Safe City, Proud Communities Plan 2020-2024

Background Paper

2020

CITY OF MELTON

Contents

Executive Summary

This discussion paper presents key data, evidence and strategic context for the promotion of road and community safety in the City of Melton. Its purpose is to inform the strategic direction of the new integrated road and community safety plan for Melton City Council (Council). The development of this discussion paper included a review of existing plans and policies at a range of jurisdictions, and the assessment of primary and secondary data and literature.

Evidence shows that communities are more likely to experience improved actual and perceived levels of road and community safety if they have:

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

Societal, environmental and individual factors play a key role in influencing real and perceived safety, and action must be taken at each level for sustained change for road and community safety. There are variances in the experience of safety for different groups of people, and in different areas and settings. Place-based action that addresses the needs, and harnesses the strengths, of selected cohorts is a key way to improve real and actual safety for the community.

Local governments play an integral role in building strong and safe communities through:
- place-based approaches including the delivery and activation of quality infrastructure and urban design
- managing and maintaining public places and spaces
- strengthening partnerships and advocacy
- developing policy and programs that address social conditions
- implementing evidence-based community development and health promotion initiatives
- conducting consultation, research and contributing to the evidence base.

The key pillars of action identified in this discussion paper consider the influences on safety and the sphere of influence of local government and can be summarised in Figure 1.
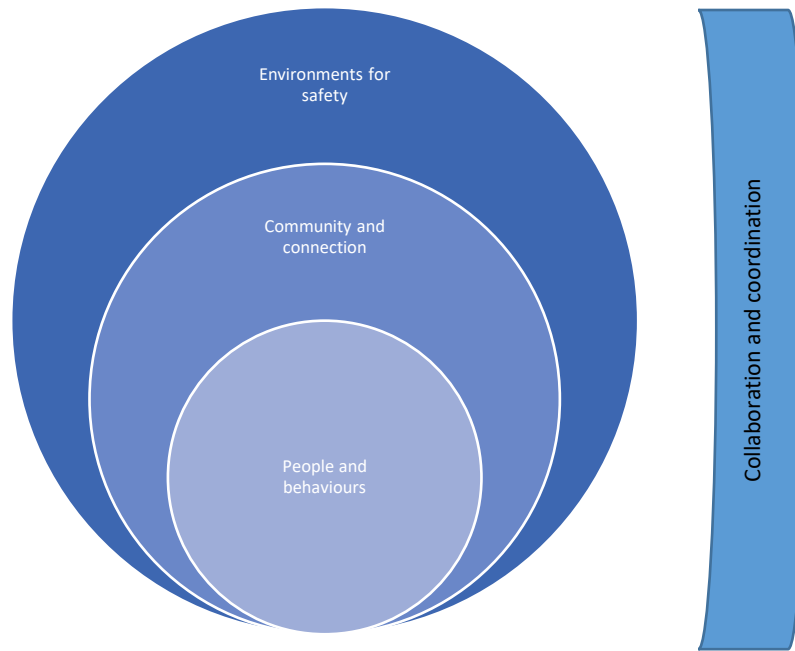
Figure 1: Pillars for action - Safe City, Proud Communities Plan

The pillar 'People and behaviours' refers to enabling community awareness and practices that contribute to safer communities and roads, and focuses on individual and groups. 'Community and connection' refers to the promotion of attitudes, norms and community participation to improve perceptions of safety and is focused on building social capital. The 'Environments for safety' pillar refers to building social and physical environments that enable road and community safety. The focus is on the design and delivery of safe and engaging public infrastructure, and promotion of solid social conditions that promote safety such as employment and education.

Building a safer community is a shared responsibility for all in the City of Melton. Council has a long-standing commitment to working in partnership to enhance road and community safety outcomes.

Introduction

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide the evidence base and strategic justification for the development of an integrated road and community safety plan. It identifies and analyses actual levels of crime and perceived levels of safety, as well as the impact of road trauma, within the City of Melton. It aims to identify place-based issues and solutions to creating safer roads and communities and highlights those community groups that are more vulnerable to community and road safety issues.

This discussion paper was developed through a four-stage approach:

1. review of existing plans and policies at international, national, state and local level

2. analysis of existing data on actual and perceived safety and road trauma

3. assessment of primary and secondary data and literature

4. engagement of key stakeholders and community.

Through Community conversations and existing consultation data, over 1000 residents were able to provide their insights regarding road and community safety. Community safety and traffic management were consistent priorities for City of Melton residents, alongside a strong need for strengthening the sense of belonging for residents in the municipality.

The Road2Zero Steering Committee and Community Safety Advisory Committee members were invited to a joint presentation on the findings presented in this discussion paper and provided further valuable insights.

Understanding road and community safety

'Safety' generally refers to the notion of being and feeling protected against harm, and is an important aspect of physical and mental wellbeing.

The Safe Communities Foundation (2020) defines a safe community as "a place that is attractive to live, work and visit. A safe community is a liveable community, where people can go about their daily activities in an environment without fear, risk of harm or injury. It increases social capital and community wellbeing by creating an infrastructure in local communities to increase action by building local partnerships and collaborative relationships. It is about wellbeing, building strong, cohesive, vibrant, participatory communities".

Whilst safety as a right is universally recognised, its definition is understood differently across sectors. There is a lack of consensus on what safety actually means because understanding of the term can be diverse, based on different societal factors. One definition that has been proposed is that safety is 'something of a dynamic state in which all those issues that lead to harm or fear of harm, or crime are prevented or controlled' (Coogan, 2007).

In this discussion paper, safety is viewed as a human right, and a key determinant of health and wellbeing.

Determinants of safer communities

This discussion paper acknowledges that a person's experience of safety in any given situation or environment is shaped by what they have experienced and observed, as well as how they feel.

There are two important drivers behind a person's notion of safety:
- subjective safety: the feeling or perception of safety in a given environment or situation

- objective safety: the actual risk of injury, harm or threat.

Subjective or perceived safety refers to how safe someone 'feels'. Objective or actual safety is how safe someone 'is'. Sometimes perceived and actual safeties align, and sometimes they differ.

Figure 2: Interplay of factors affecting real and perceived safety

There is a range of factors that influence actual and perceived safety. These can be broadly classified as individual factors, societal factors and environmental factors (Figure 1).

Individual factors

Personal factors such as age, socioeconomic status, ability, cultural identity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, education levels and personal experiences of crime can all affect how safe or unsafe a person feels. These factors can influence an individual's perceptions of safety while in their homes, workplaces, on roads and when in public spaces.

For example, women and men with a disability experience much higher levels of all forms of violence (physical and sexual violence, stalking and harassment, and partner emotional abuse) than their same-gender peers without disability. The VicHealth Indicators Survey (VicHealth, 2018) identified that people with a disability were 50 per cent less likely to feel safe walking alone compared to people without a disability.

Media and stereotypes can also affect perceptions of safety. People who live in regions, suburbs or places that the media has negatively portrayed or have negative stereotypes attached to them are more likely to feel unsafe in those areas – regardless of their personal experiences or the actual levels of crime (Currie, et al., 2010). Additionally, harmful media representations and negative stereotypes associated with particular community groups can influence perceptions of road and community safety particularly in the face of changing populations and increasing diversity (Quillian & Pager, 2001).

Environmental factors

Communities need public spaces (parks, reserves, sporting facilities, walkways, libraries and community centres) to play sport, undertake leisure, learn, connect and 'just be'. Likewise, safe transport networks are also required to allow people to move about safely and effectively. Council plays a key role in providing and maintaining such infrastructure. Activating public spaces through programming with activities such as events or classes is an important community safety strategy. It supports groups who may not have an existing relationship with the space to engage and creates new opportunities for community connection. Designing and maintaining safe transport networks ensures that people can move freely and safely throughout the community, using a variety of transport options.

Well-designed, maintained, appropriately lit, effectively utilised and activated roads, public places and spaces contribute to improved perceptions of road and community safety (Moroney, 2009). These factors can reduce the opportunity for crime to occur. Application of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and the Safe System Approach (SSA) to public spaces, infrastructure design and roads can aid in achieving this.

Crime prevention through environmental design guidelines

CPTED is an approach to crime prevention that takes into account the relationship between the physical environment and the users of that environment. This approach is important for designing public spaces that promote a perception of safety, and is proven to prevent crime. Given the rapid growth in the City of Melton, and resultant new infrastructure projects, there is significant opportunity for the application of CPTED to create spaces that promote perceived and actual safety. The theory behind CPTED is that the design of a physical environment can produce behavioural effects that will reduce both the incidence and fear of crime (Lee , et al., 2016).

There are three basic strategies in CPTED:

- natural access control
- natural surveillance
- territorial reinforcement (Victoria Police, 2015).

Safe systems approach

The international best practice model known as SSA underpins Road safety. As shown in Figure 2, SSA recognises that people will make mistakes as drivers and road users and may have road crashes – but the system should be forgiving and those crashes should not result in death or serious injury.
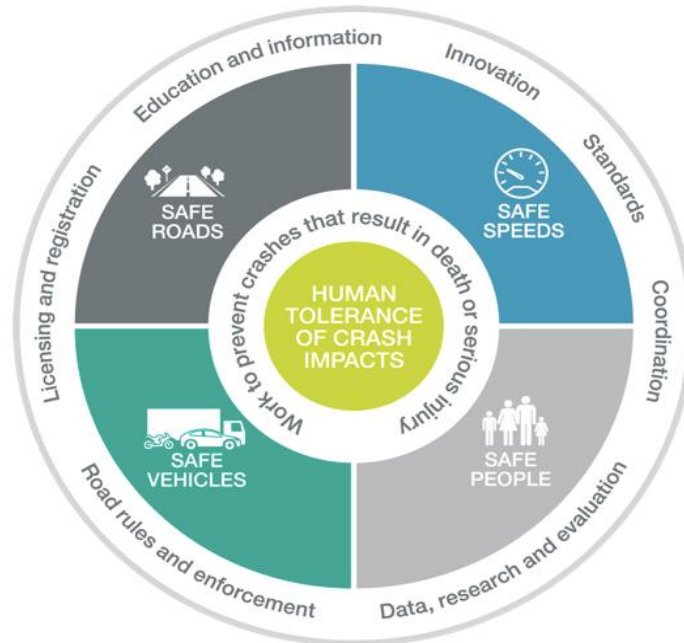
Figure 3: The Safe System Approach (SSA) for Road Safety (National Road Safety Strategy, 2010)

SSA has four domains:

- safe roads
- safe speeds
- safe vehicles
- safe road users (National Road Safety Strategy, 2010).

SSA has three guiding principles:

- *people make mistakes*: humans will continue to make mistakes, and the transport system must accommodate these. The transport system should not result in death or serious injury as a consequence of errors on the roads
- *human physical frailty:* there are known physical limits to the amount of force our bodies can take before we are injured
- *a 'forgiving' road transport system*: a safe system ensures that the forces in collisions do not exceed the limits of human tolerance. Speeds must be managed so that humans are not exposed to impact forces beyond their physical tolerance. System designers and operators need to take into account the limits of the human body in designing and maintaining roads, vehicles and speeds (National Road Safety Strategy, 2010).

Social factors

At a societal level, a number of issues can influence sense of road and community safety. Communities are more likely to experience improved actual and perceived levels of road and community safety if they have:

- high employment rates and local employment opportunities
- local education and training opportunities
- sufficient and consistent income
- adequate access to transport options including public transport, cycling and walking
- housing stability and low rates of mortgage stress
- high rates of social capital (Chen, et al., 2013; Voisin & Neilands, 2010; Mcmahon, et al., 2013).

The social environment of a community is a key determinant of community and road safety. Council plays a role in undertaking solid community planning, policy and program development and advocating to ensure that the basic social needs of the community are met. One of the key components of the social environment is social capital. Council plays a direct role in building social capital in the City of Melton by promoting community connection, local leadership and civic participation. Social capital is an integral foundation for a safer community, one that will enable communities to remain resilient in the face of ongoing population growth, population migration, and external impacts such as disaster and/or economic hardship.

Individual, environmental and social factors can influence real or perceived safety, both on their own and in combination. The promotion of social capital, safe public infrastructure and equitable social environments is a robust approach to crime prevention and road safety.

Key learnings

1. Safety is a basic human right and a key determinant of health.
2. Both subjective and objective drivers influence an individual's feelings of safety. The new plan should address both types of drivers.
3. Individual, environmental and societal factors interplay to influence an individual's experience of safety. Action should be taken at each level.
4. The actual and perceived safety of built environments can be improved through use of CPTED and SSA. These approaches should continue to be used in the development and upgrading of built environments.
5. Sustainable approaches such as strengthening social capital and promoting equitable social environments are integral for long-term safety and should be central to the development of a road and community safety plan.

