

# CHAPTER 08

## STRONG COMMUNITIES

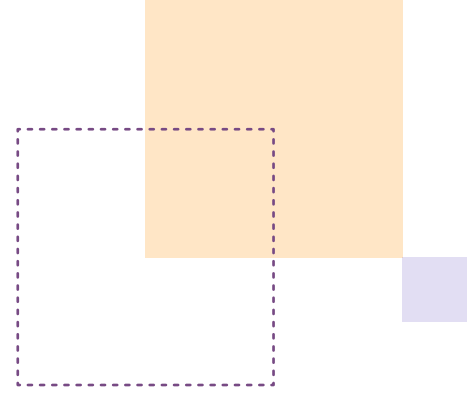


Plan Melbourne Outcome 5:  
Melbourne is a city of  
inclusive, vibrant and healthy  
neighbourhoods

The Northern Metro Region has many of the key attributes of strong, inclusive and healthy communities. This plan will help to identify the community services, open space, hospitals, educational and cultural institutions, and transport infrastructure to keep pace with a projected increase in population of over 765,000 by 2051.



Photo credit: Tim Bell Studio



Many middle ring communities in the region have high levels of disadvantage, and growth area communities have comparatively lower levels of accessibility to services.

Taking a regional approach to planning will ensure social infrastructure and open space services the widest possible catchment and cross-section of people. Plan Melbourne aims to build on the fundamentals of strong, healthy and sustainable neighbourhoods by improving access to and provision of amenity, social infrastructure, health and education, open space and the promotion of walking and cycling options.

Plan Melbourne advocates for the vision of a city of '20-minute neighbourhoods' in which most everyday needs can be met within a 20-minute walk, cycle or local transport trip from home. The established suburbs within the southern part of the Northern Metro Region are well placed to achieve this vision. Realising the hallmarks of 20-minute neighbourhoods in the region's growth areas will require integrated land use and infrastructure to support liveable, strong communities.

## State of play

### Community profile

The Northern Metro Region is a culturally diverse community. It has the highest Aboriginal population of the six metropolitan regions in metropolitan Melbourne, with more than 6200 Aboriginal people. Most people who identify as Aboriginal live in Darebin, Hume and Whittlesea LGAs (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Approximately 34 per cent of the region's population was born overseas. This is relatively consistent with metropolitan average (36.5 per cent) but lower than the Inner Metro Region where 46 per cent of residents were born overseas. India, Italy and the United Kingdom are the top three overseas origins in the region.

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) ranks areas according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The SEIFA rankings for the Northern Metro Region indicate some of the region's older established areas in middle ring suburbs, such as parts of Broadmeadows, Thomastown, Fawkner, Lalor,

Campbellfield and Roxburgh Park, have higher levels of relative socio-economic disadvantage when compared to other parts of Victoria (Figure 20). Areas with higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage may have higher demand for community, education and health services.

In contrast, some areas in the region's inner suburbs and further north-east along the Yarra and Plenty rivers, such as parts of Ivanhoe, Greensborough and Eltham, have higher levels of relative socio-economic advantage when compared to other parts of Victoria.

### Health and education facilities

The Northern Metro Region is economically and socially diverse, encompassing many areas of high need and/or limited access to health and community services and long waiting lists for existing services.

