

Draft Community Safety Strategy 2012- 2016

A plan to enhance perceptions of safety, reduce crime and build a respectful community

DRAFT

August 2012

Contents

1. Mayor's Message	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Community Safety in Darebin.....	6
4. Policy context and alignment.....	9
5. Priority Areas	12
6. Evaluation and Measurement.....	14
Appendix One: Resources and References	15

DRAFT

1. Mayor's Message

Darebin Council is pleased to introduce the Darebin Community Safety Strategy 2012 - 2016, our first stand-alone community safety and crime prevention strategy. With a dedicated Community Safety Strategy, Council recognises that safety is a major priority for the community that impacts on almost all Council programs and planning, and influences all aspects of daily life.

Community safety affects our capacity to participate in and contribute to the community. It also affects our capacity to live healthy lives and adopt healthy behaviours. A safe community helps to create an atmosphere that fosters and encourages residents and visitors to actively participate in the community.

The Darebin Community Safety Strategy 2012 – 2016 outlines how Council will work in partnership with community and service providers to enhance perceptions of safety, reduce crime and build a strong, respectful community. Darebin will continue to facilitate the development of partnerships that build an awareness of ownership and responsibility within our communities to address the priority issues identified in this plan.

This Strategy has been shaped by the community safety issues within the Darebin community. I wish to thank everyone who has contributed to this process; our key community safety partners for their support and contribution to this strategy, in particular the agencies of the Darebin Local Safety Committee; Victoria Police, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, State Emergency Services, Department of Justice, Darebin Community Health and Metro Trains Melbourne.

Improving community safety and reducing crime is everyone's responsibility. Council, residents and organisations all have a role to play in creating a community where people feel safe. We welcome your participation in this Strategy and believe that through strong partnerships and shared sense of responsibility we will make the City of Darebin a safer place to live, work, study and play.

**Cr Steven Tsitas, Mayor
City of Darebin**

2. Introduction

2.1 Context

“Community Safety aims to increase the ability of people to go about their daily life with little fear for their own safety, or of others.”

Perceptions of neighbourhood safety by residents closely relate to the satisfaction within that community, and can be used as a subjective measure of individual safety. Negative perceptions of safety can deter others from building and maintaining social networks in their local area, and from accessing local services and recreational facilities. There is evidence that actual levels of crime are much less likely to influence activity levels within neighbourhoods, than perceived levels of safety.

Addressing safety requires a coordinated approach and formation of partnerships between a wide range of government and community services. This plan aims to address local Darebin issues, and therefore requires an understanding of local issues and current approaches. The strategy will guide the implementation of actions which aim to increase perceptions of safety and reduce the opportunity for crime, injury and violence through community education, participation and partnerships.

Key Components of the Darebin Community Safety Strategy

Priority Communities	Priority Areas	Strategies
Women Older People Youth Aboriginal	People To improve social inclusion and community participation to create strong, safe, respectful neighbourhoods.	Build strong and safe communities through inclusion and participation Implement programs to address anti-social behaviour and promote respect
CALD Socially Isolated Same sex attracted and sex and gender Diverse	Place To design and maintain our city to reduce crime, and enhance public safety and perceptions of safety.	Maintain and manage the amenity of our community Design and provide safe public places Enhance safety around public transport hubs and promote safe, sustainable travel
People living on low / insufficient incomes Homeless / or in housing stress	Partnerships To work in partnership to increase community education and reduce the opportunity for crime, injury and violence.	Increase community education on how to report and prevent crime and injury Reduce the impact of violence and crime in our community, particularly against women and children Minimise the impact of alcohol and other drugs

Darebin Council is committed to community safety and employs a full-time Community Safety Officer and facilitates the Darebin Local Safety Committee. The Community Safety Officer works in partnership with Darebin Police, local emergency services and other stakeholders to coordinate and implement a range of community safety initiatives.

Darebin Local Safety Committee

The Darebin Local Safety Committee was established in 2003 as a multi - agency forum who share a collective commitment to improving safety and perceptions of safety in Darebin through a whole of community partnership response.

