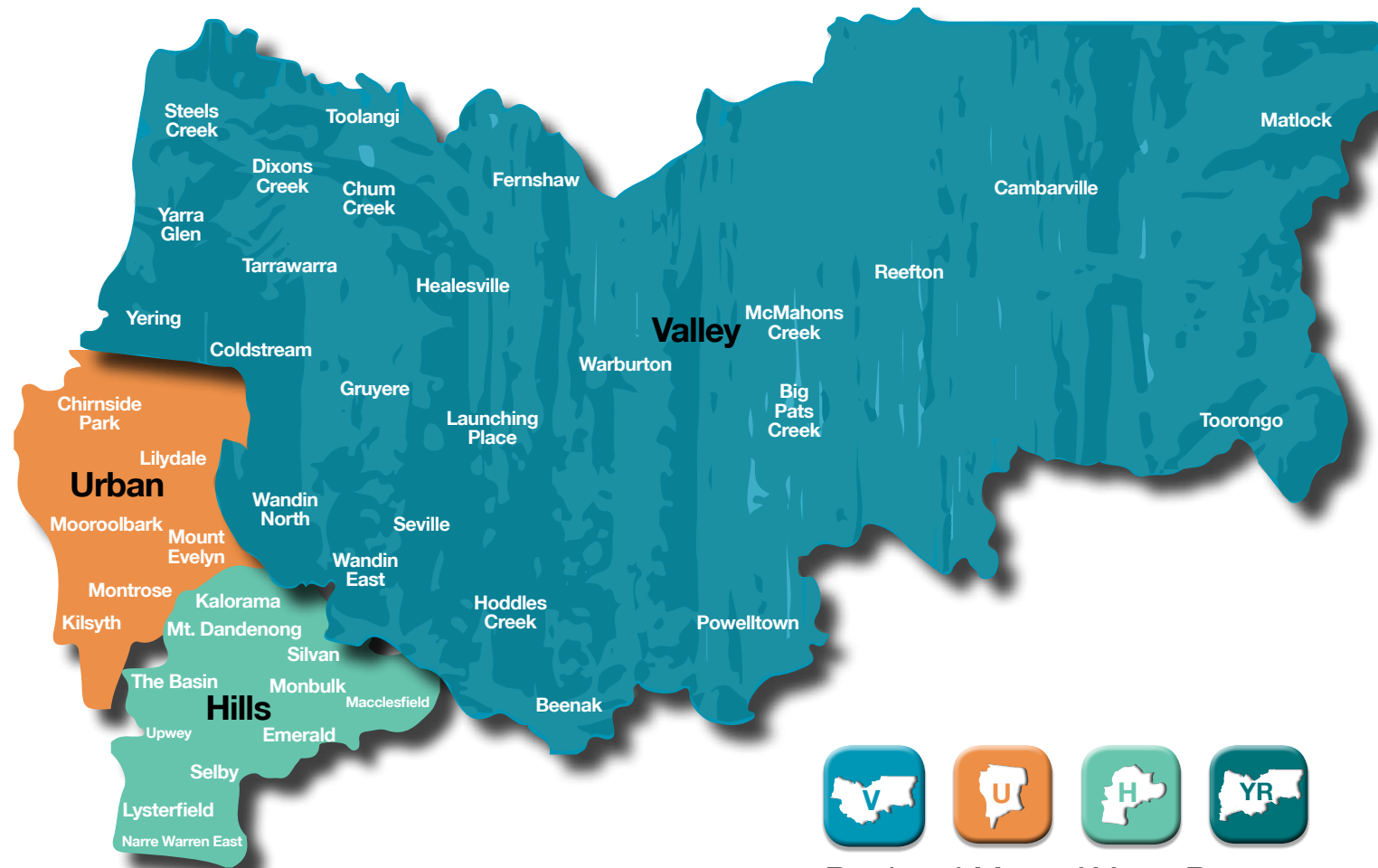


Child & Youth STRATEGY

2014-2024



Regional Map of Yarra Ranges
Urban, Hills and Valley

Vision, Key Outcomes and Goals

Vision – Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making:

OUTCOME 1

Outcome 1: Young people, children and their families can access the right services in a timely way

Goal: Lead the development of a comprehensive service system that is streamlined, focused on outcomes and includes the voices of children, young people and their families in decision making

OUTCOME 2

Outcome 2: Adequate infrastructure exists to meet the needs of children, young people and their families

Goal: Plan for future growth and advocate to address critical service gaps

OUTCOME 3

Outcome 3: All children, young people and their families will have access to universal services and supports that enhance wellbeing and promote resilience

Goal: Universal services are available to enhance protective factors for all children, young people and their families

OUTCOME 4

Outcome 4: Outcomes will be improved for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability

Goal: Deliver targeted support to those children, young people and families in the greatest need

Activity that promotes parenting, gender equity and improves outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people will be embedded within actions plans developed to achieve relevant outcomes.

