

Community Development Action Plan 2022-2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar nation as the Traditional Owners of the land we now call Surf Coast Shire. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of our Surf Coast Shire community.



ABOUT THIS PLAN

Introduction

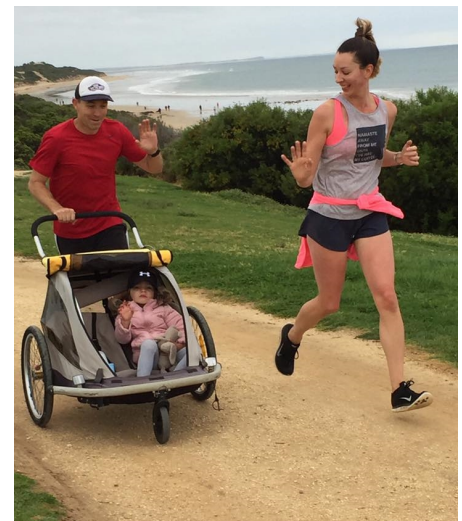
This plan brings to life Council's Community Development Policy (SCS-049), which outlines our approach and commitment to working together with our community to support community-led action.

Council's stated purpose is to *help our community and environment to thrive*. The Community Development Action Plan 2022-2024 (the Plan) responds to what people have told us they value about the Surf Coast Shire community and environment, and what they aspire for it to be in the future.

Community development acts on the premise that all individuals, groups, organisations, communities, agencies and levels of government have assets to offer and share with each other to achieve common goals. When each is connected and playing a role, communities are typically activated, welcoming, nurturing and resilient, and able to care for their natural environments and residents for generations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a demonstration of how individuals and groups rise up and come together to meet local needs in their communities. In Surf Coast Shire we have seen new food relief services, business innovations, social activities and neighbourhood initiatives. In many of these instances, Council played a supporting role, working in the background to help community members make their ideas a reality.

In the same way, this Plan centres on embedding a community development approach across Council and in partnership with our community, to create an enabling environment for individuals, groups, networks and place-based communities to connect and thrive.



Community-led action: Parkrun Torquay received recent Council grant funding to support their activities – providing inclusive, free, weekly events, where everyone is welcome to walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate.

Community development

Community development is a process where community members are supported to identify and take collective action on issues that are important to them.

Council's Community Development Policy (SCS-049) takes an Asset-Based Community Development approach to building healthy, inclusive and connected communities within the Surf Coast Shire.

Asset-Based Community Development:

- **Identifies all the positive aspects of a community as assets** – such as people, places, cultural heritage, landmarks and natural environments – and works to utilise and connect them at a localised level.
- **Acts on the basis of strengths versus deficiencies**, i.e. focuses on assets, energy and capabilities rather than what's perceived as wrong or missing.
- **Recognises that individuals bring knowledge, skills and passions to their communities**, and that people feel valued when they have the means to share theirs with others.
- **Supports resourcefulness and interdependence within communities**, by combining effort and seeing residents take responsibility for leading actions that respond to current situations and opportunities.

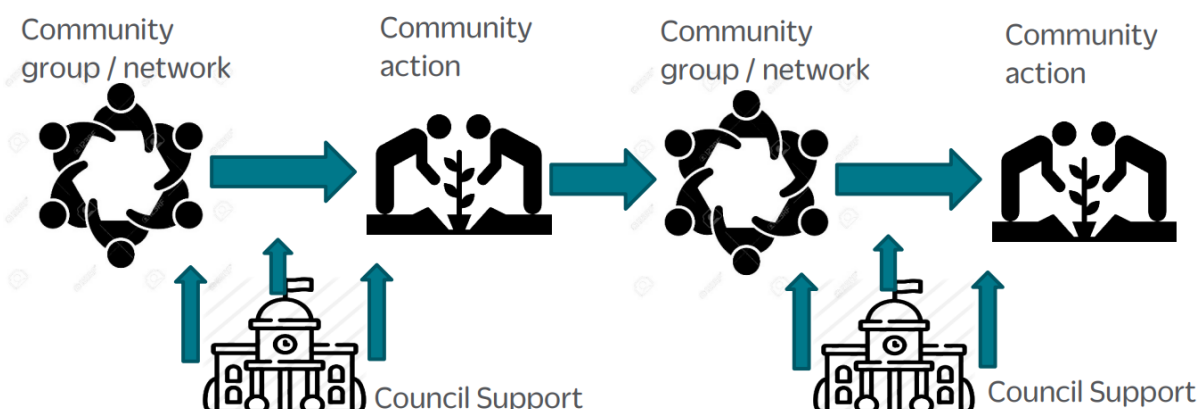
Our Policy states that “Community members are experts in their own lives and communities, and consequently, Council values their knowledge and wisdom”. It recognises that productive relationships, and a shared way of working, are central to achieving any lasting change.

Council's role therefore, is as a partner that does things *with* rather than does things *for*, or does things *to*, our community. This can include providing guidance to community members wishing to act upon a new idea; connecting people with shared visions or ideas; offering resources (e.g. grant funding); helping build skilful leaders; and having the willingness, ability and systems in place to support community-led action.

Individuals, groups and communities also have roles and responsibilities in crafting the way life looks and feels where they live. In the Surf Coast Shire, many people are taking action to shape the ways that social, economic, environmental and political factors contribute towards the vision they have for their township and the broader municipality.

Individuals and groups of people can answer the question for themselves: *What do I care enough about to act upon?* and councils can help remove barriers and provide avenues for these actions to occur.

Surf Coast Shire is recognised as one of Victoria's fastest growing municipalities. This puts increasing pressure on limited resources, making Council's investment in community development vital for providing the services, facilities and support systems that will sustain the lifestyle people are drawn to here.



A thriving community and environment

The responsibility for creating and sustaining a thriving Surf Coast Shire community and environment is shared between Council and community.

Central to community development is the notion that community members have both civic rights and civic responsibilities.

Residents have the right to expect that councils will operate with sound governance and transparency; provide particular services (e.g. road maintenance, kerbside waste collection, animal registrations); contribute towards community safety (e.g. accessible pathways, environmental health, emergency management); and demonstrate value for their rates and other municipal charges. Civic rights are typically delivered upon through residents interacting with Council's service providers, customer service platforms and communications.

It takes a great deal to maintain community life and healthy natural environments, and many responsibilities fall outside of what local governments can resource, control, influence or have interest in. Civic responsibilities call on individuals and community groups to use their own skills, resources and connections to act upon things of importance to them, to meet their own needs, and contribute to needs within their communities. This can include preparing for the bushfire season by removing hazards from private property; volunteering time with a local school or sporting club; maintaining a Community Garden; or being part of a local environment group.

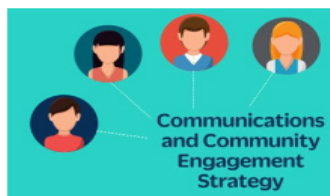
An example where civic rights and responsibilities intersect closely is when Council undertakes community engagement activities on things within its control which have an effect on the way people live in the community. Council depends on broad community input – a civic responsibility – to gain local knowledge and perspectives, influence decisions, and act to best serve the community and environment.

This snapshot from Council's website in August 2022 shows a diversity of topics seeking community input:



Deans Marsh Community Hub - Facility Development Plan

Help shape the future of the Deans Marsh Community Hall and Cottage (including childcare space). Share your ideas as we plan for a Multi-purpose Community Hub to serve the Deans Marsh community.



Communications & Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2025

Submissions close 5pm, Tuesday 23 August.

Council is seeking feedback on a new draft Communications & Engagement Strategy.



Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027

Submissions close 28 August.

Surf Coast Shire is seeking input on the development of a new Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan for 2022-2027.



Draft Residential Nature Strip Policy & Guidelines

Submissions will be open from August 22 to September 29

Council is seeking your input on a new draft policy and guidelines for the use and maintenance of residential nature strips.



What's your CATtitude?

Feedback closes Monday 12 September

Council is reviewing cat curfews, and is seeking feedback on your experience and preferences.



Moriac Structure Plan

We are working on a new Moriac Structure Plan which will document current community aspirations and outline future plans for the area.

Policy context

The Community Development Policy and Plan act upon local government responsibilities and strategic approaches that guide the way Council interacts with our community and influences community life.

Local Government Act

The [Local Government Act](#) (2020) recognises the roles and responsibilities councils have in fostering community cohesion, and encouraging active participation in civic life.

Giving priority to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations (9b) and promoting the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district (9c) are two overarching governance principles of the Act. It also states that local governments must maintain a Community Vision that is developed with its municipal community (s. 88). This is included on p10, and is central to the Plan.

