

Engagement and Directions Paper

Warburton Place Plan

September, 2019

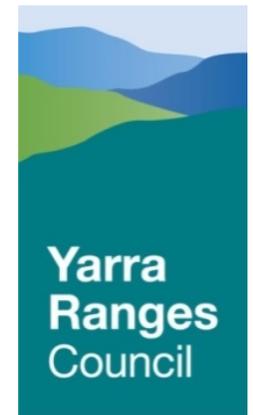


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Acknowledgement of country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People as the custodians of this land. We also pay respect to all Aboriginal community elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

A vision for Warburton

The Yarra River cuts through Warburton's narrow gorge from its catchment at Upper Yarra's mountainous source supplying Melbourne's water on its way to the city and the ocean. Warburton is both a source of energy and a destination.

Its residents come seeking the beauty and quietude of its natural environment providing the inspiration for recreation, creativity and reflection. Its visitors seek the same.

Warburton is a connected, resilient and unique community. The natural environment remains central to the community experience while providing economic prosperity for current and future generations.

Warburton celebrates its Indigenous cultural heritage, as well as the gold mining and timber milling history, which is visible throughout the township. The river is cared for and protected and remains the key focus and gathering place in Warburton.

Warburton is a unique, sustainable place, where recreation, culture and the environment drive community life. It remains a place of interest, escape and spontaneous creativity. Tourism brings cultural exchange and locals proudly share their way of life with visitors.

Change has come again to Warburton. The Warburton Mountain Bike Project, and the development of community assets, has increased eco-tourism, the population and activity. Whilst busy and prosperous, Warburton maintains a gentle walking pace.

What is place planning?

Place planning is a collaborative, long-term approach to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. This approach is characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship, and shared accountability for outcomes and impacts. Place-based approaches are often used to respond to complex, interrelated or challenging issues.

While place-based approaches in planning have been used by local governments in Australia to address urban renewal or town centre revitalisation, they have not been widely used as a whole-of-Council approach to planning for communities. For local governments, place planning shifts the focus from outputs of various departments to outcomes that deliver on quality of life improvements for communities. As such, community is central to the development and delivery of a place plan so that issues can be pursued in a more integrated, coordinated way to achieve the economic, social and environmental potential.

The development of place planning in Yarra Ranges Council has seen a number of iterations. More recently the development of the Lilydale Place Plan, followed by this development of the Warburton Place Plan, establishes a growing understanding and profile of place planning. This has been supported by Council's strategic directions and a growing body of research and experiences elsewhere that place plans provide opportunities for councils to work in partnership with communities and stakeholders in delivering improvements to places, guiding the delivery of infrastructure, programs and services.

Principles

Place Planning at Yarra Ranges is driven by five key principles:

- A Culture, Community & Service Needs
- B Economic Prosperity
- C Integrated Movement & Spatial Networks
- D Future Oriented Land Use & Development
- E Leadership & Governance

Warburton place plan

The Warburton Place Plan will help guide decisions about Warburton and direct preferred outcomes for the township. For the purpose of this report, Warburton is defined as the Warburton Township and the surrounding townships of Wesburn, Millgrove, East Warburton and Big Pats Creek

The challenge for the Warburton Place Plan is to create a roadmap to a future Warburton in which the beauty and enjoyment of the town and natural environment remains central to the community experience while providing economic prosperity for current and future generations.

Warburton is a place known for its strong sense of community and for attracting both visitors and residents alike to its highly valued natural environment. Like other townships Warburton has, and is continuing to, experience change. The investment and development of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (WMBD) Draft Master Plan and community assets, coupled with Warburton's existing strengths provide opportunities for Warburton into the future. Complementary to this, the timely development of a Warburton Place Plan seeks to identify these opportunities and guide Warburton's evolution, drawing on the resources, strengths and values of the community.

The development of the Warburton Place Plan has been aided by the delivery of a number of community engagement activities and interviews with Council staff about the work of Council in Warburton. The next step in the delivery of the plan will be the release of a draft plan for comment, based on community feedback and work by Council.

Timeline and next steps

A draft Place Plan is expected to be released by 30 November 2019. The Draft Place Plan will be posted online and distributed in Warburton. Feedback and comment will be sought. Community engagement processes will provide opportunity for testing and refinement, after which it will be taken to a Council Meeting for endorsement. Action plans will evolve out of the agreed Place Plan. The Place Plan will be evaluated and outcomes and impact reported over time. The following is the timeline to develop the draft:

1. Public release of the *Research and Directions Paper* 23 September
2. Presence at the Business and Investment Forum 9 October
3. Presentation at the Yarra Ranges Council meeting in Warburton on 22 October
4. Draft Place plan drafted for community consideration from 30 November

Summary of findings and directions

Building on community feedback provided to the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (WMBD) Draft Master plan, and regional open space and park upgrades at Warburton Recreation Reserve, Millgrove, Wesburn and East Warburton, this report (from page 16) provides detail of the feedback received from community in Warburton from December 2018 to May 2019. Representing an important element of the Warburton Place Plan, community engagement helps shape a shared vision and preferences for the town in the future. This feedback and findings is summarised with directions in the table on the following pages:

Finding	Direction
<p>Access and Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warburton’s single main road access point is constraining especially in relation to emergencies • Poor public transport service provision and difficulty accessing nearby townships, frequency of bus services, no bike racks on buses • Footpaths linking the different sides of the town, public transport, lighting around town, walkability, car tourism, transport management, connectivity and disability access need improvement. 	<p>Reduce congestion by improving transport options and local connectivity, as recommended in the Integrated Transport Strategy. Options include, but not limited to, better public transport provision and integration, additional footpaths, bike lanes, and community transport services.</p>
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community to be better engaged with Council and other government planning, services and work. • Communication from Council, especially in follow-up from initial community consultation was seen as lacking. • Digital platforms for communication including websites, email and social media are not sufficient to engage broadly with Warburton community. 	<p>Develop an engagement plan to ensure Council planning, services and works information is accessible and visible within Warburton to enable the Community to have greater understanding ownership and stewardship in the development of Warburton.</p>
<p>Site Activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are multiple dormant sites in Warburton that if activated would bring economy and energy • Community want dormant sites in town reactivated with productive activity 	<p>Proactively seek multiple avenues to develop dormant sites. Support activation to include community infrastructure including affordable</p>

Finding	Direction
<p>focussing on creative/performance spaces, co-working spaces, TAFE / creative education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limitations to what government can do, however the Mountain Bike project is a key driver in improving conditions. • Advocacy from all tiers of government and community regarding empty sites is needed. 	<p>housing in Warburton.</p>
<p>Economic Development and Business Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMBD and associated development is a major opportunity for Warburton’s economic development • Sustaining business operations is an issue as capital and customers diminish. • There is a need in Warburton for both private investment and business customers to boost economic development. • Raising capital to develop a sustainable business idea is a stumbling blocks • There are many unique assets from creativity recreation and culture that could be developed. 	<p>Deliver an investment attraction program consistent with Warburton’s assets and culture and embraces future opportunities. Encourage businesses and events which showcase recreation, the environment, and the significant local arts and culture including our rich Aboriginal culture.</p>
<p>Emergency Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire risk is a real and ongoing concern for Warburton’s residents, and one that will require ongoing risk management. • The Warburton Emergency Planning Group (WEPG) provides information regarding bushfire plans, planning for those in the community with special needs and links for further information. • There are still some areas of minimal mobile reception (Big Pats Creek, East Warburton) to consider for SMS notification. • 	<p>Review public plans with bushfire agencies and continue fuel reduction management and mitigation strategies, along with agency coordination, bushfire awareness for visitors (particularly in relation to WMBD project) and new residents. Continue to support existing Emergency Management Community Groups within the area.</p>
<p>Environment and Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Warburton community holds a very strong value for the natural environment 	<p>Develop the next Climate Plan for Yarra Ranges based on up to date research, reports and advice</p>

Finding	Direction
<p>and the Yarra river in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the River, litter and pollution, environmental sustainability and protection for Warburton’s expansive natural environment and its wildlife in the face of climate change is a key community concern. The impact of deer on the natural environment is also a concern. • Old buildings in the area have poor septic tank systems – new houses must meet requirements, but often old houses have grey water emptying into street drains 	<p>published by recognised authorities. Facilitate environmental education for visitors and match waste management strategies to tourism growth. Engage Wurundjeri community to promote local Indigenous knowledge on caring for country, environmental stewardship and land management practices.</p>
<p>Heritage and Character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong desire to preserve the intangible and tangible heritage of Warburton and retain its unique character. • The promotion and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is prominent in the minds of the Warburton community. • Opportunity to tell Heritage (Indigenous and European) stories to shape place. • Protection and preservation of the main street including heritage buildings and awnings, river facing terraces and tenancy by appropriate localised 	<p>Provide resources to specifically support the development of projects that strengthen the economic, social and cultural fabric of the region’s Indigenous and European community. Identify additional actions that can be taken to recognise Indigenous history with local Elders, Indigenous organisations and stakeholders. With sensitive urban design reflect towns’ character in the design of buildings, public spaces, transport systems, and amenities.</p>
<p>Housing Affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is becoming less affordable. There is a perception that home sharing platforms such as Airbnb are in part to blame. • There has been an increase in tourist numbers, both those making day trips and those staying in Warburton. 	<p>Advocate for investment in affordable housing and for planning schemes to require new development to provide an affordable housing component (i.e. inclusionary zoning). Apply recent legislative changes to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to facilitate affordable housing outcomes. Consider options for direct investment using consortia or partnership models.</p>

