

Strategic Directions

2022+



A Context for WCC's Strategic Directions

WCC 2018-21 strategic priorities included housing and homelessness, multiculturalism, equity of access, gender equality, young people, employment and mental health. Internal consultations and local comparative data indicate that these issues remain to be significant risk factors for people living in the City of Whittlesea particularly as a result of the COVID19 pandemic.

Through a series of planning sessions with WCC staff and Board it was decided that WCC continue its focus on the same directions, using prior learning and progress in these areas to reframe intended outcomes. WCC also recognises its role in response to these complex social issues in relation to working with local partners, specialist services and peak bodies.

While Multiculturalism and Equity of Access are not specific directions in the new plan, they underpin WCC's approach, objectives and long-term outcomes and as such are embedded in each of the strategic directions. In addition, as climate change increasingly impacts on our local community, WCC will more deliberately undertake actions to mitigate risks across multiple strategic directions.

Strategic Directions



1. People have access to safe, secure and affordable housing



2. Women achieve equitable life outcomes and are safe from violence



3. Young People have a sense of belonging & voice in their community



4. There is equitable access to employment opportunities within a sustainable local economy



5. People lead healthy lives connected to community and services

Theory of Change

In recognition of the systemic approach required to address complex and multi-layered issues WCC's Strategic Plan takes the form of a Theory of Change. A Theory of Change can help organisations to reflect and think through what they do and why, engage staff and stakeholders in a common purpose and implement an impact measurement framework.

Process for On-going Reflection

The Theory of Change is supported by a Ninety Day planning tool and an evaluation framework. Each team will undertake a 90 day planning cycle to identify and work towards short- term goals that impact on medium to long-term outcomes.

Whole of staff and Board team will participate in an annual review process where data and evaluation outcomes will be used to understand assumptions and flaws in the theory of change. This will provide an opportunity to think about what the organisation is trying to achieve and how best to achieve it, aligning activities to our purpose and approach.

A Context for WCC's Strategic Directions (continued)

Strategic Directions in More Detail

1. People have access to safe, secure and affordable housing



One-fifth (20.3%) of households with a mortgage in the City of Whittlesea are experiencing housing stress. This is more significant for those households with low (51.9%) or very low incomes (73.0%). The City of Whittlesea was Australia's fourth highest local government area for residents with mortgage deferrals in place.

There are at least 630 homeless people in the City of Whittlesea. The main reason people present to housing services is family violence, as a result the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Whittlesea are children and young people.

While not a housing provider or service WCC has a role in providing individual support, community capacity building, service coordination and advocacy. Activities that support these outcomes include intake and assessment, community information and referral, the Family Violence Housing Brokerage Project and Whittlesea Housing & Homelessness Action Group (WHHAG). WHHAG members include DPV Health, Haven Home Safe, Home Ground Real Estate Launch Housing, Hope Street Youth & Family Services, Housing Choices Australia, Merri Outreach Support Services and Women's Property Initiative. WCC recognises the need to work with housing organisations to coordinate local service delivery and advocate for increased affordable housing and services in Whittlesea.

2. Women achieve equitable life outcomes and are safe from violence



The prevalence of reported family violence in the City of Whittlesea remains high, with a rate in 2019-20 of 1,404.8 incidents per 100,000 of population compared to the rate for the North West Metro Region 1,236.2 and for Victoria 1,315.4 per 100,000 population. This was a 3.0% increase on the local rate for the previous financial year. Children were present in 1,291 incidents in the City of Whittlesea, a rate of 544.8 per 100,000 population (much higher than the rate of 498.1 for Victoria). The City of Whittlesea has the second-highest rate in the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne behind Hume and the second-highest rate of family violence related emergency presentations at hospitals. Whittlesea also has the second-highest rate of uptake of specialist homelessness services for reasons relating to family violence.

Early signs show the impact of COVID, Victoria Police Family Incident data for January to June 2020 increased by 7.6% compared to the same period in the previous year. COVID19 created additional layers of complexity to women experiencing family violence accessing the help they needed. InTouch identified new patterns in perpetrator behaviour where COVID-19 was used against vulnerable women with low English proficiency who are only able to access information from their abusers during the lockdown.

WCC has worked on prevention of family violence within CALD communities for many years developing the knowledge and expertise to lead this work locally and more broadly. This will continue to be enhanced as WCC aligns itself with Victoria's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Model (MARAM). Activities to support this strategic direction include the CALD Family Violence Women's Groups, Women's Driving Program, Community Leaders Working Group, Whittlesea Family Violence Network and Settlement Sector Capacity Project. These activities work at an individual, community and systems level to create long-term change.

