

Ascot Vale Needs Assessment 2016



Wingate Avenue
Community Centre

DEVELOPED BY WINGATE AVENUE COMMUNITY CENTRE 2016



PARTNERED WITH MOONEE VALLEY LEGAL SERVICE



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COMMUNITY FOREWORD

My name is Elif and I am from Turkey. I have been living in Melbourne for 14 years and on the Ascot Vale Estate for 11 years. It is always difficult leaving your culture, your family and your loved ones behind you, hoping for a better life and an everyday adventure too.



For me Wingate Avenue Community Centre is the door, the door that opens and helps you with all the things you need. Through the door is a home, a place you can ask for help or advice. The door is a place where you meet other people and have a cup of tea, exchange knowledge, access education and share cultural stories.

The best part about living on the Estate is having a sanctuary of my own. I feel privileged that I have a safe space and government housing. What I like about the community is that everybody is like me, similar economic and social conditions, we can understand each other's difficulties easier. This understanding gives us the opportunity to support each other's needs. We feel compassionate and tolerant and are always learning to get on with each other, in saying that, there are of course challenges. But this is also the challenge, to lift each other up – together.

Living on the Estate also brings concerns. As residents we have nowhere to go to exercise, no equipment or even shady trees and green parks to relax. There is limited parking space and community safety issues. The Estate seems isolated with no people around, security guards or police.

There is also good news because there are solutions. Every problem needs many people to solve it. Wingate staff can't solve all the problems. We need the Police and Council and Office of Housing and the community to work together.

When you look at this Estate it looks barren. It is time for the community to find their voice and speak up. We need to create a vibrant space to engage and meet each other. As an artist, I leave you with these words, together let's paint a colourful future.

Elif Yuksek

A BIG THANK YOU...

The Ascot Vale Needs Assessment project was made possible through the dedicated staff at Wingate Avenue Community Centre and Moonee Valley Legal Service, a group of incredibly talented volunteers and of course, the community who participated and shared their ideas, opinions and valuable time.

A special thanks to the following staff and volunteers for their unwavering enthusiasm, dedication and insight:

Anvi Le	Co-author
Claudia Bidstrup	Co-author and community engagement
Isabella Ronsinsky	Community engagement
Manon Ellis	Youth engagement
Assi Yovanivic	Community engagement

Enormous thanks to community members who organised focus groups, interpreted, scribed and supported community engagement strategies and consultations.

Elif Yuksek	Community organiser and interpreter
Asha Omar	Community organiser
Stella Shen	Community organiser and interpreter
Mark Brewer	Local legend and all-rounder
Olivia Giovinazzo	Community engagement and scribe

Thanks to the supportive management team and staff at Wingate Avenue Community Centre. Special thanks to Jan Thorpe, Centre Manager, who continues to advocate, support and work tirelessly for the Ascot Vale community.

To Lauren Bedggood, from Moonee Valley Legal Service, who graphically designed the report. To Chrisoula Kanaris, from New Hope Foundation, who continues to support the Ascot Vale community and brings such warmth and thoughtfulness in her work.

To our State Member for Essendon, Danny Pearson MP, and Councillors Jim Cusack and Nicole Marshall, all of whom are fearless advocates and leaders for the Ascot Vale community. Your dedication and ongoing work in the community is greatly appreciated.

Kelly Harding

Project Manager
Community Development Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wingate Avenue Community Centre was established in 1985 and is a not for profit organisation run by a voluntary Committee of Management. The Centre is located on one of the larger public housing estates in the inner western suburbs of Melbourne. Wingate Avenue Community Centre undertakes a community needs assessment every four years, aligned to the strategic plan. The needs assessment is an opportunity to identify community needs and assets and develop an action plan, in collaboration with the local community.

The purpose of the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment is to start a dialogue with the community to guide and support future directions for the Centre, in consultation with the Ascot Vale community and agencies.

The research design was based on a Community Based Research Participatory framework. A broad range of community engagement strategies were utilised including pop-up parks, ice-cream stalls, events, conversations over coffee, in-depth interviews and surveys.

106 people participated in the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment.

- 80 participants lived on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate
- 77 participants were female
- 29 participants were male

For the purpose of this report 'the Centre' and 'Wingate Avenue' refers to Wingate Avenue Community Centre. The 'Estate' refers to the Ascot Vale Housing Estate, the 'Broader Community' refers to the Ascot Vale suburb and 'The Project' refers to the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment.

KEY FINDINGS

GENERAL

- 100% of participants had all visited Wingate Avenue Community Centre previously.
- A large proportion of participants expressed the need for increased social activities including children and youth, social programs, events and a place to gather and socialise.
- Overall respondents expressed Wingate Avenue Community Centre to be welcoming and diverse, had friendly staff and offered a range of low cost programs for the whole community.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

- The 2008, 2012 and the 2016 Ascot Vale Needs Assessment identified recurring community safety themes including illicit drug and alcohol consumption resulting in crime and aggressive behavior and general personal insecurity.
- 76% of women surveyed felt that community safety was a concern on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate.
- 71% of all respondents stated community safety was a concern on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate.
- Main safety concerns included violent crime and assaults, alcohol and drug use and general personal insecurity.
- Participants identified the top three community safety improvements as increased surveillance, drug and alcohol management and improved facilities and restricted access.
- In 2015/16 (over a 12 months period) 165 crimes were committed on the Ascot Vale Housing estate in the areas of crime against the person, property and deception offences and drug offences.

PARKS AND SPACES

- The skate park located behind Wingate Avenue Community Centre is perceived by a large number of respondents and agencies as unsafe and promotes criminal activity.
- A large proportion of respondents stated the current park facilities do not meet the needs of the community.
- 65% of all participants stated they did not use the estate park at all.
- Participants' reasons for not using the park included lack of facilities, unsafe environment, syringes and other evidence of drug use.

LEGAL

The legal component of the project highlighted legal based social strengths and needs in order for Moonee Valley Legal Service to better serve the community.

"It is vitally important that this service is here" Agency Participant

- Respondents have a good awareness of Moonee Valley Legal Service. The service has a positive relationship with the community.
- Strengths identified included co-location and good community engagement.
- The Legal Service is seen to provide a supportive service that works preventatively and collaboratively and responds to local vulnerability.
- The Needs Assessment found that some barriers exist for the service including cultural needs, legal and education awareness, misperceptions, social barriers and sustainability of core funding.
- Moonee Valley Legal Service was seen to have a key responsibility for responding to community safety. Community members and agencies confirmed that there are hidden legal needs for action in housing, bills fines, crime, family and relationships, safety, neighbours, immigration, money or payments, and discrimination or mistreatment.
- The Ascot Vale Needs Assessment found there is a need for ongoing and expanded legal services, community legal education and legal advocacy projects.

CONSULTATION WITH AGENCIES

16 staff members from six agencies participated in the project. In-depth interviews were held with staff from Wingate Avenue Community Centre, Moonee Valley Legal Service, New Hope Foundation, ReGen, Maternal Child Health and Victoria Police.

Community Safety

- Community safety was widely recognised as a concern for estate residents by agencies who observed fear and danger across multiple levels including individuals, relationships, use of estate space, and perceptions.
- The main safety concerns for estate residents were recognised as relating to drugs and alcohol, tenant relationships, diverse community composition and population density, racist attitudes, physical violence, poor police relationships and poor use of public space.
- Agencies recommended physical changes to the environment such as better lighting, cameras, and visible security, as well as better use of public space with safety and community ownership.

“The housing is unsafe by design” Moonee Valley Legal Service

- Key agencies responsible for community safety were identified as the Police, Council, Department of Health & Human Services and Office of Housing, legal services, community organisations, Wingate Avenue Community Centre, social workers and politicians.

“Community safety starts when you have a relationship with someone” Moonee Valley Legal Service

Legal Needs

- The majority of agencies believe their clients are aware of Moonee Valley Legal Service.
- Agencies universally believe clients would benefit from legal information, legal social work and referral pathways.
- Agencies consistently observed client stress in the common hidden legal needs areas of:
 - o Housing, bills or fines
 - o Crime
 - o Family and relationships
 - o Safety
 - o Neighbours
 - o Immigration
 - o Money or payments
 - o Discrimination or mistreatment.
- Identified supports tended to relate to social rather than legal interventions, indicating a need for community legal education involving agencies around the structural and advocacy based potential of the law.

Parks and Spaces

- The outside facilities are viewed by the agencies as universally negative and unsafe to the Ascot Vale Community.
- General space change suggestions included modernisation, developing social and entertainment areas and focusing on the needs of children, teens and families.
- Agencies recommended developing usable natural spaces on the estate, developing sporting facilities, family friendly spaces and removing the skate park.
- The agencies also suggested a staged approach that could model other projects such as Coburg's Castle Park and the Flemington Estate park redevelopment, with strong involvement from Wingate Avenue Community Centre.

"I have seen the transformation on the Flemington estate and the enormously positive effect it had on the community and I want the same for Ascot Vale" New Hope Foundation

REVIEW OF THE 2012 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Wingate Avenue Community Centre is deeply committed to working with residents and agency partners to create a vibrant and engaged community. Wingate Avenue Community Centre undertakes a Needs Assessment process every four years which is aligned with the Strategic Plan.

The 2012 Ascot Vale Needs Assessment engaged 90 community members. Survey results were gathered primarily from focus groups, individual interviews and informal discussions representative of the Ascot Vale Housing Estate.

The key themes identified within the 2012 report included community safety, health and wellbeing, quality of services provided by Wingate Avenue Community Centre and agencies, including its ability to market these services to the community.

Community Safety was highlighted as one of the main concerns for residents living on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate in both the 2008 and 2012 Needs Assessments. Community members highlighted the visible presence of drugs and alcohol and its associated behavioral impacts. Residents suggested that better lighting around the estate would make residents feel safer as would the presence of security guards and regular patrolling of police vehicles and foot patrols.

Health and wellbeing themes were identified through social isolation and unemployment contributing to poor mental health and wellbeing. Barriers to improve physical health and wellbeing were identified through financial constraints accessing gyms and group fitness classes.

