



# Minutes

## Council Meeting

Tuesday 9 June 2026 at 6.00 pm

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

*Councillors*

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

*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 Jodie Ashworth welcomed all to the Council meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians.

*Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of this land and pays deep respect to all First Nations peoples and communities with enduring cultural connections to East Gippsland, who have cared for and nurtured Country for tens of thousands of years.*

*We honour and celebrate the rich diversity, living cultures, and ongoing contributions of all First Nations peoples who live, work, visit, and play across East Gippsland.*

*We also acknowledge the many First Nations communities who, together, continue to shape and contribute to the region we know as East Gippsland. The place where we, as Local Government, delivered services and support to our community.*

## 1.2 Apologies

Nil

## 1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Nil

## 1.4 Confirmation of Minutes

**Motion**

***That the minutes of the Council meeting held Tuesday 19 May 2026 be confirmed.***

***Moved: Cr Arthur Allen***

***Seconded: Cr Tom Crook***

**Spoke for the motion:** 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 Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 1.5 Next Meeting

The next scheduled Council Meeting is to be held on Tuesday 23 June 2026 at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street Bairnsdale commencing at 6.00 pm.

## 1.6 Requests for Leave of Absence

### Motion

***That leave of absence be granted to Cr Barry Davis for the period of 5 June to 7 August 2026 inclusive.***

**Moved:** Cr Bernie Farquhar

**Seconded:** Cr Joanne Eastman

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Bernie Farquhar

**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 Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

### Procedural Note

At this point the Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth acknowledged and congratulated the following community members who were awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the King's Birthday Honours list for 2026.

- Ms Therese Tierney OAM – for her service in community health in the Gippsland region;
- Mr Leo Op den Brouw OAM – for his service to the community of East Gippsland; and
- Mr Murray Colvin ESM - who received the Emergency Services Medal for his distinguished service as a member of Surf Life Saving Australia.

The Mayor congratulated these community members on being recognised in such a significant way for their contribution to East Gippsland and their ongoing commitment to the community.

Additionally, the Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth acknowledged Zara Wickham from Lucknow Primary School who observed the meeting from the public gallery as part of their Junior Rotary Community Awards program

To acknowledge their participation in this community program, the Mayor presented Zara with a Council pin.

## 1.7 Open Forum

### 1.7.1 Petitions

Nil

### 1.7.2 Questions of Council

#### 1.7.1

Mr Ken White asked the following questions:

Question 1: *“One of East Gippsland Shire Council’s core values is accountability. With that in mind, do the Councillors here believe that it is appropriate from an accountability perspective for East Gippsland Shire Council to be in this case the applicant, the responsible authority to assess the application and the beneficiary of the application?”*

Question 2: *“Given the permit condition of a maximum volume of both processing and storage, what will Council do with excess product, and will it seek to amend its permitted volume the moment that it exceeds this threshold?”*

The CEO and Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment provided responses to these questions which are summarised below:

Response 1: Council both being the applicant and the submitter is on occasion unavoidable and something that all Councils across Victoria find themselves facing when they are developing projects for and on behalf of the community that trigger the need for a planning permit.

Recognising this and to ensure transparency, our Council takes some additional measures to ensure that the separation of applicant and assessor roles is clear. The first of these additional steps is ensuring that all applications made by Council are referred to a Council meeting and Councillors for decision, regardless of whether there are objections or not.

The second step is to engage a third-party Planning Consultant to represent Council as the applicant. This means that our Planners are dealing with a planning consultant rather than their fellow Officers when assessing an application.

Response 2: The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Development License states that the facility must not accept or store more than 25,000 tonnes per annum. This size supports flexibility and increased capacity for kerbside FOGO uptake overtime.

Green waste received from waste transfer stations and kerbside collections sources represent the most consistent streams of feedstock, with Council maintaining oversight of their collection, transport, and final processing.

The proposed composting facility is being established to process this material, with the total forecast volume at the commencement of operations in 2028 to be in the range of 15,000 to 16,000 tonnes per annum (depending on growth).

While Council Officers have recently met with you to go through a number of issues, we are happy to meet again to work through these estimates.

Based on this the permitted capacity of the proposed facility provides for future growth and so Council does not anticipate the need to apply for any amendment of permitted volumes due to growth for the life of this asset.

