



# Stories of the Suburbs

The lived-experience of social exclusion in 10 Melbourne suburbs.

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## Executive Summary

Stories of the Suburbs provides 'snapshots' of how social exclusion is manifested in 10 Melbourne suburbs. Drawing on publicly available data, including selected agency and government reports, case studies, and interviews, this report offers a condensed account of each suburb. This report also highlights common themes across the 10 suburbs in order to shed light on the structural, economic, cultural and physical factors that lead to the exclusion of some Victorians from mainstream society, and from a standard of living that includes employment and educational opportunities, affordable housing, and access to good public transport and resources.

The level of disadvantage experienced by residents of Australian suburbs is often gauged using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index of disadvantage – a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that ranks areas in Australia according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

A feature of this report, Stories of the Suburbs, is that it triangulates these SEIFA rankings with the incidence of eight additional indicators of social disadvantage, as well as with the prevalence of specific groups that are particularly vulnerable to exclusion. The geographic location of the 10 suburbs across a range of Local Government Areas (LGAs) in metropolitan Melbourne has also been taken into account when selecting the suburbs. The combination of these various sources of information has allowed us to provide a more nuanced view into a particular type of disadvantage that Victorians are experiencing – **social exclusion**, which can become **deep exclusion** when compounded.

The 10 suburbs featured in this report are:

- Braybrook
- Dandenong
- Heidelberg West (Bellfield)
- Frankston North
- Meadow Heights
- Lalor
- Laverton
- Sunshine North
- Melton
- Prahran

The eight indicators of social exclusion canvassed in this report are:

- Not being fluent in English
- Living in a low-income household
- Not having any post-secondary qualifications
- Obtaining below Year 11 schooling
- Unemployment rates
- Youth unemployment rates
- Rates of disengaged youth
- Rates of households in rental stress.

Social inclusion tends to be unequally distributed across population groups. The population groups which have been identified as being particularly **vulnerable** to social exclusion include:

- Aged persons (65 years +)
- One-parent families
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- People renting public housing
- People who are experiencing homelessness
- People with a disability who require support with tasks of daily living and/or to access opportunities in the community, including education, training and employment opportunities
- Children and young people.

It is important to note the diversity within and across suburbs, including lived experience of social inclusion and exclusion. The report acknowledges that the prevalence of indicators and population groups are not necessarily consistent within and across suburbs.

Each suburb snapshot includes a discussion of each indicator or vulnerable group if it is experienced by, or comprises, a minimum of 15 per cent of the residents of that suburb. This threshold of 15 per cent has enabled us to highlight suburbs experiencing particularly 'deep' exclusion. Exceptions to this are two groups with which this report is particularly concerned: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people, who make up three per cent of the total Australian population (ABS 2011) and would not be detected in various suburbs using a 15 per cent threshold, and vulnerable children.

A summary of the statistical data collected across the selected suburbs and analysed in this report is provided in Appendix 1.

Finally, the authors wish to acknowledge that social inclusion/exclusion is a continuum and, additionally, that experiences of social and deep exclusion are not static.



## Part 1: Setting the Scene

Victoria has become the fastest-growing economy on Australia's eastern seaboard (2.5 per cent growth recorded in 2014-15, outstripping New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory). Only Western Australia and the Northern Territory grew faster in this period. The major contributor to Victoria's economic growth was its population growth of 1.7 per cent – more than any other state.

This growth has been linked to Victoria's 'liveability'. A popular contemporary concept, 'liveability' refers to the extent to which the **physical and social aspects** of a community environment sustainably support its members' wellbeing (VCOSS, 2012.)

Stories of the Suburbs explores the concept of 'liveability' from a suburbs frame, recognising that while Victoria is a desirable place to live for a multitude of reasons, there is not a universal experience of 'liveability'. Across the State – and often within discrete neighbourhoods – there are distinctly varied experiences, with some Victorians having limited opportunities for social, cultural and economic participation relative to other community members. Participation may be impeded by limited access to affordable housing, health and community services, transport, and other forms of social and physical infrastructure. This can manifest in what is known as **social exclusion**, and, in some instances, a compounded form known as **deep exclusion**.

Stories of the Suburbs combines personal stories, social inclusion and exclusion theory, and high-level data to provide insights into how a range of Victorians are experiencing – or not experiencing – this concept of 'liveability' in their suburb.

Stories of the Suburbs makes the case that any consideration of liveability must also acknowledge the social and deep exclusions that some Victorians are experiencing. The report's intention is not to stigmatise suburbs, but to **highlight opportunities for equitable growth**. This report maps the opportunities by commencing with an explanation of the nature of social and deep exclusion. It then describes the factors that indicate disadvantage and exclusion, as well as population groups that are particularly vulnerable to these experiences. Within this conceptual framework, the report outlines our methodology for data collection and presents individual snapshots of 10 Melbourne suburbs. Drawing on publicly available data with selected agency reporting, case studies, and interviews, the report highlights themes and patterns across suburbs. These findings are then utilised to make policy recommendations.

### A note on how the 10 suburbs were selected for this report

The level of disadvantage experienced by residents of Australian suburbs is often gauged using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure of disadvantage – a product developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that ranks areas in Australia according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

The 10 suburbs discussed in this report are not necessarily the 10 most disadvantaged according to their SEIFA rankings. Although the SEIFA is an important tool, this report goes beyond its rankings and triangulates them with the incidence of eight selected indicators of social disadvantage, as well as with the prevalence of specific groups that are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. These eight indicators and vulnerable groups are described in more detail later in this report.

The geographic location of the ten suburbs across a range of Local Government Areas (LGAs) in metropolitan Melbourne has also been taken into account in the selection.

This triangulation has allowed a more nuanced view into the exclusion of Victorians in particular, as distinct from their general level of disadvantage.

### Social and deep exclusion

Social exclusion encompasses the ways in which individuals and groups are marginalised by a range of dimensions that reduce their rights, opportunities and resources, as well as their access to political, economic, cultural, political and societal processes (Levitas et al., 2007; Hayes et al., 2008; Scutella et al., 2009; Atkinson and Marlier, 2010). Put simply, social exclusion is what can occur when 'people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, high crime environment,

bad health and family breakdown’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, p.10). Social exclusion affects both the ‘quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole’ (Levitas et al., 2009, p. 9).

In addition, social exclusion definitions are contextual. Certain indicators may be prevalent in one country and not in another, or may even differ between cities within a country; therefore the key indicators of social exclusion in Victoria may vary from the key indicators of social exclusion in the Northern Territory.

In the Australian policy context, to illuminate citizens’ experience of social exclusion, it is useful to define social inclusion. The Australian government has previously conceptualised social inclusion as including the opportunity to:

- participate in society through employment and access to services
- connect with family, friends and the local community
- deal with personal crises, e.g. ill health
- be heard (AIFS, 2011).

‘Deep exclusion’ has been defined as: ‘exclusion across more than one domain or dimension of disadvantage resulting in severe negative consequences for quality of life, well-being and future life chances’ (Levitas et al., 2009, p. 9). Vinson (2007, p. ix) has argued that when social disadvantage becomes entrenched within a number of localities, a ‘disabling social climate can develop that is more than the sum of individual and household disadvantages and the prospect is increased of disadvantage being passed from one generation to the next’. Drawing on the World Health Organisation’s Social Determinants of Health (1998) Vinson (2007, p.7) points out that ‘[p]oor social and economic circumstances affect health throughout life. People further down the social ladder usually run twice the risk of serious illness and premature death of those near the top’.

## Indicators of disadvantage and social exclusion

A diverse range of indicators are cited in the literature on disadvantage, social inclusion and social exclusion. The indicators that most consistently appear are those associated with material resources, economic participation and education. Health and wellbeing, social relations, and community (political) and personal safety are also often cited (Scutella et al., 2009a).

In an Australian context, one approach by Vinson (2007) employs six domains (comprising 34 different indicators) to measure disadvantage. These are social distress, health, community safety, economic, education and community engagement. Another approach by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) in Victoria focuses on seven domains (comprising 30 different indicators): material resources, employment, education and skills, health and disability, social connection, community, and personal safety.

## Indicators selected for this report

The eight indicators of social and deep exclusion used in this report are based on the domains identified by Scutella et al. (2009a), as well as our access to available and comparable information across the selected suburbs. Data has been primarily sourced from Atlas id, which utilises the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, and aggregate measures of general disadvantage derived from 2011 Census data.

The indicators are:

### Not being fluent in English

*This refers to the percentage of the residents of a suburb who do not speak English or do not speak it well.*

This is a useful indicator for the planning and provision of multilingual services, especially when combined with language spoken at home data (Atlas id).

### Living in a low-income household

*This refers to the percentage of households of a suburb receiving less than \$600 per week before tax.*

The amount of income a household generates is linked to the number of workers in the household, the number who are unemployed or on other income support benefits, and the type of employment undertaken by the household members (Atlas id).

### **Not having any post-secondary qualifications**

*This refers to the percentage of people aged 15 years and over who have not completed a post-school qualification or their qualification is unclassifiable or not recognised in Australia.*

People without formal qualifications tend to be disadvantaged in the Australian labour market, with employers increasingly requiring recognised qualifications (Atlas id).

### **Obtaining below Year 11 schooling**

*This refers to the percentage of people aged 15 years and over who indicated they either completed schooling in year 10 or below, and that they had no higher non-school qualification, or that they had no educational attainment at all.*

Research has found that early school leavers with Year 11 schooling or below experience social exclusion at nearly 2.5 times the rate of those who complete Year 12 (BSL and the Melbourne Institute 2014).

### **Unemployment rates**

*This refers to the percentage of people aged 15 years and over who, in the week prior to Census night, did not have a job but were actively looking for and available to start work.*

Unemployment rates are linked to age structure of the population, as young and older people generally experience higher rates of unemployment; the economic base and employment opportunities available in the area; the education and skill base of the population. Unemployment is associated with a range of social issues and the need for support services (Atlas id).

### **Youth unemployment rates**

*This refers to the percentage of people aged 15-24 who, in the week prior to the Census, did not have a job but were actively looking for and available to start work.*

Persons aged 15-24 are particularly vulnerable to unemployment, since the age group represents a transition from education to work, with generally higher unemployment rates than other groups in most areas (Atlas id).

### **Rates of disengaged youth**

*This refers to the percentage of 15-24 year olds whose labour force status is either 'unemployed' or 'not in the labour force' (i.e. not employed in four weeks prior to the Census) and who are not attending any form of educational institution.*

Large numbers of people in this category can indicate a lack of access to employment or education facilities, or a population in need of targeted services to assist them in gaining a foothold in society (Atlas id).

### **Rates of households in rental stress**

*This refers to the percentage of households in the lowest 40 per cent of incomes, who are paying more than 30 percent of their usual gross weekly income on rent (as defined by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, 2011).*

Housing affordability has become a significant social and economic problem in recent years, and between 2006 and 2011 rents across Australia increased by close to 50 per cent (Atlas id).



## Groups experiencing exclusion

Particular groups of people typically experience social disadvantage and exclusion more than others. Increasingly, a human rights approach is being used to conceptualise social exclusion (Room 1999; Atkinson et al., 2002), emphasising that the inability to participate in and be respected by mainstream society is a violation of a basic right (Taket et al., 2009, p. 33). Importantly, this approach makes a distinction between individuals' **ability** and **choice** to participate in mainstream society. It also acknowledges that people may not have the same ability to make use of opportunities (Taket et al., 2009, pp. 33-34). For example, it is likely that a young person from a refugee background who is not fluent in English will not be able to access opportunities in the same way as someone who speaks English as a first language.

In the Australian government report 'A compendium of social inclusion indicators – how's Australia faring?' some categories of people appeared at least twice among those groups highlighted by the indicators. These categories were:

### Aged persons

*The percentage of the total population aged 65 and over.*

Older people are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion (ACOSS, 2012-2013; McLachlan & Gilfillan et al., 2013). A third of people of over 64 in Australia live below the poverty line (ACOSS, 2012-2013). Older people who are renting are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion (Morris, 2007; ACOSS, 2012-2013). **Deep social exclusion** is also more likely to be experienced by older adults.

### Public housing renters

*The percentage of total households being rented by a resident of a household where the landlord type is a State or Territory housing authority.*

Public housing renters are at risk of poverty and among those least likely to be supported by relatives or others in critical times (Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators, p. xi). Using 2011 data, BSL found that 67 per cent of public housing tenants are socially excluded and more than one-in-four (27 per cent) of Australians living in public housing experience deep social exclusion (BSL and the Melbourne Institute 2014).

