EAST GIPPSLAND
SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting Agenda



Tuesday 20 October 2026 at 6.00 pm
Council Chambers (and by video conferencing)
East Gippsland Shire Council Corporate Centre
273 Main Street, Bairnsdale 3875



Acknowledgement of Country

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, deliver services and support to our community.

Council information

East Gippsland Shire Council live streams, records and publishes its meetings via webcasting (youtube.com/c/EastGippyTV) to enhance the accessibility of its meetings to the broader East Gippsland community.

These recordings are also archived and available for viewing by the public or used for publicity or information purposes. At the appropriate times during the meeting, any members of the gallery who are addressing the council will have their image, comments or submissions recorded.

No other person has the right to record Council meetings unless approval has been granted by the Chair.

In line with the *Local Government Act* 2020, Councillors are able to attend Council meetings electronically or in person and the meetings will be open to the public via livestreaming.

Members of the public are invited to view the Council Meeting livestreamed by following the link on Council's website or Facebook page.

Councillors

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

Executive Leadership Team

Fiona Weigall Chief Executive Officer
Stuart McConnell General Manager Assets and Environment
Sarah Johnston General Manager Business Excellence
Chris Stephenson General Manager Projects and Planning
Prue McTaggart Executive Manager Place and Community

Purpose of Council meetings

(1) Council holds scheduled meetings and, when required, unscheduled meetings to conduct the business of Council.
(2) Council is committed to transparency in decision making and, in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council and Delegated Committee meetings are open to the public and the community are able to attend.
(3) Meetings will only be closed to members of the public, in accordance with section 66 of the Act, if:
    (a) there are clear reasons for particular matters to remain confidential; or
    (b) a meeting is required to be closed for security reasons; or
    (c) it is necessary to enable the meeting to proceed in an ordinary manner.
(4) A meeting closed to the public for the reasons outlined in sub-rule 3(b) or 3(c) will continue to be livestreamed. In the event a livestream is not available:
    (a) the meeting may be adjourned; or
    (b) a recording of the proceedings may be available on the Council website.

Governance Rules

A copy of East Gippsland Shire Council's governance rules can be found at https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/council/council-policies

Councillors Pledge

As Councillors of East Gippsland Shire Council, we solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that we will consider each item on this agenda in the best interests of the whole municipal community.

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

Index

1 Procedural 7

1.1 Recognition of Traditional Custodians 7

1.2 Apologies 7

1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest 7

1.4 Confirmation of Minutes 7

1.5 Next Meeting 7

1.6 Requests for Leave of Absence 7

1.7 Notice of Appreciation 7

1.8 Open Forum 8

1.8.1 Petitions 8

1.8.1.1 Service Street Taxi Rank Relocation 8

1.8.2 Questions of Council 9

1.8.3 Public Submissions 9

1.9 Items for Noting 9

2 Notices of Motion 9

3 Deferred Business 9

4 Councillor Delegate Reports 9

5 Officer Reports 10

5.1 Projects and Planning 10

5.1.1 Planning Delegations Policy - Revised 10

5.2 Place and Community 43

5.2.1 Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Unconfirmed Minutes 13 August 2026 and New Member Appointment 43

5.3 Assets and Environment 50

5.3.1 Public Amenities (Toilets) Service Review Final Report 50

5.3.2 CON2026 1746a - Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services 126

5.4 Business Excellence 132

5.4.1 Annual Report 2025/26 132
5.4.2 Council Meeting Schedule 2027 344
5.4.3 S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation Planning and Environment Act 1987 346
5.4.4 Special Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes 348
6 Mayoral Term Address 358
7 Urgent Business 358
8 Confidential Business 358
8.1 Council Business Matter 358
8.2 Contract Matter 358
9 Close of Meeting 358

1 Procedural

1.1 Recognition of 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, deliver services and support to our community.

1.2 Apologies

1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

1.4 Confirmation of Minutes

That the minutes of the Council Meeting held Thursday 17 September 2026 be confirmed.

1.5 Next Meeting

The next Council Meeting is the Statutory Meeting for the election of the Mayor and, if determined, the Deputy Mayor. It will be held on Thursday 12 November 2026 at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street, Bairnsdale, commencing at 6.00 pm.

1.6 Requests for Leave of Absence

1.7 Notice of Appreciation

As a Council and as community representatives we acknowledge and recognise the service and contribution of the Hon. Tim Bull MP, Member for Gippsland East. Council on behalf of the region would like to express its appreciation for his dedication and advocacy contribution to the East Gippsland community throughout his 16 year political career.

1.8 Open Forum

1.8.1 Petitions

1.8.1.1 Service Street Taxi Rank Relocation

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Conflict of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Key Points

This report informs Council of a petition submitted by Ms Emily Moncrieff from Bairnsdale objecting to the proposed relocation of the taxi rank to Service Street, Bairnsdale. The petition was received electronically on Thursday 1 October 2026. The petition states:

"*I ask the CEO, Mayor and Councillors to listen to our community and local businesses, not proceed with the proposed Service Street location, and work with us to develop a practical solution that improves safety, preserves customer parking and supports access to those needing taxi services*."

A total of 164 electronic signatures were received in support of the petition.

The petition has been received and presented in accordance with Governance Rule 8.7.

Councillors have been provided with a full copy of the petition separately. In the interest of respecting the privacy of signatories, and in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, a copy of the petition has not been included with this report.

The Bairnsdale taxi rank is proposed to be relocated from Nicholson Street Mall as part of broader work to improve the safety, amenity and functionality of The Mall precinct. In April 2026, Council sought community feedback while investigating suitable alternative locations that would improve visibility and passive surveillance and help address ongoing anti-social behaviour concerns.

A range of alternative locations have been investigated, including sites in Nicholson Street near Woolworths, Main Street, Pyke Street and other areas within the Bairnsdale CBD. Council has worked with key stakeholders to assess options against key criteria including accessibility, safety, customer convenience, operational requirements and proximity to key destinations such as supermarkets and other services. Feedback received on a number of proposed locations has resulted in further investigation and consultation.