Council engaged SMEC consultants to prepare the design and supporting documents for both the EPA Development Licence and the planning permit. The volumes forecast by SMEC reflects the type and proportions of organic material proposed to be processed at the facility, not the total volume of material generated across the Shire.

Benchmarking referred in Council's 10 Year Waste and Recycling Transition Plan refers to a range of similar regional Shires based on population. Mildura Rural City Council referred to in your preamble is an outlier in the total volume of green waste material received - at around double the volume of other Shires.

The facility will produce a stabilised compost product, which is fundamentally different from raw waste. Compost material is intended for distribution across multiple users and applications, including agriculture.

The future production, marketing and sale of a quality composted material is of key importance, to which Council undertook a public expression of interest process with industry in the latter half of 2025, the response to which was very positive.

This provides confidence that markets will be available for the product and that storage limits at the site won't be exceeded.

Council has also entered into a formal agreement with the Gippsland Agricultural Group who are actively partnering with Council and other stakeholders to trial, test, evaluate emerging products from circular economy initiatives (including composted material derived from food and organic material) to ensure they meet these standards and are capable of delivering genuine agricultural benefit and demand.

### **Procedural Note**

Cr Sonia Buckley (online) experienced technical difficulties at 6:23 pm. The Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth paused the meeting briefly while she reconnected. Cr Buckley rejoined the meeting online at 6:26 pm.

### **1.7.3 Public Submissions**

Nil

### **1.8 Items for Noting**

Nil

## **2 Notices of Motion**

Nil

## **3 Deferred Business**

Nil

## 4 Councillor Delegate Reports

### 4.1 Cr Arthur Allen

26/05/26 - Attended, with the Councillor Group, a community meeting on Raymond Island  
27/05/26 - Reconciliation Week Elders Lunch - Lakes Entrance  
27/05/26 - Gippsland Critical Minerals workshop with Cr Farquhar and Cr Eastman

### 4.2 Cr Jodie Ashworth

Period 19 May - 9 June 2026

20/05/26 - Nicholson Mall Taskforce Meeting  
20/05/26 - Projects Meeting with the Hon. Darren Chester and Hon. Tim Bull  
21/05/26 - Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Meeting  
21/05/26 - Australian Local Government Women's Association Annual General Meeting  
22/05/26 - One Gippsland Mayors and Local Government Meeting  
23/05/26 - Apex Time Capsule Celebration  
25/05/26 - Audit and Risk Committee Meeting  
25/05/26 - REG FM - Monthly Chat Recording  
26/05/26 - Councillor Briefing Session  
26/05/26 - Raymond Island Ferry Pass Community Session  
27/05/26 - Reconciliation Week Elders Lunch  
27/05/26 - Lakes Entrance Action Development Association Quarterly Meeting  
29/05/26 - Municipal Association of Victoria State Council  
01/06/26 - Youth Ambassador Committee Meeting  
02/06/26 - Councillor Briefing Session  
03/06/26 - Reconciliation Weekly Assembly - Bairnsdale West Primary School  
03/06/26 - Bairnsdale View Club Meeting  
05/06/26 - Interview with Victorian Local Governance Association Connect

### 4.3 Cr Tom Crook

Period 19 May - 9 June 2026

As the Council delegate, I attended discussions relating to the Australian Coastal Councils Association (ACCA) and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) roundtable, which focused on bringing Councils together to achieve better outcomes in disaster preparedness, coastal management and long-term resilience planning.

A key focus of the discussions was the growing impact of coastal hazards and the need for stronger national coordination. While the Australian Government's National Adaptation Plan provides an important framework, there was recognition that coastal hazards require a dedicated national focus beyond existing disaster resilience programs, which are often primarily directed toward short-term events such as flooding and bushfires.

The roundtable also highlighted the importance of local government advocacy in protecting coastal communities, critical infrastructure and environmental assets as climate impacts continue to increase.

21/05/26 - I attended the Emerald Link Stakeholder Workshop held at the Nowa Nowa Primary School. The workshop brought together stakeholders to help shape the future direction of Emerald Link projects and partnerships within the region.

It was particularly exciting to hear more about the proposed cultural and environmental education centre being developed at the former Nowa Nowa Primary School site in partnership with Marjorie Thorpe, the Nowa Nowa community, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) and Victoria University.

