

Advocacy Action Plan

Yarra City Council



Table of Contents

1. Climate Emergency
2. Circular Economy
3. Transport
4. A Vibrant Yarra
5. Land Use Planning
6. Social and Affordable Housing
7. Public Health and Wellbeing
8. Early Years and Education
9. Financial Sustainability

Our purpose is to advocate for City of Yarra interests; build the capacity of Yarra City Council, protect and support the viability of Yarra City Council and promote the interests of our community. This plan was developed by the Advocacy and Partnerships team in line with our strategic priorities. It expresses key positions across several policy areas, but is not intended as a replication of all positions adopted through our strategic plan or Council resolutions. It is intended that this document will be reviewed, updated, and added to in response to emerging issues and priorities.

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

1. Climate Emergency

Background

Yarra City Council was one of the first councils to declare a climate emergency.

Our declaration recognised the planet's climate is already too hot and that transformational change is needed across all levels of government, businesses, and communities to address the crisis. We recognise that we need transformational change to rapidly reduce carbon emissions across the community and ensure homes, business and community infrastructure are sustainable and resilient to a changing climate.

Victorian councils have a strong track record of actively working to reduce emissions and increase organisational and community resilience to climate impacts.

Strong policy leadership and significant financial investment is urgently needed from both the State and Federal Government to accelerate the transition to a net zero emissions economy and strengthen community resilience to climate change. The major transition ahead needs to occur in a fair and socially equitable way. The most vulnerable people have typically made the least contribution to the problem and often have less capacity to respond and cope with the impacts.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 1.1 The State and Federal Governments to immediately declare a climate emergency;
- 1.2 The State Government to set strong targets for the complete transition off gas in Victoria, in line with Yarra's ambitious targets;
- 1.3 The Minister for Planning to immediately approve the Elevating Environmentally Sustainable Development Targets Planning Scheme Amendment proposed by the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment;
- 1.4 The Federal Government establish a Climate Action Regulatory Reform Working Group to remove regulatory, policy and other barriers to climate action for local governments and communities and ensure policy coherence and synchronisation at all levels of Government and with relevant industry stakeholders;
- 1.5 The State Government deliver an annual allocation of funds to each inner metropolitan Council to facilitate the creation more green spaces for their communities;
- 1.6 The State Government to expand the Integrated Water Management Grants program to provide more investment for Water Sensitive Urban Design at a local level and specifically fund \$3.5m for the Curtain Square Stormwater Harvesting project;
- 1.7 The State Government to accelerate the upgrade of all DTP streetlights in Yarra to smart LED;
- 1.8 The State and Federal Governments to develop a cohesive EV policy and fund/invest in the rollout and implementation of public and private electric vehicle chargers in Victoria;
- 1.9 The Federal Government to implement a ban on fossil fuel advertising.
- 1.10 The State Government to review and amend the electrical line clearance regulations in metropolitan areas to save canopy trees.

2. Circular Economy

Background

Every year, more than 80 billion tonnes of raw materials like metal, cardboard and plastics are consumed in Australia - that's set to double by 2060. Right now, only 9% of that raw material is reused and recycled. This is because our current waste system struggles to do much with our materials after it's thrown away. At Yarra City Council, we're working to reduce waste at each step, from design and purchasing to use and disposal. This creates a 'circular economy' which changes how we handle and value our raw materials resulting in less being sent to landfill.

A circular economy model employs three core principles; design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate natural systems.

A more circular and sustainable system is required, one that works with manufacturers to rethink how products are made and reduce the waste that's created during production, supporting our local recycling industry, reducing excess consumption and reusing items wherever possible.

This strategy requires state, federal and international work to ensure a more circular and sustainable system. Significant policy and regulatory systemic change are required to achieve an economic system that views generation of waste as a design flaw and ensures our production and consumption habits support, rather than challenge, our transition to a net zero emissions economy.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 2.1 The State and Federal Government to implement material product and packaging standards across the 'supply chain' so products last longer, are repairable, reusable and recyclable and prohibit excessive packaging and hard to recycle products;
- 2.2 The State Government to invest its landfill levy in new innovations and technology that accelerate a circular economy and reduce waste going to landfill;
- 2.3 The State Government immediate upgrade waste services and waste facilities for all public housing across Yarra's to ensure consistency with the objectives outlined in the State Governments circular economy plan "[Recycling Victoria: A new economy](#)" and the Household Waste and Recycling Service Standards;
- 2.4 The State Government immediately commit to working directly with the M9 Councils to ensure that the States Household Waste and Recycling Service Standards take into account to complexities of waste management in inner metropolitan Melbourne and are workable in their implementation.

