

Municipal public health and wellbeing planning 2021–2025

Advice Note 1

August 2020

The [Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#) recognises the significant role of councils in improving the health and wellbeing of people who live, work, study and play in their municipality. The Act requires councils to develop a municipal public health and wellbeing plan every four years (within 12 months of each general election of the council); the next municipal public health and wellbeing plans are due in October 2021.

This Advice Note summarises the legislative requirements of municipal public health and wellbeing plans, outlines policy priorities for the health and wellbeing of all Victorians, and provides links to relevant data and resources. A second Advice Note will be issued to outline the process and timelines of seeking an exemption from producing a standalone municipal public health and wellbeing plan. Further Advice Notes will be issued if required.

Victoria has faced major public health challenges in 2020 with bushfires and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which will continue to have significant impact over the coming years. Councils will have a key role to play in supporting their communities to recover from the resulting broad ranging social and economic impacts, while continuing to respond to the major causes of ill health. As part of these recovery efforts, there are significant opportunities for councils to promote healthier and more sustainable communities.

The Department of Health and Human Services will continue to work with councils to support the development and implementation of municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

Municipal public health and wellbeing plan

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act requires the municipal public health and wellbeing plan to be consistent with the Council Plan prepared under section 90 of the [Local Government Act 2020](#) (previously section 125 of the *Local Government Act 1989*) and the Municipal Strategic Statement prepared under section 12A of the [Planning and Environment Act 1987](#).

Section 26 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act specifies what must be included in a municipal public health and wellbeing plan:

- include an examination of data about health status and health determinants in the municipal district
- identify goals and strategies based on available evidence for creating a local community in which people can achieve maximum health and wellbeing
- specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community
- provide for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan
- specify how the council will work in partnership with the Department (of Health and Human Services) and other agencies undertaking public health initiatives, projects and programs to accomplish the goals and strategies identified in the public health and wellbeing plan.

Councils are required to review the municipal public health and wellbeing plan annually and, if appropriate, amend it; and to provide a copy of the current municipal public health and wellbeing plan to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Family violence prevention and response

Section 26 (2)(ba) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act requires councils to specify (in their municipal public health and wellbeing plan) measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community. In May 2017, the department provided advice on [Family violence and municipal public health and wellbeing planning: Guidance for local government](#) which remains relevant.

Section 26 (6A) requires councils to report to the Secretary on these measures at the intervals specified by the Secretary by notice in writing.

Requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020

Section 9 of the [Gender Equality Act](#) requires councils employing 50 or more staff to undertake a Gender Impact Assessment when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct and significant impact on the public. Further information is available from the [gender equality website](#).

Having regard to the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023

Section 26(3) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act requires councils to have regard to the State public health and wellbeing plan in developing their municipal public health and wellbeing plan. The [Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023](#) is the overarching policy framework for improving public health and wellbeing in Victoria.

Ten priorities are identified, based on the issues that are the greatest contributors to the burden of disease and health inequalities and emerging threats or challenges to the public's health and wellbeing and where a lack of action is likely to result in significant future health burden. Four priorities are highlighted for particular focus over the four years of the plan; the focus areas are:

- tackling climate change and its impact on health
- increasing healthy eating
- increasing active living
- reducing tobacco-related harm.

Councils are encouraged to concentrate their next municipal public health and wellbeing plans on these focus areas. Given the public health challenges faced over the past 12 months – bushfires and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – Councils are encouraged to integrate action on these focus areas with response, relief and recovery efforts.

In developing the municipal public health and wellbeing plan councils should seek to ensure that involvement of the local community reflects the diversity of the people living in the municipality.

Including municipal public health and wellbeing matters in a Council Plan or Strategic Plan

Section 27 of the Act provides councils the option to include public health and wellbeing matters in a Council Plan or Strategic Plan rather than develop a stand-alone municipal public health and wellbeing plan. Regardless of which option is taken, the requirements of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act are the same.

Councils wishing to include public health and wellbeing matters into their Council or Strategic Plan will need to seek an exemption from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and outline their commitment to meet other requirements outlined in section 26 (such as annual reviews).

The Community Vision, required by the Local Government Act, is not considered a strategic plan, therefore inclusion of public health and wellbeing matters into a (ten year) Community Vision will not meet the requirements of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act. However, the municipal public health and wellbeing plan should contribute to achieving the aspirations of the Community Vision.

The Department of Health and Human Services will issue further advice in the coming months to outline the process and timelines for seeking an exemption.

Requirements of the *Climate Change Act 2017*

Section 17 of the Climate Change Act requires councils to have regard to climate change in preparation of their municipal public health and wellbeing plans. The department has been consulting with councils to provide contemporary advice to assist councils in meeting this legislative requirement. The advice will include: the legislative and policy context; climate change in Victoria; public health impacts, mitigation, adaptation and health co-benefits of action, advice on incorporating climate change into the stages of the municipal public health and wellbeing planning cycle; Victorian case studies; and helpful resources and references.

The advice will be released later in 2020. For further information contact

Environmental.healthUnit@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Local Government Act 2020

The Local Government Act establishes a modern legislative framework for Victorian councils, guided by five primary principles including community engagement, strategic planning, financial management, public transparency and service performance. The principles of community engagement and strategic planning are particularly relevant to council planning and the development of the municipal public health and wellbeing plan. Further information on the Local Government Act and its implementation is available from [Local Government Victoria](#).

Data sources and resources to inform municipal public health and wellbeing planning

The following data sources and resources are available for councils to inform the development of the new municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

Data sources

[Victorian population health survey](#) (DHHS) The 2017 survey results are available at local government level. The 2020 survey will also report at local government level.