Finding	Direction
<p>Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are management, signage and accessibility of parking issues in the area. • There is concern that the infrastructure of the town will not meet growing visitor demand in future years. • In 1990 issues regarding parking and traffic more broadly were noted in the Warburton Township Study. 	<p>Undertake an evaluation of car parking in Warburton, in line with Council's car parking action framework in the Integrated Transport Strategy. This includes an assessment of current parking occupancy and travel behaviours, investigation of opportunities to reduce demand and improve utilisation of existing parking assets.</p>
<p>People and Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warburton's community is well connected and cares about overall community wellbeing. • Concern regarding the elderly population, ageing in place and a lack of activities, services, access and mobility for elderly residents was regularly raised. • Few opportunities for young people, lack of activities, lack of transport, safety and lack of employment and training opportunities. • Desire from engagement participants to ensure inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of community life – including physical accessibility 	<p>Develop programs to build on existing community participation through activities, groups, festivals and events. Focus specifically on social connection to further strengthen Warburton's community resilience. Advocate for funds to develop volunteer programs that support ageing in place.</p>
<p>Public Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community is seeking more vibrant public places • New performance spaces, events, and initiatives for young people and to promote Warburton to the wider Melbourne area including the infrastructure to support. • More public amenities needed including public toilets, playgrounds, bins and drinking water • Town character and environment are important. Improvement of streetscape to include public art, unique infrastructure, amenities and cleaning of buildings. • Safety an issue for some, particularly lighting, Wi-Fi access and places to 'hang out' (at night). 	<p>Collaborating with community, creatively redesign existing public spaces, focussing on Warburton's unique culture, environment, accessibility and safety. Establish Local Aboriginal acknowledgement: naming rights, memorials, protected areas and access to cultural features.</p>

Finding	Direction
<p>Skills, Training and Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The construction and delivery of the WMBD project is poised to deliver substantial economic benefits to the Warburton Community. • Develop the local economy with potential for different industries to establish in Warburton, • Training for residents to learn new skills and gain employment is important . • Community engagement activities suggest that there are untapped resources already in the community with regards to teaching and skills provision. 	<p>Partner with the business community, schools and an education provider to offer training and prepare workforce for emerging opportunities. Foster new employment opportunities for young people in nature based tourism and hospitality.</p>
<p>Social Issues and Service Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous considerations highlight the difficulties in the sustainability of services, given the generally small number of service users. • Social isolation, inadequate services based locally, housing affordability, financial hardships and lack of meaningful diverse employment opportunities impact on families, young people and children. • there are declining numbers of families with children (highlighted in this report’s “Warburton People” section) impacts on the future demands for education services specifically early childhood education, care services and primary schools 	<p>Partner with the Warburton Community to advocate for resources to support the Upper Yarra Partnership including Linking Families Service, Maternal and Child Health Outreach nurse and a trauma specialist counsellor. Focus specific activity and support existing community activity to focus on social connection to reduce isolation.</p>
<p>Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community is considering how to make the most from tourism growth • The incoming tourism visitation and spend will be beneficial to the town, its residents and businesses. • Strong desire for Cultural tourism that appreciates and celebrates the environment and culture. • Tourism with low-carbon and sustainability focus can support the importance that the community places on the conservation of the natural environment. • Emphasis on the history of the area, through bush walking, nature-based tourism, and markets. 	<p>Focus on the long term sustainability of tourism that values the natural environment and cultural tourism with local authenticity, history, values and character at the core of promotion. Use tourism strategies that enhance community pride and ownership.</p>

About Warburton

Warburton's History and Natural Environment

Warburton is a place that has long attracted people to its natural environment. It is on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations who have had a continuous presence in the area for over 40,000 years and is a place where sites of significant Aboriginal Cultural Heritage have been identified. During land surveying Robert Hoddle entered the area looking for the source of the Yarra River in 1845, Europeans initially developed Warburton as a service town for a gold mining community in 1863, the first freehold land was not taken up until 1871. This was followed by the logging industry and finally, tourism, boosted by the completion of the railway in 1901. The first guest house in Warburton opened in 1880, serviced by a road coach from Lilydale. Once the railway opened the number of guesthouses rose rapidly to fifteen.

Warburton's setting in a narrow gorge by the Yarra River, with nearby Mount Donna Buang a 20-minute drive away continues to attract increasing visitor numbers today. There is a thriving arts and creative community that acts as another drawcard to the township. The connection to the natural environment and desire to protect this environment are strong in the minds of local residents and is consistently noted as contributing to Warburton's unique feel.

Protection of this natural environment was noted as being of paramount importance both by local residents in the community consultation activities and Council staff. The natural environment was notable as it is seen as an integral,

unique and defining feature of the township. Protection of the natural environment was also discussed in the context of balancing economic development (i.e. with overdevelopment and with degradation of the natural environment there will be no reason to visit or relocate to Warburton). The 'Dear Warburton' consultation reveals that the majority of respondents have to date written about the natural environment.

The protection of Warburton and the surrounding natural environment has been the rationale for the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan*. This Plan seeks to "enable increased protection of the special features and character of the region" and continues to guide development in the region by informing the *Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme* and other key documents. The Yarra Ranges' *Green Wedge Management Plan (2010)*, *Flora and Fauna Policy (2012)* and *Environment Strategy 2015-2025* all support the *Regional Strategy Plan*. The Yarra Ranges *Environment Strategy* was endorsed by Council in 2015 after ten months of research and three rounds of consultation; the *Strategy* specifically notes the draw of natural resources for tourists. The *Yarra Ranges Municipal Strategic Statement* sits alongside the *Strategy* and aims to protect the values of "natural beauty and scenic views, open space and recreation values, rural productivity, agricultural values and health ecosystems, water resources and biodiversity values". These strategies and plans guide development and have direct implications for Warburton, given its location and setting.

Warburton's unique environment also provides challenges, with the ever-increasing risk of bushfires and climate change a threat to the community, particularly each bushfire season. Warburton's location outside of the Melbourne Urban Growth

Boundary, bushfire risk, topography, protected open spaces, river setting and desire to protect the natural environment impacts any future development. As well as being situated in a bushfire-prone area, Warburton is also at risk for flood events as the Yarra River bisects the township. The Warburton Highway (also known as Main Street in Warburton) provides Warburton's civic spine and provides a focal point for the two commercial areas, while serving as the key access point to the township from Melbourne some 75 kilometres away. The Birrarung (Yarra River) is also an important focus for community gatherings.

Warburton's People

While there are many longstanding residents and families connected to the township, community engagement activities reveal that there have also been more recent resident arrivals attracted to the township for reasons such as those noted above and what has been lower median house and rental prices (when compared to other areas of Greater Melbourne). Three secondary schools in Yarra Junction is also a drawcard for families. The overall number of residents has remained static in recent years, although there has been an increase in older residents (Warburton's median age is 48 years, 12 years greater than the Greater Melbourne median age of 36). Warburton is less culturally diverse than other areas of the Yarra Ranges and Greater Melbourne; the majority of residents (85.4 per cent) speak only English at home. Population projections expect population growth to remain low over the next 10 to 20 years.

The closure of the Sanitarium Factory (in 1997) and the Warburton Hospital (in 2001) has seen a decreased presence

of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, an organisation that has played a significant part in Warburton's story. The Signs Publishing Company, part of the Warburton Adventists, continues to operate the printing works adjacent to the Sanitarium Factory, although has reduced its workforce and output in recent years.

Some residents in Warburton face social and day-to-day living issues at higher-than-average rates when compared to Yarra Ranges averages. While the Australian Bureau of Statistics' SEIFA index shows average levels of socio-economic disadvantage across the Yarra Ranges, there are some pockets of disadvantage; Warburton and the surrounding Upper Yarra townships is one such pocket. Within Yarra Ranges, the locality with the highest rates of psychological/psychiatric disability support pension recipients were in Warburton's 3799 postcode area (27.5 per 1000 residents).

