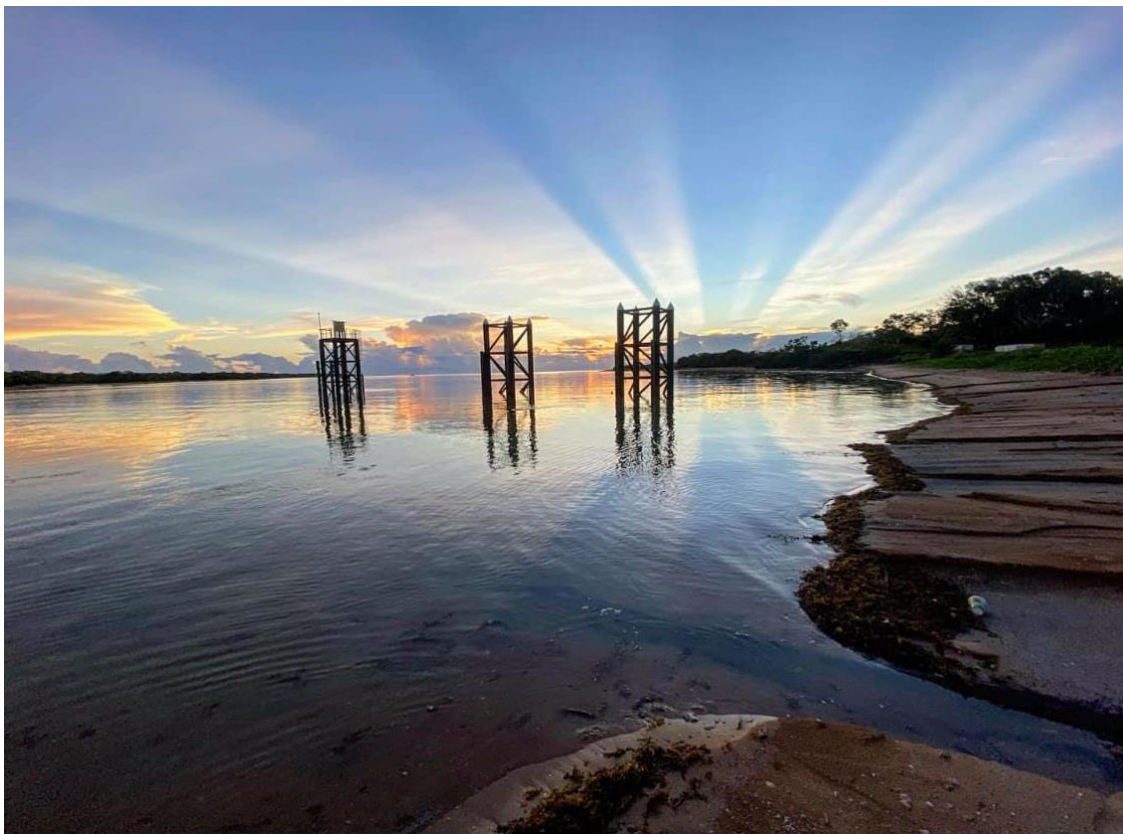




Mornington Island

Community Safety Plan (CSP): Part A

2021 to 2026



Mornington Island – photo credit Des Mellican

Moving Forward, Together

NOTE:

The Mornington Island Community Safety Plan is separated into the following parts:

- **Part A** Mornington Island Community Safety Plan (new CSP)
- **Part B** Mornington Island Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP)

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1. About Mornington Island

About the people

Mornington Island is the largest of the North Wellesley Islands located in the Gulf of Carpentaria. It is sometimes referred to as Gununa or Goonana by the Lardil people, the Traditional Owners of Mornington Island. The Lardil are also the traditional custodians of several other smaller islands including Langunganji (Sydney Island) and Lingunganji (Wallaby Island). Many Kaiadilt and Yangkaal people also live on Mornington Island. They are the Traditional Owners of the islands between Mornington Island and the mainland, and the South Wellesley Islands respectively.

