

Discussion paper for the Safe Community Policy and Strategy Community consultation 2022



Lifestyle Capital of Victoria

Frankston City Council is conducting a broad and inclusive community consultation to inform the development of a Draft Safe Community Policy and Strategy 2022–2032.

Council has committed to developing a Safe Community Policy and Strategy and is conducting this community consultation to encourage a whole of community approach to identifying the key priorities and areas of focus for community safety and crime prevention in Frankston City over the next 10 years. Once developed, the policy and strategy will guide the work of Council and our partners to ensure that we are all working collaboratively towards a safe and inclusive municipality where people feel safe, well connected and welcome to participate in community life.

What's in the Discussion Paper?

This discussion paper informs how the development of local government policy and strategy can strengthen the safety and resilience of communities, help prevent crime and reduce the impact of emergencies. The paper includes six topics for discussion, as follows:

- 1 Safe and resilient communities
- 2 Safe places and spaces
- 3 Harm reduction
- 4 Safe and respectful relationships
- 5 Reducing homelessness
- 6 Safe and inclusive communities

These topics have been developed from what you have already told us and the best available research in community safety and crime prevention. The information in this paper is provided to help you consider the scope of each topic and guide thinking around key priorities and areas of focus for the draft policy and strategy. We encourage you to visit our Engage Frankston website and complete the survey to have your say.

What you have already told us

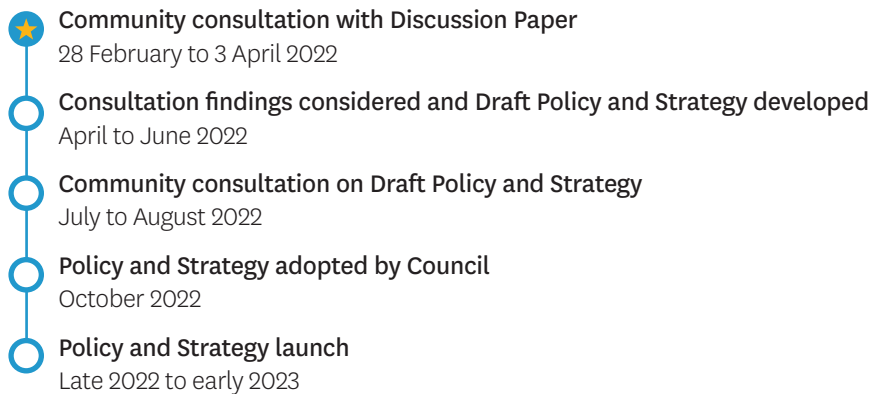
We have listened to what you have already told us about community safety in Frankston City and will be using this to help shape the draft policy and strategy.

During 2020 we undertook a deliberative engagement process to develop the Frankston City Community Vision 2040. During this process, we heard that you value:

- A socially connected, welcoming and inclusive community
- A safe city with vibrant public spaces, a signature city centre and more opportunities for walking and cycling

We've also taken into consideration what you told us about community safety in the 2021 Community Satisfaction Survey and 2021 Household Survey, and in the community consultations for the development of the Council Plan and Budget 2021-2025, Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025, Lighting Frankston Plan 2021, Play Strategy 2021 and Outdoor Dining trial. We've also reviewed place-specific consultations such as the Sandfield Reserve, Local Park Action Plan and Monterey Reserve consultations.

Timeline



How you can participate

You can have your say by completing the survey on our Engage Frankston page by 5pm on Sunday 3rd April 2022.

The policy and strategy will only be effective if it accurately reflects the diverse experiences of people who live in, work in and visit Frankston City. We encourage you to read the information provided in this paper and have your say on your priorities for Frankston City, areas of focus for the draft policy and strategy and if there is anything that we've missed. All feedback will help to shape the Draft Safe Community Policy and Strategy 2022-2032.

Complete the survey by:

Visiting our website: engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/a-safer-community

Phoning: 1300 322 322 and asking for Victoria Johnson (surveys can be completed by telephone)

Emailing: social.policy@frankston.vic.gov.au

Writing: PO Box 490 Frankston VIC 3199 (phone or email us to request a paper copy of the survey)

Discussion topic 1:

Safe and resilient communities

Building community resilience to risks and threats like natural disasters and public health emergencies

Heatwaves, storms, fires and pandemics are among the emergencies that our communities have to plan for, respond to and recover from, requiring us to work together and reach out to the most vulnerable in our neighbourhoods.

