Brimbank City Council

DRAFT

Arts and Culture Strategy

March 2024

Draft Brimbank City Council Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 - 2028

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Acknowledgement

Brimbank City Council acknowledges that the land the municipality now occupies has a human history that began with Aboriginal Traditional Custodians, the Kulin Nation. Brimbank City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate — the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

'Our city will be inclusive, resilient, innovative and vibrant and our people will share equally in the City's prosperity and opportunity.'

- Together We are Brimbank[1]

Brimbank City Council is committed to supporting a culturally enriched life for the community as a vital aspect of achieving our vision for the City. Cultural and creative activities allow us to celebrate, reflect, innovate, learn, challenge and explore who we are and how we live. These endeavours are also instrumental in fostering social cohesion, boosting the local economy, and instilling a sense of pride in our community.

Brimbank stands out as one of the most diverse and culturally rich communities in Australia, and we passionately embrace this distinction. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been the traditional owners and custodians of land on which the municipality of Brimbank is located for more than 60,000 years. These are the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin nation. Across the municipality there are significant places where Aboriginal people have lived and left traces of their culture both in physical forms and through intangible traditions and practices.

Through successive rounds of migration, Brimbank has developed a rich tapestry of cultures that shapes its art and cultural expression. Across our diverse communities we have unique ways for celebrating cultural identity. These practices contribute to an individual and collective sense of identity and citizenship.

The Brimbank Arts and Culture Strategy distinguishes arts from culture, recognising art as a tangible expression that can reflect and shape culture.

The Strategy outlines how Council will support cultural development and is the outcome of extensive discussion, feedback, and research about arts and culture in Brimbank and more broadly across Melbourne and Australia.

1.2 Vision

Our vision is for a vibrant, inclusive and thriving arts and culture ecosystem that enriches the lives of community members and contributes to the identity and wellbeing of Brimbank.

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[1] https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/plans-policies-and-strategies/plans/council-plan

1.3 Purpose

Through the pursuit of this vision, our Arts and Culture actions aim to cultivate a rich and diverse cultural landscape that fosters creativity, inspires imagination and brings people together, making our community an even more vibrant and fulfilling place to live, work and visit.

This aim of the strategy is to grow and support opportunities for the community over the next four years through:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections
- Participation and collaboration
- Leadership and partnership
- Creative Industries
- Places and Spaces

1.4 Approach and Process

The strategy considers trends and broader social influences impacting the cultural landscape of the Brimbank region. Research and analysis highlight objectives, priorities and opportunities to achieve positive outcomes for local artists, the creative industries and the Brimbank community.

The strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with community, arts sector representatives and Brimbank City Council teams.

1.5 Brimbank's role

Local governments play an important role in supporting social cohesion and growth within their municipalities. To successfully deliver this strategy, Brimbank will be a leader and champion of arts and culture. We see ourselves as:

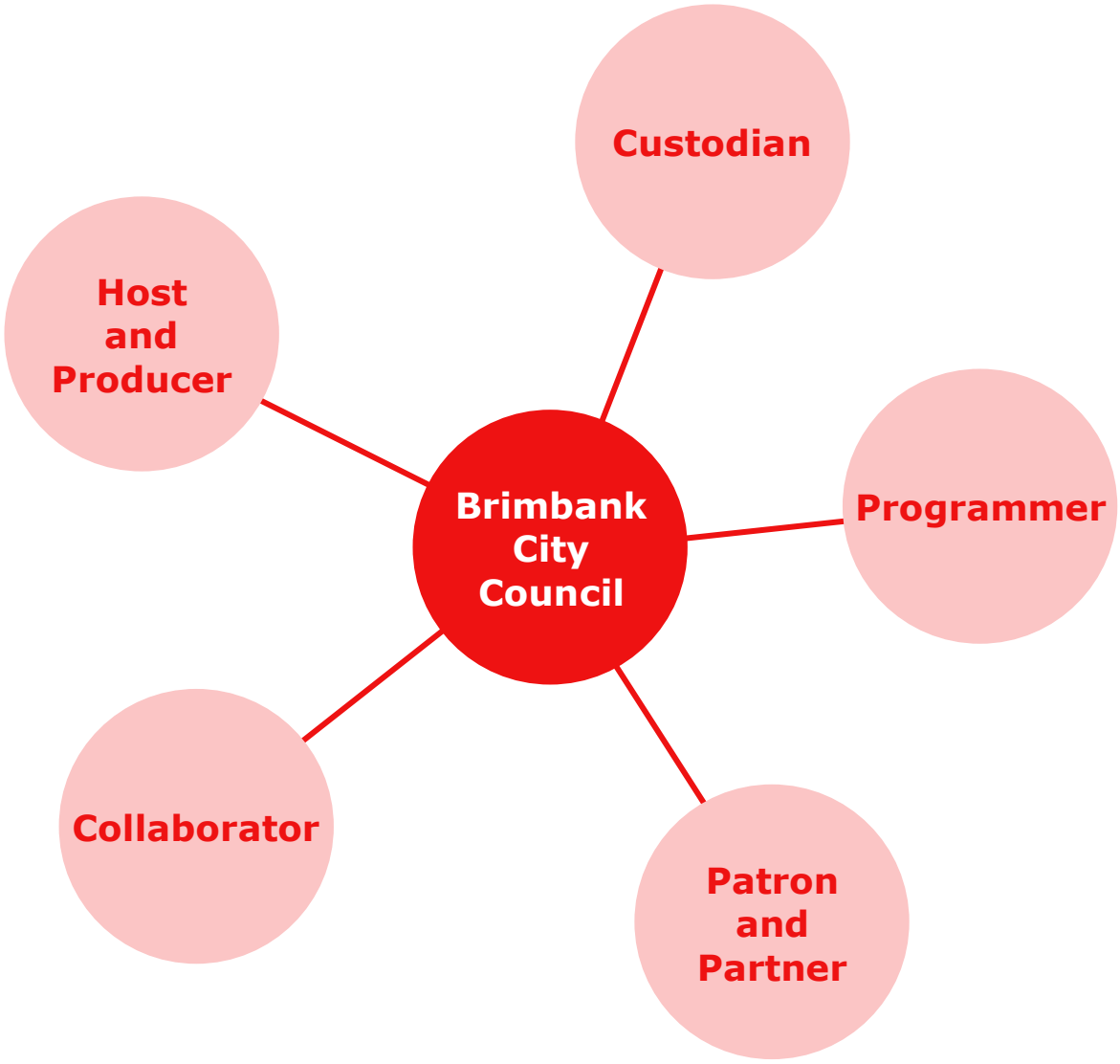
Host and producer: Providing places and opportunities for artistic, cultural and creative activity and enterprise to occur and to prosper. Producing and commissioning arts and cultural programs.

