![Murrindindi Shire Council logo]

COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan

Supporting the community through the COVID-19 pandemic
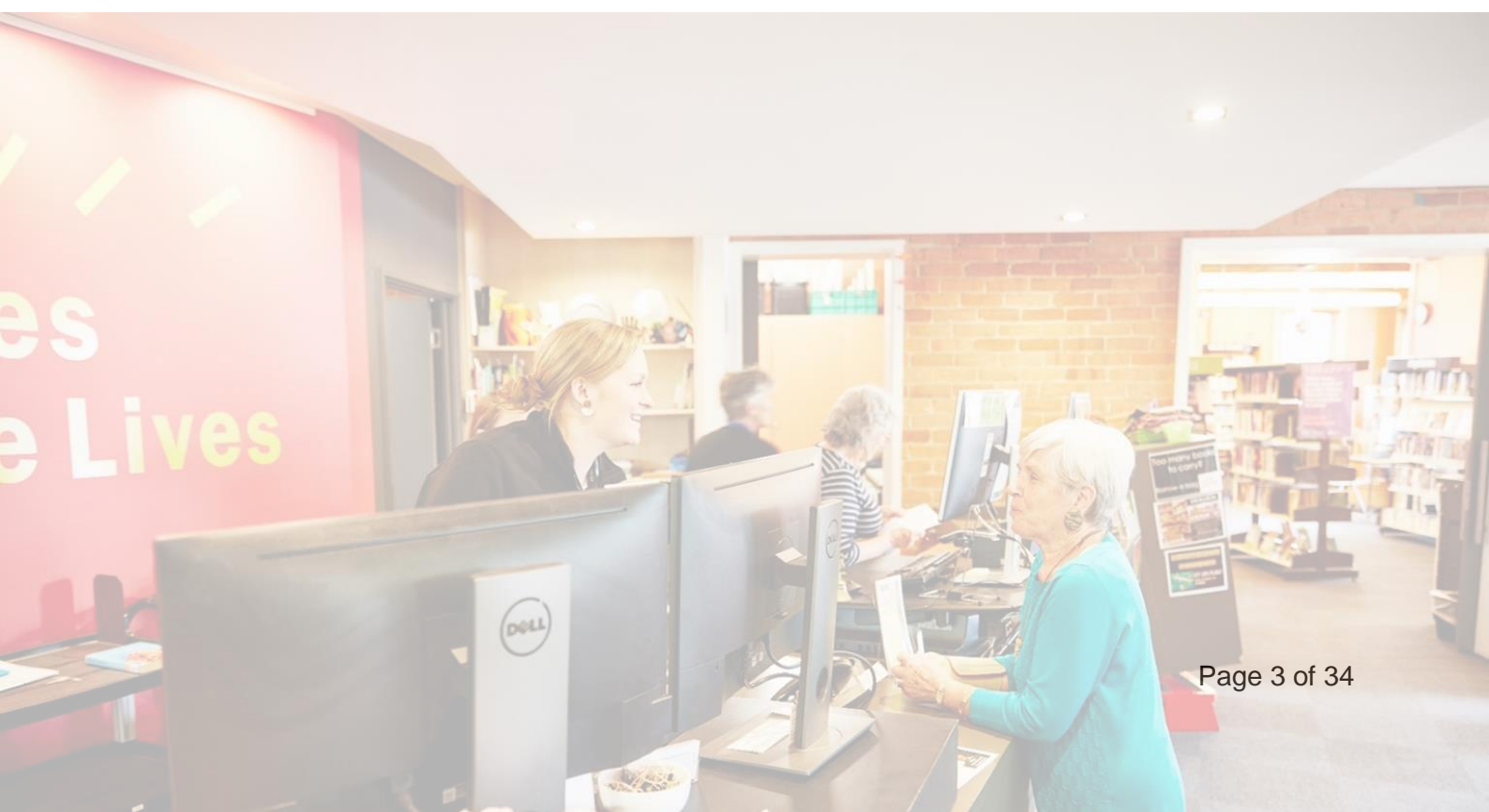
August 2020

Acknowledgement of Country

Murrindindi Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung clans of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of a large part of Central Victoria, which includes our Shire. The Taungurung clans include the clans of Benbendore-balluk, Buthera-balluk, Gunung-Yellam, Leuk-willam, Moomoomgoonbeet, Nattarak-balluk, Ngurai-illam-balluk, Nira-balluk, Tenbringnellams, Walledriggers, Waring-illam-balluk, Warrinillum, Yaran-illam, Yirun-ilam-balluk, and Yowung-illam-balluk.

Council pays its respects to the Taungurung elders, both past and present, and all Taungurung people. And acknowledges the role that we all have to play in the path to reconciliation.

Contents

1 Thank you

We would like to thank those who contributed to the development of this plan with their time, suggestions and feedback. We have worked with our partners, the Health and Wellbeing Consortium, in the development of the COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan and will work collectively to implement its actions.

We would like to thank our Health and Wellbeing Consortium for their time and expertise. We look forward to working together to support and encourage transition and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Murrindindi Shire (The Shire).

The Health and Wellbeing Consortium consists of:
- Alexandra District Health
- Alexandra Community Hub
- Berry Street
- Community Hub at Taggerty
- Darlingford Nursing Home
- Ellimatta Youth
- Embassy of Ideas
- Family Care
- Firefoxes
- Flowerdale Community House
- Inspired Carers
- Kellock Lodge
- Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House
- Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership
- Nexus Primary Health
- Marysville and Triangle Community Foundation
- Menzies Support Services
- Rural Housing Network
- Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- Toolangi Castella Community House
- Valley Sport
- Yea and District Memorial Hospital
- Yea Community House

We would also like to thank the broad range of community members, community, sport and recreation groups and event organisers who participated in the development of this plan through attendance at the Community Consultation session on 25 June 2020.