Mornington Island has a unique natural environment which has been occupied by the Traditional Owners, the Lardil people, for many thousands of years. Today, Mornington Island is renowned for its rich Indigenous culture, expressed most prominently through the Mornington Island dancers and the internationally acclaimed artwork that has emerged from the community in recent times. The community have deep respect for the land and waters, and in turn, the land and sea provide for them.



Mornington Island – photo credit Des Mellican

At the heart of everything is the land...

“It is the way we think and feel about the land that makes us Aboriginal. It is the only way to keep our culture. For many, many years our ancestors worked out how we should live in this country. How we should use everything around us and what to do to keep our relationship with it strong. These are the things the Europeans don’t understand about the way the bush can help us. These things can help Europeans too when their own way of living makes their lives sad. We can teach Europeans all about these things. They are the things we have always known. Today my people can see more than one way of living. Now there are many things in our lives that were not there before.

Our lives are changing but this does not mean we should forget the things that it took us thousands of years to work out. These things keep us clear and straight and make us strong inside. They show us the proper way for Aboriginal people to live. Our bodies must keep doing the dances and living in the bush and making the artifacts that keep our skills alive. These things are what we need to keep the head and the body together until we are given back our land and the land can make us whole again.”

The late, Larry Lanley Jagarairee Mornington Shire Council

Mornington Island is a very remote community located in the south-eastern corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria off the north-west coast of Queensland, approximately 450km north of Mount Isa, 950 kms west of Cairns, 125kms north of Burketown. Mornington Shire is arguably one of the most remote and isolated Local Governments in



Northern Australia and covers an area of 700 square kilometres. Of the 23 Islands, only two have permanent inhabitants, with most of the population living in the community of Gununa on Mornington Island.

Mornington Island's estimated resident population is 1,143 persons, of whom 88% identify as Indigenous. One hundred percent of the population is in quintile 1 (most disadvantaged) of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). The SEIFA mean score for Australia is 1000, Mornington Island scored 604.

The median age is 25 years. 42% of Mornington Island's Indigenous residents are aged under 20 years compared to 27 per cent for the total Australian population. Older people aged 50 years or more made up just 19 per cent of Mornington Island's population. The median total

personal income in Mornington Shire was \$18,304 which is comparatively lower than the Queensland median total personal income of \$34,320. (ABS 2016)

Mornington Island's unemployment rate in March 2017 was 27% as compared to the Queensland unemployment rate of 5.8% for the same period. (Australian Government Department of Employment. 2017) According to the ABS 2016, 29.8% of residents receive Newstart Allowance compared to 5.5% in Queensland. 19.5% receive Youth Allowance compared to 6% in Queensland.

Approximately a quarter of the non-Indigenous population is born overseas. Lardil and English are the primary languages spoken on Mornington Island. (ABS 2016) The population is predicted to increase by 1.1% per year over the next 25 years, to be 1,600 persons as of 30 June 2036 (Queensland Treasury, 2017).

For further data about the people of Mornington Island – [See Attachment 1](#): Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Statshot 6 January 2021.

Historical Overview and AMP Background

Mornington Island has a rich cultural history that dates back thousands of years that has been passed down the generations through songlines, stories, dance and Aboriginal Lore. The Lardil people, recognised as the Traditional Owners of Mornington Island, have occupied their lands for more than 8,000 years.

The 'Mission times' (1921-1965) severely disrupted the existing cultural heritage and traditional kinship system and imposed a 'dormitory' system in its place. Speaking Aboriginal language was not allowed under Mission rules and people were taught English. Aboriginal systems of Law and authority were forcibly discouraged during this period. Many young women and young men spent long periods on cattle stations on the mainland.

In 1978, Mornington and other nearby islands were granted Local Government status with a Shire Council and elected representatives of the community.

In 2002 the Queensland State Government commenced the introduction of Alcohol Management Plans (AMP) in remote Indigenous communities with the intent of reducing the harmful effects of excessive alcohol consumption. The AMP aimed at alleviating high levels of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect.

