SAFETY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY STRATEGY
2016-2017 to 2021-2022
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Mayor’s message

Wodonga Council has a strong commitment to improving safety, inclusion and equity to enhance the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

As part of this, the council will continue to be a leader in the prevention of violence against women and children. The Premier of Victoria has declared that family violence is “the most urgent law and order emergency occurring in our state and the most unspeakable crime unfolding across our nation”. This strategy, in part, responds to this unspeakable crime.

With this in mind, I am proud to present Wodonga’s No One Left Behind: Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2016-2017 to 2021-2022.

Wodonga is a vibrant, strong and dynamic community that has enjoyed significant growth in the past 25 years. Despite this, there are high levels of disadvantage and vulnerability experienced by some of our people. Many people within Wodonga experience social, economic and physical barriers that limit their ability to feel safe, fully included and connected with the community.

The council and the Wodonga community recognise the importance of leaving no one behind. Through research and consultation with our community, the council has identified four priorities for action to achieve this: prevention of violence against women, reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs, reducing homelessness and reducing barriers to access and inclusion for people with a disability.

As a leader in the community, Wodonga Council plays a key role in ensuring our people are safe and included. However, we cannot do this alone. Together, we all have a role in building a community that is safe, inclusive and equitable for all.

Cr Anna Speedie
Wodonga Mayor
Executive summary

Wodonga Council has a long-standing commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and equitable city where residents have the resources and opportunities to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. The community echoed this commitment in the revised Community Vision 2033, with a strong focus on leaving no one behind in Wodonga as the city grows.

Wodonga is experiencing growth, prosperity and opportunity. Many people share the benefits the city has to offer and experience good health and wellbeing. Despite this, there is considerable disadvantage and vulnerability across the community. Community members are not always safe. Some struggle to find a place to call home. Others are not included in all aspects of community life and do not have the same access to resources.

In line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Wodonga Council believes that everyone living, working or visiting the city has an equal right to good health and safety, to be socially included and to have equitable access to opportunities.

It is with this in mind that Wodonga Council has developed the Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2016-2017 to 2021-2022 that reaffirms strong commitment to working towards a safer, inclusive and equitable community.

The strategy aligns with the next Council Plan cycle, will form part of the council’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and replaces the both the Community Safety Strategy and Disability Action Plan.
Vision
To leave no one behind as the city grows.

Goals
To create a community that is safe, inclusive and equitable for all residents and visitors, where everyone has the right to:

- Feel safe and be free from incidents of injury and crime;
- Participate in all aspects of community life;
- Move easily through the city;
- Feel accepted and respected; and,
- Be supported to achieve their potential.

Priorities

Preventing violence against women and children

Reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs

Reducing homelessness

Reducing barriers to access and inclusion for people with a disability

The council acknowledges that these priorities are not mutually exclusive. Action in one priority will inevitably affect another. For example, minimising the impacts of alcohol and drug related harm on the community would also reduce levels of family violence given that alcohol is a contributing factor in approximately 50 per cent of incidents. This demonstrates the complex interrelated nature of the priorities the council is trying to address.

Addressing these priorities will take a whole of community approach. The council will involve stakeholders from government, business, education and others in the community to take a collective approach, where ownership of the priorities are shared and local actions are co-ordinated.
How was the strategy developed?

To develop the strategy and identify priority areas, a comprehensive and in-depth process was undertaken that considered:

1. What local issues most impacted on safety, inclusion and equity in Wodonga;
2. What issues were important to the community;
3. What local data revealed about the issues;
4. The council’s role and ability in addressing these issues; and,
5. A strong evidence base to inform the strategies.

Review
- Reviewed the outcomes and achievements of previous work addressed by this strategy including:
  - Community Safety Strategic Plan 2009-2012;
  - Access for All Strategy 2011; and,

Data
- Compilation of multiple local, state and national data sets.
- Development of factsheets/profiles for priority areas.

Context
- Reviewed international, national and state government policy and strategy documents.
  - Reviewed the council’s related strategies and plans.
  - Research into best practice.

Consultation
- Interviews with internal business units, key stakeholders including service providers, government representatives and community members.
- Reviewed the data from community engagement activities undertaken by Wodonga Council over the past three years.

Analysis
- Analysis of contextual, data and consultation insights.
How will the strategy work?

Collective action

“We believe that there is no other way society will achieve large-scale progress against the urgent and complex problems of our time, unless a collective impact approach becomes the accepted way of doing business.”