Council Plan

The [Surf Coast Shire Council Plan 2021-2025](#) sets the strategic direction for Council's efforts for a four year term, in partnership with our community.

The Community Development Action Plan plays a role in supporting each of the seven themes, with the most direct touchpoints shown in the diagram on the following page.

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

Councils are required to prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years.

After analysing local health data, feedback from community consultation, state and regional health plans and relevant legislation, Council has identified the following five health and wellbeing priority areas for 2021-2025:

- Increase Healthy Eating and Active Living
- Improve Mental Health and Social Connection
- Prevent Family Violence and Promote Gender Equity
- Reduce Harm from Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Tackling the Impacts of Climate Change on Health

Taking a community development approach enhances many health and wellbeing actions and outcomes in our community – i.e. utilising the knowledge, skills and passions within our community, and supporting community participation and partnerships. Examples of these are referenced in the Actions section (p33).

Council policies

The Community Development Action Plan and its actions connect and enact our:

- Community Development Policy (SCS-049)
- Grants Program Policy (SCS-056)
- Volunteer Policy (SCS-047)
- Community House Policy (SCS-006)

The Plan also relates to other policies and plans that inform Council's internal practices and interactions with our community, such as:

- Council's commitment to Reconciliation with First Nations Peoples
- Communications and Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2025
- Climate Emergency Corporate Response Plan 2021-2031
- Economic Development Strategy 2021-2031
- Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2024
- Access and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2014-2024
- Gender Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2021-2025
- Open Space Strategy 2016-2025
- Strategic Workforce Plan 2022-2025
- Youth Strategy 2022-2025
- Creative Places Strategy 2022-2030 *underway*



Council Plan, aspects of particular relevance:

Strategy 1: Work with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in our community to achieve Reconciliation

Strategy 6: Enable communities to strengthen their social connection and participate in community life.

Strategy 11: Protect heritage and township character

Strategy 14: Enable people to run successful local businesses that grow and create jobs in our changing economy.

Strategy 16: Foster an environment where people with clever and creative ideas can make a difference in their communities.

Health and Wellbeing priorities (embedded in Council Plan strategies and in the accompanying action plan).

ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

Traditional Owners and the First Nations Community

The Wadawurrung People, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar nation, are the Traditional Owners of the lands we now call Surf Coast Shire.

Traditional Owners outline their respective goals in Country Plans produced by the Registered Aboriginal Parties representing their lands – the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation's *Paleert Tjaara Dja – Let's make Country Good Together 2020-2030* and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation's *Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt 2015*.

Council and community can play roles in supporting these goals.

Theme one of Council Plan 2021-2025 is the commitment to walking with First Nations Peoples towards achieving Reconciliation.

There is also a strong appetite within our community for knowledge of local Aboriginal history and increased recognition for Traditional Owners and First Nations people and culture broadly.

Non-Indigenous community members can be supported to deepen their own connection to, and care for, Country. This should always be done through appropriate and respectful consultation with Traditional Owners through the applicable Registered Aboriginal Party or First Nations consultant.



What our community has told us

Through multiple engagement activities in 2021, community members shared their insights and vision for a thriving Surf Coast Shire.

People Place Future engagement

As a basis for developing a 10 year Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025, Council sought broad and diverse input from across the shire through its People Place Future program.

Between January and March 2021, the program attracted almost 3,000 interactions through Council's website, surveys, other submissions, market stalls, pop-ups and community meetings, summarised in the [Community Engagement Report](#) (March 2021).

These are some of the highest ranking values our community told us they wish to protect or enhance:

- Natural environment
- Social connection and inclusivity
- Health and wellbeing
- Unique character and identity of neighbourhoods and towns
- Sustainable living and responding to climate change

This Word Cloud was generated to represent the top 15 topics of importance to people when asked about their 10 year vision for the Surf Coast Shire. The size of words indicates the frequency they came up.



Based on this, a community panel crafted this 10 year vision, which underpins our Council Plan:

From the hinterland to the coast, from the First Peoples to the children of the future, we are an active, diverse community that lives creatively to value, protect and enhance the natural environment and our unique neighbourhoods. We will leave the Surf Coast better than we found it.

Actions in the Plan give our community avenues for acting upon the vision and values, both independently and in partnership with Council.

Township insights

The [Health and Wellbeing Engagement Report](#) (June 2021), part of the People Place Future engagement, provides insights at township level.

With the exception of Anglesea and Torquay, *Improving social connection* was in the top three health and wellbeing priorities nominated by residents in townships across the shire. The other two dominant priorities were *Increasing physical activity and active living* (important to all townships) and *Tackling climate change and its impact on health* (all townships except Torquay North and Winchelsea).

Surf Coast Youth Census

Conducted in the second half of 2021, the [Surf Coast Youth Census](#) gained input from 1,084 young people aged between 10 and 25 years of age.

It found:

- 97% described living on or near the Surf Coast as either good (22%), great (35%) or amazing (40%)
- 72% said they have a strong connection to their community
- 95% said they were excited about the future (sometimes 31%, mostly 44%, always 20%).

The top five things seen as the biggest issues in their community, in order, were: Rubbish; Climate Action and the Environment; Sport/Recreation; Anti-social Behaviour, Crime, Eshays; and Alcohol and other drugs. While 79% reported feeling safe in the community, those who didn't, listed issues with discrimination, cyber-bullying or the threat of violence/sexual assault on our streets.

Council's Youth Team supports young people to act on their passions for music through the FReeZA program, and climate action through the Youth4Climate program. Surf Coast Environmental Action Team (SCEAT) is one group of young residents taking action into their own hands, driving waste and litter reduction activities in their community.

Community profile

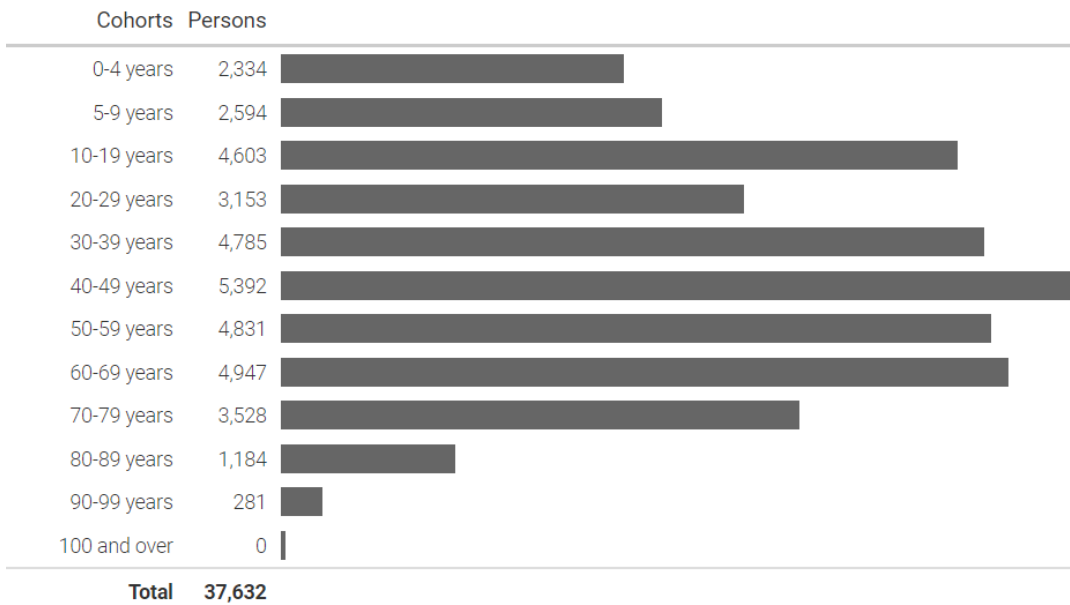
Data related to Surf Coast Shire’s population and demographics also inform Council’s approach to community development.

Population

The 2021 Australian Census estimated the resident population of Surf Coast Shire was 37,632, an increase of 28% since 2016 (29,402).