The committee meets bi-monthly and is chaired by City of Darebin Mayor and the Darebin Police Service Area Manager. The Committee comprises representatives from government, non-government and community agencies including Victoria Police, Department of Justice, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, State Emergency Services, Metro Trains Melbourne, Darebin Community Health Centre and La Trobe University. The committee links closely with the Darebin Emergency Management Committee.

The Darebin Local Safety Committee operates within the frameworks of the City of Darebin Community Safety Strategy, Safe Travel Strategy and the Victoria Police 'The Way Ahead Strategic Plan'. The Committee will act as the reference group for the implementation and evaluation of the Darebin Community Safety Action Plan.

2.2 Background

Darebin City Council has been actively involved in addressing community safety with a range of initiatives and projects aimed to enhance safety and perceptions of safety. Some examples are:

People

Y-Ute Crew mobile outreach program
Operation Bounceback motor vehicle theft reduction program
Residential Street Parties Program
Community Safety Month celebrations including Safe Stroll walking events
Women's Self Care day event

Place

Graffiti Removal Subsidy Program
Department of Justice Graffiti Removal Program
Supporting Community Art Projects to prevent graffiti
Community Initiated Safety Audit Program
Tram 86 improvements
Northland Youth Centre

Partnerships

Darebin Local Safety Committee
Darebin Alcohol Accord
Walker Street Partnership
East Reservoir Neighbourhood Renewal Program
Darebin Domestic Violence Network

2.3 Purpose of Darebin's Community Safety Strategy

Understanding and defining Community Safety is complex and is a responsibility that sits across three tiers of government:

- The Federal government assumes responsibility for high-level crime, sets policy directions and co-funds many health and community services.
- The Victorian Government funds and delivers most services involved in safety including the Victoria Police, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Ambulance, child protection and drug and alcohol services, as well as setting regulatory framework such as building standards.
- Local government through the Local Government Act 1989 enforces many state regulations and is responsible 'for the peace, order and good government' of their municipal districts. (Local Government Act 1989 – Part 1A). This includes delivering and advocating for services that support a safer and inclusive community.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a clear outline on how Darebin Council works in partnership with the community and service providers to improve safety and reduce the impact of crime on the Darebin Community. It will respond to local data, including perceptions of safety and crime data, and will focus on particular groups that are at greater risk of actual or perceived safety issues in the community.

2.4 Methodology and priority setting process

The Darebin Local Safety Committee has overseen the development of the Community Safety Strategy. Analysis of current policy, reviewing community data on safety and perceptions of safety, consulting with community advisors and council staff has informed the development of the Priority Areas. An Action Plan responding to the main priorities will support the implementation of this Strategy.

2.5 Darebin's Population

Darebin has one of the most diverse communities in Australia with residents from a range of cultures, languages, ages, social-economic status, sexual orientation and disability. Of note, 2011 Census data reveals:

- Youth between 12 to 25 years represent 17% of Darebin's population
- 15% of residents in Darebin are aged over 65 years
- 34% of the Darebin population were born overseas and 39% speak a language other than English at home
- 1155 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in Darebin. Darebin has the second largest Indigenous population in Metropolitan Melbourne
- 1 in 5 residents have a degree of disability (Australian average)

Darebin also has areas of high socio-economic status and low socio-economic status. (SEIFA index). Areas of low Social Economic Advantage are usually associated with lower perceptions of safety, and often have higher reports of police offences.

