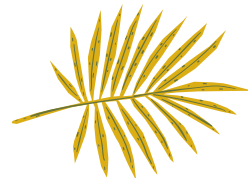


# Swan Hill District Health

## Community Health- Health Promotion

### 2025-2029 Plan



*Community Health*

## Acknowledgement of country

Swan Hill District Health would like to acknowledge First Nations communities of the Wamba Wamba, Waddi Waddi, Barapa Barapa, Latji Latji and the Tatti Tatti people on whose land, we work and live. We pay respect to all Elders past and present and honour their connection to the land and water.



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## Contents:

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Planning Approach</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strategic plan 2025-2029</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Healthy eating:</b>	<b>11</b>
Nutrition	12
Food Systems	14
Breastfeeding	16
Oral Health	18
<b>Healthy Lifestyles:</b>	<b>20</b>
Active Living	21
Smoking Cessation	22
<b>Preventing All forms of Violence:</b>	<b>24</b>
Gender Equity	25

# Introduction

The Swan Hill local government area is situated in the far north-west corner of Victoria, within the Mallee sub-region of the Loddon Mallee. Swan Hill Local Government Area (LGA) is home to approximately 21,400 people. It is important to note that the Swan Hill LGA does include the township of Robinvale although Swan Hill District Health does not directly service the Robinvale community. We do have many partnerships with Robinvale services and benefit from shared learnings between our vibrant communities.

We are fortunate to have a diverse range of people make up the Swan Hill LGA including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from a variety of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the highest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria reside in the municipality, honoring their connections to water and land. One in four residents are born overseas and many speak languages other than English at home.

Swan Hill, much like Victoria has an ageing population with a higher burden of chronic disease and disability than the state average. The median income for individuals, families and households is below the state and Swan Hill has a considerably high homelessness rate.

The data suggests Swan Hill experiences higher rates in most health risk factors which may impact long-term health measures including higher rates of high blood pressure at 25.9% (compared to 24.1% for Victoria) and obesity (32.4% vs 23% for Victoria). Swan Hill also shows higher rates of current smokers (18.9% compared to 15.5% for Victoria), and people consuming more than two standard alcoholic drinks per day on average is 20.4% vs 14.4% in Victoria.<sup>1</sup>

As noted in the 2025-2029 Swan Hill Rural City Council Plan, Mallee Climate Projections 2024 show that by 2050, Swan Hill is likely to be 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer and have 4-8% less annual rainfall than 1986-2005, meaning hotter summers, more very hot days, and drier conditions impacting farming, water, infrastructure and health.



# Population snapshot



**21,400** in Swan Hill Rural City catchment with **10,650** in NSW border regions



**Higher birth rate** and total fertility rate than state average



All cancers above state average at **13.1%** compared to 10.7% in Victoria



**4.5%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population compared to the 1% state average



**Lower** SEIFA scores, impacting health outcomes and increasing demand



**32.4%** of the adult population obese compared to 23% in Victoria



**10.6%** migrant population with low English proficiency



111.4 per 10,000 population people experiencing homelessness compared to 46.9 in Victoria



**25.9%** adult population have high blood pressure compared to 24.1 in Victoria



**39 years** is the median age with 19% aged 65+



**\$1,376** median household income compared to \$1,746 Victoria wide



**10.1%** adult population have CVD and risk factors compared to 8.7% in Victoria



**Higher** rates of avoidable deaths than the Victorian rates



Subject to rising temperatures with average **31.2** degrees in summer



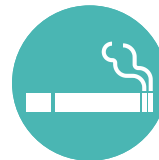
**5.6%** of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease compared to 3.8% in Victoria



Significant number of children **1,334** aged 0-4 years and **2,747** aged 5-19 years



**5<sup>th</sup> highest** in the state for family violence incidents out of 79 LGAs



Adult smokers above state average at **18.9%** compared to **14.6%** in Victoria

# Planning approach

The Swan Hill District Health (SHDH) - Health Promotion (HP) service, works in partnership with key stakeholders to provide a range of preventative initiatives to our communities based on locally identified priorities that are informed by evidence and state-wide data. The HP Department sits within Swan Hill Community Health, providing a range of inclusive and equitable health services to our community with the vision of

*Helping our community to grow and thrive through promoting healthy lifestyles, equity, inclusion and participation.*

## **OUR FRAMEWORK**

The Social Determinants of Health underpin the work of the SHDH-HP Plan, acknowledging the impact these have on health and wellbeing. The fact these determinants are largely responsible for inequalities in health outcomes across populations has led SHDH-HP to integrate health equity into practice and inform the work we do. Some people experience greater barriers and inequalities than others to living a healthy life, and as a result some communities experience poorer health outcomes than others. (ref: [Health-Equity-Strategy-2019.pdf \(vichealth.vic.gov.au\)](#)). SHDH-HP recognises the underlying determinants that support or hinder good health and put equity at the centre of our work.