While most children are doing well in Warburton, when compared to other areas of the Yarra Ranges there are higher rates of early years (0-5 years) developmental vulnerabilities. A greater number of Warburton residents report either living with a disability or caring for somebody living with a disability and experience of family violence continues to be an issue, with higher than average reports of family violence reported in the Let's Talk Warby Project (2017).

Accommodation concerns have been noted in recent community engagement activities, both for those seeking affordable rental accommodation and ensuring that there is accommodation that is fit-for-purpose. Warburton home owners have recently been experiencing higher-than-average levels of mortgage stress. Anecdotal evidence suggests that

there has been an emergence in recent years of home sharing through the digital marketplace (for example, Airbnb) in the township, which has seen pressure on the availability of affordable housing and an increase of temporary visitors. This, coupled with planning restrictions and a lack of diversity in housing stock, has been suggested by some in the community as impediments to suitable housing for all that is affordable.

Warburton's Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage was raised by community members in engagement activities and also by number of Council staff members as a primary consideration and an integral part of place planning. Opportunities to work with the Aboriginal community and inclusion in engagement were noted, particularly inviting Traditional Owners and Elders to be involved in this process. The 2016 census reveals that residents identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander make up 0.5 per cent of the population of Warburton, identical to the proportion reported residing in Greater Melbourne.

The closest Historical Society contact is with the Upper Yarra Valley Historical Society, based in Yarra Junction. It was noted that there is not a strong association with Warburton and the Historical Society, although there is a representative from Warburton acting as a coordinator with the Society. This relationship focusses on built form heritage, rather than cultural heritage, mirroring earlier studies and plans.

The influence and presence of the Seventh Day Adventist Church is somewhat unique to Warburton, and although their presence has declined over time, the Church still hosts events

in the community. Staff noted that community members have tended to see the Church, while a part of the community, as being quite separate to the broader community.

Warburton's Economy

Key propulsive industries in the area include construction services, education, residential building construction and other agriculture. The development of tourism is a priority outlined in the Yarra Ranges' *Economic Development Strategy 2012-2022*, and is important to Warburton's economic development and sustainability. This was also an area of opportunity raised through the community engagement opportunities.

Of those who are employed, most travel out of the township to work and take home a lower median income, when compared with Greater Melbourne (\$942 and \$1,539, respectively). In 2016 there were 89 people (7 per cent) in Warburton stating that they were currently unemployed, which is greater than the Yarra Ranges (5 per cent). Of this group, 59 people were seeking full-time work and 30 people were seeking part-time work. Recent community consultation reveals an ongoing tension of local residents being attracted to Warburton's natural assets and relative isolation (sometimes described as "the end of the line") and potential service access difficulties due to this location.

Situated on the Lilydale Warburton Rail Trail, Warburton is already well known and visited as a cycling destination. The Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail attracts more than 300,000 visitors a year, with visitor numbers growing 20 per cent each year. The development of the WMBD Master Plan is attracting discussion in the community regarding both the potential

impacts on the community and the opportunities that this investment may provide. This development has raised concerns of some residents and the changes that it may bring, the desire for equitable distribution of the potential benefits and the need to consider the balance in protecting the natural environment with the WMBD project.

Community engagement

In late 2018, Yarra Ranges Council engaged CoDesign Studio to assist in the development of the Warburton Place Plan. CoDesign Studio and Council staff facilitated three workshops for the community and other key stakeholders. The workshops were framed around key principles:

- Workshop 1: 20 February 2019, focusing on land use, environment and infrastructure
- Workshop 2: 28 February 2019, focusing on the local and regional economy
- Workshop 3: 28 April 2019, focusing on society, culture and identity

An overview of the workshop's specific theme in the context of Warburton was followed by a facilitated discussion on the future challenges, ideas and opportunities that exist in the area. To do so, three stations were established and designated with a theme to be explored through an open discussion.

The workshops focused on identifying early actions that key stakeholders, including Council, local community and traders could implement now and any other next steps going forward.

These workshops complemented community engagement undertaken at community events such as the Warburton Summer Produce Market, Makers Market, community cricket match, the River Folk Festival, community meetings, Redwood Community Centre and Community Emergency

Management Plan engagement session. A broad ranging community engagement was designed to ensure that the opportunities were available to community irrespective of age, gender, social status or affiliations.

An online survey from December 2018 to April 2019, promoted through social media and local media, provided further opportunity for residents and visitors to share their thoughts about Warburton and its future.

Key stakeholder groups were engaged directly, including businesses, community groups, aged care residents and young people. A focus was given to hearing from harder to reach communities. Walkshops engaged diverse community leaders to provide us with an in depth view of the town. This short engaging activity involved people in the physical world of the town, to observe and document it.

Council staff also held drop-in sessions throughout March and April 2019 where residents could visit the Arts Centre to chat about the Place Plan and other issues affecting Warburton, and share feedback to be considered for the plan.

The guiding theme of the overall engagement program was to explore the essence of Warburton's culture, identity and what makes the area unique. Over 400 people engaged with the process.

Opportunities

A number of ideas were raised by community members throughout community engagement activities. The issues that were the main focus across the engagement have been identified and summarised in **bold** below. This is followed by a discussion of the potential ways in which Council (or others) have or can address these ideas through strategic directions, strategies, research, advocacy or further work with the Warburton community.

Access and Movement

What we heard: Footpaths linking the different sides of the town, public transport, lighting around town, walkability, car tourism, transport management, connectivity and disability access need improvement.

What has strongly emerged in community consultation are the issues of transport and access, including access for those living with mobility issues and the need for improving access both within and to/from Warburton. The concerns are broad (and not limited to those in the community living with a disability or other specific groups), and included discussion of:

- Warburton's single main access point (especially in relation to emergencies)
- Poor public transport service provision (difficulty accessing nearby townships, the frequency of bus services, no bike racks on buses)
- Footpaths (provision is inconsistent and difficult for those with mobility issues), and;

- Car parking (particularly during weekends and peak tourist periods).

For an ageing and older community, these concerns are potentially contributing to some residents' isolation and inability to access services and social activities.

The *Yarra Ranges Paths and Trails Strategy*, currently in draft form, addresses many of the concerns raised in the Warburton community engagement activities. Much of the conversation regarding access and movement focussed on those with mobility issues or with particular needs (for example, older persons, young people, and parents and carers with pushers/young children). The *Strategy* includes as one of its objectives 'Inclusive Planning for Health and Wellbeing' and in doing so, makes note of the need to provide access for all. A 'refocus on the 55 community centres in the Shire', another objective, has the potential to see access improvements in these community centres (such as Warburton), and further embed place planning through the provision of paths and trails. As this *Strategy* is still in draft form it may be subject to change and detailed implementation has yet to be determined, meaning the specific impacts for Warburton are not yet clear.

The *Warburton Transport and Movement Report*, also in draft form, makes note of all the concerns raised by community members summarised above. This is to be expected as the *Report* relies on trader and survey feedback as part of its data collection through community engagement and reporting. Parking is the primary issue of concern, followed by road widths, vehicle speeds, path networks, public transport and the provision of community infrastructure. While the *Report* notes low population growth and minimal expected changes to

land use, tourism is expected to grow, with the WMBD when operational expected to see an increase of between 55,000 and 165,000 visitors a year to the area. It is with the development of the WMBD and associated visitors that traffic growth is expected to be generated, although this growth will not be uniform, depending on tourist travel patterns and destinations within the area of study.

Opportunities that are provided as Actions and Strategies in the *Transport and Movement Report* include the upgrading of the Warburton Highway streetscape and potentially reallocating road space from motor vehicles, promoting and enabling sustainable transport options (for example, walking, cycling and associated infrastructure improvements) and advocating for improvements to public transport (such as timetable frequency, shuttle services and services to key tourist destinations).

Links to the Yarra Ranges *Integrated Transport Strategy* have yet to be determined, as the *Strategy* is in development. Discussions with Council staff have indicated that transport concerns noted above will be addressed in the *Strategy*.

In areas where Council may not be able to directly influence decision making it can play an advocacy role for the community. One example is the desire for safer Rail Trail crossings where the trail intersects at the same level with the Warburton Highway. Warburton's Community Economic Development Association (CEDA) expressed a desire to see these improvements made. However, VicRoads manages the Highway and the cost for the improvements requires further investigation. The Council in this example could play an advocacy role, rather than being able to fund and deliver the

works. Part of the Council's role is to liaise and provide timely communication to the community and other key stakeholders.

The need to address issues of transport and access in Warburton are addressed both in a number of Council strategies and also previous work that the Council has undertaken. One recent example is the *Warburton Town Plan* (2015) which focussed on improving safe pedestrian connections and revitalisation works to public places. The vision of the Yarra Ranges *Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023* states "a Yarra Ranges is an accessible, inclusive and equitable society that enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens". While now superseded, the Council's *Vision 2020* noted that transport is a key issue impacting the community and the challenge of providing transport and other infrastructure to meeting the needs of the growing communities and industries. This continues to be true for Warburton.

