

21.01 MUNICIPAL PROFILE

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21.01-1 Introduction

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Located in the eastern region of metropolitan Melbourne, 25 km east of Melbourne GPO, the City of Knox covers a geographical area of 114 sq. km and contains the suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Knoxfield, Lysterfield (part of), Rowville, Sassafras (part of), Scoresby, The Basin, Upper Ferntree Gully, Wantirna and Wantirna South. The municipalities of Monash, Whitehorse and Greater Dandenong to the west, Maroondah to the north, Yarra Ranges to the east and Casey to the south, bound the City of Knox.

The City of Knox is situated between the Dandenong Creek Valley and the Dandenong Ranges foothills. The Dandenong Ranges provide outstanding views across the municipality, and are recognised as a regionally significant environmental and landscape feature that provides a significant backdrop to metropolitan Melbourne.

The City of Knox has emerged from a period of high growth to a time of maturity and consolidation. Most of Knox is now fully developed and as an outer ring suburban municipality is renowned for its residential lifestyle, employment opportunities, social and recreational attributes.

The following sections provide overviews of Knox under the headings of **Regional Context, Settlement** and **Knox Community Profile**.

21.01-2 Regional context

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A series of key regional land use and development issues effect the land use and development planning for Knox. In particular:-

Regional Housing: In 2004 the Eastern Region of metropolitan Melbourne was forecast to grow by an additional 108,000 people and 90,000 new households by 2031, (Department of Planning and Community Development). As an initiative of *Melbourne 2030*, the Eastern Regional Housing Working Group prepared a Regional Housing Statement for the purpose of managing housing needs across the Eastern Region. The City of Knox is a member council of the Eastern Region and will continue to play an important role in housing provision over the next 25 years by providing a diversity of housing to meet the needs of the existing Knox community and the 2004 forecast growth of 12,000 persons and 15,000 new households.

Social and Public Housing: The Eastern Metropolitan Region (as defined by Department of Human Services, Office of Housing) currently has the lowest level of public housing stock of any region in Victoria, 1.8% compared with the State average of 4.1%. The Eastern Region also has the lowest level of affordable private rental properties in the State.

Regional Economy: The City of Knox currently plays an important role in the economic prosperity of Melbourne's south-east with a strong business base and reputation as a high employment generator. This role will be further strengthened through the development of the Scoresby-Rowville Employment Precinct as a national business attractor and creator of employment opportunities for local communities. The Knox Central Principal Activity Centre will also continue to provide a regional retail, entertainment, recreational and civic focus for Knox and focal point for Melbourne's outer east. The City of Knox will play an important partnership role in delivering the initiatives of the *Regional Economic Strategy for Melbourne's South East*.

Regional Open Space: The City of Knox contains and is surrounded by large quantities of high quality regional public open space and significant waterways that provide recreational, open space and environmental benefits for the broader community. The City is nestled at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges and the Lysterfield Hills that provide environmental, landscape and recreational interest of regional significance.

The Dandenong Valley Regional Parklands is another significant regional public open space area that provides a green wedge and gateway between Knox and the rest of metropolitan Melbourne.

Environment & Topographical Form: The City of Knox is set in a distinct location in metropolitan Melbourne with many sensitive and significant environmental and topographical features. The City is sited on land undulating gently among creek valleys, between the Dandenong Creek valley that provides a distinct landscape break in the easterly spread of the suburbs and the Dandenong Ranges Lysterfield foothills that form part of Melbourne's urban growth boundary. The foothills provide a scenic backdrop to Knox and across much of metropolitan Melbourne; they are a major defining element for the character and image of Knox. There is a predominance of regionally threatened vegetation types among the remaining native vegetation in Knox, as is there a high number of sites of state significance. Like other parts of the metropolitan area, key environmental issues within Knox impacting on quality of life include air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, waste management, energy efficiency, noise, water conservation and quality, catchment management, loss of habitat and loss of biodiversity.

Movement and Infrastructure: As part of the broader metropolitan region, the regional road network traversing Knox plays an important role in providing accessibly for employment and community activity. EastLink is important in facilitating an integrated transport system for commuters from the south-east sourcing employment in the Scoresby-Rowville Employment Precinct and other parts of Knox. Similarly, extending the public transport grid across Knox for the local community will increase public transport accessibility from the east. The City of Knox is advocating for an extension of the light rail to the Knox Central Principal Activity Centre and a heavy rail extension to Rowville.

