



COMMUNITY CONNECTORS REPORT

FRANKSTON

Nov 2024 - Dec 2025



**SOUTH EAST
COMMUNITY
LINKS**

Acknowledgment of Country



South East Community Links and Metro Trains respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and to their cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

Executive Summary

The partnership between SECL, Metro Trains and Frankston City Council commenced in November 2024 at the Frankston Station and Young Street precinct. Young Street sits at the heart of Frankston's transport, retail, and civic centres. It experiences heavy daily foot traffic with more than 2000 people passing through the station into Young Street each day. This makes the precinct a focal point for individuals experiencing mental health challenges, housing instability, substance-related issues, and social isolation, alongside the everyday movement of commuters, community members, students and workers.

The Community Connectors program enables all partners to achieve their collective goals for the Frankston precinct. As a community-led organisation, SECL brings its core purpose of ensuring vulnerable individuals receive the support, guidance, and pathways they need that improve long-term wellbeing outcomes.

This shared model supports Metro's priorities: helping vulnerable passengers, reducing pressure on station staff, and creating a safer, more reliable station for everyone. It also advances Frankston City Council's objectives under the Young Street Action Plan by enhancing safety, supporting traders and strengthening community wellbeing.

Across the reporting period, the program made a measurable and significant contribution to safety and wellbeing across the Young Street and Frankston Station precinct.

Our reach included:

- 2,452 people supported
- 1,674 engagements providing early intervention, reassurance and practical support
- 204 referrals connecting individuals to local specialist services
- 195 individuals supported through flexible casework
- Program primarily supported adults aged 35-64

The most common issues addressed were

- Mental Health (713)
- Inclusion/social connection (712)
- Substance use (554)
- Housing & Homelessness (550)

Community Connectors played a critical role in frontline safety:

- 76 instances supporting emergency services
- 535 situations where harm was prevented
- 180 incidents safely de-escalated

These outcomes support both Council's safety goals and Metro's operational requirements, reducing disruption and improving the overall public environment.

By integrating a skilled and clinically trained community wellbeing workforce into one of Frankston's busiest and most complex urban corridors, the program:

- Improves perceptions of safety along Young Street
- Supports traders experiencing challenging public interactions
- Reduces pressure on station staff, Rapid Response Teams and emergency services
- Connects vulnerable people to appropriate local supports
- Strengthens Council's revitalisation agenda
- Delivers on Metro Trains Melbourne's commitment to a safer, more supportive station environment.

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Metro Trains Melbourne (Metro) operates and maintains the metropolitan rail service in Melbourne, transporting approximately 500,000 passengers daily. With more than 7,000 employees, Metro aims to encourage the Melbourne community’s vibrant, ever-evolving lifestyles by providing a seamless transport solution that keeps individuals connected.



Metro maintains and renews the railway network to ensure its assets are safe and operate reliably. It also partners with the State Government to deliver city-shaping projects and build Melbourne’s railway of the future. Metro is committed to having a positive social impact in the communities it serves. Through initiatives focused on reconciliation, social partnerships, and community education, it aims to strengthen, unify and support the Melbourne community and beyond.

Established in 1970, **South East Community Links (SECL)** operates with the vision that *every person counts and every system should be fair*. It works alongside multicultural communities in Melbourne to offer trusted place-based and people-centred services. Guided by the core values of equity, inclusion, compassion, dignity, diversity and choice, SECL values the skills, perspectives, and experiences that multicultural communities bring to the organisation and broader society.



In partnership with governments, communities and businesses, SECL delivers culturally responsive, coordinated and effective services that meet clients’ needs. Spanning multiple locations, SECL’s services include emergency relief, assertive outreach, community programs and support, youth and family services, homelessness and housing support, financial counselling, family violence support and settlement services.