Themes involving quality of services for both Wingate Avenue and agencies identified language barriers for newly arrived migrants and refugees as a barrier for being involved in general activities and difficulty accessing employment. Residents also raised the difficulty of the maintenance service and response times through Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Office of Housing.

2012 REVIEW - KEY FINDINGS

Community Safety

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Lack of estate security
- Poor lighting
- Identified danger hotspots

Social, health and wellbeing

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Social isolation
- No access to low cost exercise activities

Service access

- Difficulty for residents communicating with Office of Housing
- Inability to access childcare services
- Limited awareness of Wingate Avenue Community Centre and available programs

KEY OUTCOMES 2012 – 2016

Community Safety

- Reviewed and implemented OH&S policies and procedures
- Strengthened partnership with DHHS and VicPol
- Community safety forums held with staff, volunteers and residents

Social, health and wellbeing

- Foodbank registration approved and distribution of food relief commenced
- Men's shed built
- Partnered with Cohealth to deliver a range of new programs for people with disabilities, children & youth
- Roll out of recycling project across the estate

Service access

- CCB Childcare benefit obtained
- Increased ACFE childcare family support funding for disadvantaged families returning to study
- Two computer labs upgraded
- Developed online resources for English students
- Establishment of Union Road Hub

ASCOT VALE NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Ascot Vale Needs Assessment is an honest attempt to engage community members in a conversation to understand the needs and aspirations of the local neighbourhood. The needs assessment is a starting point to identify common issues and possible solutions, working in partnership with our local community.

Community development approaches involve working with communities to come together to create positive change and strengthen community resilience. This is achieved through recognising the unique skills and knowledge and lived experiences of our local community. Wingate Avenue Community Centre acknowledges that community development approaches will not, in themselves, change structural inequality and disadvantage, but rather build a foundation for redefining and strengthening the relationship between residents and Wingate Avenue Community Centre to work collaboratively together. Wingate Avenue encourages local residents to participate and be actively involved in exchanging ideas and concerns for what is needed in the local community.

Wingate Avenue welcomes people from Moonee Valley municipality and the broader community. In saying that, there is a need to prioritise the Ascot Vale community, with specific attention to the Ascot Vale Housing Estate residents. Wingate Avenue acknowledges the importance of providing social, educational and recreational opportunities for people who are socially isolated, have limited financial resources and people who are facing cultural and language barriers. The findings in this report will guide future projects and program development specifically but not exclusively for this category.

The Ascot Vale Needs Assessment is an open process aimed towards engaging the Ascot Vale community. Its purpose is to listen to voices not always heard, to identify priority needs in the community but also to identify assets and resources in the community, for which there are many.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT



THE PURPOSE

- Identify needs and assets of residents on the Ascot Vale Housing estate and broader community, with specific attention to people who are socially isolated, people with limited financial resources and people facing cultural and language barriers.
- Set priorities and develop a realistic action plan which effectively addresses the needs of the Ascot Vale community.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To provide meaningful opportunities for community members to have their voices heard.
- Develop partnerships and advocacy responses to broad needs of the community.
- Engage and build trust with residents living on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate.
- To broaden Wingate Avenue Community Centre's programs to meet the needs of the community.
- To involve agencies in a collaborative approach towards developing action based recommendations for the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment.
- To remain relevant and ensure we continue to meet the needs of the community.

POLICY CONTEXT

The 2016 Ascot Vale Needs Assessment was undertaken to identify the concerns and aspirations of the Ascot Vale community. The project places a strong emphasis on community members who are socially isolated, have limited disposable income and people facing language and cultural barriers. The policy that is most immediately applicable to the Ascot Vale community is 'the vision' for the City of Moonee Valley outlined in the 'Moonee Valley Next Generation Community Vision 2035,' to which Wingate Avenue Community Centre's principles and practices are aligned.

Wingate Avenue is located within the Moonee Valley municipality and there are several key objectives that appear in the Moonee Valley Council Plan 2013 – 17 that will form the focus of the Needs Assessment Report for 2016. The themes this report will focus on include:

- Friendly and safe – a community where people feel connected and safe
- Green, clean and beautiful – a sustainable environment for future generations
- Vibrant and diverse – opportunities for all

The Council Plan outlines strategies to work toward this vision including plans to:

- Support the community in becoming healthier and more physically active
- Facilitate and encourage access to diverse, affordable and enjoyable leisure and learning opportunities
- Build a community where people feel safe in both public and private places
- Increase opportunities for social connection by designing services and programs that facilitate participation
- Support other organisations in contributing to community wellbeing.

ASCOT VALE COMMUNITY PROFILE

GEOGRAPHY

The suburb of Ascot Vale sits within the Moonee Valley Council area. The City of Moonee Valley has a population of 119,583. It consists of fourteen suburbs and covers a land area of 4,309 hectares, population density, 27.75 persons per hectare.³ Ascot Vale has a population of 13,488 and covers a land area of 384 hectares and the population density is 35.16 persons per hectare.⁴ The Ascot Vale Public Estate itself covers a land area of 0.31km² and a predicted population density of 53.08 persons per hectare.⁵ Moonee Valley has the second largest number of public housing dwellings in Victoria with the main sites at Flemington, Ascot Vale and smaller sites at Hall Street in Moonee Ponds and Pascoe Vale Road.⁶

PEOPLE AND DIVERSITY

CITY OF MOONEE VALLEY

There are a higher proportion of females residing within the City of Moonee Valley. Females make up 51.5% of the population and males, 48.5%. There is a reported household size of 2.48 persons with the predominant structure being couples with children making up 31.3% of all households and lone person dwellings being the second most dominant household structure at 25%. Predominant age groups are 35 – 49 year olds (22.2%) and 25 – 34 year olds (15%).

The majority of City of Moonee Valley residents (67.4%) were born in Australia. The largest overseas migrant group remains Italian born, although this number has greatly decreased since the previous census data was collected in 2006. The greatest growth was seen in migrants arriving from India, forming the third largest population born outside of Australia residing in Moonee Valley. Other growing migrant populations are from New Zealand where the population increased by 307 people from 2006 to 2011 and Vietnam where it increased by 236.⁷

ASCOT VALE

Ascot Vale has a similar gender breakdown to that of the City of Moonee Valley, although a slightly higher population with males forming 49% and females forming 51%. Couples with children and single person households are the largest household composition types with the same percentage values as the rest of the City of Moonee Valley. Dominant age groups are also very similar with 35 – 49 year olds at 24.3% and 25 – 34

year olds the same at 15%. There are a slightly smaller number of residents born in Australia (65%) and while Italian born migrants continue to be the largest ethnic group they are a much smaller proportion of the population in Ascot Vale (2.9%) compared to the City of Moonee Valley (5%). Notable emerging migrant groups from 2006 to 2011 in Ascot Vale are individuals arriving from India, increasing by 102 people, New Zealand with an increase of 83 and Ethiopia with an increase of 59.⁴

THE ESTATE

The Ascot Vale Estate is the second largest public housing estate in the City of Moonee Valley with over 1000 dwellings with approximately 846 flats and 190 houses.³ Gender breakdown of the residents on the estate is comparable to both Ascot Vale and the wider City of Moonee Valley council area with 51.6% females and 48.2% male. In contrast to household compositions in Ascot Vale and the City of Moonee Valley the greatest proportion of residencies on the Estate comprised of single person (30%), single parent (23.7%) and single elderly (21.8%) households. Statistical data of tenants provided by the Office of Housing displayed slightly different age group categories to available census data, however, statistics were able to show that there was a much larger proportion of youth living on the estate than in Ascot Vale and the City of Moonee Valley where 518 of a total of 1,654 tenants are aged 0 – 17. The largest ethnic group living on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate has migrated from Ethiopia followed by Vietnam and Sudan.⁸

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

There are vast differences in the employment and income statistics between the average resident living in the City of Moonee Valley and the average resident living on the Ascot Vale Estate, with a particularly stark contrast between the Estate and the surrounding suburb of Ascot Vale when considering income. Median weekly household income for residents of Ascot Vale is \$1490 compared to residents on the Estate whose weekly income is \$414, the figure for the City of Moonee Valley is \$868 per week. Unemployment rate for the City of Moonee Valley stands at 4.7% and is slightly higher in Ascot Vale at 6.9% while on the Ascot Vale Estate the figure is 16.7%. DHHS employment statistics for the estate are significantly higher at 84% unemployment (2008). Current unemployment statistics for the Ascot Vale Housing Estate have not been made available to Wingate Avenue Community Centre.



ASCOT VALE ESTATE RESIDENTS



1,654

RESIDENTS

PERCENTAGE (%) OF RESIDENTS BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH



AGE & GENDER BREAKDOWN

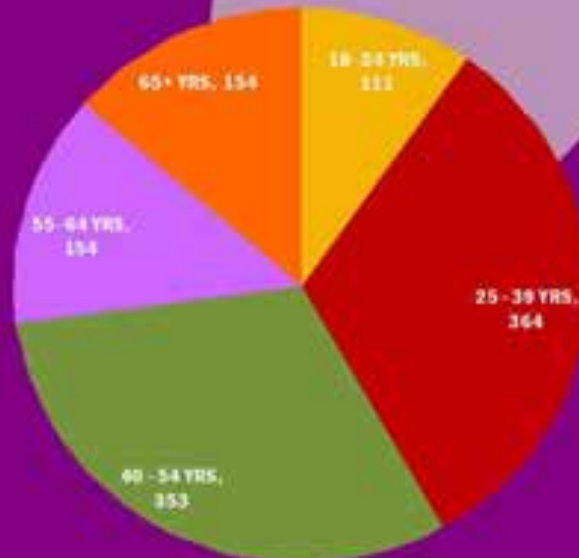


798 RESIDENTS (48.2%)



854 RESIDENTS (51.6%)

.02% NOT STATED OR UNSPECIFIED



THE PROCESS



SCOPE OF PROJECT

The scope of the project was defined largely for residents living on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate and community groups of Wingate Avenue Community Centre. The target reach was to survey between 100 and 120 people. The key themes of the survey centered on social, legal, community safety and parks and spaces. Through previous consultations and past needs assessments these themes have been identified as priority areas for residents living in and around the Ascot Vale Housing Estate.