2 Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on communities across the world. Murrindindi Shire Council recognises that the pandemic and the related government restrictions, has had specific impacts on our community. The *COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan* (the Plan) has been developed to support the immediate relief and recovery, and the transition from the impacts of the pandemic. The Plan aims to build on the strengths of our community and support communities to adapt, evolve and thrive.

The Plan is designed to work in concert with Council's *Business Recovery Plan*. Together, these plans address the COVID-19-specific issues impacting Murrindindi Shire. This Plan also aligns with the aims and objectives of *the Victorian State Emergency Relief Plan for COVID-19* and is consistent with the identified role of local government as the coordinator of local relief and recovery activities.

The Plan has been developed by Council in partnership with our health and wellbeing partners and the community. The Plan outlines actions to support our community while the pandemic continues, as well as actions to support both the short and long term recovery and transition.

The Plan is informed by social statistics and community engagement feedback. It begins by outlining the impacts of COVID-19 on communities across Australia. Communities are particularly impacted in the areas of physical health, mental health, social connection, volunteering, employment, and financial stress. Particular groups are experiencing disproportionate impacts, these groups include, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, children and young people, the elderly, people experiencing family violence and women.

The Plan provides a summary of the community engagement which has informed its development. This is comprised of two key consultations: the Community Consultation Meeting with the broader community and the Health and Wellbeing Workshop with our Health and Wellbeing Consortium. These engagements found that the COVID-19 pandemic presents both challenges and opportunities for the Shire. Some of these challenges include:
- Social isolation and disconnection
- Uncertainty and the associated stress and anxiety this comes with
- Mental health impacts of stress and isolation
- Family violence
- The uneven impact of the pandemic on different cohorts (including different age groups) within our community
- Difficulty finding the correct information
- Information overload
- Loss of exercise and recreation routines, including volunteering
- Food stress
- Loss of work or difficulty finding work
- Learning to use new technology
- Financial stress
- Suspension/loss of some community group activities

A phased approach has been used in The Plan so as to be flexible to the changing conditions of the pandemic. There are three phases to the Plan, which are outlined below in Table 1. Each phase addresses its own set of key opportunities identified through background research and community engagement (Table 1). Further detail can be found in Section 6 of this Plan.

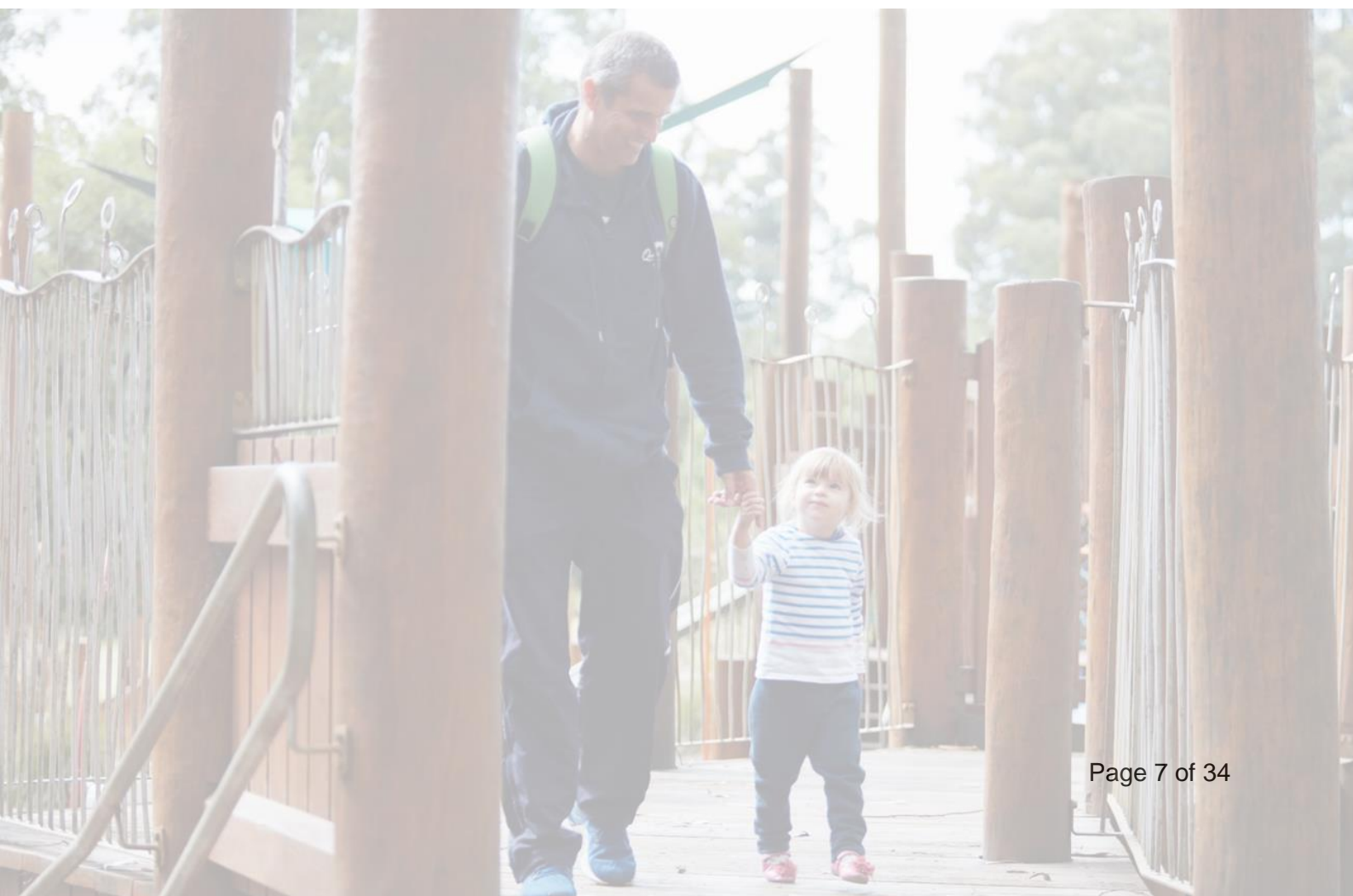Table 1: Overview of the Recovery Phases, Objectives, and Key Opportunities

