

Municipal Community Facilities and Infrastructure Priorities



Fact Sheet: Land for a Magistrates Court

Our Municipality

The City of Whittlesea is located 20km north of Melbourne. It is a large municipality covering an area of 490 square km of both urban and rural land and has a current population of over 134,000. The City includes the suburbs of Bundoora, Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Kinglake West, Lalor, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Thomastown and Whittlesea. The City of Whittlesea is a designated growth area and is experiencing a sustained period of rapid urban growth, particularly on the urban fringe. Since 2001 around 16,000 people have moved in to the municipality and over 9,500 extra dwellings have come on line. This growth is predicted to remain strong for the next 25 years or more with a projected increase in our population to 240,000 by 2031.

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To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing. The Council believes this can only be achieved in partnership with the State and Federal Government.

Insufficient resources, because of inappropriate funding formulae, have failed to keep up with population growth resulting in a backlog of community infrastructure renewal and creation within both established and emerging communities. Increased State and Federal Government investment

in infrastructure is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

The Need

A Magistrates Court, including Sheriff's Office, will require a floor area of around 4,500m². As part of a larger multi-agency emergency services centre, this will require a total land area of 2ha.

Discussion between the Department of Justice, City of Whittlesea and Westfield has advanced to the point where a preferred site within the Plenty Valley Town Centre has been identified.

Proposal and Cost

2 Ha of land between the municipal offices and McDonalds Road has a current value in the vicinity of \$300/square metre, which equates to an overall amount of approximately \$6.0 million.

This facility should be located within the Plenty Valley Town Centre area, at a walkable distance to the proposed Public Transport Interchange.

The ultimate cost will be dependent on the site selected.

State Government Policy Alignment

A Fairer Victoria: Strategy 8: Improving access to justice

"Improving access to justice will play an important role in reducing disadvantage and breaking the cycle of re-offending".

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Fact Sheet: Land for a Health Precinct

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The Need

There is a demonstrated and increasing need for primary care health services in the City of Whittlesea. Whittlesea's rapid population growth creates an imperative to increase investment in core health service provision and preventative services including:

- Acute and Sub acute services
- General Practitioners
- Podiatry
- Dietetics
- Dental
- Community and primary mental health, community midwifery
- Physio and occupational therapy
- Speech pathology
- Housing support
- Specialist disability services and disability case management
- Health and wellness promotion and research
- Counselling services and child and adolescent health services.

The Proposal

There is a need to immediately secure land (2-4 hectares) for a health precinct (multi-storey building if two hectares). State Government funding is required for the purchase of land to allow for future service provision. The preferred location is South Morang within the Plenty Valley Town Centre.

Cost

Plenty Valley Community Health (PVCH) and Northern Health are in the process of developing financial models for purchase of land. The preferred option will be sent to the Health Minister for consideration. Given the current development occurring at the Plenty Valley Town Centre, the land needs to be secured in the short term to ensure the opportunity is not lost.

State Government Policy Alignment

Victorian Labor Achievements Rebuilding Our Health System: High Quality Health Care

[The Victorian Government] wants every Victorian to have access to high quality health care when and where they need it.

Metropolitan Health Strategy (MHS):

“Super Clinics: Priority for the development of super clinics will be in areas with relatively poor access to local services and rapidly growing population”.

MHS P22 Outer North of Melbourne has the lowest ‘self sufficiency’ (ie access to service in the MSD).

MHS P18 City of Whittlesea is one of the five fastest growing municipalities.

Growing Victoria Together:

High Quality, accessible health and community services

“The health of Victorians will improve. The wellbeing of children will improve”

A Fairer Victoria:

Strategy 12: Building stronger communities Action 12.8 Support new community projects

“Continue to provide support for community projects through the Community Support Fund”

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities

‘We will help communities by funding, planning and coordinating new initiatives, particularly where these link infrastructure with positive social outcomes.’

Federal Government Policy Alignment

An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong

‘Labor believes that to be socially included, all Australians need to be able to play a full role in Australian life, in economic, social psychological and political terms. To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to.....access services.’

New Directions for Australia’s Health: Delivering GP Super Clinics to local Communities, Kevin Rudd and Nicola Roxon

‘Poor access to frontline GP and primary care services in their community means many people can’t or don’t tackle their health problems early. Attending to them after the problems have become worse puts pressure on other parts of the health system, particularly public hospital emergency departments.’