WORKING GROUP COMMITTEE

A working group committee for the Needs Assessment was established comprising of staff from Wingate Avenue Community Centre and Moonee Valley Legal Service and a dedicated team of skilled volunteers. The key role of the working group committee was to monitor progress, priorities and support with implementation of engagement strategies throughout the project.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Best practice community engagement strategies were utilised throughout the project including CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) specific focus groups, pop up parks, gender specific focus groups, individual surveys with community members and in-depth interviews with agencies.

SET PRIORITIES AND CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

A large part of the Needs Assessment is setting appropriate priorities and developing an action plan. Setting priorities is based on two key factors, firstly priorities are chosen where there has been large agreement by community members to a particular need and secondly what resources can be harnessed to address identified needs. An action plan will be updated annually to support the implementation of the Needs Assessment.

SHARE YOUR FINDINGS

An important part of the Needs Assessment process is to share the findings of what we have learned with community, agencies and local government. In particular it is vital that community members have access to action plans and have a clear understanding of the completed needs assessment and actions moving forward.



CONSULTING THE COMMUNITY – A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

METHODOLOGY

106 local residents participated in the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment by participating in focus groups over lunch, pop up parks and activities, informal conversations over coffee and individual surveys. The research project implemented elements of Community Based Participatory Research where possible.

Community-based participatory research is a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognises the unique strengths that each brings. Community Based Participatory Research begins with a research topic of importance to the community, has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change.

<https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/commbas/>

Wingate Avenue Community Centre aimed to engage residents in a collaborative approach whereby the community and researchers work together to design and manage the project. The resources available for the project did not allow for an all-encompassing Community Based Participatory Research project although the project implemented 'participatory processes' where appropriate.

Local resident participation occurred in a number of ways. Residents provided feedback on the surveys and CALD community leaders assisted with organising and leading focus groups. Other community members lent a hand in setting up the pop-up parks, cooking barbeques and running activities. There were also many conversations with community leaders to seek feedback and advice throughout the six month project.

The scope of participation of community members who freely gave their time, energy and ideas created and shaped the project and provided a framework in which community members felt validated, included and comfortable. Wingate Avenue acknowledges the skills and gifts in the community and the importance of mutual learning and the exchanging of ideas.



NEEDS ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

106 PARTICIPANTS



77 WOMEN

29 MEN



RESIDENCY DISTRIBUTION & POSTCODE

UNKNOWN 11

3012 1

3034 1

3040 1

3031 10

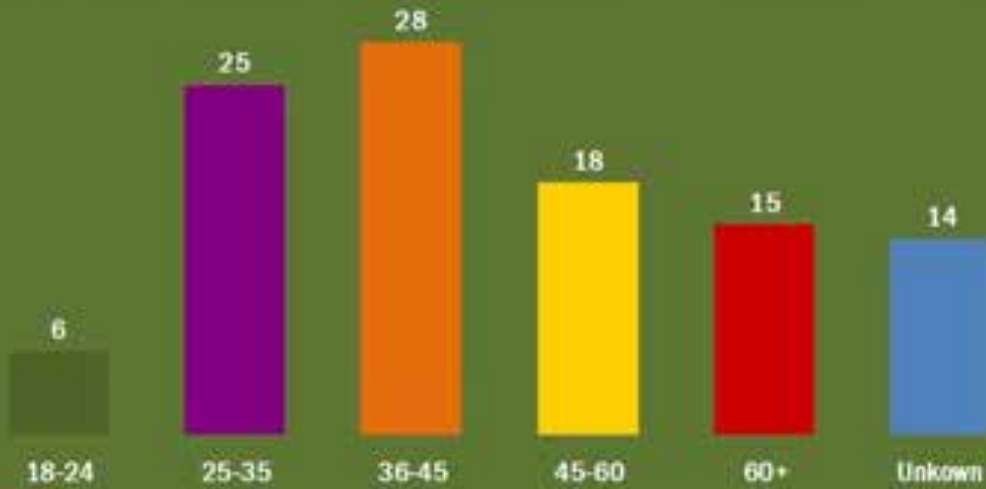
3011 2

3032 80

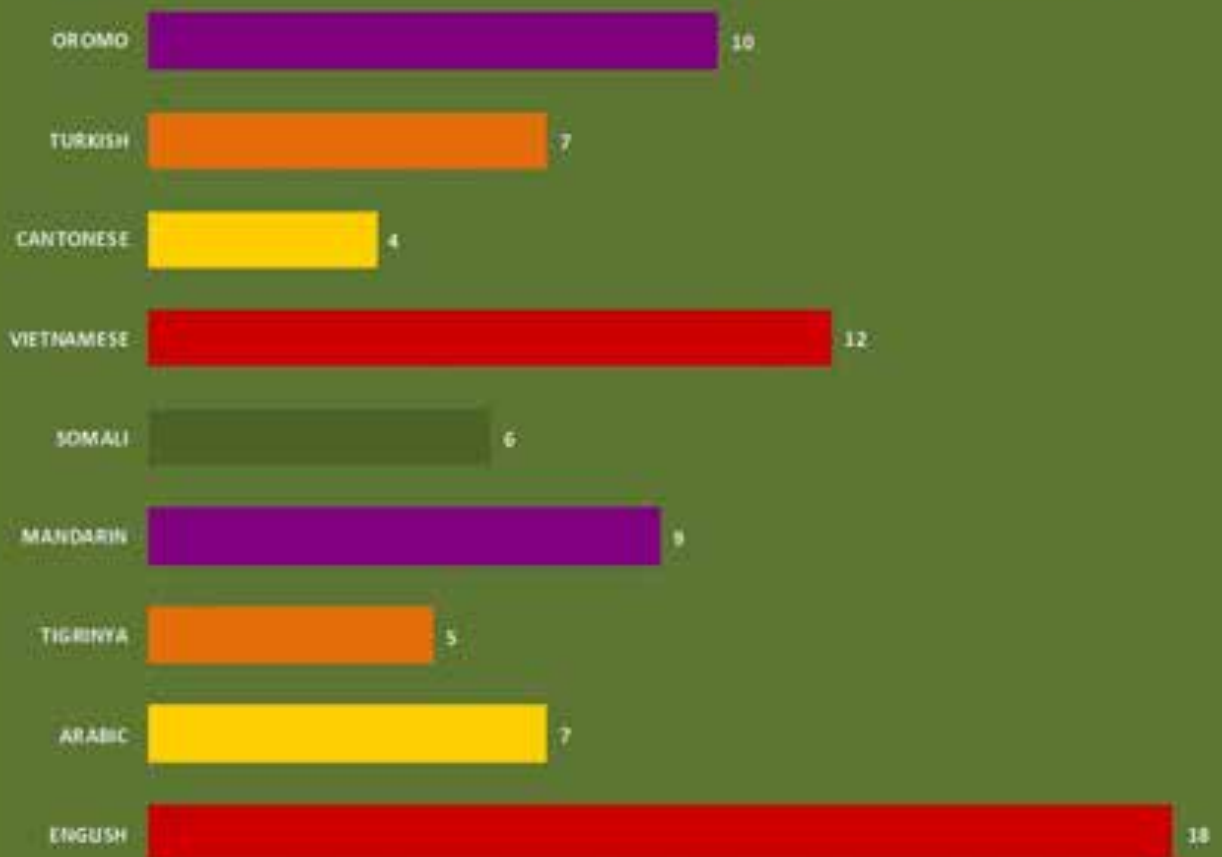




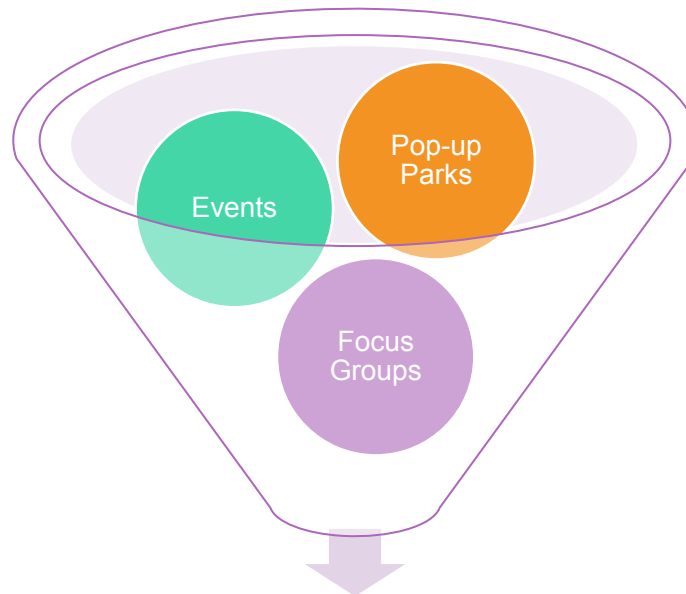
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE



PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES



Community Consultation Strategies

POP-UP PARKS

Pop-up parks are an innovative approach to activating existing spaces or parks to create informal ways to engage the community. The pop-up park was held at the Wingate Men's Shed and activities included giant jenga, art and craft for children, outside sports games, chalk drawing and a community BBQ. Over 120 community members participated in the event and surveys were collected in a relaxed environment.

A pop-up ice-cream stall was also organised in the warmer months as an avenue to engage with residents on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate. The pop-up ice-cream park had chairs, picnic blankets, children's toys, music and of course ice-cream. Over 15 people participated.

Pop-up parks are an inexpensive and imaginative approach to consulting community members. Both events combined cost under \$100. Community members supported both events through running children's activities, acting as interpreters for surveys and volunteering with the BBQ.

EVENTS

Local events were utilised as an avenue to survey residents as part of the Needs Assessment. Events included Food Share markets, English Language class celebrations and events held at the centre.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were held with the Oromo, Chinese and Turkish communities. In addition a male and female specific focus group were also held. An important part of the Needs Assessment was to provide a forum where residents from the CALD community have the opportunity to speak in their first language. Community leaders supported the focus groups through community engagement and interpreting where appropriate. The focus groups ranged from 8 to 12 participants and went for approximately 2 hours with lunch provided. The success of the focus groups involved utilising the skills of the community and strong partnerships with New Hope Foundation and Moonee Valley Legal Service.



WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US....