### One-parent families

*The percentage of total households consisting of a lone parent with at least one dependent child (under 15) who is usually resident in the family household, and no children over the age of 15 present (Atlas id).*

Based on data from 2011, BSL research reveals that 38 per cent of one-parent households experience social exclusion while one-in-ten (10 per cent) lone parents experience deep social exclusion. Caring for a child can make securing full-time and or well-paid employment a great deal harder when the primary carer does not have anyone to help shoulder caring responsibilities. Reduced opportunities for employment participation increase the likelihood of the need for income support. Limited financial resources means that children in these households are likely to have fewer recreational, cultural, social and educational opportunities than in two-parent families.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people

Australians of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island background experience high levels of social disadvantage and exclusion relative to non-indigenous Australians, which results in a range of adverse social, health, economic and community outcomes. There are a number of complex reasons for such high levels of disadvantage, including systemic racism along with the effects of colonisation and the Stolen Generations.

Further, the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) research has found that Australia has the widest gap in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals compared to New Zealand, USA or Canada. In addition, income for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households is \$460 (mean equivalised gross weekly household income as calculated by the ABS) compared to \$740 for non-indigenous households (ACOSS, 2012).

### People from non-English speaking backgrounds

Immigrants from non-English speaking countries experience more social exclusion than native-born Australians (BSL, 2011). Racism is a factor, locking people out of social and economic opportunities (AHRC, 2012, p. 4). One-in-seven Australians report experiencing discrimination because of their skin colour or background, a figure that has been steadily increasing (AHRC, 2012). A VicHealth (2007) survey found that people from non-English speaking backgrounds are three times more likely than other Australians to have experienced discrimination in the workplace, twice as likely to report experiences of discrimination in educational settings, and more than four times as likely to report discrimination in housing. These findings were echoed in 2014 research undertaken by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY, 2014, p. 13).

Community members from refugee backgrounds are likely to also experience the effects of trauma associated with the circumstances of flight from their home country and/or exposure to war or conflict.

### People who are experiencing homelessness

Homelessness is recognised as both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion. Key structural factors include poverty, unemployment, a lack of affordable housing, and geographical inequities. Other factors that can contribute to homelessness (across all population groups) include family violence, mental illness, alcohol or substance misuse, financial hardship associated with gambling, and contact with the criminal justice system. The breakdown of family support is a central factor that contributes to youth homelessness.

Particular groups of people are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians are around five times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Victorians, and young people from refugee backgrounds are 6 to 10 times more vulnerable than Australian-born young people to becoming homeless (Coventry et al., 2002, p. 50). In the past six months, 15 per cent of young people presenting to Frontyard Youth Services – the principal access point in Melbourne for young people seeking homelessness support – were born in the north east of Africa. Melbourne City Mission Frontyard workers note a number of challenges for this population of young people, including language barriers, a lack of knowledge of the service system, and problematic family relationships associated with acculturation issues.

### People needing assistance due to a disability

*This relates to the percentage of the population of a suburb in need of assistance in their daily lives with any or all of the following activities – self-care, body movements or communication – because of disability, long-term health condition, or old age (Atlas id).*

Victorians with disabilities are not a homogeneous group, however, some common themes emerge around lack of recognition and acceptance; powerlessness and voicelessness; economic vulnerability; and diminished life experiences and limited life prospects. One-in-every five complaints received by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is from a person with a disability, making this the highest area of complaint. These complaints cover such areas as employment, education, housing, transport and access to health services (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2012).

Research by VicHealth indicates that the relative income of people with disabilities in Australia is approximately 70 per cent of those without disability (the lowest in the OECD) and that 45 per cent of Australians with disabilities live in poverty or near poverty, a situation that has worsened since the mid-1990s (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 2012 research summary). VicHealth asserts that this is partly driven by the low levels of employment participation amongst Victorians with disabilities (and their carers) relative to the rest of the adult population.

Disability can increase the costs of living for individuals and families due to the need for medical services, aid, equipment, etc. (Scutella et al., 2009b, p. 21), which contributes to the risk of social exclusion. The resultant exclusion is likely to extend to employment, education and housing options, and social activities. Consistent with this, in 2011, BSL found that 53 per cent of Australians who have a long-term health condition or disability experience some level of exclusion, and one-in-seven (14 per cent) experience deep social exclusion.

**(Vulnerable) children and young people (Note: this is not an Atlas Id indicator).**

Although children from any economic or social background may be vulnerable depending on individual family circumstances, high levels of disadvantage experienced by parents and families in poorly-resourced areas are likely to result in their children being more vulnerable or more prone to vulnerability. **Thus vulnerable children and young people are both a group and an indicator of social exclusion.** Hence, we use the term 'vulnerable' in relation to children and young people whose parents and family have a limited capacity to 'effectively care, protect and provide for their long term development and wellbeing' (Victorian Government, 2013 p. 4). Vulnerable children have poorer outcomes in relation to key indicators of social inclusion such as employment, social connectedness, education, and health status (Victoria Government, 2013: Forward). In 2013, 20 to 30 per cent of the 647,000 families with children in Victoria were deemed susceptible to vulnerability (Victorian Government, 2013, p. 3).

There are a number of structural, social, familial and individual factors that can adversely impact on the capacity of parents or caregivers to care for children, and therefore increase children's vulnerability. These factors include homelessness, poverty, social isolation, unemployment, family violence, alcohol and drug use, disability, mental health problems or a familial history of abuse and neglect. Often these factors intersect; for example, parents may experience poverty, have a disability and a familial history of violence, abuse, and neglect. This intersection can result in an increased risk to children. Statistics published by Victoria Police from 2013/14 show that incidents of family violence where children are present (and may have experienced violence in addition to witnessing it) have increased compared to 2009 by 30 per cent. This has significant implications for children and how they experience their adolescence. For example, children who have experienced or witnessed family violence are more vulnerable to substance misuse, homelessness, and mental health problems in adolescence (Bromfield, Parker & Horsfall, 2010). They are also more likely to experience difficulties with education and employment pathways.

In addition, particular cohorts of children are also more vulnerable than others, including children from refugee families or unaccompanied refugee minors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children whose parents have a disability or mental health issue (Mitchell and Campbell, 2011: 422).

However, it is important to acknowledge that 'vulnerability' is not static (Cummins, Scott and Scales, 2012: 31; Mitchell and Campbell, 2011) and a family's situation, parent's capacities and children's needs change over time.

## Geographic location

- Geographic location can contribute to people's experience of social exclusion, whereby characteristics and limitations of particular environments can impact negatively on people's lives. In Victoria, residents of interface councils are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, as evidenced by The Fairer Funding report (2014), which was compiled by the Melton, Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Mitchell, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra-Ranges councils (Interface Councils, 2014). This report, published in 2014, made the case that in the four years prior there had been a state infrastructure investment lag of \$9.8 billion in outer Melbourne suburbs. The report highlighted wide-ranging community impacts, but particularly for low-income families and young residents. For example, the report linked 'poor access to schools, significant overcrowding of schools and poor infrastructure' in interface areas with lower levels of education attainment and education engagement relative to other parts of Melbourne.
- Also, due to limited public transport, many families living in outer-suburbs need to purchase cars to commute, which can place low-income families in 'transport poverty'. This term refers to spending more on car ownership than families can reasonably afford (Currie and Delbosc, 2010, cited in Interface Councils 2014, p. 26). In comparison to the interface councils, residents of inner city Melbourne suburbs have, on average, access to 25 times the number of public transport services per capita (Interface Councils 2014, p. 27).

## Affordable housing

Stable, affordable and safe housing is essential to health and wellbeing and capacity to participate in educational and economic opportunities. Increasingly, this has become unobtainable for many Victorians.

In April 2015 Anglicare evaluated every property on realestate.com (17,800 in total) in terms of both affordability and appropriateness to accommodate the required number of people (Anglicare 2015). Forty-three (43) Local Government Areas (LGAs) were included, 31 of these were in metropolitan Melbourne.

The research found that the current housing market increases the marginalisation of some of the most vulnerable people in Victoria. Specifically, the research found that the private rental market is not affordable for individuals who largely depend on government allowances. The most affordable rental properties were located in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage where employment and opportunities for education, training and development are few. In the study, only one per cent of properties were affordable for a single person on the minimum wage. These were predominantly located in interface LGAs such as Casey and Wyndham.

Only one per cent of properties were affordable for families reliant on income support. Almost none were affordable for someone living on Newstart or a Youth Allowance. Anglicare points out that this particularly disadvantages vulnerable young people exiting the care system, given their likelihood of having to live on a government allowance (Anglicare 2015).

## Community Resilience

Measham (2014, n.p), in a critique of what she describes as 'post-code superiority', observes that 'certain suburbs are reduced to their worst features at the expense of the people who live there'.

As Measham argues, this attitude can lead to an abdication of responsibility and dismissal of the structural nature of social disadvantage. It also fails to acknowledge the 'inherently multidimensional' nature of communities:

"...there are housing commission flats in the prestigious inner-city suburbs of Toorak and Camberwell just as there are state-of-the-art mansions in outlying Frankston. Tradespeople live among the university students, young families and retirees of bohemian Northcote. Migrant professionals and newly arrived refugees share the streets of Flemington."

In addition to the cultural, economic and social diversity conveyed in Measham's use of 'multidimensional', we also use the term to acknowledge that, notwithstanding their experiences of disadvantage, individuals and communities have a diverse range of skills and strengths. This strengths-based approach has its foundations in 'assets based community development (ABCD)', a concept pioneered by Kretzman & McKnight (1993).

Assets based community development prioritises local determination, investment, creativity and control, with residents taking the lead on projects and outside agencies acting in a support role.

A community asset is anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life. This may be a physical structure or place; a community organisation that implements programs or delivers services for some or all community members (for example, an early childhood education centre); a business that provides jobs and supports the local economy; or an engaged local council with plans for community and economic development. 'Assets', as defined by Kretzman & McKnight (1993), also includes residents' individual skills, capabilities and talents. We also use 'resilience' to refer to a community's ability to cope with, adapt to, or recover from hazards (Bergstrand, Mayer, Brumback & Zhang, 2014) and to recover from adversity by using its own resources.

## Part 2: Methodology

This report examines 10 suburbs in metropolitan Melbourne. The selection of suburbs was informed by the collection, collation, analysis and synthesis of publicly available data from Atlas id and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Additionally, we reviewed a range of international and Australian literature on social exclusion. This formed the basis for the identification of eight indicators of exclusion for this report, and highlighted groups typically vulnerable to social exclusion in metropolitan Melbourne. We collected three sets of data to guide our suburb selection:

- data against each of the identified indicators for every suburb in Melbourne
- data on the prevalence of the identified groups across Melbourne suburbs
- data on each suburb's score on the SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage.

These three data sources were triangulated and used as a reference point for the selection of the 10 suburbs. Geographic location, and location within interface councils (Melton, Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Mitchell, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra-Ranges) has also been taken into account. Additionally, we have drawn upon reports published by state and local governments, community agencies and media, as well as Melbourne City Mission case studies, to create a portrait of what life in each suburb can be like for those experiencing high levels of social, economic and cultural disadvantage.



## Stories of the Suburbs

### Braybrook

#### Key policy issues

- 19 per cent of residents live in social housing
- 52 per cent of households are low income
- Almost 30 per cent of young people are unemployed
- 19 per cent of residents are single parents
- Public transport is limited

#### Strengths

- Strong sense of community connection
- Residents articulate about neighbourhood issues
- Residents actively involved in building community
- Redeveloped community hub with an integrated Early Years Centre, community health services, community meeting spaces, a men's shed, community gardens, a sports pavilion, and Braybrook's first library

#### Ashlee's story

Ashlee, 17 years old, has lived in Braybrook since the age of three. She attends school in Braybrook, starting with the Melbourne City Mission Melbourne Academy classroom in 2013. Melbourne City Mission spoke with Ashlee prior to the opening of the redeveloped Braybrook Community Hub – a project she was very enthusiastic about.

Ashlee says she's seen a lot of changes in Braybrook over the years. "This area was much worse when I was younger. There was a park and that was basically it. There's going to be a new community centre, it's exciting and I think there's also going to be a new gym in there. They did used to have a community centre, but they are rebuilding it to make it better. I used to go there to see a counsellor and visit other people. Hang out. It was good because it was local and only two minutes away. It affected me when they closed the community centre to rebuild it, but I'm looking forward to it being different".

