

Darebin City Council

Submission to the Federal and State Government 2010/11 Budgets



Introduction

This submission to the State and Federal government budgets has been developed as a way of highlighting some of the key challenges, issues and needs for our community. Many specific initiatives in this submission have been under development for some time and are currently being developed in partnership with other levels of government. Some other initiatives and needs represent long term goals that are yet to win support beyond our community.

The submission covers key initiatives in the areas of:

- Transport
- Environmentally Sustainable Development
- Community Infrastructure
- Human and Social Services

The City of Darebin

Darebin's 53 square kilometres includes the suburbs of Kingsbury, Mt Cooper, Northcote, Preston, Regent, Reservoir and Thornbury and parts of Alphington, Bundoora, Coburg, Coburg North, Fairfield, Mcleod and Westgarth. The City of Darebin was established on 22 June 1994.

Over 136,000 people call Darebin home

The population declined steadily from the late 1970s through to the mid 1990s, but has grown since, and is projected to increase to 148,000 by 2021.

One in four Darebin residents was born in a non-English speaking country

Around 40% of Darebin residents were born overseas. The major contributing countries are Italy, Greece, China, the United Kingdom, and India. Almost one quarter of Darebin's residents were born in non-English speaking countries.

Over one third of Darebin's residents speak a language other than English at home

Darebin's residents speak a wide range of languages, with 39% speaking a language other than English at home. The most common languages other than English spoken are Italian, Greek, Arabic, Macedonian and Mandarin, which combined are spoken by around one in four residents. Of those residents born in non-English speaking countries, one in four don't speak English well, or at all.

Roughly one in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Melbourne live in Darebin

A total of 1,110 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in Darebin contributing 0.9% of the total population. The City of Darebin has the largest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the 31 municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne, and Darebin's indigenous community is among the largest in Victoria. Darebin is proud of its cultural diversity and acknowledges its Aboriginal heritage.

One in five Darebin residents is over 60 years of age

Australia's population is ageing and Darebin is no exception. This group of residents is expected to continue to grow over the next two decades to make up one quarter of the population by 2031.

One in four Darebin households earns less than \$500 per week (\$26,000 per year)

This is compared to less than one in five households across metropolitan Melbourne (18%) earning this amount. While the socio-economic profile of Darebin is changing, with more residents earning higher incomes, it is important to remember that a significant proportion of the population still experiences a level of relatively high socio-economic disadvantage. An important part of Council's role in the community is to provide support to these residents.

Almost one in five Darebin residents has a disability

Over 25,000 Darebin residents are affected by a disability of some kind, including physical disabilities and medical conditions, psychological and intellectual conditions or learning disabilities. These residents include children, adolescents, adults and senior citizens. Of the residents with a disability, almost one third have a disability for which they require assistance.

Darebin's non-Christian religious community has doubled in five years

The increasing proportion of residents born in China and India is contributing to growth in the local Buddhist and Hindu communities. The proportion of Islamic residents has also increased. These changes have resulted in the non-Christian religious community in Darebin doubling in size from 4.1% in 1991 to 8.6% in 2006. Perhaps the most dramatic change in the religious affiliations of Darebin residents can be found in the proportion of residents with no religious affiliation, a group which has grown from representing 12.3% of the community in 1991 to 19.2% in 2006.

There are over 900 hectares of open space in Darebin

Bordered by the Darebin and Merri Creeks, the City of Darebin contains a diverse range of open spaces, ranging from small, local parks up to major regional parklands such as the All Nations Park in Northcote and Bundoora Park in Bundoora. Added to this are environmentally sensitive areas such as the Central Creek Grasslands, the wildlife reserve at La Trobe University and the Leamington Street Wetlands.

The City of Darebin is over 53 square kilometres

The City of Darebin stretches from Melbourne's inner northern suburbs of Northcote and Fairfield out to the traditional middle ring suburbs of Reservoir and Bundoora. The municipality has over 63,000 properties, including over 57,000 homes.

The median residential property price in Darebin is higher than the metropolitan Melbourne average, while the median rental price is lower

Over the last decade, a wave of gentrification has radiated outward from Melbourne's inner city. In March 2009 the median house price in Darebin was \$544,000 compared to the metropolitan Melbourne average of \$410,000. The median weekly rent in Darebin in March 2009 ranged from \$230 for a one bedroom flat to \$360 for a three bedroom house. Overall the median rent in Darebin was lower than the median rent for metropolitan Melbourne.