About our City

Location

The City of Melton is located in outer western metropolitan Melbourne, approximately 40km from the Melbourne CBD.

With a land area of 527km^2, the population has traditionally been spread across settlements to the far east and far west of the municipality (Figure 3), with large swathes of farmland and small townships making up the 20 kilometres in between. This has resulted in two quite distinct populations. Growth and development is changing this landscape. There are now several growth fronts to the north, south and centre of the municipality. In time, the current two population centres will merge into one large and connected residential area.
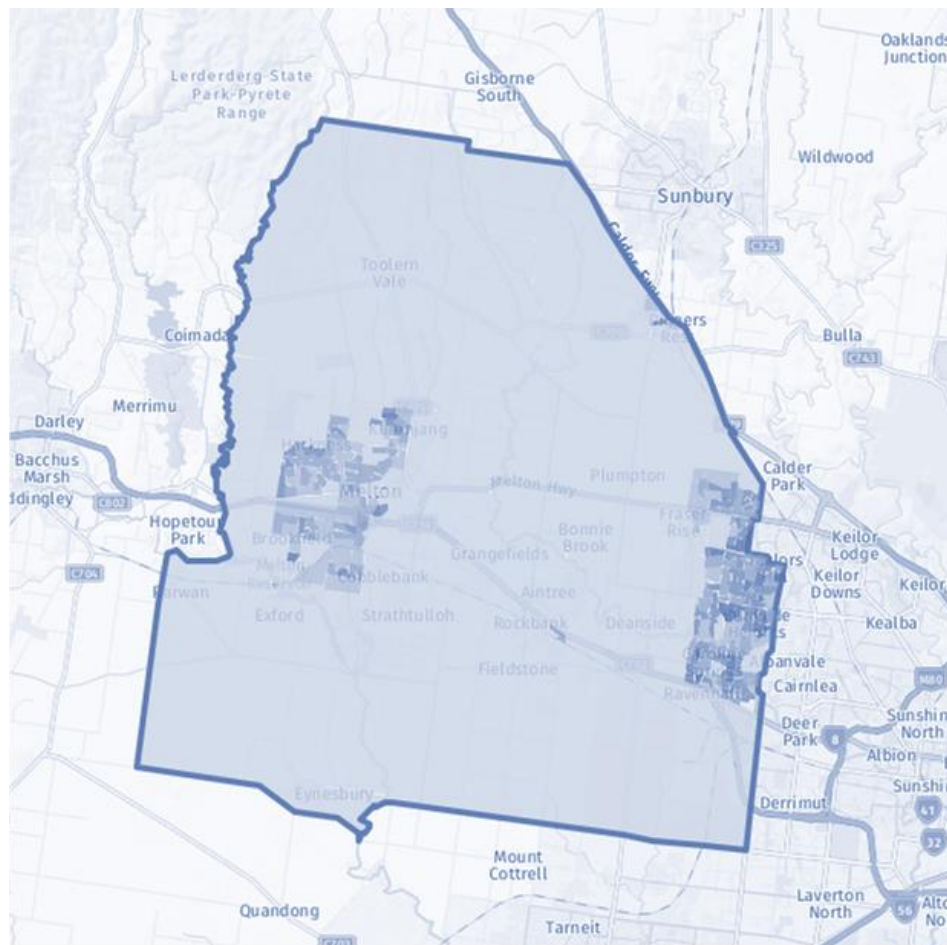
Figure 4: Map of the City of Melton shaded to represent population density (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

Population and growth

The current population of the City of Melton is 172,017. This is expected to grow to 485,000 by 2051 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia with a growth rate almost four times that of Victoria. The largest component of population change has been internal migration – that is, people moving into the municipality from other areas of Victoria and interstate.

People

Age and gender

There are slightly more women than men in the City of Melton (+0.6per cent). As represented in Figure 4, the City of Melton has a higher proportion of people in younger age groups (less than 15 years) and a lower proportion of people in the older age groups (65 years and older) compared with Greater Melbourne. Compared to Victoria, Melton has a smaller proportion of older residents; specifically Melton has much fewer females aged 60 and over, which is a key growing cohort for Victoria as a whole.

Figure 5: Age-sex pyramid compared to Greater Melbourne (id. Community, 2016)

Substantial new housing opportunities across the city provide opportunity for young couples and families to migrate to the area. This has contributed to the significant increase in young families in the City of Melton contributing to the large population groups of children and adults aged 30-44 years.

Employment, education & income

Employment status is an important indicator of socio-economic status, along with education and income. Levels of employment and unemployment are key indicators of the strength of the local economy and are linked to a number of factors including age structure, local employment opportunities and levels of education and vocational skills.
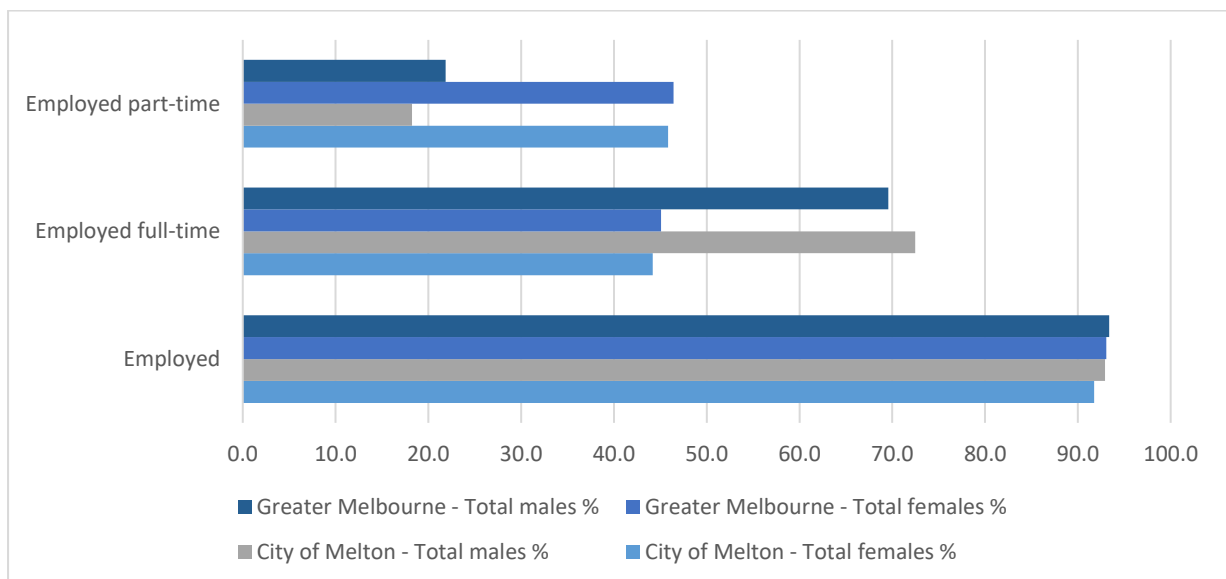
Figure 6: Employment status - City of Melton vs Greater Melbourne (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

In 2016, more than 60,000 residents (92.4 per cent) were employed, with 59.4 per cent working full-time and 31 per cent part-time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). As shown in Figure 5, females represented a substantially higher proportion of the part time workforce than males. Compared to Greater Melbourne, less males and females were employed overall. There are five industries making up almost 50 per cent of all employment sectors: retail trade, health care and social assistance, transport, postal and warehousing, construction and manufacturing.

Levels of education beyond primary and secondary schooling are an important indicator of the socio-economic status of the area.

Figure 7: Highest qualification achieved- City of Melton vs Greater Melbourne (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

As represented in Figure 6, fewer City of Melton residents had Bachelor or higher degrees compared to Greater Melbourne. City of Melton residents were more likely to have vocational qualifications compared to Greater Melbourne. This is a changing landscape, however. In 2001, only seven per cent of residents had Bachelor or higher degrees. This has risen steadily over time and in 2016, sixteen per cent of residents had degrees or higher. In the City of Melton, females on average had higher levels of Diploma, advanced Diploma, Bachelor degree or higher degree attainment than males, and substantially more males than females had vocational qualifications.
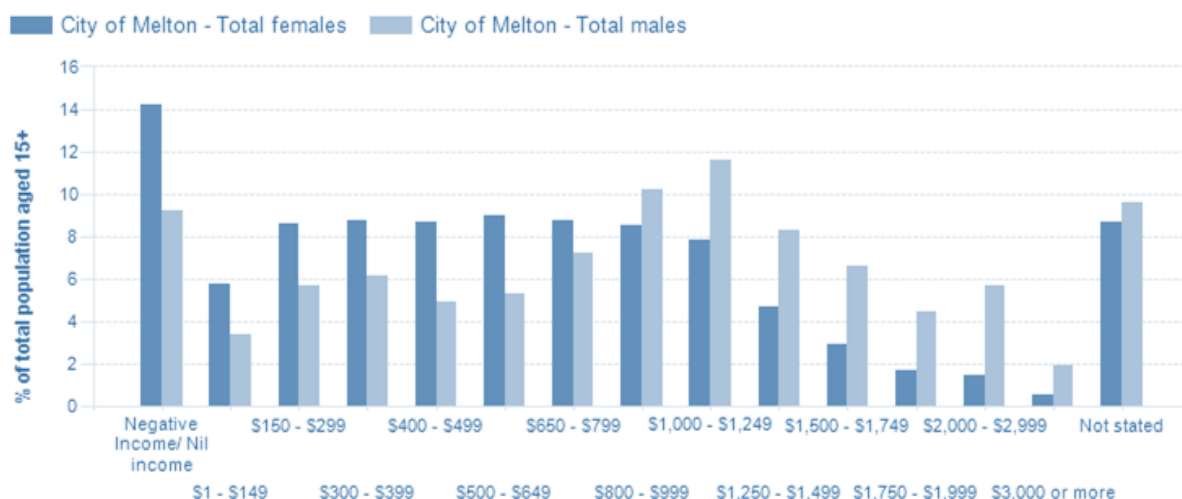
Figure 8: Individual income by sex (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

The amount of income an individual receives is linked to a number of factors including employment status, age, qualifications and type of employment. In 2016, 12.4 per cent of the population earned an income of $1,500 or more per week, compared with 16.9 per cent in Greater Melbourne. Almost 12 per cent of City of Melton residents reported negative/nil income, which was similar to the Greater Melbourne average. As presented in Figure 7, a higher percentage of females were represented in income groups below $800 per week, and higher number of males in incomes higher than $800 per week. Differences in income based on sex are broadly consistent with Greater Melbourne and demonstrate that despite greater educational attainment, women earn less due to over-representation in the part-time workforce.

People in need of assistance (disability)

The ABS Census (2016) revealed that 6,614 people within the City of Melton (4.9 per cent) reported a need for assistance in their daily lives due to disability. This is in line with the Greater City of Melbourne (4.9 per cent) and Victoria (5.1 per cent). As represented in Figure 8, in the City of Melton a higher percentage of males required assistance below the age of 75, and a higher percentage of women above the age of 75. Generally, need for assistance increased with age with a greater proportion of people in older age groups requiring assistance compared to younger age groups, however, over recent years the proportion of younger people needing assistance has grown (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).
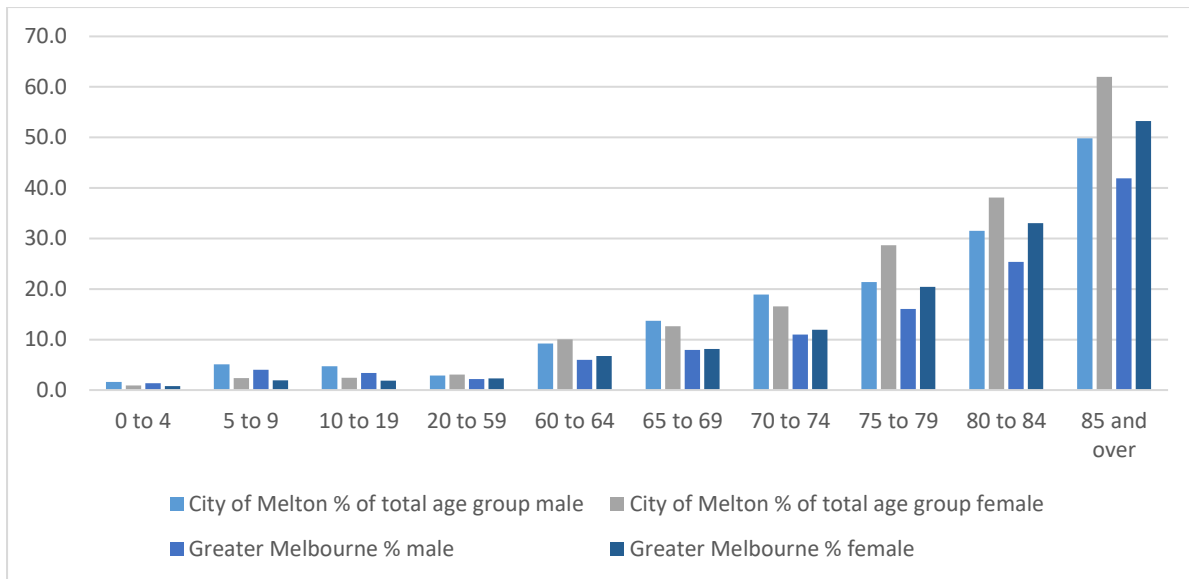
Figure 9: Need for assistance with core activities by age and sex - City of Melton vs Greater Melbourne (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

