



Our highlights

Message from the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer

We are pleased to present the 2019/20 Maroondah City Council Annual Report to the Maroondah community and to the Minister for Local Government.

While the Annual Report reflects on Council's activities during 2019/20, we continue to have our sights firmly set on the future. We have successfully completed the third year of the four year Council Plan and delivered the *Council Plan 2017-2021* to reflect Year 4 initiatives, based on the community directions in *Maroondah 2040 'Our future together'*, and feedback received from a range of community consultation activities.

Other strategic and long-term planning has taken place to guide the development of a new Children and Families Strategy; a new Youth Strategy; Arts and Cultural Development Strategy; Golf Strategy; and a new Liveability and Wellbeing Strategy, which will provide longer-term direction and the key priorities to improve the health and wellbeing of the Maroondah community.

We have continued to plan for the future of our two key Activity Centres, with a review of the Ringwood Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) Masterplan and significant work in the Croydon Activity Centre.

The Ringwood Metropolitan Activity Centre Masterplan 2018 was adopted by Council in November 2018 replacing the 2004 Ringwood Transit City Masterplan. Council has prepared *Amendment C130* to implement the objectives and strategies of the Ringwood MAC Masterplan 2018. The process for inclusion of C130 in the Maroondah Planning Scheme progressed over the past 12 months, with community consultation during February to April 2020 and a Planning Panel hearing scheduled for July.

Council has continued to work with key stakeholders, user groups, and the community on the development of the Croydon Community Wellbeing Precinct Masterplan. This long term project will bring together a range of community services, programs and activities for people of all ages and abilities within a parkland setting in the Croydon Activity Centre.

Council continued its advocacy to the Victorian Government and the Australian Government to seek funding opportunities for a range of significant projects that will benefit the Maroondah community. Projects include \$60 million for carparks at four of our railway stations, road improvements for Dorset Road (\$50 million) and Canterbury Road (\$24.5 million), and funding for sporting and community facilities.

Council continues to lead the way in its service delivery and focus has been on ensuring vulnerable people within the community continue receiving the services they require. Over the last few years, the number of awards and recognition for excellence received by Council is testament to the service innovations and quality delivered by our high performing organisation on behalf of the Maroondah community. Council will continue to seek best practice service delivery and recognition while ensuring prudent financial management and ongoing investment in Council's employees to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and tools to meet the needs of the Maroondah community.

Council's 2019/20 Budget and Long Term Financial Strategy (LTFS) continued to be based on sound financial management, as well as an understanding of the rising cost of living facing ratepayers. The LTFS outlines Council's projected financial position for the next 10 years and provides a guide to the community, Council and management in their analysis of options and decision-making about the future directions and operations of Council.

The LTFS demonstrates our long term financial sustainability and ensures we can continue to invest in community facilities and services, and not take on new debt, while operating within the rate cap environment. *The Local Government (Fair Go Rates) Act* was passed by the Victorian Parliament in November 2015. The Act introduced a rate cap based on CPI plus or minus any adjustment and came into effect on 1 July 2016. Maroondah City Council complied with the Victorian Government's 2019/20 rate cap of 2.5 per cent over the average property rate of Council.

The COVID-19 pandemic was declared on March 11, with a profound impact on our community. Council has continued to provide the majority of its services during the various stages of the pandemic and the government restrictions between March and June 2020. However, the restrictions required the closure of our leisure facilities, including Karralyka, Aquanation, Aquahub, our stadiums and golf courses, resulting in a loss of \$10 million in user fees and a redirection of in excess of \$5 million of expenditure to COVID-19 response in the 2019/20 year.

While we continue to manage the COVID-19 impacts, we are very proud of the work that has been achieved by the organisation, in partnership with the Councillors and the community. The significant achievements of the past year should be celebrated, and are detailed throughout this report. We commend it as a record of the extent of what has been accomplished to ensure our City, and the Maroondah community, continues to be active, prosperous, vibrant, sustainable, accessible, thriving, inclusive and empowered.

