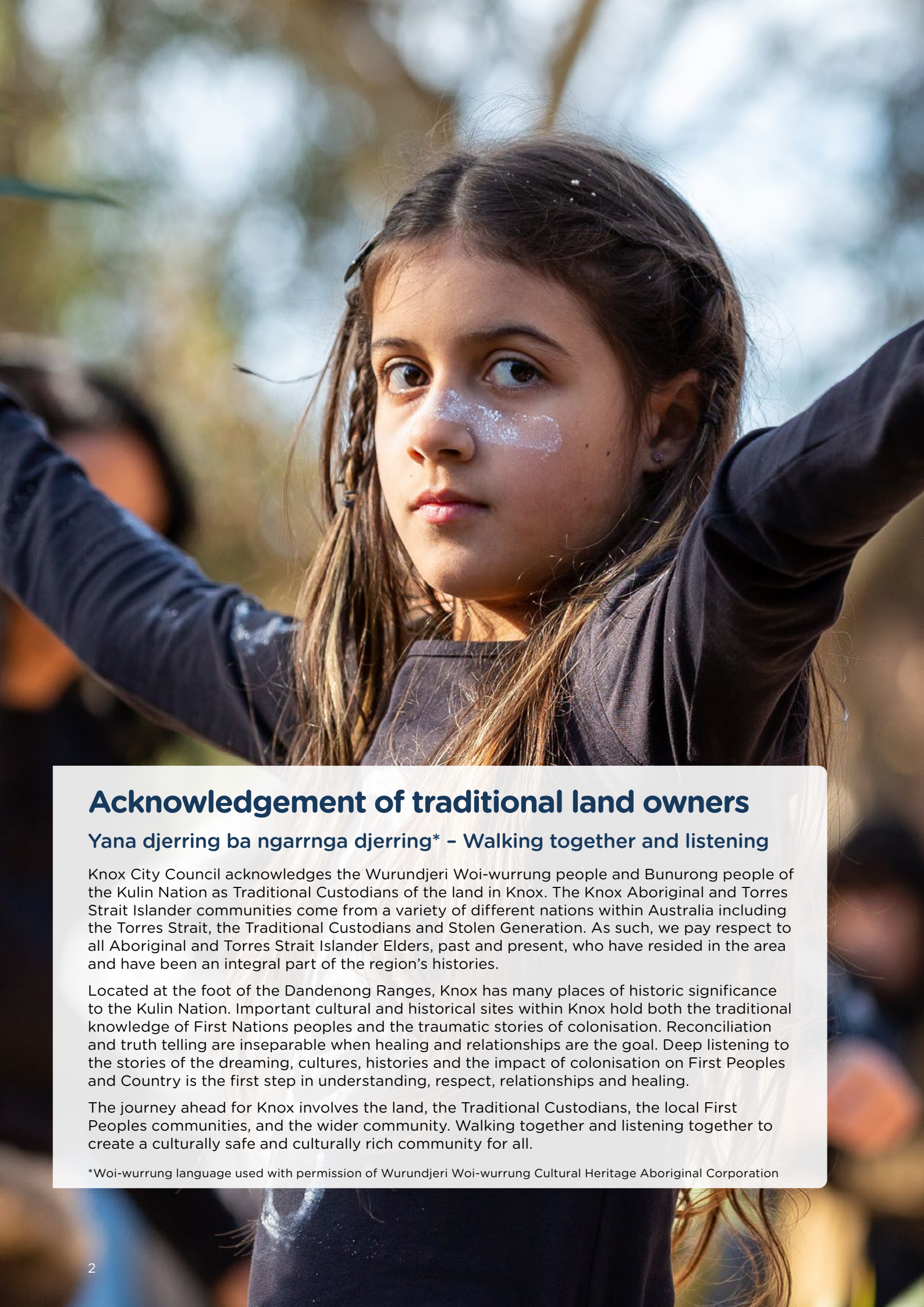
Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029

knox

Knox City Council



Acknowledgement of traditional land owners

Yana djerring ba ngarrnga djerring* – Walking together and listening

Knox City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land in Knox. The Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities come from a variety of different nations within Australia including the Torres Strait, the Traditional Custodians and Stolen Generation. As such, we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's histories.

Located at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, Knox has many places of historic significance to the Kulin Nation. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the traditional knowledge of First Nations peoples and the traumatic stories of colonisation. Reconciliation and truth telling are inseparable when healing and relationships are the goal. Deep listening to the stories of the dreaming, cultures, histories and the impact of colonisation on First Peoples and Country is the first step in understanding, respect, relationships and healing.

The journey ahead for Knox involves the land, the Traditional Custodians, the local First Peoples communities, and the wider community. Walking together and listening together to create a culturally safe and culturally rich community for all.

*Woi-wurrung language used with permission of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

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Front cover: Members of the Knox community enjoying a nature walk with a Bushland Officer
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Message from our Councillors

On behalf of Knox City Council, we are proud to present the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, our integrated Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan for 2025-2029. This document represents our promise to the Knox community and delivers on your aspirations and needs.

Our aspirations for our elected term are to maintain and protect our green spaces, work to keep everyone safe with a roof over their heads and nutritious food at their tables, responsibly and sustainably manage the finances and resources of the city and ensure our community is engaged in our big decisions.

To inform this plan, over 1,100 community members were involved in one or more of the community engagement activities undertaken over several months in 2024. Your contribution has been instrumental in ensuring that the community voice has been heard and has helped inform how we plan for Knox and deliver your priorities in the coming years. We thank all of those who participated and represented the voice of the community. We couldn't have done it without you.

Over the next four years, we are committed to addressing the key challenges and opportunities facing our community, fostering growth and development, and ensuring that the health and wellbeing of our residents are at the forefront of everything we do. This Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan reflects the values, aspirations, and needs of our diverse community and outlines the strategies we will take to improve the quality of life for all.

As your elected representatives, we are dedicated to working together to achieve our shared vision. By delivering this plan, we will continue to strengthen community connections, promote social and economic resilience, elevate our commitment to gender equality, and create opportunities for a healthier and happier future for everyone.

We invite you to read the plan and get involved in the exciting journey ahead. Together, we can continue to build a thriving community for generations to come.