Our team will work on priority areas with the key strategic directions and actions of health promotion (ref: Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion).

- Advocate, enable and mediate
- Build healthy public policy
- Create supportive environments / access
- Strengthen community action
- Develop personal skills /education and awareness
- Reorient health services

The following Practice Principles will underpin our work

- Outcomes-based health promotion – we will be evidence informed with clear program objectives and program logic, through a culture of ongoing evaluation, learning, action, reflection and experimentation.
- Local collaboration & community engagement- we will identify and strengthen partnerships to support the delivery, planning and design of health promotion initiatives, with a focus on self-sustaining programs.
- Intersectional health equity lens- we will provide more support to settings and population groups that experience disadvantage.
- Place-based approaches- we will consider local needs and local priorities and engage with community as an active partner in developing solutions
- Support other priorities – our work with support other health areas through complimentary and aligned actions.

# Planning approach

## **OUR PRIORITIES**

The 2025-2029 SHDH-HP Strategic Plan outlines the key initiatives SHDH-HP will implement, along with a 2025-2026 Annual Plan. Three key health priority areas have been identified which will guide actions to improve local health and wellbeing. These priority areas are:



### **Healthy Eating**

with a focus on Improved Nutrition, Food Systems, Breastfeeding and Oral Health.



### **Healthy Lifestyles**

with a focus on Smoking Cessation and Physical Activity



### **Preventing All Forms of Violence**

with a focus on Gender Equity in the Early Years

The SHDH-HP priority areas have been developed in conjunction with local and statewide priorities with the broad focus areas aligning to the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027, aimed at improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities for all Victorians. The plan also aligns with the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit Population Health Plan and the Swan Hill Rural City Council Plan.

The SHDH-HP eat.move.smile. campaign has been implemented for the past ten years and promotes key messages of eat –more fruit and vegetables, move – more often, and smile – together. These key messages will continue to be promoted and form the basis for our preventative health work.

Although not lead priority areas for SHDH-HP, we have two other areas of focus that are engrained across the work we do, these being Climate Change and Health and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

## **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Mental health is identified as a focus area within the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 and also recognised in the Swan Hill Rural City Council Plan for 2025-2029. A healthy lifestyle, that is good nutrition, regular physical activity and good sleep patterns, can lead to improved mental wellbeing. There is significant research to demonstrate the links between good nutrition and mood.

It is recognised that mental wellbeing is interconnected with physical health, social connectedness and healthy eating, and these considerations will be included in our action plan. Social inclusion, people having the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to learn, work, engage and have a voice, is an overarching theme across our SHDH-HP Plan, acknowledging that strong social connections are significant protective factors. To enhance measurement of this work we will be implementing the Social Inclusion Shared Measurement Project with relevant initiatives in partnership with the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit.

# Planning approach

## ***Climate change and health***

Climate change and health is identified as a focus area within the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027, the Swan Hill Rural City Council Plan for 2025-2029 and the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit Population Health Plan 2023-2025. Climate change impacts the health and wellbeing of the local population, disproportionately affecting people experiencing systemic disadvantage. However, taking action on climate change also presents the biggest opportunity to improve health and reduce inequality.

Our focus for tackling climate change and its impact on health is within our healthy eating priority. Increasing local access to fresh fruit and vegetables, through edible gardens and local growers will assist in reducing carbon emissions. We will work in partnership to support actions by others to reduce food waste, improve composting and reduce 'food miles' created when transporting food to, and from, city distribution points.

## ***PRIORITY GROUPS***

The focus of the work undertaken in the SHDH-HP Plan is on our most vulnerable. Specific groups within our population experience disadvantages and higher rates of illness and death than the general population. Based on this the following groups will be prioritised.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - Racism, colonialism, and dispossession from land has come at a high intergenerational cost for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Ongoing socio-economic deprivation and displacement from Country has contributed to high levels of morbidity and mortality.<sup>2</sup>

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people - Our newest Victorians have specific health needs influenced by the health status of their countries of origin as well as their journeys to Australia. They often experience financial, social, and cultural barriers to accessing healthcare and services in their new home.<sup>2</sup>

Families and children aged 0-5 years - Early disadvantage can have lasting effects. The first years of a child's life provide lifelong foundations for health and wellbeing. Children who have a poor start in life are more likely to develop problems with health, development, learning and behaviours, and these problems can have a cumulative effect over their lives.