Custodian: Conserving, enhancing and developing our cultural and heritage assets and infrastructure.

Collaborator: Creating networks, creative clusters and brokering partnerships. Building a strong and creative community through arts education, research, policy and sector development.

Patron and Partner: Sharing, supporting and working with others to promote community participation in arts and culture and achieving great outcomes.

Programmer: Designing and hosting diverse cultural programs that bring the community together, celebrating different arts forms and cultures, and reflecting our community's creativity and diversity.



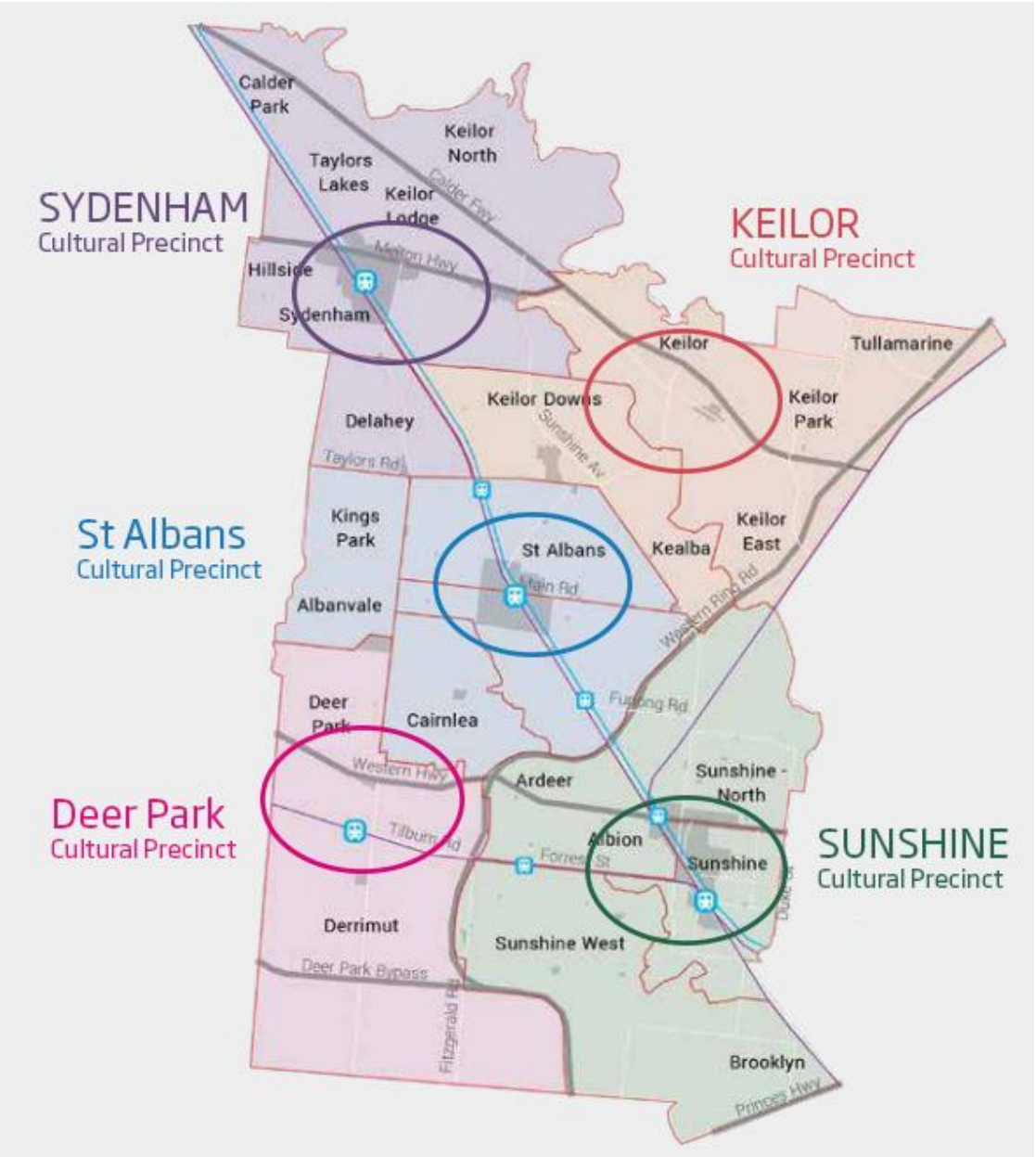
2.0 Demographic and Strategic Context

2.1 Location and Cultural Precincts

Brimbank is a municipality located centrally to the west of Melbourne. It is between 11 and 23 kilometres north and west of the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD) and is positioned between the CBD and fast-growing residential areas in the west (Melton and Wyndham municipalities). Brimbank forms part of the western metropolitan region, along with the municipalities of Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham.

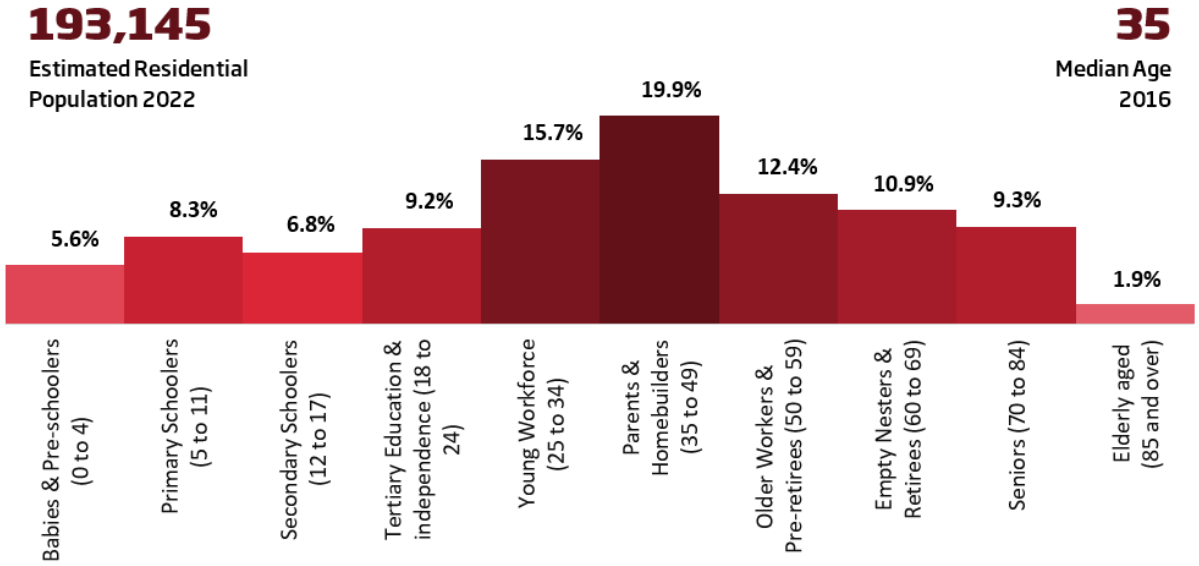
The municipality of Brimbank includes 25 suburbs across five local districts. These five districts provide a focus for Arts and Cultural activity as it is delivered into the Sydenham Cultural Precinct, Keilor Cultural Precinct, St Albans Cultural Precinct, Deer Park Cultural Precinct and the Sunshine Cultural Precinct.

