

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

CONSULTATION REPORT



COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING
STRATEGY 2025-29

COMPANION DOCUMENT 3

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Executive summary

In preparing municipal public health and wellbeing plans, councils are required by the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* section 26 to:

- “provide for the involvement of the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan” and
- “specify how the Council will work in partnership with the Department and other agencies undertaking public health initiatives, projects and programs to accomplish the goals and strategies identified in the public health and wellbeing plan”.

This report outlines the consultation undertaken with community members and key partner organisations. The consultation activities summarised in this report are:

- Deliberative Panel
- Community Survey
- Health and Wellbeing Partners Network
- Youth Council
- Neighbourhood Houses
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative

The consultation results have informed the six health and wellbeing priorities, the objectives and the strategic actions in the Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29.

Deliberative Panel

DELIBERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

A group of community members who live, work or study in the Greater Geelong region were recruited to form the Greater Geelong Panel (the Panel). The goal of the Panel membership was to create a diverse group of participants that represented the diversity of the Greater Geelong community. The Panel’s role was to identify key priorities to help shape Council’s strategic plans for the next four years, including the Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29.

The Panel came together across four sessions in August and September 2024, to identify the key challenges and opportunities for the City, high level focus areas, guiding principles and key priorities for the City and for the community’s health and wellbeing.

The panel participation is represented below:

48 panel members* consisting of:

City of Greater Geelong Community Panel

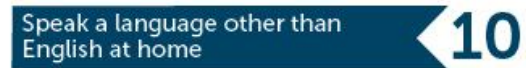
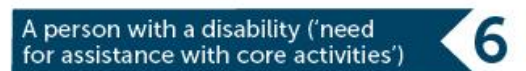
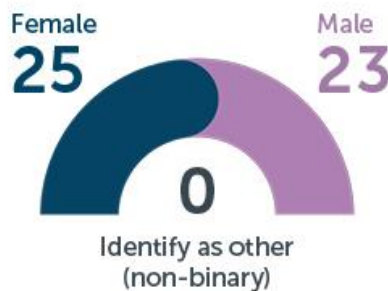


Figure 1: Deliberative Panel representation

The panel identified five key principles for the Council Plan:

1. Equitable
2. Safe
3. Clever and creative
4. Sustainable
5. Wellbeing

The panel also identified the following seven key focus areas for the next four years:

- **Community connectedness** – including considering needs across the lifespan, supporting community groups and volunteers, and ensuring equitable access to Council assets for all people.
- **Arts, culture, and heritage** – including access to and production of the arts, investing in cultural events and initiatives and celebrating the heritage of our buildings and natural environment.
- **Health and wellbeing** – including community connectedness, social interaction, focusing on prevention and ensuring health and wellbeing is part of everything we do.
- **Natural environment and wildlife** – including connecting with nature, advocacy and planning for liveability, and protecting the natural environment.
- **Economic development** – including encouraging business growth and diversity, diverse employment opportunities and investment in infrastructure and services.
- **Governance, integrity, and accountability** – including transparent decision making, demonstrating performance and effective community engagement.
- **Sustainable growth and development** – including sustainable infrastructure, environmentally responsible planning and protection of open spaces and the natural environment.

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

Greater Geelong Community Panel

Deliberative Engagement Report



City of Greater Geelong
12.09.24

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Community Survey

The community survey was open through our Have Your Say platform from 8 July to 15 September 2024 and 192 contributions were received.

The community were asked to consider which 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.

The graph below illustrates the top priorities of survey respondents.