	Phase 1 Respond	Phase 2 Recover	Phase 3 Reimagine
Phase Description	This is a period of adaptation to restrictions and health risks. It includes the current on-going and 'off-and-on' restrictions affecting Murrindindi Shire, and the State as a whole.	This is the period of transition as restrictions ease and movement around the State resumes, but continues to be a "with COVID-19" operating environment.	This is the forward-looking and longer-term in nature. This phase will focus on planning for how the community can thrive in the wake of COVID-19.
Phase Objective	Support community through this period to understand restrictions, maintain health and wellbeing, and connect in new ways.	Support groups to return to their usual activities, new groups and initiatives to form and get off the ground, and support other recovery activities to meet the needs of different cohorts and age groups.	Create conditions for the community to learn, heal and thrive after the experience of COVID-19 through exploring new initiatives and advocating to other levels of government for local solutions.
Key Opportunities	• Providing information to the community • Promoting health and wellbeing • Supporting community, sport and recreation groups • Improving access to mental health services • Increasing opportunities to connect to reduce isolation • Ensuring people's immediate needs are met • Ensuring that the voices of all people are heard and included	• Supporting community, recreation and sporting groups • Supporting community connections • Supporting and promoting physical and mental health	• Improving access services • Ensuring rural communities have a voice • Empowering communities to plan for their future • Promoting gender equity • Supporting the prevention of family violence

3   Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on communities across the world. While the number of reported cases has been low in Murrindindi Shire, restrictions on individuals and communities have had a substantial impact. Murrindindi Shire Council (Council) has been listening to its community and we have heard that there is a need to plan for immediate relief, recovery from, and transition out of this pandemic. We recognise that this planning needs to be both proactive and responsive to the continuously changing conditions. It also needs to balance our ongoing work and that of our partners. The *COVID-19 Community Recovery Plan* (the Plan) was developed with these considerations in mind.

The Plan has been developed alongside the Council's *Business Recovery Plan,* which addresses the impact of COVID-19 on the business community and economy of Murrindindi Shire. The *Community Recovery Plan* is designed to work in concert with the *Business Recovery Plan*. Together, these plans address the impacts of COVID-19 and the restrictions in place to manage the pandemic on Murrindindi Shire's businesses and community. This Plan also aligns with the aims and objectives of *the Victorian State Emergency Relief Plan for COVID-19* and is consistent with the identified role of local government as the coordinator of local relief and recovery activities.

The Plan has been developed by Council in partnership with our Health and Wellbeing Consortium and the community. The purpose of the Plan is to guide community recovery from, and transition through, the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan outlines the measures that are in place to support our community while the pandemic continues. As restrictions ease, this plan will support our communities in both the short term and long term. Given the unpredictable nature of this pandemic, we have proposed a phased approach in the Plan. This allows us to move in and out of phases as conditions and restrictions change. This Plan may evolve as further information is available on the impacts of COVID-19 and the needs of the community change.

4   Impact on Murrindindi Shire

Across Australia, COVID-19 has had specific impacts on community health and wellbeing. COVID-19 has a greater impact on those with existing vulnerabilities, those who have become vulnerable or at risk as a direct or indirect result of the pandemic, and other particular groups. For example, there have been specific impacts on vulnerable or at risk households, women, young people, older generations, and those experiencing family violence.

The COVID-19 Community Transition Plan has been shaped by the social and demographic data and input from a number of community engagement activities. This section provides some social statistics on the impact of COVID-19 on the broader Australian community, as well as a summary of the community engagement events which informed and shaped the Plan. These events are:
- Community Consultation Meeting, Online, 25 June 2020
- Health and Wellbeing Workshop with our Health and Wellbeing Consortium on 14 July 2020

Collaboration between Council, partner agencies and the community is critical both in developing and implementing the Plan. Targeted consultation will continue for some actions proposed in this Plan including with impacted groups.

