

Municipal public health and wellbeing planning 2025–2029

Advice note 1

OFFICIAL

This Advice Note summarises the legislative requirements of municipal public health and wellbeing plans, outlines policy priorities for the health and wellbeing of all Victorians, and provides links to relevant data and resources.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (the Act) recognises the significant role of councils in improving the health and wellbeing of people in their municipality. The Act requires councils to develop a municipal public health and wellbeing plan every four years (within 12 months of each general election of the council). Next municipal public health and wellbeing plans and councils plans will both be due in October 2025.

The Department of Health continues to work with councils to support the development and implementation of municipal public health and wellbeing plans. A forum for communication and coordination in this effort is the MAV (Municipal Association of Victoria) Health and Social Planners Network. This network facilitates the sharing of information, best practices, and resources among health and social planners, ensuring a cohesive approach to public health and wellbeing across municipalities.

Municipal public health and wellbeing plan

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* requires the municipal public health and wellbeing plan to be consistent with the Council Plan prepared under section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (previously section 125 of the *Local Government Act 1989*) and the Municipal Strategic Statement prepared under section 12A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Section 26 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* specifies what must be included in a municipal public health and wellbeing plan:

- include an examination of data about health status and health determinants in the municipal district
- identify goals and strategies based on available evidence for creating a local community in which people can achieve maximum health and wellbeing
- specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community
- provide for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan
- specify how the council will work in partnership with the Department and other agencies undertaking public health initiatives, projects and programs to accomplish the goals and strategies identified in the public health and wellbeing plan.

Councils are required to provide a copy of the current municipal public health and wellbeing plan to the Secretary, Department of Health.

Family violence prevention and response

Section 26 (2)(ba) of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* requires councils to specify (in their municipal public health and wellbeing plan) measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community. Department advice on this *Family violence and municipal public health and wellbeing planning: Guidance for local government* remains relevant.

Other legislative requirements

There are other pieces of legislation that impose requirements on municipal public health and wellbeing plans and/or councils.

Requirements of the Climate Change Act 2017

Section 17 of the *Climate Change Act* requires councils to have regard to climate change when preparing their municipal public health and wellbeing plans. *Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through municipal public health and wellbeing planning: Guidance for local government, 2020* has been developed to assist Councils in meeting their legislative obligations under the *Climate Change Act 2017* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. It highlights opportunities for Councils to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of their communities through climate change action. Further information and resources to support this requirement is summarised on the department's Municipal public health and wellbeing planning and climate change webpage. <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/municipal-public-health-and-wellbeing-planning>>

Requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* commenced on 31 March 2021 and seeks to improve workplace gender equality in the Victorian public sector, universities and local councils.

The Act applies to certain organisations ('defined entities'), that have 50 or more employees, including the public sector, universities and local councils, which will have specific obligations under the Act.

For further advice and resources on applying a gendered lens to municipal public health and wellbeing planning refer to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector website, Advice for local Government. <<https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/advice-local-government>>

Local Government Act 2020

The *Local Government Act 2020* establishes a modern legislative framework for Victorian councils, guided by five primary principles including community engagement, strategic planning, financial management, public transparency and service performance. The principles of community engagement and strategic planning are particularly relevant to council planning and the development of the municipal public health and wellbeing plan. Further information on the *Local Government Act 2020* and its implementation is available from Local Government Victoria.

Having regard to the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023–2027

Section 26(3) of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* requires councils to have regard to the State public health and wellbeing plan in developing their municipal public health and wellbeing plan. The *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023–2027* is the overarching policy framework for improving public health and wellbeing in Victoria.

Ten priorities are identified, based on the issues that are the greatest contributors to the burden of disease and health inequalities and emerging threats or challenges to the public's health and wellbeing and where a lack of action is likely to result in significant future health burden.

In developing the municipal public health and wellbeing plan councils should seek to ensure that involvement of the local community reflects the diversity of the people living in the municipality.

Councils should align their priorities and actions with their available capacity, resources, and the evidence base they have.

Councils are encouraged to consider the priorities identified as part of collaborative Local Public Health Unit Population health catchment plans.

Including municipal public health and wellbeing matters in a Council Plan or Strategic Plan

Section 27 of the Act provides councils the option to include public health and wellbeing matters in a Council Plan or Strategic Plan rather than develop a stand-alone municipal public health and wellbeing plan.

Regardless of which option is taken, the requirements of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* are the same.

Councils wishing to include public health and wellbeing matters into their Council or Strategic Plan will need to seek an exemption from the Secretary of the Department of Health and outline their commitment to meet other requirements outlined in section 26 (such as annual reviews).