The Ascot Vale Needs Assessment results have been divided into the below categories:

- Social
- Community Safety
- Parks and Spaces
- Legal Needs
- Agency Consultations

The categories were selected through previous Ascot Vale Needs Assessments undertaken in 2008 and 2012. The results are from 106 community members who participated in the community consultations outlined earlier in the report. All quotes from community members remain anonymous to protect participants' privacy which supported robust conversation.

Breakdowns of the 106 participants are as follows:

Of the 106 people surveyed 80 people lived on the Ascot Vale Estate.

- 21 people were surveyed through pop-up parks
- 32 people were surveyed through English classes
- 30 people were surveyed through specific gender and cultural focus groups
- 15 people were surveyed through community events
- 8 community members were surveyed through in-depth interviews

SOCIAL

Community centres and neighbourhood houses provide a range of services, activities and opportunities to local people, improving outcomes for residents and engaging the broader community in local solutions. Community centres and neighbourhood houses have always played a pivotal role in social cohesion by reaching vulnerable individuals who can be socially isolated or are excluded from mainstream services.¹⁵ The ability to participate and interact with others and develop support systems with members of the community is an essential component of mental wellbeing for a large proportion of Australians, it is particularly important for older Australians, youth and newly arrived migrants¹⁶.

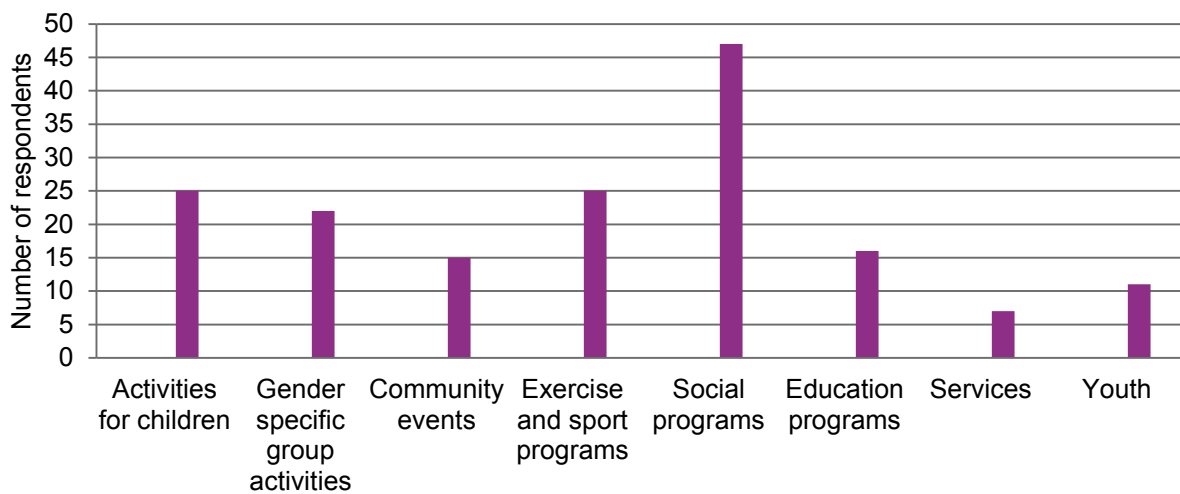
Wingate Avenue Community Centre places a strong importance on social cohesion programs including low fee drop-in programs, food relief market programs and recently strong engagement with isolated men and the building of a Men's Shed facility. Men's shed style programs have had positive outcomes including improved physical and mental health across the country.¹⁷ In addition to community development and social programs Wingate Avenue Community Centre is a place based centre, incorporating co-located services, access to health and legal services and providing pathways into education and employment and bridging gaps in adult education.¹⁸

The following section titled 'Social' broadly explores what residents liked about Wingate Avenue and what could be improved. What social activities residents enjoyed doing in their local neighbourhoods including social or health and wellbeing programs they would like to see at the centre? Of the 106 participants surveyed all had been to Wingate Avenue in the past 12 months. An overwhelming response to the 'Social' category included the importance of informal community connections highlighted below including BBQ's, social programs and events. Participants further clarified community connection activities as a place to get together, to keep in touch and to gather as families.

ACTIVITIES PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Activity	Number of respondents
English Classes	37
Food Relief Programs	22
Drop-in Programs	15
Men's Program	12
Co-located Services	12
Events	30

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN



Activities for children were identified as playgroups, young mother’s groups and general kid’s activities.

Gender specific group activities mainly related to women’s groups.

Community events were identified as celebrating cultural and national holidays, family days and community BBQ’s.

Exercise & sport programs encompassed group fitness activities, access to gym equipment as well as specific sports such as football, basketball and table tennis.

Social programs were identified as community movie nights, games and trivia nights, cooking activities and community group excursions.

Respondents requesting additional **education programs** either wanted to build upon existing English educational programs or up skilling in trades such as mechanic work, plumbing or driving programs.

Services identified by respondents related to formal services such as increased childcare availability and immigration support as well as services related to certain facilities such as garden plots and a desire for a public library at the community centre.

Youth activities were identified as a homework club, courses for young people, general youth groups and gender specific youth groups.

"We are all different and need to understand each other, we get stuck in our ways. Different cultures talking to each other. No racism or no judging" Female respondent

"Would like a women's group so we can socialise. We need a space to come together and meet and where children can play" Female Respondent

WHAT PEOPLE LIKED AND DISLIKED ABOUT WINGATE AVENUE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Likes	Dislikes
Centre is welcoming	Limited options for low cost hall hire for community groups
Friendly staff	Limited range of courses offered
Safe space	Need for additional toilets
Free services	Student and users require communal space
Diversity	ESL classes need additional levels and increased content

COMMUNITY SAFETY



Public Housing Estates have a reputation for being areas where there is a high risk for personal safety. Although Moonee Valley City Council has been accredited as a safe neighbourhood for results achieved in 2014 by international standards of safety⁹, feelings of personal insecurity and higher crime rates remain a pressing issue on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate. Public housing estates are often perceived within communities to be focal points of anti-social or criminal behaviour¹⁰ due to the high concentration of social disadvantage in the resident population.¹¹

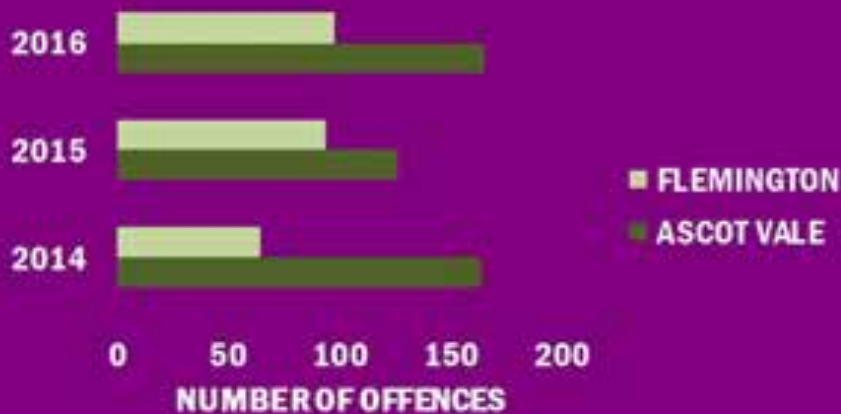
Although the built environment is seen to facilitate criminal behaviour in the case of public housing, it also presents an opportunity to reduce these risks through environmental design.¹² Prevention in many cases is seen to be a more effective tool in fighting crime than punishment, with many smaller crimes such as theft and property damage being easily avoided through careful planning and monitoring of public spaces.¹³

There is a general fear for safety within the Ascot Vale Housing Estate area with a recent rise in violent crime. "Safety is a major concern of many residents. Assaults have occurred on streets and in apartment blocks."¹⁴ Community Safety is a recurring theme identified in Needs Assessment Reports undertaken on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate. It is a prevalent concern in the 2008 and 2012 reports, continuing to be a central point of discussion during community consultations in 2016. Many of these concerns, mention the use of illicit drugs, particularly in shared areas such as laundries and stairwells, violence and alcohol abuse.

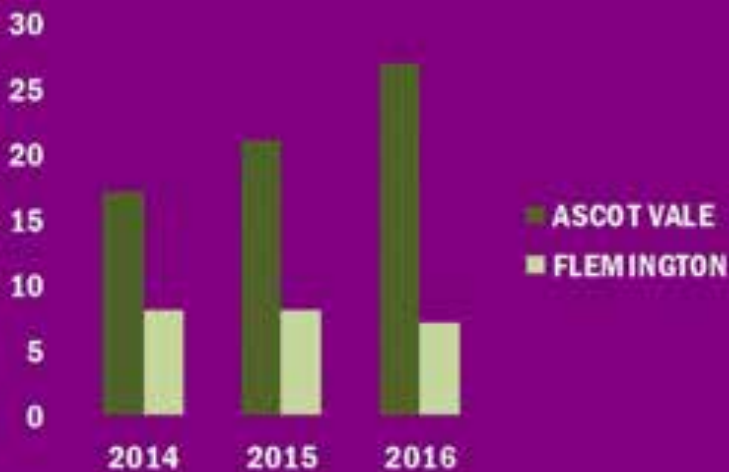


CRIME STATISTICS - ASCOT VALE & FLEMINGTON PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATE

TOTAL CRIMES (2014–16)



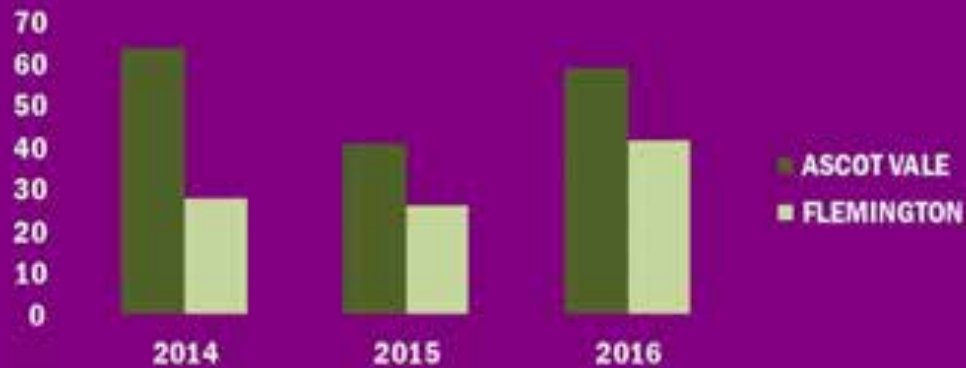
DRUG OFFENCES



"Children need to be in a safe environment and elderly residents don't feel safe coming out. They are afraid of the amount of drugs around"

