

ACTIVE BALLARAT STRATEGY

2026–2030

Proudly working
with and for
our community



Figure 1: Murrup Laarr Ancestral Stones | Photo Credit: Visit Ballarat

Project Acknowledgement

The City of Ballarat acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Ballarat community to the development of the Active Ballarat Strategy. This includes the expertise and input provided by user groups, local clubs and associations, State Sporting Associations, and City of Ballarat staff, all of whom have played an important role in informing this work.

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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

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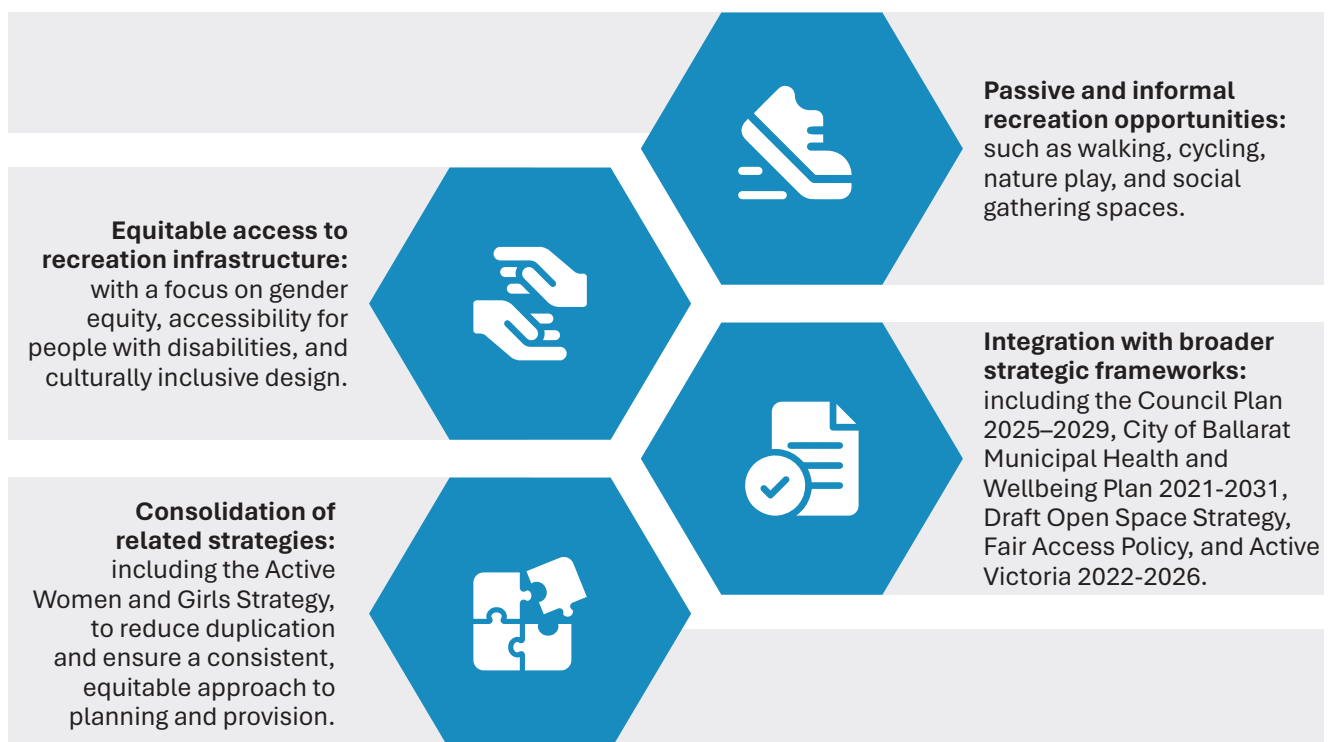


1. Introduction

The City of Ballarat Active Ballarat Strategy was originally developed in 2019 to guide the planning, promotion, and delivery of infrastructure priorities and opportunities for physical activity across the municipality. The Strategy has served as a foundational document for shaping Ballarat's active living priority focus areas.

The recreation landscape in Ballarat has evolved significantly since the Strategy's inception in 2019. In 2024, Council developed the recently adopted Recreation Infrastructure Plan (2024–2039), which initiated a strategic shift in focus moving from predominantly structured and organised sport towards a more inclusive and holistic view of recreation. This includes a stronger emphasis on passive recreation, informal physical activity, and the creation of spaces that support wellbeing, social connection, and community activation. While this shift in focus is recognised, the significant role that community sports clubs and organisations play in supporting active recreation is acknowledged and strongly supported. These clubs remain essential to Ballarat's recreation network, providing opportunities for participation, competition, skill development, volunteering, community leadership, and social connection.

The refreshed Active Ballarat Strategy reflects this strategic shift by prioritising:



2. What is Active Recreation?

Sport and recreation encompass a broad range of physical activities that support health, wellbeing, and social connection.

These activities range from informal and unstructured participation, such as play and active living, to structured and competitive sport. They provide opportunities for people to be active in different ways, depending on their interests and circumstances.

