

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan

2025 - 2029



Ararat Rural City



ARARAT RURAL CITY MUNICIPAL PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029

The Ararat Rural City Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 (MPHWP) is one of Council's key strategic planning documents. It focuses on the goals and strategies that Council can implement as part of its operations and the available evidence to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for our community.

HOW ARE WE?

There is a myriad of data available on health status and determinants. For this Plan, we have chosen to focus on two measures from the Victorian Population Health Survey as the indicators of our overall health and wellbeing. These are our:

- Self-reported health status, and
- Life-satisfaction.

These indicators are representative of our we feel about our diets, physical activity, mental health, and a wide range of other social, economic and environmental factors that influence our health and wellbeing. Our results in these two indicators are mostly worse than Victoria.

The tables below shows the proportion (%) of people and their self-reported health status and life-satisfaction from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2023¹

Self-Reported Health Status	Ararat Rural City	Victoria
Fair/Poor	28.4%*	20.9%
Good	34%	38.3%
Excellent/Very Good	37.1%	39.8%

*Significantly higher than Victoria

Life-Satisfaction	Ararat Rural City	Victoria
Low or medium (0-6)	24.7%	21.9%
High (7-8)	47.9%	50.7%
Very High (9-10)	26.6%	26%

¹ [Victorian Agency for Health Information](#)

OTHER FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Natural Disasters and Extreme Weather Events

Ararat Rural City has experienced 13 declared natural disasters in the last 15 years, consisting of storms, floods and bushfires². The frequency and severity of natural disasters and extreme weather events such as heat waves is increasing. These events can impact on our safety, physical health and emotional wellbeing, cause financial hardship, and severely disrupt communities³.

Through our lived experiences and with consideration for the National Principles for Disaster Recovery⁴, we have found that strong social connectedness and having community spaces to engage with others has helped with disaster resilience and recovery.

Family Violence

Family violence is defined as violent, abusive, threatening or coercive behaviour. Each incident can have lifelong consequences for victims and children who hear, witness or are otherwise exposed to family violence. Using violence in any situation is a choice made by those who use it. Why do people who use violence choose this option instead of others? What could be done to encourage better choices?

Ararat Rural City has consistently had higher rates of family violence incidents than the rest of Victoria. The table below shows the rate of family incidents per 100,000 population for the last five years.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Ararat LGA	2,858	2,245	2,320	3,115	2,625
Victoria	1,420	1,369	1,366	1,375	1,497
Ararat rank out of 79 LGAs	5	12	11	6	12

² Australian Government's list of [Australian disasters](#)

³ [Chapter 2 - Impact of climate change and more frequent and severe natural disasters](#) – Parliament of Australia

⁴ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience [Knowledge Hub](#)



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Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, the Eastern Maar, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk, and Wadawurrung peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We recognise and respect their knowledge of how our health and wellbeing is connected to the state of the land, our cultures, and our families.

1. SOCIAL CONNECTIONS & INCLUSION

We will encourage the development of community networks and cohesion that can provide the foundations for strong, vibrant and resilient communities.

- 1.1 Build and resource strong local networks of volunteers across our rural City.
- 1.2 Collaborate with community sporting clubs, health organisations and educational institutions to engage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in physical activity and preventative health programs.
- 1.3 Foster a culture of emergency preparedness through planning, building capability and capacity, and strengthening community resilience to disasters.

2. NATURAL & BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

We will create environments and places that encourage our communities to lead healthy and socially engaged lifestyles.

- 2.1 Deliver nature based recreational opportunities, including cool and inviting parks, gardens, playgrounds and streetscapes, while promoting unique identities for our towns and villages across the municipality.
- 2.2 Reduce injury, death and disability from road trauma by promoting community awareness and increasing the safety of local roads and infrastructure for pedestrians cyclists and drivers.
- 2.3 Upgrade and develop safe, accessible and welcoming recreational and community facilities to ensure that community health and wellbeing needs are met into the future.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

We will develop effective, long-term partnerships focused on delivering positive health and wellbeing outcomes to the communities of Ararat Rural City, including improved access and outreach programs for rural areas.

- 3.1 Continue to develop our partnership with East Grampians Health Service and the Department of Health focused on delivery of population health, wellbeing, and research outcomes at a community level.
- 3.2 Continue to collaborate with Federation University Australia and project partners to deliver 'The Healthy Regions InterVention' (THRIVE) project.
- 3.3 Commit to strong local partnerships with Grampians Community Health, key providers and social enterprises in delivery of health and wellbeing initiatives.