Introduction

The vision this Strategy will help achieve is that:

“Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making.”

This Strategy outlines Council’s approach for promoting positive outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 years and their families in Yarra Ranges. The Strategy recognises the diversity of children, young people and their families living in the Yarra Ranges. This Strategy takes a place based approach, informed by evidence and with consideration of the expressed needs of local communities. The Strategy was developed from the following evidence based understanding (Moore & McDonald, 2013):

- The strongest influence on children’s development is the quality of parenting they receive, and the nature of their home learning environments;
- Intervening during early childhood and the prenatal period (i.e. early intervention) offers a unique window of opportunity to shift individuals’ life trajectories. Early intervention leads to better outcomes for individuals and society and they are more cost effective;
- A multi-level, holistic and wrap around model of intensive support is required for children, young people and their families experiencing significant disadvantage; and
- A seamless service system for children, young people and their families enables more effective planning and resource management and facilitates greater collaboration between government departments, levels of government and the non-government sector.

The Child & Youth Strategy seeks to cement the relationship between early years and youth services. This Strategy recognises that one outcome of effective early years services and opportunities will be more resilient and achieving young people. Similarly, an outcome of providing effective youth services and opportunities will be more resilient and achieving young adults, many of whom will become the parents of the next generation. The opportunity exists, through this cycle, to significantly reduce the incidence of vulnerability and negative outcomes in future generations.

The process for developing and implementing the Strategy

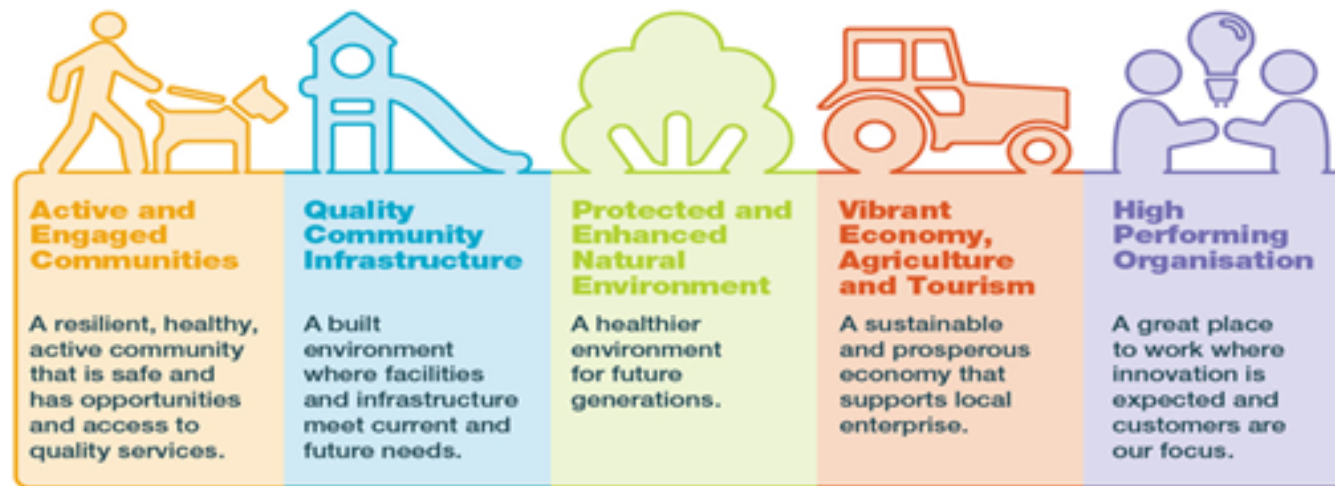
The following activities have informed the development of the Child & Youth Strategy:

1. Review and analysis of local demographic data and outcome data including place based analysis at township level where available;
2. Review of a range of relevant policies, strategies and available evidence bases;
3. Consultation with the community and key stakeholders through:
 - surveys with young people, parents/carers and service providers;
 - conversations with community members through listening posts, focus groups and individual conversations; and
 - a specialist project with young children which produced the children's book 'Riding Home'
4. Stakeholder workshops through which the key findings of stages 1-3 were shared and the proposed key outcomes tested

To implement the Strategy, Yarra Ranges Council will work with partners to develop a suite of action plans that set out the specific, measurable, evidence informed activities through which the vision and key outcomes will be achieved. Actions will seek to augment and streamline the existing range of services that are already delivered for children, young people and their families living in Yarra Ranges. Council will support the use of an integrated and holistic planning approach which takes account of the evidence, the unique needs of our people and places and engages with community.