Systemic disadvantage - Communities experiencing systemic disadvantage are interrelated by multiple common determinants of health dynamics. These marginalised peoples, families and children are shaped by relative low income, chronic disease prevalence, and multiple risk factors.<sup>2</sup>

# Planning approach

## ***PARTNERS***

We are committed to working in partnership to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach to improving health and wellbeing for our community. Our partnerships are in continuous stages of change and we understand this will be an ongoing experience due to the constant changes within all agencies and competing priorities. Our role and contribution to each partnership will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Key partnerships include:

- Food for All - Swan Hill Region (FFA)
- Swan Hill Pregnancy & Early Years Collaborative (SHPEYC)
- Better Together - Collaborative Table
- Swan Hill District Gender Equity Network (SHDGEN)
- Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit - Murray Prevention Network

## ***OUR SETTINGS***

A settings approach has been applied to the SHDH-HP Plan, focusing on creating supportive environments that enhance health and well-being by addressing the contexts in which people live, work, and play. Key settings that will be utilised for the implementation of the plan are as follows.



Health Services



Community Organisations



Early Years



Education



Recreation



# Planning approach



# Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029

**Vision: Helping our community to grow and thrive through promoting healthy lifestyles, equity, inclusion and participation**

## Goals:

Increase in fruit, vegetable and healthy drink consumption in children and adults.	Build a vibrant and connected food system	Increase breast feeding rates	Decrease dental carie rates in children aged 0-5	Increase active living opportunities	Decrease smoking rates/Reducing Harm from Tobacco and e-cigarette use	Reduce the rates of family and domestic violence
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## Objectives:

Increase access, availability and promotion of healthy foods and drinks in school settings	Increase food access to vulnerable communities	Increase breastfeeding rates	Reduce the number of dental caries in children aged 0-5 years	Ensure access to affordable and culturally appropriate physical activity options	Increase access to referral pathways and support for smoking cessation within SHDH	Increase community engagement in preventing family violence
Increase the number of eateries implementing the Catering for Good Program	Increase capacity of vulnerable community members and young families to buy/prepare healthy food and drinks			Raise awareness of existing physical activity options to support community participation	Ensure the provision of smoking cessation support services in smoke-free workplaces to encourage and assist employees and employers who smoke to quit.	Decrease impacts of harmful gender stereotypes and norms
Increased intake of fruit and vegetables in early childhood through greater exposure and education					Decrease exposures to second and third hand smoke	



## Rationale

Good nutrition is essential for health and wellbeing because it helps achieve and maintain a healthy weight, protects against chronic diseases (including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, dementia and certain cancers), and supports a healthy immune system. Data from the Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS) indicate that our community has high rates of food insecurity, poor intake of fruit and vegetables, and high rates of overweight and obesity (Body Mass Index >30) along with higher than state average rates of many chronic conditions. Our focus on healthy eating aims at improving fruit and vegetable intake across our community.



**32%**  
meet fruit guidelines



**6.8%**  
meet vegetable guidelines

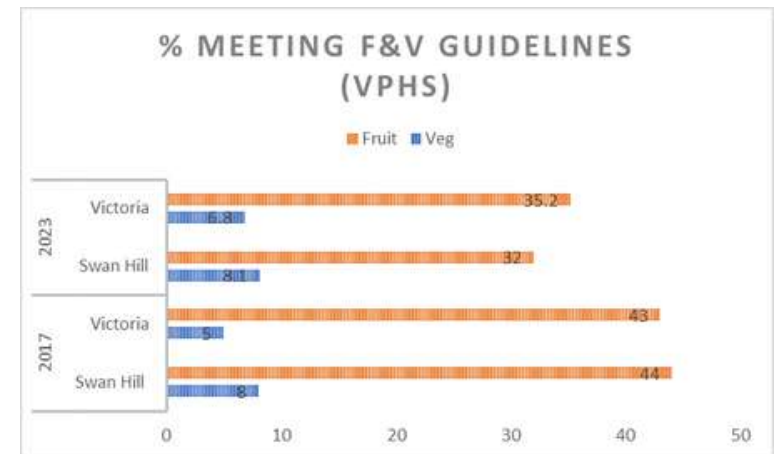
## Initiatives

### Leading

- Food For All Swan Hill Region
- Vic Kids Eat Well
- Catering for Good

### Supporting

- INFANT
- Nourishing Little Minds





## Healthy Eating: Nutrition

Goal: Increase in fruit, vegetable and healthy drink consumption in children and adults.

Objectives (by June 2029)	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Increase access, availability and promotion of healthy foods and drinks in school settings	Implement Vic Kids Eat Well in one Primary School	Number of schools supported to implement changes/VKEW  Number of bites achieved (Small/big)
Increase the number of eateries implementing the Catering for Good Program	Implement Catering for Good initiative with local food outlets	Number of settings actively supported to implement Catering for Good  Number of healthy options provided



## Healthy Eating: Nutrition

Goal: Increase in fruit, vegetable and healthy drink consumption in children and adults.