Frankston City Council (FCC) is the local government authority for a vibrant and growing municipality on the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay, approximately 40 kms south of Melbourne. Supporting a population of around 144,600 people, Frankston City is recognised for its natural environment, vibrant lifestyle, diverse community and growing business, arts, education and health sectors. Council provides the services and infrastructure that underpin everyday life for residents of all ages—from waste and road maintenance to local planning, and from maternal and child health services to investment attraction and business support.



Beyond core service delivery, Council is an active community partner, delivering programs, events and initiatives that foster connection, participation and local identity. It plays an important role in responding to pressures such as population growth, housing and cost of living, while advocating for and delivering long-term outcomes that support a liveable, connected and resilient city.

Background



Disorderly conduct offences fell 15% since the program started.

South East Community Links (SECL) and Metro Trains Melbourne (Metro) first partnered in 2023 to pilot the Community Connectors Program at Dandenong Station. The initiative introduced an innovative, first-of-its-kind, place-based outreach model designed to reduce incidents that negatively impacted public safety and station operations. The program supported local community members and passengers who were experiencing multiple and complex challenges, including mental health issues, homelessness, substance use, family violence and social isolation. Community Connectors used a multidisciplinary, trauma-informed approach, offering real-time support, de-escalation, and warm referrals to local services.

Through the success of the Dandenong Pilot, the program expanded to Frankston Station and the Young Street precinct, a central entry point to the Frankston Metropolitan Activity Centre.

Frankston's Young Street is a major civic gateway, connecting the redeveloped Frankston Railway Station to the broader city centre. The precinct experiences high daily foot traffic from commuters, students, retail workers, visitors, and community members navigating complex social and economic pressures. These pressures, including housing insecurity, mental health needs, substance use issues, and social exclusion, were key drivers behind Frankston City Council's adoption of the Young Street Action Plan in 2024.

As part of this revitalisation effort, Council partnered with SECL and Metro Trains to adapt and extend the proven Community Connectors model into Frankston Station and Young Street.

Through this partnership, Community Connectors support both station staff and commuters, as well as people living, working or spending time along Young Street.

Frankston Impact Overview

The Community Connectors Program delivered targeted, place-based support across Frankston Station and the Young Street corridor, responding to the unique demands of one of Frankston's busiest transport and city-centre environments.

From November 2024 to December 2025, Community Connectors supported 2,452 individuals through 1,674 direct engagements, providing immediate assistance, stabilisation and practical problem-solving in real time. The program served as a visible and trusted point of contact for people needing help navigating the city centre, whether due to personal distress, unmet support needs, or emerging safety concerns.

More than 200 people were successfully connected to specialist services, reinforcing the program's role in bridging gaps between vulnerable individuals and formal support systems. Many individuals (195) engaged in flexible casework with SECL as a result of the program.

The predominant needs identified across the precinct related to mental health, social inclusion,

alcohol and other drug use, and housing instability, reflecting the complexity of challenges present in a high-traffic urban gateway.

Engagement was most frequent among adults aged 35–64, consistent with the demographic profile of people accessing the Frankston city centre and transport network.

In addition to wellbeing support, Community Connectors contributed directly to safety outcomes across the precinct. The team supported emergency services on 76 occasions, prevented harm in 535 situations, and de-escalated 180 incidents, reducing escalation and easing pressure on station staff, Council response teams and emergency services.

Through its integrated partnership with SECL, Frankston City Council and Metro Trains Melbourne, the Community Connectors Program has become a critical component of Council's safety and wellbeing response supporting vulnerable people, strengthening public confidence, and contributing to a safer, more connected Young Street and station precinct.