John Kania and Mark Kramer 2012

This strategy draws on collective impact to improving safety, inclusion and equity outcomes in the community. This approach is being implemented internationally to tackle deeply entrenched social problems.

The overarching goal of the collective impact approach is to ensure successful collaboration between government (Federal, State and Local), business, service sector, community organisations, philanthropic organisations and citizens in order to achieve lasting and positive change.

A collective impact approach is successfully implemented if the following elements are adopted:

- A shared understanding of the problem;
- An agreed goal;
- Continuous communication;
- Consistent outcomes are being measured and collected; and,
- Actions are aligned towards the agreed goal.

Research indicates that the best way to address complex issues and improve outcomes is through place-based interventions where the local community, local knowledge and local resources all contribute to addressing the problem through co-ordination and mutually reinforcing strategies.

Where priorities align, the council will seek to work cross-border to co-ordinate and strengthen local efforts for greater collective action.
Council’s role

Local government is in a unique position to play a key leadership role in creating change through coordinating action at the local level. As a key influencer, the council:

- Understands the local context;
- Has access to a range of local networks; and,
- Works closely with other levels of government and the community.

The council has drawn on the Cities for Health and Safe Communities framework when identifying local government’s mechanisms and opportunities for action.

These mechanisms are unique to local government, therefore the council has an obligation to explore and act on these mechanisms to improve outcomes for its people.
**Leadership and advocacy**
The council has strong partnerships with community organisations, businesses, residents and other stakeholders at the local level. Therefore, as a leader and advocate, the council is well placed to create shared understanding and whole of community responses to local issues. The council has demonstrated leadership and advocacy through public statements about gender inequity in the media and lobbying to the Victorian Minister for Women for local resource to prevent violence against women.

**Community engagement**
One of the council’s greatest assets is its capacity to bring the community together to address issues of concern. The council works closely with the community and other key partners to address issues that affect its people. This is achieved by building community capacity through increasing understanding and awareness of key social and health issues and co-ordinating local collective action. For example, the council hosting forums, running campaigns and supporting programs.

**Workforce and organisational development**
The council has a duty to look internally to identify how the organisation’s practice can be improved when addressing equity, inclusion and safety. This includes developing an organisational gender equity strategy, promoting women in leadership and ensuring communications are inclusive for all and to prioritise the safety of staff.

**Planning and design**
The council’s strategic and statutory planning and design role ensures it designs and plans the city to meet the vision and needs of all its people. The council can strongly influence the way community spaces are designed and incorporate principles of safety, inclusion and equity to ensure built environment is accessible for all. For example, the council ensures that footpaths and road crossings are accessible for people with a disability, or that open spaces have adequate lighting to ensure people feel safe.

**Local laws and regulation**
The council’s regulatory role ensures the safety and wellbeing of its people through the enforcement of local laws or assessment and approval processes. For example, banning the consumption of alcohol in open spaces or insisting that the responsible service of alcohol is a condition of a council building lease, can minimise the harms of alcohol misuse.
What the community can do

Although the council plays a pivotal role, it is up to everyone in the community to work together to ensure no one is left behind.

The council has identified key settings and partners where change can be created together.
| **Workplaces** | Wodonga businesses serve as local leaders in the community and can influence change among those who work in the city. Key areas that workplaces can act include:  
- Development of workplace policy in areas of alcohol consumption, gender equity and disability access in the workplace;  
- Promote an inclusive and respectful workplace culture; and,  
- Offer flexible work arrangements to cater for parents or those with a disability. |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Schools and early learning services** | Teachers and carers serve as important role models and leaders for young people. Key areas where schools and early learning services can act include:  
- Development of internal policy to address gender equity, diversity, inclusion and respect;  
- Promote the importance of respectful relationships; and,  
- Guide young people in good decision-making in relation to alcohol and drug use. |
| **Community and sporting organisations** | Many people in Wodonga participate in a community or sporting organisation. These organisations can act as leaders and role models for community members. Outcomes for the community can be improved through:  
- Increasing participation of girls and women in their club;  
- Promoting gender equity by ensuring female representation on committees or boards;  
- Ensuring diversity is supported by being inclusive of people with a disability; and,  
- Upholding a responsible drinking culture. |
| **Individuals** | It is up to all community members to address issues related to safety, inclusion and equity. As a community, Wodonga can come together to ensure no one in the city is left behind. **So what can you do?**  
- **Speak up** – If you see something suspicious, report it. Call the police;  
- **Get friendly** – Get to know your neighbours and actively improve levels of community cohesion in Wodonga;  
- **Spread the word** – Talk to people about these significant issues and help raise the awareness of others; and,  
- **Change the culture** – Have you seen gender inequity in your workplace? Does your community or sporting organisation make it difficult for people with a disability to get involved? Are there sexist attitudes within your friendship group? Take a stand and make a change. Significant cultural shifts can start with just one person. |
Guiding principles

