

Community Safety Framework



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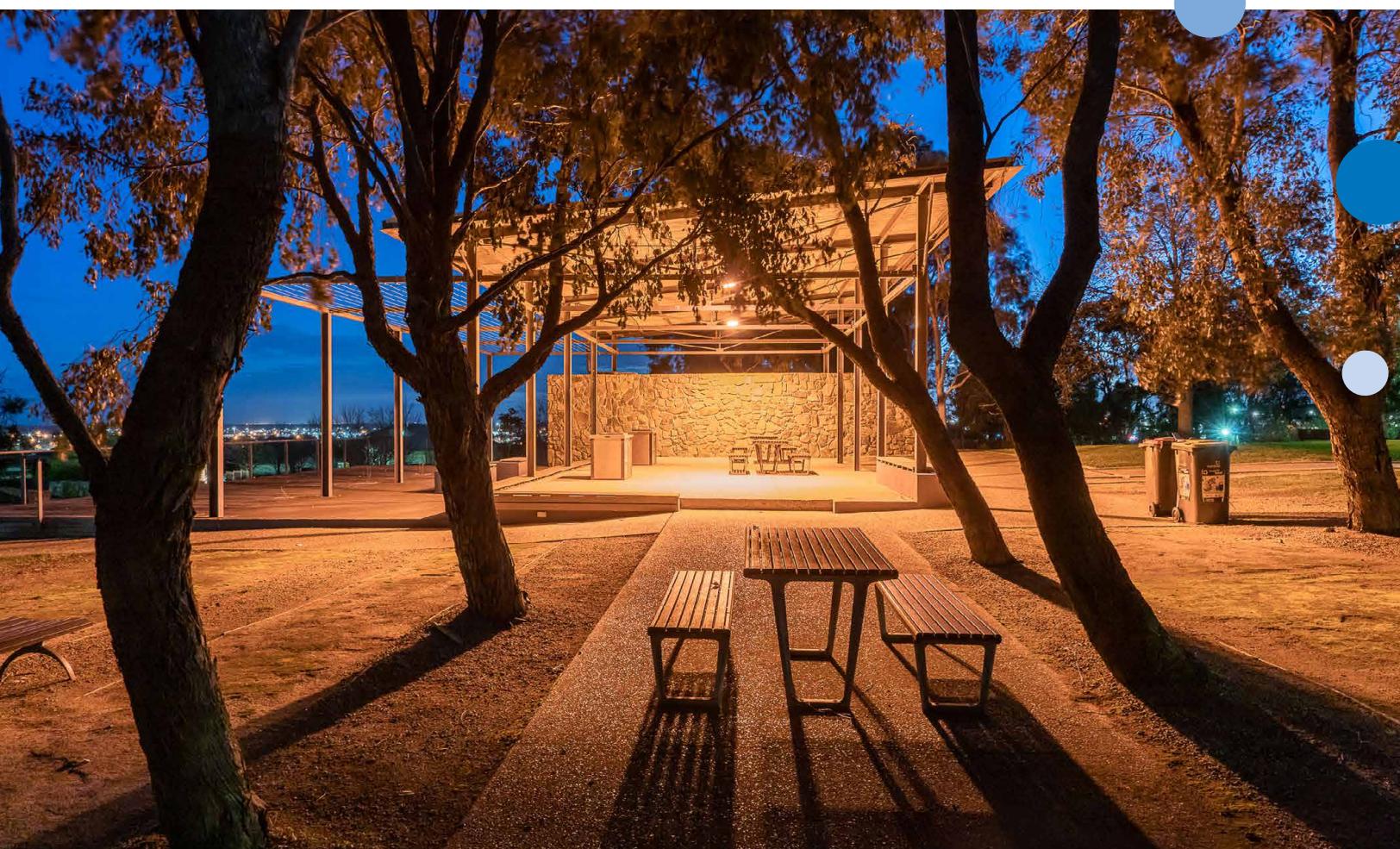
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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which Cardinia sits and pay our respects to the Bunurong and Wurundjeri who have cared for this Country over millennia, who care for it currently and who seek to preserve it for future generations.

Framework Overview

This framework outlines Cardinia Shire Council's commitment to improving safety across the municipality and articulates Council's scope of intervention within the safety realm, guiding Council's approach to tackling community safety issues and concerns.