Mayor, Cr Lisa Cooper

Deputy Mayor, Cr Glen Atwell

Cr Peter Lockwood

Cr Paige Kennett

Cr Chris Duncan

Cr Robert Williams

Cr Meagan Baker

Cr Parisa Considine

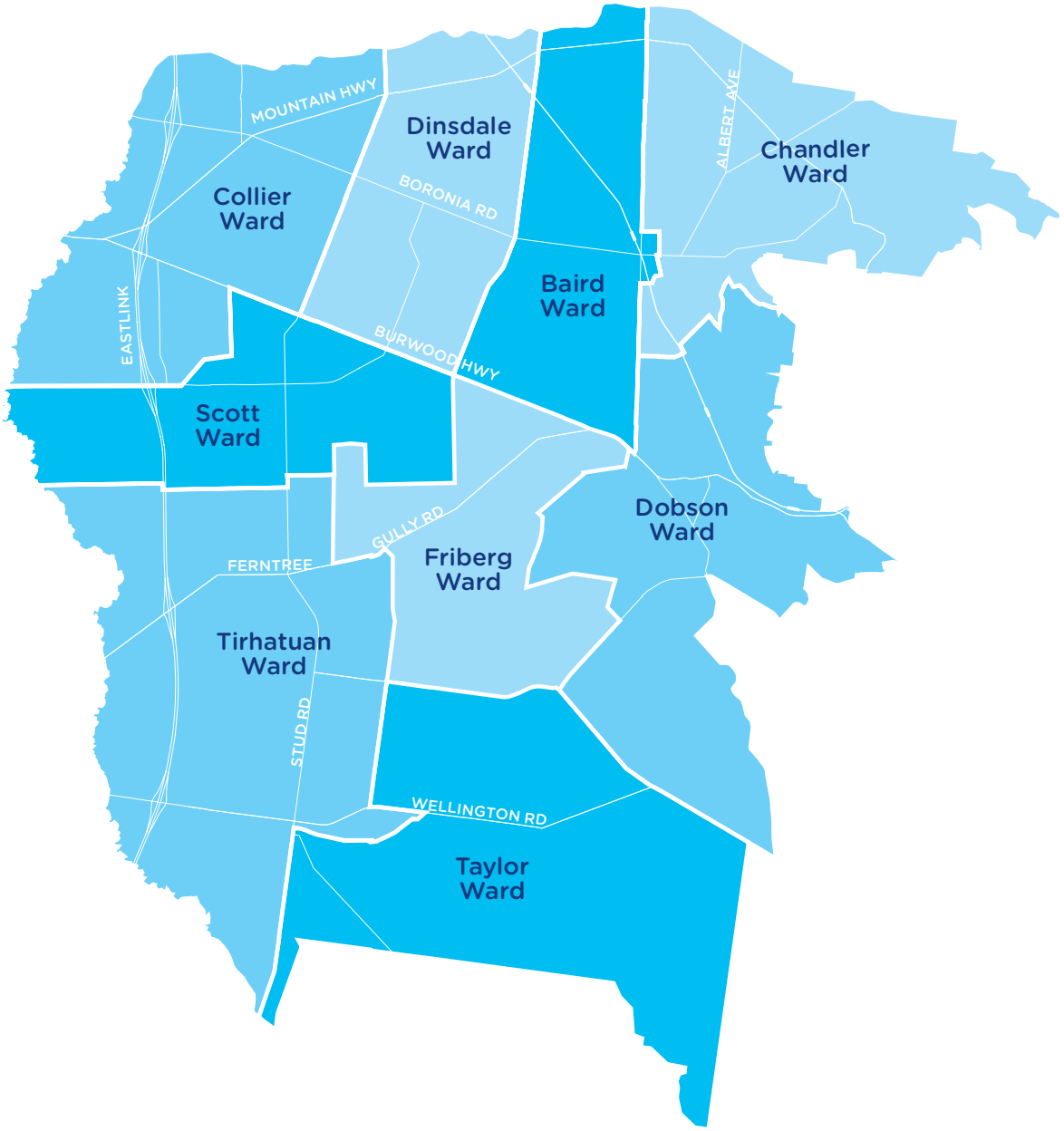
Cr Susan Pearce

Left to right: Cr Parisa Considine, Cr Robert Williams, Cr Peter Lockwood, Cr Chris Duncan, Mayor Lisa Cooper, Cr Paige Kennett, Deputy Mayor Glen Atwell, Cr Susan Pearce and Cr Meagan Baker.

Our Councillors

The municipality of Knox is made up of 11 suburbs, approximately 25 kilometres from the Melbourne central business district. Knox will be governed for the next four years by the nine Councillors who were elected by our community in October 2024.

Our Councillors work together to set and guide strategic direction and make decisions as representatives of our community. Every decision they make is guided by the needs of the people of Knox, and they work closely with the Chief Executive Officer and the organisation to do this.



Cr Peter Lockwood
Baird Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
t. 0499 111 639
e. Cr.Peter.Lockwood@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Chris Duncan
Collier Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
t. 0492 032 772
e. Cr.Chris.Duncan@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Meagan Baker
Dobson Ward

Current term: November 2020 – current
t. 0437 808 011
e. Cr.Meagan.Baker@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Lisa Cooper
Scott Ward

Current term: March 2015 – current
Mayoral term: November 2024 - current
t. 0407 240 275
e. Cr.Lisa.Cooper@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Glen Atwell
Tirhatuan Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
Deputy Mayoral term: November 2024 - current
t. 0499 884 585
e. Cr.Glen.Atwell@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Paige Kennett
Chandler Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
t. 0498 880 807
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Cr Robert Williams
Dinsdale Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
t. 0488 333 975
e. Cr.Robert.Williams@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Parisa Considine
Friberg Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
t. 0499 444 850
e. Cr.Parisa.Considine@knox.vic.gov.au

Cr Susan Pearce
Taylor Ward

Current term: November 2024 – current
t. 0499 660 084
e. Cr.Susan.Pearce@knox.vic.gov.au

Our Community Vision 2035

Our Community Vision describes our community's long-term hopes and aspirations for Knox. It helps us plan for the needs of our community now and into the future.

> **"Knox: where we connect with our people and our environment, ensuring they are safe, supported and have every opportunity to thrive."**

Crafting our Community Vision

During the 2021-2025 planning process, nearly 4,500 community members shared their thoughts on shaping Knox's future. This engagement aimed to understand the community's aspirations and what you love about Knox.

Throughout that engagement process, you, our Knox community, were very clear about what was important to you.

In 2020, you told us that:

- you envision Knox as a thriving business hub with new industries, start-ups and more local jobs.
- protecting those who are vulnerable in our community is crucial, with a focus on affordable and social housing.
- good education is a priority, with access to learning opportunities for all ages.
- you want to see sustainable developments suitable for all ages and abilities, with accessible neighbourhoods featuring good footpaths, reliable public transport, and safe roads.
- you value natural spaces and want a focus on energy conservation, recycling, and reducing waste and carbon emissions.
- good health and wellbeing are essential, with access to healthy food, physical activities, and social connection, including celebrating First Nations culture.
- ensuring all voices are heard in decision-making, community safety and addressing family violence and elder abuse were also key priorities.