This Strategy, and the supporting action plans, also serve as the Yarra Ranges Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP), enabling the Council to fulfil its key role in planning for the local delivery of adequate early years services (for those aged 0-8) in partnership with the Victorian Government. The integrated approach taken in this Strategy seeks to expand this role to also include the delivery of services for children and young people through their middle years (8-12 years) and in adolescence and early adulthood (12-25 years).

Strategic Planning Framework



Yarra Ranges Council has five key strategic objectives that provide direction for the organisation. They describe what the organisation is working towards and how we want Yarra Ranges to be in the future. All Council strategies and plans support the achievement of the key strategic objectives.

Within the framework, the Child & Youth Strategy will primarily support Active and Engaged Communities, Quality Community Infrastructure and Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism.

The Child & Youth Strategy will also support Council action against a number of other municipal strategies including the: Health & Wellbeing Strategy; Economic Development Strategy; Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy; Reconciliation Framework for Action; Recreation and Open Space Strategy; and Environment Strategy. External to Council, the Child & Youth Strategy has been informed by the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities, and by two key State Government strategies: the Early Years Strategic Plan; and Victoria's Vulnerable Children, Our Shared Responsibility Strategy. The Strategy also takes account of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities

The Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities, launched by the Victorian Local Government Association in 2013 calls for organisations to commit to increasing the participation of children in decision making forums and to create child friendly environments. The Charter which is consistent with state, national and international protocols, endorses the following principles:

- Freedom for children to experience environments that consider their needs;
- Respect and dignity for children to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and their wellbeing; and
- Equitable access to supportive environments and services for children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability.



active and engaged

This Child and Youth Strategy endorses this Charter and Yarra Ranges Council will actively support the realisation of these principles through annual action plans through the life of the Strategy. It is critically important to hear and include the voices of both children and young people in decision making processes, and this is reflected in the vision of this Strategy: “Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making.”

Alignment with recent State and Local Government Strategies

There is significant alignment between the Yarra Ranges Child & Youth Strategy and the DEECD Early Years Strategic Plan (EYSP) and whole of Government Victoria’s Vulnerable Children, Our Shared Responsibility (OSR) Strategy.

The EYSP stresses the importance of collaboration and a joined up approach between all levels of government to enable every child (from conception to eight) to achieve their potential and to prevent early and sustained disadvantage. The EYSP will seek to improve outcomes through three primary objectives: supporting parents and communities to give children a great start; early and sustained support for those who need it most; and all children benefiting from high-quality early learning, which have significant synergy with this Child & Youth Strategy.



'we know that the development of children and young people is significantly shaped by the physical and social environments'

Victoria's Vulnerable Children was developed to drive change across Victorian Government Departments and ensure that "Vulnerable children are kept safe from harm and have every opportunity to succeed in life".

This vision will be achieved through the following goals:

- Prevent child abuse and neglect: A preventative population wide strategy is necessary to reduce the lifetime implications of abuse and neglect. Optimising the participation of all Victorians in universal services is essential for preventing vulnerability;
- Act earlier when children are vulnerable: Early intervention is required when vulnerability is identified as there is significant opportunity to turn around the risk of abuse and neglect through early and coordinated action; and
- Improve outcomes for children in statutory care: Government will better meet the needs of children in statutory care.

An evidence informed approach to how outcomes for all children and young people can be improved

Conclusive evidence exists about the factors, environments and service system responses that enable children and young people to develop and thrive. Council will use this and the future evidence base to achieve the overall objectives set out in this Strategy. The four key strategic outcomes through which the vision will be realised are also informed by this evidence base.



In summary, we know that the development of children and young people is significantly shaped by the physical and social environments (their immediate families, communities, schools) in which they live, as well as by the effectiveness and responsiveness of the services available to them (Moore & McDonald, 2013). Enabling and supporting parents, carers, communities and services to be nurturing and support positive development is fundamental to improving outcomes. Many children and young people will be at risk of becoming vulnerable at some point in their life, however, the majority of these will only require support from their family/carers and the assistance of universal services. For the minority who require further assistance, there is clear evidence that the provision of targeted support to children, young people and their carers at the onset of an issue is by far the most effective and cost efficient.

The evidence is clear that a tiered service system needs to be in place that enables people/families to receive timely and effective support. There is further evidence to suggest that such systems are the most effective when they are outcome focused with central coordination ensuring there are no service gaps, and streamlined to avoid duplication and coordinate when individuals or families require multiple services. This approach is commonly referred to as '**progressive universalism**' and is depicted in Figure 2. The activity that will be undertaken to achieve the four key outcomes of the Child & Youth Strategy will effectively create this system for the Yarra Ranges.