[Victorian Child and Adolescent Health Monitoring System](#) (VCAMS) (DET)

[Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census](#) (ABS)

[Victoria in Future 2019](#) (DELWP) Population projections for Victoria 2016 to 2056 including data tables.

[Victorian climate projections 2019](#) (DELWP and the CSIRO). Local-scale climate projections data for Victoria at a 5 km by 5 km scale.

[Local Government Areas Report on Population Diversity](#) (Victorian Government) Provides local government level data on the key ABS census cultural and language diversity indicators for Victoria's population.

[Victorian Women's Health Atlas](#) (Women's Health Victoria)

[Australia's Health 2020](#) (AIHW)

[Data.Vic](#) (Victorian Government) Open data site

[Injury Atlas of Victoria](#) (Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit)

[Australian Urban Observatory](#) (RMIT University)

[Australia's Health Tracker 2019](#) (Mitchell Institute)

[Wellbeing Index](#) (Australian Unity)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) related surveys/data

[Household impacts of COVID-19](#) (ABS)

VicHealth COVID-19 Victorian Wellbeing Impact Survey forthcoming. Estimated release date late August 2020

Resources

Peak organisations

[Municipal Association of Victoria](#) (MAV) The legislated peak body for local government in Victoria.

[Victorian Local Governance Association](#) (VLGA) An independent organisation supporting councils and councillors in good governance.

[Local Government Professionals \(LGPro\)](#) The leading voice for people working in Local Government in Victoria.

Implementing the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019-2023*

[Evidence based guidance](#) The department has summarized the evidence for interventions, materials and tools for each of the focus areas and some priorities of the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023*. The guidance is provided for a range of settings, including local government.

[Prevention Victoria](#) (DHHS) Showcases the work of the prevention, population health and health promotion sector in various settings, including [school and early years](#), [local government areas](#), [recreation and sport](#), [workplaces](#), [hospitals and health services](#) and [food and hospitality](#); and provides [statewide](#) policies and resources.

[Victorian public health and wellbeing outcomes framework and data dictionary](#) (DHHS)

[Achievement Program](#) (Cancer Council Victoria)

[Healthy Eating Advisory Service](#) (HEAS) (Nutrition Victoria)

[Healthy Food Connect](#) (DHHS)

[Life! Helping you prevent diabetes, heart disease and stroke](#) (Diabetes Vic)

[Healthy active by design](#) and [Blueprint for an Active Australia](#) (Heart Foundation)

[Getting Australia Active III: A systems approach to physical activity for policy makers](#) (The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre and the University of Sydney)

[VicHealth](#) will release updated evidence-based action guides in the coming months. VicHealth also provides [tips, resources, and downloads about coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), including delivering health promotion information on-line.

[Cancer Council Victoria](#)

[Victorian Active Ageing Partnership](#) (Musculoskeletal Australia)

[Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute](#) (AHURI)

[QUIT Victoria](#)

[Infant Feeding, Activity and Nutrition Program](#) (INFANT) (Deakin University)

[Victorian Health Eating Enterprise](#) (DHHS)

Victorian Active Living Alliance (DHHS/SRV) For more information, please email <vala@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

[Climate Change and Health](#) (DHHS)

[Addressing social issues in the context of COVID](#) (Centre for Social Impact) Fact sheets about specific social issues in the context of COVID-19.

Preventing and responding to family violence and gender equality

[Free from violence, Free from violence first action plan, and Family violence outcomes framework](#) (Victorian Government)

[Pride in Prevention](#) (Rainbow Health Victoria).

[Family Violence Primary Prevention: Building a knowledge base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence](#) (The Equality Institute)

[Safe and Strong Gender Equality Strategy](#) (Victorian Government)

[Gender Equality](#) (MAV) Provides information about Local Government Grants Program and Promising practice portal

Aboriginal Victorians

[Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan](#) (DELWP) The plan currently includes an objective for enhanced municipal public health planning and delivery to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal communities. This plan is currently under review.

[Maggolee](#) (Reconciliation Victoria) This website is a resource for councils to work more closely with Aboriginal communities and includes information on policies and programs, protocols and cultural awareness, key contacts, relevant local data, news and events.

Previous guidance for municipal public health and wellbeing planning

The Department of Health and Human Services has previously published a number of [planning guides](#) to assist councils in development of their municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

The guides available include:

Guide to municipal public health and wellbeing planning (2013)

Part 1 of the 2013 guide (legislation and policy direction) is replaced by this current advice. Part 2 of the 2013 guide contains useful information on elements for effective planning.

Including public health and wellbeing matters in the council plan or strategic plan (2013)

Updated processes and timelines to seek an exemption from producing a stand-alone municipal public health and wellbeing plan will be released in the coming months.

Family violence and municipal public health and wellbeing planning – Guidance for Local Government (2017)

This guidance is also relevant to 2021–2025 municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

Department of Health and Human Services local support for councils in developing municipal public health and wellbeing plans

The Department of Health and Human Services Area teams can provide support to councils in developing their municipal public health and wellbeing plans. A map of the Department’s Areas and local government is available [here](#).

For further information about how Area teams can help, contact the Manager, Population Health and Community Wellbeing in your local area.

DHHS Area	Contact details
North Division	
North Eastern Melbourne	Belinda.Pavilach@dhhs.vic.gov.au
Hume Moreland	Coleen.Howe@dhhs.vic.gov.au
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South Division	
Bayside Peninsula	Prevention.south@dhhs.vic.gov.au
Southern Melbourne	
Inner Gippsland	
Outer Gippsland	
East Division	
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Western Melbourne	Mark.Lee@dhhs.vic.gov.au
Wimmera South West	Simone.Dalton@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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In this document, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori/Koorie’ is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.