



Hands Up Mallee

Data Indicators

Title	Hands Up Mallee Data Indicators		
Description	This report provides a set of population-level indicators developed to measure long-term progress in community wellbeing.		
Date	25 June 2025		
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1.0	Backbone - Noted	Nil	03/07/2025
1.0	Yarning Group - Noted	Nil	30/06/2025
1.0	Collaborative Governance Group - Endorsed	Text added: The indicators presented in this document retain the wording from their original data sources.	22/07/2025

Acknowledgement to Country

Hands Up Mallee acknowledges all Traditional Custodians of Country where we work, live and connect with the community.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging and the ancient connection they hold with their Country. We value their knowledge, wisdom and legacies that continue to guide our work towards positive social change.

We acknowledge there are also other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live, work in and contribute to the cultural heritage of the Mildura region.

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About Hands Up Mallee

Hands Up Mallee (HUM) is a collective impact initiative based in the Mildura Local Government Area on Latji Latji Country, near Barkindji Country in north-west Victoria. Since 2015, we have brought together community members, services and government to find new ways of working that improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The initiative takes a place-based approach to solutions for local issues centring on community voice and combining this with local data and current research to develop collective action for better outcomes for children, young people and their families. Hands Up Mallee is committed to continuous learning and improvement concerning its work to achieve positive social outcomes for the Mildura community.

Contributor Acknowledgement

Hands Up Mallee recognises the generosity of all partners and community members who share their time, words, insights, and support to work collaboratively and create change. Their contribution is essential to our work. The stories and information shared, and outcomes achieved in our journey together to create a connected community where families matter and children thrive, belong to them and the Northern Mallee.

Hands Up Mallee

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Executive Summary

This report provides a set of population-level indicators developed to measure long-term progress in community wellbeing. These indicators align with the ARACY Nest Framework's six domains of wellbeing and are grounded in community priorities, supported by local data and national research.

The purpose of these indicators is to inform decision-making, identify needs and opportunities, and support ongoing evaluation and planning across services, government, and community partners and may also support emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance structures.

Our Approach

No single policy, government department, organisation or program can solve the complex issues facing communities in the Mildura LGA. Lasting change relies on ongoing community involvement. Recognising this, the Australian government established the *Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP)* initiative, a place-based, community-led approach funded by federal, state and territory governments to help break the cycle of disadvantage in ten priority communities across the country.

As the only Victorian site in the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiative, Hands Up Mallee aims to create better outcomes for children, young people and families through co-designed, evidence informed solutions to local challenges – in genuine partnership with the community.

By putting community voice at the centre of decision-making, Hands Up Mallee is working to build thriving, connected and resilient communities for today and for generations to come.

How to use this report

This report is designed to support long-term planning, evaluation, and decision-making across community, service, and government partners. It brings together community voice, research, and data to guide action and track progress over time.

Combining local knowledge and data takes strong relationships, trust, and long-term commitment. We measure impact not just with traditional metrics, but by broader shifts in relationships, mindsets and ways of working for services, government, and community.

The indicators in this report:

- Reflect community priorities, developed through local workshops and consultation
- Align with the ARACY Nest Framework to cover aspects of child, youth and family wellbeing
- Focus on population-level data that can be tracked over 10–20 years

What are Data Indicators?

The data indicators give us a shared starting point to monitor progress and plan. Changes in population-level data are both complex and gradual. Various factors, such as social, economic, and environmental influences, contribute to shifts in this data, and no single entity or project can claim full attribution to the positive or negative changes.

This highlights the challenge when measuring effectiveness against population-level measures. It's another reason Hands Up Mallee uses qualitative data and stories alongside quantitative data, to show the incremental changes along the way, to tell the stories of the situation or the impact made. This is just as important to measure effectiveness and impact at a local level.

Hands Up Mallee's numerous evaluation reports show the localised impact made in shorter timeframes. The data indicators developed in this document focus on quantitative data with the purpose of being able to:

- Measure the population-level change in this data over long periods of time, i.e. (10, 20 years)
- Identify the gaps in data that are not currently accessible to Hands Up Mallee or community, and/or do not know is collected
- Report to government and funders

Why do we use Indicators?