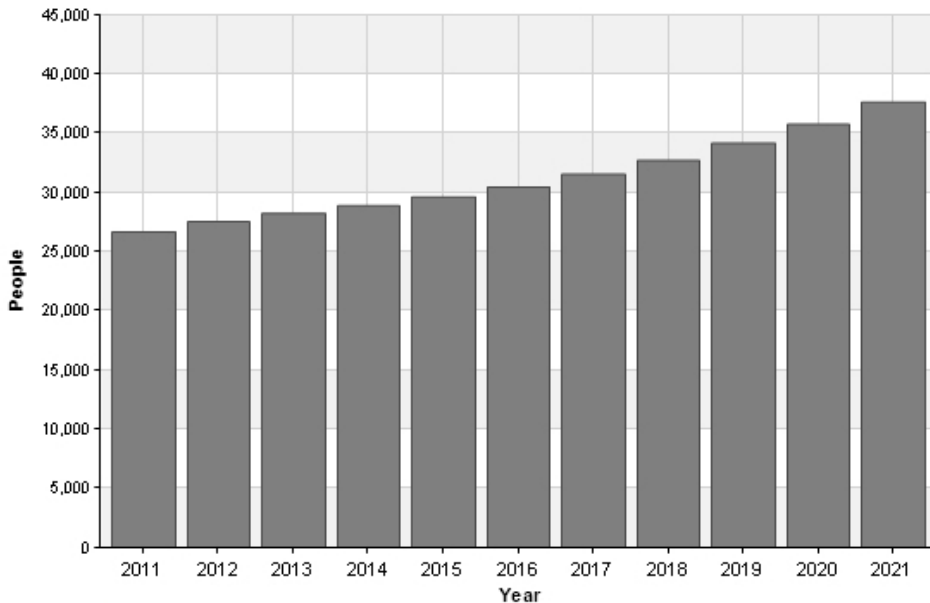
The three largest age cohorts, in order, were 40-49 years, 60-69 years and 50-59 years.

Population of Surf Coast Shire municipality 2021 (Source: REMPLAN, accessed 29 July 2022)



In the past 10 years (2011 to 2021), the estimated resident population of Surf Coast Shire has shown an annualised growth rate of 3.5% – with an accelerating rate of increase in recent years.

Ten year population trend – Surf Coast Shire (Source: REMPLAN, accessed 29 July 2022)



Population growth and community development

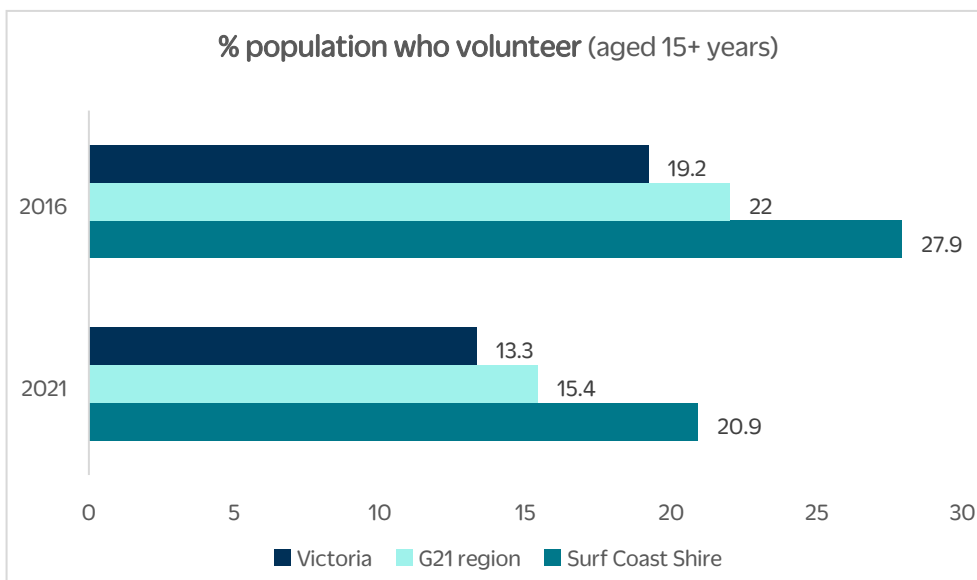
The 2016-2021 annualised population growth rate of 5.1% in Surf Coast Shire is higher than both the G21 region (3.1%) and the state of Victoria (1.9%).

Rapid growth and an increasing resident population in the shire (as well as being a popular domestic and international tourism destination) will place increasing pressure on Council’s assets and services, and on natural environments.

Council operates within constrained finances and other resources. Community-led actions and involvement will therefore be vital for sustaining the quality of life we aspire to for all people in Surf Coast Shire. Investing in community leaders, projects, partnerships and planning will share this responsibility, and support individual communities to meet changing needs at a local level.

Volunteering

Data shows a strong volunteer culture in Surf Coast Shire, with 21% of the population reporting they participated in voluntary work for an organisation or group in 2021. In both the 2016 and 2021 Australian Census, volunteer rates in Surf Coast Shire have been higher than the G21 region and the state. Each of these localities has seen a decline in volunteering in 2021 however, likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.



(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Census)

Council is currently supported by 169 local volunteers. At Council-run Kindergartens, volunteers read stories, share specialist skills or aspects of their culture, attend excursions, assist with Bush Kinder and provide general support to the program. Volunteers are also a valued part of the team at Visitor Information Centres, where they provide information and advice about our region and surrounds, share their local knowledge and passion, and promote local businesses and attractions.

Additionally, members of the Positive Aging Advisory Committee and All Abilities Advisory Committee consider information and community inputs, share their experiences and ideas, and provide advice to Council to progress strategic goals that contribute towards an inclusive, thriving community. Community Asset Committees (p16) ensure that local facilities are fit for purpose and utilised by their communities.

Community-based organisations also rely on volunteers to support a vast array of other services, sectors and causes in the Surf Coast Shire Community.

Volunteering Australia’s recently launched [National Strategy for Volunteering](#) concluded (p32), “We need to re-focus on the volunteer experience: Volunteers are increasingly valuing choice and flexibility. They want to engage with opportunities that meet their needs and provide a sense of agency.”

This, and Council’s approach, align with the [Victorian Volunteer Strategy 2022-2027](#), based on these goals:

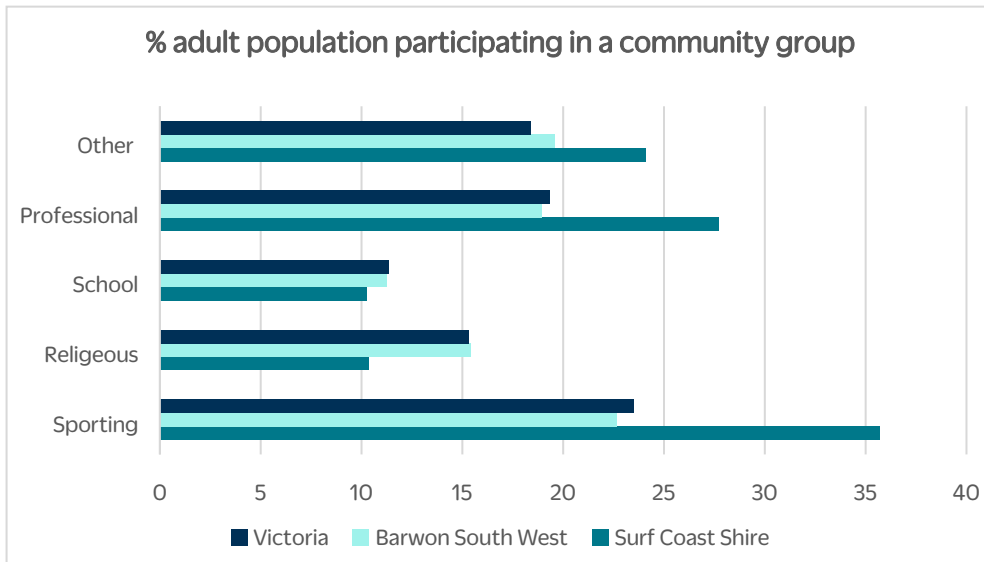
- Goal 1: Making volunteering inclusive and accessible
- Goal 2: Making volunteering flexible and easier
- Goal 3: Supporting volunteers to be resilient, supported and empowered
- Goal 4: Creating volunteering connections and pathways
- Goal 5: Ensuring volunteering is recognised and celebrated

Community participation

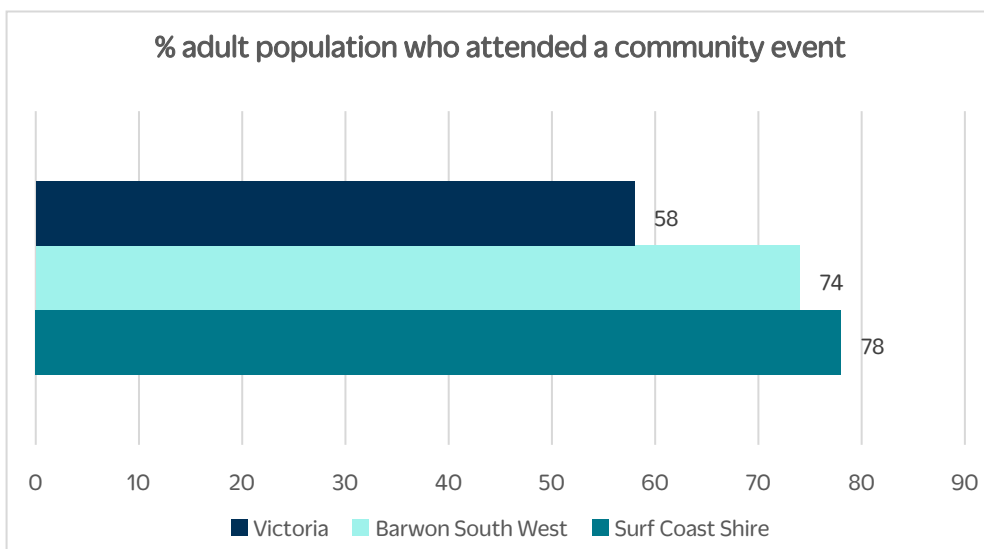
The Victorian Government ceased measuring indicators of community development or community-driven action in 2008. However data from the Victorian Population Health Survey provides some insights in its 2017 and 2014 surveys.