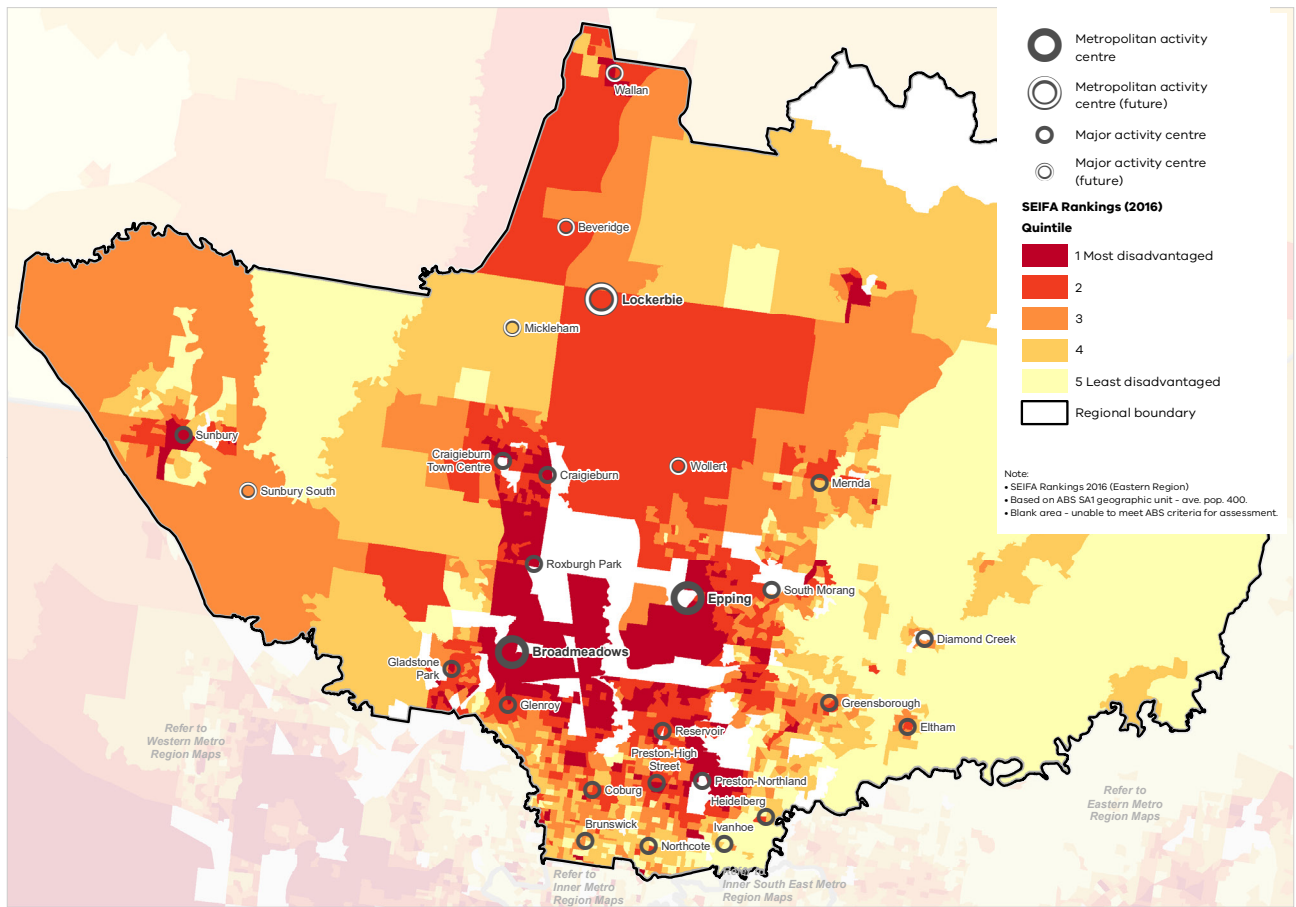
The region has seven private hospitals (excluding private day hospitals) and 10 public hospitals (including public day hospitals).

In terms of education, the Northern Metro Region also has 135 government primary schools and 33 government secondary schools (DELWP, 2017c).

Higher education providers with campuses in the Northern Metro Region include Latrobe University, RMIT, Kangan Institute, Melbourne Polytechnic and Northern College of the Arts and Technology in Preston.

People living in growth areas have lower rates of accessibility to these services compared to elsewhere in the region and metropolitan Melbourne. However, unprecedented population growth and an ageing population are also putting pressure on existing health and community services in established suburbs. Access to health and education services continues to be a focus for the region.

FIGURE 20. SEIFA rankings (2016) in the Northern Metro Region



## Social infrastructure

Social infrastructure includes all of the facilities, services and networks that help people to meet their social, cultural and community needs, in addition to health and education facilities.

