

7.3 LIFE STAGES STRATEGY

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Attachments: 1. Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy

SUMMARY

The Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy (draft) is a framework that aspires that all people within Mitchell Shire are valued, supported, connected, resilient, healthy and well as they transition through the life stages. This report outlines the Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy; including details of the context, development, and completed and planned consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse the draft Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy prior to going out to public comment.

BACKGROUND

The draft Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy (the Strategy) sits within the framework of the Mitchell Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. It is closely aligned to the Council Plan 2017-2021 and the Social Justice Framework 2017-2021. The Strategy consolidates and builds upon the achievements of three previous strategic plans: Mitchell Shire Early Years Plan 2012-2016; Mitchell Shire Youth Strategy 2014-2017; and Mitchell Shire Living Well for Life Strategy 2014-2018. It addresses previous gaps by including a focus on childhood middle years and adult individuals and families.

The Strategy is an aspirational document, shaped by what we know about the current, emerging and future population across the life stages. Through the Strategy, Council seeks to recognise and respond holistically to the needs of all people across all life stages and to provide directed focus at key transitions.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Development of the Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy

The following steps have been undertaken in developing the Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy:

- A critical review and evaluation of Mitchell Shire Early Years Plan, Youth Strategy and the Living Well for Life Strategy
- An extensive review of relevant International, National, State and Local policies and legislation
- Information drawn from community consultation: Community Wellbeing Survey 2017; Youth Survey 2017; Age Friendly Communities Project 2018; and, Your Budget Ideas 2019-2020.

LIFE STAGES STRATEGY (CONT.)

- Detailed review of Australian Bureau of Statistics and other data to inform key characteristics of Mitchell Shire's population
- Workshops conducted with stakeholders, both within the community and within the organisation, to learn from their extensive knowledge and experience
- A review to ensure alignment to the strategies within the Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2017-2021, Mitchell Shire Council Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021 and the Mitchell Shire Social Justice Framework 2017-2021.

The Life Stages

The strategy recognises that although every person will have a unique experience as they journey through life. There are common needs, issues and transitions that occur that typically correspond to each of the five key life stages. The five life stages are:

- Early Years (0-5 years of age)
- Middle Years (6-11 years of age)
- Youth (12-24 years of age)
- Individuals and Families (25-64 years of age)
- Positive Ageing (65+ years of age)

Identified priorities of the Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy

The strategy focusses on three priority areas recognising the social and cultural, economic, natural and built environments to ensure everyone is valued, supported, connected, resilient, healthy and well as they transition through the life stages.

The three priority areas are:

1. Health, wellbeing and safety
2. Learning, participation, jobs and enterprise
3. Partnerships, services and infrastructure

There are 21 aspirations that sit below the three priority areas. The priority areas and the corresponding aspirations will form the base to the corresponding four-year action plan.

CONSULTATION**Consultation to inform the development of the Life Stages Strategy to date**

The Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy has been developed in consultation with stakeholders:

- Youth Steering Committee
- Early Years Reference Group
- Cross-organisation, including a Project Working Group

The Strategy draws on numerous Mitchell Shire Council consultation surveys including:

- Community Wellbeing Survey 2017

LIFE STAGES STRATEGY (CONT.)

- Youth Survey 2017
- Age Friendly Communities Project 2018
- Your Budget Ideas 2019-2020

In its development, the Strategy has drawn on and utilised information gathered at various community engagement sessions that have occurred over previous years.

Planned consultation

Community consultation is planned for a period of six weeks in July-August 2019. During this time, the Strategy will be presented to key partners and community groups. Feedback will be sought through a short survey and will help shape the four-year Action Plan. The document will be made available online for this period.

Further internal, cross-organisational consultation is planned to occur simultaneously with the external consultation.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The development of the Mitchell Life Stages Strategy will be undertaken within existing resources.

Council Officers will continually seek to source external funding opportunities to resource initiatives where possible.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Mitchell Shire Council officers (and external partners) will be encouraged to use the Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy as a tool for applying evidence-based reform principles, strategies and a life stage approach to co-designing services, places and spaces that support people's wellbeing.