The Yarra Ranges Council is currently developing an *Integrated Transport Strategy* for the whole of the municipality. Supporting this strategy, a *Local Movement and Transport Report* was developed specifically for Warburton, which will provide data regarding current movement needs and patterns including access, connectivity and parking. Of note is Warburton's main access road, the Warburton Highway, to and from Melbourne (via Yarra Junction) and the resultant limitations posed by this single access point. Improvements to this entrance (including landscaping and pedestrian access) were one of the recommendations to come out of the 1990 *Warburton Township Study*. Council is aware of highway access in relation to emergency response and evacuation of the township. A possible solution offered was the reconfiguration of the Highway into a 'one-way loop',

which would include Old Warburton Road. A significant barrier noted would be access for emergency vehicles that would be required to use the Warburton Highway in order to access the township in an emergency.

Raised in the community engagement sessions was the emergence of new technologies and need to think creatively around addressing evolving transport need. Community-run shuttle buses between townships (for use by locals and tourists), car sharing platforms (e.g. Flexicar, GoGet) and the use of driverless vehicles as they become available were all mooted as possible solutions to accessibility and parking concerns in the Warburton and surrounding townships.

Direction: Reduce congestion by improving transport options and local connectivity, as recommended in the Integrated Transport Strategy. Options include, but not limited to, better public transport provision and integration, additional footpaths, bike lanes, and community transport services.

Communication

What we heard: Community wants to be better informed and engaged with Council (and other government) when planning, services and work.

Communication from Council, especially in follow-up and in regards to what has occurred after, or resulted from, initial community consultation was seen as lacking. Digital platforms for communication (websites, email and social media) are not sufficient to engage broadly with community.

Council's Communications team produces three bimonthly print Yarra Ranges Local newsletter editions - Urban, Hills and Valley which are distributed to residents who have subscribed, businesses and community venues. Three monthly digital newsletters are emailed to subscribers linking them through to news articles featuring video, images and text, published on the Latest News section of the Council website. Local newspapers and radio carry broad-ranging coverage of Council projects and updates.

There are a number of strategic projects designed to improve Yarra Ranges Council's engagement practices and customers' experience. The Customer Experience Strategy 2018-28 has three priority projects; website redevelopment to allow customers to easily find information and access Council services, implementation of SMS messages to update customers on a range of council services and the Customer Process Project to re-design a customer request processes to increase accountability, measurement and performance of customer request processes. Council are currently reviewing our Community Engagement Framework to determine the effectiveness of the way in which Yarra Ranges Council as an organisation delivers its community engagement service and to improve the way the organisation will deliver community engagement activities in the future.

Direction: Develop an engagement plan to ensure Council planning, services and works information is accessible and visible within Warburton to enable the Community to have greater understanding ownership and stewardship in the development of Warburton.

Site Activation

What we heard: Community want dormant sites in town reactivated with productive activity focussing on creative/performance spaces, co-working spaces, TAFE / creative education.

Potential advocacy regarding empty sites was a regular theme of the consultation. Dormant sites include: the Sanitarium Factory, Hospital, Old Exchange, Pool, and the Cerini Centre. With limited development opportunities available in Warburton large dormant sites in town such as the Sanitarium or former Hospital sites attract interest. The sites are seen as part of a possible solution to housing shortages and demand for more public places (see below).

The development of the WMBD will provide increased visitor numbers to Warburton, both national and international. The impacts, if managed well and supported by a place plan, can provide opportunities for further investment; skills and training, business and development of vacant sites (such as the Sanitarium and Hospital sites) are some of the opportunities that this investment can provide.

Direction: Proactively seek multiple avenues to develop dormant sites. Support activation with incentives to developers to include community infrastructure including affordable housing in Warburton.

Economic Development and Business Opportunities

What we heard: Sustaining business operations is an issue as capital and customers diminish.

The need in Warburton for both private investment and business customers to boost economic development was raised by community. It was stated on numerous occasions that there are plenty of business ideas in the community, however raising capital to develop a business idea and then make it sustainable were seen as stumbling blocks for the community. While there are concerns with the WMBD and associated development, this was clearly seen as an opportunity across community for Warburton's economic development.

The Yarra Ranges *Economic Development Strategy 2012-2022* details the potential use of Place Plans as a way of thinking about 'place', the unique characteristics of a place (and community) and how this can then drive economic development. The 2011 'triangle' project was identified in the strategy taking in Lilydale, Mooroolbark and Chirnside Park as a focus area. Since the development of the strategy work in this area has led in part to 'The Lilydale Project' focussing on the development of social and built future for Lilydale and subsequent Lilydale Place Plan.

It was suggested that the development of the WMBD could potentially act as a catalyst for further investment and development for other sites, such as the former Hospital. The momentum behind the WMBD was also suggested as a potential reason why other projects have stalled, as this is where the energy and momentum is at present. One aspect raised by community was the need to ensure that irrespective of the development outcome, there needs to be employment opportunities made available to local residents in order to benefit from the development. This is particularly important for

young people who experience higher unemployment, opportunities for skills development and pathways and needs to be included in the planning for the WMBD.

The Yarra Ranges Enterprise Centre (YREC) is a not-for-profit organisation that supports the growth and development of small and micro businesses in the Yarra Ranges and funded by the Yarra Ranges Council through providing affordable business premises, business counselling and advice, and networking opportunities.

Harnessing Warburton's strengths and attributes were discussed in community workshops and other engagements. Businesses that promote and have a focus on creative industries, the arts, or that celebrate Warburton's cultural heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage were seen to be of value and should be encouraged. In the community engagement activities the natural environment was firmly in the minds of the local community, even when the topic of focus was economic development. This is a contrast to other areas and townships in the Yarra Ranges where the conversation around economic development would not necessarily lead to a conversation about the natural environment. This once again reinforces the importance of the natural environment as seen by local residents.

One example of an innovative project that involved the Council's sustainability team has seen the restoration of a hydro-electric power site in Warburton. The project has restored hydro power at a site on Ythan Creek that was previously used for this purpose and feeds electricity back into the grid. The project is expected to cost \$1 million, funded in part by the Warburton Community Bank Branch of the Bendigo Bank and supported by a working group through the

Upper Yarra Community Enterprise. This project is an example of how the community can deliver a sustainable small-scale, local project driven by local leaders and supported by local grants.

While currently in development, the *Integrated Transport Strategy* may go in some way to address the potential transport barriers to full economic development and participation. Businesses have trouble attracting customers due to lack of transport options, and Warburton residents also unable access readily places of employment (particularly without a private motor vehicle). These constraints can act as a limit to economic development and opportunities in Warburton.

A key question for the community and raised in the second community engagement workshop was making sure that investment and opportunities in Warburton are spread in a way where locals are the beneficiaries (so that jobs that are created do not all go to people outside of the township). While the WMBD and the investment that is expected to follow is welcome as a means of driving economic development for Warburton, some in the community expressed a view that employment elsewhere in the township had gone to employees residing elsewhere. There were also the broader knock on effects noted where money (through wages) leaves the town and the benefits of local economy multiplier effects are lost. Potential partnerships with education providers or skills-based education in schools, focussing on the need for foundational skills development are being explored. Educational attainment and foundational skills development were named as possible barriers to employment for the local community.

Direction: Deliver an investment attraction program consistent with Warburton’s assets and culture and embraces future opportunities. Encourage businesses and events which showcase recreation, the environment, and the significant local arts and culture including our rich Aboriginal culture.

Emergency Management

What we heard: Bushfire risk continues to be a concern and community are seeking solutions for how it will be managed in the town.

Bushfire risk is a real and ongoing concern for Warburton’s residents, and one that will require ongoing risk management. The Warburton Emergency Planning Group (WEPG) provides information regarding bushfire plans, planning for those in the community with special needs and links for further information. The Country Fire Authority designates the Warburton Recreation Reserve as a ‘Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort’; there are also limited places of refuge in Millgrove and a refuge in East Warburton. The installation of an ABC rebroadcasting antenna in 2017 has meant Warburton now has 24-hour access to emergency radio.

The Yarra Ranges Community Safety Plan and Action Plan 2013 – 2018 and supporting Yarra Ranges Community Safety Background Paper aim to reduce the risks associated with bushfires. The purpose of the Community Safety Plan and Action Plan is to improve safety in Yarra Ranges through the provision of community education and collaborative partnerships that support sharing information, knowledge and resources. One goal set out in the Yarra Ranges Environment Strategy is for “communities to be resilient in the face of

changing climate and extreme events”, again of particular relevance to Warburton and in the minds of Warburton residents.