The project presents an important opportunity to strengthen cultural education, environmental awareness and community engagement while supporting local collaboration and regional development.

25/05/26 - I attended the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting. It was particularly positive to have the committee Chair, Mark Dupè attend the meeting in person. The committee considered a range of governance, risk and oversight matters relevant to Council operations.

The meeting also included a review of the updated Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Policy, which will be presented to Council for endorsement.

26/05/26 - I attended an informal community meeting regarding the Raymond Island Ferry Pass. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear directly from community members regarding their experiences, concerns and suggestions relating to ferry access and associated arrangements.

Community engagement sessions such as this are important in ensuring local perspectives continue to inform future discussions and decision making.

27/05/26 - As part of National Reconciliation Week, I attended the Elders Lunch in Lakes Entrance. It was a valuable opportunity to listen to and engage with members of the Indigenous community and hear their perspectives, experiences and aspirations.

The event reinforced the importance of ongoing reconciliation, relationship building and acknowledging the significant contribution of First Nations people within our region.

#### **4.4 Cr Joanne Eastman**

##### **Sarsfield Recreation Reserve Opening**

The official opening of the reserve was a wonderful occasion and another significant step in the recovery of the community from the horrors of the Black Summer Fire. The heartfelt speeches demonstrated just how much the community had to go through to make their building a reality. The reserve is very much a uniting point for the community, something for which they can all be proud and which will serve them well for decades to come. Congratulations to all involved in bringing the project to fruition.

##### **Timber Towns Victoria Meeting**

The Timber Towns Victoria (TTV) has memberships from Glenelg, Gannawarra, East Gippsland, Wellington, Moorabool, Moyne, West Wimmera, Baw Baw, Colac Otway and Ballarat Shires. The April meeting discussed a number of things including the ongoing challenges faced by the timber industry, fears that the declaration of native species as endangered may lead to reduced stewardship, the discrepancy in rating charges for transition lines and batteries compared to those for plantations, and some interesting innovations in value adding (production of Glulam (glued laminated timber) from blue gums and the potential for the use of timber to produce low carbon methanol and sustainable aviation fuel.

TTV members met with Parliamentarians on 13 May 2026 to discuss their priorities which include the need for adequate funding for roads and bridges, and National Forest Policy Reform, particularly since the cessation of funding via VicForests for the maintenance of forest roads.

Candlelight Vigil: East Gippsland Shire aligned with all other Shires from Gippsland this year and held a Candlelight Vigil on National Family Violence Remembrance Day (6 May 2026) to commemorate the women who have lost their lives to domestic violence in Australia. I joined Cr Ashworth and Cr Crook, the Chief Executive Officer and other Council staff who joined other participants who walked from the Corporate Centre to the Rotunda where speeches by the Mayor and Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, Kathy Dickinson brought home the confronting reality that East Gippsland has the highest rate of family violence in Victoria. The Shire is working alongside other agencies to promote awareness, prevention of family violence and to provide support for those experiencing it.

### **Raymond Island**

It was good to see a full house at Raymond Island Community Hall when Councillors and staff met with Raymond Island residents to discuss the ongoing issues with Ferry Passes. There is still work to be done with what is a complex issue and we are working to come up with an equitable resolution socially and financially responsible.

### **Reconciliation Week**

The Reconciliation Week Elders lunch at Lakes Entrance was well attended. Sandra Patton's powerful speech reminded attendees of the years of hard work and negotiation it took for the Gunaikurnai to achieve their Traditional Owner Settlement Agreement, and the importance of continuing to work together to consolidate and grow what they have achieved to date. It was wonderful to see the respect and care shown by the Secondary School students who looked after their elders during the luncheon.

### **Policing Forum**

The East Gippsland Neighbourhood Policing Forum provided an excellent opportunity to hear the range of services and programs undertaken by our local police and the ongoing challenges they face.