Local efforts to improve safety, inclusion and equity outcomes for the Wodonga community will be guided by the following principles:

1. Collaborating to create shared vision, ownership, responsibility and action;

2. Integrated planning and action across multiple partners and disciplines;

3. Working to prevent the issue before it occurs;

4. Understanding and building on the community’s strengths and assets;

5. Engaging the community to participate in being part of the solutions;

6. Using a systems thinking approach to deliver actions; and,

7. Informed decision making based on the best available evidence.
Framework: Creating a safe, inclusive and equitable Wodonga
Policy context

This strategy has been informed by and aligns with international, national, state, regional and local policy.

International

UN adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
World Health Organisation

National

The Family Violence Prevention Act 2008
National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022
The Road Home - A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness 2007
Disability Discrimination Act 1992
The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
National Drug Strategy 2016-2025

State and regional

A Right to Respect: Victorian Government Plan 2010-2020
Family Violence Protection Act 2008
Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria
State planning policy: clauses 16.01-4 Housing diversity and 16.01-5 Housing affordability
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
Disability Act 2006
Equal Opportunity Act 2010
Implementation of local Disability Action Plan (DAP).
Reducing the Alcohol and Drug Toll Strategy 2013-2017
Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria.

Wodonga

Community Vision 2033
Council Plan
Municipal Public Health Plan
Wodonga Charter for Prevention of Violence Against Women
Workplace Gender Equity Directive and Strategy, 2016
Affordable Housing Principles adopted by Wodonga Council in 2010
Wodonga Growth Strategy.
Access for All Strategy 2011
Disability Action Plan 2011
Wodonga Growth Strategy: theme - A mobile and connected region
PRIORITY

- Preventing violence against women and children
- Reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs
- Reducing homelessness
- Reducing barriers to access and inclusion for people with a disability
We understand, to a much greater extent than ever before, that family violence exists, its prevalence and impacts are devastating and shame us all, and that family violence affects individuals, our community and ultimately our nation.

Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016

In Wodonga, 75.1 per cent of people said they would act if they saw an incident of violence against a woman. And together the community MUST act.

PRIORITY

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

“We understand, to a much greater extent than ever before, that family violence exists, its prevalence and impacts are devastating and shame us all, and that family violence affects individuals, our community and ultimately our nation.”

Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016

All community members have a vested interest in preventing family violence from occurring in the first place. Everyone must work to challenge harmful attitudes, beliefs and norms that support violence in the community, in the places where people live, learn, work and play.
Men’s violence against women and children is a widespread complex issue with devastating impacts. It destroys families and undermines communities.

- For Victorian women, intimate partner violence is the leading contributor of preventable illness and premature death aged 15 to 45 years.\(^5\)
- Children exposed to family violence from an early age have much poorer outcomes than children not exposed.\(^7\)

Family violence does not only affect those directly experiencing it. Family violence impacts the wider community through family breakdown, the reduced ability of women to participate in employment, displaced from housing and education and increased crime.

The United Nations’ declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) defines violence against women as:

> “Any act of gender based violence that results in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

WODONGA IS IN THE TOP 10% IN VICTORIA FOR REPORTED INCIDENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE\(^2\)

AND THE HIGHEST RATES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IN THE HUME REGION

Violence against women and children is unacceptably high in Wodonga and reported incidents continue to grow.

Between 2010 and 2014, reported rates of family violence in Wodonga increased by 91 per cent.\(^3\)

Wodonga’s youth service providers estimate that 75 per cent of young people seeking support have a history of violence in the home.\(^4\)

One in six women in the workforce are experiencing or have experienced violence.\(^5\)

A woman dies at the hands of a current or former partner almost every week in Australia.\(^5\)
Violence against women is a complex social issue and therefore there is no single cause. There are, however, three main contributors to family violence in Wodonga that this strategy will focus on.