4. BREAKING THE CYCLE

We will work towards preventing all forms of violence by addressing the deep underlying causes, including gendered drivers, structural discrimination and disadvantage.

- 5.1 Develop partnerships to change attitudes and behaviours that can lead to violence, and deliver practical and creative ways to promote respectful, safe and equitable relationships.
- 5.2 Ararat Rural City Council organisationally will develop a culture of supporting positive attitudes towards gender equality.
- 5.3 Collaborate with local service providers, community organisations and social enterprises to improve local service provision to victims of family violence.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The following measures of success are gathered independently of Council and enable us to compare data from before and after this Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

- The rate of family incidents per 100,000 population is reduced
- The self-reported health status results from the Victorian Population Health Survey is improved
- The life-satisfaction results from the Victorian Population Health Survey is improved
- Our communities successfully recover from disasters, based on data from the National Disaster Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Database, where available.



Ararat Rural City





Ararat Rural City

Community Consultation Report: Draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29

The draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 (MPHWP) has been presented to the community for consultation and submissions via the Engage Ararat website, in writing or email, from 01 to 15 August 2025.

A total of 17 submissions were received, 16 of these were via the Engage Ararat website, these are provided in the table below. The 1 submission received via email was from a new business that provided extensive feedback without charge, their summary is provided in the table below.

We thank all submitters for their feedback and suggestions. Council's responses are provided below the table.

Submissions for the Draft MPHWP 2025-29

"As a resident of Moyston, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029. I appreciate the Council's focus on social connections, inclusion, and the natural and built environment, which are especially important in small rural communities like ours. Here are some suggestions and priorities from Moyston:

Social Connections & Inclusion

Support for regular community events at Moyston Hall to foster connection and reduce isolation.
Programs for older residents and youth to encourage intergenerational engagement.
Accessible communication channels for community updates and events.

Natural & Built Environments

Investment in walking and cycling paths, especially linking Moyston to the Grampians and nearby towns.
Improved lighting and seating in public spaces to enhance safety and usability.
Support for community gardens or green spaces to promote wellbeing and sustainability.

Partnerships

Strengthen collaboration with local groups, CFA, and health services to improve emergency preparedness and health outreach.
Encourage partnerships with schools and local businesses to support community-led initiatives.

Breaking the Cycle

Increase access to mental health services and outreach programs in Moyston.
Improve transport options for residents needing to access services in Ararat.

I believe these actions will help create a healthier, more connected, and resilient community in Moyston and across the Ararat Rural City."

"It would be good to see more health-specific outcomes included in the plan (e.g., proportion of adults who consume sufficient fruit+veg, or who are sufficiently physically active (Victorian Public Health & Wellbeing Outcomes Framework)) as measures of success.

It would also be good to see more effort made to target population groups at greatest risk of poor health outcomes (e.g., new arrivals to the country, young people, LGBTQ+ community). I welcome the intention

