

SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Plan Incorporating the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021 - 2025



Acknowledgment of Country

We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar, as the Traditional Owners and Protectors of the land we now call Surf Coast Shire. We Acknowledge their Ancestors who cared for the land and waters for thousands of generations. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

Further, we Acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, who are part of today's Surf Coast Shire community.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Our shared Vision: All people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and Culture strong

Wurrurrwilwa gupma bengadak Wadawurrung

As Wadawurrung Traditional Owners we live by Bunjil's lore to care for Country and all things living as our ancestors have always done.

Our Dja (Country), is more than a place. Our coastal cliffs, wetlands, grassy and volcanic plains, and people were all formed by Bunjil and our ancestor spirits who continue to live in the land, water and sky. Black Hill near Gordon is where Bunjil created Wadawurrung people. Lal Lal Falls near Ballarat is where he created the waterways and where he returned to before heading to his resting places in the stars continuing to watch over us.

Our Dja is interwoven with relationships no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, granite hills, crow or Manna gum. Country is filled with relations speaking language, sharing stories and following lore. These spirits they link us back through time in a continuing connection with our past, our cultural practices and our stories. These spirits connect us to our Country and each other which gives us ongoing respect for our obligation to care for our Country.

We are educating the broader community and retelling the stories of history in our Country to provide a richer understanding of how important our people have been and continue to be in the formation and functioning of modern-day Victoria.

Let's walk together
Koling wada-ngal

Paleert Tjaara Dja – Let's Make Country Good Together
Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan 2020-2030
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

The contemporary Eastern Maar nation traces an unbroken line of descent back to our ancestors over many thousands of years. We have survived as our Country's First People and, despite the well documented colonial history, continue to maintain economic, traditional, cultural, familial and spiritual ties to our homeland. Through the leadership and authority of our Elders, we are practicing our laws and customs, strengthening our system of governance and nurturing our connection to Country.

We continue to pass on our traditional knowledge from generation to generation, inducting our young people into Maar society as a cultural practice initiated by our Ancestors. It is a process that keeps customs and stories alive and ensures we are able to maintain Maar culture, language and society. Drawing strength from our identity and past, we are able to live our culture as a set of attitudes, customs, and beliefs; helping us to be resilient and adaptable in changing circumstances.

We acknowledge that looking after this place properly, in a way that benefits all people, will require strong and respectful partnerships. We will move forward in a positive and collaborative way with the people and organisations who share interests in, and responsibilities for, our traditional lands and natural resources. We will do this within the context of our cultural integrity and values.

Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt
Eastern Maar Country Plan 2015
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

This country plan is called Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt. It is in our Maar language. Meerreengeeye means 'Our Country', which includes the land and waters, plants and animals, our stories and spirits, our citizens. This is how we see our Country, as connected and all-encompassing.

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Meet the Councillors

The Surf Coast Shire Council comprises four wards and has a total of nine councillors. The number of councillors that represent each ward is determined by the population in the ward. The Lorne ward has one councillor, Winchelsea and Anglesea wards have two councillors each and Torquay is represented by four councillors.

The current Council was elected on 5 November 2020 for a four year term. Cr Libby Stapleton was elected Mayor for a one year term on 18 November 2020. Cr Liz Pattison was elected to the position of Deputy Mayor.

Anglesea ward



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Cr Gary Allen
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Torquay ward



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Winchelsea ward



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Cr Heather Wellington
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Mayor's Message



Whatever your connection to Surf Coast Shire I am sure you have a strong idea of what you love about it. It might be the natural beauty, the strong community bonds, or the healthy lifestyle. Most likely it's all the above and more besides.

Getting a clear picture of what is important about our shire was the first step in the development of this Council Plan and our other related strategic documents.

We received feedback from around 1200 people on what they cared about and then we heard from a dedicated cross section of our community who volunteered weeks of their time to explore this topic in detail.

This work culminated in a community vision for the shire which articulates the future direction for us as a community and Council. The vision records the diversity of landscapes, lifestyles and townships. Protecting our natural environment and the character of each of townships emerged as a central theme. The vision recognises the contribution of First Nations people and how ongoing understanding and respect is essential. Children are specifically mentioned in recognition of the legacy we as community will leave to them. Creativity, diversity and recreation are also acknowledged. At the heart of the vision is a desire to make the future Surf Coast Shire better in the future than the past.

It's a worthy encapsulation of what we collectively value and what we should protect and enhance.

From this, and the subsequent set of principles developed by our hard working community panel, Council has developed 19 strategies arranged across seven themes to steer us in the direction of the community vision. When Council is so many things to so many people it's been quite an exercise to hone our strategic approach to these few. In doing so we are acknowledging the role others have played and will continue

to play in our collective futures. Sometimes we will be the leader and other times it's best that we step aside and let our community and other partners shine.

The community has taken the lead on shaping this plan and we intend to honour that commitment by continuing to work in collaboration over the four year life of this plan.

That's not to underestimate the work ahead of us. For all the great things about Surf Coast Shire we know we have challenges ahead of us – with climate change possibly the most important issue of our lives. Reconciliation with First Nations people is also a critical priority and there is the complex issue of how to manage growth in a sustainable way without losing what we love. An urgent, related issue, is the lack of affordable housing for many in our community.

All the same, I am optimistic about the future of this beautiful place. Within our community we have the ingredients for success – there are more examples than we can count where creative, talented people, have banded together to achieve a common goal. This Council Plan celebrates collaboration and recognises the power that comes from having a common purpose.

Cr Libby Stapleton
Mayor Surf Coast Shire Council

CEO's Message



It's a fascinating time to be living, working or visiting the Surf Coast Shire. Like everywhere else we are navigating the impact of COVID-19 and whilst we have become more accustomed to the challenges since those distant days in early 2020 we now have the cumulative effect of lockdowns, health risks and daily tallies.

The impacts vary for each of us and certainly there are some in our community who have been dealt a disproportionate blow. Vulnerable members of our community, our tourism and hospitality operators and young people are some of those who have borne the brunt of the pandemic locally.

It might seem paradoxical but the pandemic has brought good as well. We've seen how genuinely and quickly our community has mobilised to help others. Initiatives that might have had their genesis on someone's kitchen table during lockdown 1.0 have since flourished and established really solid connections in our communities.

We have shown we have what it takes as a community to recover and get our lives to something like normal – at least COVID normal.

There are other challenges ahead of us but again we face them as a community that cares, that has great energy and ideas and that is willing to share the load.

This Council Plan distils the challenges and opportunities ahead of us and in so doing represents a series of choices - where we should focus effort, where we need to change our approach and where we need to concentrate our limited resources. We also note the value and importance of partnerships – within our community and with other agencies, councils and levels of government. The result is a set of strategies that focuses our intent over the next four years.

Whilst it's early days for me I'm proud to note the commitment of the Councillors and officers to support the goals of our community. It's been evident through the development of the Council Plan and in the day to day work of our organisation. There is a culture of care that parallels what we see in our broader community.

Council has set some ambitious goals in this Council Plan because it's important to strive and because we have some challenges that require a wholehearted commitment. We approach this work with confidence, however, knowing that, through this plan, we have a clear line of sight of where to focus our efforts.

In effect we are all custodians of Surf Coast Shire and together we can ensure it remains a beautiful, healthy, caring and prosperous place to call home.

Robyn Seymour
CEO Surf Coast Shire Council



About this Plan

The Council Plan sets out Council's strategic direction for the four years until 2024. It describes the goals we have for the term of the current Council and provides a road map for how we will achieve these goals.

The Council Plan incorporates a long term community vision for Surf Coast Shire. The vision was developed by a community panel which was convened to give guidance on community aspirations for the shire. The work of the community panel has been instrumental in the development of the Council Plan and other integrated documents.