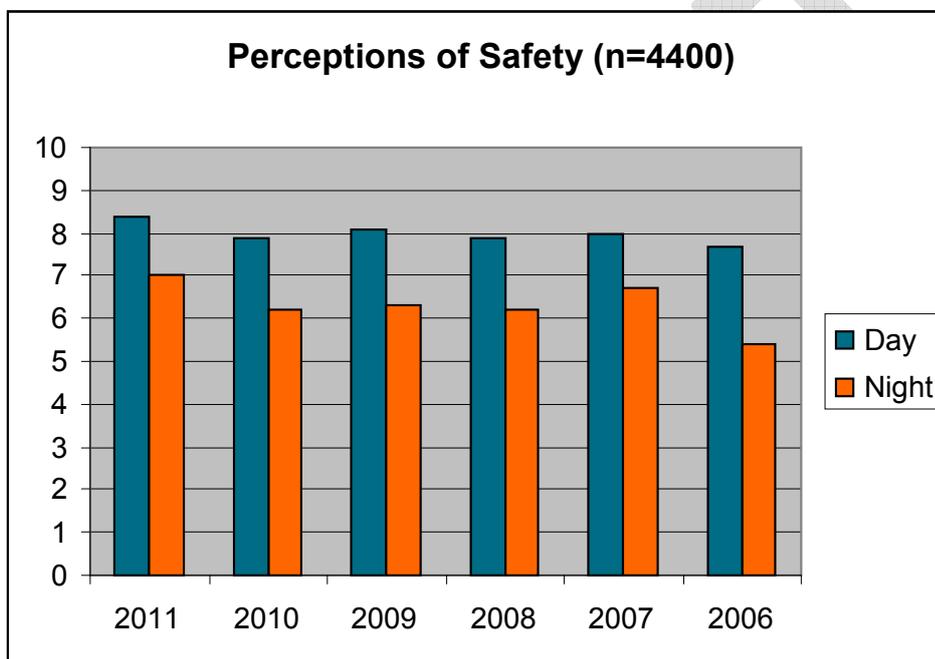
3. Community Safety in Darebin

Data from a number of sources, including perceptions of safety (qualitative) and crime and health statistics (quantitative) has been analysed to give an overview of community safety in Darebin. Perceptions of safety are a subjective measure of how safe an individual feels.

3.1. Darebin Community Survey 2005 to 2011

The Darebin community survey is conducted quarterly across the municipality. The survey measures perceptions of safety in Darebin, across gender, age and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background. On a scale from 1 to 10 (one being most unsafe) the 2011 results indicate Darebin residents generally feel safer than ever, during both day and night.

The results of this survey indicate that perceptions of safety during the day have remained high, with residents rating their perceived safety at 8.4 during the day and 7.0 during the night. In 2011 Darebin residents feel safer than they have in the previous 6 years



Males generally feel safer than females, residents 60 and under feel safer than those aged 60 and over, and people who speak English at home feel safer than those from a Non English Speaking Background.

The survey also highlights the following self reported factors as to why people may feel unsafe in Darebin:

- Drug and alcohol use in public
- Violence and harassment
- Safety around train stations
- Lack of lighting
- Robberies and theft

3.2. Governing Melbourne 2010

The Governing Melbourne survey is a survey of 1,000 respondents across every municipality in metropolitan Melbourne. Participants are asked to rate their perceptions of safety on a scale from 1 to 10; where 10 is the most safe.

In 2010, Darebin’s score for perceptions of safety during the day was 7.9. This score is higher than the Northern Metropolitan average of 7.84 but is slightly lower in comparison to other regions in Victoria (highest score was the East Region at 8.33). The Darebin average rating for safety at night was 6.2. This is comparative to the average score for the Northern Metropolitan region of 6.25 and was higher than the average recorded for the South East, West, Inner East and Metropolitan Melbourne regions.

The Report highlighted that for the North Region’s Local Councils the number one priority in the next 12 months was safety, policing, crime and vandalism. This contrasts to other areas where high priority issues were traffic management and car parking.

