

Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan

Stronger together: our way forward
from COVID-19





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Acknowledgment of Country

We, in the spirit of Reconciliation, acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land now known as the City of Maroondah, where Indigenous Australians have performed age old ceremonies. We acknowledge and respect their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection to it. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Executive summary

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been nationwide, deep and profound. The Maroondah community, along with metropolitan Melbourne, has been subjected to repeated staged restrictions to reduce community transmission.

This plan provides a strategic overview of the intended community recovery outcomes within the Maroondah municipality in response to the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Both relief and recovery begin when an emergency occurs. Typically, relief is provided during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. Recovery is generally a longer process for affected individuals and communities. The coronavirus pandemic is a situation where responding to the emergency provision of relief and recovery occur simultaneously, which therefore provides added complexity to the planning process.

Unlike more common disasters, there is no physical damage with COVID-19. The absence of a disaster 'footprint' means that many of the impacts are hidden, and play out in the psychosocial and economic domains.

Economic impacts have profound psychosocial implications for individuals, families and communities and exacerbate pre-existing social problems.

These impacts will occur across the individual, family, local/neighbourhood, and community levels. Like all disasters, pandemic impacts are not distributed evenly across society, with some groups more disadvantaged and impacted than others¹.

The priorities highlighted in this plan are based on input from over 2800 responses to various community consultation activities, local social and economic data, and feedback from local agencies, organisations and specialist advisory committees and groups.

Using the Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals² - which highlights how the social, economic, cultural, human, political, natural and built environments have a profound impact on health and wellbeing - has enabled a holistic overview of the recovery priorities.

The Priority Actions for each recovery area describe how Council will work towards these outcomes, in partnership with other levels of government and local organisations and agencies.

Recovery Capital	Priority outcomes	Priority actions (some examples)
Human Capital - Caring for our people 	Public health and wellbeing Community relief and individual support Mental health and wellbeing Physical health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote physical distancing, hygiene measures and COVID-safe behaviour as people return to public life. Support agencies in the rollout of the COVID vaccination program. Support community relief agencies through the Maroondah Emergency Relief Network to meet increased demand from vulnerable individuals and households. MaroondahConnect support service. Mental health and wellbeing promotion activities. Provide support and guidance for sporting clubs and Associations to facilitate return to sport in a COVID-safe manner.
Social Capital - Connecting our community 	Social connection Volunteering and volunteer-based organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver programs to facilitate community connections, reduce isolation, enhance mental wellbeing and connect with vulnerable residents. Deliver a series of community and cultural events and activities. Facilitate support for volunteer-led organisations and partner with Eastern Volunteers.
Built Capital - Sustaining our community facilities 	Enhancing community confidence Provision of safe and accessible facilities, parks and gardens Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular and enhanced maintenance of parks, gardens, foot and bike paths. Support accessibility and inclusion for community groups to continue to use Council facilities in a COVID-safe environment. Offer a fee subsidy program for arts and cultural groups and creative practitioners to increase access to facilities. Facilitate the acceleration of community projects such as Dorset Recreation Reserve.
Political Capital - Supporting community leadership and advocacy 	Communication Community-led decision making Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on available services and support that is accessible, repeated, includes translations and in different formats. Extensive engagement processes with community and businesses are undertaken at regular intervals. Advocate the needs of the community to partners and other levels of government. Liaise with key partners such as Migrant Information Centre and CALD community leaders to understand needs and provide support.
Financial Capital - Rebuilding livelihoods and business activation 	Business support Job creation and pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the expansion of outdoor dining areas for hospitality businesses. Business fee relief – for some permits and registrations. Shopping centre improvement works. Business promotion - shop local. Bayswater Business Precinct Project. Place Activation Project (parklets, pop up parks). Support initiatives that reduce barriers to employment, particularly for young people.

Recovery Capital	Priority outcomes	Priority actions (some examples)
<p>Cultural Capital - Revitalising cultural participation and creative industries</p> 	<p>Local arts and cultural recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure accessible arts experiences and assist community to re-engage and share their experiences through creative expression including writing, storytelling, songwriting, visual and performing arts. • Support cultural tourism initiatives to boost visitation to our activity centres and provide opportunities for local artists and creative industries.
<p>Natural Capital - Enhancing our connection with nature</p> 	<p>Protection and enhancement of green open space</p> <p>Improving community wellbeing through nature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue implementation and delivery of the Re-imagining Tarralla Creek project. • Partner with Traditional Owner groups and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place for storytelling and other cultural activities. • Promote participation in activities that connect people and nature.

As the closest level of government to the community, Maroondah City Council will continue to prioritise the efforts needed for our residents to recover and build on the opportunities, and new hopes that have arisen from the situation.

A full list of the Priority Actions can be found in the relevant Recovery Capital section of this plan.



Developing the *Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan*

The development of this plan was informed by an initial impact assessment process, extensive community consultation, service delivery impacts and research and learnings from other disasters. This has established a strong evidence base with the emerging needs and existing strengths of the Maroondah community at its centre. The Draft Plan was also placed on Public Exhibition for nearly six weeks. Feedback from this process has been analysed and added to the plan as needed. Some feedback will be addressed in other strategic plans that are to be developed over the coming months in 2021.

The complexity of recovery and providing certainty in this context is exacerbated by the continuing threat of increased community infection of COVID-19 and no definitive timeframe for the complete rollout of the vaccine program.

Recovery from pandemics, like any emergency, is a long, complex, dynamic and multidimensional process³. The key to recovery is to focus on managing the consequences⁴, and ensuring that there are systems in place that adapt to changing and emerging community needs and strengths.

Recovery is a complex, multi-faceted experience requiring community engagement and negotiation with a wide range of stakeholders. It takes time and should progress at a pace that is suitable for impacted individuals and communities.



<p>March to June 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Relief & Recovery framework • Initial Impact Assessment, including stakeholder consultation • Social profile • Service delivery impacts and adaptations • Implementation of immediate response activities 	<p>July to August 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community survey • Draft early relief and recovery priorities • Implementation of early intervention initiatives • Continue to respond to changing situation 	<p>September to October 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results from survey analysed • Development of draft <i>Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan</i> • Continue to respond to changing situation 	<p>November 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted engagement on community recovery priorities • Continued implementation of identified initiatives 	<p>December 2020 to March 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback to community on results of the survey • Public exhibition of the Draft <i>Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan</i> for community feedback • Finalise <i>Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan</i>
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Purpose

The *Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan* provides clear strategic direction to guide and focus Council's priorities for recovery for our community who live, work, study or play in the City of Maroondah.

It is recognised that when a community experiences a significant event, there is a deterioration of our social fabric and we therefore need to supplement the personal, family and community structures that have been disrupted by the event. The purpose of providing recovery services, including emergency relief, is to assist the affected community towards management of its own recovery.

This plan will assist Council, community organisations and service providers to work collaboratively to bounce back from the pandemic. Through shared planning and effort we can support the recovery needs of our community to ensure we are stronger beyond Covid-19.

Scope

The *Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan* is a Council-wide strategic document that:

- encompasses all community members who live, work, study or play in the City of Maroondah
- aims to guide Council's partnerships and collaboration with other levels of government, organisations or groups outside Council, while not directing their work.

Timeframe

The Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan is a transitional plan that highlights current priorities for immediate to medium term recovery. Longer term recovery needs will be integrated into new and future strategic planning and service delivery processes as highlighted in the diagram on page 10.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Recovery Plan will be regularly monitored to track progress on the implementation of priority actions, support continuous improvement and innovation, and identify when further review and adaptation is required as the situation evolves.

Progress reports will be provided to Council and the community on a regular basis.

Council will continue to actively engage with the community and key stakeholders throughout the implementation of the Recovery Plan to provide avenues for the community to continue to share their thoughts and experiences and be involved in community-led recovery.

Our role in community recovery

At Maroondah City Council, our role is to:

- **deliver** services that meet the needs and expectations of the Maroondah community
- **advocate** on behalf of community needs to other levels of government
- **facilitate** the delivery of outcomes by working in partnership with residents, businesses, community organisations and key stakeholders⁵.
- **leverage** constructive partnerships with the Victorian and Australian Governments and their agencies
- **build on the** expertise of Maroondah's business community via the Maroondah Business Advisory Committee and the Maroondah Business Group
- **enable** the best use of the community facilities that we own and manage.

Councils play an essential role in the state's emergency management arrangements by preparing communities to respond to and recover from emergencies.

At a local level, the coordinator of relief and recovery is local government. Councils are often a conduit between state government agencies, local communities, not-for-profit organisations and service providers.

An effective response to emergencies affecting the Maroondah community is only achieved through building on the strong partnerships that already exist. These partnerships involve non-government and government organisations, community-based groups, service clubs, churches and the private sector working together with the people and communities affected by the emergency.

Our guiding principles

The following guiding principles⁶ underpin all activities of the recovery effort. Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engages with community and supports them to move forward.