3. Transport

Background

So that Yarra remains an attractive inner-city destination to live, work and visit, it's vital we address transport challenges, create sustainable and active transport opportunities. That's why we deliver infrastructure, and advocate and innovate to improve the liveability of our neighbourhood.

To make walking and cycling a safe and attractive part of everyday life, we are improving footpaths and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. In addition, we deliver, and advocate for, an integrated transport network that prioritises sustainable and active transport that is safe, accessible, equitable and reduces barriers to community movement. This includes high-quality and connected walking and cycling routes and public transport options to enable our community, including older persons and people with mobility limitations, to move around the city with ease.

It is vital that we are at the decision-making table with the Victorian and Federal Governments on these issues and that adequate funding for local priorities is provided. State and Federal Government must make sure there is better alignment between funding streams, major projects and local priorities.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 3.1 The State Government to prioritise funding and implementation of Strategic Cycling Corridor links in the City of Yarra to provide more separated lanes and connectivity;
- 3.2 The State Government to fully fund and deliver a new fit-for-purpose bridge across the Yarra River at Walmer Street;
- 3.3 The State immediately commit to the provision, design and management of Disability Discrimination Act compliant tram stops and surrounding area upgrades to the Fitzroy Gasworks, Brunswick Street, Gertrude Street, Bridge Road and Church Street tram stops;
- 3.4 The State Government commit to streamlining their approval pathways and cutting red tape for walking and cycling works on local streets;
- 3.5 The State Government to fully fund improvements to walking, wheeling, bike and active transport issues in the Cremorne precinct including at the intersection of Kelso and Punt Road and Swan and Cremorne Street.
- 3.6 The State Government to extend the 30km/ph trial to include all of Fitzroy and Collingwood and include 30 km/h as a standard speed limit in the upcoming review of the Speed Zone Policy;
- 3.7 The State Government to fully fund works to make permanent the pop-up bike lanes on Heidelberg Road, Wellington Street, Elizabeth Street and connecting routes;
- 3.8 The State Government to deliver the North-East Link busway and provide a high-quality link into the CBD;
- 3.9 Inclusion of a new active transport corridor that runs parallel to the Eastern Freeway as part of the North-East Link project;
- 3.10 The State Government to implement an ongoing local road funding stream to ensure maintenance issues that don't meet the criteria for other grant programs can be dealt with. Existing funding streams and grants are either too rigid, or simply unsustainable.

4. A Vibrant Yarra

Background

The arts and culture sector is vital to Yarra's local economy and community. Yarra is known for its live music, galleries and visual arts studios, theatres, performance and literature venues, and public art. Council is committed to supporting local arts and culture particularly following the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yarra also has a thriving local economy with more than 16,600 businesses, making us home to one of the largest economies in metropolitan Melbourne. Our proximity to CBD business activity, cultural and sporting centres, road, rail and tram links makes Yarra an attractive place to do business and work. Our dynamic economy is driven by 4 key areas: knowledge industries, creative industries, population-driven activities and the health, education and public sectors.

From artists and craftspeople to the traders on our shopping strips to the increasing number of creative enterprises and technology businesses – Yarra's economic capacity is diverse and growing.

We aspire to be a global hub for the small to medium arts sector, showcase our diverse cultures and champion our role as a recognised centre for LGBTIQ+ culture and business. Fitzroy and Collingwood are important cultural and meeting places for Aboriginal peoples, with many people from the Stolen Generations finding their families and community in these places.

We will continue to deliver and advocate for a range of enabling infrastructure and work to improve the amenity and economic prosperity of our city.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 4.1 The Minister for Housing commits to releasing the North Richmond Masterplan and revitalisation project;
- 4.2 The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions to reinvigorate the Cremorne Place Implementation Plan working group and reaffirm their commitment to making Cremorne a centre for innovation, technology and high-skilled jobs;
- 4.3 The State Government to fund \$1.5m redeveloping the streetscape outside Richmond Town Hall to revitalise the precinct and attract more visitors to the area;
- 4.4 The State Government to commit to ongoing funding of at least \$500,000 per year to support Yarra's Leaps and Bounds Festival;
- 4.5 The State Government fund \$100,000 for the development of research into the Night-Time Economy and how inner-metro areas can work together to leverage activities and programs that boost community engagement;
- 4.6 The State Government to immediately commit to permanently locating and funding the Victoria Pride Street Festival on Smith and Gertrude Street Fitzroy;
- 4.7 The State Government to commit to funding capital projects within Yarra City Council's Brunswick Street, Victoria Street, Swan Street and Bridge Road streetscape masterplans.

5. Land Use and Planning

Background

Yarra supports an efficient and fair planning system that places community input and wellbeing at its centre. As the level of government closest to the community, councils are best placed to lead and implement planning policy that responds to local needs and vision. Councils understand that local areas pay a high price for poor planning decisions that place short-term gain over the long-term benefits of sound strategic planning.

