



Safer City Plan

2015 – 2017



HEALTHY
Connected
COMMUNITY



Contents



Melton City Council acknowledges that the land it now occupies has a history that began with the Indigenous occupants, the Kulin Nation. Council pays its respects to the Kulin Nation people and their Elders and descendants past and present.

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Mayor's foreword



I am pleased to present Melton City Council's Safer City Plan 2015-2017, a key strategic document that sets the City's direction for promoting a safer, healthy and inclusive municipality with a positive community spirit and strong sense of identity.

Council values and is committed to enhancing the safety and wellbeing of those who live, learn, work and recreate in the City of Melton. This commitment is expressed through our Council Plan 2013-2017 and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017. Together these strategic documents create the vision for a safer municipality and outline how we can achieve this vision together.

The Safer City Plan outlines the following three priority areas aimed at enhancing the safety and wellbeing of all community members:

- ▶ Vibrant places and spaces
- ▶ An informed, connected and resilient community
- ▶ A responsive council and local service system

Creating a safer city is everyone's responsibility and Council's role is one of planning, designing, coordination, facilitation and engagement - ensuring that the community has a voice to build on strengths and address challenges.

The Safer City Plan has been developed in consultation with community members and key stakeholders including Victoria Police, community service organisations, educational institutions and local traders. The Community Safety Committee has provided guidance in its development. The Plan should be read in conjunction with the Safer City Plan: Background Paper. On behalf of Melton City Council, I would like to express gratitude to the many stakeholders and community members that have contributed to the development of the Safer City Plan.

Cr Sophie Ramsey
Mayor, City of Melton

Background

2.1 Introduction

Community safety is widely recognised as a key factor influencing health and wellbeing. Feelings of safety, real or perceived, directly impact on how people interact within their local community.

Promoting community safety is more than reducing and preventing crime - it is about building strong, cohesive, vibrant and participatory environments where people can go about their daily activities without fear, risk of harm or injury. Safer communities have increased community participation, reduced demand for medical and health care services and increased workplace productivity, which are directly linked with positive mental and physical health outcomes.

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia, with a total population of 130,451 (as at 31 December 2014) and a current annual growth rate of 4.3 per cent (or 315,908 by 2036). Approximately 33 families move into the municipality each week (1,734 per year) and 42 babies are born each week (2,172 per year). Given this rapid growth, it is imperative for Council to continue its commitment to addressing challenges and enhancing strengths related to the safety and wellbeing of community members.

Creating a safer community for all is the responsibility of everyone and Melton City Council has a long-standing commitment to working in partnership to enhance community safety outcomes. Through this partnership approach, a holistic view of community safety can be taken, balancing the immediate and longer term safety needs. The Safer City Plan sets Council's direction for enhancing community safety and wellbeing over the next three years, and beyond.

The Safer City Plan provides a framework for Council to continue to strengthen collaborative work internally, inter-governmentally, with key partners and the local community. The Plan aligns with the Council Plan 2013-2017 and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017 and supports a number of other strategic documents.

The Plan has been developed through a process of identifying and examining local data trends and consulting with key stakeholders including service providers, local networks, community groups, traders and community members.

2.2 Definitions

Actual levels of safety	Actual levels of safety refer to outcomes that are accurately measured, including rates of crime.
Community safety	Community safety can be defined as something of a dynamic state in which all those issues that lead to harm or fear of harm, or crime are prevented or controlled. The World Health Organisation recognises community safety as a key factor in improving health and wellbeing outcomes. It also emphasises that broad partnerships at a local community level are essential to address the factors which threaten community safety.
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines aim to influence and inform decisions about designing and managing environments, in order to prevent the incidence of crime and enable communities to be safer, more secure and therefore more sustainable.
Environments for Health framework	The Environments for Health framework for municipal public health planning incorporates an awareness of the social, economic, natural and built environments and their impact on health and wellbeing. It encourages municipal public health planning of a high standard and consistency in scope and approach across the state, while still valuing diversity. Importantly, it is also aimed at improving community health and wellbeing by promoting the integration of Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans as an essential component of municipal corporate planning.
Perceived levels of safety	Perceived levels of safety refer to an individual's feelings of comfort and perception of risk within the environments in which they interact.
Population level	Population level refers to an approach that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of an entire population or community. This approach represents a significant shift in focus from individual (typically biomedical model) to a population focus aimed at reducing health inequities or disparities that are influenced by socio-ecological factors.
Social capital	Social capital refers to the shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and work together to improve safety and wellbeing. Communities with high levels of social capital encourage trusting, reciprocal relationships among individuals and have cohesive, strong civic institutions.