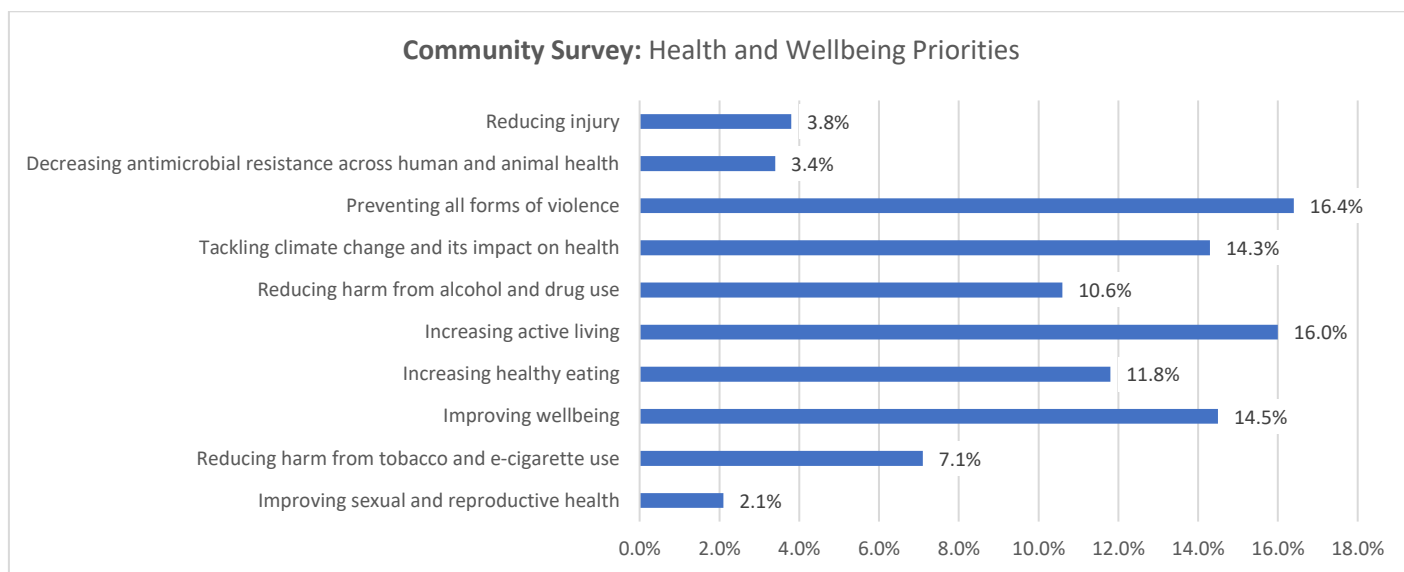


Figure 2: Top Victorian Health and Wellbeing Priorities for Greater Geelong as voted by the community

Note: Analysis of the last three priority areas have not been included in this report.

The survey also asked for ideas about how the City could make places in Greater Geelong healthier. Among the responses were more green spaces, active transport infrastructure? promoting outdoor living, waste management, sustainable and biophilic design, protecting nature, promoting climate resilience, promoting local food systems, thoughtful urban planning, and improved community safety.

The feedback reflected a strong desire for a sustainable, healthy, and green urban environment that fosters community wellbeing and protects natural resources.

In addition, open ended question about how to make Greater Geelong healthier generated the following themes:

1. Green spaces
2. Active transport
3. Outdoor living
4. Waste management
5. Urban design and sustainability
6. Protecting natural assets
7. Public safety
8. Promoting healthy lifestyles and local food systems
9. Climate resilience

The following section provides a summary of the community feedback and their ideas for how the City could address each of the top voted health and wellbeing priorities.

PREVENTING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE

1. Education and Awareness

Education is fundamental to long-term behaviour change and violence prevention. By addressing the root causes—misogyny, toxic masculinity, racism, and lack of understanding—early intervention can reduce the prevalence of violence. Local government can play a critical role in implementing educational programs in schools, workplaces, and through public campaigns

- **Early and Ongoing Education:** Implement educational programs from schools to adulthood, focusing on teaching respect, consent, healthy relationships, and violence prevention.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Raise awareness about various forms of violence (domestic violence, racism, etc.), and promote positive behaviours and responses through community engagement and media.
- **Men's Role in Prevention:** Target educational efforts at men and boys, addressing toxic masculinity and promoting healthy masculinity through role models and peer-led initiatives.

2. Community Engagement and Support

Engaging the community is crucial for building a culture of non-violence and providing support for those affected. This theme also addresses the need for strong social infrastructure, which can be a protective factor against violence. Supporting victims of violence and at-risk groups requires accessible services and a collaborative community approach.

- **Community Programs:** Develop and support programs that engage youth and adults in constructive activities (e.g., sports, arts, mentoring), fostering community cohesion and reducing violence.
- **Safe Spaces and Services:** Increase availability of safe spaces, housing, and support services for victims of violence, and ensure mental health resources are accessible.
- **Family and Social Support:** Provide education and resources for families to promote non-violent, healthy relationships and offer support for at-risk families and individuals.

3. Policing and Justice System

While education and community engagement are critical for long-term prevention, immediate safety and accountability are vital. Strengthening the justice system and law enforcement's capacity to respond to violence ensures that perpetrators are held accountable and that the community feels safe. Ensuring effective policing and legal deterrents can reduce the prevalence of violence in the short term.

- **Visible and Effective Policing:** Increase police presence in key areas and ensure law enforcement is trained to address violence effectively, with a focus on victim support and accountability for offenders.
- **Stronger Legal Frameworks:** Advocate for stricter penalties for violence and reform within the justice system, emphasizing rehabilitation and education for offenders.
- **Intervention and Monitoring:** Create systems for monitoring repeat offenders and providing interventions to reduce recidivism, focusing on education and rehabilitation.

4. Collaboration and Coordination

Violence prevention and response require a coordinated, holistic approach. Local government can facilitate partnerships and collaboration across sectors—mental health, policing, education, social services, and community groups. A collaborative approach ensures that resources are maximized, and services are not duplicated.

- **Integrated Community Effort:** Foster collaboration between local organizations, community groups, mental health professionals, and government agencies to create a unified approach to violence prevention and support.
- **Expert Consultation:** Engage experts, such as those from universities or mental health services, to guide initiatives, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing the causes and effects of violence.

5. Urban Design and Infrastructure

While it's critical to create a safe environment through education and support, physical spaces can either contribute to or reduce the risk of violence. Ensuring that public spaces are well-lit, safe, and conducive to positive community interaction can prevent opportunities for violence and increase community cohesion.

- **Safer Public Spaces:** Improve urban infrastructure (lighting, CCTV, public spaces) to enhance safety and reduce opportunities for violence in public areas.
- **Community Hubs and Youth Engagement:** Invest in creating community hubs and providing more recreational and support activities for youth to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- **Urban Revitalization:** Ensure city design fosters positive social interaction and reduces environmental factors that contribute to crime or violence, such as neglected areas or unsafe spaces.

These five consolidated themes represent the key areas of focus that Greater Geelong can work on to address the prevention of all forms of violence.