Key highlights for annual report 2019/20

- Karralyka celebrated 40 years of hosting arts and cultural events with a birthday event held on the outdoor lawn on 23 February 2020. Residents enjoyed guest appearances, entertainment, music, food trucks and free cake. Entertainment was provided on the main stage by MC Dave O'Neil, ABC's Lah Lah's Big Live Band, Chart Topping 80's Band, and The Code One band. Children enjoyed a magic fairy show, a reptile experience, free face painting, interactive games, rides and music for the whole family.
- New public art was installed in November 2019 in Town Park, Croydon. Ian Bracegirdle's Spotted Marsh Frog features the *Spotted Marsh Frog*, a species found in the nearby Tarralla Creek wetlands.
- The HE Parker Sporting Pavilion was in the final stages of construction as we moved towards the end of June. The new \$4.25 million building will include four female-friendly change rooms to cater for growing female involvement in grassroots sport, as well as a large multipurpose room and amenities. Once completed, the facility will accommodate the Heathmont Cricket Club, Heathmont Football Club and Sport and Life Training (SALT).
- Maroondah has participated in the Councils and Emergencies Project, a multi-year, three phased project that aims to enhance the emergency management capability and capacity of local governments to meet their obligations in the management of emergencies. As part of this project, the *Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2020-2023* was adopted by Council in March 2020.
- Council continued its partnership with Together for Equality and Respect (TFER) in its work towards preventing violence against women in Maroondah. The 16 Days of Activism campaign ran during November 2019, and in March 2020, Council delivered a Women's Safety Online event at Realm presented by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.
- In response to an increased demand for support services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maternal and Child Health Hotline offered a confidential, 24-hour information and advice service to vulnerable families regarding concerns about child health as well as the health of parents. Maternal and Child Health 'home' visits, Breastfeeding support, Early Parenting Program, First Time Parents Group, Supported Playgroup Program continued during restrictions via video, phone or Facebook. A series of online videos were also produced to support parents with sleeping, feeding and parenting support.
- Maroondah-first pilot program *Good Food For Me* is helping to teach older residents important yet simple, practical ways on how to live with better health through better nutrition. The pilot program was launched in February 2020 following the success of the Good Food For Me seminar held in early 2019.
- We continue to work in partnership with Knox and Yarra Ranges Councils to develop an overarching strategic framework for the revitalisation of the Bayswater Business Precinct (BBP) to attract future investment, maximise business performance and generate employment growth for the region.

- Council has broadened its support offerings to Maroondah's small business community by strengthening its partnerships with the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Australian Small Business Advisory Service Digital Solutions to provide access to a broader range of workshops and development programs for our small to medium enterprises (SMEs).
- Through the annual Student Wellbeing Action Team (SWAT) program, Council worked with a select group of Year 10 students from Maroondah schools who were keen to take their leadership to the next level. SWAT supports young people to uncover their strengths and use their new skills to lead a wellbeing project in their own school.
- Council's Kindergarten Expo held in March 2020 was again highly successful with all Maroondah kindergartens present to promote their centre and discuss timetables, learning and their programs.
- Following a review of the Arts and Cultural Development Strategy 2014-2018 the timeframe for the next Strategy was adjusted to the 2020-2025 period. During 2019/20, community and stakeholder consultation was undertaken resulting in the adoption of the Arts and Cultural Development Strategy 2020-2025 in March 2020.
- The FReeZA team have delivered a range of events during 2019/20 including a 'metal' show at EV's Youth Centre and a skate competition at Y Space in Croydon. During COVID-19 restrictions a successful online event involved an Instagram livestream. The annual Youth Week activities, held in May, were adapted with online events held for the Pure Talent art exhibition and the annual Youth Awards.
- The Vegetation Review continued during 2019/20 resulting in the adoption of the Maroondah Vegetation Strategy on 16 March 2020. Implementation of the actions within the Strategy, including a revision of planning controls within the Maroondah Planning Scheme is now underway.
- Major desilting and waterbody reinstatement works were completed at a number of locations, including at Settlers Orchard Reserve in Croydon Hills, the Ringwood Lake waterbody and pondage system, The Dell reserve and at The Range estate wetlands.
- Stage one works for the upgrade of Lincoln Road in Croydon, between Hull Road and Dornoch Court, have been completed, with the second stage, from Dornoch Court to Dorset Road, expected to be completed in August 2020.
- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the Maroondah community in 2020 Council has put in place a temporary change to the organisational structure to implement a coordinated relief and recovery framework. The framework aims to support a community led recovery through: the provision of up-to date community information and engagement; coordination of personal support; referrals for emergency shelter, food, material aid relief and counselling; recovery initiatives that build on community strengths and needs; monitoring of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19; support for local business and economic activity; and ensuring the continuation of Council service delivery.
- The new *Local Government Act 2020* is being implemented in four transitional stages, during which time it will co-exist with many of the provisions within the former *Local Government Act 1989*, up until 1 July 2021. The first phase of reforms took effect on 6 April 2020, which put in place governance principles that provide the foundation framework for the new Act.
- Council continues to provide information across a range of channels and platforms, both traditional and digital. Multimedia and video output increased during 2020, and a fortnightly eNewsletter was launched in January, providing news on Council's services, activities and events. During COVID-19 this eNewsletter provided important health and support information to our community, which was supplemented with a number of traditional bulletins sent directly to our residents.

