



Minutes

Council Meeting

Tuesday 21 October 2025 at 6.00 pm

**Council Chambers (and by video conferencing)
East Gippsland Shire Council Corporate Centre
273 Main Street, Bairnsdale 3875**

Councillors

John White (Mayor), Sonia Buckley (Deputy Mayor), Arthur Allen,
Jodie Ashworth, Tom Crook, Barry Davis, Joanne Eastman,
Bernie Farquhar, and Ian Trevaskis

Attachments referenced in these minutes can be located in the meeting agenda on East Gippsland Shire Council's [website](#).

Vision

To foster inclusive, connected, communities and places where all East Gippslanders prosper, and endeavour not to leave anyone behind.

Our Strategic Themes

1. Community Wellbeing and Social Responsibility
2. Prosperity
3. Making the Most of What We've Got
4. Managing Council Well

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1 Procedural

1.1 Recognition of Traditional Custodians

Mayor Cr John White welcomed all to the Council meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians.

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel people as the Traditional Custodians of this land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire, and their enduring relationship with country. The Traditional Custodians have cared and nurtured East Gippsland for tens of thousands of years.

Council values their living culture and practices and their right to self-determination. Council pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders, past, present, and future.

1.2 Apologies

Nil

1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Cr Tom Crook declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 5.2.1 *Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip - Implementation of Eagle Point Structure Plan (Panel Report)*, as a material interest due to owning property within the Eagle Point Structure Plan boundary line.

Sarah Johnston General Manager Business Excellence declared a conflict of interest, during the closed part of the meeting, in relation to item 7.1 *Contract Matter*, as a general interest due to having a connection with the content of the confidential report.

Fiona Weigall Chief Executive Officer declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 7.3 *Appointment of Independent Member - CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee*, as a material interest due to the matter relating to her employment at East Gippsland Shire Council.

1.4 Confirmation of Minutes

Motion

That the minutes of the Council meeting held Tuesday 16 September 2025 and of the Unscheduled Council Meeting held Tuesday 7 October 2025 be confirmed.

Spoke for the motion: Cr Arthur Allen and Cr Sonia Buckley

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

1.5 Next Meeting

The next Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 18 November 2025 at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street Bairnsdale commencing at 6.00 pm.

1.6 Requests for Leave of Absence

Nil

1.7 Open Forum

1.7.1 Petitions

Nil

1.7.2 Questions of Council

1.7.2.1 Coastal Adaptation Action Plan

Mr David Nicastro submitted the following question which was read out on his behalf by Fiona Weigall Chief Executive Officer:

Question 1: *Friends of Gippsland Lakes welcomes the strong improvements in the final East Gippsland Shire Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP); and we feel it's important to acknowledge Council really listened to many of the community's concerns.*

As a next step, would Council be open to renaming EG3.2 as a Coastal Adaptation Action Plan (CAAP) so the adaptation work is clearly gathered under one banner and decisions can be sequenced holistically and cost-effectively?

Chris Stephenson General Manager Place and Community provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: Thank you for the positive feedback and we would like to acknowledge the significant input from Friends of Gippsland Lakes into this process.

We are open to options that meet your intent to ensure that “the adaptation work is clearly gathered under one banner, and decisions can be sequenced holistically and cost-effectively”.

We believe the current actions within EG 3.1 “investigation of opportunities for dedicated adaptation planning and funding”, as well as Action 3.2 captures this intent noting this adaptation planning will be funding dependent.

However, our preferred approach is to modify wording for these actions in the Implementation Plan to ensure this intent is made clear rather than the CMMP.

1.7.2.2 Development Plan's neighbourhood interfaces

Ms Anne Gleeson submitted the following question which was read out on her behalf by Fiona Weigall Chief Executive Officer:

Question 1: *"Will Council, as residents' representative, commit to a co-design process for the Development Plan's neighbourhood interfaces, so development poses no flood risk to existing residents and protects our streetscape character, and report how resident feedback changes the Plan?"*

Chris Stephenson General Manager Place and Community provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: Under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, Development Plans are exempt from public notice. However, Council has made a commitment to undertake community consultation on development plans as outlined in our Development Plan Policy. As per the policy, Council will undertake one or more periods of public consultation throughout the development of a development plan to ensure that the community gets the chance to have their say on all elements of the development plan and to ensure that where possible, their feedback is incorporated into the final plan.

1.7.2.3 Committee of Management - Insurance

Mr Peter Reefman asked the following questions:

Question 1: *"How was the impact to communities evaluated as part of the decision to cease providing insurance to Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action appointed Committees of Management in East Gippsland and how did Council inform itself about any impacts?"*

Question 2: *"Against a backdrop of EGSC Policies around Community Engagement, Customer Response, and Annual Allocations, please explain how withdrawal of Building Insurance cover by Council demonstrates commitment by Council to the support of primarily more remote communities?"*

Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: This decision was made as part of our ongoing review into appropriate allocation of Council resources. Council is very conscious this is a significant issue for a number of Committees of Management (CoM). East Gippsland also has more crown CoM than most areas.

