



Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

2021-2025



Acknowledgements and Statements

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their ongoing connection to the land and waters that make up Baw Baw Shire. We pay our respects to their Elders; past, present and emerging.

We thank the Traditional Custodians for caring for Country and continuing the customs that maintain the longest practised culture in the world.

Baw Baw Shire Council's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Baw Baw Shire Council is committed to providing and actively promoting a safe environment for children. Council has zero tolerance towards child abuse, and is committed to protecting the physical, emotional, cultural and social wellbeing of all children. Council has policies and systems to protect children, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously. Council acknowledges that children's safety is a whole of community responsibility and is everyone's business.

Preventing Violence Against Women

Council promotes the prevention of violence against women, through leading gender equity, building respectful and safe relationships and breaking down gender stereotypes.

Statement of Partnership

The Baw Baw Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25 (MPHWP) has been developed in partnership with the local Integrated Health Promotion funded organisations, West Gippsland Healthcare Group (WGHG) and Central West Gippsland Primary Care Partnership (CWGPCP). It is the intention of Baw Baw Shire Council and these organisations to work toward integrating their prevention and health promotion actions. It is envisaged that over the life of the 2021-25 MPHWP, the collaboration between these agencies will see the integration of the three individual plans into a single guiding document for health promotion action in Baw Baw Shire.

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1 Message from the Mayor

Mayor's Message

This year, Council facilitated one of the most significant and thorough community consultation processes in our history. It was in service to the creation of a new Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire.

That vision articulates what our community collectively values and sees as guiding priorities for our future together. It can be summed up with three pillars: sustainable, healthy, thriving.

These pillars are evident throughout this Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and they've fed directly into the plan's priorities, goals and strategies for achieving them.

It goes without saying that health and wellbeing is important to each and every one of us. Creating a healthy Baw Baw Shire community is about more than promoting physical health, active living and healthy eating. It's also about promoting good mental health. It is about making people safe, promoting gender equity and preventing family violence. It is about sustaining rich natural environments and nurturing thriving economies that can support learning and financial security.

The Baw Baw Shire community is growing exceptionally quickly. Our population is expanding, and its make-up is changing. Achieving our health and wellbeing goals will require the cooperation and collaboration of individuals, communities, government bodies and industry.

To make sure all voices are heard, Council's Healthy Baw Baw Advisory Committee and several key service delivery partners have played crucial roles in the preparation of this plan.

Council's Advisory Committee is supported by the following organisations:

- Victoria Police
- The Department of Families Fairness and Housing
- Central West Gippsland Primary Care Partnership
- West Gippsland Healthcare Group
- Quantum Support Services
- Gippsport
- Gippsland Primary Health Network

I wish to thank all parties involved in the creation of this plan. It sets a clear course for how our Shire will approach and promote public health and wellbeing in our region over the coming four years. I look forward to putting it into action and working together for a healthy Baw Baw.



Cr Danny Goss
Mayor of Baw Baw Shire

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2 What is the Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025?

The Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 guides Council’s statutory responsibility under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, *Gender Equality Act 2020*, and *Local Government Act 2020*, for improving the health and wellbeing of the Baw Baw Shire community.

The Plan describes how Council will fulfill its statutory obligations of service provision, good governance, advocacy, regulation, and capacity building. The Plan focuses on four priority areas; Active Living, Healthy Eating, Mental Wellbeing, and Gender Equity and Prevention of Family Violence. It identifies how Council will work with its partners to support health and wellbeing in the municipality and considers tackling the impacts of impacts of Climate Change a co-benefit to these priorities.

This four year strategic Plan will be supported by an Action Plan which will identify Council and stakeholder initiatives and aligns with local Integrated Health Promotion agencies priorities. The Plan and Action Plan will be reviewed annually.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*¹ requires municipal public health and wellbeing plans to:

1. Have regard to the themes and priorities in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023,
2. Be consistent with the Council Plan and Municipal Strategic Statement,
3. Specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the Baw Baw Shire community, and
4. Specify how Council will work in partnership with other agencies delivering public health initiatives.

