



CITY OF BALLARAT

Social Policy Position Statement



August 2022

Promoting Active Living

Context

Being active is good for our health, and good for our economy. It has benefits for both communities and individuals. Healthy communities are more connected, participate more in community activities, are more productive and reduce the environmental impacts of car dependence. Active living also helps to reduce the risks of many preventable health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression and falls.¹

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

City of Ballarat's involvement in promoting active living is driven by a desire to positively influence the health and wellbeing of all residents, as well as contributing to the culture, lifestyle and liveability of the city. Local governments play an important role in addressing health issues in the design of the public realm and by developing strategies to support walking and cycling. In addition, local governments are responsible for the development and maintenance of infrastructure which supports sport and recreation clubs, active transport and public open spaces, and delivering a range of programs and services within the community that enable them to be more active.¹ In Ballarat, this includes over 100 recreation and sporting facilities such as stadiums, pavilions, fields, courts, community venues, BMX and skateboard facilities, aquatic facilities and splash parks, along with 45kms of walking trails, 18 major parks, 149 neighbourhood parks, and over 2,000ha of open space.

There are several plans and strategies outlining how the City of Ballarat aims to support our community to live an active lifestyle. Policy provisions supporting active living can be seen at the highest level of strategic planning, such as utilisation of the '10 Minute City' principle to encourage walking and cycling within neighbourhood areas, through to operational action plans within City of Ballarat departments, such as the Ageing Well team. This team supports older community members to participate in physical activity opportunities at the Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre. Links to key policy documents have been listed under 'Related City of Ballarat policy documents', below.

The City of Ballarat recognises the importance of active living in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our community, and acknowledges the many important roles the City of Ballarat has, which can positively influence our community to be more active.

The City of Ballarat's current role in promoting active living

After consideration of the accountability, capacity and relationships, it has been determined that the City of Ballarat has a **primary** role in promoting active living.

	<p>Primary: The City of Ballarat has a primary responsibility and, as a stakeholder, has a central role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High accountability • Strong capacity to act • Significant City of Ballarat role required to improve community wellbeing outcomes.
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In line with the *City of Ballarat Social Policy Framework 2018*, the principles of Equity, Inclusion, Proactive, Leadership, Collaboration and Compassion are to be considered in all new social policy development. These principles also provide a foundation for action and can be seen in the current City of Ballarat role in relation to promoting active living as identified below. Fully integrating these principles into different aspects of social policy work will take time and will require the dedicated efforts of everyone involved.

Planner/ regulator

- Undertakes land-use planning, including location, siting, and design of private development (housing, commercial, industrial, and special uses), parks, transport, reserves, and other recreation/sporting/community facilities.

Coordinator

- Coordinates actions across City of Ballarat departments and health partner organisations in relation to Active Living through the City of Ballarat *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031*.
- Assists with the coordination of active living programs, and innovative delivery of modified or targeted activities to increase participation with clubs or activity providers.
- Supports primary schools in the annual delivery of VicHealth Walk to School program, including the development and promotion of 'Park and Walk' areas near schools.

Advocate

- Lobbies for funding which will improve active living infrastructure and programming across the city.

Educator

- Provides information to community members about the benefits of physical activity across the lifespan through services, including Maternal and Child Health, kindergartens, childcare centres, and home and community care.
- Promotes community, school and workplace-based physical activity events, including Active April, Ride 2 School days, etc.
- Undertakes research and gathers data about active living in the municipality.

Capacity Builder

- Promotes and encourages sports clubs and organisations that offer free, low cost or flexible participation and payment options to encourage greater participation.
- Works with partner organisations across the Central Highlands region to promote active living through collaborative campaigns and initiatives.

Service Delivery

- Provides and maintains more than 100 recreation and sporting facilities including stadiums, pavilions, fields, courts, community venues, BMX and skateboard facilities, aquatic facilities and splash parks, along with 45kms walking trails, 18 major parks and 149 neighbourhood parks, and over 2,000ha of open space to support clubs and individuals with opportunities for physical activity and recreation.
- Provides footpaths and cycle paths for active travel.
- Produces and distributes resources related to active living (i.e. walking maps).
- Supports the delivery of health and wellbeing programs which encourage increased physical activity (i.e. Daughters and Sons of the West).
- Provides a range of Social Connections programs through the Ageing Well department.