The City of Darebin has assets totalling over \$900 million

In addition to cash and investments, the City of Darebin owns, controls, manages or maintains an extensive range of physical assets. These include over 600 kilometres of roads, 2,000 kilometres of drains, 300 buildings, 450 hectares of parkland and over 45,000 street trees. In 2008/09, depreciation alone ran to a total cost of over \$16 million.

Darebin's employment profile is as diverse as its community

Approximately 56,000 Darebin residents are employed in a wide range of industries, with no one sector dominating. Employment is split roughly equally between four main industry sectors - retail, property and business services, health and community services,

and manufacturing. Together, these four industries employ half of Darebin's working population.

Darebin's unemployment picture is changing

In the past, Darebin's traditional manufacturing base has made the employment market vulnerable to changes in economic conditions. This has been seen in unemployment rates, which have always been higher in Darebin than the Melbourne average. However, with an increasing proportion of residents working in white collar jobs, more residents holding university degrees and fewer residents with no post high school qualifications, Darebin's labour force is more resilient than ever before.

The City of Darebin is among the largest employers in the municipality

The City of Darebin directly employs over 800 permanent staff on a full or part time basis and many more in casual positions. This makes the City of Darebin one of the municipality's largest employers, and a big part of the local labour market. Many Council employees are also residents of the City, and bring an important local knowledge and understanding to their jobs.

Transport

The Darebin Transport Strategy aims to improve local and metropolitan accessibility, increase the role of sustainable transport modes, increase social inclusion, improve health and environmental outcomes, improve community safety and integrate land use planning, urban design, economic development and access.

The strategy is structured around five key areas: land use and development, public transport, walking and cycling, the road network and behavioural change and education.

Darebin is recognised as a Local Government leader in sustainable travel initiatives through our Green Travel Plan and numerous innovative travel behaviour change programs conducted over the last five years.

Maintaining a leading role in sustainable transport and travel behaviour change is important, as it reduces the environmental impacts of travel, improves personal health, provides social connectedness and helps safeguard our communities against economic downturns caused by peak oil scenarios. The recently concluded \$600,000 Love Living Local project is an excellent example of this type of work, and the project realised a multitude of very positive outcomes.

Council is nearing completion of its Safe Travel Strategy, which builds upon road safety using international best practice to identify the most vulnerable and highest-impact road users. The Safe Travel Strategy also continues our practice of very high partnering and stakeholder engagement in both the development and implementation of the strategy. Council believes that what is required is:

- A sustained focus on travel behaviour change and safe travel behaviour change programs, including a continuation in some form of the TravelSmart and Local Area Access Program funding schemes
- A comprehensive and integrated metropolitan walking strategy with commensurate funding for projects
- The funding and construction of the Principal Bicycle Network in the short term
- State Government support to better integrate transport and land use planning.

Specific Transport Initiatives

Tram Route 86 Corridor Improvement Strategy

Council has worked closely with key State Government stakeholders to implement the road hierarchy along Tram Route 86 from High Street, Westgarth, through Northcote and Thornbury and along Plenty Road, Preston.

The project is anticipated to attract State Government funding of \$28 million in stage 1 and a further \$50 million in stages 2 and 3. It involves:

- Integrated land use planning along Plenty Road in terms of the planning controls and urban character of the corridor
- The introduction of Disability Discrimination Act accessible tram platforms via innovative central island tram stops in Westgarth, Thornbury, Preston and Reservoir, and kerb outstands in Northcote
- The introduction of 40km/h shopping centre speed zones along High Street between Westgarth Street and Dundas Street
- The introduction of a part time tram lane and Keeping Melbourne Moving clearway times along Plenty Road between Dundas Street and Albert Street, and
- Intersection improvements at High Street and Westgarth Street, Albert Street and Plenty Road, and Plenty Road and Bell Street, to encourage through-traffic to bypass High Street and use alternate routes.

Functional design is complete and was presented to the community in the November/December consultation period. A lengthy, comprehensive community consultation, from March to December 2009 culminated in Darebin Council adopting the proposal in December 2009.

There has been significant State Government agency engagement and support to approve the project concept. However, State Government funding or at least \$28 million is required for the project to proceed in 2010/11.

Continued State Government support for development facilitation will also need to be delivered through a range of grant opportunities.

Redevelopment of Reservoir Junction

The rail and road intersection at Reservoir Junction has been a matter of community concern for many years.

Significant delays are experienced due to the large number of turning movements at the intersection where six arterial roads meet. The situation is compounded by the operation of railway boom gates.

Pedestrian crossing times from Edwardes to Broadway can be up to ten minutes, effectively cutting the Reservoir Activity Centre in half.