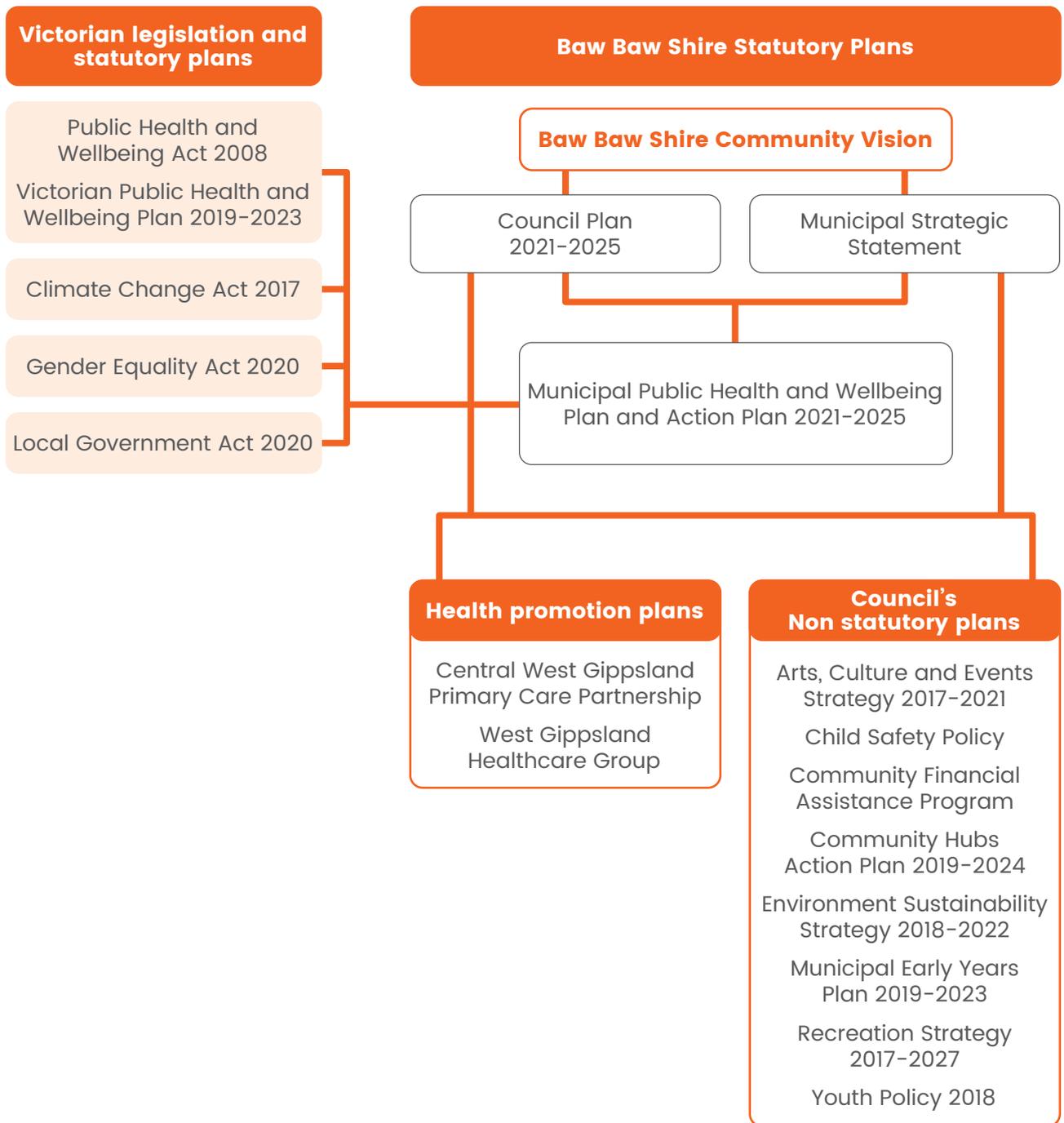
In accordance with section 9 of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, this Plan has been prepared and will be implemented giving consideration to the effects of the plan on gender equity and people of different genders.

This Plan draws on an understanding of Baw Baw Shire’s social, economic and health profile, and best practice in addressing our community and stakeholders’ health priorities for the next four years.

Baw Baw Shire’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 supports and is supported by Council’s Youth Strategy 2018–2022 and the Municipal Early Years Plan 2019–2023. The legislative and strategic policy framework can be seen in figure 1 below.

¹ Section 26 (2) (ba)

Figure 1 – Legislative and strategic policy framework



3 What challenges have influenced the development of the Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025?



The COVID-19 pandemic and Climate Change are two key challenges which threaten the mental and physical health and wellbeing of our community. These challenges influenced the development of the Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.

3.1 COVID-19 Pandemic

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities in Baw Baw Shire.

The direct effects of the pandemic in Baw Baw Shire saw changes to the way most people were educated, worked, shopped, socialised or participated in community activities. The pandemic impacted the way we celebrated and commemorated life in our community. For Council, the pandemic impacted some services, including those designed to support and care for vulnerable residents. Venues, including the West Gippsland Arts Centre were closed during lockdown periods and organised sport cancelled or postponed.

The scale of changes required by all to face the pandemic are expected to have long term implications for the ongoing health and wellbeing of the community.² During the pandemic, Victorians expressed that they experienced lower levels of life satisfaction, felt less socially connected, consumed more alcohol and experienced greater food and financial insecurity.³ Isolation, changes to employment, diet and a reduction of physical activity may all impact our ability to maintain health and wellbeing goals.

This Plan includes strategies to address the health and wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Baw Baw Shire community by increasing resilience and promoting inclusion.

3.2 Climate Change

“Climate and environmental change impact many aspects of life that are inextricably linked to health – food security, economic livelihoods, air safety and water and sanitation systems.” – World Health Organisation

The clear link between climate change, environmental sustainability, and health, highlight an important challenge affecting our wellbeing, resilience, and ability to thrive.⁴ The Climate Change Act 2017 requires local government to address climate change when preparing their municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

Tackling climate change and its impact on health is one of the four focus areas of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023 and is a key consideration of the Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021-2025. Actions that manage climate change risks and facilitate a transition to a climate-resilient community and economy are co-benefits to the health and wellbeing of the Baw Baw community.