INCREASING ACTIVE LIVING

The feedback covered a wide range of ideas related to increasing active living, health, and wellbeing in Greater Geelong:

1. Active Transport Infrastructure

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Many responses highlight the need for more and safer cycling paths, dedicated walking paths, and better connections between existing bike lanes. There is also a call for secure bike parking at key locations like train stations.
- **Public Transport Improvements:** Suggestions include improving public transport options, ensuring they are safer and more connected, and providing options like electric buses.
- **Walkability:** The importance of making suburbs more walkable, prioritizing pedestrians in urban design, and connecting walking and cycling routes across the city are frequent themes.

2. Accessible and Affordable Active Spaces

- **Free or Low-Cost Facilities:** Many responses stress the need for affordable or subsidized access to sporting facilities, swimming pools, and outdoor recreation areas. Special consideration for low-income individuals, pensioners, and families is frequently mentioned.

- **Public Parks and Green Spaces:** There is a desire for more open spaces, walking tracks, bike trails, and recreational areas, particularly spaces that are accessible to all ages and abilities. Upgrades to existing parks with more accessible, well-maintained, and inclusive features are a common request.
- **After-Hours and Informal Sports Facilities:** Providing spaces for informal or drop-in sports (like basketball courts, playgrounds, and gym equipment in parks) is seen as a way to promote physical activity.

3. Community Engagement and Support

- **Community-Driven Initiatives:** There are numerous calls to engage local sporting clubs, community centres, and local organisations to promote active living and build stronger local networks.
- **Events and Programs:** Many responses recommend organizing community events such as walking groups, fun runs, yoga in the park, or outdoor fitness classes to encourage active living. Additionally, programs to promote health and wellbeing, particularly for older people, families, and children, are frequently suggested.
- **Incentives for Participation:** Several suggestions involve offering incentives like vouchers, grants, or subsidies for active living programs, particularly for children or low-income families. Programs aimed at engaging businesses to support employee wellbeing (e.g., biking to work) are also mentioned.

4. Safety and Inclusivity

- **Safe Routes for Active Transport:** Many comments express concerns about safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a focus on creating safe, well-lit, and accessible routes, such as by implementing separated bike lanes or traffic calming measures.
- **Inclusive Spaces:** Ensuring that spaces are safe and inclusive for all demographics, including older people, children, and people with disabilities, is a recurring theme. Examples include creating spaces where dogs are kept on leads or ensuring that walking paths are wide enough and well-maintained for diverse users.

5. Education, Awareness, and Promotion

- **Health Education:** Promoting physical activity through education, such as programs in schools and community centres, is another key theme. Raising awareness about the benefits of active living and encouraging sustainable modes of transport is often mentioned.
- **Advertising and Accessibility of Programs:** Making information about available health and fitness programs widely accessible, such as through community centres or a central website, helps ensure people know what is available to them.

Other Notable Themes:

- **Nature and Outdoor Activities:** Encouraging connection with nature through activities like bird watching, nature walks, and promoting outdoor spaces that support active living is mentioned several times.
- **Support for Specific Groups:** Several suggestions focus on programs and spaces for specific groups, such as children, older people, or people with health issues, indicating a desire for more tailored support.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Linking active living with environmental sustainability, such as reducing car dependence and promoting public transportation or cycling, is frequently highlighted.

In summary, the feedback emphasises the need for better infrastructure (both active transport and recreational), community-based initiatives, affordable access to spaces and programs, safety for all users, and educational efforts to raise awareness and promote active living.

The overarching theme is to make Geelong a more walkable, bike-friendly, and inclusive city with spaces and programs that encourage people to be active in their daily lives.

IMPROVING WELLBEING

Here are the key themes identified from the feedback on the ‘improving wellbeing’ priority for Greater Geelong:

1. Physical Activity and Active Transport

- **Encouraging Active Living:** Promote walking, cycling, and other forms of active transport to reduce reliance on cars and enhance physical health. This includes improving infrastructure like bike lanes, footpaths, and walkways to make active transport safer and more accessible.
- **Parks and Green Spaces:** Expand and improve parks, green spaces, and recreational areas to encourage outdoor activities. Include accessible spaces for all abilities and dog parks.
- **Fitness and Community Programs:** Provide access to fitness classes, sports clubs, and community health programs.

2. Mental Health and Social Connection

- **Access to Mental Health Services:** Improve access to mental health services, including counselling and community hubs that offer mental health support, particularly for vulnerable populations.
- **Reducing Social Isolation:** Create spaces and programs that foster social connections and reduce isolation. Support programs for older people, young families, and marginalised groups. Community centres and hubs play a key role in facilitating these connections.
- **Addressing the Impact of Social Media:** Investigate the effects of social media, particularly on mental health, and develop strategies to promote real-world relationships and healthier online habits.

3. Community Engagement and Inclusion

- **Community Events and Engagement:** Host community events, such as fun runs, cycle events, and cultural celebrations, to bring people together. Promote volunteer programs and initiatives that encourage active participation and connection within the community.
- **Inclusive and Accessible Spaces:** Ensure that public spaces, including parks, community centres, and events, are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, and are welcoming to diverse groups (e.g., young people, women, First Nations people, LGBTQIA+).
- **Promote Local Businesses and Clubs:** Encourage the development of local businesses and social clubs that offer wellbeing-related activities and foster community engagement.