More recently, Council has undertaken consultation with Service Street businesses regarding a potential relocation to Service Street, with stakeholder feedback continuing to inform the assessment of a preferred location. A final decision on the relocation of the taxi rank has not yet been made with several alternatives being reviewed.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***receives the petition;***

2. ***notes that the petition will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration; and***

3. ***notes that the Chief Executive Officer will arrange for Council Officers to write to the head petitioner advising them of these actions.***

1.8.2 Questions of Council

1.8.3 Public Submissions

1.9 Items for Noting

2 Notices of Motion

3 Deferred Business

4 Councillor Delegate Reports

5 Officer Reports

5.1 Projects and Planning

5.1.1 Planning Delegations Policy - Revised

Authorised by General Manager Projects and Planning

Purpose

This report seeks approval for minor amendments to Council's Planning Delegations Policy 2026, specifically in relation to how Councillors are notified of a notice to refuse to issue a planning permit application. This report also responds to the additional information requested about notification processes associated with planning permit applications.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***retains the seven-day notice period for a Notice to Refuse a Planning Permit Application as outlined within Council's Planning Delegations Policy adopted by Council on 21 July 2026;***

2. ***adopts the revised Planning Delegations Policy as provided at Attachment 1 which clarifies how and when Councillors are notified of a proposed refusal to issue a planning permit; and***

3. ***authorises the Chief Executive Officer or Delegate to amend the adopted policy without formal Council consideration, if the amendments required are of a minor administrative nature.***

Key Points

At the 18 August 2026 Council Meeting, Council resolved to have the Planning Delegations Policy 2026 reviewed to potentially increase call up timeframes. The motion also requested information on notification processes associated with planning permit applications.

This report discusses the implications of amending the Planning Delegations Policy 2026 to increase the call up timeframe from 7 days to 14 days and the implications for leaving the timeframe as is. The report also confirms notification processes including how notification is to occur and what it needs to include and options for Councillor access to planning permit applications.

Discussion

At the 18 August 2026 Council Meeting, Council moved a motion as follows:

That Council:

1. ***requests the Chief Executive Officer or delegate prepare a report on options to amend the Planning Delegations Policy relating to planning permit applications proposed to be refused under delegation, including:***

    a. ***extending the current call-up period from seven days to 14 days, allowing Councillors to request that a planning permit application proposed to be refused under delegation be determined by Council;***

    b. ***notification arrangements for Councillors, including direct email notification of an officer's intention to refuse an application, with any call-up period commencing from the date of the email;***

    c. ***ensuring the weekly planning update provided to Councillors continues to include: 1. the application number; 2. the property address; 3. the applicant's name (where permitted); 4. a brief description of the proposal; and 5. the proposed officer determination;***

    d. ***options for improving Councillor access to information on planning applications that are not publicly advertised; and***

    e. ***any consequential amendments required to Council policies, delegations or Governance Rules.***

2. ***requests that the report be provided no later than the second Ordinary Council Meeting following adoption of this resolution.***

The recommendation in this report is to keep the call up period designated at 7 days and this recommendation is made for the following reasons:

- Planning Permit Applications have a number of statewide KPI's, including making a decision on an application within 60 days (10 days for VicSmart). The current call up period of 7 days has limited impact on those KPIs.

- The call up period of seven days has been in place for some time and has worked very well in terms of giving Councillors time to consider a matter and balancing that with decision making timeframes as set by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the KPIs outlined above.

- The number of Notices to Refuse a Planning Permit Application are very low (1 this calendar year so far) and therefore, there is not a high number of matters to review which would warrant additional call up time.

It is acknowledged that the policy could be strengthened in terms of how and when Councillors are notified. Therefore, an amended version of the policy is provided at **Attachment 1** which is more explicit about how Councillors are notified about planning permit applications. Specifically in relation to refusals, it is noted that in addition to the newsletter, Councillors will also be notified by email. It is noted that **Attachment 2** is a track change version so that it is clear what is proposed to be changed

In relation to Resolution 1c, new planning permit applications will continue to be included within the Councillor's weekly newsletter on a weekly basis and will include the application number, the property address and a description of the proposal. The applicant's name will continue to be omitted to comply with privacy legislation. The proposed officer determination will also be omitted as no position is able to be formed until the planning permit application is well progressed. Generally, an officer is unable to take an informed position on the application until it has been referred to other authorities, placed on public notice (if required) and once all requests for further information have been satisfied (if required). It would be unfair and legally tenuous to form a position upon lodgement.

In relation to Resolution 1e, all planning permit applications and their status are published on Council's website. This is a live tracker that is publicly available. The full application including attachments are not made available on the tracker due to privacy and intellectual property legislation.

Where the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* directs Council to do so, an application is advertised and while we must provide enough information to be informative, we are unable to provide the full application, again due to privacy and intellectual property legislation. The only caveat to this, is that the Act allows for anyone to view the application in full, but this must be done in person and photos or copies are prohibited.

To support Councillor access to information, Councillors may request further information on a particular planning application where this is required to assist their understanding of the matter. Requests would be considered having regard to legislative requirements, privacy obligations and the status of the application. Any information provided would be managed on a case-by-case basis and within the limits of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and associated privacy and intellectual property legislation requirements.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following theme in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 2: ProsperityTheme 2: Prosperity
Outcome – A well-functioning planning system that responds to our communities' needs

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

This report has been prepared in consultation with relevant internal staff and is based upon a motion moved by Council. External consultation is not required.

Opportunities and Risks

The opportunities and risks associated with the recommendation are as follows:

Opportunities:

- Keeps the planning permit process as streamlined as possible whilst also allowing Councillors reasonable review time.
- Assists Council to comply with statewide KPIs
- Gives applicants and objectors (where applicable) a clear and efficient decision.
- The policy updates are more explicit about how and when Councillors will be notified.

Risks:

- Councillors may not have enough time to make a call up decision.

Climate Change

This report considers potential climate change risks and impacts relevant to the Officer recommendation and aligns with the applicable climate change functions, categories, and legislative obligations, as detailed below:

Legislation

Planning and Environment Act 1987 (including ss. 4, 6, 12, 12B, 60)

Category

This report is assessed as having no direct impact on climate change.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

1. Attachment 1 Planning Delegations Policy (Council Final) [**5.1.1.1** - 14 pages]
2. Attachment 2 Planning Delegations Policy (Council Tracked Final) [**5.1.1.2** - 15 pages]

Planning Delegations Policy

Table of Contents

1. Purpose 3
2. Scope 3
3. Context 3
4. Statement 4
5. Exercise of Delegated Authority 5
   5.1 Notification of Planning applications to Councillors 5
   5.2 Call-up of Planning Permit Applications 5
6. Determination of Planning Permit Applications 6
   6.1 Referral of Applications to Council by Delegate 6
   6.2 Council owned land and capital projects 7
   6.3 Significant or broad community interest matters 7
7. Authority to determine an application with conditions 7
   7.1 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit with conditions 7
   7.2 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse to Grant a Permit 8
   7.3 Authority to determine to End or Amend Section 173 Agreements 8
   7.4 Authority to provide representation and form a position in VCAT matters 8
8. Planning Scheme Amendments 9
9. Other Powers, Functions and Duties Delegated 9
10. Roles and Responsibilities 10
11. Definitions 11
12. Privacy Consideration 12
13. Human Rights 12
14. Gender Equality 12
15. Risk Reference 12
16. References and Supporting Documents 13
   16.1 Applicable Legislation 13
   16.2 Applicable Policy and Procedure 13
17. Review and Revision History 13
   17.1 Administrative Updates 14
   17.2 Document Control Disclaimer 14

1. Purpose

The objective of the Planning Delegations Policy (the Policy) is to achieve effective, efficient and transparent decision making on Planning matters. Delegations are the mechanisms by which Council enables its officers to act on behalf of the Council.