Gippsland is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Our agricultural production and fauna and flora are threatened by reduced rainfall and water supply, and extreme weather events. Rising sea levels have consequences for our lakes and water sources.⁵ In Baw Baw, the floods in the winter of 2021 damaged infrastructure and vegetation, threatened power supplies and displaced members of our community.

² Australia's Health 2020 –

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/be95235d-fd4d-4824-9ade-34b7491dd66f/aihw-aus-231.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

³ VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study – <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/coronavirus-victorian-wellbeing-impact-study> [accessed 8 July 2021]

⁴ How Local Health Districts can prepare for the effects of climate change: an adaptation model applied to metropolitan Sydney. Australian Health Review 43, Rychetnik Lucie, Sainsbury Peter, Stewart Greg (2018) 601-610.

⁵ Climate Commission The Critical Decade @013 Climate Change Science Risks and Responses – <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/b7e53b20a7d6573e1ab269d36bb9b07c.pdf> [accessed 7 July 2021]

It is projected that the maximum and minimum daily temperatures will continue to increase across Gippsland in the future. While rainfall is expected to continue to decline in the long term, extreme rainfall events are expected to become more intense in the region.⁶ Extreme heat days and increased risk of fire and smoke affect everybody, especially older people and younger people, pregnant women, people living in low income households, and people with pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma or heart disease.⁷ Poor air quality also compromises our mental and physical health by increasing the risk of human injury and reducing our ability to engage in physical exercise and socialise.⁸

Climate change has a direct impact on the increased occurrence of 'fire weather' which sees low humidity and high temperatures combined with strong winds.⁹ 2019 was a year of extreme fire weather events with the Bunyip State Park and the Walhalla - Stoney Creek Complex fires directly impacting the region. The 2019-20 Black Summer fires also had long term impacts on the residents of Baw Baw Shire and surrounding communities. Due to the topography of these remote areas, many residents live with a heightened

awareness of extreme weather events which are then impacted by isolation. The recent combination of fires, floods and pandemic negatively affect health and wellbeing and can contribute to communities experiencing cumulative trauma.

Droughts and floods caused by climate change are also a direct threat to our food security as they disrupt food production. This is significant in Baw Baw Shire as the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector is the second largest employment sector in the municipality (after health care and social assistance).¹⁰

It is estimated that 30% of people affected by climate change are at risk of psychological impacts ranging from mild anxiety to significant mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, grief and substance use.¹¹ The impacts of Climate Change on the health and wellbeing of Baw Baw Shire residents will be a key consideration for the Action Plan. Health prevention initiatives that recognise or mitigate the health impacts of climate change achieve a co-benefit for the community.

⁶ Clarke JM, Grose M, Thatcher M, Hernaman V, Heady C, Round V, Rafter T, Trenham C & Wilson L. 2019. *Victorian Climate Projections 2019 Technical Report*. CSIRO, Melbourne Australia.

⁷ Gippsland Public Health Network <https://www.gphn.org.au/resources/smoke-health/> [accessed 15 June 2021] and Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023

⁸ Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023

⁹ *The 2019-20 bushfires: a CSIRO explainer* - CSIRO

¹⁰ ABS Census of Population and Housing 2016 compiled by i.d consulting (Economic Profile)

¹¹ Australian Psychological Association - <https://www.psychology.org.au/About-Us/What-we-do/advocacy/Advocacy-social-issues/Environment-climate-change-psychology/Resources-for-Psychologists-and-others-advocating/Climate-change-and-health> [accessed 13 July 2021]

4 What are Council's commitments to enhancing community health and wellbeing?

The Plan and associated action plans are founded on the following commitments:

- Adopting strategies based on a sound evidence base.
- Adopting a public health approach to addressing health inequities and preventing ill health.
- Collaborating with partners and agencies to improve the health and wellbeing of the Baw Baw Community.
- Adopting of a 'whole of Council' approach to implementing the strategies and actions in the Plan and annual action plans.
- Reducing organisational barriers which limit the implementation of the strategies and actions in the Plan and annual action plans.
- Providing the community with resources to support healthy lifestyle choices.

The strategies focus on addressing inequities in health status among groups in the community with the strategies and actions taking the following population groups into account:

- people experiencing social and economic disadvantage
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- children, young people, and older people
- people of all genders, identities, and sexual orientations
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people with compromised mental and physical health and wellbeing status
- people living in remote areas.

The actions will be implemented where the community lives, works, plays, learns and engages in physical activity.

¹² Adapted from the principles underpinning the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

¹³ Adapted from the Victorian public health and wellbeing outcomes framework data dictionary

5 Baw Baw Shire's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 at a glance

The Plan is structured around four priorities which have been identified as important to address the health and wellbeing needs of the Baw Baw Shire Community. The priorities align with the new Community Vision: 'Sustainable. Healthy. Thriving,' with Healthy and well people living in safe, connected communities and healthy environments, and the focus areas in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023. The four priorities also align with the focus areas of our local Health Promotion funded

organisations who will be our partners during the implementation of this Plan. These priorities reflect the drivers of change likely to affect our health and wellbeing over the next four years, and the areas where Council has most influence in preventing, rather than responding to, poor physical and mental wellbeing and health. Figure 2 provides an overview of the Community Vision for Baw Baw and how this Plan's priorities, goals and strategies aim to support that vision.