2.3 What does a safer community look and feel like?

Levels of community safety are commonly defined by a combination of how safe people feel and how much crime actually takes place. There are multiple influences that contribute to actual and perceived levels of community safety. Likewise, there are multiple protective factors which contribute to a community being and feeling safe.

2.3.1 Influences on community safety

Individual

Personal factors such as age, socioeconomic status, cultural identity, sex, education levels and personal experiences of crime can all impact on how safe or unsafe a person feels (see Figure 1). These factors can impact on an individual's perceptions of safety while in their homes, workplaces, cars and on their bikes, and when in public spaces. For example, older people may feel more vulnerable to being victims of crime or likewise, if someone has previously been the victim of crime, they may be more fearful of it occurring again. Men and women experience public spaces differently and gender considerations must be made when creating a safer community for all.

'Anti-social' behaviour is often cited as a reason for people feeling unsafe. However, what constitutes anti-social behaviour can vary from person to person. For example, a group of people congregating together may make some people feel safer because there are more people around or conversely, it may make them feel unsafe because they perceive that the group could behave inappropriately. It should be noted that there are some types of anti-social behaviour (e.g. urinating in public) that are illegal.

Media and stereotypes can also impact on perceptions of safety. If regions, suburbs or local places have been negatively portrayed in the media or have negative stereotypes attached to

them, people are more likely to feel unsafe in those areas – regardless of their personal experiences or the actual levels of crime.

Environmental

How and where public places and spaces are planned, designed, maintained and utilised will all impact on how safe people feel in that space and how much crime will actually occur in it. For example, spaces with clear sight lines, lighting, signage, safe walking routes, levels of maintenance and local amenity can all influence levels of safety (see Figure 1). Well-designed, maintained, effectively utilised and activated public places and spaces contribute to improved perceptions of safety. Likewise, these factors lead to reduced opportunity for crime to occur. Application of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines as well as effective management of public spaces can aid in achieving this.