Objectives (by June 2029)	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Increased intake of fruit and vegetables in early childhood through greater exposure to taste and parent education	<p>Promotion of INFANT program and messages</p> <p>Promotion of Nourishing Little Minds program</p> <p>Implementation of Nutrition education sessions with priority groups e.g. Swan Hill Regional Library</p>	<p>No. of sessions and messages promoted</p> <p>No. of sessions promoted</p> <p>No. of nutrition education sessions implemented No. of settings sessions completed in</p>



# Healthy Eating: Food Systems

Goal: Build a vibrant and connected food system in Swan Hill and District

## Rationale

Food systems incorporate all the people, animals and activities involved in producing, processing, distributing, retailing, consuming and disposing of food, and the interactions between them. The food system influences peoples access to healthy, sustainable, and affordable food. In Swan Hill we have a high rate of food insecurity on par with the Victorian average which had a 2.1% increase over the last three years<sup>3</sup>. A 2024 Food and Farming survey in Swan Hill found high rates of food insecurity and use of coping strategies such as skipping meals. This survey also found a high percentage of our community wanting more opportunities to buy local produce<sup>4</sup>. Food For All – Swan Hill Region (FFA) aims to build a vibrant and connected food system in Swan Hill and District. Our four priority areas include edible gardening, access to local produce, emergency food relief and food literacy.



**44%**  
experienced  
food  
insecurity



**26.7%**  
skipped  
meals



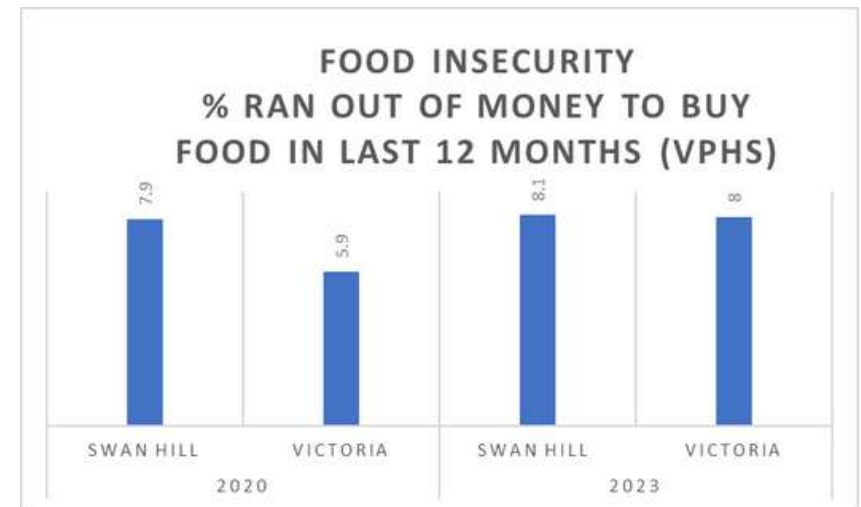
**74%**  
wanted more  
opportunities to buy  
local produce

2024 Sustain Victoria: Food and Farming Survey-Swan Hill (n= 84 Responses)

## Initiatives

### Leading

- Food For All Swan Hill Region



Victorian Population Health Survey 2023



# Healthy Eating: Food Systems

Goal: Build a vibrant and connected food system in Swan Hill and District

Four year objectives	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Increase food access to vulnerable communities in Swan Hill and District	<p>Coordinate Food For All (FFA) Swan Hill collaborative</p> <p>Development of an annual plan FFA</p> <p>Implementation of edible gardening initiatives</p> <p>Collaborate with key stakeholders to support the Swan Hill Food Hub</p> <p>Increase access to local produce</p>	<p>Food For All Collaborative implemented</p> <p>Number of FFA partnerships</p> <p>Annual plan developed, implemented and evaluated</p> <p>Number of edible gardening initiatives implemented</p> <p>Number of edible gardens supported</p> <p>Food Hub Committee of Management implement and outcomes recorded</p> <p>Number of local providers engaged</p> <p>Number of initiatives utilising local produce</p>
Increase capacity of vulnerable community members and young families to buy/prepare healthy food and drinks	<p>Cooking classes/programs implemented</p> <p>Promotion of Food for All messages and resources through website &amp; social media</p>	<p>No. of classes and programs provided</p> <p>No. of resources available on website</p> <p>No. of social media posts on social media</p>





# Healthy Eating: Breastfeeding

Goal: Increase breast feeding rates in Swan Hill and District

## Rationale

Breastfeeding is the optimal way to feed a child, exclusive breastfeeding until around 6 months of age at which time solids are introduced and continuing complimentary breastfeeding is recommended<sup>5</sup>. Breastfeeding provides significant health benefits for both mothers and babies reducing risks of illness and chronic conditions. Breastmilk not only provides all the energy and nutrients that an infant needs for the first months of life but is also safe and clean having a positive impact on the environment and food security.<sup>6</sup> Breastfeeding rates in Swan Hill LGA are well below the state average with initiation rates high but duration and exclusive breastfeeding rates declining in the first few months after birth.<sup>7</sup>