The development of the WMBD brings with it safety and emergency planning considerations, given the increasing numbers of visitors, limited access and location in a bushfire prone area. Relevant changes to Parks Victoria’s *Emergency Management Plan* for this location that considers these potential risks have been undertaken. An Emergency Management Plan for the WMBD is currently in development, with input from Emergency Service Organisations.

Direction: Review public plans with bushfire agencies and continue fuel reduction management and mitigation strategies, along with agency coordination, bushfire awareness for visitors (particularly in relation to WMBD project) and new residents. Continue to support existing Emergency Management Community Groups within the area.

Environment and Sustainability

What we heard: The Warburton community holds a significant value for the natural environment and the Yarra River in particular.

The natural environment, and particularly the River, was the most frequently cited topic in community engagements. Specifically: quality of the Yarra River, litter and pollution, environmental sustainability and protection for Warburton’s expansive natural environment and its wildlife in the face of climate change.

The Yarra Ranges' *Integrated Water Management Plan* (2017) notes the importance of the Yarra River and its tributaries and the need to protect the waterway. The vision for the Plan states that, "The Yarra Ranges is a 'water sensitive place', known for its clean, healthy waterways and its attractive streetscapes and landscapes incorporating water sensitive design...". Water sensitive urban design principles have been incorporated into the design of public realm infrastructure.

Yarra Ranges Council has supported Melbourne Water with the development of the forthcoming Yarra Strategic Plan, which will give effect to the community's long-term vision for the Yarra and support collaborative management of the river.

The Rivers to the Bay project aims to address water pollution (litter, sediment run off, and septic discharge) at its source and is focussed in part on Warburton. A stormwater quality study undertaken by Melbourne Water and Monash University is further work that had been undertaken recently in the area. A local project, *Plastic Bag Free Warburton*, supported by the Victorian State Government has sought to reduce plastic bag waste both in waterways and in landfill.

The *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* is a key guiding document in the protection of the natural environment; the *Strategy Plan* guides development by informing the *Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme* and other relevant Council strategies and plans. Other notable Yarra Ranges documents that guide the protection of the natural environment include; the *Yarra Ranges Flora and Fauna Plan* (2012), *Weed Management Strategy* (2005), *Green Wedge Management Plan* (2010) and *Draft Deer Management Strategy*.

Yarra Ranges Council, through its investment in renewable technology has made significant progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and is supporting communities to do the same.

Work is currently underway for the next iteration of the Yarra Ranges Climate Plan to identify potential Impacts & Risks arising from changing climate variables. According to Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and reports from State and global studies; we need to prepare for:

- Increased frequency, duration and severity of heat waves
- Decreased average rainfall and more severe, prolonged drought conditions
- Less regular but more intense rainfall and storm events
- Significant increase in bushfire danger days

Our Climate Plan will develop actions to avoid &/or minimise the impact on community, council service delivery and operations.

These projects and documents support the protection of the natural environment, and are supported by the Council's strategic directions. There are opportunities to leverage community knowledge and energy for protection of the natural environment, given the special place the natural environment has in the community's sense of place and cultural heritage. A place plan can further support the protection of the natural environment and include acknowledgement and protection as a key part of any plan supported by the community and also the strategies and plans outlined above.

Direction: Develop the next Climate Plan for Yarra Ranges based on up to date research, reports and advice published by recognised authorities. Facilitate environmental education for visitors and match waste management strategies to tourism growth. Engage Wurundjeri community to promote local Indigenous knowledge on caring for country, environmental stewardship and land management practices.

Heritage and Character

What we heard: Community expressed a strong desire to preserve the intangible and tangible heritage of Warburton and retain its unique character. The promotion and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is prominent in the minds of the Warburton community.

Community expressed a strong desire to preserve the intangible and tangible heritage of Warburton and retain unique character. Heritage (Indigenous and European) stories are not widely known, but there is a strong desire to know more and use these stories in making place.

The gold mining, timber milling and wellness history is also prominent and has left a legacy in the town's character. Protection and preservation of the main street including heritage buildings and awnings, river facing terraces and tenancy by appropriate localised businesses is important to those who engaged. Documenting, preserving and revitalising cultural heritage assets (including mining heritage) was raised. Warburton's ability to improve physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health was highlighted by community.

Cultural heritage, the intangible heritage of Warburton and the importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage is increasingly

acknowledged. From this, further possibilities that place planning could provide include better appreciating, understanding, promoting and respecting Aboriginal cultural heritage. Place planning also provides an opportunity to work in partnership with Aboriginal Elders and the Traditional Owners from the plan's inception and guide the plan with the community as it evolves.

The development of the WMBD provides an opportunity to record and conserve any unknown heritage sites in consultation with Heritage Victoria, in keeping with the WMBD *Heritage Survey Report*, which is currently in draft form.

Direction: Provide resources to support the development of projects that strengthen the economic, social and cultural fabric of the region's Indigenous community. Identify additional actions that can be taken to recognise Indigenous history with local Elders, Indigenous organisations and stakeholders. With sensitive urban design reflect towns' character in the design of buildings, public spaces, transport systems, and amenities.

Housing Affordability

What we heard: Airbnb and dormant sites, including how they could be used and potential advocacy on empty sites, are frequently raised issues.

As noted above, housing is becoming less affordable and a perception that home sharing platforms such as Airbnb are in part to blame. There has been an increase in tourist numbers, both those making day trips and those staying in Warburton. This may support the contention that Airbnb is attractive to

owners for short-stay letting to visitors, thereby reducing the availability of affordable rental housing in Warburton for longer-term residents. At present a lack of research specifically focussed on Airbnb, the known multiple determinants housing unaffordability and lack of affordable housing across Greater Melbourne (not necessarily impacted by tourism or Airbnb) suggest at best only a tenuous relationship between the growth of Airbnb and lack of housing affordable housing in Warburton. There will be an increasing need to provide for overnight visitors, with the average stay for domestic overnight stays for WMBD trail users expected to be 2.2 nights. This will add to the existing overnight visitors that currently visit Warburton and stay overnight.

Recent research by Yarra Ranges Council reveals in Warburton there were 1,043 private dwellings in total, of which 222 (21per cent) were unoccupied. Of the 821 occupied dwellings, 183 (22per cent) were rented. A search of Airbnb rental properties found 39 properties to rent. If these properties advertised on Airbnb had all come from the stock of rental properties, then they could have potentially reduced the number of available rental stock properties by 21 per cent. This assumes that all the properties would come from occupied private rental dwellings and does not account for any of the unoccupied private properties nor rental platforms other than Airbnb (for example, Stayz). These unoccupied homes make up a significant proportion of the private housing stock 21 percent, which is double the Greater Melbourne average of 9.1 per cent. This may account for a significant number of second (holiday) homes, of which it could be expected some owners may rent out using platforms such as Airbnb. If this is true, then the impact on the availability of long-term rental properties would be negligible. While further research and evaluation is required, this suggests limited

impacts of Airbnb on the longer-term private rental market in Warburton.

The recent changes to the Victorian *Planning and Environment Act 1987* seek to facilitate the supply of affordable housing through the planning system and encourage responsible authorities (usually local governments) to enter into section 173 agreements. For the first time the *Act* defines 'affordable housing' and seeks to "facilitate the provision of affordable housing in Victoria" through an additional objective. Section 173 agreements allow Councils and landowners to voluntarily enter into an agreement to deliver affordable housing as part of a development. While there are limited development opportunities available in Warburton, as previously discussed, Section 173 agreements may have a place in larger developments, such as the Sanitarium or former Hospital sites if a further planning approval process is required.

With the review of the Yarra Ranges 2009 *Housing Strategy*, there is scope for recommending that Council (through its Strategic Planning) negotiates the inclusion of social housing in any large development in Warburton (or elsewhere in the Yarra Ranges), partnering with a housing association to attract government funding. The recent changes to the Planning and Environment Act and Section 173 agreements can facilitate this recommendation.

Further to these changes, the need and supply of affordable housing is further addressed in *Homes for Victorians: Affordability, Access and Choice* (2017) and the *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* refresh. The *Homes for Victorians* strategy provides more than \$2 billion for support for social and affordable housing while aiming to shift support from

investors to first home buyers through tax changes and grants. Direction 2.3 in Plan Melbourne aims to “increase the supply of social and affordable housing”, noting that measures across all levels of government are needed, the Direction is supported by four policies, namely;

- Utilising government land to deliver additional social housing,
- Streamlining decision making processes for social housing proposals,
- Strengthening the role of planning in facilitating and delivering the supply of social and affordable housing, and;
- Creating ways to capture and share value uplift from rezoning

All directions have limited applicability in Warburton, given the limited potential for further development. However, over time these measures may reduce demand for social and affordable housing in Warburton if affordable housing becomes more accessible across Greater Melbourne.