Background

As in many local communities, community safety is a concern in Cardinia Shire. The experiences of and fears about crime, accident, cultural and environmental safety will be on many community members' minds and affects a wide range of indicators of community wellbeing and cohesion.

Cardinia Shire Council has recognised that “not everyone in our community feels, or is, safe and healthy” ([Cardinia Council Plan 2021-25 and Community Vision 2040: 1](#)) and seeks to address this via a number of policy and action plans, including the Liveability Plan, Safety Action Agenda, the CPTED Policy, the Road Safety Strategy and many other policy tools.

While this offers comprehensive policy coverage of 'safety', coordinating a Council response to what are often complicated issues can remain challenging. A community member's request for help with a community safety matter can be impeded by any number of things, including confusion about who holds responsibility (in the community or within the organisation), changes in staffing and loss of organisational memory, weak partnerships, underfunding, poor data and by the difficulty/complexity of some issues.

In late 2022, Cardinia Shire Council resolved to develop a Community Safety framework for Cardinia Shire. The purpose of this framework is to support Council and community in overcoming these hurdles with recommendations, derived from a comprehensive engagement process, about the procedural changes that could improve people's experiences of addressing community safety at the local level.

This framework details the background and approach the policy and the key research and consultation findings. This framework has a companion Discussion Paper that provides the more detailed research background and findings underpinning this work.



Consultation and research approach

The goal of this framework is to incorporate recent and new community engagement findings, policy review and other data to complement and extend Council's existing policy (the [Liveability Plan 2017-2029](#) and the existing Community Safety Action agenda in particular).

Between March and June 2023, approximately 200 people (50 Council staff, over 25 external partners and 125 community members) have participated in the following activities:

- a Search Conference workshop with Cardinia Shire Council participants
- six 'deep dive' focus groups with a wide range of internal staff, external partners and Advisory Committee members
- four face-to-face community pop-ups across Cardinia Shire
- an online engagement survey
- interactive discussions at the 2023 Liveability Forum with Council and external partners.

In addition to the above engagement, a context and policy review (see Appendix 1) was undertaken that has encompassed local, State and national/international policy drivers, legislative requirements and previous data collected as well as broader academic and practice research about the experiences of safety through gender and intersectional lenses.



Safety as a community priority

This process has focused on how Council can respond to a broad complement of safety concerns, including personal and inter-personal safety and crime, perceptions of safety, accident safety (related to crashes, falls and other injuries) and emergency incident safety (bushfire, flood, etc.)

Critically, the project has sought to understand 'safety' as experienced by people themselves and acknowledges that people of different gender, age, ethnicity, (dis)ability and socio-economic status have different experiences of safety and of reporting safety concerns.

Accordingly, this project has focused on community-led assessments of safety and on discussing safety with a variety of Cardinia residents/workers, partner agencies and Council staff. Analysing safety for this project has involved understanding key concepts (like gendered safety, intersectionality, etc.) and the policy environment this work sits within.

The engagement process undertaken confirms and builds upon earlier consultations findings (Cardinia Shire Council 2017c: 31) that the top safety concerns for the community are:

- road and pedestrian safety
- property crime
- crimes against people (notably family and interpersonal violence)
- alcohol and other drugs
- mental health
- natural hazards/disasters

Our findings have provided some further detail. For example, men tend to be more concerned with road safety while women are more concerned with personal safety. Women are more sensitive to poor perceptions of safety, to stories of other people's experiences and to fears of attack by strangers. They also reported experiences of being followed and/or harassed during these consultations while men didn't.

The rural/township communities show a little more concern with emergency management and road safety issues while the urban/suburban population report more concern about crime and disorder issues.

These concerns are all experienced across a spectrum, from fears or poor perceptions of safety (e.g. worrying about potential crime in a poorly lit park) to experiencing an immediate emergency (e.g. dealing with a violent partner) to processing a past safety event (e.g. rebuilding after a bushfire).

It is also important to note that many members of the public express that Cardinia is and feels safe for them. This is something they want to protect so that people can continue to enjoy their communities and neighbours. The spectrum of safety concern (including the lack of concern for many) contributes to the complexity of safety responses.

A man followed me from the train... I now don't want to go out after 6pm.