Access to social infrastructure varies across the Northern Metro Region. The region’s structure is defined by the Hume Freeway and the M80 Ring Road, which dissect it into four quadrants. Regional facilities in one part of the region can be difficult for others across the region to access, affecting catchments for regional social infrastructure. The growth areas will house much of the region’s future population growth. As the population grows in inner areas such as Moreland and Darebin LGAs, there will be greater competition for community services and facilities.

A range of sport and recreation facilities are located across the region including local and regional indoor stadiums, aquatic and leisure centres, outdoor sport courts and sports grounds.

Major recreational facilities include: Darebin International Sports Centre in Thornbury which is a multi-sports complex for state lawn bowls, cycling and soccer; Epping Stadium; the Hangar in Tullamarine and CB Smith Reserve, Fawkner.

Other regional-scale active recreation facilities include La Trobe University Sports Park in Bundoora, WaterMarc in Greensborough, Splash Aqua Park and Leisure Centre in Craigieburn, and Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre in Greensborough. These facilities are located in the inner and middle ring suburbs, while there are no regional-scale, multi-use sporting facilities in the Northern Growth Corridor. Additional regional-scale, multi-use sporting facilities will be required to keep pace with population growth across the region.

Regional justice infrastructure within the Northern Metro Region includes two Magistrates’ Courts, four Community Corrections Locations, one Justice Service Centre and a Youth Justice location in Preston.

## Regional strengths

- The region has established regional-level facilities for health, education, recreation and other social infrastructure that cater for a wide range of community needs.
- A strong network of activity centres exists within the inner suburbs, many of which are vibrant, accessible community focal points that achieve (or exceed) the principle of the 20-minute neighbourhood.

## Regional challenges

- Adequate access to social infrastructure must be provided to service the growing population.
- Ensuring development in growth areas embeds the principle of the 20-minute neighbourhood is an ongoing challenge.
- Access to primary health, education, community services and sport and recreation facilities needs to be improved in established communities and growth areas.

## Directions and strategies

The directions identified to achieve the 2050 vision for the Northern Metro Region in terms of Strong communities and Outcome 5 of Plan Melbourne are:

<b>Direction 21</b>	Plan for major social infrastructure at a regional level
<b>Direction 22</b>	Deliver health and education services in strategic locations
<b>Direction 23</b>	Support a network of neighbourhood activity centres to anchor 20-minute neighbourhoods











Each direction is implemented through regionally-specific strategies identified in this LUFFP.

Map 8 shows how strong communities will be enhanced across the Northern Metro Region by 2050 as a result of these directions and strategies, together with Plan Melbourne and other strategies and initiatives as outlined in Appendix O1.












**MAP 8. Northern Metro Region strong communities 2050**





**Precincts and Activity Centres**

-  National employment & innovation cluster (NEIC)^
-  Metropolitan activity centre
-  Major activity centre
-  Health precinct (state)
-  Education precinct (state)
-  Health & education precinct (regional)
-  Health precinct (regional)
-  Education precinct (regional)
-  Major recreational facility
-  Regional recreational facility





**Transport**

-  State-significant road corridor
-  Road network
-  Train station
-  Rail network
-  Strategic Cycling Corridor
- Principal Public Transport Network**
-  PPTN station
-  PPTN interchange
-  Bus
-  Tram

