

Liveability Plan Review: What we heard

Report on engagement January to February 2025

June 2025

Contents

Executive summary	2
Community Consultation	3
Objectives and purpose	3
Engagement promotion	3
Engagement activities	3
Who we heard from	4
Engagement findings	5
What we heard	5
Decision making	7
How the results shaped the outcome	7
Next steps	7
Appendices	8
Appendix 1 - Community Engagement Activities Conducted	8
Appendix 2 – Community engagement response form	9

Executive summary

Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan 2017-29 (the Plan) is Council's municipal public health and wellbeing plan required by all local governments under the Victorian *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. The aim of the Plan is to achieve maximum levels of health and wellbeing by identifying and assessing the actual and potential public health issues and risks in the community and outlining strategies and actions to minimise or prevent them. The Plan has a focus on 'keeping well people well' and provides a strategic framework to improve liveability, health, and wellbeing in the shire over a 12-year time frame.

Under the *Act 2008*, Council must review the Plan every four years, including "an examination of data about health status and health determinants in the municipal district" and to "provide for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan." This ensures the Plan provides a contemporary approach to inform the operational activities of Council, partner organisations and local community groups.

Initial community engagement to review the Liveability Plan was conducted between January and February 2025. This first phase of community engagement was supported by funding from VicHealth and aimed to understand the opportunities to improve health outcomes identified by communities who face the greatest barriers to health, including the impacts from climate change on health.

A summary of the engagement outcomes is outlined in Figure 1 below.

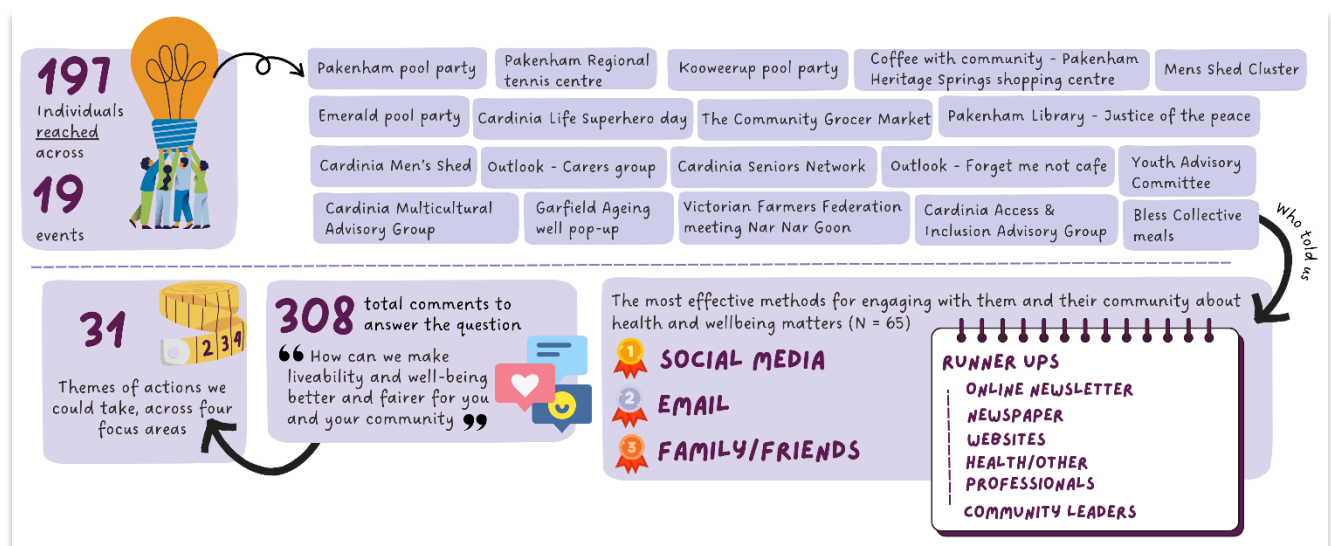


Figure 1. Summary of community engagement outcomes

Key themes have emerged from the data, as described within the *Engagement findings* section of this report. These findings were used to inform changes to the Liveability Plan, alongside other key sources discussed in the *Decision-making* section of this report.