Woman, 20s, Pakenham Marketplace pop-up

I think things are pretty good!

Woman, 70s, Cockatoo pop-up

Don't be so scared! There are more good people out there than bad. Look to be accepting of others/ difference. My rainbow family is fine.

Woman, 71, Pakenham Library pop-up

Unified approach to safety

What unifies action across Council areas and between Council and its partners across these complex safety concerns is the commitment of partners to the following principles and purpose (adapted from and aligned to the Cardinia Liveability Plan 2017: 5):

These principles reaffirm that preventing (fear of) crime, accident, emergency events, trauma/injury, disability or premature death is preferable to applying remedial measures afterwards.

These principles also assert that action to needs to be taken based on relevant and reliable evidence but acknowledge that such evidence is not always available and that sometimes we have to learn-in-action and develop research and evaluation techniques as we

go. We also need a safe environment to learn from interventions that don't work in the spirit of continuous improvement and innovation.

Collaboration and partnership building is a key principle as is accountability and giving people authority to make decisions and take action to improve safety. Finally, the public needs access to that decision making via regular communication and information and through active participation in community safety planning, implementation, and evaluation.

I heard about a lady getting stabbed. It worries me!
Woman, 50s, Pakenham Marketplace pop-up



Council's work within the community is also underpinned by the following concepts and 'lenses' that assist to ensure community safety is improved and maintained for all residents.

Experienced safety versus perceived safety

As with other data (from Cardinia as well as other places in Australia and overseas), however, fears about potential safety issues very substantially outstrip direct experiences with the same safety issues.

Much of the fear for safety (e.g. worry about home invasion or car theft, concern about behaviours in public and/or fears about interpersonal violence from a stranger) is not based on personal or even second-hand experience but on media reporting, including social media reporting in local Facebook groups, Twitter and the like.

Contemporary social and mainstream media is a powerful force in creating poor (and therefore potentially positive as well) perceptions of local safety. It is also a space where fears for safety can be exploited and exacerbated, dissuading people from using local public spaces and participating in civic life (which are positive community safety behaviours).

Gender equity

Gender inequality and discrimination in society plays out in both private and public spheres. In public spaces, inequality can be exacerbated by structural inequality through policy, programming, design, research/evaluation and resource allocation (Criado-Perez 2019; XYX Lab & CrowdSpot 2021; Kern 2021), leaving women and gender diverse people under-served by Council decisions and public space planning.

A gender impact assessment has been undertaken on this policy and council will continue to assess the impact of this policy statement and other Council initiatives may have on gender equity (Victorian State Government 2022a and 2022b).

Gendered safety

While women and gender diverse people represent a wide range of ethnicities, ages, socioeconomic resources, sexual preferences and other identity factors, they do share the impacts of gender inequality as expressed through gendered violence, harassment and design bias (Kern 2021; XYX Lab & CrowdSpot. 2021).

Gendered safety is, as a result, a critical issue to forefront in the development of this policy and in the ways in which safety is understood by Cardinia Shire Council and its partners.

Intersectionality

Women's experience of safety is mediated not just by gender but by ethnicity/Aboriginality, age, socioeconomic

resources, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, religion, migration status, housing status and other identity factors. 'Intersectionality' refers to the ways in which these different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination (e.g. sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, transphobia, etc.) (Crenshaw 2014).

Aboriginal women, LGBTIQ and gender diverse people, women living with disability, migrant women (of colour) and women experiencing homelessness, for example, are disproportionately affected by discrimination and violence in the public realm while older women are more disposed to poor perceptions of safety that younger people.

All these risks are directly relevant to the construction of this policy and are considered when developing Council's response to safety within the community.

Cultural Safety

A culturally safe environment is one where people face "no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need... [enabling] individuals to feel safe, valued and able to participate in and enable their culture, spiritual and beliefs systems, free from racism and discrimination" (Victorian State Government 2019: 3; Williams 2008).

Cardinia Shire council strives to provide culturally safe environments within all aspects of our work.

Universal Access and Design

Universal access and design are a 'reply' to the points above, stressing a design response to the public realm that accommodates all bodies and is mindful of the mobility, sensory, cultural and other needs of diverse people. These design accommodations create safety environments.