Council continues to seek resolution of this issue through a long term plan for the grade separation between road and rail at Reservoir junction to improve location east-west links and facilitate more frequent rail services that will be expected as part of the duplication of track from Keon Park to Epping as part of the South Morang extension.

Social and community Infrastructure

Infrastructure that is well maintained and meets the needs of the community underpins all of Council's services, and supports community life. The City of Darebin manages almost \$900 million worth of ageing infrastructure, including open space, buildings, roads, drains and equipment. Council spends millions of dollars each year, through its capital works budget upgrading, expanding, renewing and maintaining its community infrastructure.

Council values our ongoing partnerships with state and federal government funding bodies in relation to the development of critical community infrastructure. The recent Nation Building and related initiatives, and the State Government programs these funds supported have been welcome. It is important to recognise that significant infrastructure gaps remain as constraints to our community.

Darebin's infrastructure funding gap is estimated to be approximately \$3.1 million. This means Council should be spending an additional \$3.1 million per year renewing its assets

Council has been closing this gap slowly over the past four years. However at the current rate it will take another 10 years to close. This results in a backlog of work and a running down of Council assets. Some consideration needs to be given to accelerating closure of the gap

Specific Social and Community Infrastructure Initiatives.

New Library for Reservoir

The Reservoir library is located on the western side of the Reservoir railway station and has operated from the current building in Ralph Street since 1980, when the library moved from an inadequate facility on the site of the current Reservoir Civic Centre. Since its relocation, the surrounding shopping precinct design has changed significantly, leaving the building isolated within two car parking areas.

The building has 739 m² of public access floor space; however there are significant structural issues.

Adjustments to the interior were made in 2004 and 2007 to meet changing customer usage patterns and changes in service provision, but they have not addressed the basic issues of a 1980s building unable to meet 2010 requirements. The library service is unable to provide an integrated program of services and resources designed specifically to support the needs of the local Reservoir community, something this disadvantaged community could benefit from significantly.

The Reservoir population represents 36% of Darebin residents. It is a diverse suburb with 57.4% of residents born in Australia compared with the Darebin average of 59.8% and 64.2% for Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD). Darebin's current indigenous population is 0.9% of all residents compared to 0.4% across the remainder of the MSD. Of the 1,108 indigenous Darebin community members, 44% are Reservoir residents.

Reservoir also has a greater proportion of residents at the lower end of the household income scale compared to Darebin and metropolitan Melbourne, with a significantly large proportion of residents earning less than \$1,000 per week. This reflects a relatively high proportion of blue collar workers, a group with a traditionally lower level of library use.

Reservoir has a lower proportion of households with an internet connection: 45.5% compared with 53.3% for Darebin and 63.2% for MSD.

Redevelopment of this library would enable Council to implement an integrated plan for the provision of resources and services in the key areas of children, youth, early learning and literacy. It would encourage participation in the digital economy, support health, ageing and social inclusion projects. These services are vital to address disadvantage and assist community members to fully participate in society.

Relocation to the Reservoir Civic Centre would enable the integration of library services with allied areas such as youth, customer service and early years, creating a community hub that would enhance overall service provision. It would also significantly improve the visibility of the library service.

Government grants totalling \$4 million are being sought including \$3 million from the Federal Government through the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program-Strategic Projects (RLCIF-SP) and \$1 million from the State Government from the Community Support Fund (CSF). Added to Council's contribution of \$1 million this would fund the total project, estimated at \$5 million.

Regional Meals Kitchen

Faced with uncertain supply, quality, variety, nutritional value and price, plus the need for significant investment in new equipment and physical facilities, a group of Councils (including Darebin) decided to consider a joint venture to achieve greater control over standards and achieve economies of scale for their delivered meals programs.

Research into this innovative project has been meticulous, including an independent feasibility study, risk assessment and review of costs. A detailed business plan was completed in April 2007. This work confirmed the viability of a single large scale kitchen and recommended the creation of two companies: one to purchase the land and build the facility and the other to undertake the production and supply of meals.

RFK Pty Ltd, trading as Community Chef, (meal supply company) was incorporated in 2007 and now has 20 Councils as shareholders. Thirteen of the 20 Community Chef shareholders also formed Regional Kitchen Pty Ltd (land and building company) in 2008.

Construction of the new kitchen is currently underway and will be completed and operational by December 2010.

Regional Kitchen Pty Ltd shareholders have invested a combined total of \$2.45 million. State Government funding of \$6 million and Commonwealth Government funding of \$9 million has been committed. The shareholder agreements do not require Councils to underwrite or guarantee company loans.

