



WDN Community Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 16 September 2025

Fountain View Room, Civic Centre, 10.00 am – 12:30 pm

1.	Acknowledgement, Welcome and Introduction of Councillor Brooks Stephen Mckay, Manager Community Strengthening Councillor Nic Brooks, Councillor for the Thomastown Ward • The September 2025 WDN meeting was formally opened with an acknowledgement of the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country, recognising the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of the lands within the City of Whittlesea, and paying respects to Elders past and present. • This meeting marks two years since the re-establishment of WDN following a pause during Covid-19. During this period, participation by residents with disability and carers has increased, and the Network has strengthened connections with the special school sector and non-English speaking communities supporting people with disability. • Feedback gathered through WDN meetings has informed key community projects, including initiatives to support employment for people with disability, improve access to public spaces, and enhance connections with the NDIS. • The meeting aimed to build on this work by considering recent changes to the delivery of disability services and supports, and their impact on the community. This evidence will contribute to advocacy to federal and state governments and strengthen partnerships between council and community to support meaningful disability planning and projects. • Councillor Nic Brooks, Councillor for the Thomastown Ward, was introduced and welcomed as a member of the Whittlesea Disability Network. Councillor Brooks was then invited to address the meeting. Cr Brooks is the councillor for Thomastown ward and moving forward, Cr Brooks will be attending this network. Cr Brooks expressed that he is passionate about this space and has had previous experience in the sector as a registered NDIS partner with experience in vehicle and safety occupancy and compliance. Although, not commercially involved in the sector, Councillor Brooks is still very passionate about the work in this space.
2.	Housekeeping Jafar, Community Strengthening Officer Emergency Exits, toilets and catering and a run through of the agenda: ▪ Council Update ▪ Round Table Discussions ▪ Morning tea ▪ Report back on the table conversations

	▪ Impacts of changes to Aged Care on Council services and Community ▪ Council supports and services for families of young children with disabilities ▪ WDN 2025 Survey ▪ Next Meeting																								
3.	Council Update Rosie Beaumont, Community Strengthening Officer Tracking changes in local disability sector is key to Council’s planning and policy work to support the sector. WDN is crucial to monitoring change: • Supply and demand • Good and bad service provider practices • Other issues for managing public space and advocating This presentation will look at change in disability community over past few years (demand) and implications for service delivery <table><tr><th></th><th>2016</th><th>2021</th><th></th></tr><tr><td>Long-term health condition</td><td></td><td>63,000</td><td>28%</td></tr><tr><td>Daily assist due to disability</td><td>11,000</td><td>14,000</td><td>6%</td></tr><tr><td>Unpaid carers</td><td>18,000</td><td>23,000</td><td>12% - 13%</td></tr><tr><th></th><th>2023</th><th>2025</th><th></th></tr><tr><td>NDIS</td><td>6,000</td><td>7,000</td><td>3%</td></tr></table> • Our disability community has not experienced radical change over past few years. • The proportion of people in CoW’s population who live with or support a person with disability has remained stable Data sources: Home City of Whittlesea Community profile Explore data NDIS 46% of daily assist population, live in the West: Epping, Lalor, Thomastown • 1,990 NDIS participants receive \$136M a year – common support needs are shared accom, personal care, community participation support • 45% live in East: Mernda, Doreen, Bundoora, Mill Park, South Morang, • 3,000+ NDIS participants receive \$131M – high demand for early intervention services 6% live in growth North: Wollert, Beveridge, Donnybrook • 4380 NDIS participants receive \$243M – demand for community participation support lower than other areas		2016	2021		Long-term health condition		63,000	28%	Daily assist due to disability	11,000	14,000	6%	Unpaid carers	18,000	23,000	12% - 13%		2023	2025		NDIS	6,000	7,000	3%
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4% live in Rural North: Yan Yean, Humevale, Edan Park, Whittlesea

- 280 NDIS – demand for community participation support & early childhood

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[Care Sector Demand Map](#) | [Department of Social Services, Australian Government](#)

Daily Assistance - Social Indicators



		Whittlesea Population	Needs Assist	Needs Assist 2016 - 2021	Change
	Attending preschool	2.2%	1.1%	+ 0.3%	✓
	University degree	24.3%	10.3%	+ 2%	✓
	Unemployed	5.9%	15.1%	+ 2%	✓
	Lowest incomes	15.5%	37.6%	+ 3.5%	✗
	Social housing	1.1%	3.8%	+ 0.4%	✗

NDIS in Whittlesea



	2023 - 2025	% point difference
Participants	2.6 – 2.9%	+ 0.3
18 and under	58 – 60%	+2
Autism	31 – 36%	+5
Developmental Delay	19 – 21%	+2
Intellectual Disability	13 – 14%	+1
Psychosocial	8.3 – 7.5%	- 0.8

What's Changed?