4. Affordable and Accessible Health and Wellbeing Services

- **Improved Health Services Access:** Advocate for better access to health services, including mental health, dental, and general medical care. Provide more affordable options for those in financial hardship, including subsidised health services.
- **Access to Healthy Food:** Encourage the availability of healthy, locally sourced food that is affordable and accessible to all. Promote community food programs and initiatives aimed at improving dietary habits, particularly in underserved areas.

5. Environmental and Infrastructure Enhancements

- **Beautification and Green Infrastructure:** Invest in the beautification of public spaces through street planting, micro parks, and improved landscaping. Create visually appealing environments that foster a sense of pride and wellbeing.
- **Improved Public Spaces and Facilities:** Ensure that public spaces (e.g., parks, libraries, walking trails) are clean, safe, and well-maintained. Expand the availability of outdoor recreational spaces that can be used for fitness, relaxation, and social gatherings.
- **Eco-friendly Initiatives:** Focus on sustainability, including reducing environmental noise, promoting green infrastructure, and enhancing the natural environment through initiatives like tree planting and community gardens.

6. Support for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups

- **Youth and Family Support:** Provide more opportunities for young people and families to engage in wellbeing activities. Focus on programs for young mothers, children, and those at risk of mental health challenges.
- **Women's Health and Gender Equity:** Address gender-specific barriers, particularly for women re-entering the workforce and balancing family responsibilities. Promote gender equality in leadership and decision-making.
- **Support for the Elderly:** Ensure that elderly residents have access to support services, wellness activities, and social connection programs that improve their quality of life.

7. Collaboration with Partners and Stakeholders

- **Partnerships for Service Delivery:** Collaborate with local organisations such as Barwon Health, Deakin University, and community groups to design and implement initiatives that improve community health and wellbeing.
- **Engage with Businesses and Schools:** Work with local businesses to promote health and wellness in the workplace and school programs that emphasise active living, healthy eating, and mental health awareness.

8. Measurement and Accountability

- **Quality of Life Surveys:** Implement tools like the "Quality of Life Questionnaire" to measure the effectiveness of wellbeing programs and identify areas for improvement. Use this data to inform future initiatives and ensure accountability in achieving wellbeing goals.

- **Setting Clear Health and Wellbeing Targets:** Establish specific, measurable objectives for improving community wellbeing, such as increasing active transport participation or reducing mental health stigma.

9. Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

- **Promote Arts and Culture:** Provide access to arts, music, and cultural activities in all suburbs. Encourage outdoor performances and creative spaces for people of all ages to engage in cultural expression.
- **Support for Libraries and Community Centres:** Continue funding community hubs like libraries, which play a critical role in fostering community engagement and offering low-cost or free services to residents.

10. Public Health Campaigns

- **Health Education Campaigns:** Launch and promote health education campaigns focusing on active living, healthy eating, and mental health. Collaborate with local media, schools, and community organisations to reach a broad audience.
- **Public Awareness and Incentives:** Encourage participation in wellbeing activities by offering incentives such as free gym sessions, vouchers for fitness classes, or discounts on public transport for those engaging in active transport.

These themes focus on enhancing physical and mental health, fostering community engagement, creating inclusive environments, and ensuring equitable access to services and resources. A strong emphasis is placed on collaboration, environmental sustainability, and measuring the effectiveness of programs to improve community wellbeing.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH

Here is a consolidated summary of the key themes from the feedback on the 'tackling climate change and its impacts on health' priority area:

1. Energy Transition & Emissions Reduction

- Promote net-zero emissions through energy-efficient housing, electrification (homes, transport, public infrastructure), and the widespread adoption of renewable energy sources (e.g., solar, wind).
- Advocate for policy change at state and federal levels to reduce fossil fuel use, promote green energy, and incentivise the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and renewable technologies.

2. Sustainable Transport

- Expand public transport, improve cycling infrastructure, and promote active transport (walking, cycling, e-bikes) to reduce reliance on cars, cut emissions, and improve public health.
- Encourage the transition to electric vehicles and provide charging infrastructure to support sustainable transportation.

3. Green Infrastructure & Urban Greening

- Focus on increasing urban green spaces, including tree planting (native species, street trees, parklands) and green roofs, to reduce urban heat islands, improve air quality, and enhance mental wellbeing.

- Preserve existing ecosystems and integrate more green spaces in urban planning to mitigate climate impacts and increase resilience.

4. Climate Resilience & Health Protection

- Develop strategies to improve community resilience to climate change, especially for vulnerable populations, including heat action plans and improved housing insulation.
- Address health impacts from climate change, such as heat stress, by promoting energy-efficient homes and creating cooler urban environments.

5. Waste Reduction & Circular Economy

- Strengthen waste management systems, promote recycling, composting, and waste reduction practices, and reduce reliance on single-use plastics to decrease pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Encourage circular economy practices such as reusing materials and reducing landfill waste.

6. Education, Awareness & Public Engagement

- Increase public education on the impacts of climate change and actionable steps individuals can take (e.g., energy conservation, sustainable transport, waste reduction).
- Promote climate change awareness through community programs, school curriculums, and public campaigns focused on sustainable lifestyles and climate health.

7. Sustainable Housing & Building Practices

- Advocate for climate-resilient housing, including energy-efficient, well-insulated homes, and retrofitting programs, particularly for low-income and rental properties.
- Ensure new developments incorporate sustainable design principles, including energy-efficient materials, green roofs, and solar panels.