Our community's key climate change concerns for our local area include:

- Harsher and longer fire seasons
- Extreme weather events
- More hot days, heatwaves and droughts

Frankston City Climate Change Survey 2021

In the six months from June to December 2021 there were two major storm events (June and October), during this time Council responded to over 2,400 calls for storm-related assistance.

Frankston City Council data

In 2021, Council's COVID-19 Recovery Call Centre responded to 4,351 calls for information and referral support.

Frankston City Council data

Between July 2020 and June 2021, Community Support Frankston provided material and financial support to 147 local families and individuals who weren't eligible for income support.

Frankston City Council data

Planning and preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies requires large scale coordination across multiple agencies, including all levels of government, emergency services, private organisations, volunteers and the community itself. This process is referred to as 'emergency planning' and involves collaborative planning between these agencies to agree how they are going to act before, during and after emergencies. Effective emergency planning can reduce the impact of emergencies and help protect against cascading consequences for individuals, communities and the environment¹.

'Community resilience' refers to the ways in which communities prepare for and respond to natural disasters and public health emergencies. The capacity of a community to do this is dependent upon having positive social connections and the ability of community members to draw together. The Victorian Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management identifies that communities can better avoid or manage emergencies if they are connected, inclusive and empowered, have a dynamic and diverse local economy and a sustainable built and natural environment.

Natural disasters and public health emergencies can have a significant impact on the health and safety of our communities, as well as wide ranging social and economic flow-on effects, some of which may worsen risk factors for crime and unsafe behaviours. Furthermore, research shows that some people in our community experience greater impacts of natural disasters and public health emergencies, and have a higher risk of longstanding negative impacts. This can be a result of where we live, or social characteristics that increase our vulnerability due to inequity, including: age; gender; socio-economic status; people with disability and their carers; First Nations Australians; people from diverse cultural backgrounds; those experiencing homelessness; and LGBTQIA+ communities. For example, in Victoria and across the world, there has been a significant increase in reports of family violence impacting women since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In Frankston City, there was a 9.1% increase in family violence incidents associated with COVID-19 restrictions².

¹Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) 2020, Emergency Planning, AIDR, East Melbourne, Victoria.

²Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) 2021 Latest Crime Data by Area – Frankston, Crime Statistics Agency, Melbourne.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO indicate a changing climate will increase the severity and frequency of many natural hazards in Australia, impacting the health and safety of our communities. For example:

- Heatwaves increase the risk of heat stress, dehydration, heat stroke and mortality and aggravate chronic conditions including chronic respiratory, cardiac and kidney conditions and psychiatric illness³.
- There was a 700% increase in ambulance callouts for cardiac arrest during the 2014 heatwave⁴.
- Flooding and storm water present risk of injury, loss of life, disruption to agriculture, impacts on food security and changes in the spread of infectious diseases⁵.
- More frequent, severe and widespread bushfires, increases the risks of burns, smoke inhalation, heat stress, dehydration, trauma and long-term mental health impacts⁶.

Council's role

Local government has an important role in emergency management, from prevention through to emergency response and recovery. For Frankston City Council, this role includes:

- Developing emergency management plans in partnership with other agencies and emergency services to agree on the arrangements for how, as a community, we can plan for, respond to and recover from emergencies.
- Prevention activities like actively inspecting properties prior to the fire season and working with fire agencies to reduce fire risks.
- Planning overlay controls to address risks to properties such as fire and flood.
- Provision and coordination of Council resources during the emergency response phase, including liaison staff to assist at the Incident Control Centre where required.
- Operating relief and recovery services and centres during and after an emergency – Council's Community Recovery Call Centre has been operating since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to link residents to support during emergency events and our family health services provide hot meals to our most vulnerable and to emergency services volunteers.
- Assisting the community with emergency preparedness, focusing on the welfare of our most vulnerable residents, supporting residents' ability to remain safe at home.
- Coordinating immediate relief needs via 'on call' arrangements, including emergency shelter for displaced people and animals after an event such as a house fire.
- Coordinating clean-up activities and assessing occupancy of damaged buildings and safety of sites after an emergency.

To perform this role, Council works closely with Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, VicSES, the Australian Red Cross, Fire Rescue Victoria, Coast Guard, Department of Health, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and other local support and relief agencies.

The state and federal governments both have statutory responsibilities in emergency planning. State responsibilities include funding Emergency Management Victoria to lead emergency management in Victoria to strengthen the capacity of the emergency management sector and coordinate emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Federal responsibilities include developing and maintaining national health emergency response plans, activating the National Incident Room, maintaining the National Medical Stockpile and educating health professionals.