The ABS Census (2016) revealed that 6,626 people within the City of Melton (5 per cent) reported a need for assistance in their daily lives due to disability. This is in line with the Greater City of Melbourne (4.9 per cent) and Victoria (5.1 per cent). As represented in Figure 8, in the City of Melton a higher percentage of males required assistance below the age of 75, and a higher percentage of women above the age of 75. Generally, need for assistance increased with age with a greater proportion of people in older age groups requiring assistance compared to younger age groups, however, over recent years the proportion of younger people needing assistance has grown (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Cultural diversity

As the City of Melton continues to grow, so too does the cultural diversity within the population. In 2016, almost 30 per cent of people in the City of Melton were born overseas. India, the Philippines, United Kingdom and New Zealand were the top countries of origin. Almost one-third (32.1 per cent) of the City of Melton population speak a language other than English at home (id.community, 2020).
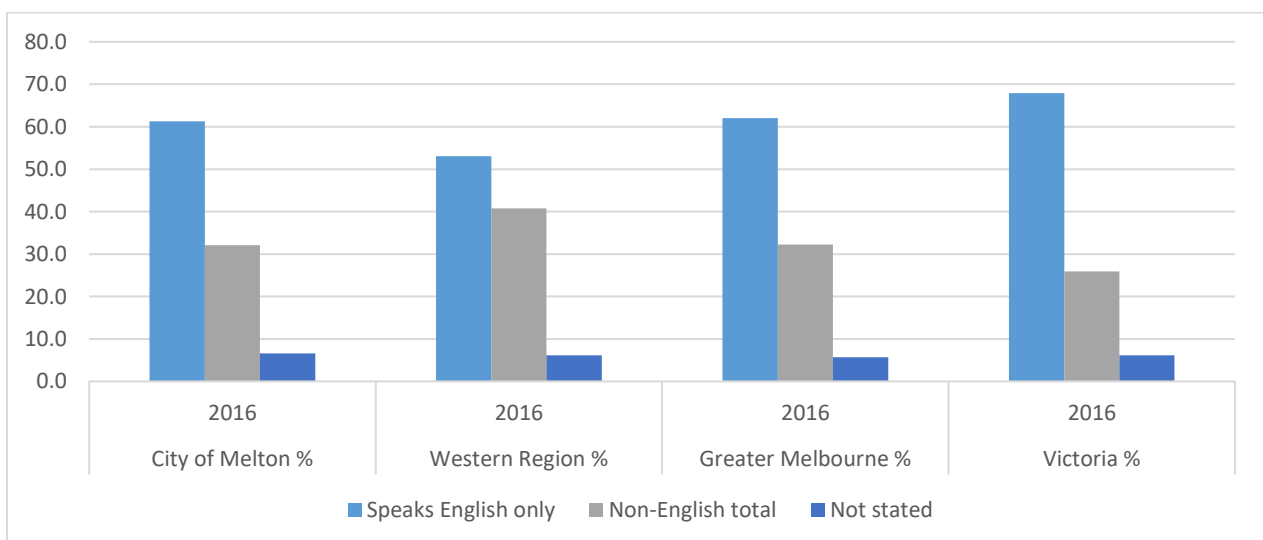

Figure 10: Percentage of total residents who speak a language other than English at home: City of Melton vs Wester Region, Greater Melbourne and Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

As represented in Figure 9, the western region (including the City of Melton) has a greater proportion of residents who speak a language other than English compared to Greater Melbourne and Victorian averages. While the City of Melton aligns more closely with Greater Melbourne than the Western region, there has been a trend of increasing diversity since 2006, as shown in Figure 10.
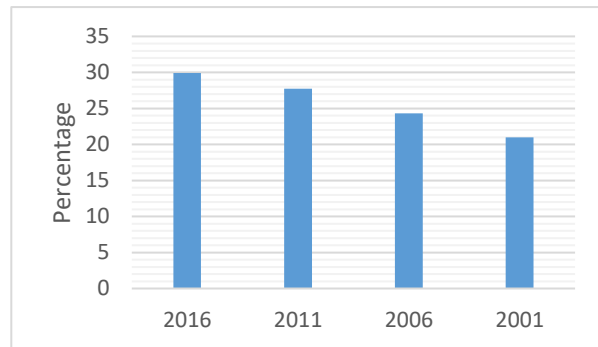
Figure 11: Change in percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home

Indigenous community

The Kulin Nations are the original custodians of the land that is now known as the City of Melton. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up one per cent of the total population of the City of Melton compared with only 0.5 per cent of the Greater Melbourne, and 0.8 per cent of Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

SEIFA index

The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage based on a range of Census characteristics. The index is derived from attributes that reflect disadvantage such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations. A higher score on the index means a lower level of disadvantage. A lower score on the index means a higher level of disadvantage. In 2016, the SEIFA Index for Disadvantage in the City of Melton was 994. In the same year, the SEIFA Index for Disadvantage was 1,021 across Greater Melbourne and 1,005.8 across Victoria's Interface Councils (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Figure 12: Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage - City of Melton suburbs (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

As presented in Figure 11, SEIFA Index of Disadvantage varies across the suburbs and townships that make up the City of Melton. In 2016, Eynesbury Township experienced the lowest level of

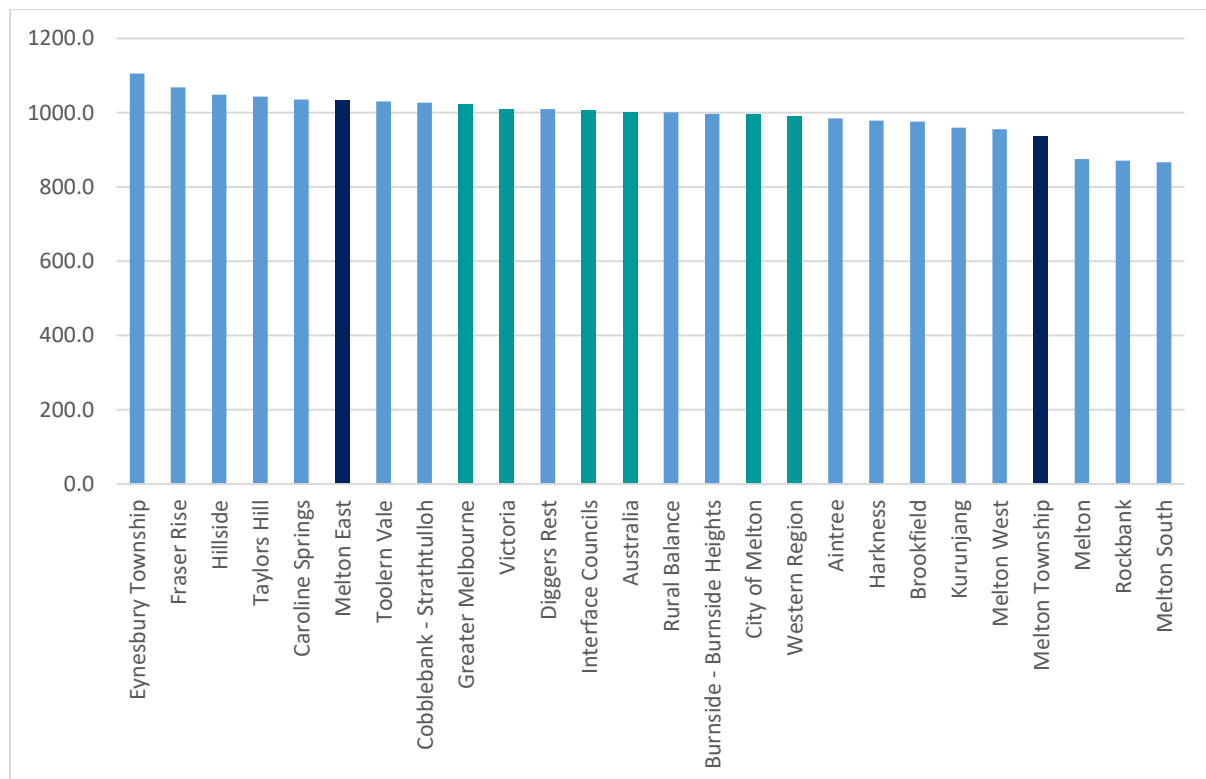disadvantage in the City of Melton with a SEIFA index score of 1,105. Contrary to this, Melton South had a SEIFA Index of 866.9, the highest level of disadvantage in the City of Melton. Furthermore, the bars represented in Figure 11 coloured dark blue, show the disparity in level of disadvantage experienced by the Melton Township are compared to the Eastern corridor labelled 'Melton East'.

Key learnings:

1. The Plan should recognise the impacts of a changing and growing community on perceptions of safety and social connection. It should seek to harness the opportunities that arise from such change, including considering how safety is experienced by sub-groups of a diverse community including young families, older adults, people of diverse cultural backgrounds and people with disabilities. Activities that seek to engage particular groups must be designed sensitively to encourage involvement.
2. There is significant variation in the level of disadvantage experienced in different suburbs. One suburb has one of the lowest levels of disadvantage in Australia, while another only kilometre away is one of the most disadvantaged suburbs in Australia. A place-based approach is required.
3. Some significant social issues (such as low income and educational attainment) influence the social environment that residents live within. The Plan should involve strategies to improve key social conditions such education, employment, service accessibility housing and transport.

Role of international, national, state and local government in road and community safety

International

International bodies are well placed to bring together governments to work collectively and to consolidate best practice for key international issues such as road and community safety.

The following international initiatives demonstrate the commitment of peak international bodies for road and community safety:

- World Health Organisation (WHO), 'Safe Communities' Model for the prevention of injury in whole populations
- Manifesto for Safe Communities, World Health Organisation 1989
- Safe Communities Guidelines, World Health Organisation 2012
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Human Development Project 1994
- UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

National

In Australia, the three levels of government – Federal, State and Local – all have the responsibility for creating and fostering strong and safe communities (Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, 2012).

The Australian Commonwealth Government creates and maintains legislation that provides an overall system and framework for laws that govern appropriate conduct and behaviour for a well-regulated and fair society (City of Glen Eira, 2018). The Commonwealth Government has responsibility for the Australian Federal Police; setting policy directions for crime and justice; funding research and select health initiatives and community services to ensure road and community safety.

The Commonwealth Government recognises the importance of road and community safety through development of the:

- Australian Institute of Criminology, National Crime Prevention Framework 2012
- A Model Performance Framework for Community Based Crime Prevention 2011
- National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, Australian Transport Council
- National Road Safety Action Plan 2018-2020, Australian Transport Council

State

The Victorian State Government develops State laws and supporting guidelines. It play a central role in road and community safety and crime prevention via policing, law enforcement, prison systems, and emergency services (City of Monash, 2015). The Victorian State Government funds major services such as Victoria Police, the State Emergency Services (SES) and a broad range of community services including drug and alcohol services, mental health, child protection and juvenile justice.

The State Government recognises the importance of road and community safety. Victorian Government policy, program and legislative developments aimed at improving safety and wellbeing include:

- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework 2016
- Victorian Government Community Safety Statement 2018/19
- Environments for health: Municipal Public Health Planning Framework 2011

- Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention 2012
- Plan Melbourne 2017-2050
- Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria 2019
- Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan (TAC) – Towards Zero 2016-2020

Local

Local government is a key player in the development and implementation of a range of services and programs related to crime prevention for the following reasons:

- a great deal of crime is very local in nature (e.g. domestic burglary, anti-social behaviour, and certain forms of violence)
- local government is frequently well-placed to coordinate and manage crime prevention responses across the community
- local government frequently has the most appropriate management infrastructure and skill base for delivering the multi-agency programs that are often required (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004).