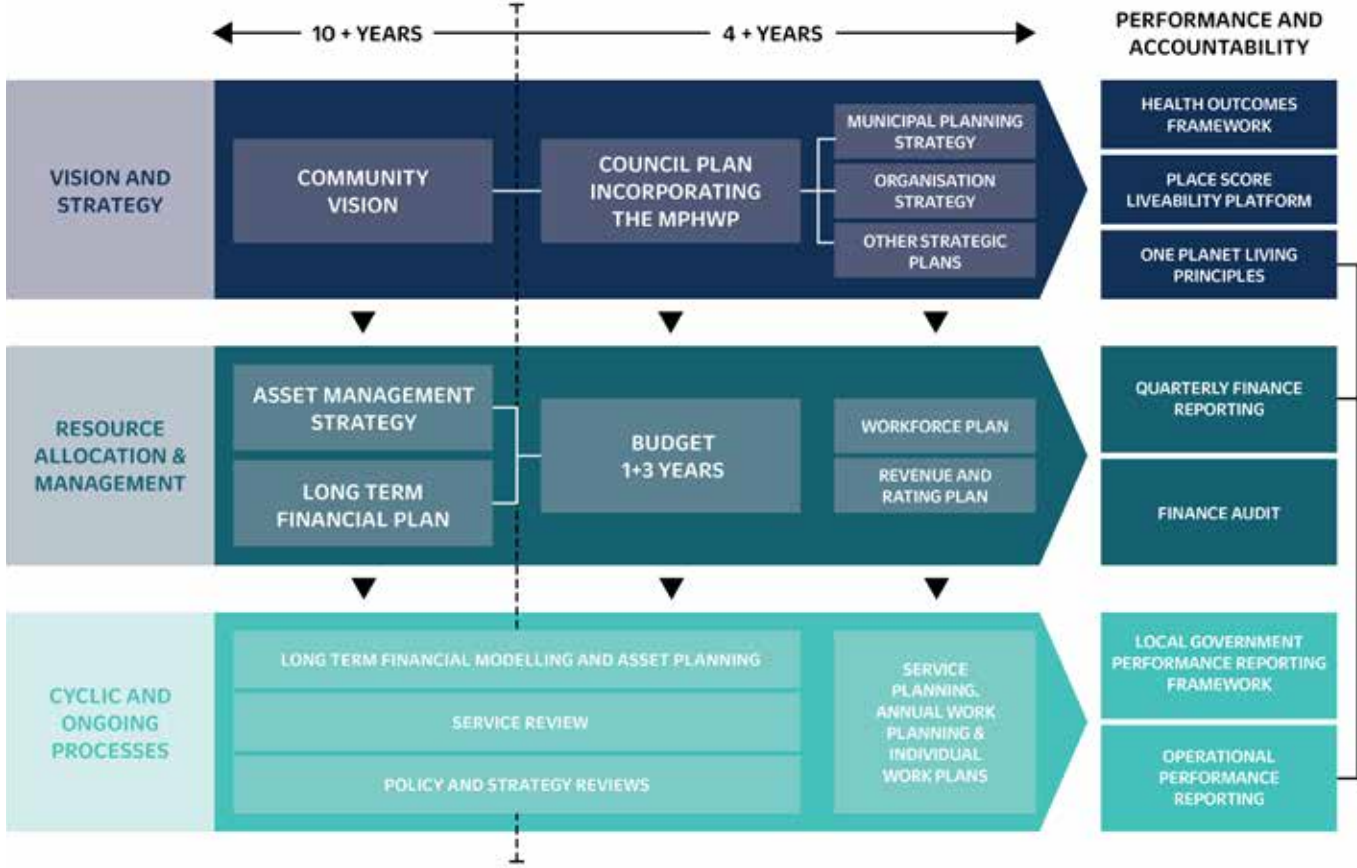
The four-year Council Plan incorporates our Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan which provides further detail on how we support community health and wellbeing goals. Councils are required under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

A separate 10-year Financial Plan and 10-year Asset Management Plan are companions to the Council Plan. These additional plans give specific guidance on our long term strategic approach to managing financial sustainability and our approach to managing and maintaining community assets.

An action plan will accompany the Council Plan, and be updated annually, to show the specific activities we will undertake to achieve the goals of the plan. We will report on progress throughout the life of the plan and will continuously review our actions to ensure our efforts remain focussed and effective.

Structure of the Plan

This diagram shows how the council Plan links to the Community Vision and its relationship to Council's other strategic documents.





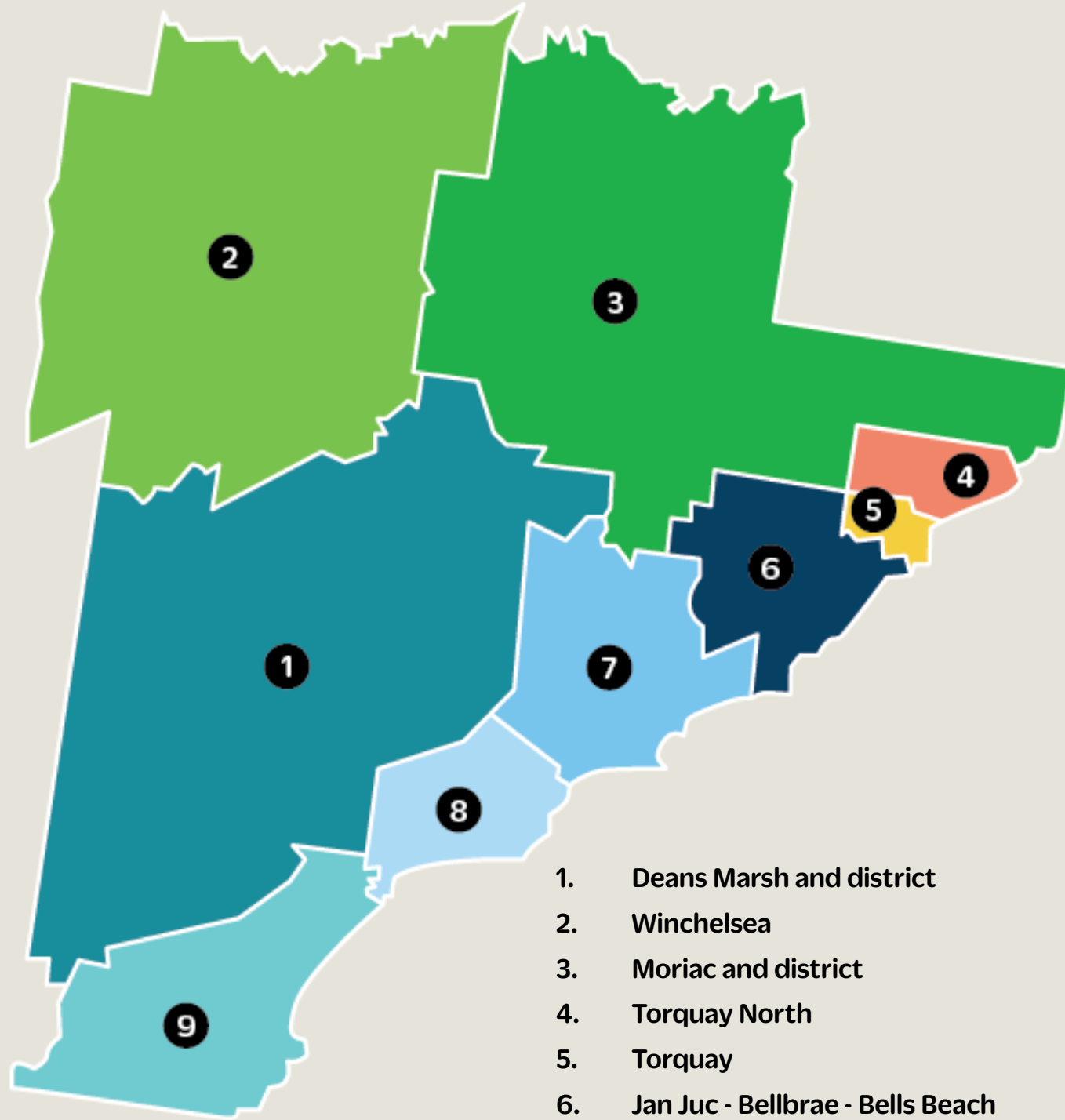
About Surf Coast Shire

The Surf Coast Shire is located in south-western Victoria, 120 kilometres from Melbourne and 21 kilometres south of Geelong.

