



# **Huon Valley Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

*Working Towards Wellness for All People in the Huon Valley*

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## WELCOME TO WELLNESS

Welcome to wellness. This Strategy supports positive change in health and wellbeing in the Huon Valley. It applies the best knowledge, ideas and expertise, and builds on the wonderful work of local people and community organisations.

The focus of the Strategy is to enable wellness by preventing ill-health. It speaks to the issues the Huon Valley community told us it cared about in the consultations. It is designed to support the community to intervene now, and to promote wellness for the future.

The Strategy recognises there has been momentous change across the Valley over the last 30 or more years with impacts that have affected different communities in different ways. Through stories about who we are, where we've come from and what we've experienced we can hear the voices of everyone – Aboriginal people, descendent families, more recent arrivals, young and old – all the stories that together make this place unique.

Through this Strategy, the Huon Valley Council harnesses and celebrates our enormous community value. It enables people, families and communities to become the primary investors in their own and each other's health and wellbeing. As one Huon Valley, we celebrate our strengths and similarities and address the differences so that everyone can adapt and flourish over the next 30 years.



*Far South*



## DRIVERS OF WELLNESS

Our long-term health is significantly influenced by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work, play and age. Our experiences in early life, connections and support from family and friends, our level of education, employment and income, and the situation in which we live, all contribute to how likely we are to stay healthy or become ill or injured.

Our health is also influenced by our genetic make-up and lifestyle choices – these factors often interact. By eating healthy food, getting enough exercise, stopping smoking, reducing our alcohol use, and getting immunised we can be healthier, live longer and create the right conditions for our children to grow, live and play in.

Research shows that social connections not only lead to good mental health but also to good all-round physical health. The sense of identity we get from membership of groups, and the meaning and purpose they provide, is very important to our health.

The environment also influences our overall wellbeing. By taking action to mitigate and adapt to adverse environmental impacts caused by issues like climate change, the health and wellbeing of the community will be supported over the long term.

In building a Healthy Huon, we must consider and respond to all these drivers of wellness – by strengthening what's already there, adding what's worked elsewhere, acting together and supporting each other. The way personal, social, community and structural factors interact and affect our health are presented at Figure 1.

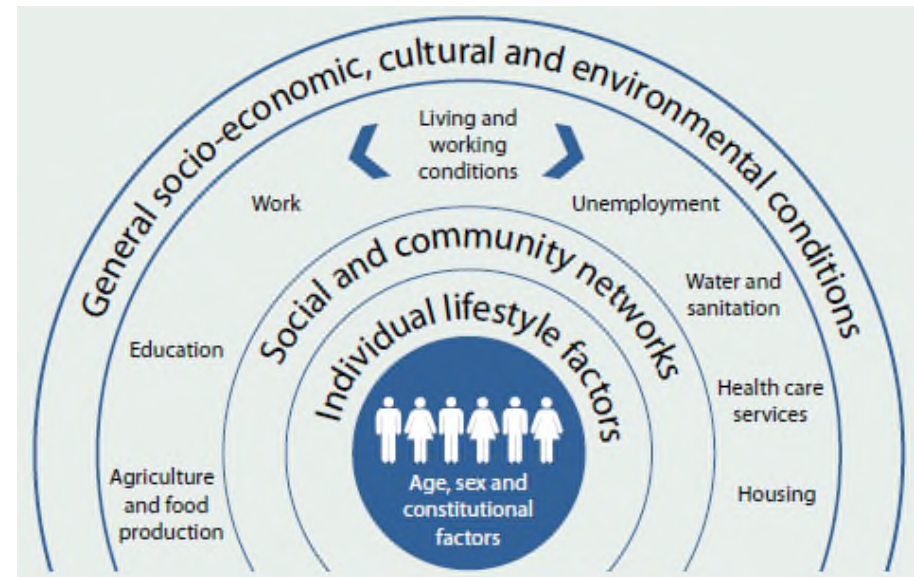


Figure 1: Drivers of wellness

Source: Dahlgren & Whitehead 1991



## A DIVERSE PLACE

Over 16,000 people make their home in the Huon Valley, living in a collection of dynamic communities. Most communities have undergone significant changes since the 1980s – each has its own personality derived from its history, traditions and location, and its own population mix, challenges and opportunities. The population of the Huon Valley is growing rapidly at a rate twice that of other areas.