4.1 What we know about the impact of COVID-19 on Australian communities

Topic	

ATSI	• "Prior to COVID-19, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples already faced health and mental health disadvantages and inadequate and inequitable access to mental health care. Globally, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted by pandemics." [i]
	• "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at greater risk of coronavirus if they:
	   o are aged 50 years and over with chronic medical conditions
	   o have a weakened immune system
	   o are aged 70 years and over" [ii]

Children and young people	• 3 out of 4 Australians with children kept them home from school or childcare[iii] • For 1 in 7 school aged children learning from home, poor internet connection was a problem[iv] • Young people are disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic. They are almost four times (15% vs 4%) more likely to ask for help from government or non-governmental organisations.[v] • Young people are more likely to be unemployed due to COVID-19.[vi] • There will likely be an increase in youth suicide[vii]
Older people	• People aged 70 years or over or aged 65 years or over and have a chronic medical condition are at an increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19.[viii]

Employment and businesses	• 1 in 9 experienced changes to their job status between early March and early July.[ix]
	• "The proportion of people always working from home rose from 7% before COVID-19 to 60% during it." [x]
	• 43% reported they or their partner had lost employment, reduced hours or wages [xi]
	• 273 jobs were lost in Murrindindi Shire between December 2019 and June 2020, representing a 6% loss in total employment in the Shire. Industry sectors that have been most affected by the pandemic over the first half of 2020 are:
	   o Arts and Recreation Services (-51% output and -78 jobs)
	   o Accommodation and food Service (-51% output and -78 jobs)
	   o Retail Trade (-33% output and -46 jobs)
	   o Wholesale Trade (-33% output and -11 jobs)
	There are many workers that have been stood down with the expectation that they will return to their jobs when restrictions ease.[xii]

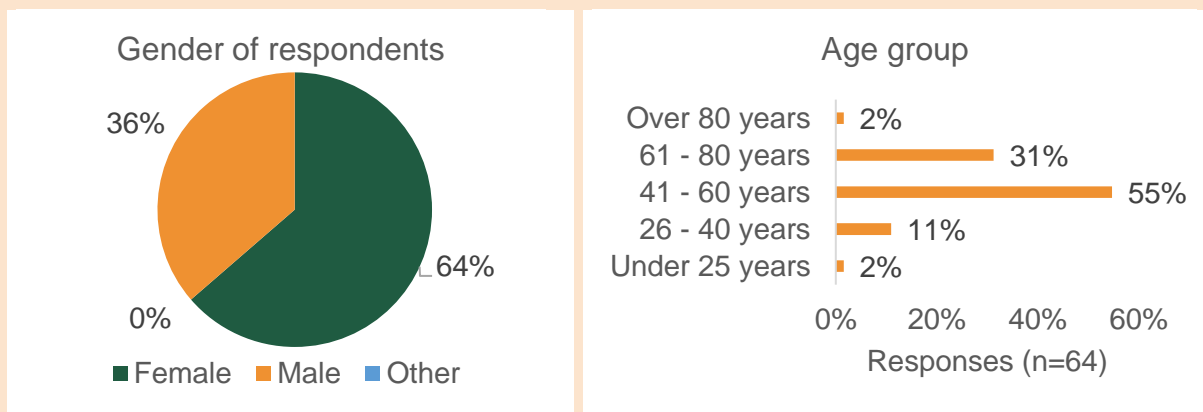| **Family Violence**	• It is anticipated that there will be increased risks for victim survivors of family violence. Research both internationally and in Australia suggests that family violence can increase in frequency and severity in periods of emergency, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.[xiii] [xiv]
Financial Impacts	• 31% reported that their household finances had worsened due to COVID-19 (over the period of mid-March to mid-April).[xv]
Women	• Women reported that they perform most of the unpaid domestic work (80%) and unpaid caring responsibilities (38%) compared to men (39% and 11% respectively) [xvi] • Women were three times as likely to look after children full-time on their own[xvii]
Health	• 1 in 5 used a telehealth service[xviii] • An increase in active transport modes: 34% reported they were walking and cycling more than pre-COVID-19 period[xix]
Mental Health	• Loneliness was the most reported personal stressor. Women were more likely to feel lonely (28%) compared to men (16%)[xx] • Almost twice as many adults reported experiencing feelings associated with anxiety, such as nervousness or restlessness, at least some of the time (compared to the 2017-18)[xxi] • Those who are health care workers, placed in quarantine, unemployed or in a casual job, or who have a pre-existing anxiety disorder or mental health problem are at an increased risk of experiencing negative psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including anxiety, distress, depression and PTSD.[xxii]
Unpaid care	• 1 in 8 adults provided unpaid care to a vulnerable person outside their household, this was most commonly in the form of shopping or the provision of meals.[xxiii]
Social Connection	• 98% had non-face-to-face contact with family or friends outside of their household (in the first two weeks of April). Including phone calls (92%); text messaging or instant messaging (86%); video calls (67%); and email (42%).[xxiv] • 79% avoided social gatherings with people who do not live with them.[xxv] • 3 out of 4 felt uncomfortable attending large public events[xxvi]
Volunteers	• Of those who volunteer, 37% reported spending less time volunteering.[xxvii]

