

Policy Context

What is a gender impact assessment?

Gender impact assessments are a way of critically thinking about how policies, programs, and services will meet the different needs of the women, men, and gender diverse people in the community.

The aim of gender impact assessments (GIA's) is to create better outcomes and ensure all people have equal access to opportunities and resources.

For more information about Council's obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020 and GIAs can be found on the [Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector's website](#).

About Banyule City Council's Housing Strategy

It had been 10 years since Banyule's Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies were developed. Since then, our population has grown, and our households have become more diverse. Melbourne is being reshaped by major infrastructure projects and our understanding of social and environmental sustainability has transformed.

Banyule needed to update our Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies and plan for Banyule's changing housing needs. Affordability, housing choice, rental housing, social connectivity, and sustainability are important considerations, and we need to revisit how we balance the need for housing growth and diversity, while respecting neighbourhood character and the liveability of our suburbs.

The review of the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies was a significant project, that took place over several years, beginning in May 2022, with extensive community engagement at a range of stages. The Housing and Neighbourhood Character strategies were adopted by Council on Monday 5 August 2024.

Banyule City Council's housing vision is:

Banyule will contain housing options for all life stages, preferences, abilities, and incomes.

New development will be sustainable, well-designed, and responsive to our unique leafy green neighbourhoods.

Fundamental to the review and the preparation of a new housing strategy was a review of neighbourhood character. The overarching aim of the Housing Strategy is to plan for housing growth that contributes to the existing or preferred neighbourhood character. The Housing Strategy guides residential development in Banyule, via three (3) main pillars:

1. Driving housing for all
2. Elevating good design and sustainability
3. Valuing preferred neighbourhood character

Gender Impact Assessment

Who does the policy impact?

The Housing Strategy impacts all residents of the Banyule community. Safe, stable, and affordable housing was established as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is crucial to physical and mental health, quality of life, education access, and economic outcomes.

How did Council conduct the GIA?

The Housing Strategy was developed over an extended period, with a phased approach. Figure 1. shows the phased approach, as well as the key consultation milestones for community engagement.

Banyule had previously acknowledged the urgency of increasing the supply of social and affordable housing through an Interim Social and Affordable Housing Policy (2023) which was in place to guide Council's decision making and advocacy for more housing until this Housing Strategy was adopted in 2024, and now supersedes the Interim Policy and absorbs its role. Consultation and community engagement, including a GIA was also conducted for the Interim Policy.

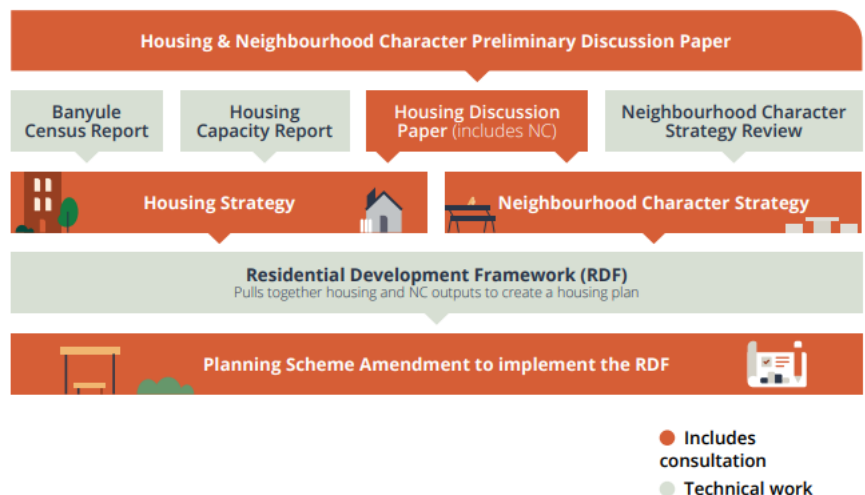


Figure 1. Process for developing the Housing Strategy

To ensure an approach that focused on intersectionality, equity and accessibility, Council officers were committed conducting a GIA that included diverse voices from internal and external stakeholders. The process included:

- Multiple internal stakeholder discussions, feedback forums and engagement. Bringing together a range of subject matter experts and lived experience.
- Multiple rounds of community engagement across two (2) years. With results disaggregated by gender and other diversity indicators.
- Ensuring the inclusion of women in the project control group.
- Research and data collection, with a focus on finding and embedding best practice in relation to gender sensitive and universal design principles.

