



Yarra Ranges Council

Pre-Budget Submission

Australian Government
2025–2026





Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been who have been and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

Yarra Ranges Council has worked closely with the community to develop a strong vision for the future of Yarra Ranges as a thriving and resilient region – the best place in Australia to live, work and visit.

Council is pleased to make this pre-budget submission to the Australian Government, outlining a range of proposals and opportunities for investment in key programs and initiatives that drive positive outcomes for our communities locally and nationally.

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Snapshot of Yarra Ranges



Yarra Ranges Shire

- Land area: 2,468.2 square kilometres
- Largest LGA in Melbourne Metro
- 2% Council land, 30% is in private ownership and 68% is Crown land
- 9 wards, 62 suburbs and localities, plus parts of 6 other suburbs



Population

- Est. 158,694 residents
- 1,713 Indigenous residents
- Yarra Ranges has the highest number of indigenous persons in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.
- Speak a language other than English at home: 10.4%
- 20.6% born overseas



Housing

- 64.30 persons per square km population density
- 52% of the population live in the urban areas of Yarra Ranges
- \$840,000 median house price (Dec 2023)
- 10.9% households with a mortgage experiencing mortgage stress
- \$520/week median house rental (Dec 2023)
- 31.7% households in private rentals experiencing rental stress



Economic

- 3.1% unemployment rate (Dec 2023)
- 14,010 local businesses
- 53,750 local jobs
- Amongst 20% of LGA's with lowest levels of disadvantage on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage



Industries

- \$7.30Bn GRP (est)
- Construction is the largest industry by employment. The sector employs over 15% of all residents.



Tourism

2023 estimates:

- Day trips: 4.5 million
- \$984.3m visitor spend
- 7,300 people in YR employed in the tourism industry

Financial Assistance Grants – Financial Sustainability of Local Government

Yarra Ranges supports the call from the Australian Local Government Association to restore Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1% and ideally 2% of Commonwealth taxation revenue via a phased approach.

The value of Financial Assistance Grants provided to local government has declined over the past three decades from around 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue to around 0.55%.

If funded, this could contribute more than \$2.3 billion to annual GDP, create over 16,000 jobs and ensure Councils can better meet the infrastructure and services expectations of the community. For Yarra Ranges, with a large land area, dispersed population and high exposure to natural disasters, the increase in the Financial Assistance Grants would allow us to continue delivering swimming pools, playgrounds, sports facilities, roads and much more for our community.

Telecommunications

In Yarra Ranges, 98% of residents rely on telecommunications in an emergency. However, a 2020/2021 study on mobile blackspots in Yarra Ranges found that 25% of sites tested along the road network and at key service locations had unusable signal or no coverage, often despite telecommunications companies' maps showing supposedly full coverage.

Further, our community experiences lagging broadband speeds and poor network resilience, even in urban townships.

During the June 2021 storm events, telecommunications service was cut to thousands of residents across 34 communities. Mobile service was lost in some areas for up to 72 hours, with no line out of the impact zone and no access to emergency information, while more than 3,000 homes were without power and internet for over a month.

Council made a submission to the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review and has welcomed subsequent investment in new and upgraded infrastructure provided through the Commonwealth's Peri-Urban Mobile Program (PUMP), Regional Co-Investment Fund and Victorian Government's Connecting Victoria program.

We would also advocate that telecommunications be identified as an essential service. This would enable faster response to system failures, ensure accurate reporting of network issues and require the development of contingency plans. This could prove lifesaving through future disasters, not only in Yarra Ranges but across Australia.

While Council continues to work with community and providers to ensure these projects can be delivered on-the-ground, ongoing investment will be needed to effectively:

- Improve **mobile connectivity** in 5 key areas with low or no mobile service quality: Dandenong Ranges, Hoddles Creek, East Warburton, Steels Creek, Fernshaw.

