Wodonga Council
Social Snapshot
**Social summary**

Wodonga is a thriving regional centre where individuals rely upon social services and connections in the community. These include health and education services, police and governance institutions, and art and cultural events. The following information is a summary of the social aspects of the Wodonga community.

**Population**

Wodonga is one of Victoria's fastest growing provincial cities and encompasses a total land area of about 433sq km.

Wodonga's has a current population of approximately 36,629 but taking the whole region into account, Wodonga services a population of approximately 170,000 people giving it a large critical mass (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013d).

The population is expected to increase by 9370 people to 45,999 by 2021, at an average annual growth rate of approximately 2.56 per cent per annum over 10 years (Forecast.id, 2013). This is based on an increase of more than 3500 households during the period 2001 to 2021, with the average number of persons per household remaining fairly stable around 2.5 (see Forecast.id, 2013).

**Graph 1: Estimated population growth 2006-2031**

Graph 2 illustrates that, in 2011, the population age structure remained mainly unchanged, with 15 to 19 year olds being the largest fraction. The number of people aged 15 years and under is forecast to increase by more than 50 per cent, between 2011 and 2031, representing a rise in the proportion of the population to 21.5 per cent.

The number of people aged over 65 is expected to increase by over 70 per cent, and are expected to attribute for 13.47 per cent of the population by 2031.
The age group which is forecast to have the largest proportional increase (relative to its population size) by 2031 is 75 to 79 year olds, who are forecast to increase by more than 90 per cent to 1483 persons. The data comprised in Table 2 is also presented in Graph 2 below.

However, Wodonga has a young population and will experience growth in the number of people aged up to 25 years, a trend that is set to continue well into the future. It is estimated that, between 2011 and 2021, the population under 25 years will increase by more than 3500 people. This ongoing positive development ensures that Wodonga will continue to be a vibrant municipality with a secure future employment base.

**Graph 2: Estimated change in age structure 2006 – 2031, per cent of total population**

![Graph 2: Estimated change in age structure 2006 – 2031, per cent of total population](source)

Family and community

**Families and households**

Wodonga has a culturally and socially diverse community. The current median age of residents is 35 years of age, and the most common household structure is couple families with dependants, predominantly children aged less than 15 years of age.
In 2001, couples with children under 15 years were the most common family structure in Wodonga. However, this trend did not continue into the year 2006, where couples without children were the strongest classification in numbers. According to the 2011 Census data, couples without families represented almost 37 per cent of all families. In total this family structure experienced an increase of more than 25 per cent between 2001 and 2011 while couples with children grew in numbers by only 3.58 per cent. It is also worth noticing that the family structure with the largest increase in numbers was one parent families. This group grew by more than 26.5 per cent between 2001 and 2011.

**Children**

As can be seen in Graph 4 below, it is important to mention that according to the AEDI, 22.9 per cent of children are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains (physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), communication skills and general knowledge) investigated by the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI, 2012) and 13.2 per cent are developmentally at risk, i.e. vulnerable in two or more domains. These values are above Victorian results of 19.5 per cent and 9.5 per cent of children being vulnerable in one or more and two or more domains respectively. Language and cognitive domain related strongly to literacy rated the highest for Wodonga surpassing the Victorian average.
Young people

In total, 11.06 per cent of individuals between the age of 15 and 24 were unemployed in 2011. This is slightly below the measure for Victoria of 12.06 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Total unemployment for 2011 was 5.6 per cent in Wodonga, which is very close to the state unemployment of 5.4 per cent.

Indigenous

Approximately two per cent of the population in Wodonga assessed themselves as being indigenous. This is above the Victorian level of 0.7 per cent and an increase of 55.5 per cent compared to Wodonga’s indigenous population in 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007, 2012).

Wodonga’s indigenous population is, on the whole, attending and completing more education across all levels between 2006 and 2011. Unfortunately, this has not translated into employment outcomes as Indigenous unemployment rates also increased between 2006 and 2011 from 20.42 per cent to 27.59 per cent.

Community Indicators Victoria

According to the Community Indicators Victoria, 75.8 per cent of people in Wodonga were feeling part of the community in 2011 and 22.1 per cent of people in Wodonga experienced limitations to transport within the previous 12
months. Both values are preferable to the state outcomes (72.3 per cent felt part of the community and 23.7 per cent were restricted in access to transport).

A total of 41 per cent of the population in Wodonga stated to be volunteers. This value is above state level of 34.3 per cent. A total of 53 per cent of Wodonga’s population participated in citizen engagements within the past 12 months, compared to 50.5 per cent in all of Victoria.

Areas of community strength include wellbeing, social support, feeling part of the community, and civic engagement. Whilst the City of Wodonga doesn’t have comparative disadvantage, areas that could be improved include food security, volunteering, and broadband access.