Community Consultation

Council's Health and Social Planning Team conducted various community engagement activities from January to February 2025, to help inform the 2025 review of Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan.

Objectives and purpose

The **objective** of this phase of engagement was to inform changes within the Liveability Plan including updating objectives and domains.

The **purpose** of the engagement was to consult community groups and members who experience poorer health, social and/or economic outcomes, to understand opportunities to improve health and health-equity.

Engagement promotion

Community feedback was collected via random intercept surveys and group interviews, across nineteen council-related events and existing community group meetings, allowing for issue exploration, particularly in group settings.

These locations were prioritised based on their targeting of the primary audiences identified from groups listed within Council's Background Report for the Social Justice and Equity Policy. The populations and groups identified are those who experience poorer health, social and/or economic outcomes that the general population, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- Children, young people and families
- Older adults
- People with disability
- People of different genders
- People experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage
- People living in rural areas.

The opportunities to interact with community members were provided by various units within council. These opportunities were already organised by council staff, or were events organised and held by partner agencies or groups who have established relationships with council. This included regular meetings of established community groups. See Appendix 1 for a list of engagement locations.

Engagement activities

The set questions asked of community members comprised an overarching question: "What could make health and wellbeing better or fairer for you or your community", as it applied to the following four domains aligned to the Liveability Plan outcome areas:

1. Mental and physical wellbeing
2. Safety and community connection
3. Family violence
4. Financial wellbeing

Where possible and appropriate, participants were also asked for some basic demographics along with their preferred channels of communication for receiving health and wellbeing information. Participants were offered the following methods to provide feedback:

1. Completing an anonymous, written feedback form at one of the events,
2. Submitting written feedback via the provided paper forms to Council via mail or email,
3. Providing feedback verbally to a Council representative, which was transcribed onto a feedback form, or,
4. In group settings, providing feedback verbally which was transcribed by a Council staff member.

See Appendix 2 for a copy of the feedback form.

Who we heard from

Overall, 197 community members were reached by the community engagement activities. Not all attendees at the group interviews necessarily participated however, with some possibly not able or choosing to due to comfort in public disclosure or personal preference. Demographics of participants in group interviews were not collected due to the inability to maintain privacy and confidentiality in these settings, and as a result, these demographics were not captured in the below figures. Of those who did provide demographics, participants comprised a mix of ages and gender, with those identifying as female between 36 and 49 years of age being the largest cohort as can be seen in figure 2 below. Participants preferring not to answer are denoted by “0”.

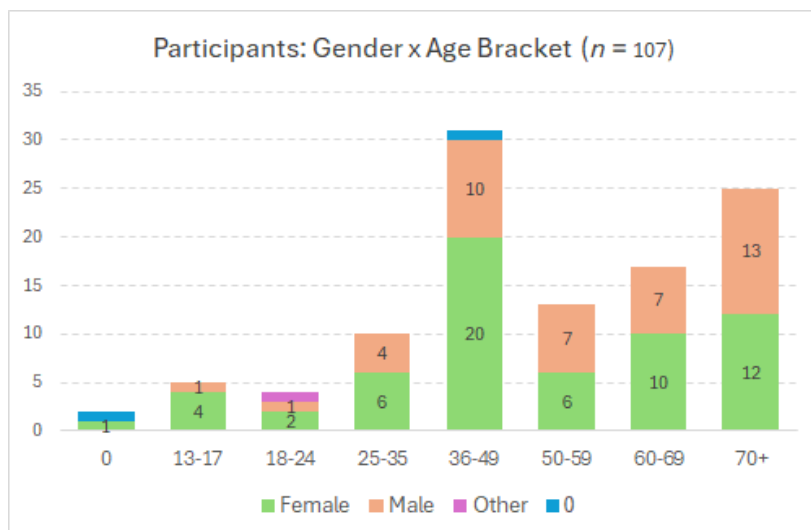


Figure 2: Count of participants' age by self-identified gender

Figure 3 below reveals the resident living or working location and first language spoken by participants, with native English speakers residing in Pakenham being a large majority.