**Environment**

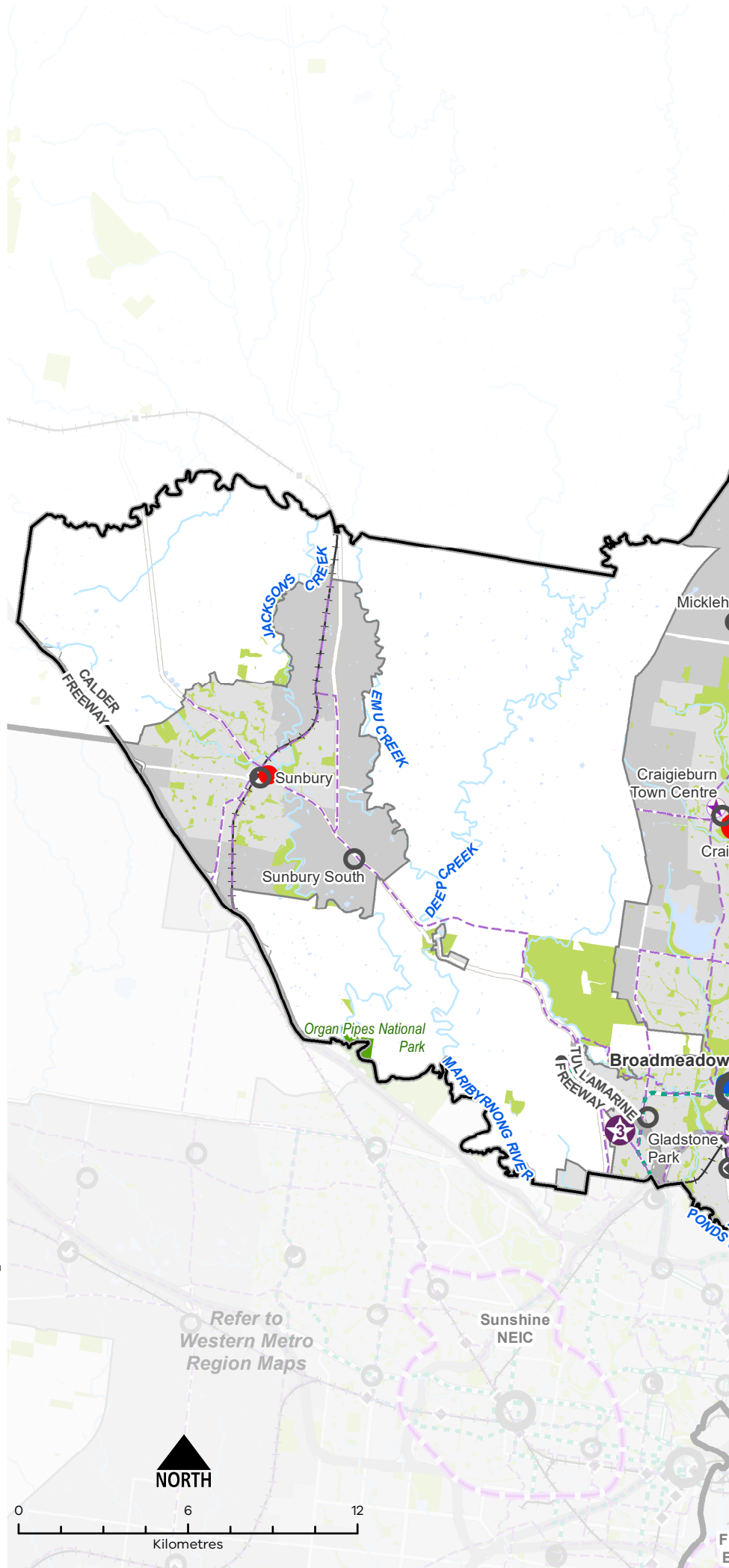
-  National park/state park
-  Public open space
-  Waterway
-  Waterbody

**Land use/Administration**

-  Regional boundary
-  Urban growth boundary
-  Growth area
-  Urban area

^NEIC boundary is indicative only and subject to detailed planning.

**Note:**  
Regional health precincts are also identified for the new Whittlesea and Eltham Community Hospitals, locations yet to be determined.



