



Recreation Strategy for Towong Shire



2022 - 2033

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Acknowledgement of Country

Towong Shire Council proudly acknowledges Towong's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

Executive Summary

Towong Shire is blessed with an abundance of natural landscapes including mountains, hills, bushland, lakes and waterways where both residents and visitors alike take part in a range of outdoor activities such as cycling, bushwalking, horse riding, swimming, fishing and camping. It also features numerous traditional sporting facilities such as ovals for AFL football and cricket, along with netball courts, tennis courts, equine facilities and lawn bowls greens, which are managed and activated by hard-working community volunteers. This Recreation Strategy, along with the master plans produced to accompany the strategy, aims to identify ways to improve sport and active recreation facilities, programs and services and to support sport and recreation clubs and other organisations who deliver physical activity opportunities. The end goal is to maximise people's participation in physical activity so that the Towong community is active, connected and resilient.

This Recreation Strategy provides Towong Shire Council with a chance to refocus its commitment on sport and active recreation and to respond to the trends that are impacting people's participation and their future needs. Council recognises that participation in physical activity helps to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, creates a strong sense of community and belonging and can also be beneficial for communities financially and economically through events and decreased use of fossil fuels.

Locally and globally there have been challenges that have impacted the way in which sport and active recreation has been delivered and the way it is perceived by the community. The impact of the 2019/20 bushfires, coupled with COVID-19 has changed the way that people are participating in sport and active recreation and the way that sport and recreation facilities are perceived as much more than pavilions / change facilities, but also as important community resources during emergencies.

One of the challenges that Towong Shire Council experiences is the dilemma of servicing a small, ageing population base spread across a vast geographic area and ensuring that there are accessible and inclusive sport and active recreation activities as well as fit-for-purpose sport and recreation facilities available nearby. It will not be possible to replicate every type of facility in each town. Rather, it is anticipated that some towns will provide a focus on mountain bike riding, others on trail or equine activities, others on football and netball and others on tennis for example. We plan to build on the existing strengths of towns to highlight and further develop their key sport and active recreation assets.

This strategy acknowledges that event-based recreation can be activated further in the Shire, which would provide a significant economic benefit in supporting local businesses and drawing visitors into the region.

Opportunities are also presented to build upon existing high-profile events, particularly in the equine sector. For example, the region has a growing number of equine clubs, a raft of horse-based events and if developed further, Towong Shire could become renowned for equine recreation activity.

This Recreation Strategy provides a framework to help guide Council to know how to best invest its resources in sport and recreation facilities, programs and services to meet the future needs of the community. Eleven planning principles have been developed to assist in investment decision

making. These planning principles relate closely to Council’s strategic direction identified in the Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan:

- Evidence-based
- Promotes physical activity
- Promotes community connections, liveability and resilience
- Environmental sustainability
- Financial sustainability
- Equity
- Accessible and inclusive
- Multi-purpose design
- Optimises usage of existing assets
- Climate resilient
- Partnerships and collaborations

The Strategy focusses on four key pillars (informed by the planning principles), each with its own objective:

1. People – to encourage and support increased participation in physical activity by the community.
2. Places – to provide a diversity of quality and accessible sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.
3. Partners – to work in partnership with community organisations, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.
4. Processes – to provide a strategic framework to guide Council’s decision making and investment in relation to sport and active recreation.

Each of these pillars contains a series of actions that will help Towong Shire to be active, connected and resilient.

Introduction

Purpose of the plan

The aim of the Recreation Strategy for Towong Shire Council is to develop a strategic framework, informed by a strong evidence base, to guide Council's investment in recreation facilities, programs and services so that more people of all ages, genders, abilities or backgrounds can be more active more often. It is also designed to provide guidance to improve places and spaces where people take part in physical activity. However, it is recognised that Council cannot achieve increased participation and improved facilities on its own. It is reliant on establishing and maintaining effective relationships with a broad array of partners including clubs / organisations, government agencies, the health sector and the private sector, and will require some external resources.

For each of the actions identified in this strategy, Council's role will be clearly identified as either the delivery agent, a partner, or an advocate. The strategy will take into consideration the resources that are available, potential usage levels, the potential social and health benefits that can be achieved and environmental and financial sustainability. It will also be guided by principles such as equity and transparency.

At the same time as this Recreation Strategy was developed, master plans were prepared for recreation reserves throughout the Shire. Each of these master plans contains a set of site-specific recommendations. The recommendations contained within the Recreation Strategy are more general, whereas township recommendations are contained within the master plans.

Towong Shire

Towong Shire is located in far north-east Victoria and covers an area of 6,600 square kilometres. Home to almost 6,000 residents, it attracts approximately 60,000 visitors annually who come to enjoy the spectacular scenery of the region, ranging from mountains and rugged bushland to lakes and rivers. Agriculture, forestry and tourism are the key economic drivers within the Shire.

The towns that make up the Shire include:

- Bellbridge
- Burrowye
- Cudgewa
- Granya
- Mitta Mitta
- Talgarno
- Tintaldra
- Berringama
- Bullioh
- Dartmouth
- Koetong
- Nariel
- Tallangatta
- Towong
- Bethanga
- Corryong
- Eskdale
- Lucyvale
- Old Tallangatta
- Tallangatta Valley
- Walwa



Methodology

In order to gather the evidence base to determine priorities for community programs, services and facilities the following activities occurred:

Assessed the current situation	Undertook community engagement with 341 participants	Undertook stakeholder engagement with approximately 80 participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified participation levels and trends Reviewed 20 relevant strategies and plans Prepared a demographic analysis Audited and photographed all of the sport and active recreation facilities in Towong Shire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community survey (101 responses representing 287 local residents) 2 community listening posts (54 attendees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 onsite meetings with clubs and organisations throughout the Shire (approximately 80 attendees)

Sport and recreation benefits

Whilst individuals benefit from sport and recreation from a health and wellbeing perspective and greater connections within their community, the whole community benefits from a greater sense of community cohesion, economic opportunities, improvement to the environment, reduction in crime and a more liveable and vibrant community. Some of the benefits that can occur through participation in sport and active recreation are:

Social Benefits	Health Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater sense of community • Stronger, more self-reliant communities • Greater social and friendship networks • Improved liveability of an area • Reduction in anti-social behavior and vandalism • Helps to develop shared attitudes, values and codes of behavior in the community (cohesion) • Breaks down barriers between different sectors of the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Protects against cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, musculoskeletal impairments, obesity, some cancers and poor mental health.”¹ • Improved balance and coordination, resulting in fewer falls • Stronger muscles, joints and bones • Improved confidence and self-esteem • Improved body image • Improved motor skills • Less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety • Greater sense of achievement • Reduced stress levels • Higher energy and concentration levels • Reduction in incidence and severity of illness and disability • Increased life expectancy – physical inactivity causes an estimated 16,000 premature deaths a year.²
Environmental Benefits	Economic Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages a greater appreciation and awareness of the natural environment (i.e. develops environmental stewardship) • Encourages the protection of areas of conservation or cultural heritage value • Reduces carbon emissions, air pollution and noise pollution (through activities such as active transport, e.g. walking and cycling in place of vehicular transportation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts visitors and generates tourism • Attracts businesses and creates employment • Creates higher market value of properties near public open space • Improvements to local business viability through sale of sport and recreation equipment, services and programs • Lower health care costs - physical inactivity costs the Australian economy \$805 million annually - \$640m in direct costs (healthcare expenditure) and \$165m in indirect costs (loss in productivity) (2013 figures)³ • Fewer days off work - productivity loss due to physical inactivity is estimated at 1.8 working days per worker per year.⁴

¹ VicHealth (2015) Promoting equity in physical activity: An evidence summary

² Ibid

³ Eoin Blackwell (2017) Physical Inactivity is Costing Australia Nearly \$1 Billion a Year: *HuffPost* 29 July 2017 https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/07/28/physical-inactivity-is-costing-australia-nearly-1-billion-a-yea_a_21441164/

⁴ Ibid

Sport and recreation trends

The sport and recreation landscape is constantly changing. The table below describes some of the trends currently occurring in the industry and within Towong Shire communities which need to be considered when planning facilities, programs and services in the future:

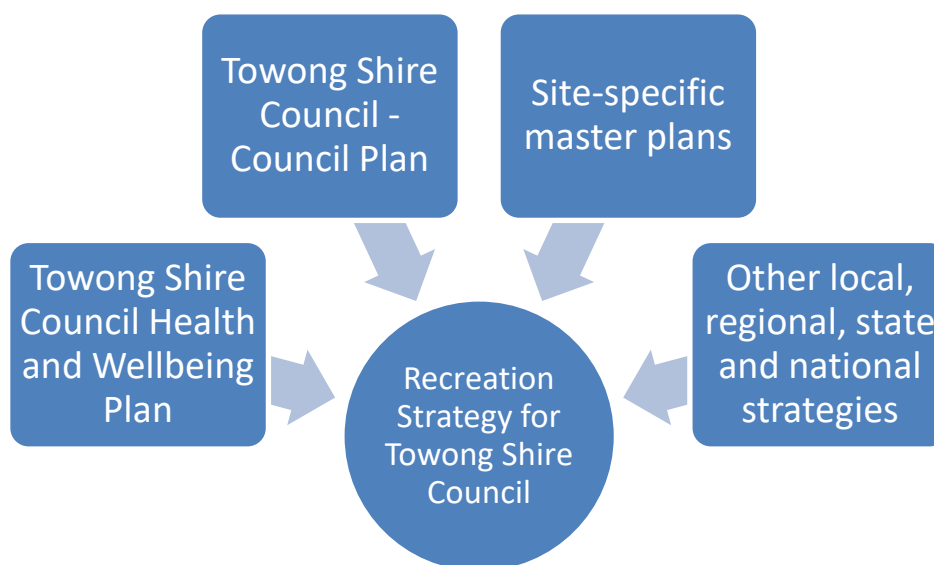
Trend	Details
Liveability	Quality sport, recreation and open spaces are seen as one of the key tools used by Local Government Authorities and property developers to attract new residents to come and live in a town and to improve the liveability of towns.
Individual lifestyle activities	There has been a movement away from many traditional organised sports such as football, cricket, netball and tennis to more individual or small group non-organised activities, e.g. walking, gym workouts, fitness classes, cycling, swimming, running, skiing, rock climbing, white water rafting, stand up paddle boarding and personal training.
Growth of female participation in specific sports	There has been significant growth across sports by females in Victoria in AFL, soccer and cricket. This growth is accompanied by the need to find suitable sports grounds and change facilities for training and games.
Events and tourism	There has been greater demand on sporting facilities and public open spaces such as parks for special events, e.g. music festivals, sports tournaments, markets, festivals, weddings, fun runs and cycling events. These can create a positive economic impact for the municipality.
Programming	There is a growing focus by Local Government on providing or facilitating programs in open spaces to attract greater levels of participation in physical activities, e.g. summer activities and Park Run.
Dog parks	There has been an emergence of off leash dog parks in response to the desire to connect with other dog walkers and the desire for dogs to socialise with one another.
Playgrounds	There has been greater investment in developing destination play spaces in open space areas, designed to attract people from both within and outside municipalities. Within these play spaces there may be a greater focus on providing quality landscaping and more natural spaces which utilise loose materials, rocks and logs.
Water play	Many municipalities are developing splash parks or water play areas for children. These spaces can feature dry riverbeds, fountains, sprays, etc.
Outdoor fitness equipment	There has been a growth in the installation of outdoor fitness equipment in public open spaces in recent years, either clustered together in one location or spread along a linear pathway.
Active transport and linkages	There is a greater focus on ensuring that sport, recreation and open space areas are connected to existing walking / cycling networks.

Trend	Details
Accessibility and inclusion	There is greater awareness of the need to ensure that people of all ages and all abilities can safely and easily utilise areas of open space. Universal Design Principles and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements provide guidance in this area. Infrastructure to encourage participation by people of all abilities includes ramps, unisex toilets with change tables, single story buildings to allow for wheelchair access and Braille signs.
Planning	Master planning of recreation reserves and open spaces has occurred to ensure that needs of all existing and casual users are considered in the long term – including the linking of cycling / walking paths, development of play spaces, landscaping and BBQ / picnic facilities and formalised parking.
Multi-purpose design and diversity	Parks and open spaces are being used for a variety of different purposes including sport, markets and festivals; hence spaces need to be as multi-purpose as possible to cater for community needs and may include the need for additional power outlets for food trucks or performances.
Safety	There is a greater awareness of safe design when it comes to sport and recreation facilities, parks and open spaces to ensure safety and perceived safety issues do not act as a barrier to usage. Clear sight lines, lighting, vegetation that can be seen through, passive surveillance and shade are all tools that can be used to improve safety.
Sustainability	There has been a greater focus on the development of environmentally responsible practices such as solar hot water, recycled water systems, double glazed windows, wetlands, community gardens, synthetic surfaces, use of recycled materials and use of locally sourced materials to reduce the impact of facilities / spaces and their users on the environment and to potentially reduce operating costs of facilities.
Climate change	There is a greater focus on climate-proofing areas of open space as much as possible to reduce water usage, provide shade and to retain some green space during periods of low rainfall.
Community gardens	There has been an increase in the number of community gardens in towns in areas of public open space where people come together to garden together and increase their access to affordable fruit and
Food and coffee	There has been a growing trend for Local Government Authorities to develop a café or restaurant in some open spaces or encourage food trucks to visit these sites.
Community hubs	There has been a trend to co-locate several sporting facilities to form recreation precincts to maximise limited resources and to cross- market activities.
Management and maintenance	Local Government Authorities and clubs are focusing on more effective planning, management and maintenance, including understanding whole of life costs of infrastructure, i.e. construction, management, activation, maintenance and replacement. Asset renewal gaps are increasing across the State and sport and active recreation projects must be considered against all other service area priorities.

Trend	Details
Modified versions of existing sports	A variety of traditional sports have developed a modified version (or several modified versions) of their game to keep older players playing longer, to involve children at an earlier age or to attract new participants, e.g. pickleball (a form of tennis played on a smaller court), cardio tennis, walking soccer, walking netball, AFL 9's, T20 cricket.
Creating pandemic-safe locations	Parks, reserves and open space are viewed by many people as safer places to recreate than indoor sport and recreation facilities following the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that these spaces continue to play an important role, it will be important to ensure that they are able to meet the requirements of a world where social distancing, hand washing, etc will become the new norm. This could impact the size and layout of social facilities in pavilions / hubs, the need for soap and hand sanitizer in toilets or near playgrounds, waiting spaces that can accommodate a line of people 1.5m apart, etc.

Context

The Recreation Strategy for Towong Shire Council is supported by a strong evidence base and aligns closely with the strategic directions contained within its plans and visions:



Some of the key directions identified in these plans and strategies of relevance to the Recreation Strategy are:

Location	Details	Source
General	Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages (2021-25)	Council Plan
	Support our communities to ensure that Shire places are welcoming to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and inclusive and connected (2021-25)	Council Plan
Recreation reserves	Develop and implement recreational masterplan for the municipality	Health and Wellbeing Plan
Cycling / walking	Develop and implement a cycling masterplan for the municipality (2021-22)	Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan
	Seek funding to complete the High Country Rail Trail (2021-25)	Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan
	Map and publish walking and cycling trails that connect townships, link destinations and create circular routes	Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Continue to deliver the strategic footpath network improvement program (2022-25)	Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan
	Support Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley mountain bike park (2021-23)	Council Plan
	Establish new annual cycling events in the Mitta Valley and Upper Murray (2021-25)	Council Plan

Location	Details	Source
Aquatics	Support the ongoing operations of the swimming pools across the municipality	Health and Wellbeing Plan
Parks and playgrounds	Review and deliver the strategic parks and playgrounds upgrade program (2021-22)	Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan
	Seek funding to deliver improved public toilets across the shire (2021-25)	Council Plan
Place-based improvements	Increase the recreation opportunities for young families in Dartmouth (2022-25)	Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan
Programs	Continue to develop health and fitness programs in the Upper Murray and Walwa to target specific demographic groups	Health and Wellbeing Plan
Promotion	Market Towong Shire as a great place to experience nature-based activities and improve wellbeing	Health and Wellbeing Plan
Waterways	Seek funding to develop a master plan for Lake Hume	Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Investigate options for additional boat ramps (2022-25)	Council Plan
Aerial	Explore opportunities to activate the Corryong Aerodrome (2022-25)	Council Plan
Planning	Establish a Developer Contributions Policy and a Minimum Social Infrastructure Requirements Policy (2022-23)	Council Plan
Environmental	Continue to seek funding for integrated water management projects to maximise the use of recycled and raw water sources for public amenity and climate change mitigation (2021-25)	Council Plan
	Improve the use of recycled materials in infrastructure projects, e.g. crushed concrete, glass and rubber (2021-2025)	Council Plan

There are also numerous actions contained within master plans, however, the majority of master plans have been updated as part of the development of the Recreation Strategy.

Funding has also recently been received through the National Recovery and Resilience Agency's Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program for the following three projects:

1. Upgrade the walking track and replace fire damaged trees in Cudgewa's Avenue of Honour.
2. Construct additional amenities, provide undercover storage, install a generator and upgrade the exterior of Walwa Recreation Reserve Pavilion.
3. Redevelop the Corryong Skate Park.

In addition to the funding from the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grant, funding has also been received to upgrade amenities at Corryong Recreation Reserve.

Planning framework

Information gathered in the research and consultation phase was reviewed by Council officers. From this data, 11 key planning principles were developed to guide the provision of recreation in Towong Shire Council from 2022 to 2033. From these planning principles, a vision has been developed. This vision aligns with the direction of Towong Shire Council’s Council Plan and Community Vision, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and various other plans and is a summary of the goals inherent to these strategies, i.e. goals around liveable communities.