### **Errinundra 2 Snowy Remote Health Project**

I attended the June meeting of the Errinundra 2 Snowy Wellbeing Spaces Governance Group (E2S). The project is in its second year and is auspiced and well supported by Orbost Regional Health. E2S Wellbeing Spaces continues to provide essential healthcare services to the communities of Tubbut, Bendoc and Goongerah. Residents have benefited directly from the provision of a range of offerings including safe and secure spaces for GP outreach (both face to face and telehealth), nurse visits, women's health checks, mental health support, and access to a range of allied health services such as physiotherapy and optometry. It's a valuable and cost-effective program that is increasing the wellbeing of residents in those communities. It is also, through its advocacy and practical help, raising awareness of, and sensitivity to, the challenges faced by remote community members without family support when they have to access health care in larger hospitals.

## 5 Officer Reports

### 5.1 Business Excellence

#### 5.1.1 Information Communication and Technologies (ICT) Professional Services Panel of Providers - Contract Number 2026-000129

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

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#### Confidentiality Notice

The information contained in the **Confidential Attachment 1** 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 includes detailed tender evaluation and pricing information, the disclosure of which would unreasonably expose the business to disadvantage.

#### Motion

##### *That Council:*

- 1. endorses the outcome of the collaborative tender led by Wellington Shire Council for Contract Number 2026-000129 - Information Communication and Technologies (ICT) Professional Services, and confirms its agreement to the award of the contract to the tenderers identified in the Tender Evaluation Report provided at Confidential Attachment 1, for the tendered Schedule of Rates (exclusive of GST);***
- 2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or Delegate to notify Wellington Shire Council, as the lead Council for the procurement, of this resolution and authorises Wellington Shire Council to finalise the terms of and to execute the necessary contact documents on behalf of the participating Councils, including East Gippsland Shire Council; and***
- 3. resolves that Confidential Attachment 1 to this report and all discussion relating to it remain confidential.***

**Moved:** Cr Arthur Allen

**Seconded:** Cr Tom Crook

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Arthur Allen 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 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 Permit Application 5.2025.18.1 - 200 Johnstons Road Forge Creek - Composting Facility

Authorised by General Manager Projects and Planning

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#### Motion

*That Council being the Responsible Authority and having considered all the relevant planning matters, determines that Planning Permit Application 5.2025.18.1 is consistent with the requirements and objectives of the East Gippsland Planning Scheme and therefore resolves to issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit for the Use and development of a composting facility, removal of native vegetation, and a dispensation from parking and bicycle parking requirements on land at 200 Johnstons Road Forge Creek, subject to permit conditions as provided at Attachment 1.*

**Moved:** Cr Tom Crook

**Seconded:** Cr Bernie Farquhar

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

**Spoke against the motion:** Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr John White

**Closed the debate:** Cr Tom Crook

**CARRIED**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Tom Crook, Cr Bernie Farquhar and Cr Ian Trevaskis

**Against:** Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr John White

**Abstained:** Cr Sonia Buckley

#### Procedural Note

In accordance with section 61(5)(e) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Councillor who is present at a meeting and abstains from voting is to be counted as a vote against the motion.

## 5.2.2 Culture and Creativity Service Agreement Review

Authorised by General Manager Projects and Planning

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### Motion

#### *That Council:*

- 1. approves the conclusion of Service Agreements with East Gippsland Music and Heritage Network East Gippsland by 30 June 2027, following the agreed transition period;**
- 2. subject to Council's approval of recommendation 1, Council also:**
  - a. notes the extension of all existing Culture and Creativity Service Agreements for one further financial year to enable an orderly transition to a new funding model;**
  - b. notes that officers will commence negotiations for a revised Service Agreement with the East Gippsland Art Gallery by 30 June 2027 to reflect its ongoing strategic role;**
  - c. notes the Culture and Creativity Funding Model as Council's primary mechanism for future investment in the creative industries; and**
  - d. undertakes to explore additional funding opportunities within Council's 2027/28 budget processes and through external sources to enable further funding of arts and cultural projects and groups including heritage focused initiatives.**

**Moved:** Cr Tom Crook

**Seconded:** Cr Arthur Allen

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Tom Crook, Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Sonia Buckley,  
Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr John White

**Spoke against the motion:** Cr Bernie Farquhar

**Closed the debate:** Cr Tom Crook

**CARRIED**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Cr Bernie Farquhar

**Abstained:** Nil

## **6 Urgent Business**

Nil

## **7 Confidential Business**

Nil

## **8 Close of Meeting**

Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth declared the Council Meeting closed at 7.41 pm.