The Strategy adopts a whole of Council approach and informs practice across key Council policy, action plan and commitment areas, including:

- Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2017-2021
- Mitchell Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021
- Mitchell Shire Social Justice Framework 2017-2021
- Mitchell Shire Council Community Engagement Framework

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

The Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy and the draft Life Stages Action Plan encourages sustainability, featuring both social and environmental sustainability, across the three priority areas and in the corresponding aspirations.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The rights protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* were considered in preparing this report and it's determined that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

LIFE STAGES STRATEGY (CONT.)

Council affirms its human rights obligations under the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and lays a firm foundation upon which to build an inclusive, equitable and well-connected community.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The Strategy and Action Plan recognises it is vitally important to support people within the early life stages and their families. It highlights that attention given to early childhood, middle years and youth through support, services and infrastructure will improve and enrich the life of individuals throughout the life stages, and in turn positively impact the community as a whole.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

The draft Mitchell Shire Council Life Stages Strategy has been developed following a comprehensive research and consultation process. This Strategy aligns closely with the Council Plan 2017-2021 and outlines the priority areas and aspirations that will help to value, support and connect people living, working and playing in Mitchell Shire to foster resilience, health and wellness as they transition through the life stages.

Following Council's endorsement, the draft Mitchell Shire Council Life Stages Strategy will be made available for public consultation from 16 July 2019.

Subsequent to this process, a final draft incorporating stakeholder and community feedback will be considered by Council for adoption in October 2019.

LIFE STAGES STRATEGY (CONT.)

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting Attachment

ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

15 JULY 2019

7.3

LIFE STAGES STRATEGY

Attachment No: 1

Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy

Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy

Contents

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners	3
Welcome message	3
Introduction	3
Vision.....	4
Purpose	4
Context.....	5
Our Location.....	8
About the municipality	8
Our Community.....	9
Demographics	9
Key characteristics	11
Health, wellbeing and safety.....	11
Learning, Participation, Jobs and Enterprise	13
Partnerships, Services and Infrastructure.....	14
The Life Stages	14
Early Years – birth to 5 years	15
Middle Years – 6-11 years.....	15
Youth – 12-24 years	16
Individuals and families 25-65 years.....	18
Positive Aging (65+)	20
Priority Areas and Aspirations	22
Appendix A: Legislative and Policy Context	26
International Context.....	26
National/Federal Context	26
Investing in the Early Years - A National Early Childhood Development Strategy (ECDS): An initiative of the Council of Australian Governments.....	27
National Partnership Agreement on the Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (2009).....	27
National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children (2009-2020)	27
National Aged Care Reform	27
State Context	27
Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019	28
The Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities (2013).....	28

The Early Years Strategic Plan: Improving outcomes for all Victorian Children (2014-2020)..... 28

Youth Employment Strategy (2016)..... 30

Youth Jobs PaTH (2016) 30

Transition to Work (2016)..... 30

Engaging Early School Leavers (2016)..... 30

Engage, Involve, Create (2012) 30

Ageing in Victoria – A Plan for an Age-Friendly Society 2010-2020 30

Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration (2016)..... 30

Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019..... 30

Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Strategy 2013-2022..... 31

Ending Family Violence: Victoria’s Plan for Change (2016) 31

Local Context..... 31

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Mitchell Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, those of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People. We pay our respects to their rich cultures and to Elders past and present.

Endorsed by Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporated and Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

Welcome message

Every day Mitchell Shire Council engages with an increasingly diverse range of people; experiencing different life stages, lived experiences, needs and aspirations. This rich diversity creates positive economic, environmental and social outcomes and brings strength and resilience to our community.

Located 40 kilometres north of Melbourne, we are one of Victoria's fastest growing local government areas. We offer a mix of rural and urban living and a diversity of life choices.

Adopting a life stages approach provides increased opportunities for holistic, integrated actions that create supportive environments and foster healthy choices for all people throughout their life. It allows us to better acknowledge key transitions that occur throughout life and recognises the importance of family, community, culture and place. It is truly a strategy for all, capturing the cycle of life.

It is with great pride that we present Mitchell Shire Council's first Life Stages Strategy.