1. **Evidence indicates that the underlying cause of men’s violence against women is gender inequality, power imbalances and negative attitudes towards women.**

   Despite the many advances made to progress gender equity, women are still constrained by traditional gender stereotypes.\(^8\)

   For example, women are:
   - Paid less than their male colleagues;
   - More likely to be responsible for child rearing duties;
   - Less likely to occupy senior leadership roles; and,
   - More likely to experience periods of unemployment due to caring responsibilities, impacting negatively on superannuation balances.

2. **Wodonga has a higher reported number of children witnessing or experiencing family violence compared to the state average.**\(^2\)

   Forty per cent of family violence occurs in front of children.\(^2\) This can lead to:
   - Children’s attitudes around violence as a normal way of dealing with conflict; and,
   - Increases the likelihood of children becoming perpetrators of family violence themselves one day.\(^10\)

3. **The reinforcing role alcohol plays in violence against women and children in Wodonga.**

   Almost half of all family violence incidents in Wodonga involve alcohol or drug use.\(^1\)

   Research shows higher levels of violence against women where there is a higher density of alcohol outlets in the community.\(^11\)

   In Wodonga, people live in close proximity to alcohol sales outlets.

   In Wodonga, proximity to alcohol outlets is a concern. This is further addressed through the priority ‘Reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs’. 
## ACTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority: Prevent violence against women and children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Participate in a collective approach to strengthen the service system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in partnership to improve the understanding, access, operation of the system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectively identify local opportunities and interventions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support the timely collection of relevant local data to inform a strong response.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate, lobby and seek funding at a federal and state government level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with internal local laws and regulation teams and Wodonga Police to explore strategies for reducing alcohol-fuelled incidents of family violence.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Objective:** Promote gender equity and respectful relationships where people live, learn, work and play |
| Increase awareness and understanding of gender equity and respectful relationships. | Community engagement |
| Actively speak out as leaders in the community in support of women’s equality. | Leadership and advocacy |
| Continue to participate in campaigns that build capacity within the business community to respond to family violence and promote gender equity. | Leadership and advocacy Community engagement |
| Work with Recreation, Local Laws and other relevant internal teams to explore strategies for improving gender equity in the community. | Local laws and regulation |

| **Objective:** Influence and encourage gender equity and the safety of women through council’s culture and practices |
| Implement Wodonga Council’s Gender Equity Strategy to promote and embed an organisational culture that embraces gender equality. | Workforce and org development |
| Support organisational changes that prioritise gender equity. | Workforce and org development |
| Increase awareness and understanding of gender equity and family violence for all staff. | Workforce and org development |
| Ensure land use planning utilises Safer by Design Guidelines and applies a gender equity lens in planning decisions. | Planning and design |
| Continue to update and improve the city’s lighting to improve safety. | Planning and design |

The Victorian Premier acknowledged, “more of the same policies will only mean more of the same tragedies”. At a state level, the 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission seek to address the multitude of issues and recommends local governments be required to report on the measures that they take to reduce family violence and respond to victims. For Wodonga this strategy sets out the council’s response.
Drug and alcohol use is a key contributor to crime and injury in Wodonga

The ease of access to drugs and alcohol, as well as the normalised drinking culture in Wodonga, has led to an unprecedented growth in drug and alcohol-fuelled crime and violence.

The council understands, and is committed to act on, its critical role in planning and design, and licensing and regulation, when working to prevent harm from alcohol and drug use in the city.

Greater attention should be paid to the relationship between alcohol supply and family violence in light of the evidence showing that alcohol misuse increases the severity and frequency of family violence.

– Royal Commission into Family Violence
Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2016-2017 to 2021-2022

71% of people in Wodonga are at increased lifetime risk of alcohol related harm compared to only 59.2% of all Victorians.\(^\text{12}\)

Heavy drinking among young people aged 16 to 25 years has almost doubled across Victoria.\(^\text{13}\)

In 2014, Wodonga police reported that ice offences have risen by at least 60 per cent a year in the past five years.\(^\text{14}\)

Drug offences have been steadily increasing in Wodonga since 2011.\(^\text{2}\)

Wodonga has the highest rate in the Hume region for hospital admissions related to illicit drugs at 3.6 presentations per 10,000 people.\(^\text{15}\)

The Issue

In Wodonga, men and women regularly drink alcohol at risky levels considered harmful, according to Australia’s national responsible drinking guidelines.

