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Draft

Mayor's Message

To be inserted once draft approved for publication.

Council's Commitment

Neighbourhood houses build stronger communities by creating opportunities for learning and social participation. Using community development methods, Yarra's neighbourhood houses respond to community need in flexible and creative ways that encourage social equity. Council recognises the importance of neighbourhood houses in bridging the ever-increasing socio-economic divide in our society, by building capacity, increasing access to resources and promoting the benefits of diversity. Council is committed to continuing a supportive and productive relationship with the neighbourhood houses in our city. Yarra's neighbourhood houses make the city a kinder, more generous, inclusive place.

A note on language

The term 'neighbourhood houses' refers to a designated space run under a not-for-profit structure and used by people in a neighbourhood for activities and programs that build community. Sometimes this space is an actual house, but it can also be a learning centres or community centre. In this Framework we use the term to refer to all of these forms of neighbourhood house.



Introduction

Neighbourhood houses are not-for-profit organisations that respond to community need and build community capacity through learning and social opportunities. Based on community-development principles, the houses are embedded within communities to deliver responsive, locally-focussed programs that aim to empower, connect and educate individuals and groups.¹ The broad range of activities, services and programs that neighbourhood houses encompass provide access to resources otherwise out of reach for many people, bridging socio-economic disparity by creating equitable opportunities for social and cultural participation and, importantly, education.

First established in Victoria in the early 1970s, the neighbourhood house model emerged out of the Women's Liberation movement to address the needs of women experiencing social marginalisation, such as isolated single mothers, and extending to people from diverse cultural backgrounds and other marginalised social groups.² Initially, most neighbourhood houses were staffed by volunteers (there is still a reliance on volunteering) with minimal government funding; however, since 1986, the Victorian state government has provided neighbourhood houses with ongoing funding for core community development activities.³ Local governments also support neighbourhood houses through a combination of financial and in-kind support (such as free or low-cost accommodation).⁴ In Yarra, all neighbourhood houses are supported by Council through annual core funding, and some are resident in Council-owned facilities.

Yarra is home to nine neighbourhood houses (including learning and community centres) in Alphington, Carlton North, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Fitzroy North and Princes Hill and Richmond.⁵ Together they form the foundation of Yarra's ground-level social infrastructure.⁶ Each house offers services specific to its immediate geographical community through programs and activities tailored to meet the needs of those residents. Neighbourhood house programs are often targeted to different life stages and cultural needs, focussing on lifelong learning through skills development, wellbeing and social connection. Programs cover a wide range of activities including gardening, cooking, arts and crafts, repair workshops, computer and language classes, and various social supports. Through the houses, people can equitably access types of assistance that fill service gaps, including flexible social support, settlement processes, life skills, employment and business incubation, and health literacy and wellbeing programs that can tangibly improve health outcomes. Houses are also spaces for informal support and connection, where people can simply drop in for a hot drink, a meal or a conversation. At the core of the houses' function is their ability to provide safe, friendly, equitable spaces that facilitate human connection. In these ways, Yarra's neighbourhood houses benefit the broader community deeply, on both a broad and granular scale.

Neighbourhood houses differ from other community services and facilities because they are deliberately based on community development principles and operate firmly within a social justice framework, responding to and addressing social inequity through hyper-local programs and services. Many of the benefits created by the houses have far-reaching and ongoing impacts that extend beyond the program participants. The houses' autonomy as not-for-profit organisations allows flexibility and capacity for detailed community involvement that simply is not possible for government-provided services to undertake. Where government services must take a broad view to

¹ Harrison et al, 2020, p. 468.

² Harrison, 2018, pp. ii–iii.

³ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2022b.

⁴ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2016, pp. 3–5.

⁵ Princes Hill Community Centre is primarily used as a community venue and is not programmed and managed in the same way as other centres and so has not been profiled in this Framework.

⁶ McShane & Coffey, 2022.

ensure efficiencies are maintained, neighbourhood houses have the remit to work attentively with individuals and groups in creative ways that respond directly to specific needs as they arise. This specialised focus builds a strong social foundation that raises the whole community.

Social impact data snapshot

Analysis of data from the annual Neighbourhood Houses Victoria 2019 survey demonstrated that Yarra's neighbourhood houses delivered more than \$12,297,747 of value to the community during that year.⁷ While 2019 is not the most recent survey, it gives a more accurate picture of neighbourhood house activity and value than the more recent snapshots available at the time of writing, which were taken during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most recent snapshot was necessarily taken over a shorter period of only four days, between Victoria's lockdowns, rather than over the normal week-long period. It also focussed primarily on COVID-19 impacts and the pandemic-related activities and support undertaken by neighbourhood houses. As a result, interactions were mainly focused on essential support. This more recent snapshot has therefore been included in [Appendix 1](#) regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the earlier data used here to provide a more reflective picture of normal activities and services. The methodology used for the impact calculations is also explained in the methodology section and attached as appendices as excerpts from the original report by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria.

The social value delivered by Yarra's Neighbourhood Houses is equivalent to:

- **\$3.14 for every \$1** of income
- **\$19.20 for every \$1** of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funding
- **> \$494.88** of value realised for every hour a neighbourhood house is in use

The following highlights from the data analysed put this in more tangible terms:

- **2,126** participants in programmed activities per week
- **260 kgs** of basic food relief provided per month⁸
- **641 hrs** of individual computer/internet use per month
- **695** frozen and community meals provided per month

The Neighbourhood Houses Victoria study found significant benefits arising from the value of community connection (i.e., social participation and reduction in social isolation created through house activities and programs). The difficulty of quantifying the many different flow-on effects that ripple out through the community means the benefits are likely underestimated.⁹

⁷ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2019.

⁸ Notably, this was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the demand for access to food.

⁹ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2019.

LUCY

Lucy regularly attends morning teas, excursions and seminars at her local neighbourhood house. She says the house supports her in immeasurable ways, helping her to manage difficult life circumstances.

When asked why she visits her neighbourhood house, Lucy says, 'Attending the house is a strategy for maintaining my mental health. If I don't attend, I would relapse – for me this means I would have no incentive to face life's responsibilities, which leaves me in a scary place.'

She says that she has to force herself to try to break through the 'webs of her condition' to come to the House but the impact of the positivity that she feels afterwards lasts for days.

'When I feel like I have to fight the webs of anxiety, paranoia and trauma, I remember the positive times at the House and then I can let go the sad feelings.'

The social connection her local House provides keeps her 'monsters' at bay – she isolates herself less and feels as though she has incentive to cope with life. She says other local community facilities don't help in the same way as they don't provide friendly staff or are not for people over the age of 65.



Policy context



Policy context

State government

The Victorian State Government provides the primary core funding for Victoria's neighbourhood houses and networks through the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program, managed by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH).¹⁰ The overall aims of the program are expressly to fund houses and community centres to use a community development model in facilitating the following social policy goals:¹¹

- community diversity and inclusion
- social and civic participation
- capacity building at an individual and group level
- life-long learning opportunities
- employment and training pathways

To do this, funding recipients must use community development processes like community consultation and co-production methods to identify community needs and issues and develop mutually agreed responses and solutions. Regarding funding calculations, it is understood that the State Government funding formula is not needs-based, instead adjusting the funding universally for a minimum amount of service hours.

The Neighbourhood House Coordination Program encourages partnerships with other organisations and funding bodies.¹² In 2018, additional sector-wide funding of \$21.8m for Victorian neighbourhood houses had been secured from the State Government (non-recurring, expiring in 2024). At the time of writing, the peak body Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (see [below](#)) was working on an advocacy campaign to make this increase permanent, which appeared to have been successful.¹³

The guidelines offer detailed information on funding, reporting, coordination and governance requirements, and importantly, provide sector-specific instruction on implementing programs using a community development model.¹⁴ It is important to note that the State Government's funding model for neighbourhood houses includes an expectation that income will be generated by charging a low fee for participation in some of the activities and through volunteer labour. Accordingly, funding recipients operate part-time with very few paid staff and a high reliance on volunteers, which limits opening hours and program capacity. Despite these limitations, Yarra's neighbourhood houses output a high level of programming and social support, with the data demonstrating that they represent a significant return on investment.¹⁵

Local government (Council's role)

Like other local government authorities across Victoria, Yarra Council provides core funding to the neighbourhood houses that service the municipality. While not the primary source of revenue for neighbourhood houses overall,¹⁶ the value that local government provides to houses in ongoing funding, project partnerships, and coupled with the contribution of Council-owned property through peppercorn lease arrangements, is substantial.

¹⁰ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2021.

¹¹ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2021.

¹² Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2021.

¹³ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2022.

¹⁴ State Government of Victoria, 2016.

¹⁵ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2019.

¹⁶ A 2013 survey by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria ranked funding from local government authorities as the fourth highest revenue source for houses (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2016, p. 1)

Yarra Council recognises the importance and value of neighbourhood houses in building community capacity and providing tailored responses to localised issues. Operational security is provided to the houses through multi-year funding commitments. The funding comprises monetary allocations for operational support, project support, and, depending on the house's residency arrangements, support for occupancy overheads such as rental and maintenance costs. Where a house resides in a Council-owned property, a 'peppercorn'-style lease agreement is in place and the property costs are absorbed in Council's budget.

In addition to tenancy management services, Council also allocates considerable officer time to support the houses with project partnerships, community connections, professional development opportunities and to assist in navigating bureaucratic processes. Officers attend regular network meetings with the houses. Different units across the organisation maintain ongoing ties with the houses through projects in areas such as sustainability, the arts, libraries, and family, children's and youth services. Each of these areas may also allocate funds and resources through project and budget processes.

Peak bodies and peer-based networks

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHV) is the peak organisation for the neighbourhood house sector. It provides strategic leadership, with a focus on coordinating state-wide advocacy and promotion, and providing research and advisory services. NHV also offer professional development opportunities for neighbourhood house managers, staff, volunteers and committee members.¹⁷

North East Neighbourhood House Network is a network of 35 neighbourhood houses in the North Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, covering the municipalities of Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra. The network operates within a social justice framework to bring together houses in these municipalities and offer peer-based support through promotion, advocacy, professional development, and networking. The range of support provided by the network is broad and priorities are determined by its members using strength-based community development principles.¹⁸

TAMIKA

Tamika first visited her local neighbourhood house with her children, with this connection later evolving into employment at the house.

Tamika has been a resident of the Princes Hill Public Housing Estate for the last six years. During that time, her connection with the house has grown, to the extent that she now refers to it as her second home. Tamika's relationship with the house was initially through her children. All four of them participated in school holiday and after school activities, such as learning club, craft, soccer, and karate.

As time went by, Tamika gradually got to know House staff and her own connection there was strengthened. She began visiting more and more, and then late last year she was employed by the house for eight weeks to run the coffee cart and the weekly food stall. Having been out of the workforce for many years, Tamika was delighted to gain some employment and notes, 'the neighbourhood house gave me an opportunity, helped me to learn to trust people, be more sociable, and want to engage in life and work again.'

After completing her job, Tamika wanted to give back to the house and started volunteering, sharing her barista skills with VCAL students to teach them how to use a coffee machine. Tamika's dedication and great work has now resulted in regular employment as a cleaner at the house. She notes that she has experienced stigmatisation in her life, but that she 'doesn't know of any other places that are so inclusive and where people are welcomed in the same way. The house is a place you feel accepted and valued whatever your background or circumstances.'

¹⁷ Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2022c.

¹⁸ North East Neighbourhood House Network, 2022.

Yarra's Neighbourhood Houses



Neighbourhood house profiles and demographics

Service areas

Across Victoria, the number of neighbourhood houses in each local government area results in a service ratio of one neighbourhood house for between 11,000 and 70,000 people, depending on population density and the number of neighbourhood houses in each municipality.¹⁹ Yarra is fortunate to have one of the highest rates of neighbourhood houses to people in the state, with approximately one house per 12,500 people.²⁰ The service catchment around each house is estimated here as being 800 metres (Figure 1).