Continued State and Federal government support is required for this major Victorian Local Government joint venture project, which will deliver a state-of-the-art meal production facility that will produce 1.6 million meals a year and have a capacity to expand its operation to 2.2 million meals per year within a short period.

Neighbourhood Renewal

In October 2005 the State Government announced East Reservoir had been selected as a Neighbourhood Renewal Project area. Neighbourhood Renewal is a State Government flagship project that aims to address issues of locational disadvantage by improving a range of factors including access to employment and learning opportunities, physical improvements to public housing and building a sense of community connectedness among residents.

Darebin Council has a unique relationship with Neighbourhood Renewal, being the first site to directly employ a Place Manager from the project's commencement. Many other sites have a mixed level of engagement with Local Government, compromising the outcomes and opportunities for the community.

A number of projects are in their final years and the Department of Human Services views Local Government as a key stakeholder in the sustainability of the initiative once formal funding ceases. The East Reservoir project involves two other organisations as key partners contracted to deliver specific components: Darebin Community Health (Community Development Project Officer) and Melbourne City Mission (Employment and Learning Project Officer). The team has been located in the new Reservoir Neighbourhood House since it opened in July 2009.

A consortium of agencies is working together to undertake a feasibility study for an early years hub in East Reservoir to address the gaps in children's services and child care in the area. Work has commenced to determine the feasibility of such a facility and provide an indication of the operational model and floor space requirements. In 2010, a report will be presented to Council, to inform a further business case for Council capital investment and funding from other levels of government.

During the remaining five years of the project the redevelopment of large public housing estates in East Reservoir by the Office of Housing will be a key focus. One of these redevelopments has commenced with all residents of the Cheddar and McMahon Road estate relocated. Planning is underway for approximately 40 new properties. The Strathmerton Street and Boldrewood Parade estate is in the preliminary stages of redevelopment and concept planning. A portion of this estate is funded to be demolished with a 23 older person unit block to be built in its place.

The Reservoir Neighbourhood House opened in July 2009 with the Neighbourhood Renewal team locating its offices within the building and running its diverse collection of programs from the Neighbourhood House.

The project requires increased resources from the Department of Human Services to equate to the level of place management provided to the project from Council as well as assistance to maximise social housing outcomes through the redevelopment of Office of Housing estates.

Preston Civic Precinct

Preston Civic Precinct is an integral part of the Preston Central Principal Activity Centre. The precinct comprises land behind the municipal office complex that is mainly owned by Darebin City Council.

The major development of the Preston Civic Precinct is planned to contain a mix of public and private development. It would preserve key parts of the site for the current and long term needs of Council and allow for community facilities and strong private sector investment in new office space and residential units. This would complement Preston's other strengths as a retail and community services destination for the inner and middle areas of northern Melbourne. The Preston Civic Precinct redevelopment would also prove an important complementary development to the future redevelopment of the

Preston Market site.

This project aims to create a vibrant and unique 'Intercultural Centre and Community Hub' to accommodate a range of important community services and activity spaces for Darebin's multicultural and broader community, affordable housing, improved public spaces and a corporate office precinct in Darebin.

- Create a variety of residential units, including a significant (20%) affordable housing component
- Improve public access, visibility and civic space within the precinct, including enhancing the Town Hall forecourt and creating a pedestrian link between High Street and Town Hall Avenue
- Consolidate and enhance Council and civic facilities in the precinct
- Create a corporate office precinct of regional significance to enable the Darebin economy to diversify and secure the future role of the Preston Principal Activity Centre, and
- Demonstrate high standards of Environmentally Sustainable Design by demanding a 5 star Greenstar rating for the development.

Such a transformation in the precinct will deliver significant social and economic benefits to the community, to the total value of \$1.1 billion, much of it within the City of Darebin.

The Preston Civic Precinct Business Case study was adopted by Council in July 2008 and selected as the preferred concept to best meet the objectives of the masterplan for the precinct. The total cost of this redevelopment is estimated to be approximately \$140 million. This level of investment will require a mix of private and public funding, with the majority of funds to come through the private development component.

Ongoing support for the Preston Civic Precinct redevelopment is required, particularly for the renewed state government Expenditure Review Committee funding submission for 2010/11.

Environmental Sustainability

Climate Change Mitigation

Darebin continues to demonstrate leadership in Climate Change Action in our own operations and some innovative community projects.

Council's Climate Change Action Plan (covering our operations) was adopted in 2007. In 2007/2008 Darebin achieved a 16% reduction in greenhouse emissions, compared to the previous financial year. In 2008/2009 we achieved a further 5% reduction. This surpassed, ahead of time, our target of a 20% reduction on our 1995 level before 2010.