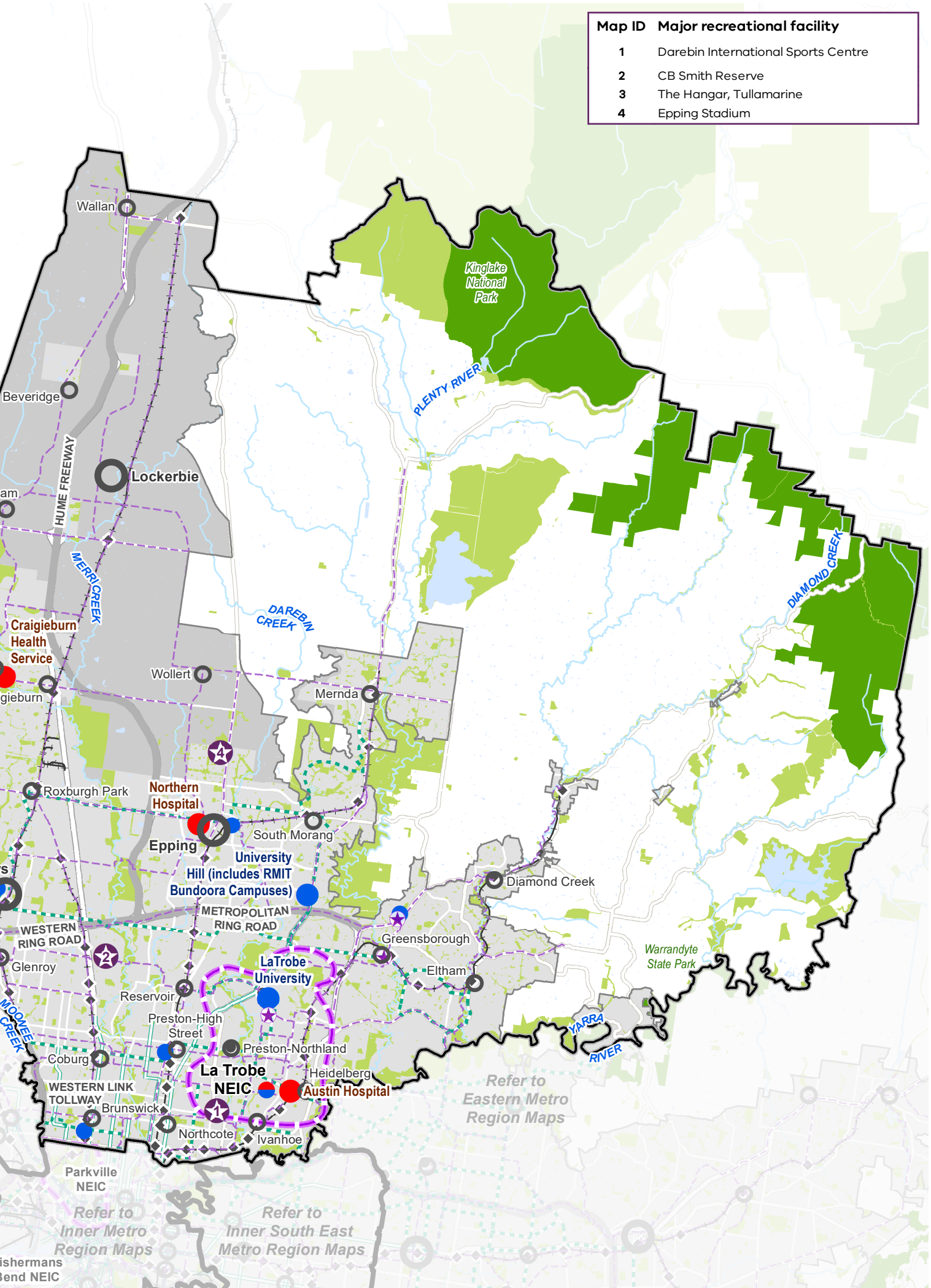
Refer to  
Western Metro  
Region Maps

Sunshine  
NEIC

**NORTH**



Map ID	Major recreational facility
1	Darebin International Sports Centre
2	CB Smith Reserve
3	The Hangar, Tullamarine
4	Epping Stadium



## **DIRECTION 21.** **Plan for major social infrastructure at a regional level**

In the Northern Metro Region, access to social infrastructure varies, with current shortfalls in community centre provision in Banyule, Darebin, Mitchell, Moreland and Whittlesea LGAs. This needs to be addressed to provide more equitable distribution of this infrastructure across the region. In addition, the scale of recent and forecast population growth, especially in the Northern Growth Corridor, poses social infrastructure and accessibility challenges.

The link between health, wellbeing and nature is reflected in many Victorian Government strategies including the *Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023* and *Active Victoria – A Strategic Framework for Sport and Recreation in Victoria 2017-2021*. The creation of healthy living environments which have a high level of urban amenity, access to nature, opportunities for community connection and active transport options are also key elements of fostering community wellbeing.