Figure 2 – Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 at a glance

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Vision</p> | <p>Sustainable. Healthy. Thriving. Healthy and well people living in safe, socially connected communities and healthy environments.</p> | | | |
| <p>Priorities</p> | <p>1. Active living</p> | <p>2. Healthy eating</p> | <p>3. Mental wellbeing</p> | <p>4. Gender equality and prevention of family violence</p> |
| <p>Goals</p> | <p>To increase participation in active living, arts and culture for everyone</p> | <p>To support equitable access to adequate, affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food and beverages</p> | <p>To enhance mental wellbeing by creating resilient, connected, and socially inclusive communities</p> | <p>To create a more gender equitable and respectful community that is free from violence</p> |
| <p>Strategies</p> | <p>1.1 Deliver and support environments for active living and participation in arts and culture</p> <p>1.2 Promote active living to increase overall wellbeing in the Baw Baw Shire community</p> <p>1.3 Support initiatives that encourage active and passive physical activity and participation in arts and culture for all</p> | <p>2.1 Support increased consumption of healthy food and beverages</p> <p>2.2 Increase food security</p> <p>2.3 Support environmentally sustainable local food systems</p> | <p>3.1 Support initiatives that promote equal access to services and resources, increase resilience and promote social inclusion</p> <p>3.2 Increase awareness of mental health and mental wellbeing</p> <p>3.3 Support opportunities for volunteering, participation in arts and culture, and lifelong learning</p> | <p>4.1 Increase community awareness, understanding and attitudes towards gender equity and respect</p> <p>4.2 Promote social inclusion and support the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community</p> <p>4.3 Support initiatives that prevent family violence</p> |

6 Our community

Baw Baw Shire is located in the West Gippsland region of Victoria, approximately 100 kilometres east of the Melbourne CBD. It is surrounded by the Shires of Mansfield, Yarra Ranges, Cardinia, South Gippsland, and Wellington, and the City of Latrobe.

The Baw Baw Shire community is expected to grow from nearly 55,000 people to more than 84,000 people in 2041.

For every 100 people in Baw Baw Shire:¹⁴

- One person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 49 are males and 51 are females
- 9 are primary school students, 6 are secondary school students and 5 are tertiary students

For every 100 people over the age of 15 years in Baw Baw Shire:¹⁵

- At least 88 are working, 5 are unemployed and 6 are not looking for work
- At least 73 drive and 3 walk to work, while 7 work at home (pre COVID-19)
- 12 provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability and 24 do voluntary work

For every 100 households in Baw Baw Shire:¹⁶

- Approximately 72 are family households, 25 are single or lone person households and 2 are group households
- 76 own their own homes outright or with a mortgage, 21 rent their homes
- 16 have no internet connection
- 10 are experiencing housing stress
- 4 don't have access to a car

Compared with Gippsland, Baw Baw Shire:¹⁷

- Is younger with a median age of 42 compared with 45
- Has more family households (72% compared with 67%)
- Has more tertiary qualifications (44% compared with 40%)
- Has more people of all ages engaged in education, including pre-school (21% compared with 19%)
- Has higher personal, family and household incomes
- Has more people caring for children (29% compared with 26%)
- Has fewer families where both parents weren't working (22% compared with 26%)
- Has fewer households with no motor vehicles (4% compared with 6%)
- Has fewer households with no internet connection (16% compared with 20%)

One of the purposes of the Plan is to address health inequities between different groups in the Baw Baw Shire community.

Baw Baw Shire is less disadvantaged compared with the Gippsland region but has concentrations of people experiencing significant social and economic disadvantage throughout the shire.

¹⁴ ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016, compiled by i.d consulting

¹⁵ ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016, compiled by i.d consulting

¹⁶ ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016, compiled by i.d consulting

¹⁷ ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016, compiled by i.d consulting

7 Our priorities and strategic directions

The goal for our four priorities over the next four years will be:



Please see the Appendix 1 for an overview of the alignment between the Plans' priorities and goals and the focus areas of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023, and Baw Baw Shire's new Community Vision and draft Council Plan 2021-2025.

7.1 Priority 1 – Active Living

What the evidence says

Our attachment to the natural environment in towns, villages, and open spaces, is critical for our mental and physical health and wellbeing.¹⁸ Active living involves engaging in physical activity in the built and natural environment on a regular basis. It includes all movement undertaken during leisure time, active transport or as part of our work. People of all abilities can have active lives by walking, hiking, cycling, wheeling, swimming, fishing, engaging in arts and culture events such as dancing, and playing sport.