The Darebin community has shown a high level of interest in small scale renewables. More than 100 Darebin households participated in a Council promoted program to install a photovoltaic system last year. We would like to see the Renewable Energy Certificates (RECS) multiplier for micro-generation units removed from the Renewable Energy Target a National Gross Feed-in tariff established to encourage the uptake of micro-generation units, and to grow Australia's renewable energy industry. Solar Hot Water systems do not generate renewable energy and should be supported through upfront rebates rather than RECS.

In addition to implementing the Solar Hot Water roll-out, Darebin will conduct a feasibility study to consider the best model for ongoing bulk roll-outs of energy and water efficient products to our community.

Almost half of Darebin's corporate emissions are from street lighting. Replacing existing street lights with energy efficient lights has been identified as a key action for significant progress towards our 2020 carbon neutral target. Darebin, in conjunction with the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action, has been working towards this goal for some years. While some progress has been made through the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Taskforce, a number of barriers remain that hinder implementation.. State and Federal Government support through budget initiatives is required to enable the roll-out of energy efficient street lights

Council is also calling for the The Federal Government to remove the RECS multiplier for micro-generation units from the Renewable Energy Target and that a National Gross Feed-in tariff be established to encourage the uptake of micro-generation units, and to grow Australia's renewable energy industry. Solar Hot Water systems to be supported via other rebates rather than RECS

Support and funding is required to enable affordable bulk roll outs of energy and water efficient products to our entire community

Council uses this opportunity to call for urgent, concerted and consistent action from all levels of government to make significant cuts in greenhouse emissions and a transition to a new green economy.

Climate Change and Peak Oil Adaptation

Climate Change and Peak Oil are serious issues that pose significant ramifications for all communities. The scientific community agrees that both phenomena exist, although there are uncertainties associated with the timing of the events. While there is strong

community and political awareness of climate change, the issue of Peak Oil is less well known. Peak Oil refers to the time when global oil production peaks and then starts to decline, following which petroleum products will become more expensive as demand continues to outstrip supply. There is growing expert consensus that Peak Oil has happened or will happen soon and that immediate planning is required to ensure effective societal transition.

Council services will be affected by climate change and peak oil. Extreme weather events, storms, fires and floods will impact on buildings and infrastructure. Ongoing drought conditions will affect recreation facilities and open space and impact on infrastructure, including foundations and pipes. Peak oil will affect petrol dependent services, including waste collection, street cleansing, vehicle fleet, meals delivery and home care, road and footpath construction and maintenance and parks maintenance. It will also affect the cost of products dependent on petro-chemicals, including asphalt, waste bins, playground equipment, vaccines, herbicides and fertilisers

Climate change will affect our community with heat stress, flooding, fuel shortages and other economic impacts. Peak oil will affect community transportation, food security (cost and supply), health and safety, economic pressures and housing affordability

Urgent state and federal planning and action is clearly required for peak oil including widespread communication. Other specific initiatives that may be required are:

- Improved public transport services and adaptation planning for these services to upgrade the system to cope with for future conditions
- A review of current building and infrastructure standards to address the impact of climate change
- Facilitation of joint regional infrastructure adaptation planning to create consistency and clarity of roles
- Prevention of imprudent infrastructure investments given fuel shortages and higher prices and active support of alternatives
- Development of regional strategies with significant State Government involvement for heatwave planning, food security and green jobs rather than individual municipal strategies
- Research of international and national emergency response case studies to identify best practice risk reduction measures for all levels of government
- Ensure that vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community are adequately protected
- Other levels of government to work with Local Government to support community driven transition initiatives and community-based solutions, including producing and consuming locally produced food.

Water Strategy and Issues

Water is a precious and finite resource. Climate change and ongoing drought conditions are impacting on the amount of water available and storm intensity. Urban consolidation and changing demographics also affect the use of water and associated infrastructure.

The Darebin Sustainable Water Strategy was adopted in March 2007 to integrate the management of water use, stormwater quality and quantity and asset integrity. The strategy draws together key water management actions and activities from the Darebin

Stormwater Management Plan, the Drainage Strategy, the Asset Management Plan and the Sustainable Water Use Plan. Darebin has achieved Council and community water conservation targets set in the Sustainable Water Use Plan through water conservation measures and State Government imposed water restrictions.

Under current Stage 3a restrictions Darebin has had exemptions for key sporting grounds and open spaces (around one quarter of pre-restriction consumption). This has recently been revised to allow a specified annual consumption, so Council can better plan water use and new, drought resistant plantings. Potable water supplies are being supplemented with rainwater harvesting, water from creeks and Edwardes Lake, and buying and transporting recycled water.