The long-term goal of SPSP is to disrupt disadvantage, with the objective to show improved wellbeing for children, young people and their families. Data indicators are one way we track progress toward that goal. They provide measurable evidence of how things are changing at the community level and help inform decisions about where to focus effort and resources.

Indicators can help us as an individual or service, but also as a community to:

- **Track and measure:** compare our data and trends and against other communities like us, or against the State and national data. It shows change over time. This helps us understand how things are shifting.
- **Inform action and priorities:** Quantitative indicators are a part of identifying what is a priority and help inform where action is needed. This is especially effective alongside community stories and voice (qualitative data) and research expertise, giving it localised context and meaning and a broader validity.
- **Allocate resources:** They can help inform allocation of funding and resources.
- **Communicate:** Indicators help communicate impact, progress and outcomes on our community needs and priorities.

- **Show accountability:** Indicators help demonstrate and keep the accountability of services and government to community and funders.
- **Evaluate:** Indicators contribute to evaluation of projects, collaborations, partnerships and ways of working to achieve impact, outcomes and drive change.

By building this set of indicators together with local community, services and government, we now have a shared tool to guide, and measure change over the long term.

How were the Indicators developed?

To track long-term progress in community wellbeing, Hands Up Mallee worked with partners to develop a tailored set of indicators for the Mildura LGA. These indicators are organised under the six domains of the six Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) [Nest Wellbeing Framework domains](#) and aligned with [Hands Up Mallee's Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework](#), which also includes the Theory of Change and Key Evaluation Questions.

The development process included:

- Partnering with the [Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth \(ARACY\)](#) to assist with the collation and organisation of population level data indicators, and to assist with the workshops and evidence collection.
- Holding workshops with local community, Aboriginal community, services and government to ascertain all perspectives on what is important for our community – what would they like to see in our community in 20 years' time?
- Synthesising what we heard as important for our community into high-level outcomes, with an alignment of data indicators to measure long-term progress and impact.

Key considerations:

When determining the indicators, the following was considered:

- Wellbeing indicators and measure of children, young people and families

- Using The Nest Wellbeing Framework domains as an organising structure
- Population data—publicly available and restricted
- Data sourced largely from government—both state and federal
- Mixture of data sources
- Quantitative data indicators

Each indicator was assessed based on the following criteria:

- **Life course:** Is there are a range of indicators that cover the life course (from antenatal through to youth)?
- **Robustness:** Is the data source reliable, consistently collected, trackable and comparable and that it is at the level of detail we need it to be useful?
- **Availability:** Is the data accessible?
- **Research:** Does this align with what the research says?

Also considered was the nature of the data, including:

- Self-reported (e.g. surveys, focus groups, stories)
- Parent- or teacher-reported
- Administrative (i.e. hospital admissions)

Different data sources are more suitable for some data indicators than others e.g. the purpose for which it was collected, how often it is collected, the level of disaggregation, etc.

What are the gaps in the Indicators?

Despite our best efforts, there are still important gaps in the available data. These limitations make it harder to fully understand what's happening at the local level.

Gaps include:

- **Infrequent data collection:** Long periods between collection of data sets, i.e. every ten years.
- **Lack of local detail:** Many datasets are only available at regional or state level, not for the Mildura LGA, limiting their relevance to local decision-making.
- **Inappropriate measures:** Some available data reflects service activity not a measure of a person or family, it's a measure out of scope, etc.
- **Restricted access:** Some useful data is collected but held privately—particularly by government agencies—and not readily available for community use.
- **Unknown Data sources:** In some cases, data may exist but hasn't yet been identified, accessed or made transparent.

Hands Up Mallee welcomes comments and feedback to continue to refine the list of indicators. This list of indicators will continue to evolve as we discover more effective, new, or alternative data sets. Some data sources may change or cease to be collected altogether. By grounding this framework in community priorities, it remains flexible and responsive to shifts in the data landscape.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty

In 2025, Hands Up Mallee developed its Cultural Safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Frameworks. These frameworks recognise the inherent rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to control the collection, access, use, and governance of data relating to their communities, cultures, and knowledge systems.