Making health care accessible for everyone

‘More health services, located together in local communities, with purpose built facilities that focus more on prevention clinics and services’

The primary care system of the future

‘The health system of the future needs to focus on: Providing more health services in the one place, to ensure greater convenience for patients in their local communities and more support to keep people healthy’

Improving access to health services for working families;

Providing a focus for integrated health care teams to come together in the one place and provide better services to patients outside hospitals; and

Getting doctors and health professionals into the communities where we need them.

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Fact Sheet: Housing

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The Issues

The provision of a range of affordable and accessible housing options is a key factor in maintaining diversity in our municipality. Affordable and accessible housing ensures that low income, different household types and people experiencing disadvantage can live in and contribute to our community.

- Established areas and growth areas of the municipality have different affordable housing issues and pressures.
- Affordable housing in growth areas is not just about the cost of purchasing or renting a house. The issue of affordability includes the increased costs to households associated with poor transport choices and accessibility to employment, leisure, retail and community services.
- In the established areas of Whittlesea, Council is developing structure plans for activity centres. These plans will encourage and identify preferred locations for new types of housing not traditionally found in established areas (e.g. apartment style housing). Whilst the Structure Plans may identify preferred locations, there is no statutory mechanism available to ensure that a percentage of new housing development is affordable. Therefore increased housing choices that are also affordable may not be delivered in the future.
- The lack of a government agency focused on the delivery of affordable housing or a government policy on the use of surplus government land for affordable housing projects is resulting in missed opportunities.
- No crisis housing is located in the municipality, resulting in residents with immediate housing needs having to travel to other municipalities.

- Relatively low provision of private rental accommodation within Whittlesea – 15.4% of households in private rental compared to 21.2% in the Melbourne Statistical Division.
- Mortgage stress levels are high with significant pockets of residents particularly in our growth areas paying well in excess of 30% of their income on mortgage repayments.
- Trend of vulnerable groups moving from the inner areas of Melbourne to Whittlesea resulting in increased demand for social and affordable housing.
- Escalating transport costs also have a disproportionately greater impact on residents in fringe municipalities such as Whittlesea – with households using three times as much petrol.
- Provision of social housing within the municipality is low and demand for social housing has increased. Our region has the highest number of applicants registered on the Office of Housing social housing waiting list (3451).

State Government Policy Alignment

Towards an Integrated Victorian Housing Strategy, Department of Human Services

Secure, affordable and accessible housing located near jobs and transport is vital for our future.

Creating strong and vibrant communities that provide a diverse range of housing choices and types is a major focus of the Victorian Government...High quality and well planned communities provide for diverse housing choice, improve liveability, boost our economy, protect the environment and attract new people, businesses and jobs to Victoria.

The Victorian Government is committed to improving housing affordability and creating communities that are socially, economically and environmentally more sustainable.

A Fairer Victoria:

Action 3.1: Expand choices for housing and support in family violence situations

“Increase short term emergency housing funding and introduce new emergency housing options”.

Federal Government Policy Alignment

An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007

In response to the housing crisis Labor has committed to closing the gap between requests for accommodation and the current supply of emergency housing over the next decade, with an interim target to halve the current turn away rate within five years.

Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness (Green Paper), Australian Government

Preventing homelessness is a key priority for social inclusion. It is also an investment that will reap broader social and economic benefits. With proper support, people can become more resilient and better able to manage their personal, financial and housing needs, and gain the confidence and skills they need to participate in mainstream economic and social life.

Reducing homelessness.....means improving the crisis and emergency response and working this in better with mainstream health, education, justice and employment services.

The most effective homelessness services are those that complement crisis accommodation and support with a long-term plan for clients to achieve greater engagement in the community and eventual self-reliance.

Contact with crisis response services needs to offer a gateway into safe, appropriate accommodation, and a pathway to social and economic participation.

Municipal Community Facilities and Infrastructure Priorities



Fact Sheet: Accessible Local Respite Facility

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The Need

A critical gap in the range of respite options available to residents of Whittlesea is overnight facility-based respite: there is none in this municipality.