Covid & NDIS impact demand

- Client complexity
- Loss of funding
- Loss of staff and volunteers

What's the same

- Not enough local services
- Not enough transport
- Not enough support with communication

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	Since 2011 Council has surveyed our health and human service sector to identify service delivery issues The 2022 Human Services Needs Analysis identified a range of barriers to accessing disability services including new challenges caused by Covid and the NDIS City of Whittlesea's NDIS market data is updated every quarter Explore data NDIS
4.	Round Table Discussions Experiences navigating major service and support changes for the following themes: • Early & School Years • Post-School & adulthood (18–64 years) • 65+ (My Aged Care) • Other Supports & Services
5.	Report back on the table conversations Early years- Whitney • Small group with high level discussion • Post kinder support starts to drop and puts pressure and stress on families. Coordinators are overwhelmed and stressed with reviews. • Families do not necessarily have a support coordinator, and services are not culturally safe or appropriately funded. • There is overall an increase in complex behaviour in children • Child protection tends to expediate assessment. Jafar- Other services and supports • A lot of mental health services contacting neighbourhood houses for connection and report support needs • NDIS cuts • Mental health stress • Carers are in crisis • Support workers are leaving the industry • Long wait lists for behavioural therapy straining services • CALD communities not finding the services accessible • Trauma impacts new arrival community support needs • Significant funding cuts across the sector and increased wait times • Reform has impacted eligibility, and self-funded service is increasing and creating pressure • Neighbourhood houses picking up significant community need across the sector and small organisations are working outside their scope

	• There are service quality impacts. Suraj – post-school and adulthood • Lack of plan communication in the rollout • Barriers to community participation • Lack of formalised correspondence and letters received in a timely fashion • Transition is a challenge particularly for teens and better communication could negate this • There are ownership issues with staff and a lack of NDIS provider feedback mechanisms in place • Multiple services and systems make the user experience complex and difficult • Reports can be cumbersome and unhelpful • There is a need to shop around for appropriate providers. Rosie – Over 65 (reported by Jafar) • Lots of changes happening in compliance • Electronic info systems are difficult to navigate • Home care and referral is complex • Abuse of aged care workers • Lack of experience in service worker and inconsistency • Poor service coordination • Difficulty in integration of services • Poor quality and service refusal is a negative outcome of information above • Lack of translation services and requirement for hard copies for example at Neighbourhood houses. This is a challenging/ demographic issue. Needs to be age appropriate/ simple language and accessible.
6.	Impacts of changes to Aged Care on Council services and Community Silvana Aliquo, Coordinator of Service Coordination Lucy Antonelli, Senior Case Manager • Council provides Commonwealth funded services • Council provides the individual at the centre of care and service. • In November 2025, the new act will be endorsed. • The New Aged Care Act 2024 • This act is based off the Australian law. • The act places the individuals at the centre of aged care. • The new act intends to improve service provision • New aged care assessment system • Residential aged care will be impacted by changes • A statement of rights has been introduced to ensure that there is a focus on the individual. This significant shift on the individual place's emphasis on the importance of a human right approach. • Clients having the right to make their own decisions • Clients can choose their own support services

- Clients to feel safe, supported and respected.
- There will be changes to nutritional standards and an expectation for nurse availability to increase
- Rights focussed service orientation including a statement of rights to replace the Charter of Aged Care rights. Clear and inclusive care expectations that include person centred decision making.
- Appointment of independent complaint commission to direct complaints and investigate
- My aged care is the first contact point to direct enquiries
- The transition from NDIS to Aged Care services will need to still go through My Aged Care.
- For those who aged 65+ years and over, they are allowed to stay on the NDIS. But this may be explored to change. These are the conversations that are happening at Government.
- Council offers entry level service such as social support groups, respite and or support at home.

Questions

Some questions about home care packages and transition to categories in support. Broadly there is a 'no worse off' principle'

Can you stay on NDIS, or must you transition to Aged care services when over 65?

The transition is mixed and advice ambiguous. Department are flagging honouring change over 65 years but yet to be practised broadly in the community. There will likely be a transition period

Question from Michael regarding travel allowance and my age care allowance (works in industry)? Consumers have the opportunity to withdraw from a home care package. Income testing may be a factor influencing a withdrawal, but they could still receive the commonwealth home support package

People can apply for NDIS till 65. Going back to NDIS after my age care is not possible

Susan uses NDIS and belongs to Blind community. Received same information regarding age parameters for NDIS. Some peers have been told they do not have to go to My age care over 65. Advised to be careful and do research

Tenille works with NDIS clients and asked if packages are means tested.

Advised they are not means tested but there is a fee associated with that service being delivered by Serviced Victoria.

Need for affordable and community transport- topic for future session to unpack



7.	Council supports and services for families of young children with disabilities. Grace Gallicchio, Kindergarten Services Coordinator • The Children and Families Department manages 0-8 years. • Councils' website is a good starting point. If you would like to find out more information, please email info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au. • The first point of contact is Maternal Child Health which is available for up to 10 visits. • Workers are trained and able to help with referrals and support services. • If you have any questions, or would like to find out more, please email: mch@whittlesea.vic.gov.au • There are also playgroups available, this is a great way to meet other families. • These groups are facilitated and offer help with parenting/ play etc. • There are 3 playgroups offered for children living with a disability. This information can be found on the website. • All programs are free/ accessible, and all venues are accessible. • There are also sessional kindergarten programs – which are funded by the Victorian Government. • Modifications can be made if required. This needs to be known as early as possible and this information can be provided via the application. • Long day care is also available. There are 3 council run sessions. • 15 hours is free. As of 2026, this will change and increase to 25 hours for 4-year-olds (pre prep) • Council has a family engagement team which can assist with referrals and overcoming any barriers. • There are staff available who speak multiple languages. Interpreters are always available if required. This support can be requested at any time.
8.	WDN 2025 Survey WDN members are invited to complete this short survey about how and what you want the Network to organise for you in 2025. Please take a few moments to give us your suggestions so we can plan a year of activities that work for you. You can complete the survey using the QR code displayed on the screen through your phones. The survey is on the Whittlesea Disability Network (WDN) Online Hub WDN 2025 Survey Whittlesea Disability Network Hub Engage City of Whittlesea

	
9.	Next Meeting and Close WDN November Meeting Tuesday 25th November 2025 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM Fountain View Room, Civic Centre, South Morang