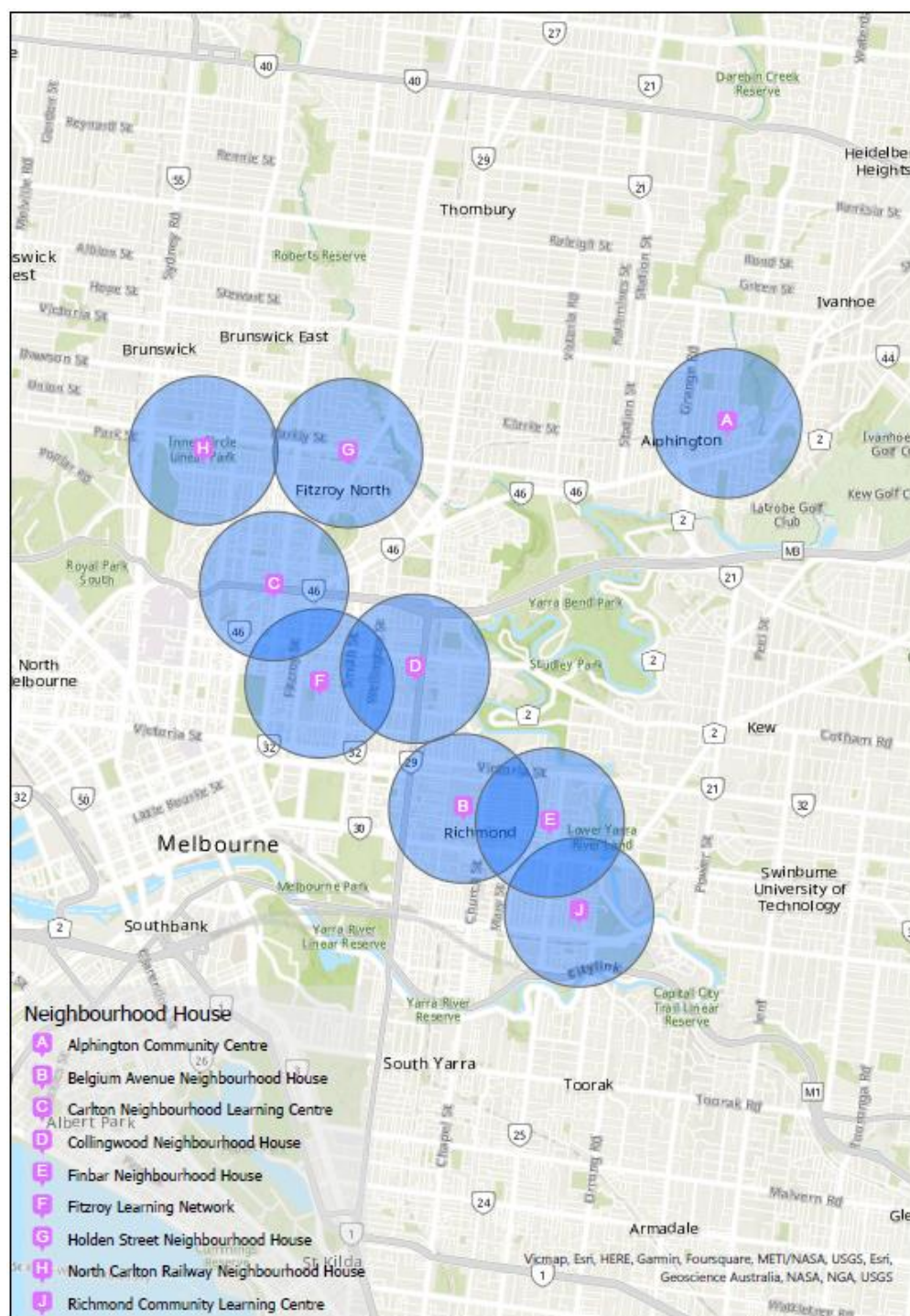


Figure 1: Map showing the location and spread of neighbourhood houses across Yarra with an 800-metre radius around each house to demonstrate the catchment areas.

¹⁹ Weston, 2021, p. 3.

²⁰ Weston, 2021, p 3.

In this section of the Framework, each of Yarra's neighbourhood houses is profiled demographically based on the 800-metre catchment radius, along with a description of the activities and services they offer specific to their surrounding communities. This 800-metre radius has been chosen to demonstrate the service catchment of Yarra's neighbourhood houses because it is considered an optimal distance for people to access a local service without driving.²¹

The map in Figure 1 clearly shows the localised focus of programs and services for the surrounding communities. The activities highlighted in these profiles provide a snapshot of the breadth and diversity of projects, services and events delivered, while the demographic profiles demonstrate the differences and similarities between the people who live within each neighbourhood. There is a demographic snapshot of the broader Yarra municipality to provide an overall context for these neighbourhood variations.

About the profile data

Population

Drawing upon ABS data and other sources, id® consulting estimates that as of 2023, the City of Yarra has an estimated resident population of 99,557 and 47,988 households.

Internet access

Internet access is an ongoing problem, with access to non-cellular internet that is uncapped and affordable a significant challenge. Until recently, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) included a question in the Australian Census asking whether a household had internet access at home. With internet access increasingly essential for communicating with others, interacting with services and accessing important information, whether or not the internet is available at home can be used as an indicator of disadvantage. The last measure that was taken in the 2016 Australian Census has been included in these demographic profiles for this reason.

Data sources

The data for the overall Yarra snapshot is from the most recent Australian Census, which, as noted above, was undertaken in 2021. The data used for the Neighbourhood House profiles (i.e., population demographics within the 800-metre service catchments) is drawn from population profile and forecast modelling data produced by Pitney Bowes from the 2016 Australian Census.

²¹ State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017.

Yarra demographic snapshot^{22 23}

As of 2023, the City of Yarra has an estimated resident population of 99,557 and 47,988 households.



Housing

- 8.1 percent of households rent public housing, the highest proportion of public housing of any municipality in Victoria
- 43 percent of households rent on the private rental market



Income

- Almost 40% of Yarra households earn more than \$2,500 per week
- 60% of employed workers are in managerial and professional occupations
- 12.6% percent of households have very low incomes, earning less than \$650 per week
- Many people in Yarra have considerable economic advantage, but a sizable proportion of the population live with ongoing economic hardship and social disadvantage



Government support

- 4,597 people receive the age pension
- 4,581 people hold health care cards
- 2,810 people receive JobSeeker payments
- 2,393 people receive the Disability Support Pension
- 9,558 people are Pension Concession Card holders
- 635 people are low income card holders



How we travel

- Yarra residents are less likely to own a car than Greater Melbourne
- Almost a fifth of households (19.3%) have no vehicle at all (compared to 8.2% across Melbourne) and rely on other forms of transport



Young people

- Just over 12 percent of residents are aged under 17 years
- 4 percent are babies and pre-schoolers
- Almost 5 percent are in primary school
- 3.5 percent are in secondary school



Older people

- A key service demographic for neighbourhood houses is retirees and older people
- 16.2% of the Yarra population are over the age of 60 years



Internet access

- Almost 10 percent of Yarra's household have no internet access at home
- Neighbourhood houses are a key point of internet access for many of these households



Employment

- Workforce participation in Yarra is higher than Greater Melbourne
- 21 percent of Yarra residents who are aged over 15 years are not engaged in any employment or study (as opposed to 32 percent in Greater Melbourne)
- This is a fifth of Yarra's adult population



Health and disability

- 3.9% of people in Yarra require assistance with daily living tasks
- 31.5% of the community reported one or more long-term health conditions
- The most common long-term health condition among Yarra residents is mental health



Language

- Yarra is home to 19,323 non-English speakers
- 22% of people in Yarra speak a language other than English at home
- 29% of people in Yarra were born overseas

²² .id Informed Decisions (2022)

²³ Australian Government (2022) (data on government support received only current to March 2022)

Alphington Community Centre

Alphington Community Centre is located in the heart of Alphington, supporting residents from the Cities of Yarra and Darebin. The centre began in 1982 as the Alphington Self-Help Exchange to provide activities and support services primarily for women at home with young children. Today the centre has expanded its services to provide for the whole community, with a focus on families, children and older people. Each week approximately 500 local residents access the Centre's activities, programs and services.



Women's Shed Program at Alphington Community Centre

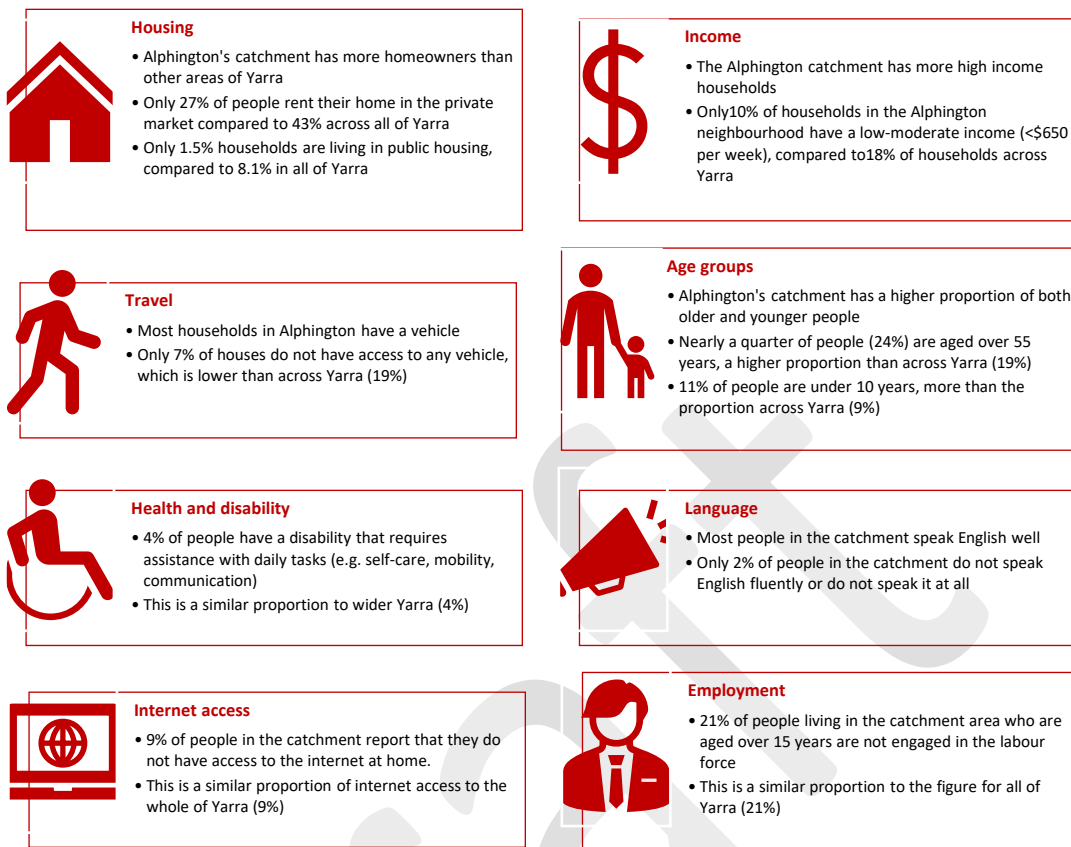
The Alphington Community Centre vision is '*working together to build and strengthen our community*' and through this it aims to encourage and enable individuals to lead active, creative and sustainable lives and nurture community connections. The centre provides community lunches, art and craft classes, gardening and sustainability workshops, counselling services, community choirs, music classes, book clubs, podcasts, and hosts community events and a 'women's shed' program. It also has a toy library and is a venue for local families' children's parties.

Alphington Community Centre places great importance on partnerships, with key partners including Darebin Libraries, Yarra City Arts, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, kinfolk and Second Bite, who support the community lunches and the all-abilities bowls program at Alphington Bowls Club. The centre relies on the dedication and skills of volunteers to run programs such as line dancing, digital literacy classes for seniors, knitting classes, with community lunches and to maintain its popular outdoor spaces.

²⁴ As discussed above in the data note, these profiles have been based on SA1 level data from the 2016 Australian Census and will be updated when the 2021 data becomes available.

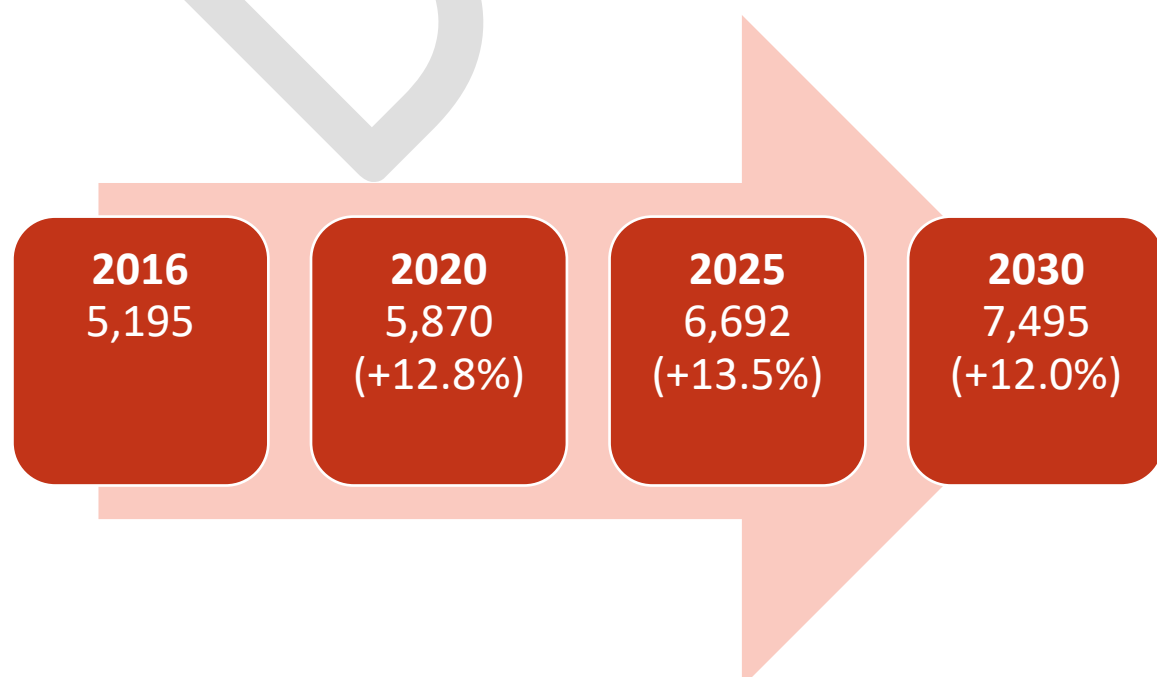
Alphington Community Centre catchment demographic snapshot

There are 5,195 people in the 800-metre catchment around the Alphington Community Centre.



Projected population growth around Alphington Community Centre to 2030

The population forecast of the 800 metres around Alphington Community Centre shows that the population in that catchment area is expected to increase by between 12 and 14% every 5 years. The expected population in 2030 is 7,495 people (compared to 5,195 people in 2016). It should be noted that the pending development of the former Amcor site at Yarra Bend will impact on population growth and service demand.



Belgium Avenue and Collingwood Neighbourhood Houses



A community celebration at Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House

BANH Inc. is a community organisation which operates Belgium Avenue and Collingwood Neighbourhood Houses, located on the Collingwood and North Richmond Public Housing Estates. It takes its name from Belgium Avenue in Richmond, which runs behind the estate where one of the neighbourhood houses is located.