Engaging in sufficient physical activity improves overall wellbeing and can prevent non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, and improves mental wellbeing. It can enhance cognitive skills in both adults and children and ensures healthy growth and development in young people.¹⁹

Physical inactivity in Australia detracts from social and economic prosperity as it puts a burden on the healthcare system, reduces economic productivity and lowers life expectancy.²⁰ The economic costs to the public healthcare system resulting from physical inactivity include increased medical costs involved in addressing ill health.²¹

Safe and inclusive public open spaces create strong communities by providing opportunities for people to socialise and interact.

Certain groups such as women and girls, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, older people, people experiencing social and economic disadvantage and people with a disability, face inequitable barriers to physical activity.²²

What the statistics say

- In the 12 months prior to June 2021, a 43% increase in the utilisation of Council's designated walking trails and pathways was recorded taking user numbers towards 550,000 for the year.
- In 2019, just over half of the adults in Baw Baw Shire met physical activity guidelines (52%)²³

In 2019, in organised sport affiliated with a State Sport Association:²⁴

- 17.4% of adults participated in one or more sport compared to the state average of 16.8%.
 - Female participation was 12.7% which was slightly lower than the state average at 13%
 - Male participation was at 22.3% which was higher than the state average of 20.5%
- 60.7% of children (4-14 years) participated in one or more sport, which was lower than the state average of 66.1%
- 34.7 percent of youth (15-25) participated in one or more sport, which was slightly higher than the state average
- Female rates of participation in organised sport are lower in every age bracket

¹⁸ Cabanek, A., Zingoni de Baro, M.E. & Newman, P. *Biophilic streets: a design framework for creating multiple urban benefits*. *Sustain Earth* 3, 7 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42055-020-00027-0>

¹⁹ World Health Organisation Fact Sheet Physical Activity 2020 - [<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity> accessed 17 June 2021]

²⁰ http://www.medibank.com.au/client/documents/pdfs/the_cost_of_physical_inactivity_08.pdf

²¹ Medibank 2008 *The cost of physical inactivity* http://www.medibank.com.au/client/documents/pdfs/the_cost_of_physical_inactivity_08.pdf [accessed 8 July 2021]

²² VicHealth *Increasing participation in physical activity Local government action guide no 3*.

²³ Victorian Public Health Survey 2017

²⁴ *Participation in Sporting Clubs in selected Fields of Sport by age and sex. Victorian Municipalities, 2019*

Community Sentiment

Participants in the 2021 Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire identified the need for more activities and community spaces for youth, better provision for outdoor recreation opportunities, including shaded and shelter areas and improved paths and trails, and greater diversity in active recreation options.

Goal, strategies, and outcomes

Goal

To increase participation in active living, arts and culture for everyone

Strategies

- 1.1 Deliver and support environments for active living and participation in arts and culture
- 1.2 Promote active living to increase overall wellbeing in the Baw Baw Shire community
- 1.3 Support initiatives that encourage active and passive physical activity and participation in arts and culture for all

What does success look like?

More people, including groups experiencing barriers to active lifestyles, engage in physical activity in Baw Baw Shire's built and natural environment resulting in more connected communities and an increase in physical activity across the Shire.



7.2 Priority 2 – Healthy eating

What the evidence says

Food security requires constant access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.²⁵

Nutrition and food security are closely linked and are key to good health. A healthy, equitable, sustainable and resilient food system supports connected communities and promotes food security. Events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and extreme weather events have impacted Baw Baw Shire community's access to nutritious food due to financial hardship and impacts on agriculture and local food supplies.

Food insecurity impacts both mental and physical health and wellbeing as it can cause anxiety and malnutrition. Poor

nutrition and the consumption of sugary drinks can lead to dental decay and gum disease which in turn may affect a person's ability to consume healthy and nutritious food.

Young people, older people and those experiencing social and economic barriers may experience barriers to healthy eating due to a lack of choice in their local neighbourhoods or an inability to afford nutritious food.

Council is part of the Baw Baw Food Security Coalition which focuses on increasing access to, and consumption of, healthy and nutritious food for the Baw Baw Shire community.²⁶

What the statistics say

In Baw Baw Shire²⁷

- 79% of adults have takeaway 1 or less times a week compared to the state average of 69.1%
- 10.3% of adults consume sugar sweetened beverages daily, almost on par with the state average of 10.1%
- 52.1% of adults consume two or more serves of fruit daily, this is higher than the state average of 43.2%
- Only 6.9% of adults eat the recommended 5 or more servings of vegetables per day, which is only slightly higher than the state average of 6.4%
- Towns in rural areas of Baw Baw Shire experience reduced access to affordable foods, as smaller independent stores are their only source of groceries
- A typical family of four and single adults are spending on average 27% of their income on food, while single parent families are spending on average 22% of their income on food
- An estimated 4,989 Baw Baw residents were provided food relief and support through Baw Baw Emergency Food Relief Network (EFRN) providers

²⁵ World Health Organisation

²⁶ Food Security – Baw Baw | Central West Gippsland PCP

²⁷ 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>

Community Sentiment

Participants in the 2021 Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire requested that our food and water supply be considered when developing farmland for housing, that new developments allow space for residential gardens and that the local food markets and food production business are supported. The work of Baw Baw Food Relief was recognised as an important and “wonderful initiative”.