Council calls for support from the Federal and State Governments with regard to:

- Council's "Green Precinct Fund Pooling Our Resources" application to the Federal Government
- The State Government to develop funding programs for medium scale Council water conservation and climate adaptation projects which use an ongoing partnership model (eg: Melbourne Water's Living Rivers Program)
- Continued support, partnerships and funding to drought proof sport grounds and open space
- Improved support for Local Government to identify, access and use "fit for purpose" water supplies. This could include support for local projects or large scale actions such as retrofitted supply pipes to suburban areas
- Continued commitment to timely consultation with Local Government as key stakeholders in water conservation and water quality program development
- Upgrade of the 5 star housing rating system to require rainwater tank installation to be mandatory rather than optional.

Towards Zero Waste

The City of Darebin Waste Management Strategy 2007-2014 maps a direction towards sustainable waste management. It includes waste avoidance and reduction objectives and actions specific to Council, households and businesses. The Strategy is aligned with Victoria's Towards Zero Waste Strategy (TZW), which aims to reuse, recycle and/or convert to energy 75% of Victoria's solid waste by 2014.

The State Government's Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Strategic Plan (Metroplan) identifies Victorian waste management facilities as inadequate to achieve TZW targets. The Victorian Advanced Resource Recovery Initiative (VARRI) responds to this, exploring alternative technologies to collect and process organic food waste in addition to current recycling, garden and residual waste processing. The City of Darebin and other Councils have expressed interest in potential participation in VARRI, however to date Local Government engagement has been limited.

The State Government has indicated that landfill levies will increase this financial year. No clarification has been made on the expected costs or funding directions.

The Federal Government's National Waste Policy heralds product stewardship schemes, commencing with TV and computer (e-waste) recycling. Local Government will require

strong advocacy from all levels of government to ensure cost burdens are not borne by Local Government as a result of these schemes.

The State Government has indicated its intent to raise the landfill levy. Significant increases are not supported and any increase will affect Council budgets. Consultation and timely advice to Local Government is required. Darebin, along with other councils, is concerned that the landfill levy must be hypothecated to waste initiatives that support resource recovery, waste avoidance and minimisation.

Council supports the National Waste Policy's product stewardship schemes – particularly e-waste recycling. However, the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) fails to incorporate real costs of collection of these items. "Drop off" points used in the RIS to assess costs have proved unsuccessful in removing computers from the kerbside. A number of Councils already have free computer recycling "drop off", yet computers still continue to appear in hard waste and dumped rubbish.

Council applauds large scale behaviour change initiatives such as Target 155. In contrast, there is nothing of this scale for waste. While Councils educate and engage our communities on waste there is a clear need for widespread, large scale media campaigns for stronger community understanding and uptake. This is work Local Government cannot do alone.

Through the current budget processes, Council is specifically seeking:

- State Government commitment to support green waste facility upgrades in the northern region which have the capacity to address the needs of Councils
- State Government commitment to increased engagement with Local Government around the VARRI process
- State Government commitment that landfill levies will be hypothecated back to waste initiatives, that increases are not significant, and that there will be adequate notice and a phase-in time for levy increases
- Commitment that e-waste schemes result in e-waste being recycled (not sent to landfill) and that they will not result in cost burdens for Local Government, including equipment changeover considerations
- A state driven, large-scale community education and behaviour change campaign on litter, waste minimisation, recycling and resource recovery, linked to waste avoidance, resource and climate impacts
- Assurance that a national CDL scheme will include a rigorous economic analysis which ensures no additional cost to communities and considers Local Government's fixed and variable costs associated with kerbside recycling, landfills and littering.

Human and Social Services

Early Years Planning

Council is a significant provider of early years infrastructure and services, with 40 dedicated, Council-owned buildings across the municipality. Recurrent expenditure for these services and buildings is \$5.9 million, of which Council receives \$3.28 million in grants from State and Federal governments.

Council services delivered from Council owned sites include maternal and child health, immunisation, family day care coordination, early years support, pre-school central

enrolment, child care centralised waiting list, inclusion support program, early childhood committees support and resourcing, early childhood staff resourcing, playgroup support and resourcing, primary school holiday program coordination, outside school hours liaison and toy libraries. Community services provided from Council sites include kindergartens (pre-school), long day child care, occasional care, playgroups, primary school holiday program and early intervention.

Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has focused on the 'early years' committing to develop services and future social capital. A National Framework and Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care will replace the current licensing and accreditation processes undertaken by the States and the Commonwealth and will begin implementation from 1 July 2010. There is also increased recognition by COAG that school sites and early year's hubs should be linked.