In 2003 an AMP was introduced for Mornington Island. Prior to the introduction of an AMP, Mornington Island had an operational canteen. At the end of 2003, only light and mid strength beers were being served at the canteen

between the hours of 3:00pm and 7:00pm on weekdays. In addition to no takeaway alcohol, the possession of alcohol in public, outside the canteen is also prohibited (Peinkinna, 2003). In December 2003, police reinforcements had to be sent to Mornington Island after riots broke out when these tough new alcohol laws were introduced.

In 2008/09, following a Queensland Government review, a range of sweeping legislative reforms were implemented resulting in still tighter restrictions. This new legislation resulted in complete prohibition. This means no alcohol, home brew or home brew equipment was allowed on Mornington Island. The Mornington Island alcohol restricted areas relate to all foreshores and the 23 islands in the Wellesley, South Wellesley, Forsythe and Bountiful Island groups and Sweers Island. Sweers Island Resort is the only licensed premise in the restricted area of Mornington Island. The resort is licensed to sell alcohol to residents and their guests only.

An independent evaluation of the AMPs in Cape York Indigenous communities found while there was an initial decline in violence, this important reduction was undermined over time with the increased availability of illicit alcohol including sly grog and homebrew (Clough et al., 2016).

Indigenous Australians are significantly more likely to experience child abuse and neglect, domestic and other forms of violent crime and be incarcerated than non-Indigenous Australians. Alcohol continues to be a major social and health problem.

After the Mornington Island tavern was shut down, locals took to home brewing, providing almost unlimited quantities of very cheap alcohol. In 2017 Mornington Shire Council called for the ban to be lifted so that alcohol could be better regulated from a single legal liquor outlet.

The sale and use of Homebrew continues to have serious negative impacts on the community. Critical health and safety issues are prevalent throughout the community as a direct result of Homebrew. In 2018-19 there were 140 per 1,000 people of episodes of care for alcohol-related mental and behavioural conditions compared with the Queensland average of 12.5 per 1,000 people.

As of March 2021, a total ban on alcohol is still in place in the Mornington Shire which includes all foreshores and the 23 islands in the Wellesley, South Wellesley Islands, Forsythe and Bountiful Island groups and Sweers Island, apart from the Sweers Resort.

About Country



Mornington Shire Council comprises of 22 islands, with Mornington Island, Bentinck Island, and Sweers Island the largest. The only township, Gununa on Mornington Island, is serviced by regular passenger flights from Mt Isa and Cairns, and a freight only barge operation from Karumba.

The islands and surrounding seas are the traditional lands and waters of the Lardil, Yangkaal, Kaiadilt and Gangalidda peoples. They have successfully and sustainably managed their land and waters for thousands of years.

The region remains one of the most pristine, featuring internationally renowned art works, rich cultural heritage, and one of the best fishing destinations in Australia. The land is covered by native flora like tea tree with swamp flats providing a habitat for many species of wildlife.

There are windswept beaches lined with sea oaks, rocky outcrops and mangroves. The abundant fish and marine life, such as turtle and endangered dugong, makes the region a must visit for any keen fishermen, divers and eco-enthusiasts. The Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal and Gangalidda people manage a number of land and sea projects aimed at maintaining the unique natural environment and supporting future generations to live off the land.

This region is remarkable – unlike anywhere else in Australia.



Mornington Island – photo credit Des Mellican

2. About Community Safety and Wellbeing

“This is a really unique environment with many positive aspects that with some proactive assistance can help the community achieve its full potential.”

Anonymous quote from Community Safety Survey 2021.

The community has been talking about community safety and wellbeing for some time. In 2012 the first Community Safety Plan was developed through extensive community consultation. Then in 2017, there was a strategic review of the impacts of Mornington Island’s Alcohol Management Plan including the supply and consumption of alcohol, hospital presentations, school attendance and impacts on service providers and community health generally. This review was undertaken by the sitting CEO of Mornington Shire Council at the time. In March 2021, community consultation was undertaken to develop a new Community Safety Plan (new CSP) that will also inform future Alcohol Management arrangements for Mornington Island.