³Parise I 2018 'A brief review of global climate change and the public health consequences' *Australian Journal of General Practice* vol. 47, no. 7, pp. 451–56.

⁴Sustainability Victoria 2020 *Linking Climate Change and Health Impacts*, Sustainability Victoria, Melbourne.

⁵Department of Health 2019 *Climate Change and Health*, Department of Health, Victoria.

⁶Johnston FH 2009 'Bushfires and human health in a changing environment' *Australian Family Physician* vol. 38, no. 9, pp. 720–724, RACGP, Australia.

Discussion topic 2:

Safe places and spaces

Creating safe public spaces through urban design and placemaking

Great public spaces that are well designed and maintained and used by the whole community promote safety and deter unsafe and anti-social behaviours, such as graffiti, crime and alcohol and drug misuse.

Our community has lower perceptions of safety than what is average for Metro Melbourne. 70.4% of residents feel very safe in public places during the day, but this drops to 28.6% at night.

Frankston City 2021 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

Women feel 14.4% less safe than men in public areas of Frankston City at night.

Frankston City 2021 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

62% of respondents to our lighting survey told us that lighting would help them feel safer on footpaths that connect night-time venues and car parks.

Frankston City Lighting Action Plan Survey 2021

In 2021, Council responded to over 3,500 incidents of graffiti in the municipality (1,500 incidents on council property, and 2,000 incidents on private property).

Frankston City Council data

Crime and unsafe behaviours are the result of a complex relationship between social and environmental factors and cannot be 'designed out'. However, good urban design of public places and spaces can be part of a broader approach to community safety and crime prevention to improve the safety of an area, and is an important objective for local government. If a public space feels safe and accessible and inclusive, it is more likely to be well used and loved by all members of the community providing visibility and surveillance, as well as opportunities for social connection.

The process of creating safe public spaces requires careful consideration of many features, including social, spatial, economic and environmental factors. This includes the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), a crime prevention approach used by local government in the urban design of public spaces. CPTED uses a range of design principles to create safe and comfortable public spaces that reduce opportunities for crime to occur.

Placemaking is another approach being used locally to activate public places and improve perceptions of safety. Placemaking is the collaborative process of creating high quality, attractive and vibrant places that people feel connected to and want to live, work, play and learn in. Placemaking usually involves a combination of short-term activations, like outdoor dining and food trucks, and longer term management of the space and amenity improvements like lighting, signage, street art, street furniture, play equipment and shade structures. Events and festivals bring people in and enliven areas to increase foot traffic, boost the economy and improve people's perceptions and the Invest Frankston Business Grants support diverse businesses to expand or bring business to the area.

Graffiti, property damage and illegal dumping of waste and materials are some of the more common illegal activities occurring in public places in Frankston City and can have a detrimental impact to the amenity and perceived safety of an area. Local government works collaboratively with other agencies such as Victoria Police and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing along with local business and communities to protect the safety and amenity of public places.

Train stations and public transport stops are often identified as public places where people do not feel safe, and can be a barrier to the use of public transport even though public transport is one of the safest ways to travel. The Frankston City Community Satisfaction Survey 2021 told us that less than half (44.7%) of our residents feel very safe travelling on or waiting for public transport.

The way we use and perceive the safety of public spaces are unique and specific to our lived experience. The evidence shows that women are more likely to feel unsafe in public spaces and as though a space is not designed with them in mind. This is particularly true for women who experience other intersecting forms of marginalisation, such as those who identify as LGBTQIA+, women from migrant backgrounds, older women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with a disability.⁷

The Victorian Government provides a framework to set out how land may be used or developed in Victoria, and supports local councils to deliver liveable and safer public places through the *Urban Design Guidelines and Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria*. Together, these guidelines support local government in planning for new public spaces, streets and developments that minimise crime and support community safety by applying the CPTED principles.

