



CITY OF BALLARAT

Social Policy Position Statement



Mental Health and Wellbeing

Context

The World Health Organization defines mental health as ‘a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises [their] own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to [their] community.’¹

Mental wellbeing contributes to healthier lifestyles, better physical health, improved quality of life, greater social connection, and productivity. We also know that the environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with others are powerful influences on our mental wellbeing and the likelihood of people being free from mental illness.²

The *Victorian Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to provide the best outcomes for the community, while having regard to the long-term cumulative effects of decisions. Councils are also required to seek to protect, improve and promote health and wellbeing under the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and to apply the ‘precautionary principle’ to preventing and controlling public health risk.


There are several plans and policy documents within the City of Ballarat which contribute specifically to improving the mental health and wellbeing of the community, including the *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031*, *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan*, *Positive Ageing Framework*, *Municipal Early Years Plan* and Sport and Active Living strategies. In addition, many other policies contribute indirectly to creating supportive environments for positive mental health across the municipality.

A current priority identified within the City of Ballarat *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2031* is ‘Improving Mental Wellbeing’.³ Within the Plan, it has been identified that the City of Ballarat and its local health partners can enhance and support the key protective factors for good mental health, including positive early childhood experiences, healthy families, liveable and safe environments, and accessible health and human services. Strategies planned to achieve this are related to supporting connections and social networking, creating supportive environments, and building capacity and enabling skills.

In keeping with the holistic approaches outlined in the Social Policy Framework, the City of Ballarat acknowledges that local government can positively impact the mental wellbeing of all individuals, families and communities by building community resilience through creating safe, respectful and equitable communities, workplaces and public environments, and by providing opportunities for increasing all residents’ participation and social connection.

The City of Ballarat's current role in mental health and wellbeing

After consideration of accountability, capacity, and relationships, it has been determined that the City of Ballarat has a **shared** role in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

	<p>Shared: The City of Ballarat is one of many responsible stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for some aspects • Some capacity • Moderate City of Ballarat role required to improve community wellbeing outcomes.
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In line with the *City of Ballarat Social Policy Framework 2018*, the principles of Equity, Inclusion, Proactive, Leadership, Collaboration and Compassion are to be considered in all new social policy development. These principles also provide a foundation for action and can be seen in the current City of Ballarat role in relation to mental health and wellbeing, as identified below. Fully integrating these principles into different aspects of social policy work will take time and will require the dedicated efforts of everyone involved.

Planner/Regulator

- Delivers key social infrastructure and urban design projects which support local service provision and/or community groups and increases community amenity.
- Uses Universal Design guidelines in the development of City of Ballarat facilities or upgrades.
- Undertakes citizen centric and participatory planning processes and uses the Historic Urban Landscape approach to ensure that culture, a sense of identity and belonging is valued and incorporated in planning.

Coordinator

- Coordinates action across City of Ballarat departments and health partner organisations in relation to mental health through the Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- Develops a range of initiatives, community programs and events to address priority issues, build resilience and promote physical and emotional wellbeing for all members of our community.

Advocate

- Encourages key settings, including sports clubs and community groups to become more inclusive and welcoming.
- Promotes the City of Ballarat as a Refugee Welcome Zone, and actively supports the work of key organisations in their work with refugees and people seeking asylum in Ballarat.
- In conjunction with health partners, educates and advocates through key settings, on the consequences of discrimination and the benefits of social inclusion.
- Supports campaigns and programs which promote awareness of common mental health risks and protective factors.
- Promotes social connections to decrease social isolation in our vulnerable populations.
- Supports culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse individuals through the prevention of race and faith-based discrimination.

- Participates in the Central Highlands Elder Abuse Prevention Network and partners in activities with older people to raise awareness of elder abuse.

Educator

- Provides library facilities and programs to engage with community on educational, cultural, and sustainable issues, and to promote digital literacy.
- Promotes and supports Parent Place to provide opportunities to connect with new residents and connect community with early years services.
- Supports campaigns that help to reduce the stigma of suicide, that help to change the way this issue is understood in the local community and that provide practical information about support for people at risk of suicide, such as World Suicide Prevention Day, RUOK? Day and World Mental Health Week.
- Promotes and supports Seniors Week to improve awareness of mental health in the older population and reduce ageism.
- Promotes intercultural understanding through the delivery of culturally sensitive programs and services.