A focus on the importance of early year's education and care has led to an increase in demand for services, in particular for community-based services. Current infrastructure is struggling to meet the needs of the community and initial data collected in Darebin as part of the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education project (15 hours of kindergarten) indicates that current infrastructure/services will not be sufficient to implement COAG's agenda in 2013. Currently 1,576 child care places and 990 kindergarten places are community-based, with the rest provided by commercial operators. Kindergarten committees focus on providing 4-year-old sessions (State funded) with only about one third of applicants for 3-year-old sessions receiving a place.

Council is seeking responses through the current budget to:

- Support to maximise financial assistance from the State and Federal governments to enable further planning for the implementation of the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in 2013 and development of community based infrastructure (kindergartens, child care) to service the increase in community demand in 2013.
- Further leadership by the State Government in providing access to early years services in pre-kindergarten (3-year-old) programs for children from disadvantaged and vulnerable families.
- Support collaboration with the State Government (DEECD) in planning for services and infrastructure that meets the COAG agenda of linking schools sites and early year's hubs.

Aged Care Strategic Directions 2010-2020

In 2001, as part of the Darebin Best Value Policy, Council undertook a major review of Aged and Disability Services. This resulted in an Aged and Disability Services Strategy that has provided the framework for planning, service development, service access and provision within the Aged and Disability Services Branch and across Council departments for the past seven years.

It is now considered timely to review this strategy, develop a new set of strategic directions for aged care and provide a framework for Council action to address the diverse and changing needs of older citizens.

The new Darebin Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy will build on and strengthen the focus on healthy ageing by underpinning the review and setting new directions within an active and healthy ageing framework. It will expand existing initiatives and further develop a range of Council directions for older citizens in community support and services, outdoor spaces and buildings, housing, social and cultural participation, social inclusion, communication and information, civic participation and transport.

The Darebin Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy will also review service provision from an Active Service Model approach. This approach emphasises proactive and preventative measures that have the potential to reduce older people's dependency levels, or slow their decline, even in the presence of substantial levels of disability as a result of chronic illness. Even when people are elderly and frail, there is increasing evidence that adopting strategies for 'wellness' can make a positive difference. These strategies can include exercise (low level activities such as shopping, cooking and gardening), using aids and equipment and improving nutrition.

Importantly, the new strategy will include an analysis of the changes currently underway in the Federal and State policy and planning environment around the provision of aged and disability services. It will also consider the implications for Council in service provision and its financial commitment now and in the future.

A reform of the current funding and administration of community and residential care for aged people and people with disabilities is on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda. In mid 2010, COAG will decide on a proposal for the Commonwealth Government to take over the administration of all aged care services, including Home and Community Care (HACC) services for older people. The impact of this on Council HACC services and the future service provision role will need to be a key component of the new Darebin Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy.

The Active Service Model is a new Victorian Government Care HACC policy direction. It emerged from a strong evidence base and drivers for change. The evidence base has led to an understanding by all HACC service providers in recent years of the importance of a 'wellness' or 'active' approach to service delivery.

Darebin Council contributes approximately 41% of the total cost of Aged and Disability Services. This is not sustainable and will not meet future service demands. Funding levels and unit prices for HACC are not keeping pace with an ageing population or the rising actual costs of delivering services. Council faces increasing pressure to meet the gap, provide the quantity and complexity of services required and respond to changing client needs.

Council calls for the State Government to strongly support the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV) position on the proposed COAG reform to aged care, to acknowledge the need to maintain the levels of service in the community and the important role played by Local Government in Victoria.

Any reform to HACC and operating models must acknowledge that Victoria is different because of Local Government's substantial role and commitment to HACC services funding, planning and provision.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a key issue for Darebin, an important element in maintaining diversity and a key determinant of social inclusion.

In response to these issues, Darebin has augmented funding provided through the Local Action Plan on Affordable Housing project and is developing our own, more local policy – Responding to Housing Stress in Darebin. The project encompasses issues of affordability, but seeks to tackle the causes and effects of housing stress through an integrated housing policy embedded in the Municipal Strategic Statement. Council will look to adopt different ways to support better housing outcomes for all Darebin residents.

Council will continue to work with the private sector and government for innovative

housing solutions. Last year we established “Boarders without borders” – a unique response to the needs of international students. There are currently five developments with some affordable element under consideration and Council is in discussion with the Office of Housing about new ways to build rooming houses and increase public housing stock.

Council has few direct instruments to generate a greater supply of affordable housing, but, through land use planning and other policies, can be very influential. Close partnerships with community organisations, and with others tiers of government are essential.