Delegations are the formal mechanism by which Council authorises officers to exercise powers, duties and functions on its behalf.

Delegations underpin Council's planning under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) and associated legislation, as implemented through Instruments of Delegation adopted by Council. These Instruments may include conditions or limitations on the exercise of delegated authority.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a framework for delegation of planning responsibilities to facilitate efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and to ensure accountability for Planning decisions.

2. Scope

The scope of this Policy is in relation to all responsibilities under the Act and includes matters pertaining to statutory and strategic planning functions, responsibilities and actions. The responsibilities include planning scheme amendments, development plans and planning permit applications.

This Policy applies to all persons acting under delegated authority. A delegation cannot be exercised by a responsible officer who has a conflict of interest. A delegation is made to a position and not to a person.

This Policy is accompanied by operational procedures associated with decision-making.

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the applicable Instrument of Delegation. Delegated powers, discretions, duties and functions are to be exercised by authorised delegates in accordance with the conditions and limitations set out in the Instrument, and consistently with this Policy and associated procedures.

3. Context

This policy sets out how Council and Council Officers interact in relation to the roles and responsibilities conferred on Council under the Act and the East Gippsland Planning Scheme (the Planning Scheme).

Council's role in the planning process is divided into three categories: local governance, Planning Authority and Responsible Authority. These are clearly defined and separate functions of Council and are detailed below.

As a democratically elected body, Council has an obligation to represent and meet the needs of the local community. This role is to be fulfilled in accordance with the legislative framework governing the power, duties and functions of Council, including the provisions of the Act. Good local governance dictates the need for clarity in terms of the roles and responsibilities of Council, Councillors and Council Officers in the decision-making process.

As the Planning Authority, Council is given the power to prepare a planning scheme or an amendment to a planning scheme. The Minister is a Planning Authority and may authorise any other Minister or public authority to prepare an amendment to a planning scheme.

As a Responsible Authority, Council is charged with administering the Planning Scheme pursuant to the provisions of the Act. The Act specifically bestows upon Council all of the powers, functions and duties in relation to assessing and determining applications for planning permit approval and associated matters.

4. Statement

This Policy adopts the approach that all powers, duties and functions in relation to operational planning decisions are delegated to Planning Unit Officers, but exceptions to this are clearly stated. Council retains a number of powers under the Act in relation to the initiation and adoption of Planning Scheme Amendments.

The Policy, and its associated procedure, outlines the framework and protocols for assessing and deciding Planning matters under the Act.

In exercising a delegation, a delegate must comply with all conditions and limitations of a delegation, relevant legislation, resolutions of Council, industrial awards and agreements and Council policies and procedures. The delegate is responsible and accountable for any decisions made under a delegation and is required to be able to justify such decisions or actions.

A Planning Unit Officer must not exercise a delegation where a conflict of interest exists in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's Code of Conduct. All conflicts of interest must be disclosed in accordance with the relevant procedure as specified in the Governance Rules.

This Policy includes criteria about what constitutes a statutory planning matter of significance or broad community interest. These include matters that:

- Relate to Council owned (or Committee of Management) land or a Council capital works project where construction value exceeds $5 million.
- Are matters that have attracted a significant number of written objections and submissions.
- Have major economic, employment or infrastructure implications.
- Raise significant issues in relation to implementation of local, regional or state planning policy.
- Involve material conflicts of interest of Planning Unit Officers or Councillors.

To efficiently facilitate the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) review process, the Policy confers power to the relevant position, irrespective of whether the decision was made by Council or a delegate, to:

- Make submissions to and submit information in response to Orders of VCAT; and
- Negotiate and settle with all parties when attending a compulsory conference; and
- Form a position on any amended plans or proposals filed with VCAT; and
- Prepare, file and serve amended grounds, having formed a position on any amended plans or proposal filed for a review under sections 77, 79, or 82 of the Act.

The Instrument of Delegation and this Policy are publicly available documents.

Delegates must keep appropriate records of all actions taken under delegation.

5. Exercise of Delegated Authority

In exercising a power, function or duty, the delegate must have regard for all statutory requirements, relevant legislation and any guidelines or policy, which the Council may from time to time adopt. All decisions will be made consistent with the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in the Act and the Planning Scheme.

Prior to a decision being made under delegation, a Delegate Report must be prepared and approved by a Delegate of equal or higher office and a copy retained on the relevant file. The Delegate Report must be prepared in accordance with the Planning Delegations Procedure.

A delegation cannot be exercised by a person who has a conflict of interest. If any conflict of interest occurs, it must be disclosed and dealt with in accordance with the relevant procedure as specified in Council's Governance Rules.

5.1 Notification of Planning applications to Councillors

Councillors will be notified weekly in writing via the councillor newsletter of all planning permit applications lodged in the previous week, highlighting applications that are considered by Planning Unit Officers to be of potential significance.

Councillors will also be notified in writing via the councillor newsletter and via direct email of any planning permit application under assessment that has received 10 or more objections.

Councillors will also be advised in writing via the councillor newsletter and via direct email of any application where it is proposed to refuse the application.

Planning Unit Officers will automatically refer any planning permit application with less than 10 objections for Council determination, where Planning Unit Officers consider the application to meet the requirements of Section 6.1.

5.2 Call-up of Planning Permit Applications

This Policy implements the principle that call-ups for Council determination are not common practice. A call up is where three or more Councillors or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) request in writing that a delegate not exercise delegation and the matter is to be determined by Council.

The call up can be made at any time during a planning application process until a determination is made by a Delegate.

A Delegate will make a determination as per usual process, unless:

- A Councillor makes a request in writing to the CEO, supported in writing by at least two (2) other Councillors, for the planning permit application to be determined by formal Council resolution, where it is not already required by this Policy; or
- The CEO requests the planning permit application to be determined by Council.

The call up must occur within 7 days of the formal notification to Councillors as outlined in Section 5.1. The 7 day timeframe starts from the date of the last notice given which will usually be the Councillor Newsletter on a Friday, This means that notice can be given before the newsletter in the form of direct email but that the official call up timeframe does not begin until the last notice is given.

In either case above, the Councillor or CEO requesting the call-up must provide the reason/s for the request and those reasons must be on planning grounds.

In making such a request, a Councillor and the CEO must have regard to the principles listed below:

- Whether the planning permit application raises issues of genuine municipality wide significance that would have a substantial impact on the achievement of Local Planning Policy within the East Gippsland Planning Scheme.
- Whether the planning permit application will have a significant impact beyond the immediate locality, including an impact across municipal boundaries.
- Whether the planning permit application raises an issue that is not adequately provided for under existing Local Planning Policy.
- Whether the planning permit application raises significant issues of public interest.
- Or whether the planning permit application will result in a use or development which is contrary to a proposed planning scheme amendment which is supported by Council.