8. Community Collaboration & Partnerships

- Foster collaboration with other councils, local organisations, and communities to share best practices and drive collective action on climate change.
- Engage the public in local sustainability initiatives, such as tree planting, community gardens, and waste management programs.

9. Advocacy & Policy Leadership

- Advocate for stronger government policies and funding to support climate change mitigation, renewable energy adoption, and sustainable transport infrastructure.
- Encourage local government leadership by setting an example, such as implementing zero emissions targets, promoting sustainable procurement practices, and advocating for climate-positive policies.

10. Behaviour & Lifestyle Change

- Promote sustainable consumer choices, including plant-based diets, energy-efficient appliances, and reducing resource consumption.

- Support sustainable agriculture, reducing food miles, and promoting local, sustainable food systems.

11. Innovation & Research

- Support research and development in new sustainable technologies, renewable energy systems, and carbon reduction solutions.
- Collaborate with local universities and institutions to develop and test climate solutions and share innovative approaches for reducing emissions.

The overarching focus is on reducing emissions, building climate resilience, promoting sustainable infrastructure, and encouraging community action and education.

Key strategies include transitioning to renewable energy, improving public transport and active transport infrastructure, increasing urban green spaces, and advocating for strong climate policies at all levels of government.

INCREASING HEALTHY EATING

The feedback on addressing the health and wellbeing priority of "increasing healthy eating" in Greater Geelong can be organised into several key themes:

1. Education and Awareness:

- There is a strong emphasis on educating the community about healthy eating, starting from early childhood education, schools, and extending to adults. Suggestions include creating programs that focus on healthy meal planning, cooking, budgeting for healthy meals, and debunking myths about food.
- Specific proposals include introducing programs in schools, community centres, and workplaces, and using various platforms for outreach (such as social media, websites, and local competitions).
- Education also focuses on promoting awareness of local healthy food options, such as farmers' markets, local growers, and stores that offer fresh produce.

2. Accessibility and Affordability:

- Making healthy food more accessible and affordable is a recurring theme. Suggestions include reducing the cost of fresh produce, providing subsidies for healthy foods, and offering financial incentives or discounts for local, healthy food businesses.
- Some respondents propose the establishment of more farmers' markets, community gardens, or affordable food hubs that prioritize local produce.
- Proposals also highlight making healthy food alternatives cheaper than unhealthy options, such as fast food.

3. Support for Local Food Systems:

- Many comments emphasise the importance of supporting local food producers, farmers, and small businesses, particularly those offering fresh, healthy options. Ideas include providing financial aid or incentives to local businesses, supporting farm-to-table initiatives, and fostering community-based farming projects.

- Protecting smaller, local food businesses from large chain establishments and preserving farming land are important suggestions.

4. Regulation and Policy:

- Some feedback advocates for more stringent regulations on unhealthy food outlets, such as limiting the number of fast food restaurants or imposing higher taxes on unhealthy foods like sugary snacks and fast food.
- There are also calls to incentivise businesses that offer healthy food options, such as restaurants and cafes that prioritise plant-based or healthy meal options.

5. Community Engagement and Programs:

- Promoting and funding community initiatives like community gardens, food swaps, and support for existing programs (e.g., neighbourhood centres, food charities) is another key theme. Respondents recommend increased funding for these initiatives and ensuring they are not solely volunteer run.
- There is a push for more community-driven educational programs and events, such as food festivals, cooking classes, and health challenges, that encourage healthier eating habits.

6. Focus on Plant-Based and Sustainable Eating:

- Many suggestions advocate for promoting plant-based eating, which is seen as both healthier and more sustainable. Ideas include endorsing plant-based initiatives, promoting "Meat-Free Mondays," and encouraging schools, hospitals, and local events to adopt plant-based menus.
- There is also a focus on reducing food waste, encouraging sustainable farming practices, and reducing reliance on processed and factory-farmed foods.

7. Infrastructure and Resources:

- Creating and supporting more accessible spaces for food production, such as community kitchens and local farms, is a key point. Some feedback suggests that local authorities should provide resources like free seeds, soil, or gardening spaces to make it easier for individuals and communities to grow their own food.

In summary, the key themes reflect a multi-faceted approach to promoting healthy eating, including education, increasing accessibility and affordability of healthy foods, supporting local food systems, implementing regulations, and fostering community engagement.

REDUCING HARM FROM ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Here's a consolidated version of the key themes from the feedback on addressing 'reducing harm from alcohol and drug use':

1. Education and Awareness

- **Targeted Educational Campaigns:** Focus on raising awareness about the harms of alcohol and drug use, particularly through school programs, community centres, and public campaigns aimed at both younger and older generations.

- **Prevention and Early Intervention:** Invest in prevention programs that educate people about substance misuse early on, with an emphasis on school-based education and promoting healthy behaviours.

2. Support Services and Rehabilitation

- **Expand Access to Support Services:** Increase availability of mental health services, counselling, and rehabilitation programs for individuals struggling with addiction. Provide support for detox services and community-led recovery programs.
- **Health-Centered Approach:** Treat addiction as a health issue rather than a criminal one, focusing on rehabilitation and recovery, and supporting individuals through programs that offer long-term recovery support.