- **Upgrade NBN** broadband services from fixed wireless, satellite and FTTN to FTTP in key areas with slow broadband service.
- Strengthen telecommunications **network resilience** during power outages and emergencies e.g. increased battery back-up at mobile towers, generator power for NBN nodes.
- Through the Mobile Network Hardening Program Noticeboard, in December 2024, Yarra Ranges Council has nominated the following crucial sites for consideration for funding and attention under this program:
 - *Stream 1* (Rural/Regional) - Warburton (4G), East Warburton (4G), McMahon's Creek, (4G)
 - *Stream 2* (Peri-Urban) - Kalorama (5G), The Patch (5G), Macclesfield, Silvan and Belgrave
- Recently, in February 2025 nominations were submitted for Round 8 of the Mobile Black Spot Program. As this Round only allowed nominations for rural and regional areas some of Council's nominations were not accepted for the Dandenongs in particular. Locations submitted included:
 - Hoddles Creek; Fernshaw; Olinda (on the eastern side of the Major Urban Boundary)

A key ongoing barrier is the eligibility of the Yarra Ranges LGA for relevant Australian Government funding programs, such as **PUMP**, the **Mobile Network Hardening Program** and the **Mobile Black Spot** program. While our outer areas such as Warburton are eligible under the rural/regional streams, the peri-urban stream is currently restricted to locations 2km inside of the Major Urban Boundary (MUB), which excludes high-risk areas such as the Dandenong Ranges, where key infrastructure is located and service blackspots and reliability issues remain.

Council strongly advocates for peri-urban eligibility to be expanded to 4km within the MUB.

Resilience and Sustainability

The Yarra Ranges boasts a rich natural environment deeply valued by the community, however climate change and increasing natural disasters pose significant challenges.

Yarra Ranges Council has welcomed the Australian Government's investments in recent years. With continued investment, the following initiatives will strengthen the resilience of Yarra Ranges' built and social infrastructure, support the communities' role as environmental stewards and accelerate the region's transition to renewable energy.

Projects:

- [Resilient Yarra Ranges](#)
- [Firestick Cultural Burning Program](#)
- [Greening the Suburbs](#)
- [Fire Risk Management](#)
- [Biolinks and Invasive Species Program](#)
- [Energy Transition](#)

Strategic links:

Yarra Ranges Council	Commonwealth Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and Wellbeing Plan• Liveable Climate Plan• Nature Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Strategy for Disaster Resilience• Net Zero 2050 plan• Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030

Resilient Yarra Ranges

The *Resilient Yarra Ranges* program, delivered with \$10 million provided through the Preparing Australian Communities program, spans a range of activities including: place-based resilience planning, emergency relief network building, a resilient buildings program, Changing Places facilities, resilient energy precinct feasibility studies and proactive tree management.

The funding agreement concludes in March 2025, with Council working with NEMA to seek a short extension to 30 June 2025 to complete all works. Successful outcomes from funded projects demonstrate that the following activities would benefit the community by extension and expansion.

Place Based Resilience Planning

Ask: \$1.4 million

Trialled through the Resilient Yarra Ranges pilot program, model to be expanded across communities in the region.

Focused on key at-risk localities:

- Mount Dandenong, Kalorama & Montrose.
- Belgrave, Belgrave South & Kallista
- Steels Creek, Dixons Creek & Yarra Glen
- Reefton, McMahons Creek

Regional Resilience Hub – Feasibility

Ask: \$500,000

Yarra Ranges is the second most disaster prone LGA in Australia. Council would like to undertake a feasibility study and commence building the partnerships for a central operations centre to coordinate emergency response, preparedness and resilience.

The Regional Resilience Hub would be used as Incident Control Centre by council and Emergency Management agencies.

Pilot project to use AI to undertake mapping of cultural assets

Ask: \$3.2 million

The proposed project would see an innovative, Victorian first, risk mapping initiative using AI to enhance risk mapping and environmental asset management. The outcomes of the pilot project would see results and learnings shared with other LGAs and Emergency Management agencies.

Inclusion of cultural mapping focused on songlines and has not been formally undertaken before. In partnership with local ATSI elders would pioneer an approach to manage risk respecting both environmental and cultural landscape.

Enhancing Cultural Burning Program

Ask: \$820,000

Funding of community development and resilience building initiatives to be delivered to help residents make critical improves to reduce risk.

Focus will be at supporting at risk groups such as elderly, people living with disability and include risks such as heatwaves outreach and response planning and working with community to support property preparedness for risks and disaster events.

Firestick Cultural Burning Program

Firestick Cultural Burning Program uses the ancient practice of Firesticks or cultural burning on private and public land to sympathetically manage fuel loads, increase biodiversity and provide a positive impact on wellbeing.