In Ballarat, sport and recreation take place across a variety of settings, including parks, trails, clubs, gyms, aquatic centres, schools, and public spaces. These environments support physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

Participation patterns are changing. Factors such as time constraints, lifestyle changes, and community values are influencing how people choose to be active. There is increasing demand for flexible and informal options, alongside traditional organised sport.

Understanding these trends helps the City of Ballarat plan and provide a system that is inclusive and responsive to community needs.



2.1. Understanding the Sport and Recreation Spectrum

The diagram below shows a spectrum of sport and recreation, from unstructured and flexible activities to structured and organised sport.

Understanding the role of both structured and unstructured recreation is important for planning. Unstructured recreation typically relies on accessible, multi-use public spaces and provides flexible, low-cost opportunities that support all communities. Structured recreation often requires dedicated facilities and scheduled use. There is increasing demand for unstructured activity, particularly from people with limited time or financial capacity. The focus is to support participation across all activity types, ensuring options are accessible, appropriate, and meet the needs of the community.

Figure 2: The Sport and Recreation Structure and Flexibility Spectrum



3. Active Ballarat Strategy Alignment



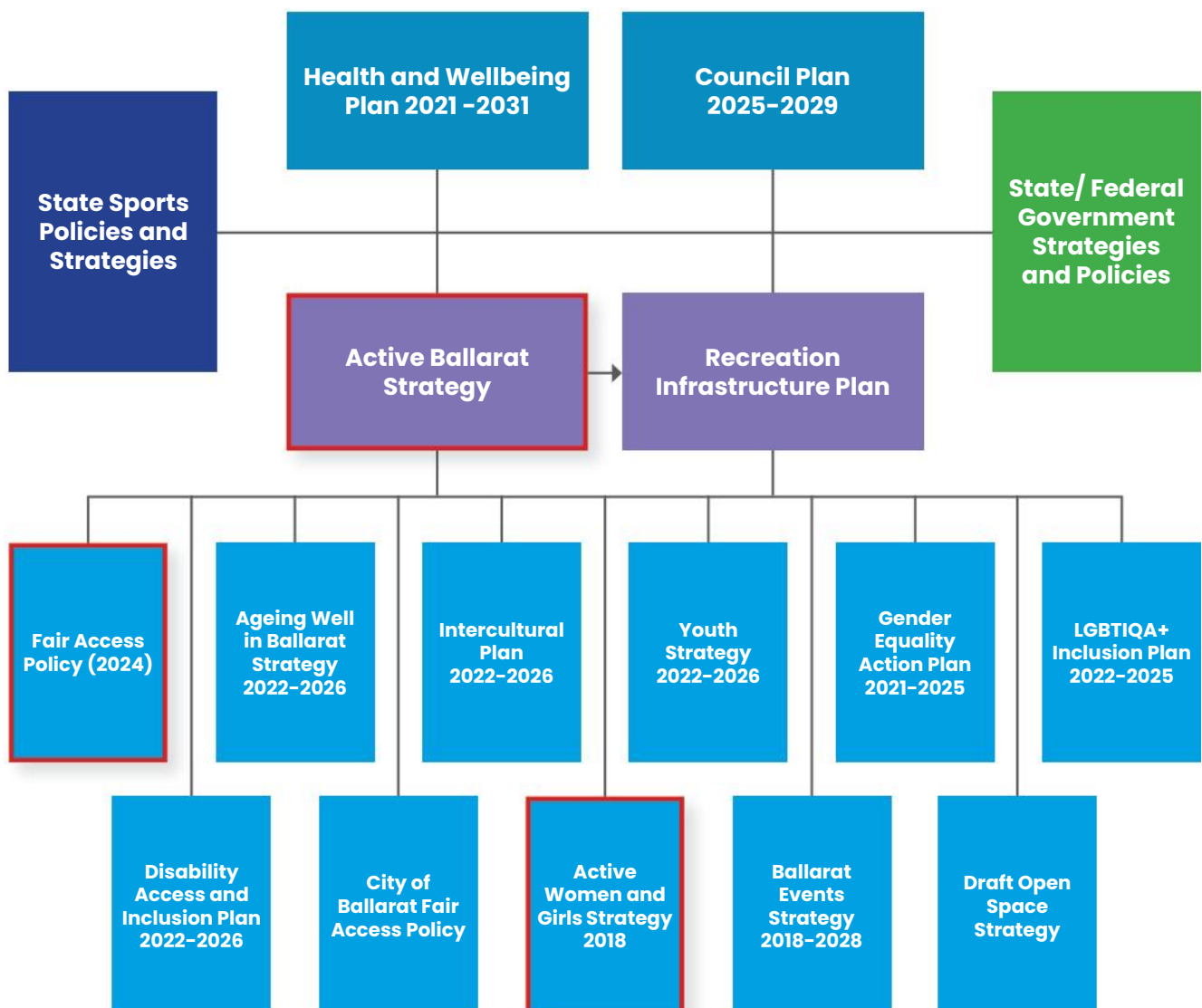
What strategic objectives will influence the future provision, improvement and management of Ballarat's community facilities in the future?