A Context for WCC's Strategic Directions (continued)

3. Young People have a sense of belonging & voice in their community



The youth population in Whittlesea is expected to increase by 60% by 2037 and the median age is younger compared to the Victorian average. Over half (58%) of NDIS participants in Whittlesea are young people under the age of 18 years. Youth disengagement for 15 to 25 year olds in Whittlesea is higher than Greater Melbourne (9.8% compared to 7.5%). To understand the impact of COVID-19 on young people in Whittlesea, Whittlesea Community Connections consulted with young people. Of WCC's COVID-19 survey participants, 87% agreed that there is no clear way for young people to have their voices heard and 75% agreed that young people's opinions are not taken seriously.

WCC works with young people through settlement programs, Empower (at-risk of disengagement), Engage, L2P, Thomastown West Community Hub, WF&FC Schools Program and student placement program. Through Engage a Youth Advisory Group, Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) was established to give voice to young people living in Whittlesea. The LOT identified the need for a dedicated youth hub in Whittlesea. Together with the LOT, WCC has and will continue to advocate for a safe space for young people to connect, learn and thrive. The Whittlesea Youth Hub will provide opportunities for young people to develop social networks, learn new skills connect to training and employment and access the wrap around supports they need to achieve good life outcomes.

4. There is equitable access to employment opportunities within a sustainable local economy



VCOSS data shows that 17% of Whittlesea residents live in poverty compared with Melbourne (12.6%). According to SEIFA Thomastown and Lalor are the most disadvantaged suburbs in the municipality and one of the more socio-economically disadvantaged suburbs in Victoria with a SEIFA score of 879 and 897 respectively (Whittlesea overall 991).

Of the current job seekers registered in Whittlesea (Labour Market Information Portal) vulnerable groups are over-represented; 14% were young people, 54% female, 17% have a disability, 7% are refugees and 3% identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The inter-sectionality of disadvantage means some people experience multiple and more complex barriers to inclusion and participation.

WCC has supported the development of employability skills through volunteering, social enterprises, Road 2 Work internship, WF&FC, Learn Local and Skilled Mentoring. In 2021 WCC established the Specialist Jobs Victoria Employment Service, Jobs Victoria Advocate (JVA), Women's Development & Leadership and Carers Employment Support programs. The JVA is a partnership program between WCC and City of Whittlesea. The JVES and JVA Steering Group, convened by Council, helps to further connect with local employment services. Knowledge and expertise gained by delivering local employment services will inform the future development WCC services and programs including social enterprises.

A Context for WCC's Strategic Directions (continued)

5. People lead healthy lives connected to community and services



The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest levels of community mental health contacts per capita, as well as significant evidence surrounding ongoing mental health issues related to the Black Saturday bushfires (VicGov, 2021). Young people aged 18-24 have the highest prevalence of mental illness of any age group.

With its' focus on community support and connection WCC delivers a number of preventative measures including the Contact Centre, Settlement Support, Community Transport and Community Visitors Scheme. Place-based approaches delivered through Mernda Community House, Thomastown West Community Hub and Whittlesea Farm and Food Collective enable community to develop social support networks and actively contribute to their local community.

Aligning current and future activities under this direction with the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommendations will be important. Findings identified significant changes required to create a future mental health and wellbeing system that provides holistic treatment, care and support for all Victorians.

Theory of Change

How we do our work:

- Place based: our work is connected to community in places and spaces where they live, work, study or play.
- Volunteer and community participation: our work is driven by, for and with community
- Multi-faceted: our work responds to multiple and diverse community needs
- In recognition that Whittlesea’s multicultural and diverse community brings opportunities and strength

Equity of access underpins the approach, objectives and long-term outcomes WCC is working towards. To ensure that individuals and groups that face particular barriers can engage and participate in community WCC provides relevant and accessible information, education, support, resources and opportunities in order for people to live a good life. WCC recognises that people may identify with more than one priority group placing them at greater risk of experiencing disadvantage. Individuals and groups include:

- First Nations People
- People living with a disability
- People experiencing homelessness
- People seeking asylum
- People from a refugee background
- People living with poor mental health
- People who identify as LGBTIQ+
- People living in rural areas
- Women and young people who identify with any of the above

To improve equity of access, cultural safety and practice WCC will develop:

- Reconciliation Aboriginal Plan
- Anti-racism Strategy
- Child Safety Plan
- Rainbow Tick Accreditation