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Outcomes as stated in the Mornington Shire Council Corporate and Operational Plan 2019- 2024 include:

- Our Council will promote the enhancement of health and well-being through coordination of service delivery.
- Our Council will ensure our community and visitors all have access to a diverse range of cultural and lifestyle experiences.

- Our Council will promote sustainable economic and community development for the benefit of the whole community.

For the Mornington Island community to make long term and sustainable improvements to community wellbeing and safety, action needs to focus on locally driven solutions that result in changes in both behaviour and attitudes on these difficult issues.

3. Our Vision

The Council's vision (Our vision incorporating Our future and Our hands) for the community is 'moving forward, together'. Our vision is for a healthy and sustainable community, where people can influence decisions that affect their own lives, enjoy their rights, and assume their responsibilities. A community in which everyone is valued and treated equally. Our future is in our hands – we will get out of it what we put into it.



Mornington Island – photo credit Des Mellican

Council's Corporate Plan's Mission states that by 2024 Mornington will be a Community where:

- Our people are happy, healthy and safe.
- Our natural environment is valued and well-managed.
- Our culture is retained and maintained.
- We have quality infrastructure.
- We have a sustainable local economy.
- Governance and ownership of Community direction is by Council.
- We have transparency of government and open communication between the three tiers of Government.

Council aims to make Mornington Island the best place they can be by:

- Enhancing community well-being
- Keeping our Culture alive
- Creating opportunities for prosperity
- Protecting our country
- Enhancing and supporting local business

4. Purpose

Following the Queensland Government's review of AMPs that was finalised in mid-2019, a new approach to alcohol management is being implemented in remote and discreet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Queensland Government is inviting communities to work with them to implement a refreshed approach to alcohol management. This refreshed approach continues to include alcohol restrictions but will be managed locally and include strategies tailored to the unique characteristics and aspirations of each community. Queensland Government is reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve safety and wellbeing in partnership with community.

The purpose of the renewed approach to alcohol management through improving community safety and wellbeing is to ensure communities and individuals are safe, thriving and self-empowered to manage and reduce alcohol-related harm and improve wellbeing.

The renewed approach retains carriage limits and is based on a partnership between the Queensland Government and communities to:

- Co-design new CSP and other coordinated initiatives and strategies that reduce demand; target illicit alcohol (sly grog and homebrew); build community capacity and readiness; and promote a healthy culture and attitude towards alcohol including through legal liquor licensing options.
- Explore minor changes to carriage limits on a case-by-case basis, pending community and Government agreement, and provided that a CSP is in place.
- Revise AMPs to reflect the outcomes and results of co-design and community engagement.

5. Mornington Shire Council's Renewed Approach to Alcohol Management

Mornington Shire Council's broader agendas, including economic development, Closing the Gap as well as Mornington Shire Council's Corporate and Annual Plan, all include a range of measures and indicators which contribute to the story of our prosperity, health and wellbeing.

As part of the development of the Mornington Shire Council's new CSP, a Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP) has been prepared. The CSAP will enable improved monitoring of local community indicators to better report the progress related to improve community safety and wellbeing.

Agile monitoring and responsive processes will be implemented to identify, understand, and manage issues as they are identified by the Mornington Shire Council in consultation with the Mornington Island Community Safety Committee.

The CSAP forms a separate document to this new CSP.

Implementation Principles

The new CSP implementation processes will be clarified by key agencies in conjunction with the community, the approach will be developed acknowledging that:

- We are committed to working together to move from surviving to thriving.
- We will embrace the humanity of people, and their capacity for excellence.
- Our focus is on health, wellbeing and safety of our most vulnerable people, in particular women and children.
- Individuals, families, community leaders, service providers and governments all have a role to play.
- We will tailor approaches that address residents' specific priorities and concerns such as addressing home brew and sly grog.
- Rebalancing the focus between supply, demand and harm reduction is crucial to success, embedded in a broader holistic approach, which includes a stronger focus on effective treatment services and harm

reduction strategies to support people who are addicted to alcohol, or are suffering an illness as a result of alcohol consumption.

