



Women's Health East

Driving lasting change

Strategic Plan 2026–2030

Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land, its waterways and seas and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. Finally, we would like to acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded. This land always was and always will be the land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Introduction

Women's Health East; driving lasting change

Women's Health East's (WHE) 2026–2030 Strategic Plan sets a clear and focused direction for advancing women's health and gender equality across Melbourne's east over the next five years. It builds on our strong legacy as a regional leader, while responding to a changing and complex environment where women and gender diverse people face ongoing and emerging barriers to health, safety and wellbeing.

At its core, the strategy is about transforming equitable health and wellbeing outcomes for all women and gender diverse people. Health is shaped not only by access to services, but also by broader social, economic and structural factors. This strategy takes an intersectional feminist approach that addresses the root causes of inequality, including gender discrimination and systemic disadvantage.

Our strategy focuses on three priorities.

1. First, we will strengthen our local health promotion work, delivering place-based, culturally responsive preventative initiatives that improve access, build health literacy, and support women to navigate health systems and community supports. Our work centres lived experience and responds to the needs of many diverse communities.

2. Second, we will play a stronger role in systems leadership and advocacy to advance gender justice and prevent gender-based violence. This includes working in partnership with government, services and communities to influence policy, shift systems, and address the drivers of violence. We will translate evidence and lived experience into clear, locally grounded insights that highlight system gaps and inform reform. Through this, we will build workforce and sector capability, support evidence-based approaches, and ensure women's voices shape decision-making at all levels.

3. Third, the strategy commits to strengthening Women's Health East as a sustainable, intersectional feminist organisation. We will invest in workforce capability, governance, financial sustainability and organisational systems, so we can adapt, grow and continue to lead in a changing environment.

We will work in partnership with communities, local organisations, government and regional networks to strengthen our impact in creating a future where there is gender equality for all.

