

Water's role in Healthy Communities

Regional cities and towns are home to thriving communities that provide attractive lifestyle choices. People feel a sense of safety and belonging, and opportunities for recreation and connection support the physical and mental health of rural and regional communities.

Place-makers and Healthy Communities

Many professions contribute to the creation of Healthy Communities through their role in place-making. People with roles in strategy and planning, urban design, engineering and environment, community development, and others, all help make our regional cities and towns great places to live. They design and maintain sport and recreational spaces for communities to meet and connect. They manage systems that provide safe drinking water and maintain built and natural systems to treat wastewater and manage stormwater and flooding, for the benefit of people and the environment. They engage with workplaces, schools and industry to develop comprehensive plans that promote social inclusion and wellbeing.



Strategy & Planning



Urban Design



Engineering & Environment



Community Development



How does water support Healthy Communities?

Water is a critical resource that supports life and livelihoods.

Water plays an important role in community health and wellbeing by sustaining places for recreation and connection such as sports fields, parks and gardens. Urban and natural environments supported by water contribute to physical and mental health and mitigate extreme heat conditions. A safe and reliable supply of drinking water supports healthy communities by reducing risks of water-borne disease. The effective management of stormwater and wastewater ensures homes and communities are safe, and environments are protected and enhanced.

Place-makers work with each other and the community on a broad range of initiatives that support healthy communities in regional cities and towns. Bringing together different skills and disciplines makes these possibilities a reality by leveraging resources, skills and knowledge.

These pages articulate the connection between water and healthy communities, and your role as a place-maker in collaborative and integrated planning to deliver this outcome.

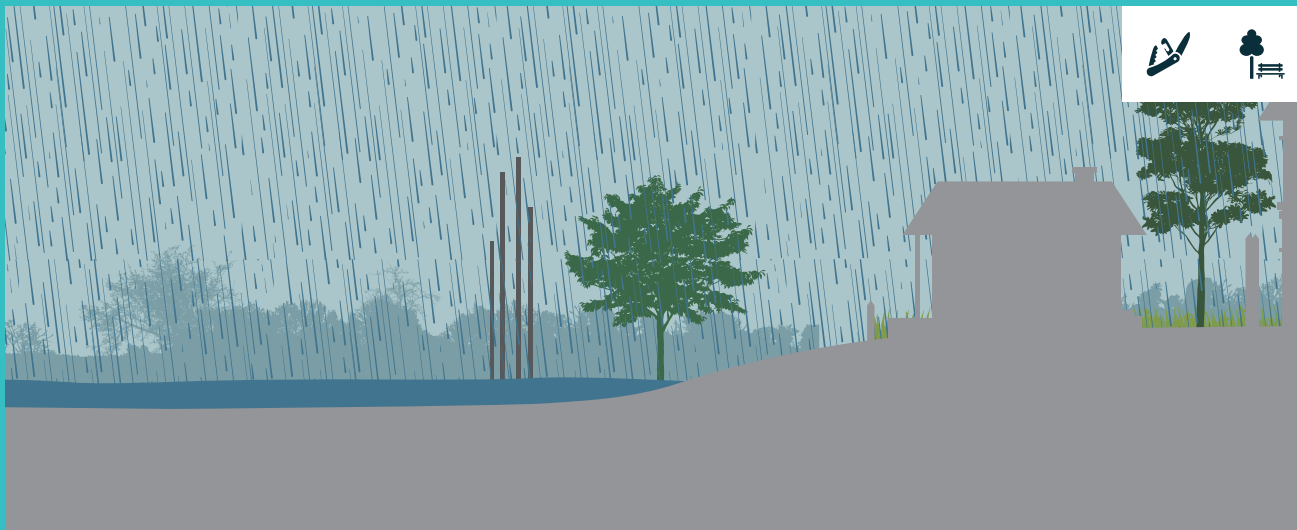
How can I contribute to creating Healthy Communities?

This could be achieved by doing things like:



Urban designers and engineers create and sustain places that support physical and mental health supported by a diversity of water sources.

Helps achieve Council Health and Wellbeing Plan, Open Space Strategy, Sustainable Water Strategy



Place-makers design multipurpose community spaces that reduce the impacts of extreme events and increases access to public open space.