> **"Residents would regularly participate in local events, workshops, and community driven projects, fostering a strong sense of belonging and cooperation."**
>
> **2024 survey respondent**

Reflecting on our Community Vision

In 2024, we revisited the Community Vision through broad community engagement as well as with a representative community panel through a deliberative engagement process. The community panel worked together over several sessions to develop recommendations for the plan and to review the Community Vision in light of the feedback from the broad engagement.

We asked you to once again imagine life in Knox 10 years from now and what it would look like if the vision was achieved. Your responses closely aligned with those who contributed to the development of the Community Vision in 2020 and reaffirmed that the Community Vision is still relevant and reflects community sentiment. The community panel agreed, with the majority of members expressing support for retaining the Community Vision as it stands.

Community members of Knox

Our Community Vision 2035

In 2024, you told us that you:

- hope for an inclusive, connected community where people have opportunities to come together, and celebrate and welcome diversity.
- want everyone to feel safe both at home and in the community, and people can fully experience and enjoy the many parks, public places and open spaces across Knox without fear.
- want Council to prioritise the safety of children and those in our community who are experiencing family violence.
- want a variety of sustainable transport options to get you to work, school, appointments or to services.
- having access to quality education, housing and local employment remains a priority.
- desire more transparent and accessible communication from and with Council, and want to be confident that your thoughts and feedback are reflected in Council decisions.
- remain very interested in the allocation of council resources and want Council to be financially accountable.
- want Council to stay focused on enhancing the wellbeing of all community members in Knox to work with other agencies and levels of government to ensure equality and fairness for all.
- would like to see growth of the area that is respectful of the natural environment, maintains the local character and to ensure new infrastructure is safe, good quality and meets the evolving needs of the community.
- are keen for businesses to be supported to thrive and be attracted to establish in Knox, increasing local employment opportunities.
- want to take care of our environment by exploring sustainable waste options and protecting biodiversity and precious natural waterways.
- are concerned that natural disasters and emergencies are impacting the Knox community and that activities to prepare, respond and build resilience against threats will be increasingly essential.

Our young people in Knox told us that they care deeply about the future and want to be active in ensuring Knox remains inclusive and safe for all. They want to see facilities and services available to support mental health and reduce uncertainty for those in our community who experience challenge and disadvantage.

Our First Nations residents like seeing references to country in their local community as it supports them to feel culturally safe and proud of where they live. They appreciate it when Aboriginal voice is considered in the community and council.

> **“Seamless connection between people and environment. Green infrastructure.”**
>
> **2024 pop-up engagement participant**

Pop up engagement for the development of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

Reaffirming our Community Vision

In summary you, our Knox community, expressed pride in Knox as a place to live, work, and thrive. You hope for improved physical and mental wellbeing through accessible services, safe and secure housing, green spaces, and well-maintained streets. You envisioned a fulfilling life with easy access to jobs, services, and entertainment, and a connected, vibrant community celebrating diverse cultures.

Given the renewed connection, affirmation and support for the current Community Vision statement, evidenced through the 2024 community engagement activities which include the community panel recommendations, the Vision will be retained for this new Knox Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan.

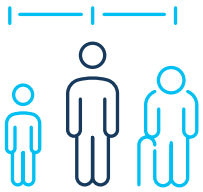
> **"Knox would be a safe place for all, with little to no crime. It would be a community environment that offers support and help to all those who need it."**
>
> **2024 survey respondent**

Our community

161,770
Total population in 2023

21%
of residents aged 0-17 years

24%
of residents aged 60 years and over



40
is the median age

48%
of households are families with one or more children

21%
of households accommodate a lone person

11%
are older couples without children

11.5%
of Knox residents live in a low-income household

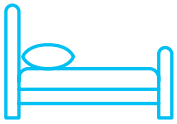
57.3%
of Knox residents living in low-income households are women

6%
of people require assistance in their day-to-day lives due to disability, long-term health condition or old age

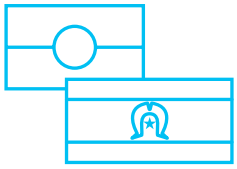
Almost
1 in 5
of Knox residents have a self-reported disability

$1,866
Median weekly household income, the same as the Greater Melbourne average

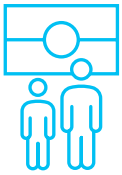
12.3%
of households have a mortgage or rent that costs greater than 30% of their annual household income



8 in 10
households in Knox have at least one spare bedroom in 2021



In 2021
1,022
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in Knox, representing the second largest population of First Nations people in Melbourne's eastern metropolitan region



21.3%
of First Nations community in Knox are young adults

33%
of residents were born overseas.

Of those born overseas the top countries of birth are China, UK, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand

29%
of people speak a language other than English at home.

Five most common languages other than English spoken at home: Mandarin, Cantonese, Sinhalese, Greek, Hindi

Our health and wellbeing

71.3 per 10,000 residents

in Knox had alcohol-related hospitalisations compared to 58.6 per 10,000 residents in Metropolitan Melbourne in 2023

$76 million

of Knox residents lost on Electronic Gaming Machines in 2023, averaging $586.24 per person, which is higher than the Melbourne metropolitan average of $548.12

7.7%

of adults ran out of food and could not afford to buy more in 2023

28%

of adults worried about food insecurity in 2023

60% of women

in 2021 compared to 40% men were unpaid carers for people with disabilities, long-term illnesses, or old age

8.9%

of residents in 2023, reported harmful drinking pattern

11.4%

of Knox residents in 2023 smoked or vaped daily compared to 14.5% in Victoria

35%

of Knox adults in 2023 consumed the recommended level of fruits and only 4% consumed the recommended level of vegetables

47.1%

of females in 2021 earned below the minimum weekly wage compared to 31.0% of males

80%
of people in Knox in 2020 relied on private vehicles as their main mode of travel on weekdays, with only 13% using active transport like walking or cycling

nearly 50%
of residents that live alone are aged 65 or over compared to 38% for greater Melbourne in 2023

22.7%
of residents in 2023 self-reported fair or poor health, compared to 20.9% in Victoria

34%
of women in 2020 felt safe in their neighbourhood at night compared to 71% of men

11.2%
of adults identify as LGBTIQA+

64%
of the Knox population in 2023 agreed that multiculturalism makes life in Knox better

About this plan

The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 has been shaped by our community and reflects the vision, values, and aspirations of the people of Knox.

It is the result of the invaluable input we received from you, our residents, local businesses, partners, community groups, staff and other stakeholders. Together, we've created a plan that will help us keep our community's health and wellbeing at the forefront of everything we do and build a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable future for Knox.

This plan progresses our Community Vision and guides Council's strategic direction, planning, and resource allocation over the next four years, bringing the Community Vision to life in meaningful ways. It provides a roadmap for how we will improve services, infrastructure, and support for residents, while ensuring our decisions are informed by data, feedback, and emerging needs. It is Council's promise to the Knox community, guiding where we put our focus and effort.