Mayor, Cr Bill Chisholm and Chief Executive Officer, David Turnbull

Introduction

Mitchell Shire is experiencing rapid population growth and social change. We recognise the need for innovative and holistic responses to meet current and future opportunities and challenges. The Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy (the Strategy) provides Council and our partners with one planning framework¹ to inclusively capture and address the needs of all people, across the life stages. The Strategy is aspirational and aims to create a municipality where locals are proud to live, learn, work and play.

The Strategy provides the context for a shift in focus to life stages, details common issues and transitions during the different life stages, and outlines the priority areas and aspirations for a healthy and well-connected community. A corresponding action plan complements this strategy and details what will be done to achieve our aspirations.

The Strategy recognises that Mitchell Shire Council plays various roles in strengthening the health and wellbeing of the individuals within the municipality, these include:

- **provider** of services, public spaces and facilities for our communities;
- **advocate** for improvements to best meet the needs of the population; and,

¹ The Life Stages Strategy consolidates and builds upon the achievements of three previous strategic plans: Mitchell Shire Early Years Plan 2012-2016; Mitchell Shire Youth Strategy 2014-2017; and Mitchell Shire Living Well for Life Strategy 2014-2018.

- **facilitator** through collaboration and partnerships.

There are five key life stages²:

Life Stage	Coverage
Early years	Early years covers from birth until primary school, around 5 years of age.
Middle years	Middle years is typically the primary school years, from age 6 to 11.
Youth	Youth incorporates ages 12 to 24 years.
Individuals and families	Individuals and families encompass the ages between 25 and 64 years.
Positive ageing	Positive ageing includes 65 years of age and older.

The Strategy responds to changes in International, Australian and Victorian government policy, our extensive experience in service and program delivery, consultation with a broad range of community members and organisations as well as research and data analysis.

The Council encourages its planning staff and external partners to use the Strategy as a tool for applying evidence-based reform principles, strategies and a life stage approach to co-designing services, places and spaces that support people's wellbeing.

Vision

People are valued, supported, connected, resilient, healthy and well as they transition through the life stages.

Purpose

The Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy aspires to foster a community that is healthy, happy, connected and resilient. It foresees a sustainable future for all our communities, towns, regional centres and suburbs. It aims to do this through advocacy, evidence-based planning, partnerships, infrastructure, services and the provision of public spaces and facilities which aim to optimise health, wellbeing, safety, environment, wealth and liveability.

Through this strategy, Council seeks to recognise and respond holistically to the needs of all people across all life stages and to provide directed focus at key transitions. It aims to ensure that everyone in the community is captured.

A life stage perspective also recognises that investing in the earlier stages of life will improve outcomes for each individual as they journey through the later stages.

While specific interventions will focus on transitions relevant to a life stage, it is recognised that many interventions are strongest when they are cross-generational.

Although every person will have a unique experience as they journey through life, there are common needs, issues and transitions that occur that typically correspond to each of the five key life stages.

² The age ranges are indicative and are based on common life trajectories. Mitchell Shire Council acknowledges that some people's life journey differs to this and endeavours to cater to each individual.

The strategy focusses on three priority areas to ensure everyone is valued, supported, connected, resilient, healthy and well as they transition through the life stages. The priority areas are:

- **Priority one: Health, wellbeing and safety.**

Priority one aspires to positively influence the many factors which combine to affect the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Our health is not just influenced by genetics, lifestyles or behaviours. Some influences are the living, environmental and cultural conditions in which people are born, grow-up and age.

Priority one covers: safety from family violence; gambling harm minimalization; safe, vibrant and accessible public spaces; valued natural environments; social connection; and, access to appropriate, affordable and accessible housing.

- **Priority two: Learning, participation, jobs and enterprise.**

Priority two aspires to support capacity growth through opportunities and access to education, participation, employment and business. Education has vast benefits for each person, broadening their mind, skills and knowledge as well as strengthening their options for the future. The overall wellbeing of individuals, families and communities is heightened through income and participation.

Priority two covers: volunteering opportunities; access to life-long learning and career paths; the development of employment zones and precincts within the municipality; and, encouraging industry and innovation.