3.1. Council Strategic Framework

The **Active Ballarat Strategy** and the **Recreation Infrastructure Plan 2024-2039** are the two key strategic frameworks to guide Council's future priorities and investment in sport and active recreation. The refreshed Active Ballarat Strategy integrates the Active Women and Girls Strategy (2018) for a more coordinated approach, while also ensuring stronger alignment with the principles of Council's Fair Access Policy (2024).

This following graphic illustrates the Active Ballarat Strategy placement within the broader Council context and how it responds to community needs in supporting active and healthy lifestyles across Ballarat.

Figure 3: Council Strategic Framework



4. Recreation Infrastructure in Ballarat

4.1. Planning Framework

A planning framework with facility provision standards was developed for the Recreation Infrastructure Plan 2024-2039 that includes a Recreation Infrastructure Network Hierarchy. This hierarchy is applied to current and future recreation facilities. This hierarchy is supported by design standards that are included in the Recreation Infrastructure Plan report.

The design standards are scaled for local, district, regional, state/national and international level participation and competition standards. The preferred facility design guidelines from sports have helped inform the design standards.

Contemporary sports facility design standards complement the design standards including design guidelines for making spaces for girls and women, transgender and gender diverse people, and universally accessible places.

The hierarchy and design standards have informed the development of a detailed inventory and growth area provision requirements. The full inventory is provided in the Recreation Infrastructure Plan and includes a detailed description of users, detailed condition assessment outcomes of sports fields and how field capacity levels, asset condition and fit-for-purpose ratings are applied.



Table 1: Recreation Infrastructure Network Hierarchy (Source: Recreation Infrastructure Plan 2024-2039)

International

Service Level Objective

- International facilities represent the highest-level venues, capable of hosting national and international events, competitions, and games. These facilities support elite sport and major events, while providing significant opportunities for entertainment and tourism. In Ballarat, Mars Stadium functions as an international level facility.
- International facilities have very specific requirements that vary depending on the sport they serve, as well as the spectator seating capacity and the amenities needed. These include a range of options from corporate suites to public seating areas. They are venues that include a high level of technology including large electronic scoreboards, lighting and sound systems for entertainment purposes. They are typically funded by State and Federal Governments, national sporting organisations and professional sporting clubs.



Mars Stadium

State/National

Service Level Objective

- A facility with the ability to host state/national competitions and events or to serve as a state/national performance training hub for one or more sports codes. They are destinations for sport and recreation and events and deliver social and economic benefits to the wider regional/country region. An example of this type of facility is Ballarat Sports Events Centre.



Ballarat Sports Events Centre

Regional

Service Level Objective

- A facility designed to serve a regional or municipal catchment area. They can host regional competitions, serve as a regional high-performance training hub for one or more sports codes or provide community participation opportunities for a high number of people across municipal boundaries. Regional spaces and places are often the primary centre of co-located, multi-sport and active recreation facilities within a regional catchment. 15ha+ in size or provides a specialist elite sports facility. Examples of regional facilities in Ballarat include the Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility and Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre.



Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre

District

Service Level Objective

- A facility designed to support organised community sport participation for a catchment covering one to three suburbs. They provide multiple fields and opportunities for a number of teams/competitors/participants within a district to participate. This community facility is 5ha to 15ha in size. An example of this facility is Marty Busch Reserve.
- A district active recreation hub would have three to five active recreation facilities such as a skate park, informal hard court, climbing wall, outdoor gym stations and fitness track.



Marty Busch Reserve

Local

Service Level Objective

- A facility that provides organised community sport participation opportunities for a local neighbourhood or community catchment. This community facility is 1ha to 5ha in size and provides for local community or junior-sized sports fields of play. They are overflow venues for various outdoor sports on natural grass fields. An example of this facility is Pleasant Street Reserve. A local active recreation hub would have up to two active recreation facilities.



Pleasant Street Reserve

4.2. Current Recreation Infrastructure Supply

The City of Ballarat has a diverse network of local, district and regional recreation facilities that are well distributed across the municipality.

These facilities support athlete development pathways, enabling progression from grassroots community sport to elite-level competition. They are great places to be active and present an opportunity to improve community health and wellbeing whilst also delivering benefits for tourism and the local economy.

In Ballarat there are:



100+

recreation and sporting facilities (stadiums, fields, pitches, greens and courts).



59

outdoor sporting grounds.



41

competition standard tennis courts.



29

lawn bowls greens (private and public clubs).



13

indoor netball and basketball courts and an additional

19

outdoor netball courts.



4

golf courses (18 holes, member and public access), one driving range, three minigolf courses and indoor golf simulators.



National/state level sports facilities including Mars Stadium, Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility, Lake Wendouree Rowing Course and Ballarat Sports Events Centre.



Regional sports facilities including for equestrian, tennis, cricket, AFL, badminton, table tennis, hockey, baseball, athletics, squash and racquet ball.



One regional indoor aquatic and leisure centre, three splash parks and three outdoor aquatic facilities.



A range of public and private facilities supporting activities such as dance, martial arts and calisthenics.



BMX track, velodrome, criterium track and mountain bike park destination.



Skate parks, pump tracks and skateboard facilities.



Contemporary active recreation hubs across the City of Ballarat have been developed, including M.R. Power Park, Wendouree West Recreation Reserve, and Mount Pleasant Reserve.



18

major parks and

149

neighbourhood parks.