Local governments play an integral role in building strong and safe communities through:

- place-based approaches including the delivery and activation of quality infrastructure and urban design
- managing and maintaining public places and spaces
- strengthening partnerships and advocacy
- developing policy and programs that address social conditions
- implementing evidence-based community development and health promotion initiatives
- conducting consultation, research and contributing to the evidence base.

Local governments also play a key role in addressing the contributing factors to community safety such as building social capital and advocating for local education and employment of the communities that they represent (Wilson & Lowndes, 2001).

Strategic alignment

The following documents, strategies and plans (highlighted above by jurisdiction) have been reviewed to identify opportunities for strategic alignment and to consolidate an understanding of best practice in road and community safety.

World Health Organisation (WHO), 'Safe Communities' Model for the prevention of injury in whole populations

The WHO 'Safe Communities' model uses a collaborative approach to build community capacity in order to reduce the incidence of injury and promote injury-reducing behaviours. Approximately 150 communities throughout the world have been designated as 'Safe Communities', in countries as diverse as Sweden, Australia, China, South Africa and the Czech Republic. This collaborative approach prioritises building community capacity and working with community to identify and action safety outcomes. Council's road and community safety plan, may look to build on the direction of the 'Safe Communities' model incorporating community capacity building as a key approach.

UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020

The UN Road Safety Collaboration has developed a *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020,* providing an overall framework for long-term and coordinated activities in support of regional, national and local road safety. The Plan for the Decade of Action is guided by a 'Safe Systems Approach' that aims to develop a road transport system that is able to better accommodate for human error, ensuring that accidents do not result in serious human injury.

The categories of activities are:

- building road safety management capacity
- improving the safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks
- further developing the safety of vehicles
- enhancing the behaviour of road users
- improving post-crash response

Given the municipality's ongoing growth and resultant need for road infrastructure, Council's road and community safety plan may look to align with this international plan, with a focus on environmental design using the safe systems approach.

Australian Institute of Criminology, National Crime Prevention Framework 2011

The National Crime Prevention Framework has been developed by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) as a resource to outline the most effective approaches to the prevention of crime. Investment in crime prevention programs can contribute significantly to the achievement of safe and secure societies. Well-planned interventions can prevent crime and victimisation, promote community safety and make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of vibrant communities.

The Framework outlines principles for good practice in crime prevention that should be adopted by Commonwealth, State and Local governments to achieve a reduction in crime and an increase in community safety.

Principles for effective crime prevention include:

- strong and committed leadership at all levels
- collaboration between multiple stakeholders to address the wide-ranging causes of crime and to draw upon the skills, expertise, resources and responsibilities necessary to address those causes
- the practical application of research and evaluation findings in the development and implementation of measures to reduce crime, targeted to areas of the greatest need and adapted to suit local conditions
- a focus on outcomes and a commitment to demonstrating measurable results through evaluation and performance measurement, with clear lines of accountability
- building and maintaining the capacity to implement effective crime prevention policies and interventions
- promoting an active and engaged community, and being responsive to the diversity and changing nature of communities
- long-term commitment to achieving sustainable reductions in crime and savings to the criminal justice system and the community
- coordination across sectors to embed crime prevention into relevant social and economic policies, including education, employment, health, and housing policies, particularly those directed towards at-risk communities, children, families and youth (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012).

Council should look to utilise the most relevant principles outlined by the Framework to inform development of the integrated road and community safety plan. Relevant elements include those related to leadership, social conditions, collaboration, evidence-based practice, the promotion of an active and engaged community, and long-term commitment and accountability.

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-23 (the Health Plan) establishes high-level strategic directions for change and improvement to the health and wellbeing of all Victorians. The Health Plan addresses safety and perceptions of safety as important contributors to overall health and wellbeing and highlights violence, in particular family violence, as a key area for systemic change. The Health Plan presents a socio-ecological view of health as depicted in Figure 12, which identifies change must occur not only for individual lifestyle factors, but also for social and community networks, living and working conditions, and general socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions.

Figure 13: The wider determinants of health - Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (State Government of Victoria, 2019)

The Plan sets 10 priorities to guide action over the next four years:

- tackling climate change and its impact on health
- reducing injury
- preventing all forms of violence
- increasing healthy eating
- decreasing the risk of drug-resistant infections in the community
- increasing active living
- improving mental wellbeing
- improving sexual and reproductive health
- reducing tobacco-related harm
- reducing harmful alcohol and drug use.

In addition to setting the 10 key priorities, the plan identifies the need to take a comprehensive and inclusive approach responsive to health inequities. Key actions to address health inequities highlighted include:

- recognising Aboriginal self-determination
- fostering gender equality
- responding to the needs of our diverse population
- tailoring approaches to the life course
- place-based and local solutions

Safety is a basic human right and is itself a determinant of health. A range of other determinants outlined in the Health Plan, such as education, housing, and social and community networks also influences safety. The Health Plan goes further to identify the reduction of injury and prevention of

all forms of violence as key priorities. Addressing inequities to ensure that all Victorians have an equal opportunity to improve their health and wellbeing is another key foundation of the Health Plan and relevant to the promotion of safety in the City of Melton context.

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework (the Framework) reflects the priorities and platforms for change identified in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-19 and 2019-23. The Framework employs a whole-of-government approach and brings together a comprehensive set of indicators drawn from multiple data sources. These indicators enable improvements in the health and wellbeing of Victorians to be monitored over time. There is a long-term focus to allow the emergence of improvements in population health that can take some time to manifest.

Domain 2: Victorians are safe and secure

Outcome 2.1: Victorians live free from abuse and violence

Indicators	Targets	Measures	Measure detail	Data dictionary reference
Reduce prevalence and impact of abuse and neglect of children		Rate of children who were the subject of child abuse and neglect substantiation	Rate of children who were the subject of child abuse and neglect substantiation	2.1.1.1
Reduce prevalence and impact of family violence		Rate of incidents of family violence recorded by police	Rate of incidents of family violence recorded by police	2.1.2.1
		Family violence index (to be determined)	Family violence index (to be determined)	2.1.2.2
Increase community safety		Proportion of adults experiencing at least one incident of sexual violence since the age of 15 years	Proportion of adults experiencing at least one incident of sexual violence since the age of 15 years	2.1.3.1
		Hospitalisation rate due to assault	Hospitalisation rate due to assault	2.1.3.2
		Proportion of adults feeling safe walking in their street at night	Proportion of adults feeling safe walking in their street at night	2.1.3.3
		Proportion of adults experiencing at least one incident of crime in the past 12 months	Proportion of adults experiencing at least one incident of crime in the past 12 months	2.1.3.4
		Rate of victimisation due to crimes recorded by police	Rate of victimisation due to crimes recorded by police	2.1.3.5

Figure 14: Victorian Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework - Outcome 2.1 Victorians live free from abuse and violence (State Government of Victoria, 2016)

Community safety is present across all five domains outlined in the framework, but is particularly relevant to Domain 2: 'Victorians are safe and secure' (Figure 13). In order to contribute to the Victorian collective approach to safety, it is important that Council evaluate the impact of the road and community safety plan over an extended period and using the same indicators.

Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan – Towards Zero 2016-2020

The Road Safety Strategy aims to create a safe system for all Victorians, focusing on safe roads and roadsides, safe speeds, safe vehicles and safe road use by all people using the road. The plan outlines ambitious state government targets to reduce the number of lives lost on the roads to fewer than 200 people by 2020 - a 20 per cent reduction in deaths.

The plan focuses on significant state level intervention through:

- a major effort to engage with the Victorian community on road safety
- further investment in police resources to combat high-risk behaviours
- new measures to ensure the vehicles Victorians travel in are as safe as they can be.

The Towards Zero Strategy and Action Plan focuses on creating a safe road system. Council's road and community safety strategy should align with the approach of Towards Zero with a focus on utilising the Safe Systems Approach for building and maintaining road infrastructure.

Victorian Government Community Safety Statement 2018/19

The Community Safety Statement 2018/19 outlines the Victorian Government's plan for keeping Victoria safe. It outlines the commitments of the Government and Victoria Police for promoting safety and decreasing crime across the state. The Community Safety Statement 2018/19 builds on the priorities outlined in the 2017 statement, including reducing rates of family violence, improving community engagement and holding offenders to account for their actions.

The Victorian Government and Victoria Police are committed to five key priorities to create a safer Victoria:

1. reducing harm – so threats are identified and prevented, and Victorians are safe from crime. Key indicators for reducing harm include enhanced public perceptions of safety, as well as a reduction in harm rates
2. increasing connection to the community – so community concerns are listened to and acted on and police have a highly visible presence. Outcomes in this area will see Victoria Police having a 'highly visible presence in, and strong connection with, the community' through increased presence and community engagement. The Victorian government is committed to investing in creating safe public spaces through design, lighting and technology through the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund for councils and community groups
3. putting victims first – so victims are at the heart of policing, and women and children live free from family violence. It is anticipated that action in this area will see additional support for victims and witnesses, and that vulnerable children and women are kept safe and free from violence
4. holding offenders to account – so people who commit crime are punished and understand the consequences of their actions
5. improving Victoria Police capability, culture and technology – so the police force has everything it needs to deliver 'evidence-based initiatives and interventions' and better represents the community it serves.

Elements of the statement for consideration in the Plan include a focus on enhancing public perceptions of safety, the commitment of Victoria Police to engaging with community and funding opportunities for infrastructure projects.

Environments for health: Municipal Public Health Planning Framework

As outlined previously, health, wellbeing and safety are influenced by a range of factors within the social, economic and physical environments that people live. A social model of health brings together the social, cultural, environmental, biological, political and economic determinants that need to be addressed to make improvements to the health, wellbeing and safety of a community. *Environments for Health* is the framework that guides municipal public health planning by local councils. The framework draws upon these social determinants, in particular those that exist within the built, social, economic or natural environments. This framework reinforces the model of safety adopted for the Plan and the wider determinants of health upon which the Health Plan is based. It is important to consider Council's sphere of influence and the opportunities where Council can have the greatest impact on these environments to promote road and community safety.

Melton City Council & Wellbeing Plan 2017-21

The Melton City Council and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21 outlines the strategic direction for the City of Melton over a four-year period. By incorporating the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan into the

Council Plan, the health and wellbeing of City of Melton residents is at the forefront of all that Council strives to achieve. There are five themes outlined in the plan:

1. *Theme 1: A proud, inclusive and safe community* relates to facilitating social capital and addressing inequities. *A safe and equitable community* is identified as an objective.
2. *Theme 2: A thriving and resilient natural environment* relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and engagement of community in these efforts.
3. *Theme 3: A well-planned and built City* relates to the provision of community infrastructure, public spaces and connected and flexible transport networks and includes advocacy and collaboration to achieve outcomes.
4. *Theme 4: A strong local economy and a lifelong learning City* relates to the provision of a variety of education, training and employment opportunities.
5. *Theme 5: A high performing organisation demonstrating leadership and advocacy* relates to the engagement of the community, advocacy for community issues, and collaborative action to deliver the best outcomes for the community.

As outlined previously, the promotion of road and community safety involves building social capital, providing safe and accessible infrastructure, addressing the social conditions that influence safety and working collaboratively. Each of these elements are closely aligned with the Council and Wellbeing Plan and reflects the suitability of such an approach to road and community safety in a local government context.

Key learnings:

1. Community capacity building should be included as a key approach to road and community safety.
2. The Safe Systems Approach is a solid framework for the design of road infrastructure.
3. Council should look to utilise the most relevant principles outlined by the National Crime Prevention Framework to inform development of the integrated road and community safety plan. Relevant elements include those related to leadership, social conditions, collaboration, evidence-based practice, the promotion of an active and engaged community, and long-term commitment and accountability.
4. The Plan should aim to address inequities by working to promote safety in a place-based manner. Activities should be tailored to meet the needs of higher risk population groups.
5. Infrastructure funding and the commitment of Victoria Police to community engagement should be considered in the development of the Plan and its actions.
6. The Plan should include efforts to address the social conditions that promote safety, as outlined in the Health Plan and Environments for Health.

Indicators of Safety

A person's perception of their own safety can be vastly different from the actual levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in their community. Research into perceptions of safety (subjective safety) report that a person's level of perceived threat can be different from the actual threat and can be related to unpredictability and lack of control of exposure to potential crime (Shepherdson, 2014). This section explores a range of local indicators of safety including both subjective and objective safety.