3. Community Engagement and Alternatives

- **Promote Alcohol-Free Social Spaces:** Encourage the development of recreational and community activities that provide alcohol-free alternatives, such as sporting events, fitness programs, and social gatherings.
- **Youth and Family Engagement:** Create opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities, and offer family-focused initiatives to prevent substance abuse from an early age.

4. Law Enforcement and Regulation

- **Increase Police Presence and Enforcement:** Enhance policing in areas with high drug activity, ensure the enforcement of responsible alcohol service laws, and regulate alcohol and gambling venues more strictly.
- **Limit Alcohol and Gambling Access:** Introduce regulations to limit the availability of alcohol and gambling in certain areas, such as banning alcohol in public spaces and reducing the number of pokies in high-risk areas.

5. Cultural and Social Norms

- **Shift Community Attitudes:** Foster a cultural shift that normalises healthy lifestyles and responsible alcohol consumption, while reducing the social acceptance of substance misuse.
- **Promote Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Encourage alternatives to substance use, such as promoting fitness, wellness, and outdoor activities, and integrating these into community events.

6. Public Infrastructure and Safe Spaces

- **Safe Spaces for At-Risk Individuals:** Create safe environments for individuals affected by alcohol and drug use, including mobile support units, safe injecting rooms, and access to clean, well-maintained public facilities.
- **Social Support Infrastructure:** Provide support through community-led initiatives, social services, and infrastructure that encourages people to seek help, such as improved access to public spaces and support programs.

7. Advocacy and Policy Change

- **Advocate for Stronger Policies:** Advocate for stronger government policies and funding for harm reduction programs, mental health services, and substance use prevention, as well as stricter regulations on alcohol advertising and sales.
- **Collaboration with Experts and Organizations:** Work closely with health professionals, local organisations, and universities to implement evidence-based approaches to harm reduction and support long-term recovery.

8. Funding and Resource Allocation

- **Invest in Harm Reduction Programs:** Dedicate more funding to local programs that address substance misuse, prevention, and rehabilitation. Support initiatives that provide education, mental health services, and recovery resources.
- **Support Local Initiatives:** Work with community organisations and partners to create more accessible resources and services for those affected by alcohol and drug misuse.

The consolidated themes focus on education and prevention, expanding support services, law enforcement and regulation, and fostering positive community alternatives.

Overall, the community feels that we should treat substance use as a health issue, provide effective support for those affected, enforce regulations to reduce harm, and engage the community in creating a healthier environment.

REDUCING HARM FROM TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTES

Here is a consolidated version of the key themes from the feedback regarding reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use:

1. Education and Public Awareness:

- Focus on education, especially in schools, to inform young people about the risks of tobacco and e-cigarette use.
- Promote evidence-based, ongoing public awareness campaigns to increase understanding of the health consequences.
- Include programs that teach stress management and healthier coping mechanisms to reduce reliance on smoking and vaping.

2. Stricter Regulations and Enforcement:

- Advocate for tougher laws and enforcement to limit access to tobacco and e-cigarettes, including stricter regulation on sales and distribution.
- Calls for banning e-cigarettes and restricting tobacco products in public spaces, particularly near schools, parks, and recreational areas.

- Ensure active policing of illegal vendors and underage sales, using existing laws to prevent illegal distribution.

3. Youth-Focused Prevention:

- Prioritize programs targeted at young people, providing them with accurate information and empowering them to resist peer pressure.
- Encourage the co-design of anti-smoking and vaping campaigns with young people to ensure relevance and engagement.
- Address social pressures and teach young people to make healthier choices by building resilience and promoting healthy coping strategies.

4. Smoke-Free Spaces and Ban Enforcement:

- Expand smoke- and vape-free zones, particularly around public areas such as council buildings, schools, and recreation spaces.
- Enforce bans on smoking and vaping in public and recreational spaces to reduce exposure to harmful products and encourage healthier environments.

5. Support for Cessation and Services:

- Provide accessible quit programs and services, such as counselling and support for those who want to stop smoking or vaping.
- Offer community-based resources and public health initiatives to assist individuals in quitting and improving their health.

6. Policy Advocacy:

- Advocate for stronger policies at the local, state, and federal levels to limit or ban the sale and use of tobacco and e-cigarettes, particularly targeting youth access.
- Support the creation and enforcement of policies that restrict where tobacco and e-cigarette products can be sold and ban new sales outlets near schools.

In summary, the feedback emphasises education, enforcement of stronger regulations, youth-targeted prevention, the expansion of smoke-free spaces, support services for cessation, and policy advocacy for stricter controls and bans on tobacco and e-cigarettes.

HOW CAN WE MAKE PLACES (OUR ENVIRONMENTS) IN GREATER GEELONG, HEALTHIER?

The key themes in this feedback centred around environmental sustainability, community health, and urban planning. Below are the main areas identified:

1. Green Spaces and Tree Planting:

- There is a strong emphasis on increasing tree cover, creating more green spaces, and prioritizing tree planting in urban areas, including streets, parks, and nature strips. This is linked to providing shade, cooling the environment, and supporting biodiversity.

2. Active Transport and Infrastructure:

- A recurring theme is the need for better infrastructure for cycling, walking, and public transport. Safe bike lanes, pedestrian-friendly streets, and improved access to public transport are highlighted as critical for encouraging physical activity and reducing reliance on cars.