Ashlee speaks about the physical environment in Braybrook. "There used to be glass and rubbish around but it's getting better. There are a lot of drugs and people who use drugs that hang around. It feels dirty. There isn't violence or anything – I don't think it's a dangerous place – [but] something just doesn't feel right. Things could be better. It could be cleaner and there could be better people around. Apart from the basketball court and the plaza, I don't feel like there is much to do. The community centre was the main thing. There were a lot of things you could do there."

Speaking about what she sees as the best things about the suburb, Ashlee says that the community and the people are the best things about Braybrook.

"The people are bad but good. They make the community what it is. It's my home – it's the only place I want to be. I feel excited to come home to Braybrook. I feel like I belong. It's a good place.

It's always going to be a good place. It's the people, not the place. If the people are treating themselves badly, the place is going to be bad. But when people come together, it could be good if they choose to be good.

It would be better if there was more to do. If there is nothing to do that keeps people focused, then they are just going to be doing bad stuff.

"There is a great example of what I mean by community. Yesterday, I was walking home and I got drenched. It was raining so much.

"I walked past this old man I usually say hi to when I'm walking home, and he saw me walking. He said 'hold on!', so I stopped – and he gave me an umbrella. Just for saying hi to him. I feel like people are looking out for me. I feel like because I made that effort with him he made the effort back."

When asked how she thought others from outside Braybrook viewed her suburb, Ashlee said “I don’t associate with people outside Braybrook, so I don’t know what people think of my suburb. I don’t care. I would just brush off their judgements anyway. It’s my community. It’s where I live. I go out with my friends around Braybrook and stay at my mum’s house. I also spend time at my grandma’s house. I take the bus to other places. It’s pretty good. It’s reliable enough.”

Ashlee has big plans: “I want to do community development in the future. I want to do it for Braybrook. I see how good it is, how good it has been and how much better it could be. But nobody really sees what happens behind closed doors. You can see what happens when you are outside it, but you can’t actually get to the people who need the help. You know? I live here, I see it.

“I want people to be able to feel comfortable to share their stories.

“If I was the community development worker here. . . It’s something I want to think hard about because it’s something I really want to do. I want to succeed in it. You only get one shot. If people aren’t interested it won’t work. As long as it relates to the people, then I think it would work. Sharing experiences is so important. I want to somehow disguise it you know, like for the youth. If they know it’s something forcing them to be something they won’t want to do it – so I want to do it in a way that works.

“I feel like there is a lot in the way of me achieving my dreams. Like, stuff to do with my moving arrangements. Going from my mum’s to my grandma’s. My mum has her own issues she needs to deal with, but they affect me at the same time. Right now I need her the most, but she’s not in the right headspace to be there for me. I feel like that’s the biggest thing stopping me, I want to help her more than I want to help myself.”

When asked whether she thought her postcode held her back, Ashlee said, “I don’t want to believe that living in Braybrook is holding me back. I guess it might hold me back because there are a lot of distractions for me here. I just want to help people and I always ask the question, how can I help the people I want to help if I’m the same? I’m trying to help myself, but trying to help my mum at the same time. It’s hard. I moved to be with my grandma to help myself and it has helped me. If I’m not under the same roof, I’m not seeing the same stuff every day, you know? It’s not always in my face and I can think about it from a different point of view.

“I feel like I hold myself back. I need more motivation and I need to believe in myself more. I can’t really blame anybody. Braybrook is a good place to be”.

Over the years, Braybrook has consistently been ranked as one of Australia’s most disadvantaged postcodes. Currently, it is the second most disadvantaged in Victoria, with a SEIFA ranking of 801.1. This disadvantage has historically been accompanied by significant stigma. In 2005 youth worker Les Twentyman told *The Age* that one of his clients, a young man from Braybrook, had inquired about a job only to be informed that the position was filled when he gave his address. Apparently when the same applicant called back a couple of hours later with the address of a relative in Kew, he was offered an interview (Gooch, 2005).

Almost a decade later, gentrification is gradually creeping into Braybrook, though it is not a straight-forward trajectory. For example, whilst Braybrook was ranked 95 out of 314 suburbs in *The Age* newspaper’s 2014 Liveable Melbourne Study, one year on this ‘liveability’ ranking fell to 137 out of 321 suburbs (Barnes, 2015). More importantly, as noted by Maribyrnong Council in 2011, ‘recent growth and change in the inner west has not improved indicators of disadvantage for those in Braybrook’. The report contends that ‘without targeted and sustained investment to redress the situation’, Braybrook residents are at risk of facing a ‘widening inequality gap’ (*Stories of the Suburbs* does not examine all disadvantages and contributors to the widening of this gap, but focuses solely on the eight indicators described earlier in this report, for the sake of consistency across all suburb snapshots).

While 19 per cent of residents live in social housing, Braybrook also had the largest average annual growth of median house price of all suburbs in the City of Maribyrnong between 2000 and 2009. However, 36 per cent of Braybrook’s population earns less than \$26,000 p.a., which is less than the minimum wage in Australia, and a growing proportion earns a very low income (Maribyrnong Council 2011, p. 4). In 2011, approximately 52 per cent of Braybrook Households earned \$999 or less per week. Furthermore, the Maribyrnong Council (2013) states that the majority of people living in Braybrook in 2011 were ineligible for social housing, but were also unlikely to afford a property to rent or buy.

In 2009, the Centre for Full Employment and Equity classed Braybrook as a High Risk area for job losses, whereby it is particularly vulnerable to employment loss, especially when the national economy tightens. Since then, the national economy has indeed contracted and had a significant impact: at the time of writing, Braybrook's unemployment rate (15 per cent) was more than double the state's unemployment rate (6 per cent). Furthermore, the youth unemployment rate was at almost thirty per cent.

A connection can be made between low levels of qualifications, low income and high levels of unemployment: over half (53 per cent) of Braybrook's population do not have a University or TAFE qualification, and 38 per cent have below Year 11 schooling. In 2011, 31 per cent of Braybrook residents left school at year 10 or below. Crucially, transport also impacts on opportunities to access employment, training and education. This report notes that 17 per cent of Braybrook residents do not own a car, and the closest train station is 25 minutes away in Sunshine.

According to the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI, 2012), Braybrook has the highest percentage of developmentally vulnerable children in the Maribyrnong municipality. The Index lists five domains of focus, including physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, school-based language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge (12 per cent of children in Braybrook are developmentally vulnerable on two or more of the domains, compared with 8 per cent in the municipality overall).

This is further reflected by the fact that Braybrook residents have been noted to have low participation in early years services, and to perform poorly in the first years of school (Maribyrnong Council, 2013). At the time of writing, enrolment of children in kindergarten in Braybrook was 94 per cent, which was lower than State averages. Since then, we note that the redeveloped Braybrook Community has opened, with enhanced family and community services, including maternal and child health, a library and a Melbourne City Mission integrated early years centre, including a kindergarten program.

The rising costs of housing coupled with other indicators described in this snapshot, such as high unemployment and limited educational qualifications, suggest that many Braybrook residents are likely to already be experiencing deep exclusion.

Braybrook is quite culturally diverse: almost half the population of 8,184 are from a non-English speaking background, and almost 20 per cent are not fluent in English. The suburb also has the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents (51 persons or 0.6 per cent) in the municipality of Maribyrnong.

A high proportion of Braybrook residents (19 per cent) are single parents. This is over twice the proportion found in the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD). Single parent families are more likely to face financial stress. They may also face emotional challenges due to being the only adult in the house and being solely responsible for the running of the household and the wellbeing of their children. This can also impact on young people, who may often feel that they need to take more responsibility.

### **Strengths and Opportunities**

Braybrook residents have been actively involved in developing their suburb through an eight-year Neighbourhood Renewal project – a Victorian State Government initiative, which brought 'together the resources and ideas of residents, governments, businesses and community groups to tackle disadvantage in areas with concentrations of public housing' (DHS n. d). The initiative's key areas of focus were 'lifting employment and learning opportunities and expanding local economies; enhancing housing and the physical environment; improving personal safety and reducing crime; promoting health and wellbeing; increasing access to services and improving government responsiveness; increasing people's pride and participation in their community' (DHS n. d).

While the Braybrook Neighbourhood Renewal project finished in 2010, residents continue to develop their skills and advocate for, and participate in, improving their suburb with the support of the Maribyrnong City Council, community agencies and State Government. The Maribyrnong Council adopted the Revitalising Braybrook plan in 2011.

Built on consultations with Braybrook residents, the Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan 2013 – 2015 is underpinned by an assets based approach to community development, building on the capacities and strengths of residents.

Priorities identified by the Braybrook community are education and lifelong learning; transport and connectivity; employment and training; housing; amenity and infrastructure; community safety and building the capacity of residents to participate and advocate for their community (Maribyrnong City Council, 2013). The \$12.5 million redevelopment of the Braybrook Community Hub was a direct response to these priorities.

It is evident from both Revitalising Braybrook (Maribyrnong Council, 2013) and interviews undertaken by Melbourne City Mission for this report, that residents have a strong sense of positive connection to their locality. They are very clear in articulating the issues they face, such as limited access to public transport and the rising cost of housing, yet they also emphasise that Braybrook is a neighbourhood where residents support each other and work together.

## Dandenong

*Note: Dandenong is not included in Atlas id data. Statistics for this report were obtained from the City of Greater Dandenong.*

### Key policy issues

- 67 per cent of residents born overseas
- 20 per cent of residents have limited English fluency
- One-third of residents have limited qualifications
- Almost half the population have a very low income
- 20 per cent of young people are disengaged from education and employment

### Strengths

- The Revitalising Central Dandenong initiative aims to improve infrastructure such as transport and improve employment and education opportunities over the next 10 to 15 years
- The City of Greater Dandenong is active in acknowledging challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contribution they make to the community

The suburb of Dandenong, located in Victoria's second most disadvantaged LGA, the City of Greater Dandenong, has even higher levels of cultural diversity than Braybrook. In 2011, a total of 67 per cent of the municipality's 24,919 residents were overseas-born. Many were newly-settled in Australia, with 12 per cent having arrived in the two-and-a-half years prior to 2011. In 2011-12, more than 2,700 recently-arrived migrants settled in Greater Dandenong – the highest number of settlers in any Victorian municipality. Nearly a third were humanitarian immigrants, largely from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and Pakistan (City of Greater Dandenong, 2014). Like Braybrook, almost 20 per cent of the population has limited fluency in English.

In 2011, Dandenong's overall unemployment rate was 11 per cent, with 14 per cent of young people aged 20 to 24 unemployed. Twenty (20) percent of 20 to 24 year-olds were neither in paid work, nor engaged in employment. The same percentage in this age group had left school before completing Year 11. Thirty-four (34) per cent of the population aged 15 or more had no post-secondary qualifications. A connection can be made between limited qualifications and high levels of unemployment. Being young and having little or no employment experience also increases the difficulty of getting paid work. However, as mentioned earlier in this report, research suggests that people from non-English speaking backgrounds find it much more difficult to find work because of societal prejudice (AHRC, 2012; CMY, 2014; VicHealth, 2007).

Young African-Australians are a group who may be particularly hard hit. On an episode of 'Q & A' (Australian Broadcasting Network, 2012) live from Dandenong, Victor, a young Sudanese-Australian man, observed that graduates from African backgrounds often don't get a 'fair go'. He related his own long search for employment close to home and his belief that opportunities are connected to the image of African-Australians and people's assumptions about them:

We are from a war-torn background, we are this, we are that, we're that, we're that and, all of a sudden, when we want to apply for a job, get a job, 'No, his name – his name is, what do you call it? His name is Deng. Or I cannot pronounce his name. I'm not quite sure if he will be qualified for this job'.

Diana Nguyen, a community development worker who works with young people in Dandenong, interviewed on the same Q & A episode, agreed with Victor:

[Young Sudanese people]...want to contribute back to the community, so they do disability or community development... [Although there is] a need for disability workers in Melbourne, these young people can't seem to get a job.

While the median individual income is \$374 per week and the median household income is \$832, 40 per cent of Dandenong's population aged 15 or more have a weekly gross individual income of less than \$300. Approximately 18 per cent of Dandenong's residents comprise one-parent families, and 20 per cent comprise one-parent families with children under 15. Given that the median rent in Dandenong is \$245 per week, the data relating to unemployment, income and family composition suggests some alarming levels of disadvantage. This is reflected in the fact that almost a quarter of the population is in rental stress.



### **Strengths and opportunities**

Places Victoria, the State Government's Urban Renewal Authority, is working in partnership with the City of Greater Dandenong to deliver the Revitalising Central Dandenong initiative over the next 15 to 20 years. The initiative aims to improve infrastructure as well as 'kick-start new development and job-creating economic activity'. While the initiative also includes improved public transport, which will increase residents' access to education and employment opportunities, another significant element is creating an aesthetically appealing and contemporary city centre.