Benefits include healing of Country, advanced climate change adaptation, resilient landscapes, preservation of significant flora and fauna, space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to share Aboriginal culture and heritage and a platform for Reconciliation to thrive.

Yarra Ranges Council has delivered an award-winning Firestick program through a partnership with the Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation (FAIC).

Ongoing funding to support Firestick cultural burning knowledge and capabilities, led by Traditional Owners, could enhance local land management and caring for country practice.

Build Cultural Burning Capability for Land Management and Asset Protection

Ask: \$200,000

Project aims to build Cultural Burning capability and understanding of the efficacy of traditional Firestick practices for land management and asset protection on private, Council or public land.

Deliver Cultural burning activities, led by Traditional Owners around Monbulk, Healesville & Yarra Junction, which includes habitat of endangered species such as the Helmeted Honey Eater and Leadbeater possum. Facilitated by a funded Project Officer - Cultural Burning.

Research Project

Ask: \$100,000

Funding will help deliver a research project to understand and develop Culturally appropriate tools and measures for future Cultural Burning opportunities, that can be shared with fire management and land managers at local, regional and state level.

Greening the Suburbs

Trees are fundamental to the story of Yarra Ranges, shaping our cultures, values and communities. They are a prominent feature in our landscape, providing benefits to our health and wellbeing, community and culture, the environment, ecology and economy.

But as the climate changes and our urban areas evolve, severe weather events will become more frequent, and the tree canopy will continue to decline.

During the savage storms that swept through the region in June 2021, our region is estimated to have lost around 25,000 trees. This forever changed the landscape and created more vulnerability for trees that were once buffered from dramatic weather but are now exposed.

We need more trees, with the right tree in the right location, through a targeted tree-planting initiative that will 'Green the Suburbs'.

Greening the Suburbs

Ask: \$9.5 million

This funding would allow Council to **plant and establish over 130,000 trees over four years**, with a mix of street tree planting and bushland reserve planting across various townships in the urban, valley and hills areas.

Project funding will resource planning, community engagement, plant selection and procurement, project management, delivery and maintenance. Potential to integrate school-based programs and volunteer groups.

Fire Risk Management

Woody Weed Removal

Ask: \$1.5 million (5yrs)

\$300,000 per year for 5 years to carry out a program of woody weed removal undertaken along council managed roadsides. This program would enhance community safety and reduce fuel and weed seeding across the Yarra Ranges.

Biolinks and Invasive Species Program

Biolinks and Invasive Species Program

Ask: \$3.95 million (10yrs)

Council recently endorsed its Nature Plan, which sets the direction to deliver a Biolinks Plan to establish important habitat corridors for biodiversity protection and enhancement; implementation of a strategic cross-tenure program between community and government landowners to address invasive animal and plant species; community education and incentive programs.

\$450,000 investment would kick-start a Biolinks and Invasive Species program and an additional \$350,000 per annum for 10 years for implementation.

Energy Transition

Zero Emissions Facilities Transition

Ask: \$3.6 million

(\$900,000 per year for 4 years) to reach Yarra Ranges' community zero emissions target, by extending Council's portfolio of solar and energy storage systems and transitioning community facilities off gas and improve overall performance to support future net zero operations.

Zero Emissions Fleet and Plant

Ask: \$2 million

(\$500,000 per year for 4 years) for additional investment required in zero emissions vehicles and plant and charging infrastructure to support Council and the community's transition.

Community Climate Adaptation Program

Ask: \$1 million

(\$250,000 per year for 4 years) to support local communities to overcome cost and capability barriers to investing in climate-resilient measures; provide ongoing practical support and education programs for residents, community groups and businesses working to transition energy, reduce carbon emissions and adapt to a changed climate future.

Stormwater Offset Program – Implementation

Ask: \$120,000

Council is preparing to implement a Stormwater Offset Program to enhance our stormwater management efforts. Currently, developers make financial contributions to Melbourne Water, which allocates funds based on project priorities.

The Council Offset Program would allow us to receive contributions directly, enabling us to prioritise and fund local stormwater projects. These funds could support significant infrastructure improvements like wetlands, waterway restorations and enhanced flood control measures. This approach ensures that new developments effectively contribute to managing stormwater, even when site-specific constraints limit the full implementation of certain measures.