Council has implemented "Enhanced Standard – Universal Design" principles which are applied to all council developments to incorporate these principals.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

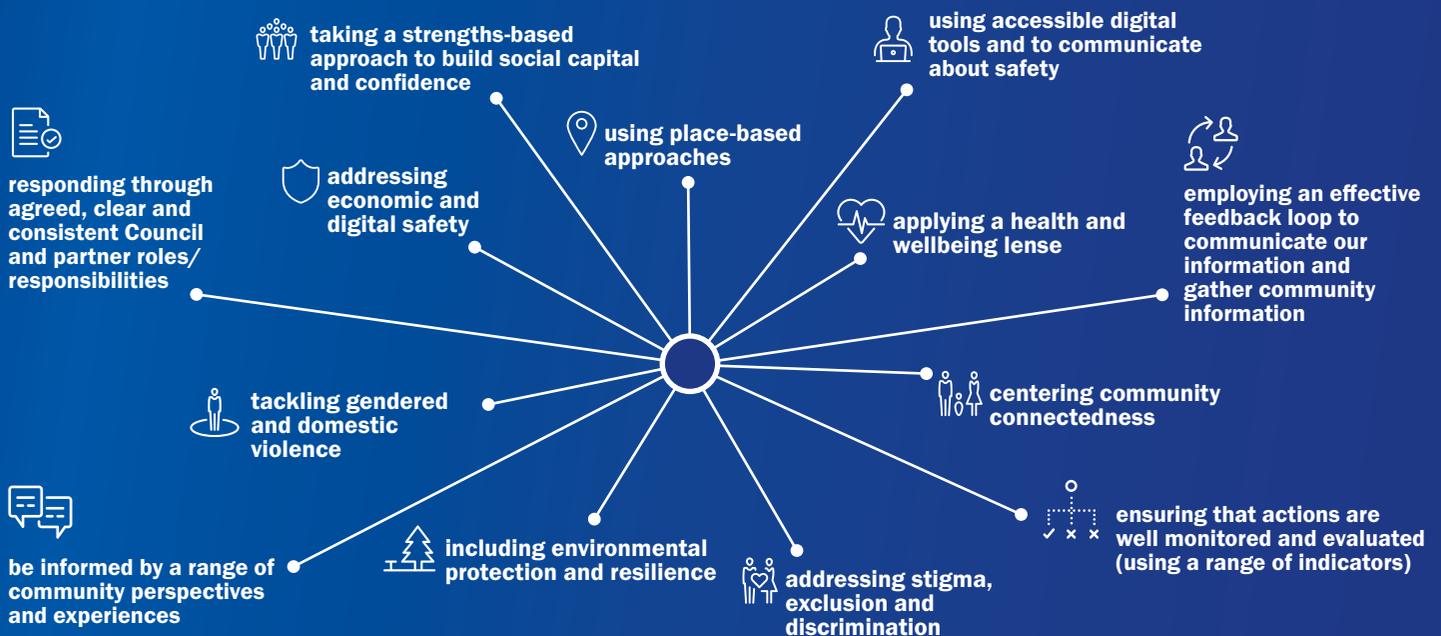
In addition to the socio-cultural concepts related to safety, there are physical components that encompass target hardening approaches and place activation initiatives that 'legitimise' the use of public spaces, day and night. Collectively, these ideas are referred to as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).

The International CPTED Association recommends four principles of CPTED practice: building social cohesion, strengthening (inclusive) community culture, building physical, social and cultural connectivity and addressing threshold capacity issues (ICA 2022: 1).

Cardinia Shire adopted its CPTED policy in June 2022 which incorporates these recommendations.

A safety framework for Cardinia

Council will anchor its work using the following framework that was developed via the engagement activities with Council staff, agency partners and the public. The framework reflects the unifying principles as applied to the current and emerging community safety priorities in Cardinia:



Council appreciates the complexity in safety and this becomes a key driver of research, programming, evaluation and reflective learning with consideration of the following:

- **places** - different environments are associated with different community safety risk profiles. For example, rural areas are at greater bushfire risk than urban areas and will therefore have greater bushfire awareness needs. As another example, urban parks are environments with poorer perceptions of safety for women
- **populations** - different groups will encounter different community safety risks and experience different perceptions. For example, older migrants and Aboriginal people will have experiences with racism that younger, Australian born Anglo populations may not comprehend.
- **services** - how services respond to community safety through program design and implementation is complex. Some services – emergency services, for example use a 'command and control' approach to manage imminent dangers while others are involved in community development approaches to strengthening cohesion and resilience.