Brimbank Municipality and Cultural Precincts



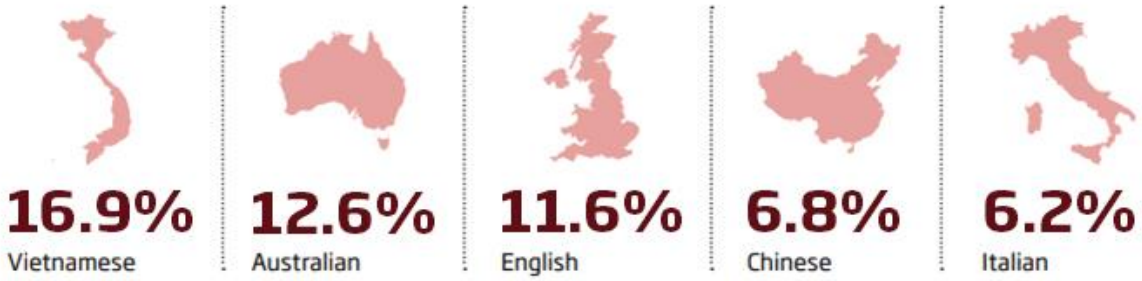
2.2 Population Snapshot

Population and Demographics at a glance



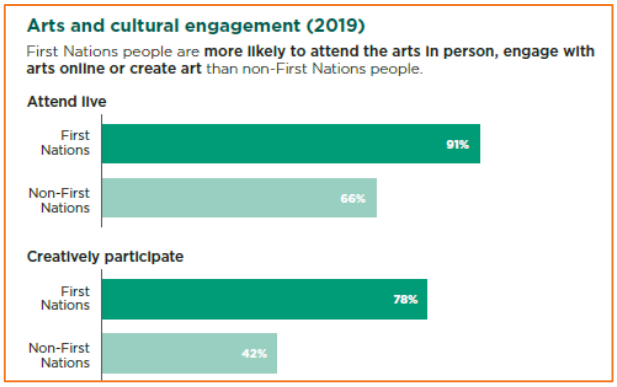
Brimbank is a diverse and vibrant community with a population exceeding 193,000 residents. The municipality has recorded consistent moderate population growth over the past decade but experienced a decline in 2020 - 2022 due to COVID-19 impacts on migration.

Top Ancestries 2022



The diversity of the community includes people from at least 130 different nationalities – 48.2% of people in Brimbank were born overseas compared with 35.7% in Greater Melbourne. More than 57% of residents speak a language other than English at home. The most commonly spoken language other than English is Vietnamese and people with Vietnamese ancestry make up almost 17% of the population.

Brimbank's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community dramatically increased from 282 residents in 2016 to 847 in 2021. The Creative Australia report, *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector*, notes that "First Nations people are more likely to attend the arts in person, engage with arts online or create art than non-First Nations people". This provides Brimbank with an opportunity for meaningful targeted engagement.



Number of Residents Needing Assistance with Core [day-to-day] Activities

7.7% of residents in Brimbank reported needing assistance with core activities

compared with **5.5%** in Greater Melbourne

	Number	% of Total Population	Change 2016 - 2021 (persons)
Females	8,158	4.2%	▲ 1,322
Males	6,820	3.5%	▲ 1,180
Total	14,975	7.7%	▲ 2,502

Another notable trend is the increase in people with a disability in Brimbank. In 2018 ABS statistics noted 17.7% of all Australians had a disability. In Brimbank, the 2021 Census disability data reported 14,975 people, or 7.7 percent of the population, needed help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. This was 2.2 per cent higher than Greater Melbourne. Given these increases and the role that arts and culture can play in wellbeing there is a significant opportunity for engagement.

Other population and demographic considerations:

- The median age of residents is 35 years, with a high proportion of households with children
- There is higher than average unemployment and lower than average educational qualification when compared to Greater Melbourne