Council's role

Local government has an important role in the safety of public places and spaces, from urban design through to local law enforcement. For Frankston City Council, this role includes:

- Urban design of public open places and spaces so that they are accessible, fit for purpose and valued by all members of our community.
- Placemaking, through initiatives like the *Frankston City Vacant Shopfront Activation Grants Program* in partnership with State Government to attract new businesses to vacant shopfronts across the city, and the Façade Improvement Grant to support business owners, operators and landlords to enhance the presentation of their building or business in Frankston's city centre.
- Activation through events and festivals such as the *Do It Outdoors Summer Series* and *The Lineup* music program that bring people into the municipality.
- Strategic planning to help guide the location, design and delivery of safe public open spaces and infrastructure upgrades, and then working in partnership with State Government, businesses and other stakeholders to invest in renewing public spaces like the Frankston Train Station area.
- Regulatory controls and enforcement through state and local legislation, issuing of permits and enforcing Smoke Free Outdoor areas.
- Provision of CCTV cameras and pedestrian counters to better understand people's movement and behavior in public spaces.
- Proactive graffiti management program to prevent and remove or minimise the appearance of graffiti.
- Traffic management, including the building and maintenance of local roads and footpaths, cycle paths, street lighting and car parks, along with the provision of traffic signage, road closures, parking infringements and school crossing supervisors.
- Transport planning, including the development of an Integrated Transport Strategy to facilitate improved transport connections and movements in Frankston City and advocacy for improved lighting, visibility and shelters at public transport stops to ensure they are safe and accessible for everyone in our community.
- Cleaning, maintenance and upgrading of public spaces to ensure they continue to be safe, achieve safety standards and address any safety concerns, such as fallen trees and damaged play equipment.

To perform this role, Council works closely with Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, VicSES, the Australian Red Cross, Fire Rescue Victoria, Coast Guard, Department of Health, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and other local support and relief agencies.

⁷Wass, S 2020 Creating safe and inclusive public spaces for women, Women's Health East, Doncaster East.

Discussion topic 3:

Harm reduction

Creating safe communities to reduce harms from alcohol, drugs, gambling, road trauma, violence and crime

Harms from alcohol, drugs, gambling, road trauma, violence and crime all have a significant impact on the health and safety of an individual, as well as on the broader community.

66% of adults in Frankston City are at increased lifetime risk of alcohol related harm, and 21% are at increased risk of alcohol related injury, due to drinking five or more standard drinks on a single occasion.

Victorian Population Health Survey 2017

In the year to September 2021, Victoria Police recorded 4,578 reports by victims of criminal offences in Frankston City, which is the 10th highest rate in Metro Melbourne.

Crime Statistics Agency

\$62.65 million was lost on pokies in Frankston City's nine gaming venues during 2018-19, equating to an average of \$582 per resident aged over 18 years.

Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission

There have been 20 road fatalities in Frankston City over the past five years (to 2021), the majority of which were male.

Transport Accident Commission

It is important that the strengths, resources and environments that promote safe behaviours and positive change are supported in our communities and neighbourhoods in order to prevent and minimise harm. These include the safe consumption of alcohol, responsible gambling, responsible driving, the elimination of attitudes that condone violence and evidence-based approaches and practices that prevent and minimise alcohol and drug harm and address the underlying causes of crime.

The consumption of alcohol is widespread, with an established drinking culture prevalent within many social and cultural activities. In Frankston City alone, there are 245 licensed premises and on average people only have to travel less than 1km from home to reach a bottle shop. The misuse of alcohol and other drugs is a contributor to many health, social and economic harms, including injury, chronic conditions and preventable diseases, road trauma, violence, healthcare and law enforcement costs and can contribute to people remaining trapped in cycles of poverty and disadvantage. Evidence shows alcohol is associated with increased frequency of family violence, with data on Australian police responses to family violence incidents indicating alcohol is often reported as a risk factor in up to 65% of all incidents.⁸

Gambling is an activity that affects the quality of life of many people, affecting the health, wellbeing and financial security of even those who gamble infrequently. Poor mental health, poverty, homelessness and chronic illnesses can all be linked to gambling, and there is emerging evidence linking gambling with the perpetration of violent and non-violent offences, including domestic and family violence⁹. Female gamblers are more likely to report depression and anxiety and to exhibit psychological distress, compared to male gamblers¹⁰.

⁸Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Australia

⁹Dowling, N. A., Ewin, C., Youssef, G. J., Merkouris, S. S., Suomi, A., Thomas, S. A., & Jackson, A. C. 2018 'Problem gambling and family violence: Findings from a population-representative study' *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 806-813.

¹⁰Hing N, Russell A, Tolchard B & Nower L 2014 A comparative study of men and women gamblers in Victoria, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne

When road accidents occur they can have a devastating impact, not just on the people involved but also on their families, communities and workplaces. Victoria has been a world leader in the introduction of road safety initiatives that have been associated with a reduction in road deaths, like compulsory wearing of seatbelts and bicycle helmets — that have been associated with a reduction in road deaths. Nonetheless, in 2021 3,260 claims from people with injuries sustained in transport accidents that involved hospitalisation were made to the Traffic Accident Commission in Victoria, 54 of which were from Frankston City. Anti-social driving behavior, or ‘hoon driving’, endangers the lives of drivers and other road users and is recognised locally as a safety issue with older pedestrians at greater risk of harm.