3.3. Victoria Police Crime Statistics

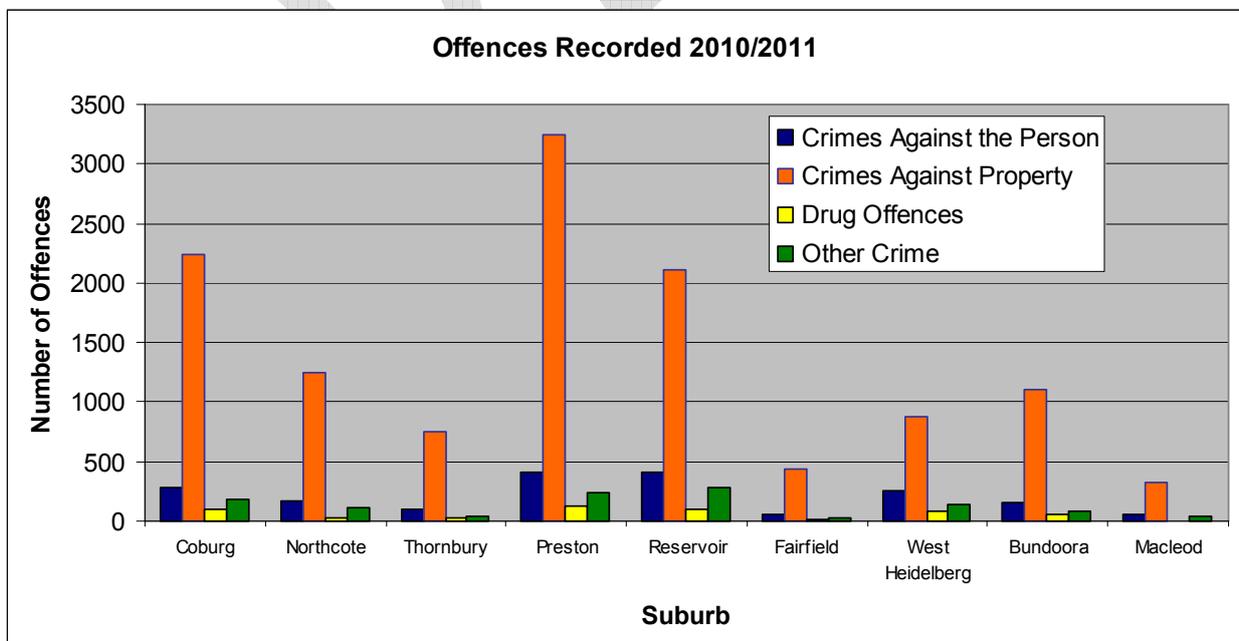
Crime statistics are produced annually by Victoria Police with figures extracted from the Law Enforcement Assistance Program Database. Data can be influenced by changes in reporting (better reporting procedures), and by population size.

Victoria Police data indicates that the number of recorded offences from 2004/2005 to 2010/11 in Darebin is decreasing, and decreasing at a faster rate than Metropolitan Melbourne.

The three leading recorded offences in Darebin Local Government Area during 2010/11 were:

- Theft from motor vehicle 1,573
- Property damage 1,183
- Theft (shop steal) 1,086

The following table provides a summary of recorded offences for the 2010/11 period comparing suburbs and offence type. Preston had the highest recorded offences, followed by Reservoir. Macleod had the least. This aligns closely to population size.



3.4. Reducing re-offending

Improving community safety and reducing crime involves working with those who offend to reduce the high rate of re-offending. Access to community services is critical (appropriate housing, mental health and drug and alcohol agencies) to prevent those at risk from engaging in crime.

3.5. National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing 2011

In investigating perceptions of safety on public transport only 35.7% of Australians feel safe using public transport at night. During the day feelings of safety rose to 82.6%.

3.6. Family Violence and Victorian Burden of Disease: Mortality and Morbidity 2001

Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to preventable death, disability and illness for Victorian women aged 15-44. In 2010/11 there were 1,003 reported incidences of family violence incidents in the City of Darebin, a rate of 710.6 per 100,000. One in three women will experience violence in their lives, and one in five will experience sexual violence. Many cases are unreported. Council has adopted a Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan which complements the work of the Community Safety Strategy.

3.7 Alcohol related Hospital Admissions: Victorian Admitted Episodes Database:

Morbidity data on all admitted patients from public and private acute hospitals within Victoria was extracted for the Local Government Area of Darebin. Alcohol-related hospital admissions data for Darebin Council over a 5 year period, 2003/4 to 2007/8, is fairly consistent of around 50 per 10,000 people. Compared to other Municipalities Darebin LGA rates of alcohol-related admissions is also average (Darebin 51.08, range 25.38 Nillumbik to 67.52 Yarra rate per 10,000)

3.8. Community consultation

The development of the Community Safety Strategy drew information from a range of individuals and groups in the Darebin community including Council staff, advisory committees, local service providers and community members. The Strategy was also shaped by a number of existing pieces of research which relate to perceptions of safety and crime in the Darebin community.