Crime

In 2019, there were 9,103 criminal incidents in the City of Melton. When viewed on a per capita basis, the rate of criminal incidents is 5,530 per 100,000 persons, which is lower than the Victorian average of 6122 incidents per 100,000 persons.
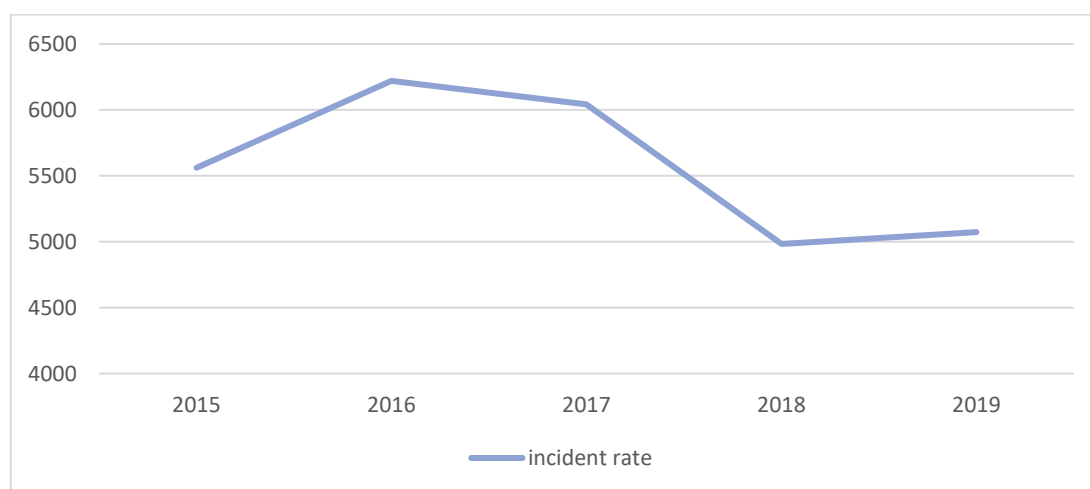

Figure 15: Incident rate (per 100,000 population) - City of Melton (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019)

Figure 14 demonstrates that in the last four years the rate of crime in the City of Melton was at its highest in 2016. This correlates with a rapid decline in perceptions of safety for City of Melton residents captured in the 2017 Household Community Satisfaction Survey (the Survey). Since 2016, actual crime rates have declined and this has correlated with a steady increase in perceptions of safety for residents.

The localities of Melton, Melton West, Melton South and Caroline Springs have consistently experienced the highest number of incidents of crime over the past three reporting years (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019). However, when presented as a rate per population, Rockbank, Melton West and Melton were the localities with the highest incidents rates per population.

As highlighted in Figure 15, residents aged 25-44 years experienced the highest rates of victimisation in the City of Melton from 2016-2018. Women made 2210 (33 per cent) victim reports, men 2503 (37 per cent), and organisations made 1991 reports (30 per cent). Of alleged offender incidents, 775 (22 per cent) offenders were women, and 2795 (78 per cent) were men (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019).
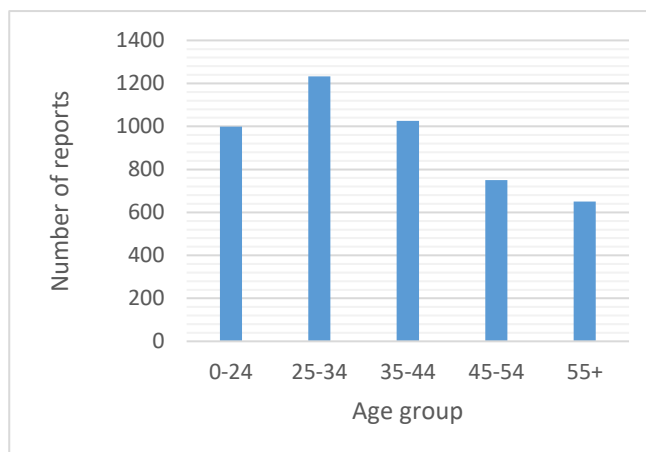

Figure 16: Victim reports of criminal incident by age 2016-2018 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019)

Family violence

In 2019, there were 9,103 criminal incidents in the City of Melton. In the same period, there were 2,528 family incidents[1] reported (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019), equating to 28 per cent of all criminal incidents in Melton in that year. This has been a consistent trend (see Figure 16).
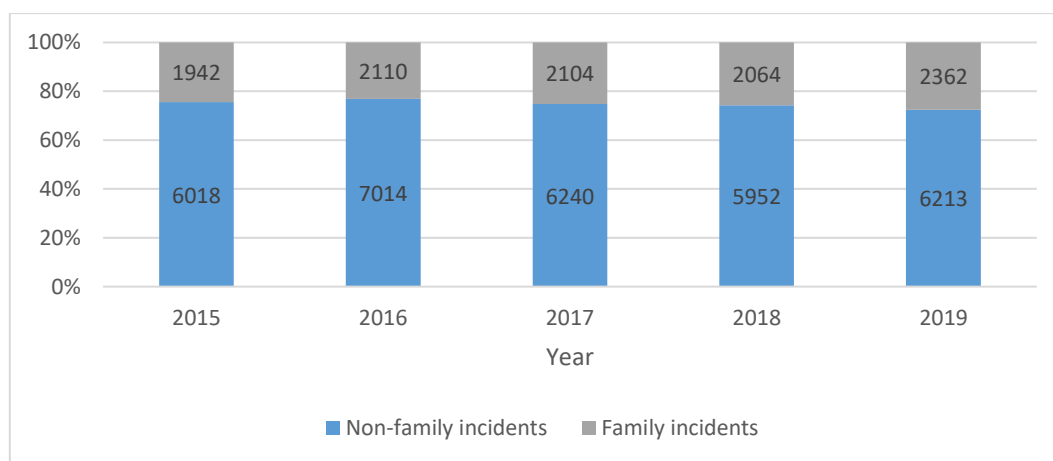

Figure 17: Proportion of criminal incidents that were family incidents 2015-2019 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019)

For the year ending september 2019, 38 per cent of incidents where women were the victims were family incidents. Of incidents where men were the victims, 9 per cent of those were family incidents. (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019). Statistically, women are much more likely than men to be victimised by people they know in their own homes (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016).

Council recognises the significant impact of family violence in the community and has a long-term commitment to preventing family violence presented in a stand-alone strategy 'Equality & Respect 2030'. The Strategy guides Council's approach to addressing gender inequality as the root cause of violence against women (Our Watch, ANROWS, VicHealth, 2015).

Perceptions of safety

Perceptions of safety in public areas continue to be among the top priorities raised by City of Melton residents in the Survey. As indicated in Table 1, there was an evident decrease in perceptions of safety in various locations during the day and at night in 2017.

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[1] An incident reported by Victoria Police where a Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report (L17 form) was completed. The report is completed when family violence incidents, interfamilial-related sexual offences, and child abuse are reported to police.

Table 1: Perceptions of safety at various locations and times in the City of Melton 2016-2019 (Metropolis Research, 2019)

Perceptions of safety	2016	2017	2018	2019
In public areas during the day	8.33	7.61	7.43	7.90
In and around Caroline Springs SC	7.94	7.49	7.29	7.67
In and around Melton Town Centre	7.70	7.21	7.17	7.49
In and around local shopping centres	7.93	7.20	7.39	7.45
In and around Wood grove Shopping Centre	7.94	7.17	7.27	7.33
At local community events	7.83	6.72	7.05	7.37
Travelling on/waiting for public transport	7.19	6.52	6.68	7.00
In public areas at night	6.36	5.33	5.64	6.18
At home alone after dark			6.90	7.37
At Lake Caroline at night			5.87	6.35

Following this decline in perceptions of safety in 2017, substantial improvements have returned results back to trend in 2018 and 2019 (Metropolis Research, 2019). As highlighted by Figure 18, despite these improvements, residents still reported lower perceptions of safety in comparison to the western region, metropolitan Melbourne and other growth council areas.
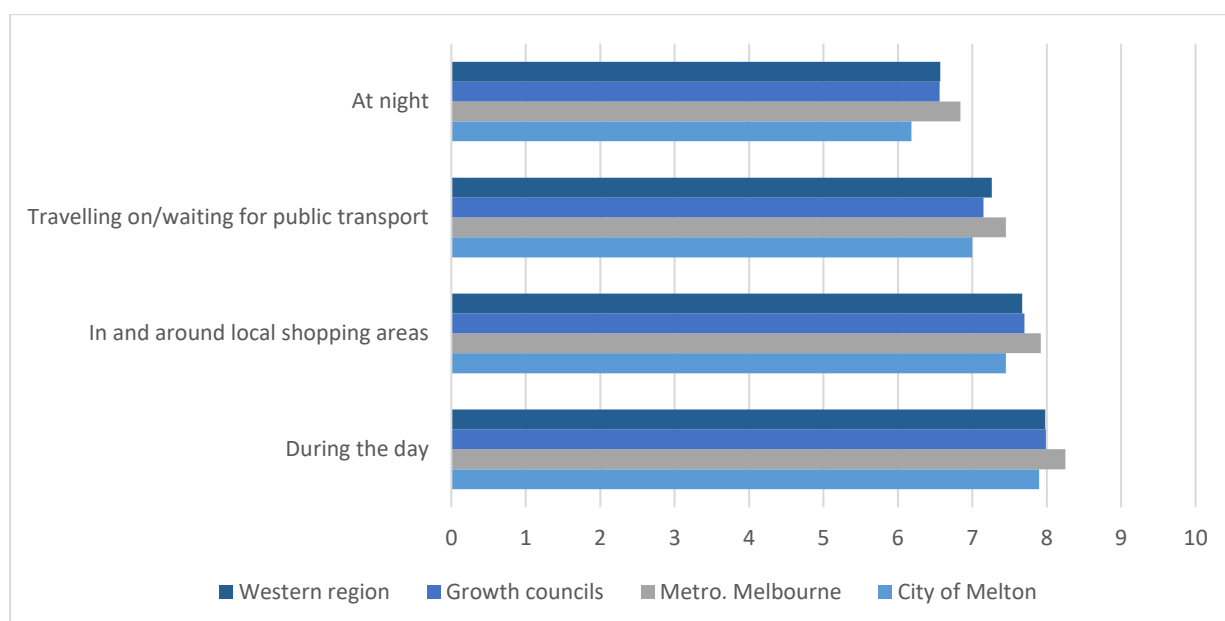

Figure 18: Perceptions of safety in public areas: City of Melton vs Western Region, Growth Councils and Metropolitan Melbourne

Figure 18 demonstrates that people across all regions feel less safe at night, in all settings, than they do during the day.
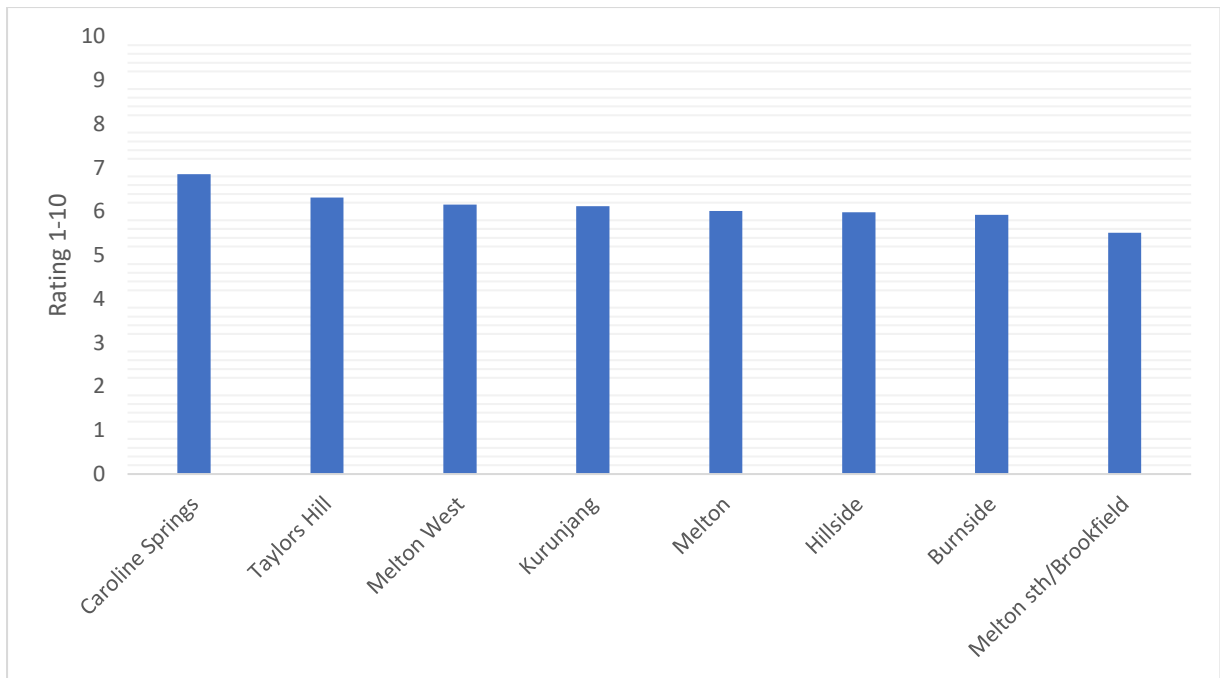
Figure 19: Perceptions of safety at night by selected suburb - 2019 (Metropolis Research, 2019)