Council will apply these considerations to determine the best course of action to respond to complex community safety issues and concerns either independently or with its partners.

The role of Council in community safety

Local governments are a delegated authority from the state to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of residents. Cardinia Shire Council plays a critical role in promoting community safety and supporting crime prevention activities at the local level and undertakes local research and engagement to understand the safety needs of the community.

Plan and Regulate

Council is involved in planning approvals and the development and delivery of community infrastructure. Council also has legislative responsibility in areas of public health and emergency management that assist in creating positive community safety outcomes.

Examples of this role: detailing community safety requirements in precinct/neighbourhood structure plans; creating community safety, design and emergency management policy; enforcing local laws.

Advocate and Lead

Council has a duty to listen to its residents and advocate to external agencies, state and federal governments to provide resources, services or supports to improve safety at a local level.

Examples of this role: advocating for traffic calming measures on state government roads; providing domestic violence supports to local community members; advocating for increased mental health, drug and alcohol treatment services in the local area.

Communicate and educate

Through sharing relevant information with the community via a variety of communications channel and initiatives Council plays a role in informing and education the community in an effort to increase awareness and knowledge of safety issues.

Examples of this role: supporting bushfire preparedness materials and education sessions for members of the public; partnering with Victoria Police on community-based activities.

Partner

Council has effective partnerships within the community with organisations and groups that play a role in improving safety within Cardinia Shire. As Council's scope of intervention into safety issues including crime, anti-social behaviours and other offences is limited, it is of utmost importance that strong relationships are formed with key stakeholders to provide timely interventions for the community.

Examples of this role: establishing and resourcing Cardinia's cross-agency Safer Communities Partnership Committee; responding to complex local safety incidents in a holistic 'whole-of-government' manner.

Members of the safer communities partnership committee include internal business units, Victorian Police, homelessness support services, youth support providers, government departments, family violence services, employment and education support services, mental health support providers, drug and alcohol organisations, and Crime Stoppers.

Appendix 3 outlines the more detailed Council business unit roles in relation to community safety.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Key intersecting policy and legislation

This framework intersects with the following pieces of local and state policy/legislation:

Key Cardinia policy and associated Victorian guidance/legislation

Council Plan 2021-25

operationalised through all Council activities and legislated under the Local Government Act 2020

Liveability Plan 2017-29 (with the Strategic Directions Paper) & Safety Action Agenda 2021-23

operationalised via Community and Family Services, legislated under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and guided by Victoria's [Crime Prevention Strategy](#)

Strategic Directions Paper 2017

directions paper supporting the development of the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan

Road Safety Strategy 2016-25

operationalised via Infrastructure Services and guided by the Victorian Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy

Municipal Emergency Management Plan

operationalised via Regulatory Services and legislated under the Emergency Management Act 2013

Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-23

operationalised via Community and Family Services and guided by Reconciliation Australia, Reconciliation Victoria and the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2006

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Policy

operationalised via Planning Strategy and Urban Design and guided by the Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria

Gender Equality Policy 2021

operationalised across Council via Community and Family Services and legislated through the Gender Equality Act 2020

Access & Inclusion Disability Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2026

operationalised across Council via Community and Family Services and legislated through the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2006

Cultural Diversity Plan 2019-23

operationalised across Council via Community and Family Services and guided by the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2006

Ageing Well Strategy 2019-24

operationalised via Community and Family Services and guided by the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2006

Child, Youth and Family Strategy 2017-21

operationalised throughout Council via Community and Family Services and guided by the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities 2006

Other Council Policies:

- CCTV Policy
- Child Safe Policy
- Neighbourhood House Policy
- Public Transparency Policy
- Responsible Gaming Policy

Other relevant documents:

- Victorian Crime Prevention Strategy 2021
- National Road Safety Strategy 2021 - 2030
- Victoria Police Strategy 2023 - 2028