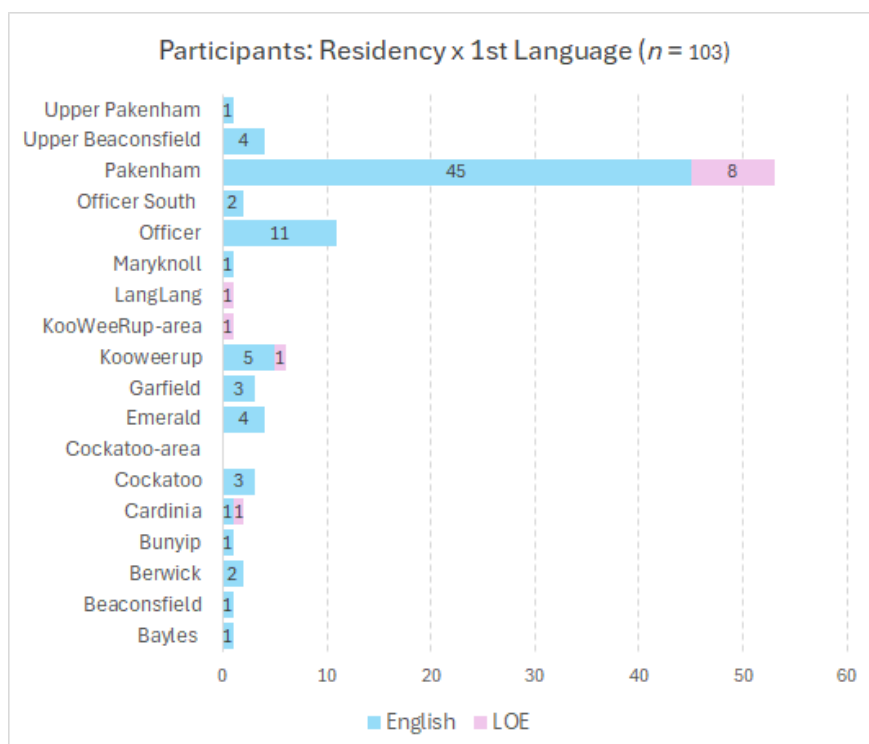


Figure 3: Count of participants' resident location by 1st language (English vs Language Other than English)

Engagement findings

Feedback collected was categorised under the four health and wellbeing areas, and then thematically analysed to identify solutions raised in response to the key question “*how could health and wellbeing be made better or fairer for you or your community?*”

An overarching theme from the feedback was that while there is an appreciation for the Shire’s facilities, services, amenities and activities, they aren’t easily accessible to everyone. This was seen to have the greatest impact on health and wellbeing, from those who face the greatest health, social and economic barriers.

It is important to note that feedback gathered from participants was not limited to (but could include) features, places, services, facilities or programs that Council directly delivers, funds or regulates. All responses gathered, related to each respondent's experience of health and wellbeing within the boundaries of Cardinia Shire.

What we heard

Participant Communication Preferences

Figure 3 presents the results for communication preferences in relation to how participants preferred to receive information about health and wellbeing matters, with social media the most reported.