Helps achieve Flood Management Plan, Open Space Strategy

Healthy Communities: Case Studies

Green spaces enable “Activities in the Park” in Shepparton

Greater Shepparton City Council’s Activities in the Park project utilises sport and recreation facilities to foster physical and mental wellbeing. The program is run by the council’s Active Living Department and offers a huge range of free and low-cost activities designed to encourage people to utilise green spaces, be physically active and engage with their community.

Activities in the Park have been running successfully for five years and have grown from 75 activities with 8,229 participants in 2012 to 370 activities with 14,500 participants in 2017. Evaluation results reveal participants value the opportunity for social connection, continued access to activities and that the number of participants visiting local parks and reserves has increased.

Kaye Thomson
Director Community, Greater Shepparton City Council

“Activities in the Park programs are mainly held in green spaces around the lake and in our parks and gardens. Sport is very important to the people; we understand that sport improves peoples’ mental health.”

Our sports precinct in Shepparton is very reliant on water. Our soccer pitches provide competition spaces for state and national levels and we hold AFL events at Deakin Reserve. The people who play tennis feel very proud of our lawn courts and the fact we hold major events because they are beautifully looked after. In drought times, when our parks and sports areas start to brown off, people start to feel depressed so we try to keep our parks, gardens and recreation spaces green to maintain a positive approach.”

“We understand that sport improves peoples’ mental health.”



Masterplanning to enhance community health and wellbeing at Lake Wendouree



Lake Wendouree in Ballarat hosts a huge variety of sporting, arts and cultural events and offers attractive, diverse recreational spaces. In 2016, the City of Ballarat invited the community to participate in creating a new Masterplan to guide the city’s investment in the lake for next 20 years.

The Masterplan will reflect extensive community consultation which indicated local people placed high importance on having water in the lake and on water quality. Residents wanted future investment to support community health and wellbeing.

Adam Parrott
Senior Landscape Architect,
City of Ballarat

“Community feedback showed strong support for initiatives that supported community health and wellbeing.”

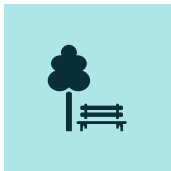
“Lake Wendouree is the jewel in Ballarat’s crown and very much the centre of community life so it’s important to understand what the community values about the lake. Community feedback for the Masterplan showed a high appreciation of the value of the lake to local residents and strong support for initiatives that supported community health and wellbeing such as improved lighting for walking tracks. The feedback also indicated a high level of support for maintaining water levels and water quality.”

When the lake went dry, it had a huge psychological impact on the city. Council initiated a range of infrastructure works to minimise the chance of it going dry again and protect water quality. These included securing different sources of supply and improving the quality of stormwater inflows. The new Masterplan will continue the focus on maintaining water levels and quality.”

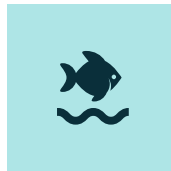


Why Integrated Planning?

An integrated approach to water planning and management can provide multiple benefits to communities beyond water supply, sewage and drainage services, such as:



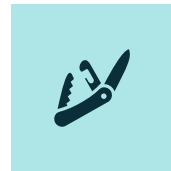
Green and cool streetscapes



Healthy waterways and habitat



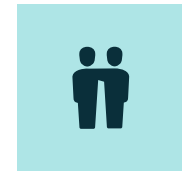
Water for sport and recreation



Multipurpose assets



Supply security



Engaging places for community connection

In order to realise those benefits of an integrated approach to water planning and management in an efficient and cost-effective way, we need to bring all our place-makers together. Even though they may not see themselves as associated with water, professionals in strategy and planning, urban design, engineering and environment and community development can all help achieve these broader benefits in the local context through early planning, collaborative decision-making and considering the whole system.

This document highlights the benefits of working beyond operational and organisational silos so that all place-makers contribute to Healthy Communities through the way water is managed. Healthy Communities is one outcome from a list of five – the others are Vibrant Centres, Economic Opportunity, Healthy Environments, Climate Resilience - that all characterise the best of regional Victoria.



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