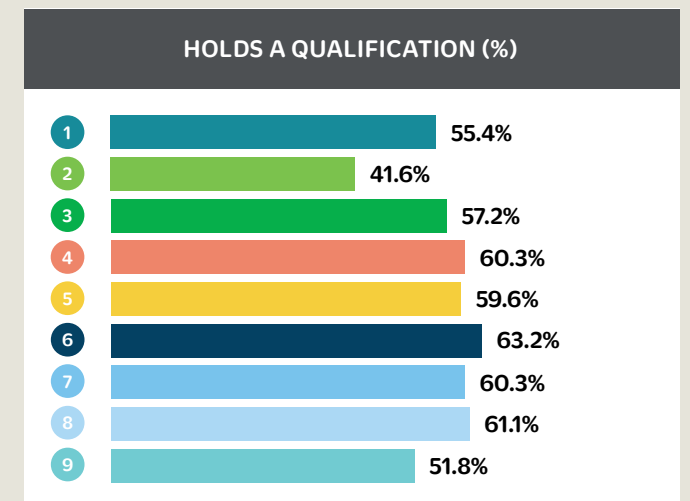
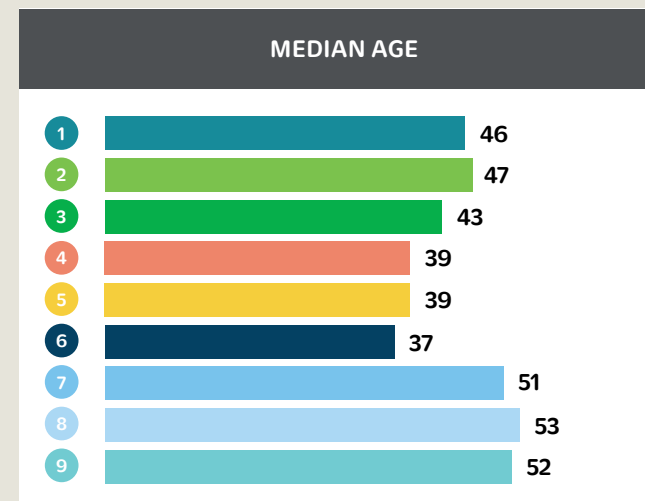
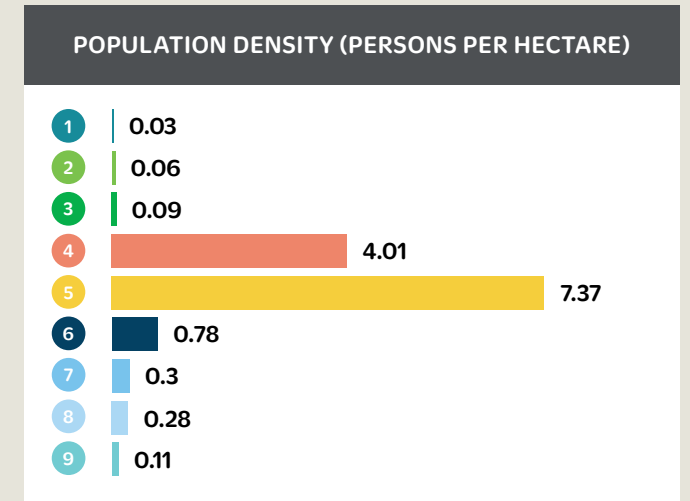
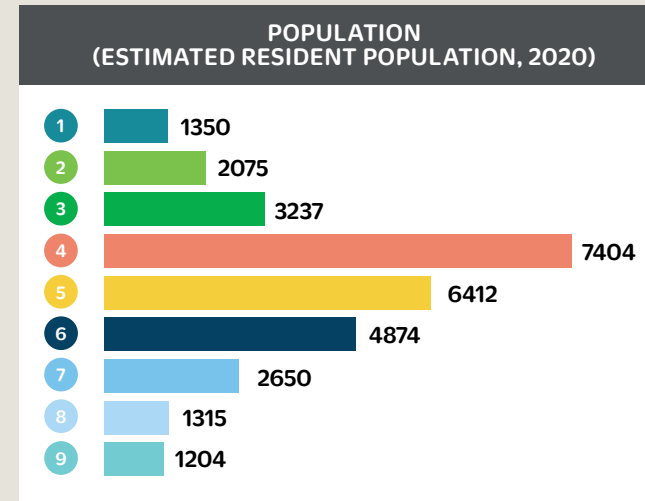
The landscape is a mix of coast, natural forest, urban settled areas and rural environments including land dedicated to agricultural production. The region's natural beauty and easy access make it a popular destination for tourists and day trippers. The Great Ocean Road is acknowledged as one of the nation's top destinations for international visitors and whilst COVID-19 has for now stopped international travel, domestic tourism remains a cornerstone of the regional economy. Other attractions include the Great Otway National Park and Bells Beach which is the best known of many outstanding surf breaks in the shire.

Surf Coast Shire comprises many individual townships, including Aireys Inlet, Anglesea, Bellbrae, Deans Marsh, Fairhaven Jan Juc, Lorne, Moriac, Torquay and Winchelsea. Each is a unique community with a sense of its own identity and a strong desire to protect what they cherish, including township character and the natural environment.





1. Deans Marsh and district
2. Winchelsea
3. Moriac and district
4. Torquay North
5. Torquay
6. Jan Juc - Bellbrae - Bells Beach
7. Anglesea
8. Aireys Inlet - Fairhaven
9. Lorne





Our Challenges

We have identified a number of long term challenges facing our shire and these have influenced the Council Plan and related strategic plans. Summaries of the challenges were available to people who completed our community surveys and to the members of the community panel to assist them in making their strategic recommendations.

The challenges are not exclusive to Council and the best response to them is likely to be a partnership with community, Council and other agencies. Our collective response to the challenges will determine the future liveability, sustainably and prosperity of our shire.

Housing affordability

A lack of affordable residential accommodation has emerged as a major problem in Surf Coast Shire and neighbouring municipalities. In May 2021 Surf Coast Shire Council declared a key worker accommodation crisis in recognition of how a lack of affordable accommodation was impacting on the economy and sustainability of local communities. House prices have soared with many towns now reporting median prices above \$1 million. For landlords short term holiday rentals are more appealing than long term rentals making it near impossible for workers to find rental properties in the town where their job is located. Most sectors of our economy are affected by the associated shortfall of staff.

Growth pressure

Surf Coast Shire's lifestyle and coastal and hinterland environments are enormously appealing. It is one of the most popular domestic travel destinations in Australia, and before the COVID lockdown, was Australia's number one international driving destination. Visitor numbers are compounded by growth in our permanent populations and those of neighbouring municipalities, which places additional pressure on local roads, parks and parking spaces. There is corresponding impact on beaches and other natural settings. With coast on one side and a national park on the other, vehicle access to much of the Surf Coast Shire is limited to just one route - the Great Ocean Road. Surf Coast Shire is part of a state level designated growth zone which mandates a specified number of allotments be available for residential development. Equally Council is limited in its revenue sources, compounding the challenge of how to fairly spread the cost of infrastructure necessary to support non-rate paying visitors.

Council income and spending

Council needs an income to fund the services and facilities it provides to the community. Surf Coast Shire Council relies on rates revenue for a greater proportion of its income compared to other councils. The Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates system sets a maximum limit for rate increases each year, which means even if Council wanted to it cannot increase rates beyond the limit set by the government. The increase is typically around the Consumer Price Index increase each year – currently about 1.5% to 2.0%. Sports clubs and community groups pay fees to use certain public facilities but these fees are not enough to cover the full cost of these facilities.

Long term modelling shows Surf Coast Shire financial status running into deficit based on current spending. Council is entering a period when a significant proportion of its public facilities, or assets, are becoming due for renewal or costly upgrades.

Reconciliation

Surf Coast Shire encompasses both Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar country. Australian Aboriginal culture is the oldest living culture in the world. Reconciliation with First Nations people is a fundamental and pressing need if we are to advance toward a fairer, more inclusive, society. The Native Title Act of 1993 and National Sorry Day are evidence of progress but the long history of injustice continues to impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Victorian Government has commenced a formal process to work towards reconciliation. Surf Coast Shire Council is seeking to build strong relationships with our Traditional Owners other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community. Our goal is to build a partnership that is respectful of their culture and traditions and supports their respective strategic goals.



Climate change

Climate change is an existential threat. Human activity, including burning of fossil fuels, has led to an increase in global temperatures. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts catastrophic effects if global temperatures increase by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Changes to weather patterns are occurring, species extinction is accelerating and heat related human deaths have increased. Reducing emissions will require systemic change in areas such as economics and trade, energy generation, food production and transport.

Local economy

Small permanent populations mean many local businesses rely on the tourist economy to sustain them. Tourists spend \$500 million in Surf Coast Shire each year. A strong summer season can be the difference between a local business surviving the off season or not. This applied before pandemic and is an even more acute challenge now. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on Surf Coast Shire compared to many other municipalities given how much of our economy is linked to tourism. Outside of peak tourism season our community relies on a sustainable local economy for daily essential such as food and fuel. In Surf Coast Shire there are distinct sub economies based on location and industry type. For businesses to thrive there needs to be a sufficient scale to maintain a enough large catchment. Communities function better when there are enough businesses to meet local needs. Local trading precincts create opportunities for social interaction and they lessen the reliance on car travel, for both customers and workers, with a subsequent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Community Engagement

The engagement activities for the Council Plan and other related strategic plans were delivered through a campaign titled **People Place Future**.



The aim was to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing our shire, encourage broad participation and seek diverse views.

The engagement methodology was designed to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and our own Surf Coast Shire Council Community Engagement Policy.