Estate Respondent

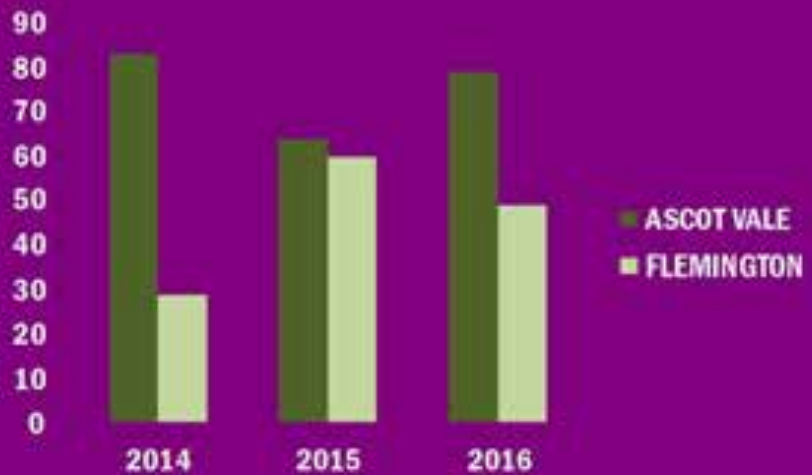
CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON



THEFT & BREAK INS

"I was followed on the estate in broad day light. A man punched me in the head and run away, no reason. Very scared."

Female Estate Respondent



CRIMES ON THE ASCOT VALE ESTATE

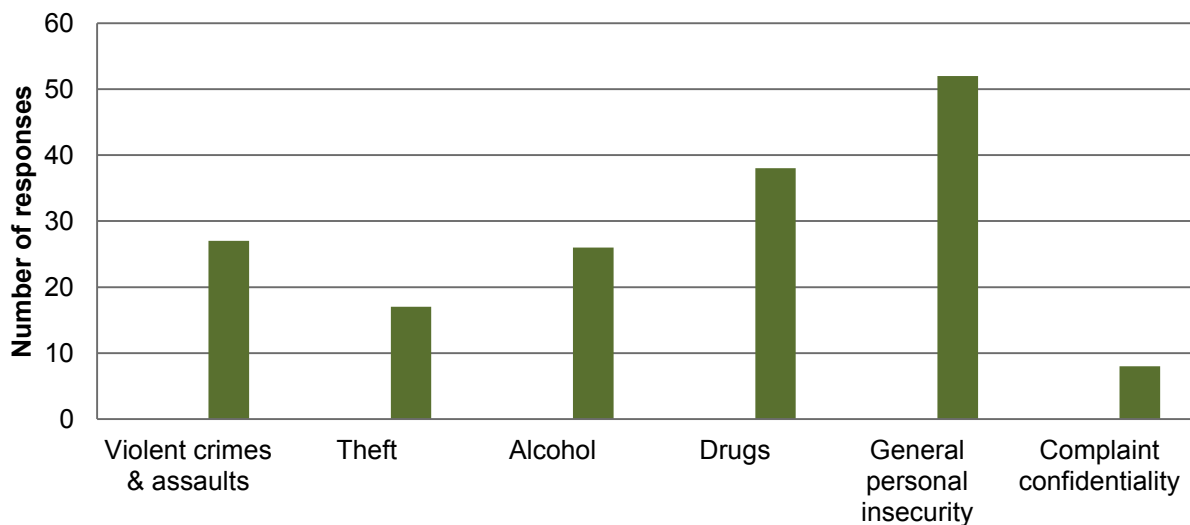
	2014	2015	2016
HOMICIDE & RELATED	0	0	≤3
ASSAULT & RELATED	50	32	50
STALKING, HARASSMENT & THREATENING BEHAVIOUR	12	9	7
DANGEROUS & NEGLIGENT ACTS	2	0	0

* In order to maintain confidentiality, sensitive offence counts with a value of 3 or less are displayed as "≤3" and are given a value of 2 to calculate totals.

IS SAFETY A CONCERN ON THE ASCOT VALE ESTATE?



MAIN SAFETY CONCERNS



Violent crimes & assaults were identified as homicide and physical assault such as fighting or other violent crime.

Violent Crimes and Assaults

"You don't feel safe at all on this estate (Ascot Vale), I have concerns with people trying to break into the house. Sometimes I don't go to bed until 5am in the morning" Female Estate Respondent

"I witness violence in my block, someone had been stabbed. It's difficult to see violence in your backyard. It's very upsetting, because members zip up, don't say anything, people are in fear" Estate Respondent

"When I cook at night I can't open the door for fresh air because of drugs and fighting" Estate Respondent

"I'm friendly with everyone. But since the shooting happened it's scary" Male Respondent

"A guy confronted us, had a knife. Heaps of people on drugs, lots of fights. You can't walk around safely during the day" Estate Respondent

Theft was identified as motor vehicle theft, possession theft, break ins and recounts of clothing and other items being stolen from the communal laundry areas.

Theft

"People are always stealing our laundry" Estate Respondent

"Before very quiet, now they come robbery around here, a lot" Estate Respondent

Alcohol was identified as a problem through misuse of the substance resulting in crime and aggressive behavior.

Alcohol

"Children can't play outside, you have to stay with them. My son is scared of people, drunks, he runs home" Estate Respondent

"Some of the community members get drunk during the day, yell at you, throw things at you and scare you" Estate Respondent

Drug use was identified through community concerns of the use of illicit drugs and drug dealing.

Drug Use

"Office of housing should screen potential tenants. If you're a known drug dealer in the area then they should not live here" Estate Respondent

"There have been three drug raids in the last eight months in my block, a stabbing last week and people using drugs in my stairwell" Estate Respondent

General personal insecurity was identified through residents not feeling safe at night and not feeling safe to freely walk around the estate, elderly not feeling safe, not safe for children and not enough security.

General Personal Insecurity

"Scary situations with children, can't go out after 6pm, especially in wash room" Estate Respondent

"To have a direct line to security, so when things happen we can call them, I never know where they are on the estate" Estate Respondent

'Normally I don't go out at night. I don't feel safe at night "Estate Respondent

Complaint confidentiality was identified by residents not wanting to make complaints, particularly neighbours due to confidentiality.

Complaint Confidentiality

"I know a women who is dealing drugs but I am too afraid to say anything" Estate Respondent

"I am frightened by my neighbour, too scared to say anything to the police, neighbours by cause trouble" Estate Respondent

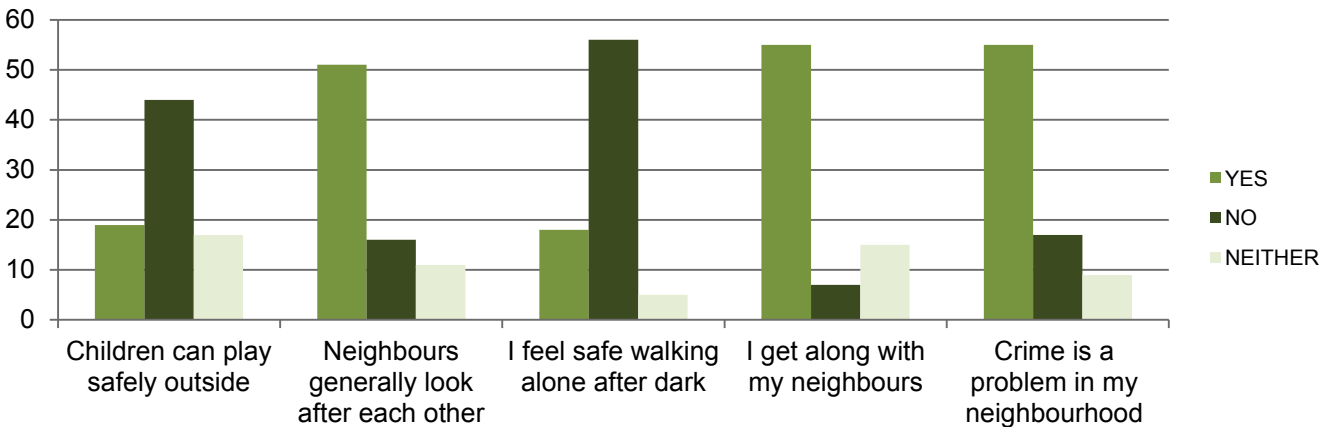
"I argued with my neighbour and she threw a brick through my window" Estate Respondent

GENERAL COMMUNITY SAFETY STATEMENTS

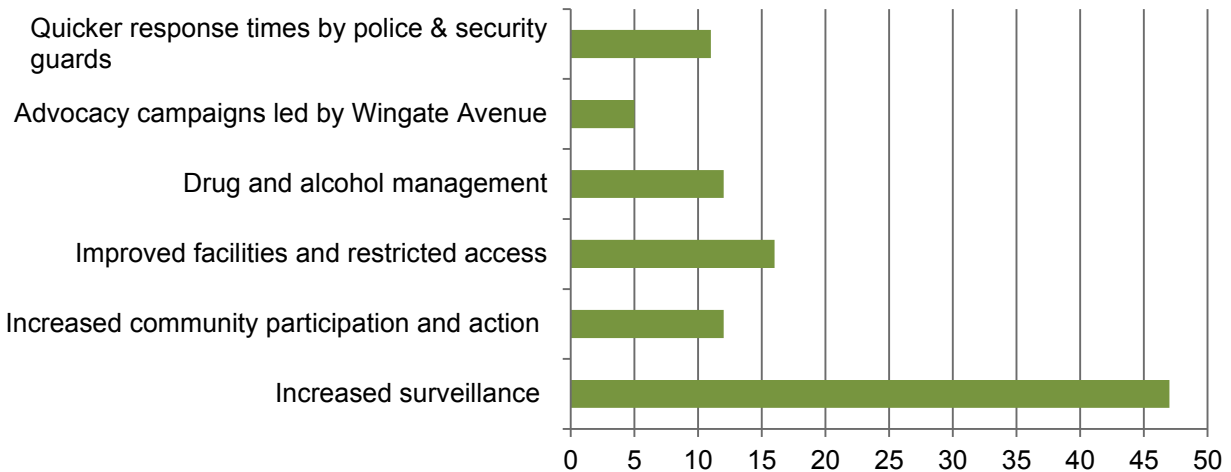
Participants of the survey were asked 'do you agree with the below statements' to gain an understanding of perceived community safety on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate. Interestingly, although a large proportion stated yes to 'crime is a problem in my neighbourhood' there was also a large proportion that stated yes to both 'neighbours generally looks after each other' and 'I get along with my neighbours'.