Perceptions of safety at night vary across the municipality (Figure 18). Caroline Springs residents reported feeling safer compared to residents in Melton South. This is consistent with differences in rates of crime with Melton South experiencing more crime per capita than Caroline Springs. This association did not apply consistently, however. Despite having a lower crime rate than Melton or Melton West, survey respondents from Caroline Springs were much more likely to identify 'safety, crime and policing' as a top issue than residents from Melton or Melton West (Metropolis Research, 2019).
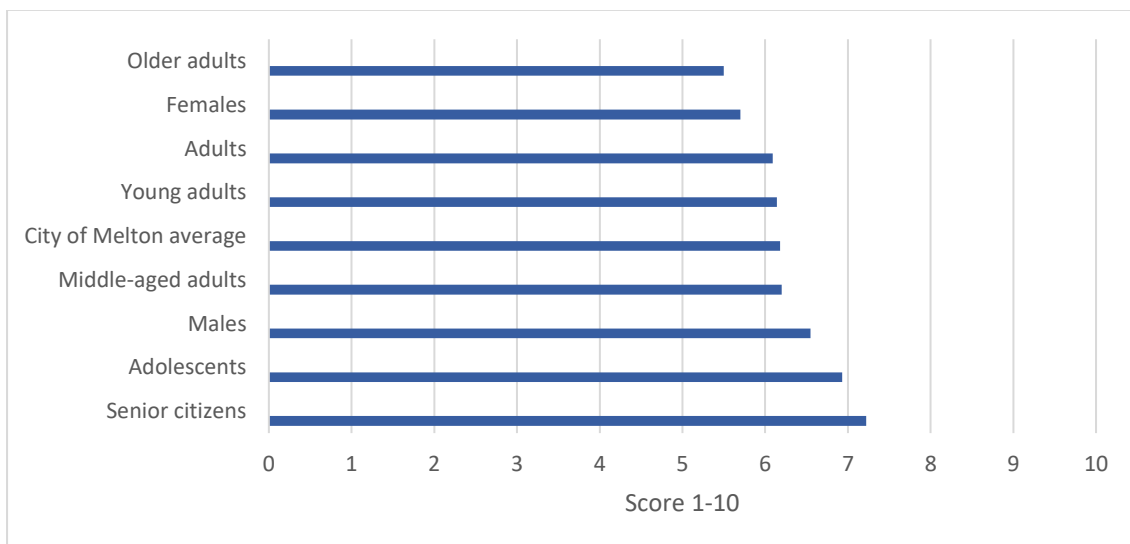

Figure 20: Perceptions of safety at night in the City of Melton by respondent profile - 2019 (Metropolis Research, 2019)

As demonstrated in Figure 19, seniors and adolescents reported feeling measurably safer in comparison to other age groups. A notable variation in perceptions of safety is that between older adults (60-74 years) and seniors (75+ years), with older adults reporting lower perceptions of safety at night than seniors do. The disproportionately low perceptions of safety for older adults compared to seniors and other age cohorts should be further explored to better understand and influence perceptions of safety for this cohort.

Men reported higher perceptions of safety than women for all safety measures in the Survey, however there was a greater gap in perceptions of safety between the sexes at night (women 5.7, men 6.55). While men experience higher rates of violence in public than women, women are more personally concerned about their safety and take more safety precautions than men (Walker & Logan, 2017).

Suburb-based differences in perceptions of safety remained consistent in and around local shopping precincts, with Melton South/Brookfield precincts reporting lower perceptions of safety (7.01) compared to Caroline springs (7.92). Perceptions of safety at shopping centres and community events increased slightly compared to 2018, however still have not returned to levels recorded in 2016.

The perception of safety around Lake Caroline at night was 6.35 out of ten in 2019, increasing from 5.87 recorded in 2018. Again older adults (aged 65-74 years) felt less safe than seniors aged 75+ years (5.68 compared with 7.99, respectively), and female respondents felt less safe than male respondents (5.98 compared to 6.60).

As presented in Table 2, reasons for feeling unsafe in the City of Melton were varied and have changed between 2016 and 2019. Fear of crime has increased since 2016 with a peak in 2018, and remains the most commonly cited reason for feeling unsafe. There has also been a trend of increasing concern about people acting in an anti-social manner in public spaces. Concerns about lighting have increased significantly over time, as have concerns about general safety. Lack of police presence was far less commonly cited in 2019 than in previous years, as were issues with public transport safety and traffic-related issues. Media representation of safety in the City of Melton appears to have contributed to reduced perceptions of safety in public areas of the municipality, with some respondents identifying a negative image of the community as having an influence on their experience of safety.

Table 2: Reasons cited for feeling unsafe in public areas in the City of Melton 2016 - 2019 (Metropolis Research, 2019)

Reason	2016	2017	2018	2019
	Percent			
Crime- - theft robbery violence etc.	21.3	29.1	30.4	27.7
Issues with people – gangs, youths, 'louts' etc.	20.3	22.1	17.1	23.5
Lighting	4.3	3.3	7.2	11.0
General safety	4.3	13.6	9.9	9.6
Police presence	17.0	17.4	11.6	8.1
Image/feel of place and news reports	8.5	7.5	6.1	7.4
Drug and alcohol issues	5.3	3.3	6.1	7.4
Public transport safety	12.8	2.3	4.4	2.2
Traffic related	7.4	1.4	3.3	0.7
Other	0.0	0.0	3.9	2.9

Indicators of safety in the City of Melton further support the need for place-based initiatives and also highlight the need to work with key population cohorts including women, older adults and young people.

Unintentional injury

As the title suggests, unintentional injury is injury that was not caused on purpose or with intention to harm and includes incidents such as falls, sports injuries, burns and road accidents. Figure 20 presents the emergency department presentation by City of Melton residents due to unintentional injury. The five highest unintentional injury causes for City of Melton residents are:

1. Falls (from heights of less than one metre)
2. Struck by collision with object
3. Unspecified
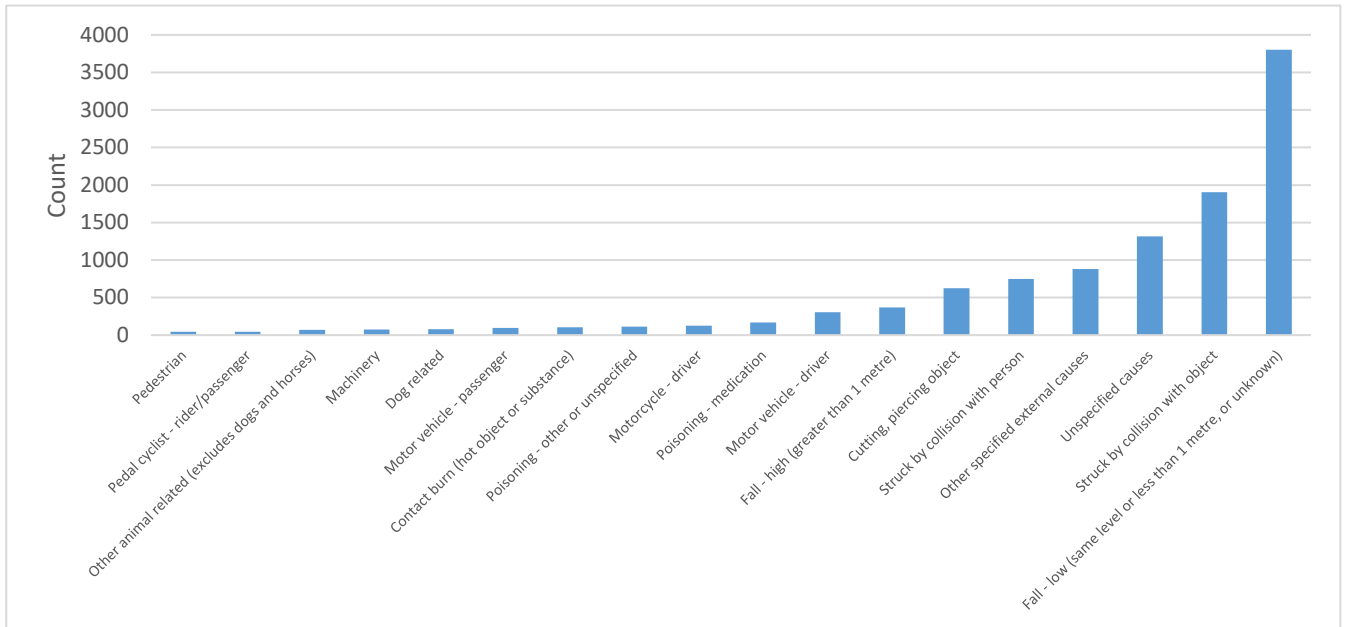4. Other specified external causes
5. Struck by collision with person.

Figure 21: Unintentional injury - City of Melton count of emergency department presentations by cause 2016-2018 (Monash University, 2018)

Emergency department presentations for unintentional injury are more common in males than females (Figure 21). This is consistent with the male tendency towards engaging in more risk taking behaviours than women (Barker, et al., 2009), and gendered norms such as playing contact sports. Injuries were also more common for younger residents aged 0-14 years, which is reflective of the high proportion of children in the City of Melton compared with other regions.
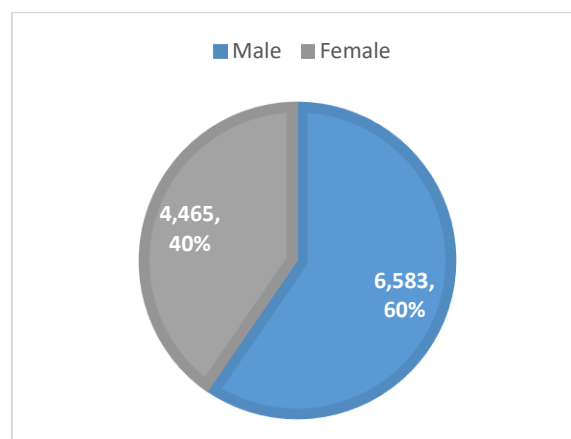

Figure 22: Number of emergency department presentations of unintentional injury by sex 2016-2018 (Monash University, 2018)

Road and traffic incidents

As represented in Figure 20, road related injuries are not included in the top five emergency department presentations for City of Melton residents. Safety concerns related to traffic have dropped significantly since 2016 (Table 2). Despite fewer concerns regarding traffic safety, traffic management was the top issue rated by residents in the 2019 Survey (Metropolis Research, 2019). Residents from Melton West, Burnside and rural precincts were more likely to nominate traffic management as an issue. Survey results suggest community concern includes that traffic moves too fast in local streets, and not fast enough on main roads, particularly when subject to road works.
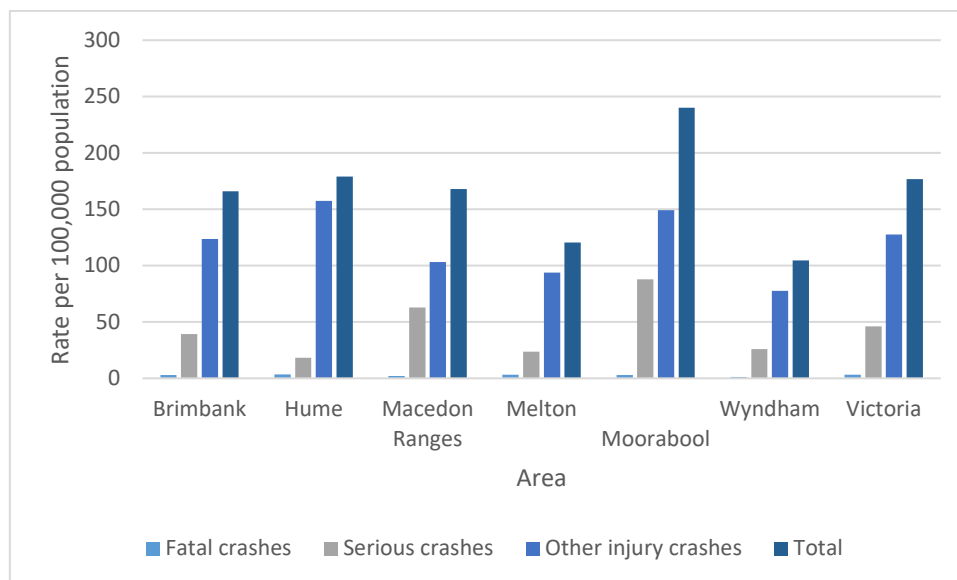
Crash statistics

Figure 23: Rate of crashes per 100,000 population by severity - Regional comparison 2018 (VicRoads, 2019)

Crash data is categorised into fatality, serious injury and other injury in the VicRoads database. As shown in Figure 22, the City of Melton had a lower total rate of crashes per 100,000 than neighbouring regions, Brimbank, Hume, Macedon Ranges and Moorabool. The rate of crashes in the City of Melton was less than that of the whole of Victoria (121 compared to 177).