Council calls for Federal and State budget allocations to provide ongoing funding for the expansion of social housing options through community housing associations and community housing providers.

Council also asks for support for joint exploration of effective legislative mechanisms to encourage developers to take on affordable housing projects, including consideration of inclusionary zoning.

International Students

The City of Darebin has experienced a rapid increase in the number of international students, who represent approximately 4% of Darebin’s residents or more than 5000 people. The largest groups come from India, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

In the last six months, media coverage has brought to public attention the difficult plight of some of these students and also the negative perceptions and behaviour toward them from some sections of the community.

Council has responded to these issues through the establishment of the Darebin Overseas Student Advisory (DOSA) Committee and the ‘A Fair Go for International Students’ program, a suite of projects which aim to address issues of housing, mental health, personal support, education and community relations. The program seeks to ensure international students are grounded on a personal level, included as part of the wider community, and empowered to negotiate the systems to ensure human rights, personal wellbeing and value for money outcomes.

There are compounding issues relating to employment and finance, affordable accommodation, quality education and mental health related conditions. Systems failures across the chain of operations of the international student service sector with international students affected in terms of financial, educational, mental and physical health-related costs. Closure of private educational institutions has occurred with few contingencies for the welfare of students affected by these closures. Council is requiring state and federal government support to establish three key mechanisms:

- **Regional Coordination and Service Nodes.** Darebin City Council wants the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) to instigate a regional advocacy response to give priority to international student issues through the establishment of three regional committees in metropolitan Melbourne, in the north, south-east and west. In each jurisdiction, a cluster of municipalities and partner organisations would establish an International Students Advisory Council to coordinate advocacy, services and support for international students based on the ‘A Fair Go for International Students’ model.
- **Clearing House Committee.** Council, in partnership with Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, establish a committee

which responds to incidents of 'systems failure' which impact on international students. The committee should include representatives from Australian Council for Private Training and Education (ACPET), Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (AIWCW) and other relevant agencies who work to resolve such failures.

- Rooming House Taskforce. Council wants to establish a taskforce that monitors compliance of rooming houses which contravene government building and health regulations, educates operators on compliance issues and manages the 'fall out' from the closure of rooming houses. The taskforce would ensure compliance and service delivery functions were coordinated to decrease the likelihood of overseas students being at risk of homelessness

Council also recommends the Federal and State governments mandate the inclusion of sunset clauses and transitional arrangements when introducing new legislation and regulations, and that students adversely affected by policy and regulatory changes be supported and compensated. Currently continuing students are disadvantaged through being denied due process as a result of policy 'changing of the goal posts'.

Community Health and Wellbeing

The City of Darebin plays a leading role in planning for population health and wellbeing across the municipality. It is a requirement of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 that all Councils provide a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years. This plan is designed to identify existing and emerging public health priority areas Council needs to address and provides a range of preventative and responsive strategies to enable people to achieve their maximum wellbeing.

Darebin's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013 is Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and was adopted by Council in December 2009. The plan provides a broad, four-year strategic framework for health and wellbeing planning in the municipality. It aims to build upon Council's existing work, and move Darebin forward towards a more holistic and integrated planning approach, encompassing all Council activities that relate to the health and wellbeing of our community.

Council coordinates two key committees that involve a range of stakeholders that work to improve health and safety in Darebin. They are the Darebin Health Committee and the Darebin Local Safety Committee. These committees involve a range of community partners including Darebin Police, Connex, VicRoads, Darebin Community Health and other local drug, alcohol and mental health support services.

Key Projects under this priority for 2010/2011:

- Development of a Social Inclusion Agenda for the City of Darebin
- Support and connect with disengaged youth through programs such as YUTE Crew mobile outreach program
- Translate the Northern Region Family Violence Help Card into the top 12 languages other than English across the northern region, including an Aboriginal version
- Evaluate the Alcohol Restricted Zones pilot project in Preston and Reservoir, and
- Conduct research to improve understanding of mental health issues in Darebin and support service available to local residents.

To support the ongoing implementation of the plan, Council is seeking, through the federal and state budget processes:

- Increased power to Local Government authorities to object to new liquor license applications on the grounds of alcohol outlet density and potential harm to the community
- Increased funding for drug and alcohol and mental health support services in Darebin to support Council's work with the Alcohol Restricted Zones pilot project
- Increased power to Local Government authorities to embed food security into land use planning
- Further support for evaluation of municipal public health and wellbeing plans including the update and release of Local Area data related to Burden of Disease for 2006. The most recent data that is currently available is from 2001.