Community Panel

Community Panel members during a panel session

How we created this plan together

To ensure Knox's Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 reflects the voice of our community, a detailed research and engagement program was undertaken:

- The State of Knox Report 2024 enabled us to understand key demographics and changes in our community since 2020, including social, economic, and environmental conditions in Knox.
- Using over 100 previous engagement activities, we analysed the recurring themes and what matters most to you when it comes to your values, aspirations, and priorities.
- An equity impact assessment was undertaken to ensure the voices of our diverse community were incorporated through targeted and deliberative engagement. This enabled us to capture voices representative of our multicultural community, First Nations people, people with a disability, children and young people.
- We held many community engagement activities where more than 1100 Knox community members shared insights, helping us to validate what we've learned, to identify current challenges and aspirations, and to shape priorities for the next four years.
- A representative Community Panel took part in deliberative engagement, helping us interpret the findings from the broader community, providing recommendations, and shaping the key elements of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, including themes, strategic objectives and strategies, along with confirming health and wellbeing priorities.
- Councillors and staff were also engaged to ensure that the plan reflects the role of Council.

Our themes

Based on research and engagement, six key themes were developed that highlight what we, as a community, are going to focus on to achieve our Community Vision.

Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

Our community can access important local services and resources through Council's delivery, advocacy, and partnerships.

Leading, listening and governing responsibly

Our community feels empowered, heard, and has trust in Council through responsible governance, proactive communication and engagement, and transparent decision making.

Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

Our diverse and connected community is strengthened by creating opportunities to actively participate, connect and learn.

Being a strong voice for safety

Our community feels safe, respected and supported in public spaces and at home through Council's delivery, advocacy and partnerships.

Caring for and enhancing our environment

Our environment is greener, healthier and sustainable through Council's environmental protection and enhancement, working in collaboration with our community.

Planning our future city

Our neighborhoods, housing and infrastructure meet the needs of our changing community through effective planning, delivery and advocacy.

Traffic school at Marie Wallace Bayswater Park

Council and what we do

Council delivers 34 services to support our community at all stages of life, aligned to the six Council and Health and Wellbeing themes. We are committed to continuously improving our services to best meet the needs of our diverse community now and into the future.

Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources	Embracing connection inclusion and diversity	Caring for and enhancing our environment	Leading, listening and governing responsibly	Being a strong voice for safety	Planning our future city
Cemetery	Arts & Culture	Fleet, Plant & Machinery	Customer Service	Community Laws	Capital Works Planning
Economic Development	Early years	Open Space & Biodiversity	Data, Information & Technology	Community Safety	Property & Facilities
Health	Festivals & Events	Sustainability & Climate Response	Finance	Emergency Management	Statutory Planning
Libraries	Seniors	Waste	Governance	Food Safety	Strategic Land Use Planning
Roads & Transport	Social Research, Policy & Planning	Water & Drainage	People	Statutory Building	
	Sport & Leisure		Procurement		
	Youth		Risk Management		
			Strategy & Performance		

Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

We maintain:

- 729 km of roads

In an average year, there are over:

- 5,500 community transport trips made
- 860,000 physical library items loaned & 560,000 digital library items loaned
- 1,000 cyclists on a typical day at a typical site on Knox's shared path networks

In an average year, we provide:

- Immunisation for over 4,500 infants

Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

We maintain:

- 64 sportsgrounds & reserves

In an average year, we provide:

- Maternal and Child Health services to 4,600 children.
- 31,000 meals through Meals on Wheels

In an average year, there are over:

- 337,000 visits to aquatic facilities

Caring for and enhancing our environment

We maintain:

- 39,547 drainage pits
- 1,100 kW of solar across 50 buildings
- 209 playgrounds

In an average year, there are over:

- 32,000 hard-waste bookings lodged
- 2,200 trees planted by Council

Leading, listening and governing responsibly

In an average year, we receive over:

- 125,000 online service requests
- 11,000 visits to Council's customer service centre
- 99,000 phone calls

In an average year, we have:

- 45 engagements on Have Your Say to seek community feedback
- Over 6,000 people subscribed to the Have Your Say platform to participate in community engagement

Being a strong voice for safety

In an average year we:

- Receive over 1,100 animal management requests
- Inspect over 1,150 food premises
- Inspect over 1,000 buildings
- Support 311 individuals with enquiries or required assistance around housing

Planning our future city

We maintain:

- 283 Council-owned buildings

In an average year, there are:

- 660 to over 950 planning applications received
- 19,000 m^2 to over 22,500 m^2 of graffiti removed from Council's assets

Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

Council takes an integrated approach to planning and reporting, with the 10-year Community Vision directly informing short, medium and long-term planning.

Enabled and governed through
Annual community engagement, planning, monitoring, audits and review.
Annual and quarterly reporting.

Knox's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework guides Council in identifying and delivering on community needs and aspirations over the long term (Community Vision), medium term (Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029) and short term (Annual Budget and Action Plan).

A number of other plans also guide our long-term and medium-term planning. They include plans about how we're going to manage our financial resources (the Financial Plan), manage and maintain our assets (the Asset Plan), plan for our future city (Municipal Planning Strategy) and plan and prioritise our service delivery (strategies and plans).

The key themes, strategic objectives and health and wellbeing priorities of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan are also integrated across our other key strategies and plans. This approach provides a line of sight through every service in Council to achieve and report back on our community's vision and our wellbeing commitment.

To ensure that Council remains responsive to the community's evolving needs and priorities, each financial year, actions are published in the Annual Budget. The development of the Annual Budget and Action Plan also includes setting an annual target for each performance measure of the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan. In Council's Annual Report, we report back to the community on the actual result of each performance measure compared to the target, as well as on the achievement of the annual actions.

All parts of the integrated planning and reporting framework include opportunities for community and stakeholder input. This is important to ensure transparency and accountability. We monitor and regularly report back to the community on our progress through different mechanisms to ensure greater openness and understanding.

Members of the community having their say

Community members enjoying Lewis Park

Our commitment to health and wellbeing

At Knox City Council, we recognise that health and wellbeing are the cornerstones of a strong, cohesive, and resilient community.

Knox's Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan with the Council Plan, ensuring that our priorities for supporting, protecting, and improving the health and wellbeing of our community are at the forefront of everything we do. These priorities are embedded in the plan's themes, strategic objectives, strategies and measures, reflecting our commitment to a holistic approach to community health.

Knox commits to develop actions annually to respond to the health and wellbeing priorities that the community and research has told us are important to address. Progress against these actions will be monitored and reported annually alongside the review of the health and wellbeing components of the integrated plan.