Where a call-up occurs, the matter shall be included in a future Council Meeting agenda for Council determination.

6. Determination of Planning Permit Applications

In exercising a power, function or duty, the Delegate must have regard for all statutory requirements, relevant legislation and any guidelines or policy, which the Council may from time to time adopt. All decisions will be made consistent with the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in the Act and the provisions of the Planning Scheme.

6.1 Referral of Applications to Council by Delegate

A Delegate shall automatically refer to Council any planning permit application when any of the following apply:

- The proposal raises an issue of significant public interest, concern or controversy, or is likely to do so;
- The proposal raises an issue of policy or process not covered by existing policy or practice;
- The proposal has received 10 or more objections;
- The proposal is for a capital project with construction value of $5million or more on Council owned land or under Committee of Management arrangements;
- The Delegate recommends approval of the proposal, but such approval would be or could reasonably appear to be inconsistent with a previous decision by or on behalf of Council;
- A Delegated Planning Unit Officer pursuant to the Instrument of Delegation S6 or any currently serving Councillor has declared a conflict of interest in the matter;
- Implementation of the proposal would require expenditure of Council funds, and such funds have not been specifically provided for in the budget;
- The Delegate or the CEO is not satisfied that the proposal is one that is appropriate for determination under delegation; or
- A request in writing is made by three or more Councillors to call-up the matter for Council decision and the reasons provided in accordance with Section 5.2.

6.2 Council owned land and capital projects

The following planning permit applications will be determined under delegation unless called up by Councillors:

- All buildings and works applications on Council owned or managed land up to a value of $5million.
- All applications requesting removal of native vegetation on Council owned land.

Assessment of any planning application for Council owned or controlled land may be subject to external peer review at the discretion of the General Manager or CEO.

6.3 Significant or broad community interest matters

The Act stipulates that the Responsible Authority must (where appropriate) have regard to the number of objectors in considering whether the use or development may have a significant social effect.

Any social effects of a proposal must be balanced with other significant effects of the proposal having regards for the following:

- The objectives of the Act
- The provisions of the planning scheme
- Relevant policies and decision guidelines in the scheme
- Other considerations in sections 60 and 84B of the Act

7. Authority to determine an application with conditions

Delegated Planning Unit Officers have authority to issue a notice of decision to grant a permit, a permit, or an amended permit with conditions having regard to the decision guidelines of the Planning Scheme and any relevant policy or procedure of Council:

- Where an application is lodged in general compliance with the East Gippsland Planning Scheme (including incorporated documents) and Council's adopted policies and procedures, and no objections are received.
- Where an application substantially complies with any relevant Council policy or procedure and nine or less objections are received, following the issue of a notice of decision.
- Where Council have determined an application and the resolution is for the issue of a permit with conditions.

7.1 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit with conditions

Delegated Planning Unit Officers shall have authority to issue a Notice of Decision to grant a permit or amended permit with conditions having regard to this Policy and decision guidelines of the Planning Scheme and any relevant policy or procedure of Council where:

- An application is lodged in general compliance with the Planning Scheme (including incorporated documents) and Council's adopted policies and procedures and nine or less objections are received.
- An application has been determined by Council and the resolution is for a Notice of Decision to grant a permit with conditions.

- Up to ten objections have been received and the call-up or Council referral provision of Section 5.2 or 6.2 has not been enacted.

7.2 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse to Grant a Permit

Decisions which refuse to grant a permit may be exercised in the following circumstances:

- Where an applicant has not provided sufficient information for an informed decision to be made.
- Where the application does not or is unable to comply with the relevant provisions of the Planning Scheme.
- A determining referral authority lodges an objection to a planning permit application.
- Where the grant of a planning permit would authorise a breach of a registered restrictive covenant, and such matter is not subject to the application. Before a decision is made, the applicant must be given reasonable opportunity to amend the application.
- Where the application proposes to use Coastal Crown Land without Minister's consent or where the Minister has refused or is deemed to have refused to give consent under the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.

Councillors will be notified in writing via the Councillor Newsletter and via direct email of any applications that are recommended for refusal and the matter is able to be called up for a Council decision in accordance with section 5.2 of this policy.

If the matter is not called up in accordance with section 5.2, a delegate will issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse a Permit.

7.3 Authority to determine to End or Amend Section 173 Agreements

All written requests made pursuant to the Act to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement will be determined under delegation, except in circumstances where the matter has been referred for Council resolution in accordance with this Policy.

In determining whether to end or amend an Agreement, the Delegate must consider all matters under section 178B of the Act.

A Delegate may determine to give in principle approval to ending or amending a Section 173 Agreement.

Where a request is made pursuant to the Act to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement, and the agreement of all those bound by any covenant in the agreement pursuant to section 177(2) or section 178 is received, the Delegate may determine to end or amend the Agreement.

Where a request is made pursuant to the Act to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement and objections are received the Delegate may determine to end or amend the Agreement in accordance with the requirements of Section 7.1.

7.4 Authority to provide representation and form a position in VCAT matters

Where an applicant has appealed to the VCAT pursuant to section 79 of the Act, and the Delegate in consultation with the Manager Planning and Development forms the opinion that the application could have been determined under delegation in accordance with this Policy, then the Delegate may represent the interests of Council at VCAT and recommend conditions suitable to the proposal, as if a delegated determination was made.

Where the Delegate in consultation with the Manager Planning and Development forms the opinion that the application would have been referred to a Council meeting for determination, a report shall be prepared for a Council meeting to enable Council to form a position on the application.

Planning Unit Officers will also exercise delegation in relation to any VCAT matters under sections 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 82AAA, 82AA, or 82B of the Act, as follows:

- Represent Council at a mediation conference and approve a mediated outcome;
- Make submissions to and submit information in response to Orders of VCAT;
- Negotiate and settle will all parties when attending a compulsory conference;
- Form a position on any amended plans or proposal filed with VCAT; and
- Prepare, file and serve amended grounds, having formed a position on any amended plans or proposal.

8. Planning Scheme Amendments

The following matters will be reported to Council for formal resolution as required by the Act.

1. Request to seek authorisation and give public notice of a planning scheme amendment.
2. Consideration of written submissions and request for Ministerial Appointment of a Planning Panel (if required).
3. Consideration of Panel Report – adopting or abandoning of an amendment (if required).
4. Adopting or abandoning of an amendment.

The exceptions to a formal Council resolution for planning scheme amendment matters include State-wide planning scheme amendments administered and executed by the Minister for Planning.