Over 600 community organisations or groups were recorded across Surf Coast Shire, providing programs and events focused on social, environmental, cultural and political outcomes.

In 2017, Surf Coast Shire showed significantly higher levels of participation in community groups and community events compared to regional and state averages, except religious and school-related groups.



(Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Population Health Survey 2017)



(Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Population Health Survey 2014)

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED ACTION

Council offers a variety of supports and strategies to encourage individuals, groups and townships to contribute towards a thriving community and environment.

Community Development Action Plan 2020-2022

The 2020-2022 Plan included 24 actions, with some of the highlights being:

- **Grants Program Review** – resulting in a new Grants Program launched on 1 July 2022.
- **Community Project Development Program** – 17 projects investigated, with some securing funding for implementation and underway, and others seeking funding or being referred to other processes.
- **Marsh and District Community Action Plan** – supporting residents to act on their documented vision.
- **Supporting community networks and committees** – including Community Asset Committees; Positive Aging Committee; organisations with volunteers; place-based networks.
- **Community House partnerships** – including events for International Women’s Day and supporting localised activities responding to health and wellbeing priorities.
- **Online Community Directory** – providing for greater participation in place-based communities.
- **Environmental Leadership website** – showcasing local leaders and community initiatives.

Grants Program Review

In 2021-22, officers led a significant review of Council’s grants program, with a particular focus on program governance, seeking community feedback, aligning with Council’s strategic directions, and meeting current community needs.

As a result, the following have been developed and embedded in the 2022-2024 Grants Program:

- Overarching Grants Policy – bringing consistency in how grants are administered across Council.
- New grant streams and styles – providing greater flexibility for funding diverse community projects.
- New guidelines and application forms – which are clearer and simpler to use.
- GrantGuru – a platform for searching external grants, available on Council’s website.
- Additional \$35,000 funding for community grants in the 2022-23 budget.
- Processes that allow community members to take more ownership for delivering capital works projects.

New Council processes

A common theme arising from feedback gained from our community, and from engagement across Council teams, is the willingness and ability of community members to be more hands on with projects if Council allowed it. As a result, efforts have been made to increase understanding of the principles of Asset Based Community Development across Council teams, and to identify where Council processes or assumptions are limiting or preventing community-led action.

The following are two examples of officers working together to share knowledge and change processes.

Community Initiatives Assessment Panel

Established in 2021, this internal panel consists of Council officers across areas including Community Projects and Partnerships; Community Health and Development; Social Infrastructure Planning; Outdoor Space operations; Recreation; Assets; Infrastructure; Youth; Aged and Access; Engineering and Environmental Sustainability. The panel meets monthly to discuss community-led ideas and initiatives arising across the shire through Council programs (e.g. Community Project Development, Community Grants, community leadership programs) and from community groups or individuals seeking assistance via our customer service portal.

Through the panel, officers gain ongoing information about skills and assets in our community, determine the best type of supports Council can provide for each new community project, and identify any implications for our own work and assets. It has created a consistent and efficient approach for assessing and supporting community-led projects.

Community-led capital projects on Council managed land

In 2022, a process was introduced to enable community members to retain more ownership for delivering small capital works projects at facilities/sites managed by Council (e.g. projects arising from the Community Project Development Program, Community Partnership Projects, grants and lease agreements). To ensure the safety of community members, groups and the broader community, officers meet with community members onsite to develop strong working relationships, undertake project risk assessments and complete asset handovers as relevant. Any advice, requirements and/or conditions are established together, before projects begin.

Other programs and supports

Each of the following Council programs and supports are reviewed regularly, and will continue to adapt and evolve in response to community interests and needs, and our own resourcing.

Community Grants Program

Grants help our community deliver a huge variety of activities including environmental works, improvements to facilities such as Community Gardens and Men's Sheds, First Nations programs/activities, equipment for Historical Societies and sporting clubs, Senior's Festival activities, community events, and community arts projects. Typically, for every \$1 Council invests in grants, our community contributes time and other resources to the value of \$5.

The 2022-2024 [Grants Program](#) has greater emphasis on supporting diverse needs, groups and initiatives, encouraging partnerships, and giving more agency and autonomy to community members. It includes these streams: Community Initiatives, Small Equipment, Natural Environment, Climate Emergency, Business Collaboration, and Artists and Creatives.

Consultation with Traditional Owners

Council officers meet regularly with the Registered Aboriginal Parties – [Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation](#) and [Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation](#) – for the purpose of gaining input and guidance, and sharing information.

Council also plays a role in supporting individuals and community groups to connect with Traditional Owners through appropriate consultation in cases where First Nations people and culture are included in community projects or ideas.

Casuarina Community Leadership Program

Over 21 years, Council has offered the Casuarina Program to residents seeking to develop their leadership skills, networks and ideas for community projects or social enterprises. The program typically runs over a 7-10 week period, requiring a significant investment of time from participants and Council officers.

Resulting projects have been diverse, including reinvigoration of the Winchelsea Farmers and Makers Market, a food garden at Winchelsea Primary School, a mentoring program for young emerging artists, new business initiatives, and launching the Surf Coast Athletics club.

In the 2022 program, participants developed project ideas for First Nations Reconciliation, family violence prevention and referrals, women's health and supports, eliminating single use coffee cups, and healthy eating for children and young people – demonstrating how the program responds to current community interests, needs and opportunities.

Community Project Development Program

This program guides and supports community members to apply their efforts and expertise to develop feasible projects to implement in their community. Officers provide advice, information and connections to help scope the project and develop project plans, community consultation and funding strategies.

Some projects that have been implemented include the Deans Marsh Festival Stand, Getjawil Garden (Indigenous food and yarnning circle) in Torquay, Yellow Gums Performance Space, Torquay History Trail Signage and Great Ocean Views Reserve Activation Program.

Community Partnership Projects

When local clubs and community groups have scoped projects and secured funding for them, Council officers assist them to navigate approval processes and agree upon conditions so those clubs/groups can deliver the projects at Council-managed facilities/sites. Often these projects centre on enhancing local sports, but also include signage projects, or activities with arts or environmental outcomes, such as the Hooded Plover mural at Aireys Inlet Community Centre.

Community Asset Committees

[Community Asset Committees](#) manage the daily administrative and operational activities at eight nominated halls and recreation reserves across the shire on behalf of Council. The Committees – involving 68 community volunteers – use their local knowledge and connections to make effective use of the facilities in their communities, including Aireys Inlet, Anglesea, Connewarre, Deans Marsh, Winchelsea, Modewarre and Lorne.

Volunteers

Council currently has 169 volunteers contributing their knowledge, skills and passions at Council-run Visitor Information Centres and Kindergartens, and on Community Asset Committees, the Positive Aging Advisory Committee and All Abilities Advisory Committee (read more p12).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a reduction in volunteering, and Council has been supporting a reactivation within its own programs, and with a goal to assist community organisations that also rely on volunteers.

Community Houses

Located in [Lorne](#), [Anglesea](#), [Torquay](#), [Deans Marsh](#) and [Winchelsea](#), Community Houses provide meeting places and learning hubs for individuals and groups. They deliver programs, activities, services and events that respond to current and emerging needs in their local communities, and welcome participation from everyone.

The Community House Policy (SCS-006) commits Council to supporting the five Community Houses, for example through annual funding, lease agreements and facility maintenance, promoting their programs and services, sharing information, participating in Barwon Network meetings, and connecting in residents.

Place-based community networks

Officers support place-based networks that exist for the purpose of connection, knowledge sharing and collective action. This currently includes Community Action Networks in Torquay, Anglesea, 3231 (Aireys Inlet, Eastern View, Fairhaven, Moggs Creek) and Deans Marsh, Moriac Community Network and Growing Winchelsea.

