

# Reducing Harm from Alcohol and Other Drugs

## Summary Paper

### Background

Within our City, and indeed Greater Melbourne, the vast majority of people who use alcohol and other drugs do not become dependent or develop serious problems. However, the misuse of alcohol and other drugs is widely recognised in Australia as a major health problem, and one that has wider social and economic costs. Having policies and strategies in place at all levels of government ensures a clear and unified direction in managing alcohol and other drugs usage.

Local government – as outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) – plays a pivotal role in addressing the social, economic, and health impacts of alcohol and drug use in local communities. The Act emphasises the responsibility of Councils to prioritise the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

Council's previous Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy 2017-2021 has expired. We are now seeking community feedback on our new Draft Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy 2023- 2028.

### What is Council's role in this space?

While local government does not directly provide services for managing drug and alcohol problems, it can influence the level of alcohol and drug related harm through various harm minimisation activities. These include:

- Assessing the location and design of licenced premises through planning schemes and the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*.
- Building community awareness of the potential impacts of alcohol and other drugs and promoting alternative non-alcohol related activities.
- Advocating to the State Government for reforms to laws relating to alcohol and other drugs.
- Undertaking research into the harm minimisation approaches relating to alcohol and other drugs.

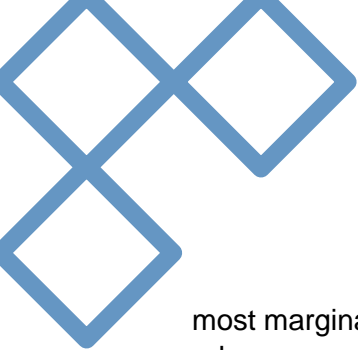
### Alcohol and drug use in the City of Maribyrnong

In the City of Maribyrnong, the rate of alcohol related ambulance attendances has grown by 66% over the last decade. Our City has also experienced a steady increase in alcohol-related hospitalisations, most notably in people over 65. Coupled with this is the rate in which people are seeking alcohol treatment, which has steadily declined over the same period.

Additional factors that can exacerbate the effects of alcohol and other drug use include age, gender, income disparity and unemployment. In 2021, the median level of income in Yarraville was \$2,485 per week, while in Braybrook it was \$1,451. In 2021, unemployment in Yarraville was 2.7 per cent, whereas Braybrook was 7.1 per cent.

### The previous Policy

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy 2017-2021 outlined a harm minimisation approach and acknowledged that drug misuse is a very complex issue that disproportionately affects the



most marginalised in our community. The previous policy focused on five areas including: advocacy, research, partnerships, information provision and leadership.

## The draft Reducing Harm from Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy 2023-2028

The draft Reducing Harm from Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy 2023-2028 holds significant importance for every resident in the City of Maribyrnong, shaping a collective vision for how we ensure the continued vibrancy of community life while minimising the risks associated with substance misuse in our community.

The draft Policy continues Council's public health and harm-minimisation approach to alcohol and other drugs in the City of Maribyrnong. The draft Policy takes into account recent changes to State and Federal government policies and legislation in relation to alcohol and other drugs including:

- The *Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness Act 2021* and public intoxication reform in 2023.
- The establishment of an ongoing medically supervised injecting room in Richmond following a two year trial of the facility.
- Changes to State and Federal drug laws to allow the cultivation and use of medicinal cannabis in Australia.

This Policy, once implemented, will play a crucial role in outlining our approach to addressing the complex issues related to alcohol and drug use. It will establish expectations for thoughtful, considered, and sustainable strategies in meeting our community's needs in the realm of substance misuse.

## Policy commitments

The draft Policy commits Council to the principles of advocacy, partnerships, and research, with the aim of reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs.

- **Advocacy:** The services and programs that address drug misuse are funded and delivered by the State and Federal governments, and the community based sector. To maintain and improve programs it is crucial that Council and local stakeholders adopt a proactive advocacy role to ensure local needs are met.
- **Partnerships:** Stakeholders and all levels of government are working towards dealing with the issues associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs. Council will strengthen its current partnerships, and work to build new partnerships.
- **Research:** Council has an important role in undertaking research and providing data and information about prevention, harms, services and programs.

## Join the conversation

For more information about the project, or to review the draft or provide feedback online, please visit [yourcityyourvoice.com.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs](https://yourcityyourvoice.com.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs)

Alternatively, you can submit your feedback via email to [SocialPlanning@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au](mailto:SocialPlanning@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au).

Feedback closes **midnight Monday 11 March 2024**.