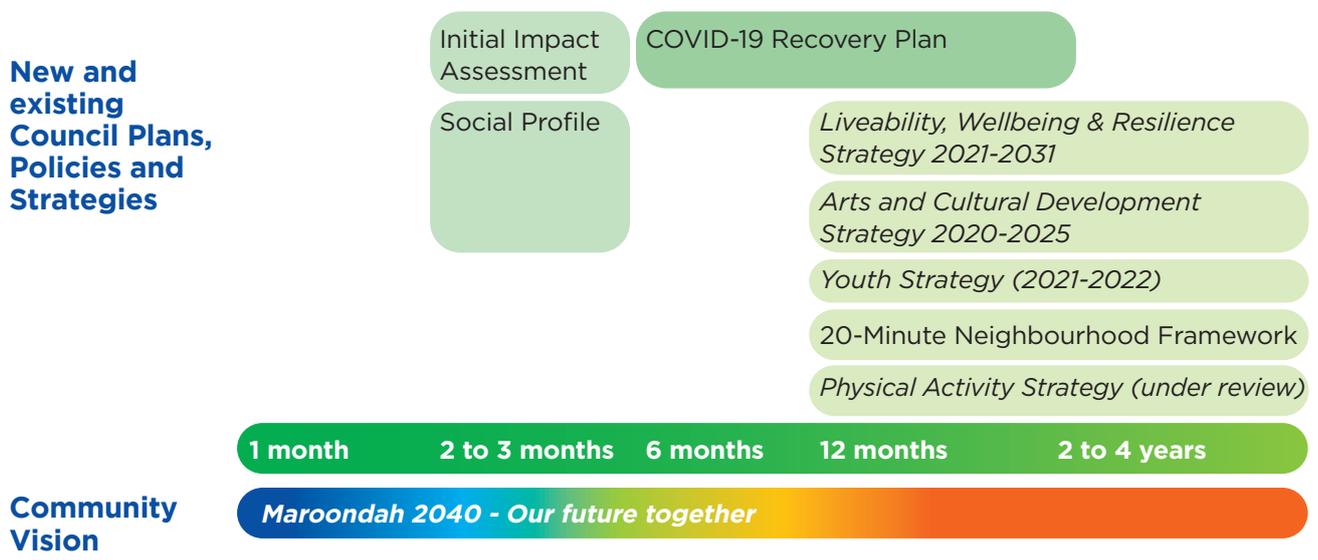
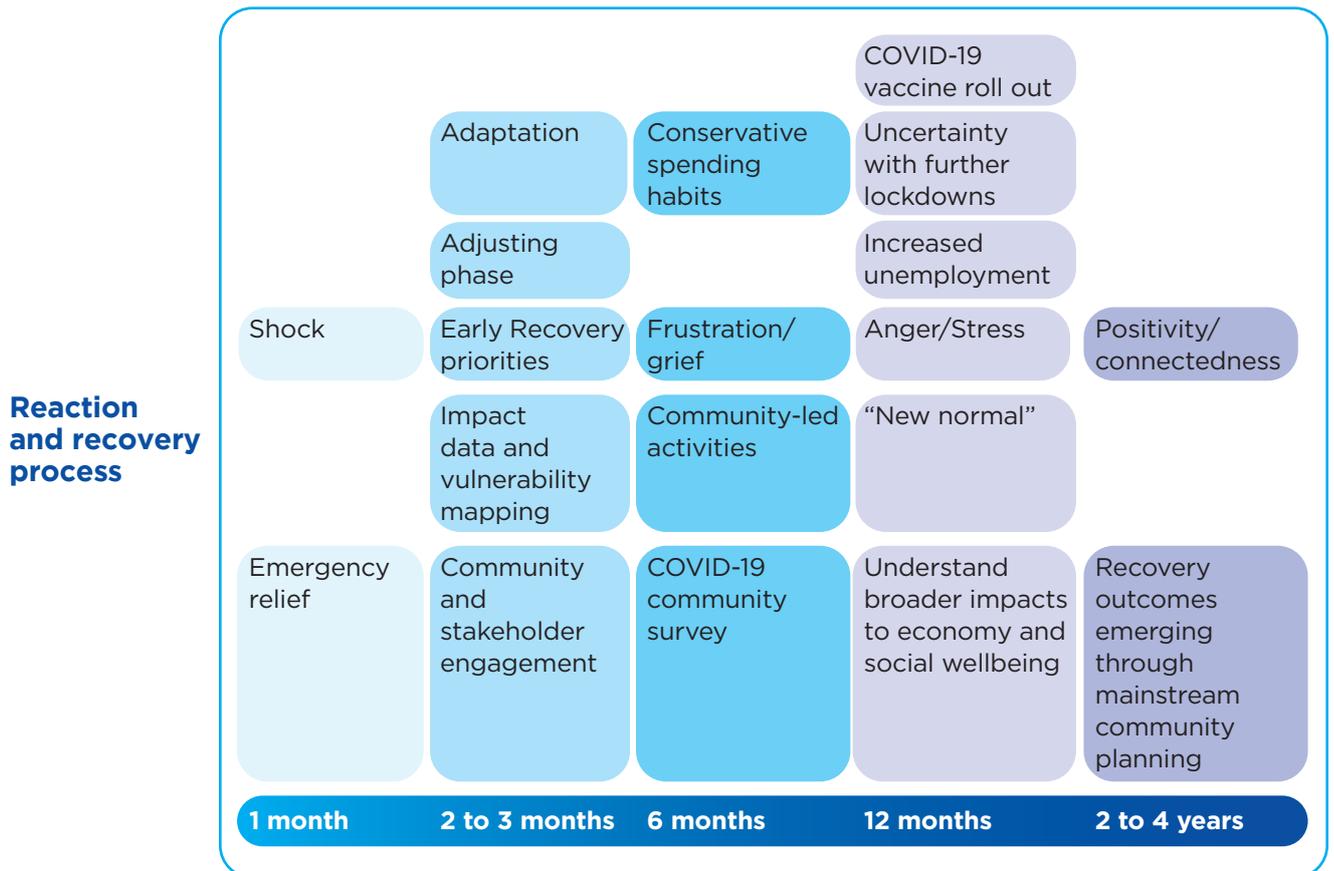
Principle	Action
Community-led process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The active involvement of the community directly and indirectly affected, is essential. • We will recognise differing community needs and work in partnership with the community. We will develop sound processes that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of the community. • We will recognise that different people will be at different stages of their recovery and that decision-making involves grief and will take time. • Recovery should build collaborative partnerships between the community and those involved in the recovery process. • We will recognise that new community leaders often emerge during and after a disaster. • We will recognise that different communities may choose different paths to recovery.
Individuals and communities are resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals, when provided with information about the situation and available services, are able to make informed choices about their recovery. • Communities, when supported with information and resources, are able to support and manage their own recovery.
Levels of recovery operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery operates at multiple levels of government. All agencies and organisations involved in management, coordination or service delivery will endeavour to undertake activities in a collaborative manner, within the agreed framework. • Coordination and communication between the community, key agencies and Australian, State, and local governments assist in ensuring the success of recovery activities for the affected community.
Roles of organisations and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery is not the exclusive domain of any single agency. All agencies and organisations willing to participate have an important role to play. • Recovery is a whole-of-government and a whole-of-community process. • The recovery process will build on and channel effort through pre-identified and existing community assets, including local knowledge, existing community strengths and resilience.

While it is not the domain of Maroondah City Council, or any one agency, to provide this support, we will endeavour to coordinate support, and partner with, agencies and community organisations across the recovery priority areas.

Council’s Integrated Planning Framework

This Plan aligns with Maroondah City Council’s integrated planning framework and existing strategic plans. It builds on previous consultation, review processes and policies integral to these.

The following diagram outlines the relationship between this plan, Maroondah 2040 and a number of forthcoming strategies, including the *Maroondah Liveability, Wellbeing & Resilience Strategy 2021-2031* (to replace the *Maroondah Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021*).





File image

COVID-19 in Maroondah

Current context

The declared State of Emergency and subsequent staged restrictions disrupted our social infrastructure, economic livelihoods, normal routines and community activities. This created a challenge for community recovery but has also provided new opportunities.

Public health impacts

COVID-19 was first confirmed in Australia in late January 2020. As COVID-19 is a new disease, there is no existing immunity in our community. Australia's COVID-19 vaccine national roll-out strategy⁷ identifies:

- priority populations for vaccination, and the phases in which vaccines will be provided in Australia
- details for how vaccines will reach frontline healthcare workers, quarantine and border workers, and aged and disability care residents and workers
- initial locations, across Australia, at which vaccines will be administered.

The uptake of the vaccine across the community will play an important part in the recovery process.

In Maroondah (as at February 2021) there were a total of 105 cases (0 active) - one of the lowest in Metropolitan Melbourne. While the disease risk was low in Maroondah, the longer-term nature of the disruption and sustained feelings of threat or anxiety, have a compounding effect on people's wellbeing.

Social impacts

The recovery system recognises the increased risk factors for people with pre-existing vulnerabilities. Of particular concern to the Maroondah community are issues such as mental health, support for older and vulnerable community members, community connectedness, access to information, and employment.

Maroondah City Council has also been significantly impacted by the forced closure of the majority of our community facilities and buildings. This has resulted in a flow-on impact to the community as these facilities provide opportunities for our community to meet, connect and improve their wellbeing.

The full impact of these closures on community groups, arts and cultural groups, sporting clubs and associations may not be known for years to come.

While community members have positively embraced digital technology to conduct online transactions for various services and to stay connected. It is yet to be seen if this behaviour will continue in the long term and exacerbates exclusion for those without internet access.

Economic impacts

The global response to the pandemic has impacted both local and global economies with flow-on effects across the community. The pandemic has impacted many sectors - notably manufacturing, education, creative industries, tourism and the services sector including accommodation and retail⁷. It has also dramatically reduced the number of seasonal workers available. The implementation of Australian Government, JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments and support from the State Government has assisted many businesses and their employees but has not included all affected workers.

There has been a rapid acceleration in the use and development of digital technologies by businesses and community organisations. The pandemic has hastened the speed with which businesses have embraced the utilisation of digital technology. However, bricks and mortar retail, especially in local shopping centres have been significantly impacted as a consequence of physical distancing restrictions.

The restrictions on movement has also led to changes in behaviour with potential long-term impacts on office accommodation with many organisations realising the benefits of a hybrid working pattern between home and the office. This may have impacts upon the nature of commercial developments in the future.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of local manufacturing and supply chains. Both the Victorian and Australian Government are supporting the transition of manufacturing practices and the skills required; through pathways for education, and skills development to employment, to ensure the sustainability of this sector.

The nature of the economy will continue to evolve both locally and globally as it continues to respond to the pandemic and its aftermath.

Population groups who are vulnerable or disproportionately impacted by the pandemic:

- Young people.
- Older people.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people, particularly those with low English proficiency.
- International students and temporary visa holders.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Women.
- Socially isolated people, including lone person households.
- People in residential care.
- Financially disadvantaged people, including those with low incomes or high debt.
- Unemployed or underemployed people.
- People experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- People experiencing or at risk of violence or abuse, including family or partner violence, child abuse and elder abuse.
- People with a self-reported disability.
- People reliant on external support.
- People with limited access to internet or other digital technologies at home.

Our community

The estimated residential population of Maroondah is 118,558 (as at 30 June 2019)⁸, living across approximately 45,000 households, with an average household size of 2.5 people.

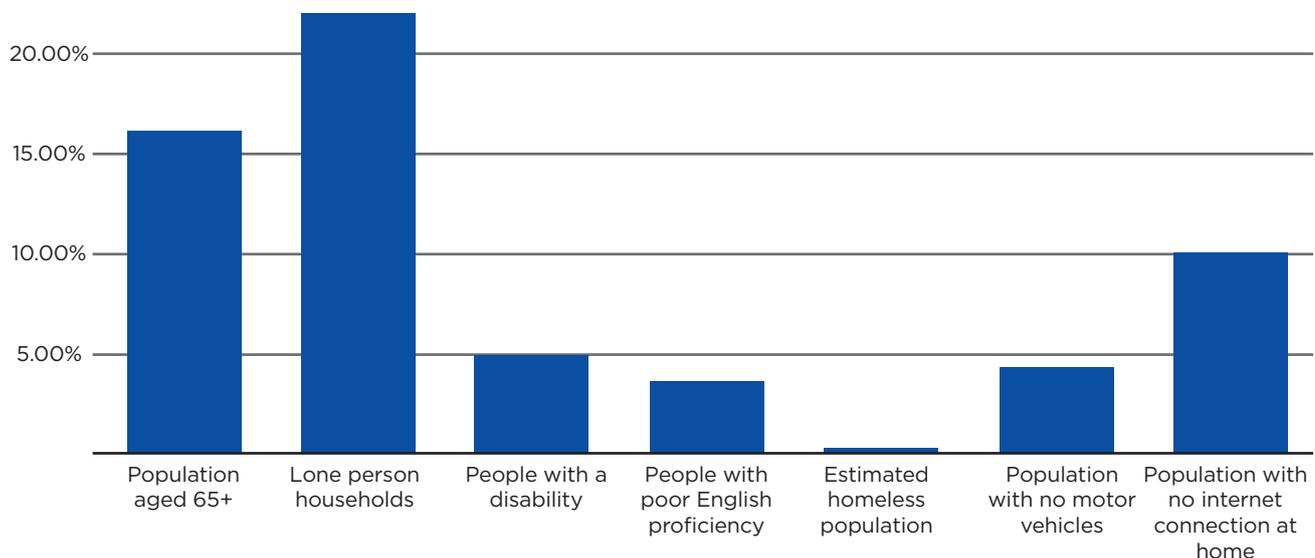
In 2016, the largest age group in Maroondah was parents and homebuilders (ages 35-49) at 20.9% of the population, and Maroondah had a higher proportion of children (under 18) and persons aged 60 or older than Greater Melbourne⁹.