It is also in line with the *Committee of Management Guidelines* April 2024 published by the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA), whereby Council has no obligation to provide insurance to state assets.

Councils across Victoria take a range of positions in relation to this issue.

Importantly, DEECA has advised that where there is an impact on a state-owned asset, funding for repair is considered on a case-by-case basis, and that volunteer groups such as CoM can potentially access insurance through the Victorian Managed Insurance Agency.

Council's commitment is to continue with its current allocations policy to support committees as per that policy. Our position on supporting CoM hasn't changed, except for the insurance issues raised.

Policies providing building cover also require the policy holder to commit to a minimum level of maintenance of the facility – this is something that is best in the hands of the CoM rather than Council.

Officers are working with DEECA, as are other local governments, to identify the best ways to support CoM with their role including the issues associated with building coverage.

It is also important to note that Council provides tailored support to a range of different CoM through annual allocations, assistance with maintenance and assistance with grounds maintenance.

We are continuing to discuss this matter with Councillors.

Response 2: Council will continue to support Crown Land Committees in the next financial year with adhoc maintenance support and the Annual Allocations process.

Committees receiving annual allocations from us will receive their 2025-26 funding as usual. We are also maintaining our current commitments to ground maintenance for DEECA facilities where we have agreements in place and will continue to offer strategic and maintenance advice where needed.

We are also committed to reviewing the allocations policy to ensure funding is distributed as equitable as possible across all of our communities.

1.7.2.4 Committee of Management - Insurance

Ms Cathy McLellan asked the following question:

Question 1: *“Why is Council dragging its feet in responding to serious concerns from Committees about scrapping building insurance, leaving communities exposed and in the dark?”*

Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: Council has provided responses to many Committees of Management both verbally and in writing. There are still some responses required that we are working through, as not all circumstances are the same. We will endeavour to get these out as soon as possible.

1.7.2.5 Committees of Management

Ms Joy Manley asked the following question:

Question 1: *“When will Council review its current support for community committees of management to ensure that the support provided across the Shire is equitable for all communities?”*

Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: Officers acknowledge that this policy requires further review noting the current policy has recently been approved to allow allocations to be made in the interim.

There are some inconsistencies starting to appear in the current policy; however, a more detailed review of the Assets associated with the Committee of Managements is required before a new policy and payment formula can be developed.

This will take place over this financial year.

In relation to Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) facilities, Council will continue to work with DEECA on their approach and the allocations policy.

1.7.2.6 Committees of Management - Insurance

Ms Ellen Edwards asked the following questions:

Question 1: *“Why does Council expect community committees to engage with Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) directly, given there is no indication DEECA will reconsider its stance, Council's own negotiations have failed, and DEECA appears uninterested in the viability of local committees in East Gippsland?”*

Question 2: *“Why was withdrawal of Building Insurance cover supported in the absence of exploring possible alternative approaches to continue to ensure that DEECA managed sites in East Gippsland Communities have appropriate and affordable insurance cover?”*

Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: Council should operate within the frameworks applied by DEECA. However, Council will continue to work on the behalf of the Committees of Management (CoM) and with DEECA on this issue. It is also important that CoM continue to work with DEECA on this issue where possible.

Response 2: As per previous response, Council believes it is operating within the guidelines set by DEECA. However, we are happy to continue to work with DEECA and CoM on alternatives.

1.7.2.7 Committees of Management - Insurance

Ms Beverly Cree asked the following questions:

Question 1: *“Why has East Gippsland Shire really decided to cease paying for Building Insurance for approximately 40 local community facilities across the Shire?”*

Question 2: *“Is Council prepared to reverse this decision?”*

Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: As per previous responses, the decision was made as part of our ongoing review into appropriate allocation of Council resources, in line with DEECA management guidelines.

It is also worth noting that the advice received by Council was that there was a risk that claims may not be successful due to current practices.

Response 2: Council's commitment is to review the allocations policy and any changes to the current approach would need to be formally adopted by Council. Officers will present options to Council for their consideration. DEECA is integral to any future position on this issue as they are fundamentally the asset owner. Officers are currently in discussions with the Councillors on this matter and hope to be in a position to provide further information to the effected communities shortly.

1.7.3 Public Submissions

1.7.3.1 Crown Land Committees of Management Insurances

Mr Mick Harrington addressed Council on the Crown Land Committees of Management Insurances.

1.7.3.2 Gippsland Lakes Shared Community Hub Project

Mr Gary Maskiell addressed Council on the Gippsland Lakes Shared Community Hub Project.

1.7.3.3 Planning scheme amendment C171egip

Ms Sandra McSweeney addressed Council on the Planning scheme amendment C171egip - Implementation of Eagle Point Structure Plan and spoke at item 5.2.1.

1.7.3.4 Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip

Ms Georgina Ah Yee addressed Council on the Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip - Implementation of Eagle Point Structure Plan and spoke at item 5.2.1.

1.7.3.5 Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip

Mr Shane McCarthy addressed Council on the Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip - Implementation of Eagle Point Structure Plan and spoke at item 5.2.1.