These differences between communities play out across a number of factors, for example, in levels of education, household income and types of employment. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) tells us there are differing levels of unemployment across the Valley; that some areas have a higher rate of people with a university degree who are more likely to be employed as professionals; and some have fewer people go past year 10 who are more likely to be employed as labourers or in aquaculture.

There are other differences revealed by the ABS statistics as well – Dover has a much older age profile with a median age of 54. Ranelagh, which has an increasing number of young families with parents in full-time work, especially as tradespeople and technicians, has a median age of 34. Overall, the Huon Valley median age is 45 and it has risen sharply from 42 in 2011. In 2016, 37% of people in the Huon Valley were aged over 55 and 20% over 65. Just 10% of people were aged between 15 and 24.

Respecting the diversity of the Huon Valley community and ensuring fair and equitable access to services is key to achieving success.

Understanding and incorporating the varying needs of the community is vital to ensure everyone has a fair opportunity to live a healthy and happy life.



*'Random Acts of Kindness' Commissioner Adriana Taylor and students from Huonville High School*



## PRIORITY AREAS

To achieve wellness for all people in the Huon Valley and to meet our aspirations for this Strategy, 3 Priority and 10 Action Areas have been identified. A summary is provided on the next page.

The three Priority Areas are:

### PRIORITY – CONNECTING PEOPLE

Our social connections contribute enormously to our health and wellbeing. Evidence shows that strong relationships and being actively involved in community keep us healthy. Some groups need support to make the connections that build wellness for life. Priority 1 facilitates connections that build optimism, inclusion, and the best start to life.

### PRIORITY – CONNECTING TO PLACE

People living in the Huon Valley have a strong sense of place. It's rural qualities, natural beauty and diverse communities bring opportunities but can also test our ability to be healthy and well. Priority 2 enables connections to get around, live comfortably, eat well, and enjoy the outdoors.

### PRIORITY – CONNECTING KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW

Local knowledge and practical know-how is an enormous resource for building a Healthy Huon. Connecting this knowledge and know-how strategically through signature projects, and locally, will achieve increased health and wellness. Priority 3 connects expertise so we avoid harm, learn constantly, and deliver more collectively than we would on our own.



## THREE PRIORITIES, 10 ACTION AREAS

### Priority – Connecting People

Action Areas	Our Aspirations
1. Inclusion and interaction	People of all ages have fulfilling and meaningful connections and a sense of belonging in their community
2. Conception to school	All Huon Valley children get the best start in life with the foundations for long-term health and wellness
3. Young healthy and well	Young people are resilient and optimistic, feel connected and valued, and can find the right support to meet their needs

### Priority – Connecting to Place

Action Areas	Our Aspirations
4. Getting Around	People move easily around, and out of, the Huon Valley to meet their health, social, educational, work and other needs
5. Affordable secure housing	People live in comfortable affordable innovative housing that promotes wellness
6. Fresh food for all	The best fresh food is available, affordable and accessible, people are skilled in growing, preparing and cooking it, and everyone eats well
7. Active outdoors	Our towns and hamlets are pedestrian-friendly, connected by a network of cycling tracks and walking trails, and have active recreation and exercise spaces that encourage participation and use

### Priority – Connecting Knowledge and Know - How

Action Areas	Our Aspirations
8. Free from harm	Individuals, families and communities are safe from the harmful use of alcohol and other drugs
9. Learning for life	People in the Huon Valley at whatever stage of life or level of learning value, engage with, and participate in, lifelong learning
10. Strengthening connections	Local knowledge and know-how is connected to need and increases the wellness of individuals, families and communities



## PRIORITY - CONNECTING PEOPLE

### ACTION AREA 1 - INCLUSION AND INTERACTION

Meaningful social contact is central to making people's lives better. When we have a strong set of connections we are less likely to be anxious and depressed. When our connections are weak, our health and wellbeing suffers and it's much harder to re-connect. Groups especially at risk are adolescents and young people aged under 25, people over 65, and men over 40 – a largely hidden group in the Valley who can become isolated and are often reluctant to seek help.