Maroondah is an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse community. In 2016, nearly 1 in 4 Maroondah residents were born overseas, representing an increase of 3,758 persons since 2011¹⁰. Of those people born overseas, 4,929 people arrived in Australia within the previous five-year period, and they were predominantly born in Myanmar, China and India¹¹.

In 2017-2018, 60% (211) of Humanitarian Visa arrivals in the Outer East region of Melbourne settled in the City of Maroondah – more than three times the next highest local government area (Yarra Ranges). The majority (69%) were born in Myanmar.

There are a number of key demographic groups that could be particularly vulnerable in the case of an emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that some individuals will fall into more than one group, potentially heightening their vulnerability. The percentage of Maroondah residents in each of these groups in 2016 is outlined in the chart below¹² and informs Council’s COVID-19 recovery planning.

A more detailed overview of the Maroondah community can be found in the Maroondah Social Profile available on Council’s website, which was developed to inform these recovery priorities.



Source: ABS Census of Population and housing, 2016

Initial impact assessment

The immediate impacts, relief needs, and the Council and community agency response as the COVID-19 pandemic progressed were captured through extensive stakeholder engagement during March to May 2020, and recorded in an Initial Impact Assessment. This process provided the foundation for a more in-depth assessment and prioritisation of medium to long-term impacts on the Maroondah community.

At the time, the key impacts and concerns included:

- Access to technology (hardware and internet) to access information and services from home.
- Social isolation and loneliness.
- Mental health.
- Unemployment.
- Family violence and abuse.
- Restricted service delivery by community support agencies.
- Remote and flexible learning and care for children and young people.
- Remote working.
- Business impacts including revenue loss, increased costs, reduced staff and supply chain impacts.
- Temporary closure of libraries, community facilities, sporting clubs, neighbourhood houses and arts and cultural groups.

Community members experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage, such as those demographic groups listed earlier, were generally more heavily impacted by the pandemic and the government restrictions. Some culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities face additional challenges due to language barriers, increased racism and ineligibility for government support.

*<https://global.vic.gov.au/whatson/2020/november-2020/responding-to-coronavirus-covid19> (accessed on 1 December 2020)

Service delivery impacts

A broad range of services delivered by Council have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has resulted in changes to service delivery, scale-up of responsive activity and re-prioritisation based on budget impacts.

Critical Council services have been adapted to meet physical distancing requirements and COVID-safe plans including Customer Service; Maternal and Child Health; Immunisation; Health; Aged and Disability; Operations; Business and Activity Centre Development; Community Development, and many others.

In particular, the community has been significantly impacted by the forced closure of the majority of Council-owned community facilities and buildings that provide opportunities for the community to meet, connect and improve their wellbeing. Council's leisure facilities have been required to close, as have libraries and community centres.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Council's service delivery and activities have responded to the needs of our community in the form of:

- fee and permit relief
- deferral of due dates
- coordination of emergency relief
- provision of community support
- provision of business support
- implementing early recovery initiatives
- reprioritisation/adaptation of service delivery.

Victorian and Australian Government response

There has been a significant economic and health response to the pandemic by the Victorian and Australian Governments, for individuals, organisations, the arts and creative industries and businesses.

Global Victoria* summarises the Victorian and Australian Government support (including both job and economic packages) for businesses impacted by coronavirus.

Given the profound impact this pandemic has had on our community, Council will continue to advocate to the Victorian and Australian Governments. Council will work with community and partners to apply for available grant funding opportunities to address emerging issues and needs.

Council service delivery responses since March 2020

Group	Activity
Ratepayers 	Interest waiver on outstanding rates. Rate payment arrangements based on individual circumstances.
Sport clubs 	No charges for winter training or competition. Summer clubs will be charged a pro rata fee from the start of competition.
Community facilities 	Fees and permits waived for facilities not in use.
Businesses 	Charges waived or deferred for street permits and some renewal fees. Design and digital distribution of health and wellbeing tips for businesses working in isolation - 'Deskercise' videos available online. Provision of free expert business and mental health assistance and business legal advice.
Special COVID-19 Community Grants Program 	New grants to support emergency relief agencies and community organisations supporting mental health and social inclusion.
Community engagement 	130+ people expressed an interest in supporting community recovery activities
Eastern Regional Libraries 	287,888 loans and renewals Adapted to Click and Collect and Click and Deliver 1,118 Requests for children's activity packs
People sleeping rough 	Established a new service for people experiencing homelessness to access showers using local sporting facilities.

Group	Activity
Community Support & Emergency Relief 	MaroondahConnect service established.
	<p>160 Referrals to local agencies for the provision of food relief, material aid, financial assistance, transport, social inclusion, mental health and accessing support from other levels of government.</p>
	<p>Supported local agencies to provide 14,469 community meals (March to November 2020) Provision of 8,000 masks Council has worked in partnership with Maroondah Emergency Relief Network agencies to ensure continuity of community meals, work through COVID-19 restriction issues. Council has also advocated to Victorian Government in relation to local needs.</p>
	<p>51,325 Delivered meals from Karralyka kitchen from March to October for Knox City Council and Maroondah City Council.</p>
	<p>450 Regular social and welfare phone calls to people registered on Maroondah Police Seniors Register every month.</p>
	<p>785 Welfare calls to senior residents.</p>
	<p>550 Hand-written letters have been received and distributed between year 5 & 6 students and clients of Aged & Disability with many reciprocated letters.</p>
	<p>193 105 additional older, isolated residents joined the 88 pre-existing ‘members’ of Kerrabee social support programs, (Australian Government emergency funding).</p>
	<p>Exercise program with one-on-one instruction in the home with qualified personal trainer offered to 88 Kerrabee social support members and 240 delivered meals to promote physical activity to maintain mobility and reduce risk of falls for clients (Maroondah Leisure redeployment).</p>
	<p>28 Occupational Therapy and Kerrabee staff who have partnered in a Social Technology project. This involved isolated, older Kerrabee members, loaned electronic devices with data if required (provided through Australian Government funding), together with individual education to independently connect with the online Kerrabee programs and with their family and friends.</p>
	<p>One-on-one practical support such as shopping for essentials like groceries, pharmaceuticals available as necessary to Aged and Disability Services clients.</p>
	<p>Increased capacity of our Occupational Therapy service to reduce waiting time for support from months to weeks. Focussing on maximising safety and independence at home, increasing/maintaining mobility and preventing falls and supporting social connection strategies (funded by Australian Government emergency grant).</p>
	<p>4,300 Activity packs delivered to older residents including welfare checks and telephone calls.</p>
<p>103 Kerrabee programs expanded to include online and delivered-to-door for 30 additional seniors. Support 103 people in total. (Australian Government emergency grant).</p>	

Group	Activity
	<p>150 Maternal and Child Health hotline received over 150 calls.</p> <p>1,981 Maternal and Child Health additional counselling support attached to consultations for parent anxiety, depression, family stress, unwell babies or babies discharged early from hospital.</p> <p>87 Maternal and Child Health referrals to specialist family violence services resulting in over 100 consultations.</p> <p>380 Support packs for children and mothers delivered to homes.</p>
<p>CALD community</p> 	<p>Translating Victorian Government material and the community survey in 6 local Burmese and Chinese languages.</p> <p>Linking culturally and linguistically diverse community leaders with other agencies who can provide assistance and ensuring communities have access to material and community meals where required.</p> <p>Maternal and Child Health nurses directly assisted 15 families to complete kindergarten enrolments due to language and computer literacy barriers.</p>
<p>Be Kind Maroondah</p> 	<p>Delivered a series of initiatives to promote community wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to online support tools and services. • Physical health sessions. • Distribution of connect/support postcards in local neighbourhoods. • Distribution of 'Thank you' cards to community members and organisations. • Promotion of positive wellbeing messages for the community. • Sharing of kindness stories on Council's online engagement platform, <i>Your Say Maroondah</i>. • Promoting images of local 'Spoonvilles' on Council's social media channels and encouraging the community to share their own photos. • Over 50 community group members participated in the KnitOne, WarmOne initiative to support vulnerable residents with hundreds of items donated to Uniting, Summer Foundation and Wellways. • Men's Health event - An Evening with Tom Boyd. Video viewed over 850 times. • The Sunflower Effect Project (an idea originated by a local resident) encouraged Maroondah residents to plant sunflower seeds in their front garden or in a pot to bring some hope and brightness into their street. It was supported by local community houses, with over 110,000 seed packets being handed out. • The Maroondah Moments campaign encouraged residents to take photos of people, places, things or activities that make them happy. <p>Mental Health Month - October 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 690 participants registered for the '<i>From surviving to thriving</i>' online presentation on resilience building strategies. The video of the presentation was viewed over 2000 times. • Mental Health First Aid training provided for 24 people. • Introduction to Mindfulness session - two sessions of 30 people per session.

Our consultation

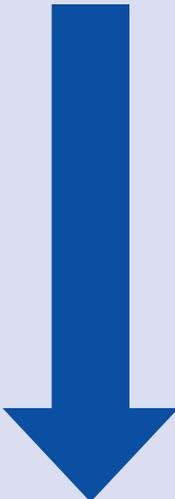
What we did

Extensive engagement was undertaken between March and October. Staged restrictions applied to Melbourne throughout much of this time, which limited the types and amount of engagement that could be undertaken. However, Council was still able to engage with Council Advisory Committees and network partnerships, individuals, organisations, businesses, and business groups. The draft COVID-19 Recovery Plan was also put on Public Exhibition in Dec/Jan 20/21, and the feedback has been analysed and added to the plan as appropriate.

