

Growing Wyndham's Community Strength

A community strengthening policy and framework for
Wyndham City

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Introduction

Wyndham is a city with many strengths. Our diverse people, organisations and businesses, and the skills, experiences and resources they bring, in combination with our local environment, make this community a great place to live, learn, work and play.

The growth and change being experienced in Wyndham is well documented and reflected in all of Council's current plans. Changes include rapid growth, increasing cultural diversity, changing age and demographic profiles, increasing urbanisation and gentrification of older parts of Wyndham, and a changing socio-economic profile. Whilst change is inevitable, the way that residents experience change will be in part determined by the strength, health and resilience of our local communities.

As the municipality grows and changes, Council will support the many communities who call Wyndham home to become and remain strong and connected. Community strengthening happens every day in Wyndham, as people, organisations, businesses and institutions build stronger connections with each other. Council encourages this interdependence between the many groups and organisations as it helps Wyndham to become a self-reliant city.

While much community strengthening happens in our community without requiring the input of Council, Council can contribute to community strengthening in Wyndham.

This does not necessarily require new or separate initiatives, rather it can occur through Council's existing processes and services by ensuring those processes and services are focused on these five areas of community strengthening action.

Council will listen to and work with Wyndham's people and community organisations to determine the specific actions Council can take to build community strength and impact on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Council's commitment

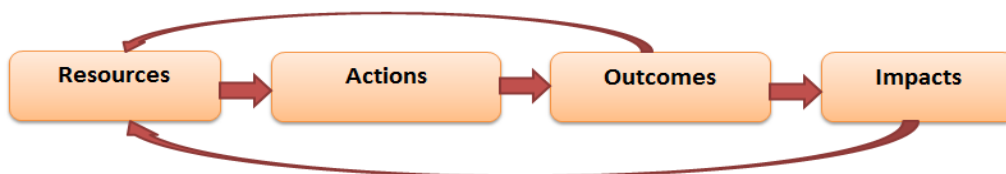
In order to achieve the Wyndham City mission of *"We strive to serve the best interests of the Wyndham community by providing quality services; managing growth; and supporting residents to lead healthy, safe, vibrant and productive lives, while protecting our local environment"*, Council commits to undertaking all Council business in ways which strengthen our local communities through:

- Building organisation
- Building skills
- Building equality
- Building engagement
- Building identity

The community strengthening framework further elaborates on how this commitment will be applied to Council business.

Framework

Community strengthening can be guided by a simple logic of identifying the resources (or assets) that our community possesses and taking actions that will strengthen them, leading to both immediate outcomes, and broader impacts for the community. Both the outcomes and the impacts reinforce the resources of the community.



The **resources** in our community are the various types of capital held by the community. Human capital (ie people’s personal capacity) and social capital (the effectiveness of organisations and networks) are of particular significance for community strengthening. Economic capital (material assets) and natural capital (the natural environment) also contribute to community strength.

In this framework, the **actions** referred to are those actions undertaken by Council which contribute to community strength.

The immediate **outcomes** of community strengthening actions will result in an increase in human and social capital.

The longer term **impacts** of community strengthening are gains in all types of capital, leading to a healthy and strong community.

Each element of this framework is outlined further in the following sections.

Resources

The resources available for community strengthening in Wyndham include:

<p>Human capital These are the resources that individual people have, and can contribute to community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Knowledge • Skills • Confidence • Experience
<p>Social capital Social capital refers to the ways that people relate to each other – the number, nature and quality of relationships. It can also refer to the way that people interact with community organisations and governments, including Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social participation • Civic participation • Altruism • Trust • Sense of community • Inclusion
<p>Economic capital This refers to material assets and the way they are distributed. Economic resources that Council contributes include community facilities, community grants and other funding, and the many services Council provides.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income and jobs • Housing • Services • Infrastructure and transport • Built environment
<p>Natural capital This refers to the natural environment that Wyndham is a part of.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resources • Ecosystem • Aesthetics of nature

This community strengthening framework draws mainly on the rich human and social capital we have here in Wyndham. The community strengthening outcomes directly enhance the human and social capital in our community. In the longer term, however, the impacts should be seen in all of our resources.

