

Heidelberg West Community Services Hub

The Heidelberg West community needs a modern, multiple purpose facility within walking distance of established residential neighbourhoods and significant new housing developments. The Hub will offer a range of essential social and community services to nurture and support community well-being.

Council is seeking:

a \$20 to \$23 million funding partnership with the Victorian and Australian Governments

Why is a hub needed?

Heidelberg West is a dynamic and complex area with strong community pride and a range of needs. The area carries high rates of disadvantage and vulnerability with a Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) score of 955, ranking in the top 15% of disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria. This is a diverse community in need of integrated and connected community services.

Financial wellbeing



9.8% of residents aged 15-64 receive a government allowance (compared to 5.2% in Metropolitan Melbourne)



Lower than average household income - 30% earn less than \$800 per week



6.1% unemployment rate (versus 5.3% in Metropolitan Melbourne)

Diverse needs



More than one third of local residents (6.6%) are born overseas



Higher proportion of residents (34%) with at least one long-term chronic health condition (compared to 29.5% in Metropolitan Melbourne)



2022-24 crime statistics show violent crime 157.4% higher than the Victorian average and 160% higher than the national average

Complex growth



Highest proportion of social housing in Melbourne at 25.7%



High shop vacancy-rate in Bell Street Mall, dilapidated buildings, security concerns



Opportunity for renewal, kick-start new investment in the area

Complex local needs are increasing

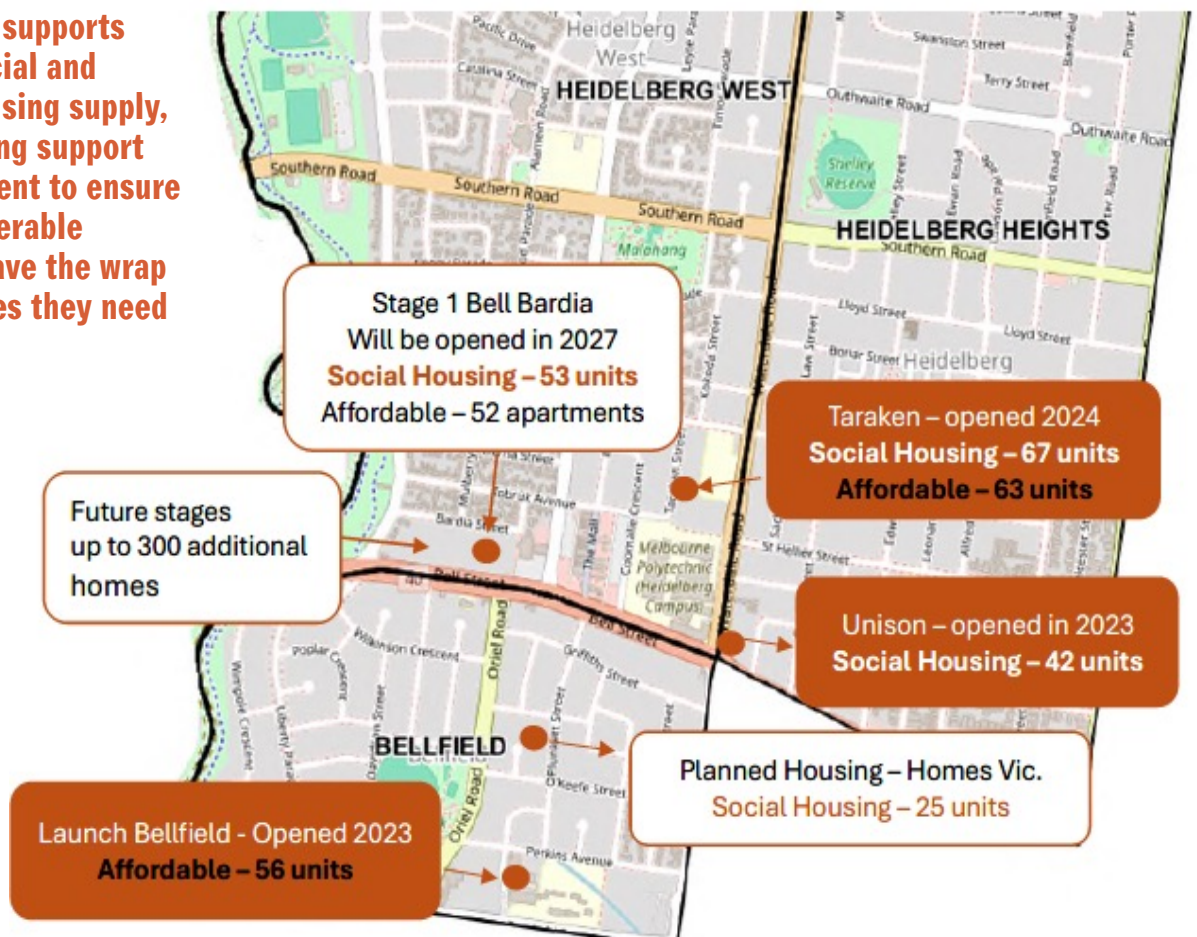
- Rising levels of social and affordable housing in Heidelberg West will further strain existing services already under pressure and operating from inadequate premises.
- Cost of living pressures are impacting Heidelberg West greatly. Since 2020 there has been a 243% increase in demand for food and financial relief services delivered by local food relief provider, BANSIC.
- Local service demand has increased significantly since residents moved into Unison Housing in 2023 and Tarakan Housing in 2024, particularly for wrap-around services for domestic violence, emergency food relief, and financial counselling.
- Increase in requests for social connection programs and social housing support. Residents who have moved into the area have limited social connections.
- Banyule Council's Service Navigation team reported that in 2025 the two highest calls for assistance were those seeking emergency and material aid support and those seeking assistance with disability support.
- NDIS Local Area Coordinators are not located close to Heidelberg West, leading to above average requests for disability support from Council's Service Navigation team.