- Safe and responsible modifications to community carriage limits which are unpinned by stable harm rates; strong local leadership; community agreement, a demonstrated healthy culture and attitude towards alcohol; and access to effective demand and harm reduction services.

Alcohol Management Plan

Mornington Island has had an Alcohol Management Plan since 2002. The Mornington Island restricted area is the Mornington Shire including all public and private places. This includes all foreshores and the 23 islands in the Wellesley, South Wellesley, Forsythe and Bountiful Island groups and Sweers Island with the exception of the Sweers Island Resort.

No alcohol or homebrew and homebrew equipment is allowed in these restricted areas.

Penalties

Maximum penalties for possessing alcohol in the restricted area are:

- first offence 375 penalty units (currently \$50,043)
- second offence 525 penalty units (currently \$70,061) or 6 months imprisonment
- third or subsequent offence 750 penalty units (currently \$100,087) or 18 months imprisonment.

Vehicles found carrying alcohol in the restricted area may be confiscated.

It is also an offence to attempt to bring alcohol into the restricted area. The maximum penalty for this offence is 375 penalty units (currently \$50,043).

Homebrew

A maximum of 190 penalty units (currently \$25,355) will apply to offenders who:

- Possess a homebrew kit or a component of a homebrew kit.
- Possess equipment or a component of equipment that is being used or has been used to brew alcohol.
- Possess homebrew concentrate.
- Supply homemade alcohol to another person in the restricted area.

Sly Grog

It is illegal to sell alcohol without a licence or permit (sly grog) in Queensland. Penalties apply.

The maximum penalty for possessing alcohol in a dry place is 19 penalty units (currently \$2,535).

These penalties apply to all people living in, travelling through, visiting or working in the restricted area.

The penalty unit from 1 July 2019 is \$133.45.

Current Carriage Limit

No alcohol or homebrew and homebrew equipment is allowed in Mornington Shire.

Licensed premise

Sweers Island Resort is the only licensed premise in the restricted area of Mornington Island. The resort is licensed to sell alcohol to residents and their guests only.

Government Indicators

The Queensland Government currently uses six key indicators of harm and wellbeing relating to AMPs.

Number	Indicator	Community safety element
1	Reported offences against the person	Harm (primary indicator)
2	Episodes of care for assault-related injuries	Harm (primary indicator)
3	Breaches of alcohol restrictions	Demand (supporting indicator)
4	Child safety - Substantiated notifications of harm	Wellbeing (supporting indicator)
5	Child safety - Finalised child protection orders	Wellbeing (supporting indicator)
6	Student attendance.	Wellbeing (supporting indicator)

These indicators only tell part of the story, for the full story can only be achieved with the inclusion of community voice and experiences communicated.

Refer to [Attachment 2](#): Mornington Island Community Safety Survey Report.

6. Current Services contributing to Community Safety and Wellbeing

Mornington Island's services are mainly delivered through third party service providers engaged by the Government, who generally operate on a fly-in fly-out bases. In community Government services include Education and Police. Mornington Island's government services are either located in Cairns or Mount Isa.

The local government, community, not-for-profit organisations and local businesses are therefore critical in supporting residents to be safe and well, bringing their expertise to assist to improve community safety and wellbeing either through well-being and healing programs, providing a safe space, or employment. For services available to the residents of Mornington Island refer to Mornington Island Services Directory: [Attachment 3](#).

There is a critical need to improve service provision on Mornington Island, including the co-ordination and collaboration of service provision on the Island.

In February 2021, Council resolved:

"That Council make representations to both the State and Australian Governments for an independent audit of all government funded services on the Island to ascertain what services are being provided, how they are being provided, and what funding is coming to the Island and how are such programs success being monitored and reported."