There is not widespread agreement for the causes of these changes to housing affordability, however the delivery of social housing to ensure those in the bottom quartile of income have access to safe and affordable housing is required both in Warburton and elsewhere. A suite of measures is required; further work and research is continuing in this area.

Direction: Advocate for investment in affordable housing and for planning schemes to require new development to provide an affordable housing component (i.e. inclusionary zoning). Apply recent legislative changes to the Planning and

Environment Act 1987 to facilitate affordable housing outcomes. Consider options for direct investment using consortia or partnership models.

Parking

What we heard: There are management, signage and accessibility of parking issues in the area, as well as concern that the infrastructure of the town will meet growing visitor demand in future years.

Parking concerns (such as the inability to find parking close to the desired destination) have been raised in the community engagement activities. Again, it is of note that in 1990 issues regarding parking and traffic more broadly were noted in the *Warburton Township Study*. While some community members in the community engagement activities have suggested that parking has been a recently emerging issue (mostly due to increased visitor numbers), the *Township Study* suggests parking has been a long-standing issue raised in the community. This challenges the idea that there was a time not too long ago when parking was not seen to be an issue, prior to more recent notable increases in tourist numbers.

Issues of parking raised at the community consultation sessions focussed on these increased visitor numbers, access issues to and from car parking away from the Main Street (especially for those with mobility issues) and the lack of parking spaces (in particular at peak times, for example at weekends or during the school holidays).

A recent survey indicates that there is ample parking in the township (however it is located away from the Main Street and is not as well known, so therefore underutilised). There are

also other parking opportunities further away from the township that, with effective connectivity, could help to spread demand.

The draft *Warburton Transport and Movement Report* makes clear in its 'Actions and Strategies' the need to further monitor parking demand, mix, restrictions and availability (beyond the monitoring activities included in the *Report*). Possible opportunities include changes to the mix of parking restrictions; consistency in township parking signage and ensuring that traders are consulted with regards to any changes to parking that may impact their businesses. The need for additional car parking is seen not to be a short-term necessity in the *Report*; with the expected increased visitor numbers the need for additional car parking seen to be required sometime in the future to accommodate this growth. Transport and car parking maps are one way in which current parking arrangements and changes can be communicated to local residents and visitors.

Consideration is given to parking overflow sites as possible longer-term solutions, such as the former landfill site in Wesburn (and the provision of a shuttle bus linking the site).

Direction: Undertake an evaluation of car parking in Warburton, in line with Council's car parking action framework in the Integrated Transport Strategy. This includes an assessment of current parking occupancy and travel behaviours, investigation of opportunities to reduce demand and improve utilisation of existing parking assets.

People and Community

What we heard: This community is well connected and cares about overall community wellbeing.

Concern regarding the elderly population, aging in place and a lack of activities, services and access (mobility) for elderly residents was regularly raised. Opportunities for young people, lack of activities, lack of transport, safety and lack of employment and training opportunities was seen as a priority. A desire from participants to ensure inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of community life – including physical accessibility improvements was raised.

Yarra Ranges Council follows an asset based community development model. The Warburton community is highly engaged and informed on issues affecting their town. Community organisations commonly lead on important services and infrastructure projects, such as;

- The community-owned \$1.2 million mini hydro power plant
- Volunteer-run Visitor Information Centre at the Waterwheel, offering Artist Gallery an Indoor Forrest/Environment Centre and retail space showcasing locally handmade goods is provides information from local businesses and volunteers.
- Warburton Emergency Management Group is a community initiative. Through their advocacy the Upper Yarra now has 96.1 emergency radio frequency that relays emergency radio information broadcast on AM radio station 774

- Redwood Community Centre provides extensive social services and material aid for families in and around Warburton.
- The Warburton Advancement League is one of the longest running township groups in Yarra Ranges and support new initiatives and coordinates community action.
- Local social enterprise Koha provide community events and food security
- The Upper Yarra Community Enterprise (UYCE) manage the Community Bank in Warburton and Yarra Junction
- The Community and Economic Development Association

As detailed above, some residents in Warburton face social and day-to-day living issues. Warburton has high number of people living on a support pension. There is a high number of single parent families. Most children are doing well in Warburton, but when compared to other areas of the Yarra Ranges there are higher rates of early years (0-5 years) developmental vulnerabilities. A greater number of Warburton residents report either living with a disability or caring for somebody living with a disability and experience of family violence continues to be an issue.

Direction: Develop programs to build on existing community participation through activities, groups, festivals and events. Focus specifically on social connection to further strengthen Warburton’s community resilience. Advocate for funds to develop volunteer programs that support ageing in place.

Public Places

What we heard: Community is seeking more vibrant public places including new performance spaces, events, and initiatives for young people, winter and night activities and promoting Warburton to the wider Melbourne area.

Public amenities including public toilets, playgrounds, bins and drinking water – are needed and design fitting the town character and environment are important. Improvement of streetscape should include public art, unique infrastructure, amenities and cleaning of buildings. Safety is an issue for some respondents, particularly siting lighting, Wi-Fi access and places to ‘hang out’ (at night). Opportunities raised for consideration included to review planning of streetscape reorient existing frontages, and extend nearby library and business opening hours. More diversity of activities and access to the Yarra River is also important for promoting Warburton.

The Yarra Ranges 2018 *Creative Communities Strategy* promotes culture as the “heart of our places” (p.5), and supports both the development and investment in cultural facilities (such as the Arts Centre in Warburton) and the Culture Tracks Program of programs and activities across the Yarra Ranges. A place plan would support the Strategy and could also provide opportunities to support other initiatives for supporting the arts and culture both in Warburton and further afield.

Direction: Collaborating with community, creatively redesign existing public spaces, focussing on Warburton’s unique culture, accessibility and safety. Establish Local Aboriginal

acknowledgement: naming rights, memorials, protected areas and access to cultural features.

Skills, Training & Employment

What we heard: Community want to develop the local economy with potential for different industries to establish in Warburton, and training for residents to learn new skills and gain employment is important to them.

The development of a Place Plan for Warburton can provide opportunities and other ways of thinking about education and partnerships that could take place. Conversations during community engagement activities suggest that there are untapped resources already in the community with regards to teaching and skills provision. Retirees and older residents may be a part of this untapped resource.

The construction and delivery of the WMBD project is poised to deliver substantial economic benefits to Warburton and cannot be ignored in terms of scale and potential opportunities for skills, training and employment. The WMBD *Economic Impact Assessment* estimates that during the construction phase of the project a total of 23.4 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs would be created. Once complete and the project is realising its full potential, it is estimated that the WMBD will create 99.5 FTE jobs. The main job sectors that will benefit from this project are accommodation, food and beverage, recreational services and other visitor services including retail. While jobs may be created by the WMBD directly and indirectly, it is expected that there will be strong competition for these jobs from the local residents and those who may travel (16,000 people live within a half hour commute from Warburton). Supporting the local community through ensuring

that employment opportunities are provided to locals could be facilitated through targeting employment opportunities for local people experiencing unemployment and the delivery of training schemes for this group and others in the community who may be experiencing other disadvantage.

Direction: Partner with the business community and an education provider to offer training and prepare workforce for emerging opportunities.

Social Issues and Service Provision

What we heard: Residents have reported a lack of services accessible in Warburton.

Social isolation, inadequate services based locally, housing affordability, financial hardships and lack of meaningful diverse employment opportunities impact on families, young people and children.

Previous considerations highlight the difficulties in the sustainability of services, given the generally small number of service users when compared with other areas of the Yarra Ranges, and Yarra Junction being the area's regional service hub. This issue and specifically the fact that there are declining numbers of families with children (highlighted in this report's "Warburton People" section) especially impacts on the future demands for education services specifically early childhood education and care services and primary schools

Higher than average levels of “intersectional vulnerability”ⁱ result in complex needs of some in the community. The *Let’s Talk About Warby* consultation (see below) and Upper Yarra Family Partnership are some key ways in which Council has recently been working with the community. The Upper Yarra Partnership is a government, service and school collaborative impact project aimed at improving outcomes for children under 14 years of age.

The *Lets Talk about Warby* highlighted the issue service sustainability paradox; there may be a need in the community, however if people do not or are hesitant to access services until trust is built, service providers have then assumed that there is not a need for the service and ceased to provide that service in the past (before the opportunity to build trust in the community and with individuals/families occurs).