4.2 Community Engagement

4.2.1 Community Meeting

On 25 June 2020, Council hosted an online community meeting to better understand how the community has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The feedback received helped shape the Plan, as well as informing the discussion topics for the Workshop event with the Health and Wellbeing Consortium.
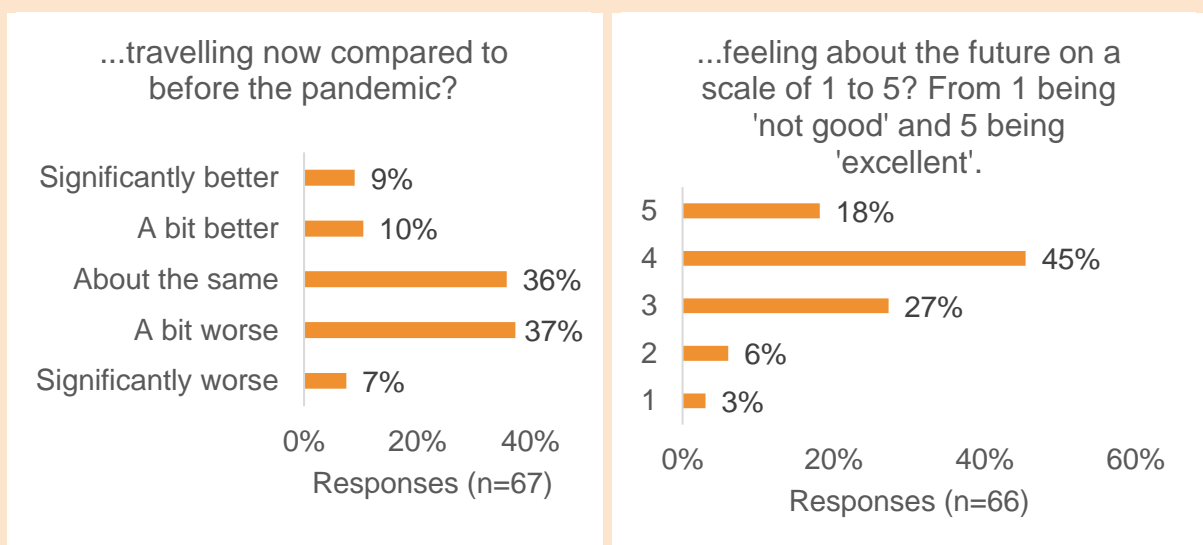
Participation included 68 participants via *Zoom* and 79 participants via *YouTube*. The *YouTube* figure includes 24 concurrent views, and 55 playbacks at the close of the event. Participants were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on them personally, from a community group perspective, and from a broader community perspective.

The event attracted a total of 147 attendees from across the Shire, though not all attendees responded to the questions. This included participants from Acheron, Alexandra, Buxton, Eildon, Flowerdale, Glenburn, Highlands, Kinglake, Marysville, Pheasant Creek, Taggerty, and Yarck and Yea.

Demographics of Participants

Gender of respondents

- 36% Male
- 64% Female
- 0% Other

Legend: ■ Female ■ Male ■ Other

Age group

Age group	Percentage
Over 80 years	2%
61 - 80 years	31%
41 - 60 years	55%
26 - 40 years	11%
Under 25 years	2%

Responses (n=64)

How are you…

...travelling now compared to before the pandemic?

Response	Percentage
Significantly better	9%
A bit better	10%
About the same	36%
A bit worse	37%
Significantly worse	7%

Responses (n=67)

...feeling about the future on a scale of 1 to 5? From 1 being 'not good' and 5 being 'excellent'.

Rating	Percentage
5	18%
4	45%
3	27%
2	6%
1	3%

Responses (n=66)

Our community identified the following challenges…

Social Isolation

- Loss of social connection
- Mental health impacts

Family Violence

- Greater risk of family violence
- Social isolation may prevent some people from accessing services

Uneven Impact

- Vulnerable or at risk groups are more severely impacted by many aspects of the pandemic
- Socio-economic differences / 'the haves and the have nots'

Information

- Information overload
- Understanding changing restrictions, including difficulty finding up-to-date and correct information

Uncertainty

- Anxiety and stress from changing and uncertain circumstances

Exercise and Recreation

- Changes to exercise and recreation routines and loss of organised sport

Food

- Food stress
- Difficulty finding products

Employment

- Job loss (or reduction of hours)
- Difficulty finding work

Technology

- Upskilling with technology
- Understanding and accessing telehealth
- Lack of resources, internet, skills, or devices necessary to access digital solutions to connect and access health services.

Volunteering

- Loss of volunteer activities for volunteers
- Lack of volunteers to continue activities for groups

Financial stress

- Financial stress due to changes to income

Mental health

- Impact of the pandemic as a whole on mental health, particularly youth and individuals living alone

Community Groups and Clubs

- Some ceased operation due to restrictions or safety concerns

Our community identified the following positives…

Kindness

- Random acts of kindness
- Mutual aid
- Helping out our neighbours

Localization

- Shopping local
- More people walking in their local area

Technology

- Finding new ways to connect
- Improving our IT skills
- Innovative uses of social media
- Online event and social groups
- Telehealth

Time at home

- Time with family
- Relaxation
- More time to get jobs done around the home
- Gardening
- Cooking

Working from home

- Better work-life-balance
- Reduced commuting, saving money on transport

Exercising

- Exercising outside more often

Suggestions of initiatives to support community connection and reduce isolation…

Online initiatives

- Live streamed music concerts
- Education courses
- Virtual tours, film festivals, exhibitions and other activities
- Online communities

Community programs and events

- Initiatives to engage isolated members of the community
- Support for events to adapt and continue under restrictions

Socially-distanced face-to-face initiatives

- Outdoor movie cinemas
- Greater use of trails and reserves
- Music in parks and streets

Community planning and engagement

- Continuing to consult the community through this time
- Expansion of the community planning program

Additional social services

- Support for existing services
- Need for additional local services

Mutual aid

- Mutual aid support networks
- Food sharing

Grants

- Grants and support for community groups and businesses.