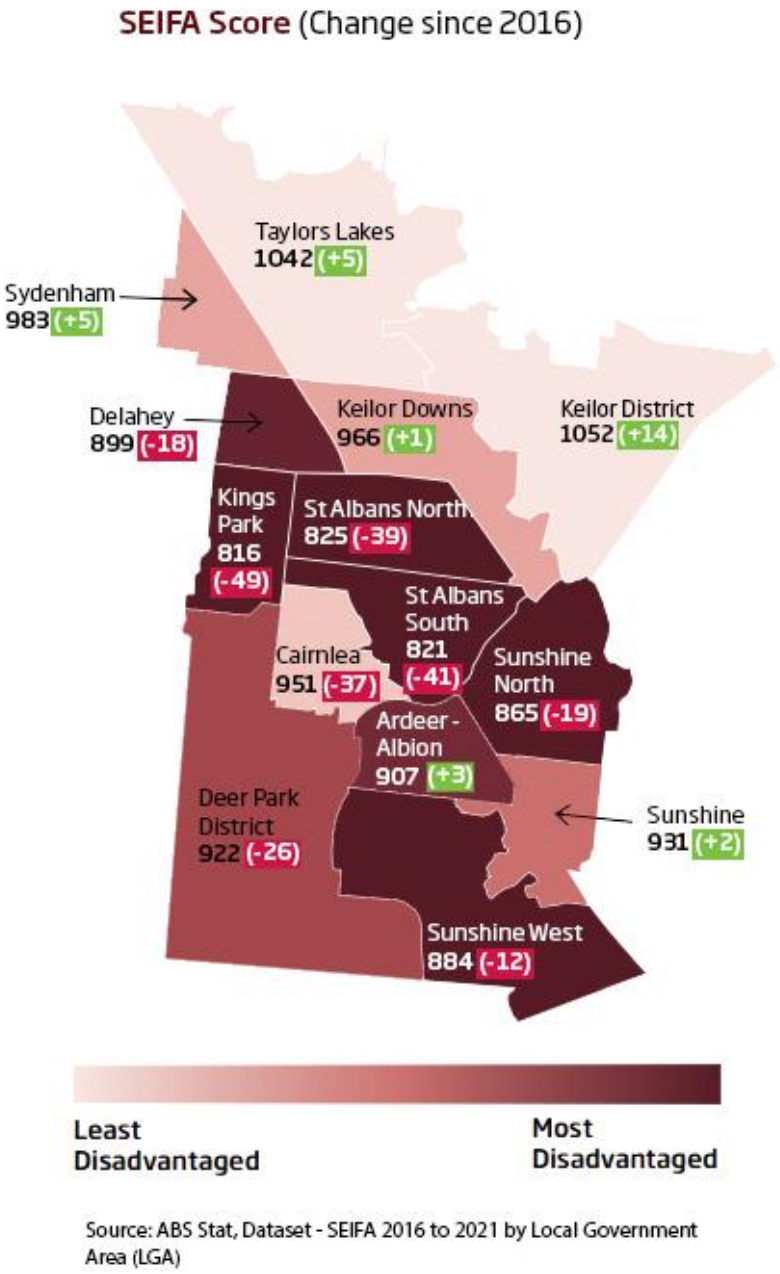
2.3 Socio-Economic Profile

The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) is an index that measures the level of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in a particular area. It takes into account indicators such as income, education attainment, employment participation and job qualifications and skills. A higher score on the SEIFA index indicates a lower level of disadvantage or a higher level of advantage. The national average index score is set at 1,000 with a score below 1,000 indicating a higher level of disadvantage compared to the national average.

When considering Brimbank, the Australian Bureau of Statistics from 2021 indicate that:

- Brimbank is ranked as the 3rd most disadvantaged Local Government Area out of 80 in Victoria and the 2nd most disadvantaged in metropolitan Melbourne.