The engagement approach comprised three interactive phases:

1. PARTICIPATORY PHASE
2. DELIBERATIVE PHASE
3. REVIEW PHASE

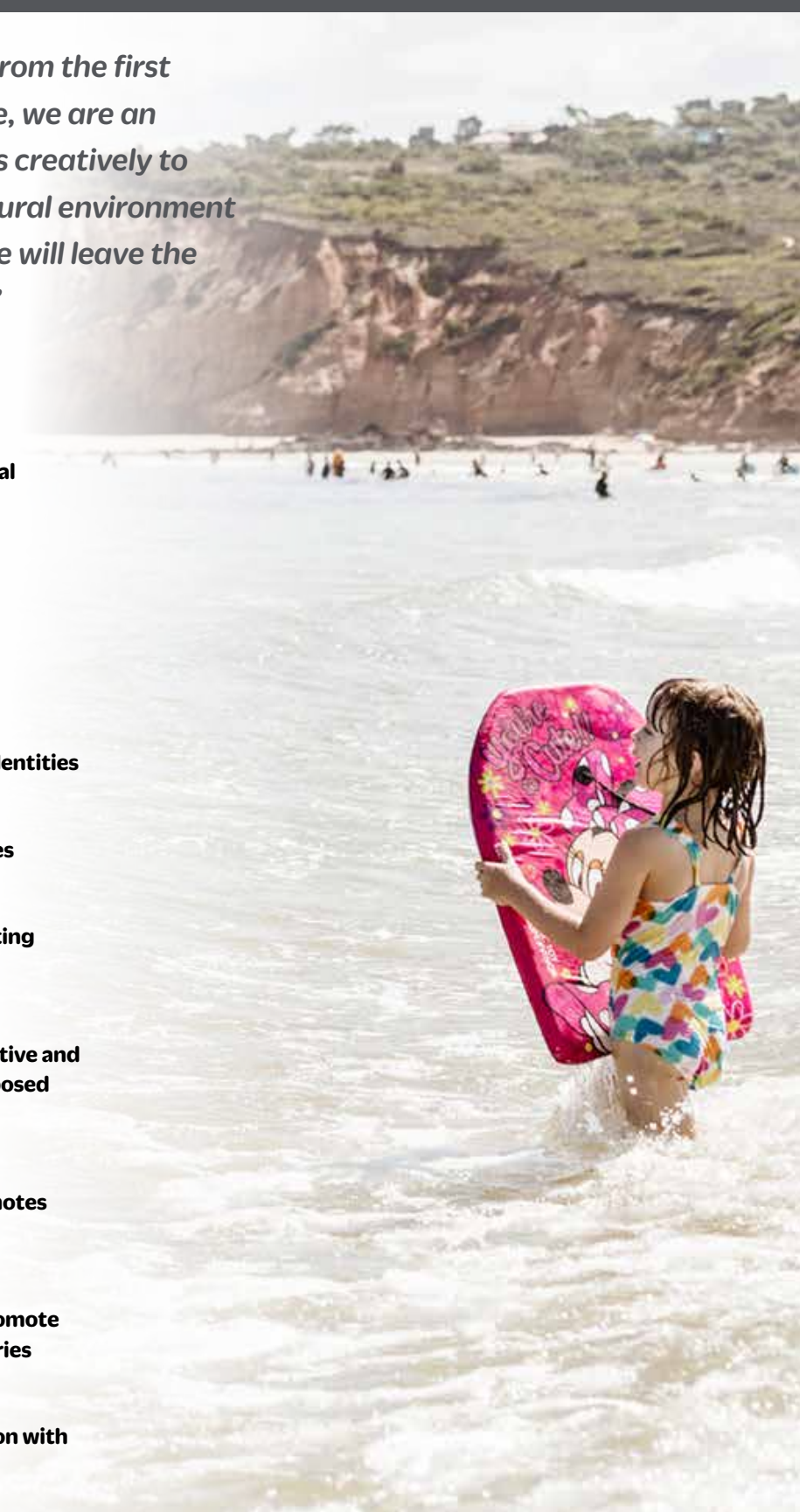




Community Vision

The Community Vision, as developed by the community panel, and adopted by Surf Coast Shire Council is:

“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.”



Participatory Phase January – March 2021

This phase sought broad community and stakeholder input, through surveys, online submissions, targeted contact with stakeholders, and face to face discussions at pop up stalls. Newspapers, direct mail, posters, flyers, social media and web content were used to promote this phase.

INFLUENCE AND COMMITMENT: Council committed to review and consider all input received during this phase and provided this information to the Community Panel for further analysis. Characteristics of this phase were that anyone could contribute and participants did not need to have reached a consensus with others.

OUTCOME: Close to 1200 responses were received through a combination of surveys, written submissions and conversations with stakeholder groups and at pop up events.

Deliberative Phase March – May 2021

The deliberative phase was the primary engagement activity of the People Place Future program. It comprised a deliberative panel, membership of which was based on random selection following an expression of interest process. The panel met between March and May, and through six independently facilitated workshops, developed a long term community vision and a set of principles and recommendations for Council.

Membership of the panel was weighted to represent the geographic spread of the shire population and the age and gender mix.

This process was designed to conform to the requirements of the new Local Government Act 2020, which mandates the use of deliberative engagement to inform the Council Plan and other strategic plans of Council.

INFLUENCE AND COMMITMENT: Council committed to adopting the community vision and principles to the greatest extent possible. Characteristics of the deliberative engagement phases were that participants were given time and detailed information to enable them to achieve a deep understanding of a topic. Decision making required a greater than majority consensus.

OUTCOME: 293 expressions of interest were received, with 35 recruited for the community panel.

Review Phase August – September 2021

Council invited community submissions on draft versions of the Council Plan and other documents prior to their endorsement.

This opportunity was widely promoted to community members, including those who had been involved in previous phases of the project.

INFLUENCE AND COMMITMENT: Council committed to reporting back on the decisions made, and the ways community input influenced the draft report. Feedback from the submission process was reviewed and considered prior to the final plan being adopted.



Principle 1
Protect, conserve and restore our natural environment



Principle 2
Planning for Growth



Principle 3
Sharing our Home with the World



Principle 4
Identify and Maintain our Community Identities



Principle 5
Equitable delivery of community services



Principle 6
Tackling Climate Change and Implementing Climate Resilient Strategies



Principle 7
Accountability through timely, consultative and transparent communication about proposed council decisions



Principle 8
Commitment to a community that promotes cultural and recreational activities



Principle 9
A place to nurture, acknowledge and promote innovation, the creative arts and industries



Principle 10
Respectful Engagement and Consultation with First Nations



How we built on the community panel report

The Council Plan contains seven themes which serve as pillars for a series of strategies. The themes and strategies can be traced back to the community panel report and have been informed by it.

The community panel made a series of recommendations on how each of its principles should be pursued. As with the principles themselves the recommendations have been considered by Council and have informed the Council Plan.

It should be noted many of the Community Panel Report's recommendations would more typically appear as actions in a conventional strategic hierarchy. Therefore whilst some panel recommendations can be recognised in Council Plan strategies others have been referred to the action planning process. Where there might be potential barriers to delivering on a recommendation, (cost or jurisdiction for example) Council has sought to interpret the overall intent of a recommendation and build a strategic aim from that.

The Community Panel Report is available as an appendix to the Council Plan.

COMMUNITY VISION:

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.

COMMUNITY PANEL PRINCIPLES

- 1 Protect, conserve and restore our natural environment
- 2 Planning for Growth
- 3 Sharing our Home with the World
- 4 Identify and Maintain our Community Identities
- 5 Equitable delivery of community services
- 6 Tackling Climate Change and Implementing Climate Resilient Strategies
- 7 Accountability through timely, consultative and transparent communication about proposed council decisions
- 8 Commitment to a community that promotes cultural and recreational activities
- 9 A place to nurture, acknowledge and promote innovation, the creative arts and industries
- 10 Respectful Engagement and Consultations with First Nations

COUNCIL PLAN THEMES

- Theme one: FIRST NATIONS RECONCILIATION
- Theme two: HEALTHY CONNECTED COMMUNITY
- Theme three: ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP
- Theme four: SUSTAINABLE GROWTH
- Theme five: A ROBUST AND DIVERSE ECONOMY
- Theme six: ARTS AND CREATIVITY
- Theme seven: ACCOUNTABLE AND VIABLE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIES

- Strategy 1** (2, 6, 7) Work with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community to achieve reconciliation
- Strategy 2** (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) Ensure Council decisions consider and respect Traditional Owner perspectives, culture and knowledge
- Strategy 3** (5, 6) Facilitate the provision of social infrastructure and open space to enable healthy lifestyles
- Strategy 4** (5, 6) Improve access to local services and programs that support people to be healthy and well
- Strategy 5** (3, 4) Make it easier for people to move around our towns and in nature without relying on cars
- Strategy 6** (6, 7) Enable communities to strengthen their social connections and participate in community life.
- Strategy 7** (2, 4) Protect significant habitats, landscapes and biodiversity
- Strategy 8** (2, 4, 5, 7) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit the impacts of climate change
- Strategy 9** (5, 7) Divert more material from the waste stream
- Strategy 10** (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7) Adapt to a changing climate
- Strategy 11** (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7) Protect heritage and township character
- Strategy 12** (2, 5) Improve access to affordable residential accommodation
- Strategy 13** (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) Support tourism and events that encourage people to stay longer and appreciate and care for this place
- Strategy 14** (2, 4, 6) Enable people to run successful local businesses that grow and create jobs in our changing economy
- Strategy 15** (2, 3, 4, 6, 7) Foster businesses that reflect local character and values including ethical, social and sustainable principles
- Strategy 16** (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7) Foster an environment where people with clever and creative ideas can make a difference in their communities
- Strategy 17** (1, 2, 4, 5) Increase support for creative industries and arts
- Strategy 18** (2, 3, 4, 5, 6) Establish a sustainable financial position
- Strategy 19** (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) Improve Council's credibility as a trusted decision maker through meaningful engagement