Health

It is important that Wodonga residents receive an equal opportunity to achieve good health and personal wellbeing. The council supports this statement through implementing the avoidance and prevention of disease framework, protecting the public from conditions liable to be dangerous to health, ensuring that food is wholesome, nutritious, safe and accessible, implementing disease prevention strategies and by recognising environmental circumstances which may impair public health.

Maternal and child health

As to an indicator of community health, the current fertility rate of 1.9 children per family is higher than the Victorian state wide rate of 1.7 children per family. Wodonga Council has a strong immunisation program with 5 immunisation sessions each month and exceeds state average with 95.5 per cent of children below the age of 6 years being fully immunised.

Breastfeeding rates for three month olds was, however, in the lower ten percentile of the state and, in 2008, Wodonga region had double the amount of teenage (15-19yrs) births than Victoria on the whole.
**Burden of disease and life expectancy**

Wodonga residents have a higher life expectancy than Victorian figures. Wodonga residents, however, experience a higher rate of disability adjusted life years and years of life lost.

Major causes of disease are cancer, cardiovascular and mental disorders followed by neurological and sense disorders. The disease which is of most prevalence in the municipality in comparison to the state is Type 2 diabetes with nearly three times the state rate of presentation. Comparably, mental health is lower than the state average but incidence of obesity is higher.

**Healthy Together Wodonga**

In 2012 Wodonga Council was funded to be roll out the Prevention Community Model (PCM) which provides a comprehensive approach to chronic disease prevention, and is part of Victoria’s implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health (NPAPH). As part of the PCM the following benchmarks have been set by the Commonwealth Government for the states to meet. In Wodonga we are expected to meet the following benchmarks by 2016;
### Table 1: Healthy Together Wodonga NPAPH benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overweight and obesity (% of population)</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate levels of physical activity (% of population)</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable consumption (number of serves)</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit consumption (number of serves)</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking rates (% of population)</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Preliminary results


The final benchmark that will be addressed as part of the NPAPH is risky alcohol consumption. Currently the weekly risky alcohol consumption is approximately 10 per cent, this is equivalent the state average. At this stage there are no future benchmarks set for risky alcohol consumption.

Food security, equitable access to affordable, nutritious and culturally safe foods, is also a big concern for the Wodonga community. Recent statistics from UnitingCare Wodonga, which is the main agency delivering emergency food relief in Wodonga, shows that the need for emergency food relief is continuing to increase.

**Education and training**

Education has been found to correspond with social and health outcomes. The more resources people have available to them, the better access they have to education. People with the lowest educational qualifications frequently have the poorest health.

Education is a self-reinforcing factor: families that place a high value on education are more likely to eat well, and eating well generally makes children more responsive and engaged at school.

As such, the state of education is an important indicator of social health for a community.

In Wodonga, there are many educational options, from preschool right through to higher education options such as university and TAFE.
The student population within the Wodonga community is approximately 11,258 individuals. Of these, 3255 are attending primary school and 2467 are enrolled in secondary school.

**Children**

There is a growing body of evidence both nationally and internationally showing early childhood development sets the trajectory for outcomes in adult life. Research has shown investment in the early years, in the form of preschool care and education services have a positive effect on long term outcomes. The City of Wodonga kindergarten participation rates, from 2006-2011, show a move to a higher than average participation rate compared to the Hume Region and Victoria as a whole.

**Graph 6: Kindergarten participation rates 2006 to 2011**

![Kindergarten participation rates 2006 to 2011 graph](image)

**Young people**

Two per cent of young people in Wodonga who have left school engaged in full time study or full time work. This measure is below Victorian rates of 2.4 per cent and 2.89 per cent less than the Hume region levels. 0.7 per cent of school leavers were disengaged and were not working or studying. This is above Victorian level of 0.41. Additionally, as at December 31, 2010, there were 2082 residents were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship.
Level of education

As to the education levels achieved by Wodonga residents, 58.73 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds completed year 12, which is below state level of 74.1 per cent. In Wodonga, 57.45 per cent of people older than 25 have a non-school qualification, while the fraction at Victorian level amounts to 60.55 per cent.

Furthermore, Wodonga residents have improved their education levels between 2006 and 2011 as can be seen in the graph below. There have been increases in highest level of education achieved across all levels of education and decreases in those who have no qualification.

Graph 7: Highest level of qualification in per cent of all non-school qualifications

Crime and safety

Community safety contributes greatly to the health and wellbeing of Wodonga residents. Factors such as education, employment status, lifestyle and behaviour shape the level of safety within a community.

A wide range of issues comprise community safety and these include crime prevention, road safety, public transport, fire safety, emergency management, education and training, safety in public places, safety around the home and workplace, people’s perception of crime and antisocial behaviour. All these safety related issues impact on the health, economic, and social wellbeing of the Wodonga community.
Crime

Between 2009-2010 and 2011-2012, Wodonga experienced increases in reported crimes against the person and property. Consequently, the crime rates, per 100,000 population for these categories are now above Victorian figures. More precisely, crimes against the person amounted to 1,190.2 per 100,000 population in Wodonga (Victoria: 976.8), while crimes against property rose to 5,745.9 per 100,000 in Wodonga (Victoria: 4762.3).