The widely accepted social determinants of health encompass a range of factors such as income, education, employment, social support networks, and access to healthcare. Addressing these determinants, and focusing on planning and prevention, is crucial for improving health outcomes and promoting equity. Additionally, the physical environment is a critical determinant of health. Access to public open spaces, quality and affordable housing, ability to connect with each other and our community, nutritious food, and efficient and reliable transport systems can significantly influence our individual choices and overall wellbeing.

Knox's Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 focuses on addressing these determinants through our eight health and wellbeing priorities.

To influence health and wellbeing outcomes we undertake a multi-faceted approach including working with key stakeholders, advocating, educating and providing services.

Some Knox residents face more challenges than others in their daily lives, which can lead to poorer health outcomes and lower life satisfaction. The following groups are considered priority populations and Council acknowledges the need to apply additional considerations to these groups so that all people can feel welcome and participate fully in life in Knox.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), including migrant and refugee community
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus (LGBTQIA+) community
- Older people
- People from low socio-economic background
- People who experience homelessness
- People with a disability
- Women who experience family violence
- Young people

Our health and wellbeing priorities

Knox City Council understands that the health and wellbeing of our community is essential for our collective prosperity and quality of life. By measuring and addressing wellbeing, we can identify areas of need, track progress, and implement targeted interventions to create a healthier, more resilient community.

The Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 meets requirements of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years. Eight priority areas have been identified for Council to work on to improve the health, wellbeing, and quality of life for the local community.

The priorities are informed by local health and social data, community needs, the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan priorities, feedback from key community stakeholders and feedback from the broad community engagement that was undertaken in 2024. The deliberative Community Panel undertook activities to confirm the proposed health and wellbeing priorities and to ensure they reflect the diverse voices and experiences of the community.

Reduce harm from alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling

Promote equal participation opportunities and celebrate our diverse community

Support access to affordable and nutritious food

Create opportunities for active living

Advocate for equity across our community

Support prevention of all forms of violence by promoting safety and respect

Build resilience to emergencies and threats, including climate change

Improve social connection and mental wellbeing

Reduce harm from alcohol, smoking, vaping and gambling

Gambling losses can lead to financial problems, stress, anxiety, and depression. They can also result in increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs as coping mechanisms, exacerbating mental health issues and affecting work or study performance.

Relationship problems and family violence are common consequences, as financial strain and gambling behaviour create tension within families. Addressing these issues through community education, support groups, and regulations is vital for promoting safer, healthier lifestyles.

Smoking and vaping have significant health impacts. Smoking is a leading cause of preventable diseases and deaths, causing various cancers, respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular issues. Vaping, while often considered less harmful, still poses risks such as nicotine addiction, lung injuries, and exposure to harmful substances.

Both smoking and vaping contribute to high healthcare costs and productivity loss. Quitting smoking and vaping can lead to substantial health benefits and reduce the risk of many diseases.

Promote equal participation opportunities and celebrate our diverse community

Ensuring equal participation opportunities for all community members fosters inclusivity and strengthens social cohesion. Initiatives like multicultural festivals, support services, and inclusive community programs can help achieve this goal. Celebrating our multicultural community enhances social capital and contributes to a more inclusive society.

In 2021, people with a disability in Knox aged between 20-59 years account for 24% of all people with a disability, 61% of people with a disability are aged 60 years and over, of which 20% of those are aged 85 years and older. This is important to consider when planning health and wellbeing services.

Our health and wellbeing priorities

Support access to affordable and nutritious food

By improving access to affordable and nutritious food, we can enhance overall health and wellbeing, particularly for those experiencing greater disadvantage and hardship.

Nutritious food and healthy eating habits ensure that there are enough essential nutrients to support the body and prevent chronic diseases. Additionally, maintaining a balanced diet can improve mental clarity and emotional stability, contributing to a more productive and fulfilling life.

Knox City Council collaborates with local welfare agencies and community groups, allocating grants to support emergency food relief programs. Each week Knox food relief providers are:

- Serving or distributing more than 2,000 cooked meals – a 167% increase in less than two years.
- Assisting with over 2,200 grocery packs or pantry visits – a 550% increase in less than two years.

Initiatives such as these aim to reduce food insecurity, foster community engagement, and ensure that all residents have access to nutritious food to support their physical health and reduce the risk of diet-related diseases.

Create opportunities for active living

Encouraging physical activity is essential for maintaining good health, and Knox is well-positioned to promote active living. With 80% of Knox dwellings within 400 meters of open space, residents have ample opportunities to enjoy parks and recreational facilities.

However, 48.5% of Knox residents do not undertake the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Additionally, 43.6% of Knox residents aged 18+ spend six or more hours sitting still each day. Increasing physical activity is crucial for preventing chronic diseases, improving mental health, and enhancing overall wellbeing. By providing accessible spaces and programs, we can encourage residents to engage in regular exercise.

When last surveyed in 2019, the percentage of women in Knox who met the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines was 48.7%, lower than the 53.0% of men who met the guidelines. Factors contributing to this disparity include barriers such as caring responsibilities, fear of judgment, and perceptions of safety.

Knox aims to address barriers to active living by promoting the benefits and options for active recreation, welcoming community participation through supportive programming, adapting infrastructure to meet changing needs, and partnering with community groups to sustain activities and services.

Advocate for equity across our community

Advocating for equity ensures that all residents have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Addressing health inequities involves identifying and removing barriers to health and wellbeing.

Despite a 34% increase in median household income over the past decade, housing affordability remains a challenge in Knox, with 11.5% of residents living below the poverty line alongside an unemployment rate of 4%. Knox City Council advocates for more industry investment to boost job growth and improve transport options so people can access health services and employment.

It's also crucial to ensure that the mix and depth of services available in Knox matches the community's needs.

For our First Nations population, 49.6% rent, compared to 21.3% for the non-Indigenous population in Knox. For the health and wellbeing of the Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to flourish, initiatives must include a holistic, whole of life cycle view of health that includes physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, economic (including housing) and mental health and wellbeing.

Bike riding on shared paths

Our health and wellbeing priorities

Support prevention of all forms of violence by promoting safety and respect

Safety is a top priority for Knox residents, with 77% of households expressing concerns about crime. Promoting safety and respect helps prevent violence and creates a secure environment for everyone.

Gender inequality significantly impacts family violence by creating power imbalances and reinforcing harmful norms. When women and girls are viewed as less valuable or secondary, it can lead to environments where violence against them is tolerated or even justified. This inequality is both a cause and consequence of family violence, perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

Discriminatory laws, exclusionary social norms, and limited access to resources and opportunities for women further exacerbate the issue. Addressing gender inequality in Knox is crucial in preventing family violence and promoting a safer, more equitable society.