Extensive network of shared trails.



2,000ha+

of public open space.

4.3. Key Findings of Supply Assessment

The key findings from the supply analysis indicate:



Good Distribution: There is a good distribution of local, district and regional sports facilities across the City of Ballarat. These facilities service the current residential areas and are reaching capacity. This means additional sports facilities will be required to service the new growth areas proposed for Ballarat.



Local and District Provision: Each township area has access to a local or district sports facility that supports the local football, netball and cricket clubs. These sports facilities are supported by secondary (overflow) fields that provide for junior and low-level senior teams.



Football Distribution: Football (soccer) competition is primarily serviced by the Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility and complemented by district soccer facilities in Buninyong (south), Wendouree West (north), Trekardo Park/Pleasant Reserve (central), Russell Square (east) and St George's Reserve (south).



Outdoor Sports Infrastructure: Most outdoor sports fields, lighting and pavilions are of high quality, in good condition and fit for purpose.



Regional Sport Facilities: Regional sports facilities for indoor sports (Ballarat Sport Events Centre), cricket (Eastern Oval), AFL (Mars Stadium), soccer (Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility), athletics, badminton (Ballarat Badminton Centre), table tennis (Ballarat Table Tennis Centre), tennis (Ballarat Regional Tennis Centre), squash (Ballarat Squash & Racquetball Centre), rowing (Lake Wendouree Rowing Course), touch football (Russell Square), equestrian (Victoria Park), hockey (Prince of Wales Park Hockey Centre) and baseball (Prince of Wales Park Baseball Centre) provide for both local domestic competition and also attract regional, state and national events to the City of Ballarat. In most cases, these regional facilities are in good condition and a plan for renewal to maintain the social and economic benefit they deliver the City is required.



Indoor Sport Facilities: The Ballarat Sports Events Centre primarily services the indoor sports competitions for basketball, netball and volleyball. The Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre is the primary gymnastics facility. This facility is supported by Llanberris Netball Centre and Doug Dean Stadium (social basketball and roller sports). There are also private and school based indoor facilities servicing indoor sports including the MinerDome and two private gymnastics clubs and a regional indoor bowls facility (Sebastapol).



Tennis Facilities: Tennis competition is provided across six venues. The Ballarat Regional Tennis Centre, Warrenheip Tennis Centre, Buninyong Tennis Centre, Buninyong Recreation Reserve Tennis Courts, Ballarat Lawn Tennis Centre and Mt Helen Tennis Courts.



Bowls Facilities: There are 14 bowls clubs and 29 lawn bowling greens in the City of Ballarat provided on Council Land (7), Crown Land (1) and private clubs (6). Eighteen of these greens are grass and 11 are synthetic. Most bowls facilities have access to two greens with a mix of grass and synthetic greens. There is one indoor bowls facility at Sebastapol Bowls Club (private club).



Cycle Sports: There are bike sports facilities that support all cycling disciplines, including BMX, mountain biking, road cycling, track (velodrome), cyclocross and criterium racing.



Active Recreation Hubs: Contemporary active recreation hubs across the City of Ballarat have been developed, including M.R. Power Park, Wendouree West Recreation Reserve, and Mount Pleasant Reserve.



Private Sport and Recreation Facilities: There are other providers of recreation infrastructure in the City of Ballarat that complement the sports facilities provided on public land. Golf is located on private land and Crown Land. Golf offers green free play as well as member use. Driving ranges and minigolf are also available. The private and public schools, including Federation University, provide indoor and outdoor sports facilities often used for training and school-based competitions. There are also a range of health and wellness facilities and other indoor sport opportunities provided by the commercial market. There are several public and private facilities used for activities such as dance, martial arts and calisthenics.

5. Our Community Profile



What are the community programming and participation requirements to meet the current and future participation demand?

5.1. Population



113,462
Population in
2021*



+12.0%
Population growth
2021–2026



147,901
projected increase
by 2036 of 16.4%

Between 2021 and 2046 the population of the City of Ballarat is forecast to grow at an average annual rate of

1.4%, with total population increasing by
30.4% (+34,439 people)
between 2021 and 2036.



51.9%
females compared to
50.8% in regional Victoria

48.1%
males compared to 49.2%
in regional Victoria



Growth will be concentrated mainly in the western and north growth zones, particularly:

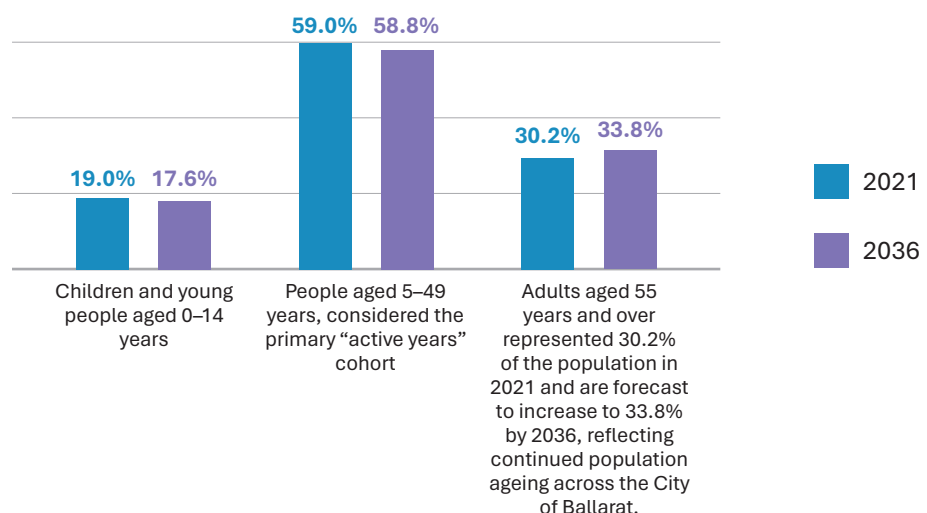
+179.8%
Cardigan Village – Bunkers Hill

+168.2%
Delacombe

+99.9%
Lucas Cardigan



39
median age
compared to 43 in
regional Victoria



Sources: *profile.id

5.2. Diversity

Ballarat is a changing and diverse community.



There are approximately

2,160

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the City of Ballarat, indicating a need for culturally safe sport and active recreation participation opportunities.



There are approximately

12,868

people born overseas living in the City of Ballarat supporting the need for a diverse range of sport and active recreation opportunities among culturally and linguistically diverse communities.



Almost 10% of City of Ballarat residents identify as LGBTQIA+. This equates to

10,000+

residents. Supporting initiatives that break down the barriers to participation in sport and recreation opportunities by LGBTQIA+ people will encourage greater participation.



There were

8,380

people with a need for assistance living in the City of Ballarat, with the largest age group being 85 and over year olds in 2021. Providing universal access to sport and active recreation facilities and supporting adaptive sports competitions and programs will encourage greater participation.

5.3. Social Disadvantage



The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) provide measures of socio-economic conditions for geographic areas. Ballarat has a SEIFA score of

986

(34th percentile), which is comparable to regional Victoria, with a score of 985 (33rd percentile).

5.4. Health and Wellbeing



In general, the 2015 VicHealth Participation Survey showed Ballarat residents reported similar wellbeing to all Victorian residents. Residents gave an average score of

76.2 out of 100,

compared with the Victorian average of 77.3.



6. How our Community participates

6.1. Local Participation

An online survey was distributed to 234 clubs and associations. The following infographic shows the participation data from the 25 clubs and associations that completed the survey.

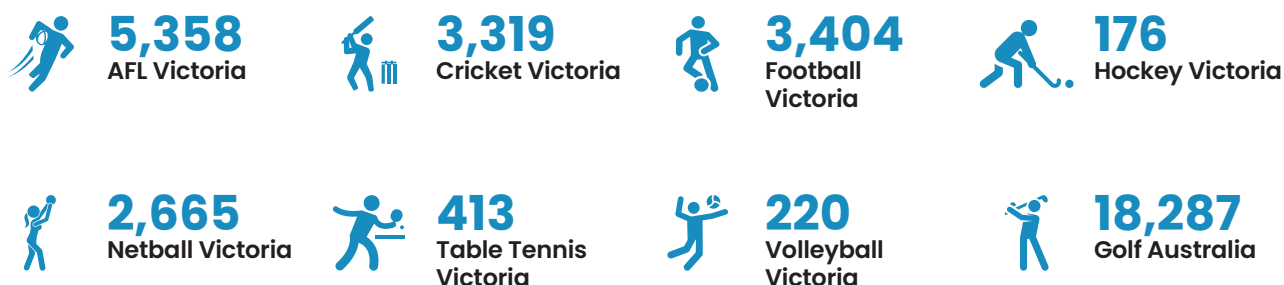
Table 2: Ballarat Clubs and Associations Participation Data

Organisation Name	Male – Juniors (0–17)	Male – Seniors (18+)	Female Juniors (0–17)	Female Seniors (18+)	Non-Bi-nary Juniors (0–17)	Non-Bi-nary Seniors (18+)	Total
Ballarat Netball Association	50	50	1,200	600	-	-	1,900
Ballarat Light Car Club Inc	20	115	8	30	0	0	173
Ballarat Masters Badminton Club Inc	0	60	0	8	0	0	68
Ballarat Disc Sports - Ultimate	4	55	0	26	0	0	85
Ballarat Disc Sports - Disc Golf	2	32	1	2	0	0	37
Ballarat Bowling Club	3	55	1	9	0	0	68
Ballarat Pony Club	1	0	35	10	0	0	46
Lake Wendouree FNC	200	85	140	80	0	0	505
East Point Junior Football Netball Club	200	0	90	0	-	0	290
Ballarat Fire Brigade CC	4	60	0	1	-	0	65
Dragons Abreast Ballarat	0	1	0	30	0	0	31
Ballarat Amateur Canoe Club	5	90	5	10	-	0	110
Ballarat Football Netball Club	500	75	380	70	-	-	1,025
Brown Hill Cricket Club	30	90	-	15	-	-	135
Volleyball Ballarat	19	115	25	45	0	1	205
Lake Learmonth Yacht Club	0	9	0	3	-	-	12
Ballarat Cricket Association	869	1,127	223	157	-	-	2,376
Ballarat Royals Baseball Club	35	35	3	0	-	0	73
Ballarat Gymsports	60	15	650	20	-	3	748
Ballarat Water Polo Association	6	8	9	16	0	1	40
Ballarat Soccer Club	200	55	30	25	3	0	83
Central Highlands Pickleball	5	50	4	30	0	0	89
Trainor Taekwondo Academy	200	50	100	50	1	1	402
Ballarat Alexandra Croquet Club	0	23	0	36	0	0	59
Total	2,413	2,255	2,904	1,273	4	6	8,855

State Sport Association Participation Data

The following infographic summarises the State Sports Association (SSA) affiliated members/registered players data for the Ballarat region.