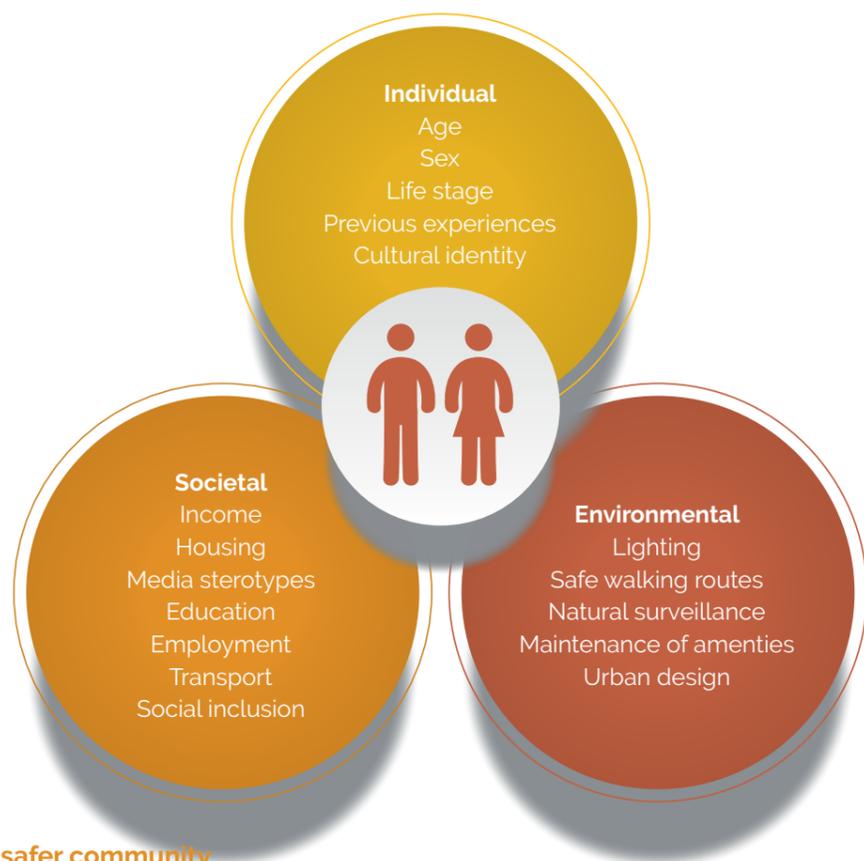
Societal

At a societal level, a number of issues can have an impact on levels of community safety including accessibility to and types of employment, education and training opportunities, income, transport routes and availability, housing options and status and social connections. Collectively, these influences are known as the social determinants of health. All communities have some form of access to these determinants however, not all individuals have equitable access. Equitable access and distribution of these factors enhance community safety and wellbeing. Conversely, where access and distribution is not equitable, communities have higher crime rates and poorer perceptions of safety.

Communities are more likely to experience improved actual and perceived levels of safety if they have:

- ▶ high employment rates and local employment opportunities
- ▶ local education and training opportunities
- ▶ equitable and consistent income
- ▶ adequate access to transport options including public, cycling and walking
- ▶ housing stability and low rates of mortgage stress
- ▶ high rates of social capital.

Figure 1: Influences on community safety



2.3.2 Creating a safer community

To build and maintain safer communities there are multiple and mutually reinforcing approaches that need to occur. The Environments for Health framework incorporates an awareness of the social, economic, natural and built environments and their impact on safety and wellbeing.

Localised research and community consultation has identified a number of protective factors across these domains. For example, community members reported feeling safer in environments that were inclusive, accessible and well-connected (see Table 1).

Table 1: Elements of a safer community

Built	Social	Economic	Natural
Well maintained private and public properties	An active and engaged community with a strong sense of community and local pride	Day and night time economic activation, including a mix of activities	Provision and maintenance of quality green open spaces
Provision and maintenance of public infrastructure	Community events, programs and services	Adequate and accessible service provision	Open spaces that encourage use by multiple people.
Adequate street lighting, limited graffiti and vandalism, clean streets and improved amenity	Natural surveillance through activation of public places and spaces during the day and night	Local employment opportunities, including those for young people	Open spaces that encourage a mix of uses
Places and spaces that encourage people to visit, interact and stay	Strong social networks and knowing your neighbours	Local training and education opportunities	Parks and open spaces have clear lines of sight
Streetscapes that encourage people to walk and cycle	Visible and proactive police presence	Attractive shopfronts that are well lit and maintained	Provision and maintenance of street trees
Adequate public transport			

2.4 Community safety in the City of Melton

2.4.1 Growth rates

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. The total population was 130,451 at December 2014 and the annual growth rate is 4.3 per cent with 42 families moving in each week and approximately six babies born each day.

The rapid growth rate presents a number of opportunities and challenges related to community safety. Reported rates of crime and unlawful activity can increase as the size of the population grows. Likewise, perceptions of safety can be negatively impacted as it becomes more difficult for people to adjust in their growing neighbourhoods. Changes in lifestyle can also impact on community safety, for example, people may have longer commutes and less time for participation in community life.