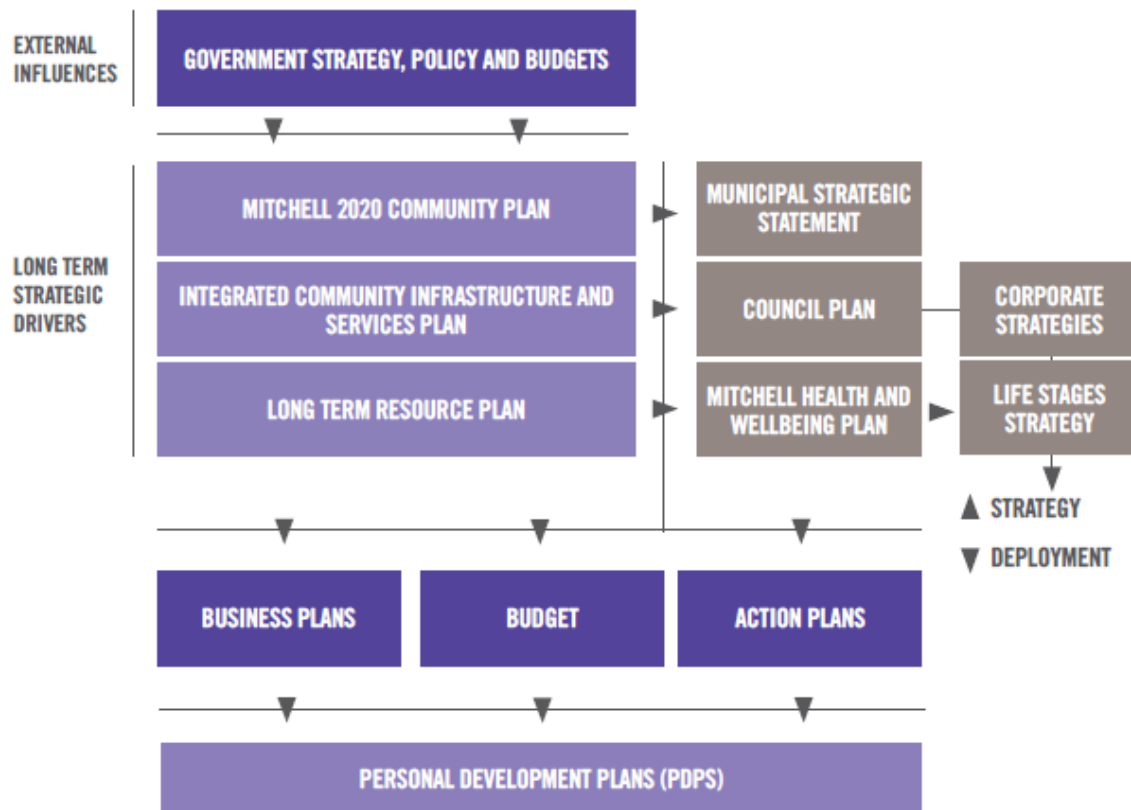
- **Priority three: Partnerships, services and infrastructure.**

Priority three aspires to ensure collaboration occurs for service and town planning and that it is community driven and supports optimal community connection. Strategic alliances and improved communication through partnerships support sustainable, innovative and efficient service delivery models. Integrated, coordinated and community driven services strengthen our community and create positive outcomes.

Priority three covers: planning for connection and amenity; accessible, timely and sustainable infrastructure; community focussed community services; community directed planning and investment; innovative, collaborative and adaptive partnerships; and, valuing the environment in planning and decision making.