Social infrastructure and community facilities – from maternal and child health to schools and aged care to cemeteries – should be considered and coordinated in PSPs for new communities within the growth areas as well as within existing activity centres. Higher-order social infrastructure should be regionally planned and, where appropriate, enhance and align with each activity centre's identified role.

The Northern Metro Region has a limited number of regional-scale sporting and recreation facilities, particularly in the Northern Growth Corridor. The long-term need for sporting fields and specialist sporting facilities, accessible via a range of transport options, is not currently coordinated at a regional scale. Given the challenges associated with acquiring land and funding infrastructure, a regional approach to funding (through grants or developer contributions), planning and delivery of these facilities would be valuable.

As a part of this process, state and local government will work together to identify a location for a regional-scale sports precinct to serve established and new communities in the Northern Growth Corridor. Opportunities for new active and passive recreation facilities that could be delivered through developer contributions as a part of new open space, include:

- South of Wallan town centre
- Along Merri Creek, between Campbellfield and Beveridge
- Beveridge North West regional active open space

- Kalkallo retarding basin
- Sunbury, south of Emu Bottom wetlands, part of the Jacksons Creek parklands corridor.

**STRATEGY 65.** Support regional planning that will provide for a range of sporting and active recreation facilities to meet the needs of the growing population.

**STRATEGY 66.** Facilitate a regionally coordinated approach to planning for 'whole of life cycle' social infrastructure in order to ensure adequate provision of social infrastructure across the region.

**STRATEGY 67.** Support the upgrade and expansion of social infrastructure to enable it to diversify uses and be more flexibly and intensively used.

**STRATEGY 68.** Locate social infrastructure near activity centres and to be accessible by walking, cycling or public transport.

**STRATEGY 69.** Support a regional network of community hubs to anchor social infrastructure and services.

**DIRECTION 22.****Deliver health and education services in strategic locations**

Access to health services varies substantially across the Northern Metro Region and is a key issue for the Northern Growth Corridor that has a lack of health and education precincts.

Local councils in the Northern Metro Region have expressed concern about a shortfall of hospital beds in the region. There is a need for equitable access to health and education services across the region and to better support residents with mental illness, children, youth, women at risk, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants from refugee backgrounds, ageing residents and those at risk of chronic diseases, particularly obesity.

Improvements will be made to the delivery of public healthcare in suburban and regional Victoria by expanding the public hospital network through the Community Hospitals Program. In the Northern Metro Region this will involve upgrading and expanding existing community hospitals in Craigieburn and Sunbury and developing new community hospitals in the Whittlesea and Eltham areas. Community hospitals play an integral role in providing a broad range of ambulatory, community health and social services in one place.

In the Northern Metro Region there is an opportunity to connect health and education precincts to develop a regional network of facilities that addresses gaps in service provision and meets the needs of a growing population.

Plan Melbourne identifies state-significant health and/or education precincts to support health and education services that are well served by public transport in a range of locations across Melbourne. There is also a range of regionally-significant health and/or education precincts that complement these services (Table 13). This identification highlights their specialised economic functions and provides opportunities for the agglomeration of ancillary health and education services, retail, commercial and accommodation uses.

At the regional level, there is an opportunity to identify new and existing health and/or education precincts to enhance and broaden the role of health and education facilities to serve as regional focal points for a range of services.

Regionally-significant health precincts are accessible via a range of transport options, have an agglomeration of primary healthcare services, contribute to regional employment and where possible, seek opportunities to integrate with the education sector. Regionally-significant education precincts feature tertiary, TAFE or dual-use campuses accessible via a range of transport options. They also provide an agglomeration of

services to meet students' and staff daily needs, contribute to regional employment and where possible seek opportunities to integrate with the health sector.

Planning should consider the need to upgrade existing facilities or relocate within health and education precincts that are accessible via a range of transport options. As health services are delivered by the private and public sectors, private health facilities should be encouraged to locate near major public health facilities. This will support synergies between different service providers and provide opportunities for connections between tertiary and TAFE facilities and health providers.

The identification and development of health precincts in growth areas will encourage an agglomeration of primary health services in line with population changes. Planning for the development of education precincts in the growth areas should prioritise locations accessible by public transport and provide a range of ancillary services.