Appendix 2 - Liveability Plan safety domain

Objectives	Strategies
3.1 Increase road, pedestrian, and cyclist safety	3.1.1 Review and implement the Cardinia Shire Road Safety Strategy 2016-25.
3.2 Increase perceptions of safety	3.2.1 Identify and understand neighbourhood level perceptions of safety and any differences among population groups. 3.2.2 Raise community awareness and understanding of actual or potential risks to safety. 3.2.3 Activate under-utilised public spaces to reduce sense of isolation. <i>(co-benefits with objectives 4.3, 4.4)</i> 3.2.4 Engage young people in activities that prevent anti-social behaviour and generate positive perceptions.
3.3 Increase preparedness for climate hazard events.	3.3.1 Raise community awareness of what to expect in the event of climate hazard events and of the responsibilities of individuals, communities, and government. 3.3.2 Build a capacity of households and communities to prepare for and respond to climate hazard events. <i>(co-benefit with objectives 1.2, 1.3)</i> 3.3.3 Implement the Municipal Heat Health Plan 2020-25.
3.4 Reduce crime and anti-social offending.	3.4.1 Strengthen community capacity to prevent, prepare and respond to local crime and anti-social behaviour issues through information provision, awareness campaigns and program delivery. 3.4.2 Develop a Community Safety Policy Framework which incorporates Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) 3.4.3 Apply CPTED principles within planning, to minimise crime and fear of crime. 3.4.4 Bring key stakeholders together to advocate for reduced crime and anti-social behaviour issues, while designing initiatives and resources for sustainable pathways for change.
3.5 Reduce injury in public places.	3.5.1 Maintain high quality public open spaces to minimise hazards and risk of injury.

Livability Indicators

Determinants of safety include factors such as being able to get around safely without risk of injury, feeling safe in your neighbourhood and in public places and being able to get help when you need it.

Active Travel	Education	Employment	Food	Community Infrastructure and Services	Housing	Environment and Open Space
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 3 - Council Business unit roles

This model expresses goals which are underpinned by several shorter and longer-term actions, which are discussed in the companion Discussion Paper, and which will inform future safety action plans.

The first step in realising these aspirations, though, is establish clear ‘point of contact’ role in the areas of:

- **community safety and inclusion (the Community and Family Services Team)**
- **road safety and CCTV (the Infrastructure Services team)**
- **emergency management (the Regulatory Services team)**
- **safer design/CPTED (the Planning and Design Team)**

The point of contact roles would help triage community safety enquiries, directing people to the appropriate areas in Council for their query (as follows):

Risk, Health and Safety

- Project and Event risk management plans

Regulatory Services

- Emergency Management
- Evacuation Plans
- Fire Inspection Program
- Building Surveying
- Animal Management
- Environmental Health Inspections
- School Crossing supervisors

Buildings and Facilities

- Building and facility maintenance
- CCTV installations and maintenance

Community and Family Services

- Liveability Plan
- Community Safety Action Agenda
- Family Violence Action Agenda
- Safer Communities Partnership Committee
- Responding to general community safety enquiries

Active and Connected Communities

- Reserve and Open space planning

Planning and Design

- Urban space planning
- CPTED Policy (Decentralised CPTED implementation as per policy)

Operations

- Road and drain maintenance
- Parks maintenance

Community Infrastructure Services

- Waste management
- Land development
- Road, transport and pedestrian planning

Communications

- Promotion of community safety campaigns
- Distribution of safety information

Senior Leadership Team

- Advocacy to levels of government to support positive safety outcomes within Cardinia

Councillors

- Champion community safety messaging within the community
- Communicate with staff emerging community safety concerns





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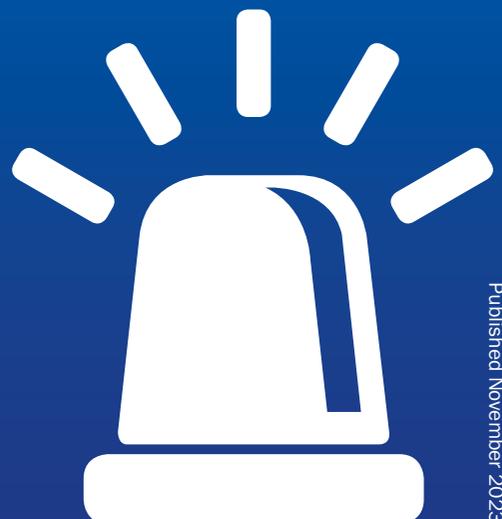
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Published November 2023