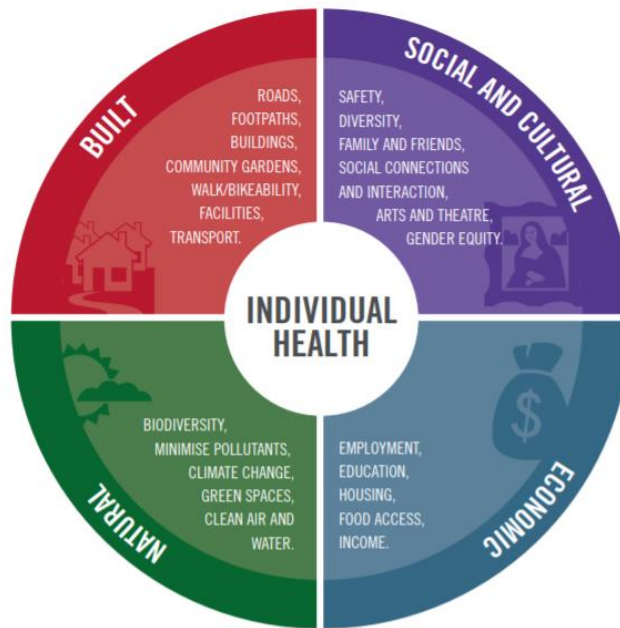
Context

The Mitchell Shire Council Life Stages Strategy sits within an integrated framework along with the Mitchell Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. It is one of many strategies created by Council to develop the health, wellbeing and resilience of our community.



A number of frameworks form the development base of the Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy. These frameworks guide Mitchell Shire Council to consider each person holistically, and all that influences the way they live their lives, their wellbeing and their participation in community life.

The Strategy recognises there are multiple factors that determine the health of everyone. It aligns with the Environments for Health Framework, launched by the Department of Human Services in Victoria in 2001. Environments for Health Framework acknowledges that health and wellbeing is influenced by factors originating across overlapping environments: built, social and cultural, natural and economic.



Source: Department of Human Services, 2001.

The determinants of health include social and cultural, economic, natural and built environments. The Mitchell Shire Life Stages Strategy recognises the determinants of health and has incorporated them in the three priority areas: **Priority one:** Health, wellbeing and safety; **Priority two:** Learning, participation, jobs and enterprise; and **Priority three:** Partnerships, services and infrastructure.

There is strong evidence that investment in the early years has significant and positive impacts on health, wellbeing, education, employment and financial prospects in the short, medium and long term. Attention given to early childhood support, services and infrastructure will improve and enrich the life of individuals throughout the life stages, and in turn positively impact the community as a whole.³ Therefore, Council recognises it is vitally important to support people within the early life stages and their families.

The UNICEF Child-friendly Cities Framework has been considered in the drafting of the Strategy. UNICEF describes a child-friendly city as: “a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children’s rights⁴”. Their framework for action is based on the right of every young person to the following:

- Influence decisions about their city.
- Express their opinion in the city they want.
- Participate in family, community and social life.
- Receive basic services such as health and education.
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.

³ Poulton R, 2016, *Childhood disadvantage strongly predicts costly adult life-course outcomes*, University of Otago, NZ.

⁴ Van Gils, Jan. *Introducing the child friendly city network: One of the most effective programmes in the world today to transform our cities into places of well-being*, p. 173, 2013.

Mitchell Shire is aligning with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Age-Friendly Community Project. "In an age-friendly community, policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable older people to "age actively" – that is, to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society."⁵

Active ageing is dependent on a number of influences that surround individuals, families and communities. They include material conditions and social factors and have an effect on behaviour and wellbeing. All the of influences affect how well individuals age. Age-friendly communities reflect these features in their urban setting and services.

The Strategy is guided by Federal, State and Local government legislation and policy.



Source: World Health Organisation, 2007, *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*.

Mitchell Shire Council's Life Stages Strategy is informed and influenced by many more international, national, state and local policies, legislation and reforms. These are summarised at Appendix A.

Our Location

About the municipality

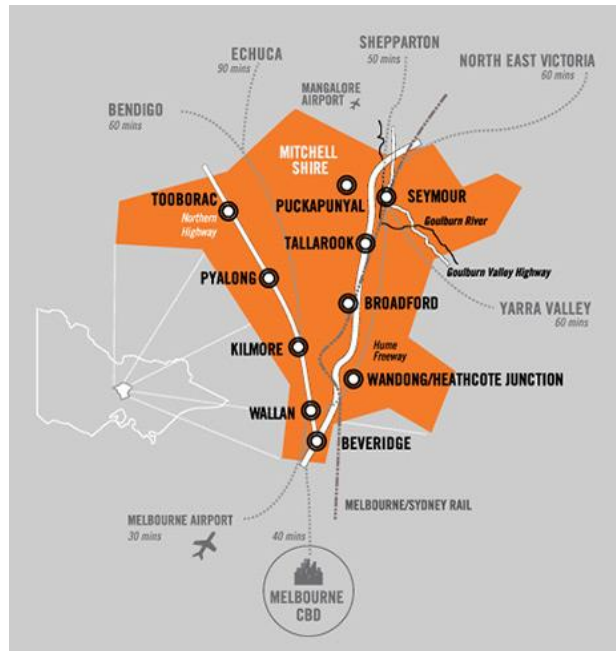
Located 40 kilometres north of Melbourne central business district (CBD), Mitchell Shire is one of Victoria's fastest growing outer metropolitan municipalities.