Actions and outcomes

The actions in this community strengthening framework have been based on the *Building Stronger Communities* model¹, and adapted to suit the current context of Wyndham. Appreciating the unique challenge of growth and change, and recognising Council’s role in service provision, policy development and advocacy, the framework is built on the following five elements of community strengthening action and outcomes:

Action	Outcome
Building organisation	Wyndham has many effective and well-organised community organisations and networks, which work in the interests of the community.
Building skills	People in Wyndham have the skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them to achieve their aims and to fully participate in community life.
Building equality	Wyndham’s diversity is embraced, and human rights are promoted and upheld. Community and voluntary groups are inclusive, and work to build equality in their communities.
Building engagement	People in Wyndham are involved in and influential over decision-making that affects them – both at Council, and through their involvement in decision-making in local groups, organisations and other levels of government.
Building identity	People feel connected to other people through a shared sense of place, story or culture.

These actions and outcomes will directly reinforce the human and social capital of our community, and are expanded upon in the following section.

¹ Scottish Community Development Centre (2012) *Building Stronger Communities*. Retrieved from www.scdc.org.uk

Building organisation

This describes the development and support of community groups and organisations and their work for the interests of the community. It also includes the building of networks between groups and people. It generates the impact of people and resources being connected, and of the community knowing itself better because information is shared well.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the value of the many community organisations based in Wyndham • Make skilled and focussed community development support available • Empower the community with information and advice • Play a role in providing, funding or brokering resources and assets for use by community. • Facilitate connections between people, organisations, business and government. 	<p>A strong community will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have organisations with sound governance and management • Have organisations with strong accountability and legitimacy • Have the resources and assets needed to support community activities • Have strong networks between organisations • Have organisations which are effective for their communities

Related policies, strategies and frameworks:

- Community **Grants Program**
- Leisure Strategy 2013-2017

Building skills

This refers to the ways in which community members can build their skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them to fully participate in community life. Increased skills will have the impact of generating leadership throughout Wyndham’s communities.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the many skills that community members have to offer • Ensure relevant learning opportunities are available on a range of topics • Promote and encourage volunteering • Provide services using models which promote empowerment, development, independence and autonomy • Recognise and address the developmental needs of Council staff and other local workers in their work in communities • Help residents to understand how decisions are made at Council 	<p>A strong community will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have people with the knowledge, confidence and health required to thrive in their community, particularly during transition times in life • Have organisations which represent and advance community views • Assess and plan for community needs and issues • Continually learn from experience • Have organisations which are involved in community life

Related policies, strategies and frameworks:

- Learning **Communities** Strategy
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2013-17

Building equality

This refers to how Council and communities respond to Wyndham’s diversity and ensure that all people have the opportunity to participate in community life.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide welcoming environments which respect diversity and promote dignity • Ensure barriers to participation in Council services and activities are recognised and removed • Ensure that the pricing of Council activities and services does not entrench further inequality between groups of people • Ensure people in all parts of Wyndham have fair access to services and activities regardless of where they live • Encourage best practice in both embracing diversity and addressing inequity and provide guidance and training • Advocate in partnership with the community on issues of human rights and social justice 	<p>A strong community will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have opportunities for people of all interests and identities to participate in community life • Identify barriers to inclusion, and tackle them • Support solidarity and identity within particular groups • Build cohesive relationships between groups • Encourage effective relationships, promote co-operation and manage conflict

Related policies, strategies and frameworks:

- Cultural Diversity Policy and Action Plan (in development)
- Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-17