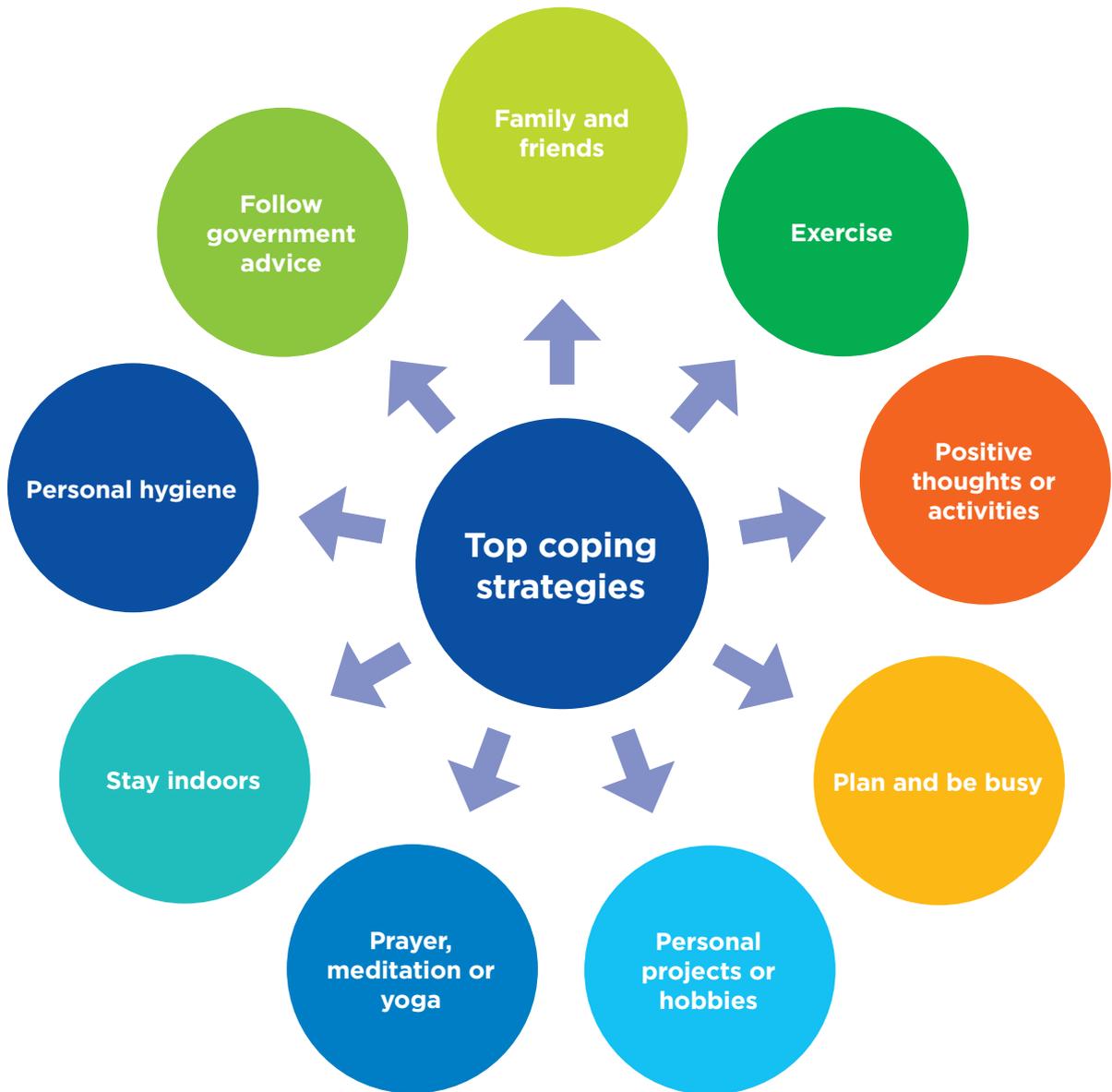
Engagement methods	Outcomes
Stakeholders (March to May 2020)	1190+
Phone calls to community services and organisations	50+ contacted
Phone calls to education institutions	17 contacted
Phone calls to Maroondah businesses	300+ contacted
Survey via Melbourne East Regional Economic Development Group (MEREDG)	823 responses
Community members (July to October 2020)	2814
Online Maroondah COVID-19 community survey on Council's online engagement platform, Your Say Maroondah	2382 responses
Paper copy survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributed to vulnerable people, including Aged and Disability Services clients and residents receiving support from Eastern Volunteers (700+ distributed) Mailed on request 	90 responses
Translated surveys for culturally and linguistically diverse communities (nine languages) - online and electronic	208 responses
Online focus group with Karen community members in partnership with Migrant Information Centre (<i>14 of which also completed a survey - deducted from total</i>)	29 participants
Outreach telephone surveys to vulnerable residents who had not completed the online survey	88 conducted
Adapted surveys with primary school aged children via schools	20 responses
In-person surveys with vulnerable residents at community meals programs	11 conducted

What we found

Key results are summarised below. A report detailing the full findings is available on Council's website.

Impacts	
On the community:	
 <p>Main positive impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling part of the community • Family, parenting or carer responsibilities • Work/employment status • Overall health and wellbeing • Recreation, hobbies and interests. 	 <p>Main negative impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation, hobbies and interests • Mental health • Overall health and wellbeing • Family, parenting or carer responsibilities • Feeling part of the community • Feelings of safety • Availability of food and groceries • Work/employment status • Access to support • Ability to afford food <p><i>*Bold = over 1000 responses</i></p>
On businesses:	
<p>95% of businesses reported that they have been, or will be, affected by COVID-19.</p> <p>60% of businesses reported that they will be unviable after 6 months if negatively impacted.</p>	<p>Main impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue loss • Customer loss • Increase in costs • Reduced staff • Supply chain impacts.

Top coping strategies



Note: Many respondents reported that they did not use any strategies to cope.

Where support is most needed in Maroondah

From the community

 Mental health and wellbeing support	 Support for older people and people with a disability	 Community connectedness	 Support for people who are vulnerable or living alone	 Financial support	 Safety, health and wellbeing
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From businesses

 Financial support	 Financial guidance	 Information	 Assistance with adapting, including going online	 Assistance with personal protective equipment	 Mental health and wellbeing support
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Behaviours and activities

 Doing more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling anxious, worried or experiencing other mental health concerns • Spending time with family • Helping others • Drinking alcohol • Talking to neighbours • Exercising • Eating healthy food • Spending time looking after myself • Volunteering • Gambling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending time with friends • Spending time with family • Exercise/sports/games • Spending time looking after myself • Volunteering • Talking to neighbours • Helping others • Eating healthy food • Drinking alcohol • Gambling. <p><i>*Bold = over 1000 responses</i></p>	 Doing less
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Draft *Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan* Summary of community feedback

The draft *Maroondah COVID-19 Recovery Plan* was made available for community feedback from 11 December 2020 to 22 January 2021.

There were a total of 69 feedback responses, including:

- 18 responses on Council's online engagement platform, Your Say Maroondah.
- 5 email responses.
- 10 young people aged 16-22 responded to the youth-specific feedback survey.
- 7 young people aged 16-21 participated in an in-person focus group with the Maroondah Youth Wellbeing Advocates.
- 29 children aged 4-12 participated in an in-person engagement activity at Council's Vacation Care Program.

Council employees also offered feedback both before and during the Public Exhibition period.

In addition:

- Over 11,500 people were reached on Council's Facebook and Instagram channels, as well as over 1400 Twitter impressions.
- There were over 300 downloads of the draft plan from Council's online engagement platform, Your Say Maroondah.

Feedback received was wide-ranging, with the majority falling under the following themes:

- Engaging and supporting community members who are vulnerable or disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, particularly culturally and linguistically diverse communities, older people, young people, women, people living with disabilities, isolated people, and people experiencing or at risk of violence at home or homelessness.
- Connection to nature.
- Connecting with community.
- Access to safe community facilities and spaces.
- Supporting community groups and organisations.
- Education and employment pathways, particularly for young people.
- Grief and loss.

A number of respondents suggested specific potential actions they wanted to see undertaken, generally under the above themes. These suggestions were considered and incorporated into the Priority Actions where appropriate, noting that some of the suggestions are, or will be, covered in other Council strategies and plans, including:

- *Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031* (in development)
- *Physical Activity Strategy* (to be reviewed)
- *Vegetation Strategy 2020-2030*
- *Children and Families Strategy*
- *Youth Strategy 2021-2022*

Other feedback included suggestions to add a section on monitoring and reporting of progress, referencing suggestions, and suggestions around the structure and length of the plan. These suggestions were all considered and incorporated where appropriate.



Over 50 community groups/members participated in Council's Knit One Warm One initiative to support vulnerable residents with hundreds of items donated to Uniting, Summer Foundation and Wellways

Our approach to community-led recovery

Community development

The community development model of disaster recovery acknowledges the strengths of affected communities and works with individuals and communities to self-determine and manage what 'recovery' looks like for them and their community.

The guiding principles of recovery underpin any decision, approach or strategy required to ensure community engagement in the process of recovery. A community development approach from all sectors is integral to this process.

During the emergency response, relief and recovery journey, there will be a need to embrace multiple forms of community development.

- The *Psychosocial Framework*¹³ and *Social determinants of Health*¹⁴ models are a useful lens to apply to ensure all members of a community have access to resources and their basic needs are met (noting that there has been a cumulative impact of vulnerabilities such as race, gender, homelessness and unemployment etc through the pandemic).
- An asset-based community development approach¹⁵ can help to ensure a sustainable approach that is embraced by the community; and builds on existing strengths to build resilience.

- Positive Psychology goes a step further in the development of the factors that enable human flourishing. It includes a broad range of evidence-based concepts and interventions that support the wellbeing and optimal functioning of individuals, groups, organisations and communities. This approach has been adopted by many parts of the Maroondah community, including our 27 public schools, and has led to the development of Communities of Wellbeing Inc. - a local not-for-profit organisation using these principles to build capability and connectedness to enhance human flourishing.

Efforts to recover wellbeing within Maroondah will be based on key elements of the psychosocial framework:

Individualised support for people, businesses and families

- Provision of accurate, timely and accessible information.
- Facilitating access to food relief and material aid, financial assistance, emotional and practical support.
- Building wellbeing literacy - providing people with the knowledge, skills, resources and capabilities to manage their own wellbeing and support the wellbeing of others.
- Fostering social connections.

Council is well placed to work in partnership with local agencies to identify gaps, assess service system capacity, address needs, and advocate on behalf of the community based on core health and wellbeing needs.