Furthermore, with 70 per cent of the population aged below 40 and the cohort most likely to engage in unlawful behaviour being adult males under 30, crime levels could increase. Conversely, the rapid growth presents with it strong potential to enhance community wellbeing and promote social inclusion and increased social capital, all of which are linked with improved actual and perceived levels of community safety.



2.4.2 Perceptions of Safety

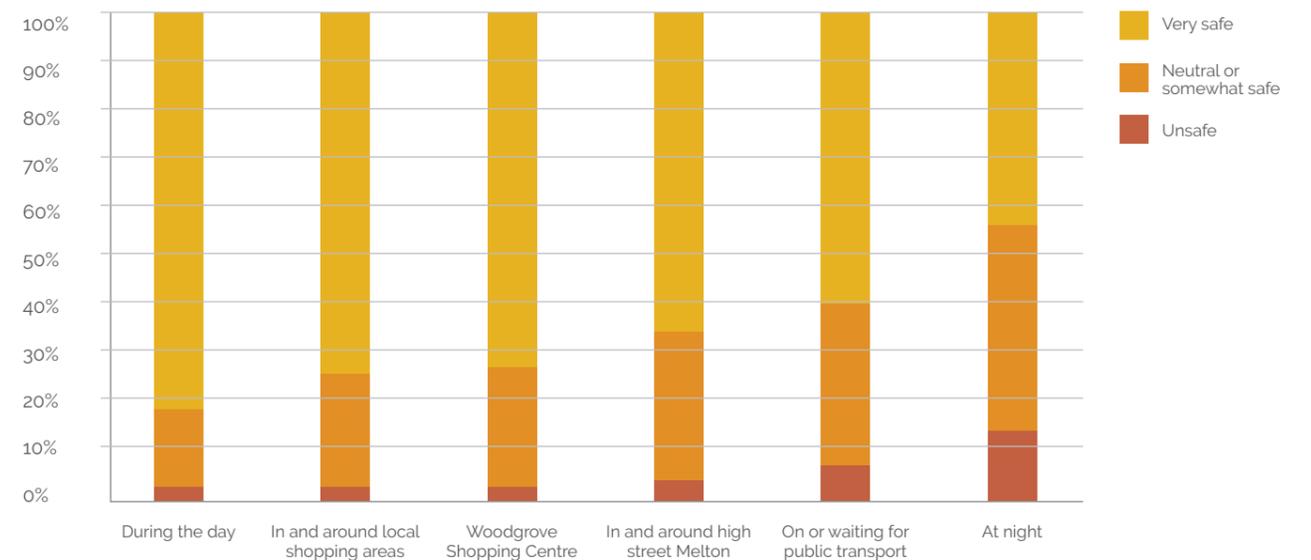
Just as direct experience of crime can affect people's day-to-day lives and wellbeing, so too can fear of crime. Fear of becoming a victim and decreased feelings of safety may restrict a person's participation in society. However, people's perceptions of crime do not always align with levels of criminal activity and victimisation.

Council's Community Satisfaction Survey (2014) showed that 81.3 per cent of residents feel very safe and 16.4% feel neutral or somewhat safe

during the day, while 42.5 per cent feel very safe and 42.9 per cent feel neutral or somewhat safe at night (see Figure 5). These figures are similar to those of the north and west metropolitan region (95.2 per cent feel safe during the day) and Victoria (97 per cent feel safe during the day).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents reported feeling very safe in and around local shopping areas. The poorest perceptions of safety for City of Melton residents were reported as travelling on or waiting for public transport (see Figure 2).