As an Interface growth area, Mitchell offers a mix of rural and urban living and a diversity of lifestyle and housing choices.

⁵ World Health Organisation, 2019, *Global Age Friendly Cities Project*. Accessed: https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities/en/

Our rolling foothills, open farmland, mountain ranges, rivers and creeks are key attributes of our landscape amenity. This also means parts of our municipality are subject to natural disasters such as fires, storms and floods.

At 2,862 square kilometres, we are a large municipality with rural and urban land including Melbourne’s Northern Growth Corridor. These include Beveridge, Broadford, Bylands, Clonbinane, Forbes, Glenaroua, Glenhope, Glenhope East, Heathcote Junction, Heathcote South, High Camp, Hilldene, Hughes Creek, Kilmore, Kilmore East, Mia Mia, Moranding, Northwood, Nulla Vale, Puckapunyal, Pyalong, Reedy Creek, Seymour, Sugarloaf Creek, Sunday Creek, Tallarook, Tooborac, Trawool, Tyaak, Upper Plenty, Wallan, Wallan East, Wandong, Waterford Park, Whiteheads Creek and Willowmavin. We also cover parts of Avenel, Donnybrook, Flowerdale, Highlands, Mangalore, Strath Creek, and Tarcombe.



Our Community

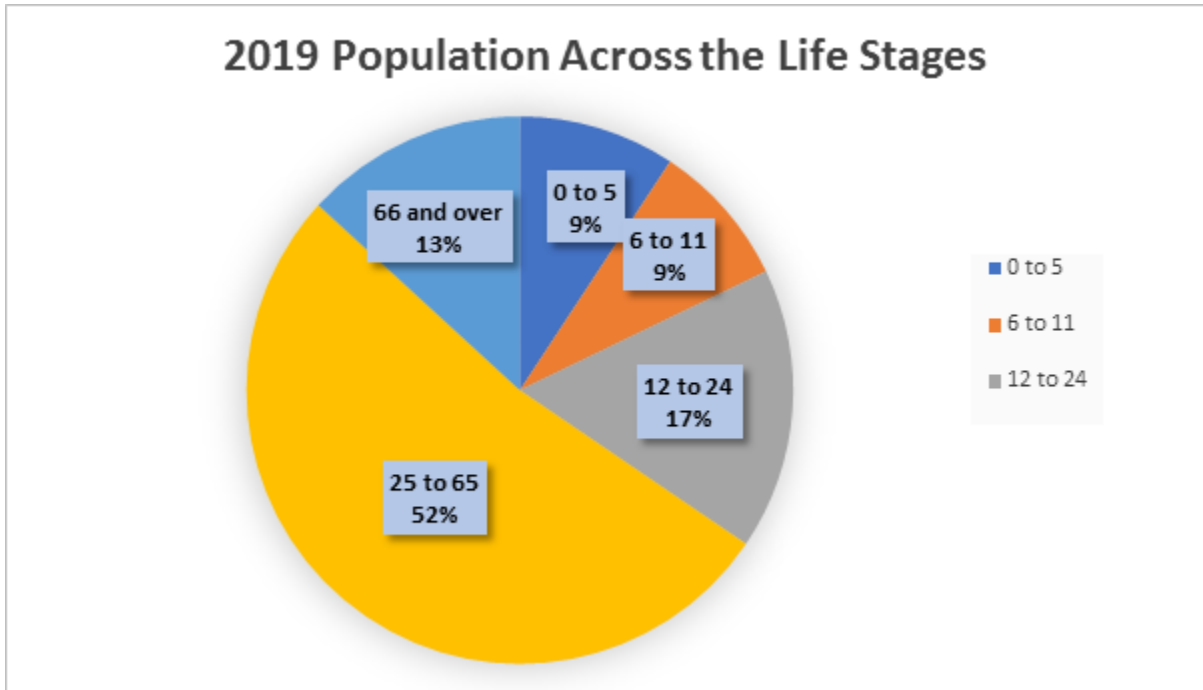
We must have a thorough understanding of our community to be able to holistically support them through the life stages.