Goal, strategies, and outcomes

Goal

To support equitable access to adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and beverages.

Strategies

- 2.1 Support increased consumption of healthy food and beverages
- 2.2 Increase food security
- 2.3 Support environmentally sustainable local food systems.

What does success look like?

Everyone in Baw Baw Shire has equitable access to adequate, affordable, safe, sustainable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and beverages.



7.3 Priority 3 – Mental wellbeing

What the evidence says

Mental health is defined as “a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community”.²⁸ Poor mental health can have a significant impact on individuals, causing isolation, discrimination and stigma,²⁹ personal injury and self-harm including suicide.

Good mental health will enable the Baw Baw Shire community to participate in society fully and effectively, regardless of their age, socio-economic status, cultural background or physical health status.³⁰ People at greatest risk of experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing include young people, carers, people experiencing social and economic disadvantage, older people and LGBTQIA+ people.³¹

LGBTQIA+ people experience disproportionately high rates of poor mental health and wellbeing. This is due to stigma, prejudice, discrimination, harassment and abuse on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status or sexual identity.³²

Social connections involve the people we know, the friends we can confide in, the family we belong to and the groups we participate in during work, volunteering, exercise and arts and cultural events.³³

Social inclusion refers to policies or programs that remove barriers to participation in mainstream society.³⁴ Social exclusion, which can result from factors such as geographic isolation or lower incomes, can reduce people’s access to services such as health, education and housing, and lead to higher rates of mental health issues such as depression.³⁵

Factors such as gender inequality, domestic violence, poverty, unemployment, reduced employment, substance abuse, gambling-related harms and homelessness all contribute to poor mental health and wellbeing.

Social connection, resilience and social capital are protective factors against mental illness.³⁶ Arts and culture can support lifelong learning, support caregiving, and help people experiencing mental illness. Participation in culturally diverse forms of arts and culture can strengthen communities by promoting engagement by socially and economically disadvantaged groups.³⁷

Natural and physical environments can support mental health by providing access to green spaces which promote opportunities to engage in physical activity, arts and cultural events and interact with others.

²⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) *Australia’s health 2018. Australia’s health series no. 16. AUS 221.* Canberra: AIHW.

²⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) *Australia’s health 2018. Australia’s health series no. 16. AUS 221.* Canberra: AIHW.

³⁰ *Reference State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, Final Report, Summary and recommendations, Parl Paper No. 202, Session 2018–21 (document 1 of 6)*

³¹ Sax Institute Evidence Check – Mental wellbeing risk & protective factors <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/General/VicHealth-Attachment-1---Evidence-review-of-risk--protective-factors.pdf?la=en&hash=4CFF1B8DDE1E3CE257289448655A136AB5B4C16> [accessed 8 July 2021]

³² <https://lgbtihealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SNAPSHOT-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention-Outcomes-for-LGBTI-people-and-communities.pdf>, Queensland Public Sector Commission LGBTQIA+ inclusion strategy 2017–2022 <https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/lgbtiq-inclusion-strategy.pdf?v=1491458841>

³³ VicHealth: *Opportunities for social connection. Addressing the social and economic determinants of mental and physical health.*

³⁴ VicHealth: *Opportunities for social connection. Addressing the social and economic determinants of mental and physical health.*

³⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. *Australia’s health 2020 data insights. Australia’s health series no. 17. Cat. no. AUS 231.* Canberra: AIHW.

³⁶ VicHealth Local Government Action Guides *Improving mental wellbeing* <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/vichealth-indicators-action-guides-2015> [accessed 19 June 2021]

³⁷ Fancourt D, Finn S. *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review.* Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019 (Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report 67)]

Community Sentiment

Participants in the 2021 Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire identified the need for more support for those suffering mental illness, greater advocacy for mental health awareness and noted the need address youth suicide rates and “invest in our teens – in their mental health”.

The need to better care for the natural environment to support mental health was also recognised.

What the statistics say

In Baw Baw Shire

- In 2018, 8.3% of children were developmentally vulnerable in the emotional domain at school entry (Victoria 8.1%).³⁸
- 14.2% of adults reported high or very high levels of psychological distress (Victoria 15.4%)³⁹
- 17.0% of adults reported low or medium agreement with feeling that life is worthwhile (Victoria 16.7%)⁴⁰
- More than a third (35.4%) of adults in Baw Baw Shire have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression – this is higher than the average for Gippsland (33%)⁴¹
- Although almost a quarter of Victorians aged 15 years or older (24.4 %) undertook voluntary work through an organisation or group in the 12 months prior to September 2020, this is significantly lower than the 32.1 % for 2019⁴² and continues a ten year downward trend in volunteering rates⁴³

Goal, strategies, and outcomes

Goal

To enhance mental wellbeing by creating resilient, connected, and socially inclusive communities.

Strategies

- 3.1 Support initiatives that promote equal access to services and resources, increase resilience and promote social inclusion
- 3.2 Increase awareness of mental health and mental wellbeing
- 3.2 Support opportunities for volunteering, participation in arts and culture, and lifelong learning

What does success look like?