3. Community Wellbeing and Health:

- Many responses focus on promoting outdoor living and physical activity through accessible green spaces, safe walking paths, and community amenities. There is a call for more public spaces for exercise, such as outdoor gyms and playgrounds, and efforts to improve air quality and reduce noise pollution.

4. Waste Management and Pollution:

- Managing waste, reducing litter, and improving recycling efforts are frequent points of concern. The need for cleaner streets, better waste disposal systems, and actions to protect waterways from pollution are noted. There are also mentions of banning single-use plastics and promoting composting and waste reduction.

5. Urban Design and Sustainability:

- Feedback suggests a desire for more sustainable and biophilic design in urban spaces, including green roofs, better integration of nature in cities, and using sustainable materials. The idea of "future-proofing" urban areas to ensure environmental sustainability is also present, such as building with energy efficiency in mind and investing in renewable energy.

6. Protection of Natural Areas:

- Many comments express concern about preserving natural habitats, including wetlands, wildlife corridors, and parks, with a focus on preventing overdevelopment and habitat destruction. Specific suggestions include making certain areas more accessible to the public for recreation and tourism, such as converting certain sites into protected wetlands or nature reserves.

7. Public Safety and Cleanliness:

- There are calls for improved safety in public spaces through better lighting, increased police presence, and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). Clean streets, less graffiti, and regular maintenance of public spaces were also noted as important for community pride and safety.

8. Community Engagement and Education:

- A number of responses mention the need for community involvement in environmental initiatives, such as tree planting, waste clean-up days, and educating the public about sustainability. Programs aimed at engaging young people in conservation efforts and promoting environmental education are suggested.

9. Urban Development and Housing:

- Concerns about overdevelopment, particularly in areas like wetlands or residential spaces, are highlighted. There is a desire for more thoughtful urban planning, with larger residential blocks, more green space, and less dense living conditions. There's also a desire for regulations that protect trees and prevent the removal of green spaces for new developments.

10. Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Local Food Systems:

- Promoting healthy eating and active living is frequently mentioned. Feedback suggests community gardens, better access to fresh produce, and more opportunities for outdoor physical activities. Encouraging active transport and reducing fast food options are part of creating healthier communities.

11. Climate Resilience and Environmental Protection:

- There is a clear desire for measures to protect against climate change, such as creating shaded spaces, managing stormwater effectively, and reducing urban heat. Many responses advocate for planting more trees to mitigate heat islands and improve overall environmental resilience.

These themes show a strong desire for a more sustainable, healthier, and community-oriented urban environment with a focus on protecting nature, encouraging physical activity, and improving the quality of life for residents.

Stakeholders

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERS

Health and Wellbeing Partners Network

The City meets regularly with a network of community and health agencies across the Greater Geelong region. This network provided an opportunity to engage with a variety of partners on the health and wellbeing challenges our community faces, as well as where the City should focus its efforts over the coming four years.

Partners highlighted the challenges associated with the rising cost of living, and how this influences access to basic needs such as housing, healthy food, and health services. The increasing pressure placed on families as a result, can fuel an increase in violence. Partners highlighted the increased uptake of vaping in young people as a precursor to smoking tobacco later in life.

In relation to the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27, partners drew on their experiences in service delivery and working directly with communities, highlighting similar priorities identified by the wider community.

The following tables show the questions and responses from the network at the July 2024 meeting:

Health and Wellbeing Partners Network: 4 July 2024

What do you think will be the top 3 health and wellbeing challenges for the Greater Geelong community over the next 4 years?					
Family violence	Access to services	Mental health and wellbeing	Secure access to healthy food	Tobacco & Vaping	Access to basics (e.g., housing, employment)
<p>Health conditions resulting from factors such as domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drug use;</p> <p>Family violence (2)</p>	<p>Access to healthcare services (e.g. GPs, specialists, allied health, mental health supports)</p> <p>Access to bulk billing GPs</p> <p>Ready access to high quality health services (primary care / prevention e.g. vaccinations)</p>	<p>Mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Mental health support including general mental health conditions, trauma recovery and addiction support.</p> <p>Social isolation</p> <p>Mental health supports</p>	<p>Food security (2)</p> <p>Food security across demographics</p> <p>Supplying healthy foods with high nutritional value</p> <p>Access to healthy and sustainable food sources</p> <p>Rising cost of fruit and vegetables</p> <p>Socioeconomic factors e.g., housing, job & food security</p> <p>Access to healthy and nutritious food</p>	<p>Reducing tobacco & e-cigarette related harm</p> <p>Emergence of vaping</p>	<p>Safe and secure housing</p> <p>Cost of living pressures for secure employment and housing</p> <p>Socioeconomic factors e.g., housing, job & food security</p> <p>Housing, particularly social housing</p> <p>Homelessness / affordable housing</p> <p>Increasing homelessness</p> <p>Working with higher earning families who are seeking support</p>
Why do you think these are important challenges for the community?					
<p>Family violence rates increasing</p> <p>High prevalence of family and sexual violence in Greater Geelong LGA</p>	<p>Ready access to primary care availability declining due to affordability and workforce sustainability</p>	<p>Turn around the increasing rate of mental health issues.</p> <p>Important that community have a range of options available to</p>	<p>Food can be a great connector for the community.</p> <p>Rising cost of healthy food encourages consumption of unhealthy options / less choice.</p>	<p>High rates of vaping</p> <p>Reducing tobacco & e-cigarette harm – current priority with action</p> <p>Vaping – don't know the health impacts yet –</p>	<p>If the basic health and wellbeing needs are not met, chronic conditions increase, health outcomes are poorer, people do not thrive in the community which</p>

		them where they can connect in with support.	High cost of living Climate change affecting food availability / resources	need longitudinal research.	puts pressure on the health system. High cost of living Important that community have a range of options available to them where they can connect in with support.
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Focus on prevention is needed.