Four key focus areas have also been identified, each with an objective and numerous actions. Each of these aspects when combined, provides a framework to inform Council and the broader community of the types of facilities, programs and services Towong Shire Council will invest in over the next 10 years to achieve an active, connected and liveable community.

Vision

Towong Shire Council’s vision for sport and active recreation is:

“Active, connected and resilient communities”

Planning principles

The 11 planning principles that support the vision and guide sport and active recreation provision in Towong Shire are as follows:

Principle	What it means to us
Evidence-based	Any proposed facility developments / upgrades will be supported by demonstrated need (feasibility studies for large projects) and any programs or services will be implemented based on evidence of need or evidence of likely benefits to the community.
Promotes physical activity	Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs or services will result in increasing or maintaining physical activity levels.
Promotes community connections, liveability and resilience	Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs or services will encourage opportunities for social connections between people and help to create a more liveable and resilient community.
Environmental sustainability	Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs and services will consider environmentally sustainable design principles and materials as part of their construction, development, management and maintenance.
Financial sustainability	Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs and services will be financially sustainable to develop, operate and maintain wherever possible.
Equity	Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to ensure equity of provision across Towong Shire where feasible

Principle	What it means to us
Accessible and inclusive	Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to increase access for all abilities and be inclusive of everyone regardless of abilities, age, gender, cultural background and socio-economic status.
Multi-purpose design	Facilities can be used in multiple ways by more than one group (unless a regional level single-purpose facility or a facility that has no option for sharing with others due to specialisation of infrastructure); and can be adapted to meet changing needs.
Optimises usage of existing assets	Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to better use existing assets rather than necessarily developing new ones (unless need is clearly demonstrated).
Climate resilient	Any facility developments / upgrades are designed to be as resilient as possible to extreme heat, fires, floods and droughts and provide infrastructure to support communities in need where possible.
Partnerships and collaborations	Wherever possible, facility developments / upgrades, programs and services will be developed in partnership with other organisations to maximise the use of limited resources and to improve outcomes.

Four Pillars and objectives













The four pillars that this Strategy focuses on, and their related objectives, are:

People	Places	Partners	Processes
To encourage and support increased participation in physical activity by the community.	To provide a diversity of quality and accessible sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.	To work in partnership with community organisations, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.	To provide a strategic framework to guide Council's decision making and investment in relation to sport and active recreation.

People

Towong Shire residents

The following table provides an overview of the Towong Shire community based on the last available Australian Bureau of Statistics Census⁵ from 2016. Note that the Census information is over five years of age, and it does not account for the change in demographics experienced by many rural and regional communities following COVID-19 migration away from cities such as Melbourne and Sydney:


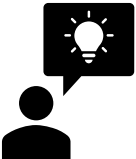






<p>Current population</p>  <p>5,985</p>	<p>Females</p>  <p>48.6%</p>	<p>Males</p>  <p>51.4%</p>	<p>Projected population of Towong Shire by 2036</p>  <p>6,250</p> <p>(a growth rate of 0.2%)⁶</p>
<p>Median age</p>  <p>50 years of age (compared with 37 years of age for Victoria)</p>	<p>20-45 year olds (as a % of population)</p>  <p>20.7% (compared with 35.6% for Victoria)</p>	<p>People over 65 (as a % of population)</p>  <p>34.3% (compared with 15.6% for Victoria)</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (as a % of population)</p>  <p>1.5% (compared with 0.8% for Victoria)</p>
<p>People born in Australia</p>  <p>82.7%</p>	<p>Top countries of birth (other than Australia)</p> 	<p>Languages spoken at home other than English</p> 	<p>Median household weekly income</p>  <p>\$1,043</p>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census QuickStats (Towong Shire):

https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA26670?open=document

⁶ DELWP (2019) Victoria in Future:

https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/332996/Victoria_in_Future_2019.pdf

(compared with 64.9% for Victoria)	England, New Zealand, Germany Netherlands and Philippines	German, Malayalam, Italian, Tagalog, Slovene	(compared with \$1,419 for Victoria)
Those with a Bachelor degree or above  11.2% (compared with 24.3% of Victorians)	Top 5 occupations  Managers, professionals; technicians and trades workers; labourers; and clerical and administrative workers	Top 5 industries of employment  Beef cattle farming (specialised), dairy cattle farming; hospitals (except psychiatric); supermarket and grocery stores; and secondary education	Average number of motor vehicles per dwelling  2.1 (compared with 1.8% for Victoria)
Volunteering to help one another in past 12 months  48.5% (compared with 23.2% for Victoria)	Attended a community event in past 12 months  78.4% (compared with 58.7% for Victoria)	Insufficient physical activity (adults)  44.9% (compared with 50.4% for Victoria)	Pre-obese or obese (adults)  58.2% (compared with 50.0% for Victoria)

Based on the 2016 Census, in comparison with Victoria, Towong Shire has:

- a higher proportion of older adults
- a lower proportion of 20-45 years olds
- a lower median household income
- a higher proportion of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders
- a higher proportion of residents born in Australia
- a higher proportion of volunteers and those who take part in community events
- more physically active residents, but more pre-obese or obese adults.

Consequently, consideration needs to be given to:

- Ensuring that provision is made to encourage participation in physical activity by the growing number of older adults through opportunities such as: walking and cycling (e.g. off road trails and dog parks), aquatic activities (swimming and aqua aerobics), softer playing surfaces (e.g. synthetic / cushioned hard courts as opposed to asphalt), modified activities (e.g. walking netball, exercise programs in halls (e.g. yoga and pilates), specific fitness programs designed to maintain health and wellbeing (strength training and chair exercise classes) and gentle exercise classes outdoors (e.g. tai chi)
- Reducing the maintenance burden on volunteers, e.g. installing automated irrigation systems and potentially replacing grass bowling rinks with synthetic grass.
- Acknowledging that it may be difficult to field sports teams requiring players in the 20-45-year age bracket in some areas due to low numbers in this age cohort, or conversely, providing improved sport and active recreational opportunities, or opportunities for families to participate in activities in Towong Shire to attract greater numbers of people in this age cohort
- Keeping program / participation fees as affordable as possible in recognition of lower than state average income and the financial impact of the 2019/20 bushfires and COVID-19 on the community (especially for people who were reliant on businesses or industries hit hard by bushfires and lockdowns).

How much physical activity do people need to do?

The Australian Government’s Department of Health and Ageing has published National Physical Activity Guidelines⁷ for Australians to provide an overview of the minimum amount of physical activity required to enhance health. Guidelines have been produced for a variety of age groups.

Age	Minimum Amount of Physical Activity Required to Enhance Health
0-1	Babies should be encouraged to take part in physical activity from birth, particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments.
1-2	Toddlers should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day. Toddlers should include some energetic play in their day, e.g. running, twirling, jumping, dancing or skipping.
3-5	Pre-schoolers should be active for at least three hours each day, spread throughout the day. They should take part in one hour of energetic play (e.g. running, kicking, throwing, jumping, dancing or skipping).
5-17	Children and young people should do at least 60 minutes each day of moderate to vigorous physical activity that makes the heart beat faster (e.g. football, netball, swimming, dancing). At least 3 days per week, children and young people should incorporate vigorous activities and activities that strengthen muscle and bone in the 60 minutes (e.g. running, yoga, lifting weights, sit-ups). Children and young people

⁷ Australian Government – Department of Health and Ageing website: http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#rec_0_5. Updated 6 May 2021.

Age	Minimum Amount of Physical Activity Required to Enhance Health
	should also do several hours of various light physical activities each day (e.g. walk to school, go to a park, help around the house).
Adults 18-64	Adults should be active most days, preferably every day. Each week, adults should do either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity – such as a brisk walk, golf, mowing the lawn or swimming • 1.25 to 2.5 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity – such as jogging, aerobics, fast cycling, soccer or netball • an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous activities.
Adults 65 and over	People aged 65 years and over, should do at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.

Victorian participation rates in physical activity

Traditional sports such as football, netball, cricket and tennis remain popular in Towong Shire, however, there has been a considerable growth in informal physical activities in recent years at a state, national and international level.

According to Ausplay data⁸, the top 15 participation activities for adults and the top 10 participation activities for children in Victoria in between July 2020 and June 2021 were as follows:

Adults aged 15+	
Activity	%
Walking (recreational)	51.3%
Fitness/Gym	37.4%
Athletics, track and field (includes jogging and running)	25.2%
Cycling	18.0%
Swimming	14.8%
Bushwalking	8.7%
Yoga	7.3%
Tennis	6.3%
Basketball	6.0%
Golf	5.9%
Pilates	5.0%
Football / soccer	4.6%
Australian Football	4.5%
Cricket	3.6%
Netball	3.2%

Children 0-14 years of age	
Organised out of school activities	%
Swimming	30.6%
Basketball	13.3%
Australian Rules Football	11.1%
Gymnastics	9.1%
Football/Soccer	7.6%
Tennis	7.5%
Dancing (recreational)	7.1%
Netball	6.2%
Cricket	5.1%
Karate	4.3%

⁸ Sport Australia. Ausplay Survey 2020-2021:
<https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/ausplay/results>

The emphasis for adults is far more on individual non-structured activities. The children’s survey specifically focussed on organised sport outside of school hours, so it is not possible to ascertain the popularity of unstructured activities.

