

Annual Budget and Action Plan 2026-2027

community engagement report

In August 2025, we conducted a survey to help us better understand what services the community value most and the actions we can deliver to best meet the needs of our community.

Our 2026-2027 Annual Plan and Budget engagement had three distinct purposes:

- To inform our 2026-2027 Budget and future budgets
- To inform the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan year two actions and performance measure targets
- To inform our annual service planning program for 2026-2027

This work will also be informed by:

- Engagement results from the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029
- Changes to the external environment including reforms, cost of living changes, population trends
- Legislative requirements, service planning and reviews and community data.

Engagement approach

The engagement was designed to capture people who were motivated to participate through Council's online engagement page and to capture wider viewpoints through four pop up activities at locations across the municipality. Targeted activities including engagement at our childhood and family centres and representation from nine Advisory Committees through a Multi Advisory Committee workshop captured the perspectives of key audiences.

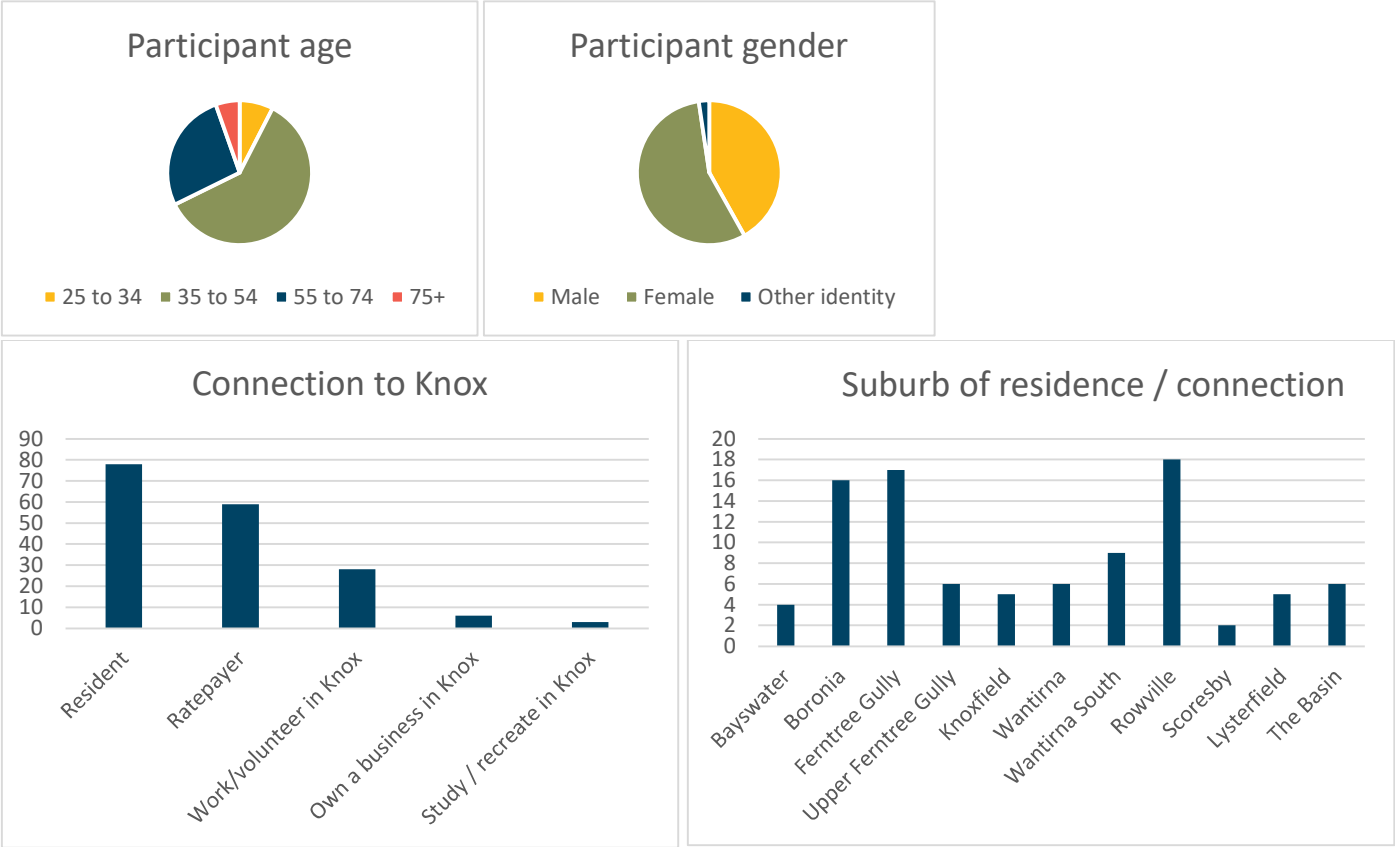
The engagement captured feedback through the following activities:

- Budget allocation / voting to understand service priorities
- Nominating projects on a map
- Survey to propose actions for the Annual Budget 2026-27
- Formal written submissions.

Who completed the activities?

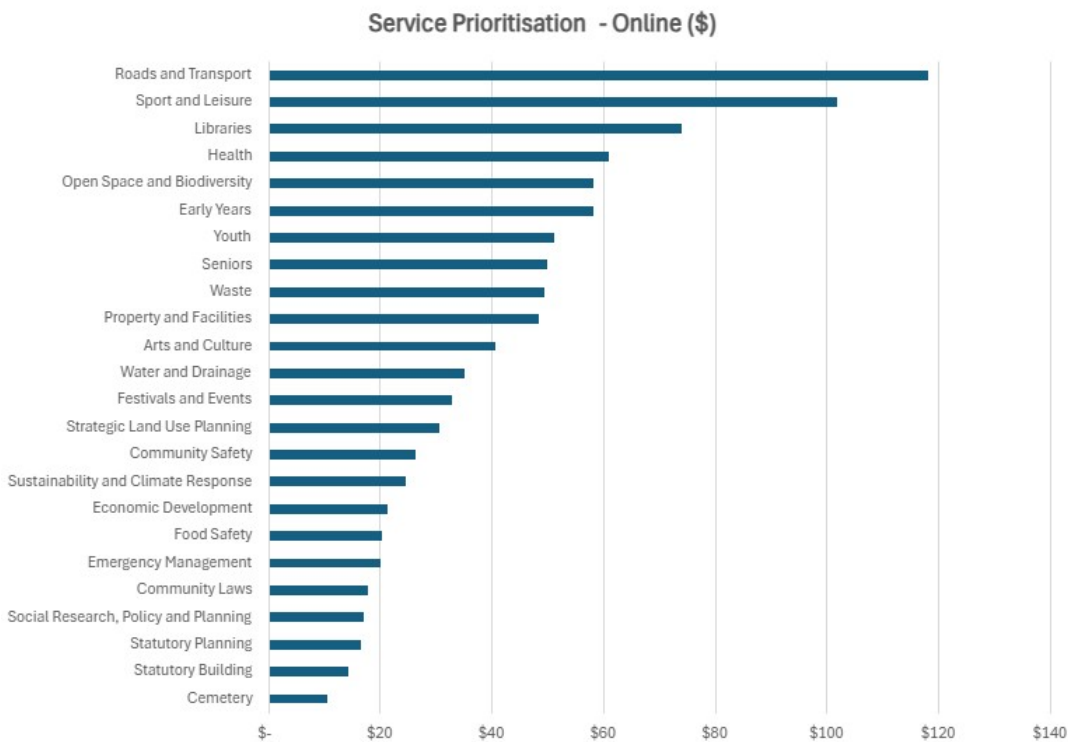
- 594 total responses from the Knox community
- 8 members of the community submitted a public submission
- 100 children from our family centre hubs submitted a drawing.

The demographic profile of the respondents to the online survey were as follows:

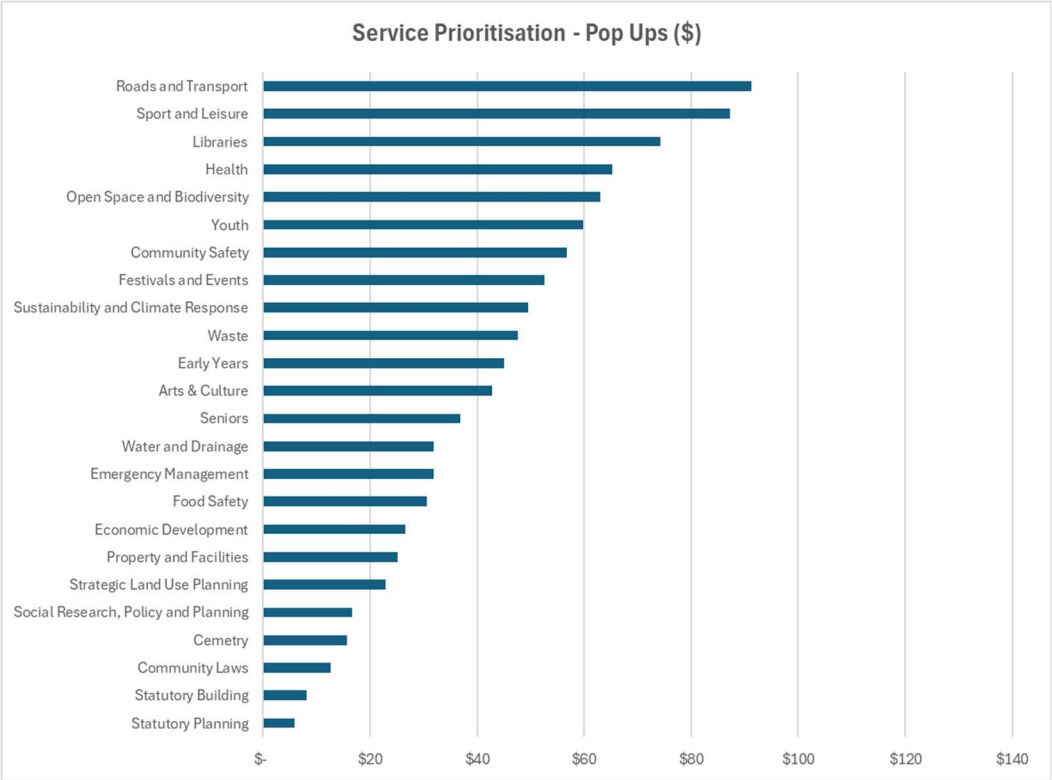


Which services do you think deliver the most value to the community?

Respondents were asked to help us understand which services they believe deliver most value to the community by allocating points to the service area. Two similar activities were run online and in person. In the online survey, respondents had a total of 1,000 dollars to allocate across all 24 external facing services according to their priority. The average dollar allocation per service is as follows:



At pop-up events, respondents were provided with 10 dots each representing \$100. Respondents were asked to allocate across the 24 external facing services according to their priority. The average dollar allocation per service is as follows:



Roads and Transport, Sports and Leisure, Libraries, Health and Open Space and Biodiversity were consistently rated, in that order, as the top five valued services across both the online and pop-up engagement activities. Youth and Waste were also consistently rated in the top ten valued services across the activities however the other services in the top ten varied. In the online activity, Early Years, Seniors, and Property and Facilities made up the remaining top ten valued services. In the pop-up activity, Community Safety, Festivals and Events, Sustainability and Climate Response made up the remaining top ten valued services.



What are your priorities for our Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan year two actions

Respondents were asked to identify their ideas and priorities for the 2026-2027 Annual Plan and Budget to deliver on our Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (CHWP) themes. Responses have been categorised, noting there was generally only one or two comments relating to each topic. The topics are listed under each CHWP Theme below:

Theme 1: Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

- Support for local business
- Improved and accessible footpaths and bike paths
- Advocacy for improved public transport, including the trackless tram
- Clear, localised pathways to support our vulnerable community
- Increased library hours on Saturday and Sunday mornings
- Provide ongoing funding to Knox Infolink which provides community-led programs that reflect deep local knowledge, trusted relationships, and proven effectiveness.
- Clean pathways and roads.

Theme 2: Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

- Services and infrastructure that promote safety and social connection, build trust and support vulnerable community members
- Social events to mark various community cultural and religious events
- Workshops and education on mental health, gambling, drug and alcohol issues in the community
- Reduced 'red tape' was received in relation to the Risky Play program
- Prioritise ongoing investment in established programs recognising that health and wellbeing outcomes require long-term commitment and stable resourcing as opposed to grant funding
- Additional sporting facilities and support for sporting clubs.