Figure 4: State Sports Association Data for Ballarat Region



6.2. Summary of Future Population and Participation Demand Findings

The key findings from the demand assessment indicated:



The estimated population for the City of Ballarat is expected to increase from 113,462 residents in 2021 to 147,901 residents in 2036, representing a 30.4% increase (source profile.id).



Residential growth will be concentrated mainly in the western areas, particularly Cardigan Village – Bunkers Hill (179.8% increase), Delacombe (168.2% increase), Lucas Cardigan (99.9% increase).



People aged 5–49 years, considered the primary “active years” cohort, represented 59.0% of the population in 2021 (66,803 people) and are projected to represent 58.8% of the population by 2036 (86,896 people).



Based on data gathered from State Sporting Associations, the highest participation activities were golf, AFL, football (soccer), netball, and cricket.



The future participation demand analysis using the 2025 AusPlay participation rates overlayed with population growth projections estimates participation across a variety of sport/activities will increase by 20,392 users by 2036 and 36,637 users by 2046.

7. Engagement Findings – What Have We Heard?

7.1. How We Engaged

An extensive community consultation and stakeholder engagement process was undertaken as part of the strategy refresh. This included:

Community Survey

- An online community survey via the MySay platform was open between 6 March 2026 and 17 April 2026.
- The survey received 127 responses from residents across Ballarat, capturing participation habits, barriers to activity, perceptions of inclusivity and priorities for future investment.



127
responses

Clubs and Associations Survey

- An online survey was distributed to 234 clubs and associations operating within the City of Ballarat.
- A total of 25 clubs and associations completed the survey, providing insights into participation trends, facility needs, inclusion practices and future priorities.



25
completed
surveys

State Sporting Association Interviews

- Targeted interviews were conducted with 11 State Sporting Associations.
- These discussions focused on participation trends, emerging formats, inclusion priorities, facility constraints and opportunities specific to the Ballarat region.



11
interviews

Internal Council Stakeholders Workshop

- A facilitated workshop was held with key City of Ballarat staff.
- The session explored competing demands on facilities, opportunities to better support informal activity, affordability challenges and alignment with broader Council priorities such as gender equity and access.



**Key City of
Ballarat staff**

Clubs and Associations Workshop

- A dedicated workshop was held with local clubs and sporting associations.
- This session focused on future needs, facility and capacity challenges, emerging participation trends and opportunities to strengthen organised and informal sport across Ballarat.



Local clubs
and sporting
associations

Community Panel Feedback

- Feedback was gathered from the community panel to gather insights into community priorities, perceptions of current services and facilities, and opportunities to improve participation and inclusion across Ballarat.



Community
panel

Advisory Committee Feedback

- Feedback was obtained from the City of Ballarat LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and the City of Ballarat Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- This feedback highlighted inclusion priorities, barriers to participation, accessibility considerations and opportunities to improve equitable access to sport and recreation opportunities across the community.



2
committees



7.2. Key Engagement Themes

The following points summarise the key findings of the stakeholder engagement for the Active Ballarat Strategy Refresh.

	Participation is high and behaviours are changing: Across the community, clubs and State Sporting Associations, participation remains high; however, people are increasingly favouring informal, social, modified and recreational activities over traditional, structured competition. Growth is most noticeable among juniors, women and girls, and recreational participants.
	Strong demand for flexible and affordable options: Community members and clubs highlighted the need for low cost, flexible ways to be active. This includes “come and try,” casual participation, shorter seasons, and pay per session models that better suit work and family commitments.
	Inclusion is valued, but uneven: Stakeholders clearly want to engage people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women and girls, older adults and LGBTIQ+ participants. While many positive programs exist, participation outcomes are mixed and formal data tracking is limited.
	Cost, transport and awareness remain barriers: Fees, equipment costs, insurance, travel distance and limited promotion continue to prevent some people from participating, particularly people on low incomes, new migrants, and those unfamiliar with local opportunities.
	Facilities are a big pressure point: A consistent message from all stakeholders was that limited access to quality facilities is restricting participation. Shortages of courts, ovals, indoor spaces, storage, lighting and inclusive change rooms are affecting both growth and the ability to deliver welcoming, inclusive programs.
	Informal and recreational activity is a major opportunity: Popular activities such as walking, cycling, and running, along with parks, lakes, aquatic spaces, and fitness zones, provide accessible ways to stay active and complement organised sport, particularly for those not involved in clubs.
	Schools are critical for participation: School based programs were consistently identified as the most effective way to introduce children and young people to sport and physical activity, especially girls, culturally diverse communities and beginners.
	Clubs need support beyond infrastructure: Volunteers are under pressure, governance capacity is stretched, and clubs need help with promotion, inclusion practices, training and long term sustainability to keep pace with participation demand.
	Council leadership and coordination is essential: Stakeholders strongly supported the City of Ballarat playing a lead role in facility planning, promotion, affordability, activation of informal spaces, and alignment between community needs, clubs and State Sporting Associations.
	Equity across Ballarat matters: Growth areas, particularly in the western corridors, need early access to facilities and programs. Stakeholders stressed that if infrastructure and activation lag behind population growth, participation can drop and be hard to recover later.
	Safety and accessibility influence participation decisions: Community panel and advisory committees’ feedback reinforced that perceptions of safety, welcoming environments and ease of access strongly influence whether people choose to participate, particularly for vulnerable and underrepresented groups.
	Targeted approaches are needed for different life stages: Insights from the Youth, Children and Family Strategy 2022-2026, and Ageing Well Strategy 2022-2026 highlight that participation needs vary significantly across age groups, requiring tailored programs, facilities and scheduling to support lifelong activity.
	Awareness, communication and visibility need improvement: Across the community panel, advisory committees and Council strategies, there was consistent feedback that people are often unaware of available opportunities, highlighting the need for clearer, centralised and more inclusive promotion of activities, programs and facilities.