VicHealth⁹ notes that in relation to physical activity in Victoria, there are some participation trends concerning children, young people and women that need to be addressed and turned around:

Children 5-12 years of age	Young people 12-17 years of age	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s lifestyles are becoming increasingly sedentary, with 4 out of 5 children (5–17 years) not meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day. • Globally, today’s children may be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. • By 2025, it is estimated that one in three Australian children will be overweight or obese. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in physical activity halves during adolescence (down from an average of 120 minutes to just over 60 minutes a day). • Sport participation levels drop suddenly at around age 15. • Physically active children and youth are more socially active, have reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, and perform better at school. • The transitions to and from secondary school are key life stages at which to influence behaviours that establish lifelong healthy habits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 out of 5 women aren’t sufficiently active to gain health benefits from their activity. • Females participate in sport at only half the rate of males. • Barriers to participation in sport and physical activity are higher for women and girls.

Adult physical activity participation rates in Towong Shire

Data contained within the Victorian Population Health Survey (2017)¹⁰ states that:

- 63.2% of women and 70.4% of men over 18 years of age living in Towong Shire are insufficiently active to achieve health benefits, compared with 49.0% of women and 52.8% of men living in Victoria.
- 48.9% of women and 68.8% of men over 18 years of age living in Towong Shire are overweight, compared with 43.7% of women and 58.2% of men living in Victoria

⁹ VicHealth (2018) Physical Activity Strategy 2018-2023

¹⁰ Victorian Population Health Survey 2017: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/population-health-systems/health-status-of-victorians/survey-data-and-reports/victorian-population-health-survey/victorian-population-health-survey-2017>

- 22.5% of women and 24.3% of men over 18 years of age living in Towong Shire are obese, compared with 19.5% of women and 19.0% of men living in Victoria.

Of those who filled out a community survey, 38 of the people who responded to the survey (38%) are active for more than 7 hours per week, with a further 11% stating that they are active for 7 hours per week. Only 4% of survey participants were active for less than 3 hours each week.

Through the community survey undertaken as part of the strategy, Towong Shire adults identified the following 20 most popular activities that they currently participate in (note that the survey respondents may not be a representative sample of the community as their participation in the survey was voluntary and not randomly selected).

No.	Activity	No. of participants N=101	Participation %
1	Gardening	79	79
2	Walking	78	77
3	Bushwalking / hiking	77	76
4	Camping	71	70
5	Fishing	51	50
=6	Cycling – rail trail / recreational	45	45
=6	Swimming – outdoor pool	45	45
=6	Swimming – lake	45	45
7	Canoeing / kayaking / stand up paddle boarding	44	44
8	Gym / weights / strength training	43	43
9	4WD	42	42
10	Swimming – river	39	39
11	Exercise class, e.g. group fitness class, bootcamp	36	36
12	Running / jogging	30	30
=13	Cycling – mountain bike riding	27	27
=13	Golf	27	27
=13	Tennis	27	27
14	Cricket	25	25
15	Cycling – BMX / pump park	23	23
=16	Football (AFL)	22	22
=16	Shooting	22	22
=16	Skiing / snowboarding	22	22
=17	Basketball	20	20
=17	Lawn bowls	20	20
=17	Netball	20	20
=17	Swimming – indoor heated pool	20	20
=18	Cycling – on road	19	19
=18	Trail bike / motorbike riding	19	19
=18	Yoga	19	19
19	Cycling – gravel	18	18
20	Pilates	16	16

Towong Shire survey respondents show a similar pattern to Victorian trend data in that they have an increased likelihood of engaging in informal, individual physical activities as opposed to organised sporting activities. Just over 80% of survey respondents stated that for at least one of their activities, they take part in an informal manner with family or friends and 61% said that they take part in at least one of their activities alone. This contrasts with just over half (54%) of survey respondents who stated that they participate in at least one of their activities as a member of a formal sports club.

Of interest is that outdoor activities utilising mountains and waterways are even more pronounced in Towong Shire than many other areas of Victoria. Local residents clearly take advantage of the natural environment for many of their recreational pursuits. The data contained within this table highlights the need for Towong Shire Council and other providers of physical activity to consider both active recreation activities alongside structured sporting opportunities.

There was insufficient data from children to make any statements about the most popular activities.

What activities local residents would like to do

According to the community survey, the most desired activities by survey respondents from Towong Shire include:

Activities people would like to do	No. of people
Cycling – recreational	10
Mountain bike riding	7
Children’s sport, recreation and play activities in the local area	6
Gym	6
Pilates	6
Tennis	6
Group fitness / exercise classes / personal training	5
Swimming all year round / indoor heated pool	5
Yoga	5
BMX / pump track riding	4
Lawn bowls	4
Outdoor fitness equipment training	4
Basketball	3
Bocce	3
Horse riding events	3
Skateboarding	3
Abseiling and rock climbing	2
Aqua aerobics	2
Boxing	2
Clay target shooting	2
Community activities	2
Dancing	2
Netball	2
Soccer	2

Barriers to participation

The key to increasing physical activity levels amongst local residents is to address barriers to participation:

Individual barriers	Barriers at organisational or club level
<p>Factors such as lack of time; cost of activities; poor health; lack of motivation; inability to access childcare; fear of being judged; a history of being inactive; negative parental attitudes towards physical activity; lack of peer support; stranger danger fears; and lack of confidence or self-esteem are key factors that limit participation in physical activity by individuals.</p>	<p>At an organisational or club level, factors that may limit participation include lack of inclusive and welcoming policies and practices; lack of information about opportunities available; inadequate facilities (e.g. for female participation); lack of opportunities that meet the desired level of participation (e.g. lack of social / informal sport opportunities); poor quality coaching / instruction; activities held on days or at times that don't suit potential participants; and clubs or organisations that do not respond to the cultural needs of certain groups.</p>
Community barriers	Society barriers
<p>At a community level, lack of suitable facilities; inadequate facilities, paths and areas of open space; lack of activation of spaces; lack of public transportation; and communities where people do not feel connected to each other can have a negative impact on physical activity.</p>	<p>At a societal level, participation can be limited if people don't feel that facilities and areas of open space are safe; if they feel that spectators will make it unpleasant to participate; if it is more enjoyable to spend leisure time using technology; and if there is a concern that participation as a participant or support person may lead to litigation.</p>

Through the community survey, local residents told us that they would be more likely to participate in sport and active recreation:

- If the activity was available locally (82%)
- If facilities were better quality (35%)
- If facilities were accessible for all abilities (15%)
- If I had more time (14%)
- If I had childcare (10%)
- If I knew someone else who does that activity (10%)
- If it was offered at a different time (10%)
- If it was less expensive (8%)
- If clubs / groups were more inclusive and welcoming (8%)
- If my health / fitness was better (7%)
- If it was offered at the standard / level that I want (7%)
- If I had better skills / confidence (4%)
- If I had transport (1%).

To ensure that we can increase participation in physical activity by local residents, key issues need to be addressed, such as:

- providing for the types of activities people want to do, e.g.
 - bicycle related activities (cycling, mountain bike riding and BMX / pump track riding)
 - children's activities / play
 - exercise (gym, pilates, group fitness and yoga)
 - tennis
 - swimming
- activation of spaces
- improving accessibility
- reducing barriers to participation
- ensuring activities are affordable
- supporting volunteers
- assisting with the provision of multi-purpose spaces
- providing more information about what is available.

Places

Existing places and spaces

Towong Shire Council, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, North East Water, Goulburn-Murray Water, North East Catchment Management Authority, sport and recreation clubs, health organisations, neighbourhood houses, schools and the private sector provide a diverse range of places and spaces where physical activity occurs within the Towong Shire region.

DWELP Committees of Management primarily provide the regions sports fields and courts facilities as well as some parks and playgrounds. Towong Shire Council has a number of parks, playgrounds and shared trails under its portfolio, in addition to some halls and swimming facilities.