- Visits to BANSIC requesting food and other emergency relief have increased 160% from an average of 275 people per month in 2020 to 660 people a month in 2024 and 2025. Highest demand for emergency relief was for grocery vouchers (1,120 people), medication assistance (720 people) and material aid (420 people).
- Olympic Neighbourhood House is unable to meet the demand for English language classes due to a lack of programmable rooms.

Significant social housing growth is underway, more in the pipeline

- New social and affordable housing developments coming into the area will generate significant demand for social infrastructure, noting social housing is exempt from the developer contributions levy.
- Population in Heidelberg West/Bellfield will grow by 34% between 2025 and 2046
- Since 2023, 230 new community housing dwellings delivered in the area.
- Stage one of Homes Victoria's Bell Bardia estate is underway to deliver 104 new homes by 2027, with potential for another 300 homes in subsequent stages.

While Council supports increasing social and affordable housing supply, we need funding support from Government to ensure incoming vulnerable populations have the wrap around services they need to thrive.



Hub Concept

- A double-storey community facility in the heart of Heidelberg West, providing approximately 2,000 square metres of floorspace
- Community programs and access to key social services
- Core group of anchor tenants identified from existing local services currently operating out of sub-standard accommodation
- Space and capacity for other service providers to take tenancies or provide occasional / visiting services through a flexible configuration of consulting suites.

Proposed location: 155-157 Oriel Road, Heidelberg West

This site is currently home to BANSIC's food relief service, and a run-down, water-damaged building recently vacated by Olympic Neighbourhood House.

- Land-owner:** Homes Victoria
- Zoned:** Residential Growth
- Site:** 2260 sqm (build area: 2184 sqm)
- Build cost:** \$14,909,388
- Allowances:** \$7,687,032
- Overall cost:** \$22,596,421 + land

Site characteristics

- Flexible design with capacity for future expansion
- Convenient location – close to bus stops, retail, housing
- Will not limit realisation of the Bell Street Mall Masterplan
- Only large enough for the Hub if both properties are available
- Option for a land swap, for State to gain strategic property titles to the north-west
- Potential direct link to Bardia housing development.

Benefits of co-location

- Stronger dialogue, relationships and networks between service providers
- Economies through shared utilities, reception, security, staff training
- Convenience, ease of access, users more likely to use ancillary services in the building if it is all under one roof
- Better future service planning through aggregated (de-identified) user data
- Clients avoid having to re-tell their stories numerous times to multiple providers
- Greater opportunities for referrals between services, providing users with more holistic, joined-up support, opportunity to improve service system cohesion
- Better connections for Council's Service Navigation team to local services providers.



Ground Floor



First Floor

Proposed governance and operations

To ensure the Hub is sustainably governed, a Partnership model is recommended as the ideal structure. Under this model, Council will take a leadership role in:

- fostering collaboration between partner organisations
- administration of tenancies and building management
- facilitating collective leadership, and overarching strategy.

Under this proposal, the Hub will require:

- a dedicated facility manager and reception staff to manage clients and tenancies.

Financial viability

- Council has commissioned a preliminary Business Case to plan for this project.
- A net position of around \$1.5 million value per annum can be achieved, based on generating just under \$1 million per annum of non-cash community benefit.

The payback period for return on investment is about 16 years

Beyond the initial capital investment, a modest operating surplus can be achieved after about 4 years.

For every \$1 invested, \$1.06 to \$1.10 of community value can be generated.

Strategic benefits

Wrap-round services

The hub presents an opportunity to demonstrate best practice implementation of current housing reform by taking a holistic, place-based approach to supporting local needs.

The hub offers a template for how to deliver new social housing developments in tandem with essential wrap-around services.

Prevention

As well as meeting current needs, this project has enormous potential to deliver preventative impact. By building local health and well-being the hub will help to reduce dependence on government payments and support programs such as employment services.

The hub will include migrant services offering youth support programs that are designed to enhance educational and employment engagement among young people.

These initiatives have the potential to positively influence individual life trajectories, contributing to improved long-term well-being, increased economic participation, and disruption of pathways into crime.

Flexible government services

With a range of direct government services recently exiting the Heidelberg West area the hub model offers flexible, secure, purpose-built consulting suites to accommodate Government agency pop-ups, taking a 'visiting services' approaches.

For more information

Felicity Hamerston, Advocacy Lead

Banyule City Council

 felicity.hamerston@banyule.vic.gov.au

 (03) 9490 4222

 banyule.vic.gov.au/About-us/Advocacy-priorities