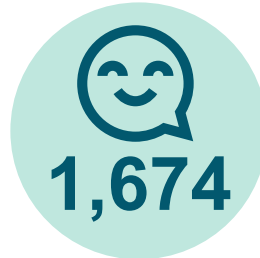


Reach and Impact

Nov 2024 to Dec 2025



people supported

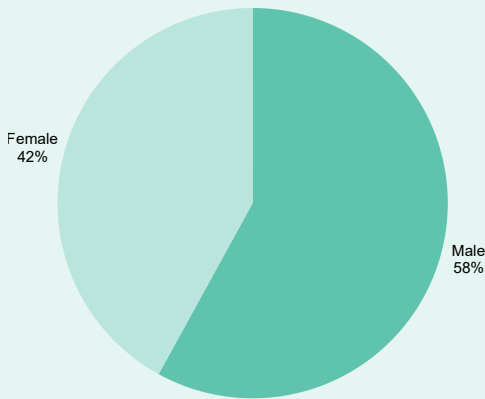


engagements

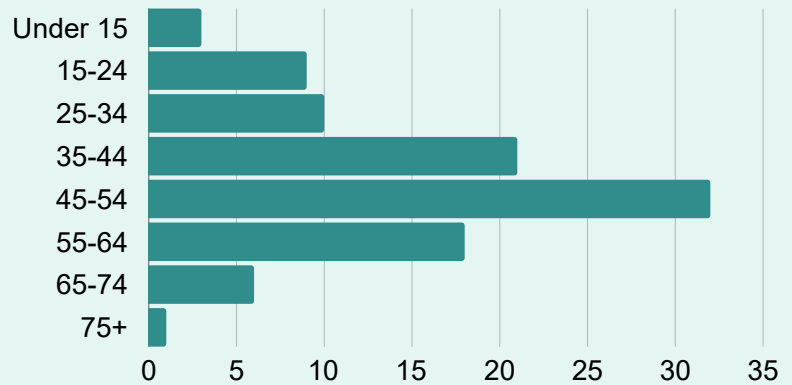


referrals to specialist support services

Demographics



Gender



Age

Presenting Issues

713 Mental Health

712 Inclusion

550 Housing & Homelessness

554 Alcohol and Drug

Supporting Emergency Services

76 Times Community Connectors supported emergency services

535 Incidents where harm was prevented

180 Situations de-escalated

Case study: Aunty Frankston

Rebuilding trust, restoring dignity

Aunty Frankston's journey

- Long-term rough sleeper in Frankston and the surrounding areas for 35 years
- Lived with complex trauma, including child abuse, domestic violence and long-term alcohol and other drug use as a coping mechanism
- Expressed significant distrust of services and authority, with limited engagement prior to Community Connectors.



This image has been generated using AI and is for illustrative purposes only.

Supports provided

- Ongoing trust-building over a 2-month period using a flexi-case management approach
- Engagement through flexible, relationship-based outreach, including adjusted connector hours and morning engagement
- Coordinated support across housing, health, crisis support, and alcohol and drug services.

***I don't normally trust people,
but there is something about
the two of you.***



-Aunty Frankston

Today

- Accepted into long-term housing
- Has access to medical care, mental health support, regular meals, and on-site staff support
- Maintains contact with Community Connectors as needed
- Reduced street presentation.

Community Safety

Reduction in disorderly and offensive conduct offences as recorded by Victoria Police, from 2024-25



The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) - the independent body responsible for processing, analysing, and publishing Victoria's crime data - provides publicly available datasets that allow organisations to review local crime patterns. Drawing on CSA data, for the 2024/2025 reporting period across the Frankston LGA, there was an increase in disorderly and offensive conduct across the Frankston LGA. In contrast, the Frankston Station and Young Street precinct, where the Community Connectors program is delivered, recorded a 44% reduction in disorderly and offensive conduct offences.

In this operating environment, Community Connectors provided an essential early-response function that helped prevent incidents from escalating into police-reportable events. During the reporting period, the team supported emergency services on 76 occasions, prevented harm in 535 situations, and successfully de-escalated 180 incidents.

These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of having trained, trauma-informed staff embedded directly within the precinct capable of intervening at the earliest point of risk, stabilising situations, and resolving issues before they escalate into criminal incidents or require enforcement responses. It also helps to create safer public spaces, reduce disruption and strengthen confidence for station staff, commuters, traders, and broader community.



Just please keep them on the streets. They're doing an amazing job. They're so approachable. Thank you for the ones who initiated this.