Family violence rates in Knox were higher than the Metropolitan Melbourne rate in 2022 and 2023. Knox has experienced an upward trend in reported family violence incidents (4.6% increase since 2019) and has had the highest rate of reported family violence in Melbourne's outer east for more than 20 years.

In 2023-24, 1131 people in Knox sought assistance with housing due to family violence issues in the home. Knox City Council has endorsed a Statement of Commitment to the Prevention of Family Violence and has developed a Gender Equality Action Plan.

The rate of drug-related crime in Knox is also higher than the metropolitan Melbourne rate, with 655 incidents per 100,000 population compared to the Melbourne average of 424 in 2023.

Violence of all forms undermines community health and safety. Promoting respect and safety through education and support services will help prevent violence and foster a secure and safe environment for all.

Knox staff member engaging with members from the community

Build resilience to emergencies and threats, including climate change

In recent years, our Knox community has faced numerous challenges from natural disasters such as floods, storms, bushfires, and heat health emergencies. These events have highlighted the need for comprehensive support for residents, not only in preparation and during the events, but also throughout the recovery phase.

The impacts of climate change demand our urgent attention. Significantly, 67% of the Victorian population is concerned about climate change and believes that immediate action is necessary.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change can bring numerous health benefits, including improved mental health, lower cancer rates, fewer deaths from extreme heat, increased food security, and decreased cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Building resilience to both emergencies and climate change is crucial for protecting our community and ensuring long-term sustainability. As climate change and emergencies continue to pose significant health risks, our collective efforts in resilience and adaptation will be vital.

Knox City Council has endorsed the Climate Response Plan 2021–3031 and aims to protect our community from the effects of climate change and reduce both Council and community greenhouse emissions.

Improve social connection and mental wellbeing

Social connection is a cornerstone of positive mental health. Programs and initiatives that increase social connection, such as community events, support and interest groups, learning opportunities, social and sporting groups can help residents build meaningful connections, reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, and increase mental wellbeing.

In Knox, 21% of households are single person households, which can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and impact mental health.

When it comes to diagnosed mental health conditions, women are nearly twice as likely as men to suffer from a mental illness. Females in Knox have a higher rate at 1057 per 10,000 compared to 665 for males. Hospital admission numbers for self-harm in 2021 also reflect this disparity, with 70 admissions for females and 37 for males. For Knox's First Nations population, 15.1% of residents disclose that they live with mental health conditions.

By prioritising social connection and mental wellbeing, we can create a more supportive and resilient community.

By addressing these 8 health and wellbeing priorities, Knox City Council is committed to creating a healthier, more equitable, and resilient community.

How to read this plan and how it will be delivered

Themes: Broad focus areas that reflect community priorities and aspirations.

Strategic objectives: High level outcomes the community wants Council to achieve under each theme.

What's most important: What the community said was most important.

Strategies: How Council will achieve the strategic objectives.

Health and wellbeing priorities: How delivery of the strategies will improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

Our services: The services Council provide to support the strategic objectives.

Performance measures: A measure used to evaluate progress towards achieving each strategic objective.

To ensure Council delivers on the objectives of this plan and remains responsive to the changing needs of the community, the annual actions and performance measure target ranges will be published in each Annual Budget and progress monitored in quarterly and annual performance reporting.

There are various roles that we play in leading, guiding and managing our city and community.

Advocate – we raise awareness at state and federal government levels and with other stakeholders about the issues and needs of the Knox community, as well as initiating or supporting campaigns for positive change.

Partner – we develop trusting formal and informal relationships and alliances, working with others to achieve common goals.

Provide – we offer a range of services and support, preventative interventions, infrastructure and facilities to individuals and groups.

Fund – we provide grants, funding and subsidies to local groups and agencies to progress and develop services and infrastructure for individuals and groups.

Educate – we share information, raise awareness, and develop knowledge and skills to empower individuals and groups.

Plan – we proactively plan for services and infrastructure that respond to current and future community needs.

Regulate – we provide governance and regulatory controls such as local laws and health and building controls.

Research – we collect and analyse data to inform planning, priority setting, decision-making and evaluation.

Our partnerships

Knox City Council acknowledges that outcomes for the community will be achieved and amplified through the strength of strategic partnerships. This is particularly so regarding health and wellbeing where multiple government, non-government and community agencies can play an important collaboration role to deliver the right services to the right people at the right time.

Two key partnerships are with other council groups who work together to achieve joint outcomes for our communities – the Eastern Region Group of Councils (ERG) and Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM).

The ERG is committed to work together to develop opportunities for shared services, joint procurement and the shared use of community infrastructure. As a member of the ERG Knox can amplify Council's voice and impact, be more efficient and effective, and improve community access to infrastructure and services across the municipality.

GSEM advocates for jobs, infrastructure, investment, liveability, sustainability and wellbeing for the southeast and everyone who works and lives in the region. Working together with partners ensures that our community can access the services it needs most.

Council has established the Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee to contribute to the development and implementation of actions to address the health and wellbeing priorities, participate in the annual review, provide advice and join together for advocacy efforts. This advisory committee includes up to 13 representatives from safety, health and wellbeing organisations, alongside the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Victoria Police. We thank them for their enduring support of our Knox community.

Members from Templeton Cricket Club

Theme 1
Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

Strategic objective
Our community can access important local services and resources through Council's delivery, advocacy, and partnerships.

Parent and child reading in the Knox Library

What our community says is most important
- Improve access to services through better public and active transport options that enable people to get to work, education and health services easily
- Make community-based education opportunities more accessible to support people participating in lifelong learning experiences that connect them and provide personal growth and improved wellbeing
- Local employment opportunities for all people, including those from diverse backgrounds and circumstances
- Access to affordable food for those in need so that everyone has equal opportunity to access sufficient nutrition to stay healthy

> **"Opportunities for meaningful employment and volunteering for vulnerable community groups."**
> Survey respondent

Strategies	Health & wellbeing priorities
Strategy 1.1 A variety of transport options is available through the effective planning, advocacy and management of efficient, active, sustainable and accessible transport modes, particularly in growth locations.	
Strategy 1.2 Our community can access diverse training and life-long learning opportunities through delivery, promotion and partnerships with relevant organisations.	
Strategy 1.3 Local businesses and our economy are strong and resilient and there are increased employment opportunities through development, attracting investment, embracing technology and innovation, and advocacy.	
Strategy 1.4 Access to affordable and nutritious food is enhanced through advocacy and working in partnership with relevant organisations to raise awareness and promote available community programs.	
Strategy 1.5 Our community's health and wellbeing is improved through proactive planning, delivery, partnerships and advocacy that enable access to services, education and programs.	

Volunteer delivering Meals on Wheels to a Knox resident

Theme 1
Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

Delivering on our health and wellbeing commitment

Our Knox community will feel better supported and more informed. They will be able to access the jobs, services, and the nutrition they need to sustain a healthy, and satisfying lifestyle.