The State Disability Plan identifies respite as 'a critical support for people with a disability'. Planned, regular respite is very important at any stage of caring and is acknowledged in the State Disability Plan as critical in reducing the need for emergency respite support. Access to a range of respite options is acknowledged as essential for the carer's own health and wellbeing and that of the person in their care.

Carers, people with disabilities, service providers, the Whittlesea Disability Network and the Council have publicly and repeatedly identified the lack of overnight, facility based respite accommodation as the highest priority for people with disabilities and their families in the City of Whittlesea. The provision of respite services and facilities was raised and endorsed as a community priority in the City of Whittlesea's 2008-2012 Community Plan consultation process.

In the Northern Metropolitan Region (NMR), there are only approximately 45 bed places funded per night and none of these are in Whittlesea, one of the largest growth areas in Victoria. The 2006 Census identified that Whittlesea's population has increased by more than 10,000 since 2001. As this significant growth is ongoing and planned, it is reasonable to expect the need for a respite facility will be greatly exacerbated by the significant growth in population.

The City of Whittlesea has a higher percentage of people receiving Disability Support Pensions at 4.5% compared with Victoria overall at 3.4%. It has a higher percentage of people on Carers Support at 1.1% compared with 0.7% across Victoria.

Many stakeholders have identified urgent need by their constituencies for local facility-based respite.

These stakeholders include Neurological Disability Support groups, groups supporting people with

Acquired Brain Injury, HACC service providers and users, Merriang Special Development School and the Whittlesea Disability Network. Rigorous and publicly available research funded by Council and undertaken by a major local service provider, the Whittlesea and District Helping Hand Association, has overwhelmingly indicated that accessible (local and operated by a trusted provider) facility-based respite is urgently required.

The Proposal

The City of Whittlesea acknowledges and advocates the urgent need for a respite facility within the municipality to address a critical unmet need.

Council is actively facilitating partnerships aimed at achieving this goal. Several possible options are currently being explored. They include

1. Redevelopment of Helping Hand-owned site (estimated site value \$750,000) to provide an integrated community/neighbourhood activity centre and overnight and weekend respite facility, a base for recreational respite activities and urgently required upgrading of existing Adult Training Support Service (ATSS) buildings.
2. Rental and refurbishment of an existing 5 bedroom house as a base for facility-based respite and recreational opportunities for a range of target groups.
3. Several sites in growth corridor areas of the municipality: in estates such as VicUrban's 'Aurora', large private developments and land parcels owned by NGO organisations.

Cost

Costs of establishing and operating the service will depend on the service model developed.

State Government Policy Alignment

State Disability Plan

'Focus on assisting people with a disability to live in the community and participate in activities of their choice, in ways that are meaningful to them'.

Recognising and Supporting Care Relationships for Older Victorians policy framework:

Aims to 'improve recognition of, and support for, care relationships for older Victorians through policy and service development and delivery'.

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities - A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:

'.....Strengthening assistance to disadvantaged groups including.....new options for people with a disability.'

Priority Area Three: Improving Health and Wellbeing – Reducing health inequalities and promoting wellbeing

'Much more can be achieved through targeted investments to reduce the unfair burden of disease on disadvantaged Victorians.....continually improving mental health services and the wellbeing and life options of people with a disability are among the important challenges.'

'Access to respite services...will be expanded to enable community-based living and more help for carers.'

Fact Sheet: *Broadband Access*

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Increased State and Federal Government investment in social infrastructure is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

Need – Better Broadband Access for Our Residents

Greenfield residential estates are being built, many without fixed line broadband services available. New residents are moving from established areas of Melbourne which have a choice of broadband services to these new estates, and are only able to get dial up services or inadequate and expensive satellite or alternative services.

The City of Whittlesea has identified a need and has committed to supporting the local community in accessing services that were unavailable due to the lack of infrastructure.

With the limited powers it has to effect change in the telecommunications arena, it has worked to facilitate better outcomes for the local community. It has taken on a leadership role in representing its community, representing outer metropolitan areas and representing the Local Government sector.