- The northern suburbs of Brimbank, such as Keilor District (1052) and Taylors Lakes (1042), show relatively higher levels of advantage.
- From 2016, there has been a small narrowing of the disadvantage gap in areas like Sunshine, Ardeer, Albion, and Sydenham. However, in other areas such as St

Albans, Cairnlea, Deer Park and Kings Park, the disadvantage gap has significantly widened by comparison.



Source: ABS Stat, Dataset - SEIFA 2016 to 2021 by Local Government Area (LGA)

2.4 Growth Projections

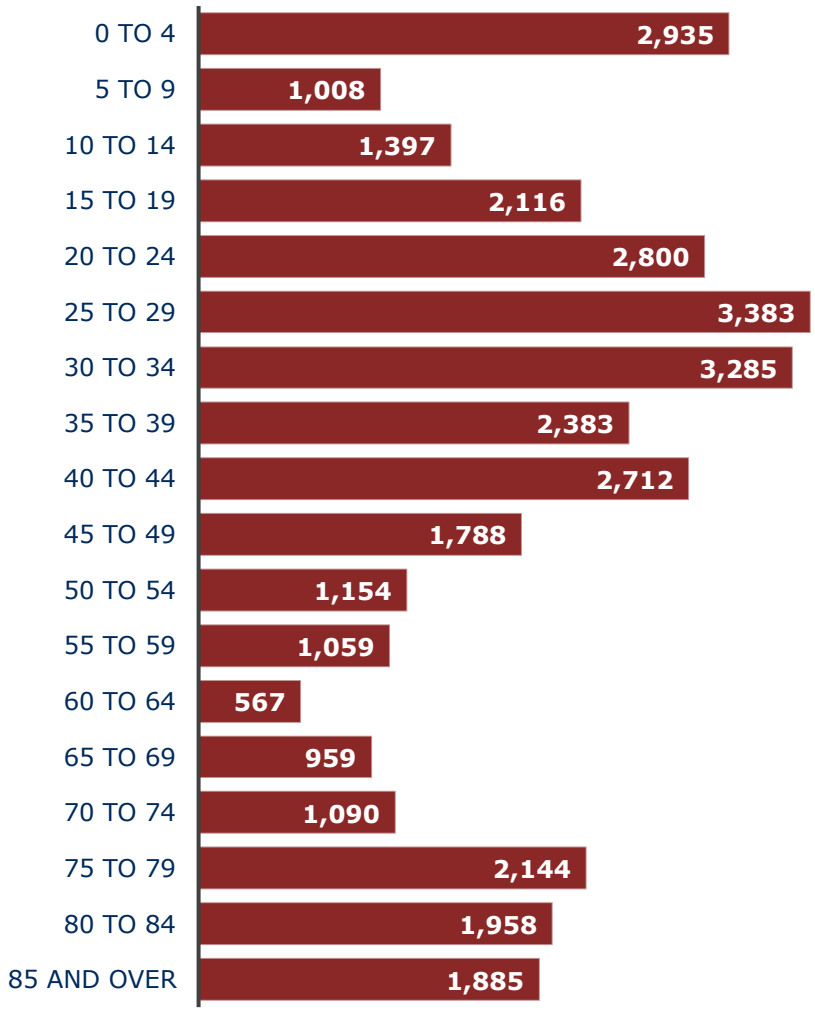
By 2041, Brimbank's population is expected to reach about 231,332, indicating a growth of 34,620 residents, equivalent to an average annual increase of 1,731 residents since 2021. Most of this population growth is projected to take place in the southern region of the municipality, encompassing areas such as Sunshine, Sunshine West, Sunshine North, Albion and Ardeer.