Capacity Builder

- Supports community groups and local organisations to develop stronger community connections, increase local capacity and build skills through provision of community grants.
- Supports key settings, including schools and workplaces, to promote mental health, wellbeing, mental health literacy and resilience.
- Works to develop a better understanding of mental health through promotion of common risk and protective factors.
- Works in partnership with local communities to build capacity, deliver improved amenity, and develop community connections through the Engaging Communities program.
- Provides Supported Playgroups focusing on building parenting-capacity.
- Provides partnerships and social networking opportunities that enhance connectedness of all persons to their community and improve their mental health.

Service Delivery

- Works with agencies and schools to promote positive youth mental health through innovative programs and engagement opportunities.
- Provides and promotes access to facilities where local community members can meet to socialise and participate in community activities (i.e community halls, parks and gardens, sports facilities).
- Provides and promotes a range of intercultural sporting programs, events, activities and festivals which are accessible and inclusive for all community members
- Supports and encourages social connection opportunities for older residents and volunteers, including planned activity groups, gardening programs and outings, and community meals
- Facilitates the delivery of leadership and volunteering programs that foster learning and development to the local youth community, such as the Western Bulldogs Leadership Program, T.E.A.M. and FReeZA programs.
- Facilitates the delivery of the City of Ballarat Intercultural Ambassador Program.

- Supports and promotes volunteering opportunities with the City of Ballarat and other local organisations.
- Works collaboratively with the Western Victoria PHN on place-based initiatives for the prevention of suicide.
- Provides training to improve the skills and confidence of key City of Ballarat staff to recognise and respond to people at risk of suicide and mental health issues.
- Provides appropriate referrals and has knowledge of appropriate referral pathways through My Aged Care and Aged Persons Mental Health.
- Provides Maternal and Child Health screening and support, drop-in services and new parent groups to support in early parenting period.

Related City of Ballarat policy documents:

- Council Plan 2021-2025
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/202109/Council%20Plan%202021%E2%80%932025.pdf
- Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2031
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/202110/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%202021-2031_LR.pdf
- Ageing Well Strategy 2022 (in planning)
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2022 (in planning)
mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au/municipal-early-years-plan
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 (in planning)
- Sport and Active Living strategies
- ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/vision-strategies-and-plans/plans-strategies-and-frameworks
- Social Policy Framework 2018-2022
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/about-us/social-policy
- City of Ballarat Intercultural City Strategic Plan
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Intercultural%20City%20Strategic%20Plan%202018-21.pdf