**83%**  
Breastfeed at  
discharge



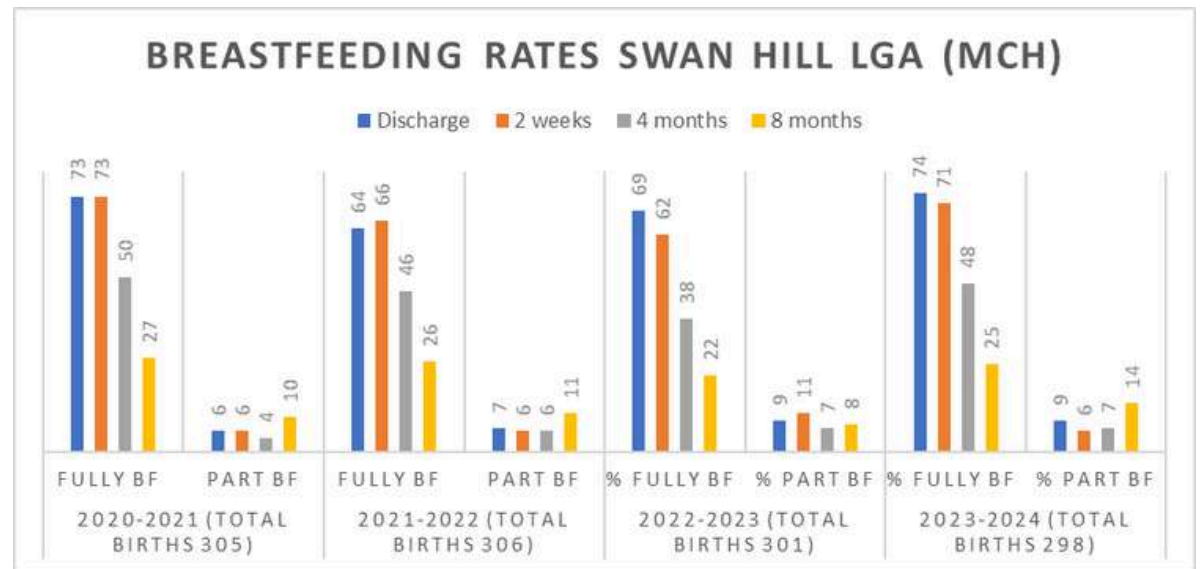
**77%**  
Breastfeed at  
2 weeks



**55%**  
Breastfeed at  
4 months



**39%**  
Breastfeed at  
8 months

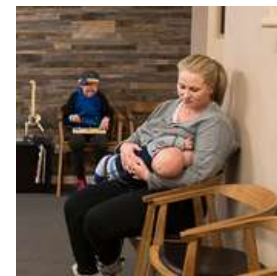
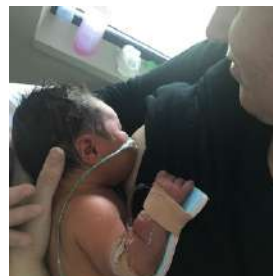


(2023-24 Breastfeeding rates Swan Hill LGA- Provided through Maternal Child Health)

## Initiatives

### Leading

- Swan Hill Pregnancy and Early Years Collaborative
- Swan Hill Breastfeeding Group
- Swan Hill Antenatal Breastfeeding Program







## Healthy Eating: Breastfeeding

Goal: Increase breast feeding rates in Swan Hill and District

Four year objectives	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Increase breastfeeding rates	<p>Work with the Swan Hill Pregnancy and Early Years Collaborative to create a breastfeeding action plan</p> <p>Provide consistent messaging on significance of breastfeeding</p> <p>Provide support and access to prenatal breastfeeding education and knowledge</p> <p>Strengthen programs that provide mother-to-mother support</p>	<p>Breastfeeding Action Plan developed</p> <p>Number of breastfeeding marketing strategies implemented</p> <p>Number of local services partnerships</p> <p>Number of antenatal breastfeeding sessions conducted</p> <p>Number of participants attended</p> <p>Number of breastfeeding support group sessions</p> <p>Number of breastfeeding media stories added to the Early Years Online Hub</p> <p>Number of interactive tools and resources accessible through the Early Years Online Hub that support breastfeeding</p>