to improve road safety, and look forward to the work to increase safety of local roads and infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers."
"Improving the segregation of Indigenous people and all others. Improving the native flora and fauna habitat's for our native species, including bees. And the improvement of our roads"
"Working with local communities to assist in actioning CAPs would be good to add. Also, where are the specific projects Council has in mind for the next 4 years? The plan seems very vague. Thanks."
"I think [name removed for privacy] should run Public Health and Wellbeing classes for Ararat! Call it [name removed]Fit. Surely that would help Ararat meet it's targets."
"I commend ARCC team on this plan and the use of reference data, which is very different from the previous plan. Being able to understand why these issues are such an important focus, I would hope in the implementation of this plan. I understand that it is hard to name all stajе holders and for this plan I agree Grampians Community Health is a key one- however it would be worth recognising the role of CG Llen. They have a significant role in supporting the children within these target families. Thank you"
"It is disappointing that there are no actions in this plan that directly target young people in our community."
"As a council that has signed the charter for a Child Friendly City there is no mention of children and youth in this Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. There is also no mention of the wellbeing of specific communities, including our First Nations community. If the plan was developed starting from a rights based perspective then the potential for it to have real impact would be greater. For example, the Child Friendly Cities draws on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Birth -0 18yrs) which specifically states that all children should be meaningfully consulted and allowed to have a voice in what happens to them and their communities. At the moment it is a plan that is only using measures that are linked to existing data on 'health' and 'wellbeing' making this plan narrow in its scope."
"As our community is being dragged through the Ballyrogan wind project debacle, and witnessing the dramatic decline in mental health it is causing, I would love council to make a similar stand to Northern Grampians. Agriculture is our most important industry, please make a stand protecting farmers from transmission lines and wind turbines."
"I'm disappointed that Council doesn't apply its own local laws to maintain and improve amenity of neighborhoods. Inconsistent or negligence in policing lends tacit approval to non-compliance and the degradation of the environment and an increase in 'anti-social' behaviour and general community dissatisfaction. Examples are common throughout the City of Ararat and include numerous properties owned or used by one individual to store an ever increasing collection of junk and associated heaps on natures strips, rental properties in the Campbell St, Mitchell Rd neighborhood where junk is piled in front yards and out onto nature strips, private property stacked in laneways, vehicles (and caravans) parked on roadsides in what appears to be a permanent parking arrangement (Laby St is a good example), commercial buildings which have been burned or damaged and dilapidated and the ongoing 'permanent' campers at Green Hill Lake, including those currently facilitated by welfare agencies. In brief, the tone of a community is reflected in its health and wellbeing outcomes and levels of criminality. Council seems to have a whole lot of projects going on, including encouraging subdivision and building of domestic properties but has failed to make our communities better places to live in. This plan is warm and fuzzy but doesn't address Council's own culpability in allowing our communities to become worse places to live in!"
"What a dismal lot of piffle. There was nothing new and the social inclusion part completely skipped the elderly and people with disabilities. A work experience kid could have done a better job. This is not an innovative policy for the future. Very disappointing."
"If you are really concerned about the health of Ararat Residents you would stop the Tyre Shredding and Battery's Recyling plants proposed by Manhari This is 500 metres from my house where my grand children come to stay and play There is also a church the mulit million dollar sporting complex plus the Community Collage Farm which is used by the Ararat Early Learning Centre for there outdoor kindergarten. So if you are really serious about the health of residents you would not let this expansion happen."

"Sort out your zoning within Ararat City itself. It's an absolute hodge podge mess with light industrial mixed with residential and all over the town. Light/heavy industrial should be away from residential with a decent natural buffer zone. The shopping precinct needs to be just that shopping, food, retail, etc. Residential should be residential and not have panel beaters, mechanics, car wash etc in the amongst it. Yes the town has grown up around what was originally there but no new approvals should be given within residential or retail areas for light/heavy industrial businesses."
"As a concerned Ararat resident, I would like to know what is happening with the recycling plant at Matahari and what health impacts the recycling of tyres and batteries will have on our community and what Ararat Rural City Council plan to do about it? What safety precautions are in place if there was to be tyre or battery fire?"
"You can start your "Health and Wellbeing Plan" by banning Manhari from massively expanding their business beside a residential area with little buffer zone. And then there is the associated issue of 150+ heavy trucks coming down Elizabeth / Gordon Street every day, from 6am to 8pm which will affect those of us living at the bottom end of Moore Street."
"Please put out a statement about what is happening with Manhari."
"In Summary: The plan would be substantially strengthened by mapping to state priorities, sharpening its goals and commitments, expanding its equity and inclusion focus, clarifying how actions will be measured, and deepening its evidence-based approach to the specific issues facing Ararat. These changes will ensure greater impact, accountability, and better health and wellbeing outcomes for all local communities. The addition of clear actionable items could leverage successfully being awarded grants for achieving these objectives."

Responses to the feedback:

- Our goals for the MPHWP is to support and foster our communities to have the capability and capacity to hold regular events and programs that are of interest and meet the needs of people within their community, such as within the Moyston community. This could include activities specifically for older people, younger people, or other cohorts within their community. This will be achieved with Council's existing Community Support Grants Program, initiatives such as the Six C's Emergency Prep and Emergency Recovery Sessions, and new initiatives that would be developed or may arise over the 2025-29 period.
- Communication of updates, events and activities is acknowledged as a challenge that many community organisations, groups and even Council often encounters. There are a diverse range of existing communication channels for community organisations and groups to share updates and promote events. For example, social media, websites such as My Community Diary, contacting the local print newspapers to share possible news stories, putting up posters in community notice boards, and cross promoting events through different community organisations and groups. We hope that our goal to focus on 1. Social Connections & Inclusion will help improve communication and engagement throughout the community in general to help alleviate this challenge.
- Council notes the feedback and suggestions for new and upgraded infrastructure, these will be considered as part of the Council's budgeting and capital works planning processes.
- Having experienced three major bushfires within 12 months in Pomonal, Mount Buangor and the Yarram-Gap Road bushfire, Council absolutely recognises the importance of collaboration with emergency services, local groups and health services for emergency relief, recovery and preparedness and for the health and wellbeing of our community. Many of our local businesses and educational institutions went over and above to support the affected communities, and the ongoing involvement and engagement with these sectors is recognised as important for our community. These relationships are included under 1. Social Connections & Inclusion.
- Council has requirements in the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to specify how we will work in partnership with the Department of Health and other similar agencies on public health initiatives, this is provided under 3. Partnerships of the MPHWP.
- 3. Partnerships has been with 'including improved access and outreach programs for rural areas.'

- We have chosen to focus on the Victorian Public Health & Wellbeing Outcomes that align strongly with Council's areas of responsibility and can most effectively influence through our assets and operations. Council can encourage physical activity through the community assets that we manage, this is included in 2. Natural & Built Environments, but we have chosen not to specifically focus on the levels of consumption of fruit and vegetables.
- The focus on population groups at greatest risk of poor health outcomes is integrated throughout the MPHWP on the basis that supporting the health and wellbeing of these groups will benefit all groups. For example, social cohesion and inclusion is a foundation for positive outcomes for new arrivals to the country and the LGBTQ+ community. Providing safe, accessible and welcoming recreational and community facilities enables and supports people with disabilities, women and girls, older, younger, culturally diverse and First Nations peoples to access health and wellbeing services and facilities.
- We aim to deliver improved natural spaces as part of 2. Natural & Built Environment for the health and wellbeing of the community. This will also support native plants and animals, including bees.
- Council engages with the Community Asset Committees and many different community groups throughout the municipality on projects and initiatives, including those identified in Community Asset Plans (CAPs). Please be encouraged to get involved in your local Committees and groups to find out more about the progress of items in CAPs, or feel free to contact Council.
- Our approach is to provide clear strategic goals and objectives for Council's multi-year plans and strategies, such as this MPHWP 2025-29. The 2025/26 Budget already contains a number of initiatives and projects that support the objectives of the MPHWP 2025-29, including the Ararat Active Transport Bicycle Network project and continued free access to the outdoor pools. Once adopted, this MPHWP 2025-29 will help inform future initiatives and projects in future budgets, and these will be reported on monthly basis during Council Meetings as part of the Annual Plan. This approach has resulted in better strategic directions for Council and better outcomes for community.
- This MPHWP incorporates objectives and collaborations to support the health and wellbeing of people of all ages, including young people and the organisations that support them. Council also has a number of initiatives in progress targeted at young people, including the Ararat Youth Activators with the Crazy Ideas College, the Youth Events, Activities and Happenings (YEAH) Crew, and the Council's Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Working Group that was established in late 2024 to advise Council on matters that ensure the Victorian CFCC Charter's principles are upheld and advanced.
- Council acknowledges the community's concerns around the proposed Ballyrogan Wind Farm. We understand this is a complex issue, and recognise the distress this situation is causing. Council is committed to ensuring that there is better communication and engagement between Squadron Energy and the community, and that concerns are heard and questions are addressed throughout this process.
- Good neighbourhood amenity is Council's preference, but Council must apply its Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law (2022) in accordance with this law and the Local Government Act 2020, Domestic Animals Act 1994, and other Acts, Regulations, and processes that we are required to follow.
- Council's role in a planning application is to act as the responsible authority, assessing the application against the Ararat Planning Scheme and the Victorian Planning Provisions. This framework provides the legal basis for Council planning decisions and ensures that all applications are evaluated fairly. Council is committed to transparent and accountable governance, and we encourage residents to engage with the formal planning process. You can view all planning application documents and submissions on our website at <https://ararat.greenlightopm.com/planning>
- Some of the feedback received was regarding a specific planning permit application and were irrelevant to the MPHWP.
- All other feedback is noted, and we thank the submitters again for their input.