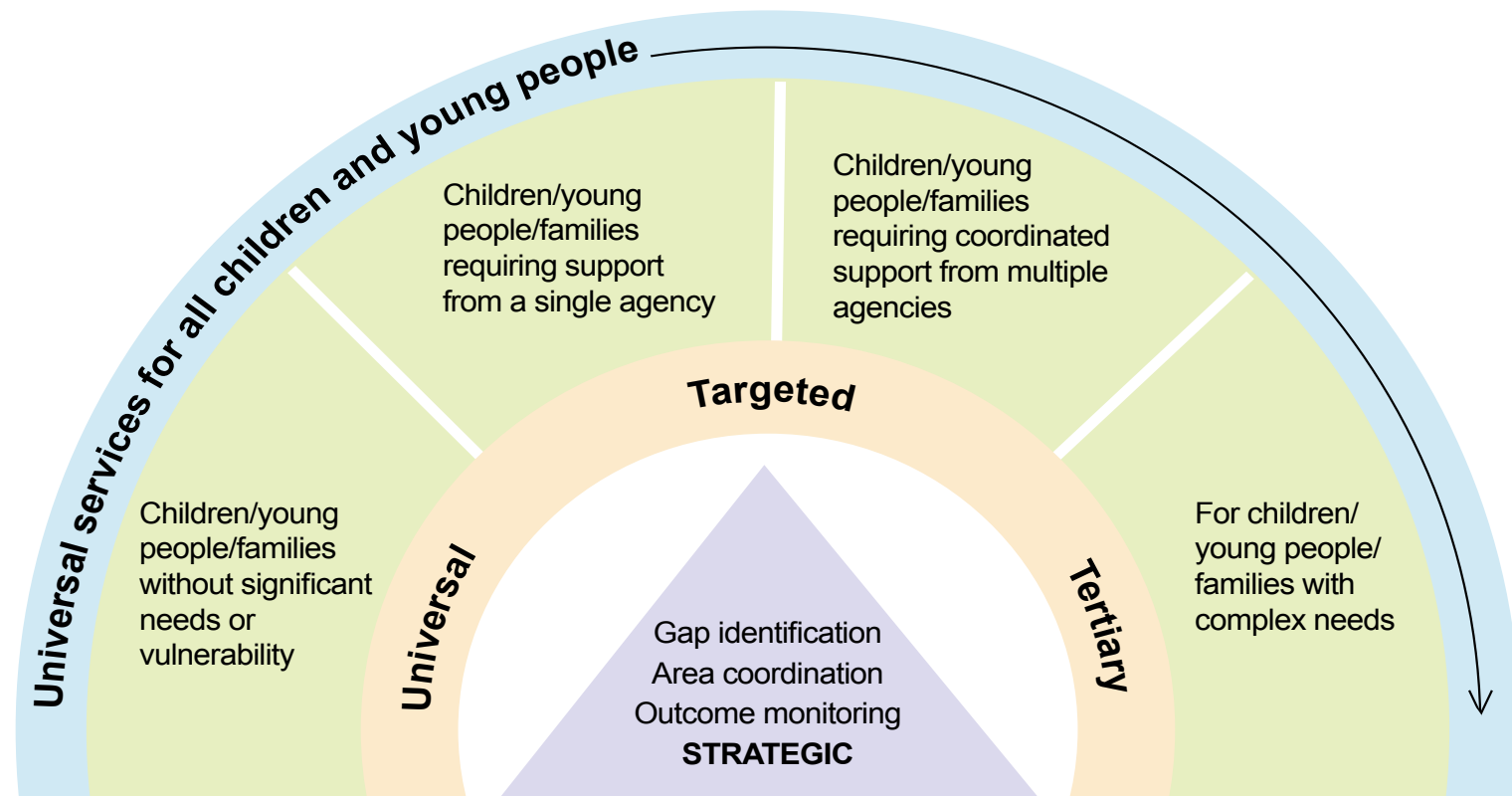


Figure 2: The Progressive Universalism Windscreen

Two further key drivers of activity relate to **reconciliation** and **gender equity**. It is recognised that outcomes for children and young people who are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent remain worse than those of other descent. Correspondingly, the activity supporting this Strategy will continue to address this and ensure that a culturally aware system is nurtured.

Activity which seeks to prevent violence against women, particularly through the promotion of gender equity, will also be embedded across all activity areas, strongly recognising the need to eradicate family violence as an end in itself, in addition to the positive impact that this would also have on outcomes for children and young people.

Child & Youth STRATEGY

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Key Information about children, young people and the service system in Yarra Ranges

Yarra Ranges is a diverse Interface Council with unique characteristics and issues facing communities. This Strategy takes a place-based approach to planning and considers the diverse needs of three regions: Hills, Urban and Valley (refer to map on page 1). Overall, the Yarra Ranges municipality extends 2470 Kms² with an estimated resident population of 149,538 (ID. community profiles, 2013).