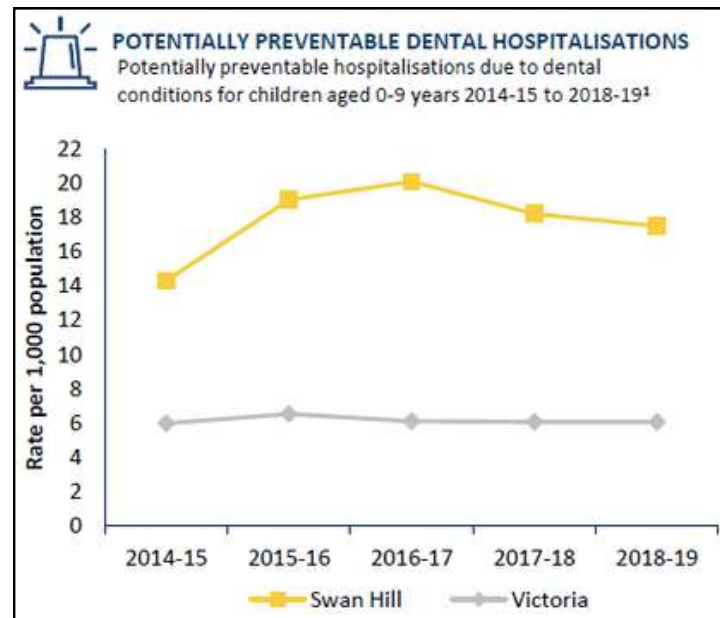
## Rationale

Good oral health is important for general health and wellbeing. The burden of oral disease comes from three main conditions: tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer.<sup>8</sup> Swan Hill is above the state average for severity of tooth decay in 3 to 12 year olds and has over double the state average for preventable hospital admissions in children aged 0-9 due to dental conditions.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, oral health is fundamental to children's wellbeing as it influences speech, eating and the ability to socialise without pain or discomfort. Establishing sound oral health and healthy eating habits from an early age gives children the best chance of maintaining good oral health in adulthood.

## Initiatives

### Leading

- Smiles4Miles



Data sourced from Oral Health Victoria 2024



## Dental Health: Smiles4Miles

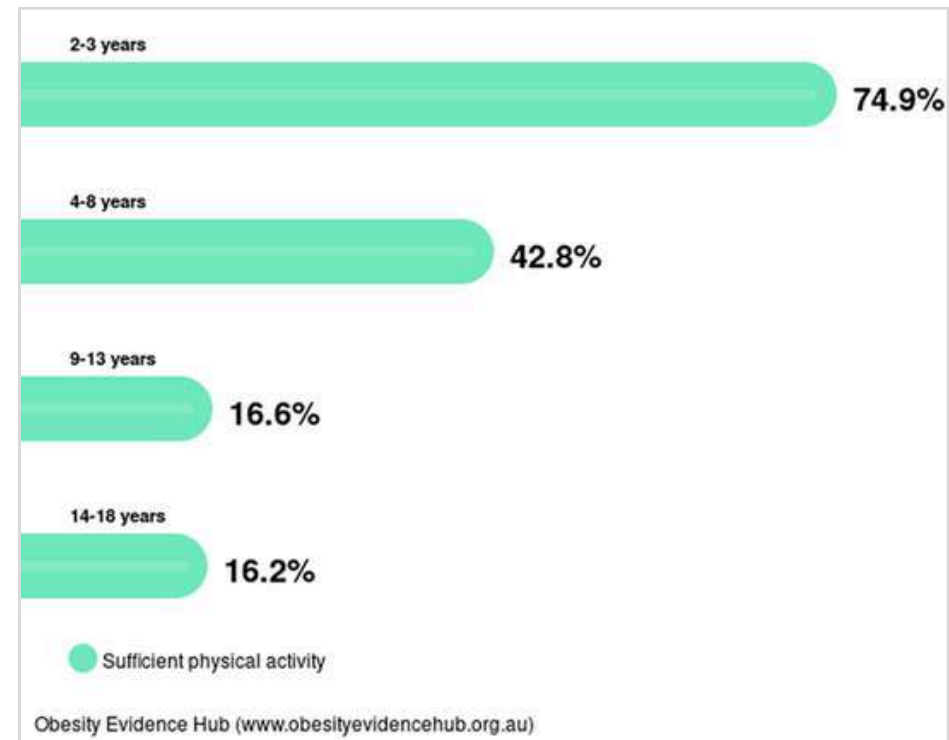
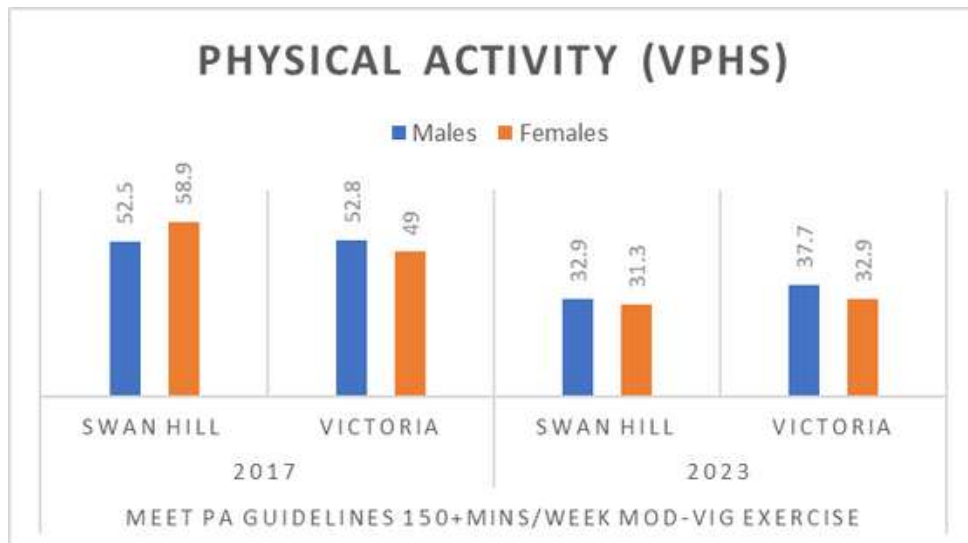
Goal: Decrease dental carie rates in children aged 0-5 in Swan Hill and District