Networking with other municipalities and sharing both developed materials and experience has raised the need for Councils to be actively involved in promoting and facilitating the community's access to good quality broadband infrastructure and services. This includes Councils in WA, QLD, SA, TAS, VIC and NSW.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to address the lack of awareness, access and service options that local residents have. These include:

- WIRED Development Project
- Broadband Access Project for business
- Broadband Register and survey
- Broadband advocacy
- Community training
- PC Recycling program
- Developing Local Government electronic services

Council has amended its Planning Scheme to require the provision of communication conduits in new areas and has been negotiating with developers to provide services into these conduits.

The community is actively seeking and receiving Council assistance in helping them gain access to broadband. Over 1500 residents have benefited from this assistance. Free training has been provided to many hundreds of residents in the use of the internet.

Businesses have been encouraged to connect to broadband and assisted to access broadband when it has not been available. Businesses have been trained in how to extract the most use out of the services available on broadband. Over 200 businesses have had direct assistance.

Council has been developing electronic services to provide better services 24/7 to local businesses and the community.

The City of Whittlesea has also contributed to the development of a Victorian State Government website to assist the community to understand broadband and strategies to bring it to their local neighbourhoods. The website is accessible at www.mmv.vic.gov.au/broadband

Proposal

Council is acting as a voice for the community at State and Federal levels, pushing for better access to broadband and raising the benchmark in terms of broadband speeds and services.

Council is looking to partner with the State Government to highlight the importance of high speed broadband services in Metropolitan Growth Areas and to encourage the Federal Government to develop broadband plans that will fill the current gaps in broadband and provide essential high-speed broadband services to new suburbs. A commitment is sought from the Government to provide world class broadband services, with no cost or service disadvantage, that will support the economic, environmental and social well being of residents and businesses within Metropolitan Growth Areas.

The Federal Government Broadband Network needs to provide affordable, comprehensive, high-speed broadband access which is essential to economic, social and environmental development.

Municipal Community Facilities and Infrastructure Priorities



Fact Sheet: Cultural Bridges

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The Proposal

The concept of a Cultural Bridges Centre is both a place and a philosophy that encourages the diverse communities of Whittlesea to come together to share experiences, learn together and build a more socially inclusive community. A Whittlesea Community Futures Community Action Group has formed to progress the Whittlesea Cultural Bridges Centre from concept to reality.

The overarching aim of the Cultural Bridges Project is to establish and sustain meaningful cross and inter-generational connections based on the respect and appreciation of the rich traditions, customs and strengths of Whittlesea's diverse cultural, national and ethnic mix.

Cultural Bridges is a strengths based, community building approach to building resilience in the socially and culturally diverse communities of the City of Whittlesea. Developing partnerships between community, not-for-profit organisations and government will be fundamental to achieving the outcome of connecting cultures through targeted programs, events, activities and access to resources and services.

The underlying philosophy of community connectedness and social inclusion will be reflected in a place where people can gather as people, rather than as clients or members of target groups. As one community member said, "We are lacking space to practice our culture that is our identity and [that] gives us a sense of belonging...[and where] we can contribute to multiculturalism and make it rich..... (Burundi Community Member)."

The Cultural Bridges Centre aims to be a cost neutral, environmentally sustainable facility that actively creates opportunities for:

1. Community ownership and management of a facility
2. Connecting and bringing together people and communities
3. Promoting skills development and employment
4. Learning and creative participation

5. Community groups to access IT and office facilities
6. Providing a range of culturally relevant community services

The Cultural Bridges concept emanates from, and is driven by, the community. The high level of community participation and sense of community ownership is underpinned by the locally developed Whittlesea Community Engagement principles. The Cultural Bridges Centre will be designed to facilitate community connectedness and community strengthening.

Cost

The City of Whittlesea seeks funding from the Department of Planning and Community Development, through Community Support Fund for the employment of project officer(s) whose role would be to strengthen and support the Cultural Bridges - Community Action Group, to undertake relevant research, to consult with our diverse community and develop a preferred model for a Cultural Bridges Centre and program.

Funding sought: \$80,000.

State and Federal Government Policy Alignment

An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007

To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity toconnect with others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community.

Senator Ursula Stephens, Address to UnitingCare Australia, Uniting Missions Network National Conference

Committing to a Social Inclusion agenda is about making a real difference in the lives of people who face barriers to participation in aspects of Australian life most of us take for granted....That's not just work and education – it's also the ability to make connections with friends and family, and engagement

with the broader community.....Many new migrants may become excluded due to language and cultural barriers; The more isolating experiences are torture, trauma and social dislocation in their first country, then disrupted education or no recognition of their prior skills in their new home.