The City of Greater Dandenong has made a strong commitment to supporting refugee and asylum seeker residents, and has been a Refugee Welcome Zone since 2002. The Council actively promotes and advocates for the rights of forcibly displaced people. A Refugee Welcome Zone is a local government area that has made a commitment to welcome refugees into the community, uphold the human rights of refugees, demonstrate compassion and enhance cultural and religious diversity in the community (City of Greater Dandenong, 2014).

The Council also has a Refugee and Asylum Seeker Statement, which makes their position of support very clear: 'The City of Greater Dandenong acknowledges the journey of refugees and asylum seekers who are often fleeing from conflict, human rights violations and persecutions. Refugees come to our community seeking safety and protection in order to rebuild their lives. They bring resilience, hope, motivation and skills and contribute substantially to our community social, civic and economic life' (City of Greater Dandenong, 2014).

## Heidelberg West (Bellfield)

### Key policy issues:

- Almost one-quarter of the population are under 18
- 30 per cent of residents live in social housing
- Entrenched disadvantage
- Increasing cultural diversity with recent arrivals from Somalia, China and India
- Proportionally high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents
- 30 per cent of residents live alone
- 15 per cent of young people unemployed
- Almost half of all residents have no post-secondary qualifications

### Strengths

- Strong sense of community connection
- Residents have the capacity to speak out about local issues
- Active residents group
- Children are doing well according to key developmental indicators

### Leanne and Michael's story

Leanne and Michael have lived in West Heidelberg for the past 25 years. Their grandson, Simon, accesses disability case management from Melbourne City Mission and uses services such as respite.

Leanne and Michael love their neighbourhood. There is a sense of community for the family, with Leanne explaining that "a lot of the people get to know you by sight and say hello as they walk past. I feel very safe here and I do feel as if there is a sense of community. We have a steady population growing around us and it's very multicultural. We have our local doctor just down the road and sometimes they have community fairs and things on for the kids. It's good to get people to intermingle."

Leanne and Michael's grandson, Simon, is welcomed and supported in the local community. Leanne says, "A lot of the people around here know Simon and they ask how he is going. Simon stops and says hello to everyone and most of them smile and say hello back".

In terms of education, the couple note that there are two high schools nearby, however, the closure of three local primary schools, replaced by apartments, has "had a huge impact on the community here". However, the specific services that Simon needs are close to home, and it is easy to transport Simon to and from his school and other activities.

Leanne and Michael say, "Most of the services we use are within 20 minutes of each other, so we don't have to travel far out. Simon is really enjoying school. He goes to day placement every day with his best friend and they have a ball together. Simon is really active. He enjoys music and swimming. He definitely keeps us active!"

Leanne says: "Like everywhere, there is the good and the bad [but] I've never had any problems living in West Heidelberg. I've never had any experiences with rowdy types or anything like that.

"Everything is close to us.

"Our local shop is just across the road. We have Northland shopping centre which is 10 minutes down the road. We can either walk or drive down there.

"There seems to be a lot for the young people in the area. There's a soccer club just across the road and we have a basketball stadium over at the community centre. They've built a skate park here as well. They can also use their bikes and there is a flying fox.

"We have seen a lot of improvements, especially up the road at the park where they have put play equipment in for the kids.

“We have had problems with getting a Liberty swing installed at the local park down here. There are quite a few kids here who live with a disability and it would be great to cater to their needs as well”. However, in terms of future planning, Leanne and Michael say that the council is working to include people with disabilities as much as possible. They reflect, “When they [the council] built the park, they did a lot of work ensuring the paths were accessible. All the paths around here are very accessible”.

Public transport is good, though it is an issue for people wanting to travel on the weekends. “The bus routes are great here for the youth to get to school – except for the weekends. The bus timetables are much different on the weekend and it takes a lot longer to get one.”

Heidelberg West (Bellfield) in the City of Banyule is ranked as the sixth most disadvantaged suburb in Victoria on the SEIFA index of disadvantage. After the 1956 Olympics, the purpose-built Olympic Village in Heidelberg West was converted into public housing and, since then, rather than being associated with glamour and opportunity has been associated with entrenched poverty. In 2011, 30 per cent of residents of a total population of 7,015 were in social housing, around a third higher than Braybrook, which, overall, ranks as being even more disadvantaged than Heidelberg West.

Heidelberg West is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. In 2011, 56 per cent of residents were of Anglo-Celtic background while 46 per cent were from Somali, Chinese, Lebanese, Italian, Indian and Vietnamese backgrounds. It is worth noting that while the dominant cultural group is Anglo-Celtic, the data indicates that the number of residents from this population group was decreasing and the emerging cultural groups included residents from Indian, Somali and Chinese cultural groups. Additionally, 1.5 per cent of residents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which is three times higher than the 0.5 per cent average for Greater Melbourne. Twenty-six (26) per cent of residents are recent overseas arrivals from countries including Somalia, China and India and 20 per cent of residents speak a language other than English at home.

Heidelberg West’s population is young, and particularly disadvantaged in terms of employment and education participation. Almost a quarter (22 per cent) of Heidelberg West’s population were under 18 years of age in 2011 and youth unemployment was at 15 per cent, while the same number of young people were viewed as disengaged. Nearly half of all residents (49 per cent) had no post-secondary qualifications, while Year 11 was the highest level of school completed by 42 per cent of residents. However, the Australian Early Development Census data (2012) identified that school age children living in Heidelberg West consistently rated above the average levels for children across Banyule LGA in the five developmental domains of physical (21 per cent), social (16 per cent), emotional (14 per cent), language (12 per cent) and communication (20 per cent). These findings suggest that children in Heidelberg West are not ‘developmentally vulnerable’.

Almost one-third (30 per cent) of all residents live alone. Those living alone who are unemployed, or on a low income, are more vulnerable to social exclusion than other population cohorts because of the considerable expense of having no one to share rent, utilities and food costs with. This drain on resources also means that it becomes more difficult to participate in activities outside the home. Social isolation and loneliness (which may contribute to decreased wellbeing and depression) are therefore a risk. For older people 65 years and over, living alone can also be a significant health risk – in the event of an accident, illness or medical emergency there is no one immediately on hand to provide support or notify medical services. Like Braybrook and Dandenong, Heidelberg West also has a high proportion of one-parent families with children (18 per cent). Given this data it is unsurprising that 34 per cent of households are ‘low income’, and the suburb’s median weekly household income is \$809. Consistent with these figures is rental stress – something that is experienced by a quarter of the Heidelberg West’s population (26 per cent).

### **Strengths and Opportunities**

Heidelberg West was the focus of a Neighbourhood Renewal project which ended in June 2013. Banyule City Council has reported that the project 'brought many physical improvements but more importantly empowered people, bringing them together to solve problems and inspire community spirit'. The past Chair of the Heidelberg West Neighbourhood Renewal Steering Committee, Rachael Wightman, has lived in the suburb for nine years and says that she has seen noticeable improvements.

According to Rachael, the locality has 'become a connected and passionate community, willing to step up and contribute'. While she feels that there are still some issues, she believes that as a result of Neighbourhood Renewal, residents 'now have a stronger united voice to advocate for all members of our community, and that voice is not only heard, but listened to and acted upon.' Rachael has also commented on the increased connectedness of residents who, initially brought together by the project, continue to hold barbeques at Malahang Reserve and come together at markets and community gardens (Banyule City Council n. d). Since the Neighbourhood Renewal project finished, Heidelberg West residents have continued to develop their community through a residents' group – 3081 Connect (Banyule City Council n. d).

## Frankston North

### Key policy issues

- Entrenched disadvantage
- A proportionally high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents
- 17 per cent of residents are over 65 years old
- Almost one-third of all households in rental stress
- 23 per cent of young people are unemployed
- 27 per cent of young people are disengaged
- High rates of family violence

### Strengths

- Strong safety net, with a large number of community services
- Frankston City Council responsive to community ideas and needs
- Residents take pride in and enjoy the natural environment
- Schools use creative, lateral strategies to combat socio-economic disadvantage
- Youth 'hangouts' in each Frankston suburb, providing recreational activities and life skills

### Jacky's story

Jacky's son is part of the Frankston Detour program with Melbourne City Mission.

When asked her perspectives on the suburb, Jacky stated "there's so much need in Frankston. Families are doing it tough and they just don't know how to get help. The families have broken down so much but they just don't know where to turn". Jacky's observations reflect broader community feedback provided to Council during the development of the Frankston North Community Plan (2013-2014), in which families said they didn't know what services were available.

Jacky spoke about young people living in Frankston, stating "it's amazing how many kids just walk off and they all just follow each other. There is so much pressure and stress on families. I'll see kids 10, 11 or 12 years old walking around. They desperately need direction. [Some parents] just don't have the knowledge or the education of how to help their kids. [There are] kids who don't see any future or have very little hope for the future."

Jacky describes her own family's challenges, and says that she was about to let her daughter go into residential care before she found the Detour program, a Melbourne City Mission early intervention program that diverts young people away from homelessness. "I cannot say enough good things about it. It's just so welcoming. It's the best thing I ever did. The workers are relatable and my daughter says they are "cool". She can talk to them because they aren't really old. Get the program out to the schools. That's where it's most needed."

Speaking about motivation and seeking assistance, Jacky says "it's having the initiative to try something that might help, but also having the opportunities to do it and knowing where to get help. People in Frankston are trying to do better. The Council is trying to do better. The Hangout for teenagers is fantastic. They go to school much happier kids because of the Hangout program on the holidays. We have to channel the money into things to help teenagers".

In 2011 (the most recent SEIFA data), the Frankston local government area was the 8th most disadvantaged municipality in Victoria. Particularly disadvantaged within its own LGA, Frankston North, which has a population of 5,631, has a reputation for entrenched generational disadvantage. The suburb is not particularly culturally and linguistically diverse – in 2011 the majority of residents were Australian born. However, a proportionally high number of residents (two per cent of the population) are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. More recently there are also increasing numbers of people born in non-English speaking countries moving into the LGA, particularly from India, the Philippines and China.



The demography of Frankston LGA as a whole differs from that of metropolitan Melbourne in a variety of ways: Frankston's population is weighted towards young people and older people, with those aged 18 to 34 representing a smaller share of the population than the metropolitan average. The municipality has an aging population, which is particularly evident in the suburb of Frankston North. In 2011, 17 per cent of Frankston North's residents were 65 years of age and above in 2011, a small increase from 2006, and a larger proportion than that in Frankston City (14 per cent). Lone person households make up 29.7 per cent of the Frankston North community.

Frankston City Council has noted that Frankston is a particularly car-dependent city with 74.7 per cent of residents travelling to work by car, which is nearly 10 per cent more than people across metropolitan Melbourne. This is particularly notable in Frankston's outermost suburbs. The Council also acknowledges that the Frankston line is a very long service, with trains typically stopping at 14 to 25 stops between Frankston City Centre and the Melbourne CBD. This is a disincentive for the community to use public transport and may also create feelings of isolation for young people and older residents. A car can be a substantial drain on individual and family resources, which is significant when people are already experiencing disadvantage. In 2011, around one-third (32 per cent) of Frankston North residents were living in low-income households. This proportion of residents on a low income has increased since 2006 from 39 per cent to 41 per cent in 2011.

Unsurprisingly, given this data, 29 per cent of households in Frankston North were under rental stress in 2011. Similarly, unemployment in the suburb has increased from 13 to 16 per cent between 2006 and 2011. Around a quarter of all young people (23 per cent) are unemployed, a higher proportion than any other suburb in the LGA. It is likely that large numbers of young people in Frankston North do not have appropriate employment skills and/or need support to identify their own areas of interest and ability. In 2011, 63 per cent of the suburb's residents had no formal qualifications beyond Year 11 and 27 per cent of young people were in neither education nor employment. Overall only 18 per cent of the population attended an educational institution.

Due to the increase in older people in the suburb, Council notes that two schools and a kindergarten have closed. In 2012 St Anthony's Coptic Orthodox College, which was located in Frankston North went into voluntary administration over \$500,000 in debt. The college blamed its decline on falling student numbers and on the fact that many families were unable to pay the school fees (Peake, ABC news, 2012). Given the fact that a large proportion of students were either from Egyptian or Southern Sudanese families, and St Anthony's had a reputation both for academic success and support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, the closure may mean a significant service gap.