1.7.3.6 Planning scheme amendment C172egip

Ms Kate Young addressed Council on the Planning scheme amendment C172egip - Implementation of Paynesville Growth Area Structure Plan (Panel Report) and spoke at item 5.2.2.

1.8 Items for Noting

Nil

2 Notices of Motion

Nil

3 Deferred Business

Nil

4 Councillor Delegate Reports

4.1 Cr Arthur Allen

01/10/25 - The Chief Executive Officer, Fiona Weigall, General Manager Assets and Environment, Stuart McConnell and I met with the Executive Officer of Rail Freight Alliance to discuss our wish list, particularly for freight into and through Melbourne. After the meeting I took Reid for a quick visit to Fennings Intermodal. Reid expressed his amazement that this fantastic facility can't be utilised at this point.

09/10/25 - The Mayor Cr John White and I attended the Paynesville Cemetery Trust annual dinner. Thank you to chairman Geoff for this opportunity to join with this important group of volunteers and their helpers from Paynesville Lions who do a fantastic job of maintaining the cemetery in top class condition.

10/10/25 - Once again with the Mayor Cr John White, I attended the opening of the Bairnsdale District Art Society opening night of their Spring Art Show at St Johns Hall. As always, the show was really high quality, a feature being a drawing of an old shearing mate of Cr White.

11/10/25 - It was a privilege to attend a function to mark the 50th anniversary of Gippsland Lakes Community Health, again in the company of the Mayor, Cr John White. This was a great occasion with the first and long serving director of nursing Dianne Clarke (Connally) and her second in command Cheryl Brookes in attendance as well as staff and directors from across the years.

4.2 Cr Jodie Ashworth

My first 12 months in Council has been a busy but exciting and interesting time.

In addition to attending Council meetings, briefings and planning consultation meetings, I have also attended other Council opportunities.

November 2024

Following the election results it was a busy time undertaking the new required mandatory training requirements following the new *Local Government Act 2020* updates to ensure Councillors understood their roles and responsibilities in carrying out their statutory responsibilities for the four-year elected term.

I attended the Newlands Arm Resident & Ratepayers Association Annual General Meeting. It was a great turn out of passionate locals, and I thanked them for their kind invitation and warm welcome while I listened to what was coming up for the community.

I joined several Councillors at the civic event for the Official Opening of Forest Park in Orbost. This event was well attended and included a teddy bears picnic for local school children who enjoyed the new adventure playground. Following the official cutting of the ribbon and speeches the community enjoyed the new facilities, and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet and thank all those involved in the project.

It was great to attend the Community Forum in Newlands Arm to hear from and meet local residents who spoke about the community's vision and priorities to develop an open space masterplan.

December 2024

Along with other Councillors, I attended the East Gippsland Community Panel session to observe and listen to Community Panel Members as they reviewed the Community Vision that provided recommendations on Council's Strategic documents such as the Council Plan, Long-Term Financial Plan, Asset Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Plan. It was an enthusiastic group who are passionate about East Gippsland and want the best for their community, thank you for your time and effort in shaping this important work.

I attended my first Audit and Risk Committee meeting along with Mayor John White and Cr Eastman.

I attended the East Gippsland Marketing Inc Christmas and end of year function. It was great to catch up with network partners and celebrate the achievements and outcomes of 2024.

January 2025

I attended the Citizen of the Year Awards in Orbost at Forest Park where there was a large turnout on what turned out to be a very hot day. It was great to meet community members from all over East Gippsland to celebrate the contribution our volunteers make in our community. Congratulations to everyone who was nominated in the awards.

On Australia Day, I had the privilege of speaking at the Paynesville Foreshore on behalf of the Shire. The event was put together by the Paynesville Sea Scouts and Paynesville Lions Club and was well attended by community members who I got to catch up with and shared the morning together.

Regional Australia provided a workshop on “Building the Future with your community” to understand and focus on collaboration and innovation to ensure Australian regions are empowered to thrive using various approaches to challenges faced in regional and rural councils such as housing, natural disaster recovery and the transition to renewable energy.

February 2025

I attended a meeting to hear from locals of the Fort King area about the Public Amenity opportunities which were identified in the precinct with a focus on specific strategies to improve existing public amenities and inform a masterplan to achieve balance between environmental controls and community expectations in Paynesville. It was a great turn out of approximately 70 residents who provided their ideas and feedback on what the plan could look like.

The last weekend in February was a busy one with the Paynesville Festival of Music being held. I was joined by Mayor White, Councillors Farquar and Crook at the official opening. The event was a huge success with many local community members and visitors attending.

I attended our Audit and Risk Committee Meeting with Mayor White and Cr Eastman.

Our Community Visit to Orbost included a visit to Build QA, Lochiel Park, Orbost Recreation Reserve and basketball stadium, Orbost Mechanics Hall, Snowy Rail Bridge, Orbost Waste Transfer Station and Mingling Waters Caravan Park. We enjoyed meeting the community at the Orbost Art Centre and attending a meeting with the Orbost District Community Recovery and Transition Committee and Future of Orbost and District Projects representatives.