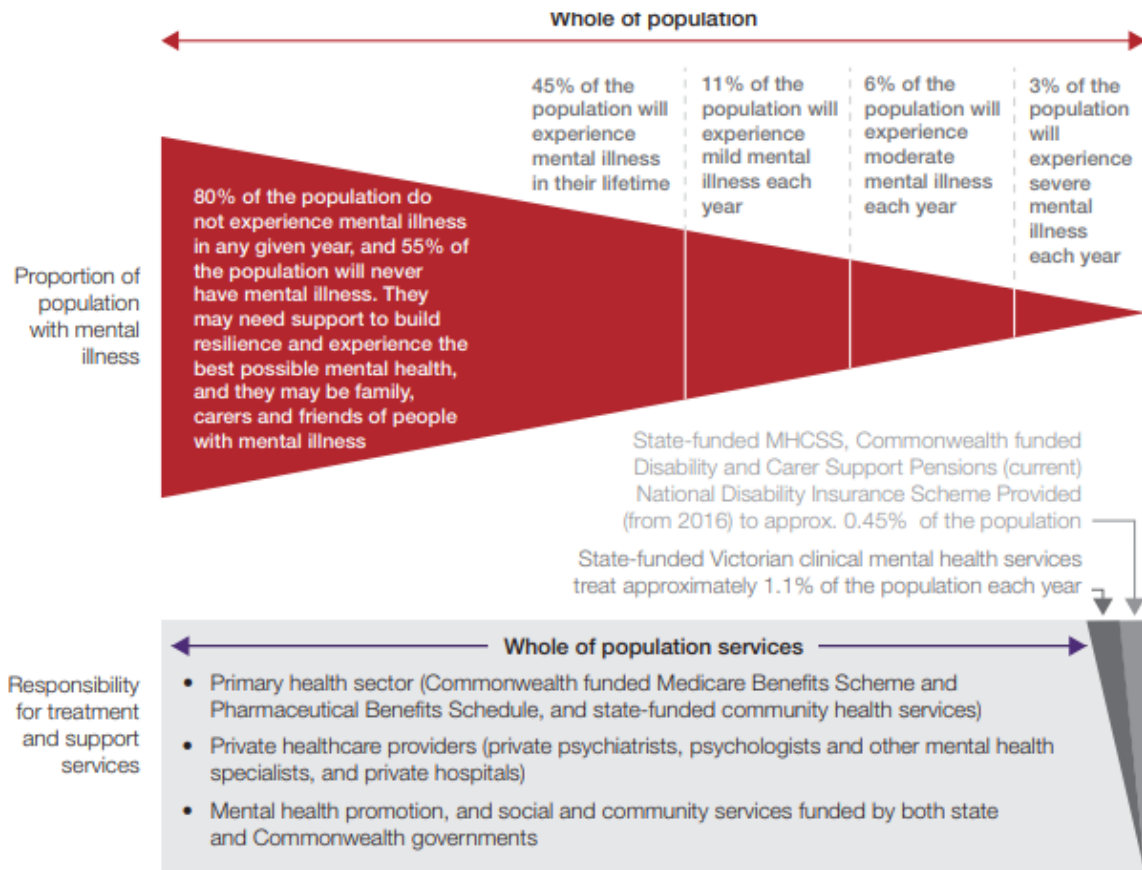
Key messages – Mental health and wellbeing

- Mental wellbeing contributes to healthier lifestyles, better physical health, improved quality of life, greater social connection and productivity.
- Mental health disorders are a significant cause of disability, with certain population groups at higher risk due to discrimination, social isolation, family violence and stress.
- We know that the environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with others are powerful influences on our mental wellbeing, our sense of belonging, and the likelihood of people being free from mental illness.²
- The City of Ballarat and its local health partners can enhance and support the key protective factors for good mental health, including positive early childhood experiences, increased social connection, elder abuse prevention, healthy families, liveable safe and active environments, and accessible health and human services.
- The City of Ballarat acknowledges that local government can positively impact the mental wellbeing of all individuals, families and communities by building community resilience through creating safe, respectful and equitable communities, workplaces and public environments and by providing opportunities for increasing all residents' participation and social connection.

Key data and trends

Each year, one in five people will experience a mental health condition, with 45 per cent of Victorians experiencing mental health conditions over their lifetime. Mental health disorders are a significant cause of disability, with certain population groups at higher risk due to discrimination, social isolation, family violence and stress.⁴

PREVALENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE ADULT POPULATION



Source: Victoria's 10-year mental health plan⁴

In considering the prevalence of mental health conditions in Ballarat, in 2020:

- 36% of the Ballarat population have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression, compared to 27% in Victoria.⁵
- Women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with anxiety or depression, but men in Ballarat have a higher than state-average likelihood of being diagnosed with anxiety or depression (30.8% of men in Ballarat compared to 21% of men state-wide).⁵
- Ballarat had the highest rate of hospital admissions for intentional self-harm injuries in the Central Highlands between 2014-15, notably higher than regional Victoria or Victoria average.⁵
- Compared to the state average of 10.1, Ballarat experienced a much higher rate of 15.2 per 100,000 persons of avoidable deaths from suicide and self-inflicted injuries between 2013 and 2017.⁵

In the VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015, Ballarat residents reported an average resilience score of 6.8 out of 8. This is significantly higher than Victorian residents, who reported an average resilience score of 6.4.⁶ Resilience is an important asset for everyone, and it helps build the capacity of those who are at risk of or currently have mental illness to manage it. Therefore, improvements to individual and community resilience have the potential to achieve multiple positive outcomes.²