Consideration of the wider context of our community helps to inform Mitchell Shire’s responses and guides where efforts should be focussed.

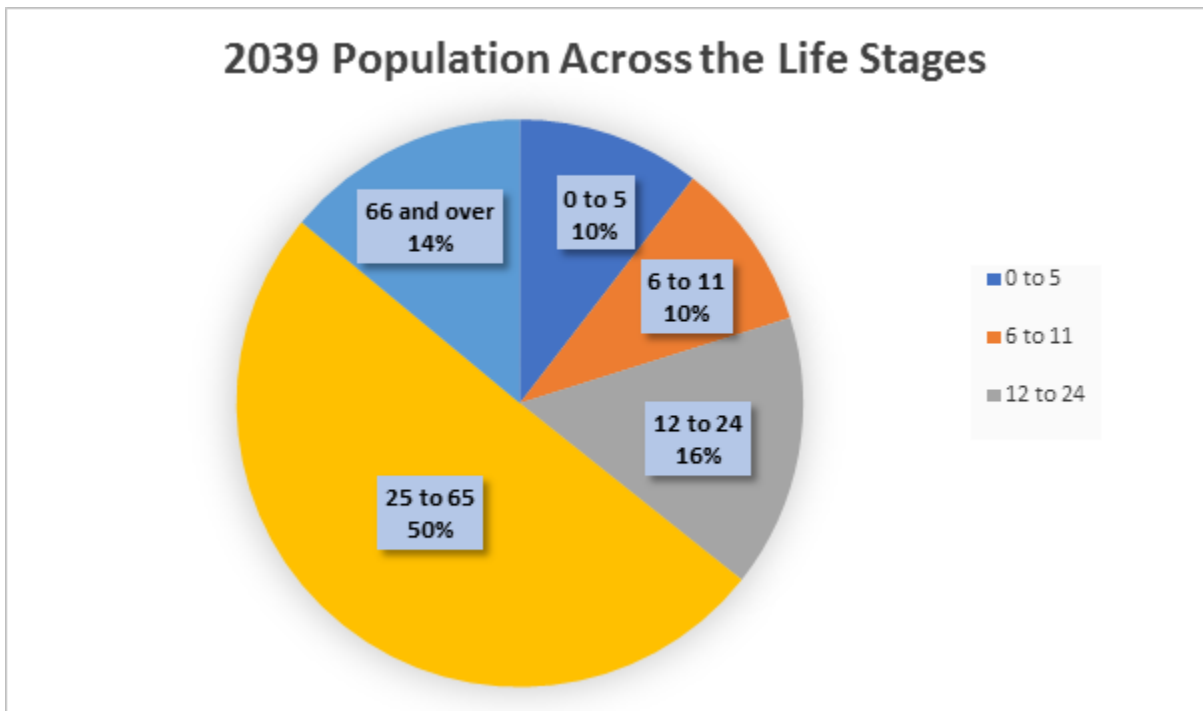
Demographics

As at December 2019, our total population will stand at 49,000. By 2050, our population is projected to have grown to approximately 270,000. It is anticipated that most of this growth will occur in and around the southern townships of Beveridge, Wallan and Kilmore.