Risky alcohol consumption is defined as consuming more than two standard drinks at a time. Anything over this amount increases one’s likelihood of long-term risk of harm from alcohol-related disease.

While the individual health impacts are concerning, the social consequences of harmful alcohol and drug use, where other people are affected, is of most concern. Harmful alcohol and drug use is linked to many incidents of crime and injury in Wodonga.

Of particular concern is the reinforcing role alcohol and other drugs play in violence against women and children, with about 50 per cent of incidents in Wodonga involving alcohol or other drugs.\(^\text{11}\)

Injury/violence where alcohol and other drugs was involved (rate per 10,000 people)\(^\text{15}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency department presentations</th>
<th>Wodonga</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious road injury</th>
<th>Wodonga</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family violence</th>
<th>Wodonga</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assault</th>
<th>Wodonga</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
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<tr>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>13.1</td>
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</table>
CONTRIBUTORS

There are two key contributors of harmful alcohol and drug use in Wodonga where the council will focus efforts.

1. There is a strong drinking culture in Wodonga. People in Wodonga drink alcohol at a higher rate when compared to their Victorian peers and spend slightly more on alcohol. Risky levels of drinking is considered the norm.

   Young people are also starting to experiment with alcohol and drugs from an earlier age, with 40 per cent of people aged between 12 and 17 years in Australia having already tried a full serve of alcohol. In 2011, 40 per cent of people in Wodonga purchased alcohol in the past seven days.

   In 2011, 40 per cent of people in Wodonga purchased alcohol in the past seven days.

   Heavy drinking among young people aged 16 to 25 years has almost doubled across Victoria.

   The average distance from home to an alcohol outlet in Wodonga is 2.3km, compared to 10.1km in the region.

2. People can easily access alcohol throughout the city.

   Alcohol or drug use is a factor in almost half of all family violence incidents in Wodonga.

   Almost 50% of family violence and incidents of child maltreatment and neglect increase with a higher density of alcohol outlets.

One of the specific recommendations for the Victorian Government is to change liquor licensing laws so the impact of family violence can be considered in planning applications for bottle shops and other alcohol outlets.

It is therefore important for the council to consider the three main mechanisms for action: (1) Leadership and advocacy; (2) Designing and planning the city; and, (3) Assessing liquor licencing applications.
## Priority: Reduce alcohol and drug harm in Wodonga

### Strategies

**Local Govt mechanism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Participate in a collective approach to strengthen the service system</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work in partnership to improve the understanding, access and operation of the drug and alcohol service system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectively identify local opportunities and interventions to improve access to drug and alcohol services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the timely collection of relevant local data to inform a strong response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate, lobby and seek funding at a federal and state government level.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Increase awareness of risky drinking to encourage a safe drinking culture where people live, learn, work and play</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobby and advocate with community partners to de-normalise risky drinking and drug use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in campaigns that increase community awareness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work internally to create a responsible workplace drinking culture.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Use council planning, regulatory and policy mechanisms to reduce alcohol and drug harm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work to reduce anti-social behaviour and violence in public spaces through local laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work to reduce anti-social behaviour and violence in public spaces through the consideration of improved public lighting and implementing Safer by Design Guidelines in planning decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate and lobby in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria to influence state policy to better consider the social and health impacts of alcohol-related harm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undertake an alcohol outlet mapping exercise across Wodonga.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigate ways for council to better consider the social and health impacts for all liquor license applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In partnership with Wodonga Police, encourage compliance with, and appropriate issuing of, liquor licences through education and advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence the council’s services and events to promote responsible drinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure active surveillance over reserves and other public spaces through the use of design and development overlays or other appropriate policy and controls to minimise anti-social behaviour in relation to drug and alcohol use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Everyone in Wodonga has the right to have a safe place to call home and it is through the community’s collective efforts that this is achievable. The council recognises it has a key role in progressing efforts to reduce homelessness within the community.

**Home is about safety and security, and being involved in the community**

- Homeless person in Wodonga
Being without safe, secure and affordable housing can have life-long impacts on community members. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines a person as homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation and their current living arrangement:

- Is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- Has no tenure, or their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or,
- Does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations.