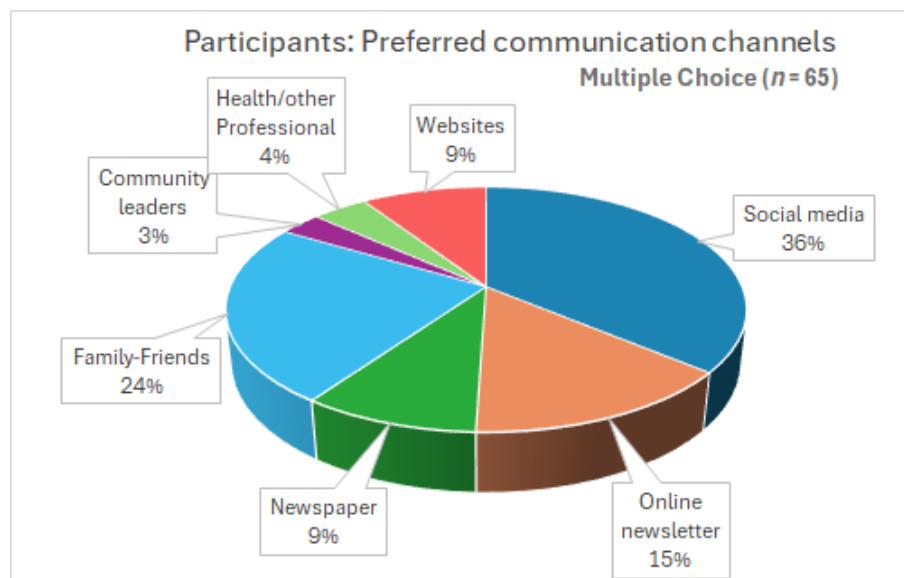


Figure 3: Preferred communication channels for Health & wellbeing information

Participants were also asked if there were other channels of communication which they preferred that were not listed in the set of options. Table 2 reveals that email is a commonly preferred communication channel, along with the remaining ‘other’ responses.

Table 2: Count of the 'Other' communication preferences reported

OTHER	COUNT
Email	23
Newsletter	10
Post	9
SMS/Text	4
Library	3
School	2
Facebook	1
Noticeboards	1
Community groups	1
TV	1
Books	1
Rates Notice	1

What communities need to improve their wellbeing

There were 308 comments for feedback, which were classified into 31 themes across the four categories. The table below outlines the core themes that emerged for each category. Some quotes have been chosen to highlight the meaning and stories that were shared across these themes.

Mental and Physical Wellbeing (i.e. exercise, nutrition, social connection, reducing alcohol, drugs, smoking and vaping)	
Communities need improved access and awareness of the existing facilities, services and activities that the Shire has, as well as addressing the gaps in services and facilities that exist. Commonly articulated ideas for solutions included more and well-maintained open spaces, more healthcare and food options locally to avoid long travel distances, improved public transport options, consider financial and accessibility impediments for vulnerable groups, and improved promotion of facilities, activities and services.	<i>"I like that parks are fenced and enclosed, but they all need toilets, especially accessible toilets, more seating, shade, and a place to fill up my drink bottle."</i> - Respondent, intercept survey, Pakenham <i>"Need more halal food options locally... We go all the way to Dandenong market to do our shopping"</i> - Respondent, intercept survey, Kooweerup <i>"Educate the community about what [food] is fresh and in season; we have been spoilt by the supermarkets having a variety of produce 12 months of the year."</i> - Participant, group interview, Nar Nar Goon
Safety and Community Connectedness (i.e. fair access, cultural safety, crime)	
Communities need opportunities and spaces where they feel welcome and safe to connect, and connection in turn, fosters safety. Commonly articulated ideas for solutions included visible safety personnel and design features, more community events and groups, especially for young people, and safe pedestrian crossings. Positives were shared about staff in public places and cultural events.	<i>"More opportunity for people to interact with people of all different backgrounds"</i> - Respondent, intercept survey, Pakenham <i>"I feel safe on [my] road, as there is a great police presence already. I get to know local people through walking.... but let's help residents connect"</i> - Respondent, intercept survey, Pakenham
Family Violence (i.e. financial, physical and emotional abuse)	
Communities need increased education and awareness, access to welfare and housing support, and improved laws and legal system. Common solutions articulated included	<i>"Family support is really important, financially and to help look after children ... people need a better understanding of family law"</i> - Respondent, intercept survey, Pakenham

increasing knowledge of the issues involved and solutions, early life education about violence, and improved processes to support people in escaping family violence.	<i>“Across Victoria we have various examples of intergenerational programs – we have to start with the younger generation” - Participant, group interview, Kooweerup</i>
Financial Wellbeing (i.e. budgeting and understanding bills)	
Community need increased education, awareness and information. Commonly articulated ideas for solutions included reducing cost of living pressures through low-cost activities, increasing awareness of free activities and increasing financial skills across all communities and scenarios, from schools through to people in distress.	<i>“I use a lot of free services, Libraries, waste teams provided free re-useable nappies, uses cardboard drop off day at the tip to save money.” - Respondent, intercept survey, Pakenham</i> <i>“Reliable financial advice is important as we age, especially if you lose a partner who manages the finances. Access to help with computers would...help manage online finances” - Respondent, intercept survey, Garfield</i>