9. Other Powers, Functions and Duties Delegated

The Instrument of Delegation sets out other powers, functions and duties delegated from Council to specific Council officers in relation to the operation of the planning process. These powers, functions, and duties include where the Act requires something to be done. Please refer to the Instrument of Delegation for specific powers, functions and duties.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

The following teams or positions have direct and/or supporting responsibilities associated with this Policy:

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Councillors	To facilitate community awareness of this Policy, to be properly informed to enable appropriate decision making, and to adhere to call-up provisions and conflict of interest obligations.
Chief Executive Officer	To ensure staff and community awareness of and adherence to this Policy.
General Manager Place and Community **General Manager Projects and Planning**	To ensure community awareness of this Policy and oversee its implementation.
Manager Planning and Development	To ensure community awareness of and staff adherence to this Policy.
Planning Unit Officers	To implement and adhere to this Policy.

All staff have an obligation to report occurrences of non-compliance with Council policy. Incidents of non-compliance should be reported immediately to the Manager or General Manager responsible for this Policy.

11. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Application	Any application made to Council pursuant to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, including a Planning Permit application, an application to amend a Planning Permit, an application to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement or any other application for consent made pursuant to the Act.
Delegate	A member of Council staff holding, acting in or performing the duties of office or position as described within the Instrument of Delegation
Determining Referral Authority	An authority as specified in clause 66 of the Planning Scheme as a determining referral authority
Manager Planning and Development	Council officer responsible for the management of the Planning Unit
Material Conflict of Interest	As defined by Section 128 of the Local Government Act 2020
Planning Permit Application	Any application made to Council pursuant to Sections 47 or 72 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
Permit	A planning permit or other consent issued under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
Planning Unit Officer	Member of East Gippsland Shire Council planning team.
Community	People who live in East Gippsland; People and organisations who are ratepayers in East Gippsland; and People and organisations who conduct activities in East Gippsland.
Council	East Gippsland Shire Council.
Councillor	A person who has been elected to the office of “Councillor” of East Gippsland Shire Council.
Council Officer	A current member of East Gippsland Shire Council staff with the authority to engage in activities on behalf of Council.
Responsible Officer	The staff member of East Gippsland Shire Council who has responsibility for the general area/subject matter to which a record pertains.
Shire	The geographic area of East Gippsland Shire Council.
Staff	All staff engaged by East Gippsland Shire Council, including all full-time, part-time, and casual employees, labour hire agency staff and contractors.

12. Privacy Consideration

All personal information collected by East Gippsland Shire Council about matters arising from the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* will be handled in accordance with all applicable privacy legislation and will be used only for investigating matters related to the Act, the Planning Scheme, and land use and development within the East Gippsland Shire.

The disclosure of information revealed by planning processes is regulated by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*. It is an offence to disclose such information to a third party unless exempted under the Act.

This Policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Victoria *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

13. Human Rights

Council is committed to upholding the Human Rights principles as outlined in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006 (the Charter). This Policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Charter.

14. Gender Equality

This Policy has considered the *Gender Equality Act* 2020 in its preparation and has been assessed as not requiring an Equity Impact Assessment (EIA).

15. Risk Reference

This Policy is implemented as a control to mitigate risks in the following categories:

Risk Category		Risk Category	
Community	✓	Governance and Reputation	✓
Financial		Environment	
People and Property	✓	Service Delivery and Projects	✓

16. References and Supporting Documents

16.1 Applicable Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1989, Local Government Act 2020*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- *Building Act 1993*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1970*
- *Heritage Act 2017*
- *Housing Act 1983*
- *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*
- *Subdivision Act 1988*
- *Planning and Environment Regulations 2015*
- *Planning and Environment (Fees) Regulations 2016*

16.2 Applicable Policy and Procedure

- Planning Delegations Procedure
- Development Plan Policy
- Development Plan Procedure
- S6 Instrument of Delegation from Council to Members of Staff
- East Gippsland Planning Scheme
- Planning Delegations Procedure

17. Review and Revision History

Version Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Review Summary
1	3 April 2018	Council	
2	26 September 2022	Council	New format. Expanded criteria for consideration of matters other than permit applications. Additional delegations.
3	14 November 2023	Council	Amendments to notice of intent requirements. Other administrative changes.
4	3 June 2026	Chief Executive Officer	Administrative updates including to the template and clarity of roles. Addition of process relating to PCMs.
5	21 July 2026	Council	General review of policy to make administrative updates Removal of duplicated information Delete PCMs

6		Council	Updates to communication modes.

17.1 Administrative Updates

Minor amendments to this document may be required from time to time. Where amendments do not materially alter the intent of a document, they will be made administratively and approved by the Document Owner.

17.2 Document Control Disclaimer

Printed copies of this document are considered uncontrolled. Please refer to the Corporate Document Register on Council's intranet to access the most current version of this document.

Planning Delegations Policy

Table of Contents

1. Purpose 3
2. Scope 3
3. Context 3
4. Statement 4
5. Exercise of Delegated Authority 5
   5.1 Notification of Planning applications to Councillors 5
   5.2 Call-up of Planning Permit Applications 5
6. Determination of Planning Permit Applications 6
   6.1 Referral of Applications to Council by Delegate 6
   6.2 Council owned land and capital projects 7
   6.3 Significant or broad community interest matters 7
7. Authority to determine an application with conditions 7
   7.1 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit with conditions 7
   7.2 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse to Grant a Permit 8
   7.3 Authority to determine to End or Amend Section 173 Agreements 8
   7.4 Authority to provide representation and form a position in VCAT matters 8
8. Planning Scheme Amendments 9
9. Other Powers, Functions and Duties Delegated 9
10. Roles and Responsibilities 10
11. Definitions 11
12. Privacy Consideration 12
13. Human Rights 12
14. Gender Equality 12
15. Risk Reference 12
16. References and Supporting Documents 13
   16.1 Applicable Legislation 13
   16.2 Applicable Policy and Procedure 13
17. Review and Revision History 13
   17.1 Administrative Updates 14
   17.2 Document Control Disclaimer 14

1. Purpose

The objective of the Planning Delegations Policy (the Policy) is to achieve effective, efficient and transparent decision making on Planning matters. Delegations are the mechanisms by which Council enables its officers to act on behalf of the Council.

Delegations are the formal mechanism by which Council authorises officers to exercise powers, duties and functions on its behalf.

Delegations underpin Council's planning under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) and associated legislation, as implemented through Instruments of Delegation adopted by Council. These Instruments may include conditions or limitations on the exercise of delegated authority.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a framework for delegation of planning responsibilities to facilitate efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and to ensure accountability for Planning decisions.

2. Scope

The scope of this Policy is in relation to all responsibilities under the Act and includes matters pertaining to statutory and strategic planning functions, responsibilities and actions. The responsibilities include planning scheme amendments, development plans and planning permit applications.

This Policy applies to all persons acting under delegated authority. A delegation cannot be exercised by a responsible officer who has a conflict of interest. A delegation is made to a position and not to a person.

This Policy is accompanied by operational procedures associated with decision-making.