People who are more socially connected live longer and have better health. Strong social ties are at least as good for health as not smoking, having a good diet and regular exercise. Feeling lonely increases our likelihood of earlier death by 26% – this is greater than the risk for obesity. To create thriving communities and flourishing individuals, it is essential to provide information and opportunities for people to easily and meaningfully connect wherever they are in the Valley.

Feeling part of a community or group and knowing we can get support when we need it also provides us with a sense of belonging. Supportive hubs that bring individuals, families, community groups and service providers together make a real difference – places across the Valley like the libraries, schools, Child and Family Centres, Drop-In Centres, SETAC, and Community Houses and Hubs. Community arts and sporting clubs also empower individuals, heal communities and foster connections.

#### Our Aspiration

*People of all ages have fulfilling and meaningful connections and a sense of belonging in their community*

#### Social Wellbeing

**Direction 1** - Promote participation in social and special interest activities

**Direction 2** - Partner with schools to connect families to each other activities and programs

**Direction 3** - Partner with organisations to support and encourage connections to interests and activities

**Direction 4** - Partner with the arts, sports, recreation and cultural sectors to support and promote community wellbeing

**Direction 5** - Collaborate with the Aboriginal community

#### People with Disability

**Direction 6** - Build community awareness and consider people with disability in all Council and community decisions and activities

**Direction 7** - Support small business to be more responsive to people with disability





## ACTION AREA 2 - CONCEPTION TO SCHOOL

The time from conception to the end of the first two years of life – our first 1000 days – lays the groundwork for who we are and what we achieve.

Research shows that experiences during those first days have life-long effects on our health and wellbeing. Many challenges in adult society have their roots in these earliest years – major public health problems like obesity, heart disease, and mental ill-health. Experiences in early childhood can also influence criminality, problems in literacy and numeracy, and lower economic participation.

About three-quarters of Huon Valley children have highly or well developed strengths across a range of social and emotional items. However, by the time Huon Valley children start school, 16% are developmentally vulnerable across at least one, and 26% across two of five key domains: language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge, physical health and wellbeing, social competence, and emotional maturity. Children who are vulnerable on one or more domains at age 5 are more likely to be in the bottom 20% of NAPLAN scores in Years 3, 5 and 7.

These results tell us that the future health and wellbeing of too many children are at risk and taking action that is child-centred, family-focused and activated at the community level will benefit children, families and the whole community.

### Our Aspiration

*All Huon Valley children get the best start in life with the foundations for long-term health and wellness*

### Action on Early Childhood

**Direction 1** - Strengthen parenting by connecting people and organisations who are supporting children and their families

**Direction 2** - Encourage child centred, family focused service delivery

**Direction 3** – Raise awareness of the importance of the early years

**Direction 4** - Promote the value of parents and care givers and support them through the early years



*Huon Valley Children's Services*



## ACTION AREA 3 - YOUNG HEALTHY AND WELL

Young people told us they want to be well and to be themselves, to have a space they can call their own and to be able to connect with someone they trust and respect. A valued adult with whom young people can share their teenage journey with honesty and candour can have a significant influence on wellbeing.

Mental health emerged as one of the greatest threats to the health and wellness of young people. The latest results from the Mission Australia's annual Youth Survey reveals mental health is now the number one concern for young people in Australia aged 15-19 for the first time in the survey's 16-year history. Alcohol and drugs, and equity and discrimination, rated almost as highly. Reasons for poor mental health vary, including anxiety, bullying, isolation, limited choices and confidence to 'come out'.

Research reveals that building hope and optimism in young people can help stop this decline in mental health. We need to support young people to learn how to strengthen relationships, build positive emotions and personal resilience, and adopt a healthy lifestyle. This Positive Education not only increases wellness, rigorous evaluation of the approach has demonstrated it also delivers significant improvements in school performance.