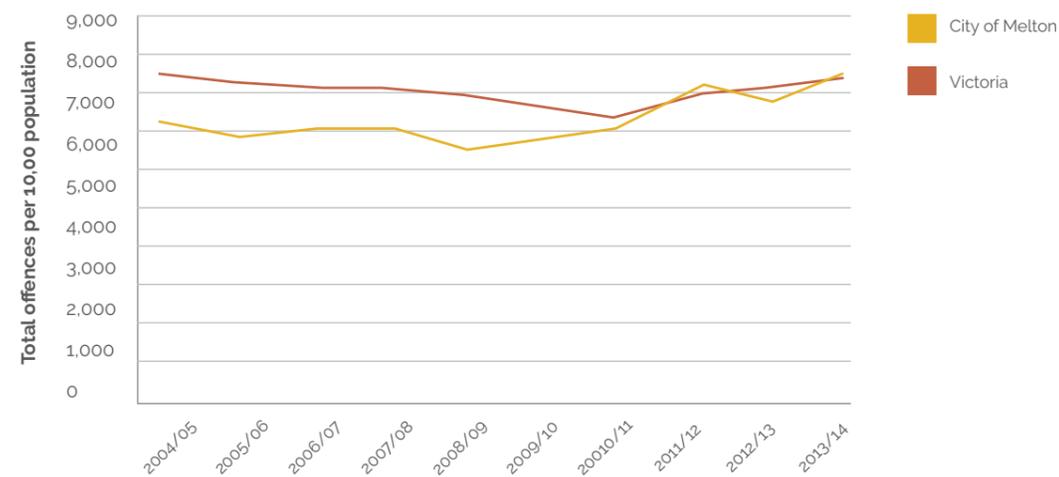
Figure 2: Perceptions of safety in public areas of the City of Melton



2.4.3 Crime trends

Over the past 10 years, overall crime rates have been increasing across the state and the City of Melton. Since 2004-2005 to 2013-2014 crime rates within the City of Melton have increased from 6,474 to 7,680 per 100,000 population (an increase of 18.6 per cent increase). Given the growth rate within the City of Melton, an increase in crime is expected.

Figure 3: Rates of all offences (per 100,000 population) for City of Melton and Victoria 2004-2014



In 2013-2014 crimes against the person (1,183 per 100,000 population) and crimes against the property (5,081 per 100,000 population) were slightly higher in the City of Melton than Victoria (1,035 and 4,722 respectively). The rate of increase is higher than the Victorian rate of increase.

In 2013-2014 there were 380 drug offences per 100,000 in the City of Melton, less than that of Victoria at 405. The rate of increase within the City of Melton is slower than the rate of increase within Victoria.

Rates of family violence in the City of Melton exceed the state average and indicate that violence against women is a key concern in the municipality. Council has adopted a standalone three year Preventing Violence Against Women and their Children Strategy and Action Plan to address this priority area.

2.5 Role of Council and key stakeholders

Local government is the closest tier of government to the community and therefore plays a key role in identifying and responding to local community safety needs.

Melton City Council recognises that achieving community safety is broader than law enforcement and crime prevention, and requires a whole-of-community approach to address complex determinants and contributing factors.

Council prioritises working collaboratively and strategically towards achieving a safer community for all. Council has influence on actual and perceived levels of community safety through delivery of:

- ▶ quality infrastructure and urban design
- ▶ management and maintenance of public places and spaces
- ▶ partnerships and advocacy
- ▶ community development and health promotion initiatives
- ▶ comprehensive consultation and research.

Council continuously develops a range of corporate, planning, strategic and operational documents that outline goals and approaches for Council service delivery and community planning. Matters pertaining to community safety do not operate in isolation, relying on collaborative action for effective and efficient outcomes.

Collaboration with key stakeholders including local organisations and service providers as well as the broader community, is integral in achieving the objectives of the Safer City Plan 2015-2017. Specifically, the Community Safety Committee will be a key driver in overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the Plan. The Committee, established in 2013, aims to coordinate a multi-agency partnership response to prioritise community safety and crime prevention issues within the City of Melton.

Council actively participates in local and regional working groups related to community safety. These networks build and improve community safety and crime prevention partnerships across all levels of government and sectors.