By pursuing this program, we aim to support sustainable urban development and strengthen our community's resilience against flooding and climate change.

Stormwater Flood Mapping & Mitigation Projects

Ask: \$3.72 million

Undertake comprehensive stormwater flood mapping for the municipality.

Develop and implement a stormwater management infrastructure program to mitigate flood risks to the community and waterways, which may include:

- large scale and/or distributed stormwater harvesting
- stormwater detention systems
- infiltration systems
- passive drainage design for roads, where feasible
- rainwater tank incentive programs on private land

Council has identified a priority list along with developing detailed plans for works. A package of works could be coordinated to an agreed budget allocation.

Sustainable Food Systems Program

Ask: \$400,000

(\$100,000 per year for 4 years) to deliver a Food Security Program that promotes community resilience, quality nutrition and social cohesion; in partnership with commercial growers, traditional owners, visitors, service providers and local gardeners. This program will highlight Yarra Ranges' critical position as the food bowl of Melbourne and aim for greater food resilience for our community in the event of natural disasters and other disruptions to supply chain.

Vibrant Townships: Tourism and Sustainable Economic Growth

By 2032, Council aims to grow its regional economy to \$9.1 billion, supporting more than 57,000 local jobs. Visitors to the region are expected to double, to over 9 million per annum in the next decade. Investment in flagship precincts and projects, as well as workforce skills and accommodation, will be key to attracting and retaining both local and overseas workers, driving sustainable economic growth and developing competitive tourism offerings.

Despite this need and the region’s potential, Yarra Ranges has been losing access to critical funding programs that support these economic objectives.

Council recognises the Australian Government’s intent to manage these programs with tighter definitions of the regions. However, it is evident that key opportunities and unique local conditions are being overlooked.

Council would welcome the opportunity to provide additional information for projects or localities to be considered on a municipal or locality level for exemptions and funding.

Projects:

- [Ridges and Rivers](#)
- [Regional Centre of Excellence, Workforce Skilling and Accommodation](#)
- [Wandin North Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvements](#)

Strategic links

Yarra Ranges Council	Commonwealth Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic Development Strategy• Integrated Transport Strategy• Recreation and Open Space Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• THRIVE 2030• Thriving Suburbs Program• Local Govt Financial Assistance Grants

Ridges and Rivers

Ridges and Rivers is a world-class trail-based tourism destination consisting of three signature outdoor attractions: the Yarra Valley Trail, ngurrak barring (formerly RidgeWalk) and Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.

To date, \$30 million in investment has been funded between the Commonwealth Government, Victorian Government, Yarra Ranges Council and Bendigo Bank (Warburton & Yarra Junction). Early stages of the projects have commenced construction.

Through a network of improved trails and walking tracks, Ridges and Rivers will help to connect local townships and provide convenient, easy access to walking, cycling and mountain biking opportunities, delivering significant health and wellbeing benefits for Yarra Ranges communities.

Ridges and Rivers will also provide a much-needed economic boost to the region, particularly throughout the course of the Native Timber harvesting transition. Warburton Mountain Bike Destination alone is projected to inject \$48 million into the local economy by 2031 and create 229 new jobs.

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination – Stage 1 (Southern section)

Ask: \$3 million

The first 100km of trails are currently under construction. \$3million will deliver the final 25km of tracks that will complete Stage 1 of the project, the southern section.

Yarra Valley Trail

Ask: \$5.1 million

Funding is sought to continue delivery of stage 1B of the Yarra Valley Trail, between Yering and Yarra Glen, including a dedicated bridge over the Yarra River.

ngurrak barring

See below

Further investment required to deliver car parks and pedestrian crossings in Dandenong Ranges townships to facilitate visitors to ngurrak barring trails and ease broader parking pressures for locals. Projects can be staged.

Pedestrian crossing upgrades at Olinda and Sassafras	\$1.5M + \$1.5M
Terry Avenue, Belgrave-Ferny Creek – Carpark Upgrade	\$800,000
Mechanics Hall, Sassafras – Carpark Upgrade	\$50,000
Falls Road, Kalorama – Carpark Upgrade	\$30,000

Regional Centre of Excellence, Workforce Skilling and Accommodation

As Yarra Ranges braces for visitor numbers to double over the next decade, there is a need for investment in worker upskilling across key industries, alongside key infrastructure, to sustain meaningful employment opportunities and quality visitor experiences.