There is a substantial community services sector in Frankston, which has built up over the years in response to entrenched disadvantage. However, the Frankston North Community Plan (2013-2014), which is based on discussions with the Frankston North community members, indicates that young people may not be utilising services due to an expectation on the part of service providers that young people should engage with services of their own initiative. The plan also suggests that families do not know what services are available. This may partly be due to residents moving frequently; Frankston North children's services staff report high levels of transience.

Additionally many young people and children in the locality face problems at home. Frankston has the highest rate per capita of family violence incidents of all metropolitan LGAs, and also ranks third in the whole of Victoria. Research from 2011 also indicates that family violence has been increasing in Frankston (Peninsula Community Legal Centre, 2011). AEDI statistics show that Frankston North children are particularly vulnerable with 70.4 per cent considered vulnerable in one or more domains compared with 25.1 per cent for the whole LGA, and 23.6 per cent for the whole of Australia.

### Strengths and opportunities

Frankston City Council and Frankston residents, businesses, schools and community groups take a strengths-based approach to the social and economic challenges reflected in the SEIFA data for Frankston.

A Community Renewal Steering Committee comprising community and service provider/agency representatives was established to determine the key priorities for Frankston North and in 2007 developed an initial Action Plan for implementation that has since been reviewed and updated. Community priorities have included:

- Employment, Education and Training
- Infrastructure and Open Spaces
- Community Participation
- Safety, Health and Wellbeing.

Additionally, in 2013, the Frankston City Council hosted a series of community consultations so that residents could contribute to planning Frankston's future. The project aimed to identify the community's priorities and to highlight its various needs. The findings were to be aligned with a Community Plan, Council Plan, and LGA plans. The priorities that were identified included:

- Increasing levels and awareness of Aboriginal health through improving the provision of health services and having more Aboriginal health professionals in the community
- Improving the situation of vulnerable children and families through engaging parents in community decision-making, providing pre-natal care in the public health system, and designing and implementing a special needs program for children
- Creating a register of willing older people who would receive training to support vulnerable children and families
- Education programs targeted at early intervention in regards to domestic violence.

The Frankston North Local Community Plan (LCP) attempts to address the issue of the ageing residents of Frankston North, acknowledging that 'ageing well' is characterised by having access to health care, being close to friends and family, and living close to public transport and shops.

The Frankston North LCP also identifies 'providing more opportunities for young people, including spaces to socialise and more activities' (Frankston North Local Community Plan, 2013) as a priority. Since then the Frankston City Council has established six 'Hangouts' for young people (one in each suburb of the LGA) that provide recreational activities, homework support and a life-skills program that focuses on assisting young people with the practicalities associated with finding employment.

Schools in the Frankston LGA appear to be particularly responsive to the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out, and to the effects of social disadvantage. In 1999, Frankston High School developed the Hands on Learning (HOL) program, which continues to run at the school and is now running at numerous other schools around Victoria through a charity of the same name. Two artisan-teachers work collaboratively with small groups of cross-age students on building projects that enable students to engage, grow confidence and achieve success at school. HOL focuses on work and life skills such as collaboration, problem solving, communication, resilience and empathy.

Mahogany Rise Primary School in Frankston North has also been proactive and creative in terms of providing opportunities for its most disadvantaged students. In 2013 the school raised \$11,000 through online crowd-funding source 'Pozible' for eight students to visit Scotland after an application for government funding had been refused (Topsfield, 2013). Many students at Mahogany Rise come to school without breakfast and cannot afford the uniform, such is the level of disadvantage (Topsfield, 2013). The school believed an international trip was a significant opportunity, which would broaden the students' worldview.

Local secondary colleges, such as Monterey Secondary College, have proactively engaged with community service organisations like Melbourne City Mission to address risk factors for family breakdown and homelessness.

## Meadow Heights

### Key policy issues

- Almost half of the population are under 18
- 28 per cent of young people are unemployed
- 65 per cent of residents have no post-secondary qualifications
- 40 per cent of households are low income
- 42 per cent of residents are from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Over half of all residents arrived after 1991
- Meadow Heights has the highest percentage of households (43 per cent) across Hume experiencing housing stress

### Strengths

- School-age children consistently rate higher across developmental domains than any other suburb in the LGA
- Dianella Community Health Centre provides comprehensive, accessible primary health services and community programs
- Neighbourhood House provides adult education opportunities and community programs
- Melbourne City Mission runs a Turkish mother's group which creates sense of community

### Mum's from Turkish Playgroup – Meadow Heights Primary School Hub

On the day Melbourne City Mission visited the Meadow Heights Primary School Hub, 10 women were in attendance at the playgroup with their children.

The women expressed how happy they feel living in their suburb.

The women said:

"There are opinions about our suburb. I hear people say there are many drug dealers here but we don't see them. I also hear that there are many thieves. In my eyes, I don't see this. It's just what other people say. It might be because there has been crime that has happened here a few times.

"We love the area very much. It's a community here. We love the shops and the food. The people are nice and we all feel very safe. The majority of people around here are Turkish, Iraqi, Arabic and Lebanese – lots of different cultures. It's good. We don't feel like we're far away from our country or family here. Same culture, same thing – so it feels like home. There are two community centres here for the children. It's very good for my kids".

"We love coming here to see the other women. Before this, I did not have friends. Once I started coming here, now I see these women nearly every day. For mums, there is only our group. We really love it here with Salwa [coordinator]. We are the same culture here. She is a good support for us. We all come here and connect and it feels like family again. We feel very safe and supported here".

"We all live close to each other and we catch up every day. Our children are growing up together. Harmony day here was so beautiful. We were singing and dancing. It was very nice.

"The community hub here helped me to find work. My kids are in school and my hours allow me to be able to drop them off and pick them up".

When asked what they feel could be improved about the area, women reflected:

"There is an area near the school and drivers don't stop for the pedestrians. It's dangerous, especially for the kids."

"There is no swimming pool here, and there are no sporting clubs around. Our dream would be to see sports clubs and creative hobbies here for our children."

“There are also no holiday programs here for the kids. We would like to see that. We need to see that here for the children.”

“There is really only one high school here. There are no Arabic schools. We would like to see an Arabic school, especially because there are so many of us here in the community”.

In 2011 Meadow Heights ranked as the ninth most disadvantaged suburb in Victoria. This is immediately apparent in unemployment rates, particularly amongst young people. Forty-four (44) per cent of the population is under 18 years of age and youth unemployment had risen to 28 per cent in 2011, almost twice the percentage of the adult unemployment rate (15 per cent). Unsurprisingly, 40 per cent of households were low income, with 55 per cent of all individual residents on a low income. In specific reference to rent, 43 per cent of households were experiencing housing stress. Across the Hume LGA, Meadow Heights also had the highest percentage of households (26 per cent) who were experiencing housing stress, including difficulties meeting rent or mortgage payments.

Just over half of all residents Meadow Heights’ residents arrived after 1991. The suburb is extremely culturally diverse – in 2011, 42 per cent of the 14,839 residents were from non-English speaking backgrounds, with Turkish being the largest cultural group by far (26 per cent). A particularly high proportion (70 per cent) of residents reported that they spoke another language at home while 18 per cent of the community reported that they were not fluent in the English language.

A connection can be made between the high unemployment rate and the level of educational attainment – the highest level of schooling completed by 46 per cent of residents was Year 11, while 65 per cent of residents had no qualifications post-secondary school. Additionally 17 per cent of young people were disengaged. Language and cultural needs may also be a factor.

### **Strengths and opportunities**

Dianella Community Health Centre provides primary health services and community support programs for residents in Meadow Heights, including families and children (Dianella Community Health Centre, 2014).

However, Australian Early Development Census data (2012) identified that school age children living in Meadow Heights consistently rated above the average levels for children across Hume LGA in the five developmental domains of physical (17 percent), social (19 percent), emotional (15 percent), language (17 percent) and communication (21 percent). These findings suggest that children in Meadow Heights are not ‘developmentally vulnerable’.

The Meadow Heights Learning Shop provides training for adults including AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) and SEE (Skills for Education and Employment). The Centre is also the local Neighbourhood House and provides community support programs including playgroup; meditation; men’s activities; and free tax assistance (Meadow Heights Learning Shop, 2014).

Specific activities for young people are provided through the Meadow Heights Community Centre, which provides access to the internet, football and soccer and creative writing (Meadow Heights Community Centre, 2014).

## Lalor

### Key policy issues

- Over 45 per cent of all residents are from a non-English speaking background
- Arabic, Italian and Macedonian are the most common languages apart from English
- 61 per cent of all residents have no post-secondary qualifications
- 17 per cent of all residents are over 65 years old
- 17 per cent of all young people are unemployed
- Over one-third of residents experience rental stress
- Limited public transport

### Strengths

- A library with a range of community responsive programs
- An adult learning centre with a range of community responsive classes
- City of Whittlesea has a Youth Action Plan and a Multicultural Action Plan

### Laura's story *(name changed for privacy)*

Laura is 27 years old and has lived in Lalor for over nine years. She became involved with Melbourne City Mission through the Community Friends Volunteer program and has been a part of this for the past three years. She works as an accountant for Court Services Victoria.

When asked about what she thought of her suburb, Lalor, Laura stated, "I like that my part of Lalor is quiet – you don't get the noise and the bustle. You get your own space. I don't hang out as much as I used to around this area – when I go out, I go to other places. Most of my friends from high school are around here, so that's when I do spend time around Lalor. There is a local hangout here which is the local shopping centre. Apart from that there's really not much to do. I enjoy being able to take my dogs for a walk and everyone is friendly here. Lalor is a nice little quiet area – where I live it is, anyway. It's where I have grown up and haven't lived anywhere else".

In terms of safety, Laura states that where she lives is a residential area, "It's a diverse community and minimal traffic. I don't feel unsafe but I don't catch buses and I think that has a lot to do with it. There are always PSO's (Protective Services Officers) at the train station. There are a lot of firecrackers that go off but nothing major other than that. You do hear cars doing burn outs every now and then, but again, nothing serious.

"My car window was smashed at Thomastown station once. Recreationally there isn't much to do – in terms of free time and entertainment wise there is not much on offer". People do seem to think Lalor is a high crime area and that it has a bad reputation. I personally am not affected by this but people have mentioned it to me. I would probably move out of Lalor if I had the opportunity only because I want to be closer to the city."

When asked whether she felt Lalor was in any way stopping her from achieving her dreams, Laura answered, "I'm happy where I am in my career and in myself. I don't feel like Lalor is a hindrance to me in terms of my goals or where I want to go in life. Perhaps when I get older and have kids, I might get frustrated with catching transport and being so far out from the city. Without having a car, it could be challenging relying on transport.

"When I went to high school, I didn't attend one around this area. I have heard that other kids who attended schools around here haven't had the opportunities I have had. That might have something to do with why I am where I am today".

In 2011, Lalor ranked 27th on the SEIFA index of disadvantage, and slightly over a quarter of all residents were from low-income households, with 35 per cent experiencing rental stress. The median weekly income for households in Lalor (\$939) is markedly lower than that for households in Greater Melbourne (\$1,333). Lalor is particularly culturally diverse. In 2011 just over 45 per cent of residents were from a non-English speaking background and 15 per cent reported that they were not fluent in English. Arabic, Italian, and Macedonian

are the most common languages, spoken by around 10 per cent of the population respectively (City of Whittlesea, 2014b). As described earlier in this report, individuals who are not fluent in English or are from non-English-speaking backgrounds are more likely to experience social exclusion compared to native-born Australians. Research suggests that this may especially be the case for Lalor, as the City of Whittlesea, has an overall lower rate of community acceptance of diverse cultures (42 per cent) compared with Victoria in general (51 per cent) (City of Whittlesea, 2014b).

A large proportion of Lalor's residents (61 per cent) have no post-secondary qualifications, and 51 per cent have below Year 11 schooling, despite the presence of several primary schools and three public secondary schools in the suburb. It is possible that many residents do not have informed aspirations to higher education, and are not aware of the options available to them. Residents who are not fluent in English or who are from non-English-speaking backgrounds may be encountering language barriers when considering tertiary education. Seventeen (17) per cent of young people in Lalor are unemployed, and 15 per cent are disengaged (City of Whittlesea, 2014a).

According to the City of Whittlesea Youth Plan 2030 Summary and Action Plan (City of Whittlesea, 2007), lack of transport has been a major issue for young people living in the area, and it has had consequences on their access to health, education, and support services (Lalor North Citizenship Consultation, 2005). It further states that, in 2007, young people were requesting more buses and trams due to rising petrol prices. Laura (27), who is a volunteer for Melbourne City Mission's Community Friends program, and has lived in Lalor since her late teens, comments that a car is fairly essential in Lalor as relying on public transport is 'challenging'. According to Laura, recreational opportunities are very limited, which makes better public transport even more of necessity. However, Laura also observes that although she has never felt unsafe in the suburb this may actually be due to the fact that she doesn't catch public transport. There are, she says, 'always a lot of PSO's' at the train station'.