The Valley represents the largest geographical region, 2115.6 Kms². The Urban area and the Hills are smaller in size (132.3 and 218.4 respectively), and more densely populated.

The service system in Yarra Ranges includes a blend of local agencies and regional services that cater to the outer east of Melbourne including the municipalities of Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges.

Place-based demographics and indicators of wellbeing





urban

In 2011, the population of children and young people aged 0-24 years in the Urban region was 25,732. The Urban area will experience significant growth of 0-24 year olds, growing by 15% by 2036:

- 0-4 yr olds will increase by 1004 (20%)
- 5-9 yr olds will increase by 1206 (26%)
- 10-14 yr olds will increase by 784 (15%)
- 15-19 yr olds will increase by 364 (7%)
- 20-24 yr olds will increase by 405 (7%)

The Urban region has an average SEIFA score of 1040, ranging from 1009 (Kilsyth) to 1058 (Montrose).



hills

In 2011, the population of children and young people aged 0-24 years in the Hills was 11,783. There will be a 12% reduction in 0-24 year olds in the Hills by 2036:

- 0-4 yr olds will decrease by 240 (-11%)
- 5-9 yr olds will decrease by 96 (-4%)
- 10-14 yr olds will decrease by 142 (-6%)
- 15-19 yr olds will decrease by 368 (-14%)
- 20-24 yr olds will decrease by 562 (-24%)

The Hills is a relatively affluent area with an average SEIFA score of 1069, ranging from 1028 (Monbulk) to 1102 (Lysterfield).

Victorian average SEIFA score is 1019.



valley

In 2011, the population of children and young people aged 0-24 years in the Valley was 12,574. Overall, the population by 2036 will remain relatively stable in the Valley:

- 0-4 yr olds will increase by 125 (5.1%)
- 5-9 yr olds will increase by 143 (5.6%)
- 10-14 yr olds will increase by 18 (0.7%)
- 15-19 yr olds will decrease by 364 (-11.9%)
- 20-24 yr olds will decrease by 199 (-8.9%)

The Valley has an average SEIFA score of 1006. The range is large, extending from 846 (McMahons Creek) to 1076 (Steels Creek). This socio economic prosperity of residents across the Valley is diverse with some of the most advantaged and disadvantaged communities.



INDICATORS OF WELLBEING

Breastfeeding

Rates of breastfeeding at 3 and 6 months of age (2011/12)

Immunisation

Fully vaccinated at 12-15 months, 24-27 months and 60-63 months (2012/13)

Maternal Child Health (MCH) participation

Engagement in Key Age and Stage Consultations at 18 months and 3 ½ years of age (2012)

Preschool participation

Engagement in 4 year old preschool services (2012)

YARRA RANGES AND PLACE BASED ANALYSIS

Maternal Child Health data indicates strong overall breastfeeding rates compared with the State average. Area analysis indicates lower rates of breastfeeding in the Valley and Urban areas

Fully vaccinated in Yarra Ranges: 12-15 months (90.7%); 24-27 months (91.7%); 60-63 months (91.9%). There is an estimated local objection rate of 8%. Areas of concern are the Valley (Healesville, Warburton) and the Hills (Upwey)

Strong engagement at 18 months across the Yarra Ranges including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Lower engagement across all areas including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at 3 ½ years (55.2% compared with State average of 64.4%). The Valley is the main but not exclusive area with lower rates

Yarra Ranges preschool participation dropped from 97.9% (2011) to 93.4%, to be below the State average of 98%. The lowest rates are (according to AEDI) in: Valley (Warburton 91.2%); Urban (Mt Evelyn 91.6%); and Hills (92% Tecoma)





INDICATORS OF WELLBEING

Australian Early Childhood Index (AEDI)

The AEDI assesses the breadth and type of vulnerability in children at primary school entry across five domains: physical health and wellbeing (PHW); language and cognitive skills (LCS); communication and general knowledge (CGK); emotional maturity (EM); and social competence (SC).

YARRA RANGES AND PLACE BASED ANALYSIS

The AEDI indicates that 83.2% of 1,979 5 year olds in the Yarra Ranges are not vulnerable upon school entry. Of the 16.8% (334) who are vulnerable, a small majority (55%) are vulnerable on a single domain and 45% vulnerable on 2 domains or more.

The Urban area has the highest overall incidence of vulnerability, with 17.8% of 5 year olds vulnerable, with particular concentrations in Mount Evelyn (LCS) and Kilsyth (SC; EM).

