

# Submission form: Victoria’s draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

## Your details

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<b>Position (if applicable):</b>	Manager – Regional Projects
<b>Email:</b>	████████████████████
<b>Phone:</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.

## About you

Please tell us which best describes you:

- Victorian resident
- Victorian business owner/operator
- Industry professional
- Community organisation representative
- Local government representative
- State government representative
- Researcher
- Other (please specify): State government-funded organisation

## Your focus areas

Select the topics or regions you are providing feedback on (select all that apply):

Topics	Regions
<input type="checkbox"/> Across sectors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Victoria
<input type="checkbox"/> Circular economy	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban growth areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Cities	<input type="checkbox"/> Melbourne
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate change	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community infrastructure	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Freight	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health	
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure for Victoria's First Peoples	
<input type="checkbox"/> Transport	
<input type="checkbox"/> Water	

## Your feedback

Add as many sections as you need to provide all your feedback in this submission.

<b>Topic/area:</b>	Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities
<b>Recommendation name:</b>	Build libraries and swimming pools for Melbourne's growing communities
<b>Recommendation number:</b>	5
1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In part
2. Tell us why	<p><b>Regional and rural Victorian swimming pools need investment to remain open.</b></p> <p>Many local swimming pools in regional Victoria are slated for closure due to age and deterioration. Heatwaves are Australia's deadliest natural disaster (Red Cross, 2025). The number of days above 40 degrees have quadrupled in Castlemaine and Mildura since the mid-1960s.</p> <p>Regional town swimming pools are key public assets that play a crucial public recreation and public health role. Regional Victorians deserve equitable access of key public infrastructure, especially as these sites serve multiple functions: prevention of chronic disease through physical activity; cool space relief during extreme heat; and social connection and opportunity for all-ages participation, promoting mental, physical and social wellbeing.</p> <p>Especially in the Loddon Mallee region, local swimming pools are essential cooling spaces in hot weather. In 2050, under high emissions, the climate of Bendigo will be more like the climate of Shepparton now; Echuca will be more like Swan Hill; Swan Hill more like Hay; and Mildura more like Menindee (DELWP, 2015).</p> <p>Local government is tasked with swimming pool maintenance and upkeep, which is costly and increasingly impossible for small organisations. These public assets need to be viewed in the context of public health and wellbeing, social equity and climate change. Keeping swimming pools operating in regional towns is essential infrastructure for mental and physical health, social connection and climate resilience. It also offers much needed recreational opportunity for people of all ages.</p> <p>Cooling spaces like swimming pools need to be planned and maintained with the support of State government, as their importance to public health and equity goes beyond the remit and capacity of local government.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>DELWP (2015) Climate Ready Victoria - Loddon Mallee Climate Fact Sheet <a href="https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/60746/Loddon-Mallee.pdf">https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/60746/Loddon-Mallee.pdf</a></p> <p>Red Cross, (2025) Heatwaves, <a href="https://www.redcross.org.au/heatwaves/">https://www.redcross.org.au/heatwaves/</a></p>

3. Share any supporting evidence or examples	<a href="https://climateactionmerribek.org/2025/01/07/merri-beks-6-public-swimming-pools-are-an-essential-climate-adaptation/">https://climateactionmerribek.org/2025/01/07/merri-beks-6-public-swimming-pools-are-an-essential-climate-adaptation/</a>
4. Include proposed changes and improvements	Undertake a feasibility study, that includes public health benefits and social value, to retain existing public swimming pools in regional Victoria in a warming climate.

<b>Topic/area:</b>	Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities
<b>Recommendation name:</b>	Invest in maintenance, upgrades and expansions of community health facilities
<b>Recommendation number:</b>	17
5. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In part
6. Tell us why	<p><b>Invest in delivery of regional cool spaces</b></p> <p>We recommend that safe and inclusive community cool spaces are available in rural areas at times of extreme heat. A cool space is typically an air-conditioned or cooled building that has been designed as a site to provide respite and safety during extreme heat. Heatwaves are the deadliest of extreme weather events experienced in Australia. They cause more deaths than all natural disasters combined and are a serious threat to health. Temperatures in the Loddon Mallee region are expected to rise by 2.8 -3.0°C by 2050 posing a serious threat to health in the future. It is estimated that there may be an extra 402 deaths per year in Victoria by 2050 due to heatwaves if no adaptation measures are taken.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Currently cool spaces are not equitably available, due to resource constraints and competing pressures on the entities oriented to their need– usually local government and /or neighbourhood houses. Rural local government have aging, multipurpose assets that could be used as cool spaces but would / may require upgrades to be more sustainable. Community health facilities are well situated to offer this service as well, being both aware of the community need for this option and already providing a service interface with community.</p> <p>As temperatures continue to rise, the need for cool spaces becomes even more urgent. They can be used to protect vulnerable populations and reduce the health risks associated with extreme heat.</p> <p>Cool spaces provide short-term refuge from extremely high temperatures for those who cannot avoid the heat in their homes. Having a cool environment for people reduces the risk of heat-related illnesses. It can build long-term resilience and well-being of communities in the face of climate change. A cool space is different to an emergency response or relief centre, which is generally a centrally located large building that provides immediate basic support and safety in times of an emergency. They are not necessarily airconditioned and functional as a cool space.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Keating A, Handmer J. Future potential losses from extremes under climate change: the case of Victoria, Australia. VCCCAR Project: Framing Adaptation in the Victorian Context, Working Paper. 2013.