- Community member

Australian Crime and Prevention Awards

Community Connectors awarded Gold

The annual Australian Crime and Violence and Prevention Awards (ACVPA) recognise and reward programs that reduce crime and violence in Australia. The ACPVA are a joint initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments and are delivered by the Australian Institute of Criminology. All projects are assessed each year by the ACVPA Board, which consists of senior law enforcement representatives from each state and territory police service, and is chaired by the AIC Director.

The Community Connector program was awarded the gold award in the community based category for the role it played in reducing crime and enhancing safety at stations and contributing to a safer and more inclusive public spaces.

This is an excellent initiative that promotes crime prevention and enhances community safety.

Given the encouraging results of the program with disorderly and offensive conduct down 79% and public order and security offences reduced by 59%, there is scope for adoption in other communities.



- Deputy Director,
Dr Rick Brown, AIC



Service Coordination

Service coordination has been a critical component of the Community Connectors Program, recognising that many people engaging in the Frankston Station and Young Street precinct face complex needs that cannot be resolved through single-service responses. Community Connectors play a key role in bridging gaps between individuals and the broader service system, particularly for people who experience barriers to access, long waiting times, or difficulty navigating formal support pathways.

Throughout the reporting period:

- 420 service interactions were undertaken with local health, emergency services housing, mental health, AOD, family violence, youth and community services, supporting information sharing, advocacy and coordinated responses.
- 204 referrals were made to specialist services, with Community Connectors actively supporting people through the referral process rather than relying on self-navigation.
- Ongoing support provided while on waiting lists, including check-ins, practical assistance and monitoring, reducing the risk of escalation during service delays.
- Warm, trauma-informed engagement helped overcome common barriers such as system complexity, past negative experiences and disengagement from services.

Case study

“Pauline” was first identified by Community Connectors staff in early July after repeatedly presenting on Young Street with her belongings and her puppy, Angel. She was sleeping rough, had fled a domestic violence situation, and was living with serious health concerns.

Pauline was highly distressed, often confused, and mistrustful of services. Community Connectors provided consistent engagement, de-escalation and reassurance, gradually building trust and creating a foundation for coordinated support.

Service coordination was central to achieving a positive outcome. Community Connectors supported Pauline to access and engage with multiple services, including housing, family violence, health, income and community support.

Staff walked alongside her to appointments, provided ongoing reminders and advocacy, supported her while she was on waiting lists, and worked closely with partner agencies to maintain continuity of care. Through this sustained coordination, Pauline was accepted into long-term accommodation at Sumner House, with her puppy approved as a support animal.

She is now housed, engaged in health treatment, and continues to present as calm, settled and appreciative of the support received.



Through the Community Connectors networking efforts, some of Frankston's most vulnerable people are now able to access vital services. I believe that many of the people who have been referred to us through this program would not have accessed our service without their support."