In the Valley, where 16.6% of 5 years are vulnerable, there is significant variation. A small number of townships experience very low incidence of vulnerability while others have very high levels across multiple domains. Areas of particular concern are Warburton/ McMahon's Creek and Woori Yallock/ Hoddles Creek.

Woori Yallock/ Hoddles Creek have the highest concentration of developmentally vulnerable children who (17.2% on one domain and 14.1% on two or more) particularly on CGK, while the rate of vulnerability for Warburton/ McMahons Creek is 11.5% on one domain and 17.1% on two or more. There is a more diverse range of vulnerabilities experienced by children in Warburton/ McMahons Creek including PHW; LCS; and EM.

The Hills has both the lowest overall incidence (15% of all 5 years olds) and lower concentration of vulnerability.

YOUTH INDICATORS (age 13-25)	Yarra Ranges	Victoria
Bullying Years 7-9	21%	20.4%
Feel connected to school	63%	61.7%
Literacy Year 7 & Year 9	97.1% 95.3%	95.9% 93.5%
Numeracy Year 7 & Year 9	96.9% 95.8%	95.8% 95%
Year 12 Completion	83.8%	84.2%
Mental Health (2009)		
Psychiatric hospitalisation (2009/10)	9.6 per 1,000	6.7 per 1,000
Self reported levels of psychological distress	15.8%	13%
Rate of eating disorders	2.7%	2.4%
Sexual activity	32.9%	22.4%
Fertility Rate (Teenage Pregnancy) (2012)	7.8 per 1,000	10.4 per 1,000
Rate of Sexually Transmissible Infections	39.2 per 1,000	38.5 per 1,000
Crime Victimization Rate (2011/12)	6.4 per 1,000	10 per 1,000
Offending Rate (2011/12)	15.6 per 1,000	24.4 per 1,000
Alcohol consumption (2009)		
'Ever' drunk alcohol - 12-14 years	59.8%*	46.4%
'Ever' drunk alcohol - 15-17 years	79.7%	74.1%
Past 30 days - 12-14 years	31.1%	23.8%
Past 30 days - 15-17 years	55.1%	52.3%

** Percentage of young people is significantly higher than the State average.*



Consultation Outcomes: Children and Young People

Children

As detailed in the 'Riding Home' children's book produced through innovative consultation with pre-schoolers and primary school aged children, children growing up in Yarra Ranges especially value the natural environment and opportunities for: walking; riding bikes; playing sport; playing in wide open spaces; and interacting with animals. A friendly community and feeling safe are also important to them.

Children reported their concerns in relation to: graffiti and vandalism; 'hoons'; violence; littering; closure of local businesses; cutting down trees; and increasing traffic. The children also reported feeling unwelcome and unsafe at some skate parks.

Children's views were common across all places.

Young People

75% of young people reported there are enough sources of help.

Young people have a high level of confidence when seeking help for education and physical health issues. Their confidence levels decline for mental and sexual health, family problems and friendships and peer-related issues. Overall confidence levels are generally lower in the Valley.

Specific Issue	Yarra Ranges	Valley	Hills	Urban	ATSI
School or education	87%	89%	88%	89%	79%
Physical health	81%	79%	84%	83%	84%
Mental health	68%	62%	75%	66%	68%
Sexual health	53%	41%	57%	54%	68%
Family problems	69%	67%	70%	70%	79%
Friendships and peers	72%	77%	70%	68%	74%

Young people reported that Council can best support them by:

1. Providing regular local activities (highest in Valley);
2. Delivering services to young people with difficulties (highest in Urban);
3. Promoting a positive image of young people (highest in Hills); and
4. Helping young people contribute to community (highest in Urban).

Consultation Outcomes: Parents / Carers and Service Providers

Parents and carers

Parents and carers reported a high level of satisfaction with services received locally. This rate was 90% in the Hills, 80% in the Urban area and 77% in the Valley.

Parents and carers reported that service access could be improved. Some had experienced an unmet service need at a rate of 35% in the Valley, and 20% in the Urban area and the Hills. The top priorities were:

- Valley – health services, activities, and playgroups;
- Urban – music programs, and child care including long day care and occasional care; and
- Hills – activities, playgroups, and long day child care.

Overall, parents and carers also reported the need for local service options and outreach. A lack of support services for the middle years (8-12 years), and the need for extra support for children with additional needs were also reported. Parenting support and advice, and better awareness of services and how to access them, were also noted.

Service Providers

The consultation findings with Service Providers were not able to be analysed by place as many providers operate at a local government or regional level. The findings are applicable across the municipality.

The findings correlate with parents and carers views with regards to services needs and gaps. Service Providers reported that service access would be improved through locally available services (89%) and assertive engagement/ outreach (77%). They also recognised the lack of services for 8-12 year olds and the critical role of parents and the need to better support them.