Community Directory and Community Events Calendar

An [online directory](#) was added to Council's website in 2021 to help community members find opportunities for social connection and participation, and to promote active groups across townships. To support local events, community members can also add details about their workshops, classes and gatherings to the online [community events calendar](#).

Local Legends Awards

This program celebrates people and groups who are helping our community and environment to thrive. Nominations are made by community members, and all nominees who meet the criteria are recognised for what they contribute towards enacting and strengthening the values of the Surf Coast Shire community.

Facilitating community group networks

Council officers coordinate quarterly meetings with representatives from each local Men's Shed, to enhance networking and knowledge sharing. Officers also support Senior Citizens clubs, Advisory Committees and Community Asset Committees to perform their roles in the community.

Skill building resources

Council's website hosts a collection of resources for community groups on topics such as fundraising and grants, attracting members and helpers, strategic planning and succession, financial management, and event planning. Live grant information and grant writing workshops have also been offered to support Council's annual Grants Program.

Community of Practice

A Community of Practice brings individuals together to share and gain new skills and knowledge. In 2020, Council ran its first Community of Practice on the topic of community leadership, with experiences being shared by community members and Council officers. The COVID-19 pandemic put further events on hold, but we're exploring what this might look like in the future.

Provision of assets and facilities

Many community groups and organisations are supported to run their programs or operations from Council-managed sites and facilities, including Community Houses, Men's Sheds, Senior Citizens, Torquay Theatre Troupe and sporting clubs. Use of these facilities is also supported by the Community Asset Committees that manage daily operations at eight halls and reserves across the shire.

Priorities for 2022-2024

Council will continue to provide a variety of programs and supports that respond to community needs, interest and opportunities, like those outlined in the previous section.

The 2022-2024 Action Plan has been developed with an emphasis on enhancing and evaluating the outcomes of Council's actions and investment in community development.

In particular, it aims to:

- Embed Council's Community Development, Grants Program, Volunteer and Community House policies.
- Create/change Council processes to align with an Asset Based Community Development approach, including removing barriers to community-led action.
- Contribute towards Reconciliation with Traditional Owners and the First Nations community.
- Enhance partnerships between and within Council and our community.
- Encourage people to work together to have positive impacts on the Surf Coast Shire community and environment.
- Encourage individuals to contribute knowledge, skills and passions in their communities.

ACTION PLAN

Evaluation framework: Results-Based Accountability

This Plan is based on the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework, which is specifically designed to improve conditions and measure impacts within communities.

RBA does this by evaluating actions using three questions:

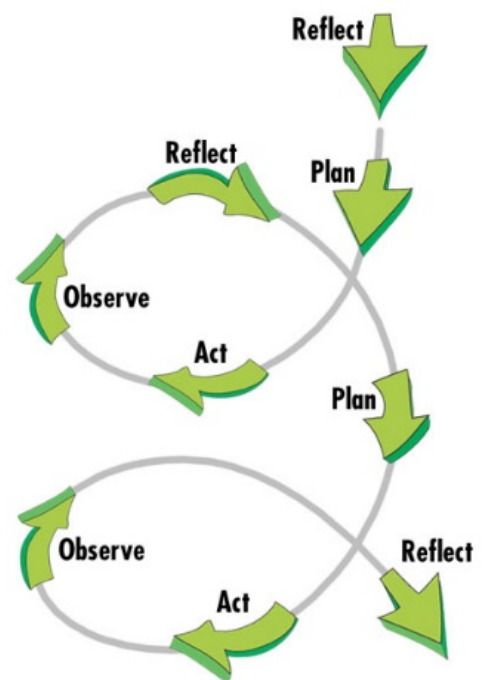
How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anybody better off?

Some qualities of the RBA framework are that it:

- Starts with a clearly articulated **outcome**, describing how people and communities will be better off from our actions.
- Establishes **measures** that harness both quantitative and qualitative data, and embeds them in the actions.
- **Evaluates** both the wellbeing of the community and the performance of the actions.
- **Keeps community voices and expertise at the centre** by bringing together diverse stakeholders to analyse and reflect on the data collected, then measure impact and plan the next actions.
- Operates on a cycle of **reflection and continuous improvement**.
- Contributes to achieving the organisation's goals *because* the community/participants are kept central to the actions and evaluation.

RBA uses an action research cycle:

Statement of DESIRED OUTCOME



Are we achieving the
DESIRED OUTCOME?

Community Development Action Plan 2022-24

Outcome

What are the conditions we want for our community?

Population level

Community Vision for Surf Coast Shire

From the hinterland to the coast, from the First Peoples to the children of the future, we are an active, diverse community that lives creatively to value, protect and enhance the natural environment and our unique neighbourhoods. We will leave the Surf Coast better than we found it.

Developed by the People Place Future Community Panel in 2021, and stated in Council Plan 2021-2025.

Program level

What is the change we are seeking as a result of our contribution through this Plan?

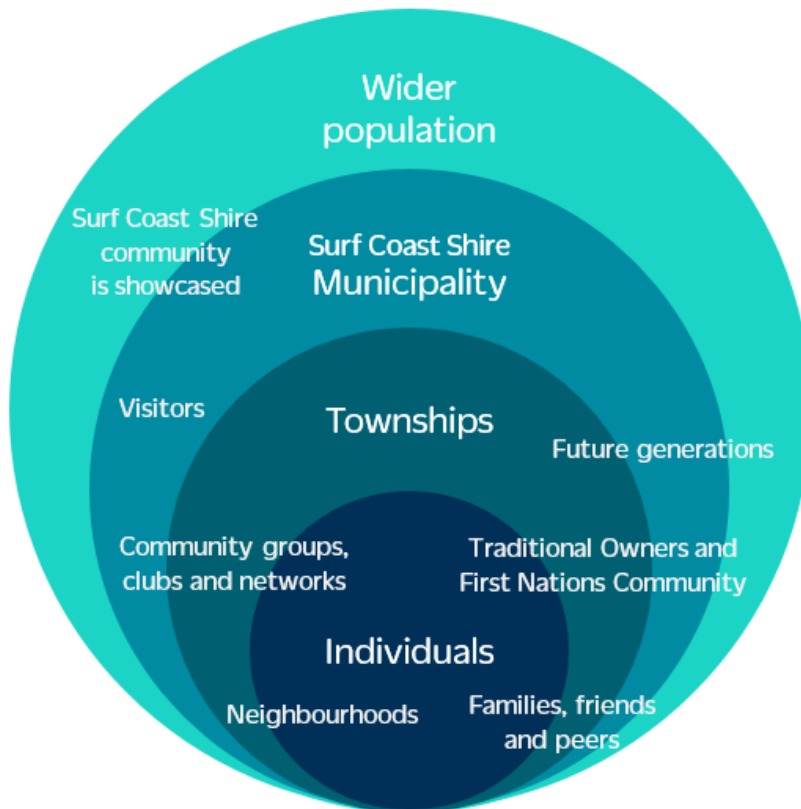
It is easy for individuals to contribute their knowledge, skills and passions towards a thriving community and environment, and work together to lead positive actions in the Surf Coast Shire. Council encourages this to happen.

Impact

What would this look and feel like in our community?

- **Individuals** feel valued, fulfilled, connected, and able to contribute in positive ways to their community, including sharing and gaining skills, and leading actions in their communities.
- **First Nations** voices are heard. First Nations people feel safe to identify and proud to practice their Culture. Non-Indigenous people are led by the Traditional Owners to connect with and care for Country, and take positive actions towards Reconciliation.
- **Community groups** are active, enjoyable, inclusive, sustainable, appropriately resourced, and connected with other groups, allowing them to fulfil their purpose in the best interest of their communities.
- **Diverse cohorts and minority groups** bring richness through sharing their knowledge, skills and experiences within their communities.
- **Individual townships and hamlets** are safe, clean, healthy, resilient, inclusive and welcoming. They express their unique character, and people feel a sense of belonging and contributing to where they live.
- **All aspects of the natural environment are thriving**, including marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems. Air and water here are fresh and unpolluted. Sustainable/regenerative practices are used in agriculture and other types of production.
- **Council enables community-led action** by playing a role in doing things with, rather than doing things for, or doing things to, our community.
- **Surf Coast Shire** is a place where all people can live, work and play in a thriving community and environment.
- **Our community's talents, resourcefulness and success stories are showcased and shared** across our shire and well beyond.
- **Our community is acting on behalf of future generations' needs.**

What individuals offer, contribute and value is the foundation of thriving communities.