The following table provides an overview of the facilities that are currently available:

Town	Aerial / flying sports	Athletics	Bocce / petanque	Bowling green	Camping	Cricket nets	Croquet green	Disk golf	Equestrian facilities	Fire running track	Golf course	Gun club	Gym / fitness centre	Hall / Pavilion / Club house	Hockey field	Motor sports	Mountain bike facilities	Netball courts	Indoor sports court	Outdoor fitness equipment	Oval	Path / trail	Playground	Pump track / BMX	Racecourse	River pool	Rowing / dragon boat	Skate park	Soccer fields	Splash park	Squash	Swimming pool	Tennis courts	
Bellbridge						X																X	X				X						2	
Bethanga						X			X					X				2			1	X	X											2
Biggara														X																				2
Burrowye					X																													
Bullioh											X			X				2			1		X											
Corryong	X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X				2			1	X	X				X					X		8
Cudgewa														X				1			1	X	X											4
Dartmouth																						X	X											
Eskdale						X							X	X				2			1	X	X							X	X		2	
Granya						X								X																				2
Koetong																																		2
Mitta Mitta											X			X			X	1			1		X											1

Town	Aerial / flying sports	Athletics	Bocce / petanque	Bowling green	Camping	Croquet green	Croquet nets	Disk golf	Equestrian facilities	Fire running track	Golf course	Gun club	Gym / fitness centre	Hall / Pavilion / Club house	Hockey field	Motor sports	Mountain bike facilities	Nethall courts	Indoor sports court	Outdoor fitness equipment	Oval	Path / trail	Playground	Pump track / BMX	Racecourse	River pool	Rowing / dragon boat	Skate park	Soccer fields	Splash park	Squash	Swimming pool	Tennis courts	
Nariel					X																													
Tallandoon														X																				2
Old Tallangatta														X																				4
Talgarno														X									X											4
Tallangatta				X		X			X		X			X	X			2	1		1	X	X					X				X		6
Tintaldra									X					X								X	X											2
Towong									X					X										X										
Walwa											X			X				1			1	X												3

There are a variety of recreational programs and activities undertaken in Towong Shire by community organisations, health organisations and the private sector including gym, yoga, strength classes, swimming lessons, personal training, martial arts, etc. Towong Shire Council could potentially further support these organisations to value add to their existing offerings to help achieve positive health and wellbeing outcomes within the community.

A proportion of local residents visit facilities in other municipalities, e.g. indoor aquatic centres, soccer fields, hockey fields and basketball stadiums in locations such as Wodonga. In some instances, people who live in other municipalities and southern New South Wales utilise sport and recreation facilities within Towong Shire, e.g. recreation reserves, fishing spots, camping areas, etc. Once mountain bike facilities are completed at Mitta Mitta, an even greater proportion of visitors from other parts of Victoria and New South Wales are expected to take part in active recreational opportunities in the Shire.

A review of existing facility provision against industry standards¹¹ indicates that Towong Shire has a higher than average number of tennis courts, netball courts and ovals. Consideration could be given to establishing an indoor sports complex with one to two multipurpose courts or seeking greater access to the indoor facilities at Corryong College and Tallangatta Secondary College. There may also be high enough numbers to support a soccer field, although there is not a strong culture of soccer in the region at this stage. Note that there is a soccer field at Corryong College.

It is important to note that industry standards are often developed for metropolitan centres or growth areas and don't necessarily take into consideration the condition of existing facilities, their location, their distance from population centres, their layout (i.e. stand-alone facility or several facilities located together), and the geography of the surrounding area, etc. As a very basic guide, the following table provides an indication of provision in growth areas of metropolitan Melbourne and neighbouring Alpine Shire:

Sports facility	Ratio of provision planned in growth Councils (e.g. City of Casey)	Ratio of provision in Alpine Shire	Number in Towong Shire (pop: 5985)	Ratio of provision in Towong Shire
Athletics	1 grass track: 75,000	None	None	None
Australian Rules Football	1 oval: 4,250	1 oval:1,542	8	1 oval:748
Baseball	1 field: 50,000	1 field:12,337	None	None
Basketball	1 facility: 8,000	1 court:4,112	1	1 court:5,985
Cricket	1 oval: 3,000	1 oval:1,371	8	1 oval:748
Hockey	1 pitch: 100,000	None	1	1 pitch:5,985
Lawn bowls	1 facility: 15,000	1 facility:3,084	2	1 facility: 2,993
Soccer	1 field: 4,500	1 field:6,169	None	None
Netball outdoor)	1 court: 5,000	1 court:1,371	13	1 court: 460
Netball (indoor)	1 court: 5,000	1 court:4,112	1	1 court: 5,985
Tennis	1 court: 2,300	1 court:441	46	1 court: 130

¹¹ City of Casey (2014) Leisure Facilities Development Plan Policy: <https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/leisure-facilities-development-plan-policy>

Issues and opportunities

Sport and active recreation facilities

From the observations undertaken when visiting each recreation reserve in the Shire, a range of issues and opportunities were identified, including:

- Varying level of standards from brand new facilities to **ageing facilities**, i.e. from Corryong Recreation Reserve pavilion (excellent) to Bethanga Recreation Reserve pavilion (poor)
- **Lack of female friendly or gender-neutral change facilities** at the majority of recreation reserves
- **Higher levels of participation in equine activities** and subsequent equine infrastructure in Towong Shire compared with many other Shires, e.g. Tintaldra and Corryong Recreation Reserves
- **Significant value of recreation reserves in times of emergencies** as a place for the community to gather, and therefore a need for facilities able to cater for emergencies and emergency accommodation
- **Gaps in the trail network** and opportunities to better connect towns with one another (e.g. Bethanga and Bellbridge; and Corryong and Towong)
- **Lack of knowledge** within the community of existing spaces, e.g. squash courts and gym at Eskdale Recreation Reserve
- **Potential safety issues**, e.g. holding club BBQs in sheds where machinery and chemicals may be stored
- **Poor wayfinding signage** to many of the recreation reserves in the Shire
- **Drainage issues**, e.g. Towong Racecourse
- **Facilities that don't meet sporting facility guidelines**, e.g. tennis courts at Granya Recreation Reserve
- Facilities that will require an **upgrade in the near future (and considerable expenditure)**
- **Various levels of accessibility** in relation to DDA compliant toilets, paths, ramps, play equipment, etc.
- **Lack of public toilets at some sites**, e.g. Roy Williams Park in Bellbridge
- **Lack of infrastructure that could help to further activate sites**, e.g. paths, seats, shade, picnic tables, water bubblers and play equipment

Many of these issues and opportunities are addressed in individual master plans.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the condition of the recreation reserve closest to their house. Only 38% of people feel that it is in good condition. In terms of usage, only 39% use the recreation reserve regularly. Twenty-eight percent believe that the range of activities offered at their closest recreation reserve is good.

Footpaths and shared trails

Increasing the level of walking and cycling are two of the easiest ways to increase people's level of physical activity, particularly for those who are currently inactive. These activities are accessible to people of all ages and abilities and can be undertaken at minimal or no cost.

Given that walking and cycling are two of the most popular activities for local residents, and some of the most desired activities to take part in in the future, further investment by Towong Shire Council should be considered as a priority.

To improve opportunities for walking and cycling in Towong Shire, there needs to be a network of cycling and walking trails / paths that are:

- Well designed and safe (even surfaces, wide enough pathways, well lit, clear lines of site, separation from vehicles, well maintained)
- Connected to key locations people want to visit
- Well signed.

In addition to footpaths, on-road cycling lanes and off-road cycling paths such as the Cudgewa Wodonga Rail Trail, there are numerous other paths in the Shire that are maintained by DELWP. These trails form an integral part of the recreational opportunities available in Towong Shire for both residents and visitors.

Survey respondents were asked to identify new or improved sections needed in the Shire's network of walking and cycling paths and trails to better link places or towns to one another. The most popular responses in order of priority were:

1. Develop a walking track in Bethanga
2. Link Bethanga to Bellbridge
3. Bethanga to Bethanga Bay
4. Corryong to Towong
5. Municipal trail connecting all of some of the following: Corryong, Towong, Tintalra, Walwa, Cudgewa, Colac Colac, Thowgla
6. Dartmouth to Mitta Mitta
7. Eskdale to Mitta Mitta
8. Extend High Country Trail to Cudgewa.

Consideration should be given to undertaking a walking and cycling strategy to map all existing opportunities, identify gaps in the network and identify potential improvements or developments required.

"It would be amazing if there was a walking/pram friendly walking track from the centre of Bethanga to Bethanga Bay. It would provide a beautiful walking/cycling path, more opportunity for youth to independently access the weir in a safe manner and give families, especially young families who are often isolated a safe place to exercise."

Aquatic facilities

Towong Shire Council operates two public outdoor swimming pools; one in Corryong and one in Tallangatta. There is also a community managed outdoor swimming pool located in Eskdale.

Survey respondents were asked which of the two Council managed pools (if any) that they had used in the past 12 months. 20% said that they had used Corryong and 20% said that they had used Tallangatta. They were also asked is what would encourage them to use these pools more often. Distance to the pool, the temperature of the pool and opening hours were the top 3 barriers to greater use. All of the answers in order of priority are:

- If pools were closer to where I live (32%)
- Warmer water (24%)
- Different opening hours, e.g. early morning (23%)
- Programs at the pool, e.g. water aerobics, lap swimming group (21%)
- Swimming lessons at the pool (19%)
- Events at the pool, e.g. family BBQs, dive in movies (18%)
- Activities such as inflatables or volleyball at the pool (14%)
- More shade at the pools (11%)
- Cheaper entrance fees (9%)
- Nothing - I'm not interested in swimming / water play (9%)
- Nothing - I have my own pool or use a friend's pool (6%)
- Nothing - I am self-conscious about my body / weight (5%)
- If I could get transport to the pools (2%).