Additionally, there were 1495.4 family incidents reported per 100,000 population in Wodonga in 2011-2012. This represents an increase compared to 2010-2011 of 34.35 per cent and is above state level of 910.3 reported incidents per 100,000 population.

Perceptions of safety

Wodonga residents reported a higher percentage of people who felt safe during the day (98.7 per cent) than average state level (97 per cent), however there was a lower percentage of residents in Wodonga who felt safe at night than residents in the region (64.9 per cent) and the state (70.3 per cent).

Culture and leisure

Wodonga is proud of what it offers in terms of arts, entertainment and cultural engagement for those living and visiting the city. The city boasts vibrant events, public art, visual arts, musical and performing arts programs that find expression in a variety of forums. It also hosts strong cultural programming in a range of venues including Arts Space Wodonga, TAFE Space and The Cube Wodonga.

Participation

As for community indicators in Wodonga, residents have increased their participation in organised sport and physical activity in recent years and participation in artistic and cultural endeavours is similar to the Victorian participation rate.

Wodonga residents actively use the Wodonga Library with high monthly lending and attendance at library run programs.

Wodonga Council hosts a range of events across the year. The participation and satisfaction of residents and others is highlighted in the table below. As can be seen, there are very large participation rates for most of the events run by the council as well as many volunteers who provide their time.
### Table 2: City of Wodonga events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Satisfaction rate % - above average or excellent</th>
<th>Visitation of outside region</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Fair 2010</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnivale Wodonga Stomp 2011</td>
<td>18,533</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todos Arte 2011</td>
<td>3865</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Celebrations 2011</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Events (Red Carpet, Red Fest, Red Showcase &amp; Red Expression - 10/11)</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street BBQ’s (34 Events) - 10/11</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paws in the Park 2011</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia Day 2011</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wodonga Council

### Internet

Of the 13,222 households in 2011 67.6 per cent had broadband internet connection. State wide, 70.04 per cent of households had broadband internet connection in 2011. In total, 75.16 per cent of Wodonga households have internet connection, compared to 76.87 per cent in Victoria.

The Wodonga Library experiences a continued high internet usage through its public PCs and in addition an increasing wireless internet usage.
Gambling

Gaming machine losses continue well below the state average for 2008-2009 and 2010-2011. The figures show that for 2010-2011 the average gaming machine loss per head significantly decreased from $528.41 (2008-2009) to $294.

Housing

Wodonga has historically had a high proportion of public housing, a vast majority of which is detached housing. As recently as 1996 the share of public housing in the municipality was 16 per cent but this has declined to 7.7 per cent by 2012. This is mostly due to no additions being made to the public housing numbers whilst the population grew.

The share of public housing is still well above the state average of around 2.9 per cent. About 30 per cent of the public housing is located relatively near the city centre and much of this has the capacity for redevelopment at higher density without stock loss.

Source: Advice towards an Affordable Housing Action Plan for Wodonga (2010)
**Graph 9: Public housing supply and demand**

Public housing supply and demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Public housing stock</th>
<th>Waiting list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benalla</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moira</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towong</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga</td>
<td>1107</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 10: Regional public housing percentage**

Percentage of public in public housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benalla</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moira</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towong</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic-average</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social key focus areas:

- With the projected increase in population over the coming years it is important to ensure enough infrastructure and services are in place and able to meet the demands of large population growth.

- Wodonga will have both an ageing population and a young population that will require specific services and infrastructure.

- Household types that will increase in the future are couples without dependants and single parent families. It will be important to ensure both housing and appropriate social supports are available.

- While it is important to concentrate on whole of child development, the AEDI results indicate that concentrated effort in improving social competence and emotional maturity in our young children is critically important.

- Continued support for Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders in Wodonga is needed. Particular focus on indigenous employment would be beneficial for the community.

- As to health, focus is required for the promotion of breastfeeding in the community as well as targeted action for the reduction of teenage pregnancies.

- Focus is needed by health prevention practitioners to reduce risk factors that contribute to chronic disease. The Prevention Community Model initiative aims to increase levels of fruit and vegetable consumption as well as physical activity and decrease levels of obesity and smoking in our community.

- Great effort and co-ordination are already happening in the food security space. However, the levels of Wodonga citizens seeking emergency food relief have continued to increase.

- For education and training, kindergarten attendance rates can be improved as well as reading results for grade one students.

- Some focus can be given to the variety of courses offered at local institutions. As research has shown that lack of variety of course options has forced young people to move from the area.

- Many Wodonga residents do not feel safe going outside at night time.

- Internet connectivity is vitally important for many reasons. Although improved since 2006 it is of concern that approximately one in five Wodonga households did not have an internet connection in 2011.