- Windana



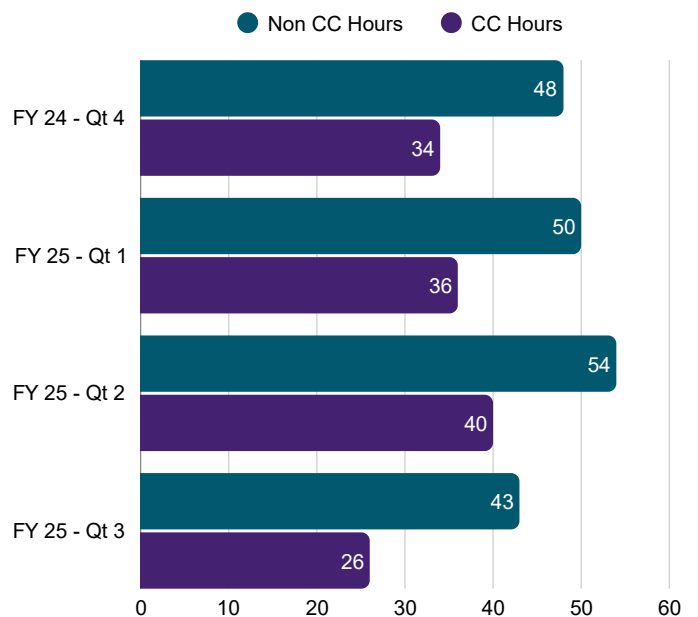
Partnership in Action

Metro's incident data indicate that anti-social events were consistently lower during Community Connector operating hours across all reported quarters. This pattern suggests that the presence of Community Connectors supports earlier identification and management of emerging behaviours, reducing the likelihood of escalation into more serious incidents.

The most pronounced difference occurred in FY25 Q3, where incidents during Community Connector hours were substantially lower than during non-Connector hours, reinforcing the value of proactive, on-site intervention in a high-demand station environment.

These reductions have clear flow-on benefits for community safety staff and station operations. Fewer, less escalated incidents reduce the need for reactive responses from safety personnel, allowing staff to focus on core duties and maintain a visible, preventive presence. This contributes to smoother operational continuity, minimises service disruption, and supports a safer and more stable environment for passengers, staff and contractors throughout the reporting period.

Metro Anti-Social Events by Financial Quarter



Case study: 14 year old rough sleeper

Early intervention through supportive partnerships

“Jack’s” journey

- Referred to Community Connectors by Metro staff after being observed sleeping at Frankston Station.
- Jack had been experiencing homelessness since early 2025
- No access to a phone, identification, income or youth allowance.
- Significant family instability, including a parent currently incarcerated and ongoing conflict at home
- Not engaged in education and expressed a desire to seek employment in the future



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Supports provided

- Referral and accompaniment to Youth Homelessness Access Point
- Advocacy with homelessness provider, Child Protection and Victoria Police to clarify intervention order conditions.
- Practical assistance provided, including food and details of the Community Connectors details to support ongoing engagement

Today

- Remains engaged with Community Connectors and local youth services.
- Child Protection involvement is being clarified following cross-agency advocacy
- Highlights the importance of early identification, supportive partnerships, and coordinated responses for young people experiencing homelessness.



Summary

The Community Connectors Program at Frankston Station and the Young Street precinct has demonstrated the effectiveness of a place-based, trauma-informed outreach model in supporting vulnerable community members while strengthening safety in a high-traffic public environment.

Through consistent presence, early intervention, and relationship-based engagement, Community Connectors has supported individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, substance use issues, and social isolation, many of whom face significant barriers to accessing traditional services. This approach has enabled timely support, reduced escalation, and improved pathways into appropriate services.

The program has also made a meaningful contribution to community safety, supporting a calmer environment for commuters, traders, and frontline staff.

Central to these outcomes has been the strong partnership between SECL, Metro, and Frankston City Council, alongside collaboration with local services. Together, these partnerships have delivered a coordinated, compassionate, and effective response that balances public safety with dignity, inclusion, and long-term wellbeing.

Next Steps

Building on the program's demonstrated impact, the next phase will focus on strengthening system responses, deepening coordination, and ensuring the sustainability of outcomes across Frankston Station and Young Street.

Consolidate and formalise service coordination practices

- Community Connectors will continue to play a critical system navigation role, supporting people to remain engaged while awaiting services, advocating across agencies, and reducing the risk of escalation linked to service gaps or delays

Sustain and grow this work with an increased focus on funding strategies that support stakeholder engagement and partnership development

- Using demonstrated outcomes to attract ongoing and diversified funding. Investment in partner-driven approaches will be critical to maintaining momentum and responding effectively to emerging community needs.

Expand to additional stations

- Given the demonstrated impact at Dandenong and Frankston station planning will commence to explore the program's expansion to further priority stations within the network. This will support wider coverage, extend safety benefits, and enhance early-intervention capacity across more communities.

Strengthen referral pathways

- Working with service partners to support clearer escalation pathways, and continuity of cares for people who regularly present in the precinct



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