Council awards and recognition

Maroondah City Council is proud to be recognised for its commitment to leadership and service excellence. A selection of the honours received during 2019/20 are highlighted below:

2019 Victorian Early Years Award - Outer East Early Start Kindergarten - Finalist

This program is an initiative from the Childhood Out of Home Care Working Group of which Council is a partner. The program was established under the auspice of the Brighter Futures Children and Youth Area Partnership. The strategic aim of the partnership is to increase the participation and educational outcomes for preschool aged children in Out of Home Care, with the scope broadened to include all 3-year old children who have ever been engaged in the Child Protection system.

2019 Active Ageing and Wellbeing Awards - Buried in Treasures - Winner

Winning the Outstanding Program or Project (non-grant based), the Buried in Treasures program assists people with hoarding behaviours and is run in partnership between Council and Uniting Care. The 16-week program is a self-help, small group which supports people with hoarding and over-acquiring behaviours to make a change. Hoarding behaviour is the persistent accumulation of, and lack of ability to relinquish, large numbers of objects or living animals, resulting in extreme clutter.

2019 LGPro Corporate Planners Award - Maroondah Youth Strategy - High Commendation and Delegates Award

Maroondah City Council's Youth Strategy has catalysed an evidence-based transformation of Council's work with, and for, young people, whilst also leading a shift in focus towards raising youth wellbeing across the entire community. Through innovative partnerships with University of Melbourne and the Department of Education, Maroondah's Youth Services team have adopted the science of positive psychology and wellbeing to facilitate a whole of system change that has mobilised more than 1000 local professionals towards our common vision that young people are flourishing as part of a healthy and thriving community.

2020 National Awards for Local Government - Ringwood Arts Precinct - Finalist

The Arts Animates category recognises the creation of vibrant and cohesive communities through the Arts. The Ringwood Arts Precinct is a highly successful project which has transformed the centre of the Ringwood Metropolitan Activity Centre to create a place to experience and participate in the arts as part of everyday life.

2020 MAV Technology Awards for Excellence - Implementing Desktop as a Service - Finalist

Council was keen to leverage technology to act as a force multiplier, increasing its service delivery capacity, responsiveness and efficiency whilst also increasing its resilience to service interruptions and enabling greater business continuity capabilities. This project saw the delivery of Desktop as a Service creating a mobilised workforce, able to work from any location or field site.

2020 Australian Workplace Health & Safety Awards - Ergonomic desk setup video - Finalist

Council developed and produced an instructional video and support communications for the organisation to assist employees with ergonomic desk and chair set up in the workplace. This activity resulted in improved wellbeing for employees and was well utilised by our employees working from home during the COVID restrictions.

2020 PLA Awards - Community Facility of the Year - Maroondah Nets - Finalist

Construction of the HE Parker multi-sports complex (Maroondah Nets) commenced in March 2018 and was opened to the community in April 2019. The new facility was formally named Maroondah Nets, which identifies the location of the facility, as well as referencing the nets that are used by each of the sports that use the facility in netball, volleyball, badminton and table tennis. Community consultation was key to the development of the project due to the unique bushland nature of HE Parker Reserve.