	<p>In smaller rural communities, there is a lack of public or private places to seek relief from the heat. This is because there are fewer indoor shopping centres, movie theatres, libraries and no beaches to escape to.</p> <p>The largest demographic impacted by heat are the elderly, particularly when living alone, followed by young children, the socio-economically disadvantaged and those with pre-existing health conditions like diabetes, respiratory or heart disease.</p> <p>A Bendigo Health Cool Spaces resource has been produced to support conversations and mapping within our sub-region stakeholder networks.(See link below).</p>
<p>7. Share any supporting evidence or examples</p>	<p>Bendigo Health: Cool Spaces Guidance  <a href="https://bendigohealth.org.au/Assets/Files/APPROVED%20-%20Cool%20Spaces.pdf">https://bendigohealth.org.au/Assets/Files/APPROVED%20-%20Cool%20Spaces.pdf</a></p> <p>Royal Society of Victoria – Everybody be Cool: Using community spaces to manage heatwaves  <a href="https://rsv.org.au/community-spaces-to-manage-heatwaves/?srsId=AfmBOoqwo9hITZk7EqQkcLz8P7kK8HPI_SavBF1L5ub2ZDUgBs_xHMVAZ">https://rsv.org.au/community-spaces-to-manage-heatwaves/?srsId=AfmBOoqwo9hITZk7EqQkcLz8P7kK8HPI_SavBF1L5ub2ZDUgBs_xHMVAZ</a></p>
<p>8. Include proposed changes and improvements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct a feasibility study into improve Cool Spaces in regional Victoria, particularly in the Loddon Mallee region.</li> </ol>

## More feedback (optional)

### Keeping cool in summer: climate adapted community facilities – a Loddon Mallee Case Study

The Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) engaged with key stakeholders in the Loddon sub-region to determine awareness, availability and provision of:

- cool spaces
- heat health information
- energy efficiency and literacy education
- cool landscapes- tree planting and shade.

Stakeholders including libraries, neighbourhood houses, council staff (emergency management, health and wellbeing, climate change, access and support, community partnerships) primary health, community health (housing and community health), churches, other community groups, Women's Health Loddon Mallee, Bendigo Community Health Services refugee and migrant programme. The areas of interest included the Shires of Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, Loddon and City of Greater Bendigo.

**Cool spaces offer essential relief from extreme heat, assisting those who are most vulnerable due to systemic disadvantage.**

**Low income families can pay up to 6 times more than high income families on their electricity bills in cooling and heating their homes.<sup>2</sup>**

\*It was recognised that some community members cannot easily access the cool spaces due to lack of transport and or the timing of closing of the cool space is at peak heat of the day which can exacerbate chronic illnesses. For those community members who cannot access these cool spaces, parallel capacity-building in household energy efficiency and literacy is required.

The cool spaces recognised in the scope of this case study included:

- libraries,
- neighbourhood houses,
- supermarkets,
- churches,
- health and community health services reception areas.

**Libraries and neighbourhood houses were the spaces more frequented.** These spaces are used because they are trusted spaces where people feel safe and connected, and they are accessible. To reduce any potential stigma around the use of these spaces the advertising was oriented to events happening in these spaces, for example, children's Summer school holiday events.

The cross-sector conversations led to the following identification of needs:

#### 1. Sharing heat health and other information and resources in cool spaces

- Streamlining heat health resources for use by cross sector organisations and one pager resources for target audiences is required
- Information shared more extensively through trusted organisations and translated into various languages including Karen and Dari
- Family violence, mental health and crisis supports information is needed

<sup>2</sup> Bedggood et al., 2021 (data source: HILDA)

## 2. Improvement in access and use of cool spaces

- Increased opening hours in libraries and neighbourhood houses with associated staffing
- Improved cultural safety, safety for women and gender diverse community through having relevant information available for those communities and through capacity building of staff and volunteers
- Scaling of the City of Greater Bendigo community connector project in other smaller libraries
- Provision of drinking water fountains or similar in Libraries
- Building cross sector collaboration and capacity building to support cool spaces operation and promotion.

## Recommendation

1. **Conduct a feasibility study into improve Cool Spaces in regional Victoria, particularly in the Loddon Mallee region.**