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the applicable Instrument of Delegation. Delegated powers, discretions, duties and functions are to be exercised by authorised delegates in accordance with the conditions and limitations set out in the Instrument, and consistently with this Policy and associated procedures.

3. Context

This policy sets out how Council and Council Officers interact in relation to the roles and responsibilities conferred on Council under the Act and the East Gippsland Planning Scheme (the Planning Scheme).

Council's role in the planning process is divided into three categories: local governance, Planning Authority and Responsible Authority. These are clearly defined and separate functions of Council and are detailed below.

As a democratically elected body, Council has an obligation to represent and meet the needs of the local community. This role is to be fulfilled in accordance with the legislative framework governing the power, duties and functions of Council, including the provisions of the Act. Good local governance dictates the need for clarity in terms of the roles and responsibilities of Council, Councillors and Council Officers in the decision-making process.

As the Planning Authority, Council is given the power to prepare a planning scheme or an amendment to a planning scheme. The Minister is a Planning Authority and may authorise any other Minister or public authority to prepare an amendment to a planning scheme.

As a Responsible Authority, Council is charged with administering the Planning Scheme pursuant to the provisions of the Act. The Act specifically bestows upon Council all of the powers, functions and duties in relation to assessing and determining applications for planning permit approval and associated matters.

4. Statement

This Policy adopts the approach that all powers, duties and functions in relation to operational planning decisions are delegated to Planning Unit Officers, but exceptions to this are clearly stated. Council retains a number of powers under the Act in relation to the initiation and adoption of Planning Scheme Amendments.

The Policy, and its associated procedure, outlines the framework and protocols for assessing and deciding Planning matters under the Act.

In exercising a delegation, a delegate must comply with all conditions and limitations of a delegation, relevant legislation, resolutions of Council, industrial awards and agreements and Council policies and procedures. The delegate is responsible and accountable for any decisions made under a delegation and is required to be able to justify such decisions or actions.

A Planning Unit Officer must not exercise a delegation where a conflict of interest exists in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's Code of Conduct. All conflicts of interest must be disclosed in accordance with the relevant procedure as specified in the Governance Rules.

This Policy includes criteria about what constitutes a statutory planning matter of significance or broad community interest. These include matters that:

- Relate to Council owned (or Committee of Management) land or a Council capital works project where construction value exceeds $5 million.
- Are matters that have attracted a significant number of written objections and submissions.
- Have major economic, employment or infrastructure implications.
- Raise significant issues in relation to implementation of local, regional or state planning policy.
- Involve material conflicts of interest of Planning Unit Officers or Councillors.

To efficiently facilitate the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) review process, the Policy confers power to the relevant position, irrespective of whether the decision was made by Council or a delegate, to:

- Make submissions to and submit information in response to Orders of VCAT; and
- Negotiate and settle with all parties when attending a compulsory conference; and
- Form a position on any amended plans or proposals filed with VCAT; and
- Prepare, file and serve amended grounds, having formed a position on any amended plans or proposal filed for a review under sections 77, 79, or 82 of the Act.

The Instrument of Delegation and this Policy are publicly available documents.

Delegates must keep appropriate records of all actions taken under delegation.

5. Exercise of Delegated Authority

In exercising a power, function or duty, the delegate must have regard for all statutory requirements, relevant legislation and any guidelines or policy, which the Council may from time to time adopt. All decisions will be made consistent with the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in the Act and the Planning Scheme.

Prior to a decision being made under delegation, a Delegate Report must be prepared and approved by a Delegate of equal or higher office and a copy retained on the relevant file. The Delegate Report must be prepared in accordance with the Planning Delegations Procedure.

A delegation cannot be exercised by a person who has a conflict of interest. If any conflict of interest occurs, it must be disclosed and dealt with in accordance with the relevant procedure as specified in Council's Governance Rules.

5.1 Notification of Planning applications to Councillors

Councillors will be notified weekly in writing via the councillor newsletter of all planning permit applications lodged in the previous week, highlighting applications that are considered by Planning Unit Officers to be of potential significance.

Councillors will also be notified in writing via the councillor newsletter and via direct email ~~from time to time as required~~ of any planning permit application under assessment that has received 10 or more objections.

Councillors will also be advised in writing via the councillor newsletter and via direct email of any application where it is proposed to refuse the application.

Planning Unit Officers will automatically refer any planning permit application with less than 10 objections for Council determination, where Planning Unit Officers consider the application to meet the requirements of Section 6.1.

5.2 Call-up of Planning Permit Applications

This Policy implements the principle that call-ups for Council determination are not common practice. A call up is where three or more Councillors or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) request in writing that a delegate not exercise delegation and the matter is to be determined by Council.

The call up can be made at any time during a planning application process until a determination is made by a Delegate.

~~After seven (7) days of the receipt of a notification of a Delegate's Intent to Determine a Planning Permit application, the~~A Delegate will make ~~such~~ a determination as per usual process, unless:

- A Councillor makes a request in writing to the CEO, supported in writing by at least two (2) other Councillors, for the planning permit application to be determined by formal Council resolution, where it is not already required by this Policy; or
- The CEO requests the planning permit application to be determined by Council.

The call up must occur within 7 days of the formal notification to Councillors as outlined in Section 5.1. The 7 day timeframe starts from the date of the last notice given which will usually be the Councillor Newsletter on a Friday, This means that notice can be given before the newsletter in the form of direct email but that the official call up timeframe does not begin until the last notice is given.

In either case above, the Councillor or CEO requesting the call-up ~~or the CEO, as the case may be, shall~~ must provide the reason/s for the request and those reasons must be on planning grounds.

In making such a request, a Councillor and the CEO must have regard to the principles listed below:

- Whether t~~T~~he planning permit application raises issues of genuine municipality wide significance that would have a substantial impact on the achievement of Local Planning Policy within the East Gippsland Planning Scheme.
- Whether t~~T~~he planning permit application will have a significant impact beyond the immediate locality, including an impact across municipal boundaries.
- Whether t~~T~~he planning permit application raises an issue that is not adequately provided for under existing Local Planning Policy.
- Whether t~~T~~he planning permit application raises significant issues of public interest.
- Or whether t~~T~~he planning permit application will result in a use or development which is contrary to a proposed planning scheme amendment which is supported by Council.

Where a call-up occurs, the matter shall be included in a future Council Meeting agenda for Council determination.

6. Determination of Planning Permit Applications

In exercising a power, function or duty, the Delegate must have regard for all statutory requirements, relevant legislation and any guidelines or policy, which the Council may from time to time adopt. All decisions will be made consistent with the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in the Act and the provisions of the Planning Scheme.