Play spaces

Towong Shire Council currently manages 13 play spaces:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Bellbridge – Roy Williams Park | • Dartmouth – Baniboola Road |
| • Bethanga – Bridge Street | • Granya – Double Day Street |
| • Corryong – Apex Park | • Mitta Mitta – Paddy’s Reserve |
| • Corryong – Attree Park | • Tallangatta – Triangles |
| • Corryong – Galleon Park | • Tintaldra – Recreation Reserve |
| • Corryong – Jardine Park | • Walwa - main street |
| • Cudgewa – main street | |

In addition to these play spaces, there are also play spaces at some of the recreation reserves situated on Crown Land, e.g. Eskdale Recreation Reserve. Skate parks also exist in Bellbridge, Corryong and Tallangatta.

Council’s website currently lists the location of play spaces and identifies whether or not there is a BBQ or toilet on site. To improve people’s awareness of the locations of play spaces, it would be advantageous to provide more information on Council’s website about play spaces, e.g. photos, maps and a more description of facilities available such as disabled access, shade, picnic tables, fencing, toilets, BBQs, etc.

It would also be advantageous to develop a play strategy which outlines the location of all play spaces, the year they were installed, an overview of the types of play opportunities provided, mapping to show catchments and gaps and a strategic plan to upgrade play spaces and improve play value and accessibility.

Climate change

Towong Shire is being impacted by climate change. Warming temperatures and an increase in the number, duration and severity of heatwaves increases the number of extreme fire risk days and the length of the bushfire season. High temperatures can result in an increased need for cooling in sport and recreation facilities. An increase in fire risk requires the need to design facilities to withstand fire as much as possible.

High temperatures also have an impact on participation, as many activities are called off once the temperature hits 35 degrees or above to reduce the likelihood of people suffering from heat stress while playing sport. Some people are likely to stop participating in summer sports as a result of potential heat stroke and sunburn. High temperatures can also contribute to blue-green algae outbreaks, therefore impacting water sports.

Lower rainfall levels may impact the condition of playing fields and the availability of water to irrigate playing fields. Intense rainfall events may result in flooding of playing fields and buildings and the cancellation of games.

Environmental sustainability

Wherever possible, buildings, infrastructure and playing surfaces need to be designed to be environmentally sustainable. Not only will environmentally sustainable practices help to reduce the impact on the environment, they can also help reduce operating costs. Consideration needs to be given to items such as:

- Drought tolerant grasses
- Water harvesting and water tanks
- Passive cooling and heating
- Double glazed windows
- Eaves on buildings
- Solar hot water and electricity
- Low flow showers
- Dual flush toilets
- Use of recycled materials, e.g. crushed concrete
- Purchasing materials locally.

Access and inclusion

It is important that people of all ages, abilities, gender, cultural background and socio-economic status are able to participate in physical activity within Towong Shire so that they are able to improve their health and wellbeing and connect with others in the community. In order to ensure that sport and active recreation is accessible and inclusive, consideration needs to be given to:

Physical spaces

Spaces need to be accessible for people of all abilities, sizes and capacity. They need to be compliant with DDA regulations (e.g. accessible toilets, ramps, hand rails, Braille signage, hearing loops, wheelchair accessible paths, etc) and designed according to Universal Design principles. These spaces also need to provide for people of all genders, e.g. provision of unisex toilets and showers that can be used by people who do not identify as either male or female and the removal of urinals and open showers in pavilion change rooms.

Information

Unless people know what types of sport and active recreation opportunities are available within a community, their participation may be limited. Information needs to be provided in simple plain English and feature images to support the text. Ideally images will represent the diversity of people who make up the community. Although Towong Shire Council currently has a high proportion of

residents who only speak English at home, this may change in the future so information may need to be provided in relevant community languages in the future. Information should also be provided through multiple sources, e.g. online, hard copy (e.g. newspapers and newsletters) and as posters.

Attitudes

Providing access and inclusion training to members of sports clubs and Council staff may help to increase understanding and awareness of the needs to traditionally disadvantaged members of the community including people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, older adults, First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse people and girls and women. This in turn will potentially improve access and inclusion for all members of the community.

Cost

Keeping activities at an affordable level will help to increase participation, particularly by people who currently find cost a barrier. Free activities should be well promoted as well as spaces and places where people can be physically active for free, e.g. parks, playgrounds, walking / cycling trails, skate parks and waterways.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of every community club and organisation in Towong Shire. Towong Shire Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan (2021-2025) acknowledges this and states that we need to ensure that "our volunteers are well supported and can continue to provide their invaluable contribution."

Many clubs in the Shire are worried that their volunteers are ageing and that they may not find sufficient volunteers to run their activities in the future. At the same time, the practice of volunteering is changing. Many people are time-poor and rather than contribute to a half day working bee on a regular basis or sit on a committee of management, they prefer to volunteer for short term and very specific tasks, e.g. helping to take registrations for an event.

Clubs and organisations need to be supported to attract, train, retain and reward volunteers for their service to physical activity provision in the Shire.

Partners

Sport and active recreation opportunities are delivered or facilitated by a diverse range of partners in Towong Shire including Council; sport and active recreation clubs and organisations; Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Parks Victoria; Corryong Health, Tallangatta Health Service; Sport North East; State Sporting Associations; schools and the private sector. Collaborations between these different groups can ensure better health, social, economic and environmental outcomes are achieved and ensure that limited resources are maximised. These organisations can also help Towong Shire Council achieve its health and wellbeing targets identified in the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Sport and recreation clubs

Sport and recreation clubs and organisations in Towong Shire are the key providers of organised physical activity within the Shire.

DELWP

The majority of recreation reserves in Towong Shire are located on Crown Land. Either Council or a local committee of management are then delegated responsibility by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to manage these sites on behalf of the Crown. In addition to owning the majority of sports facilities in Towong Shire, DELWP is also responsible for management of trails on State Government land.

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is responsible for management of National Parks and for trails on Crown Land.

Corryong Health

Corryong Health provides a broad range of hospital, residential aged care, medical and primary health and community support services including:

- Community Health and Fitness Centre – provides yoga classes and gym classes for strengthening, stretching and toning
- Day Activity Centre – provides a variety of activities including bowls

Tallangatta Health Service

Tallangatta Health Service provides a diversity of services to the community. From a physical activity perspective and / or social connection perspective, it provides:

- Strength training
- Gentle strength training
- Tai chi
- Mixed community group – Tallangatta
- Peninsula Activity, Laughter, Movement & Sociable

Sport North East

Sport North East (SNE) is a regional sports assembly funded by Sport and Recreation Victoria to support sport and recreation clubs in north east Victoria. The type of support available includes: information, workshops, resources and policies around issues such as governance, grants, volunteer

recruitment, programming and anti-social behaviours. The Sports Library offered by Sport North East from its base in Wangaratta could potentially be replicated (at a smaller level) in a town such as Tallangatta or Corryong. This would enable local residents to hire sports equipment such as yoga mats, netballs, hula hoops, boxercise equipment, cricket bats, tennis racquets, bocce sets, volleyball nets, etc for free.

Local, regional and state sporting associations and leagues

State Sporting Associations (SSAs) are the pre-eminent governing bodies for specific sports in Victoria (e.g. Tennis Victoria). SSAs are funded by Sport and Recreation Victoria and fees from affiliated clubs in areas such as Towong Shire. Their role is to establish the strategic direction of their sport and to assist local and regional clubs and leagues / associations to grow the sport through the provision of various resources.

Both SNE and SSAs have resources and knowledge to assist local clubs / organisations to grow participation; to improve their facilities; to be more sustainable; and to lead effectively through quality governance.

Schools

Schools have a role in the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles to young people through the provision of physical education classes; organised sporting events (e.g. athletic events or inter-school sports); promotion of healthy eating via food sold in school canteens; providing opportunities for informal play during recess and lunch; and through participation in programs such as Walk to School Day. From a facility perspective, schools tend to provide grassed playing field(s); hard courts suitable for netball, basketball, tennis and other activities such as downball; and playgrounds. Some will also provide extra facilities such as indoor sports courts.

Community access to school facilities, whilst encouraged by the State Government, is often decided upon by school councils and permission may change as council members change. Many schools also use community facilities managed by Towong Shire Council or local clubs such as ovals, courts, swimming pools and walking / cycling paths as part of their curriculum or events.

Given the limited resources available by both Council and schools, greater access to school facilities by the community and to community facilities by schools can reduce duplication of facilities and maximise usage of existing assets.

Private sector

Increasingly the private sector is becoming involved in the sport and active recreation sector in Towong Shire, particularly in the area of health and wellbeing classes, e.g. yoga, pilates, dance, martial arts, personal training and boot camps. These organisations are generally not financially supported by Towong Shire Council (as they are for-profit businesses), although like traditional sports clubs, they also help Towong Shire Council to achieve its health and wellbeing targets and improve liveability.