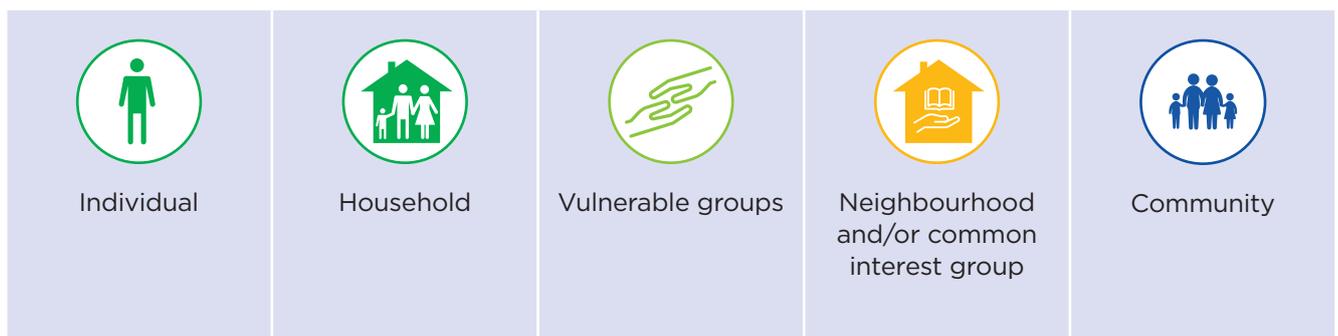


Figure 1. Psychosocial Framework

Neighbourhoods

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that people live, connect and communicate with one another. The associated public health restrictions have limited movement, prevented face-to-face contact and presented a range of challenges for many organisations that are central to our community life.

With most community members largely confined to their households and within a walkable catchment for much of 2020, there is a new opportunity to consider how social inclusion, mental health, volunteerism and resilience outcomes can be pursued at a local neighbourhood level.

20-minute neighbourhoods

One of the positive outcomes of COVID-19 restrictions is that many Maroondah residents have taken the time to truly discover their local neighbourhood. The lockdown has led to a new-found appreciation of our neighbours, local parks and walking tracks and shopping precincts.

This revitalised connection has the potential to enable a greater understanding of the concept of living within a 20-minute neighbourhood. The principle of 20-minute neighbourhoods is all about 'living locally' giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home, with access to safe cycling and local transport options.

Working in partnership, the Victorian Government has identified the following hallmarks of a 20-minute neighbourhood. They must:

- be safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport
- offer high-quality public realm and open spaces
- provide services and destinations that support local living
- facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher-order services
- deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable
- facilitate thriving local economies.

Creating a network of 20-minute neighbourhoods where everyone can live, work, and play is highlighted in the Maroondah 2040 Vision. This requires the identification of local activity centres with the capacity to support community members to live locally, and the planning of such centres in partnership with the community. This process has the potential to inform future investment strategies and coordinated delivery of neighbourhood level improvements across the municipality.

Within each of these neighbourhoods in Maroondah, there are existing key social assets. These 'social assets' present in the form of schools, small businesses, community houses, arts and cultural groups, sporting clubs, community interest groups, churches, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, emergency relief agencies, community and allied health organisations.

Community partnership and collaboration is fundamental to the 20-minute concept, and each of these community organisations can play a key role in community recovery.

Community

Social networks and connections have important benefits for reducing the impact of a disaster on people's health. There is often significant community strength and connection shown in the aftermath of emergencies. Participation of community members in events, activities and decision-making processes is important.

Given the extent and breadth of the impact of COVID-19, it is acknowledged that social health and wellbeing outcomes will be most effectively achieved through mobilising the strengths, partnerships and resources already available within Maroondah and the wider Eastern Metropolitan Region.

There are many individuals, groups and organisations in Maroondah which are already pivotal to the broader social, health and wellbeing of the community. These groups understand the local community needs and are well placed to provide ongoing sustainable community recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community engagement

The nationally agreed *Community Engagement Framework for Disaster Resilience*¹⁶ incorporates a Community Engagement Model that details principles and approaches of community engagement in the emergency management context (Figure 2.).

It outlines five elements of engagement - information, participation, consultation, collaboration and empowerment. Any given engagement activity may incorporate one, several, or all elements, depending on the required outcome of the activity

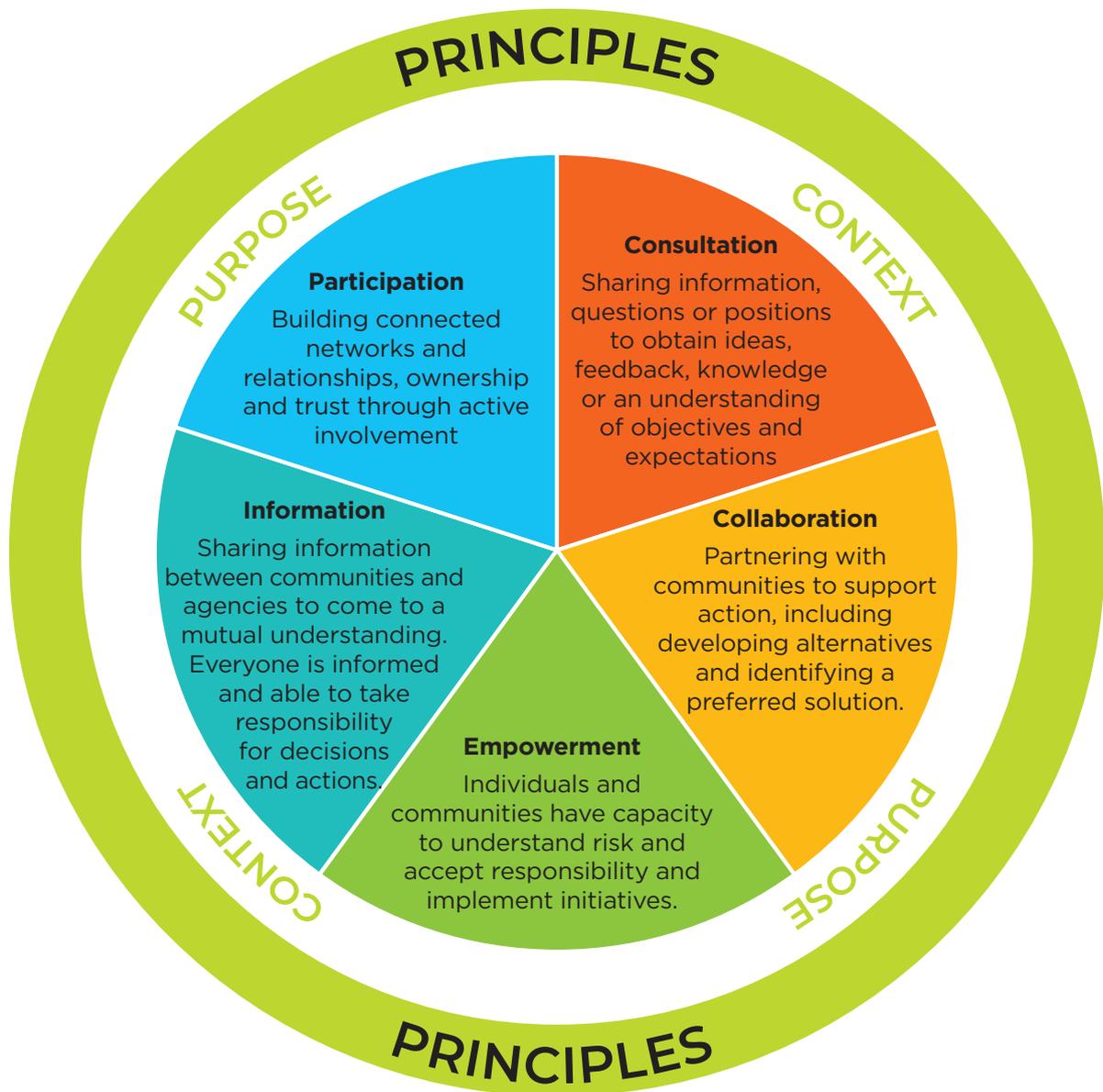


Figure 2. Community Engagement Model for Emergency Management

In line with this model, Council has developed a three-stage *COVID-19 Community Engagement Strategy*: Council will continue to facilitate effective community engagement and communication of important information to help ensure emergency relief and recovery activities are responsive to community needs.

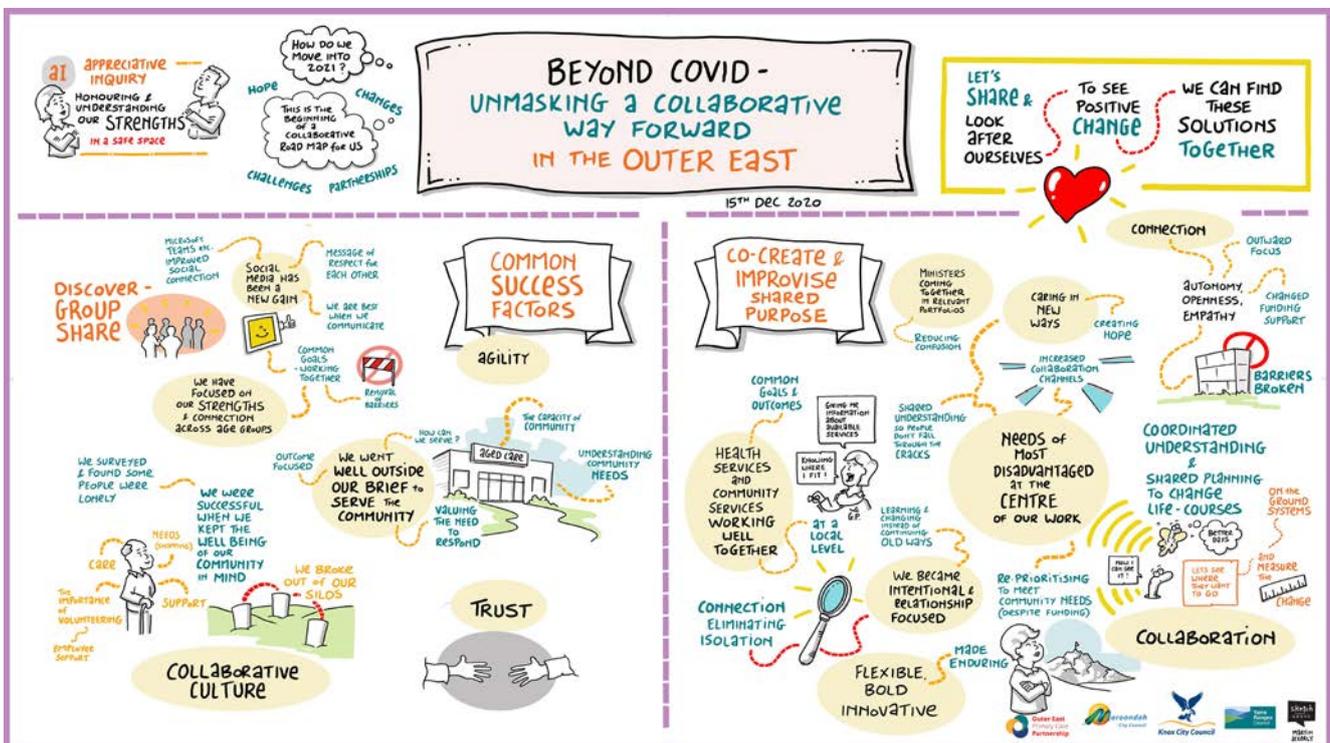
Agencies and partners

Effective recovery requires collaboration between individuals, communities, all levels of government, non-government organisations and businesses.