6.1 Referral of Applications to Council by Delegate

A Delegate shall automatically refer to Council any planning permit application ~~without prior decision by the Delegate~~ when any of the following apply:

- The proposal raises an issue of significant public interest, concern or controversy, or is likely to do so;
- The proposal raises an issue of policy or process not covered by existing policy or practice;
- The proposal has received 10 or more objections~~;~~.
- The proposal is for a capital project with construction value of $5million or more on Council owned land or under Committee of Management arrangements;
- The Delegate recommends approval of the proposal, but such approval would be or could reasonably appear to be inconsistent with a previous decision by or on behalf of Council;
- A Delegated Planning Unit Officer pursuant to the Instrument of Delegation S6 or any currently serving Councillor has declared a conflict of interest in the matter;
- Implementation of the proposal would require expenditure of Council funds, and such funds have not been specifically provided for in the budget;
- The Delegate or the CEO is not satisfied that the proposal is one that is appropriate for determination under delegation; or
- A request in writing is made by three or more Councillors to call-up the matter for Council

decision and the reasons provided in accordance with Section 5.2.

6.2 Council owned land and capital projects

The following planning permit applications will be determined under delegation unless called up by Councillors:

- All buildings and works applications on Council owned or managed land up to a value of $5million.
- All applications requesting removal of native vegetation on Council owned land.

Assessment of any planning application for Council owned or controlled land may be subject to external peer review at the discretion of the General Manager or CEO.

6.3 Significant or broad community interest matters

The Act stipulates that the Responsible Authority must (where appropriate) have regard to the number of objectors in considering whether the use or development may have a significant social effect.

Any social effects of a proposal must be balanced with other significant effects of the proposal having regards for the following:

- The objectives of the Act
- The provisions of the planning scheme
- Relevant policies and decision guidelines in the scheme
- Other considerations in sections 60 and 84B of the Act

7. Authority to determine an application with conditions

Delegated Planning Unit Officers have authority to issue a notice of decision to grant a permit, a permit, or an amended permit with conditions having regard to the decision guidelines of the Planning Scheme and any relevant policy or procedure of Council:

- Where an application is lodged in general compliance with the East Gippsland Planning Scheme (including incorporated documents) and Council's adopted policies and procedures, and no objections are received.
- Where an application substantially complies with any relevant Council policy or procedure and nine or less objections are received, following the issue of a notice of decision.
- Where Council have determined an application and the resolution is for the issue of a permit with conditions.

7.1 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit with conditions

Delegated Planning Unit Officers shall have authority to issue a Notice of Decision to grant a permit or amended permit with conditions having regard to this Policy and decision guidelines of the Planning Scheme and any relevant policy or procedure of Council where:

- An application is lodged in general compliance with the Planning Scheme (including incorporated documents) and Council's adopted policies and procedures and nine or less objections are received.
- An application has been determined by Council and the resolution is for a Notice of Decision to grant a permit with conditions.
- Up to ten objections have been received and the call-up or Council referral provision of

Section 5.2 or 6.2 has not been enacted.

7.2 Authority to issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse to Grant a Permit

Decisions which refuse to grant a permit may be exercised in the following circumstances:

- Where an applicant has not provided sufficient information for an informed decision to be made.
- Where the application does not or is unable to comply with the relevant provisions of the Planning Scheme.
- A determining referral authority lodges an objection to a planning permit application.
- Where the grant of a planning permit would authorise a breach of a registered restrictive covenant, and such matter is not subject to the application. Before a decision is made, the applicant must be given reasonable opportunity to amend the application.
- Where the application proposes to use Coastal Crown Land without Minister's consent or where the Minister has refused or is deemed to have refused to give consent under the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*.

Councillors will be notified in writing via the Councillor Newsletter and via direct email of any applications that are recommended for refusal and the matter is able to be called up for a Council decision in accordance with section 5.2 of this policy.

If the matter is not called up in accordance with section 5.2, a delegate will issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse a Permit.

7.3 Authority to determine to End or Amend Section 173 Agreements

All written requests made pursuant to the Act to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement will be determined under delegation, except in circumstances where the matter has been referred for Council resolution in accordance with this Policy.

In determining whether to end or amend an Agreement, the Delegate must consider all matters under section 178B of the Act.

A Delegate may determine to give in principle approval to ending or amending a Section 173 Agreement.

Where a request is made pursuant to the Act to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement, and the agreement of all those bound by any covenant in the agreement pursuant to section 177(2) or section 178 is received, the Delegate may determine to end or amend the Agreement.

Where a request is made pursuant to the Act to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement and objections are received the Delegate may determine to end or amend the Agreement in accordance with the requirements of Section 7.1.

7.4 Authority to provide representation and form a position in VCAT matters

Where an applicant has appealed to the VCAT pursuant to section 79 of the Act, and the Delegate in consultation with the Manager Planning and Development forms the opinion that the application could have been determined under delegation in accordance with this Policy, then the Delegate may represent the interests of Council at VCAT and recommend conditions suitable to the proposal, as if a delegated determination was made.

Where the Delegate in consultation with the Manager Planning and Development forms the opinion that the application would have been referred to a Council meeting for determination, a

report shall be prepared for a Council meeting to enable Council to form a position on the application.

Planning Unit Officers will also exercise delegation in relation to any VCAT matters under sections 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 82AAA, 82AA, or 82B of the Act, as follows:

- Represent Council at a mediation conference and approve a mediated outcome;
- Make submissions to and submit information in response to Orders of VCAT;
- Negotiate and settle will all parties when attending a compulsory conference;
- Form a position on any amended plans or proposal filed with VCAT; and
- Prepare, file and serve amended grounds, having formed a position on any amended plans or proposal.

8. Planning Scheme Amendments

The following matters will be reported to Council for formal resolution as required by the Act.

1. Request to seek authorisation and give public notice of a planning scheme amendment.
2. Consideration of written submissions and request for Ministerial Appointment of a Planning Panel (if required).
3. Consideration of Panel Report – adopting or abandoning of an amendment (if required).
4. Adopting or abandoning of an amendment.

The exceptions to a formal Council resolution for planning scheme amendment matters include State-wide planning scheme amendments administered and executed by the Minister for Planning.

9. Other Powers, Functions and Duties Delegated

The Instrument of Delegation sets out other powers, functions and duties delegated from Council to specific Council officers in relation to the operation of the planning process. These powers, functions, and duties include where the Act requires something to be done. Please refer to the Instrument of Delegation for specific powers, functions and duties.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

The following teams or positions have direct and/or supporting responsibilities associated with this Policy:

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Councillors	To facilitate community awareness of this Policy, to be properly informed to enable appropriate decision making, and to adhere to call-up provisions and conflict of interest obligations.
Chief Executive Officer	To ensure staff and community awareness of and adherence to this Policy.
General Manager Place and Community **General Manager Projects and Planning**	To ensure community awareness of this Policy and oversee its implementation.
Manager Planning and Development	To ensure community awareness of and staff adherence to this Policy.
Planning Unit Officers	To implement and adhere to this Policy.