Key data sources

The following data sources and resources are available for councils to inform the development of the new municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

National

- [Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey) (ABS) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey>>
- [Australia's Health 2022](https://www.aihw.gov.au/) (AIHW) <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/>>
- [Australia's Health Tracker 2019](https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/australian-health-tracker-series/australia-s-health-tracker-2019) (Mitchell Institute) <<https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/australian-health-tracker-series/australia-s-health-tracker-2019>>
- [Australian Urban Observatory](https://aou.org.au/) (RMIT University) <<https://aou.org.au/>>

State

For planning and implementation purposes, many key resources that were previously listed in multiple locations are now hosted in one place for ease of access. These include the Department of Health's *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing plan* site and the Victorian Government's *place-based site hosting regionally specific data sources*, analysed by geographical area.

- [Place-based regionally specific public data sources](https://www.vic.gov.au/place-based-regionally-specific-public-data-sources) Publicly available data that you can access and analyse by geographical area. <<https://www.vic.gov.au/place-based-regionally-specific-public-data-sources>>
 - Of note this includes: [Victorian population health survey](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey) (DH) The 2020 survey report at local government level. <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey>>
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- [Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan](#) (DH) site hosts comprehensive information on current statewide public health and wellbeing priorities, including;
 - An outline of shared benefits across priority areas, policy aspirations, and relevant targeted strategies for each of the 10 priority areas.
 - Evidence-based guidance for taking action in each of the 10 priority areas.
 - Frameworks, targets and tools to support monitoring public health and wellbeing outcomes, including the [Victorian public health and wellbeing outcomes dashboard](#). <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-health-and-wellbeing-outcomes-dashboard>>
- [Prevention Victoria](#) Best practice examples (DH) <<https://prevention.health.vic.gov.au/>>

Other data sources

- [Data.Vic](#) (Victorian Government) <<https://www.data.vic.gov.au/>>
- [Victorian Child and Adolescent Health Monitoring System](#) (VCAMS) (DET) <<https://www.vic.gov.au/archived-victorian-child-and-adolescent-monitoring-system>>
- [Victorian Women's Health Atlas](#) (Women's Health Victoria) <<https://victorianwomenshealthatlas.net.au/>>
- [Local Government Areas Report on Population Diversity](#) (Victorian Government) <<https://www.vic.gov.au/local-government-areas-report-population-diversity>>

[Open data site Injury Atlas of Victoria](#) (Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit) Other relevant statewide policies and programs and resources

- [VicHealth](#) (VicHealth) <<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/>>
- [Achievement program](#) (Cancer Council Victoria) <<https://www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au/>>
- [Life](#) (Diabetes Vic) <<https://lifeprogram.org.au/>>
- [Healthy Eating Advisory Service](#) (Nutrition Australia) <<https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/>>
- [Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy](#) (DELWP) and [Maggolee](#) (Reconciliation Victoria) <<https://www.maggolee.org.au/>>
- [Healthy Active by Design](#) (Heart Foundation) <<https://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/>>
- [INFANT](#) (Deakin University) <<https://www.infantprogram.org/>>
- [Local Public Health Networks](#) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/local-public-health-units>> and [Primary Health networks](#) <<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/phn/your-local-PHN/Vic-PHNs>> Refer to individual websites to view their plans.

Peak organisations

- [Municipal Association of Victoria](#) (MAV) The legislated peak body for local government in Victoria <<https://www.vlga.org.au/>>
- [Victorian Local Governance Association](#) (VLGA) An independent organisation supporting councils and councillors in good governance. <<https://www.mav.asn.au/>>

Previous guidance for municipal public health and wellbeing planning

The Department of Health has previously published a number of planning guides to assist councils in development of their municipal public health and wellbeing plans. The guide, available on the department's website, includes:

[Guide to municipal public health and wellbeing planning](#) (2013) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/site-4/publications/including-public-health-and-wellbeing-matters-in-the-council-plan-or-strategic-plans>>

Part 1 of the 2013 guide (legislation and policy direction) is replaced by this current advice.

Part 2 of the 2013 guide contains useful information on elements for effective planning, including public health and wellbeing matters in the council plan or strategic plan (2013).

To receive this document in another format email, prevention@health.vic.gov.au <prevention@health.vic.gov.au>

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Available at [Municipal public health and wellbeing planning](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/municipal-public-health-and-wellbeing-planning) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/municipal-public-health-and-wellbeing-planning>