While overall perceptions of safety in Darebin are relatively high and are similar to other Municipalities in the North, there are a number of persisting safety concerns and locations in Darebin where community safety is a heightened issue. The higher incidence of community safety related concerns is often due to the levels of disadvantage associated with these locations (ABS SEIFA Index, 2001) and in response Darebin Council has been actively involved in seeking further information on these safety issues and has conducted or participated in place-based community working groups.

Safety is an important issue for the Darebin community. To improve safety, residents, Council staff and service providers have all identified the need to focus on both the physical and social environments, as both greatly influence perceptions of safety and crime. The consultation process also identified the need for a holistic approach, with partnerships between Council, community and service providers in all community safety and crime prevention initiatives.

The following table summaries the key data sources and community safety concerns.

Consultation and data sources

Annual Darebin Community Survey perceptions of safety data 2007 – 2011
Victoria Police Crime Data for Darebin 2010/11
Darebin City Council Racism Inquiry Report 2012
Darebin Youth Summit Report 2010
Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy Consultation Report: 2009/2010
Preston East Community Safety Consultation 2010
East Reservoir Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan and Community Survey 2011
Walker Estate Community Safety Action Plan Survey 2011 and community survey 2011

Community Safety Concerns

Safety on and around public transport
Anti-social behaviour of young people
Hoon driving
Harassment (including racial) and bullying (including cyber)
Provision of 'safe' community/public spaces such as playgrounds and youth centres
Lack of community engagement and neighbourhood participation
Poor amenity including lack of lighting, graffiti, vandalism, dumped rubbish
Family violence
Alcohol and substance abuse including drug dealing
Lack of community knowledge on how to prevent crime and report incidents
Appropriate Police response

4. Policy context and alignment

The following policies and strategies inform and support the work of the Community Safety Strategy. The Community Safety Strategy provides a framework for the delivery of Darebin City Council's actions that aim to improve safety, and perceptions of safety within Darebin.

4.1 International Context

United Nations Safer Cities Program

The Safer Cities Program provides an internationally recognised framework to support the development of urban safety and social cohesion. It has three main pillars: Urban Planning, Governance of Safety and Focus on Vulnerable Communities.

4.2 National Context

Australian Institute of Criminology: National Crime Prevention Framework

The National Crime Prevention Framework outlines the most effective approaches to the prevention of crime. This Framework is focused on strategies that have, as a primary goal, the elimination or reduction of crime and antisocial behavior or improvements in community safety. The following issues have been identified as priority areas:

- reducing alcohol-related violence
- improving the safety of young people
- improving the safety of Indigenous people
- preventing child abuse and neglect
- reducing violence against women.

4.2 Victorian context

The Victoria Police

The Way Ahead 2008-2013 provides the strategic direction for Victoria Police. The priorities include, A Safer Victoria, Connecting the community and Valuing our people

Department of Justice, Community Crime Prevention Program

The Community Crime Prevention Program aims to improve safety and reduce crime through a number of areas including preventing violence against women and children, promoting safe infrastructure and reducing the impact of graffiti on our community.

VicHealth

Among others, VicHealth departments includes social exclusion, discrimination, violence and alcohol misuse. These are all issues that intersect with Community Safety and emphasise the link between safety and health.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Under the 'Building Respectful and Safe Schools Strategy' key areas of focus are bullying, cyber-bullying, violence, harassment and discrimination.

Melbourne Safer Design Guidelines

The Melbourne Safer Design Guidelines provide guidelines for preventing crime and promoting safety through environmental and infrastructure design. In particular it promotes the concept of having good natural surveillance and visibility. Council has adopted this guideline to inform both private and public development planning.

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Darebin Charter Check list

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities underpins this action plan and has been taken into consideration through application of the Darebin Charter Check List.