Feasibility Study

Funding to develop a feasibility study for a Centre of Excellence for food and beverages of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, akin to industry-leading examples in the Barossa Valley. (To be developed and run by industry bodies).

Workforce Accommodation

Investment in housing to address workforce accommodation needs, particularly across growing industries of health, aged care, hospitality and agriculture.

Hospitality Upskilling Program

Support for local hospitality businesses to train and upskill existing and new workers. (To be developed and delivered via industry bodies)

Wandin North Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvements

The Wandin North masterplan was adopted by Council in July 2023. The plan seeks to reinvigorate the public areas for visitors and locals, with a focus on the shopping precinct, Greenglades Court Reserve and connections to the popular Warburton Trail.

Pedestrian Crossings and Streetscapes

Ask: \$1.7 million

\$1.7 million investment would deliver improvements to pedestrian crossings and streetscapes in Wandin North, including:

- Installation of 2 signalised pedestrian crossings across Warburton Highway at Warburton Rail Trail and George Street.
- Upgrading on-street car-parking, footpaths, street furniture, roadside (kerb and drainage) and street tree planting, along Warburton Highway between George St and Union Rd.
- Upgrading footpaths, roadside (kerb and drainage) and street tree planting, along Warburton Highway between Warburton Rail Trail and George Street.

Community and Recreation Infrastructure

Accessible and inclusive facilities are needed to support our communities to stay active and connected – every day, and even in times of emergency.

Council has taken an evidence-based approach to identifying facilities requiring renewal and upgrade. With targeted investment in the following projects, Council’s facilities will support equitable participation in sport and active recreation, with some facilities – such as our pavilions – playing a critical role during disaster response and recovery.

Projects:

- [Community Pavilions](#)
- [Aquatics](#)
- [Other community assets](#)
- [Early Years Infrastructure](#)

Community Pavilions

Priority projects	Location	Total cost
Lilydale Recreation Reserve	Lilydale	\$8,450,000
Belgrave Recreation Reserve	Belgrave	\$8,400,000
Wesburn Community Recreation and Education Centre	Wesburn	\$8,800,000
Warburton Recreation Reserve	Warburton	\$8,400,000
Mooroolbark Heights Recreation Reserve	Mooroolbark	\$6,000,000
Yarra Junction Recreation Reserve	Yarra Junction	\$9,500,000

Aquatics

Adopted in 2024, Council's Aquatics Strategy has identified a number of priority projects in consultation with our community:

Priority projects	Location	Total cost
Indoor Aquatics Centre – funding to develop a business case for an integrated indoor aquatics facility in the urban area	Urban	\$300,000
Healesville Outdoor Pool – heating and minor improvement works	Healesville	\$1,000,000
Monbulk Aquatic Centre Electrification and Sustainable Building Upgrades	Monbulk	\$2,400,000

Other community assets

Priority projects	Location	Total cost
Upwey Oval #1	Upwey	\$1,500,000
Gateway Oval # 2	Lilydale	\$1,200,000
Belgrave Lighting (#1 Oval)	Belgrave	\$260,000
Don Road Lighting (#1 Oval)	Healesville	\$300,000
Morrison Reserve Netball Courts	Mt Evelyn	\$330,000
Don Road Netball Courts	Healesville	\$330,000
Queens Park Pavilion – change rooms & upgrades	Healesville	\$500,000
Montrose Tennis Court	Montrose	\$300,000
Belgrave Cricket Nets	Belgrave	\$265,000
Lilydale Recreation Reserve – temporary change facility	Lilydale	\$500,000
Lilydale Recreation Reserve – engineering design & detailed costings	Lilydale	\$300,000

Early Years Infrastructure

The Australian Government has renewed its focus on early years with the development of its draft Early Years Strategy 2024-2034. Its vision is one that Council strongly supports, for 'all children in Australia to thrive in their earlier years. They reach their full potential, nurtured by empowered and connected families, who in turn are supported by strong communities.'

The Australian Government's focus, alongside the Victorian Government's *Best Start, Best Life*, impacts on Council's capacity to provide critical built infrastructure and technology, and in turn, support effective and efficient service delivery for local families.

Yarra Ranges anticipates that at least 33 additional rooms and \$64 million in new and upgraded infrastructure will be required to facilitate the early years' service system over the next 10 years, with enrolments growing due to Early Years reform and population growth.