These popular, friendly gathering places host community events, such as music and food festivals, art exhibitions, outdoor cinema, cultural celebrations and wellbeing activities such as yoga and Tai Chi. Both houses offer a diverse range of activities, provide meals and food, and run special events throughout the year, as well as supporting local residents to produce their own events and social enterprises – including everything from roller discos, to political theatre, to cultural catering services.

The vision of BANH Inc is to *‘create stronger community through shared experiences’*. The houses partner with a wide variety of locally based community organisations, such as Carringbush Adult Education and Concern Australia, with which they offer programs including English classes and after-school programs. Other partners include:

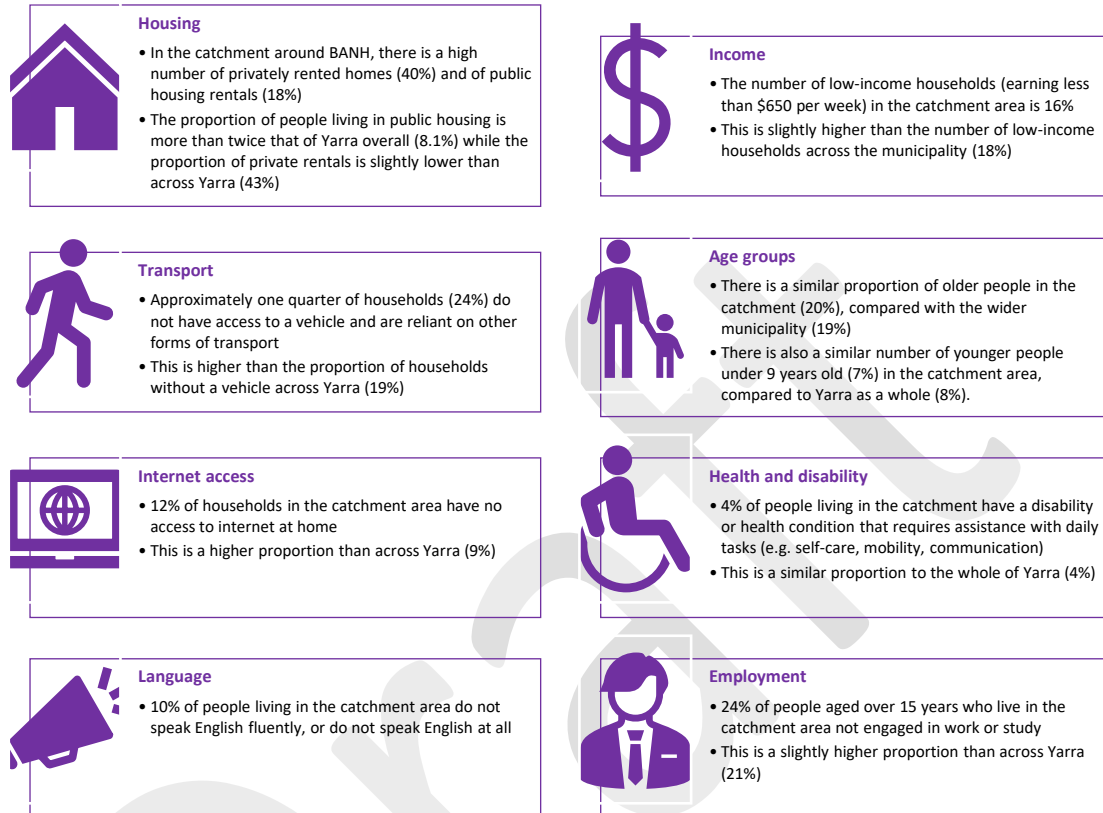
- RMIT Public Art students, for the ‘Space Between Light’ Festival on the Richmond Public Housing Estate
- Cultivating Communities, to engage the residents in the community garden at Collingwood estate
- Neighbourhood Justice Centre to establish a social enterprise kiosk run by students from the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) serving coffee and food prepared by local residents, providing traineeships for the students to build their skills and capacity in hospitality alongside their English language skills.

The houses make use of two additional spaces as well, ‘The Factory’, located at the Richmond estate, and the ‘Underground Carpark’, at the Collingwood estate. Both are active spaces for local residents

to participate in drama productions, fringe performances, craft markets, music and art events, youth activities and cultural festivals.

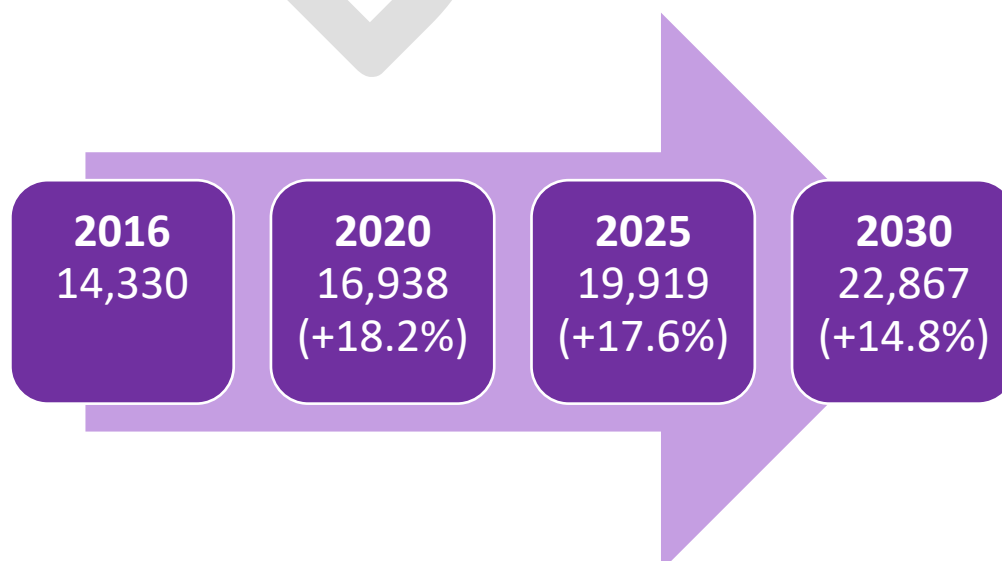
Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House catchment demographic snapshot

There are 14,330 people living in the 800-metre catchment around Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House (BANH), which takes in a portion of the Richmond public housing estate.



Projected population growth around Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House to 2030

The population growth for the 800-metre area around Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House in Richmond is forecast to be between 14% and 18% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 22,867 people living in that radius, an increase over time of more than 50% of the 2016 population (14,330).





Harvest Festival at Collingwood Neighbourhood House

Collingwood Neighbourhood House catchment demographic snapshot

There are 11,274 people living in the 800-metre catchment around Collingwood Neighbourhood House, which is located within the public housing estates between Hoddle and Wellington Streets in Collingwood.



Housing

- In the catchment around Collingwood Neighbourhood House, 39 % of households rent their home privately
- 15% of households rent public housing (15%)
- The proportion of people living in public housing is almost twice the amount in Yarra overall (8.1%)



Income

- 16% of households in the catchment area around Collingwood Neighbourhood House have a very low income, earning less than \$650 per week
- This is a higher proportion of households than in the wider City of Yarra (12.6%)



Transport

- Almost a quarter of households in the catchment (23%) had no access to a vehicle and rely on other forms of transport.
- Localised access to services is important where vehicle access is limited



Age groups

- There is about the same number of older people in the catchment area as there are across Yarra (16%)
- There are slightly more younger people (9%) in the catchment than are living in the wider City of Yarra (8%)



Internet access

- 10% of households living in the catchment area do not have access to a computer or the internet at home, which is about the same as across Yarra.



Health and disability

- 3% of people living in the catchment area have a disability or health condition that means they require assistance with daily activities (e.g. self-care, mobility, communication)
- This is slightly less than the proportion of people across Yarra (4%)



Language

- 5% of people living in the catchment around Collingwood Neighbourhood House either do not speak English or do not speak English fluently

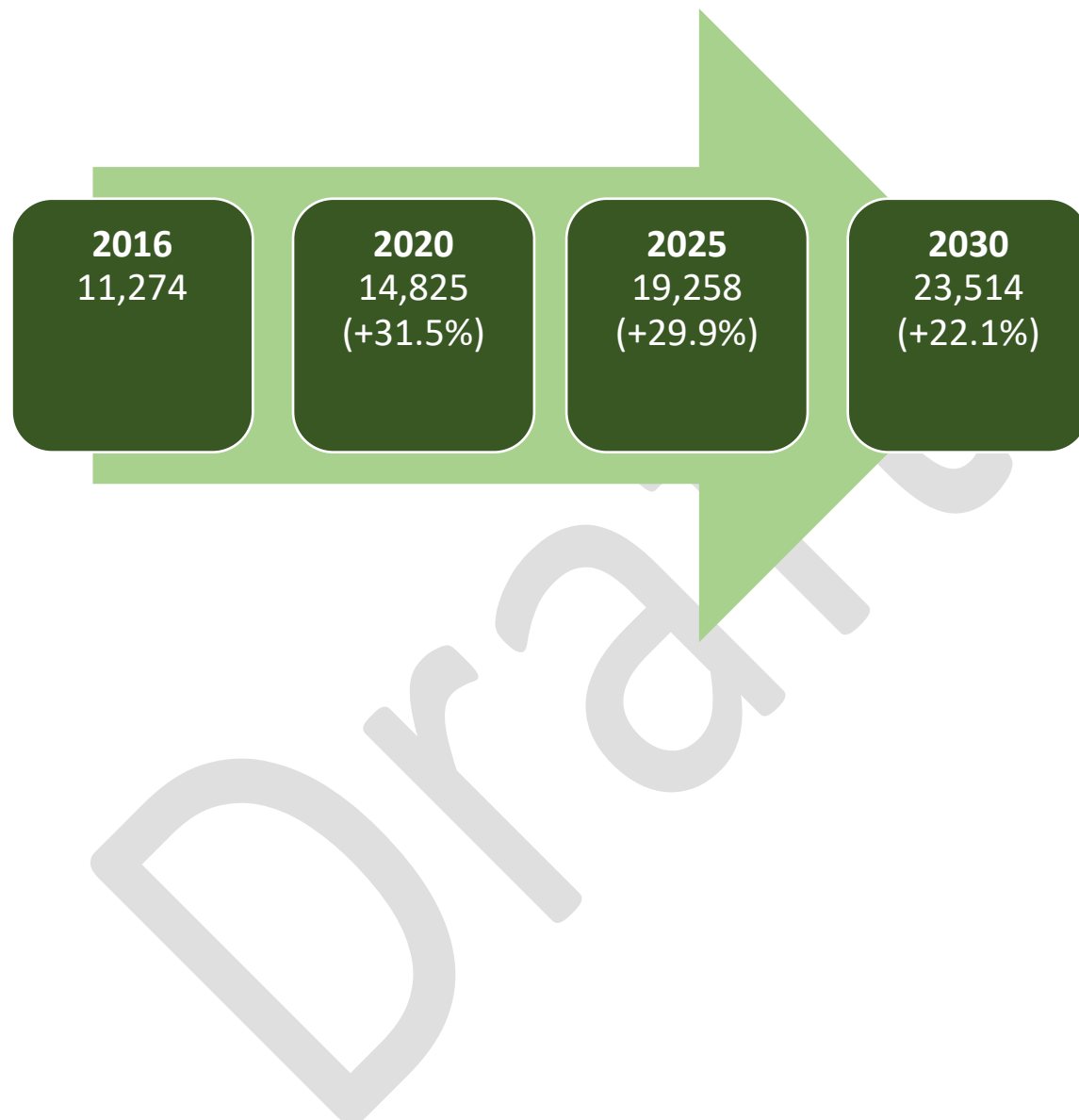


Employment

- 18% of people aged over 15 years living in the catchment area are not engaged in work or study.
- This is slightly less than the proportion of people across Yarra (21%)

Projected population growth around Collingwood Neighbourhood House to 2030

The population growth for the 800-metre area around Collingwood Neighbourhood House is forecast to be between 22% and 32% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 23,514 people living in that radius, an increase over time of more than 100% of the 2016 population (11,274).



Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre



Volunteers celebrating Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre

Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre (CNLC) provides programs and services with a vision to ‘build a community that connects people, creates opportunities and challenges disadvantage and inequity’. It is a not-for-profit organisation that works with residents of Carlton and surrounding areas – particularly with people who are experiencing disadvantage. Through a range of programs and activities, CNLC supports the community to connect, learn, share skills and participate in work and community life.

Programs are offered across a broad range of learning opportunities, with nationally recognised courses, pre-accredited courses, workshops, volunteering and events. In addition to learning, CNLC offers employment and support services through the ‘Open Door’ program. The program aims to reduce barriers to employment and education by working with people from diverse backgrounds to gain representation in the workforce, and in positions of leadership and responsibility. In addition, the house offers a digital literacy skills program which includes one-on-one support and helps students to access low-cost devices. It also provides an all-abilities program that provides literacy pathways for work and community connection.

CNLC has a community garden that provides an inner-city oasis where people can learn more about gardening or volunteer. The house has a community compost hub to help reduce food waste going to landfill and is an e-waste collection point for the local community.

Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre catchment demographic snapshot

There are 14,725 people living in the 800-metre catchment around the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre.