The impacts of homelessness on individuals and the community are devastating. Homeless people are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes, drug and alcohol addiction and poor mental health. Furthermore, the stigma associated with being homeless can contribute to feelings of shame and fear, which can make it difficult for people to seek help.
CONTRIBUTORS

In Wodonga there are two main contributors to homelessness that the council will focus efforts towards.

1. Poor housing affordability and diversity within the local housing system can contribute to poor housing availability.

In Wodonga, there has been an increase in the median rent and house price, as well as a shortage of diverse housing options.

In Wodonga 7.8% of dwellings are social housing, higher than Victoria at 3.8%.

Between 2000 and 2015, the number of two-bedroom flats for rent decreased from 191 to 97, with four-bedroom houses increasing from 30 to 87.

The increase in four-bedroom houses and a decrease in units has made it difficult for single people seeking affordable housing.

2. Housing stress, combined with everyday living costs and unforeseen expenses such as illness or injury, can increase the risk of becoming homeless.

It is important to increase community awareness and understanding that anyone in the community can experience homelessness, not only those experiencing drug and alcohol addiction or mental illness.

In Wodonga

11.8% renters

7.1% homeowners

experience housing stress.
### Priority: Reduce homelessness in Wodonga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Local Govt mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Participate in a collective approach to strengthen the service sector and to improve pathways into housing in Wodonga.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in partnership to improve the understanding, access and operation of the housing system.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the timely collection of relevant local data to inform a strong response.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectively identify local opportunities and interventions to create new or improved pathways into housing.</td>
<td>Community engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to enforce local laws related to public squatting/camping while also linking in those experiencing homelessness to appropriate services and housing support.</td>
<td>Local laws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Objective:** Work to reduce housing stress in the community              |                               |
| Participate in relevant networks and support community organisations working directly with people at risk of homelessness. | Community engagement          |
| Participate in campaigns that increase community awareness of the nature, causes and consequences of homelessness. | Leadership and advocacy       |
| Community engagement                                                      |                               |

| **Objective:** Use council planning, regulatory and policy mechanisms to increase housing diversity and affordability |                               |
| Undertake a housing needs analysis and develop a housing strategy.         | Planning and design            |
| Advocate, lobby and seek funding from federal and state governments for appropriate and affordable housing across all tenure types. | Leadership and advocacy       |
| In partnership, explore innovative models of social and affordable housing. | Leadership and advocacy       |
| Investigate ways to increase development of affordable and diverse housing options, close to transport and services. | Planning and design            |
| Through the *Wodonga Growth Strategy* investigate ways to influence both affordability and diversity by using appropriate residential zones to promote a more diverse supply of lot sizes and dwelling types. | Planning and design            |

The council has an obligation to ensure that it plans for a growing city and caters for all residents now and into the future. The *Wodonga Growth Strategy* recognises the need to create a liveable city through the provision of diverse housing options and suggests appropriate actions to achieve this.
This chapter furthers the council’s commitment to achieve a fully accessible and inclusive city.

The council is legislated to develop and adopt a Disability Action Plan. Wodonga Council’s Disability Action Plan is integrated into this strategy to reduce barriers to access and inclusion for people with a disability. This has been done to ensure that access and inclusion principles are considered in all responsibilities, activities and services of the council.

People with a disability in Wodonga are more likely to experience discrimination and exclusion from community life.
Everyone in the community has the right to access the services they need and to participate fully in community life.

This includes simple things that most people take for granted; being able to move freely throughout the city, attending community events and having a say on issues that are important to them. However, people with a disability face many barriers within the community that limit their ability to participate fully.

**LOCAL SERVICES ESTIMATE THAT**

18% OF PEOPLE IN WODONGA HAVE SOME TYPE OF **DISABILITY** = 7280 PEOPLE

Disability affects approximately one in five Australians. Most common types of disability include:
- Mental illness;
- Physical or intellectual impairment;
- Hearing loss and vision impairment; and,
- Dyslexia.

**In Wodonga, 5.4% of people require help with day-to-day tasks due to disability**

**THE ISSUE**

Compared to people without a disability, people with a disability are:
- More likely to leave school earlier;
- More likely to experience discrimination and exclusion;
- Less likely to own a home;
- More likely to experience disadvantage;
- Less likely to be employed;
- Less likely to enjoy full participation in the community; and,
- Two times more likely to be in the bottom 20 per cent of gross household income.
The council has identified two significant barriers that prevent people with a disability from participating fully in Wodonga. This is where the council will focus efforts.