As Council continues to analyse projected enrolments and asset requirements, an early priority infrastructure project has been identified at the Rolling Hills facility in Mooroolbark.

Rolling Hills – Mooroolbark Facility Redevelopment

Ask: \$8.7 million

The Rolling Hills is an existing and well-used facility, with the potential to be redeveloped to meet growing service needs into the future.

A redevelopment would involve renewal and upgrade of the existing pre-school building (200m²); rebuilding of the old kinder and immunisation building, including an expansion in area and joining it to the pre-school building (830m²).

This funding would allow for 3 x playrooms (for 33 children each), amenities and storerooms, 2-3 Maternal and Child Health and allied health consultation rooms and refurbishment of the existing kinder into community room.

Roads & Integrated Transport Infrastructure

Our region covers the largest area of any metropolitan council in Victoria so reliance on roads is significant. Sealing our extensive network of dangerous unmade roads remains a priority. Yarra Ranges Council's Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), **Connected**, sets the direction to deliver transport infrastructure that is safer, healthier, well-connected, sustainable and inclusive.

Council welcomes the Australian Government's increased investments into local roads, which will contribute to building safer roads that are more resilient to natural disasters. This includes recently announced increases to Roads to Recovery, Black Spot Program and Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program.

Council has also developed programs through the ITS to make our roads safer, promote physical activity and make our communities safer. The proposed scale of each program is designed to maximise efficiencies in cost and delivery however, programs can be tailored to any level of funding commitment.

Projects:

- Priority Road Sealing – Roads for Community & Emergency Preparedness
- Cycle & Pedestrian Safety – Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail

Strategic links

Yarra Ranges Council	Commonwealth Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated Transport Strategy• Liveable Climate Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030• National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy

Priority Road Sealing – Roads for Community & Emergency Preparedness

Yarra Ranges has more than 700 kilometres of unsealed roads, accounting for 40% of the Council-managed network. A lack of public transport options increases our community's reliance on car travel. With a land primed for agriculture, local agribusinesses rely on our roads to transport prized produce to domestic markets and for exports. Additionally, every year millions of tourists use our roads to visit a range of attractions.

In 2019 Council received nearly \$50 million to commence delivery of the Roads for Community initiative, with a further \$100 million promised by the then Australian Government for an extended program. Extensive planning, design and community engagement activity was undertaken to implement the road sealing program with additional contributions from landowners, amplifying the program's reach. 31.75 km over 96 local roads will be completed with the initial funding. Following the Government's 2022 review, the funding for future year projects was withdrawn. With much of the design and engagement completed, Council seeks the funding to be re-instated to complete this significant road safety initiative.

Yarra Ranges' extensive network of unsealed roads impedes evacuation and access in emergencies and creates safety risks for local drivers and visitors. Council has identified and prioritised roads where sealing works will enhance community safety, particularly during emergency situations.

A commitment of \$23 Million would enable Council's top 12 identified roads to be sealed to support emergency access or egress.

Council seeks to work with the Australian Government to address these needs and can tailor a program of work to align with its priorities of emergency preparedness.

Cycle & Pedestrian Safety – Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail

Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail and Little Yarra River Trail: Crossing and Bridge Upgrade Program

- Warburton Highway, Wandin North – signalized crossing
- Warburton Highway, Yarra Junction 1 – signalized crossing
- Warburton Highway, Yarra Junction 2 – road crossing and bridge over Yarra River
- Warburton Highway, Warburton – signalized crossing at termination point of trail
- Woods Point Road, East Warburton – bridge upgrade to separate pedestrians/cyclists & vehicles

Lilydale Line – Rail Duplication Between Lilydale and Mooroolbark

Duplication of the Lilydale railway line between Mooroolbark and Lilydale to enable additional trains to operate on the line; construction of a new station at Cave Hill to reduce bottlenecks and provide for an increase in users with 3,000 new dwellings to be developed in the 800m catchment area.

The estimated value of construction in 2020 was \$46 million and this major project requires investment and delivery by the Victorian and Australian Governments into the future.

Health and Wellbeing

In 2023, Yarra Ranges Council conducted a **Human Services Needs Analysis (HSNA)** across our region. This analysis provides insight into the main issues and trends affecting services, including shifting community needs, access to services, working challenges, funding and infrastructure.