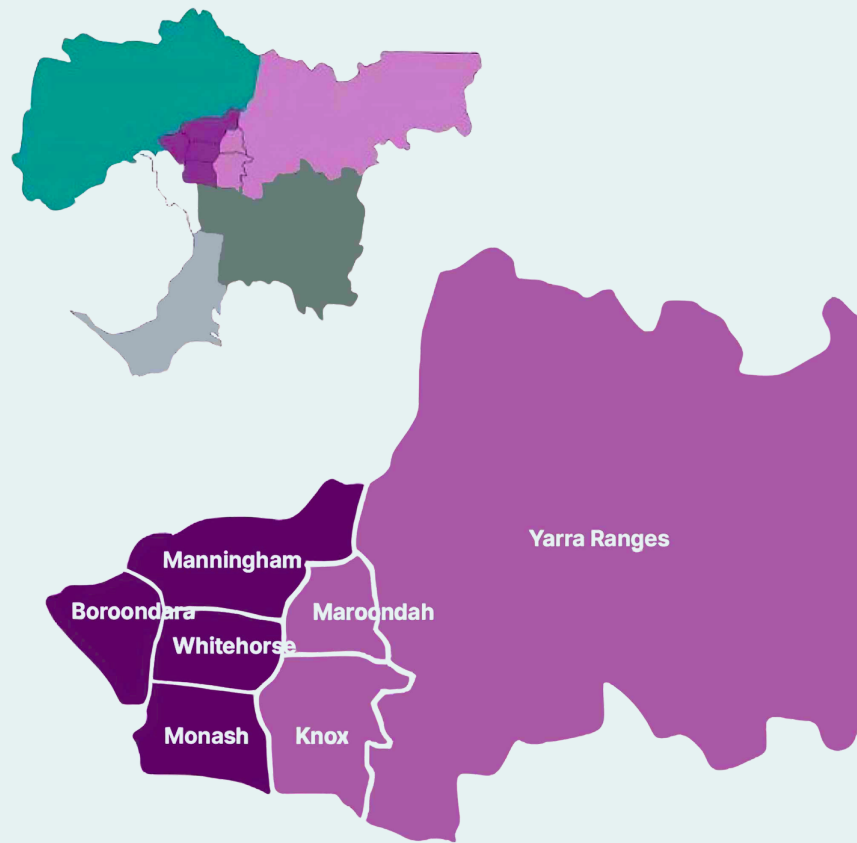
About the strategy

Background

WHE is the leading organisation advancing women's health and gender equality in Melbourne's east. Together with our partners, WHE plays a critical role in achieving equal outcomes for women and gender diverse people across diverse communities, elevating women's voices, and influencing systems to better meet the needs of women. Our Strategic Plan sets out our direction for the next five years, strengthening our role as a leader in advancing women's health and gender equity while responding to a rapidly changing environment.

Developing our new Strategic Plan

The strategy is informed by extensive consultation with our Board, staff and community partners. This occurred through focus groups, 1:1 interviews, surveys, workshops and meetings, supplemented by desktop research between January and May 2026. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their time, expertise and lived experience throughout this process. Your rich insights have shaped our strategy and will continue to guide our work over the next five years.



Our local context

WHE's region covers seven Local Government Areas (LGAs): Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondah, Manningham, Monash, Whitehorse and Boroondara. Communities across the region are diverse, both socioeconomically and culturally, and growing, with inconsistent access to health and community supports.

Broader social, political and policy shifts including rising cost of living pressures, climate change, technological change, increasing backlash against gender equality, and a challenging fiscal environment are reshaping the women's health landscape and reinforcing the need for clear, values led and strategic leadership.

WHE's impact is amplified through its engagement with the Women's Health Services Network, sharing knowledge, insights and expertise to advance women's health and gender equity across Victoria.

51%

or 584,000 residents are female. This will grow by 3.8% in 2030, with the largest growth occurring in Monash (10.1%) and lowest in Maroondah (-0.4%).



The top 5 languages spoken in the region, other than English, are Mandarin, Cantonese, Greek, Hakha Chin and Sinhalese.

28.9%

of residents were born in a predominately non-English speaking country. This was higher than the Victorian rate of 24%.



Intimate partner violence exceeds the state average in Maroondah, Knox and Yarra Ranges.

5.7%

of the population across the region has a profound or severe disability.

3,004

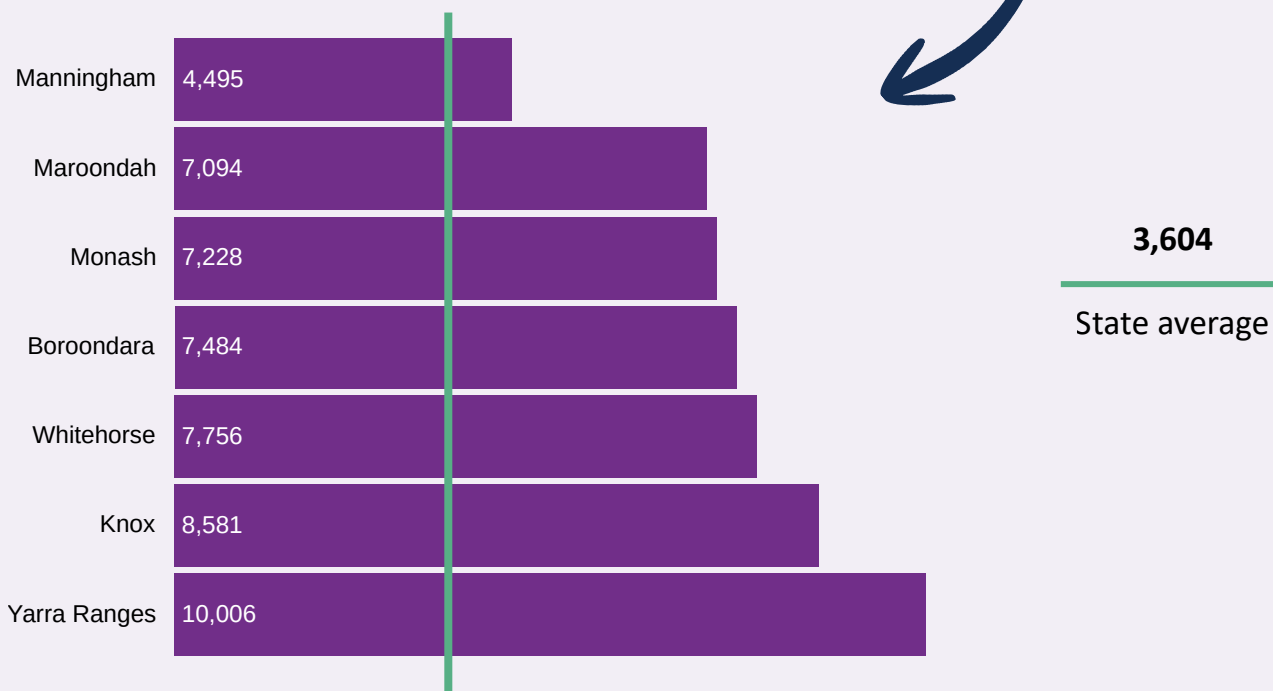
females identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.