8. Summary of Key Issues

The following provides a summary of key issues that guide the development of the pillars, objectives and actions for the Active Ballarat Strategy.



Strategic Alignment

- **Strategic alignment, participation trends, and equity focus:** Active Ballarat strongly aligns with Council and state strategies promoting health and connected communities, while responding to growing demand for flexible, informal participation. A key emphasis is on equity, including the Active Women and Girls Strategy and Fair Access Policy, which prioritise removing barriers and ensuring fair and inclusive access for all.
- **Infrastructure, inclusion, and sustainable delivery:** Long-term planning, renewal, and expansion of infrastructure is required, with a focus on accessible, inclusive and multi-use design. Partnerships and shared-use models are essential to improve access and support participation growth.



Supply Analysis

- **Well-distributed network of structured and unstructured sporting and recreation infrastructure:** Ballarat has an extensive network of local, district, regional and state-level facilities that support community participation through to elite pathways, contributing to health and wellbeing outcomes.
- **Capacity constraints impacting equitable access:** While facilities are generally high quality, many are nearing capacity, limiting opportunities to expand participation as demand is increasing and access to peak training and competition times remains constrained.
- **Need for continued upgrades to support inclusion:** Ongoing investment in gender-friendly design and flexible spaces is required to improve capacity, scheduling equity, and the overall experience for women, girls and gender diverse communities across the network.



Demand Assessment

- **Significant population growth and shifting demographics driving demand:** Ballarat's population is projected to grow by over 30% by 2036, with strong expansion in western growth areas and increasing numbers across all age groups. This growth is particularly evident for the older adult cohort, while the "active years" age group (0 to 49) remains dominant. Strong demand for sport and recreation will continue across cohorts.
- **Rising and diversifying participation needs:** Participation is expected to increase significantly (over 20,000 additional users by 2036), with high demand in sports like AFL, football (soccer), netball, cricket, and golf, along with growth in unstructured activities (e.g. walking, swimming). Diverse and underrepresented populations ("quiet groups") including women and girls, culturally diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people, and lower socio-economic groups, highlight the need for inclusive, accessible, and affordable opportunities.



Trends Analysis

- **Shift towards flexible, inclusive participation:** There is an increase in demand for unstructured sport and recreation activities that are flexible and social, along with a growing focus on reducing barriers and increasing participation among underrepresented groups.



Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- **Strong demand for flexible and affordable options:** The community highlighted the need for low cost and flexible opportunities to participate in active recreation.
- **Inclusion is valued, but outcomes are inconsistent:** Stakeholders expressed a strong commitment to engaging people from diverse backgrounds. However, while many positive programs exist, participation outcomes are mixed and formal data collection is limited.
- **Facilities are lacking capacity to cater for demand:** A consistent message from all stakeholders was that limited access to quality facilities is restricting participation. Shortages of facilities and support infrastructure are impacting both growth of some sports and the ability to deliver welcoming, inclusive programs.
- **Clubs need support beyond infrastructure:** Volunteers are under pressure, governance capacity is stretched, and clubs need help with promotion, inclusion practices, training and long term sustainability to keep pace with participation demand.
- **Strengthening links between events and participation:** There is a need to better link events with grassroots participation to maximise community legacy outcomes, and to clearly communicate and promote the health and wellbeing benefits to the broader community.



9. Our Vision and Pillars Framework

9.1. Vision

The above findings support the vision and inform the refreshed pillars and objectives.

An aerial photograph of a wide, multi-lane city street in Ballarat, Australia. The street is lined with historic buildings, including a prominent clock tower on the left. The street is filled with cars and has a central green space with trees and a lamppost. A large blue hexagon is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the vision statement.

