



## THEME 2

# Healthy, diverse and thriving communities

### KEY ISSUES: SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG FAMILIES AND SENIOR VICTORIANS; HOUSING



## SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG FAMILIES AND SENIOR VICTORIANS

### CURRENT SITUATION

Local government understands the importance of supporting young families and senior Victorians. It continues to formally embrace this through a range of plans, infrastructure provision, service delivery and support.

Childhood is a stage of life where investment has the greatest return and opportunities to intervene have the greatest impacts. Councils focus and support of early years and the opportunities for intergenerational opportunities which involve older people benefits all members of the community.

However, despite the essential nature of this support, there are threats to their future viability that require urgent attention. Across all caring professions, ongoing workforce shortages continue to affect service delivery to some of Victoria's most vulnerable people.

The State Government must develop comprehensive workforce strategies in partnership with local government to ensure the sustainability of maternal and child health nurses, early years educators and community aged care workers.

The sustainability of services is also reliant on appropriate community infrastructure. Councils are frequently relied upon to provide suitable infrastructure for State Government initiatives and communities. Councils bear the continued cost of maintaining these important community assets.

There is currently limited resourcing for ageing infrastructure used by councils to provide essential services and programs for young families and older people. The continuation of community groups such as senior citizens is currently under threat due to withdrawal of Federal Government funding used to maintain ageing centres in the community.

Councils have a long and proud history of supporting young families and older people to be active participants in the community, but action from the State Government is needed to ensure programs, services and infrastructure is available now and into the future.

### WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Immediate review of the State Government resourcing of the maternal and child health service and an ongoing commitment to the 50:50 partnership with local government in the provision of this essential universal service
- Review the MCH Key Age and Stage Framework, aligning and including evidence-based interventions, time allocation per consultation and funding of program hours per child, alongside the development of a comprehensive MCH workforce strategy for the sector to deliver the service now and into the future
- Commitment to work with local government to resource ageing infrastructure used for the programs and services that support young families and older people. Including recognition of the unprecedented volume of construction required for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform
- Commitment to work with local government on workforce planning to ensure the continuation of essential services such as maternal and child health, early years education and care and community aged care are available to support young families and older people
- Partnering with and investing in local government to plan and coordinate social recovery from COVID-19 for senior Victorians to age well in place.

## BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Partnering with councils to act on the needs and aspirations of their young families and older people will have a direct and sustainable impact on the lives of all Victorian communities. Councils are the level of government best placed to support and work directly with these cohorts to produce local outcomes
- Young families and older people can access the services and programs they need to thrive and participate in age friendly communities
- Older Victorians can age well in place, with easy access to the supports they need to remain connected to their communities.



## CURRENT SITUATION

The significant shortage of social and affordable housing across Victoria is exacerbating financial and emotional stresses for many families, households and individuals.

All communities are impacted, whether it be young people not able to consider owning their own home, communities unable to house key workers which support local businesses, or those who can't find a bed for the night.

Housing is a key social determinant of physical and mental health. Having somewhere to live where people have connections to family, work and community underpin thriving local economies which in turn generate the opportunities that will define the prosperity of the state now and into the future.

Victorian councils are critical players. As local planning authorities they are trying to require more affordable housing dwellings be established closer to existing infrastructure.

Rural and regional councils grappling with population increases combined with tourism and visitor economy downturns are exploring innovative options with local businesses and government agencies to develop more short- and medium-term rental options, social housing and for-profit housing which will support employment, trades and skills development.

Metropolitan and regional city councils are also working to generate more social housing dwellings for people on low incomes. Over 40 councils are part of the Inter-Council Affordable Housing Forum where council officers share their innovations and practical solutions.

All these locally-led innovations across the state can be escalated at pace and scale with increased federal and state resourcing.

## WHAT WE NEED FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Formalised partnership arrangements between state and local government, underpinned by a state-wide agreement (Compact) which includes a mechanism to engage across the range of state agencies that influence social and affordable housing policy
- Recognition that councils are essential partners in the creation and ongoing sustainability of social and affordable housing., and that they must be properly resourced to fulfill necessary planning, support and community development functions to support their communities
- Implementation of planning mechanisms that empower councils to seek mandatory affordable housing contributions from developers and zoning options which require developments to include affordable housing options
- Shared planning around building renewal and development of state owned and managed public housing to ensure they conform to local planning schemes and are fully integrated into the urban landscape, including environmentally sustainable design
- Improving wrap-around outreach services for people with complex needs experiencing homelessness
- Development of a shared social and affordable housing data and monitoring system that provides transparency and a basis for joint planning
- A state-wide public awareness and community education campaign, matched with municipal engagement to encourage communities to be actively involved the planning and delivery of social and affordable housing.

## BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- More affordable housing options are available so that people can live near where they need to work
- Fewer homeless people need to camp out in public places because they are searching for a place to live
- Trends to increasing inequalities and poor health outcomes from higher mental stresses are avoided – costs reduce on state funded health and welfare services.