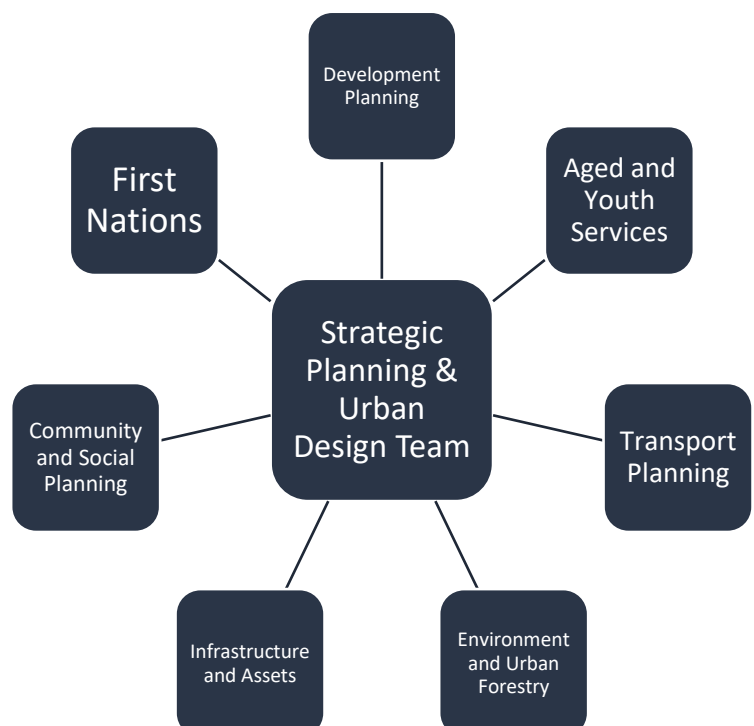


Figure 2. Relevant internal teams engaged throughout GIA process.

Key Themes

Internal discussions and community engagement highlighted a range of key themes and concerns for women in the Banyule community.

- One of the strongest engagement cohorts were women in the 35 – 60 age brackets, highlighting a keen interest in the housing strategy and a desire for more affordable and diverse housing options.
- Community engagement respondents, included a higher proportion of homeowners who identified as women.
- Census data indicates that women's weekly earnings are 14% less than men.
- Community engagement highlighted strong positive feedback from women that Banyule needed more medium density housing close to hubs and services, whereas men highlighted concerns related to rezoning certain areas for higher-density housing, especially in established neighbourhoods.
- Council established that more women accessing homeless services than men, with a particular concern that women escaping family violence were not able to find a place to live or stay in Banyule, including access to housing support.

When looking at Banyule's diverse population and considering an intersectional lens, the some of the key themes included:

- Older members of the community raised concerns around finding places to downsize within Banyule. Expressing a desire to stay in their community, but options were either larger family style homes or smaller apartments.
 - 25% of Banyule residents are aged 60 years and over. This is higher than Greater Melbourne which is 20%. Of the older residents in Banyule, 55% are women and 45% are men.
- Banyule is expected to remain a major destination for young people with residents aged 20 to 29 years of age projected to continue to grow. La Trobe University and the City's substantive hospital infrastructure are anticipated to be major attractors for students and health workers.
 - Noting that women are more likely than men to be employed in health care and social assistance roles and this industry is a major source of employment for women in Banyule.
- Young people, particularly LGBTIQ+ young people, who cannot live at home highlighted having limited housing and homelessness support options.
- Banyule's neurodiverse community shared challenges with new housing developments, due to auditory sensitivity, broadening this out to all people living with varying types of disability highlighted the need for universal design principles needing to be followed.
 - Generally, Banyule households that include a person living with disability have lower income.
- Time poor people, those experiencing hardship, and people with disability struggled to engage in some of the initial community engagements surveys.
 - Council officers changed engagement process and included a shorter survey option for second round of consultation which increased representation and engagement.

Identified Opportunities and Recommendations.

Given the broad scope of the Housing Strategy, key areas of focus for the GIA were shaped around the three (3) driving pillars.

1. Driving housing for all – ensuring different typologies, scales, densities and including affordable and social housing that cater to the diverse needs of the Banyule community.
2. Elevating good design and sustainability – making sure new developments are suitable for people to live in, fit for purpose and not expensive to run.
3. Valuing preferred neighbourhood character – focusing on supporting and maintain the local identity, sense of place, and what people in Banyule are proud of.

Identified opportunities to improve and promote gender equality, inclusion and accessibility in the housing strategy included:

- Establishing and identifying Council's role in social and affordable housing. Council has an important role in enabling, advocating for, and improving the supply, quality, and access to social and affordable housing to the Banyule community.
 - Details around social and affordable housing, housing stress, homelessness and hardship were all included in the final Housing Strategy.
- Investigating why Banyule does not have specialist housing services established within the municipality, with a particular focus on investigating why Banyule does not have youth or family violence refuges.
 - Identifying opportunities to work with specialist housing services to identify opportunities for new developments such as refuges, transitional housing etc but also wrap around services for social housing that ensure sustainable outcomes.
- Ensuring gender sensitive and universal design standards for social and affordable housing are front of mind.
- Working with Council Community Impact Team (social and community planning) to roll out training for development planners to support assessment of planning permit applications for social and affordable housing.
- Work to diversify housing options in Banyule to ensure that older adults do not have to leave their local community when needing to downsize based on life stage.
 - Looking at single and detached housing options as well as apartments.

Other Comments

Limited data exists on the experiences of gender diverse residents, which was a gap in our GIA assessment.

Certain data has been taken from the Census which currently uses female and male as gender categories, for the purposes of this GIA report, the terms women and men have been used.