- Need to take a ‘preventative’ mindset to reduce health impacts on our community and health/community support systems.
- Not easy to resolve or prevent/reduce but can see results if work collaboratively.
- Already significant impact and increasing trend.
- Low investment of dollars in prevention.
- Taking preventative measures considering health care – physical, psychological, spiritual.

What should or could the City do to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community?

Where do you think the City should focus its resources?

Partner, Support, Collaborate	Involve community	Access to Data	Focus on Enablers (i.e., SDOH)	Equity
Support and partner with organisations and services undertaking work in identified priority areas.	Co-design – if you want community members to use services, include them in the conversation.	Availability of data Share data	Enablers such as community spaces, good public transport, accessible to all abilities Invest in housing, transport, access to community spaces.	Ensuring that an equity lens is taken across all areas of Council.

What should or could the City do to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community?

Where do you think the City should focus its resources?

Partner, Support, Collaborate	Involve community	Access to Data	Focus on Enablers (i.e., SDOH)	Equity
<p>Financial support for community groups, sporting clubs and organisations who promote health living (e.g., Active Geelong, food access services)</p> <p>Leverage off the work other organisations are already doing – support them to continue to deliver or expand their service (if they can demonstrate positive impact)</p> <p>Leverage environmental responsibilities under the Tobacco Act to ensure all areas are smoke / tobacco free.</p> <p>Continue to partner with PHUs / PHNs on delivery of consolidated plans.</p> <p>Continue to support preventative plans</p>			<p>Ability to leverage own facilities e.g., leisure facilities for green option foods.</p> <p>Planning processes re: fast food venues</p> <p>Lessen burden where possible on cost of living pressures (e.g., public transport)</p>	

What should or could the City do to enhance the health and wellbeing of the community?

Where do you think the City should focus its resources?

Partner, Support, Collaborate	Involve community	Access to Data	Focus on Enablers (i.e., SDOH)	Equity
(vaccination, physical activity, access to health food)				

At the next meeting, network members voted for the Victorian Health and Wellbeing Priority Areas which most impact Greater Geelong.

Health and Wellbeing Partners Network: 28 November 2024

Bringing together the data, community views and considering your organisation's role/priorities, what should be the focus areas / priorities for the City's next municipal public health and wellbeing plan?

Why?

1. Tackling climate change and its impact on health (8 votes)

- Impacts on food security.
- Co-benefits with other priority areas
- Costs of severe weather events for the community
- Unfair and unequal distribution of impacts for those experiencing disadvantage.

2. Preventing all forms of violence (8 votes)

- Focus on domestic / family / gendered violence.
- Association with other determinants of health and inequities and impact on safety
- Rates are not going backwards.
- Human right to feel safe.

3. Increasing healthy eating (8 votes)

- Capitalise on food security agenda.
- Opportunity to influence through Council facilities, centres, programs etc.
- Obesity and knock on effects to other priorities.

4. Increasing active living (6 votes)

- Local government has great influence in this space e.g., walkable, 20-minute cities, access to sporting clubs and outdoor spaces, direct influence through service delivery.
- Co-benefits with climate change and mental health
- Reduce increasing health care costs.

5. Improving wellbeing (5 votes)

- Loneliness
- Flow on to other priorities
- Link to commercial determinants of health, cost of living, housing

6. Reducing Harm from Alcohol and drug use (4 votes)

- Links with violence and gambling

7. Reducing harm from tobacco use (2 votes)

- Opportunity to stop the increasing uptake of vaping in young people.

Stakeholders

YOUTH COUNCIL

Consultation with the new 2025 Youth Council provided fresh insights into the health and wellbeing concerns of young people. They highlighted many similar issues as the wider community however some were also particular to their age group:

- the impacts of bullying on mental wellbeing
- vaping (which leads to violence)
- accessing sexual and reproductive health services and improving diagnosis and treatment of women's health issues.
- accessing mental health services in relation to alcohol and drugs

Some strategies highlighted were:

- School based information sessions
- Addiction prevention and/or rehabilitation sessions
- Enforce laws regarding use by under 18s and selling to under 18s.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

We sought the input of neighbourhood houses because of their close ties with local communities and real time understanding of community needs.

Issues highlighted included social isolation, complex mental health issues, food insecurity, homelessness, the rising cost of living and access to basic services such as electricity, older people feeling excluded and needing assistance with technology, and assisting with recovery from emergency events.

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 advised that the health needs of First Nations communities in Greater Geelong relate primarily to mental health issues including anxiety, and the health impacts of complex chronic health conditions and disease management.

Refer to the **Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Phase 2 Engagement Report** for community and stakeholder feedback on the draft strategy. This feedback was obtained through the public exhibition process from 23 April to 25 May 2025.

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CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

Wurriki Nyal

137-149 Mercer Street, Geelong

8.00am – 5.00pm

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