Hands Up Mallee will continue to work with these principles and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to govern data that relates to them. This will also increase the access and understanding of data relating to our local community.

The Nest Wellbeing Framework

The organising framework for the data indicators is [The Nest Wellbeing Framework](#) developed by ARACY. This evidence-based framework conceptualises wellbeing as six interconnected domains that support each other to help children and young people reach their highest potential. To have everything they need for the best start in life, a child or young person needs to be adequately resourced in all six domains.

The Nest wellbeing domains are:



Healthy

Promoting good physical and mental health.



Learning

Encouraging effective learning and development opportunities from early childhood through to adult life.



Valued, Loved and Safe

Ensuring children feel valued in loving and secure environments.



Material Basics

Providing access to essential material needs like food, housing, transport and other essentials.



Participating

Children and young people have a voice, are listened to and are involved in decision-making processes that affect them. They are connected with peers, family and community.



Positive sense of Identity and Culture

Supporting a strong sense of self and belonging, including cultural identity and values.

Structure of the Indicators

The structure of the indicator framework is:

- The Nest domain and its description
- Outcomes—this is what we heard our community wants to see over time
- Indicators mapped out to the summarised outcomes, grouped by 0–8-year-olds, 9-18-year-olds and families.

The indicators presented in this document retain the wording from their original data sources.



Healthy

Promoting good physical and mental health.

What Community Said

- Access to health information and services
- Physical, mental and emotional health needs are met

Indicators

0-8

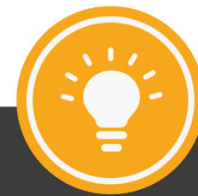
- 1.1 Increase % of babies born with a healthy birth weight (>2500g)
- 1.2 Decayed, missing or filled baby teeth (5 & 6)
- 1.3 % of prep children who are on-track for physical health and wellbeing domain of AEDC
- 1.4 % of children who have participated in Ages and Stages consultations at Maternal and Child Health Service by age group
- 1.5 % of children fully immunised at 2 years
- 1.6 Proportion of children fully vaccinated (1, 2, 5 years)
- 1.7 % of babies fully breastfed at 3 or 6 months
- 1.8 % of prep children who are on-track for emotional maturity and social competence

9-18

- 1.9 Decayed, missing or filled adult teeth (12yo)
- 1.10 Percentage of youth (13-24) not using illicit substances
- 1.11 Human Papilloma Virus 3-dose coverage rate
- 1.12 % of young people experiencing psychological distress

Families

- 1.13 % of women not smoking during pregnancy
- 1.14 Proportion of parents or guardians who used illicit drug in past 12 months
- 1.15 Proportion of households in which parents of children 0-17yrs are without mental health morbidities
- 1.16 % of families experiencing high or very high stress
- 1.17 % of houses that have enough bedrooms for size of household



Learning

Encouraging effective learning and development opportunities from early childhood through to adult life.

What Community Said

- Appropriate and safe learning environments
- Community and family engagement with school/ing
- Career pathways and further education

Indicators

0-8

- 2.1 Increase in ECEC centres meeting or exceeding national quality standards
- 2.2 Increase in children attending high quality education and care
- 2.3 Increase in children with readiness for school against AEDC domains
- 2.4 Increase in children attending primary school 90% or more of the time
- 2.5 Increase in children with parent(s)/caregiver(s) who are actively engaged with the school in supporting their children's learning
- 2.6 School attendance for Prep (transition)
- 2.7 Percentage of children who are regularly read to/encouraged in their reading at home

9-18

- 2.8 Increase in children attending primary school 90% or more of the time
- 2.9 Increase in children attending high school 90% or more of the time.
- 2.10 Increase in youth who gain year 12 attainment or VET equivalent
- 2.11 Average NAPLAN score by age and domain
- 2.12 School attendance for Grade 6, 7 and 10, 11 (transitions)
- 2.13 Increase in proportion of young people participating in education, employment or training



Valued, Loved and Safe

Ensuring children feel valued in loving and secure environments.