Data suggests that Warburton residents aged 0-5 years were experiencing higher than average levels of developmental vulnerabilities when compared to other areas in the Yarra Ranges. *Let’s Talk about Warby* community consultation in 2014 revealed lower rates of child immunisation (65per cent of 5-year olds are immunised) and cost of living pressures. The latter attributed to Warburton’s higher day-to-day living expenses associated with food, travel and services (which also highlighted a lack of choice for these essentials). This

ⁱ Intersectional vulnerability recognises that people experience disadvantage differently based on varying identities, needs and priorities.

consultation sought to identify service gaps and improvement for service coordination and provided seven key recommendations. This has seen ongoing engagement in the community, supporting families to access services and enhancing integrated service provision (in part through the support of the Upper Yarra Partnership).

Let’s Talk about Warby found that not only are reports of family violence higher in the Warburton area, access to specialist services for those experiencing or at risk of family violence is difficult, with implications for safety. Previously, women accessing support would be told they would have to attend an appointment in Ringwood for a risk assessment, which for many was difficult, if not impossible. An outreach service was recommended as a way of reaching those experiencing difficulty in accessing these services. Since the publication of the recommendations from *Let’s Talk about Warby* Council has advocated for an outreach worker to provide services closer to Warburton for those experiencing family violence. The Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) now provides the services of a remote worker at Yarra Junction four days a week. Other services that are now providing services locally following *Let’s Talk about Warby* and work of the Upper Yarra Partnership include a Linking Families Service, a Maternal and Child Health Outreach nurse and a trauma specialist counsellor.

Direction: Partner with the Warburton Community to advocate for resources to support the Upper Yarra Partnership including Linking Families Service, Maternal and Child Health Outreach nurse and a trauma specialist counsellor. Focus specific activity and support existing community activity to focus on social connection to reduce isolation.

Tourism

What we heard: Community are thinking about how to make the most of future increases in tourist visitation and ensure that the incoming tourism visitation and spend will be beneficial to the town, its residents and businesses, while ensuring the town keeps its village atmosphere.

Tourism that appreciates and celebrates the environment was discussed by community members in engagement activities, and further celebrates Warburton's unique location and natural environment. Tourism that has a low-carbon and sustainability focus provides another way in which tourism can support the importance that the community places on the conservation of the natural environment. Community want to emphasise the history of the area, through bush walking, nature-based tourism and markets. Nature-based tourist experiences (such as walks and tours) as suggested by local community members and are congruent with the community's values and wishes. Support through the Warburton Place Plan, the Yarra Ranges *Creative Communities Strategy*, *Economic Development Strategy* or YREC could further support such tourism activities and business opportunities.

Tourism is a significant sector of Warburton's economy, and growing. The Yarra Ranges *Economic Development Strategy 2012-2022* supports these developments and aims more broadly to achieve local and international recognition for the Yarra Ranges as a premier tourist destination. Yarra Ranges Tourism acts as the regional tourism board and promotes the region as a tourist destination, receiving funding from the Yarra Ranges Council to undertake this work. The website for

the Yarra Ranges Tourism has a dedicated site focussing on Warburton and the surrounding district (referred to as the 'Warburton Valley'), and provides links to activities, accommodation and hospitality in the area.

Accessible tourism is promoted by Yarra Ranges Tourism, a TrailRider all-terrain wheelchair is available to loan by residents and visitors that may be used to access walking trails that are inaccessible using two-wheeled conventional wheelchairs. The Yarra Ranges *Paths & Trails Strategy* is currently in draft form and will further support accessibility in Warburton

Direction: Focus on the long term sustainability of tourism through Cultural tourism with local authenticity, history, values and character at the core of promotion. Use tourism strategies that enhance community pride and ownership.

Previous plans & priorities

Development and improvement plans for Warburton are not new, having been initiated by both Council and other local stakeholders. Green & Dale Associates were commissioned by the Warburton Advancement League in 1990 to author the *Warburton Townscape Study*, focussing on the built environment and providing a study of the township fabric and character. The impetus for study originated from the reported neglect and dilapidated condition of the commercial and residential buildings along Main Street with the desire to “upgrade the townscape character and contribute to the social and economic base of Warburton”. While the *Study*’s focus was an “in depth look at the character of Warburton”, the *Study* focusses on the buildings and layout of the township. Notably, there is no discussion of the intangible cultural heritage aspects of the township and the relationship to the built environment and community values. Opportunities for improvements to the streetscape and the shop frontages in the two commercial precincts were noted in the report.

At the time of the *Warburton Township Study* the focus was on the Main Street frontages; subsequent work by the Yarra Ranges Council has seen improvements to Thomas Avenue and the rear of the shops orientated towards the Yarra River. This reorientation towards the River has been key infrastructure shift in the township, with some reporting these changes were controversial at the time. Recent community consultation sentiment suggests that this built form reorientation and focus towards the Yarra River has since been embraced by the community, as community members report the river setting being one of Warburton’s most highly-

valued assets. Similar work to better link the two commercial areas of the township along the Highway was raised as previously being on the Council’s radar, and also was discussed in the recent community consultation activities. However insufficient work has been done to address better connecting these two areas.

In 2003 improvements were made on the other side of the Warburton Highway, with the development of the *Landscape Concept Plan for the Waterwheel Precinct* and efforts made by Council to better connect the Warburton Station site to the town/Main Street. In 2007 Council refurbished both the Upper Yarra Arts Centre (now Arts Centre) and adjacent Mechanic’s Institute Hall, one of the oldest remaining buildings in the Upper Yarra.

The Warburton Community Recreation Precinct and WMBD were included in the Yarra Ranges key strategic advocacy priorities in November 2017. These priorities are driven by the needs of the community and seek to complement the priorities of the State and Federal Governments, neighbouring councils and the business sector.

Work has progressed with the development of the Warburton Community Recreation Precinct (following community consultation regarding future uses of the swimming pool site) which will see a new recreation area, including a Water Play Park, open grass recreation area, picnic facilities and an updated play space that “responds to local early childhood development needs”. This development is supported by the *Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013-2023*, supporting the goal to “create a healthy and active Yarra Ranges community and environment” and providing “quality and diverse sport and recreation facilities, parks and community

spaces”. The project has been given planning permission and is currently in the call for tenders phase; the Precinct is slated for completion in 2020. The project makes use of the former swimming pool site that has not been used for ten years, next to the caravan park, and is expected to attract 50,000 visitors per year. To be completed in stages, the first stage is the water park element. The *Recreation and Open Space Strategy* also notes that Warburton’s ageing population will place increased demands on accessible recreation opportunities and facilities in the future.

Two of the most recent capital works projects undertaken by Council include;

- Streetscape improvements in the Warburton town centre. This involved the installation of street furniture and bicycle racks, improved paths between Thomas Avenue and Main Street, and new disabled car parking spaces in Main street.
- Improvements to Redwood Forest, a popular tourist site, working with Victoria Police and Parks Victoria. New car parking and sealing of Cement Creek Road from Wood Points Road to the Yarra River Bridge were completed in November 2018.

The Millgrove Community Plan was developed in 2015 by the Millgrove Residents Action Group, and sets out the community’s priorities, with the vision to “... see a vibrant, joyful and safe community with positive opportunities for all. A place we are proud to call home”.

Further studies

- The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination has involved and continues to involve a number of studies and research in the project’s development including a *Feasibility Study and Flora & Fauna Assessment (2013)*, *Governance and Business Models for Recreation Trails report (2017)*, an *Economic Impact Assessment (2018)* and *Social Impact Assessment (2019)*.
- Rivers to the Bay, a three-year (2017-2020) project with DELWP addressing pollution (litter, sediment run off, and septic discharge) at its source. This project is focussed on Warburton, Healesville and the Dandenong Ranges.
- A stormwater quality study undertaken by Melbourne Water and Monash University.
- A Draft *Deer Strategy*, completed in late 2018, developed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR).
- Stonefly research on Mount Donna Buang by the University of Melbourne
- Environmental/ecological study

These current studies and strategies will further support the needs of the community and the work of Council in Warburton.