Theme 3: Caring for and enhancing our environment

- Update sites of biological significance with an emphasis on tree planting, revegetation and wildlife corridors
- Respond to a rise in illegal dumping of waste, animal waste and litter in parks, reserves and council land
- Improve waste and recycling services, find a solution for soft plastics, polystyrene and foams, increase frequency of waste collection and provide larger bins
- More canopy trees on Council and private land and better protection for our wildlife, vegetation and trees
- Ensure there is above ground water for wildlife via protection of creeks and ponds and the removal of algae and debris from ponds
- Maintenance of playgrounds
- Plant fruit trees for people to eat from.

Theme 4: Leading, Listening and governing responsibly

- Reduce spending on non-essential programs, promotions, and projects outside Council's core responsibilities, and concentrate on doing the basics well
- Advocate for the removal of Land Tax.

Theme 5: Being a strong voice for safety

- Provide safe and accessible areas
- Improve wheelchair access, bike racks and pedestrian zones
- Setup neighbourhood watch schemes, partner with Police, add surveillance cameras and increase street lighting.

Theme 6: Planning our future City

- Stop property developers buying land and reduce 'massive builds'
- Approved designs are in nature colours rather than reds and neons
- Landscaping and native vegetation requirements stronger across all build types
- Enforcement of building and landscaping requirements needs to be better resourced and supported
- Increase facilities and services that enable community to gather and connect at no cost
- Increase housing of different types, densities and variety
- Upkeep of Scout Halls and Toy Libraries
- Prioritise graffiti removal.



Multi advisory committee workshop outcomes

In addition to the engagement activities, representatives from Knox's nine advisory committees were asked to suggest ideas for the CHWP year two actions. Ideas under each CHWP theme are summarised below:

Theme 1: Enhancing community connection to vital services and resources

- Better communication around capital development i.e. footpaths, alternate routes, accessibility considerations (wheelchairs).
- Provide digital health assessments for community, with support around technology.
- Review and enhance actions around Strategy 1.5, by evaluating efforts, identifying gaps and what is working well.
- Provide community education on using substances, including for families supporting individuals.
- Address access to basic needs, including housing, food and community connection.
- Provide space for people to connect without being moved on.
- Provide education and programs focused on health and nutrition – partnership approach with experts and relevant settings.
- Provide electric bike hire stations, especially in areas where there is limited public transport.

Theme 2: Embracing connection, inclusion and diversity

- Increase awareness on First Nations culture, data, and accessibility. Including place naming, and provenance.
- Plan and establish another Men's Shed in central Knox.
- Develop a centralised platform to promote committees, groups (including internet groups), and opportunities for connection around Knox.
- Provide a free English language program for new arrivals who cannot learn English for free.
- Increase positive coping mechanisms in young people.
- Provide interactive online maps for locating accessible, pram friendly sites and facilities in Knox.
- Continue the 'Keeping it real' program and broaden for men and women. Including advertising more widely, in order to reach more people in the community.
- Support for people with dementia.
- Provide multicultural resources in language, including welcome packs in language for new residents.
- Provide ongoing social connection opportunities that allow for intergenerational & multi-generational connection. Make informal, but ongoing.
- Increase and further support employment and volunteering opportunities, especially amongst Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and youth.
- Establish a walking club at Scoresby Tennis Club, in partnership with the club and using club facilities.

Theme 3: Caring for and enhancing our environment

- Work in partnership with key community groups (sporting clubs, scouts etc) to improve the environment (tree planting, education etc).
- Sporting clubs to be provided with dedicated food waste bin, alongside general waste and recycling.
- Expand sites of biodiversity and bio-sensitive urban design, including continuing to expand utilising innovative ideas e.g. planter boxes on hard serves with vegetation that encourages biodiversity and floating wetlands.

- Work with private property shopping precincts industrial precincts to utilize biodiversity boxes, planter boxes on hard surfaces.

Theme 4: Leading, listening and governing responsibly

- Council to go to schools and get ideas and feedback from students. Council could look at doing this with workplaces too.
- Create process and services that are aligned and connected, in order to create a consistent and shared source of information and visibility.