4.3. Local Context

Darebin Council Plan

The Council Plan is developed every 4 years after the Council election, and identifies the promises and goals that the new Council make to the community for their 4 years in office. As 2012 is an election year, a new Council Plan 2013 - 2017 will be developed and adopted by the incoming Council in June 2013.

Community Wellbeing, including community safety is consistently identified as a key goal in the Council Plan. The Darebin Community Safety Strategy 2012 -2016 will be strongly linked the future Council Plan.

Darebin Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013

Darebin's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan have a number of priorities. Priority three, *Creating a Safe, Supportive and Sustainable environment* aligns closely to the Community Safety Strategy. The goals of the priority area are:

3.3. Design and maintain our city to reduce crime, and enhance public safety and perceptions of public safety.

3.4. Undertake proactive partnerships to establish initiatives and programs that educate residents about crime prevention, injury prevention and personal safety.

Policy Alignment

The planning principles used to guide the implementation of the Community Safety Strategy include the Human Rights framework and the Darebin Equity and Inclusion Policy. This process enables Council to consider the impacts on safety and the specific safety needs of various groups in our community. Community safety is addressed in a variety of ways through a number of Council Plans, policies and strategies. The diagram below demonstrates this alignment and the integrated approach to improving safety.

		Council Plan 2009 – 2013
		Community Safety Strategy 2012- 2016
Planning Principles Human Rights Equity and Inclusion Policy	Direct link	Graffiti Management Action Plan Alcohol and other drugs Action Plan Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan Multicultural Action Plan Sexuality, Sex and Gender Diversity Action Plan
	Strong cross over	Community Health and Wellbeing Plan Women’s Equity Strategy Safe Travel Strategy Youth Strategy Anti- Racism Strategy Emergency Management Plan East Reservoir Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan Aboriginal Action Plan
	Other documents related to safety	Equity and Inclusion Policy Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy Community Engagement Framework Local laws Animal Management Traffic Enforcement

5. Priority Areas

In reviewing and analysing current local and state policies, community surveys, focus group reports and community responses, three priority areas have been identified. They are people, place and partnership.

1. People

To improve social inclusion and community participation to create safe and respectful neighbourhoods.

“Knowing your neighbours and neighbourhood creates a feeling of safety”. Darebin resident.

This priority area aims to make Darebin a safer and stronger community by improving social inclusion, community participation and addressing antisocial behaviour. Studies have shown that high levels of social interaction and inclusion are greatly linked to increased perceptions of safety.

Perceptions are as important a measure of public safety as actual instances of crime. If people feel unsafe in their home and local area they may be less likely to talk to their neighbours, trust others living in the area, use public transport, walk in the area, use public amenities and generally participate in their communities. The most critical elements in achieving high levels of perceptions of community safety are; community engagement, participation, inclusion, and effective strategies to deal with crime and alleviate anti-social behaviour.

Antisocial behaviour is of serious concern to the community for several reasons. It can have a negative impact on community perceptions of safety and people's quality of life. It can threaten the establishment and maintenance of a safe and secure community. Further more individuals who engage in antisocial behaviour risk becoming excluded from important support mechanisms and risk coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

This priority area is strongly linked to the City of Darebin Equity and Inclusion Policy 2012 -2015 goal number three: To contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities.

The strategies in this priority area will focus on interventions with people and communities identified in Council's Equity and Inclusion Strategy as being at greatest risk of isolation and exclusion. This includes, but is not limited to elderly, youth, CALD and Women.

The strategies are:

- 1.1 Build strong and safe communities through inclusion and participation**
- 1.2 Implement programs to address anti-social behaviour and promote respect**

2. Place

To design and maintain our city to reduce crime, and enhance public safety and perceptions of safety.

“I feel much safer being in public spaces if I know there are people around”. Darebin resident

This priority area aims to make Darebin safer through the design, construction and maintenance of the built and natural environment. State and Council guidelines about public space demonstrate how crucial the design and maintenance of public place is in order to enhance perceptions of safety and reduce the chance of opportunistic crime.