2020 ALGWA Victoria Bursary - Winner

The Annual Bursary Award is aimed at encouraging and assisting women in Local Government to further their education in a field directly related to their role. Council's Coordinator Local Laws was the Bursary recipient and will use the Bursary towards completing their current Law degree.

2020 AILA National Landscape Architecture Awards - Croydon Town Square - Finalist

Council's new Croydon Town Square improves the sense of character, arrival experience and functionality of this gateway precinct in the heart of Croydon. For commuters, weekly shoppers, lunch goers, or traders on their coffee break, the Square offers respite and a slice of solitude amongst the urban hum, with a generous number of seats and a comfortably sloped expanse of grass. Included in the development was a new Changing Places facility, made possible through funding from the Victoria Government. Each component of the Square works to create a public space that welcomes visitors and locals alike.

Maroondah 2020 Australia Day awards

Maroondah's Citizen of the Year was awarded to Averil Embury for her significant contribution to the Australian Red Cross 'Trauma Teddies' program. Trauma Teddies are hand knitted toys given to children and adults who are affected by some form of disruption to their normal lives, which causes them anxiety and panic.

Averil began by knitting skins (the two sides of the teddy) but soon extended her involvement by offering to finish the teddies by sewing them up, sewing on the Australian Red Cross label, filling them and giving the teddy life by adding eyes, ears, neck and a smile of love.

Averil has been the main 'finisher' for the area for many years, finishing an average of 100 per month. Averil has also been volunteering at Olivet for the past 20 years where she assists the mending of pillowcases, food protectors, turning old sheets into laundry skip covers and the list goes on; nothing is too much for Averil.

Young Citizen of the Year was awarded to Ben Voogd for his time assisting Ringwood Little Athletics, Little Athletics Victoria and Little Athletics Junior Development Coaching Squads. Ben is a team member of Ringwood Seniors where his contribution to set up and assist is acknowledged by his peers and Club Committee. Ben has been coaching Junior Athletics to state titles over the past four years. In addition to coaching, Ben is a National and State title holder, representing Australia and achieving Gold in the Oceania Championships. He has also broken Meet Records, won Australian Championships representing Victoria and won Victorian Championships representing Ringwood.

The Community Event of the Year was awarded to the Winter Shelter, a Maroondah churches and community response to local homelessness. It is the mission of Winter Shelter to provide not only shelter but food and honour for people who need comfort and support. Winter Shelter works together with local Christian churches to provide the best support to those without anywhere to stay in Maroondah.

Community endorsement

Council's overall community satisfaction results provided good news with the Maroondah community continuing to rate Council's overall performance at a level significantly higher than the state-wide average. This is evidence of the high standard of work across all areas of Council, including our strategic leadership.

Council's 2020 results are generally slightly lower when compared to results averaged out over the past five years. However, Council continues to perform well in comparison to state-wide average results. It is important to note that the survey period coincided with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council's overall performance is rated in line with the average rating for councils in the Metropolitan group and is rated statistically significantly higher than the state-wide average for councils (index scores of 66 and 58 respectively).

Key highlights of the 2020 survey include:

- the rating for 'Councils overall performance' (65) is seven points higher compared to the state-wide average (58);
- the rating for 'overall direction of Council' (56) is five points higher compared to the state-wide average (51);
- the rating for 'making decisions in the interest of the community' (58) is five points higher compared to the state-wide average (53); and
- the rating for 'business and community development and tourism' (63) is four points higher compared to the state-wide average (59).

This Victorian Government initiated survey is just one of a range of tools used to measure Council's progress towards the vision and outcomes highlighted in *Maroondah 2040 'Our future together'* and Council's mission. The survey is one of the processes by which Council receives important community feedback to ensure its activities are well targeted, performing efficiently and are relevant to the community.

Council continues its commitment to continuous improvement and effective community consultation and encourages active involvement and participation to ensure we continue to be responsive to the needs of the community.



Cr Mike Symon
Mayor



Steve Kozlowski
CEO