Council's role

Local government has a role in the prevention and minimisation of harm through activities that address the underlying causes of crime and improve community safety. For Frankston City Council, this role includes:

Advocacy and building collaborative partnerships with government, not-for-profit organisations and other stakeholders to deliver prevention projects, which often relies on the successful application for grant funding.

Advocating for reforms and public health approaches to reduce gambling-related harms, which includes being a member of the Alliance for Gambling Reform's group of Leadership Councils.

Delivery of prevention programs through universal services, such as Youth Services programs and projects including the RAD-FMP project to address harms from alcohol and other drugs.

Local planning policies and issuing planning permits for licensed premises. In particular ensuring the safe development of the night-time economy.

Reviewing liquor and electronic gaming machine (pokies) license applications for detrimental amenity and socio-economic impacts.

Authorising the Victoria Police under the Community Local law to work in partnership to promote community safety.

Implementing the MAV Tobacco Agreement, including tobacco visits, audits and investigations.

Offering the Libraries After Dark program to provide a positive recreation activity in the evenings as an alternative to gambling.

Promoting safe social settings at festivals and events, libraries and community centres.

Ensuring sporting clubs that lease facilities from Council are members of the Good Sports Program and comply with Responsible Service of Alcohol requirements.

Undertaking road safety works, for example the 2021 intersection upgrade on Claudia Street.

Partnering with Community Support Frankston to support community welfare, particularly for those that are extremely financially disadvantaged and that fall through the gaps of the social services system.

Providing information and referrals to support services — Council's Maternal and Child Health Service provides resources and referrals to specialist services for help with alcohol and other drugs, gambling and family violence.

Discussion topic 4:

Safe and respectful relationships

Building partnerships to prevent family violence, violence against women and elder abuse

Everyone has the right to feel safe and respected in their relationships, and be free from the fear of violence within their homes and in the community. For many women, this will not be experienced until the cycle of family violence, and violence against women, is broken.

In the year ending March 2021, there were 2,091 family violence incidents with female victims in Frankston City, compared to 709 incidents with male victims.

Crime Statistics Agency

Frankston City has the highest rate of family violence incidents in Metro Melbourne.

Crime Statistics Agency

Breaching a family violence order is one of the top five criminal offences in Frankston City.

Crime Statistics Agency

Females are four times more likely to be a victim of intimate partner violence than men.

Crime Statistics Agency

Family violence is a fundamental, serious and preventable violation of human rights that occurs when a perpetrator exercises power and control over another person¹¹. It involves coercive and abusive behaviours designed to intimidate, humiliate, undermine and isolate, resulting in fear and insecurity¹². It also involves an escalating spiral of violence that can include physical and sexual abuse, as well as psychological, emotional, cultural, spiritual and financial abuse¹³.

Family violence is against the law and Victoria's justice system plays the leading role in responding to incidents of family violence to keep women and children safe and hold perpetrators to account.

Family violence affects all family members, however data shows that it is a gendered issue with the majority of victims being women and their children, and the majority of perpetrators being men. Family violence carried out against a current or former partner is known as intimate partner violence, and is the leading preventable contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15–44¹⁴. Stopping these forms of violence before they start requires a primary prevention approach.

The causes of family violence involve harmful cultural norms and structural inequalities. *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*¹⁵ identifies four gendered drivers of violence against women that are most consistently associated with higher levels of men's violence against women. These are: condoning of violence against women; men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life; rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity; and male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

¹¹Our Watch 2021 *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia* (2nd ed.) Our Watch, Melbourne.

¹²VicHealth 2017 *Violence against women in Australia An overview of research and approaches to primary prevention* VicHealth, Carlton South.

¹³Department of Premier and Cabinet 2016 *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria.

¹⁴VicHealth 2004 *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence* VicHealth, Carlton South.

¹⁵Our Watch 2021 *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia* (2nd ed.) Our Watch, Melbourne.

Violence against women occurs across the whole community, however certain groups of women experience much higher rates of intimate partner violence than others. Women that are pregnant, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and those with disabilities or leaving or trying to leave a violent partner, are at increased risk¹⁶. LGBTQIA+ people are less likely to receive appropriate support when needed¹⁷. For many women, the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse.