Theme 5: Being a strong voice for safety

- Establish a gambling harm committee and implementation plan. Including partnerships with community education programs such as EACH Gamblers Help Program, and community lived experience.
- Support 'The Forge', a young men's program (14-17 years) supporting healthy masculinity, healthy and positive peer relationships.

Theme 6: Planning our future City

- Increased housing for older people that live alone.
- Improve footpath accessibility for wheelchairs across Knox. Work to replace footpaths and ensure private property and business access is achievable.
- Improve planning and development of use of old and new infrastructure. Consider impacts on parking, safety, traffic, and accessing open space.
- Create more free and safe facilities for young people to socialise, study or chill (similar to Youth Hive at Knox Library).
- Support people over 50 to own a house and live safely in their community.
- Install more changing places accessible bathrooms in Knox public places and facilities.

Understand community ideas for actions or projects in a specific location in Knox

Throughout the engagement, the community were invited to provide ideas for actions or projects in specific locations within Knox. These ideas were placed by respondents on a map of Knox to signify the specific location. Ideas have been categorised as follows:

- Cycling safety and investment in bike infrastructure was discussed with dedicated bike lanes requested on Mountain Highway, The Basin; new bike paths along Armstrong Road and Pine Road, Bayswater, better connections for the Ringwood–Belgrave rail trail, cycling links between Lakeview Drive and Stamford Park Rowville, better links for cycling and walking paths in Ferntree Gully, a new path between Coleman Road and Boronia Road, Wantirna and a dedicated bike path along Stud Road in Rowville as the current path is not fit for purpose.
- Pedestrian safety was raised as a concern at the Bayswater shopping precinct on Mountain Highway, accessing Knox Basketball Stadium and Knox Regional Football Centre and on Claremont Avenue, Boronia. Other suggestions included an accessible path connecting Bayswater station and the Scout Hall, a footpath connecting Liverpool Road and the retarding Basin and improved public lighting in Upwey.
- Investment in infrastructure including maintenance and upgrades of Knox Leisureworks, Wally Tew Scout Hall, Mountain High Shopping Centre, Boronia Library, a new arts and entertainment facility in Wantirna and upgrades to Boronia station and bus terminal including well-lit commuter spaces, multi-level car parking and adding a mural.
- More and improved green space, parks and playgrounds in Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Rowville, Upwey as well as more active living and sporting opportunities, including sporting ground upgrades in Lysterfield Rowville and Upwey.
- Public toilets in the parks in Lysterfield, Rowville and Guy Turner Reserve, Bayswater.
- Outdoor sporting infrastructure such as basketball courts in Rowville, Ferntree Gully and Boronia, upgraded skate parks and BMX tracks at Rowville and Lewis Road Skate Park, a new water park in Rowville, and Mountain Bike facilities in Ferntree Gully.
- Removal of mature trees was a concern and enhancing tree related approval processes.
- Investment and maintenance of the footpath and road infrastructure in Upwey, Rowville, Wantirna South and Lakewood Reserve and a new footbridge connecting Bayswater and Heathmont.
- Parking and traffic concerns were raised, including having no standing signs on overdeveloped streets in Boronia and Ferntree Gully and the Knox Regional Netball Centre parking, Angliss Hospital and Talaskia Reserve needing more available parking.
- Open access to the Knox Westfield swimming pool during school holidays and summer.
- Extended library hours and collections.
- Advocacy for improved public transport including the trackless tram in Rowville and bus access in Bayswater.
- General maintenance such as more frequent street sweeping, cleaning the creek in Ferntree Gully, removing commercial bins from streetscapes and removal of older unsafe buildings and playgrounds.
- Long term planning of waste, waste collection frequency and introducing more plastics collections and more bins on bike paths
- Opportunities for social and neighbourly connections including programs and support for seniors and active ageing.
- Christmas decorations and celebrations.

Children's Drawings and Statements

Children were asked to draw and write what they love about Knox. These drawings and statements were analysed and grouped together by theme. The key themes identified included:

- Family and pets
- Socialising
- Childcare and school
- Sport
- Cultural links
- Home, garden and bedroom
- Use of park, footy ground and playground facilities for socialising, play and walking
- Close proximity of services
- Bike riding and swimming
- Shopping and toys
- Closeness to the mountains, forest, the river, birds, flowers, open spaces, rainbows and the sun
- Transport, e.g. riding in the car.