We're proud that our region is home to three Aboriginal community-led and governed organisations: Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service, Mullum Mullum Aboriginal Gathering Place and Oonah Aboriginal Health and Community Services.



Every LGA in the region exceeds the Victorian average (3,604) for women experiencing mental health conditions, with Yarra Ranges (10,006) recording the highest number.



Strategic Plan 2026–2030

Vision

**Gender equality
for all**

Purpose

**To build a society where everyone is healthy,
safe and thriving in Melbourne's east.**

Priority 1

**Transforming local
health outcomes** for
women and gender
diverse people in
Melbourne's east

Priority 2

Advancing gender
equality & freedom
from gender-based
violence through
**systems leadership
and advocacy**

Priority 3

Leading change as
an innovative,
influential,
sustainable
feminist
organisation

Our principles

- Intersectional feminism
- Place-based
- Social justice and human rights
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Lived experience
- Self-determination

Our values

- Respect
- Integrity
- Inclusion
- Excellence

Definition of feminism

Feminism is the belief that everyone, regardless of gender, should have equal rights, opportunities and outcomes, recognising the diverse experiences and identities that shape people's lives.

UN Women, 2026, February 25.

Our principles

① Intersectional feminism

We recognise that women and gender diverse people experience inequality differently. We respond to the diverse and intersecting needs of communities and our staff team.

② Place-based

We deliver locally responsive work that is shaped by the needs, strengths and priorities of communities in Melbourne's east.

③ Social justice and human rights

We work to achieve fair, equitable outcomes for all women and gender diverse people by addressing the social and structural drivers of inequality.

④ Partnerships and collaboration

We work with communities, organisations and government to collectively strengthen our impact and achieve shared outcomes.

⑤ Lived experience

We centre lived and living experience as a key form of evidence to inform our work and drive change.

⑥ Self-determination

We support communities to lead decisions that affect their lives and respect their knowledge, culture and autonomy.

Strategic priorities

Strategic priority 1

Transforming health outcomes for women and gender diverse people in Melbourne's east

WHE delivers innovative and responsive place-based health promotion that centers the voices of women and gender diverse people, addressing inequities and supporting them to navigate health and community systems.

We work with and alongside community partners so that First Nations women, migrant and refugee women, LGBTQIA+ communities and people with disability can positively benefit from our work-centering our principles of self-determination, social justice and human rights.

What does success look like?

- Our programs improve mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health for women and gender diverse people in the communities we work in
- Women and gender diverse people can easily find, understand and access respectful, culturally safe and high-quality health and community services
- Improved social determinants of health for women and gender diverse people across the east, so they experience better health and wellbeing across their life course.

How will we get there?

- Our place-based health promotion and community engagement programs will be delivered where the need and opportunity for impact are greatest
- We will effectively work with local government, community health services and other partners on local service planning, primary prevention and early intervention health and well-being initiatives
- We strengthen medical practitioner capability that improves health access and experience for women, including women's experience of pain and other intersecting forms of discrimination
- We centre lived and living experience in the design, delivery and evaluation of our programs and services safely, ethically and sustainably.