Specific concerns were raised about vulnerable young people in relation to mental health, drug and alcohol and homelessness. Service Providers also identified the need for system improvements including:

- Improving strategic governance;
- Improving service coordination and collaboration; and
- Better support of referral processes and pathways by increasing awareness of services and streamlining service delivery.

Strategic Outcomes



Outcome 1: Young people, children and their families get the support they need in a timely way

Goal: Lead the development of a comprehensive service system that is streamlined, focused on outcomes and includes the voices of children, young people and their families in decision making

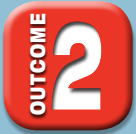
Rationale for this Outcome and Goal

A tiered system of 'progressive universalism' is required to ensure that all children, young people and their families get the support they need in a timely way (Moore & McDonald, 2013; Vulnerable Children's Strategy). Achieving a comprehensive, streamlined and outcomes focussed system requires a collaborative approach and strategic governance between governments, non-government agencies, communities and service users (Moore & McDonald, 2013). There is clear evidence that the effectiveness of the current Yarra Ranges service system could be improved through greater coordination and streamlining services. This is evidenced by:

- 93% of service providers believed increased strategic governance would be beneficial and 74% believed there should be greater activity to promote coordination and collaboration between services;
- Parents/carers reported service gaps and service limitations (i.e. long waitlists and eligibility criteria) and that they required greater information about the availability of services. Parents/carers also indicated a need for earlier and swifter support for children/young people with additional needs, highlighting the impact of lengthy waiting lists.
- 40% of service providers reported difficulties in finding services and programs due to a lack of local services or information about those that are available, and long waitlists;
- The current limited sharing of data between agencies that would enable stronger service coordination.

Effective early intervention will only occur when there is the capacity and ability for those in universal systems to identify issues at an early point and then be able to swiftly access appropriate inclusive services.

Activity to achieve this outcome will also seek to be informed by, and inform, the development of Area Partnerships in the Outer East (as set out in the Vulnerable Children's Strategy), the implementation of the Streamlining Antenatal to Four Project, and build upon the work of the Better Youth Services Pilot Project and Outer East No Wrong Door initiative.



Outcome 2: Adequate infrastructure exists to meet the needs of children, young people and their families

Goal: Plan for future growth and advocate to address critical service gaps

Rationale for this Outcome and Goal

Adequate infrastructure for the delivery of universal and targeted services is essential to meet the future needs of children, young people and their families in Yarra Ranges.

Analysis of expected population change by 2036 has been undertaken:

- The 0-24 year old population will grow by 4.2% across the Yarra Ranges between 2011 and 2036, increasing from 50,089 to 52,209. The number of 0-14s will increase by 2802 (+9.6%) while those aged 15-24 will decrease by 682 (-3.3%);
- Overall the 0-24 population for the Hills area will reduce by 1480 (-12%) from 11,783 to 10,375, with a marked 24% reduction in those aged 20-24 (by 562 to 1802);
- The 0-24 population will grow by 3763 (+15%) in the Urban area from 25,732 to 29,495, with significant increases in the 0-14 population (+20%) and moderate increases for those aged 15 to 24 (+7%). Highly significant growth will occur for 0-4s and 5-9s in Lilydale (+57%, +55%), Chirnside Park (+36%, +28%) and Kilsyth (+26%, +27%). The number of young people/adults aged 15-19 and 20-24 will also increase significantly in Lilydale (+35%, +40%) and Chirnside Park (+30%, +22%); and
- There will be a slight overall decrease (-2%) in the 0-24 population for the Valley from 12,574 to 12,339. However, the 0-9 population will increase (+5.3%), particularly in Healesville, Yarra Glen and Yarra Junction, while the 15-24 population will decline in all areas apart from Yarra Glen.

These changes, also informed by the consultation findings indicating current service gaps across the Yarra Ranges, highlight the need for further analysis and planning to determine the current, short and longer term infrastructure needs. For example, the availability of child care and medical services are routinely reported to be in short supply, while access to tertiary education services is a service gap that may well grow.

This 'long lens' assessment of population change is required to ensure that sufficient infrastructure will exist where needed to avoid both over and under supply.

OUTCOME 3

Outcome 3: All children, young people and their families will have access to universal services and supports that enhance wellbeing and promote resilience

Goal: Universal services are available to enhance protective factors for all children, young people and their families

Rationale for this Outcome and Goal

The availability of inclusive high quality universal services ensures that children, young people and their families can access a core set of services that meet the needs of all children and young people, and support the development of their overall health and wellbeing and promote the development of resilience. These include prenatal and antenatal services, maternal and child health services, child care, health services and early childhood development services including pre-school, primary school and secondary school. Universal services are often the most cost effective and their benefits can be substantial.