What Community Said

- Our children have a voice that is heard and valued.
- Children are with their families.
- They want all children and families to feel connected, included and safe.

Indicators

0-8

- 3.1 Parents are actively involved in their children's learning
- 3.2 Rate of children receiving child protection services (0-18)
- 3.3 Rate of children who were subjects of substantiations of notifications of child protection concerns (0-18)
- 3.4 Rate of children in out of home care (0-18)
- 3.5 # of children and young people aged 0-24 who are victims of crime
- 3.6 % of children who have witnessed violence
- 3.7 Family violence rate (0-24)

9-18

- 3.8 Children reporting they have a voice and the ability to raise concerns and have those concerns heard
- 3.9 Children and young people reporting it would be easy to talk to a parent or a friend
- 3.10 Rate of children receiving child protection services (0-18)
- 3.11 Rate of children who were subjects of substantiations of notifications of child protection concerns (0-18)
- 3.12 Rate of children in out of home care (0-18)
- 3.13 # of children and young people aged 0-24 who are victims of crime
- 3.14 # of children aged 10-24 affected by family violence
- 3.15 Family violence rate (0-24)
- 3.16 # of alleged offender incidents where the alleged offender is aged 10-24
- 3.17 Decrease in youth 10-24yo reoffending.
- 3.18 10-18yo reporting they feel safe at school
- 3.19 15-18yo reporting they have been bullied at school in the past 12 months
- 3.20 10-18yo who have been concerned about their safety online.
- 3.21 15-18yo reporting 'LGBTIQ-phobic bullying, discrimination or negative language is a problem at my school'



Material Basics

Providing access to essential material needs like food, housing, transport and other essentials.

What Community Said

- Access to stable and affordable housing
- Children and families accessing services appropriate for them
- Youth and families are employed

Indicators

0-8

- 4.1 Increase in number and proportion of children 0-14yrs in stable accommodation
- 4.2 Number of children who are homeless on census night (0-24)
- 4.3 Increase in number and proportion of children/youth 0-17yrs with at least one parent in full-time employment.

9-18

- 4.4 Increase in number and proportion of children 0-14yrs in stable accommodation
- 4.5 Number of children who are homeless on census night (0-24)
- 4.6 Increase in number and proportion of children/youth 0-17yrs with at least one parent in full-time employment.
- 4.7 Percentage of young people aged 15-19 in education, employment or training
- 4.8 Young People (16-21) Unemployment Benefits

Families

- 4.9 Percentage of houses that have enough bedrooms for size of household
- 4.10 Percentage of families spending less than 30% of household income on rent
- 4.11 Waiting list for social housing
- 4.12 Percentage of families where one or both parents are working



Participating

Children and young people have a voice, are listened to and are involved in decision-making processes that affect them. They are connected with peers, family and community.

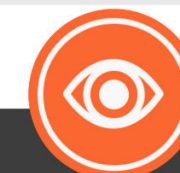
What Community Said

- Children and families contribute to decision-making processes that affect them
- Children and families are socially connected, included and supported
- Places for youth to hang out safely and opportunities for them to participate

Indicators

9-18

- 5.1 % of children reporting that they have friends at school
- 5.2 Increase in number and proportion of youth (13-24yrs) who participate in sport, cultural or art-based activities
- 5.3 Participation of children in sports



Positive Sense of Identity and Culture

Supporting a strong sense of self and belonging, including cultural identity and values.

What Community Said

- A positive sense of their identity - a strong sense of self, cultural pride and connection
- Safe and respected – identities and cultures are respected and valued, safe and supported in expressing identity

Indicators

9-18

- 6.1 % of children reporting: 'I feel like I belong at this school'
- 6.2 % of persons aged 15-24 who volunteered for an organisation or group
- 6.3 Children reporting they have experienced racism at school this year (12-18)
- 6.4 Children reporting 'students at this school respect each other's differences'
- 6.5 15-18yo reporting 'LGBTIQ-phobic bullying, discrimination or negative language is a problem at my school'