Four year objectives	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Reduce the number of dental caries in children aged 0-5 years	Implement Swan Hill Smiles 4 Miles Program	<p>Number of Early Learning Centres (ELC) registered for Smiles 4 Miles</p> <p>Number of awarded ELC</p> <p>ELC supported by coordinator to achieve long day care menu planning guidelines</p> <p>Number of Eat a Rainbow sessions</p> <p>Number of participants at Eat a Rainbow sessions</p> <p>Number of Dental Screenings sessions</p> <p>Number of Dental Screenings completed</p>



### Rationale

Living an active life improves health and wellbeing and reduces the risk of ill health and all-cause mortality. In Swan Hill, 32.9% of female and 37.7% of male adults meet the Australian Guidelines for physical activity.<sup>3</sup> For Australian children physical activity rates are highest in 2-3 years olds however decline by the late childhood to around 16% of children meeting the Australian Guidelines (2018). Physical activity plays an important role for all in improving quality of life, promoting mental wellbeing and supports optimum development, learning and growth in children.



### Initiatives

#### Leading

- Physical Activity Options for Adults and Children

#### Supporting

- Engaging CALD communities in physical activity



## Healthy Lifestyles: Active living

Goal: Increase active living opportunities

Objectives (by June 2029)	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Ensure access to affordable and culturally appropriate physical activity options	Support physical activity options for CALD communities	Number of activities provided  Evidence of community consultation and partnerships
Raise awareness of existing physical activity options to support community participation	Promote events and supports to enable increased participation in physical activity across the catchment, including supporting state-wide initiatives	Physical activity options for adults resource updated  Physical activity options for children 0-5 years resource updated



## Healthy Lifestyles: Smoking cessation

Goal: Decrease smoking rates

### Rationale

Swan Hill LGA has the highest smoking prevalence in the state with 18.9% of adults who currently smoke tobacco.<sup>10</sup> Tobacco use is the leading contributor to disease and death burden in Australia, increasing the risk of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, diabetes and stroke.<sup>11</sup> Nicotine, the addictive substance in tobacco, makes it easy to start smoking and harder to stay smoke-free. However, smoking cessation has both immediate and long-term health benefits which dramatically reduces the risk of smoking-related diseases.<sup>2</sup> Increasing support for smoking cessation can help decrease hospital admissions and create better health outcomes through lifestyle changes.



**18.9%**

of adults smoke tobacco  
(an estimated 3,154 adults)



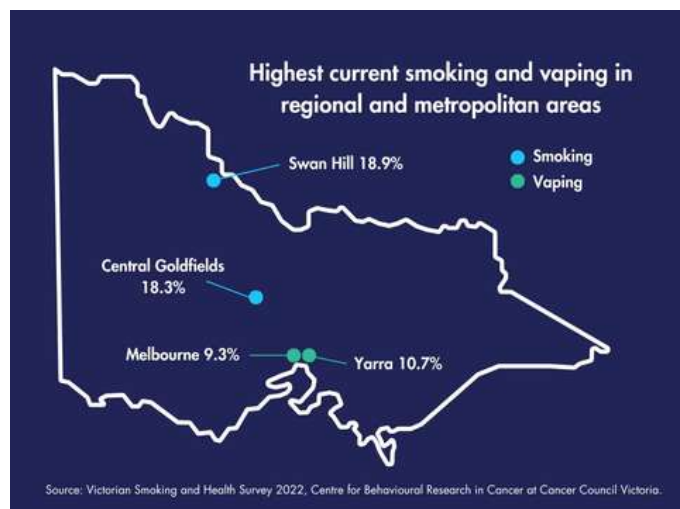
**16.6%**

of adults smoke daily  
(an estimated 2,768 adults)