Strategic priority 2

Advancing gender equality and freedom from gender-based violence through systems leadership and advocacy

WHE works in partnership to influence policy, shift systems and address the drivers of gender-based violence and advance gender justice on priority and emerging health and safety issues for women and gender diverse people.

What does success look like?

- Together with our partners, we influence systems and settings to progress gender equality and prevent gender-based violence
- We powerfully demonstrate and communicate our impact, influence and value to improving women's health and advancing gender justice
- Strong strategic partnerships at the systems, policy and community levels.



How will we get there?

- We lead initiatives that advance gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence for people at the margins, reflecting the diverse needs of women and gender diverse people across Melbourne's east
- We convene and strengthen the Together for Equality and Respect partnership, so it drives measurable change in the systems that prevent gender-based violence where we live, work, learn and play
- We lead the Eastern Metropolitan Region Sexual and Reproductive Health partnership to collectively achieve our strategic goals of equity, access and capability
- Workplaces, sporting clubs and other organisations across the east improve gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence through WHE's training, consulting and capability-building initiatives
- We are a leading voice on women's health, sought out expert advice and contribution to strategic alliances and reform agendas.

Strategic priority 3

Driving lasting change as an innovative, influential, sustainable and feminist organisation

WHE remains a strong, safe, sustainable and intersectional feminist organisation that is financially resilient, ethically grounded and adapts to our changing world.

What does success look like?

- We are a trusted, reputable organisation known for driving lasting change to achieve gender equality
- We are financially sustainable with diversified funding streams
- A highly skilled, values-aligned and agile workforce that reflects the communities we serve.
- Leadership and governance skillfully navigate change, balancing risk and innovation.

How will we get there?

- Our work contributes to the evidence base of best practice health promotion, primary prevention and early intervention initiatives
- We have the commercial and technical capability to generate earned income through high-quality gender equality consulting, training and grants
- We invest in and nurture our talented workforce
- We have the systems, data and infrastructure to deliver and evidence our work.



Implementation timeline

Year	Focus	What this means
Years 1–2 (2026–27)	Consolidating and scaling delivery of existing programs	• Confirm priorities through annual planning • Strengthen governance and internal processes, including data systems and approaches to impact measurement • Scale delivery of core programs and initiatives across all strategic priority areas, with increased focus on place-based health promotion, partnership development, and strengthening WHE’s advocacy and communications capability
Years 2–3 (2027–28)	Demonstrate impact and innovate	• Continue embedding programs and partnerships • Translate data and lived experience into stronger policy influence and advocacy, using WHE’s evidence base and insights to lead change • Continuous improvement is driven by evaluation insights and emerging community needs
Years 4–5 (2029–30)	Expand influence and deepen impact	• Scale successful initiatives • Strengthen system-level partnerships • Diversify funding and organisational capability to support long-term impact • Showcase outcomes across all priority areas • Use evaluation and learning to inform the next strategic cycle

Monitoring and review approach

Alongside this Strategic Plan, Annual Action Plans will set out our priority activities each year and how these will be delivered. This will be a key mechanism to track progress against the strategic priority areas and ensure delivery remains responsive to emerging needs and opportunities.

WHE will also develop and implement an Outcomes Framework to articulate how its work contributes to short-, medium- and long-term change. This Outcomes Framework will guide consistent monitoring, evaluation and reporting across all areas of work, drawing on data and lived experience to demonstrate impact and inform continuous improvement.

A robust governance structure will play a central role in strategy implementation. The Board and Executive Team will regularly review progress, risks and performance, supported by reporting against the Annual Action Plans and Outcomes Framework.

Together, these mechanisms will ensure the Strategic Plan remains both accountable and adaptive and focused on achieving meaningful outcomes for women and gender diverse people in Melbourne's east.

Women's Health East acknowledges the support of the Victorian government.



Driving lasting change

Women's Health East Strategic Plan 2026–2030