The estimate for the prevalence of elder abuse among people living in the community aged 65 and older in Australia is 14.8%, with the most common form of abuse being psychological abuse (11.7%) followed by neglect (2.9%). Overall prevalence rates were similar for men and women, and with low socio-economic status being associated with a greater risk of abuse overall. Elder abuse is mostly committed by family members, with adult children being the most common perpetrators, followed by intimate partners, then partners of adult children.¹⁸

Council's role

Local government plays an important primary prevention role in responding to family violence, as well as performing some statutory responsibilities. For Frankston City Council, this role includes:

- Providing frontline staff with education and training in family violence risk identification, assessment and management, consistent with the Victorian Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM).
- Demonstrating commitment to addressing family violence, violence against women and elder abuse through policies and strategies, including the Frankston City Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025, Positive Ageing Action Plan 2021-2025 and Family Violence Prevention Plan 2022-2026 (in development).
- Advocating and building collaborative partnerships to promote gender equality and prevention of violence against women, including Women's Health in the South East (WHISE), the Victorian Government, Peninsula Community Legal Centre, specialist family violence services, Victoria Police, health and community services and the community itself.
- Delivering primary prevention programs through our universal services that strengthen safe and respectful relationships, such as the Men as Role Models project to support boys to be free from violence and other harmful behaviours.
- Engaging the community in campaigns that raise awareness of gender equality and attitudes and behaviours that enable violence against women and elder abuse, including the 16 Days of Activism, International Women's Day, Elder Abuse Awareness Day and EveryAGE Counts Ageism Awareness Day.
- Co-designing and delivering a culture change program for sporting clubs to achieve greater gender equality, both on and off the field.
- As an employer, Council is developing a Gender Equality Action Plan and has policies in place to support employees impacted by family violence.

The Victorian Government is implementing a number of reforms to strengthen the family violence system in response to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence. These include delivering Respectful Relationship education in schools, managing the risk of family violence through the MARAM and rolling out the Orange Door network. The Victorian Government has also established Respect Victoria, a statutory authority dedicated to the primary prevention of all forms of family violence. At a national level, the Australian Government is currently drafting a National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

¹⁶VicHealth 2017 Violence against women in Australia An overview of research and approaches to primary prevention, VicHealth, Carlton South.

¹⁷O'Halloran K 2015 Family violence in an LGBTIQ context: a summary of issues arising out of submissions to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, DVRCV Victoria.

¹⁸Qu, L., Kaspiew, R., Carson, R., Roopani, D., De Maio, J., Harvey, J., Horsfall, B. (2021). National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Discussion topic 5:

Reducing homelessness

Building partnerships to reduce and prevent homelessness and support equitable access to safe, secure and affordable housing

Over 24,000 Victorians will be homeless on any given night (ABS, 2016), including families with children, young people, older people, single adults and people with disabilities.

Between 2011 and 2016 the homelessness rate grew at more than twice the rate of overall population growth (14.7% compared to 6.7%).
Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016

Rough sleeping is the fastest growing form of homelessness in the municipality, and in 2017 the Victorian Government officially recognised Frankston City as a rough sleeper hot spot in Victoria (one of nine).
Victoria's homelessness and rough sleeper action plan, 2018

Between 2011 and 2016 rental stress increased from 29.8% to 33.2%, which is higher than the Metro Melbourne average. One-parent families and lone person households are the most likely household type to experience stress.
Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016

Homelessness rates in Frankston City are growing and impacting different groups of people, resulting from a range of complex and intersecting social, economic and housing market factors. Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows the main causes of homelessness as being the lack of affordable housing, escaping family violence, poverty and financial hardship, relationship/family breakdowns and mental or physical illness and/or addiction. This means a 'one size fits all' solution won't solve this issue and a range of tailored solutions are required, including increased access to affordable housing and a more effective homelessness service system.

The experience of homelessness is not just about not having a home. The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines someone as homeless if their current living arrangement is in a dwelling that is inadequate, has no tenure, has a short and not extendable tenure, or does not allow them to have control of, or access to, space for social relations. Whereas rough sleeping the most visible form of homelessness, it is estimated that rough sleeping only makes up around 7% of homeless. The remainder of homelessness is 'hidden', and includes those in supported accommodation for the homeless, rooming houses, sleeping in cars, severely overcrowded dwellings, couch-surfing or staying in other temporary types of accommodation. People sheltering in vacant buildings can create safety risks for the people sheltering in them and impact perceptions of safety in the community.