### Our Aspiration

*Young people are resilient and optimistic, feel connected and valued, and can find the right support to meet their needs*

### Wellness for Young People

- Direction 1** - Explore opportunities to build resilience and wellness in young people
- Direction 2** - Scope a mentoring program for young people
- Direction 3** - Explore options for a Youth Space
- Direction 4** - Promote access to services for young people
- Direction 5** - Advocate for increased youth outreach services

### Skate Park Safety

- Direction 6** - Address perceptions and concerns at Huon Valley skate parks



## PRIORITY - CONNECTING TO PLACE

### ACTION AREA 4 – GETTING AROUND

When affordable and convenient travel options aren't available, people can feel isolated and excluded which impacts on our wellbeing.

Lack of suitable, affordable transport was the most frequently identified issue during the consultations for this Strategy. People were eager to be better connected to each other, services, and especially to education and employment.

Transport was seen as the ultimate connector. Without reliable transport people experienced barriers to employment, education, health, and social connections. It stopped people from getting to work, training, school and college, being at social occasions, and attending appointments. Once there, getting home at a convenient time was often the hardest part.

Good, accessible, affordable, reliable transport is a major challenge in the Huon Valley. Over two thirds of vehicles are over ten years old and 41% of us live in towns without a bus service. The challenges include the cost, scheduling, frequency and routes of buses, access to driver training for young drivers, and the cost of car ownership including registration, insurance and petrol.

#### Our Aspiration

*People move easily around, and out of, the Huon Valley to meet their health, social, educational, work and other needs*

#### Transport for Health

**Direction 1** - Actively participate in the Transport Health Access Working Group

**Direction 2** - Seek support to develop a co-designed transport action plan

**Direction 3** - Support volunteer learner driver mentor programs

**Direction 4** - Explore flexible and innovative transport options for the Huon Valley



*Positive Ageing Excursion*



## ACTION AREA 5 - AFFORDABLE SECURE HOUSING

Appropriate affordable housing that is dry and warm in winter and cool in summer is a significant contributor to health and wellbeing. Poor housing impacts on both our physical and mental health and poses risks to older people, those with chronic health conditions, and children. For some groups in the Valley, comfortable housing can be hard to find.

Energy-saving programs that contribute to more comfortable living conditions have high health and wellbeing paybacks – fewer symptoms of wheeze and colds, fewer visits to GPs, hospital admissions and days away from school, improved mental health, and less economic stress – good health is less worry about bills.

A vision for local renewable energy and innovative housing will not only help to address energy and housing stress, but also has the potential to provide economic benefits. The Valley already has many of the skills, knowledge and know-how needed to improve existing housing, and to develop new housing creatively and sustainably.

In partnership with communities, there is a wide range housing options that could be considered to suit the emerging age profile of the Valley – lower cost housing forms like garden flats, caravan parks, diverse home estates, relocatable homes, self-build houses, eco-housing and co-housing.

### Our Aspiration

*People live in comfortable affordable innovative housing that promotes wellness*

### Comfortable Housing

**Direction 1** - Explore strategic opportunities for renewable energy across the Valley

**Direction 2** – Advocate for an energy efficiency program to assist low income households

**Direction 3** - Support access to local skills and knowledge to improve housing comfort and efficiency

### Innovative New Housing

**Direction 4** - Convene a roundtable discussion with interested community members, developers and stakeholders to explore viable, creative, innovative and alternative housing options

**Direction 5** – Advocate for the availability of affordable housing



## ACTION AREA 6 - FRESH FOOD FOR ALL

Good food is essential for good health and there is plenty for all in the Huon Valley. The Valley's rich fresh food tradition is thriving once more, with growing numbers of small and medium sized growers contributing to the local economy, addressing issues relating to climate change, and providing the fresh fruits and vegetables that are so important to health. While about 75% of us get some vegetables every day, just 1 in 25 of us eats a sufficiently healthy amount of vegetables and only about 1 in 3 eat the recommended serves of fruit.

It is critical that the fresh bounty of fruit and vegetables reaches those who need it most. Community gardens now flourish in parts of the Valley as both a source of fresh produce and a valuable opportunity for people to learn new skills and be connected to each other and their locality. People not only get great social and physical benefits from being part of a gardening community, community gardens also provide the opportunity to develop skills in preparing, cooking, and storing food safely.

Food surpluses also provide an opportunity for people to be part of the 'sharing economy'. There are already groups sharing surplus fresh produce or harvesting surplus or residual fruits and vegetables in the Valley. This sharing culture provides the foundation and experience for more organised, widespread distribution of surplus food – both grown and cooked.