Tourism promotion

- Promotion of the region to help tourism-associated businesses recover

Localisation

- Support for local businesses
- Encouraging people to buy local

Impact on community groups and sporting and recreation clubs…

Operation

- Some ceased operations due to restrictions or safety concerns
- Many reported continuing activities in small groups and implementing additional cleaning

Resuming activities

- Many reported planning to resume activities as restriction ease
- Some planned to grow membership and have plans in place to promote their group

Engagement

- Adoption of online engagement
- Some reported increased engagement via other means, e.g. phone calls and welfare checks
- Some reported barriers to connecting with members and broader community

Events

- Many were planning free events to reduce isolation and encourage the community to connect
- Seeking support in promoting events
- Some would like larger venues for groups to meet while adhering to social distancing

Financial stress

- Many reported financial stress, including loss of income and difficulty fundraising

Food

- Sharing recipes and produce
- Food security concerns
- Increased awareness of the importance of locally produced food

Information

- Wanted clear guidance on restrictions for group activities and information on the grants available

Advice

- Some expressed wanting support or advice regarding governance structures

4.2.2 Workshop with our Health and Wellbeing Consortium

On 14 July 2020, Council hosted an online Workshop via Zoom, inviting the members of our Health and Wellbeing Consortium to shape the Plan. There was a total of 28 participants, representing various organisations, all of which are members of Council's Health and Wellbeing Consortium.

The Workshop involved discussion of themes derived out of the Community Meeting Data. Participants discussed issues, proposed actions, and collaborated to find commitment to these new actions. The actions were then refined and sent back to the Consortium after the Workshop for further feedback. All actions developed out of the Workshop are in addition to ongoing actions in Council's annual Health and Wellbeing Implementation Plan.

5   Development of the Plan

Scan	• Assessment of current and projected impacts of COVID-19
Consultation	• Community meeting
Analysis	• Analysis of community meeting data and review of social statistics and research in this area
Consultation	• Health and Wellbeing Consortium Workshop
Draft	• Development of draft COVID Community Transition Plan
Consultation	• Consultation with Health and Wellbeing Partners to confirm Actions
Finalisation	• Finalisation of Plan
Approval	• Council approval and adoption
Release	• Release of Plan
Further Consultation	• Targeted consultation will be undertaken to inform some specific actions

Figure 1: Steps in the development of the Plan

6 Phases

The uncertain nature of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it difficult to apply specific timelines to recovery and transition planning. As a result, the Plan includes a phased approach to ensure a dynamic approach which will enable adaptation to the situation. There are three phases

- Phase 1: Respond
- Phase 2: Recover
- Phase 3: Reimagine

In addition to the need to remain adaptable, we anticipate there may be some overlap between phases as part of this flexible approach, according to need. For example, there are some actions which begin in Phase 1 and will continue on through Phase 2.

Table 2 provides a description and the objective for each of the three phases. Each phase is set out with its associated issues and actions in the following sections.

Table 2: Overview of the Recovery Phases, Objectives, and Key Opportunities

	Phase 1 Respond	Phase 2 Recover	Phase 3 Reimagine
Phase Description	This is a period of adaptation to restrictions and health risks. It includes the current on-going and 'off-and-on' restrictions affecting Murrindindi Shire, and the State as a whole.	This is the period of transition as restrictions ease and movement around the State resumes, but continues to be a "with COVID-19" operating environment.	This is the forward-looking and longer-term in nature. This phase will focus on planning for how the community can thrive in the wake of COVID-19.
Phase Objective	Support community through this period to understand restrictions, maintain health and wellbeing, and connect in new ways.	Support groups to return to their usual activities, new groups and initiatives to form and get off the ground, and support other recovery activities to meet the needs of different cohorts and age groups.	Create conditions for the community to learn, heal and thrive after the experience of COVID-19 through exploring new initiatives and advocating to other levels of government for local solutions.
Key Opportunities	• Providing information to the community • Promoting health and wellbeing • Supporting community, sport and recreation groups • Improving access to mental health services • Increasing opportunities to connect to reduce isolation • Ensuring people's immediate needs are met • Ensuring that the voices of all people are heard and included	• Supporting community, recreation and sporting groups • Supporting community connections • Supporting and promoting physical and mental health	• Improving access services • Ensuring rural communities have a voice • Empowering communities to plan for their future. • Promoting gender equity • Supporting the prevention of family violence

6.1   Phase 1: Respond

This is a period of adaptation to restrictions and health risks. It includes the current ongoing and 'off-and-on' restrictions affecting Murrindindi Shire, and the State as a whole. The objective of this phase is to support community through this period to understand restrictions, maintain health and wellbeing, and connect in new ways. Key opportunities for this phase are summarised below, while Actions are contained in Table 3.

6.1.1   Key Opportunities

From our engagement, we found there was a need to address a number of key opportunities in Phase 1. They can be categorised as follows:

Providing information to the community, including:
- promotion of local health and mental health services
- providing current and accurate information on COVID-19 restrictions.

Promoting health and wellbeing, including:
- encouraging local opportunities for physical exercise
- encouraging the use of telehealth services.

Supporting community, sport and recreation groups, including:
- supporting existing community and service groups who are providing grassroots health and wellbeing initiatives
- providing clear guidelines on COVID-19 restrictions and other support for community, recreation and sporting groups to assist with adapting previous activities and new activities
- providing easily accessible information on grant funding opportunities.

Improving access to mental health services, including:
- providing access to online mental health support
- providing an online mental health workshop
- improving digital skills to support use of online applications for social connection
- encouraging discussion regarding men's mental health and promote services available.

Increasing opportunities to connect to reduce isolation, including:
- building community confidence, connection, and health and wellbeing through positive messaging
- providing opportunities for women to connect virtually
- providing opportunities for parents with young children to connect
- encouraging and promoting incidental volunteering within communities
- supporting for older people and people with a disability who need assistance to connect online.

Ensuring people's immediate needs are met, including:
- providing emergency food and material aid relief assistance
- supporting for vulnerable or at risk families/households
- ensuring all community members can access the services they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- conducting welfare checks for vulnerable or at risk people in our community.
- supporting ongoing connection for people who live remotely or who are isolating
- supporting access to Services Australia (Centrelink, Medicare and other Government services) for vulnerable or at risk people
- providing outreach support for people experiencing family violence
- providing information and support services to prevent family violence and ensure people know where to go for help.

