

# Snapshot on MAR (Most At Risk) Communities in the City of Whittlesea and C-19 Impact

**The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the traditional owners of this place. I would also like to acknowledge that some of you may be on the lands of other traditional owners as we speak and I encourage you to acknowledge this today as well.**

*A place for all*

## Projected population increase

2017	2041	% increase
209,118 residents	379,342	81.4%

- High proportion of children, young people, young families and women in the perinatal period
- Language other than English at home (44 per cent)
- Born overseas (35.5 per cent)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Aboriginal population in Metropolitan Melbourne.

# How is our community faring?



**17% of Whittlesea residents** live in poverty.

**40% of children** (aged under 15years) in Thomastown are living in poverty.

Higher proportion of vulnerable groups, LOTE, Aboriginal, social disadvantage

Higher rates of financial stress, family violence, gambling, self-harm and suicide in the municipality which are all associated with poor access to and the quality of mental health care

Limited access to health services family violence response and support and mental health services

The EMPHN Integrated Mental Health and AOD Service Atlas mapping highlights the disparity in service access demonstrating the vast majority of services are located in inner east and inner northern suburbs within the catchment

# COVID 19 and it's impact: International students, Temporary visa holders and People Seeking Asylum



- International students are isolated with limited contacts in the local community. The key problem is lack of income and employment. They are not eligible for government benefits and unable to go home. This is leading to depression, loneliness, food insecurity and accommodation stress that puts them at further risk of exploitation in the housing market.\*
- Newly arrived skilled migrants who are unemployed or underemployed are fearful of being evicted from their residential properties because they do not have enough money to pay the rent. \*\*

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- People seeking asylum are predominantly in industries that have been shut down, like hospitality and retail, in insecure work and/or in roles that can't be worked from home. They're in a desperate situation of taking any job available. Coupled with the lack of a safety net, this is representing a journey “from joblessness to homelessness” as they weigh the risks of employment against the threat of catching C19.\*
- Newly arrived women with limited family support networks are experiencing increased vulnerability and risks during the isolation period.

- The Whittlesea Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) COVID-19 Recovery Network meeting on 14 October identified the following key issues facing our CALD community (in order of importance):
  - Financial hardship
  - Unemployment
  - Housing/homelessness
  - Isolation and relationship issues
  - Awareness and navigation of services
  - Mental health
  - Physical health
  - Family violence
  - Home-schooling

The Northern Metropolitan Aboriginal COVID Response Network meeting on 7 September identified the following key issues facing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community:

- A gap around young people and mental health supports, including:
  - immediate needs for young people in crisis and not engaged in education and in out of home care
  - connecting young people with each other on culturally safe platforms, and in person (when possible)
- There is concern for Elders and other community members experiencing isolation and worsening mental health\*
- There is fear/concern amongst community members about going into health services \*\*



# COVID 19 and it's impact: Key Service Demand



- Whittlesea Community Connections received 461 requests for emergency food relief from 341 clients
- Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) report a sharp increase in the number of people seeking financial support in our community since the Coronavirus Supplement was reduced
- The unemployment rate in the North East Melbourne region (which includes the City of Whittlesea) was 8.7% in September, up from 7.6% in August and 4.5% in March
- Increased demand for employment and mental health support due rising unemployment rate and financial stress

# Advocacy Opportunities!

- Coordinated service response
- Leveraging existing resourcing and new funding opportunities
- Forging Local level partnerships with targeted interventions
- Influencing all levels of governments for more humanitarian programs-e.g. emergency relief and response, access to medicare, income support for those who are out of work etc.

# Q & A