A community case study



Photo: Marcel Berens/Sports Media Images

In 2022, one individual's vision and actions led to establishing [Surf Coast Little Athletics](#) – launching with 100 permanent members and interest from 250 children.

The initiative provides health and wellbeing benefits for children participating in sport, and created a local club for families who would otherwise need to travel to Geelong.

From scoping the idea through Council's Casuarina Leadership Program, to establishing the club's operating structure and recruiting volunteers, to finding a venue (currently Torquay Primary School), to securing funding for equipment – the club now provides much loved activities and social connections.

Measures

How do we know the change is happening – or not?

The following Population level and Program level measures will be used to evaluate whether actions in the Plan are making a positive contribution (or otherwise) towards the outcomes we seek for community life and community development in the Surf Coast Shire.

Population level

Population level indicators respond to the question: *Does life in the Surf Coast Shire look like the stated community vision?*

These indicators act as a guide:

Aspect of Vision	Indicators
From hinterland to coast; unique neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People all around the shire are having a positive experience living here.
First Nations Peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owners and the First Nations Community feel that goals within local Country Plans are being achieved, and that Reconciliation is advancing in the Surf Coast Shire.
Active, diverse, creative; unique neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents are actively participating in a variety of aspects of community life.
Natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The natural environment is being protected and enhanced.
Future generations; better than we found it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future generations are being considered in the decisions and actions being taken in the Surf Coast Shire now.

Internal data sources

- Council Plan reporting
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan reporting
- Evaluation and reporting on policies listed in Policy context (p7)
- Council's engagement activities on related topics

External data sources

- [Victorian Population Health Survey](#)
- [REMPAN](#)
- [Profile.id](#)
- [Social Stats](#)
- [Australian Census](#)
- [Place Score](#)
- [Australian Reconciliation Barometer](#)
- Quality of Life indicators/indices

Program level

Program level measures indicate how well Council and the actions in the Plan are performing against these questions:

- **Quantity** – How much did we do? (usually expressed as numbers or percentages)
- **Quality** – How well did we do it? (related to the participants’ or community’s experience of it)
- **Impact** – Is anyone better off? (benefits and outcomes such as changes in awareness, behaviours and conditions)

Each action in the Plan includes specific measures and data sources related to these overarching measures:

Aspect	Measure
Council’s contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has Council contributed? Has it been effective or not?
Community development outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Council staff and processes demonstrate an Asset-Based Community Development approach? • What community development outcomes are occurring in our community as a result of the actions?
First Nations Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the actions contributing towards Reconciliation with Traditional Owners and other First Nations Peoples?
Community assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What knowledge, skills and passions are people in our community contributing, and to what?
Activating individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy for individuals in our community to contribute and gain things themselves through these actions/avenues?
Community leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy for people to activate community-led initiatives through these actions/avenues?
Diverse inputs and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are a diverse range of community members contributing their knowledge, skills and passions across our community?
Wide-spread benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are a diverse range of community members and communities (e.g. townships) benefiting from these actions?
Strong relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the actions building and strengthening relationships in the shire?

Data collection

Data collection is the responsibility of the Community Development Advisor.

Population level

Typically, Population level data is available infrequently (e.g. every 2-4 years), and change is noticed over an extended period of time.

Baseline data on Population level indicators will be established during year one of the Plan, and data will be collected again at the conclusion of the Plan (2024) and in alignment with Council Plan evaluation.

Program level

Program level data will be collected every 6 months in the Data Collection template included in Appendix 1.

Program evaluation and continuous improvement

Results-Based Accountability keeps participants/community central, which continues in the program evaluation.

Following the collation of Program level data, every 6 months a small number of community members will be invited to join Council officers in what RBA terms a *turning the curve conversation*. This refers to the purpose of the conversation, being to evaluate whether improvements are being seen in the conditions the program is targeting.

Turning the curve conversations

In these conversations, a group of officers and community members will discuss the data on quantity, quality and impact, and ask questions to determine whether the actions are leading towards the outcomes we seek for our community.

In relation to each action, the group will consider the following questions, record their assessment and plan next steps.

- **What is the story behind the data?**
Drawing upon our individual and collective knowledge and perspectives, what is the data telling us?
- **Who are our partners that can help?**
Are there opportunities to work with others to achieve or enhance the outcomes?
- **What works to do better?**
What should we keep doing? Stop doing? Start doing?
- **What are we going to do?**
Will we continue on the same path or make any changes?

Continuous improvement

The Plan outlines strategic actions that have been framed around the outcomes we seek, yet these will remain flexible and responsive to findings of the 6 monthly evaluation and ongoing application of the action research cycle: Plan; Act; Reflect; Observe (repeat).

Turning the curve conversations will guide the next steps for the action plan, and determine whether other actions are needed to build upon, fill gaps, adapt to current conditions, and act in support of current energy in communities

Using the action research cycle also keeps actions relevant and responsive to continuous improvement – not only during the 6 monthly data collection and evaluation cycles.

Future plans will continue to inform and align with the most recent Community Development Policy, Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Reporting to Council

Officers will report annually on the Community Development Action Plan 2022-2024 at Councillor briefings.

Actions

What are the things we (Council) can do to achieve the desired change?

The Plan commits Council to eight (8) headline actions that we anticipate will play a role in moving us towards the Population and Program outcomes we aspire to. They are informed by opportunities we have identified to better align Council's approach with the principles of Asset-Based Community Development (p5), and by what our community has told us (p9-10).

These actions will be ongoing in nature across the two years of the Plan. They work together to create an environment where individuals, groups, networks and communities can, and want to, contribute their skills, knowledge, and passion for the betterment of the broader shire community.

Some of the actions are new, and some represent Council's existing commitments. This Plan links them to our overarching goals, and creates a structure where reflection and evaluation are embedded into each of them.

Headline actions

1. Deliver an annual Grants Program that funds diverse initiatives and projects.
2. Support community members to develop and share an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of their groups' meetings and events.
3. Implement a single, easy process that gives community members an avenue to seek guidance to act on an idea for a new initiative/project.
4. Deliver an annual leadership/skill development program open to all residents.
5. Elevate volunteering in Surf Coast Shire to make it easy for individuals to contribute their skills in our community.
6. Support place-based communities to develop their own unique Community Plans.
7. Work with the Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Houses and local Community Houses to see them thrive as place-based hubs for community connection, action and innovation.
8. Remove barriers from Council processes that limit or prevent community participation and/or action.

Responsibility

The Plan is the responsibility of Council's Coordinator Community Health and Development, and will be delivered in partnership with many other teams across Council.

Action 1:

Deliver an annual Grants Program that funds community members to spark diverse initiatives and projects that respond to current needs and opportunities across the shire.

FACT! Council's Grants Program was reviewed and relaunched in July 2022 with greater emphasis on supporting diverse needs, groups and initiatives; encouraging partnerships; and giving more agency and autonomy to community members. Community contributions and outcomes from our separate Community Event Grants will also be evaluated as part of this action.

Council Policy: Grants Program (SCS-056)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dollar value of Council's contribution to the Grants Program. • Number of <i>applicants/groups</i> funded through the Grants Program. • Number of <i>initiatives</i> funded through the Grants Program. • Number of applications/initiatives <i>not</i> funded by the Grants Program and dollar value of them (i.e. unsuccessful or partially funded). • Number of hours and value (\$) and in-kind) contributed by grants recipients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did a diversity of <i>applicants/groups</i> get funded through the Grants Program? • Did a diversity of <i>types of initiatives</i> get funded through the Grants Program? • Did community members enjoy carrying out their grant-funded initiative? • What types of skills and knowledge did community members contribute to the funded initiatives? • Did the new program make it easier for community members to apply for and receive funding to support their projects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many groups received a Council grant that hadn't in the previous two years? • Did Council's grant program enable groups or individuals to do something they wouldn't have otherwise have been able to do? • What community development outcomes (e.g. new connections/partnerships, contributing skills, gaining skills) did participants report from implementing their initiatives? • What benefits did the community report as a result of the funded initiatives?

Data sources: Grant Program records; Event Grant records; Grant acquittal forms; other feedback received from grant applicants and recipients; Grant Guru statistics; Grant celebration events.

Action 2:

Support community members to develop and share an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of their groups' meetings and events as a gesture of recognition and respect for Traditional Owners and First Nations Peoples, and as part of the ongoing journey towards Reconciliation.

FACT! Within our community there is strong interest to learn more about First Nations Peoples, Cultures and perspectives. This includes how to show respect for local Traditional Owners – the Wadawurrung People and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar Nation – and caring for Country. Acknowledging Country is one step on this path.