The presence of PSO's aligns with the Place Profiles report, which states that Lalor residents are more likely to perceive their community as unsafe at night compared with residents from all other neighborhoods in the City of Whittlesea. While they perceive public areas to be safe during the day, this safety rating is still the lowest area rating in the City of Whittlesea.

Seventeen (17) per cent of Lalor's residents are over 65 years of age. According to the Place Profiles report, Lalor contained a relatively high median age (38 years) compared to that of Greater Melbourne (36 years) and of the City of Whittlesea (34 years) in 2011 (City of Whittlesea, 2014a). Crucially, according to the report, residents aged 85 and over are expected to increase by 41 per cent between 2014 and 2036.

### **Strengths and opportunities**

The City of Whittlesea is responsive to cultural diversity in the LGA evidenced by the City of Whittlesea Multicultural Action Plan (2014-2018), which follows on from similar plans that have been in place over the past several years (City of Whittlesea, 2014b). The LGA is a Refugee Welcome Zone and the Council has developed a Welcome Program in collaboration with local service providers to support culturally and linguistically diverse communities to access local services (Refugee Council of Australia 2013, p. 47).

The Library, which is promoted as a community hub for the suburb, has eight different language collections, employs multilingual staff and hosts a Language Cafe for those who speak English as a second language. In addition to a range of reading programs aimed at children and young people, there are also library services specific to seniors including afternoon teas held once a month with guest speakers. The Library also organises a 'Community Connection Day' every March in celebration of cultural diversity.

The Lalor Living and Learning Centre, a not-for-profit organisation focused on adult education also offers classes specifically for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In 2013 in response to the safety concerns of residents, The City of Whittlesea installed lighting, paving, seating, and pergolas along Peter Lalor Walk – one of the suburb's central streets.



## Laverton

### Key Policy Issues

- Over one third of all residents are from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Proportionally high percentage of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander residents
- High proportion of low income households
- 17 per cent of young people are unemployed
- High percentage of households in rental stress
- High incidence of domestic violence
- Identified need for parenting support groups

### Strengths

- An eight per cent increase in the numbers of residents with post-secondary qualifications between 2006 and 2011
- Hobson's Bay Council has an Aboriginal Services Plan, which is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander residents
- Council has developed The Laverton Community Action Plan, aimed at community strengthening in consultation with residents

### Jack's story

At the time of writing, Jack attended the Braybrook Academy classroom, part of Melbourne City Mission's education pathways program.

"I've just turned 16 and I've lived in Laverton my entire life. There are pros and cons growing up in Laverton, like everywhere I guess. I feel safe in Laverton. Sometimes I feel unsafe at the train station though. I feel like I belong in Laverton and there are people looking out for me.

"People say Laverton is scummy, but it's not. It's really cool. People don't really know the area because they don't live here, so they can't really know what it's like. I play local Footy. I really like it. I train twice a week and play on the weekend. I get along with the guys I play with. It's cool".

When asked about what he thinks could be better about Laverton, Jack says "The roads are really bad here. They need to resurface it. The Community Scout Hall was set on fire a while back. It was pretty scary. People were a bit on edge after that. I was scared to walk home. People were scared to walk home. You weren't sure whether these people were going to do something else".

Jack would ideally like to be a plumber or an electrician, but feels he will be held back. "I feel like I can't get a job because there are not enough jobs and there are so many of us who want work. I feel like cheap labour is affecting people getting jobs".

In terms of his future in Lalor, Jack would like to move out of the area. He states that he can't see himself living in Laverton forever: "I want to move to the bush".

For a small suburb, Laverton, which ranks 24th on the SEIFA index is very culturally diverse. In 2011, 39 per cent of Laverton's 4,454 residents were from non-English-speaking backgrounds. These backgrounds included Indian (13 per cent), Irish (7 per cent) and Burmese (7 per cent), with smaller proportions of Filipino, Chinese, Italian and German residents. British and Australian born residents made up 20 per cent of the population respectively. Consistent with this, 43 per cent of Laverton's residents reported speaking a language other than English at home, a 19 per cent increase since 2006. Laverton also has a higher proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander residents (1 per cent) than the LGA of Hobson's Bay (0.4). The Hobson's Bay Municipal Public Health Plan (2007 – 2011) highlights Aboriginal Communities as regional health priority areas and, in 2009, planned to focus on an Aboriginal Services Plan, children, young people, and families, improving the way they work with the Aboriginal community, improving the health of Elders, and applying a Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (Hobson's Bay Municipal Council, 2009).

Seventeen (17) per cent of Laverton's young people are unemployed (note that 13 per cent of its residents,

overall, are unemployed). Nineteen (19) per cent of Laverton's residents were from low-income households in 2011 and 28 per cent of Laverton's households were experiencing rental stress. In 2011, 42 per cent of Laverton's residents only had below Year 11 schooling and 48 per cent of Laverton's residents did not have post-secondary qualifications. However, this is actually an improvement from 2006 when the proportion of residents without post-secondary qualifications was 56 per cent.

According to the Laverton Community Action Plan for 2006 – 2015, there has been a high incidence of domestic violence in Laverton, and a strongly identified need for domestic violence and parenting support groups, as well as family counselling (Hobson's Bay City Council, 2006). This observation aligns with statistics reported by Victoria Police surrounding the number of family violence incidents in Hobson's Bay. According to these figures, there was an increase in the number of family violence incidents reported between 2005/06 and 2006/07. According to the family incident reports by the Victorian Police, 921 family incidents were reported in Hobson's Bay, 210 of which had children present, and 72 of which had a safety notice issued (Victoria Police).

### **Strengths and opportunities**

The Hobson's Bay Council have developed a Laverton Community Action Plan highlighting several objectives that it aims to meet by 2015 based on seven key issues: economic development and improved education and training opportunities, housing and growth, neighbourhood precincts development, street works, infrastructure and transport, community well-being, community strengthening, governance and communications. The Action Plan identifies specific initiatives, measurable priorities, and also outlines progress to date.

Examples of progress to date include a Community Hub, which offers a wide range of courses as a Registered Training Organisation. The Plan states that there has been an increase in the number of residents in paid employment and/or training programs as well as an increase in the number of students completing Year 12. An Affordable Housing Plan has also been developed, and the plan states that there is now an increased number of housing choices in Laverton. The Council has engaged residents in community planning activities which have helped identify both community issues and possible solutions for community strengthening (Laverton Community Action Plan, 2006 – 2015).

## Sunshine North

### Key policy issues

- Almost a third of all households are low income
- Over half of all residents are from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Over a third of residents experience housing stress
- Over half of all residents don't have post-secondary qualifications
- 27 per cent of all residents under 18
- 16 per cent of residents aged 65 and over
- Tendency for developmentally vulnerable children

### Strengths

- Young people feel sense of neighbourhood connection
- Culturally specific community centres
- Health, education and community support programs offered by nearby West Sunshine Community Centre
- Brimbank City Council responsive to needs of residents from refugee backgrounds

### Hannah and Frankie's story

Siblings Hannah and Frankie have lived in Sunshine their whole lives. At the time of writing, they are students of the Melbourne Academy classroom, part of Melbourne City Mission's education pathways program.

When asked about the comparison between North and Central Sunshine, Hannah and Frankie say, "Basically North Sunshine and the main part of Sunshine feel pretty much the same. No-one goes around calling it North or West Sunshine, it's just Sunshine as a whole. Nothing really happens in Sunshine North though. It's like the neglected step child of Sunshine. There are really only schools and a park".

They explain that the suburb is a "very multicultural place to live" and that despite seeing "a lot of people around Sunshine using drugs", they feel safe in Sunshine due to how many people they know. "It feels like there are people looking out for us. It's a community".

"We went to the Sunshine North high school. It was a nice area, it was quiet. You've got to know your way around Sunshine. As long as you know how to look after yourself, it's okay". They talk about the central hub of Sunshine as being Sunshine Plaza, "Everything happens in the plaza. Nothing really seems to happen at the outskirts".

In terms of community programs and activities, "The Visy Hub is good and there is a library. The Visy Hub is really good, there are lots of services there". Public transport is sometimes an issue, "they've changed all the bus routes, so now it's hard to know how to get to places. The train station is close to home so that's a good thing".

There also seems to be a lack of recreational activities for young people, "There's nothing for young people to do in Sunshine North – except for the football field, cricket and tennis courts. But if you're not into that – there's nothing to do".

When asked about what they believed other's perception of their suburb was, Hannah and Frankie noted that "people who don't live here have heard things about Sunshine, they think the place is scummy and that we have a bad reputation. But people who live here, they just say you have to know how to handle it. I think that for the people who call the place 'Scumshine', something bad must have happened to them here and now they don't like coming here".

The siblings don't believe that their suburb is holding them back in their lives, "Sunshine is not getting in the way of us doing what we want to do in life. It's more a personal motivation thing. What this place does do is motivate you not to become like some of the people that live around here. Sunshine is great. We really do like it because we live here. It's an interesting place to live. We would want to live in Sunshine forever. Even if we could move, we would stay here".

Sunshine North is ranked 19th on the SEIFA index of disadvantage. Over half (52 per cent) of all 10, 547 residents are from non-English speaking backgrounds, with 68 per cent reporting that they speak another language at home and almost a quarter of the community reporting that they were not fluent in English. Twenty-eight (28) per cent speak Vietnamese, while a smaller proportion speaks Chinese (11 per cent) and Maltese (8 per cent) respectively.

In 2011 almost a third of all households were low income, bringing in \$600 per week in total, which is less than half of the median household income for Greater Melbourne. Just over half of all individual residents earned \$400 or less per-week.

Given this data, it is unsurprising that 36 per cent of the population were experiencing housing stress. Factors that are likely to contribute to this level of financial hardship are the composition of households and age of residents. It is therefore significant that 16 per cent of the community in 2011 were one-parent families, while the same proportion were aged 65 years or over. Of all the residents in the 65 to 69 age group, 16 per cent required assistance due to a disability. For residents aged 80 years and older, this increased to 70 per cent.

The Australian Early Development Census data (2012) identified that school age children living in Sunshine North consistently rated below the average levels for children across Brimbank LGA, Victoria and Australia, across the five developmental domains of physical (15 per cent), social (4 per cent), emotional (5 per cent), language (3 per cent) and communication (18 per cent) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014). These findings suggest that children in Sunshine North are 'developmentally vulnerable' across three of the five domains.

Twenty-seven (27) per cent of residents were under 18 years of age in 2011, and both youth and adult unemployment was at 15 per cent. The highest level of schooling completed for 45 per cent of students was Year 11 while 59 per cent of residents didn't have a secondary qualification.

### **Strengths and opportunities**

There are a number of culturally specific community centres in Sunshine North that provide ethno-specific services and programs to residents, including Vietnamese, Turkish and Maltese.

Residents of Sunshine North are able to access services and programs at the West Sunshine Community Centre, including computer and English classes, playgroups and maternal child health services (Brimbank City Council).

The Brimbank City Council is a Refugee Welcome Zone. This is 'a Local Government Area, which has made a commitment to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding their human rights, demonstrating compassion and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community' (Refugee Council of Australia, 2013, p. 3). In 2011 the Council established a Settlement Action Plan, which aims to identify strategic opportunities to work with in partnership with State and Federal Government agencies, develop strategies to respond to the identified needs of new and emerging communities settling in Brimbank and support the work of Brimbank's settlement agencies (Refugee Council of Australia, 2013, p. 16).

The Council has implemented an Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan (2013 – 2017), which details commitments to build relationships with key Indigenous networks, for example the Maribyrnong Indigenous Network and the Western Regional Gathering Place.

## Melton

### Key policy issues

- 70 per cent of the LGA population is under 45 years old and 31 per cent between 0 and 19
- Located in the second fastest growing LGA in Australia
- Lack of infrastructure such as schools, transport and hospital
- 18 per cent of households are single parent families
- Entrenched disadvantage
- Almost one third of residents experiencing rental stress
- Low numbers of parents engaging with health services

### Strengths

- Council has collaborated with other Interface Councils to make Government aware of community issues and give residents a voice
- Abundant parks and green spaces and outdoor recreation opportunities
- Council and residents articulate about community needs
- Schools and community services responsive to needs of young people and families

### Hayden's story

Hayden has lived in Melton for the past 13 years. At the time of writing, he attended Braybrook Academy classroom, part of Melbourne City Mission's education pathways program.