Key observations for the age profile growth:

- Significant growth is anticipated in the senior and elderly cohorts, specifically those aged over 75 years.

- There is expected to be a strong increase in the tertiary and independence-aged cohort (20-24 years), young workforce (25 to 34 years) and parents and home-builders cohort (35-44 years).
- Substantially lower growth is projected for pre-retiree and retiree cohorts (55-69 years).

Age Structure Forecast by Cohort, Brimbank 2021 to 2041



Source: Population and household forecast, 2021-2041, prepared by.id (informed decisions), July 2023.

2.5 The Arts and Cultural Landscape in Brimbank

In Brimbank, we are fortunate to have a broad range of artistic and cultural offerings. Our community enjoys vibrant music, visual art, theatre and performances influenced by and expressing cultures from around the world as well as our unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. These creative offerings are not only produced by Council but also more broadly by the community and creative industries sector.

The Creative Brimbank Market Research Report 2022 noted that many people in Brimbank and surrounding areas were not choosing between going to a headline event in the CBD over a local show or exhibition. Rather, cultural activities in Brimbank are

considered as different kinds of localised and convenient offerings. A noteworthy consideration of the report was that pricing affordability and value may be a determining factor in decision making relating to event attendance.

The report also stated that 93% of respondents attended arts and cultural events and, of these, the most common kinds of events they attended were theatre, festivals, visual arts, film and music. Many of these can be found on the calendar of events in Brimbank.

2.5.1 Brimbank's Creative Industries

Council values local artists, cultures, resources, knowledge, processes and skills. Brimbank is home to skilled and organised artists and community leaders who are well connected to local networks and resources and can play key roles in community and cultural development. We hold the community in positive regard, and its strengths become the foundation of our work together. Brimbank supports a thriving creative ecology comprising creative practitioners, collectives and micro-to-small creative organisations/businesses. They contribute to the liveability of the municipality in many ways. As well as the substantial social benefits they bring, they contribute to the local economy and provide employment in the area. A selection of creative industries that are working in the municipality include:

- The Fundere Foundry and Studio, specialising in art bronze casting and sculpture fabrication, serving as a creative hub for artists, art producers and arts business including Sculpture Co and the Sunshine Print Artspace
- Western Edge Youth Arts
- L2R (Dance)
- 100 Story Building
- Cinespace (Film)
- Hyphenated Projects
- Paul Borg Art School
- Arts Access Victoria
- Boilover Inclusive Ensemble
- Women's Circus
- Wit Incorporated
- Snuff Puppets
- The Crate Theatre, located at Catholic Regional College Sydenham, which offers a professionally managed studio/ black box space available for hire
- Dance schools that offer classes facilitated by professional dance teachers
- Performing arts schools
- Festival partners that support Council to present work including Midsumma, Melbourne Fringe Festival, Melbourne International Jazz Festival
- A range of private entities with facilities suitable for a variety of various creative activities.

2.5.2 Current Brimbank City Council Arts and Culture services

Brimbank City Council has a proud history of actively supporting arts and culture activities with and for our community.

A selection of these activities includes:

- Targeted programming such as youth-led events and activities, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programming delivered in consultation with

the Brimbank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee (BATSICC)
- Commissions and art collections: public art, mural commissions and managing the Indoor Art Collection
- Studios program: 13 studio art spaces across 4 locations
- Exhibition and projection spaces for the community to share and enjoy art including at The Bowery Gallery, Brimbank Gallery, Sunshine Art Space Gallery and the Sunshine and Brimbank Projection Galleries
- Bowery Theatre: a diverse bi-annual season of theatre, music, dance and children's programming, including self-produced work that reflects the Brimbank community and performances by local artists
- Bowery Theatre Residency Program: supporting the development of diverse Australian voices and championing these artists and their practices
- Art and Culture courses held at neighbourhood houses and community centres to empower residents with artistic skills and knowledge
- Financial and skills training and support for community-based festivals and events, helping them to succeed and our community to come together to share their cultures.

These initiatives reflect the Council's efforts to nurture arts and culture within Brimbank and empower community members to engage in and benefit from artistic endeavours and cultural exchange.

2.6 Strategic Context

Local governments across Australia and globally acknowledge the significance and value of arts and culture in maintaining a connected and healthy society as well as supporting individual well-being. As a result, many municipalities have developed strategies and policies over the past decade to guide their investment in creative activities. An efficient and well-designed strategy serves as an indispensable tool in ensuring the sustainable provision of services to the local community. The Brimbank Arts and Culture Strategy 2024-2028 aligns with and supports various local, state, and national plans, thereby reinforcing its importance and enhancing its impact.