This suggests that although residents feel unsafe generally on the estate there is a strong foundation of social capital between neighbours and friends. This is prevalent on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate with residents often cooking meals for people who are sick, checking in on each other, looking after each other's children and supporting each other. Wingate Avenue staff are often inspired by the community stories of compassion and kindness we witness on a daily basis.

DO YOU AGREE WITH THE BELOW STATEMENTS?



WHAT WOULD MAKE THE ASCOT VALE HOUSING ESATE A SAFER PLACE TO LIVE?



A **quicker response time by police and security guards** was identified through police promptly responding to incidents on the estate and residents wanting increased access to security guards.

Advocacy campaigns were identified through increasing advocacy relating to community needs led by Wingate Avenue Community Centre.

Drug and alcohol management was identified through safe needle disposal boxes and evicting drug dealers.

Improved facilities and restricted access was identified through creating family blocks, increasing tenancy screening and improve public housing.

Increased community participation and action was identified creating opportunities to talk with neighbours, increase safety awareness and reporting of crime and for residents to do walk-arounds with Victoria Police.

Increase surveillance was identified by increasing community policing and police presence, neighbourhood watch type programs, increased security, security cameras and improve lighting.

Making the Ascot Vale Estate Safer

"Work with the police. The police have to be walking around the estate, not driving around" Estate Respondent

"Scared of druggies. We do not want to call just in case they see us. Can you keep those people away from us" Estate Respondent

"We need more lights and cameras and more security officers. Also in the park there is no water or toilet for children" Estate Respondent

Lack of camera and lights are the main concerns" Estate Respondent

PARKS AND SPACES



Crime prevention through environmental design is a model that is currently adopted by both the Victoria Police¹³ and the City of Moonee Valley as an approach to reduce the opportunity to commit crimes and therefore increase community safety.⁹ Exposure to drug use and a street-based marketplace poses a significant risk to the community particularly in areas of concentrated social and economic disadvantage.¹¹

The skate park at Ascot Vale Housing Estate has long been seen as a site of concentrated criminal activity and there is a clear need to redesign the space in order to address the safety concerns of the residents and create a safe place on the estate for children to play.¹⁹ The presence of alcohol and drug use and its associated litter within the area creates the idea that these behaviours are socially acceptable, having an impact on the uptake of these behaviours and discouraging the use of the space by younger age groups.²⁰ Many of the residents on the estate tend to avoid the area leaving it to become run down and uninviting. Redesigned and invigorated facilities will allow the community to reclaim the space for pro-social behaviours which will not only be able to reduce crime²¹ but also create a positive environment for all community members, particularly residents who suffer from poorer health and wellbeing outcomes by having limited access to recreational spaces.²²

While many residents expressed a desire for both their children and themselves to be outdoors and participate in physical activity, they also noted that the current facilities did not allow them to do so. In Australia, a decline in physical activity levels, particularly in younger age groups has become an increasingly significant health issue due to rising childhood obesity levels, with children residing in low-socioeconomic areas seen to be at high risk of physical inactivity.²³

A higher prevalence of obesity in lower socio-economic groups has also been observed and is associated with energy-dense, nutrition poor diets present within groups that experience food insecurity.²⁴ Population groups prone to food insecurity include the unemployed, low-income earners and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, these groups make up the majority of residents at Ascot Vale Housing Estate.

The introduction and popularity of the foodbank program for residents at Wingate Avenue Community Centre has clearly identified the presence of food insecurity. The ability to promote physical activity through the use of recreational space could have a huge positive impact on health outcomes for the socially disadvantaged families residing within the estate.²⁵

Access to high quality outdoor facilities will not only benefit younger people within the community but has the potential to encourage residents of all ages to use the space for physical recreation, promoting a sense of community participation and social cohesion between children, families and community members.²⁶ It has also been noted that the physical activity levels of public housing residents vary greatly, depending on modifiable aspects of their built environment, further supporting the need for better facilities.²³ Active and involved communities are also safer communities, while increased engagement in social and recreational exercise activities by varied groups will also create a vibrant and lively

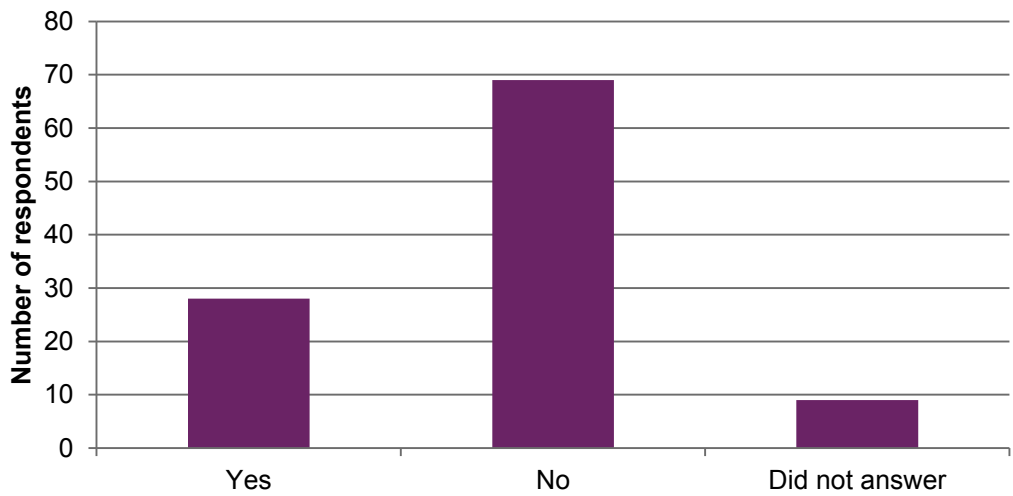
environment¹¹ that will allow the residents of Ascot Vale Housing Estate to take pride in their surroundings and work together to maintain the space for its intended use.

Having high quality park facilities has been shown to increase the physical activity levels of both children and adults across a number of communities in Australia by an average of 161%.²⁷ For children who reside in high density public housing, there is a reliance on public parks to be able to facilitate the achievement of daily recommended activity targets set by the Federal Department of Health in order to mitigate the risk of development several chronic diseases including type-two diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.²⁸ Health has been highlighted as a serious concern for many residents living in public housing across Victoria, with 30% of public housing residents surveyed in a report produced by Melbourne MP Adam Bandt's office.²⁹

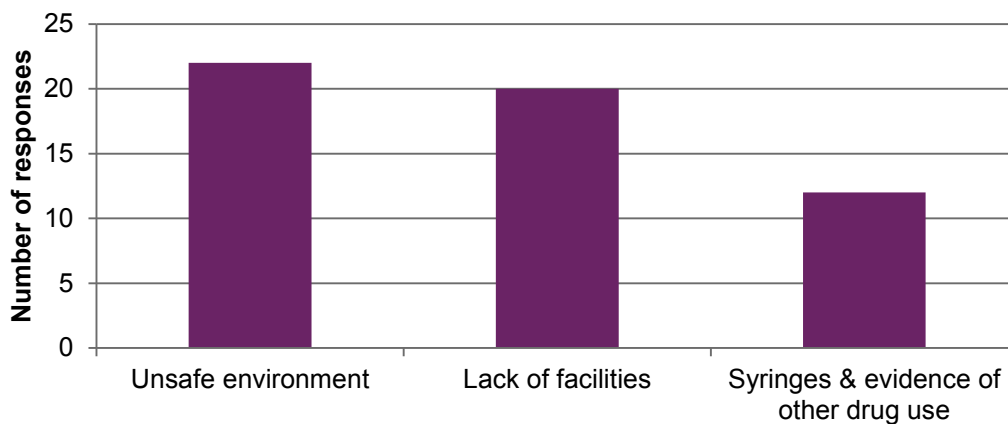
In addition to improvements in the physical health outcomes for residents on the Estate, there are also a number of added mental health benefits that high quality park facilities can have.³⁰ Many residents feel as though they are confined to their flats with nowhere to go, while increasing urbanisation has been associated in a number of studies with declining mental and physical health in Australians.²⁵

Out of 106 people who participated in the project, only 29 respondents used the Ascot Vale Housing estate parks and spaces.

DO YOU USE THE ESTATE PARK?



WHAT PREVENTS RESIDENTS FROM USING THE ESTATE PARK?



When asked why they did not use the park facilities within the Ascot Vale Estate many responded that it was an **unsafe environment** for both themselves and their children.

Unsafe environment

“Not safe. Need more people at the park. If no-one there I don’t feel safe. The more people there, the better it feels.” Estate Respondent

“You go days without seeing children at the park, when you do, parents have to watch them” Estate Respondent

“Children used to go. Now...not anymore, they never go out now. They’re scared. There is fighting there. It’s not nice for kids to see.” Estate Respondent

“Sometimes I take my children, but often take them home, we don’t feel safe. People hanging around the park.” Estate Respondent

Lack of facilities was identified through the absence of benches, BBQs, and play equipment. This also included the area looking 'barren' and the existing facilities being aged and run down.