Hayden expresses how different Melton is to his hometown, Gippsland, "The environment is completely different". He speaks about how it's not the postcode that makes a town get a bad reputation, but the unhealthy behaviours of people that add to the overall culture. "It's not the town that makes it bad – it's the people in it. It's a good environment, but something about it just doesn't feel right. There are racial wars and racial tension in Melton, sometimes it makes me feel unsafe. Melton was alright until I got older and started running around the street doing stuff that wasn't so good. As I said, it's not so much the place but the people you associate with. I don't feel like I belong here".

"Where you live and how that feels depends on who you live with and the groups of people you hang out with. I hang out with two groups, one good and one not so good. I get to see two different views. I don't like hanging out with the bad crew as much as I used to because the other crew make me feel more calm and relaxed".

When asked what makes Melton home for Hayden, he responds that "general things make Melton home for me. Football makes me feel comfortable and like I belong. Footy brings us together. We come together to play footy and then you get to know people and become mates. I want to be a football player or a carpenter in the future. Melton is love/hate for me. I wouldn't want to live here forever and raise a family here. I want to be around good people. I want to start fresh and not know some of the people I know now. Sometimes I find it isolating and I just want to get out of here. I do travel around a lot though and public transport is fine for me".

"My habits get in the way of me achieving my dreams and the people I associate with. But it's my choice. They influence me but it's my choice to hang out with them.

I went down that road and it's no-one else's fault. I know the council and there could be some support there for me. There is support there if I want it".

'Melton' is commonly used to refer to an urban area 35 km west of central Melbourne, which is the administrative centre for the Shire of Melton LGA. In 2011, this urban area, with the suburb of Melton at its heart, had a population of 45,624 and was ranked 35th in terms of disadvantage. Unless otherwise stated, we use 'Melton' in this report to refer to the suburb, which had a population of 7,593 in 2011. However it is worth noting that, because 'Melton' actually conveys three different geographical areas, data for the suburb of Melton is not as rich as for some other suburbs. To create a fuller picture, we have included some data

relating to the Shire of Melton and to the suburb of Melton South.

Although a traditionally disadvantaged locality, Melton was ranked 259th in The Age's 2014 Liveability survey. Like Braybrook, this appears to have a lot to do with the relatively low costs of real estate and abundant outdoor recreational opportunities. On the 'homely' website (which provides reviews of suburbs) a satisfied resident praises Melton's sporting facilities:

"You will not be found lacking Parks, Gyms, and recreational activities. Melton has multiple tennis clubs, a great golf course, so many gyms it isn't funny, a fantastic all year round swimming pool, bowls, squash, horse riding schools, three football clubs, two indoor recreation centres and multiple soccer pitches. Hannah Watts Park is lovely and green all year round and there are many green spaces between streets, which is great for young families."

However, many Melton residents are still vulnerable to social exclusion, or are likely to become so given the fast growing population, young age of a large proportion of residents and lack of appropriate infrastructure. During 2010/2011 the City of Melton was the second fastest growing LGA in Australia. Over 70 per cent of the population of 118,000 in this LGA is under 45 years of age, with 31 per cent of the residents aged between 0 and 19 years, significantly higher than the Victorian state average of 25 per cent. The community is growing by about 52 new households each week. Similarly, one of the striking characteristics of Melton is how young the population is. In 2011 children aged 0 to 14 years old made up 18 per cent of residents. Given the growth of young families in the area, the population of children and young people is likely to become an even larger proportion of the overall population in the next decade. The municipality is expected to become a city in excess of 250,000 people by 2031 (Melton City Council 2012, p. 12).

This data points to the need for services catering to children and young people and young families, and a need for affordable rental accommodation. In 2011, 26 per cent of Melton's total households were classed as low income compared to 17 per cent in Greater Melbourne. In 2011 the median weekly personal income for people aged 15 years and over in Melton was \$447 and 18 per cent of Melton's residents were one-parent families with children. Unsurprisingly, given this data, household rental stress in Melton in 2011 was a high 30 per cent. High housing costs can severely deplete the residual income that people have available to spend on other essential items such as food, transport and health-care.

A connection can be made between economically disadvantaged families and the potential vulnerability of young children in Melton. A scoping study for the Royal Children's Hospital on the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Melton South, (Payton, Lane and Bielecki, 2013, p. 12) states that intergenerational poverty was a consistent theme in the interviews they conducted, with respondents commonly expressing the feeling of being unable to 'break the cycle'.

Data from Child Health Services in Victoria also suggests a gap in the engagement of parents with health services. Health assessments are routinely undertaken by the Maternal and Child Health Service to monitor child health and development. Ten visits are anticipated according to key ages and stages until a child reaches 3.5 years of age. While no data is available for the suburb of Melton, the rate of participation for children eligible for an assessment at 3.5 years was 55 per cent in the City of Melton in the 2011 – 12 Office for Children, compared to 59 per cent in the Northern and Western Metro Region and the Victorian State average of 64 per cent.

Payton, Lane and Bielecki (2013, p. 13) state that there is a prevalence of grandparents having guardianship in Melton South 'because parents are not in a position to care for and provide for their children'. Additionally, community agency and school personnel whom they interviewed often mentioned family violence as a concern in Melton South. According to MacKillop Family Services, referrals to Child FIRST at their Melton office for the six months from November 2012 to April 2013 included 83 referrals indicating family violence (Payton, Lane & Bielecki, 2013, p. 13).

Because of the limitations of both education and appropriate services in Melton it is necessary for some young people/families to travel long distances. However, there are also limited transport options in Melton: while commuters can catch the morning and evening V/Line trains there is little in between. This can also present issues for young people in terms of choices around education, employment and recreation. As 17 year old Hayden, who attends the Braybrook Academy classroom observes:

Sometimes I find it (Melton) isolating and I just want to get out of here.

Hayden's views are supported by Payton, Lane and Bielecki's (2013) research. A number of organisations consistently brought up transport as an issue for young people in Melton. The lack of public transport means



that for many families a car is fairly essential, which can be a drain on resources.

Limited public transport is only part of the picture. Surprisingly, given the size of the population, Melton doesn't have a hospital. Residents have commented that, "in an emergency it takes too long, and waiting time is too long as well, when we are directed to Sunshine and Footscray hospitals" (Interface Councils, 2014, p. 19). The demand for particular services also means that some residents miss out. An elderly community member has commented, "I have been on the waiting list to join the Senior Citizens Club, Melton. There are too many of us and the club cannot accommodate us all, so what do I do in the meantime? Isolation leads to mental health issues for some of us" (Interface Councils, 2014, p. 20).

With a superficial glance at the data, Melton does not seem particularly culturally and linguistically diverse. In 2011 73 per cent of Melton residents were born in Australia. The most common countries of birth were England (4 per cent), New Zealand (2 per cent), Malta (1 per cent), Scotland (1 per cent) and Germany (1 per cent). However, Melton has a comparatively high proportion of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander residents: two per cent of the population compared to 0.5 per cent in Greater Melbourne.

The population is also changing. Payton, Lane and Bielecki's research (2013) indicates that there has been a recent shift in the cultural diversity of Melton South, since the 2011 census. There appear to be more African and Pacific Island families moving into the area, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of children from these backgrounds enrolled at the local schools. A pertinent question is whether there are culturally sensitive services catering to these growing communities. In 2011 there was a great deal of racial violence reported in Melton – particularly towards Sudanese-Australian residents. As a result of threats, racial abuse and violent incidents, ten Sudanese-Australian families left Melton (Kaila, 2011). According to a report commissioned by MP for Melton, Don Nardella, one family was forced from their new rental property by neighbours determined to stop their entry into the neighbourhood (Kaila, 2011).

### **Strengths and opportunities**

The Melton Shire Council has collaborated with other Interface Councils to make Government aware of community issues. Both council and the community are very clear about the need for infrastructure and amenities in the LGA.

The Interface Council's Fairer Funding Report (2014) has identified a list of community priorities for each Interface Council with a clear budget stating the cost of each and requested amount of funding from the State Government. Melton's Shire Council's list (Interface Councils, 2014, pp. 50-53) includes:

- Significant work to major roads including construction, widening, signalling intersections, duplication, and bringing particular sections of the highway up to freeway standard
- Melton rail line duplication and provision of more bus services
- Acquisition of school sites in three areas, expansion and upgrade of Melton Specialist School and development of policy to support specialist school provision in growth areas
- Provision of more community and health programs including parenting and children's programs, a gender equity and respect project, a youth personal development and counselling program and accessible community transport for the elderly.

The Children's Mental Health Service (CMHS) at the Royal Children's Hospital has developed a Festival of Healthy Living (FHL), a state-wide program, which is in its 17th year. The festival works through schools as core social centres and using art, performance and health promoting participatory activities aims to 'equip young people to manage themselves and their relations with others, understand the world and act effectively in that world'. Planning for a FHL in Melton began in 2011, with the 'Melton Festival for Healthy Living – Scoping Study Report' released in 2013.

Planning included a scoping study with schools and services in and around Melton South. While the scoping study made it clear that children in the locality faced family problems including a lack of parental care and family violence (Payton, Lane & Bielecki, 2013), it was also evident that there was a great deal of positive initiatives taking place in the schools and wider community and that there were strong connections between community/health organisations and schools (Payton, Lane & Bielecki, 2013, p. 16).

## Prahran

### Key policy issues

- Currently no state school
- Planned state school will only have around 500 places
- 28 per cent of residents have no post-secondary qualification
- Federal government cuts mean reduced service to vulnerable families and young people
- 18 per cent of households in rental stress
- 20 per cent increase in homelessness between 2006 and 2011
- Entrenched disadvantage in housing estates

### Strengths

- Young people and children on the housing estates are re-engaged in education through community programs
- A long term renewal and redevelopment plan for the estates has commenced
- Council responsive to community issues and focused on breaking cycle of social disadvantage
- Council has a Reconciliation Plan 2012 – 2016 aimed at forging links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

### Students from St Kilda Youth Service (SKYS)

Two students who, at the time of writing, attend the SKYS (St Kilda Youth Service) alternative education classroom were interviewed about their experiences in Prahran. The first young lady was 20 years old and has lived in Prahran for one year.

“I love living here, the energy, the vibe and the convenience of everything is so great. It’s easy to get home safely, eat out, go out, drink and shop. I love eating breakfast and dinner out at all the cute cafes and restaurants. I love to shop, hang out with friends and learn. I love to help others and I hope to be working in a bar or as a chef on Chapel Street.”

In terms of how she felt others saw her suburb, she stated, “I think Prahran is looked at as quite a posh suburb. It can be seen as snobby and expensive but there’s a whole other side to it”. She also feels her postcode doesn’t attribute to her overall motivation, “I don’t think there is anything getting in the way of me achieving my goals. I just need to keep motivating myself, even to just get out of bed. Prahran doesn’t have anything to do with me not getting to where I want to go”.

The second young lady was also 20 years old and grew up in Prahran when she was younger. After moving to Noble Park for a few years, she came back to Prahran and has been living there the past three years.

“Growing up in Prahran was great, there are heaps of parks and lakes around and everything is close by. I view my suburb as a lively, social place. I enjoy working in Prahran, but I think the gyms are too expensive. I would like to finish school and get a full-time job in the social work sector. I feel that my depression gets in the way of me achieving what I want to achieve, but I am working on that. Living in Prahran is great. It’s not a barrier to me doing what I want to do in life”.

The City of Stonnington scores 1,084 on the SEIFA index of disadvantage making it the fourth least disadvantaged LGA in Victoria. Despite being one of the more advantaged suburbs included in this report (Prahran has a SEIFA index of disadvantage of 1340), many of Prahran’s residents are still vulnerable to social exclusion. The Horace Petty and Bang Street Housing Estates are located in Prahran – a pocket of serious disadvantage surrounded by obvious trappings of wealth and privilege – houses that sell for over a million dollars and the designer boutiques and expensive cafes that Chapel Street is renowned for. Member of Parliament for Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown (2013) has said of the Horace Petty estate, ‘I do not think anyone would say the estate is a pleasant environment for the residents. It is very isolated from the rest of the community, despite being right in the heart of a dense inner city area, and the dwellings themselves are certainly not up to modern standards’.

The extent of disadvantage experienced by housing estate residents is indicated by the fact that the Horace Petty, Bang Street and two other estates in the LGA, Essex and King Street score 535, 595, 659 and 832 on the

SEIFA index, situating them in lowest 0.3 per cent to 4.5 per cent of all Victorian SAIs. An SA1 is the smallest spatial unit for which census data are reported (Public Place, 2014, p. 18).