Ensuring that the voices of all people are heard and included, including:
- conducting youth engagement to better understand of the recovery needs of younger people
- ensuring the voices of people with a disability are heard and considered in recovery planning
- identifying further groups that may be missing or underrepresented from consultation processes.

6.1.2 Actions

Table 3: Phase 1 Actions with associated Key Opportunities, Leads and Partners (* = Will continue through Phase 2)

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
Providing information to the community	Provide current and accurate information to the community to support understanding of COVID-19 restrictions.	Council	Health and Wellbeing Consortium
	Promote local health and mental health services to the community to ensure they know where to go.	Alexandra District Health Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership Nexus Primary Health Yea and District Memorial Hospital	Council
Promoting health and wellbeing	Support and promote initiatives to encourage local opportunities for physical exercise, healthy eating and food security.	Alexandra District Health Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership Nexus Primary Health Valley Sport Yea and District Memorial Hospital	Council

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
	Explore the potential for how-to videos on COVID-19 health education, such as basic infection control and the use of telehealth services.	Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership	Alexandra Community Hub Alexandra District Health
Supporting community, sport and recreation groups	Provide easily accessible information on grant funding opportunities to support community, sport and recreation activities.	Council	Valley Sport
	Provide support and clear guidelines on COVID-19 restrictions for community, recreation and sporting groups to support them to adapt previous activities and new activities.	Valley Sport Council	Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Hubs
	Support existing community and service groups who are providing grassroots health and wellbeing initiatives.*	Council	Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Hubs
Improving access to mental health services	Provide access to online mental health support for people in the community.	Alexandra District Health Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Nexus Primary Health	Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership
	Support the delivery of online information sessions on mental health for the community.	Council	Alexandra District Health Nexus Primary Health

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
	Increase the capacity of the broader community to connect online by improving digital skills through sharing educational videos on how to use online applications for social connection.	Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Nexus Primary Health	Alexandra Community Hub
	Work with Men's Sheds and Community Sheds to encourage discussion regarding men's health and promote mental health services available.	Council	
Increasing opportunities to connect to reduce isolation	Explore local place based initiatives to encourage and promote neighbourhood connections and volunteering between community members.	Council	Health and Wellbeing Consortium
	Provide opportunities for women across the Shire to connect virtually*	Firefoxes	
	Create a community campaign that supports positive messages that build community confidence and connection and promotes health and wellbeing across a range of media platforms.*	Council	Health and Wellbeing Consortium
	Provide training and/or mentoring and support for older people and people with a disability who need assistance to connect online.*	Council	Nexus Primary Health Menzies Support Services

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
			Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Hubs
			Kellock Lodge
			Darlingford Nursing Home
			Yea and District Memorial Hospital
	Provide opportunities for parents with young children to connect including the provision of facilitated playgroups and PEEP.*	Council FamilyCare	
Ensuring people's immediate needs are met	Provide emergency food and material aid relief assistance to vulnerable or at risk members of the community.	Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Hubs Salvocare Alexandra District Health	Council
	Provide information on family violence prevention and support services to ensure people know where to go for help. This will include highlighting the increased risk of family violence and increased burden of unpaid work, particularly on women, under COVID-19 restrictions.	FamilyCare Nexus Primary Health	Council
	Promote and deliver the Dindi Link program to ensure all community members can access the services they need through the COVID-19 pandemic.	Council	

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
	Undertake welfare checks as required on vulnerable or at risk people in our community.	Health and Wellbeing Consortium	
	Reach out and support ongoing connection for people who live remotely or are isolating via the Book Butler Library service.	Council	
	Provide access to Services Australia (Centrelink, Medicare and other Government services) to support vulnerable or at risk people to access government support.	Alexandra Community Hub Council	
	Provide support to vulnerable or at risk families/households including individual support, parenting groups and information sessions.*	Council FamilyCare	
	Provide outreach support to people experiencing family violence to ensure they are informed, connected and safe.*	Nexus Primary Health FamilyCare	
Ensuring that the voices of all people are heard and included	Plan and deliver youth engagement to support a better understanding of the recovery needs of younger people.	Council	
	Work with Speak up Alexandra Self Advocacy group and the Murrindindi Shire Council Access and Inclusion Committee to ensure the voices of people with a disability are heard and considered in recovery planning.*	Council Nexus Primary Health	
	Identify and work with groups that may be missing or underrepresented from consultation processes, such as Indigenous and CALD communities.	Council	

6.2 Phase 2: Recover

This is the period of transition as restrictions ease and movement around the State resumes, but continues to be a pandemic operating environment. The objective of this phase is to support groups to return to their usual activities, new groups and initiatives to form and get off the ground, and support other recovery activities to meet the needs of different cohorts and age groups. Key Opportunities for this phase are summarised below, while Actions are contained in Table 4.

6.2.1 Key Opportunities

From our engagement, we found there was a need to address a number of Key Opportunities in Phase 2. They can be categorised as follows:

Supporting community, recreation and sporting groups, including:
- providing low or no cost spaces to meet
- developing a directory of events to support community groups to plan and coordinate upcoming activities
- supporting community groups through the promotion of their events
- providing opportunities for training and support for groups' sustainability, volunteer base and planning for the future
- supporting community projects and events through grants and contributions.