2.6.1 National

The Australian Federal Parliament released its National Cultural Policy in 2023, entitled *Revive*. The Policy aims to empower artists and arts organisations to thrive and grow – unlocking new opportunities, reaching new audiences and telling stories in compelling new ways. The development of the Brimbank Arts and Culture Strategy considered the 5 pillars of the National Policy, which are:

1. First Nations first
2. A place for every story
3. Centrality of the artist
4. Strong cultural infrastructure
5. Engaging the audience.

2.6.2 State

The State Government's strategy relating to the creative industries is *Creative State 2025,* which presents a vision to grow jobs and skills and secure Victoria's reputation as

a leading cultural destination and creative leader. The *Creative State 2025* document is built around 5 strategic priorities which are:

1. More and better job opportunities and pathways
2. Innovative creative products and experiences
3. Industry stability and growth
4. Equitable access to the creative industries
5. New audience and markets.

These priorities were all taken into consideration in the development of the Brimbank Arts and Culture Strategy.

2.6.3 Local

The *Together We are Brimbank* plan, which includes the Community Vision 2040, Council Plan 2021 – 2025 and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, has identified a series of Strategic Directions that focus and guide Council activities towards its Vision for Brimbank. The four Strategic Directions are:

1. **People and Community**: A welcoming, safe and supported community – an inclusive place for all
2. **Places and Spaces**: Liveable and connected neighbourhoods that support healthy and sustainable futures – a green place for all
3. **Opportunity and Prosperity**: A future-focused city where all have opportunities to learn and earn – a prosperous place for all
4. **Leadership and Governance**: A high-performing organisation that enacts the vision and decisions of Council through the delivery of quality and innovative services – a fairer place for all.

While the Arts and Culture Strategy aligns with aspects of all four directions, the Strategic Direction which Arts and Culture activity primarily contribute to is *People and Community.* Within this Strategic Direction are two Strategic Objectives: Wellbeing and Belonging and Pride and Participation. The latter of these objectives includes a focus on strategies to:

- Enable social, cultural and artistic expression
- Continue our commitment to respecting and recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture
- Deliver a range of initiatives that celebrate diversity and intercultural sharing
- Encourage vibrant community events and activities.

The Arts and Culture Strategy delivers against these objectives of the *Together We are Brimbank Plan* and supports Council's Vision for the municipality.

3.0 Strategic Framework

3.1 Priorities of the Strategy

The Brimbank Arts and Culture Strategy embraces a multifaceted approach aimed at enabling cultural and artistic expression while fostering inclusivity and celebrating cultural diversity. This includes a broad community-wide response and a more targeted approach to support the development of diverse Australian voices. Importantly, this ensures a considered approach to engagement and creates opportunities for marginalised voices to be heard and for their cultural contributions to be acknowledged. This includes ensuring opportunities that are inclusive of or focus on our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, rainbow communities, seniors and young people and people with a disability.

The delivery of this work is supported through collaboration and partnership with external organisations, most Council departments and a structure of enablers within the Arts and Culture Unit. These enablers include a Community and Cultural Development team, Theatre and Performing Arts team, Festivals and Events Team, Visual and Public Art team and Venue Operations team.

3.1.1 Community Cultural Development Team

The Community Cultural Development (CCD) team facilitates arts and cultural activities, adopting a community development approach that places the Brimbank community first. It works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and values their knowledge and guidance. The team focuses on engaging communities in cultural activities and artistic endeavours to address social issues, foster community engagement and promote social change. This approach typically involves collaboration between artists, cultural practitioners, community members and other stakeholders to co-create and co-produce cultural experiences. The emphasis is on empowering communities to express their identities, share their stories and address local concerns through artistic and cultural activities. The Community Cultural Development team aims to empower the Brimbank community by leveraging the richness of culture and the arts for social benefit. Through diverse activities, workshops, and events, it strives to strengthen social connections and cohesion within Brimbank.

3.1.2 Bowery Theatre and Performing Arts

The Bowery Theatre is a vibrant space in Melbourne’s west for artists, audiences and communities to explore and experience bold ideas, diverse perspectives and performances with a rich cultural lens. The Bowery respectfully acknowledges the place where we live, work and play, Wurundjeri and Bunurong country, and commits to sharing the stories and creatives practices of First Nations Australians on its stage. The theatre is a producer, presenter and venue for hire. It hosts theatre, dance, music, literature and experimental performances across multiple forms that entertain, educate, and inspire audiences. Embracing a participatory practice, the Theatre and Performing Arts team supports local artists and champions diverse Australian voices by working purposefully and collaboratively through residencies, arts partnerships and artist development programs.