Safer City Plan 2015-2017

3.1 What is the Safer City Plan?

Community safety is an integral component in building a healthy and equitable community. The Safer City Plan aligns and reinforces Council's commitment to safety and wellbeing in its Council Plan 2013-2017 and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017.

The Safer City Plan sets the direction for Council and our partners to work towards achieving optimum safety for and with our community. It describes the vision and priorities for achieving a safer community for all, through:

- ▶ a proactive and preventative focus incorporating a strengths-based approach

- ▶ a holistic and whole-of-community approach
- ▶ addressing the determinants of community safety and links to health and wellbeing outcomes
- ▶ considering the physical, natural, social and economic environments in which community members interact.

The Safer City Plan is underpinned by the Environments for Health framework which makes considerations for the impacts that built, social, economic and natural environments have on health and wellbeing.



3.2 How was the Safer City Plan developed?

A multi-faceted approach was adopted in the development of the Safer City Plan including the following five key stages:



3.3 SAFER CITY PRIORITY AREAS

The three priority areas of the Safer City Plan 2015-2017 have been developed to closely align with the four themes of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) 2013-2017.

The Plan provides a community safety lens to conceptualise and promote strategies to improve health and wellbeing in the City as reflected through the following Framework:

SAFER CITY FRAMEWORK			
VISION: The City of Melton will be a safe, healthy and equitable municipality with a positive community spirit and strong sense of identity.			
Council Plan	Outcome 3: A culturally rich, active, safe and connected City Objective 3.6: Create a safer community through building a sense of belonging and community pride		
Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan themes	Healthy places	Healthy community	Healthy lifestyles and healthy people
Safer city priorities	Vibrant places and spaces	An informed, connected and resilient community	A responsive Council and local service systems
Safer city objectives	Community places and spaces that are vibrant, inviting and conducive to inclusiveness and wellbeing.	High levels of social capital and civic participation for safe and equitable participation in community life.	Opportunities, initiatives and partnerships that promote wellbeing and community safety for all.

Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies
Create safe physical, built and natural environments through adherence to Safer Design principles including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Maintain an effective, coordinated and proactive approach to graffiti management through prevention, education, removal and enforcement. Maintain and improve accessibility and attractiveness of public places and spaces to increase levels of perceived and actual safety amongst community members. Reduce anti-social behaviour in and around hot spots.	Identify partnership and funding opportunities for prevention and early intervention initiatives related to community connectedness, equity and community safety. Support the delivery of priority population and settings based prevention initiatives to improve community safety. Encourage the provision of local activities and events that encourage social participation, inclusiveness and increased community pride. Promote positive community interactions with police and other emergency services. Promote positive community safety messages and ensure community members have access to relevant, accurate and timely information promoting safe and healthy living. Support investment in local employment and education and training opportunities.	Build community and service capacity to strengthen protective factors to promote community safety and improve health and wellbeing outcomes of residents. Collaborate with key stakeholders to address community safety and crime prevention priorities. Build community and service capacity to prepare for and respond to emergency and adverse events. Work in partnership with key stakeholders to address emerging community safety issues and improve perceptions of safety in the community. Commission, monitor, disseminate and respond to community safety related research and emerging issues.	A sustainable city that promotes community health and wellbeing. A safe, inclusive and connected community. A culturally rich, active, safe and connected city. A city of people leading healthy and happy lives.
Outcomes	Implementation of the Safer City Plan will support the achievement of MPHWP outcomes		

Implementation and evaluation

It is recognised that achieving a safer community is the responsibility of everyone. The Safer City Plan 2015-2017 outlines a coordinated, multi-agency approach based on a prevention model. Delivery of the Plan will be led by Council and guided by the Community Safety Committee with contributions from various key stakeholders.

Actions to support the implementation of Safer City Plan will be developed and included in Council Action Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Annual Action Plans. Actions will also be identified and included in area specific strategic documents.

Achievements will be reported to Council and key stakeholders via the Community Safety Committee.





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