City of Knox Image: Closely tied to the above contextual issues, the concept of 'image' is central to the City's economy, residential, recreational and environmental attraction. Within the regional context, image relates to how people from outside the area perceive the City of Knox. The City of Knox needs to reinforce its image and character to differentiate Knox from other outer metropolitan municipalities. Many urban design challenges and opportunities exist in improving the image of Knox. The City is provided with significant opportunity to more clearly reinforce its image by lifting the design standards of the built form, by strengthening the identifiable landscape characteristics particularly along transport corridors and creeks, facilitating lively activity centres for community focus, protecting the leafy, green environment and improving the character and amenity of residential communities.

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Settlement

The Wurundjeri people and Bunnerong people of the Kulin Nation are acknowledged as traditional custodians of the land on which the City of Knox is located.

Since European settlement, the City of Knox experienced a distinctive settlement pattern that culminates today in contrasting demographic and natural features between the suburbs. The suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully and Upper Ferntree Gully were originally developed around the railway stations along the Belgrave Line and are generally located within the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, with the exception of Bayswater.

Development then spreads in a westward direction towards the Dandenong Creek Valley. More recently, urban development has been concentrated south of Burwood Highway around Rowville, Knoxfield, Lysterfield and Scoresby. Today, there are few opportunities left for green field broad hectare development in the City of Knox although infill residential and commercial development is increasing. Pressure for residential development in the foothills areas and beyond the urban growth boundary will need to be carefully managed to protect the environmental, landscape and visual amenity qualities of these areas. Urban consolidation objectives must not outweigh the environmental and landscape objectives for the foothills.

Parts of Knox are at risk from bushfire. Accordingly, development should be designed and located to minimise the risk to life and property from bushfire and should be avoided in areas where development may compromise human life or valuable ecological assets.

Knox Central Principal Activity Centre provides a regional retail, commercial and entertainment focus for the municipality and the outer east with significant opportunities for mixed use and residential development. Bayswater, Boronia, and Stud Park shopping centres are major activity centres that are a focus for investment and change in retail, office, service and residential activities for the Knox community.

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Knox Community Profile

Knox will face challenges posed by changes in demographic trends, housing growth, community aspirations, increased demand for social services, business investment, pressure on the natural environment, and achieving long-term sustainability.

Over the next 25 years, there will be a substantial change in the population characteristics of the Knox community. Settlement pattern is the primary driver of these changes coupled with national trends of ageing and increasing lone households. Changes to the population profile will have significant implications for housing, the local economy, service provision and social activities within Knox. In particular, the need for diversity of housing and social service provision as the community matures.

Over the rapid growth phase of the last 30 years Knox has been an attractive and affordable location for young families to establish their homes. These families have been supported by the provision of services and facilities aimed at catering for family needs and requirements. This current level of infrastructure and service provision coupled with the lifestyle attributes that are abundant within the area makes the City of Knox a great place for families within all phases of the life cycle to locate.

Based on the 2006 census figures, the City of Knox population grew from 150,157 in 2001 to 152,388 in 2006. By 2031 the population is expected to increase to 162,228 persons using the Department of Planning and Community Development forecast figures, which formed part of Knox's Housing Statement. These forecasts, which were formulated prior to the 2006 census details were released, are based on migration patterns, births and deaths, and national trends of ageing. Based on Council's own population predictions undertaken after the 2006 census, Knox's population may reach 170,333 persons.

The age groups that will experience the most significant change from 2001 to 2031 are those over 55 years, currently representing nearly a third of Knox's population (28.5%, Melbourne Statistical Division 23.1%) and the 0-14 year age group (20%, MSD 18.8%). The number of persons in the age groups of 55 years and over is expected to increase to around 35.6% of the population over the next 25 years as the Knox community matures, while the number of children in the 0-11 age group is expected to decrease substantially.

The cultural diversity of the population of Knox is increasing. In 2006 the percentage of people born overseas (25% of the Knox population) increased from 2001, as did the percentage of those from a non-English speaking background (16.8%). Such changes will have broad influences on community and cultural services required.

Knox is also experiencing an increase in the number of persons with disabilities. In 2006 nearly 1 in five people (19.2%) of the Knox population had a disability of some type, which is a significant increase from the 1998 ABS survey estimate of 12.8%. This increase, while below the state average (was 18% now 21%), is consistent with the general prevalence of disability as people age and the ageing trend occurring in Knox. Planning and design of physical and social infrastructure will need to respond appropriately to ensure that access to the build environment and appropriate housing is improved.

The Knox Housing Statement (based on 2001 census figures) projected for 2031 that the total population of Knox would increase by around 12,000 persons from 2001 levels and household numbers would exponentially increase by over 15,000. Much of the household growth is being generated by the existing community of Knox as children mature creating households of their own, separation of existing couples and death of partners.

Future household composition will change, as couple families with dependents will no longer dominate the household composition of the Knox community, currently representing 43.7% of all Knox households. Household size will reduce and the number of couples without dependents and lone households will increase notably over the next 25 years.