In 2011, 15 per cent of households in Prahran were low income and 18 per cent were in rental stress. These are far lower figures than those for suburbs such as Braybrook and Frankston North, but still fairly high for a suburb renowned for its affluence. Additionally, there were 550 people experiencing homelessness on Census night, a huge increase of 20 per cent from 2006 (CHP, 2014). Although it is impossible to attribute this increase to any single cause, it is indicative of significant levels of disadvantage in the area. In 2011 a worrying total of 45 per cent of households on the four housing estates had an income of less than \$400 per week (Public Place, 2014, p. 18).

Based on the 2011 Census, Public Place (2014, p. 18) has noted that the age profile of the housing estates is notably different to Prahran and Greater Melbourne. Specifically, there are fewer adults aged 20 to 44 compared with Prahran and more children, young people and older persons. There are a greater proportion of families with children and lone persons than Prahran as a whole and 62 per cent of the residents of the Essex/King Street estates are aged greater than 65 years old.

In comparison to suburbs such as Dandenong and Braybrook, Prahran is not particularly culturally diverse. In 2011, 19 per cent of Prahran's residents were from a non-English speaking background. However, cultural diversity is increasing. The number of residents born overseas rose by 12 per cent between 2006 and 2011. Prahran also has a slightly higher concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents (0.3 per cent) relative to the LGA.

Educational attainment in Prahran is fairly low. In 2011 almost a third of residents (28 per cent) did not have a post-secondary qualification and 18 per cent had only completed below Year 11 schooling. Young people and children in Prahran are experiencing disadvantage through limited educational opportunities (at secondary level) and diminishing recreational opportunities for younger children. The lack of a state school in the electorate of Prahran (other than Melbourne High, which is select-entry) creates an immediate and significant barrier for young people who do not come from economically or socially privileged backgrounds. Some students are forced to spend over an hour on public transport to get to Hawthorn, Glen Eira, and other areas to attend a state school (Preiss, 2012).

This is also an added cost for parents already struggling to afford basics such as food. Other families may choose to send their children to local private schools, which can create financial pressure. While the Victorian government announced that it would invest \$20 million in building a new school, it is unclear how long potential students will have to wait until this school opens. Additionally, the school will only accommodate 500-600 enrolments.

The Prahran Community Learning Centre runs the Youth Education for Life and Learning Access (YELLA) program at public housing estates in Prahran and South Yarra for young people who have dropped out of mainstream high-school education. The program works with children as young as 11 who have spent little more than a week of their lives in school and with teenagers who have not been to school for up to two years (Preiss, 2012). A young resident who volunteered with YELLA on the estate, as part of her studies, said that she left school in Year 9 herself and almost gave up on education, "I didn't know anything about these programs, which is such a shame because they're really good. I wish I knew about them sooner" (quoted in Preiss, 2012).

Children in Prahran were disadvantaged by the Federal Government's \$125,000 cut in funding to the Prahran Adventure Playground earlier in 2014. Stonnington Council has made it clear that the cut will reduce council's ability to deliver vital support services to some of Victoria's most vulnerable young people who reside at the Horace Petty and Bang Street housing estates (Villarosa, 2014). The Adventure Playground has been hosting daily programs and services to families and young people for the past 30 years. Around 40 to 60 people access services at the Adventure Playground every day (Villarosa, 2014). Mayor Adrian Stubbs has said that the support provided by the programs at the Adventure Playground is essential in breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, "We have seen young people grow up at these housing estates, participate in our programs and services and go on to pursue successful careers" (quoted in Villarosa, 2014).

At the time of writing, Stonnington Council have said they will be re-tendering for funding for the Prahran Adventure Playground in 2016 in order to secure much needed funds for the ongoing support of the program.

### **Strengths and opportunities**

The YELLA program visits the Horace Petty twice a week and runs classes in nearby Grattan Gardens every day. The students learn English, math, art, and job skills. They can also complete their Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (Preiss, 2012). YELLA has had many successes since it started in 2003. Students have returned to schools or continued study at TAFE and others are working full-time (Preiss, 2012).

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is currently developing a masterplan (also called the Prahran Renewal Plan) outlining a long-term vision to guide the redevelopment of the Horace Petty housing estate, Bangs, Essex and King Street estates.

The redevelopment, which has been planned in consultation with the community, will involve turning the estates into a mix of social and private housing, retail and commercial spaces and community facilities. There will be no loss of public housing to the estates (Public Place, 2014, p. 1). According to the DHS, 'the goal for the masterplan is to create a liveable, sustainable and well-integrated neighborhood that people enjoy living in, can contribute to and in which they can thrive' (DHS, 2011/2014).

In 2011, the Prahran Renewal Team was introduced at the Horace Petty Estate. The Prahran Renewal Team state that their approach to social renewal is 'long-term and includes efforts to improve community input in decisions affecting the estate, the amenity and liveability of the site, safety and security, health and wellbeing, social integration with the wider community, employment and training'.

At the time of writing, the third phase of community consultations took place in 2015, with community feedback currently being compiled by independent community engagement specialists. An Independent report will be submitted to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning alongside the masterplan (DHS, 2015).

The City of Stonnington has developed a Reconciliation Action Plan for 2012 – 2016, which advocates for the forging and maintenance of connections with the Aboriginal community in the City so that cultural awareness is raised, contributions are honoured, and history is respected. Actions outlined in the Plan include identifying key Aboriginal Community members who can advise the Council in its implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan and strategic initiatives, as well as delivering the Stonnington Indigenous Education Resource Program in primary schools.

## Findings and Recommendations



## 1. An integrated approach to social exclusion

As both international research and this report demonstrates, social exclusion is multidimensional; created by a range of intersecting factors that limit people's full participation in society, and which can therefore be viewed as a denial of both their human rights and their potential as human beings. For example, the most affordable rental properties in Melbourne are located in the areas of highest economic disadvantage where employment and education opportunities are limited. This means that those who are already facing exclusion through poverty are at risk of facing deeper exclusion due to their location.

This report recommends a genuinely integrated, cross sectoral approach to social exclusion, where government and services work in partnership with residents to positively impact on each of the intersecting factors contributing to social exclusion.

## 2. Enabling individuals and families to thrive

A consistent theme across the suburbs profiled in this report is youth disengagement and vulnerability in young children. As such this report recommends long-term investment in strength-based early intervention programs for families and young people, which enable people to improve their relationships and develop meaningful pathways to participation.

Best-practice examples include Melbourne City Mission's Cradle to Kinder program, which is a longer-term intervention that offers tailored support to young women and their families from pregnancy until the child commences pre-school. The service design shifts the focus from crisis responses to capacity building and prevention – support is able to commence during the ante-natal period and child/family focused wrap-around supports continue, as needed, for the first four years of the child's life, in collaboration with early childhood services. This kind of dynamic, longer-term intervention represents a real investment in vulnerable families and sets the scene for sustainable, long-term outcomes.

Another example of an early intervention service offering an empowerment model is Melbourne City Mission's Detour Program. Detour works with vulnerable young people aged 12–24 to divert them away from homelessness through ensuring they have access to the resources they need to strengthen their family and social networks and enhance life opportunities. The case studies in this report clearly demonstrate what can be achieved through working closely alongside young people to resource and empower them.

## 3. De-politicising improvements to infrastructure

An intersection of factors such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, limited employment and a lack of infrastructure, such as transport and schools, create environments that make it very difficult for individuals and families to thrive in.

The Interface Council's Fairer Funding report demonstrates the lack of essential infrastructure in Interface suburbs, which makes it much harder for residents to have a good standard of living and fully participate in society. Stories of the Suburbs profiles how this disadvantage is experienced in Melton and Lalor. However, essential infrastructure such as good transport and schools are also a pressing concern for other suburbs in this report, such as Heidelberg West, Frankston North and Braybrook.

This report recommends long term place-based, de-politicised investment in infrastructure in genuine partnership with local residents. On a practical level this means investing in local government and community organisations working in close partnership with residents to plan and develop appropriate infrastructure that meets the needs of diverse and growing communities.



#### **4. Provision of education and employment opportunities**

Residents in Braybrook and Heidelberg West have benefitted from eight year Neighbourhood Renewal Projects through participation in community building and advocacy projects and now have skills to be vocal and articulate about both the assets of their communities, and community needs. However, levels of unemployment in these suburbs are no less than those of other suburbs profiled in this report. Similarly, a large percentage of residents still do not have post-secondary school qualifications. This demonstrates that while eight years of Neighbourhood Renewal has provided important groundwork in terms of empowering residents, more targeted, place-based community strengthening is required.

This report recommends long term investment in mentoring young people and adults to pursue educational and training pathways, with the aim of improved employment opportunities. Mentoring programs need to be genuine partnerships with residents, government, educational institutions and community agencies. It is not enough to provide individuals with employability skills, a targeted approach is also required to link people with actual jobs. Mentoring programs need to be specifically tailored to suit the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, those from refugee and migrant backgrounds and residents living with a disability. In line with this recommendation, education must be made affordable for everyone, not just the small minority who are able to pay for it.

#### **5. Increased participation for people living with a disability**

As demonstrated in this report, people living with a disability are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. Particular suburbs also have higher numbers of residents living with a disability. For example, according to children's services in Frankston North, the suburb has high numbers of children with special needs. It is essential that suburbs have the services and infrastructure to ensure that people living with a disability are able to genuinely participate in society. As this report demonstrates, although Melton has a specialist school, there are limited options for young people with disabilities and a lack of transport is an added challenge. Via the Fairer Funding Report the Melton Shire Council has stated that there needs to be an expansion and upgrade of Melton Specialist School and development of policy to support specialist school provision in growth areas. This report seconds this recommendation. This report also recommends an audit and upgrade of facilities and services available to people who are living with disabilities in the ten suburbs profiled in this report.

#### **6. Affordable rental properties**

A consistent theme throughout this report is high proportions of residents experiencing rental stress. The Maribyrnong Council (2013) states that the majority of people living in Braybrook in 2011 were ineligible for social housing, but are also unlikely to afford a property to rent or buy. It is reasonable to extrapolate something similar for the other suburbs featured in this report. Anglicare's 2014 research indicates that the private rental market is not affordable for individuals who largely depend on government allowances. Single parents and young people exiting the residential care system are particularly vulnerable. This report recommends that more housing is specifically put aside for community members and vulnerable young people who are living on low incomes. This must include both existing housing stock and new housing.

## Appendix 1: Suburb Data

### Indicators across the suburbs

Suburb	Not fluent in English (%)	Low income households (%)	No post-secondary qualifications (%)	Below Year 11 schooling (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Youth unemployment (%)	Disengaged youth (%)	Households in rental stress (%)
Braybrook	19.4	29.3	53.7	38.1	14.6	29.8	11.1	29.4
Dandenong	-	34.8	-	37.1	11.2	-	-	22.5
Frankston North	1.7	31.9	57.5	62.6	15.9	26.3	27	28.6
Heidelberg West (Bellfield)	7.2	30.5	48.5	42	11	14.9	14.8	25.6
Lalor	15.4	25.4	61.4	51.4	9	17.1	14.5	35.2
Laverton	9.2	19.2	47.8	42.1	13.3	16.6	13	27.8
Meadow Heights	17.7	24.5	65.1	51.1	15.2	28.5	17	42.6
Melton	3.5	13.7	48.3	44.6	6.1	13.7	11.5	29.5
Sunshine North	20.7	26.8	59.3	45.5	13.3	15	9.7	35.7

### Incidence across suburbs of groups typically experiencing social exclusion

Suburb	65+ years (%)	Non-English speaking background (%)	One parent families, with children under 15 (%)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (%)	Rent social housing (%)	People who are experiencing homelessness (%)	People needing assistance due to disability (%)
Braybrook	9.8	48.6	6.2	0.6	19.3	139	5.2
Dandenong	13	62.3	-	0.4	6.8	629	7.8
Frankston North	17.3	11	9.6	2	10.9	150	9.3
Heidelberg West (Bellfield)	12.9	29.1	6.1	1.8	30.5	188	7.7
Lalor	17.4	45.4	4.5	0.8	1.6	101	7.7
Laverton	8.8	39.1	5.6	1.1	2.9	3	4.8
Meadow Heights	6.2	42.6	6.6	0.7	9	165	7.3
Melton	13.9	12.9	7.5	1.6	4.5	70	7.7
Sunshine North	15.5	51.9	5.2	0.3	1.5	99	7.1

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