There were 189 casualty crashes in 2018, including five fatal, 37 serious and 147 other injury crashes. Comparatively there were a total of 213 causality crashes in 2017 and 231 in 2016 (Vic Roads, 2019). The rate of crashes per 100,000 has reduced between 2016 and 2018 (Figure 23).
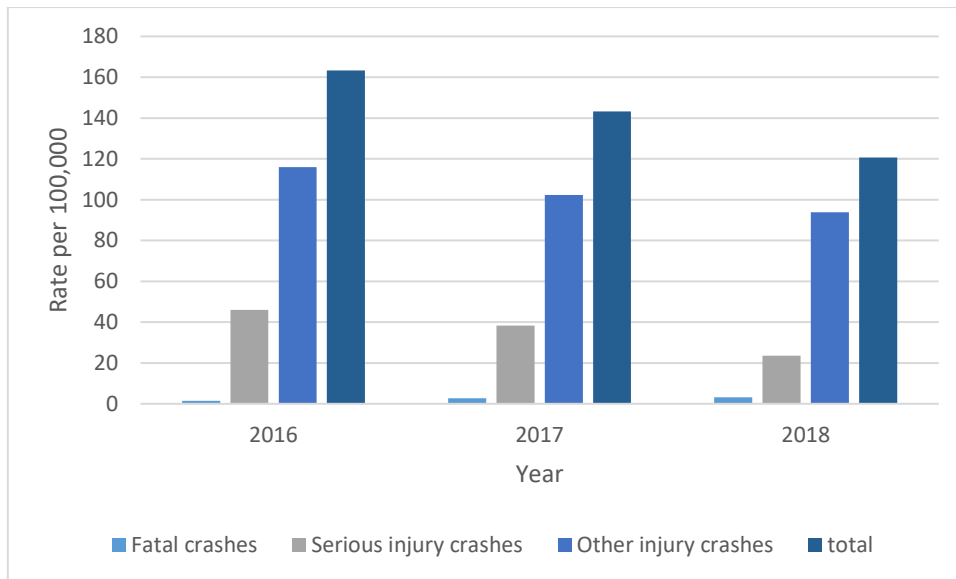
Figure 24: Rate of crashes per 100,000 population by severity - City of Melton 2016-2018 (VicRoads, 2019)

In 2018, there were 476 people involved in the 189 crashes in the City of Melton. Of these, six were fatal, 43 serious, 190 other injury and 237 non-injury. As shown in Figure 24, the rate of people involved in crashes recent years has declined over the previous years, as has the number of serious and other injuries that occurred. Of the six fatalities occurring in 2018, only one occurred on local roads that are managed by Council. The other five occurred on freeways and main arterial highways. Of the 37 serious injury crashes, more than half (22) occurred on local roads.
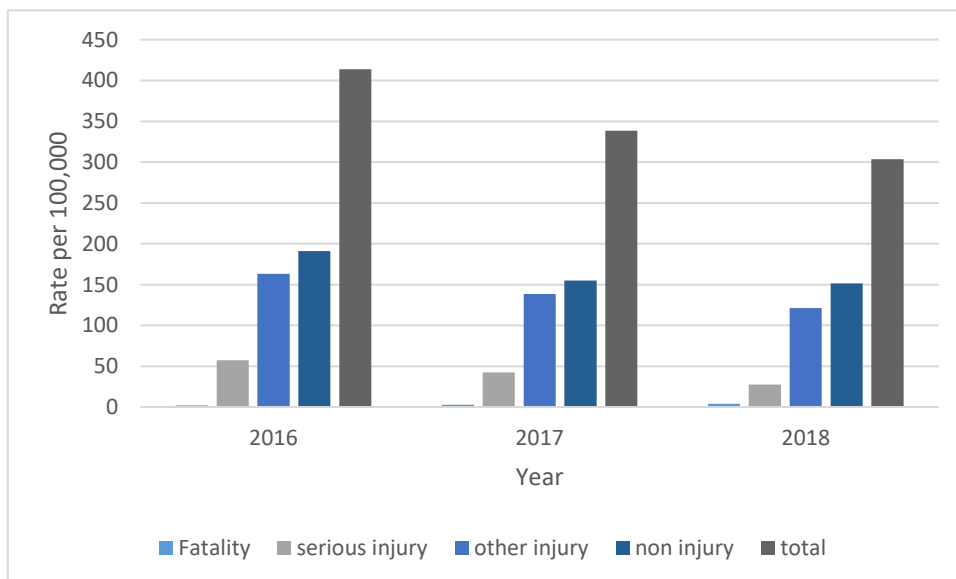

Figure 25: Rate of persons involved in crashes per 100,000 population by severity - City of Melton 2016-2018 (VicRoads, 2019)

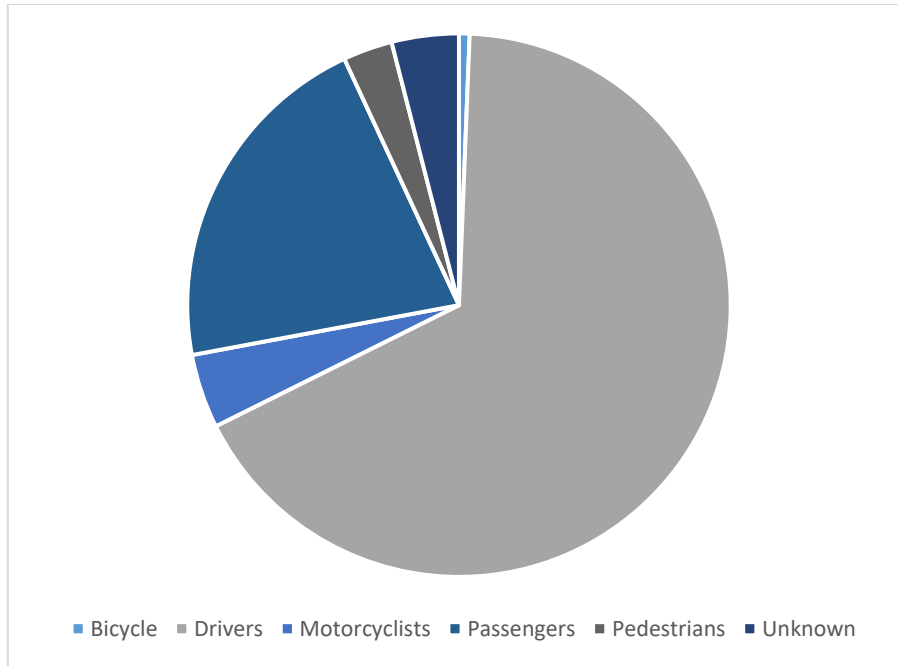*Figure 26: Categories of road users involved in crashes - City of Melton 2014-2018 (VicRoads, 2019)*

As shown in Figure 25, of the 476 persons involved in crashes, most were drivers, then passengers followed by motorcyclists. Of the six fatalities in 2018, two were drivers, two were passengers and two were motorcyclists.
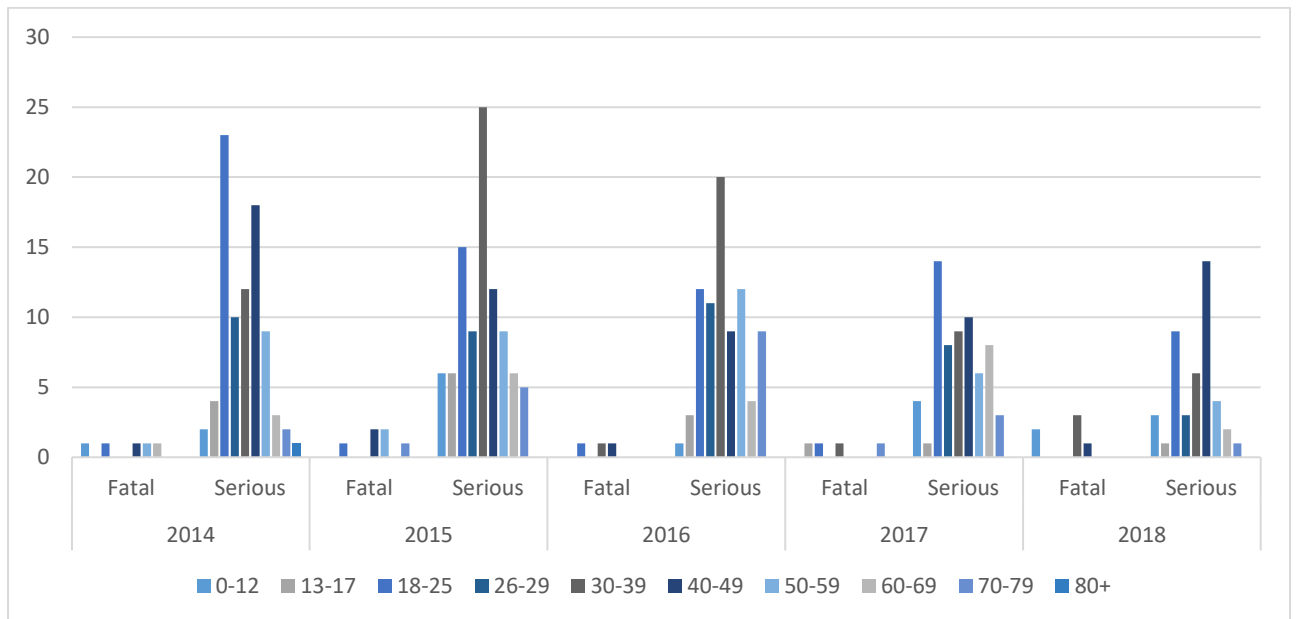

Figure 27: Number of fatal and serious injuries per age group - City of Melton 2014-2018

Figure 26 highlights the age groups that have experienced disproportionate numbers of fatal and serious injuries over time. There is no obvious pattern in age groups involved in fatal accidents. Those aged 18-25 years are strongly represented in the serious injury category across each of the five years. With so few fatalities over the five-year period, it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions regarding age cohorts or sex more likely to die on local roads. However, examination of serious injury data shows that males are more likely than females to suffer serious injury in road incidents (Figure 27).
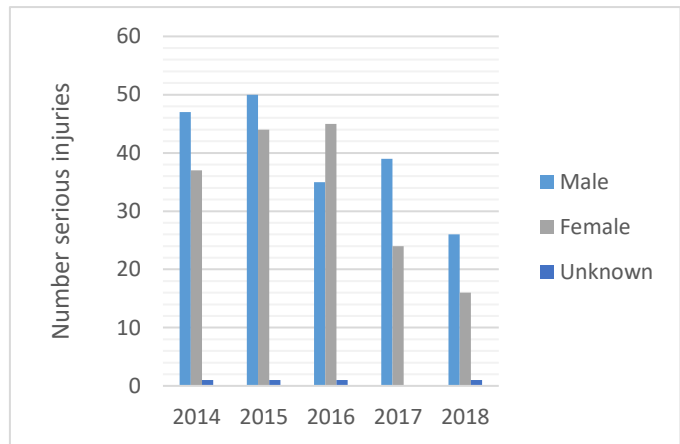

Figure 28: Number of serious injuries by sex - City of Melton 2014-2018
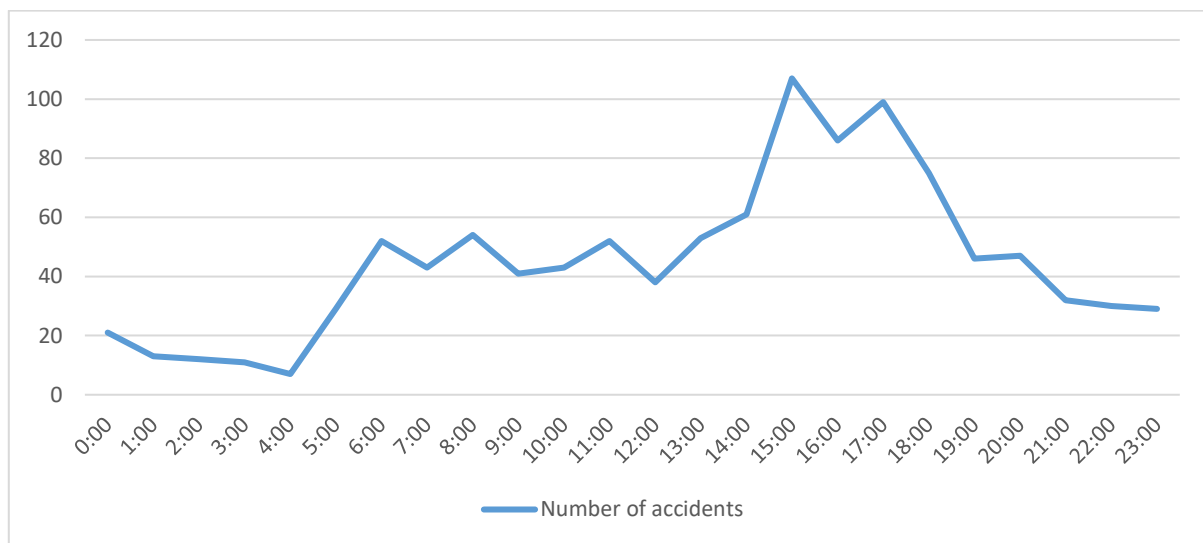

Figure 29: Number of accidents per hour - City of Melton 2014-2018

Figure 28 presents an overview of number of accidents per hour from 2014-18. When examining data by day of the week, the fewest crashes occurred on Sunday (12.8 per cent), with a peak occurring on Wednesdays (16.4 per cent) followed closely by Thursdays (16.2 per cent). The trend in weekdays and afternoon timing of accidents may correlate with school pick up and close of business, and indicates a key intervention opportunity for the road and community safety plan.