We want our Social Inclusion policies to achieve the following:

To create opportunities for individuals to participate not just in the economic life, but also Australia's civic and social life..

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities, May 2008

A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:

....Providing targeted support to the highest risk areas with significant effort and resources directed towards addressing place-based disadvantage. These efforts will continue and extend work with new and emerging communities to plan and build support to prevent community disadvantage before it takes hold.

A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:

.....Reducing barriers to opportunity with a sustained focus on identifying and redressing those factors that prevent people gaining access to opportunities for a better life. The effort this year is to assist more Victorians to overcome barriers to economic and social participation.

Multicultural Affairs in Victoria: a discussion paper for a new policy, Victorian Multicultural Commission

Valuing Cultural Diversity

...Articulates four themes that underpin the successful management of our cultural diversity:

- Valuing diversity
- Reducing inequality
- Encouraging participation
- Promoting the social, cultural and economic benefits of cultural diversity to all Victorians

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Fact Sheet: 'Gathering Place' for our Indigenous community

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Currently, families, children and young people in the City of Whittlesea are disadvantaged in relation to the provision of local human services. In addition, like other Interface Councils, local residents are geographically isolated from service centres and current service provision is not keeping pace with population growth and demand.

To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing. The Council believes this can only be achieved in partnership with the State and Federal Government.

The Need

The City of Whittlesea has the fourth highest Indigenous population in metropolitan Melbourne and has experienced a rapid 24% increase in its Indigenous population between 2001 and 2006 (ABS 2006 Census), with 38.7% of the population under the age of 15 years and 24.3 % between 15-24 years of age.

Whittlesea Indigenous Population
ABS 2006

	Females	Males	Persons	
0-4 years	49	56	105	12.5%
5-14 years	113	109	222	26.3%
15-24 years	94	110	204	24.2%
25-44 years	78	116	194	23.0%
45-64 years	43	57	100	11.9%
65 years and over	4	14	18	2.1%
	381	462	843	

What is an Indigenous Gathering Place?

It is a 'community hub', or centre, where Indigenous people come together. This is an important cultural need for all Indigenous people and their respective communities. A Gathering Place will provide both the local ATSI community, and the wider community, with an centre or facility that will support the cultural needs of local the ATSI community.

Indigenous communities across Australia have traditionally 'come together', or need 'to gather', at certain times during the year, particularly around significant cultural events, traditional practices and for celebrations and ceremonial purposes. Additionally, a gathering place would provide the opportunity to learning traditional cultural practices, ie: basketweaving, making implements. This has been going on for hundreds of years, and continues today.

Every Indigenous community in Australia is different, therefore it is expected the Indigenous Gathering Place for the City of Whittlesea will be unique to the local ATSI community and will have different programs, services and cultural components. The Reconciliation Committee believes this is an exciting project for both local Indigenous and non- Indigenous community members.

Cost

The City of Whittlesea seeks funding from the Department of Planning and Community Development, through the Community Support Fund for the employment of project officer(s) whose role would be to support the City Whittlesea Reconciliation Committee to undertake relevant research, to consult with our Indigenous community and develop preferred models for a 'gathering place'.

Funding sought: \$80,000.

State and Federal Government Policy Alignment

An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007

To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity toconnect with others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community.

Senator Ursula Stephens, Address to UnitingCare Australia, Uniting Missions Network National Conference

Committing to a Social Inclusion agenda is about making a real difference in the lives of people who face barriers to participation in aspects of Australian life most of us take for granted....That's not just work and education – it's also the ability to make connections with friends and family, and engagement with the broader community.....

We want our Social Inclusion policies to achieve the following:

To create opportunities for individuals to participate not just in the economic life, but also Australia's civic and social life..

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities, May 2008

A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:

....Providing targeted support to the highest risk areas with significant effort and resources directed towards addressing place-based disadvantage.

A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:

.....Reducing barriers to opportunity with a sustained focus on identifying and redressing those factors that prevent people gaining access to opportunities for a better life. The effort this year is to assist more Victorians to overcome barriers to economic and social participation.