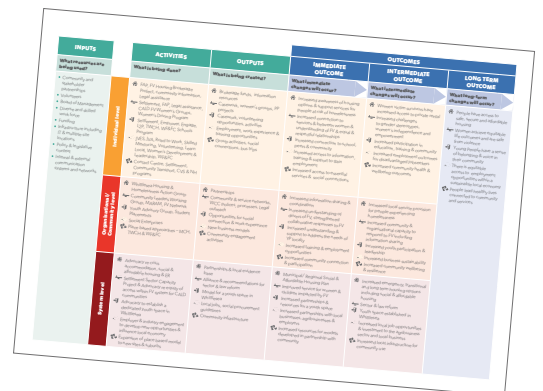
This will inform the development of:

- New or different ways to engage priority groups across the organisation
- Partnerships that strengthen engagement and responses for priority groups
- Appropriate internal processes including intake and assessment, data collection and evaluation

Core values:

At Whittlesea Community Connections we aim to identify and break down barriers to accessing information and specialised support services and work towards building individual and community resilience. As a community-led organisation, Whittlesea Community Connections works alongside individuals, families and groups to create opportunities to build and strengthen connections, supporting a community that is better able to support itself.

>> See over page



OUTCOMES					
INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	IMMEDIATE OUTCOME	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME	LONG TERM OUTCOME
What resources are being used?	What is being done?	What is being created?	What immediate changes will occur?	What intermediate changes will occur?	What long-term changes will occur?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and stakeholder partnerships Volunteers Board of Management Diverse and skilled work force Funding Infrastructure including IT & multiple site locations Policy & legislative context Internal & external communication systems and networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAP, FV Housing Brokerage Project, community information, legal assistance Settlement, FAP, Legal assistance, CALD FV Women's Groups, Women's Driving Program Settlement, Empower, Engage, L2P, TWCH, WF&FC Schools Program JVES, JVA, Road to Work, Skilled Mentoring, Volunteering, Learn Local, Women's Development & Leadership, WF&FC Contact Centre, Settlement, Community Transport, CVS & NH programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brokerage funds, information resources Casework, women's groups, PP projects Casework, volunteering opportunities, activities Employment, work experience & training opportunities Group activities, social connections, bus trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of housing options & support services for people at risk of homelessness Increased connection to services & between women & understanding of FV & equal & respectful relationships Increased connection to school, peers & community Increased access to information, training & support to gain employment Increased access to essential services & social connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women victim survivors have increased access to private rental Increased challenges to gender stereotypes, empowerment Increased participation in education, training & community Increased employment outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers Increased community health & wellbeing outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People have access to safe, secure and affordable housing Women achieve equitable life outcomes and are safe from violence Young People have a sense of belonging & voice in their community There is equitable access to employment opportunities within a sustainable local economy People lead healthy lives connected to community and services
	Individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whittlesea Housing & Homelessness Action Group Community Leaders Working Group, MARAM, FV Network Youth Advisory Group, Student Placements Social Enterprises Place based approaches – MCH, TWCH & WF&FC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships Community & service networks, WCC polices, processes, Legal outreach Opportunities for social connection & work experience New business models Community engagement activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased information sharing & coordination Increased understanding of drivers of FV, strengthened collaborative responses to FV Increased understanding & support to address the needs of YP locally Increased training & employment opportunities Increased community connection & participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased local service provision for people experiencing homelessness Increased community & organisational capacity to respond to FV including information sharing Increased youth participation & leadership Increased business sustainability & resilience
Organisational/Community level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy re crisis accommodation, social & affordable housing & ER Settlement Sector Capacity Project & Advocacy re equity of access within FV system for CALD communities Advocacy to establish a dedicated youth space in Whittlesea Employer & industry engagement to develop new opportunities & influence local economy Expansion of place based model to new sites & suburbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships & local evidence base Alliance & recommendations for sector & law reform Model for a youth space in Whittlesea Local jobs, social procurement guidelines Community infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal/ Regional Social & Affordable Housing Plan Improved service for women & children impacted by FV Increased partnerships & resources for a youth space Increased partnerships with local businesses, agribusinesses & employers Increased resources for models developed in partnership with community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased emergency, transitional and long term housing options including social & affordable housing Sector & law reform Youth space established in Whittlesea Increased local job opportunities & investment to the agribusiness sector and local business Increased local infrastructure for community use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased emergency, transitional and long term housing options including social & affordable housing Sector & law reform Youth space established in Whittlesea Increased local job opportunities & investment to the agribusiness sector and local business Increased local infrastructure for community use
System level					



Whittlesea
Community
Connections

Making a positive difference everyday

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