Related City of Ballarat policy documents:

- Today, Tomorrow Together: The Ballarat Strategy 2040
ballarat.vic.gov.au/pbs/city-strategy/ballarat-strategy.aspx
- City of Ballarat Council Plan 2021- 2025
[ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-09/Council Plan 2021–2025.pdf](http://ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-09/Council%20Plan%202021-2025.pdf)
- City of Ballarat Active Women and Girls Strategy 2018
ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/4455763/2018_active_women_and_girls_strategy.pdf
- City of Ballarat Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2031
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%202021-2031_LR.pdf
- Ballarat Planning Scheme
planning-schemes.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/ballarat
- Sport and Active Living Strategies
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/vision-strategies-and-plans/plans-strategies-and-frameworks
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2022 (in planning)
mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au/municipal-early-years-plan
- Ballarat Cycling Action Plan 2017-2025
ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/4264663/ballarat_cycling_action_plan_2017-25.pdf
- Social Policy Framework 2018
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/about-us/social-policy
- Community Infrastructure Plan
mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au/community-infrastructure-planning

Key messages– Promoting active living

- Regular physical activity contributes to good health across all life stages, whilst inactivity is one of the most significant contributors to the global burden of disease.²
- Active living does not just refer to participation in structured sport, but a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines.
- Active living helps to reduce the risks of many preventable health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression and falls.¹
- Only 46 percent of adults in Ballarat participate in physical activity four or more days a week, showing opportunity for improvement.⁸

- People living within the City of Ballarat tend to be generally more active in organised forms of physical activity, including club-based sport than the Victorian average.⁸
- Women are less likely to participate in sport than men, but there is a growing increase in female participation in sports.⁷
- People who are less likely to meet recommended physical activity guidelines include those who are: female, culturally and linguistically diverse, older adults, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, living with a disability or socioeconomically disadvantaged.⁶
- The City of Ballarat's involvement in promoting active living is driven by a desire to positively influence the health and wellbeing of all its residents, as well as contributing to the culture, lifestyle and liveability of the city.
- The City of Ballarat recognises the importance of active living in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our community and acknowledges the many important roles the City of Ballarat has which can positively influence our community to be more active.
- The City of Ballarat provides and maintains more than 100 recreation and sporting facilities including stadiums, pavilions, fields, courts, community venues, BMX and skateboard facilities, aquatic facilities and splash parks, along with 45kms walking trails, 18 major parks and 149 neighbourhood parks, and over 2,000ha of open space which supports physical activity and recreation opportunities.

Key data and trends

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. This might include things like walking and cycling for transport, gardening, playing in a local park or social activities, such as dancing.

Regular physical activity contributes to good health across all life stages, whereas inactivity is one of the most significant contributors to the global burden of disease². Sedentary behaviour, including time spent sitting each day, is emerging as an independent risk factor for health.³ Moving more and sitting less is important for physical and mental health and wellbeing, and delivers a range of other economic, social and environmental benefits.⁴

Active living helps to reduce the risks of many preventable health conditions and there is also evidence that physical activity can make a significant contribution to preventing depression, reducing stress and anxiety, and chronic conditions, including obesity.

In 2020, 60.9% of adults in Ballarat were classified as overweight (BMI over 25), compared to 21% of Victorians, whilst 28.7% were classified as obese, compared to 20.9% of Victorians.¹¹

In 2017, 49.4% of adults engaged in an insufficient amount of physical activity when compared to physical activity guidelines, with 45% not meeting fruit and vegetable consumption guidelines. In addition, 36.2% of adults in Ballarat had been diagnosed with depression or anxiety in 2017 compared to the state average of 27%.⁵

There are several factors which make it more likely for people to have lower levels of physical activity. People who are less likely to meet recommended physical activity guidelines include those who are female, culturally and linguistically diverse, older adults, those of Indigenous background, living with a disability or socioeconomically disadvantaged⁶.