1. Wodonga’s physical environment and community infrastructure contributes to poor access for people with disability. This includes narrow footpaths, limited kerb ramps, poor access into shops and poor public transport.

In Australia, 35.5 per cent of people with a disability have difficulty in getting to where they need to go, compared to 12.7 per cent of people without a disability.

2. Attitudes towards people with a disability. National research about community attitudes has highlighted the often paternalistic and patronising attitudes people have towards those with a disability.

These attitudes lead to exclusion and discrimination. For example, people with a vision or hearing impairment are often excluded from civic planning and decision making as services do not always tailor to their communication needs.

The council acknowledges that the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the largest reform to address barriers for people with a disability in Australia. This will roll out in Wodonga in October 2017 and will have significant impact on the community and further inform the direction of the council’s work with the sector and community.

The council is committed to reducing the barriers for people with a disability created by the built environment, negative attitudes and discriminatory practices to ensure that all members of the community are able to participate fully in the community.
### Priority: Reduce barriers experienced by people with a disability to allow them to participate fully in community life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Local Govt mechanism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Participate in a collective approach to strengthen the service system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work in partnership to improve the understanding, access and operation of the disability service system.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy Community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectively identify local opportunities and interventions to improve participation of people with a disability in community life.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
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<td>Support the timely collection of relevant local data to inform a strong response.</td>
<td>Community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Promote inclusion and participation in the community for people with a disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate for diverse and affordable housing and transport options in Wodonga.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
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<td>Develop a consultative platform for people with disabilities to identify and address issues of accessibility within the community.</td>
<td>Community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate, lobby and seek funding from federal and state governments to support people with disabilities to reach their full potential.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work in partnership with community organisations to improve opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in education, training and employment.</td>
<td>Community engagement Leadership and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> Use council planning, regulatory and policy mechanisms to reduce discriminatory practices for people with a disability</td>
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<td>Investigate social procurement as a lever for improving employment opportunities for people with a disability.</td>
<td>Workforce and org development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with partners to communicate to our community relevant changes regarding the National Disability Insurance Scheme.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply access and inclusion principles to the operation of council services, programs, events and communications.</td>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the opportunities and provide support for people with disabilities to exercise their rights in civic participation.</td>
<td>Workforce and org development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and improve accessibility of council buildings and infrastructure.</td>
<td>Planning and design Workforce and org development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise leadership by championing the value of access and inclusion across Wodonga’s business community.</td>
<td>Community engagement Leadership and advocacy</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Implementation and evaluation

This strategy will be implemented and evaluated over a five-year period.

The successful implementation and evaluation of this strategy relies on:

• Appropriate levels of resourcing;
• Relevant measures and reporting mechanisms; and,
• Ongoing commitment from a range of stakeholders to work in partnership to advance safety, inclusion and equity in Wodonga.

Implementation

To determine the relevant resources needed to achieve the strategic objectives outlined, a detailed action plan will be developed annually. The action plan will clearly set out the activities that will be undertaken in alignment with the council’s five mechanisms/levers for change, the timelines for the actions to be undertaken and any budgetary considerations of these actions.

The implementation of this plan will take a ‘whole of council’ approach to the delivery of each priority area. This ensures strategies and actions are implemented by appropriate business units and encourages integrated planning and action. A cross-council working group will be established to oversee implementation.

Review

An action research approach will be adopted to continually review and track progress against annual measures. This will allow local initiatives to be targeted, adaptive, and more effective. This method ensures the council is continuously reviewing and refining its actions to maximise local opportunities to improve safety, inclusion and equity.

Evaluation

A formal review and evaluation of the Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy will be undertaken at the end of the five-year period.
Acknowledgements

Wodonga Council wishes to acknowledge the following groups and individuals who contributed to the development of this strategy:

Rural Housing Network Limited, Wodonga Chamber of Commerce, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, Wodonga Principals Network, Junction Support Services, Gateway Health, Department of Health and Human Services, Disability Advocacy and Information Service, LaTrobe University, Women’s Health Goulburn North East, YES Youth and Family Services, Hume Region Homelessness Network Coordinator, Intereach, Centre Against Violence, Betty’s Place, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and community members who participated in community engagement exercises that Wodonga Council has implemented over the past three years.

Wodonga Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which it meets. The council pays its respects to their Elders and to Elders from other communities past and present.

For further information:

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References

The following sources were used in the creation of this document.