It was wonderful to be able to attend a Civic Reception with other Councillors to welcome Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC Governor of Victoria to East Gippsland where a reception was held to formally acknowledge her visit and thank her for visiting our region.

March 2025

My fitness was tested with a bike ride (on a non-electric bike!) on the East Gippsland Rail Trail. It was great to hear from this passionate volunteer committee about the work they have undertaken over the last couple of years and the benefits of the trail that it provides for businesses and our local economy that is used by locals and visitors from across Australia and internationally.

I attended the 2025 Victoria Convention of Councillors after applying and being successful in receiving a scholarship place through Municipal Association Victoria, where elected representatives and leaders gathered together to explore the evolving role of local government, with the central message being clear: *"The future is local."* The presentations and speakers were highly regarded, professional and extremely knowledgeable. Topics included: The changing role of Councillors, governance and leadership, financial sustainability: leading for the long term, Inclusive and ethical community representation, building trust through relationships – not rules, community empowerment and innovation, infrastructure, growth and resilience, transformation leadership in a time of complexity and leading with courage, vision and values.

It was a great conference where I was able to network with lots of newly elected Councillors, some of who I met through the Women Leading Locally program. I also got to meet many Councillors who had been re-elected who shared their knowledge, skills, experiences, and interesting stories. As well as meeting and connecting with other Councillors from Gippsland, the conference was a great networking opportunity.

I attended the Bairnsdale Community Meeting to hear from speakers and the community who discussed the future of the Old Geriatric Centre to explore ideas on how the site could potentially become a community-led project.

Along with Cr Eastman and Cr Trevaskis, I attended the Snowy River Campus Alpine School Community Learning Project presentation day. We met with staff and students and listen to students present their ideas how they could lead and make a difference in their community in the future.

April 2025

I attended my first Marina Consultative Committee and was warmly welcomed by Cr Allen and the Committee.

I attended a presentation by Dr Sai Ravel who in collaboration with the Koala Island Foundation demonstrated how computer vision and machine learning are being used to analyse photos of Raymond Island koalas, enabling the identification of individual animals and the tracking of their behaviours and movements providing unprecedented insights into koala populations. It was a great insight into the groundbreaking scientific initiative and the research being undertaken by passionate locals from the Foundation.

May 2025

Along with the Mayor Cr White, Deputy Mayor Cr Buckley and Cr Allen, I attended the opening of Palm Lake Resort Paynesville. It was a successful opening and attended by lots of community members. It was a great opportunity to view the facilities on offer.

I attended the Municipal Association Victoria (MAV) Rural and Regional Planning Conference which was attended by Councillor and Officers of which there was 165 people. Local Government planning is one of the most complex and challenging areas in local government that Councillors have responsibility for. The conference program included discussions on climate risk, renewable energy benefits, and regional food systems. Key themes included the transformation of rural Victoria, engagement with Traditional Owners, regional housing supply challenges and infrastructure needs, protection of natural resources focuses on statewide planning reforms, housing challenges and the role of AI in local governance. This conference was a great networking and collaborative opportunity with other local government representatives across Victoria who also undertake critical planning challenges to ensure sustainable development in rural and regional areas.

Our quarterly Audit and Risk Committee was held and attended by myself, Mayor White and Cr Eastman.

June 2025

I was delighted to attend the Rising Strong East Gippsland's Path to Community Resilience Forum as I had previously attended the first Rising Strong event in March 2024 in Lakes Entrance. I attended this with Mayor White and Cr Eastman.

Five years on from the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires it was great to bring community members together from local organisations and agencies to reflect on a shared recovery journey which celebrated successes and explored ongoing challenge. I enjoyed hearing from the speakers as they talked about their experiences not just from an agency perspective but also from a personal and lived experience. There has been amazing work done in East Gippsland that is focused on preparedness and resilience for future emergencies. A big thankyou and congratulations to all involved in this project.

It was great to attend the Victorian Government Treaty Information Forum with nearly all Councillors in attendance along with the Executive Leadership Team. This forum was an opportunity to learn more about Victoria's Treaty process and to hear directly from the Parliamentary Secretary for First Peoples, Christine Couzens MP, and Terry Garwood, Deputy Secretary, First Peoples - State Relations, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

I had the privilege of meeting the Governor General Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC at a Civic reception breakfast to mark First Responders Day. The Governor General was generous with her time and spoke to everyone while thanking them for their service to our community. The Governor General also enjoyed an unplanned ride in the fire truck to see some sights around Bairnsdale.

For National Volunteers week I took the opportunity to thank the Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre and all the hard work the volunteers do in our community. It was wonderful to be able to thank and celebrate with the volunteers at a morning tea where I got to interview one of the centre volunteers (Yvonne) who has been volunteering her time for many years. East Gippsland has a large percentage of people who volunteer in their communities so a big thank you to YOU!

Attending the 2025 National General Assembly (NGA) in Canberra was a great opportunity to network with other Councillors from all over Australia and reconnected with others I had met at the MAV Conference and the Regional and Rural Planning Conference as well as women from the Women Leading Locally program and Women for Election.