In looking specifically at sports participation, key findings from VicHealth's Sport participation in Victoria 2019 Research summary highlighted that⁷:

- Sports participation is highest among young children (aged 10-14 years)
- Sports participation rates drop significantly during adolescence
- Sports participation rates among females are higher than those for males

- Sports participation rates are higher in regional Victoria compared to metropolitan Melbourne.

At a local level, when compared to Victoria as a whole, people living within the City of Ballarat tend to be generally more active in organised forms of physical activity, including club-based sport. There is also good support for an active community through higher-than-average rates of volunteering and sports coaching.⁸ However, as highlighted in the *City of Ballarat Active Women and Girls Strategy*, there is a significant decrease in female sport participation from ages 15–19 and sport participation is considerably higher for males than females.

As mentioned, participation in sport is not the only way to live an active life. Changes in society mean that people are increasingly time constrained, and although they are more health conscious, they are now more likely to choose flexible options that fit their busy schedules and allow for personal goals and definitions of success, rather than the traditional structured time and place requirements of organised sport.⁹

Active recreation is leisure time physical activity undertaken outside of structured, competition sport. It is a set of activities within the wider range of physical activity options that also include active living, active transport and sport. Victorians participate in almost 775 million hours of exercise, recreation and sporting activities each year. Significantly, 80 per cent of this time is classified as active recreation.⁹

The most popular physical activities are predominantly individual exercise activities:

- Walking
- Gym workouts
- Cycling
- Running/jogging
- Aerobics/exercising activities
- Swimming.

Using active travel to get around is another way in which people can incorporate activity in their day to day life. In 2016, only 0.7 per cent of the city of Ballarat's employed population travelled to work by bicycle compared to the Victorian average of 1.2 per cent. In addition, 3.0 per cent of employed Ballarat residents reported that they walked to work, which is lower than the Victorian regional average of 3.9 per cent.¹⁰

Further Information

Research, data and publications

- Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines
health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines
- City of Ballarat Integrated Transport Planning
ballarat.vic.gov.au/integrated-transport-planning
- VicHealth Physical Activity Strategy 2018-2023
vichealth.vic.gov.au/physical-activity-strategy
- VicHealth Indicators Survey
vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/vichealth-indicators-survey
- Heart Foundation– Healthy by Design
heartfoundation.org.au/programs/healthy-by-design-victoria
- Active Victoria- A strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria 2017-2021
sport.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/strategies/active-victoria-strategic-framework-sport-and-recreation

- Victorian Government Health and Human Services– Physical Activity
health.vic.gov.au/public-health/preventive-health/physical-activity

How community members can get involved

- Join a local sports or recreation club. Find a local group using the City of Ballarat Community Directory- ballarat.vic.gov.au/pc/community-directory.aspx?Parent=109373&Child=
- Join Ozebuddy for free to connect to others in Ballarat who want to get more active. It is always easier to stay motivated with a training buddy - ozebuddy.com
- Join a free Live Life Get Active class - livelifegetactive.com (search by location)
- Encourage your family to get outside and be active with you- participate together in events and activities such as Active April (activeapril.vic.gov.au) or Parkrun (parkrun.com.au/ballarat)
- Support your school with Walk to School and Ride to School activities
- Volunteer at a local sports or recreation club and help others keep active
- Sign up to the Active Ballarat newsletter by emailing info@ballarat.vic.gov.au and asking to be added to the mailing list

Contact

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Position statement review by August 2024

References

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2. Lee IM, et al. 2012, 'Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy', *The Lancet*, 380: 219–29.
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9. Sport and Recreation Victoria – Active Recreation webpage. Available: <http://sport.vic.gov.au/our-work/participation/active-recreation> (Accessed: 16/07/2018).
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11. Victorian Population Health Survey, 2020. Available: https://www.bettersaferecare.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/2020%20VPHS%20Dashboard_FINAL%20202107014_1.xlsm