Appendix 1

The following table documents the Key Themes, Concerns, Opportunities and Supporting Strategies from community workshops and place plan engagement based on the five key principles:

- A Culture, Community & Service Needs
- B Economic Prosperity
- C Integrated Movement & Spatial Networks
- D Future Oriented Land Use & Development
- E Leadership & Governance

Key themes	Concerns raised	Suggested opportunities	Supporting strategies and projects
Natural ecosystem protection Principles: D, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity at risk due to pest species • Watch erosion • Climate change and environmental sustainability as part of development plans • Warburton Mountain Bike Destination: • Could clear large amount of vegetation • Introduce cats/foxes who like man-made trails • Noise and movement scares animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feral animal control • Management plans for native trees • New development to respond to unique topography • Conservation of Redwood Forest • Free tip/more hard rubbish collection to prevent dumping in the bush • Environmental education for tourists, promote quiet enjoyment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan • Yarra Ranges <i>Environment Strategy</i> (2015 – 2025) • Yarra Ranges <i>Flora & Fauna Plan</i> (2012) • Yarra Ranges Weed Management Strategy (2005) • Yarra Ranges Green Wedge Management Plan (2010) • Yarra Ranges Domestic Animal Management Plan (2018 – 2021) • Yarra Ranges draft Deer Management Strategy
River health & water management Principles: D, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River health is declining • River pollution caused by rubbish, farm refuse, septic tanks, pesticides, stormwater runoff, sediment • Willow tree ingress impacting river recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town sewerage subsidies/ initiatives/information • Pollution – reduction waste data collection, education • Water sensitive urban design: sealed roads, drainage, stormwater management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges <i>Environment Strategy</i> (2015 – 2025) • Yarra Ranges Integrated Water Management Plan (2017) • <i>Rivers to the Bay</i> project (2017 – 2020) • <i>Stormwater Quality Study</i> undertaken by Melbourne Water and Monash University • Plastic Bag Free Warburton (2017)

Key themes	Concerns raised	Suggested opportunities	Supporting strategies and projects
			•
Tourism Principles: B, D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient infrastructure to support population increase: parking, toilets, services, mobile network • Transient tourist population negatively impacts town culture: losing village atmosphere • Road safety: heavy traffic, dangerous driving • Warburton Mountain Bike Destination: • Impacts other users of the bush • Drives steep tourist population increase • Impacts town culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness local talents instead of external tourism projects: promote artistic, culinary, health and well-being, eco-tourism, snow activities, local businesses • Seasonal tourism and events schedule to disperse visitor numbers • Improve access to the river: boat ramps, disabled access, willow tree management • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Tourism Strategic Plan (2017 – 2020) • WMBD Economic Impact Assessment • Yarra Ranges Economic Development Strategy (2012 – 2022) • Yarra Ranges Creative Communities Strategy (2018) • Yarra Ranges Recreation & Open Space Strategy (2013 – 2023)
Local branding Principles: A, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monocultural future • No branding for artistic community • Retain Warburton’s capabilities for improving physical, mental, emotional, spiritual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace historical attributes, artistic community • Epicurean profile, paddock to plate concept • Local businesses to be the face of Warburton • Refine community ethos and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Creative Communities Strategy (2018) • Yarra Ranges Economic Development Strategy (2012 – 2022) • Yarra Ranges Tourism Strategic Plan (2017 – 2020)
Architectural, cultural and Indigenous heritage Principles: A, D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining heritage aesthetic and country town feel • Warburton should not become a mini Melbourne • Warburton mining heritage is not acknowledged • Lack of Indigenous acknowledgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development needs to be sympathetic to aesthetic tradition of Warburton • Revitalise old turntable and market • Documentation of local heritage, including ecological and indigenous heritage • Local Aboriginal acknowledgement: naming rights, memorials, protected areas, access to cultural features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Reconciliation Framework for Action 2013 – 2023 • WMBD Cultural Heritage Management Plan (2018) • WMBD Heritage Survey Report (draft, 2019) • WMBD engagement with Wurundjeri Council • Yarra Ranges Creative Communities Strategy (2018) • Guide to Heritage in the Yarra Ranges (2018)
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining quality of life for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve streetscape: bins, planting, clean buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Creative Communities Strategy (2018)

Key themes	Concerns raised	Suggested opportunities	Supporting strategies and projects
spirit Principles: A, E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaining community participation No place for artistic expression as a community Insurance, risk, cost impacts ability to run festivals and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create infrastructure that caters to unique community e.g. performance space, recording studio, art spaces Festivals/activities to engage locals, funding Street art Engage local clubs Community leaders to address social challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yarra Ranges Equity, Access & Inclusion Strategy (2013 – 2023) Yarra Ranges Recreation & Open Space Strategy (2013 – 2023) WMBD Social Impact Assessment (2019)
Activate existing infrastructure Principles: D, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dormant sites: Sanitarium Factory, Hospital, Old Exchange, pool Underutilised urban areas of the town Financial barriers to existing halls/community spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dormant sites could become office spaces, mixed use facilities, university campus, creative arts college, Yarra Valley TAFE Review planning of streetscape, re-orient existing frontages Extend nearby library) and business opening hours Free use/cheaper prices for community hire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the <i>Planning & Environment Act 1987</i> that define affordable housing and allow for Section 173 agreements to facilitate affordable housing provision on development sites Development of Warburton Playspace – Waterpark Yarra Ranges Equity, Access & Inclusion Strategy (2013 – 2023) Yarra Ranges Recreation & Open Space Strategy (2013 – 2023)
Housing and accommodation Principles: D, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing affordability Homelessness Lack of long-term rentals Airbnb pushing out renters and pushing up rental prices, no regulations Housing, emergency accommodation, family violence services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public housing Variety in housing stock Changes to the Planning Scheme/regulations Develop policies/local laws to address negative impacts of short-term accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts noted and discussed in WMBD <i>Social Impact Assessment</i> (2019) Yarra Ranges <i>Health & Wellbeing Strategy</i> (2017 – 2021) Housing and accommodation research currently being undertaken by Council, review of <i>Housing Strategy</i> Changes to the <i>Planning & Environment Act 1987</i> allowing for Section 173 agreements to facilitate affordable housing provision Yarra Ranges Visitor Accommodation Study (2018)
Emergency management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer bushfire season, high risk Emergency transport for injuries on mountains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire evacuation plans for tourists and locals Limit access during high risk fire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warburton Emergency Planning Group Yarra Ranges <i>Environment Strategy</i> (2015 – 2025)

Key themes	Concerns raised	Suggested opportunities	Supporting strategies and projects
Principles: A, C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • danger rating days • Upgrade Warburton Highway for safety, including overtaking lanes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Community Safety Plan & Action Plan (2013 – 2018) • Yarra Ranges Community Safety Background Paper (2013 – 2018) • Parks Victoria Emergency Management Plan • VIC SES / Flood Planning Committee <i>Flood Emergency Plan</i> • Emergency Management Plan for WMBD being developed
Parking Principles: C, D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient parking • Lack of parking effects traders • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise existing parking • Park and ride • 45 degree parks instead of parallel parking • Transport management strategy • Roundabout at Station Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warburton Transport & Movement Report (2019) will inform the Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy, currently in development.
Transport and accessibility Principles: C, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public transport, accessibility issues for the elderly • Melbourne to Warburton transportation link 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade footpaths / paths • Bike racks on buses • Shuttle service from central location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warburton Transport & Movement Report (2019) will inform the Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy, currently in development. • Council has taken advocacy role
Local employment, training and businesses Principles: B, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment opportunities for locals • Lack of meaningful and diverse employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create co-working space to support net-based businesses, artists/makers with employment and marketing/networking resource • Integrate/link training with high school/TAFE • Incentives for businesses to offer training/work experience • Encourage citrus/fruit growers as an opportunity to develop industry • Provide place-based training package: business development, customer services, hospitality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Economic Development Strategy (2012 – 2022) • WMBD Economic Impact Assessment (2018) • WMBD Social Impact Assessment (2019) • Yarra Ranges Visitor Accommodation Study (2018) • Yarra Ranges Enterprise Centre (YREC) • Yarra Ranges Tourism Strategic Plan (2017 – 2020)
Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of elderly population • Isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about Federal Government Home care packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges Equity, Access & Inclusion Strategy (2013 – 2023)

Key themes	Concerns raised	Suggested opportunities	Supporting strategies and projects
<p>population</p> <p>Principles: A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing in place • Balancing an ageing demographic • Unable to access adequate services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve footpaths and street lighting • Improved accessibility to locals businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges <i>Health & Wellbeing Strategy</i> (2017 – 2021) • Yarra Ranges Recreation & Open Space Strategy (2013 – 2023)
<p>Engagement with families, young people and children</p> <p>Principles: A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of activity and employment • Need for social services, safe spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people working with elderly • Targeted engagement/ employment: Misfit social enterprise • Support existing associations and community groups to provide young people with outside of school hours activities. • Design public spaces that are safe for young people to “hang out” • Design outdoor/ indoor spaces for families with children to connect and play E.g. East Warburton Hall upgrade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Ranges <i>Child & Youth Strategy</i> (2014 – 2024) • Yarra Ranges Middle Years Strategic Action Plan (2017 - 2021) • Yarra Ranges <i>Health & Wellbeing Strategy</i> (2017 – 2021) • WMBD Economic Impact Assessment (2018) • Yarra Ranges Equity, Access & Inclusion Strategy (2013 – 2023) • Yarra Ranges Recreation & Open Space Strategy (2013 – 2023) • Yarra Ranges Playspace Strategy 2019 - 2029