Key learnings

1. Actual crime and perceptions of safety vary from suburb to suburb, and from setting to setting. Place-based approaches should be taken to ensure that needs of different areas are met.
2. There are variances in perceptions and actual levels of safety. Tailored approaches should be taken to increase perceptions of safety and reduce crime.
3. Men are disproportionately represented in offender data. Crime prevention strategies may focus on targeting gender differences.
4. There are key population cohorts including women, older adults and young people that have disproportionately poor perceptions of safety. The needs and experiences of these groups should be prioritised where possible.

5. Behaviour-change interventions for road safety should target age groups, which experienced disproportionate numbers of injuries such as 18-25 year olds, 30-39 year olds, and males aged 40-49.
6. The high rate of accidents on weekdays and afternoons indicate that schools and workplaces may be key settings for intervention.

Community feedback

Community conversations

Conversations with the community led to the identification of a range of themes regarding road and community safety. Unprecedented growth was raised as a concern. People spoke of the impact of growth on infrastructure and service demand. They raised concerns regarding residents' sense of community and their connection with others living in their immediate areas. Residents also frequently identified parks and open spaces as one of the most valuable assets in the community.

The following overarching themes emerged from community conversations:

Infrastructure and services

Community members reported that there was often a delay in the provision of infrastructure to meet the needs of a rapidly growing city. Frustrations were aired in relation to investment in road works and maintenance that responded to current need (such as sealing unpaved roads) but did not address future need (such as adding additional lanes). There was a sense that services did not respond well to need, including public transport. Residents stated that bus services did not alleviate congestion at school drop off due to poor timetabling, and that there was no direct transport link from Caroline Springs to the Melton Township. Residents praised how well Council was doing by working with developers on great parks and recreational spaces in new areas.

Transport and road user behaviour

Challenges and opportunities were identified in relation to the ability of residents to move about the City of Melton, particularly in ways that reduce congestion on local roads. Residents raised a need for walking and biking paths that lead to useful destinations, and for end-of-trip facilities such as bike racks. Safety concerns when crossing or using roads acted as barriers to walking and riding. Driver behaviour around schools was highlighted, with comments about low compliance with school speed zones, poor parking behaviours during pick up and drop off, and congestion on local roads.

Sense of community

Community members discussed a reduced sense of community given growth in recent years and migration of residents across the municipality. It was important to not only feel safe, but also feel like they belong (for existing residents) and that they are welcome (for new residents). Negative portrayal of the area in the media influenced residents' sense of pride in their community, and contributed to increased perceptions of high crime in certain areas.

Places and spaces to visit

The breadth of places and spaces to visit in the City of Melton was a highlight shared by community members. People reported that, at times, litter, graffiti, overgrown vegetation or groups of people exhibiting anti-social behaviour limited enjoyment of such spaces. Also noted by residents was the need for access to water, toilets and ample shade in green spaces. Residents were very positive about how Council used its existing spaces such as Hannah Watts park to hold events or activities and looked forward to engaging with these opportunities.

Annual Household Community Satisfaction Survey 2019

The Survey monitors a range of indicators related to road and community safety and these have been explored in the indicators of safety section of this discussion paper. Further to this, the Survey measured respondents' sense of community across 16 indicators. These indicators are relevant to understanding community cohesion and sense of belonging, key factors in safe communities.

In 2019, respondents reported the strongest agreement with the following indicators:

- the Melton community is welcoming and supportive of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds
- Melton is a child-friendly community
- in times of need I/we could turn to neighbours for help
- Melton is an age-friendly community (Metropolis Research, 2019).

Survey respondents reported the least agreement with the following indicators:

- it is an active community, people do things and get involved in local issues
- the Melton community is vibrant, accessible and engaging
- I/we feel part of the local community
- there are adequate opportunities to socialise and meet people in the local area (Metropolis Research, 2019).

Respondents also reported low average agreement with the statements "There is public transport that goes where I need to go" and "There is access to affordable and efficient public transport". Traffic management was rated as a priority area by almost a quarter of residents in the Survey.

These results indicate that the City of Melton has a strong foundation of inclusion, however residents are seeking a greater range of opportunities to engage and connect with the local community. There is also a desire to have well connected transport systems to allow residents to move freely and safely throughout the municipality and to other areas.

Community aspirations for a strong and safe City

Council undertook a major community survey "My City My Say" (the My City Survey) as part of developing 'The City We Imagine' long-term vision for the City of Melton.

The My City Survey asked four questions:

1. What do you love about the City of Melton?

Twenty-one percent of respondents identified parks and playgrounds (including walking and bike paths) as the most valued part of the City. Most age groups ranked this as one of their top three factors that they love about the City. There was some indication that younger people may value different aspects of the municipality than older cohorts. For example, those in the 50+ years cohort on average ranked the country feel, quiet and peaceful environment as the number one aspect they love about the municipality. In contrast, those aged 12-24 years did not rank this in their top 10 aspects and were more likely to rank the Wood grove Shopping Centre as a valued aspect, which was not cited by the older cohort.

2. What don't you like about the City of Melton?

Crime, anti-social behaviour, gangs or violence was included in the top 10 negative aspects by 20 per cent of respondents. These aspects were expressed by all age groups, followed by lack of access to public transport. Key differences between the eastern corridor and Melton township areas included a stronger focus on untidy streets and rubbish in the township and a stronger focus on lack of police presence in the eastern corridor.

3. What are your hopes for the City of Melton in 20 years?

The most popular responses included improved infrastructure, including more recreation facilities and parklands. Younger people aged 12-24 years were more likely to cite safer streets, less crime and more police than their older counterparts.

4. What needs to happen for these hopes to become a reality

Almost a quarter of residents (24 per cent) cited appropriate council planning, development, action and leadership as key elements to achieve the vision. This was consistent across the Melton Township and eastern corridor. More young people cited the need for a greater police presence than those aged over 25 years. Those aged over 50 years were more likely to identify Council's role in advocacy to government and developers as a requirement to achieve the vision.

The My City Survey identified a number of strengths and opportunities in the municipality consistent to those revealed in throughout the community conversations. Respondents clearly identified that crime was a key concern for the municipality and expressed their hopes for a safer community into the future.

Key learnings

1. Growth is an ongoing key challenge for Council and community and must be considered in planning for road and community safety.
2. Timely infrastructure planning and delivery is a key factor in the promotion road and community safety
3. Alternative travel networks (including walking and bike paths) and positive pedestrian and cyclist behaviour may relieve pressure on road systems and provide an alternative to focusing on only driver behaviour.
4. While Melton appears an inclusive City, there is need for a greater range of opportunities to engage and connect locally. Strengthening a sense of belonging for community members is key to building a stronger sense of safety for residents.
5. Crime is a key concern for the municipality and residents expressed their hopes for a safer community into the future. It is likely then that community engagement around safety is likely to be well received.
6. There is a need to identify new ways to engage whole of community in cross-cultural activities to build cohesion in the face of growing diversity.

Key learnings for consideration

Throughout this discussion paper, 'key learnings' have been identified, which are critical to informing the development of a road and community safety plan. These can be summarised as ten key learnings:

1. Council should plan initiatives at the individual, environmental and societal levels to maximise opportunities to influence both subjective and objective safety.
2. Council should take a place-based approach to road and community safety to ensure that responses are relevant to specific localities and their residents.
3. Council should take a health equity approach by prioritising areas of disadvantage or focusing on working with higher risk or more vulnerable cohorts.
4. Council should target initiatives for subsets of the community who are disproportionately represented in data. For example, women and older people who have lower perceptions of safety, or men who have a higher incidence of offending and risk-taking behaviour.
5. Council should invest in an approach that builds social capital, including community cohesion and sense of belonging.
6. Council should consider settings-based work to allow targeting of specific cohorts or specific behaviours.
7. Council should align with international, national and state direction by designing and building safe communities through Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and Safe Systems Approaches.
8. Council should take a systemic and holistic approach to identified community concerns. For example, the key to alleviating road congestion and lack of safety on roads may be in strengthening alternate means of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling.
9. Council should ensure it balances its role in being responsive to community needs and taking long-term sustainable approaches.
10. With such strong community interest in safety, Council should maintain consistent and regular communication with community regarding safety initiatives.

Areas for Council action

Consideration of the role of local government in promoting safety, trends in data and community viewpoints have enabled the identification of the themes shown in Figure 25.
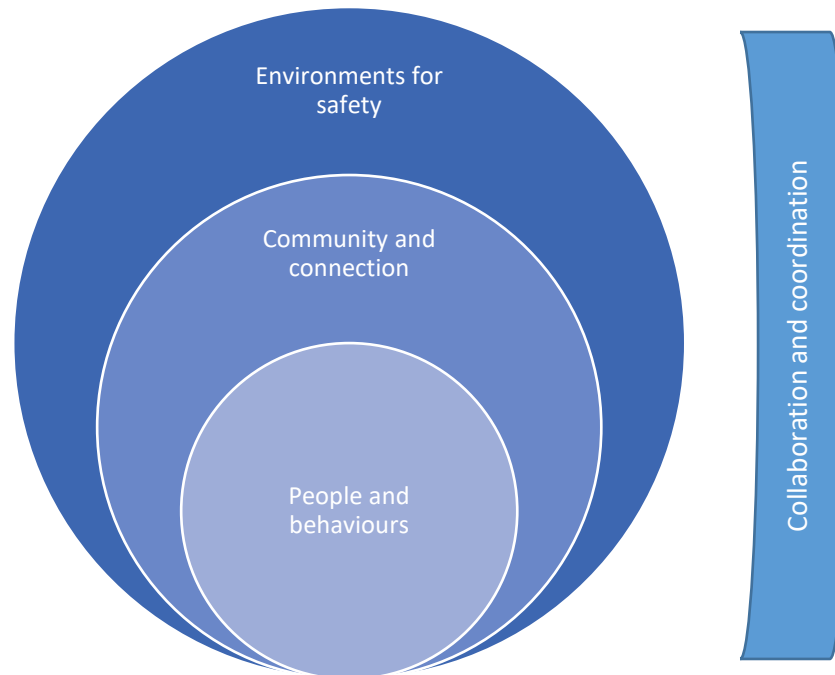

Figure 30: Identified themes for the road and community safety plan

Key strategies, actions and outcomes will be aligned with each theme and will be informed by the evidence presented throughout this paper.

There are significant exisiting strengths and future oppertunities for building positive outcomes for road and community safety in the City of Melton. There is considerable overlap between community safety and road safety principles and approaches. Integration of the Safer City and Road 2 Zero plans provides Council with an opportunity to deliver a single, high-level plan that can drive a focus on safety across the organisation.

The new integrated road and community safety plan, presents an exciting opportunity to bring these together and develop a consolidated, holistic approach for the City of Melton community.

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