Housing

- 42% of people living in catchment around CNLC rent their homes privately
- This is a slightly lower proportion compared with wider Yarra (43%)
- 15% of people in the catchment live in public housing, almost twice as much across Yarra (8.1%)



Income

- 16% of households in the catchment area have very low incomes of less than \$650 per week
- This is almost 4% more than in wider Yarra (12.6%)



Transport

- 27% of households (almost a third) have no access to a vehicle and rely on other forms of transport
- This is more than the proportion of people with no vehicle across Yarra (20%) and considerably more than in Greater Melbourne (8.2%)



Age groups

- 18% of people in the catchment area are older
- This is slightly more than across Yarra (16.2%)
- 8% of people are under 10 years of age
- This is similar the proportion across Yarra (9%)



Internet access

- 9% of households in the catchment around CNLC do not have any access to a computer or internet at home
- This is the same proportion of households as across the whole of Yarra



Health and disability

- 4% of people living in the catchment area have a health condition or disability that means they require assistance with daily activities (e.g. self-care, mobility, communication)
- This is the same as the proportion of people across Yarra who require assistance



Language

- 4% of people living in the catchment area either do not speak English or do not speak it fluently

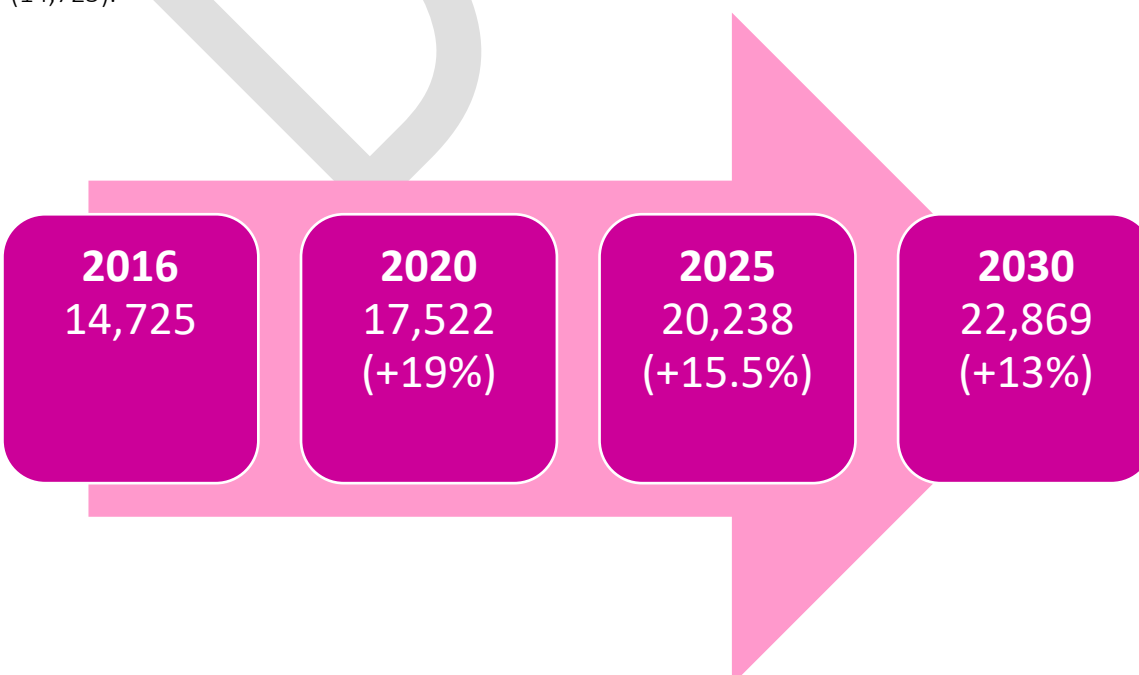


Employment

- 24% of people aged over 15 years in the catchment area around CNLC are not engaged in work or study
- This is a slightly greater proportion than across Yarra (21%)

Projected population growth around Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre to 2030

The population growth for the 800-metre area around Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre is forecast to be between 13% and 19% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated that 22,869 people will live in that radius, an increase over time of more than 50% of the 2016 population (14,725).



Finbar Neighbourhood House



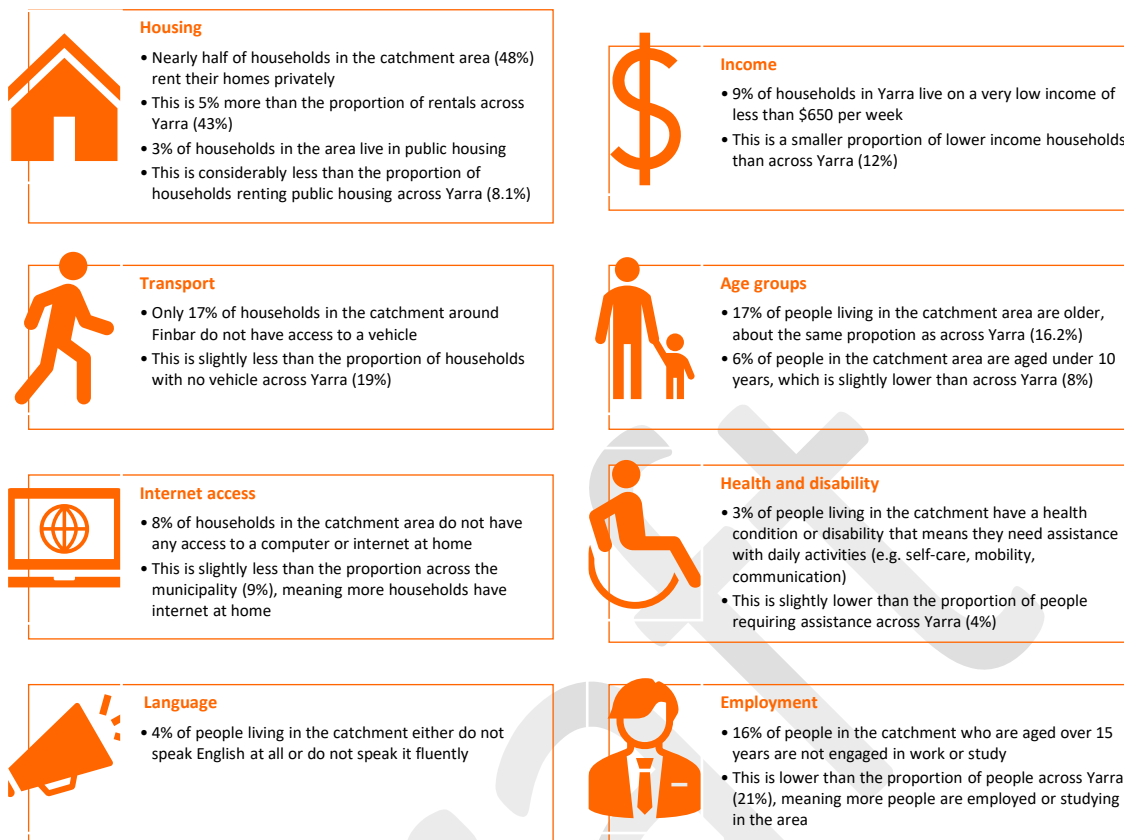
Finbar Neighbourhood House

Finbar Neighbourhood House has a vision to create a strong community that is proud of its diversity, where all people are able to realise their full potential. It offers a wide range of activities and educational programs to the residents of Richmond and nearby Abbotsford and has a focus on sustainability, including community composting exchange programs, a seed library and an extensive community garden project with plots where community members can grow their own vegetables. The House is also an e-waste collection point, and extra produce can be exchanged through the boxes on the house's verandah, next to the popular book swap.

Finbar offers a range of activities and support services for nearby residents encompassing targeted programs for older people, activities for children, music, art and craft, wellbeing classes, book clubs, men's groups and digital inclusion programs. It supports the local community by providing an inclusive environment with opportunities for lifelong learning, social connection, participation and sharing skills and information.

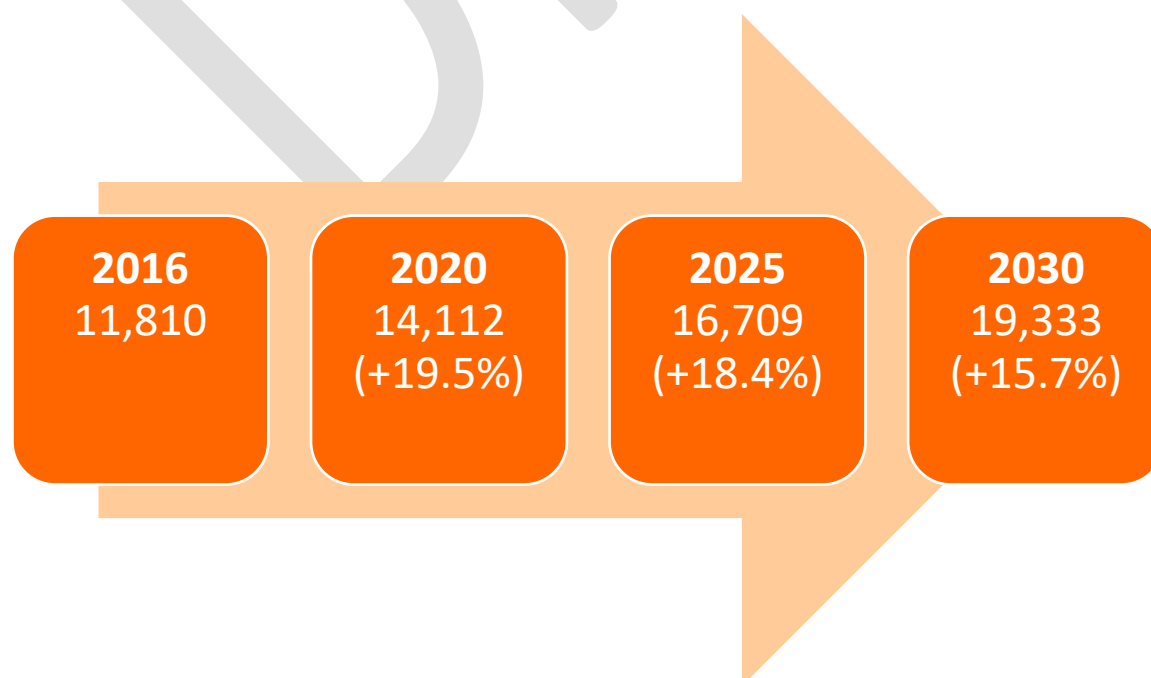
Finbar Neighbourhood House catchment demographic snapshot

There are 11,810 people residing in the 800-metre catchment around Finbar Neighbourhood House.



Projected population growth around Finbar Neighbourhood House to 2030

The population growth for the 800-metre area around Finbar Neighbourhood House is forecast to be between 15% and 20% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 19,333 people living in that radius, an increase over time of more than 50% of the 2016 population (11,810).





People enjoying a community event at Fitzroy Learning Network

Fitzroy Learning Network (FLN) is a Neighbourhood House, a Learn Local Centre, and a Registered Training Organisation. It is a place where refugees, migrants, people seeking asylum and those living on the public housing estates in Yarra can find support, get help navigating settlement services, and where they can learn and connect. FLN delivers programs and projects, often in partnership with other local groups and organisations, and is a registered charity and not for profit organisation. During 2021, FLN undertook 622 referrals to connect 63 people to support services.

The wide-ranging annual program at FLN includes: adult education, accredited training, short courses, creative classes, youth engagement programs, community support services (such as employment, housing and refugee support), a food bank, community lunches, gardening programs and events and celebrations. Fitzroy Learning Network is committed to building a strong, inclusive and engaged community, where people can access resources, build networks and find support to realise their aspirations. By investing in people and using a holistic community development approach, FLN creates opportunities for social, cultural and economic inclusion and participation.

Fitzroy Learning Network catchment demographic snapshot

There are 14,903 people residing in the 800-metre catchment radius around the Fitzroy Learning Network, which is situated next to the Atherton Gardens public housing estate.



Housing

- 40% of households in the catchment area rent their home privately, slightly less than across Yarra (43%)
- 19% of households in the catchment area live in public housing
- This is more than twice as many public housing residents as across Yarra (8.1%)



Income

- 18% of households in the catchment area had a very low income of less than \$650 per week
- This is substantially more low-income households than across Yarra (12%)



Transport

- 28% of households in the area do not have access to a vehicle, relying on other forms of transport
- This is a substantially higher proportion than across the rest of Yarra (19%)



Age groups

- 18% of people living in the catchment area are older, slightly more than across Yarra (16.2%)
- 9% of people in the catchment are younger, aged under 10 years, which is slightly more than across Yarra (8%)



Internet access

- 10% of households have no access to a computer or internet at home
- This is slightly more than across the municipality (9%)



Health and disability

- 4% of people living in the catchment have a health condition or disability that means they need assistance with daily activities (e.g. self-care, mobility, communication)
- This is the same as the proportion of people across Yarra who need assistance (4%)



Language

- 6% of people living in the catchment around Fitzroy Learning Network either do not speak English fluently or do not speak it at all

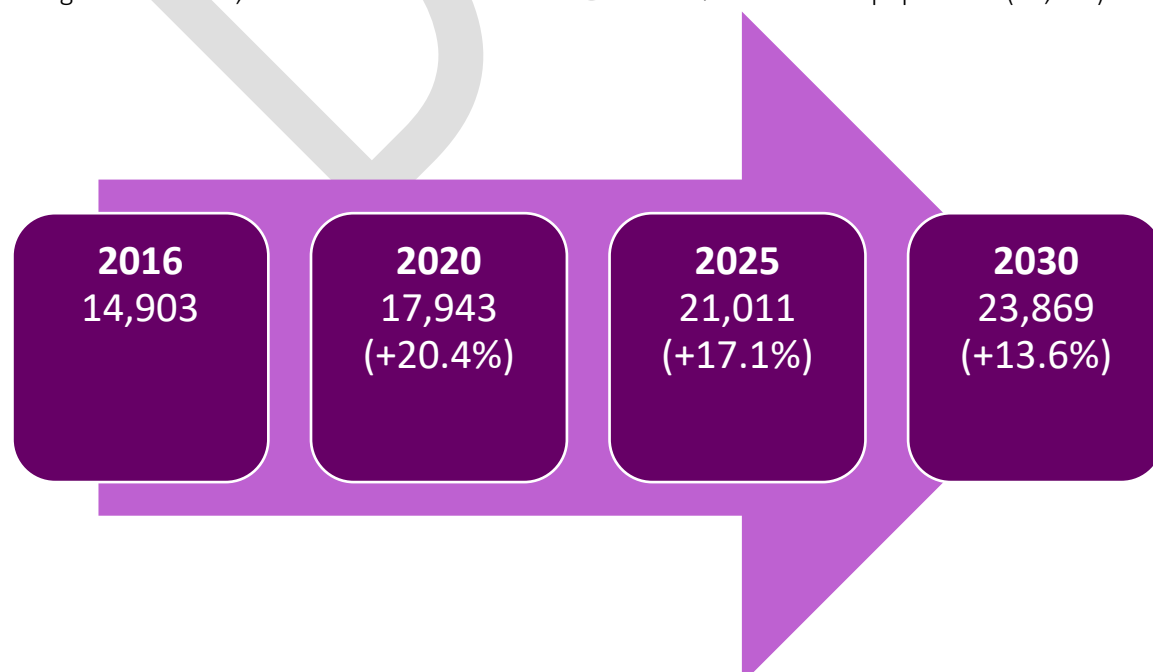


Employment

- 22% of people living in the catchment who are aged over 15 years are not engaged in work or study
- This is slightly higher than the proportion across Yarra (21%)

Projected population in the area around Fitzroy Learning Network to 2030

The population growth for the 800-metre area around Fitzroy Learning Network is forecast to be between 13% and 21% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 23,869 people living in that radius, an increase over time of more than 50% of the 2016 population (14,903).