3.1.3 Visual and Public Art

The Visual Art program at Brimbank City Council serves as a vibrant cornerstone for community enrichment and development. Through exhibitions, public art, murals, studios, workshops, professional development opportunities and accessible artist-run initiatives, the program fosters a sense of belonging, civic pride and cultural identity within the community. By strategically placing art in public spaces and community facilities, the program visually enhances these areas and sparks dialogue and reflection among residents and visitors. The emphasis on supporting local artists and those connected to the region celebrates local creatives and provides a platform for artists to showcase their work, nurturing a thriving artistic ecosystem that contributes to the area's cultural fabric. The program actively engages diverse demographics and art forms, promoting inclusivity, thus serving as a catalyst for social cohesion and creative empowerment within Brimbank.

3.1.4 Community Festivals and Events

Brimbank City Council's support for community-led festivals and events is guided by the *Festivals & Events Policy and Strategy 2022 - 2025*. Council works with local communities to bring forth celebrations that reflect the diversity and richness of cultures in the municipality through a multi-faceted array of initiatives and assistance, including funding support via the Community Grants Program, capacity building and skills development as well as offering access to facilities, venues, promotion and staff. Through this support, Council amplifies the voices of its residents, ensuring these events connect, enliven and resonate with our diverse community.

3.2 Pillars & Objectives

Pillars

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections

We acknowledge that arts and culture in Brimbank are based on a foundation of human creativity in Australia that is more than 65,000 years old. Brimbank City Council is located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples. As custodians of the oldest living culture on the planet, Traditional Owners share a profound and enduring connection with the land, its waterways and people. This cultural heritage is expressed through a vibrant and resilient artistic legacy and modern cultural identity. Brimbank supports and celebrates the sharing of the art and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We acknowledge that self-determination is integral, as it empowers people to tell their own stories.

In relation to this pillar Council will:

- **Respect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories**
- **Support self-determination of cultural expression**
- **Support the growth of knowledge about Aboriginal cultural and heritage items in Brimbank**

2. Participation

Arts and culture provide a platform for social connection and understanding that engages all members of our community and can transcend barriers to participation. To foster inclusivity, we will actively build relationships based on trust and cooperation, community engagement and accessibility. As one of the most culturally diverse municipalities in Victoria, Brimbank will support its communities to contribute to and participate in the arts to promote and celebrate their diversity and resilience.

In relation to this pillar Council will:

- **Support and promote opportunities for everyone who lives and/or works in Brimbank to participate in arts and culture**
- **Celebrate the diversity of Brimbank**
- **Create pathways that provide equitable access to a range of arts and culture opportunities within Brimbank**

3. Partnerships, Collaboration and Contributions

Partnerships play a vital role in extending and deepening creative program delivery and impact within Council and across the arts sector. Council plays a pivotal role in empowering leaders, partners and collaborators, while supporting the development of diverse Australian voices and championing artists and their creative practice. We will develop initiatives to support cultural leaders in Brimbank that provide platforms for creation, presentation and celebration while building industry networks. We will advocate for the importance of arts, culture and creativity for the whole community.

In relation to this pillar Council will:

- **Facilitate and empower key partnerships and collaborations**
- **Advocate for the inclusion of arts, artworks, artists and creative thinking across Council**
- **Support the development of emerging cultural leaders in Brimbank**
- **Explore mechanisms and opportunities for government, private and philanthropic contributions to art and culture in Brimbank.**

4. Creative Industries

Arts and culture in Brimbank are as vibrant and sustainable as the communities, organisations and artists that contribute to them. Council listens to the needs of the creative sector and community. It provides support, employment and funding to build capacity and promote local creative industries and foster growth, innovation and connections for local artists and arts organisations. Artists are provided with opportunities to learn through collaboration, making and presenting. Learning and education initiatives will support skills development and a more inclusive, thriving cultural ecosystem.

In relation to this pillar Council will:

- **Encourage and share information about creative practitioners, industries and activities in Brimbank**
- **Connect artists and creative businesses to strengthen partnerships, viability and growth**
- **Develop learning initiatives that support career development**

5. Places and Spaces

Access to arts and cultural spaces and places is essential for ensuring sustainable, vibrant and thriving communities. They bring people together to immerse themselves in arts, culture and creativity. Outdoor creative interactions that encompass public art, festivals and events enhance the local cultural landscape and infuse art into everyday life. Ultimately, safe, accessible places and spaces are essential for cultural exchange, promoting a sense of belonging, connection to community, and celebrating difference as well as our shared identity.

In relation to this pillar Council will:

- **Provide and share information about locations where the community can engage with arts and cultural activities and experiences**
- **Provide spaces where artists can create and share their creativity and culture**
- **Investigate new sites and platforms for festivals, events and public art**

4.0 Implementation and evaluation

To progress work against each of the pillars and their objectives, a plan will be developed for every year of the strategy's duration. The plan will be based on evaluation of previous activities along with ongoing engagement with the creative sector and practitioners, Council departments and a broad range of other stakeholders.

A range of quantitative and qualitative measures will be used to evaluate the success of each activity, including the diversity of individuals and communities they reach and the impact they have on those involved as well as the Brimbank community overall.

Brimbank City Council

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