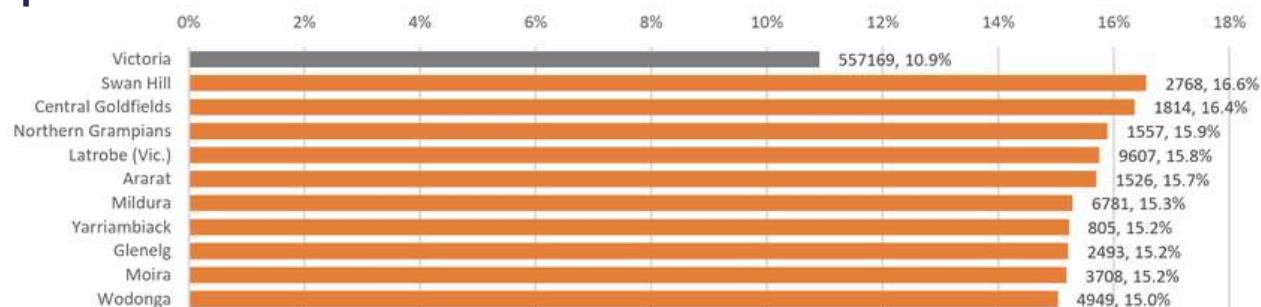


**80%**

of lung cancer disease  
burden in Victoria is  
caused by tobacco use



### Ten LGAs in Regional/Rural Victoria with the highest smoking prevalence in 2022



Data sourced from Victorian Smoking and Health Survey 2022



## Healthy Lifestyles: Smoking Cessation

Goal: Reducing Harm from Tobacco and e-cigarette use

Objectives (by June 2029)	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
<p>Increase access to referral pathways and support for smoking cessation within SHDH</p> <p>Ensure the provision of smoking cessation support services in smoke-free workplaces to encourage and assist employees and employers who smoke to quit.</p>	<p>Complete an internal needs assessment on supports for smoking cessation</p> <p>Update internal policies and protocols and how they are communicated to staff and community</p>	<p>Number self-identified smokers</p> <p>Number consumers referred to smoking cessation</p> <p>Number consumers provided with cessation care</p> <p>Number available services and resources</p> <p>Wait times for cessation support</p> <p>Consumer readiness to quit</p>
<p>Decrease exposures to second and third hand smoke</p>	<p>Increase promotions of SHDH as a smokefree environment</p>	<p>Number of promotional activities</p>





## Preventing all forms of violence: Gender Equity:

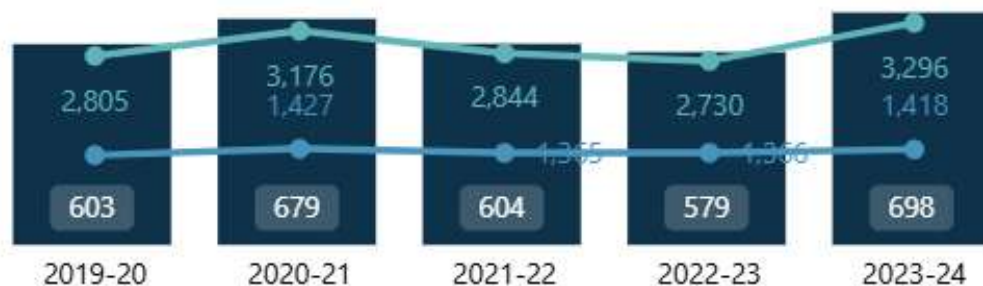
Goal: Reduce the rates of family and domestic violence

### Rationale

Family violence remains a significant issue in the Swan Hill region as the LGA ranks 5<sup>th</sup> highest in the state for family violence incidents.<sup>13</sup> Family violence causes physical, emotional, psychological and financial harm to those who experience it, and can be lethal. Promoting gender equity is a crucial strategy in preventing family violence by addressing the underlying drivers of violence, such as gender inequality and harmful masculine norms.<sup>14</sup> By fostering equal opportunities, challenging gender stereotypes, and promoting respectful relationships, we can create a society where violence is less likely to occur.

#### Number and Rate of Police Recorded Family Violence Incidents

● Nr of Incidents (LGA) ● Incident Rate (LGA) ● Incident Rate (Victoria)



Data sourced from Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, 2025

#### Number of Victims on FVIO Applications

Magistrates' Court

Children's Court



#### Emergency Department Patients

62



### Initiatives

#### Leading

- Swan Hill Gender Equity Network

#### Supporting

- 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign
- Elephant in the Room Project June 2025–2026







## Preventing all forms of violence: Gender Equity:

Goal: Reduce the rates of family and domestic violence

Four year objectives	Key initiatives/interventions Year 1	Measure
Increase community engagement in preventing family violence	Coordinate Swan Hill District Gender Equity Network	Number of Network meetings conducted  Number of initiatives implemented
Decrease impacts of harmful gender stereotypes and norms	Implement gender equity initiatives in the community focused on early years 0-5	Number of initiatives implemented

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