Holden Street Neighbourhood House



Second Bite program at Holden Street Neighbourhood House

Holden Street Neighbourhood House has a history of more than 40 years as a neighbourhood house, providing a place of connection and belonging for the local community. A fundamental value of Holden Street is to work collaboratively and respectfully with diverse communities to build capacity, connections and a sense of belonging.

The house provides a range of educational, recreational, wellbeing and social activities to encourage community participation and social connection. Holden Street has good access for people with mobility needs and offers classes specifically for people with a disability, as well as the provision to support NDIS participants to access programs. The house provides classes for digital literacy, creative and visual arts, wellbeing and life skills. Additionally, it offers gardening, playgroups, community lunches, activities for seniors and men's groups. It is also a popular venue for hire by the local community for family functions, community groups and businesses forums.

Holden Street has an extensive focus on sustainability, using solar panels for energy, water tanks for the rainwater and herb garden, food growing, composting and worm farms. It is also a recycling drop off point and there is a seed library available to the community. The sustainability initiatives are integrated with the learning and education programs to increase participants' knowledge, skills and awareness for limiting energy consumption and minimising the environmental footprint. The house also runs a 'Repair and Share' program where participants learn skills in repairing household items to reuse and reduce landfill. The house provides a weekly food relief service in partnership with Second Bite and has recently established a community pantry.

Holden Street Neighbourhood House catchment demographic snapshot

There are 10,549 people residing in the 800-metre catchment of the Holden Street Neighbourhood House.



Housing

- 39% of households in the catchment area around Holden St Neighbourhood House rent their homes privately, slightly less than across Yarra (43%)
- 6% of households live in public housing, slightly lower the proportion across Yarra (8.1%)



Income

- 13% of households in the catchment area have a very low income, of less than \$650 per week
- This is slightly higher than the proportion of households with low income across Yarra (12.6%)



Transport

- 17% of households in the catchment area do not have any access to a vehicle
- This means slightly more households have a vehicle than in Yarra overall (where 19% have no vehicle access)



Age groups

- 21% of people in the catchment area are older, slightly more than across Yarra (16.2%)
- 10% of people in the catchment area are aged under 10 years, which is slightly more than in Yarra as a whole (8%)



Internet access

- 9% of households in the catchment area have no access to a computer or internet at home, which is about the same as across Yarra (9%)



Health and disability

- 4% of people in the catchment area have a health condition or disability that means they need assistance with daily tasks (e.g. self-care, mobility, communication)
- This is the same as the proportion of people across Yarra who need assistance (4%)



Language

- 3% of people in the catchment area are either not fluent in English or do not speak it at all

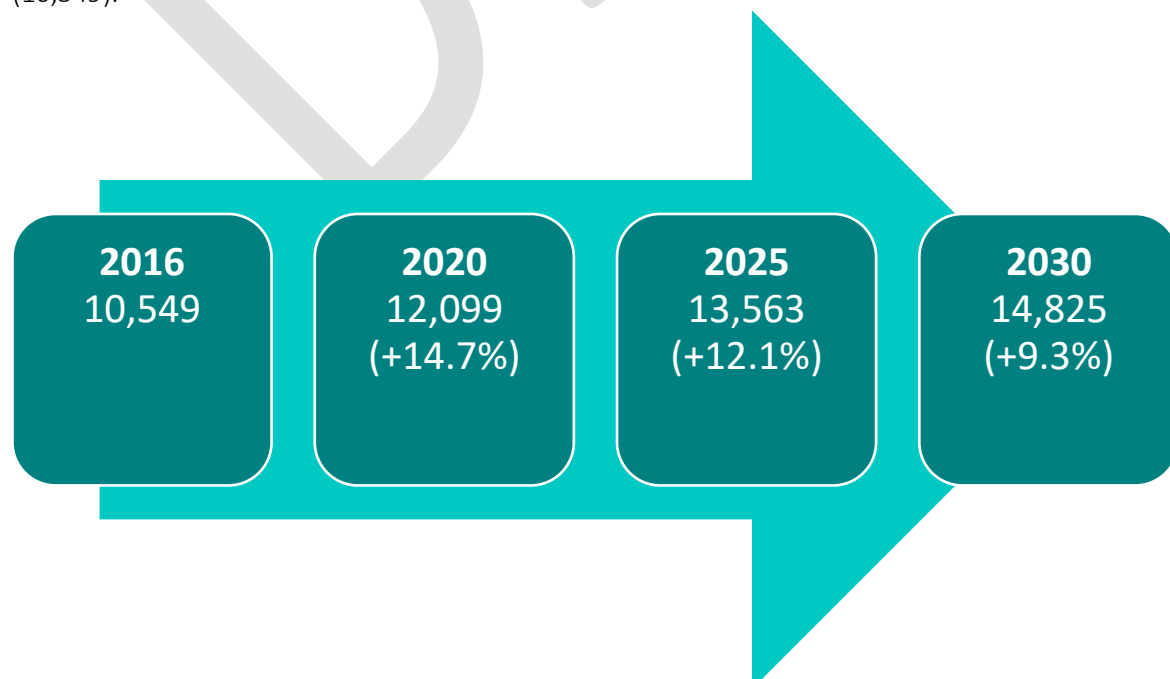


Employment

- 18% of people aged over 15 years living in the catchment area are not engaged in work or study.
- This is slightly less than the proportion of people over 15 across Yarra who do not work or study (21%)

Projected population growth around Holden Street Neighbourhood House to 2030

The population growth for the 800-metre area around Holden Street Neighbourhood House is forecast to be between 9% and 15% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 14,825 people living in that radius, an increase over time of almost 50% of the 2016 population (10,549).



North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House



A Covid-safe AGM at the North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House

The North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House is a place where social connections are strengthened, social action is encouraged, and people are supported to expand their possibilities and make meaningful contributions to the community. It resides in a building that was originally the North Carlton railway station, part of the Inner Circle Line, which was discontinued in the early 1980s. Prior to that, in the early 1970s, the residents, with the support of unions, saved the historic building and surrounding land from becoming an industrial site. Residents continued to work to have the former railway land transformed into a linear park and the old railway station developed as a neighbourhood house. In 1984, the North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House was formally established.

The house's programs, services and activities promote participation, connection, social harmony between contrasting demographics, and foster a sense of belonging. It has a thriving community garden, which is a popular place for local residents to connect, and to learn about growing food, composting, soil and water management. Students from local primary and secondary schools also have dedicated gardening programs to learn to grow and harvest produce. The program provides a strong sense of inclusion and belonging where young people have opportunities to engage positively, learn skills and participate.

Railway House has a weekly free food market provided through donations from Second Bite, FairShare and local bakeries, and stocked with excess produce from the garden. Other regular offerings include health and wellbeing programs, music and choir groups, cooking classes and weekly community lunches, and a drop-off point for e-waste and soft plastics. There are dedicated intergenerational programs as well as activities for children and young people.

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House catchment demographic snapshot

There are 10,003 people residing in the 800-metre catchment of the North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House.



Housing

- 45% of people in the catchment area rent their home privately, slightly more than the proportion of private renters across Yarra (43%)
- 4% of households live in public housing, which is around half the proportion of public housing rented Yarra as a whole (8.1%)



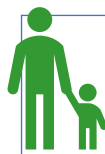
Income

- 12% of households in the catchment area have very low incomes of less than \$650 per week, which is about the same proportionally as across Yarra (12.6%)



Transport

- 19% of households in the catchment do not have access to a vehicle, which is the same proportionally as across Yarra



Age groups

- 19% of people living in the catchment area are older, which is a higher proportion than across the municipality (16.2%)
- 7% of people in the catchment are aged under 10 years, slightly less than the proportion across Yarra (8%)



Internet access

- 8% of households in the catchment area do not have access to a computer or internet at home, which is slightly below the proportion of households with no internet access across Yarra (9%)



Health and disability

- 3% of people in the catchment have a health condition or disability that means they require assistance with daily tasks (e.g. self-care, mobility, communication)
- This is slightly less than the proportion of people across Yarra who need daily assistance (4%)



Language

- 2% of people in the catchment area are either not fluent in English language or do not speak English at all

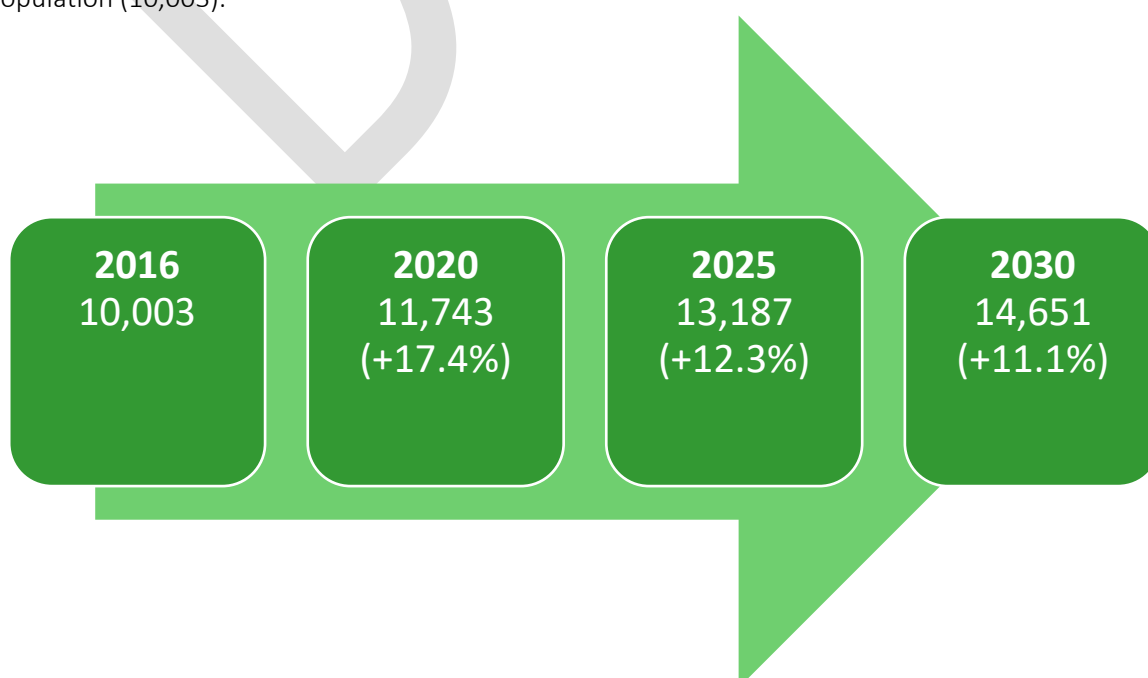


Employment

- 20% of people aged over 15, or one in five adults in the catchment area, are not engaged in work or study.
- This is slightly less than the proportion of people over 15 across Yarra who do not work or study (21%)

Projected population growth around North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House to 2030

The population growth forecast for the 800-metre area around North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House is forecast to be between 11% and 18% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 14,651 people living within that radius, an increase over time of almost 50% of the 2016 population (10,003).