Yarra will continue to advocate for strong policy leadership on a range of issues that are important to our community, particularly climate change mitigation and adaptation and mechanisms to meet the systemic lack of social and affordable housing.

Yarra will advocate for reforms to the planning system that improve transparency in decision-making, responds to the urgency of the climate crisis, delivers necessary infrastructure, and empowers communities to make informed decisions on the future of their neighbourhoods.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 5.1 The State Government immediately commits to ensuring that any changes to planning controls or planning powers will maintain input from local Councils and safeguard the community voice;
- 5.2 In response to the planning reforms announced by in September 2023, that the State Government:
 - Specify how DTP will consider Council's built form controls and Councils strategic planning when determining 'significant developments';
 - Commit to ensuring that all Public Open Space and Development Contributions are captured;
 - Qualify how or when the 10% affordable housing will be waived or varied;
 - Commit to transparent decision making by publishing of all DTP's Planning (decision) Reports, including application assessments, details as to why affordable housing requirements have been reduced or waived, height and other built form controls have been varied;
 - Commits to ensuring that the Development Facilitation Program does not shift costs to Council by directly reimbursing Council for the full costs incurred for planning advice;
 - Commit to providing reasonable time frames to allow Council to respond to referrals and requests for advice.
- 5.3 The State Government reaffirm their commitment to delivering the Cremorne Place Implementation Plan including funding streetscape, traffic movement and amenity improvements;
- 5.4 The Minister for Planning to urgently approve all outstanding Yarra Planning Scheme amendments;
- 5.5 The State Government to continue investing in creating more green, community space through road discontinuances and immediately fund \$3.5m to deliver the Charlotte Street pocket park in Richmond;
- 5.6 The State Government to work with Yarra to identify government owned land in Cremorne to create new public space.

6. Public, Social and Affordable Housing

Background

Council has a long and proud tradition of advocating for the best housing outcomes for its residents and is resolute in its commitment to work with all levels of government and private, non-profit and government property developers to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the municipality.

Sustaining a socio-economically diverse population in Yarra requires us to address a range of affordable housing needs and ensure accessible options across various income levels. This commitment extends from supporting the most vulnerable members of our community and through to the key workers essential to our economy. Offering affordable housing options for very low, low, and low-to-moderate-income households exerts downward pressure on market forces, alleviating the current housing market's polarisation. In this market, public and social housing is limited, and most available housing is often only accessible to high-income earners.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 6.1 The State Government to immediately committing to ensuring that all public housing tenants are fully informed of all processes and possible outcomes from all public housing redevelopments and supporting them through any changes;
- 6.2 No significant net loss of vital open space that may result from future infill construction across the public housing estates;
- 6.3 The immediate incorporation of inclusionary zoning in planning schemes in Greater Melbourne and beyond to dramatically increase the provision of affordable housing options for lower-income households and key workers;
- 6.4 A mandated minimum social and affordable requirement for build-to-rent developments with binding agreements with registered housing agencies to retain social and affordable housing stock into the future;
- 6.5 At any public housing redevelopments, there is a mix of dwellings made available across the spectrum of housing products for singles, couples, and families to ensure that people of various life stages can reside in the same neighbourhood, fostering social diversity, promoting community stability, and enabling aging in place;
- 6.6 All new public and community housing dwellings are to be indistinguishable from any affordable-to-purchase or private market housing stock (i.e., tenure blind);
- 6.7 Efficient allocation of government capital funding currently distributed across various authorities (e.g., Victorian Health Building Authority and Homes Victoria) towards viable, needs-based mixed-use projects (e.g., combining health facilities with housing or adult education with housing), such as the cohealth proposal on Hoddle Street, Collingwood;
- 6.8 Access to capital funding from state and federal housing growth funds should be enabled for non-profit organisations owning undercapitalised land to realise mixed-use redevelopment.

7. Public Health and Wellbeing

Background

Yarra City Council is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and connected community where everyone is welcome and has the opportunity to participate and receive the support and services they need. We deliver social, physical and mental wellbeing services directly to our community as well as partnering with other tiers of government and community organisations.

During times of crisis and emergency, we respond to evolving needs within our community and support those in need. We actively support our more vulnerable populations and make decisions in the best interests of our community's health and wellbeing. Council works in partnership with other agencies including Victoria Police and Victorian Government in responding to community safety. These issues are complex, and Council is aware of the significant impact that drug-related activity is having on the community.

Council's key role and influence is working in partnership with others to promote and address public health, safety and amenity. Council leads, supports and participates in a range of coordinated responses to address complex and dynamic issues found in the community. Council also supports and advocates for an approach that prioritises investment in service delivery and community development, to respond to vulnerabilities, using a strengths-based approach to community safety.