Council's strong partnerships between a wide range of local and regional agencies, organisations and individuals will continue to be vital in helping the Maroondah community recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

Council will encourage all local businesses, service providers, schools, community groups and individuals to partner together and contribute to community recovery.

In playing our role, Council has committed to aligning our resources and service delivery activities to the outcomes and priority areas in this recovery plan.



Source: Digital Illustration by SketchGroup. From the Outer East Primary Care Partnership workshop - Beyond Covid: Unmasking a collaborative way forward in the Outer East held on 15 December 2020, with over 20 Eastern Metropolitan organisations represented.

A recovery strategy for the future

Using a strong evidence base, Council has developed the following strategic recovery framework which outlines the focus for our work with and for the community of Maroondah into 2021 and beyond.

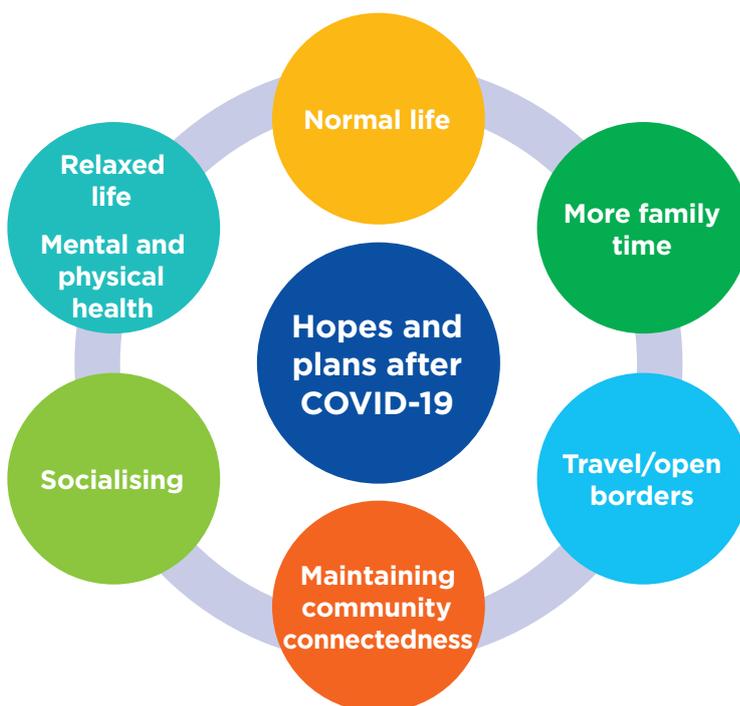
Our Vision

Shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Council refreshed the Maroondah 2040 Community Vision. The below Community Vision statement outlines the community's hopes for Maroondah in 2040:

In 2040, Maroondah will be a vibrant and diverse city with a healthy and active community, living in green leafy neighbourhoods which are connected to thriving and accessible activity centres contributing to a prosperous economy within a safe, inclusive and sustainable environment.

Months into the pandemic, Council asked the community about their hopes and plans after COVID-19.

While a significant number of respondents stated that they hoped for a life returning to normal, the overall responses show a strong alignment with the existing 2040 Vision, with a stronger emphasis on the importance of family, friends and community connectedness



“(I want to see) people working together for a common goal, people coming together for shared interests. Supporting the community to accept and include everyone.”

Recovery Capitals Framework

Council officers have had the opportunity to work with leading recovery experts from the University of Melbourne and Australian Red Cross to pilot a recovery planning framework, Recovery Capitals Framework (ReCap)¹⁷.

The concept of ‘capitals’ illustrates the ways that many factors interact and influence recovery from disasters, and how resources and strengths already existing in our community, can be identified and drawn upon to support community wellbeing.

Capitals are defined as “resources used to generate more or new resources for the purpose of sustaining and securing the wellbeing of all life forms on the planet”¹⁸. It helps us to identify the aspects of community life that are strong, and that when mobilised and developed can strengthen individual and community wellbeing.

Using the framework enables priorities to be established under social, economic, cultural, human, political, natural and built environments; however all the capital areas are interconnected, and have a profound impact on health and wellbeing.



Figure 3. Based on Community Capitals Framework¹⁹, as adapted by the Recovery Capitals (ReCap) project (www.recoverycapitals.org.au) Diagram adaptation of ReCap design.

The Priority Actions for each Recovery Capital on the following pages, describe how Council will work towards these outcomes. Much of the evidence in the following pages has been drawn from the Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap) - referred to in this plan as the ReCap Guide (as found on <https://recoverycapitals.org.au/>).



file image



Human Capital - caring for our people

A key focus of this recovery plan is ensuring that individuals, including businesses or otherwise, are firstly able to access basic needs. Recovery support needs to build on people’s existing skills and capabilities, including the ability to access resources and knowledge. However, supporting the provision of food relief, material aid, financial assistance, practical information on restrictions, or emotional support continues to provide a foundation for further participation in public life²⁰.

In contemporary emergency management arrangements, this is the provision of emergency relief. Given the protracted nature of the pandemic, the focus is shifting from “emergency relief provision” to supporting individual needs.

Melbourne’s extended lockdown has highlighted existing inequality and has disproportionately affected the health and income of our most vulnerable residents. It has also placed financial stress on households that have not previously experienced sudden unemployment. In addition, people from lower socio-economic areas are more likely to be financially strained²¹ making them particularly vulnerable in a recession.

Recent research has found that levels of psychological distress have been elevated and worsened since the outbreak. While undertaken in the first lockdown, a study by Black Dog Institute revealed that more than three-quarters of people claim their mental health has worsened since the outbreak of COVID-19²² with loneliness and increased job and financial volatility

contributing factors. This was reflected in the Maroondah community survey where over half of the respondents reported feeling more anxious or worried, and mental health was identified as the area where support is most needed in Maroondah. Gender diverse/LGBTIQ+ people who also experience family and partner violence have higher rates of anxiety and depression than other community members.

Vulnerability to disasters can be exacerbated by existing social and financial disadvantage; policies; and messaging and practices overlooking people’s capabilities needs and circumstances (such as age, gender, race, cultural background, health, disability, education, and housing status²³).

Survey respondents identified that support for seniors; people with a disability; those experiencing family violence; and people who are financially disadvantaged or living alone should be a priority.

Aside from the immediate health impacts of those who may contract the virus, fear of catching it has also meant reduced access to many health services. General practitioners, emergency departments and allied health are seeing significant reductions in patronage leaving people vulnerable to worsening of existing health conditions, and delays in the diagnosis and treatment of new conditions.

Routine physical activity has been impacted as has the associated social and mental health benefits of sport, physical and cultural activity.

Maroondah’s Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

Maroondah has an increasingly multicultural community, and Council undertook targeted consultation to ensure that people from many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities were able to share how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted them and what supports they need.

Overall, key areas of impact for Maroondah’s CALD communities include recreation, hobbies and interests, travel, outdoor activities and sports, education, mental health, and overall health and wellbeing.

Top support needs for CALD community members included mental health, community connectedness, financial support, regular updates and information, shopping and education.

Maroondah’s CALD communities hopes and plans for life after COVID-19 include returning to ‘normal’ life, travel and opening of borders, more family time, community connectedness, the ability to socialise, and employment.

Gender impacts of COVID:

Women have also been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and have experienced:

- Higher rates of job losses²⁴
- Limited access to the JobKeeper welfare scheme (almost 40% of Victorian women whose income was impacted by COVID-19 were ineligible for JobKeeper)²⁵
- A disproportionate burden of unpaid care for children and other family members²⁶
- An increase the frequency and severity of family violence^{27, 28}
- Women also comprise the majority of essential service workers, including health and social assistance, aged, disability and mental health care, early childhood education, teaching, cleaning and retail services. This has placed women on the frontline of the COVID-19 response.

Priority outcomes

Public health and wellbeing

- Community members feel sufficiently safe following the pandemic to engage in social activities and interactions with other members of the community.
- Community members have the knowledge, skills, and resources for dealing with health issues related to the pandemic experience.

Community relief and individual support

- The needs of vulnerable individuals and groups are addressed, particularly in gaining access to food and material aid, health services and information.
- All households, families, and individuals have the information needed to make decisions and are enabled to influence their own recovery.
- People can access individualised information and support, including advocacy to navigate pathways to services and agencies to meet their specific needs.

Mental health and wellbeing

- Community members can access appropriate services to deal with health needs.
- The community is not experiencing excessive stress and hardship arising from the pandemic.

Physical health

- Community has safe access to leisure facilities and activities, organised and informal sport and recreation.
- Existing health clients receive continuity of their medical care.

Priority actions

Public health and wellbeing

- Promote physical distancing, hygiene measures, COVID-safe behaviour as people return to public life.
- Work in partnership with EACH and Eastern Health to support the establishment of a Community Vaccination Clinic for the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Support the Victorian Government-funded High Risk Accommodation Response Program to help high risk accommodation premises to be prepared for and respond to future outbreaks.
- Coordinate the distribution of reusable face masks funded by the Victorian Government to support vulnerable Victorians.

Community relief and individual support

- Support community relief agencies through the Maroondah Emergency Relief Network to meet increased demand from vulnerable individuals and households, including adjusting service models based on restriction levels.
- Continue to provide the Maroondah *Connect* support service to actively assist people to connect to practical and psychosocial supports and services relevant to their individual needs.
- Deliver a COVID-19 Special Community Grants Funding Program to support emergency relief agencies and community wellbeing initiatives.
- Support translation services for CALD groups and continue to work in partnership with the Migrant Information Centre and community leaders to ensure distribution of key information, and understand local challenges.

Mental health and wellbeing

- Implement a series of mental health and other wellbeing promotion activities for the Maroondah community.
- Consolidate relationships with local providers to maintain up to date resource information about scope, capacity and referral pathways for services and supports to ensure community members are provided with timely and accurate information, including provision of information in relevant translated languages.
- Continue to work with regional partners on initiatives in the Together for Equality and Respect Strategy - to prevent violence against women in Maroondah.
- Assist Communities of Wellbeing Inc to build and upskill a network of community health and wellbeing leaders across Maroondah.