Bike group at Burnley Backyard

Richmond Community Learning Centre (RCLC) creates spaces and opportunities for people to come together and connect, learn new skills and contribute towards an inclusive, vibrant healthy community. RCLC provides programs and services across three sites:

- **Studio 1:** a versatile space for local groups and organisations to meet and engage, as well as spaces for social functions for families
- **Burnley Backyard:** which focuses on sustainability initiatives and activities for children
- **The Stables:** which offers a range of activities, programs and educational opportunities to support families and children

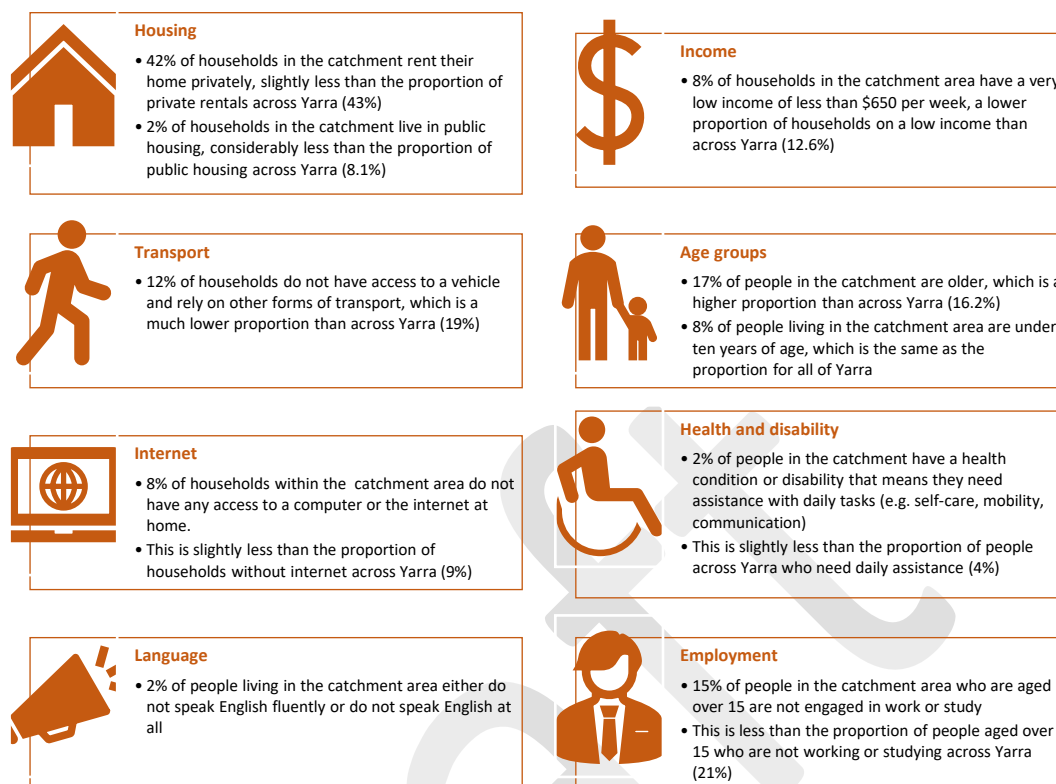
Partnerships with Mums in Yarra, Ardency Place, Yarra Energy Foundation and MIND Australia support new community projects and workshops to facilitate a stronger, more connected and resilient community.

RCLC empowers local women to build a stronger sense of themselves and connection to other women by providing non-traditional hands-on learning opportunities in the areas of working with timber, welding and furniture refurbishment. Local women facilitators are also supported as they start and build their own small business.

There are extensive gardening and sustainability programs, organic gardening classes, composting, an e-recycling collection point, and monthly Repair Corner to fix, mend and repair anything from clothes to bikes to your favourite toaster, minimising waste and reducing landfill. Additionally, RCLC offers digital literacy programs, and a range of health and wellbeing activities.

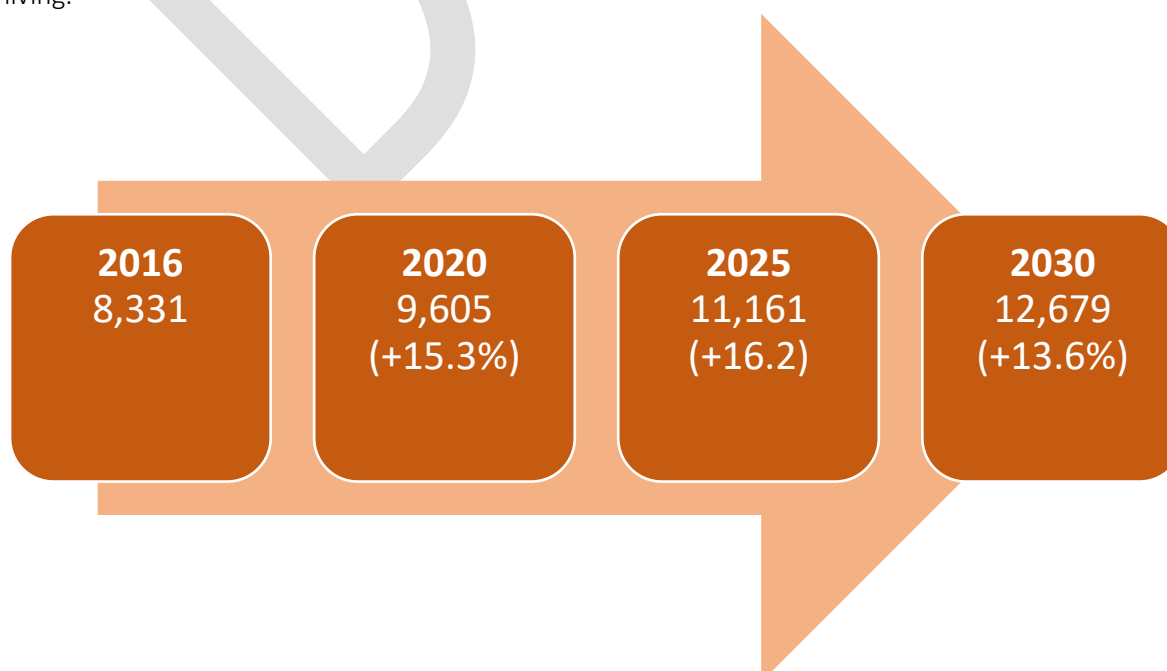
Richmond Community Learning Centre catchment demographic snapshot

There are 8,331 people living in the 800-metres around the Richmond Community Learning Centre.



Projected population growth around Richmond Community Learning Centre to 2030

The population growth forecast for the 800-metre area around Richmond Community Learning Centre is forecast to be between 13% and 17% every five years until 2030. In 2030 it is estimated there will be 12,679 people living within that radius, an increase over time of about 50% of the 2016 population (8,331). Further development at the former GTV Nine television studio site is likely to impact on these demographics as more dwellings are completed, including aged care and retirement living.



DIANE

Diane has been involved in her house's Occasional Care program for 29 years, first as a participant, then as a volunteer and finally as an employee.

Diane has lived in Richmond all her life and is incredibly proud to be part of the neighbourhood. For Diane, her local house is so much more than a neighbourhood house. It has acted as an extension of her family, it provided occasional care and childcare to her daughter, and was somewhere for her to feel safe, cared for and heard as a newly single mum.

In 1993 she started taking children she was caring for to her house's playgroup. The warm welcome they received inspired her to become involved in fundraising and community lunches, all of which led her to join the committee. The house remained an integral part of not only her daily life, but also her wellbeing. This became most apparent in 2001, which brought both the loss of her mother and a divorce. During this challenging time, Diane says, 'The help I received from everyone at the centre was just wonderful, if it wasn't for them, I don't know what I would have done.'

Beyond the personal support provided by her house, Diane was given the opportunity of casual employment in the Occasional Care program. Staff also urged her to return to study, and so in 2006 she applied for a Certificate III in Children's Services. After not studying for over 40 years, it was a hard transition, but the staff and community members of her local house supported her throughout. Diane graduated in 2007 and in the same year she was encouraged to obtain a Diploma. Inspired, she followed this advice, which led her to becoming the house's Occasional Care Team Coordinator.

Diane believes that if it wasn't for the dedication, perseverance, and care that she and her daughter received from the house's staff, she doesn't think they would be where they are today.

For Diane the impact of her house hasn't stopped with her. She established an outstanding rapport with the children and their parents, grandparents, and extended families, building strong community connections. Her daughter now housesits for one of the families she used to babysit, and she notes that it feels full circle. Diane says, 'We have been given skills and connections that continue to move through the generations. My house pulled me from my isolated and withdrawn existence and planted me firmly within my community. I am always grateful.'



Strategic Directions



Strategic Directions²⁵

Council recognises and is committed to supporting the core business of neighbourhood houses, which represent an important investment in Yarra's communities.

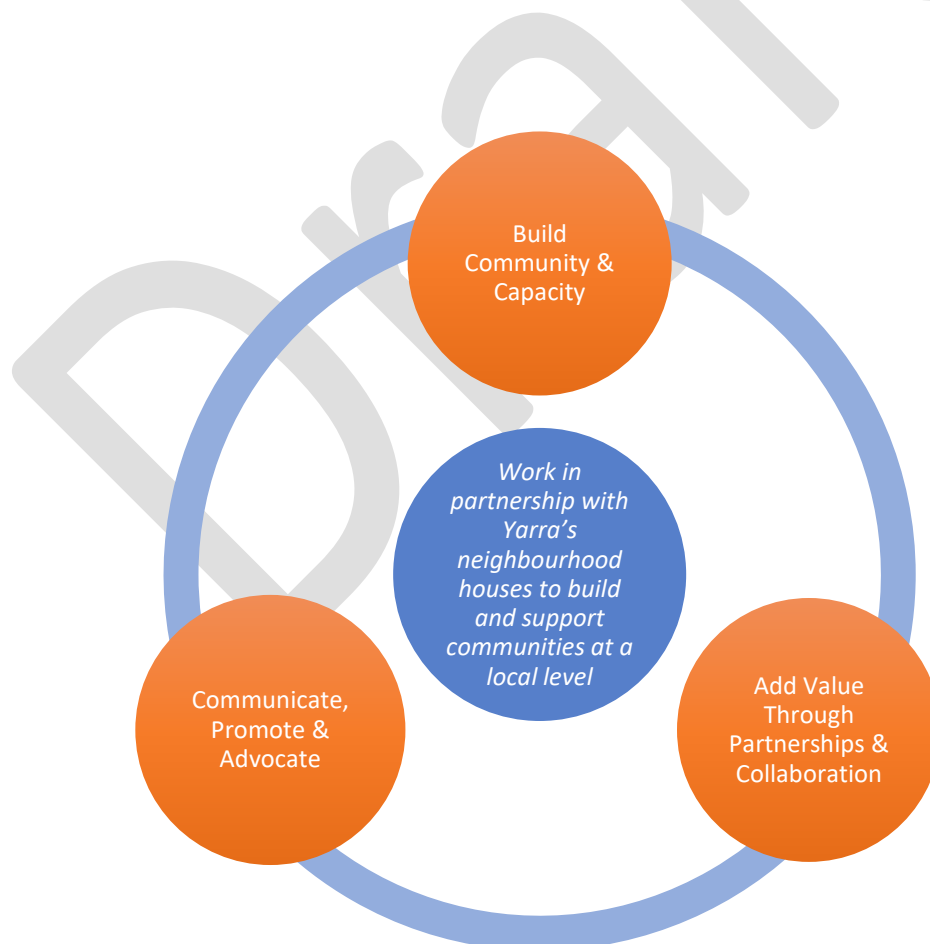
Neighbourhood houses are independent non-profit organisations and operate in partnership with Council and the other funding bodies. As it states earlier in the report, both the State Government and Council provide core funding for neighbourhood houses, which also generate their own income. The following strategic directions should be read with this in mind. These directions are intended to guide this valuable partnership through actions undertaken together.

The overall strategic direction is ***to work in partnership with Yarra's neighbourhood houses to build and support communities at a local level.***

Through this framework, Council aims to build on neighbourhood houses' core business with strategic directions that sustain, maintain and improve our neighbourhood house network in ways that are robust and represent best-practice community development.

We will work towards this in partnership with the neighbourhood houses through three key areas:

1. Build Community and Capacity
2. Add Value Through Partnerships and Collaboration
3. Communicate, Promote and Advocate



²⁵ Each strategic direction has been matched against the corresponding strategic objective within the *Yarra City Council Plan 2021–2025*. Where there is an asterisk (*) after a strategic objective, it means that this same connection applies to the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* (which is embedded within the Council Plan document).

Strategic Direction 1: Build Community and Capacity

This strategic direction aims to maintain and improve Yarra's neighbourhood houses by building capacity for social connections and civic participation in the community and building the capacity and resilience of Yarra's neighbourhood houses.

1. Build Community and Capacity		Responsibility	Council Plan Strategic Objective	Related Strategy from Council Plan
1.1	Connect with community members whose needs have emerged or become more complex.	Neighbourhood houses	Social equity and health	2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
				2.3 Support vulnerable communities and residents of public housing to thrive in the community
				2.7 Work actively to prevent and respond to gendered violence and all forms of violence by addressing known contributors to violence and promoting a gender equitable, safe and respectful community*
1.2	Increase digital access and improve digital literacy for the community.	Neighbourhood houses	Social equity and health	2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
				2.3 Support vulnerable communities and residents of public housing to thrive in the community
1.3	Work with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria to make best use of research into the impact of neighbourhood houses' programs, events and services and gain deeper understanding of social impact and community need.	Shared	Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy

1.4	Extend reach to target demographics who are underrepresented in program participation by accessing and utilising demographic data and other social statistics.	Shared	Social equity and health	2.3 Support vulnerable communities and residents of public housing to thrive in the community
			Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
1.5	Educate and empower the community about sustainability and encourage action in areas such as the climate emergency and the circular economy.	Neighbourhood houses	Climate and Environment	1.1 Take urgent action to respond to the climate emergency and extend our impact through advocacy and partnerships
				1.2 Lead and support the community, business and industry to take urgent climate action and transition towards net zero emissions and a circular economy
				1.3 Enhance the resilience of our community to prepare for health related and other impacts of climate change *
				1.4 Lead, embed and promote the transition towards net zero carbon and a circular economy and extend our impact through advocacy and partnerships
1.6	Share information between houses and Council to inform the community of local issues and resources, and to increase civic engagement.	Shared	Social equity and health	2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
			Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy

Strategic Direction 2: Add Value Through Partnerships and Collaboration

This strategic direction focuses on sustaining and improving resources and reach of Yarra's neighbourhood houses by actively leveraging partnerships and collaborations.