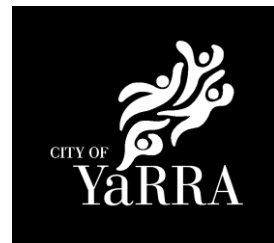
The focus of all levels of government on public health, mental health and wellbeing is welcomed but it is critical that local coordination of new funding programs and service delivery from both federal and state government works to minimise service gaps and duplication of scarce resources including trained workforces.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

7.1 Improving safety and amenity in the North Richmond precinct:

- The State Government immediately assumes responsibility for syringe management services and associated cleansing in the North Richmond and southern Abbotsford area (currently costed at \$500,000 PA), or funds the full costs currently met by Council;
- To effectively support harm reduction efforts, the State Government should establish additional medically supervised injecting rooms near street-level drug markets across the Greater Melbourne area;
- The State Government to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring members of our community continue to receive the support and services they need and prioritise initiatives that foster community resilience and connectedness in the North Richmond Precinct;
- The State Government to collaborate with Yarra City Council to enhance safety perceptions around the immediate perimeter of the Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR). This collaboration should involve exploring design interventions that can contribute to improved safety in the area.



- 7.2 The Federal Government to ensure the new aged care funding model provides for a flexible funding model for aged care group-based programs, including social support, community transport and meals programs, that recognises the fixed costs of providing these services and individualised funding models.

8. Early Years, Education and Young People

Background

A key responsibility of Victorian councils is strategically planning for the health, wellbeing, safety, connection to culture, access and participation, and development of its youngest citizens. Councils take a whole-of-community, whole-of-system approach to building community strength and addressing the underlying causes of inequity and vulnerability of children and young people and their families.

Local government understands the importance of the early years and continues to formally embrace this through a range of plans, infrastructure provision, service delivery and support. A municipality that has a focus on children is one that benefits all members of the community.

Whilst local government understands the importance of the early years and continues to formally embrace this through a range of plans, infrastructure provision, service delivery and support, it is becoming increasingly difficult for local government to play a provider role in the face of significant federal and state level reform. Childhood is a stage of life where investment has the greatest return and opportunities to intervene have the greatest impacts. Yarra will prioritise its focus to ensure an optimum environment for children and young people.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 8.1 Improved pathways to education and employment for young people in the City of Yarra, particularly through partnerships with online and tech businesses located in the Cremorne precinct;
- 8.2 The State Government to continue to provide core funding of \$305,000 annually (indexed to CPI) to Council for the Richmond Youth Hub for a minimum of a further four years from July 2024;
- 8.3 An ongoing partnership with local government in the provision of universal maternal and child health services, including an increase in the State Government's unit cost to meet the 50:50 funding arrangement;
- 8.4 The State Government to commit to fully funding unmet demand identified in the updated Kindergarten Infrastructure and Service Plan (KISP) and resources to implement the kindergarten reform, including associated infrastructure / capital and operational costs.

9. Financial Sustainability

Background

Councils, including Yarra, tend to 'step in' as a provider of 'last resort' when other levels of government or the market exits a service to the community. This occurs when the service is essential and more recently perceived to be important to the community. Typically, councils do not receive sufficient funding to deliver these services and often struggle to maintain continuity.

Going forward, Council alongside our community, will need to make difficult decisions about the role of local government in delivering services that address a shortfall created by other levels of government.

Cost-shifting occurs where Local Government provides a service to the community on behalf of the State and Federal Government. Over time the funds received by local government does not increase in line with real cost increases. Some sector estimates herald a cumulative burden of cost-shifting in the order of \$6.2b in a 10-year period (preceding 2021). Legislative and policy changes imposed by the State Government have had a significant financial impact on Yarra, such as early years reform, pool fence compliance, psychological safety legislation, cladding, gender equality legislation, child safe legislation, the fire services levy and waste reforms. In all these services, the level of payment Council receives (or the absence of payment) from government does not reflect the real cost of providing the service to the community – leaving a financial burden that is borne by ratepayers.

Our Position

Yarra advocates for:

- 9.1 The revision of agreements for co-funded 50 / 50 services between levels of government, as many have shifted unfair burdens onto local government (i.e school crossing supervisors) over time and haven't risen with inflation;
- 9.2 The creation of mechanisms to fully resource Councils to implement the growing number of obligations from new State Government legislation;
- 9.3 Greater consideration in Regulatory Impact Statements of the costs that will be borne by local government;
- 9.4 The Federal Government to increase Financial Assistance grants and restore them back to 1% of Commonwealth tax revenue;
- 9.5 The State Government to reinstate a state funded program to ensure local government is adequately supported to continue the ongoing maintenance and additional replacement and renewal of the local road network.