The structure of our built and natural environment, and the way neighbourhoods are designed and maintained, impact greatly on perceptions of safety and are critical factors in any strategy for improving public safety and reducing crime. Spaces that are inviting and appealing, have good lighting, clear vision, and a sense of ownership by the community can help people to feel safe, and prevent crime. In addition to Town Planning, Council has a role in providing and advocating safe road and transport infrastructure. The design of public transport and roads is vital to preventing injury and crime.

Perceptions of safety are an important factor in whether or not the public decides to use public transport. Personal safety on and around our public transport hubs, such as on station platforms or on the way to or from one’s tram stop, is a leading safety concern for Darebin residents.

Darebin is committed to promoting safe and sustainable travel choices, not only through reducing crime but also through providing high quality infrastructure and protecting our most vulnerable road users.

The strategies for this priority area are:

2.1 Maintain and manage the amenity of our city

2.2 Design and provide safe public places

2.3 Enhance safety around public transport hubs and promote safe, sustainable travel

3. Partnerships

To work in partnership to increase community education and reduce the opportunity for crime, injury and violence.

“I think community safety and preventing crime is everyone’s responsibility”. Darebin Resident

This priority area aims to reduce crime, violence and injury through the development of strong, coordinated partnerships across all sectors of the community. Community safety is everyone’s responsibility and can only be achieved through the development and support of partnerships within local communities, with business, residents, community groups, police, agencies and councils, which can identify local solutions to local issues. Then organisations and service providers work together to pool resources, knowledge and commitment to crime prevention. Working in partnership is endorsed by many state and local organisations.

The need for extra community education on crime prevention and reporting crime and safety concerns is indicative of the types of safety concerns and crimes recorded in our municipality. Education can help empower residents to reduce their personal risk of crime and injury. It can

also enable people to report crime and safety concerns, which assists in providing evidence for action. This provides better safety outcomes for the entire community.

Darebin residents report that they are concerned about drug use, drug dealing and associated crime, as well as alcohol related issues. These behaviours are health and safety risks to both the individual and community and are associated with violence and anti-social behaviour. Council is committed to implementing a harm minimisation approach to reduce the negative impact of alcohol and other drugs on our community.

We know that family violence is the most under-reported crime, often due to fear of further violence from the perpetrator. Violence against anybody is unacceptable. Men and boys are sometimes victims of family violence and sexual assault, but women are overwhelmingly the victims of these forms of violence. This issue has a flow-on effect on children. Council is committed to the prevention of violence against women and children by integrating our work across the whole organisation and in partnership with the community.

The strategies for this priority area are:

- 3.1 Increase community education on how to report and prevent crime and injury**
- 3.2 Reduce the impact of violence and crime on our community, particularly against women and children**
- 3.3 Minimise the impact of alcohol and other drugs**

6. Evaluation and Measurement

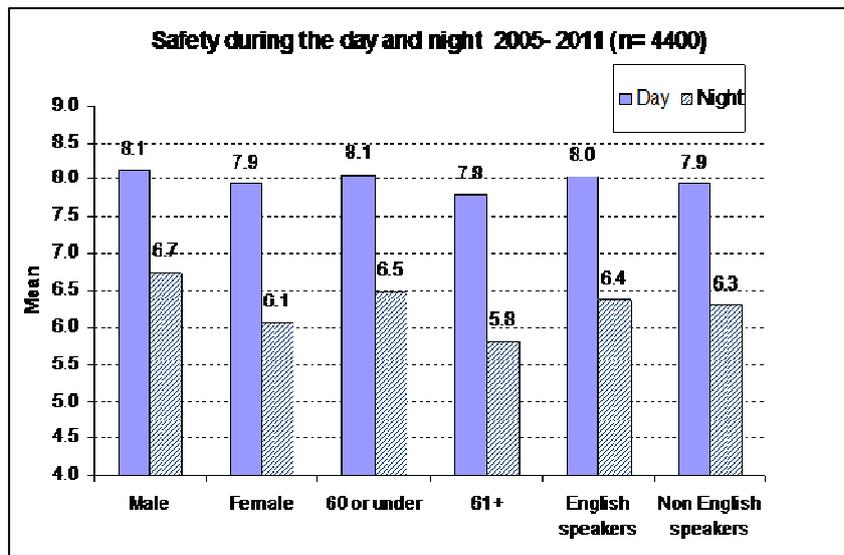
The Community Safety Action Plan will be reviewed annually. Realistic measures have been attached to each action to ensure the outcomes of the strategy can be evaluated.