Lack of facilities

"If it is safe and there is new equipment, it would encourage me to take my daughter" Estate Respondent

"The playground equipment is very old and boring for the kids" Estate Respondent

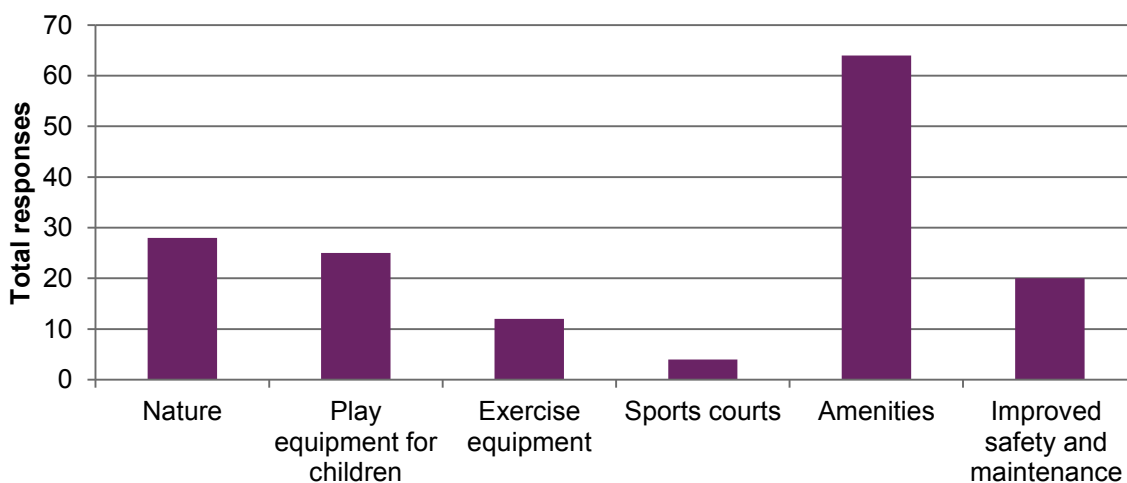
"Make it magical. It should be a retreat for kids, especially when they have a shit home life. If it is an uplifting environment, it will be respected" Estate Respondent

Syringes & evidence of other drug use concerned many residents who responded that there was likely to be debris in the park ranging from syringes to broken glass.

Syringes & evidence of other drugs use

"Estate has changed in the last few years, used to be safer, I don't feel safe anymore, too many drugs and violence" Female Estate Respondent

WHAT NEW FACILITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ON THE ESTATE PARK?



Nature was identified as grass, trees, flowers and veggie gardens.

Play equipment for children included general playground equipment such as monkey bars, flying foxes and swings although the majority of respondents noted that they would like the existing equipment to be replaced by newer equipment.

Exercise equipment was identified as outdoor equipment, similar to what is seen on Maribyrnong River.

Sports courts were identified as basketball courts, soccer pitches and table tennis courts.

Amenities included benches, public toilets, drinking fountains, BBQ facilities and sails for shade.

Improved safety and maintenance was identified as keeping the area clean and free of syringes, extra lighting and making the park generally safer for its users.

Facilities community members would like to see on the Estate

"Would make it much greener and colourful so people could sit under trees. Really lacking that. The flats are so small we need outside to enjoy" Estate Respondent

"A place to relax whether hot or rainy weather, need space where see children play and relax" Respondent

"if it was nice of course I would go there" Estate Respondent

"Like Flemington which has everything" Estate Respondent

*"If the playground is beautiful and the children play we are happy"
Female Estate Respondent*

"Not safe. Need more people at the park. If no-one is there I don't feel safe. More people there is, the better it feels" Estate Respondent

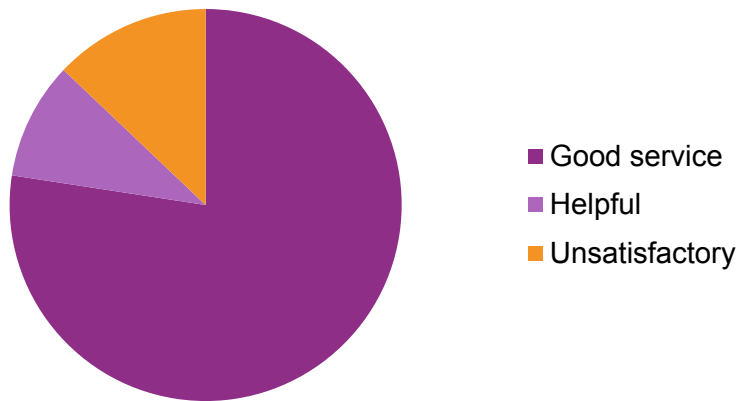
LEGAL

The Moonee Valley Legal Service (MVLS) was established on the Ascot Vale Housing Estate in 1985 by a team of community volunteers and activists. MVLS is a Community Legal Centre providing free legal advice, information, referrals, and casework for people with a relationship with Moonee Valley. With a focus on empowerment and disadvantage, the legal service is motivated by a vision of social justice and equality for all. Its mission is to work with our diverse community for high quality, culturally appropriate legal services, community education and advocacy. MVLS takes a responsive approach to legal support and took an active role in the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment.

The legal aspect of the Ascot Vale Needs Assessment addressed both community and co-located agency needs and perceptions. A needs and strengths assessment allows a community to declare what it needs³¹ while agency consultation can offer important broader insight into normative or expected community standards.³² Ascot Vale socio-demographic factors include CALD community members, welfare needs and social housing which are all recognised indicators of broader legal needs.³³ The 2013 Legal Needs Assessment established the need for increased and intensive legal support that responds to the diversity of the Moonee Valley catchment as well as the service gaps left by funding cuts and un-resourced specialist centres. The Legal Needs Assessment also identified the need for ongoing community awareness and partnership projects.³⁴ The research was undertaken in the context of ongoing cuts and a lack of investment into the Community Legal Centre sector.

The Ascot Vale Needs Assessment surveyed community members about their perceptions and experiences of the MVLS. The majority of community participants was aware of the service and had attended the legal service in the past twelve months, rating their experience as good. Participants, who had wanted to speak with a lawyer but had not, identified a number of key barriers to access. Community participants highlighted these barriers to access as including language and uncertainty of interpreter availability, a desire for support through the community centre and a lack of service awareness. There was also uncertainty about whether specialist help could be provided by MVLS, and a perception that legal assistance was focused on arrestable offences.

WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE AT MOONEE VALLEY LEGAL SERVICE?

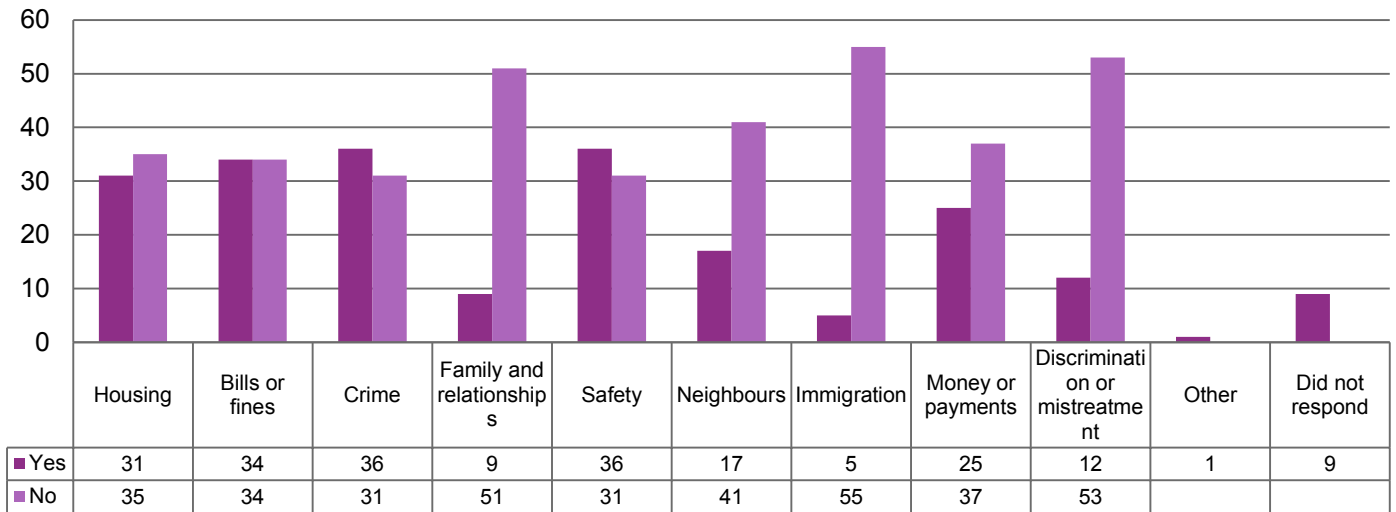


*“On the scale they were minor matters, but it meant a lot to me”
Estate Respondent*

*“They were very friendly and tried to solve our problem, professional
and understanding” Estate Respondent*

Community participants were surveyed about hidden legal needs which can be a confidential, confronting and a complex topic area. Despite this barrier, key hidden legal needs were confirmed as safety, crime, bills or fines, housing, money or payments, neighbours, discrimination or mistreatment, family and relationships and immigration. These common hidden legal issues were seen by community members as social and bureaucratic concerns rather than avenues of legal intervention and support, indicating the need for greater legal, citizenship, and rights-based community education, alongside extended legal support. Community participants who recognised specific supports suggested the service could assist with public housing needs and advocacy to the Office of Housing, police confidentiality and support, family activities, budgeting, a citizenship program, metering issues and utility charges and discrimination. This information suggests a need for ongoing legal education and support alongside social responses.

CONFIRMED LEGAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY



Identified Legal Needs

"There are suggestions of unfair hot water bill charges to certain people within the flats and incorrect meter readings" Estate Respondent

"Housing office is too strict on delayed rent when people don't have the money on time" Estate Respondent

VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY

Solving my problem. They know what I'm feeling, like my family.



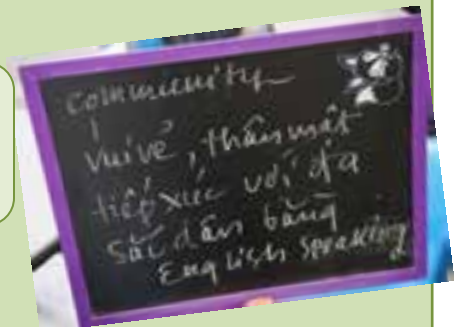
Safe place, happy place, like a big family.