Leading Council services

- Cemetery
- Economic Development
- Health
- Libraries
- Roads & Transport

Performance measures	Health & wellbeing priorities
Kilometres of new active transport in Knox aligned with the Knox Cycling Action Plan and other active transport plans.	
Community satisfaction with bike and shared paths (both on-road and off-road and including shared paths).	
Community satisfaction with the maintenance and repair of sealed and local roads.	
Number of visits to libraries in the Knox municipality.	
Community satisfaction with local library services.	
Number of planning permits issued for commercial, office or retail use and development.	
Value of grants provided to emergency relief organisations.	
Self-reported health status of Knox residents.	
Amount of gross regional product (GRP) ($) generated by businesses in Knox.	
Community satisfaction with Council services and facilities.	

Community members looking at the vegetable garden at Orana Neighbourhood House

Theme 2
Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

Strategic objective
Our diverse and connected community is strengthened by creating opportunities to actively participate, connect and learn.

Community members catching up at a local reserve

What our community says is most important

- A community that respects, supports and values all people so that everyone in Knox feels welcome and an important part of the fabric of local community life
- More opportunities to celebrate diversity by promoting and delivering local community events and interest groups that bring people together from across Knox
- Knox residents know how to access the local businesses, programs and services that are available for them to get the support they need
- Enhanced and accessible public spaces so that everyone can participate

> **"Opportunities to share, interact, enjoy and create a sense of community and belonging."**
> Survey participant

Strategies	Health & wellbeing priorities
Strategy 2.1 Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.	
Strategy 2.2 Cultural diversity is celebrated through assisting, participating in, facilitating and delivering accessible programs, initiatives and events in partnership with our community, community groups and service providers.	
Strategy 2.3 Our community is supported to thrive during all stages of life through the promotion and provision of services, advocacy and partnerships with local service providers.	
Strategy 2.4 There are opportunities for social connection and active living through planning, provision of facilities, program delivery and support for local groups.	

Dancers at Knox Fest

Theme 2
Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

Delivering on our health and wellbeing commitment

Our Knox community will feel valued, connected and included.

Leading Council services

- Arts & Culture
- Early Years
- Festivals & Events
- Seniors
- Social Research, Planning & Policy
- Sport & Leisure
- Youth

Performance measures	Health & wellbeing priorities
Participation of young people in Youth Services programs.	
Participation in social inclusion programs and intergenerational initiatives.	
Community satisfaction with community and cultural activities, festivals, and events.	
Number of health promotion initiatives targeted at reducing alcohol-related harm.	
Number of volunteers that attend volunteer training and education.	
Participation of people living with disability and their carers in targeted events, programs and professional development opportunities.	
Number of residents accessing the Knox community transport bus outings.	
Number of upgrades that provide for gender inclusion in Council owned pavilions.	
Community satisfaction with services for youth.	
Community satisfaction with sports ovals and other outdoor sporting facilities.	

Members of the Bayswater Junior Football Club

Theme 3
Caring for and enhancing our environment

Strategic objective
Our environment is greener, healthier and sustainable through Council's environmental protection and enhancement, working in collaboration with our community.

Gilbert Park wetlands

What our community says is most important
- Better waste management and waste education so that everyone understands the individual contribution they can make to protecting the environment for future generations
- Encouraging people to use their cars less and use alternative forms of transport
- Community awareness of renewable energy options so that businesses and households can be proactive in reducing energy consumption
- Maintaining and improving green spaces and biodiversity for enjoyment and protection of our natural environment

> **"Make sure that all new developments are encouraged to provide a greener aspect to properties."**
> Survey respondent

Strategies	Health & wellbeing priorities
Strategy 3.1 Our environment is healthy and sustainable by considering environmental factors when planning for and making decisions.	
Strategy 3.2 Green spaces and waterways are protected, enhanced and enjoyed through planning, promotion and maintenance of our built and natural environment.	
Strategy 3.3 Minimise waste to landfill through access to a suite of waste services and education.	
Strategy 3.4 Energy consumption and the use of renewable energy resources are positively impacted through investment in assets, education, planning and advocacy.	

Residents putting their bins out

Theme 3
Caring for and enhancing our environment

Delivering on our health and wellbeing commitment

Our Knox community will be able to enjoy the benefits of a well maintained and sustainable environment to support their mental health and vitality.

Leading Council services

- Fleet, Plant & Machinery
- Open Space & Biodiversity
- Sustainability & Climate Response
- Waste
- Water & Drainage

Performance measures	Health & wellbeing priorities
Community satisfaction with the provision and maintenance of parks and gardens.	
Net change in Council trees (planted vs removed).	
Waste diverted from landfill.	
Council's greenhouse emissions (CO2 equivalent).	
Electrification of Council Buildings (removal of gas and/or installation of solar and/or battery connection).	

Members from Friends of Blind Creek Llewellyn

Theme 4
Leading, listening and governing responsibly

Strategic objective
Our community feels empowered, heard, and has trust in Council through responsible governance, proactive communication and engagement, and transparent decision making.

Customer being served at the Civic Centre Building and Planning counter

What our community says is most important
- Issues are responded to promptly to keep everyone safe
- Genuinely listening to the voices of our diverse community and consider what is heard when planning and making decisions
- Communication is accessible to all so that no one misses out on the opportunity to contribute
- Spend money sensibly so that Council can afford to continue the delivery of essential services for the community
- Accountability, honesty and transparency in order to build trust and understanding of local government

> **"Stronger community representation in Council decisions."**
> **Survey respondent**

Strategies	Health & wellbeing priorities
Strategy 4.1 Council demonstrates its accountability through transparent and responsible decision-making and working together productively.	
Strategy 4.2 Our diverse community is informed and has opportunities to participate and provide feedback through clear and meaningful communication and engagement.	
Strategy 4.3 Council services are efficient and optimised through ongoing improvement, and focused investment in innovation, technology and capability.	
Strategy 4.4 The changing needs of our community are met through informed policy and strategy that maximises value, collaboration and partnerships with other councils and local organisations.	
Strategy 4.5 Council is financially sustainable through long-term strategic, financial and asset planning, and the responsible prioritisation, allocation and use of resources.	

Community member having their say

Theme 4
Leading, listening and governing responsibly

Delivering on our health and wellbeing commitment

Our Knox community will feel heard and considered which will enhance community cohesion and a sense of belonging.

Leading Council services

- Customer Service
- Data, Information & Technology
- Finance
- Governance
- People
- Procurement
- Risk Management
- Strategy & Performance

Performance measures	Health & wellbeing priorities
Community satisfaction with Council's community consultation and engagement.	
Adjusted underlying surplus.	
Community satisfaction with Council having a sound direction for the future.	
Community satisfaction with Council's representation, lobbying, and advocacy on behalf of the community.	
Community satisfaction with customer service.	
Community satisfaction with Council's overall performance.	
Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public.	