Physical health

- Support reconnection and physical health with community members through the CALD Senior's Activity Program
- Provide support and guidance for sporting clubs and associations to facilitate return to sport in a COVID-safe manner.
- Provide and/or promote opportunities for community members to re-engage into sport and informal recreation and physical health activities.
- Retain and engage both existing and new members of Maroondah Leisure facilities.
- Facilitate ongoing development and increased community use of the Maroondah Leisure app.
- Support volunteers in Aged and Disability Services to re-engage with volunteering.
- Implement Council's Equally Active Strategy.



*
STAY
SAFE
*
BE KIND

A smooth, orange rock with white text and stars is placed on a grey, textured rock surface. The text reads "STAY SAFE BE KIND" with a star above "STAY" and a star between "SAFE" and "BE". The background shows green foliage.



Social Capital - connecting our community

“After COVID-19 I hope that everyone is kinder and more understanding of each other. That if we work together we can overcome adversity.”

The existing strength of social connections and participation within communities will strongly influence recovery outcomes²⁹. We have seen many heart-warming instances of neighbours coming together to respond to the needs of different community members. There is an existing resilience within our community, with many programs, services, systems, organisations, assets and relationships already in place that build community strength.

Community groups play an important role in recovery decision-making and collective action³⁰.

We also know that social connections are integral to the flow of information, which is critical during recovery as it enables decision-making and access to resources³¹. This includes connections between family, friends, neighbours, service providers, media and government. Information delivered through strong relationships and effective methods can further strengthen social capital³².

Due to the restrictions on the movement of people and physical distancing, social wellbeing has been significantly affected, particularly for older and health-compromised residents who had to withdraw from almost all social contact.

Results from the community survey showed that community connectedness was one of the areas where support is most needed in Maroondah, and one of the community’s top hopes for life after the pandemic. Reports of increasing loneliness and social isolation compound existing vulnerabilities for some people which has flow on effects to other aspects of health and wellbeing.

Volunteer-led organisations have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, yet they remain a key asset to drive the community recovery process. Volunteer-led organisations take the form of sporting clubs, churches, community houses, interest groups and community support agencies. Through these volunteer-led organisations, a broad range of social support is provided to the community and community members are provided with social networks to support one another. Council has a role facilitating these recovery outcomes by working in partnership with community organisations.

In Maroondah there is strong support for an understanding of wellbeing that is rooted in the science of positive psychology. This approach has been embedded in a number of community initiatives over recent years including:

- The Maroondah Positive Education Network - a partnership between 27 government schools, council and the University of Melbourne to use positive education (a blend of positive psychology and best practice teaching) as a uniting framework to raise the wellbeing of students, staff and parents in Maroondah.
- Communities of Wellbeing Inc. - a local not-for-profit organisation established together to work actively measure and improve wellbeing in Maroondah by 'building capability and connectedness to enhance human flourishing'.
- Flourishing Together: Building wellbeing in Maroondah - a community-wide forum of over 100 people helping to design the community's future through the lens of wellbeing.

Priority outcomes

Social connection

- Community members have social networks to support each other.
- Cultural and racial diversity is respected.
- Community organisations are supported to continue to provide a broad range of social support services.

Volunteering and volunteer-based organisations

- Facilitate support for volunteer-led organisations in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and empower them to play a lead role in enhancing social inclusion.

Priority actions

Social connection

- Continue to deliver the *Be Kind Maroondah* program to facilitate community connections, reduce isolation, enhance mental wellbeing and connect with vulnerable residents.
- Facilitate local social support groups through the establishment of *Know Your Neighbour*, an initiative to reduce social isolation for older adults .
- Facilitate a letter writing project, connecting local young school children with older residents.
- Identify new localities for 20-minute neighbourhood planning.
- Deliver a series of community and cultural events and provide support and guidance for community groups to return to activities in a COVID-safe manner.
- Provide opportunities for community members to engage or re-engage into organised activities.
- Deliver *Let's get neighbourly, Maroondah!* project to connect people with others in their local neighbourhood

Volunteering and volunteer-based organisations

- Deliver and support capacity building programs for volunteer-based community organisations to assist their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent volunteer fatigue.
- Support volunteers, who were advised to isolate, due to staged restrictions, to re-engage in Council's delivered meals and social support services.



Artist impression of Dorset Recreation Reserve



Built Capital - sustaining our community facilities

Maroondah City Council has been significantly impacted by the forced closure of the majority of our community and cultural facilities and buildings. This has resulted in a flow-on impact to the community as these facilities provide opportunities for our community to meet, connect and improve their wellbeing.

For a community to function well, it requires operational public buildings and assets. The community is reliant on this infrastructure to establish a sense of normality, recover and reconnect with friends and interest groups.

Council has been advocating for external funding to facilitate the acceleration of community projects and to boost the local economy. Council was recently successful with a \$2m grant from the Victorian Government's Community Sports Infrastructure Stimulus Program, for the Dorset Recreation Reserve redevelopment project in Croydon. Council has also brought forward its own funding, to facilitate the completion of this \$7m redevelopment of Dorset Recreation Reserve within the next 12 months.

An increase in pedestrian traffic, visitors to parks and gardens and bike riding, has provided more opportunities to both update and upgrade Council foot and bike paths.

“After COVID-19 my hopes are that people help and look out for each other more. That people enjoy the time they have with each other, value their community, and care more for each other.”

Priority outcomes

Social connection

- Enhance community confidence to return to organised activities in community and cultural facilities.
- Provide safe and accessible parks, gardens, foot and bike paths for community use.
- Provide safe and accessible community infrastructure to promote centre activation and community connection through enhanced outdoor dining opportunities.

Priority actions

Returning to accessible and safe community facilities

- Ensure Council owned and managed facilities are provided with highly visible COVID-safe communication materials, posters, decals etc.
- Regular and enhanced maintenance of parks, gardens, foot and bike paths.
- Support accessibility and inclusion for community groups to continue to use Council facilities in a COVID-safe environment.
- Develop a fee subsidy program for arts and cultural groups and creative practitioners to increase access to facilities.
- Implement women's safety walks to inform planning for land use structure plans and enhancements to Council's open space areas

Infrastructure

- Continue to advocate for external funding to facilitate the acceleration of community projects, and to boost the local economy.
- Deliver funded infrastructure projects including Dorset Recreation Reserve.
- Support businesses to expand outdoor dining opportunities safely using car parking spaces and footpath areas.



Council's bushland team implemented COVID-safe plans to continue to maintain parks and reserves

A well governed and empowered community



Political Capital - supporting community leadership and advocacy

Community participation, agency, and knowledge are highly valuable in disaster resilience. Recovery outcomes are best when support from external groups and agencies complements local decision-making and existing community capacity³³.

Through strong and adaptable community leaders, access to external resources can increase. Community leaders encourage innovation, support community mental health, and foster cooperation within and between communities³⁴.

There is already an existing resilience within communities and programs, services, systems, organisations, assets and relationships already in place that build community strength. The staged restrictions and physical distancing requirements have had a significant impact on agency, business and Council capacity to deliver services.

Organisations and groups are integral parts of communities. Enhancing organisational capacity and capability is a critical step towards creating more resilient communities.

Recovery communication should:

- Recognise that communication with community should be two-way, and that input, and feedback should be sought and considered over an extended time.
- Provide a basis for important social processes between individuals, groups and communities.
- Ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and channels.
- Facilitate accurate and consistent information from Council and partner agencies to the community.
- Repeat key messages because information is more likely to reach community members at different stages.

Priority outcomes

Communication

- Households, families, and individuals have the information needed to make decisions.

Community led decision-making

- Recovery priorities are guided by local decision-makers and community participation in decision-making is supported.
- Vulnerable, hard to reach and marginalised communities are actively and effectively engaged and consulted with on matters that affect them.
- The needs of the Maroondah community are advocated for at all levels of government.

Priority actions

Communication

- Provide information on services and support that is accessible, repeated, includes translations and is provided in different formats.
- Liaise with key partners such as Migrant Information Centre and CALD community leaders to understand needs and provide support.

Community led decision-making

- Engage with community and businesses at regular intervals, to ensure services continue to meet current needs and can adapt to new and emerging ones.
- Strengthen long-term community-led recovery by applying a recovery lens to Council's long-term community planning.

Sector coordination and partnerships

Victoria's emergency management system identifies a key role for local government in acting as conduit between state government agencies, not-for-profit organisations, service providers and local communities.

This sector coordination and partnership role is particularly critical in dealing with the immediate impacts of COVID-19 for emergency relief but will also be important throughout the medium-to-long term recovery process. Facilitating a coordinated approach to addressing priority outcomes and implementing priority actions in partnership with local agencies and community groups will be critical.



Financial Capital - rebuilding livelihoods and business activation

“After COVID-19 I want to see support for small businesses that are providing community connection such as ours - being unable to operate for the better part of the year, support is needed to ensure we are able to reopen and again provide an outlet for people in our community.”

The staged restrictions introduced as part of the management of the pandemic have had a significant impact on the community through the closure of industries and places of employment. Financial strain is contributing to reduced wellbeing and mental health.

Many people, particularly women³⁵ have found themselves unemployed or underemployed as a result of the pandemic.

Young people have also been disproportionately affected by this, with youth unemployment reaching a 23-year high this year along with record underemployment³⁶. Council will continue to work with the local youth sector on a range of initiatives that support the development, wellbeing and employability of young people in Maroondah.

Supporting local businesses and suppliers during the recovery process will have a hugely positive impact upon economic recovery and the wellbeing of the local community. Businesses are also likely to be impacted by psychosocial aspects (mental health, stress, anxiety) of the pandemic.

Council has strong relationships with existing local businesses, stakeholders, governments and industry partners and Council has been supporting businesses through a diverse range of assistance programs delivered directly or in partnership with others. This includes expert business advice, COVID-19-specific assistance to establish if a business can trade by assisting them in understanding restrictions, developing plans and accessing support services. There have been a number of business support initiatives funded by the Victorian Government, but administered by Council, for example the provision of digital thermometers and the outdoor dining expansion project.

Priority outcomes

Business support

- Advocate and encourage community and business participation in the digital economy.
- Embrace a place-based approach to the revitalisation, activation and promotion of neighbourhood activity centres that enhance opportunities for local business, access to services and places for social interaction.
- Advance business development and support for small and medium business enterprises through facilitating partnerships, collaboration, peer support, mentoring, training, and knowledge sharing.

Job creation and pathways

- Businesses and not-for-profits can access or attract appropriately skilled workers.
- The workforce has transferable skills.
- Work in partnership to promote the diversification and mobilisation of Maroondah's economy to enable local employment opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Council's Business and Activity Centre Development team has a strong working relationship with local employers and industry. The Bayswater Business Precinct initiative endeavours to work more strategically and effectively with business in that area. This cluster provides an established network to work closely with academic and industry stakeholders to build the partnerships necessary to strengthen career pathways advice through industry alignment and collaboration.