Decision making

We listened widely, drawing insights from the findings of this engagement, alongside data gathered from recent government surveys (Census, Victorian Population Health Survey), local surveys (Cardinia Shire Household Liveability Survey), research partners and papers, and government strategies and policies, to inform the drafted changes to the Liveability Plan. With the Council Plan being developed simultaneously, we also gathered understanding about community priorities from the 2025 Deliberative Panel Report.

How the results shaped the outcome

We acknowledge and honour the contributions of the 197 community members who shared their stories of struggle, persistence and hope, alongside their ideas and perspectives of the solutions to creating a healthy and fairer community. Each of these stories have contributed to the creation of the Draft reviewed Liveability Plan.

The themes have informed a list of insights under the Liveability Plan domains for Council and key stakeholders to consider for future action, including as part of the development of the Council Plan 2025-29. This data was considered alongside a comprehensive analysis of public health data, policy analysis, and internal and external stakeholder engagement, to update the objectives within the revised Draft Liveability Plan based on needs and priorities.

Next steps

The final phase of community engagement, commencing from 22 July though to 22 August 2025, will seek to ensure that the objectives reflect our communities’ current needs and priorities, and shape how Council partners with organisations to enhance the health and wellbeing of our community.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Community Engagement Activities Conducted

DATE	GROUP/VENUE	PARTICIPANTS ¹	DATA COLLECTION METHOD
27/02/2025	Bless Meals Pakenham	15	Intercept interviews
10/01/2025	KooWeeRup Swimming Pool	9	Intercept interviews
13/01/2025	Pakenham Regional Tennis	9	Intercept interviews
15/01/2025	Pakenham Swimming Pool	4	Intercept interviews
16/01/2025	Heritage Springs Pakenham	8	Intercept interviews
17/01/2025	Emerald Swimming Pool	5	Intercept interviews
20/01/2025	Super-Hero Day (Pakenham pool)	5	Intercept interviews
30/1/2025	Community Grocer Pakenham	8	Intercept interviews
31/01/2025	Justice of Peace (Pakenham Library)	5	Intercept interviews
26/02/2025	Youth Action Committee Pakenham	8	Group Interview
5/2/2025	Cardinia Men's Shed	9	Group Interview
6/2/2025	Christ Church Carers' Group	7	Group Interview
13/2/2025	Cardinia Seniors network meeting	40	Group interview
18/02/2025	Outlook Forget me Not	4	Intercept interviews
18/02/2025	Vic Farmers Federation Nar Nar Goon	5	Group Interview
19/2/2025	Cardinia Access & Inclusion Advisory Committee	10	Group Interview
20/02/2025	Brewers Café Garfield (Ageing well)	3	Intercept interviews
20/02/2025	Multicultural Advisory Group	8	Intercept interviews
26/2/2025	Men's Shed Cluster	35	Group Interview
TOTAL		197	

¹ Respondents to intercept interviews and attendees at group interviews (not necessarily contributors)

Appendix 2 – Community engagement response form

Participant number(s)

Share your thoughts to help us create a liveable and healthy community

What could help make this better or fairer for you and your community?	
 Improving mental and physical wellbeing Things like exercise, healthy eating, social connection, reducing alcohol, drugs, smoking, vaping harm.	
 Improving safety and community connectedness Things like fair access, cultural safety and crime.	
 Reducing family violence Things like reducing all forms of violence and abuse, financial, physical, emotional.	
 Improving financial wellbeing and resilience Things like budgeting and understanding bills.	



interpreter

To provide feedback over the phone or get further information, contact Cardinia Shire Council on **1300 787 624** or mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au.
If you need an interpreter, call **131 450** to speak to a translator.
Ask the translator to ring Cardinia Shire Council on **1300 787 624**.



Cardinia