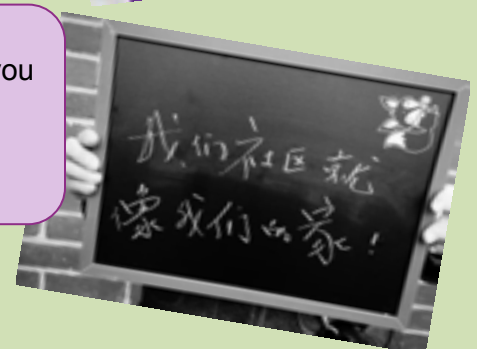
All cultures to interact together. Culture, food, sit down and talk and understand. No matter where we come from we do care.



Share the joy, share the food, share the ideas, share the thinking.



Safe, togetherness, trust. When, if you knock on someone's door, you know it is safe.



Sharing together and having good times, looking after each other.



The community of Ascot Vale is colourless, we care for everybody. There is a neighbour he is very sick, I check on him. We check on each other.



Come together, live together and share ideas happiness and sadness and helping each other.



When you have stress the place you can go to get rid of that stress.



WHAT AGENCIES TOLD US

Surveyed co-located agencies operating out of the Wingate Avenue Community Centre have over fifty combined years of community and estate experience and relationships. The agencies provide a range of services in alcohol and other drugs, maternal and child health nursing, community engagement, refugee and immigrant settlement, legal support, and centre management and direction.

16 staff members from six agencies participated in the project. In-depth interviews were held with staff from Wingate Avenue Community Centre, Moonee Valley Legal Service, New Hope Foundation, ReGen, Maternal Child Health and Victoria Police.

SOCIAL

The agencies believed in a community engagement and empowerment approach to program development that supported general social cohesion and created more community roles and opportunities. Agencies identified a need for greater health promotion through campaigns and information, exercise programs, and mental health support and training for staff and volunteers. The agencies noted a need to continue specifically tailored programs for men, women, families and youth. The agencies also suggested specific useful programs such as work preparation and mentoring, legal programs and debt support and to advocate for a social worker. Agencies showed a lack of mutual program awareness, suggesting a number of existing programs and indicating some need for greater internal service awareness.

“A social worker is a pre-requisite around here” Maternal and Child Health Nursing Service

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community safety was almost universally recognised as a concern for estate residents by the agencies who observed fear and danger across multiple levels including individuals, relationships, use of estate space, and perceptions. The main safety concerns for estate residents were recognised as relating to drugs and alcohol, tenant relationships, diverse community composition and population density, racist attitudes, physical violence, poor police relationships and poor use of public space. Agencies also indicated safety concerns related to mental health, wandering outsiders, discrimination and general criminal activity.

“There are so many demographics trying to live together, it’s confronting and scary for them” Moonee Valley Legal Service

Perceptions of relative community safety were described by agencies as extremely low, and it was reported that both staff and community members experience some degree of fear. Some agencies pointed to the influence of outside forces such as the media as contributing to these perceptions and qualified these high levels of fear with the protective factors of community pride and leadership as well as staff safety and passion.

“The estate looks after itself in many ways. People look out for each other. Despite the disadvantage, community members want to feel proud. There will always be key members in the community who will look out for everyone” Regen

Agencies suggested a community empowerment and development approach to safety projects that provided targeted solutions, built relationships within the community and between services and modeled success. Agencies recommended physical changes to the environment such as better lighting, cameras, and visible security, as well as better use of public space with safety and community ownership. Agencies endorsed a range of responses that included both specific roles such as community leaders, mentors, and support workers, and specific programs such as a Neighbourhood Watch, police relationship-building, communal spaces and activities and music and cultural events.

“The housing is unsafe by design” Moonee Valley Legal Service

Agencies supported a collaborative approach between services and workers with an emphasis on action and real results. Key agencies and services to respond to community safety were identified as the Police, Council, Department of Health & Human Services and the Office of Housing, legal services, community organisations, Wingate Avenue Community Centre, social workers and politicians.

“Community safety starts when you have a relationship with someone” Moonee Valley Legal Service

LEGAL NEEDS

The majority of agencies believe that their clients are aware of Moonee Valley Legal Service. It was suggested that any lack of awareness of the services was related to the absence of legal need amongst residents.

Identified barriers to legal awareness included:

- Knowledge of the suite of programs offered by MVLS
- Pre-conceived ideas relating to the law and lawyers
- Clients facing multiple challenges and social exclusion

Agencies stated that awareness had been achieved through place based co-location services, the legal service's community engagement efforts and the observed service need and demand.

"The clients and estate are aware [of the MVLS] due to other services and their knowledge" Moonee Valley Legal Service

Agencies universally believe that clients would benefit from legal information, legal social work and referral pathways.

"There is an influence of disadvantage on access to justice" Moonee Valley Legal Service

Agencies identified a range of access barriers relating to legal education, community engagement and client needs. Legal education and community engagement barriers included misconceptions and police-legal association, general intimidation, a lack of awareness of general legal options, and a lack of awareness of MVLS until engaged with Wingate Avenue Community Centre. Client needs related to barriers arising from practical considerations such as the availability of appointments, transport, cultural and language issues and cultural concerns about privacy, general concerns about confidentiality and privacy, and the influence of overwhelming social and health problems and disadvantage.

Agencies consistently observed client stress in the common hidden legal needs areas of:

- Housing, bills or fines
- Family and relationships
- Immigration
- Discrimination or mistreatment
- Crime and safety
- Neighbours
- Money or payments

Identified supports tended to relate to social rather than legal interventions, indicating a need for community legal education involving agencies around the structural and advocacy based potential of the law.

Specific legal support suggestions included the need for targeted advocacy and prevention, general systemic advocacy, and legislative and structural change. Agencies supported the need for more legal services in general with continued community legal education and expanded drop-in services. Agencies also recommended the development of new services such as a divorce drop-in, dispute resolution, migration law, financial hardship assistance, a legal public housing liaison and a wills and probate service.

“Legal covers many issues but expanded support and more services are needed” Moonee Valley Legal Service

Agencies also recommended non-legal client intervention for hidden legal needs through supports such as a social worker, counsellor, financial counsellor and expanded migration services. Agencies saw a need for more communication, transport and cultural supports. Agencies indicated a need for more local social options and activities, and a range of community projects such as police and community engagement and access to activities outside of the estate. The data overall uncovered a requirement for ongoing legal support and education that is accessible, responsive and collaborative.

PARKS AND SPACES

The outside facilities are viewed by the agencies as universally negative and irrelevant to the community. Agencies perceive the outside space as unmaintained, unused, unattractive and dangerous. Minor changes suggested for the outside space included fencing, lighting, security cameras, and seating and benches. General space changes included modernisation, developing social and entertainment areas and focusing on the needs of children, teens and families. Agencies recommended developing usable natural spaces on the estate, developing sporting facilities, spaces, and teams and removing the skate park. The agencies also suggested a staged approach that could model other projects such as Coburg’s Castle Park and the Flemington Estate park redevelopment, with strong involvement from Wingate Avenue Community Centre.

“I have seen the transformation on the Flemington estate and the enormously positive effect it had on the community and I want the same for Ascot Vale” New Hope Foundation

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY ASSETS

Community assets are often referred to as buildings, halls, community centres, sports facilities and libraries owned by community organisations. At Wingate Avenue Community Centre we work from a strength based approach and have a strong belief that there are many 'community assets' in our community. We have mapped our strengths and assets in our community, this is what we found.



Culture and Language – The Ascot Vale Housing Estate represents a broad range of languages and cultural groups. Residents support the Centre through interpreting. Residents also support staff and volunteers to understand diversity and the importance of culture.

Leadership and Sharing Knowledge – Many residents on the Estate are leaders in their community, displaying leadership through supporting and resourcing community members and advocating on their behalf.

Volunteers – 20 residents of the Ascot Vale Estate informally volunteer with Wingate Avenue Community Centre. The Centre has over 40 volunteers in total.

Social Capital – Residents on the Ascot Vale Estate have an enormous capacity to care for each other and random acts of kindness are not uncommon. Making meals when people are sick, looking after each other's children and supporting each other through difficult times.

Artists and Creatives – Ascot Vale Housing Estate is home to many talented individuals including sculptors, artists, cooking cultural food and catering, face painters and performers.

ACTION PLAN 2016 TO 2020

Key Direction	Strategy	Area Responsibility	Timeline
Parks and Spaces	<p>Action 1:</p> <p>Seek funding to develop masterplan for redevelopment of Ascot Vale Housing Estate Park.</p>	Community Development	2017
	<p>Action 2:</p> <p>Seek funding to redevelop and redesign the Ascot Vale Housing Estate Park.</p>	Community Development	2017/ 2018
Community Safety	<p>Action 3:</p> <p>Implement 'Ascot Vale walk-arounds' with residents on the Estate to discuss improvements. Council, Vic Pol and DH&HS to be involved.</p>	Community Development	2 per year
	<p>Action 4:</p> <p>Develop a suite of activities for English classes to improve community safety and health and wellbeing.</p>	Education and Community Development	1 per term
	<p>Action 5:</p> <p>Investigate funding options or volunteer models to place a generalist social worker at Wingate Avenue Community Centre.</p>	Community Development	2017

Key Direction	Strategy	Area Responsibility	Timeline
Communication and Engagement	<p>Action 6:</p> <p>Develop Ascot Vale Estate resident leadership group to contribute to the governance of the Centre.</p>	Community Development	2017
	<p>Action 7:</p> <p>Develop resident database to inform residents of key activities at the Centre.</p>	Community Development	2016/2017
	<p>Action 8:</p> <p>Develop a bi-lingual volunteer program to strengthen existing relationships with CALD community groups and individuals.</p>	Community Development	2016/2017
	<p>Action 9:</p> <p>Implement and coordinate a quarterly co-located tenant network to improve cross promotion of services.</p>	Community Development	4 per year
Community Connectedness	<p>Action 10:</p> <p>Develop a yearly calendar of events to celebrate a range of cultural and community days of significance.</p>	Community Development	Annual
	<p>Action 11:</p> <p>Develop and deliver a range of programs/activities that support men, women and CALD communities.</p>	Management Team	Annual

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