Neighbouring Local Government Authorities

Towong Shire shares its boundaries with the City of Wodonga, Indigo Shire Council, Alpine Shire and East Gippsland Shire. It is important to understand priorities and projects of neighbouring Local Government Authorities as what they may be developing could potentially impact works within

Towong Shire. Indigo Shire is currently adding an extension to the Murray to Mountains Trail from Beechworth to Allan's Flat to the east of Yackandandah. This brings the rail trail much closer to Tallangatta – which is likely to raise demand to connect the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail with the High Country Trail. Similarly, the mountain bike improvements that Indigo Shire is making could attract more mountain bike riders to the region and bring in additional visitors to the proposed mountain bike facilities at Mitta Mitta.

Conversely, any works to waterways, trails or camping facilities in Towong Shire, or events such as the Towong Cup or The Man from Snowy River Festival may have a broader catchment than just local residents, which in turn could help local facilities or activities become more sustainable. Partnership opportunities should be explored, particularly when considering the development of regional level facilities or activities / events that may appeal to a regional audience.

Processes

Council's role

The role of Towong Shire Council in relation to recreation currently is to provide, manage, maintain and promote sport and active recreation programs, services and facilities as a community benefit. The following table shows what Council current does, and what it ideally could do in order achieve its health and wellbeing targets and to address community sport and active recreation needs both now and in the future. Note that these roles are not confined to one unit but occur across many units. Additional resources may also be required in order to deliver additional recreation functions.

Activity	Current role	Additional roles
Strategic planning	Undertake, facilitate or support strategic planning for sport and active recreation programs, services and facilities, e.g. assisting with recreation reserve master plans and linking various tracks and trails to one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to update existing tools, policies, strategies and processes as required. • Support the implementation of existing plans with a sport and active recreation focus, e.g. recreation reserve master plans • Monitor the impact of potential participation barriers and implement measures to improve accessibility as required.
Provision of facilities	Provide a range of places and spaces where physical activity can occur in the community. These places and spaces include formal sports facilities such as ovals and hardcourts, through to shared trails, swimming pools and playgrounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote universal design and compliance to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements in facilities. • Ensure that all sport and active recreation facility developments, upgrades and renewals incorporate Environmentally Sustainable Design principles (playing surface, clubrooms / change rooms and surrounds). • Design any facility developments or upgrades to include consideration of needs to respond to potential climate change impacts. • Ensure that consideration is given to the development of female change facilities in pavilions
Management and maintenance of facilities	Manage and maintain sport and active recreation assets owned by Towong Shire Council, including swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, some shared trails and some sports facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Asset Database and update this as new information becomes available or conditions change.
Promotion of sport and active recreation opportunities	Promote clubs / organisations and sport and active recreation programs and events via Council's promotional tools, e.g. Towong Shire Council's online Community Directory,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote female participation in sport and active recreation. • Promote initiatives and programs from partner organisations that are designed to improve accessibility by people (particularly under-represented communities) to sport and active recreation.

Activity	Current role	Additional roles
	Council website and Council social media. When relevant, promote initiatives through the local media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote private sector sport and active recreation organisations that deliver physical activities for local residents in Council’s Community Directory.
Club / organisational support	Provide support to clubs / organisations through mechanisms such as financial assistance / grants, information provision, advice and promotion of activities / events to enable clubs / organisations to deliver a diversity of sport and active recreation opportunities in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote clubs / organisations through Council’s Community Directory and expand the level of information available about each club / organisation. Develop a community grants program for clubs and organisations to support facility developments / upgrades, programs, events, volunteer training and small equipment purchases. Encourage multi-use of facilities and the delivery of additional activities by clubs / organisations (e.g. social / modified activities) as an add-on to their traditional offerings. Explore opportunities to better support clubs and their volunteers in relation to issues such as governance, planning, policy development, programming, information and advice regarding grant applications. Promote any government initiative that provides funding or training for potential coaches / sports administrators locally. Commit to nominating sport and active recreation volunteers to awards programs in the region to recognise and reward them for their service.
Partnership development	Establish and maintain effective partnerships with relevant groups, organisations and government agencies to collaboratively deliver sport and active recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in formal and informal regional sport and recreation networks to share information with neighbouring Local Government Authorities. Work in partnership with Sport North East and relevant State Sporting Associations to bring additional resources to Towong Shire to support clubs / organisations and local residents to deliver physical activity opportunities and to be more active. Establish or enhance working relationships with schools throughout the municipality to enable discussions about shared facility planning to help reduce duplication and to maximise asset usage.
Advocacy	Advocate to State and Federal Government and other relevant agencies on behalf of clubs /	Continue to liaise with clubs and organisations to understand their specific issues and needs and provide support or advocacy as appropriate.

Activity	Current role	Additional roles
	<p>organisations and the community for improved sport and active recreation facilities, programs or services that can be added to the project pipeline and reviewed as and when funding becomes available.</p>	

Tools, policies, strategies and procedures

Township Recreation Facility Framework

A Township Recreation Facility Framework, which identifies the minimum level of recreation facility provision for towns in Towong Shire, based on their size, catchment and visitation has been developed as an internal planning document to support the Recreation Strategy. This framework will help guide Towong Shire Council to understand what should be provided to ensure that everyone, regardless of where they live in the municipality, has access to recreational facilities and open space in close proximity to their homes.

This framework has been specifically developed for the Shire, taking into consideration:

- hierarchies of provision identified in State Sporting Association facility guidelines, e.g. *AFL Preferred Facility Guidelines (2019)* which identifies the appropriate level of infrastructure for local, regional and state level football ovals
- provision and benchmarking of facilities in similar-sized towns in rural Victoria
- the types of activities that currently occur (or may feasibly occur in the future given feedback from local residents and examining statewide participation trends)
- existing and potential population growth.

Note that some towns may already exceed the levels in the framework, or community groups or other organisations such as schools may choose to construct and maintain additional facilities. The framework, like those developed by State Sporting Associations, are intended to be a guide only, as there will always be some anomalies. Actual needs of towns vary considerably depending on:

- the demographics of the town
- the impact of visitor numbers on facilities
- existing facility provision within the catchment (including neighbouring towns and municipalities).
- specific participation trends
- availability of coaches / instructors for certain activities
- transport availability to other locations
- land availability to develop specific activities
- culture and history of particular activities in an area
- costs.

Where a community desires a new facility that does not fit within its category, it may be fully responsible for construction, maintenance and asset renewal costs, unless a compelling case can be established as to why that type of facility is important and what its catchment may be. Where a town already has facilities beyond what would normally be expected within its category, when the existing facility reaches the end of its life, Council may choose not to support its replacement.

Project Assessment Tool

To assist Towong Shire Council to assess one potential project against another, an internal planning document, aligned with the planning principles contained within this Recreation Strategy has been developed. Each potential project will be assessed against each of the planning principles. A score is provided to determine how well each project meets each of the planning principles. A final score is produced, which then places the project in a high, medium, low or ineligible category. A final lens is placed over each of the high priority categories to determine what Council's sport and recreation capital works project funding priorities will be.

Community Directory

A community directory on a Council website, may be the first port of call for local residents or potential new residents when seeking information about existing sport and recreation opportunities available in Towong Shire. It is therefore important that it is comprehensive and updated regularly by both Council and clubs / organisations. At present, the site incorporates basic information about some of the sports clubs in the Shire, swimming pools and some of the parks / playgrounds. Ideally information will incorporate photographs where relevant and more detailed information about what is available, e.g. types of programs / facilities / infrastructure, address, contact details, accessibility.

Asset database

To help Towong Shire Council effectively manage its sport and recreation assets, and to be aware of other community sport and recreation assets on Crown Land, it is recommended that a sport and recreation asset database is established. This database should incorporate the following type of information for each asset:

- Name of the asset
- Address of the asset
- Ownership of the asset, e.g. Council, Crown, Department of Education, other
- Relevant zones and overlays
- List of built infrastructure (including date constructed if known)
- User of the assets, e.g. tennis club
- Condition reports
- Photos
- Committee of management contact details.

Implementation and evaluation

It is important that a multi-disciplinary team is established to oversee and implement this plan as responsibility for sport and active recreation crosses many areas within Towong Shire. It is suggested that this group meets at least twice per year to monitor actions and that once per year all actions are reviewed and modified if needed. Ideally one officer will be given the responsibility of coordinating meetings. A recreation strategy should be developed in 2033.

Action Plan

The following table provides a set of objectives and actions to guide Towong Shire Council in terms of the planning, development and management of sport and active recreation facilities and opportunities from 2022-2033. Priorities have been developed from:

- An assessment against the vision and planning principles
- An assessment of existing strategies and reports
- Demographic review
- Examination of trends and participation rates
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Community surveys, online feedback and workshops
- Visual assessment of facilities
- Assessment of best practice
- Review of resources available or potentially accessible.