In addition, attracting, maintaining and accommodating suitably qualified staff continues to be an issue which impacts on the quality of service provision. The Mornington Island Stakeholder and Interagency Committee is working towards improving service provision.

7. Mornington Island's Community Safety Action Plan

7.1 Review of Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs)

In 2012 the Queensland Government commenced a review of Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs) consisting of:

Community-specific reviews

Alcohol management proposals were provided to Government from all communities that have alcohol restrictions in place including Mornington Island (summarised in the body of the plan). The proposal development process for some communities included community meetings, forming working groups to oversee the review, doing community surveys and working with external parties to facilitate consultation and evaluate their current AMP.

The Convictions Project

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership engaged the Office of the Government Statistician to compile the Convictions Project in response to community concerns about whether alcohol restrictions were leading to people who would not otherwise have a criminal history entering the criminal justice system. Findings were presented in [Alcohol Management Plan Review - Breach of alcohol restrictions in Indigenous communities and associated contact with the criminal justice system \(PDF, 1.1 MB\)](#). This report was provided to communities on 8 April 2014.

General Review

This general review, conducted by PwC Indigenous Consulting, assessed the overall effectiveness of AMPs. It incorporated feedback from 23 members of the public and other key stakeholders.

The Queensland Government finalised a review of (AMPs) in mid-2019, a renewed approach to alcohol management has been developed which builds on the Review's findings:

- AMPs play a valuable role in ensuring community safety, particularly for vulnerable people such as women and children.
- Illicit alcohol (sly grog and homebrew) has undermined the positive impacts of AMPs.
- Concerted and coordinated efforts are needed to sustainably reduce demand and harm.
- Community ownership and local leadership in determining and implementing strategies for managing alcohol misuse and harm is key to the effectiveness of these measures.

The renewed approach prioritises community safety, particularly for women and children, and emphasises a need for AMPs that are community-led and driven and developed and implemented in partnership with communities. Key features of the renewed approach include:

- Alcohol management is locally controlled.
- Co-designed community-specific plans and strategies that improve safety and wellbeing, reduce demand, address sly grog and homebrew and promote a positive alcohol culture.
- Potential for amendments to carriage limits where communities want them and demonstrate the ability to manage the changes.
- Emphasis on sustainable solutions.

7.2 New Community Safety Plan and Associated Community Safety Action Plan

It is acknowledged that community safety and wellbeing particularly as it relates to alcohol misuse is complex and requires a balanced approach. The new CSP and other coordinated initiatives and strategies that increase safety and wellbeing, reduce demand; target illicit alcohol (sly grog and homebrew); build community capacity and readiness; and promote a healthy culture and attitude towards alcohol including through legal liquor licensing options. One of the stronger motivating factors is to reduce the serious harm caused by the homebrew epidemic as evidenced by our alarming statistics (offences against the person, alcohol-related mental and behavioural conditions, etc) in comparison to the Queensland rate.

Refer to [Attachment 1](#): Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Statshot 6 January 2021.

As part of the new CSP a Community Safety Committee consisting of community representation will be established to work with Mornington Shire Council to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the CSP, and the Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP). This Committee will measure the success of the CSP to support a case for minor changes to alcohol restrictions for consideration by community and Government.

It is important that the new CSP continues to reflect the voices of the community and addresses their emerging needs. The CSP sets the context for the management of community safety and wellbeing including alcohol management on Mornington Island. The Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP) brings together conversations across our community and builds on achievements. The CSAP is a living document that provides opportunities for

a collaborative approach to the implementation of several key actions to improve community safety and wellbeing on Mornington Island. The CSAP will regularly be monitored by the Community Safety Committee and be reshaped to respond to emerging needs and aspirations as required.

This plan builds on previous and existing actions plans, and activities of agencies working on Mornington Island. It will be achieved by drawing on the expertise, knowledge of community members, traditional owners, community groups, stakeholders and local, state and federal government partners over the next five years to implement this plan.