The 2021 Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia highlighted that homelessness can have a profound and long-term impact on a person's safety and security, physical and mental health, on their connection to the community and on their ability to thrive in school or in the workplace. Research shows that compared to the general population, people who are homeless experience significantly higher rates of death, disability, mental health conditions and chronic illness and are 13 times more likely to have experienced violence and 47 times more likely to have been victims of theft.¹⁹

In Australia, rates of homelessness are higher for men, but 61% of people using homelessness services are female²⁰. Older women are the fastest growing group experiencing homelessness²¹.

¹⁹Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) 2008 'Homeless people: their risk of victimisation' AI Crime reduction matters No. 66, AIC, Canberra.

²⁰Council to Homeless Persons 2019 Women and Homelessness, Council to Homeless Persons, Melbourne.

²¹ABS 2016 cited in Mercy Foundation (undated) Older women and homelessness, Mercy Foundation, Wollstonecraft.

Housing is considered to be a basic human right, however many Victorians are not able to find stable and secure housing. Rapidly rising housing costs and inadequate supplies of social and affordable housing mean that many households are living in housing stress (which occurs when property costs exceed 30 percent of household income among those on a low income), which increases their risk of homelessness.

Emergency and crisis accommodation provides immediate, and temporary assistance for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and are managed by funded homelessness providers. There is no crisis support accommodation located within Frankston City, with people needing to travel outside of the municipality to access these services.

Homelessness policy, funding and programs are delivered across all three tiers of government, although the primary responsibility and resource allocation lies with state and federal governments. The Victorian Government receives funding for social housing and specialist homelessness services from the Federal Government through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Services funded through this include assertive outreach, case managed support, crisis and transitional accommodation, supported housing and help to enter the private housing market. The Victorian Government also builds, owns and manages public housing.

Council's role

Local government has a supporting role in preventing and responding to homelessness through education, advocacy and working in partnership with service providers. For Frankston City Council, this includes:

- Collaborative partnerships with service providers and other tiers of government to understand local issues, advocate and coordinate effective prevention and early intervention strategies in response to homelessness. For example, Council:
- Coordinates the Frankston City Strategic Housing and Homelessness Alliance to raise awareness, build capacity and better respond to homelessness and housing affordability.
- Is an active member of the Frankston Zero project introduced in 2021 to support local community services to deliver a coordinated response to minimize the time spent 'experiencing homelessness' for individual rough sleepers and reduce homelessness.
- Partnerships with outreach services so Council services that engage with people experiencing homelessness can make referrals to local homelessness and outreach services and other supports.
- Advocacy to other levels of government, for example Council is an active member of:
- The Regional Local Government Charter for Homelessness and Social Housing which highlights regional homelessness and housing issues and advocating for reform to prevent homelessness.
- The Y2 Campaign, a youth homelessness campaign seeking homelessness solutions for young people in the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula region.
- Provision of community infrastructure for services, including the Comfort Station shower facility and Community Support Frankston, a not-for-profit community support agency providing services including emergency food, grocery vouchers, help with utility bills and advocacy for people experiencing hardship, including homelessness.
- Building regulation safety and compliance, playing a role in the regulation of rooming houses and other accommodation used by homeless persons.
- Land use and planning policies to support the provision of affordable housing. Council is developing an Integrated Housing Strategy to manage housing growth and change across all residential and activity centres in the municipality.

Discussion topic 6:

Safe and inclusive communities

Creating inclusive and well connected communities where everyone feels welcome

Neighbourhoods and cities thrive when everyone feels safe, valued and included as part of their community and conversely, being a victim of, or involved in crime, is associated with communities that experience high levels of social exclusion²².

43.5% of adults in Frankston City think that multiculturalism makes life in their area better, which is lower than the Victorian average of 53.4%.

Victorian Population Health Survey 2017

39.6% of adults in Frankston City feel valued by society, which is lower than the Victorian average of 48.3%.

Victorian Population Health Survey 2017

The rate of criminal incidents in Frankston City decreased by 22.9% from 2020 to 2021, and the rate of victim reports fell by 17.3%.

Crime Statistics Agency

In 2021, the top three reported crimes in Frankston City were criminal damage, theft from a motor vehicle and breaches of family violence orders.

Crime Statistics Agency

A welcoming and inclusive community where people are valued and their differences are respected allows people to feel safe, enjoy a sense of belonging and feel able to participate in social, cultural and civic life. This extends to people of all ages, abilities, genders, sexualities, cultures, socio-economic status and religions or faiths.