⓪ Indicates other related themes

Health and Wellbeing Plan



Health and Wellbeing Commitment

People's health and wellbeing are affected by how they live their daily lives and external factors such as access to employment and education, level of social connection, access to healthcare services and the physical environment. Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to creating environments that improve health outcomes for community members at every stage of their lives.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 mandates that local governments have a responsibility to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within their municipalities. Surf Coast Shire Council has chosen to integrate its health and wellbeing priorities within its Council Plan. We have done this because:

- It enables health and wellbeing to be embedded across Council priorities
- It reduces duplication of processes that might occur as part of the development of both plans
- It enables us to better align resources in the implementation of the plan across the four year cycle.

Council's role in community health and wellbeing

The World Health Organisation defines the social determinants of health as **"the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life"** (www.who.int.org).

The Social Model of Health identifies that there are many factors (social determinants) to building healthier communities, the social determinants are defined by the economic, environmental and social conditions that influences individual and community health outcomes.

Council addresses many, if not all social determinants, of health through:

- Leadership
- Advocacy
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Planning and built environment
- Service and program delivery
- Regulation
- Strategic planning and policy
- Education and promotion
- Resourcing





Health and Wellbeing Data Snapshot



GENERAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

53.3% employed full time (57% Vic)	3.1 average number of people per household (3.0 Vic)	58.3% formal qualifications (45% Vic)
64% own two or more cars (52% Vic)	0.6% Social Housing (3.2% Vic)	\$722 personal weekly income (\$644 Vic)



SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORKS

27.7% volunteering (19.2% Vic)	14.7% undertake 15 hours or more of unpaid work per week (11% Vic)	3.5% need daily help due to a disability (5.1% Vic)
21.5% increase in family violence incidence since 2019	23.5% experience rental stress (28.1% Vic)	Higher participation rate in kindergarten than state average



LIFESTYLE FACTORS

58.6% do not eat enough fruit and vegetables (51.7% Vic)	5.3% consume sugar sweetened drinks daily (10.1% Vic)	18.7% diagnosed with anxiety or depression (27.4% Vic)	9.1% experiencing psychological distress (15.4% Vic)	74.1% at risk of alcohol related harm (59.5% Vic)
59% of adults are pre- obese or obese (50.8% Vic)	52.3% meet physical activity guidelines (50.9% Vic)	17.7% currently smoke (16.7% Vic)	17.7% have two or more chronic disease (25.5% Vic)	39.5% excellent or very good dental health (37.2% Vic)

For more detailed health statistics see our Health and Wellbeing Data Profile at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/peopleplacefuture.

For more detailed community feedback regarding health please read the Health and Wellbeing lens on People Place Community Engagement Report at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/peopleplacefuture.

Determining our Health and Wellbeing priorities

The health and wellbeing focus areas, goals and strategies were determined alongside the development of the Council Plan itself.

Specific inputs that were considered to determine the health and wellbeing focus areas and goals are represented in the diagram below.





Health and Wellbeing focus areas

After analysing health data, community feedback, state and regional health plans and relevant legislation Council has identified five health and wellbeing focus areas.

The health and wellbeing focus areas the Council Plan themes and goals addresses are outlined by the table below.

 <p>Increase Healthy Eating and Active Living</p>	<p>Healthy eating and physical activity is integral to health and wellbeing. Regular physical activity has major benefits including reducing people's risk of chronic disease, it helps reduce social isolation, strengthens social connection and improves mental wellbeing (VicHealth Physical Activity Strategy. 2019 -2023). Eating healthy food reduces the risk of physical health problems like heart disease and diabetes and positively impacts on energy levels and mental health (Australian Department of Health, Head to Health).</p> <p>Surf Coast Shire has low rates of residents meeting daily fruit and vegetable consumption guidelines and just over half of adults meet recommended physical activity levels. Increasing physical activity is the top priority for the community identified in the community engagement survey. Healthy eating and physical activity are also priorities in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and for the G21 region.</p>
 <p>Prevent family violence and promote gender equity</p>	<p>Family violence is a serious, widespread, but preventable problem. In the year 2019 -2020 there was a 21.5 % increase in family violence incidences in Surf Coast Shire.</p> <p>All Victorian Councils are required to take action to reduce family violence. Surf Coast Shire Council will focus on responding to family violence and tackling the drivers of violence against women and girls by promoting and progressing gender equity across the shire (Change the Story, A National Framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and children). Preventing all forms of violence is also a priority in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and for the G21 region.</p>
 <p>Improve Mental Health and Social Connection</p>	<p>Each year, one in five Victorians will experience a mental health condition, with 45 per cent of Victorians experiencing that in a lifetime (Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019 -2023). 'Strong ties with family, friends and the community provide us with happiness, security, support and a sense of purpose. Being connected to others is important for our mental and physical wellbeing and can be a protective factor against anxiety and depression (Beyond Blue, Connections Matter, www.beyond.blue.org.au).</p> <p>Whilst the Surf Coast Shire does have lower proportions of adults experiencing anxiety or depression and psychological distress than the state average, and higher rates of volunteerism, this data was prior to the COVID19 pandemic and our community identified improving social connection and mental health as one of the top three health issues they would like Council to focus on in the People Place Future community survey. Improving Mental Wellbeing is also a priority in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023.</p>

 <p>Tackling the Impacts of Climate Change on Health</p>	<p>Climate Change has been described by The World Health Organisation as the defining issue for public health in the 21st century. The WHO outlines the health impacts of a changing climate are overwhelmingly negative, with climate change negatively affective key determinants of health including clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter (World Health Organization, Climate change and human health https://www.who.int). In 2019 Surf Coast Shire Council declared a climate emergency in recognition that climate change is a real and significant threat and urgent action is needed globally and locally.</p> <p>Tackling Climate Change and its impacts on health was the second highest health priority for the Surf Coast Shire community and is also a priority within the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023.</p>
 <p>Reduce harm from Alcohol and other drugs</p>	<p>Alcohol is one of the top 10 avoidable causes of disease and death in Victoria. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to a range of chronic diseases and serious health problems including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and a range of cancers (VicHealth, Alcohol harm prevention). Other health harms caused by excessive use of alcohol and other drugs include injury, crime, road fatalities and family violence.</p> <p>Adults across the Surf Coast Shire consume alcohol at levels that put them at significantly greater risk of alcohol related harm than the Victorian average. 74.1% of adults on the Surf Coast are classified as at life time risk of alcohol related harm as a result of consumption levels, this is the fifth highest level of all local government areas in Victoria. 59.2% of adults are at risk of short term harm as a result of the amount consumed in a single occasion, second highest of all local government areas in Victoria (Victorian Department of Health, Victorian Population Health Survey 2017).</p> <p>As the closest level of government to the community and as leaders, planners and policy makers, Council can prevent and minimize harm from alcohol and other drugs in our communities and this will be a focus for this plan.</p> <p>Reducing harmful alcohol and drug use is also a priority of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023.</p>

The Council Plan strategies that contribute to these focus areas are identified with a heart symbol throughout the plan.

Additionally, there are specific actions included in the annual action plan accompanying the Council Plan.

Putting the Health and Wellbeing plan into action

Focus areas are not mutually exclusive. Actions undertaken in one focus area can contribute to better health outcomes in other areas. For example 'taking actions to improve healthy eating and active living, address the health impacts of climate change and reduce tobacco-related harm are shown to improve mental wellbeing and reduce risk of developing mental illness' (Co-Benefits of health lifestyle for mental wellbeing , www.health.vic.gov.au)

We recognise we cannot improve the health and wellbeing of residents in isolation, and a whole of community approach is required. Council collaborated with partners to develop its action plan, so that we can collectively draw on our shared expertise and resources. This partnership also enables us to monitor and evaluate health outcomes across the shire over the life of the plan.

Partners include:

- Government agencies including the Victorian Department of Health, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and other local governments
- Health and community services including Barwon Health, Hesse Rural Health, and Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West
- Education and early years providers including primary schools and kindergartens

- Community organisations and groups including Community Houses and sporting clubs.