The Australian Local Government Association NGA conference is an important event that brings over 1300 local government leaders together from over 500 councils from across Australia to advocate to the Federal government to ensure the challenges councils face are recognized by the Federal Government.

I had the pleasure of meeting The Minister of Finance and Women Senator Katy Gallagher MP, National Senator for Victoria and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Senator Bridget McKenzie, Dr Anne Webster MP Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and Shadow Minister for Regional Communications all of whom were generous with their time and interested in East Gippsland.

The NGA is vital for representatives of local councils to speak directly with policymakers about areas that are challenging for all councils including Emergency Management Capability and Capacity, Safer Roads, Housing and Community Infrastructure and Local Government Jobs and Skills and Financial Sustainability.

July 2025

This month the Councillor group travelled to Mallacoota via Cann River. It was great to catch up with the Cann River community over lunch and to hear about what is happening in the area. The evening was spent at a business networking event. We heard about the current issues, challenges and the opportunities in the business community. We met with the Mallacoota Halls and Recreation Committee of Management and visited the hall to see the upgrades taking place. We enjoyed the visit to the Wilderness Collective to see the exciting work that was going on there. We also took the opportunity to visit the medical centre and met with practitioners and staff.

August 2025

I attended the Marina Consultative Committee with Cr Allen.

The Paynesville Business Tourism Association (PBTA) Networking Night was held and thanks to Mayor White and Cr Eastman for attending. PBTA had great speakers including the Manager from the Community Bank talking about scams, Rebecca and Scott from EGSC spoke about economic development and our visitor economy and the President from the Paynesville Classic Boat Rally talked about the upcoming event in February 2026. It was a chance for businesses and community organisation to network.

I attended a meeting with Beverley McArthur MP Shadow Local Government, Tim Bull MP and other Councillors to discuss the important issues for East Gippsland.

Representative from Visit Victoria were in Lakes Entrance to seek feedback and consult with community members, tourism operators and the public for their 2030 strategic planning. It was an opportunity to network with passionate East Gippsland advocates and hear their ideas for what is needed to promote our region.

I attended the Audit and Risk Committee meeting with Mayor White and Cr Eastman.

The “Answering the call for Regional Housing” summit hosted by the Regional Australia Institute which I attended with Cr Eastman the Chief Executive Officer at Churchill presented a report with key findings and recommendations for governments to address regional Australia’s housing challenges. This report shines a light on the urgent and complex housing challenges facing regional communities, setting out a bold vision for reform and highlighted innovative place-based solutions to ensure every community has access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

I attended the Gippsland Agricultural Group’s Annual General Meeting at the Gippsland Agricultural Centre to hear about the success of group over the last 12 months.

In late August I attended the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) State Conference with the theme of “Make your mark”. I got to network and reconnect with Councillors from all over Victoria. The keynote speaker, Fabian Dattner spoke about creating meaningful change, collaborative leadership and building a legacy that was inspiring but also purposeful. Other presentations and topics that provided helpful and insightful information to take away were tackling incivility in local government, combatting disinformation, social media 101, strategic planning for local government using future thinking and foresight to proactively identify important and emerging trends and opportunities not just for organisations but also for the wider community.

September 2025

I attend an event hosted by EmpowHer East Gippsland that was presented by the Working Women Centre Victoria called Empowered Women at Work, Your Rights, Your Voice. The presentation was for employees and employers and was open to everyone in the community to hear about their rights in the workplace and how to navigate issues with confidence.

The Marina Consultative Committee gathered together to tour the shire facilities at Paynesville, Metung and Chinaman’s Creek. Thanks to the Council Enterprise’s team for organising the day and for providing insights into the marinas and explaining the challenges and opportunities to the committee.

Thanks to Councillors for joining me at the Caring for Community roundtable meeting in Paynesville organised by the Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre and facilitated by Happy Changemakers to bring community groups and organisations together to discuss the needs of the community in Paynesville, Raymond Island, Newlands Arm and Eagle Point area.

While in Paynesville, Councillors met with representatives of the Gippsland Lake Yacht Club and visited the Breeze way and the Slip Road projects and were provided with updates on these projects.

I attended an online forum on how the local government is seeing rising demand for affordable housing and an increasing homelessness crisis that is affecting many countries across the world. This webinar explored the shared challenges and some of the approaches that are being developed by different councils. The speakers were from Australia and the UK and provided great insights into how to adopt preventative models of service delivery for homelessness, how to working with private developers and address supply-side drivers and how to work with communities and community organisations to tackle homelessness.

I had the pleasure of speaking at the Country Women's Association in Paynesville and Toonalook September meeting. It was wonderful to catch up with many familiar and friendly faces and to hear about what the group were up to in the community.

4.3 Cr Tom Crook

7 October – 21 October 2025

As a Councillor, I remain committed to listening to our communities and ensuring their voices shape the decisions that affect them. Over the past fortnight, I've had the privilege of engaging with a range of passionate individuals and groups working to protect and enhance East Gippsland. These events reflect the strength of our community and the importance of collaboration in building a fairer, more sustainable region.