Cohesive communities where people build shared values and belong to social networks that provide emotional support, companionship and meaningful social engagement can also improve mental health, increasing self-esteem and resilience and reduce stress and depression²³. We know COVID-19 has had a negative impact on people's sense of community associated with greater social isolation, which is leading to worsening mental health.

Research also shows a strong association between community building and perceptions of safety. For example, people who trust their neighbours and see them as willing and able to help address local problems are significantly less likely to worry about crime. This demonstrates how community safety strategies that aim to build social capital by increasing community cohesion and community connection can have significant and meaningful benefits to people who worry about crime, as well as the broader community²⁴.

Feelings of safety can vary between population groups. In line with criminological research, a recent Australian study into perceptions of crime found that women worry more about the risk of physical and sexual assault as well about robbery and harassment. Those who spoke a language other than English were more concerned with harassment that derived from discrimination and prejudice²⁵.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a personal characteristic protected by the law, such as disability, or vilify a person or group of people on the basis of their race or religion or behave in a way that is racially offensive²⁶. Victorian adults who frequently experience racism are almost five times more likely than those who do not experience racism

²²Morgan, A, Boxall, H, & Anderson, J 2012 Effective crime prevention interventions for implementation by local government, Australian Institute of Criminology

²³VicHealth 2005 Social Inclusion as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing, VicHealth, Carlton South.

²⁴Morgan, A, Boxall, H, & Anderson, J 2012 Effective crime prevention interventions for implementation by local government, Australian Institute of Criminology

²⁵Lee M, Wickes R and Jackson J 2020 Social Cohesion and Pro-Social Responses to Perceptions of Crime – Victorian report, University of Sydney, Sydney.

²⁶Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) 2014 Good practice, good business: A quick guide to Australian discrimination laws, AHRC, Sydney.

to have poor mental health and 2.5 times more likely to have poor physical health . Racism is disproportionately experienced by culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities . Members of LGBTQIA+ communities also experience abuse and harassment .

Over the past six years to 2021, there have been decreasing rates of crime in Frankston City, with decreasing rates of both criminal incidents and victim reports. These decreases have mainly been seen in property and deception offences and justice procedures offences. Crimes against the person are also decreasing, but to a much lesser extent.

Despite a decreasing crime rate in Frankston City, some measures of residents' feelings of safety and community strength are falling, and remain lower than what is average for Metropolitan Melbourne overall. The Victorian Population Health Survey found that for adults in Frankston City:

- 54.1% feel safe walking alone down their street after dark most of the time (2017), down from 58.2% (2014)
- 23.4% agreed that people can be trusted most of the time compared (2017), down from 34.8% (2014)
- 23.9% feel they had opportunities to have a say on issues important to them (2017), down from 28.5% (2014)

Council's role

Local government plays an important community building role to enable resilient and inclusive communities where diversity is encouraged and everyone is respected, welcomed and supported. For Frankston City Council, this role includes:

- Community engagement through working groups, meetings and committees, including facilitating Mini Frankston City, the Disability Access and Inclusion Committee, Age Friendly Frankston Ambassadors, Youth Council and leadership for the Peninsula Pride Youth Alliance. Council is also establishing a LGBTQIA+ Network, Gender Equality Network and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Network.
- Community development and support for community groups, including training for community groups, distribution of a community newsletter, provision of land and support for community gardens, men's sheds and facilitating volunteering opportunities through Impact Volunteering.
- Community grants program for not-for-profit, charitable organisations and individuals to help them provide important community services.
- Events, programs and activities that celebrate diversity and support residents to feel valued and connected, including through the Frankston Arts Centre and events like Harmony Day, International Day of People with Disability, Neighbour Day, Midsumma Festival and International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).
- Working alongside First Nations peoples to build respect and recognition and promote reconciliation. Activities include flying both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan, celebrating Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, and engaging Elders and community leaders through the Reconciliation Advisory Committee.
- Building and maintenance of community facilities, including neighbourhood houses, community centres, youth hang outs, community meeting rooms, play spaces and an Aboriginal Gathering Place (Nairn Marr Djambana).
- Development and support for community sports clubs and associations to be welcoming and accessible for everyone.

²⁷Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) 2017, Racism in Victoria and what it means for the health of Victorians, DHHS Victoria, Melbourne.

²⁸VicHealth 2017 Racism in Victoria and what it means for the health of Victorians, VicHealth, Carlton South.

²⁹Leonard W, Pitts M, Mitchell A, Lyons A, Smith A, Patel S, Couch M and Barrett A 2012 Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) Australians, Monograph Series Number 86, The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, Victoria.