Greater participation in lifelong learning, arts, culture and volunteering leads to greater social inclusion, resilience and connection for our Baw Baw Community, people, including young and older people feel valued, have equal access to services and facilities, and have the opportunity to participate fully in activities and programs that support mental health and wellbeing

³⁸ PHIDU Social Health Atlas

³⁹ VPHS 2017

⁴⁰ VPHS 2017

⁴¹ Gippsland PHN Population Health Planning Hub

⁴² General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2019 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

⁴³ Re-engaging Volunteers and COVID-19 (volunteeringaustralia.org)

7.4 Priority 4 – Gender equity and prevention of family violence

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*⁴⁴ requires municipal public health and wellbeing plans to specify measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the Baw Baw community.

What the evidence says

Gender equity seeks to prevent the physical, psychological and economic harm created by inequitable situations.⁴⁵ Gender inequity can lead to poor health and wellbeing outcomes for all but disproportionately affects women and gender diverse people. Community and workplace stereotypes contribute to inequity and can support the 'gender pay gap', the 'superannuation gap'⁴⁶ and gendered stereotypes around caring and parenting responsibilities.

Violence against women is the biggest contributor to ill health and premature death in women aged 15 to 44 years.⁴⁷ Violence against women affects the whole community. Groups at a greater risk include women living with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in rural and remote areas, and immigrant and refugee women.⁴⁸

What the statistics say

In Baw Baw Shire

In Baw Baw Shire:

- Although adult females were 2.5% more likely to be employed as managers or professionals than adult males, the male average income was 6.6% higher than the female average income.⁴⁹
- Females experienced and reported family violence at rates 215% higher than males in 2019–20.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Section 26 (2) (ba)

⁴⁵ <https://www.genvic.org.au/about-us/the-harm-of-gender-inequity/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.genvic.org.au/resources/gender-equity-statistics/>

⁴⁷ VicHealth [Gender Equality | VicHealth accessed 19 June 2021]

⁴⁸ VicHealth [Gender Equality | VicHealth accessed 19 June 2021]

⁴⁹ Differences in Social Conditions and Outcomes by Gender: Victoria Municipalities, Census data 2016

⁵⁰ Vic Police 2020

Community Sentiment

Participants in the 2021 Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire recognised the need “To educate accepting diversity and inclusion in the community” The need to “correct the imbalance towards men’s sport” was also identified.

Goal, strategies, and outcomes

Goal

To create a more gender equitable and respectful community that is free from violence.

Strategies

- 4.1 Increase community awareness, understanding and attitudes towards gender equity and respect
- 4.2 Promote social inclusion and support the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community
- 4.3 Support initiatives that prevent family violence

What does success look like?

Baw Baw Shire is a more gender equitable and respectful community that is free from violence.



8 Implementing and evaluating our municipal public health and wellbeing plan



Council will collaborate with our partners over the lifetime of the Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 to ensure we collectively respond to the identified health and wellbeing priorities in our community.

Implementation of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 will be supported by an Action Plan and is a 'whole of council' responsibility. The action plan will identify stakeholder, partner and Council lead strategies and actions and be reviewed annually. Each action will be accompanied by measurable outcomes which will assist in evaluating their success, and the overall success of the Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.

For Council led initiatives, the first year of the action plan will focus on overcoming governance and legislative barriers which may restrict Council's capacity to implement actions or consolidate the achievements of previous action plans.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires Council to annually review the Plan and if appropriate, amend the Plan and Action Plan. This will be undertaken in collaboration with our partners the Healthy Baw Baw Advisory Committee to ensure we are successful in achieving the Baw Baw Community Vision for a sustainable, healthy and thriving Baw Baw community.



Appendix 1

Overview of alignment

1. **Baw Baw Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025**
2. **Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023**
3. **Baw Baw Shire Community Vision**
4. **Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021–2025**

| Baw Baw Shire Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 Priority –Active living Strategies: | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1.1 Deliver and support environments for active living and participation in arts and culture 1.2 Promote active living to increase overall wellbeing in the Baw Baw Shire Community 1.3 Support initiatives that encourage active and passive physical activity and arts and culture for all | | |
| Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023 Focus Area: <i>Increasing active living</i> | Baw Baw Shire Community Vision <i>Sustainable. Healthy. Thriving.</i> | Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021–2025 <i>Overarching Strategies</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve neighbourhood and precinct planning to better support active living • Increase accessible and adaptable spaces for active living, ensuring compliance with appropriate state and national regulations and standards | 1.3 Infrastructure (e.g. roads, public transport, public amenities) that keeps pace with our region’s growing population and changing technology, enabling business and broader community to stay local. 3.4 Resourced and effective services that support those in our community when they need it. Positively impacting their lives. 4.1 Safe, accessible and inclusive community spaces and places throughout Baw Baw Shire that change alongside our community and help people connect. 4.2 A welcoming and accepting community for all people, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality or age. 5.1 Protected rural and natural environments that support the health of our local wildlife, trees, rivers and forests; as well as places and landscapes for our community to enjoy and gain positive mental, social and physical health benefits. 7.2 Diverse and vibrant recreation and cultural places, spaces and offerings that bring our community together (e.g. arts, parks, community hubs). | 1. Planning for a sustainable, healthy and thriving Baw Baw Shire. 3. Advocating for strategic priorities and those services and facilities needed by the community. 6. Supporting community connectivity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation. 7. Creating environments that support a diversity of sports and recreation opportunities and walkable communities across the shire. |