The HSNA found that nearly two-thirds of services have experienced demands they had been unable to meet. The top service gaps reported were:

- Housing and homelessness support
- Mental health – including shortage of GPs and Mental Health specialists
- Urgent Care – access to an urgent care centre in the Yarra Valley
- Transport – which impedes transport access to physical services

Council will continue collaborating with local service providers to leverage the findings from the HSNA and expand our strategic advocacy efforts, including opportunities to work with other levels of government and close these critical service gaps.

Projects:

- [Housing and Homelessness](#)
- [Mental Health](#)
- [Urgent Care](#)

Strategic links

Yarra Ranges Council	Commonwealth Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Wellbeing Plan • Housing Strategy • Municipal Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision 2030: Blueprint for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention • National Housing and Homelessness Plan • Early Years Strategy

Housing and Homelessness

Council advocates on housing and homelessness issues alongside its partners in the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance and the Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter.

The combined rate of homelessness and other marginal housing in Yarra Ranges rose by 19% between 2016 and 2021 – a total of 756 people. Homelessness alone rose by 10% in Yarra Ranges, double the state average.

Yarra Ranges social housing stock stands at 2.5% of all dwellings compared with the state average of 3.2%. Coupled with the 25% increase of households on the Victorian social housing waiting list from 2018 to 2023, highlights the growing need for increased investment for social and affordable housing in the region.

As a foundational determinant to community health, increasing access to affordable housing will be key to addressing disadvantage in the LGA. Improved access to affordable housing will also address key worker shortages in the region, as currently the median house price is unaffordable for the 10 most represented occupations within Yarra Ranges.

In 2024, Council adopted its renewed Housing strategy, which provides direction for long-term planning and development of private residential housing, as well as Council's partnership work on social and affordable housing.

Ask: Housing & Homelessness

Yarra Ranges Council's key asks for the Australian Government include:

- Identify and release suitable Commonwealth land in Yarra Ranges for social and affordable housing.
- Provide delivery pathways and funding for social and affordable housing to be developed when Councils contribute suitable land.
- Undertake a comprehensive review and increase the Commonwealth Rental Assistance to support those struggling in private rentals.
- Provide targeted funding to State Government to urgently increase the number of social housing dwellings and crisis accommodation units in Yarra Ranges, which currently is facing a shortfall of 2500 units with an expected rise to 3600 by 2041.
- Collaborate with Local Government to design and fund a local homelessness service to provide a homelessness outreach case management service and a drop-in service in Yarra Ranges.

Mental Health

From the HSNA, all mental health services (25 total) reported increase in service demand over the past four years. This was particularly concentrated in the urban part of Yarra Ranges, which saw the closure of the Lilydale Youth Hub at the end of 2022.

Further, 89% of all services surveyed reported increased mental health concerns among their clients.

Over the past few years, Council has advocated with local service providers for investments to meet the needs of our community, which remain relevant given the findings from the HSNA.

Ask: Mental Health Services

Yarra Ranges Council's key ask of the Australian Government:

- **Expanded resourcing for mental health services, including headspace Lilydale and support to integrate mental health services with general health service provision.**

Urgent Care

Yarra Ranges residents experience significant challenges trying to access health services locally, particularly residents in the outer areas of the municipality. Issues include a lack of GPs, specialists and health workers; lack of local accessible services; residents having a very high tendency to go to emergency departments when unwell; lack of private health insurance and falling levels of preventative care and screening. Service usage and survey data show that most services have had rising demand over the past four years and have often been unable to meet community demand.

The Australian and Victorian Governments have funded and opened a number of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics in metro areas and 70 Urgent Care Centres in rural and regional areas.

Provision of an urgent care clinic, potentially to be co-located or supported by Healesville Hospital, is likely to save the federal government large amounts of money in spending on preventable health issues and emergency department use. Currently the nearest Urgent Care Clinic is located in Bayswater (40km from Healesville & 45km from Warburton) with similar distances to the nearest emergency departments at Angliss and Maroondah Hospitals.

Ask: Access to an urgent care centre in the Yarra Valley

Yarra Ranges Council asks that the Australian Government allocate funding for either a Medicare Urgent Care Clinic or a Rural Urgent Care Centre to be developed in Healesville.