### Our Aspiration

*The best fresh food is available, affordable and accessible, people are skilled in growing, preparing and cooking it, and everyone eats well*

### Affordable Fresh Food

**Direction 1** - Partner with community groups, neighbourhoods and schools to create and support community gardens

**Direction 2** - Support food sharing opportunities

**Direction 3** - Provide support to community and non-government organisations to increase food security at times of need

### Systems Approach

**Direction 4** - Support the establishment of a Food Policy Council



Geeveston Community Garden



## ACTION AREA 7 - ACTIVE OUTDOORS

People in the Valley want to walk and cycle safely, enjoy the freedom to move between townships and hamlets, and feel connected to nature and each other. For example, residents of Franklin and Ranelagh want to be able to walk and cycle to Huonville for school, work and shopping, while other towns across the Valley want easy access to recreation spaces and scenic spots.

Designing outdoor spaces for health entices people to be more physically active. We know that while adults spend just over 30 minutes per day doing physical activity, only 43% actually meet the "sufficiently active" threshold needed for good health.

Quality outdoor exercise stations are an affordable way to promote good health and prevent poor health for individuals; quality sporting infrastructure supports local clubs to survive and thrive, building healthier communities. It is well-established that football and other sporting clubs support important social networks and provide essential community connections.

Older residents and people with disability also need safe, pedestrian-friendly environments for easy walking that include seating and shade. Being able to walk to essential services like shops and the post office not only has benefits for our physical health but also delivers social benefits – people who are out and about have spontaneous conversations in the street and connect with local businesses and services. They feel part of a community.

### Our Aspiration

*Our towns and hamlets are pedestrian-friendly, connected by a network of cycling tracks and walking trails, and have active recreation and exercise spaces to encourage participation and use*

### Recreation and Exercise

**Direction 1** - Engage with local communities to develop pedestrian-friendly infrastructure

**Direction 2** - Develop a Recreation Strategy that includes links between townships, has shared amenity suitable for all users and considers health and wellbeing

**Direction 3** - Promote active, affordable or free outdoor activities that provide the opportunity for people to play outdoors locally



*Franklin River Walk*



## PRIORITY - CONNECTING TO KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW

### ACTION AREA 8 - FREE FROM HARM

Over the last 30 or more years there have been significant changes to jobs, industries and lifestyles in the Valley, bringing risks of disconnection from education, work and community. For some, these experiences lead to feeling excluded and to a loss of meaning, purpose and the connections they got in a previous life and job.

Alcohol and other drugs can play a part in seeming to make life easier. Young people aged 10 to 24 can be particularly vulnerable – rates of risky alcohol and drug use are higher in this group. Alcohol and drugs may also be used by people with mental ill-health to escape their symptoms.

Alcohol and drug abuse not only jeopardises the wellbeing of individuals, but also impacts on children and families across generations causing further disconnection from education and jobs, and the prospect of a less healthy life.

Community-based approaches that build trust through education, outreach and relationship-building can improve understanding and knowledge of alcohol and drug abuse. Strengthening support at the local level decreases and prevents risky alcohol and drug use, reduces adverse effects, and minimises disconnection from education and work by helping young workers and jobseekers connect with local businesses.

#### Our Aspiration

*Individuals, families and communities are safe from the harmful use of alcohol and other drugs*

#### Effective Action

**Direction 1** - Support Geeveston Community Centre to deliver the LDAT (Local Drug Action Team) Community Drug Action Plan

**Direction 2** - Build community knowledge and understanding of alcohol and other drug-related issues

**Direction 3** - Collaborate with schools and the Trade Training Centre to deliver early intervention for young people



*Side by Side Suicide Prevention Forum*



## ACTION AREA 9 - LEARNING FOR LIFE

Learning is positive for health, and lifelong learners live long lives as active, open, curious, engaged adults. But for many of us, learning is a challenge – Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show half of adult Tasmanians don't have the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to get by in the modern world.

People with lower literacy and numeracy are much more likely to experience poor health. Lower literacy affects our ability to read and interpret medical information and to take our medication according to the instructions. As a result, we may not be as effective at managing our own health and illnesses and have a greater dependence on health care providers.