This plan sets out how the community will work with Government to create proactive solutions to identified community safety issues.

Community Consultation

In February 2021, Mornington Shire Council engaged Peak Services to undertake community consultation and to develop a refreshed Community Safety Plan. The community consultation enabled local residents to have a say about their community wellbeing and safety issues and concerns. Some 200 people actively participated in this community consultation. The information that was gathered has informed the development of this Community Safety Plan.

The community consultation consisted of:

- Online survey
- Hard copy surveys were made available for residents that did not have access to complete the survey online.
- Support was provided to residents that requested literacy support to complete the survey.
- Face to face discussions with individuals and small groups.
- Interviews with key government agencies and Service Providers.
- A Community Public Meeting was held at the Festival Grounds in Gununa.

We will know if our community is safer when:

- Our people are happy, healthy and safe.
- There is a decrease in domestic and family violence.
- Our children are attending school.
- Our culture is retained and maintained.
- Our natural environment is valued and well-managed.



Key community areas of concern

The Community Safety Survey identified several key themes and strongly indicates that homebrew is causing significant community safety issues. These key themes predominantly derive from the homebrew epidemic such as alcohol related violence, parental neglect due to intoxication, youth crime, and chronic health issues. 86% of respondents stated that domestic and family violence is a key issue of concern. This survey identified that 88% of the community would like to see the current Alcohol Management Plan lifted and a safe designated drinking area reintroduced to the community as well as the option for limited take away alcohol.



Furthermore, the community feel most unsafe at night, largely relating to youth crime and alcohol related violence. Mornington Shire Council have proposed a Youth Hub to provide a safe place for young people impacted by homebrew consumption. Participants would like increased night patrol and security, as well as the introduction of key activities to divert participation in homebrew drinking. These activities include sporting and fishing competitions as well as cultural activities. There is a night patrol operated by Mission Australia that was recently restarted for youth only, however there is a need to cover the rest of the community. Many participants would like to see harsher punishments for homebrew making

and selling as well as for crime. The survey findings have been supported by information gathered from face to face interviews that were conducted with government agencies and service providers based on the Island.

It was identified that service providers are committed to working together to drive action to create a safer and healthier community. The key issues identified by service providers are home brew, domestic violence, youth crime and protection of children, Elders and people with disabilities. They acknowledge that as a collective, the agencies are currently working too independently and bringing them together through a Community Safety Action Plan will enhance efficiency and effectiveness of services.

Agencies believed that coordination, data sharing, and communication across agencies and with community will demonstrate accountability, grow community trust and ensure cohesiveness required to achieve positive outcomes. Without a cross agency approach, linked strongly to community it will be difficult to achieve effective change. The agencies believe they can make positive change. It will require a momentum shift through short term small action-oriented gains, and a long term commitment and presence. To effectively address the challenges of the island additional resources beyond the standard level are required.



Detailed Community Safety Survey consultation findings are set out in [Attachment 2](#).

Mornington Island's Reforms Framework

Mornington Shire Council aims to establish a Mornington Island Community Safety Committee that will consist of representation of Council, Traditional Owners, community groups, State and Federal Government agencies and other key stakeholders. The Mornington Island Community Safety Committee will be responsible for the provision of local information and data to inform the implementation, monitoring and ongoing evaluation of the Mornington Island CSP.

Council will be responsible for the co-ordination of the Mornington Island Community Safety Committee and will be the primary liaison. Council in consultation with the Mornington Island Community Safety Committee, will provide reports to government on community safety matters and the progress of service reforms to enable residents of the Mornington Shire to improve quality of life including improving community safety and wellbeing.

Based on the Community Safety community consultation findings conducted in March 2021, the Mornington Shire Council will review the current Alcohol Management Plan (AMP) and make recommendations to government for any proposed changes to the AMP.



Mornington Island – photo credit Des Mellican

Mornington Island Community Safety Plan: Part B ACTION PLAN

Refer to the separate Mornington Island Community Safety Plan: Part B ACTION PLAN.