The team also has fostered effective working relationships with local Traders' Associations, QIC (Eastland) and traders in a number of Maroondah's neighbourhood and local shopping centres.

Priority actions

Business support

Outdoor dining project

- Provide safe and accessible community infrastructure to promote centre activation through enhanced outdoor dining opportunities.

Better Approvals Project implementation

- Continue to support new small businesses with a case management approach, by streamlining Council's application, permits and approval processes.

Fee relief

- Provide registration, renewal and permit licence fee relief for the 20/21 year to support food and health businesses impacted by the directions to close.

Shopping centre strategic review

- Review Maroondah's 31 shopping centres to identify improvement works that align with Council's Neighbourhood Activity Centre Development and 20-minute neighbourhood principles for thriving and sustainable centres.

Business Triage Program

- Deliver expert business advice relating to business operations and legal matters, plus health and wellbeing advice during the pandemic.

Trader Association liaison and engagement

- Continue to engage and support Maroondah's shopping centres and representative trader associations.

Business promotion

- Use Council's BizHub website and its business directory to promote local businesses to other businesses and the community.

Business support continued

Shopping centre improvement works

- Implement place activation in selected activity centres; including parklets, pop-up parks through the Victorian Governments Neighbourhood Activity Centre Renewal Fund:
 - Croydon South.
 - Ringwood East.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) business community engagement

- Design and support the installation of material to assist in communicating physical distancing requirements for CALD traders and visitors to centres.

Digital communications to businesses

- Develop a suite of communications as part of ongoing engagement with businesses including advice, resources, news and events.

Job creation and pathways

Working for Victoria Initiative

- Participate in the \$500 million Working for Victoria online jobseeker program to help our community and contribute to Victoria's ability to respond to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Bayswater Business Precinct

- Continue to work in partnership with Knox and Yarra Ranges Councils to develop a long-term vision for the renewal and sustainability of the precinct through the digital connection and transformation of businesses in the area as well as identifying pathways for education, skills development and employment creation within the precinct.
- Establish a digital platform that provides an opportunity for the 5,000 businesses in the precinct to connect with one another for the provision and exchange of goods and services and employment opportunities.

Youth unemployment

- Partner with key stakeholders to help connect young people and their families to reliable information and opportunities around education, training, career planning and employment, and help them to be 'work ready' - with a particular focus on young people that are facing barriers to employment.
- Support the Youth Jobs Expo by Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network and Central Ringwood Community Centre.

Volunteering as an employment pathway

- Work with key partners, particularly Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre to promote volunteer opportunities and to support recently unemployed community members to find meaningful volunteering positions that support up-skilling, transferable or future job opportunities.

SORRY

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COVID-19



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Cultural Capital - revitalising cultural participation and creative industries

Cultural vitality is recognised as a key ingredient in sustainable cities and healthy communities and is highly valued in Maroondah. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an immediate and severe impact across all levels of the arts and creative ecosystem. Impacts range from reduced opportunities for arts and cultural participation within the community, to a severe and extended impact on the viability of creative industries.

The recovery of all levels of our local creative network from community choirs to professional practitioners, is integral to a return to quality of life for the whole community. Support across all of these levels will support the community’s right to experience the arts as a part of everyday life through to opportunities to enjoy outstanding cultural experiences. Recent research³⁷ has estimated people need at least two hours per week of arts engagement for good mental wellbeing, with arts engagement ranging from active involvement like participating, performing and creating art to receptive involvement such as attending, listening and viewing art.

Research also shows that after a period of trauma, participatory community-building cultural activity led by skilled artists and creative facilitators can have a profound positive impact on community recovery. Cultural recovery priorities within Maroondah are based on an understanding of the impacts and needs of all levels of the local creative network and community.

“My hopes after COVID-19 are to continue mindfulness, being thankful about small things, being grateful for family and good health, playing lots of games, appreciating nature, sticking to my values, and caring for neighbours.”

Priority outcomes

- Promote and develop social connectedness, community wellbeing and mental health.
- Support the sustainability of local creatives and cultural activity.
- Foster connections between local arts and non-arts networks with shared aims for recovery.
- Provide opportunities for skills development of local artists.
- Strengthen local arts and cultural groups and organisations.

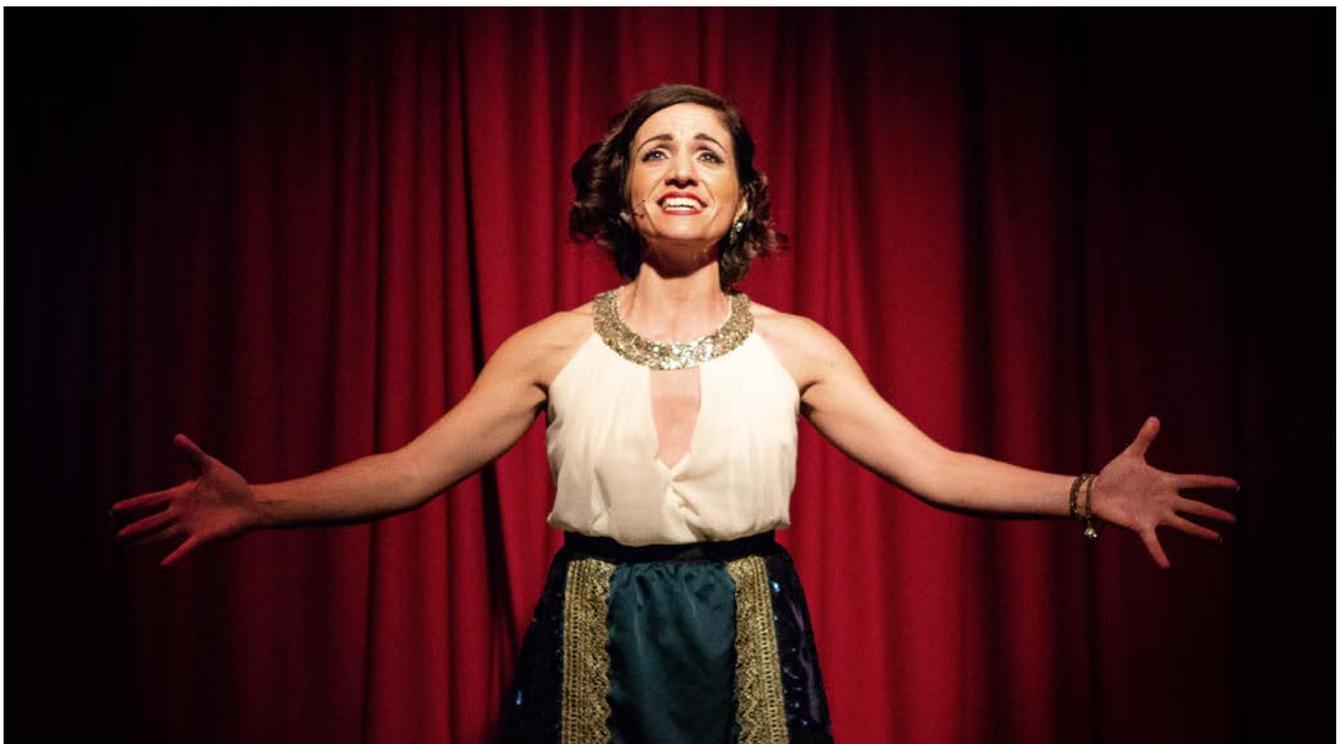
Priority actions

Arts and cultural recovery

- Ensure accessible arts experiences for all and assist those who are experiencing isolation or anxiety to re-engage and share their experiences through creative expression including writing, storytelling, songwriting, visual and performing arts.
- Consult and engage with arts, community and creative industry stakeholders to further identify priorities for arts and cultural recovery from 2021.
- Work in partnership with community, arts and cultural groups to build community confidence to return to civic life including events, public spaces, community programs and activities.
- Partner with Traditional Owner groups and Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place for storytelling and other cultural activities which support the development and delivery of the Tarralla Creek Health and Wellbeing Program through connection to nature.

Support creative industries

- Provide subsidised use of cultural facilities for local arts and cultural groups and creative practitioners including rehearsal, presentation, and exhibition spaces at Karralyka, Maroondah Federation Estate, Wyreena Community Arts Centre, and halls across Maroondah.
- Support cultural tourism initiatives that have the potential to boost visitation to our key activity centres and provide opportunities for our artists and creative industries.





Natural Capital - enhancing our connection with nature

“(After COVID-19 I want) it to be safe to take my family out and about, to use parks and playgrounds and to eat out and see wider family.”

Connection to the natural environment is an important part of people’s sense of place³⁸. The *Beyond Bushfires* study found that people who reported feeling connected to the natural environment had better outcomes on a wide range of psychosocial measures following disasters³⁹. The wide-ranging benefits of nature are reducing stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression as well as boosting immune systems, physical activity and social behaviours^{40,41}.

Recent consultation on the progress of Maroondah 2040⁴² showed our community deeply values the unique leafy natural environment of Maroondah. There is a strong desire to protect and enhance green open space, native vegetation and bushland reserves to ensure that the semi-rural feel is retained.

This was also reflected in the feedback regarding the draft version of this plan. The *Maroondah Vegetation Strategy (2020-2030)*⁴² also realises the benefits of our natural environment on reducing anxiety and stress, engaging in outdoor physical activity and helping people connect with nature.

Council is committed to the enhancement and the preservation of the natural environment within the City of Maroondah, and this commitment is demonstrated by specific allocations within its annual capital works budget, and the dedication of the staff that work closely with the community.

Council has also focused on significant partnerships with other authorities (i.e. Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, and the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning), to achieve enormous benefits for the community. The Re-imagining Tarralla Creek project is an example of this, whereby Council has allocated approximately \$1.3m over the next 12 months to undertake a range of complementary improvements to the open space areas adjacent to the Tarralla Creek Wetland, which will undergo a major enhancement by Melbourne Water.

Priority outcomes

- Protection and enhancement of green open space, native vegetation and reserves.
- Improving community wellbeing through facilitation of opportunities for connection to local parks, gardens and outdoor spaces.

Priority actions

Protection and enhancement of green open space

- Continue with implementation and delivery of Re-imagining Tarralla Creek (and associated waterway projects). This work includes a precinct-based approach for enhanced natural environment/waterways and infrastructure that provides opportunities for community to safely connect to nature and to one another through social, environmental, cultural, educational, and recreational experiences.
- Provide additional works to improve habitat corridor function and passive recreation access and use for the length of Tarralla Creek including the provision of information signage to guide users of the area.
- Identify the top 10 walk/ride routes most needing addition of vegetation, (mainly shade trees and adding nature interest) and aligning priorities with street tree planting program.

Improving community wellbeing.

- Launch the Nature Play page on Council's website.
- Promote participation in the City Nature Challenge and other activities that connect people and nature such as:
 - planting at Eastfield Park
 - supporting bushland volunteers
 - providing guided bushland walks.



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