2. Add Value Through Partnerships and Collaboration	Responsibility	Council Plan Strategic Objective	Council Plan Strategic Objective
2.1	Encourage partnerships to further resources and reach for programs, services and events, and to access specific expertise where needed.	Council	2.1 Celebrate, respect and embrace Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and heritage, and reflect this in our decision-making, services and activities
			2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
			3.4 Facilitate local partnerships which create and promote a range of learning, employment and other pathway opportunities for businesses, workers, and residents
2.2	Enhance linkage between the neighbourhood houses and Yarra's existing volunteers' program where appropriate.	Council	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
			2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
2.3	Identify opportunities for new partnerships where appropriate, including	Neighbourhood houses	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
			3.4 Facilitate local partnerships which create and promote a range of

	but not limited to, local businesses, educational institutions, and local organisations.			learning, employment and other pathway opportunities for businesses, workers, and residents
				Democracy and governance 6.4 Practice good governance, transparency and accountable planning and decision-making
2.4	With Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and North East Neighbourhood House Network, leverage, generate and promote training and development opportunities for neighbourhood house staff, volunteers and board/committee members.	Shared	Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
				6.4 Practice good governance, transparency and accountable planning and decision-making
2.5	Enhance collaboration and accountability through review and update of funding agreements, network terms of reference and the Memorandum of Understanding.	Council	Democracy and governance	6.2 Manage our finances responsibly and improve long-term financial management planning
				6.4 Practice good governance, transparency and accountable planning and decision-making
2.6	Develop clear, consistent program-specific partnership agreements that articulate roles and responsibilities of particular areas of the Council and of the neighbourhood houses, and hold partnership meetings where appropriate.	Council	Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
				6.4 Practice good governance, transparency and accountable planning and decision-making
2.7	Where appropriate, build upon and help identify opportunities to utilise economies of scale for neighbourhood	Shared	Social equity and health	2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*

	houses, by collectively accessing and sharing resources.		Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
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Draft

Strategic Direction 3: Communicate, Promote and Advocate

This direction is focused on improving operational conditions for neighbourhood houses through strategic advocacy that considers the funding and policy context for neighbourhood houses, promoting achievements and best practice.

3. Communicate, Promote and Advocate		Responsibility	Council Plan Strategic Objective	Council Plan Strategic Objective
3.1	Utilise Neighbourhood House's community connections to strengthen Council's approach to community engagement	Council	Democracy and governance	6.1 Provide opportunities for meaningful, informed and representative community engagement to inform Council's decision-making
3.2	Support advocacy campaigns that promote adequate and sustainable funding for the neighbourhood house sector from the state government.	Shared	Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy
3.3	Showcase the work done by neighbourhood houses to highlight the importance of their function for local health and wellbeing outcomes and strengthen long-term resourcing and sustainability.	Shared	Social equity and health	2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
3.4	Promote the significant role of neighbourhood houses in meeting changing service demand in the current social and mental health landscape.	Shared	Social equity and health	2.2 Build a more resilient, inclusive, safe and connected community, which promotes social, physical and mental wellbeing*
3.5	Build neighbourhood house staff marketing skills using common tools and social media channels.	Council	Democracy and governance	6.3 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy

Implementation and monitoring

The Strategic Directions outlined above will be implemented and monitored through an annual progress report against this framework which will be reviewed and updated when the context in which it sits has significantly changed. Annual reports will be provided to Council on the progress and status of the framework and any relevant shifts in the policy environment or community circumstance. At the point of major change to Council's policy positions or the broader policy environment, a new framework can be developed.

Related Policies

Yarra Council Policies

The Neighbourhood House Partnership Framework is closely aligned with the Yarra City *Community Vision* and *Council Plan 2021–2025*. The following table demonstrates who is responsible for each strategic objective, and their alignment to both the Council Plan's Strategic Objectives and Strategies:

The draft Neighbourhood House Partnership Framework is strategically aligned with the following strategic objectives of the Council Plan:

- Climate and Environment – The houses offer activities and education to community, to raise awareness and encourage sustainable practices in the everyday lives of the community.
- Social Equity and Health – The houses support community members and groups to participate in recreational, educational and social programs that strengthen their capacity and improve wellbeing.
- Local Economy – The houses offer education and training to build capacity for disadvantaged communities which can lead to the development of small businesses.
- Democracy and Governance – Through strategic partnerships, the houses and Council utilise resourceful service delivery methods, increase transparency, and further the reach of civic/community engagement efforts.

Specifically, the framework aligns with the following specific strategies in the Council Plan, as mapped out in the [strategic directions](#) above:

Relevant Council Plan Strategic Objective		Related Council Plan Strategy
1	Climate and Environment	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4
2	Social equity and health	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7
3	Local Economy	3.4
6	Democracy and governance	6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4

Under the Council Plan, the following policy documents intersect with this Framework:

- **Aboriginal Partnerships**
 - [Yana Ngargna Plan 2020–2023](#)
- **Arts and Culture**
 - [Arts and Culture Strategy 2022–2026](#)
- **City Works and Assets**
 - [Asset Management Policy](#)
 - [Asset Plan 2022-2032](#)
 - [Waste Minimisation and Resource Recovery Strategy 2018–2022](#)

- Climate and Sustainability
 - [Climate Emergency Plan 2020-24](#)
- Community Wellbeing
 - [Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy 2018–2023](#)
 - [Community Infrastructure Plan](#)
 - [Multicultural Partnerships Plan 2019–2023](#)
 - [Social Justice Charter](#)
 - [Strategic Community Infrastructure Framework](#)
 - [Volunteer Strategy 2019–2023](#)
- Families, Children and Young People
 - [0–25 Years Plan 2018–2022](#)
- Aged and Disability Services
 - [Access and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2024](#)
- Library Services
 - [Yarra Libraries Strategic Plan 2022–2026](#)
- Yarra Leisure
 - [Yarra Moves Physical Activity Strategy 2021-2031](#)

Relevant Victorian Strategies and Guidelines

- [Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Strategic Plan \(2019–2021\)](#)
- [Neighbourhood House Coordination Program Guidelines 2016–2019](#)²⁶

Relevant Legislation (in alphabetical order)

- Child Safety Act 2005
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Local Government Act 2020
- Privacy Act 2000
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012
- Working with Children Act 2005

²⁶ Although this appears outdated these are the most recent guidelines. As new guidelines become available, they should be accessible here: <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/neighbourhood-house-coordination-program>

Methodology

Consultation

Extensive consultation was undertaken to understand issues and opportunities for neighbourhood houses and their stakeholders. Themes were drawn after each consultation and were built upon as consultations progressed, thus taking an iterative approach.

The nine neighbourhood houses were initially consulted individually. They were then kept informed of the Framework progression through regular Neighbourhood House Network meetings. This approach was supported by the houses, with one neighbourhood house manager stating:

'I think it's very wonderful having a Council that is so supportive of neighbourhood houses and that this seems to have been a very clear and slow and consultative process. And I know a lot of my fellow managers feel very happy with the way it's been conducted. So just to pass on that, congratulations to you.' – Neighbourhood House Manager (2022)

Key stakeholders for Yarra's neighbourhood houses were also consulted to understand how Council can better facilitate internal and external opportunities for houses:

- North-East Neighbourhood House Network (the regional sector network for Yarra, Darebin, Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea)
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (the sector's peak body)
- Council officers (regarding partnerships and subject matter expertise)
- Neighbourhood House Board/Committee Members (two consultation sessions held)
- Council Advisory Groups (Active Ageing Advisory Group, Disability Advisory Group, Multicultural Advisory Group – officers also note that the Yana Ngargna Advisory Group was not being convened during the Framework development period).

Given the geographical specificity of neighbourhood houses, demographic profiles for each neighbourhood house were developed using the 20-minute neighbourhood model with the analysis outlined above in the section on [Yarra's neighbourhood houses](#). This model was adopted in *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* with the aim of neighbourhoods to meet their needs through 'living locally'.²⁷ A key feature of the 20-minute neighbourhood model is its 800-metre walkable catchment area.²⁸ Demographic profiles for each house have therefore been calculated using the data within 800 metres of each house. Demographic information has been sourced from Australian Census data.²⁹ Creating profiles for each house is important to understand the differences that exist across the houses. This information not only serves to inform the Framework for Council but will also assist houses to further develop and tailor their programs and services.

Analysis

Issues and opportunities that arose from consultations emerged from thematic analysis of the consultation discussions and data gathered through desktop research. The themes and sub-themes identified through this process led to the development of the three strategic directions that lay the foundations for the Framework. Research and reports by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria were drawn on to provide deeper understanding of the activity and social impact of Yarra's neighbourhood houses during the several years leading up to this Framework. The calculations used in Neighbourhood

²⁷ State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017

²⁸ State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017, pp. 98–99.

²⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census (at time of writing, the data from the 2021 Census was yet to be released)

Houses Victoria's research are quoted in detail in [Appendix 2](#). All other research materials are as cited with references below.

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Appendix 1: Impact of COVID-19

The Neighbourhood House Partnership Plan 2018 – 2021 was developed without the foresight of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on neighbourhood houses and their communities. Action taken by the houses during the pandemic has demonstrated their capacity for quick adaptation to changing community need. Houses were pivotal to communicating Council's pandemic response to the community – particularly to groups that can be harder to reach and who do not access digital media easily. They have also been key players in filling important service gaps, such as food relief, health and social support. Where institutions such as government can create efficiencies of scale, small community-based organisations such as neighbourhood houses have 'adaptive efficiency'.³⁰

Conversations with Neighbourhood House Managers and anecdotes from the community (as shown above in case studies) demonstrated to Council officers that neighbourhood houses have responded to the needs that have been emphasised by the pandemic by:

- providing food relief services (increased demand has been maintained since the pandemic)
- making efforts to bridge the digital divide (websites and apps were key sources of pandemic-related health information)
- mitigating loneliness and social isolation (the impacts of which are still heightened)

The pandemic has also highlighted how a lack of resourcing impedes the impact of neighbourhood houses across Yarra, and it was noted in the consultations that staff, and in particular manager, burnout has become a pressing concern. While working with limited resources is a historical issue for these organisations, the last two years have accentuated how this creates a strain on the wellbeing of not only the community but also the neighbourhood house staff. The focus on governance training and support in the strategic directions is intended to help address this issue.

According to Council's 2021 Neighbourhood House Survey, the house and centres recorded a total loss of income of \$190,109. This impact varied across houses/centres, with the loss of income ranging between four and 51 percent of their individual annual income. In addition to the loss of income, 44% of houses/centres incurred additional expenses in 2021, accumulating to a total of \$29,853.³¹

Houses advised that the most notable services and programs to have been suspended as a direct result of COVID-19 were:

- Hiring out spaces for events and meetings, resulting in reduced income
- Organising fundraisers, resulting in reduced income
- Family and children's services

Programs that were adapted/reduced were:

- Education classes (excluding RTO)
- Seniors' programs

A data snapshot taken over four days between lockdowns in 2021 revealed that, during that short time, Yarra's neighbourhood houses provided \$78,522 of value in provision of services, support and community wellbeing activities, including:³²

- Food and groceries: \$3,769
- Services such as employment support, digital literacy and community meals: \$6,280
- Volunteered labour: \$16,970

³⁰ McShane and Coffey, 2022, p. 2.

³¹ Yarra City Council, 2021.

³² Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2022.

- Quality of life improvements through social connection: \$51,322

Yarra's neighbourhood houses provide foundational and responsive social infrastructure for the community. As the world continues to navigate the pandemic this localised social safety net has proved essential.

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Appendix 2: Neighbourhood Houses Victoria's methodology for calculating social impact value

The following pages have been extracted directly from the report produced by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (2019), 'Yarra City Council: Real Impact. Real Value', which analyses and calculates the social impact and economic value of the 2019 Annual Survey of Yarra's Neighbourhood Houses. A summary of the key points from the full report have been included above in the [Social Impact Data Snapshot](#). This section should be read in conjunction with that snapshot. Similar calculation methods informed Neighbourhood Houses Victoria's 2020 survey analysis, which is drawn on in [Appendix 1](#), with regard to the impacts of COVID-19.

Calculation methods

Social Connection

In 2018, Deloitte Access Economics produced a report³³ that determined a monetary value for the community connection work of Morwell Neighbourhood House. The method, detailed in the report, uses existing research to calculate the contribution of community connection to a Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years (QALYs)³⁴. Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years is the most widely used approach for estimating quality of life benefits in economic evaluations³⁵.

The report assumed that 50% of the annual unique visitors to the neighbourhood house were one off or infrequent for the purpose of their calculations. Appendix C of their report outlines the detail on their method.

Because programmed activities are group activities run over a period of time and therefore not attended in a one-off or infrequent way, using the number of participants per week in programmed activities figure from the Neighbourhood House survey allows for a conservative calculation of the numbers of visitors potentially obtaining social connection benefits.

The number of weekly participants in programmed activity is multiplied by the percentage of participants that identified "meeting new people/making friends" and/or "spending time with others" as benefits of attending their neighbourhood house based on each Neighbourhood House's 2017 Participants Survey³⁶. These two reported benefits are used in the Deloitte calculations and are most strongly associated with participants who identified attending for various programmed activities including, social and support groups, job training and support and other courses and classes.

The \$ Values are expressed in 2019 equivalents i.e. CPI adjusted Quality Adjusted Life Year value of \$195,177, which is consistent with Deloitte's method.

The value of your Neighbourhood Houses increased social connection is calculated using this formula:

Number of participants in activities X 1 QALY (\$195,177) X percentage of people identifying a social connection benefit X contribution of social connection to a QALY (3.84%) X the extent to which contribution of social connection to a QALY can be attributed to attending the Neighbourhood House (28.57%).

³³ http://www.morwellnh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/MNH_Social-Impact-Analysis_May-2018_.pdf

³⁴ https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/Value_of_Statistical_Life_guidance_note.pdf

³⁵ <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-toc~illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-5~illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-5-2>

³⁶ Where A Neighbourhood House's participant data are absent or unreliable due to sample size, an average of Neighbourhood Houses in similar sized communities with similar incomes is used. Income is a proxy for volume of activities delivered through a Neighbourhood House.