Improving literacy and numeracy and improving health go hand-in-hand. To be our best, literacy and numeracy need to be valued across the generations, beginning at birth, and continuing through school into our adult lives. Everyone needs to be involved seamlessly across pre-schools, schools and trade training, as well as local footy clubs, community organisations, and employers.

Being able to read, write and do basic maths is our passport to education, employment, social connections and a full community life, all key contributors to our overall health and wellbeing.

### Our Aspiration

*People in the Huon Valley at whatever stage of life or level of learning value, engage with, and participate in, lifelong learning*

### Adult Literacy

**Direction 1** - Support 26TEN programs, including the Health Literacy Network campaigns and projects

**Direction 2** - Encourage the use of the HeLLOTas toolkit for developing health literacy in community service organisations

### Strategic Literacy and Numeracy

**Direction 3** - Support the development of a Huon Valley Literacy and Numeracy Plan





## ACTION AREA 10 - STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

There is a wealth of expert knowledge and practical experience across the Huon Valley. Council brings expertise across its areas of responsibility, and profit and not-for-profit organisations provide highly valued services and information. Businesses bring long traditions in agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and wooden boat building, and newer knowledge in wine and cider-making, brewing and tourism. Many retirees and semi-retirees who have chosen the Valley as home bring knowledge and expertise on a wide range of subjects.

The Valley will be even richer if this knowledge is more widely shared. Council can play a pivotal role in knowing where the talent is in the community, making connections that add value, and facilitating conversations amongst potential collaborators. The highly respected Service Provider Network can contribute expertise to the health and wellbeing priorities in this Strategy, and volunteers of all ages and backgrounds can form diverse and supportive networks where they can express their talents and develop interests for the benefit of others.

Council is uniquely placed to be a community leader, to skilfully facilitate opportunities people want to be part of and make sure people know about them. Through collaborative projects and partnerships, and a clear view across the Priorities, Action Areas and Directions, Council will be able to connect people to deliver maximum value for the Valley.

### Our Aspiration

*Local knowledge and know-how is connected to need and increases the wellness of individuals, families and communities*

### Information Connections

**Direction 1** - Coordinate and distribute a community directory of organisations and activities

**Direction 2** - Support high levels of internet access and digital literacy

### Volunteers

**Direction 3** - Support locally based organisations to connect and involve people in local communities in a way that matches interests and expertise

### Tapping knowledge

**Direction 4** - Partner with the Service Provider Network to promote health and prevent disease to address the Action Areas in this Strategy

**Direction 5** - Investigate a collaboration/co-creation/partnership model that suits Council and community to tap the deep expertise available in the Huon Valley across the professional and community spheres



## DOING THE WORK

There are 10 Action Areas and 48 Directions under the three Priority Areas set out in this Strategy. Not everything can be done at once – it is important that the Directions are prioritised and progressively rolled-out over time.

An annual Implementation Plan that sets out the Directions to be delivered each year will be incorporated into the Council's Annual Plan. Council will report annually on the outcomes achieved. This demonstrates Council's commitment to their implementation and its intention to monitor, review, adapt and evaluate the Implementation plan

Council has a key role to play in implementation, variously as leader, facilitator, advocate, regulator and provider. As leader, it will work towards wellness for all people in the Huon Valley; as facilitator, it will connect people, knowledge, experience and skills to bring the Strategy to life; as advocate, it will ensure it attracts the resources and expertise it needs to keep the Valley healthy; as regulator, it will consider the issues for which it is legally responsible; and as provider, it will deliver services where there is an identified need. Council will also ensure it considers health and wellbeing in all its decisions and supports the community to be healthy and well.

The Implementation Plan will recognise the strengths and capabilities of everyone who can influence change, encouraging co-designing solutions and collaborating on action.

The Plan will support the trialling of new ideas and provide the opportunity to learn quickly and efficiently what works and what doesn't work. The Plan will bring together and align the efforts of individuals, families, Council, organisations and communities to have a greater impact on the wellness of all people in the Huon Valley.



*Huon Valley Sunrise*



## SOURCES AND RESOURCES

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### Young Healthy and Well

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## **Huon Valley Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

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