Council Policy: Acknowledgement of Country (SCS-061) and supporting resource: *Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country: Guidelines for Surf Coast Shire Councillors, staff and volunteers.* (underway)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of groups/individuals in our community who received officer support to share an Acknowledgement of Country. Percentage of those groups and individuals reporting doing an Acknowledgement of Country at their meetings and events. Percentage of those people transferring this knowledge/action to other contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What level of confidence do people in our community have to share an appropriate Acknowledgement of Country – has this increased? What barriers do people report for why they haven't done Acknowledgements – and how many people have overcome these? How have community members shared their own knowledge of Country and guided others on how to share an Acknowledgement of Country? Did community members find it enjoyable and valuable learning how to share an Acknowledgement of Country? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What percentage of people have been prompted to learn more about local Traditional Owners, Country, Culture and First Nations Peoples more broadly as a result of this action? What has this broader learning been, and what are they thinking or doing differently as a result? How is this action being experienced by local Traditional Owners and other First Nations People in our community? Has it impacted knowledge, respect and relationships in our community?

Data sources: Surveys of community group members – before and after receiving assistance; Feedback from Registered Aboriginal Parties; Feedback from other First Nations People in our community.

Action 3:

Implement a single, easy process that gives community members an avenue to seek guidance to act on an idea for a new initiative/project.

FACT! Community members currently present ideas for new initiatives and share aspirations for their community through a range of channels – including conversations with officers; interactions with Councillors; raising them in meetings; contacting Customer Service; and submitting a Request Form, Community Project form or grant application.

This can lead to inefficiencies or inequality in how Council responds to community members’ ideas, and can mean they lose ownership or agency for driving an initiative they are passionate about. The purpose of this action is for Council to offer pathways to guide or support community members/groups to act upon their idea for a new initiative.

Planning a more supportive system is already in progress, and is likely to include five components:

1. Ongoing collaboration, input and guidance from the internal Community Initiatives Assessment Panel (p14).
2. Promoting an online form/portal to create a single entry point for community members seeking Council support for their initiatives.
3. Creating a checklist/tool for assessing community initiatives seeking significant support from Council against our priorities and resources.
4. Educating about and embedding the form and referral pathway across Council operations and interactions with our community.
5. Helping our community to utilise and benefit from the system, to see outcomes in the community.

These components are being guided by the draft Community Initiatives Referral Pathway diagram (Appendix 2).

Council Policy: Community Development Policy (SCS-049)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of community initiatives/contacts received through the online form. • Number of community initiatives <i>not</i> referred through the online form (i.e. coming in via CRMs, emails, Councillor requests, community meetings). • Number and type of initiatives directed to each of the individual referral pathways. • Number and type of initiatives directed to a community development pathway (e.g. connecting them with others in their community). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are community members experiencing the process? e.g. Is the online form easy to use? Did they get a clear and timely response? Have we included the right referral pathways or are there others to add? • Did people receive useful support/guidance for progressing their idea? (e.g. links to local collaborators, information or funding) • Did community members find it enjoyable, valuable and rewarding to receive guidance and progress their idea? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the process make it easier for individuals to contribute their skills and knowledge to a thriving community and environment? • Which projects took steps forwards, and what outcomes have they delivered for the community? • Have officers and Councillors gained new understandings about community development and the assets within our community? • Are community members consistently being guided to the form and referral pathway?

Data sources: Website statistics; Survey of form users; Community Projects and Partnerships, and Community Health and Development records; Community Initiatives Assessment Panel; Survey of Council officers/teams.

Action 4:

Deliver an annual leadership/skill development program open to all residents, to activate individuals to use their skills and passions to create positive change in their communities.

FACT! Council's Casuarina Leadership Program has seen fantastic outcomes over the past 21 years (see p15), and this action allows flexibility in the type of experience and format we invest in and offer our community each year.

It allows Council to listen and respond to the current needs of individuals, groups and communities, for example to activate innovative projects, help raise up new leaders, plan for succession in current groups, form new groups, or address emerging challenges and opportunities – in a format that is accessible and appealing.

Council Policy: Community Development Policy (SCS-049)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Expressions of Interest received and from where across the Shire. • Number of participants in the program. • Number of contact/content hours provided through the program. • Number of community members participating for their own personal interest/growth. • Number of groups that were represented by the participants, and/or community initiatives that benefited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did participants find the program enjoyable, valuable and rewarding? • Was the program accessible to a diverse range of individuals across the shire? • Was there diversity in the types of groups/initiatives that were represented/benefited? • What types of skills and knowledge did community members contribute to the program and any arising initiatives? • Did Council support participants to follow through on projects (or other outcomes) after the program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What community projects (or other outcomes) began/are occurring as a result of participating in the program? • What benefits did participants report as <i>personal gains</i>? (e.g. sharing their skills/knowledge/passion, gaining new skills/knowledge, feeling valued, making new connections) • What benefits did participants report for their <i>group or broader community</i>? (e.g. filled a knowledge gap, led to improvements in a group or network they're part of, created new connections, led to new joint projects, initiated a new project) • If new projects were initiated, what benefits did they have for the community and/or environment?

Data sources: Program records; Participant survey – before, during and after the program; Conversations with participants.

Action 5:

Elevate volunteering in Surf Coast Shire to make it easy for individuals to contribute their skills in our community, including Council staff taking opportunities to volunteer themselves, and utilise volunteers to support their work.

FACT! In 2021, 21% of Surf Coast Shire residents volunteered with a community group or organisation (Australian Census). Encouraging greater diversity in who volunteers and the types of volunteer opportunities available, both within Council and our community, will benefit individuals wishing to contribute their skills and energy in the time they have available, and strengthen local organisations.

Additionally, Council's Leave Policy (HR-14) provides permanent employees with two days annual Community Service Leave, to volunteer in Council and community-based activities. There is currently very low uptake (fewer than 25 hours total across the organisation in the years 2019-2022, and 83 hours in 2018, pre-covid). This action aims to see more staff personally connecting with the benefits of volunteering, and this translating to them offering opportunities for community volunteers to participate in Council events/programs.

Council Policy: Volunteer Policy (SCS-047) – being revised in late 2022

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of resources or processes developed/shared to help community groups and Council teams to support volunteering. Number of community organisations Council supported to enhance volunteering. Number of Council teams/functions that utilised volunteers, and number of volunteer hours contributed across them. Number of Council staff who utilised Community Services Leave. Number of Council staff hours contributed to volunteering in Council and community programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What diversity of community organisations has Council helped to enhance their volunteer programs? Which approaches, tools, resources, connections etc contributed by Council have had the most impact? Can this be expanded upon? What are individuals saying about their experience volunteering in the shire? E.g. Is it easy to find opportunities, join/register, contribute time and skills, gain new skills and connections, etc? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are community organisations offering any new or different volunteer opportunities (e.g. roles, functions, flexibility)? Has there been any change in which/how many Council teams or functions are utilising volunteers? Any new opportunities? Are more staff utilising their Community Services Leave entitlements?

Data sources: Feedback from volunteers in Council programs; Surveys/conversations/feedback from community organisations; Feedback from volunteers in community programs (as available); Survey of Council staff and teams; Council's Payroll records on Community Services Leave; Australian Census.

Action 6:

Support place-based communities to develop their own unique Community Plans, with a staggered cycle of engagement, development, implementation and reflection on Community Plans in townships across the shire.

FACT! Community Planning enables residents to identify common values and create a shared vision for their community. Community Plans document a clear list of priorities and activities that community members themselves will undertake. The [Marsh and District Community Action Plan](#) (MaDCAP) is a great local example.

A staggered cycle of community planning across the shire means we work with communities when *they* desire to begin the process (and as Council resources allow). Support may take the form of introducing the concept, creating links between community members and other local assets, and/or engaging a facilitator to help guide the development of a community-led plan.

Community Plans then inform Council's plans and programs in those places, influenced by the vision, values, priorities and community-led actions taking place in each individual community.

Council Policy: Community Development Policy (SCS-049)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Community Planning information sessions/meetings held with local networks or residents. Number of communities across the shire that are 1) developing, 2) implementing and 3) reflecting on Community Plans. Number of community activities/actions <i>captured</i> in each Community Plan. Number of community activities/actions <i>delivered</i> in each Community Plan. Number of references to Community Plans in grant applications and the Community Project Development Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are community members finding it enjoyable, valuable and rewarding to contribute to a Community Planning process? Is there an increase in local interest and knowledge about Community Plans? Are community members participating in Community Planning activities who haven't engaged in other Council programs? To what extent? Are people engaging for the term of the Community Plan they have contributed to? What is influencing this? What types of skills and knowledge are community members contributing towards their local Community Plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the community planning process make it easier for individuals to contribute their skills and knowledge to a thriving community and environment? In townships that have Community Plans, do place-based groups report that it contributes to their direction, functionality and outcomes? What types of new activities or projects were initiated as a result of a Community Plan, and what benefits do they bring for the community and/or environment? Are Community Plans influencing Council's plans and programs in individual communities?