8 October 2025 – Community Information Night: Mine-Free Glenaladale

I attended a well-supported community information session hosted by Mine Free Glenaladale, where approximately 150 residents gathered to hear concerns about the proposed mining development. The strong turnout and thoughtful discussion underscored the community's desire to be actively involved in decisions that impact their environment and future. I continue to support transparent processes and meaningful engagement on this issue.

10 October 2025 – 'Bringing Back the Birds' Event

Hosted by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, this event brought together agency and community partners to discuss habitat restoration. I led a nature walk through Eagle Point Reserve, highlighting Council's role in managing natural areas and the importance of these spaces to our community's wellbeing. It was a valuable opportunity to connect with stakeholders and reinforce our shared commitment to environmental stewardship.

12 October 2025 – Friends of Gippsland Lakes Annual General Meeting

I attended the Annual General Meeting of Friends of Gippsland Lakes, featuring a presentation by Professor Peter Gell. His insights into the ecological changes in the Lakes and the gaps in reporting to the RAMSAR Convention highlighted the need for stronger collaboration between government and community. I remain committed to advocating for transparent and accountable environmental management.

At this meeting, we discussed recent advocacy to the federal government, including correspondence to Minister for the Environment, Murray Watt. Key topics included the call for a dedicated federal minister for coasts and the implementation of comprehensive coastal hazard risk assessments. These discussions are vital to ensuring our coastal communities are heard and protected in national policy.

I will continue to work alongside our communities to ensure their voices are central to Council's decisions. Together, we can build a more inclusive, resilient, and just East Gippsland.

4.4 Cr Joanne Eastman

8 October 2025

It was a privilege to attend Gippsland East Study Hub's celebration of five years of operation. The Hub is run by the Gippsland East Local Learning and Employment Network (GELLEN) and provides a critical service to students from the region, particularly those who might otherwise struggle to access tertiary and further education. Its outreach centres in Mallacoota, Orbost, Omeo, Heyfield, Yarram, Bairnsdale and Sale have supported over 500 students doing tertiary education over the past five years and the number keeps growing.

Supports offered by the Hub include accessible after-hours study spaces, high-speed internet, and computer facilities along with student support. With such limited facilities and opening hours in our libraries and at schools, these quiet study spaces are critical to dozens of students (both VCE and tertiary) whose homes are not conducive to learning, whether because of overcrowding or other factors. This year Gippsland East's Study Hub supported 132 students enrolled with 49 different education providers across the country. The students were enrolled in 69 different courses with qualifications including Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Certificates and Diplomas, through to Doctorates.

Guest speaker, the Honourable Fiona Nash, Commissioner of Regional Education, appeared online and provided an insight into the role of Study Hubs across Rural and Remote areas across Australia in improving the equality of access for our students. Supporting them is critical for the young people of East Gippsland who are so disadvantaged by distance from, and the expense of accessing, tertiary education. It is also critical for those secondary students whose living situations can make it almost impossible for them to do well at school and break out of the cycle of disadvantage and underachievement.

10 October 2025

It was wonderful to see so many primary school students and other enthusiasts at the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's Welcome Back the Birds event at Eagle Point. There certainly was something for everyone, including a highly informative walk and talk through the Eagle Point Reserve led by Councillor Crook. The event celebrated the return of migratory birds to the Gippsland Lakes and was a terrific opportunity for community groups and agencies whose work focuses on environmental and water management issues to showcase what they do. I hope this event goes from strength to strength as it so clearly demonstrates so much of what is unique to our region, so deserving of support and protection, but at the same time so vulnerable, and unfortunately sometimes collateral damage, to the decisions we make, or to our failure to implement actions to address recognised risks.

The event also highlights the number of agencies involved in protecting our waterways and everything that relies on them, along with the importance of the work done by volunteer groups such as the Friends of the Gippsland Lakes and Bird Life East Gippsland, both of which provided much sought after and highly regarded expertise and inputs to agency work, datasets and knowledge base. Congratulations to all involved - the organisers, participating agencies, community and volunteer groups, businesses, and visitors - on a fabulous day.

15 October 2025

I attended the Governance Group meeting of the Errinundra to Snowy (E2S) Wellbeing Spaces Project. The project is a nurse-led model of healthcare that is coordinated by Orbst Regional Health Service (ORHS). It aims to improve access to health care for our very remote communities at Bonang, Bendoc, Tubbut and Goongerah. With nurses and allied health providers going out to the community, the project is improving health outcomes for residents through reduced travel costs and out-of-pocket expenses, improved mental health outcomes from having someone trusted and reliable to speak to about problems, timely on-the-spot care, immunisations and support for chronic disease management. It also improves pathways to specialists, links patients to GPs and specialists and other health providers and supports access to telehealth options. It is proving a great option for farmers and others who no longer put off health visits because it requires an entire day away from work. Delivering courses in First Aid Certification in these small settlements has been another very valuable project output.