Council also actively participates in a number of health partnerships including G21 Healthy Eating and Active Living and G21 Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women. Council will seek to build new partnerships over the four years of the plan to address emerging issues, capitalise on funding opportunities and increase the impact of strategies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the Health and Wellbeing focus areas is not only a legislative requirement of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, but also is important in:

- understanding what is and isn't working
- exploring ways in which Council and partners can do things differently
- identifying the impact that investment of resources is having on community health and wellbeing
- creating opportunities to innovate and adapt to address changing environments in health and wellbeing.
- acknowledging and reporting achievements to community and partners

Alongside our partners, we will review and report on the health and wellbeing outcomes and actions annually.

Our Purpose and our Commitments

Surf Coast Shire Council has a defined purpose which guides our decision making. Supporting our purpose is an Organisation Direction statement that describes how our organisation works.

Council Purpose

To help our community and environment to thrive.

Organisation Direction

Our organisation will be:

An innovative and flexible leader,
And a constructive partner,
That values the strengths of others;
A place where people can do their best
And be proud of their achievements

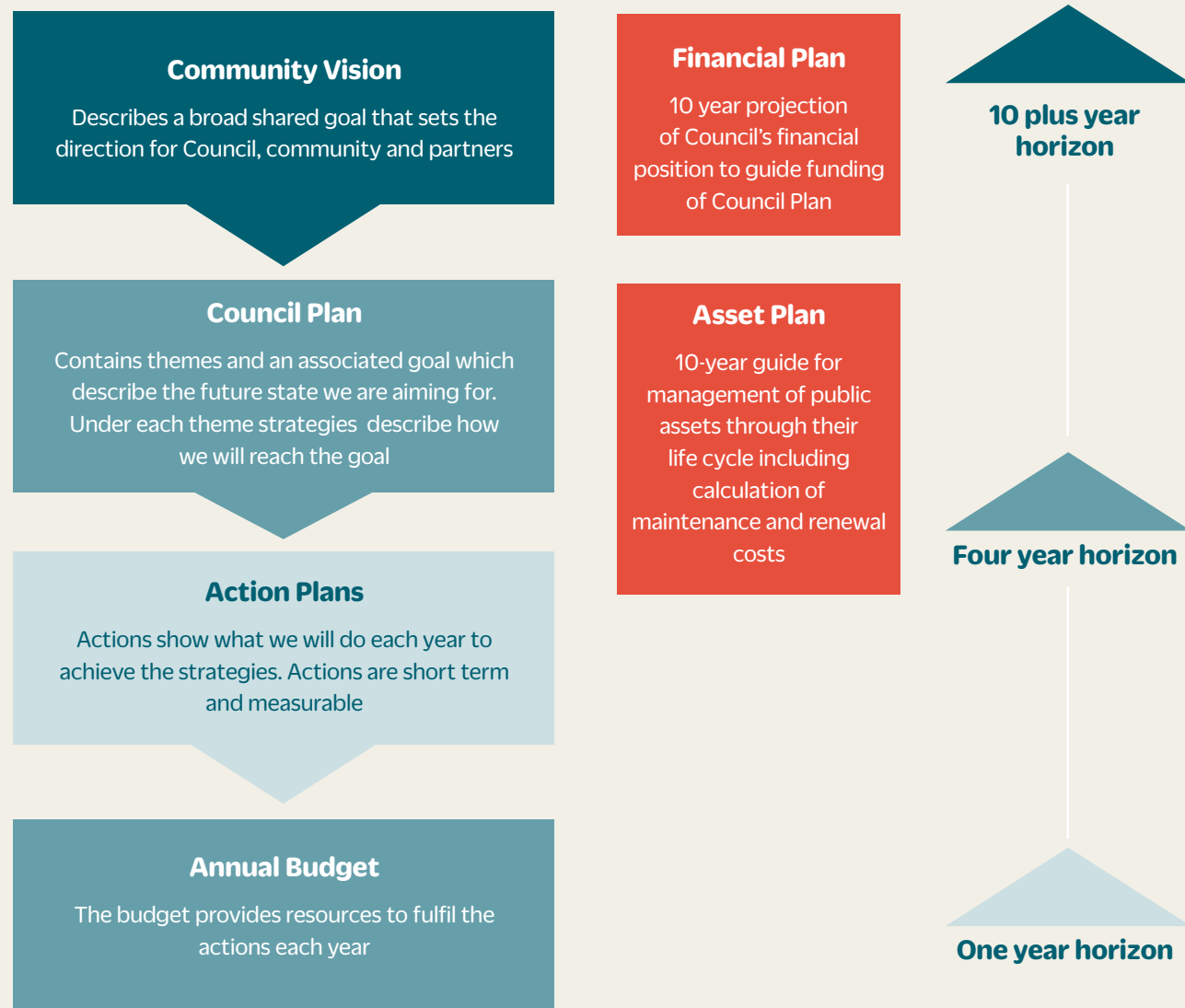


Commitments

Additionally, as we work through the strategies within this plan Council will operate according to a set of commitments.

Equity	We commit to ensuring all community members are treated fairly and equitably	Evidence based	We commit to drawing on evidence when we make decisions and determine a course of action.
Partnership	We commit to working collaboratively with community and partner organisations to ensure we are working for the collective good, we are achieving the highest impact and the people best placed to respond are doing so.	Collaboration	We commit to providing people with the opportunity to participate in community life and to have a say on matters of significance in their lives.
Place based	We commit to addressing needs and priorities according to an understanding of the uniqueness of each place.	Accountability	We commit to being open and fair in the way we operate and to keep people informed in a timely and easy to understand way.

This chart shows how Council's strategic documents support the community vision and what the purpose is of each document. It also shows where they fit on a one to ten-year plus timeline.



Council Plan





THEME ONE: First Nations Reconciliation



Goal:

Reconciliation with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community through respectful engagement, acknowledgement and collaboration

STRATEGY 1: WORK WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND OTHER ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY TO ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

There is broad recognition and respect for the Wadawurrung people and the Gadubanud and Gulidjan peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the Surf Coast Shire is now situated.

Rationale

Reconciliation with First Nations people is a fundamental and pressing need if we are to advance toward a fairer, more inclusive, society. The Native Title Act of 1993 and National Sorry Day are evidence of progress but the long history of injustice continues to impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Victorian Government has commenced a formal process to work towards reconciliation. At Local Government level there is much we can do to support this goal. Surf Coast Shire sits within two First Nation countries – Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar. Our aim is to build strong relationships with Traditional Owners that are respectful of their culture and support their respective strategic goals. Our ultimate goal is to achieve reconciliation.

STRATEGY 2: ENSURE COUNCIL DECISIONS CONSIDER AND RESPECT TRADITIONAL OWNER PERSPECTIVES, CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

A greater understanding of Traditional Owner culture and perspective is reflected in Council business and decision making.

Rationale

Through this strategy Council is seeking to broaden its understanding of Traditional Owners' perspectives and to use this knowledge to make better decisions. This will apply widely across Council policy making and operations. We are aware Country has a significance of meaning to Indigenous Australians that requires the utmost respect and consideration. We are also mindful of the role Traditional Owners have in stewardship of the land and so we will seek to understand and learn from this knowledge.

LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

- Principle 10: Respectful Engagement and Consultations with First Nations
- Principle 4: Identify and Maintain our Community Identities
- Principle 7: Accountability through timely, consultative and transparent communication about proposed council decisions
- Principle 8: Commitment to a community that promotes cultural and recreational activities



THEME TWO: A Healthy Connected Community



Goal:
To foster a thriving, connected, healthy community

STRATEGY 3: FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPEN SPACE TO ENABLE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

The Surf Coast community has access to a sustainable network of facilities and open spaces, both structured and unstructured, that meets our needs now and as our community changes

Rationale

A growing body of research recognises the influence that social infrastructure and open spaces have on our physical, mental and social health and the important role it plays in reducing health inequities. Where the pandemic has exacerbated health inequities and confined us to our homes, we need to social infrastructure to help us re-establish our civic habitats. Social infrastructure and open space relates to both the formal and informal places and spaces of a communal, human or social nature that is required, by the different areas of the community, and progressively as a community grows. Council will invest in coordinated planning and delivery of a network of fit-for-purpose facilities and open spaces that are accessible and inclusive of different users, close to work and school, shops and services and connected through pathways and public transport.

STRATEGY 4: IMPROVE ACCESS TO LOCAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT PEOPLE TO BE HEALTHY AND WELL



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Community members have a greater awareness of supports available locally and increase in community members participating in and accessing new and existing services and programs.

Rationale

Health equity research indicates access to health and social services such as GPs, allied health, dental health, mental health, housing and homelessness, family violence and alcohol and drug services support proactive help-seeking lessening the ripple effects caused when issues reach crisis point.