A key protective factor for mental health which councils can positively influence is social connection. Just under six out of 10 (58.6 percent) Ballarat residents felt that they live in a close-knit neighbourhood, and a similar proportion of Ballarat residents agreed that people in their neighbourhood can be trusted (68.2 percent), compared to the proportion of Victorians who agreed (71.9 percent).⁶ In addition, the proportion of Ballarat residents who agreed that people in their neighbourhood are willing to help each other out was 72.4 percent, similar to the Victorian estimate (74.1 percent).⁶

Some groups face greater challenges to their mental health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people experiencing family violence, refugees, older and younger Victorians, people living in regional and rural communities and LGBTIQ+ people are all at greater risk of experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing.⁴

People who live with mental illness are at a much greater risk of social and economic disadvantage, deprivation and poorer physical health, and have a lower life expectancy. Those living with mental illness are also more likely to be unemployed, homeless, to have contact with the criminal justice system, and to miss out on treatment for physical health problems.⁴

Further Information

Research, data and publications:

- VicHealth Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023
vichealth.vic.gov.au/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Action-Agenda/Mental-Wellbeing-Strategy2019.pdf?la=en&hash=3BD22466E99199251B0C55B7B91E8B067422D041
- Victoria's 10-year Mental Health Plan
health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/victorias-10-year-mental-health-plan
- Western Victoria PHN Needs Assessment 2019
westvicphn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/WVPHN-Needs-Assessment-2019.pdf
- Central Highlands Primary Care Partnership Community Profile 2020
chpcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CHPCP_Cmnty-Profile_with-Liveability-data_May2021.pdf
- Ballarat and District Suicide Prevention Network
suicidepreventionballarat.com.au

Services and support

Health Direct provides an online list of Mental Health Services available in the Ballarat area. To access the information visit: healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services, and by clicking on the 'Other Services' tab, scroll down and select 'Mental Health Services'. Add your location and click search to find nearby services. You can also call 1800 022 222, 24 hours a day.

Crisis Help

- Lifeline 24/7 Crisis Line – Telephone crisis support, suicide intervention and prevention, mental health support service. Phone: 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline – Free telephone and online counselling service for young people between 5 and 25 years. Phone: 1800 551 800
- SANE – Information and helpline for people with mental health issues. Phone: 1800 187 263
- Beyond Blue – Information on a wide variety of mental health problems for sufferers, carers and professionals. Phone: 1300 224 636
- Black Dog Institute - blackdoginstitute.org.au/getting-help/seeking-help
- Head to Health – free mental health and wellbeing service. Phone 1800 595 212 or visit headtohealthvic.org.au
- Grampians Health Ballarat- mental health services. Visit bhs.org.au/services-and-clinics/mental-health-services/

How community members can get involved

- Support community mental health awareness raising campaigns.
- Be a supportive friend. Sometimes spreading mental health awareness can simply mean supporting and listening to those close to us.
- Volunteer in your community. Donate your time to help others. You'll boost your mental health as you work to help those in need.
 - Ballarat Foundation- ballaratfoundation.org.au/page/91/volunteering-ballarat (Volunteer opportunities from a range of different organisations can be found on this site)
 - Black Dog Institute- blackdoginstitute.org.au/get-involved/volunteer-with-us
 - Beyond Blue - beyondblue.org.au/get-involved
- Encourage healthy eating for mental health. Good nutrition can make a difference in how we feel.

Contact:

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Position Statement review by August 2024

References:

1. World Health Organization – Mental health: strengthening our response. Available: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>. (Accessed: 01/05/22)
2. VicHealth Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019. Available: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/mental-wellbeing-strategy> (Accessed: 17/07/2018).
3. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031. Available: https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%202021-2031_LR.pdf (Accessed: 1/11/21).
4. Victoria's 10 Year Mental Health Plan Available: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/priorities-and-transformation/mental-health-plan> (Accessed: 17/07/2018).
5. Central Highlands Primary Care Partnership Community Profile 2020 http://www.chpcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CHPCP_Cmnty-Profile_with-Liveability-data_May2021.pdf (Accessed 01/11/21).
6. VicHealth Indicators Report 2015. Available: http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/4368201/vichealth_indicator_survey_2015_-_ballarat.pdf (Accessed: 17/07/2018).