ORHS and others involved in the project clearly demonstrate the importance of place-based knowledge and a willingness to listen to communities to build the trust that allows the reliable identification of what is needed for, and the flexibility in thinking that leads to, successful projects. As seems the case across the State, the threats of reduced, or removal of, funding for this and other health services weighs heavily on those trying to improve equity of access and health outcomes for our rural and remote communities for whom no or few options are available. These communities ask for, and expect, very little from governments of all levels so this well-being project means a lot to them.

The ORHS, associated service providers and community workers put extraordinary effort in collaborating to make a little funding go a long way. They are certainly batting above their weight into what they deliver and deserve all the support we can give them.

4.5 Cr John White

16 September to 21 October 2025

17/09/25	National Citizenship Day – Citizenship Ceremony
19/09/25	One Gippsland: Closed Mayoral, Board and Local Government Meeting
22 - 23/09/25	Councillor Team Building Workshop
24/09/25	REG FM – Chat with Council
24/09/25	Orbost District Stakeholder Meeting
25/09/25	Projects meeting with the Honourable Darren Chester Member of Parliament and Honourable Tim Bull Member of Parliament
30/09/25	Councillor Briefing Session and Council Meeting
01/10/25	East Gippsland Shire Council and Rail Freight Alliance Meeting
05/10/25	Victoria Downhill Mountain Bike Series
06/10/25	Workshop with Councillors on 2024/25 Annual Financial Statements
07/10/25	Annual Joint Councillors and Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
07/10/25	Councillor Briefing Session
08/10/25	Celebrating 5 Years – Gippsland East Study Hub
09/10/25	Paynesville Cemetery Trust – Annual General Meeting
10/10/25	Welcome Back the Birds – Eagle Point Foreshore
10/10/25	Opening Night Spring Art Show – Bairnsdale and District Arts Society
11/10/25	Gippsland Lakes Community Health Celebrating 50 Years of Community Health
13/10/25	East Gippsland Seniors Festival Concert
14/10/25	Councillor Briefing Session
15/10/25	Carers Week Open Day – Mental Health Wellbeing Connect
15/10/25	Official Launch – Gippsland Support Outreach Healthcare Program
15/10/25	East Gippsland Art Gallery Inc – Annual General Meeting
16/10/25	2025 Westpac Gippsland Wine Show Awards Tasting and Dinner
17/10/25	Audit and Risk Committee Performance Review Workshop
18/10/25	Bairnsdale Urban Fire Brigade – Annual Dinner
19/10/25	East Gippsland Ratepayers and Residents Association Meeting
19/10/25	Meeting with Senator Bridget McKenzie
21/10/25	Bairnsdale Tennis Club Site Visit and Meeting
21/10/25	Councillor Briefing Session

5 Officer Reports

5.1 Business Excellence

5.1.1 Adopt Annual Report 2024-25

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Motion

That Council adopts the Annual Report 2024-25 provided at Attachment 1.

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Arthur Allen

Spoke for the motion: Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Arthur Allen

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.1.2 S5 Instrument of Delegation Council to Chief Executive Officer

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Motion

That Council, in the exercise of the power conferred by section 11(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2020, resolves:

- 1. to delegate to the person holding the position, or acting in or performing the duties, of Chief Executive Officer the powers, duties and functions set out in the S5 Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer (as presented at Attachment 1), subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument;***
- 2. that the instrument comes into force immediately upon this resolution being made and is to be signed by the Council's Chief Executive Officer and Mayor;***
- 3. that on the coming into force of the instrument all previous delegations to the Chief Executive Officer are revoked; and***
- 4. that the duties and functions set out in the instrument must be performed, and the powers set out in the instrument must be executed, in accordance with any guidelines or policies of Council that it may from time to time adopt.***

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Tom Crook

Spoke for the motion: Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Tom Crook

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.1.3 Risk Management Policy

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Motion

That Council adopts the draft Risk Management Policy as presented at Attachment 1.

Moved: Cr Bernie Farquhar

Seconded: Cr Joanne Eastman

Spoke for the motion: Cr Bernie Farquhar and Cr Joanne Eastman

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.1.4 Summary of Councillor Briefing Sessions

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Procedural Note

Cr Sonia Buckley moved her own motion.

Motion

- 1. receives and notes this report and all attachments pertaining to this report; and**
- 2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer (or Delegate) to publish future Councillor Briefing summaries on Council's website, without the need for further Council resolutions, to promote transparency and public confidence in Council's decision-making processes.**

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Tom Crook

Spoke for the motion: Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Tom Crook

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.1.5 **Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes**

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Motion

That Council notes the confirmed minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held Monday 25 August 2025 as presented at Attachment 1.

Moved: ***Cr Bernie Farquhar***

Seconded: ***Cr Tom Crook***

Spoke for the motion: Cr Bernie Farquhar and Cr Tom Crook

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
 Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
 Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.2 Place and Community

5.2.1 Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip - Implementation of Eagle Point Structure Plan (Panel Report)

Authorised by Acting General Manager Place and Community

Conflict of Interest

Cr Tom Crook, having declared a conflict of interest in relation to 5.2.1, left the meeting at 7.32 pm and was absent during the discussion on this item.

Public Submission

Ms Sandra McSweeney
Ms Georgina Ay Yee
Mr Shane McCarthy

Procedural Motion

That Council resolves to extend duration of the meeting by one hour.