Baw Baw Shire Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025

Priority – Healthy eating

Strategies:

- 2.1 Support increased consumption of healthy food and beverages
- 2.2 Increase food security
- 2.3 Support environmentally sustainable local food systems

| Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023 Focus Area: <i>Increasing healthy eating</i> | Baw Baw Shire Community Vision <i>Sustainable. Healthy. Thriving.</i> | Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021–2025 <i>Overarching Strategies</i> |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to healthier food and drinks, and decrease access to discretionary foods and drinks • Increase capacity to breastfeed, and prepare and consume healthier foods and drinks | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.3 Balance the demand for new housing development and infrastructure (e.g. roads) with the protection and support of productive agriculture land and agricultural industry across the region. 3.2 Health and wellbeing services that are connected and actively work together, providing care and support to those with multiple needs. 5.2 Resilient people and communities prepared and ready to deal with significant challenges and disruptions, including the impacts of climate change and extreme events. | <p>Objective</p> <p>Advocacy on behalf of community health and wellbeing related needs.</p> <p>Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning for a sustainable, healthy and thriving Baw Baw Shire. 3. Advocating for strategic priorities and those services and facilities needed by the community. 4. Sustainably protecting and managing the natural environment, and agricultural land. 5. Supporting community health, safety, and wellbeing, including mental health. 8. Responding to and readying for climate change, emergency events, disruption, and transition. |

Baw Baw Shire Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Priority – Mental wellbeing

Strategies:

- 3.1 Support initiatives that promote equal access to services and resources, increase resilience and promote social inclusion
- 3.2 Increase awareness of mental health and mental wellbeing
- 3.2 Support opportunities for volunteering, participation in arts and culture, and lifelong learning

| <p>Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023</p> <p>Focus Area:</p> <p><i>Improving mental wellbeing</i></p> | <p>Baw Baw Shire Community Vision</p> <p><i>Sustainable. Healthy. Thriving.</i></p> | <p>Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021-2025</p> <p><i>Overarching Strategies</i></p> |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in the prevalence of mental illness, and increased resilience among Victorian individuals, families and communities • Reductions in the gap in social and emotional wellbeing for at risk groups, including Aboriginal Victorians, with an emphasis on loneliness and increasing social connectedness • Reductions in the occurrence of suicide deaths, suicidal ideation and suicidal attempt, and the gap between the suicide rates for vulnerable groups and the general population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.4 Resourced and effective services that support those in our community when they need it. Positively impacting their lives. 4.1 Safe, accessible and inclusive community spaces and places throughout Baw Baw Shire that change alongside our community and help people connect. 4.2 A welcoming and accepting community for all people, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality or age. 5.2 Resilient people and communities prepared and ready to deal with significant challenges and disruptions, including the impacts of climate change and extreme events. 6.1 A diverse, self-sustaining and resilient economy focussed on local industry and small business; helping businesses to thrive across the region. 7.3 Access to high quality and diverse tertiary education options available to people across the community, including physical campuses, as well as remote learning opportunities. | <p>Objective</p> <p>Advocacy on behalf of community health and wellbeing related needs.</p> <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Advocating for strategic priorities and those services and facilities needed by the community 5. Supporting community health, safety, and wellbeing, including mental health. 8. Responding to and readying for climate change, emergency events, disruption, and transition. |

Baw Baw Shire Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Priority – Gender equity and prevention of family violence

Strategies:

4.1 Increase community awareness, understanding and attitudes towards gender equity and respect

4.2 Promote social inclusion and support the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community

4.3 Support initiatives that prevent family violence

| <p>Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023 Focus Area: <i>Preventing all forms of family violence</i></p> | <p>Baw Baw Shire Community Vision <i>Sustainable. Healthy. Thriving.</i></p> | <p>Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021-2025 <i>Overarching Strategies</i></p> |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, men, girls, and boys are treated equally with respect and dignity • All parts of the community are engaged in practical and creative ways to learn about respectful, safe and equitable relationships • Women and children are resourced, supported and empowered to make decisions regarding their safety and wellbeing • All Victorians feel safe and empowered to take a stand against family violence | <p>3.4 Resourced and effective services that support those in our community when they need it. Positively impacting their lives.</p> <p>4.1 Safe, accessible and inclusive community spaces and places throughout Baw Baw Shire that change alongside our community and help people connect.</p> <p>4.2 A welcoming and accepting community for all people, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality or age.</p> | <p>Objective Advocacy on behalf of community health and wellbeing related needs.</p> <p>Strategies</p> <p>3. Advocating for strategic priorities and those services and facilities needed by the community.</p> <p>5. Supporting community health, safety, and wellbeing, including mental health.</p> |

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