Participation in community groups, sporting clubs, social, learning, creative and recreational activities, neighbourhood networks, etc. knit us into our communities so that we're all knots in the safety net. Social distancing requirements has made it more difficult to be in the company of those who can tell at a glance that we're doing it tough. Health data shows that more people are reaching crisis point. In the Surf Coast Shire we've seen an increase in the number of family violence incidences, harmful alcohol consumption and need for mental health services.

By ensuring access to health services and community programs we can re-establish proactive supports and help-seeking avenues.

STRATEGY 5: MAKE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO MOVE AROUND OUR TOWNS AND IN NATURE WITHOUT RELYING ON CARS



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Greater use of active and public transport as a result of Council and partner programs and initiatives.

Rationale

Being active in nature delivers well documented health and wellbeing benefits ranging from improved physical fitness to a positive impact on stress and anxiety levels. These benefits extend to active transport which is when we travel by foot or bike. Active transport also means less cars on the road and a corresponding environmental benefit given vehicles are one of the largest contributors of greenhouse emissions in our shire. Traffic and parking congestion is reduced. There's a personal cost saving too. Through this strategy we will enable more people to travel to and around our towns, as well as natural attractions, such as trail heads and surf breaks, without relying on private vehicles. We will advocate to and partner with public transport providers to improve quality, connectivity and reach of current services.

STRATEGY 6: ENABLE COMMUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THEIR SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY LIFE.



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Expanded capacity of community to provide social connection programs and initiatives to increase people's participation

Rationale

Evidence makes it clear people live their best lives when they are connected to others and have purpose. Social isolation and loneliness is considered a significant health and wellbeing issue that can effect physical and mental health. There are number of factors that have contributed to the increase in social isolation and loneliness in recent years, including changes to the way we work, live, how we age, social media and life events such the COVID 19 pandemic. Our community identified improving 'Social Connection' as the number three health and wellbeing priority for Council to focus on in the next four years, Council has a role to play in supporting community to feel connected and can do this through advocacy, planning and delivering programs and services that build community capacity and knowledge and encourage community to connect with each other We will work to remove barriers to participation in community life. A focus will be empowering people and building on existing strengths within the community, including the many benefits derived when people from different generations share experiences.

LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

- Principle 1: Protect, conserve and restore our natural environment
- Principle 4: Identify and Maintain our Community Identities
- Principle 5: Equitable delivery of community services
- Principle 8: Commitment to a community that promotes cultural and recreational activities





THEME THREE: Environmental Leadership



Goal:

Protect our environment and help our community to thrive through environmental leadership

STRATEGY 7: PROTECT SIGNIFICANT HABITATS, LANDSCAPES AND BIODIVERSITY



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Improved understanding and protection of biodiversity, local ecosystems, landscapes and natural features.

Rationale

Our natural landscapes are prized by our communities. Landscapes contribute to our sense of place and our wellbeing and they are important habitat for native flora and fauna. Habitat is critical for the protection of biodiversity which is the key to a healthy and sustainable eco-system. An intact eco system can reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere thereby mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand species loss has a cascading effect that can lead to unforeseen and catastrophic consequences. Through this strategy we will protect landscapes and habitats of significance both for their environmental and aesthetic value. Underpinning this aim is the protection of local biodiversity.

STRATEGY 8: REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS TO LIMIT THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Council's residual greenhouse gas emissions are reduced or offset to achieve net zero emissions and households and businesses have taken their own steps to become more sustainable.

Rationale

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts catastrophic effects if global temperatures increase by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is essential if we are to decrease the rate at which temperatures are rising. It's an urgent and major risk. Council will aim to reduce its total emissions and where necessary offset residual emissions to become a carbon neutral organisation. It's an important step in its own right and we hope will inspire other organisations to take similar action.

STRATEGY 9: DIVERT MORE MATERIAL FROM THE WASTE STREAM



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Our shire generates less waste through reduced consumption, and increased reuse and recycling initiatives

Rationale

Diverting material from the waste stream results in major environmental benefits, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions and less accumulation of toxins in the soil. There is a financial cost as every tonne of material is subject to EPA landfill levies which have historically increased as a deliberate measure to encourage more recycling. Additionally, there are cost and environmental benefits if we can maximise the life of the Anglesea landfill. We will build on recent initiatives including the introduction of the fourth kerbside bin for glass recycling and the Food Organics Garden Organics kerbside collection to further reduce the volume of material buried in landfill. Our goal is to work towards zero recoverable waste going to landfill in line with the concept of a circular economy, where materials continue to be reused rather than becoming waste.

STRATEGY 10: ADAPT TO A CHANGING CLIMATE



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

We are better placed to manage the impacts of climate change on our community places, spaces, and services.

Rationale

Climate change is an existential threat. Human activity, including burning of fossil fuels, has led to an increase in global temperatures. Changes to weather patterns are occurring, species extinction is accelerating and heat related human deaths have increased. The impact of climate change has emerged as a significant mental health concern for our population. We have a clearer understanding of the impact on health and wellbeing and we have a legislative requirement to consider its impact. Public Health and Wellbeing Act and Climate Change Act. The impact at a local level will include extreme weather, erosion, flooding and heightened bushfire risk. Council will seek to understand the implications of a changing climate on its operations and adapt our work accordingly. We will also use this knowledge to support our community to adapt. Additionally, we will support emergency services organisations in the prevention and management of bushfires and other climate related events.

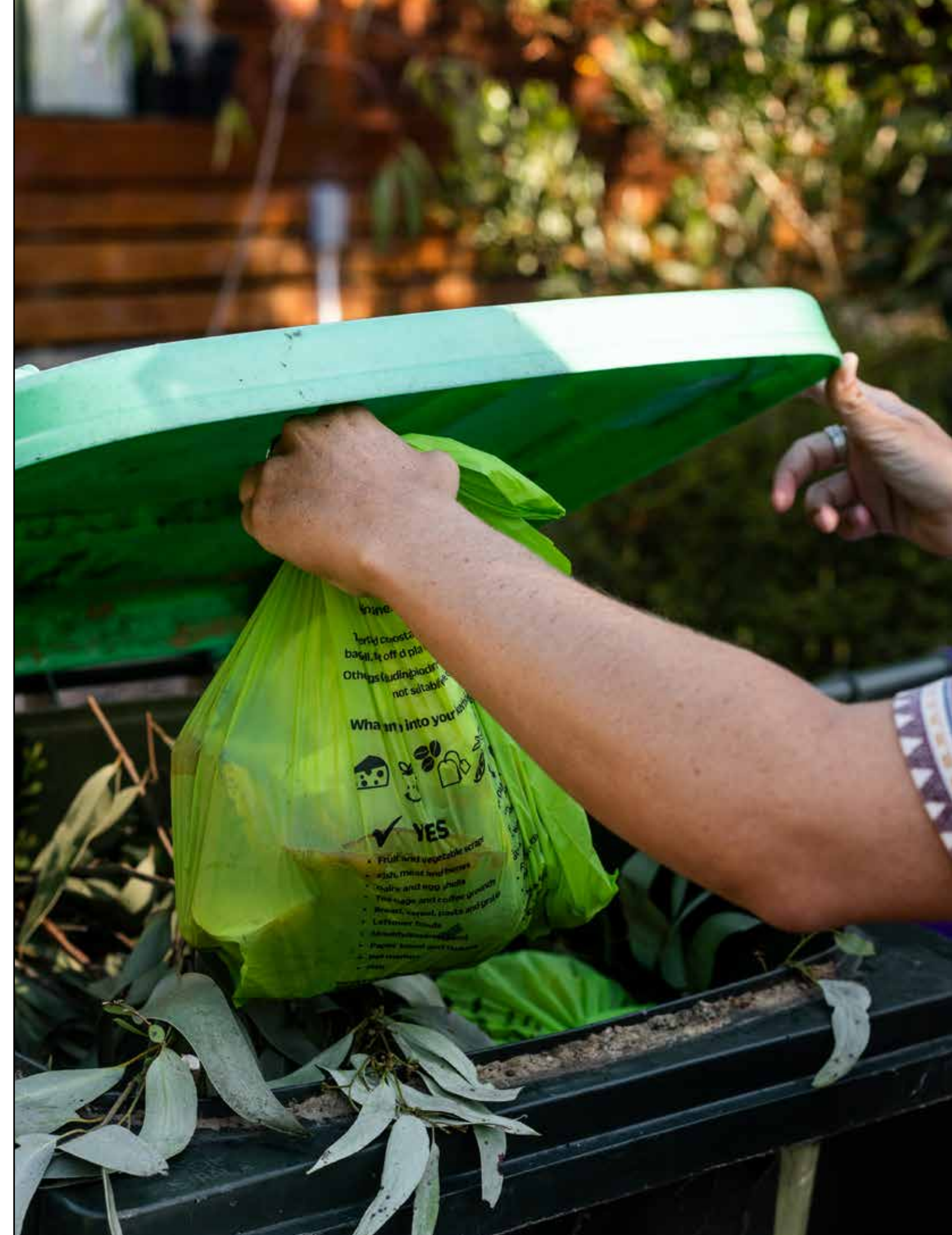
LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

Principle 1: Protect, conserve and restore our natural environment

Principle 2: Planning for Growth

Principle 6: Tackling Climate Change and Implementing Climate Resilient Strategies





THEME FOUR: Sustainable Growth



LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

- Principle 1: Protect, conserve and restore our natural environment

- Principle 2: Planning for Growth

- Principle 3: Sharing our Home with the World

- Principle 4: Identify and Maintain our Community Identities

Goal:

Growth is not at the expense of environmental values or the unique heritage and character of our townships

STRATEGY 11: PROTECT HERITAGE AND TOWNSHIP CHARACTER

OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Sense of the uniqueness of towns and neighbourhoods - their natural elements and character - is strengthened.