Supporting community connections, including:
- developing and promoting support groups that can assist families and children living with a disability
- providing opportunities for groups and services to network and collaborate
- encouraging older people in our community to connect
- celebrating older people in the Shire
- supporting and encouraging young people to connect and build leadership skills
- support the connection of children and families
- assist youth with employment and vocational opportunities through a learning and employment network.

Supporting and promoting physical and mental health, including:
- exploring initiatives that will support connection and promote positive mental health for young people
- identifying and addressing service gaps, and advocating for improved access for our community
- providing education on healthy relationships and wellbeing for children
- promoting of health and wellbeing, including mental health, for all ages
- providing mental health professional development events.

6.2.2 Actions

Table 4: Phase 2 Actions with associated Key Opportunities, Leads and Partners

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
Supporting community, recreation and sporting groups	Provide low or no cost space to organisations and community that need to meet community members face-to-face.	Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Hubs Council	
	Support coordination and communication across community groups including the creation of a directory of events to support community groups to plan and coordinate upcoming activities.	Council	Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Hubs
	Support community groups to promote their events.	Council	
	Provide opportunities for training and support to community, recreation and sporting groups to assist with their viability, sustainability, volunteer base and planning for the future.	Council Valley Sport	
	Coordinate the Murrindindi Shire Council Grants and Contributions program to support community projects and events.	Council	
Supporting community connections	Develop and promote support groups that can assist families and children living with a disability.	Inspired Carers	
	Provide opportunities for groups and services to network and collaborate.	Council	
	Encourage older people in our community to connect through the promotion of a broad range of activities for seniors available online.	Council	
	Plan and deliver an activity to celebrate older people in Murrindindi Shire.	Council	Yea and District Memorial Hospital

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
			Kellock Lodge Darlingford Nursing Home
	Deliver the Youth Leadership Program to support and encourage young people to connect to their community and build their leadership skills.	Council	
	Celebrate the connection of children and families through a Children's Week and ELF Reading Day media campaign and competition.	Council	Murrindindi Children's Network
	Explore opportunities to work with Local Learning and Employment Network to assist youth with employment and vocational opportunities.	Council	
Supporting and promoting physical and mental health	Explore initiatives, informed by youth engagement in Phase 1, that will support connection and promote positive mental health for young people.	Council	
	Support the Goulburn Integrated Mental Health project to work with mental health services to identify and address service gaps and advocate for improved access for our community.	Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership	Council Alexandra District Health Yea and District Memorial Hospital Nexus Primary Health FamilyCare

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
	Support healthy relationships and wellbeing for children through offering Drumbeat program to schools and other children's groups in the region.	FamilyCare	
	Provide mental health professional development events via the Murrindindi Children's Network	Council	
	Using Grow Well Dindi to connect general health and wellbeing (eating well and being active) to mental health.	Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership	

6.3   Phase 3: Reimagine

This is the forward-looking, longer-term goal. The purpose of this phase is to create conditions for the community to learn, heal and ultimately thrive from the experience of COVID-19 through exploring new initiatives and advocating for local issues to higher levels of government. Key Opportunities for this phase are summarised below, while Actions are contained in Table 5.

6.3.1   Key Opportunities

From our engagement, we found there was a need to address a number of key issues in Phase 3. They can be categorised as follows:

Improving access to services, including:
- allied health NDIS services
- mental health services
- parenting programs and play groups
- accessible transport for people with mobility aids
- emergency, transitional and social housing.

Ensuring rural communities have a voice, specifically:
- advocating for the ongoing recovery needs of the community
- advocating for better access to local data to support health and wellbeing planning.

Empowering communities to plan for their future, specifically:
- exploring additional funding opportunities to expand the community planning initiative.

Promoting gender equity, specifically:
- training community groups and service providers in gender equity areas.

Supporting the prevention of family violence, specifically:
- aligning with the Victorian Family Violence Action Plan 2020-2023 once it is finalised.

6.3.2 Actions

Table 5: Phase 3 Actions with associated Key Opportunities, Leads and Partners

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
Improving access to services	Advocate to State and Federal Government for improved and additional mental health services	Council Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership	Health and Wellbeing Consortium
	Advocate for improved access to allied health services for people on NDIS.	Council Menzies Support Services Nexus Primary Health	Alexandra District Health Yea and District Memorial Hospital
	Further explore and advocate for accessible transport for people with mobility aids to enable greater community participation and connection.	Council	
	Explore the expansion of PEEP program and facilitated play groups	Council	Family Care
	Advocate to State and Federal Government for improved access to emergency, transitional and social housing	Council	Health and Wellbeing Consortium
Ensuring rural communities have a voice	Continue to advocate to State and Federal governments regarding the ongoing recovery needs of the community	Council	Health and Wellbeing Consortium

Key Opportunity	Action	Lead	Partner
	Advocate to State and Federal Government for better access to local data to support health and wellbeing planning such as crime data and employment rates.	Council	
Empowering communities to plan for their future	Explore additional funding opportunities to expand the community planning initiative.	Council	
Promoting gender equity	Train community groups and service providers in gender equity, unconscious bias, and bystander action.	Council	Valley Sport
Supporting the prevention of family violence	Support the prevention of family violence in line with the Victorian Family Violence Action Plan 2020-2023 once finalised, including community programs and awareness campaigns.	Council	

7   Next Steps

The Plan will be implemented in a phased approach, based on the changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, associated restrictions and community needs. We will work with our Health and Wellbeing Consortium partners to implement these actions. All Partners will report on these actions through the Health and Wellbeing Plan framework which includes progress measures and reporting requirements. Council has identified some funds to support the implementation of the Plan. Council will continue to apply actively for external funding to build upon recovery initiatives wherever possible.

8   References

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