The overall community impact of the strategy will be measured using the perceptions of safety data gathered in the Darebin Community Survey. This strategy aims at minimum level to maintain the perceived safety in Darebin at 8 during the day and 7 at night. It will strive to improve the perception of safety at night especially in areas identified as hot spots.

Monitoring will be supported through Council annual reporting cycles across each department. Annual reports will be provided to Council and the Community outlining Council's progress and achievements.

Appendix One: Resources and References

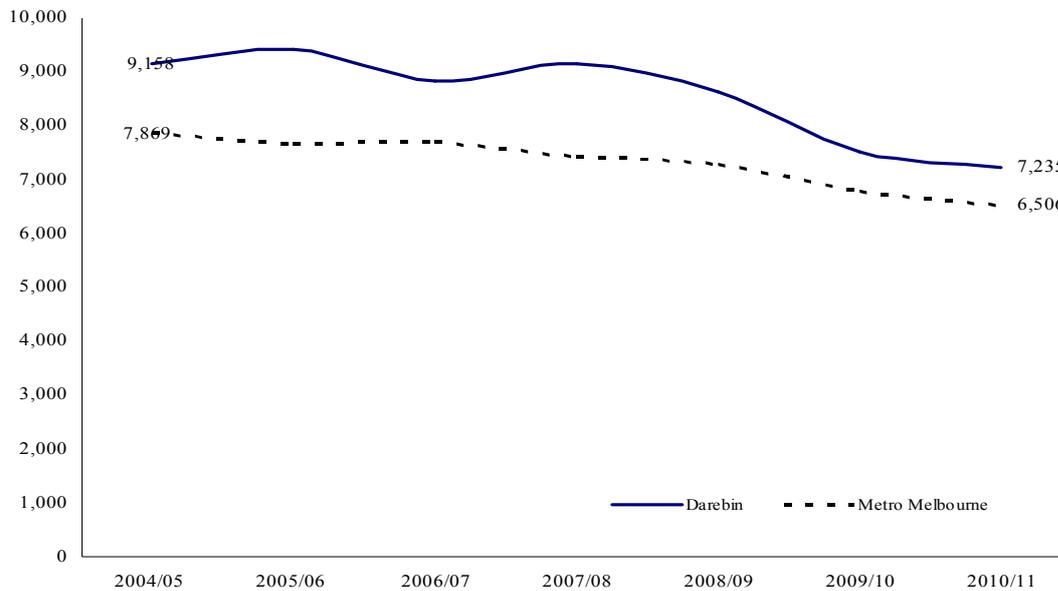
1.1 Darebin Community Survey Perceptions of Safety Data 2005 – 2011



1.2 Metropolis Research Governing Melbourne Survey Northern Region Priorities

North	
Safety, policing, crime and vandalism	24.6%
Traffic management	21.8%
Public transport	16.6%
Environment, climate change, sustainability	11.4%
Garbage collection	8.5%
Roads maintenance and repairs	8.1%
Street trees / nature strips	6.6%
Car parking	6.2%
Footpath maintenance and repairs	6.2%
Activities, services and facilities for the elderly	5.7%

1.3 Victoria Police total Recorded Offences from 2004/2005 to 2010/11: Darebin and Metropolitan Melbourne comparison



1.4 References

- **Crime prevention through design** - Safer design guidelines for Victoria. Department of Sustainability and Design and Crime Prevention Victoria.
http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/41231/Safer_Design_Guidelines.pdf
- **Local Government Act 1989** - Local Government in Victoria is administered under the Local Government Act 1989, which provides a framework for the establishment and operation of councils. The Act is the main legislative instrument for Victoria's 79 councils. It commences with a Preamble that restates the constitutional recognition of local government as a distinct and essential tier of government.
- **Design Principles and Social Inclusion relationship** - www.healthyplaces.org.au