Data sources: Meeting discussions/conversations/surveys of place-based groups/networks; Council officer records (Community Health and Development); Council Grant applications; Community Project Development Program; Community Plans; Community Planning Facilitator (external consultant).

Action 7:

Work with the Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Houses and local Community Houses to see them thrive as place-based hubs for community connection, action and innovation across the shire.

FACT! Being located in the heart of five unique townships across the shire, and supporting others in their proximity, means Community Houses know and support residents in ways that Council can't.

The past 2 years have had significant impact as they navigated and played a crucial role in supporting individuals and communities through the COVID-19 pandemic, from becoming hubs for food and/or mask distribution, to offering crisis support, connection and outreach. Council is a committed supporter as our Community Houses shift focus back to their community development goals and act on localised energy and aspirations.

Council Policy: Community House Policy (SCS-006)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of times Council promoted Community Houses as assets for residents to connect with. • Number of projects Community Houses sought support for and/or auspiced other groups to do (e.g. through Council Grants). • Number of joint programs/events delivered in partnership between Council, Community Houses and/or the Barwon Network. • Number of local Community House and Barwon Network meetings attended by Council officers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What community development initiatives are Community Houses delivering with Council's annual financial contribution? • What roles are Community Houses playing to help existing and emerging leaders come together on shared visions in their town? • What new types of skills and assets are Community Houses unearthing in our communities? • Are Community Houses playing a role in Community Planning when it is occurring in their townships? • Is knowledge about the role and opportunities associated with Community Houses increasing amongst Council officers and our community? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does connecting with Community Houses make it easier for individuals to contribute their skills and knowledge to a thriving community and environment? • How are Community House staff feeling about the relationship and support they're receiving from Council?

Data sources: Council officer records (Community Health and Development); Records from individual Community Houses; Insights from Community House staff; Council funding acquittals (for Community Houses and Grants); Surveys of participants in joint projects or events.

Action 8:

Remove barriers from Council processes that limit or prevent community participation and/or action, making it easier, more appealing, and more satisfying for people to contribute to their communities.

FACT! Sometimes the most positive impact local councils can have is to *get out of the way* and let community members instigate, create and deliver their own outcomes.

Councils support this, for example, by reducing administrative barriers (e.g. making it easier to volunteer, lead action or secure grant funding); providing information that increases agency and autonomy; or setting up measures to keep community groups, their members and the broader community safe as they deliver a capital works project.

Council Policy: Community Development Policy (SCS-049)

Measures:

Quantity – How much did we do?	Quality – How well did we do it?	Impact – Is anybody better off?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Council systems/processes changed to enable more community-led action. • Number of new community projects that have been delivered with a higher degree of community input and output than previously possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What systems/processes have been changed to enable more community-led action? • Are community members delivering more of a project with less input/control from Council? • Is there any change in the number of community members who are completing Council administrative processes that enable them to contribute to their communities, e.g. grant applications, registration to volunteer? • What additional knowledge, skills and passions are individuals now able to contribute? • Has safety or quality been compromised or enhanced by the new systems/processes? • Have there been any positive or negative impacts on the environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are community members feeling more activated, autonomous, trusted and/or impactful in their community? • What benefits have been realised for individuals, groups, townships, the shire or Council? Have there been any negative impacts? • Have the new systems/processes had a positive impact on relationships and understandings between Council and community?

Data sources: Council officer records (e.g. Community Health and Development, and Community Projects and Partnerships); Council officer conversations (including those within the internal Community Initiatives Assessment Panel); Survey of community members using particular Council processes or services; Survey of broader community; Grant acquittals.

Other community development actions

Within the two year duration of this plan, specific new actions may emerge as we reflect, plan, act upon and observe the results we're seeing. Any new community development actions committed to for 2022-2024 will have measures established to collect data and evaluate their effectiveness in line with the Program level Measures (p22) and the reporting cycle of this plan.

Some related work/actions across Council teams

Community health and wellbeing actions

Actions in Council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan are reported on annually, and evaluated on their reach, impact and effectiveness.

These are some examples of Council actions where a community development approach is central, with individuals contributing their skills and passions, and partnerships elevating the impacts at township level.

- Working in collaboration and supporting Community Houses to host and deliver events and activities that bring local people together to connect and share stories, experiences, knowledge and skills. Examples include International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism, National Volunteer Week, and Responsible Service of Alcohol training.
- Supporting locally led health and wellbeing initiatives and projects, by helping individuals build connections, access resources and promote participation. The Men's Wellbeing Group and Nature Play Program are examples.
- Making a financial contribution to local community groups, clubs, schools, Community Houses and individuals so they can deliver activities that meet specific interests and needs in their communities and cohorts. Providing community grants for IDAHBOT Day and Mental Health Month have been particularly impactful.

Enhancing place-based knowledge sharing, decision making, capability and capacity

For over 65,000 years, Australia's First Nations Peoples have cared for Country, and maintained an intimate knowledge and deep respect for their local environments. Connections to places and communities continue to be central to the lives of Traditional Owners, the First Nations Community, and non-Indigenous people who live, work and play on the lands of the Wadawurrung People, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nation, today.

Council has a duty to understand what people love about where they live, a role to play in supporting individuals and communities to enhance those places, and a responsibility to respond to visions shared within communities, townships and hamlets.

Some Council actions to support this include:

- Contributing towards goals outlined in local Registered Aboriginal Parties' respective Country Plans.
- Establishing regular catch ups across teams/officers working in the same place-based communities.
- Working together across teams to understand community assets, to listen and respond to community aspirations, and support action upon them. Place-based engagement on Town Structure Plans provides one opportunity for this, but it relates to all functions of Council.
- Integrating Council's plans and programs *around* Community Plans and other shared visions and values in communities, townships and hamlets.
- Implementing the scoped Relationship Management System to improve information sharing and engagement activities within Council and community.
- Continuing to build place-based understandings, resilience and leadership capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from local emergencies and natural disasters.
- Actively progressing our own actions on climate change, and encouraging and supporting community-led action.

Communications and engagement that supports community development outcomes

Ensuring that community members are receiving locally relevant information, and are taking opportunities to share their knowledge and views on Council-led plans and programs also contributes to community development outcomes.

Council's [Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025](#) (draft currently out for community consultation) includes actions to support this, including:

Strategic Direction 3 – Building relationships and trust

Major initiatives under this strategy are to:

- Showcase our community's talents, resourcefulness and success stories to inspire others.
- Amplify our communications and engagement through our existing relationships and their networks.

Strategic Direction 5 – Council wide focus and continuous improvement

Priority 3 is a commitment to coordinating communications and engagement at township level to ensure activities are efficient, don't clash and are combined where appropriate. This includes working across Council departments to share local knowledge of activities/events/issues within townships.

APPENDICES

1. Data Collection template (draft)
2. Community Initiatives Referral Pathways

Appendix 1. Data Collection template

Community Development Action Plan 2022-25

Reporting period: xx

PROGRAM LEVEL OUTCOMES

Action 1. Deliver an annual Community Grants Program that funds community members to spark diverse initiatives and projects that respond to current needs and opportunities across the shire.	
<p>Actions undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> xx xx xx 	
<p>QUANTITY How much did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dollar value of Council's contribution = x Hours and value (\$ and in-kind) contributed by grants recipients = x Number of <i>applicants/groups</i> funded = x Number of <i>initiatives</i> funded = x Number of applications/initiatives <i>not</i> funded and dollar value of them = x 	<p>QUALITY How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the program make it easier to apply for and receive grant funding? Did a diversity of <i>applicants/groups</i> get funded? Did a diversity of types of <i>initiatives</i> get funded? Did community members enjoy carrying out their funded initiative? Types of skills and knowledge community members contributed to the initiatives? How many, and which, initiatives went ahead even if they didn't get the funds applied for?
<p>Comments:</p>	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>IMPACT Is anyone better off? – i.e. as a result of the grants program this 6 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did any groups receive a grant that hadn't in the previous two years? Does the Grants Program make it easier for individuals to contribute their skills and knowledge to a thriving community and environment? What community development outcomes (e.g. new connections/ partnerships, contributing skills, gaining skills) did participants report from implementing their initiatives? What benefits did the community report as a result of the funded initiatives? 	

Etc. – for each action

Appendix 2. Community Initiatives Referral Pathways