**“Active Ballarat:
Creating a movement
towards a more
vibrant healthy and
liveable future for our
community”**

9.2. Pillars

The following six pillars will provide the framework to achieve the vision and provide focus areas and actions throughout the life of the Active Ballarat strategy.

Figure 5: Pillars for framework for future focus areas



10. Our Plan – Focus Areas and Objectives

The tables below show the objectives and descriptions under each pillar.

Pillar 1: Participation, inclusion and active communities



Objectives	Descriptions
1.1 Expand low-cost and flexible participation opportunities	Support affordable, social and casual participation options that better suit diverse lifestyles, work and family commitments.
1.2 Support informal and recreational activity	Promote active living through walking, cycling, outdoor recreation and activation of community and civic spaces. This includes supporting active transport opportunities aligned with the Ballarat Integrated Transport Action Plan 2020.
1.3 Improve affordability and awareness	Reduce participation barriers by increasing awareness of opportunities through accessible, demographic-specific promotion methods, including both digital and traditional communication channels, and by supporting affordable access to programs, activities and services.
1.4 Increase participation among diverse and underrepresented groups	Develop targeted initiatives that improve participation opportunities for underrepresented groups such as First Nations, CALD and LGBTIQ+ communities.
1.5 Strengthen school, children and youth participation pathways	Encourage state and local organisations to identify initiatives within schools and youth organisations to introduce children and young people to lifelong physical activity including opportunities to participate in community sport and active travel.

Pillar 2: Equitable access to quality facilities and places



Objectives	Descriptions
2.1 Plan and deliver multi-use/multi-sport recreation infrastructure	Prioritise flexible, shared and multi-purpose sport and recreation facilities that respond to population growth and changing participation needs.
2.2 Improve access to existing facilities	Increase community access to, and usage of courts, ovals, indoor spaces and training areas through improved allocation, scheduling and shared-use arrangements. This should take into consideration emerging sports.
2.3 Deliver inclusive infrastructure in line with the City of Ballarat Fair Access Policy	Ensure planning, design and allocation of facilities aligns with the City of Ballarat Fair Access Policy to support equitable access.
2.4 Strengthen informal recreation spaces	Enhance parks, trails, open spaces and active recreation environments that encourage walking, cycling, fitness, active travel and casual participation.
2.5 Improve long-term asset planning	Align infrastructure investment and renewal planning with long-term community demand, growth and lifecycle requirements.

Pillar 3: Strong clubs, volunteers and community capacity



Objectives	Descriptions
3.1 Support volunteer sustainability	Facilitate access to support, training and partnerships that strengthen volunteer recruitment, retention and capability across the sector.
3.2 Strengthen club capability and fair access practices	Support existing clubs to improve governance, planning and inclusive practices and facilitate the activation of new recreation infrastructure by supporting the establishment of new clubs or relocated clubs.
3.3 Build inclusive club environments	Support clubs to create welcoming, safe, respectful and inclusive environments for participants, volunteers and families and for underrepresented groups such as First Nations, CALD and LGBTIQ+ communities.
3.4 Improve collaboration across the sector	Strengthen partnerships between the City of Ballarat, clubs, schools and community organisations to improve coordination and shared outcomes.
3.5 Support community activation	Encourage local events, programs and activation initiatives that increase participation and community connection.

Pillar 4: Data, planning and innovation



Objectives	Descriptions
4.1 Improve participation and facility data collection	Strengthen data collection to better understand participation trends, facility usage and community needs.
4.2 Use data to guide investment and planning	Use evidence and community insights to inform future infrastructure, programming and service decisions.
4.3 Improve digital access and communication	Enhance digital platforms and communication channels to improve awareness of local opportunities and services.
4.4 Strengthen evaluation and reporting	Implement clear monitoring and evaluation processes to track participation outcomes and strategic progress.

Pillar 5: Events, tourism and community legacy



Objectives	Descriptions
5.1 Connect events with community participation	Link major events with local participation initiatives, club engagement and grassroots development opportunities.
5.2 Maximise community legacy outcomes	Ensure sport and recreation infrastructure developed for events delivers lasting community benefit and ongoing local use.
5.3 Promote Ballarat as an active city	Promote Ballarat as a healthy, active and connected community through coordinated sport, recreation and tourism initiatives.
5.4 Continue to actively attract major events to the region	Actively attract major events to the region to boost community engagement, showcase local facilities, and support economic growth.

Pillar 6: Increase women and girls' active participation



Objectives	Descriptions
6.1 Increase women and girls participation in active sport and recreation	Increase women and girls participation in both structured and unstructured physical activities to align with the National Physical Activity Guidelines.
6.2 Increase participation in leadership and governance	Increase women and girls participation and representation in leadership, governance, coaching and executive roles in the local sport and recreation sector, including within sporting clubs.
6.3 Equitable access to sporting facilities and infrastructure	Make improvements to facilities and infrastructure to support increased women and girls participation.
6.4 Promote women and girls in sport and active recreation	Increase exposure and enhance positive messaging associated with women and girls sport and active recreation.
6.5 Support participation of women and girls, through sector-wide action to build safe, respectful and inclusive cultures through sport and recreation	Collaborate with clubs, organisations and key partners to drive culture change initiatives that strengthen respect, gender equity and inclusion, and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.



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