Evidence collected in the development of this Strategy indicates that access and engagement with universal services in Yarra Ranges could potentially be improved including:

- 'Later' Maternal & Child Health Key Age and Stage assessments (Yarra Ranges engagement at the 3½ year check is 55.2% compared to the State average of 64.4%);
- Immunisation rates at 12-15 months (90.7%), 24-27 months (91.7%) and 60-63 months (91.9%) compared with a state average of 91.7%, 91.7%, and 92.6% respectively;
- Preschool participation in the Yarra Ranges has dropped to 93.4% and is markedly lower than the State average of 98%; and
- Fewer Year 12 completers from Yarra Ranges go to University (47.4%) compared to the State average of 53.2%

The consultation findings also identified that service users reported that access was impeded by: a lack of knowledge about services; affordability; hours of availability; waitlists; eligibility criteria; transport; lack of local services and service gaps. 89% of Service Providers reported that more locally available services would improve access, and 77% reported that greater assertive outreach was required. The youth consultation data also highlighted the importance of having regular affordable activities available locally.

The data supports the need to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families by increasing participation in Maternal and Child Health Services, pre-school attendance and school attainment. The importance of acknowledging and supporting Indigenous cultural practices and beliefs was also identified as critical for inclusion and cultural safety.

**OUTCOME 4**

Outcome 4: Outcomes will be improved for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability

Goal: Deliver targeted support to those children, young people and families in the greatest need

Rationale for this Outcome and Goal

While effective universal services can cater for most children, young people and their families, a sizeable minority will have significant needs that require targeted services. Data from the Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy suggests that between 20-30% of families might become vulnerable in Yarra Ranges at some point. While it is difficult to assess the extent and intensity of vulnerability in the Yarra Ranges, the following findings affirm the need for the ongoing delivery of effective targeted support:

- Anecdotal commentary from Service Providers indicates significant numbers of vulnerable children, young people and families, which is unsurprising given the low levels of Socio Economic Advantage in parts of Yarra Ranges;
- The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) for 2012 found that 17% of 5 year olds in Yarra Ranges are vulnerable on 1 developmental domain while 7.5% are vulnerable on 2 domains. The lowest proportion and intensity of vulnerability is experienced in the Hills. While the greatest overall proportion of vulnerable children live across the Urban area, those in the Valley experience the greatest intensity and clustering of vulnerability;
- A number of indicators demonstrate that more children in Yarra Ranges start school when: their family is living in stress, there is parental concern about the child's speech/language or behaviour, and/or with emotional or behavioural difficulties;
- Bullying in years 5-6 in Yarra Ranges is higher than the State average;
- There is an expressed concern about Family Violence within Indigenous communities and a shortage of crisis accommodation;
- Youth Mental Health is a key priority with a high rate of psychiatric hospitalisation for mental illness and very high levels of reported psychological distress. Analysis of Council's Youth Counselling Service intake data indicates disproportionately higher needs in the Valley;
- Alcohol use by 12-14 years is significantly higher than the Victorian average, as is the proportion of young people aged 15-17 who engage in sexual intercourse with a higher proportion of teenage births occurring in the Valley; and
- Anecdotal evidence points to increased use of 'crystal methamphetamine/ICE' in Yarra Ranges. This trend is recognised as a growing problem within Indigenous communities, but not exclusively.

Next Steps and Evaluation

A broad range of empirical and consultation evidence has been gathered and analysed in order to develop this Strategy. This rich evidence base will also significantly inform the implementation of this Strategy.

This Strategy will be achieved through identification or establishment of a range of working groups that are able to develop or oversee delivery of annual action plans required to achieve the four key outcomes. This activity will commence from July 2014, including the identification of an appropriate group to take responsibility for overall implementation of the Strategy and ensure regular communication is undertaken.

A key action for the first year will be to establish an evaluation and monitoring framework for the Strategy. This framework will identify key statistical indicators and other milestones that will enable progress to be identified and reported upon.

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The Child & Youth Strategy Reference Group (members)

Yarra Ranges Council representatives

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- Deborah Handley, Executive Officer Youth Services
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- Rod McKail, Executive Officer Governance
- Bronwyn Saffron, Executive Officer Family and Children's Services
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- Ana Tsaganos, Integrated Planning Officer Family, Youth and Children's Services
- Ali Wastie, Director Social and Economic Development
- Rebecca Wright, Strategic Projects Officer Family, Youth & Children's Services / Economic and Community Development

Representatives from the Yarra Ranges Child, Youth & Family Network

- Karin Stanzel, Coordinator Child and Family Team, Yarra Valley Community Health Service
- Meg Beilken, Manager Performance and Planning, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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