Building engagement

This means the extent to which local people are involved in and influential over decision-making that affects them – both at Council, and through their involvement in decision-making in local groups, organisations and other levels of government. This will be guided by the Community Engagement Framework. It generates the impact of communities which practice ongoing dialogue and which shape their future together.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and refresh Council’s understanding of the needs and issues in Wyndham’s communities. • Ensure there is a breadth of engagement with all sections of the community and remove barriers to involvement. • Partner with community organisations and residents to advocate on issues outside of Council’s control. • Provide civic education to support residents’ participation in Council processes. • Take a co-ordinated approach to community engagement to ensure best use of community time and energy. • Work together with community organisations to understand and meet the needs of the local communities. • Seek input from service users in designing and reviewing Council services. 	<p>A strong community will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have community organisations which demonstrate the principles and practice of community engagement • Have a shared understanding of community needs and issues • Be effective in influencing decision-making

Related policies, strategies and frameworks:

- Community Engagement Framework
- Customer Service Charter
- Governance Framework
- Wyndham City Advocacy Strategy

Building identity

This concerns the extent to which people feel connected to other people through a shared sense of place, story or culture. The impact of generating a sense of community is particularly relevant in Wyndham where the population is growing and becoming increasingly diverse, and people who come to live here may not have a ready connection to people or place locally.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and respect Aboriginal culture as fundamental to the past, present and future of Wyndham. • Recognise the value of neighbourly connections and focus on connecting people locally. • Use community cultural development to foster creative discovery and expression of identity and culture. • Provide Council services and community facilities that foster interaction, attachment to place and community pride. • Recognise the range of ways to facilitate cultural expression, which build people’s personal identity, wellbeing, confidence and sense of belonging. • Foster the community’s use and connection with Wyndham’s diverse natural environments and open spaces. 	<p>A strong community will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people to express their own culture, and to be exposed to other cultures • Be a place where people feel connected to the place where they live, learn, work or play • Facilitate shared experiences between people and groups to build social connections • Ensure Wyndham’s history is preserved, and new narratives are created and shared

Related policies, strategies and frameworks:

- Cultural Diversity Policy and Action Plan (in development)
- Creative Communities and Cultural Places – Cultural Development Strategy
- Neighbourhood Planning Strategy (in development)

Impacts

A Victorian government literature review² showed that people with strong connections experience benefits in:

- health;
- positive parenting and child development;
- success at school;
- positive ageing; and
- better employment outcomes.

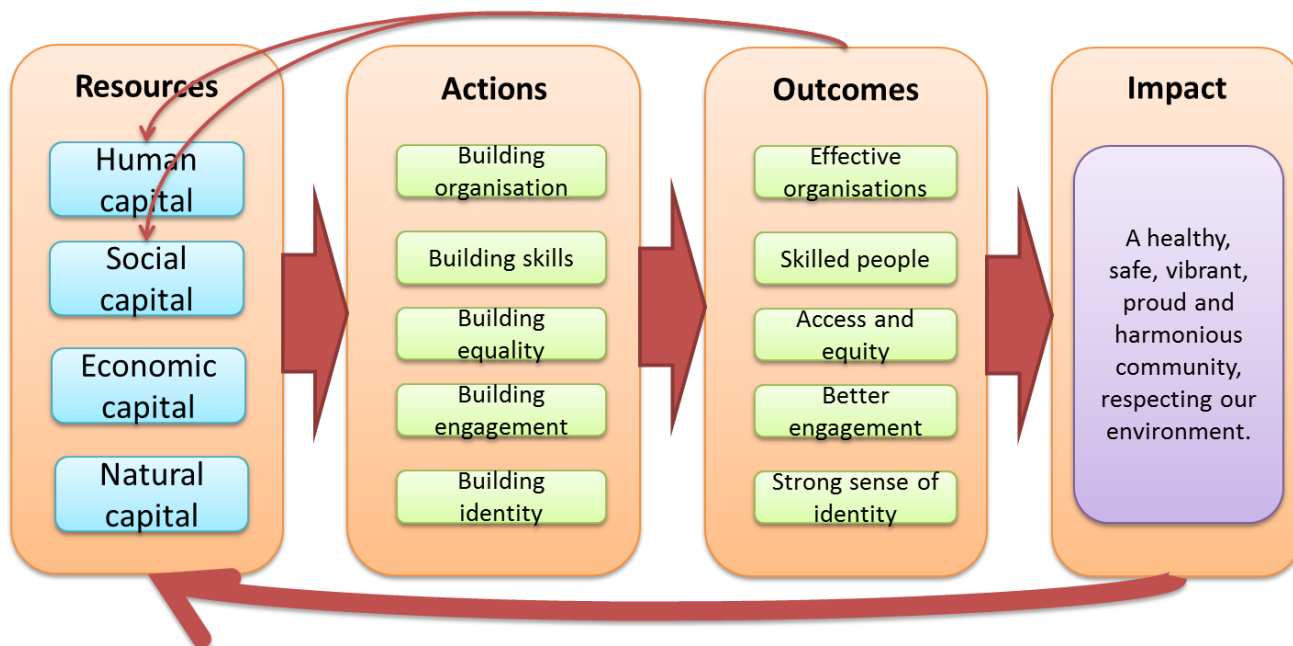
As well as the benefits for individuals, communities with strong connections enjoy the benefits of:

- the spread of information and innovation;
- inclusive attitudes and respect;
- safer communities;
- working together towards shared goals;
- stronger community planning; and
- community assets turned into outcomes (such as jobs or educational achievement).

These benefits are encapsulated in the 2013-17 City Plan Mission:

“...supporting residents to lead healthy, safe, vibrant and productive lives”.

These are the broad and long term impacts that are sought through Council’s commitment to community strengthening. This in turn acts as a reinforcing feedback loop, where the impacts increase the resources available communities.



² *Indicators of community strength in Victoria: framework and evidence* (2011) Department of Planning and Community Development: Victoria.

Evaluation

In order to understand the particular strengths of Wyndham's communities, and how they change over time, community strengths should be mapped, analysed and used for planning purposes. A range of sources of information can be used for this. A comprehensive evaluation framework will be developed to support the implementation of this framework.

Actions

The suitability and efficacy of specific community strengthening actions can be undertaken through rigorous process evaluation of projects and review of services.

Outcomes

The Building Stronger Communities³ model provides a suite of tools and processes that can be used to work with local communities to assess current community strengths and social capital, and to determine the areas requiring more attention.

Impacts

The broader impacts of community strengthening can be assessed by identifying and monitoring an appropriate set of indicators. Sources for these indicators will include the Council Satisfaction Survey and the Victorian Population Health Survey.

³ Scottish Community Development Centre (2012) *Building Stronger Communities*. Retrieved from www.scdc.org.uk



Appendix 1: Definitions

Community

The Oxford Dictionary definition of community is “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common”.

In an expanding and increasingly diverse municipality such as Wyndham there will be a range of communities, including neighbourhood-based communities as well as communities of interest, and communities of identity or experience. This policy understands community in this broad context and recognises that within the broad Wyndham community, there are many other communities that people belong to.

Community organisations

The community strengthening policy uses the term “community organisations” to include all organisations, regardless of size, which operate as not-for-profit and have volunteer community members in leadership or governance roles. This includes social and support groups; hobby, recreation and sports clubs; faith organisations; community health, welfare and support organisations; schools; service clubs; environment and heritage groups.

Community strengthening

Community strengthening is the process of building cohesive and inclusive communities which nurture the wellbeing of all members. Cohesion and inclusion result from strong connections between local people, groups and organisations. These connections can be characterised as:

- bonds between close family and friends;
- social bridges between people through groups, neighbourhoods or other common experiences; and
- linkages between people and large organisations and institutions⁴.

Building the number, reciprocity and quality of all of these kinds of connections can strengthen communities and contribute to the health and wellbeing of people in those communities.

⁴ Hughes P, Black A, Kaldor P, Bellamy J & Castle K (2007) *Building Stronger Communities*, UNSW Press: Sydney