Sorry Day

Theme 5
Being a strong voice for safety

Strategic objective
Our community feels safe, respected and supported in public spaces and at home through Council's delivery, advocacy and partnerships.

Knox staff member supporting our residents

What our community says is most important

- People feel safe at home and out and about in the community
- Public facilities and spaces are designed and maintained to deliver safer environments for people to enjoy
- Education programs and services relating to both personal and community safety are accessible to build individual and group resilience when emergencies happen
- Increase cultural safety and pride so that everyone feels welcome and there is no discrimination

> **"Knox would be a safe place for all, with little to no crime. It would be a community environment that offers support and help to all those who need it."**
>
> **Survey respondent**

Strategies	Health & wellbeing priorities
Strategy 5.1 Our community feels safer in public spaces and facilities through planning, maintenance, education, design and proactive program delivery for Council owned and managed spaces and via advocacy for others.	
Strategy 5.2 Safety and liveability are prioritised through the planning, delivery and enforcement of local laws and regulatory services.	
Strategy 5.3 Our community is more secure, connected and feel less isolated through planning, partnerships, advocacy and targeted support for our most vulnerable.	
Strategy 5.4 People feel safe in their homes and in the community through the development of partnerships, planning and promotion of programs, services and education that focus on connection, safety and respect.	
Strategy 5.5 Our community is resilient in the face of emergencies through planning, education, emergency response and support.	

Young people at Pride March

Theme 5
Being a strong voice for safety

Delivering on our health and wellbeing commitment

Our Knox community will feel safer and more resilient, knowing that the Council is working together with community and agencies to create safe places and spaces and promote respect.

Leading Council services

- Community Laws
- Community Safety
- Emergency Management
- Food Safety
- Statutory Building

Performance measures	Health & wellbeing priorities
Perception of community safety in public areas of Knox.	
Perception of community safety at home.	
Number of days taken to follow up a major or critical food notification or outbreak.	
Percentage of high-risk buildings (large public buildings such as shopping centres, aged care facilities, hospitals or entertainment venues) audited annually, for compliance with safety requirements.	
Animal Management Prosecutions.	

Knox school crossing mascot, Lottie presenting to school students on road safety

Theme 6
Planning our future city

Strategic objective
Our neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure meet the needs of our changing community through effective planning, delivery and advocacy.

Bayswater Activity Centre

What our community says is most important

- Advocate for affordable, social and community housing options so that people of all ages and stages can live comfortably in Knox
- Develop and grow in a way that respects the character of Knox, is sustainable and maintains our beautiful and plentiful green spaces
- Be able to feel proud of where we live because of the great local amenities and public places we have
- Social and community infrastructure that facilitates access to local services, provides places to meet, learn and celebrate

> **"Knox's housing and infrastructure will meet the changing needs of the community and natural environment in which it resides."**
>
> **Survey respondent**

Strategies	Health & wellbeing priorities
Strategy 6.1 There is improved access to a diverse range of housing options through effective planning, advocacy, and identifying opportunities for social and affordable housing supply.	
Strategy 6.2 High quality, integrated community services and facilities are available through the planning, design and maintenance of multifunctional places that promote connection and utilisation.	
Strategy 6.3 Our evolving neighbourhoods are liveable and sustainable through planning and design that responds to population growth and our community's changing needs.	
Strategy 6.4 Our community's expectations and aspirations for housing development and land use are considered through planning, advocacy, partnerships and decision-making.	

Tim Neville Arboretum

Theme 6
Planning our future city

Delivering on our health and wellbeing commitment

Our Knox community will be able to fully enjoy their local area, knowing that what they need now and into the future has been considered and planned. They will feel proud of where they live.

Leading Council services

- Capital Works Planning
- Property & Facilities
- Statutory Planning
- Strategic Land Use Planning

Performance measures	Health & wellbeing priorities
Community satisfaction with planning for population growth.	
Number of one and two bedroom dwellings approved in planning permits.	
Extent of housing development that is consistent with housing strategy expectations.	
Percentage and proportion housing defined as affordable for very low and low income earners sales.	
Percentage and proportion housing defined as affordable for very low and low income earners rentals.	
Percentage of Asset Renewal Program completed.	

Members from the Knox Inclusive Basketball League

Implementation and monitoring our progress

To ensure we stay on track toward our shared Community Vision and meet the legislative requirements of the Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan, ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential. Knox City Council plays a key role, but we know that success depends on the collaboration of community members, businesses, agencies, and other levels of government.

By working together, we will continuously assess our progress and adapt to the evolving needs of our community, while keeping our long-term goals at the forefront.

Our Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework will help guide the delivery of strategies and track progress, providing transparency for everyone involved.

Performance measures and annual targets will be used to assess how effectively we're meeting our objectives, and quarterly reports will provide regular updates to ensure we're on course. An Annual Report will provide a more detailed review of our achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement, ensuring we remain accountable to our community.

Every two years, a report will be submitted to the State Government highlighting progress against the health and wellbeing priorities and actions.

Engagement with partners and stakeholders will be ongoing, with regular feedback from community surveys and consultations helping us refine our approach. A mid-term review will also assess overall progress, allowing us to make adjustments as needed to ensure we stay on track to achieve the Community Vision. By working collaboratively and staying responsive, we can ensure Knox remains a great place to live, work, and play.

Equity Impact Assessment

An Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed to ensure the elevation of the needs of priority populations through the delivery of Knox's Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

The following recommendations will be implemented over the life of the Plan:

- Ensure communications such as language, visuals and messaging from leadership and as an organisation, reflect and reinforce intersectional gender equality and inclusion.
- Strengthen relationships with diverse stakeholders and community agencies who work towards improving community safety, health, gender equality and wellbeing in Knox.
- Strengthen use of gender disaggregated data to understand community need and inform planning and delivery of programs, initiatives and services.

Keeping in touch and opportunities to have your say

Knox City Council is committed to seeking feedback, making sure you are aware of issues that affect you and providing opportunities to have your say. There are a number of ways you can do this.

Visit our Have Your Say website to see how you can contribute to projects and tell us what you think of our draft plans and strategies: www.knox.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay

Knox City Council has several Advisory Committees that provide advice on the development, implementation, monitoring, and review of programs or activities.

These committees are made up of community members, staff and current Councillors.

Find out if there are opportunities available in your area of interest on our website: www.knox.vic.gov.au/our-council/about-council/council-committees

Sign up to receive Knox eNews, our weekly email newsletter which will keep you informed about the latest news, events and activities across the community: www.knox.vic.gov.au/email-newsletter

Knox intergenerational program with Boronia K-12 College

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