Rationale

Surf Coast Shire contains many separate townships. Each has its own identity comprised of physical characteristics, such as building style and landscape, and of the values, lifestyle and history of the people who live there. This strategy recognises how important heritage and township character is to our communities. As visitor and permanent population numbers rise residents are increasingly concerned about the impact on their way of life and the look and feel of their townships. We will identify the qualities that contribute to the character of our towns and seek to protect them.

STRATEGY 12: IMPROVE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

People have access to more affordable and sustainable residential accommodation options

Rationale

Median house prices in some Surf Coast Shire towns have surpassed \$1 million. Finding affordable accommodation is becoming an acute problem for younger and older age groups. Also affected are people who work in education, childcare, health, emergency services, retail and hospitality. Local businesses are in jeopardy because potential workers cannot find somewhere nearby to live. In 2020 real estate agents reported there were zero vacancies for rental properties in Surf Coast Shire towns. This strategy recognises the significant economic and social impacts of a lack of affordable housing and seeks to work with community and business on creative solutions.

STRATEGY 13: SUPPORT TOURISM AND EVENTS THAT ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO STAY LONGER AND APPRECIATE AND CARE FOR THIS PLACE

OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Visitors stay longer in the off season to better utilise our capacity and they demonstrate respect for our environment

Rationale

Small permanent populations mean many local businesses rely on the tourist economy. Tourists spend \$500 million in Surf Coast Shire each year and a strong summer season can be the difference between a local business surviving the off season or not. At the same time not all visitation is equal. So called slow tourism, where visitors linger and enjoy experiences over time, is preferable to rushed point-to-point visits that can create congestion yet return little income to local traders. Through activities such as building the off peak events program and supporting compatible tourism businesses we will encourage slow and purposeful visits that enhance rather detract from local amenity.



THEME FIVE: Robust and Diverse Economy



Goal:

Our economy is sustainable and supports a diversity of local enterprises and people

STRATEGY 14: ENABLE PEOPLE TO RUN SUCCESSFUL LOCAL BUSINESSES THAT GROW AND CREATE JOBS IN OUR CHANGING ECONOMY



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Businesses are emerging locally and succeeding, contributing to job creation and enabling more residents to work closer to home

Rationale

Our business community is a key part of how we experience life in Surf Coast Shire. We want the necessities, such as food and fuel and we want the extras that add value and meaning such as a barista coffee or a custom made surfboard. A thriving local economy also means more employment can remain local providing job opportunities that reduce the need for commuter travel and enable young people to stay living locally. A successful local business is part of an eco-system that relies on a critical mass of complementary businesses that keeps us shopping locally. In Surf Coast Shire there are distinct sub economies based on location and clusters based on growth in specific industry sectors. This strategy recognises the role local businesses play in creating sustainable local economies and the benefits that derive from them. We will provide advice and streamlined processes to enable local business to start up and grow.

STRATEGY 15: FOSTER BUSINESSES THAT REFLECT LOCAL CHARACTER AND VALUES INCLUDING ETHICAL, SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

More businesses are in a better position to take steps to operate according to social, ethical and sustainable principles.

Rationale

This strategy recognises the role local business plays in adding to the amenity and identity of our communities. It is based on the understanding that business can and does reflect a community's shared values. Local enterprises are leading the way in environmental sustainability and ethical manufacture for example. We will continue a facilitation role to encourage these kinds of enterprises with a view to growing a local economy that supports our community and is in turn supported by that community.

LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

Principle 2: Planning for Growth

Principle 3: Sharing our Home with the World

Principle 9: A place to nurture, acknowledge and promote innovation, the creative arts and industries



THEME SIX: Arts and Creativity



Goal:
Acknowledge the value of arts and creativity and nurture their growth

STRATEGY 16: FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE WITH CLEVER AND CREATIVE IDEAS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

More people access capacity building supports and resources to develop or scale-up creative ideas that will make a difference in their community

Rationale

Great ideas can emerge anytime and from any quarter. Advances in technology provide opportunities for innovation without high capital costs. People are opting more often to balance lifestyle and work leading to new ways of doing things and a desire to make a difference in their community. Through this strategy Council is seeking to encourage community innovation that will improve local lives and tackle the big issues facing our shire. This strategy is aligned to the Arts and Creativity theme but in practice may manifest itself across any of our Council Plan themes.

STRATEGY 17: INCREASE SUPPORT FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND ARTS



OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Greater investment into the creative sector and more collaboration between businesses, and cultural and creative practitioners.

Rationale

Surf Coast Shire is recognised as having one of the highest concentrations of creative jobs in regional Australia. It's an important and growing part of our local economy and we will seek to grow it further. There are opportunities to build creative clusters that respond to emerging industry sectors. There is also great potential to position Surf Coast Shire as a destination for arts and culture based tourism. This strategy also recognises the value of arts and culture to our wellbeing and sense of identity. The arts bring joy, provide meaning and bring us together as a community. Our aim is to nurture arts and culture and create more opportunities for its expression. We will do this through our own projects and by facilitating community efforts.

LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

- Principle 4: Identify and Maintain our Community Identities
- Principle 8: Commitment to a community that promotes cultural and recreational activities
- Principle 9: A place to nurture, acknowledge and promote innovation, the creative arts and industries
- Principle 10: Respectful Engagement and Consultations with First Nations



THEME SEVEN: Accountable and Viable Council



Goal:

Council has financial capacity to deliver services now and into the future and decision making is informed by community views.

STRATEGY 18 ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL POSITION

OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Council can fund the delivery of services that are most important for the community.

Rationale

Council faces annual deficits if it maintains the current balance of spending and income. We rely on rates revenue for a greater proportion of our income compared to other Councils. The Victorian Government's Fair Go rates system sets a maximum limit for rate increases which means even if Council wanted to it cannot increase rates beyond the limit set by the government. We need to find a way to reduce spending, increase income, or both in the face of high community expectations for services and facilities. Central to this is to look at when it is appropriate to subsidise the cost of services and facilities and when we should seek to recover costs. We also need to explore how many assets Council can afford to provide in the future, including where they should be located, and how the community can access and share these assets in an effective way.

STRATEGY 19 IMPROVE COUNCIL'S CREDIBILITY AS A TRUSTED DECISION MAKER THROUGH MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

OUTCOME (In four years we'll see)

Community members have increased confidence in Council as a trusted governor, financial manager and advocate and feel their input contributes to strategic decision-making.

Rationale

The principle behind this strategy is that members of our community should have the ability to influence decisions that affect them. Community engagement was a focus area of the new Local Government Act 2020 which mandated more comprehensive, or deliberative, engagement be used to inform Council's key strategic work including this Council Plan. We will build on this foundation. Through well planned engagement we will provide opportunities for people to explore issues more fully and provide the considered feedback that deliberative methods enable.

LINKS TO COMMUNITY VISION

Of the 10 Principles developed by the community panel this theme responds most directly to the following principles:

Principle 7: Accountability through timely, consultative and transparent communication about proposed council decisions

Other Reading

The Council Plan is part of a suite of strategic plans. Whilst the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan is embedded within the Council Plan itself there are two companion documents that sit alongside the Council Plan.

Financial Plan 2021-2031

This plan provides a long term projection of Council's financial position to guide how the actions in the Council Plan can be funded. It contains a series of principals that guide strategic planning and financial management. There is also a series of actions which detail specific measures to achieve the funding requirements of the Council Plan

Asset Plan 2021–2031

This plan guides the management of public assets throughout their life cycle. This plan informs the financial plan by identifying the amount of funding required to maintain, renew and upgrade assets. It calculates this according to defined service levels for each type of asset.

Community Engagement Findings Report

This document provides in-depth details of the results of the People Place Future community engagement program.

People Place Future Community Panel Report

This is the report prepared by the community panel that was convened for the deliberative engagement phase of the People Place Future project. The report contains the community vision and a set of principles and recommendations. It was used by Council as the framework for the Council Pan and other strategic documents.

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