**STRATEGY 70.** Strengthen the role of the health and/or education precincts of the Northern Metro Region by co-locating new health and/or education facilities within these precincts and encouraging an agglomeration of ancillary uses such as primary healthcare, retail and accommodation.

**STRATEGY 71.** Expand the network of health and/or education facilities and precincts across the region to meet the needs of the growing population. Ensure that these facilities and precincts are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

**STRATEGY 72.** Support the upgrade of existing health and education infrastructure to allow for more intensive use of those services.

**STRATEGY 73.** Ensure the early provision of health and education facilities and precincts in the Northern Growth Corridor to support the needs of new communities. Locate these facilities or precincts within or near activity centres to maximise the benefits of colocation with ancillary land uses.

**STRATEGY 74.** Plan for more comprehensive and specialised education, health and community facilities in higher-order centres including Broadmeadows, Lockerbie and Mickleham.



**TABLE 13. State-significant and regionally-significant health and/or education precincts**

STATE-SIGNIFICANT HEALTH PRECINCT	REGIONALLY-SIGNIFICANT HEALTH PRECINCT
Austin Hospital (Heidelberg) Northern Hospital (Epping) Craigieburn Health Service	Sunbury Community Hospital Whittlesea Community Hospital (proposed) Eltham Community Hospital (proposed)
STATE-SIGNIFICANT EDUCATION PRECINCT	REGIONALLY-SIGNIFICANT EDUCATION PRECINCT
La Trobe University (Bundoora) University Hill (includes RMIT Bundoora campus)	Melbourne Polytechnic (Epping, Preston and Greensborough) Kangan Batman TAFE (Broadmeadows) RMIT University (Brunswick)
STATE-SIGNIFICANT HEALTH AND EDUCATION PRECINCT	REGIONALLY-SIGNIFICANT HEALTH AND EDUCATION PRECINCT
	Melbourne Polytechnic Heidelberg and Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital



Photo credit: Tim Bell Studio

**DIRECTION 23.****Support a network of neighbourhood activity centres to anchor 20-minute neighbourhoods**

All activity centres in the Northern Metro Region play a role in enabling a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods. While neighbourhood activity centres play a local role, larger metropolitan and major activity centres service a wider catchment and play a wider role in terms of providing more local jobs and services.

A regionally consistent designation of neighbourhood activity centres will enable a network of 20-minute neighbourhoods where gaps in service provision can be identified and planned for, allowing for the prioritisation of investment. This is particularly important where centres straddle regional or council boundaries.

The timely delivery of new infrastructure and services, including a coordinated effort across all tiers of government and partnerships with private providers to deliver regional-scale infrastructure in growth areas, will be critical to achieving 20-minute neighbourhoods. Place-based planning of local development, services, infrastructure and destinations will maximise the benefits of investment in the catchment of new transport infrastructure. These opportunities need to be carefully considered as part of the planning and delivery of the precincts around new and existing train stations on SRL.

A 20-minute neighbourhood pilot program initiated in 2020 identified place-based planning approaches and community partnerships as an important component of achieving the hallmarks of 20-minute neighbourhoods. Work is underway to develop guidance tools for local councils in designating neighbourhood activity centres.

**STRATEGY 75.** Support a consistent designation of neighbourhood activity centres and their role in the network of activity centres.

**STRATEGY 76.** Plan for existing and new activity centres to embed the 20-minute neighbourhood hallmarks, through a place-based, community partnership approach. In particular, this includes planning for new communities within the Northern Growth Corridor.

**STRATEGY 77.** Support the role of neighbourhood activity centres to provide retail, community and allied health services to their respective local catchments.

**STRATEGY 78.** Prioritise neighbourhood planning in activity centres within the catchment of major infrastructure projects.

**ACTIONS –  
Strong communities**

**ACTION 14.** Develop a methodology for a social infrastructure strategy for the Northern Metro Region. This would consider social infrastructure such as libraries, multi-use community and recreation facilities and assess how they can be used more flexibly and intensively. This could be a pilot project suitable for other regions.