The use of the participants in programmed activities as the basis for the calculation is conservative as it uses a typical weekly attendance figure. The actual total number of participants in programmed activities over a year will be greater as new people participate in activities over the course of a year. In addition, it does not include volunteers, 62% of whom report a social connection/participation benefit state-wide, nor does it include regular informal attendance i.e. drop ins where relationships are also built and maintained.

Deloitte further calculate the value of increased connection through increased participation in the broader community due to participation at the Neighbourhood House using the formula above for 10% of the participants.

Volunteering

Volunteering value is based on the replacement cost of volunteers' labour. This is valued at \$42.99 per hour. This is based on the method recommended by Our Community³⁷ which uses the ABS average weekly earnings per hour as of May 2019³⁸.

The formula for calculating the community value of volunteering is:

Number of volunteer hours per week X weeks open per year X volunteer hourly replacement rate

This is a conservative valuation. For example, it does not include the value of the services provided as a result of volunteering or the contribution to the economy and taxation from participating in volunteering, e.g. cost of travel to the place of volunteering.

Emergency relief

Food and groceries

The value to community of emergency food relief is based on work undertaken by Foodbank in Australia³⁹. Their social return on investment analysis determined that food relief was valued at an average \$20.05 per kilogram of food in 2014 dollars. This valuation included the value of:

- Improved physical health (children)
- Better performance at school (students)
- Better social relationships
- Increased sense of self-worth
- Improved standard of living
- Improved physical health
- Increased emotional wellbeing
- Reduced waste and greenhouse emissions

While the cost of food has increased since 2014, the change in value of the social benefits is unclear. For this reason, we have retained the \$20.05 figure making this a conservative evaluation.

The formula for calculating the community value of food and groceries is:

Number of Kgs distributed for an average month X 12 (months) X \$20.05

Food vouchers

³⁷ <https://www.fundingcentre.com.au/help/valuing-volunteer-labour>

³⁸ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6302.0>

³⁹ <https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Foodbank-Hunger-Report-2014.pdf>

Based on the dollar value of vouchers given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from accessing food such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc.

The formula for calculating the community value of food vouchers is:

Total \$ value of food vouchers distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Cash/prepaid or gift cards

Based on the dollar value of cash or gift cards given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from items purchased such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children, added value to the economy etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of cash/prepaid or gift cards is:

Total \$ value of cash/prepaid or gift cards distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Fuel Vouchers

Based on the dollar value of vouchers given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to transport or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for transport such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc. It also does not include benefits to the local economy.

The formula used for calculating the community value of fuel vouchers is:

Total \$ value of fuel vouchers distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Bill payments

Based on the dollar value of bills paid by the Neighbourhood House for individuals in need. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to services for which bills were paid or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for transport such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc. It also does not include benefits to the broader economy.

The formula used for calculating the community value of bill payments is:

Total \$ value of participants' bills paid in an average month X 12 (months)

Public transport cards

Based on the dollar value of public transport cards given out. This is a conservative valuation as it does not include the benefit derived from increased access to transport or the alternative use of funds that would otherwise have been used for transport such as improved health and wellbeing, improved school performance for children etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of public transport cards is:

Total \$ value of public transport cards distributed in an average month X 12 (months)

Services

Except for school breakfast clubs, service valuations in this section do not include additional benefits from the service such as improved health, job prospects or employment nor the auspiced community groups' outcomes. This is due to the absence of appropriate research that quantifies these benefits.

Room Usage

Based on the number of hours of room use by external groups and organisations per month and the cost of hiring an equivalent space locally as determined by each Neighbourhood House. Where no value or below median value was reported, the replacement value is based on the median reported cost of \$30⁴⁰. This is to reflect a minimum value to community rather than a replacement cost that is not reflective of broader market values. The value does not include the benefits to community of the room use activity such as improved health, improved access to information, reduced cost to services, increased economic activity etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of room hire is:

Total number of hours of room hire in an average month x 12 months X cost per hour of local equivalent (either supplied or \$30).

Internet/computer usage

Based on the number of hours of internet or computer use by individuals in an average month. This is benchmarked to the cost of a commercially available equivalent i.e. internet kiosk regardless of whether a commercial alternative is available. Note that free wifi is not an equivalent as there is no support or equipment made available. Commercial rates from \$3-\$5⁴¹ have been benchmarked. The lower rate is used to account for the variation in the equipment and software provided. The rate does not include non-market benefits such as family connection, benefits from accessing or managing government services etc.

The formula used for calculating the community value of internet/computer use is:

Total number of hours of internet/computer in average month x 12 months X \$3

Resume assistance

Based on the cost of a resume service for a fee. The fee was benchmarked at the median price of \$50 on airtasker.com⁴². The value was discounted to \$30 to account for the fact that Neighbourhood Houses may provide a participant with assistance in developing a resume rather than creating a full resume as a service.

The formula used for calculating the community value of resume assistance is:

Total number of resumes assisted with in an average month X 12 (months) x \$30

Tax help

Based on the cost of the cheapest commercial tax service found online⁴³ at \$100 per tax return. This is a conservative valuation as many tax help clients have multiple and/or complex returns which attract additional fees at commercial tax service providers.

The formula used for calculating the community value of Tax Help is:

Total number of tax returns lodged in 2019 x \$100

Auspicing other organisations

⁴⁰ Based on 255 valuations from the 2019 Neighbourhood Houses Survey

⁴¹ <https://www.facebook.com/dsinternet512/?rf=710935435612179>
<https://www.facebook.com/galaxysonicgaming>

⁴² <https://www.airtasker.com/writing/resume-writing/>

⁴³ www.taxtoday.com.au/information/fees/

Based on the cost of purchasing public liability cover which groups would have to take out if they were not covered by the Neighbourhood House under auspicing arrangements. The price is benchmarked at \$637 for annual cover provided by Local Community Insurance Services⁴⁴

The formula used for calculating the community value of auspicing other organisations is:

Total number of organisations auspiced in 2019 x \$637

Community lunch, frozen or other meals

Based on the cost of purchasing a meal commercially, this has been benchmarked at \$10 per meal. This is benchmarked based on the prices quoted by ING, and numbeo.com⁴⁵ ranging from \$13 to \$25. It is discounted to \$10 per meal to account for regional price variation.

While many meals provided at community lunches are likely to be a form of emergency relief, participants may attend community lunches for other reasons such as for company or a lack of cooking skills. Because we are unable to distinguish between the two, meals provided are not valued as emergency relief.

The formula used for calculating the community value of community lunches, frozen or other meals is:

Total number of individual meals served/provided in an average month x 12 months x \$10

School aged breakfast clubs

The value to community of food provided through school breakfast clubs is based on work undertaken by Foodbank in Australia⁴⁶. Their social return on investment analysis determined that school breakfast clubs were valued at an average \$110 per kilogram of food in 2014 dollars. This valuation included the value of:

- Improved physical health (children)
- Better performance at school (students)

Based on data from their report, the average breakfast is valued at \$31.40 in 2014 dollars. While the cost of food has increased since 2014, the change in value of the social benefits is unclear. For this reason, we have retained the \$31.40 figure making this a conservative evaluation.

The formula used for calculating the community value of school aged breakfast programs is:

Total number of individual breakfasts served/provided in an average month x 10 months x \$31.40

Government subsidised Adult Community Education (ACE)

Based on analysis of the Allen Consulting's 2008 report, The Economic Benefit of Investment in Adult and Community Education in Victoria⁴⁷ commission by the ACFE Board. While there have been significant subsequent structural changes that have occurred in the VET sector, the work is most relevant because it examines the Victorian ACE sector specifically and includes pre-accredited as well

⁴⁴ <https://www.localcommunityinsurance.com.au/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Melbourne> , <https://blog.ing.com.au/money-matters/saving/dust-off-your-lunch-boxes/#article-1811>,

⁴⁶ <https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Foodbank-Hunger-in-the-Classroom-Report-May-2015.pdf>

⁴⁷ https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/assets/documents/hilda-bibliography/other-publications/pre2010/ACG_economic_benefit_of_investment_adult_education.pdf

as accredited training. The analysis discounts the value of pre-accredited compared to accredited training by estimating a proportional certificate equivalence.

Its use to estimate community value is also adopted because it is conservative in that it does not;

- include the significant known non-market benefits such as improved health, reduced criminality and welfare dependency etc. estimated to be equal in value to the market benefits
- include 36.3% of student contact hours to account for those with no market benefit
- include the direct contribution of ACE provision to the economy (direct and induced economic impact of provider expenditure and wages)
- include the benefits provided to community from \$10.09 additional tax revenues from increased income and gross state product for each dollar invested by the Victorian government in ACE
- account for the increased focus on delivery of pre-accredited training with market benefits since 2008
- account for tighter targeting of vocational training to industry demand

This report effectively values two principle community benefits at \$17.23 for each dollar of government funding. It is the value created over a 25-year timeframe from the learning provided. This rate is comparable with other work conducted locally and internationally. From a single year of state government investment of \$36.7 million, the report models:

- Future income – \$202 million
- Increased gross state product – 2.13 times the income effect - \$202 million x 2.13 = \$ 430.26 million
- Total \$632.26 million / \$36.7 million state government funding = \$17.23

By comparison, a 2017 study from the University of Adelaide's South Australian Centre for Economic Studies⁴⁸ showed a return on investment for Cert I foundation courses averaging just 34 student contact hours at \$6.50 for each dollar of funding. However, the average SCH rate of \$43.70 was about 4.8 times the value of \$9.10 ACFE rate so equates to over \$31 return on investment for the same volume of activity if conducted as pre-accredited in Victoria. The study also only included the benefit of increased income and Victorian transition rates to Cert III and above for Learn Local students, with the corresponding higher income earning potential, are much higher⁴⁹ than those in the South Australian study.

Work that includes a more comprehensive range of non-market benefits values Government subsidised Adult Community Education at much higher rates. A New Zealand analysis from Price Waterhouse Coopers⁵⁰ valued ACE returns, including a range of non-market benefits, up to \$72 for each \$1 invested. While the comparisons differ substantially in many ways, all add significant value because they focus on disadvantaged learners.

Any potential overstatement of community value due to the changes in the structure of ACE since 2008 are more than compensated for by the value of other benefits not included in the calculation.

⁴⁸ South Australian Centre for Economic Studies. The Economic and Social Impact of the Adult Community Education (ACE) Sector. University of Adelaide; 2016.

⁴⁹

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/acfepublications/Participation%20training%20outcomes%20and%20patterns%20report_FINAL_Nov%202017.pdf

⁵⁰

<http://www.crystaladventures.co.nz/ACE/ACE%20Price%20Waterhouse%20Coopers%20Research%20Summary%20V4.pdf>

The formula used for calculating the community value of Government subsidised Adult Community Education programs is:

Total \$ value of government student contact hour subsidies in 2019 X 17.23

Childcare

There is inadequate research to determine the value to community of occasional childcare beyond the actual value of the service.

The formula used for calculating the community value of childcare is:

Total \$ value of government subsidies + parent fees in 2019 X 1

Four-year-old Kinder

Based on a 2019 Price Water House Coopers study⁵¹ which valued early childhood education in the year-before-school. It calculated a \$2 benefit for each dollar of costs.

The formula used for calculating the community value of four-year-old kinder is:

Total \$ value of government subsidies + parent fees in 2019 X 2

Community value relative to inputs

Community value for every \$1 of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP)

Shows the total calculable community value from the organisation for each dollar of NHCP funding received. The NHCP provides the platform to develop and attract funding for the various activities the organisation undertakes.

The formula used for calculating the community value for each dollar of NHCP is:

Total community value/ total NHCP for the reported year

Community value for every \$1 of income

Shows the total calculable community value from the organisation for each dollar of income received.

The formula used for calculating the community value for each dollar of NHCP is:

Total community value/ total annual income for the reported year

Community value for every hour the Neighbourhood House is in use

Shows the total calculable community value as an average for each hour the Neighbourhood House is in use. 'In use' includes any time of the week or day when activities are occurring, regardless of whether the organisation is staffed or open to the broader public. It does not reflect concurrent usage i.e. multiple activities occurring simultaneously for one hour are counted as 1 hour of use, even if these activities occur at different sites operated by the organisation. It is essentially an expression of community value from a building utilisation perspective.

The calculation assumes activities take place over 50 weeks in the year.

The formula used for calculating the community value for every hour the Neighbourhood House is in use is:

Total community value / (hours per week the building/s is in use x 50)

⁵¹ <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/images/downloads/ECO%20ANALYSIS%20Full%20Report.pdf>

Employment

Employment is calculated using the total hours of paid employment response combined with multipliers derived from 2017 analysis by Deloitte ACCESS Economics on the Economic contribution of the Australian charity sector for the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission⁵². The multipliers are based on employment data for the development and housing sector classification. This classification covers much of the work done by Neighbourhood Houses including community development and training (multiplier = 1.39). This means that for every full-time equivalent employee, a further 0.39 full-time equivalent jobs are supported elsewhere in the economy due to the economic activity created by wage spending. Neighbourhood Houses engage in activities that fit in other classifications e.g. emergency relief, referral etc which fit within the social services classification (multiplier = 1.46) or recreational activities that fit within the culture and recreation (multiplier = 1.35). These classifications' multipliers are marginally higher and lower than the development and housing multiplier respectively, further supporting the use of a 1.39 employment multiplier for the sector.

The formula used for calculating the total employment effect is:

Total reported hours of paid employment /38 X 1.39

⁵² <https://www.acnc.gov.au/%2Ftools%2Freports%2Feconomic-contribution-australian-charity-sector&usg=AOvVaw2R-20vVOybpm8ctvW5xsCY>