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Barry Davis

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Barry Davis,
 Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
 Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

Procedural Motion

That the meeting be adjourned for a 10-minute break.

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Barry Davis

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Barry Davis,
 Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
 Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

Procedural Note

The meeting was adjourned at 8.16 pm.

Procedural Motion

That the meeting be resumed.

Moved: Cr Arthur Allen

Seconded: Cr Sonia Buckley

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Ian Trevaskis,
Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Barry Davis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

The meeting resumed at 8.37 pm.

Procedural Note

Upon resumption of the meeting, the Mayor Cr John White called for any Councillor to move a motion.

Motion

That Council:

- 1. having considered the Planning Panel Report and the Panel recommendations for Amendment C171egip endorses the Officer's response to the recommendations as outlined in Attachment 2;***
- 2. adopts the revised Eagle Point Structure Plan (2019, updated 2025) as provided at Attachment 3;***
- 3. adopts Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip in accordance with section 29 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, with changes as reflected in the final Amendment C171 documentation provided at Attachment 4;***
- 4. submits the adopted Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip, together with the prescribed information, to the Minister for Planning for approval in accordance with section 31 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987; and***
- 5. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to advise those persons who made written submissions to Planning Scheme Amendment C171egip of Council's decision.***

Moved: Cr Arthur Allen

Seconded: Cr Jodie Ashworth

Spoke for the motion: Cr Arthur Allen and Cr Jodie Ashworth

Spoke against the motion: Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Joanne Eastman

Closed the debate: Cr Arthur Allen

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Bernie Farquhar and Cr John White
Against: Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr Ian Trevaskis
Abstained: Nil

Procedural Note

The motion was put to the vote, and the result was tied. Accordingly, the Chair Mayor Cr John White exercised a casting vote as required under section 61(5)(d) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the motion was carried.

CARRIED

Attendance

Cr Tom Crook returned to the Council Chamber at 8.47 pm.

**5.2.2 Planning Scheme Amendment C172egip - Implementation of
Paynesville Growth Area Structure Plan (Panel Report)**

Authorised by Acting General Manager Place and Community

Public Submission

Ms Kate Young

Motion

That Council:

- 1. having considered the Planning Panel report and Panel recommendations for Planning Scheme Amendment C172egip, endorses the Officer's response to the recommendations as outlined in Attachment 2;***
- 2. adopts the revised Paynesville Growth Area Structure Plan (2019, updated 2025) as provided at Attachment 3;***
- 3. adopts Planning Scheme Amendment C172egip in accordance with section 29 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, with changes as reflected in the final Amendment documentation provided at Attachment 4;***
- 4. submits the adopted Planning Scheme Amendment C172egip, together with the prescribed information, to the Minister for Planning for approval in accordance with section 31 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987;***
- 5. recognises the significance of community input into council decision making and commits that the preparation of the Development Plan will include consultation with community and stakeholders through a participatory and collaborative process; and***
- 6. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to advise those persons who made written submissions to Planning Scheme Amendment C172egip of Council's decision.***

Moved: Cr Joanne Eastman

Seconded: Cr Tom Crook

Spoke for the motion: Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Tom Crook

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.2.3 East Gippsland Shire Council Coastal and Marine Management Plan

Authorised by Acting General Manager Place and Community

Motion

That Council:

- 1. adopts the East Gippsland Shire Council Coastal and Marine Management Plan as presented at Attachment 1; and***
- 2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to seek endorsement of the East Gippsland Shire Council Coastal and Marine Management Plan from the Minister for Environment.***

Moved: ***Cr Tom Crook***

Seconded: ***Cr Arthur Allen***

Spoke for the motion: Cr Tom Crook, Cr Arthur Allen and Cr Sonia Buckley

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
 Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
 Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

**5.2.4 Unconfirmed Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes 20 August 2025**

Authorised by Acting General Manager Place and Community

Motion

That Council receives and notes the unconfirmed minutes from the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee meeting held 20 August 2025.

Moved: Cr Barry Davis

Seconded: Cr Tom Crook

Spoke for the motion: Cr Barry Davis, Cr Sonia Buckley; and Cr White

Spoke against the motion: Nil

Closed the debate: Nil

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Joanne Eastman,
Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

6 Urgent Business

Nil

Motion

That Council resolves to move into confidential business pursuant to section 66(2) of the Local Government Act 2020.

Moved: Cr Arthur Allen

Seconded: Cr Sonia Buckley

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

The meeting was closed to the public at 9.22 pm.

7 Confidential Business

7.1 Contract Matter

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (g) Private Commercial Information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that(ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage, by disclosing financial information to competitors.

7.2 Council Business Matter

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (a) Council Business Information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations, if prematurely released.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would prejudice Council's ability to negotiate effectively with contractors and funding bodies by disclosing sensitive financial details.

7.3

Appointment of Independent Member - CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (f) Personal Information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would unreasonably disclose personal information about the Independent Member of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Employment and Remuneration Committee.

8 Close of Meeting

Mayor Cr John White closed the meeting at 9.55 pm.