Each of the actions is prioritised and identifies key partners, the resources required in order to achieve the action and the potential sources of funds.

- Quick win projects are those that can be achieved within 12 months.
- High priority projects are those that could potentially be achieved within 1-3 years
- Medium priority projects between 4-7 years
- Low priority projects in 8 years' time or more.

Some projects are ongoing throughout the ten years. Quotes from suppliers will need to be sourced in order to gain accurate costings.

Note that the ability of some of these projects to be funded will be dependent upon the funding environment (including Council's ability to provide matching funds for relevant projects where required), the availability of external funding sources (i.e. Government, private sector, clubs, organisations and the philanthropic sector) and the types of Government funding priorities or programs available at any given time (e.g. the Victorian Government's current Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Funding Program).

PEOPLE

Objective: To encourage and support increased participation in physical activity by the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
1	Accessibility	Undertake an accessibility audit of all sport and active recreation facilities in Towong Shire in order to ensure that they meet DDA compliance and adhere to Universal Design Principles	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations	Existing budget	Staff time	High
2	Accessibility	Update project management procedures and relevant templates to capture the requirement that all upgraded facilities must achieve DDA compliance and incorporate Universal Design Principles and gender equity as part of the upgrade. Input a mandatory check point on completion of Concept and Detailed design that DDA requirements and Universal Design Principles have been considered and captured.	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations Architects / building designers / builders	Existing budget	Staff time	Ongoing
	Accessibility	Provide access and inclusion training to members of sports clubs and Council staff to increase understanding and awareness of the needs to traditionally disadvantaged members of the community including people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, older adults, First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse people and girls and women.	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations Sport North East	Existing budget	Staff time	Ongoing
3	Affordability	Support and promote programs from partner organisations that provide free / low-cost sport and active recreation opportunities for local residents, e.g. Get Active Victoria, This Girl Can, Sports Library, voucher schemes, etc.	State Government Sport North East State Sporting Associations	Existing budget	Staff time	Ongoing

PEOPLE

Objective: To encourage and support increased participation in physical activity by the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
4	Programs	Explore opportunities to develop new programs at Council owned sport and recreation facilities such as parks, playgrounds, skate parks, halls, shared trails and swimming pools.	Corryong Health Tallangatta Health Services	Recreation and events budgets	Staff time and external staff	High
5	Volunteers	Support local leagues / associations, schools, Sport North East and State Sporting Associations to create initiatives to recruit, train, support and recognise the contributions of volunteers.	Local leagues / associations Schools Sport North East State Sporting Associations Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations Volunteering Victoria	Existing budget	Staff time	Ongoing

PLACES

Objective: To provide a diversity of quality and accessible sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
1	Recreation Reserves	Support Recreation Reserve Committees of Management to implement the strategic actions contained within their Master Plans (refer to separate master plans for details).	Recreation Reserve Committees of Management Sport and Recreation Clubs	External funding required	Not costed	Ongoing
2	Footpaths and shared trails	Develop a walking / cycling / equine trails strategy to map all existing opportunities, identify gaps in the network and identify potential improvements or developments required (including locations of toilets and drinking water). The Strategy should explore the feasibility of developing the following trails: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bethanga to Bellbridge, incorporating Bethanga Bay and trails around each of the towns Corryong to Towong Dartmouth to Eskdale via Mitta Extension of High Country Trail to Cudgewa. <p>It should also consider the following:</p>	Informal cycling groups Corryong Visitor Information Services Tallangatta Visitor Information Services Relevant community groups, e.g. Mitta Valley Inc.	Footpath / trail budget/ equine External funding required	Staff time or external consultant	Medium

PLACES

Objective: To provide a diversity of quality and accessible sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping walking and cycling trails that connect townships, link destinations and create circular routes Supporting Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley mountain bike park Identification of cycling and walking events 				
3	Footpaths and shared trails	Continue to deliver the strategic footpath network improvement program	None		No costed	Ongoing
4	Swimming pools	Continue to provide, maintain and upgrade swimming pools in Corryong and Tallangatta.	Sport and Recreation Victoria	Existing Council budget Sport and Recreation Victoria grant	Council staff External contractors where required	Ongoing
5	Waterways	Seek funding to install additional boat ramps, fishing platforms and canoe launching pads in strategic locations throughout Towong Shire.	Fishing clubs Canoe clubs / users	External funding required	External contractors	Medium
6	Waterways	Undertake a master plan for Lake Hume.	Lake Hume user groups	External funding required	External consultant	Medium
7	Play spaces	Undertake a play strategy to develop a framework to guide Council's investment in play, taking into consideration play value, diversity of play opportunities, distribution of play spaces, play space hierarchy, accessible play, nature based play, adventure play, condition of equipment,	Recreation Reserve Committees of Management Service Clubs	External funding required	External consultant	High

PLACES

Objective: To provide a diversity of quality and accessible sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
		areas of over and under supply, and geographic catchment.	Schools			
8	Public toilets	Undertake a review of public toilets in Towong Shire (at Recreation Reserves, parks, town centres and in buildings), taking into consideration condition location, catchment, remaining life span, features, areas of over- or under- supply, accessibility, baby change facilities, changing places facility, unisex toilets, operating hours, etc.	Recreation Reserve Committees of Management	External funding required	External consultant	Medium

PARTNERS

Objective: To work in partnership with community organisations, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
1	Clubs / organisations	Conduct an annual workshop with clubs / organisations to provide information about grants, governance, policy development and other relevant matters. Provide an opportunity at this workshop for clubs / organisations to share information with one another and discuss issues and opportunities.	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Ongoing
2	Clubs / organisations	Support clubs in undertaking an annual Come 'n' Try day in Towong Shire in partnership with Sport North East and State Sporting Associations to encourage local residents to learn about and experience some of the activities provided by local clubs and organisations.	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations Sport North East State Sporting Associations	Existing Council budget	No cost	Ongoing
3	Grants program	Plan for the future development of a community grants program, for projects that facilitate increased participation in recreational activity. This can be available to clubs and organisations to support facility developments / upgrades, programs, events, volunteer training and small equipment purchases.	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations	Existing Council budget	Funds will be required	High
4	DELWP and Parks Victoria	Hold meetings twice yearly with Parks Victoria, DELWP and Towong Shire Council to discuss active recreation issues including trail management.	Parks Victoria DELWP	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Ongoing

PARTNERS

Objective: To work in partnership with community organisations, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
5	Schools	Review agreements / memorandums of understanding for shared school and community facilities with a view to clarifying and improving issues such as usage through improved agreements.	Schools Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Ongoing
6	Health organisations	Work in partnership with Corryong Health and Tallangatta Health Services to provide physical activity opportunities for the community.	Corryong Health Tallangatta Health Services	Existing Council budget Some external funding may be required	Staff time	Medium
7	Neighbouring Local Government Authorities	Regularly liaise with neighbouring Local Government Authorities to discuss regional facility development / catchment and other related issues.	Neighbouring Local Government authorities	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Medium

PROCESSES

Objective: To provide a strategic framework to guide Council's decision making and investment in relation to sport and active recreation.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
1	Town Recreation Facility Framework	Adopt the Town Recreation Facility Framework as a tool to guide sport and active recreation development in the Shire.	None	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Adopted with this Plan
2	Project Assessment Tool	Adopt the Project Assessment Tool as a tool to undertake a preliminary prioritisation of projects for Council consideration.	None	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Adopted with this Plan
3	Asset Management	Develop a Recreation Facility Asset Database and update this as new information becomes available or conditions change.	None	Existing Council budget	Staff time	High
4	Community Directory	Review the current Community Directory and develop a system to alert and enable clubs and organisations to update their contact details annually in the community directory.	Sport and active recreation clubs / organisations	Existing Council budget	Staff time	High
5	Policy development	Establish a Developer Contributions Policy and a Minimum Social Infrastructure Requirements Policy to help guide future facility developments.	Developers	Existing Council budget	Staff time	High
6	Data collection and analysis	Collect and analyse data such as participation numbers, bicycle counts, etc to help provide an evidence base of successful initiatives and those that were not so successful.	None	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Medium
7	Resources	Investigate the feasibility of allocating additional staff resources to sport and active recreation	None	Existing Council budget	Staff time	High

PROCESSES

Objective: To provide a strategic framework to guide Council’s decision making and investment in relation to sport and active recreation.

No.	Strategic area	Strategic actions	Partners	Funding source	Resources	Priority
		planning, facility management, promotion, club support, partnership development and advocacy.				
8	Implementation and evaluation	Establish an internal working group to implement and evaluate the Recreation Strategy.	None	Existing Council budget	Staff time	Establish during process of adopting this Strategy.
9	Recreation Strategy	Prepare a new Recreation Strategy in 2033	Sport and Recreation Victoria	Sport and Recreation Victoria	Sport and Recreation Victoria grant with matching contribution from Council	Delivery in 2033