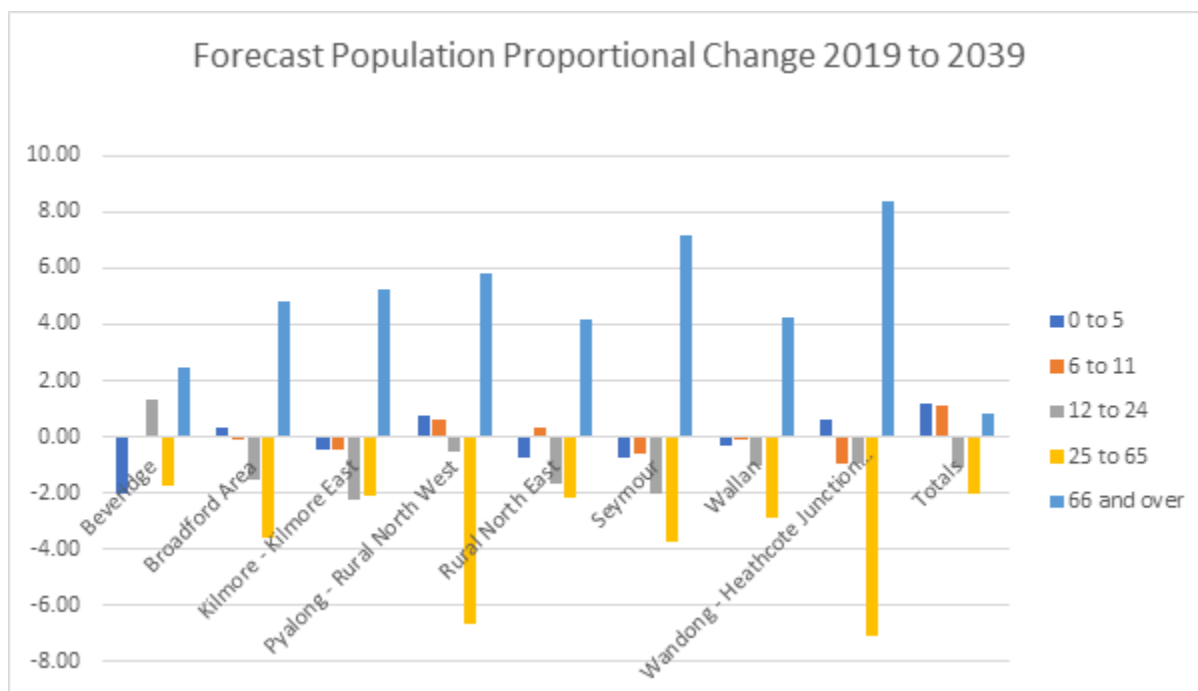
In 2019, there were 4,500 babies and children in the early years; 4,200 children in the middle years; 8,100 youth; 25,650 adults in the individuals and families category; and 6,450 older adults in the positive ageing category.



It is projected that in 2039 there will be 17,250 babies and children in the early years; 16,000 children in the middle years; 26,000 youth; 83,000 adults in the individuals and families category; and 23,000 older adults in the positive ageing category.



It is forecast that the total population will be distributed similarly across the life stages in 2040. However, a breakdown of population projections by location shows a significant rise in older adults aged 66 years and over across the whole of Mitchell Shire and a decrease in adults aged 25-65 years as a proportion of the population. This is the projected trend in all locations and is most remarkable in the Shire’s smaller communities.



Key characteristics

Mitchell Shire has a diverse population and each person has unique strengths and needs. This section considers common issues and experiences that affect many people living in the municipality to enable Council and our partners to holistically support the population across the life stages.

Health, wellbeing and safety

The experiences detailed in this section specifically inform Priority one: Health, wellbeing and safety. People in Mitchell Shire Council are experiencing a range of vulnerabilities.

Mental Health

Mitchell Shire has a high proportion of people who are at very high risk of developing poor mental health outcomes (7.1%) which is well above the Victorian state average (3.9%).⁶ 14.8% of Mitchell Shire reported high/very high levels of psychological distress, which is 2.2% higher than the Victorian average. There is a lack of mental health services within the Mitchell Shire making it difficult for people to access the care they need.

Family Violence

Mitchell Shire’s family violence rate is almost double the Victorian average. The rate of family violence is higher than all the councils located in and around Melbourne (2,275.2 per 100,000 population). Over one third of family violence incidents in Mitchell Shire in the last year had children present. Out of all crimes against the person, property and deception offences and other offences in Mitchell Shire in the last year, just under one third were related to family violence.

Developmental vulnerability

The Australian Early Development Census is a measure of how young children are developing in Australian communities and tracks children’s development as they enter their first year of formal

⁶ Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, 2016, Victorian Population Health Survey 2014, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.