All staff have an obligation to report occurrences of non-compliance with Council policy. Incidents of non-compliance should be reported immediately to the Manager or General Manager responsible for this Policy.

11. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Application	Any application made to Council pursuant to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, including a Planning Permit application, an application to amend a Planning Permit, an application to end or amend a Section 173 Agreement or any other application for consent made pursuant to the Act.
Delegate	A member of Council staff holding, acting in or performing the duties of office or position as described within the Instrument of Delegation
Determining Referral Authority	An authority as specified in clause 66 of the Planning Scheme as a determining referral authority
Manager Planning and Development	Council officer responsible for the management of the Planning Unit
Material Conflict of Interest	As defined by Section 128 of the Local Government Act 2020
Planning Permit Application	Any application made to Council pursuant to Sections 47 or 72 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
Permit	A planning permit or other consent issued under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
Planning Unit Officer	Member of East Gippsland Shire Council planning team.
Community	People who live in East Gippsland; People and organisations who are ratepayers in East Gippsland; and People and organisations who conduct activities in East Gippsland.
Council	East Gippsland Shire Council.
Councillor	A person who has been elected to the office of “Councillor” of East Gippsland Shire Council.
Council Officer	A current member of East Gippsland Shire Council staff with the authority to engage in activities on behalf of Council.
Responsible Officer	The staff member of East Gippsland Shire Council who has responsibility for the general area/subject matter to which a record pertains.
Shire	The geographic area of East Gippsland Shire Council.
Staff	All staff engaged by East Gippsland Shire Council, including all full-time, part-time, and casual employees, labour hire agency staff and contractors.

12. Privacy Consideration

All personal information collected by East Gippsland Shire Council about matters arising from the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* will be handled in accordance with all applicable privacy legislation and will be used only for investigating matters related to the Act, the Planning Scheme, and land use and development within the East Gippsland Shire.

The disclosure of information revealed by planning processes is regulated by the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*. It is an offence to disclose such information to a third party unless exempted under the Act.

This Policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Victoria *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

13. Human Rights

Council is committed to upholding the Human Rights principles as outlined in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006 (the Charter). This Policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Charter.

14. Gender Equality

This Policy has considered the *Gender Equality Act* 2020 in its preparation and has been assessed as not requiring an Equity Impact Assessment (EIA).

15. Risk Reference

This Policy is implemented as a control to mitigate risks in the following categories:

Risk Category		Risk Category	
Community	✓	Governance and Reputation	✓
Financial		Environment	
People and Property	✓	Service Delivery and Projects	✓

16. References and Supporting Documents

16.1 Applicable Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1989, Local Government Act 2020*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- *Building Act 1993*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1970*
- *Heritage Act 2017*
- *Housing Act 1983*
- *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*
- *Subdivision Act 1988*
- *Planning and Environment Regulations 2015*
- *Planning and Environment (Fees) Regulations 2016*

16.2 Applicable Policy and Procedure

- Planning Delegations Procedure
- Development Plan Policy
- Development Plan Procedure
- S6 Instrument of Delegation from Council to Members of Staff
- East Gippsland Planning Scheme
- Planning Delegations Procedure

17. Review and Revision History

Version Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Review Summary
1	3 April 2018	Council	
2	26 September 2022	Council	New format. Expanded criteria for consideration of matters other than permit applications. Additional delegations.
3	14 November 2023	Council	Amendments to notice of intent requirements. Other administrative changes.
4	3 June 2026	Chief Executive Officer	Administrative updates including to the template and clarity of roles. Addition of process relating to PCMs.
5	21 July 2026	Council	General review of policy to make administrative updates Removal of duplicated information Delete PCMs

6		Council	Updates to communication modes.

17.1 Administrative Updates

Minor amendments to this document may be required from time to time. Where amendments do not materially alter the intent of a document, they will be made administratively and approved by the Document Owner.

17.2 Document Control Disclaimer

Printed copies of this document are considered uncontrolled. Please refer to the Corporate Document Register on Council's intranet to access the most current version of this document.

5.2 Place and Community

5.2.1 Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Unconfirmed Minutes 13 August 2026 and New Member Appointment

Authorised by Executive Manager Place and Community

Confidentiality Notice

The information contained in **Confidential Attachment 1** 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 in relation to this agenda item would result in the disclosure of personal information relating to the applicants.

Purpose

This report is to seek approval for the appointment of two industry representatives to fill the vacancies on the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee (ASAC).

This report also provides Council with the unconfirmed minutes for the ASAC meeting held Thursday 13 August 2026 at the Gippsland Agriculture Centre in Bengworden. A copy of the minutes is provided at **Attachment 2.**

Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***appoints the industry representatives identified in Confidential Attachment 1 to the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee for a term commencing upon appointment and ending 31 December 2027, with the option to extend for a further two-year period from 1 January 2028 to 31 December 2029;***

2. ***notes that all Expression of Interest applications were assessed against the criteria contained in the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Charter;***

3. ***authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to advise all applicants of the outcome of their expression of interest;***

4. ***authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to make a public statement on the membership of the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee following notification of all applicants of the outcome of the Expression of Interest process;***

5. ***notes the unconfirmed Minutes of the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee meeting held on Thursday 13 August 2026 as provided at Attachment 2; and***

6. ***resolves that Confidential Attachment 1 to this report and all discussions relating to that attachment remain confidential.***

Key Points

At the Council meeting on 5 June 2020, Council approved the formation of the ASAC and the Charter.

The Charter outlines that the Committee will provide Council and its officers with advice and recommendations on any matter of significance that is impacting or is considered likely to impact on individual agriculture sectors, and/or the agriculture sector more broadly.

At the Council meeting of 26 September 2023, three industry representatives were appointed to ASAC for the term of 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2025, with an option to extend the term for a further two years until 31 December 2027. One member chose to accept the second term. Committee members Emily Richardson and Wayne Dredge chose to step down from the committee as of June 2026.

Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Membership Selection Process

In line with the Charter, an Expression of Interest (EOI) process commenced 6 July 2026, closing 10 August 2026. The EOI was advertised through the local newspaper, Council's website, Business Connect Newsletter, AgriNews and direct emails to agricultural organisations. Eight applications were received representing four different industries across eight locations.

An overview of the applicants and their backgrounds are provided at **Confidential Attachment 1**.

Discussion

Council received eight applications for the two vacancies. Applications were assessed by a panel comprising the Executive Manager Place and Community, Manager Economic Development and Agribusiness Development Officer against the requirements of the ASAC Charter and the need to maintain broad representation across agricultural sectors, geographic locations, skills and experience.

Following the assessment process, the panel has recommended the appointment of two applicants to strengthen representation across agricultural sectors and geographic areas within East Gippsland. Details of all applicants and the panel's recommendations are provided at **Confidential Attachment 1**.

All applicants were considered against the same criteria, and the recommendation reflects the panel's objective of maintaining a balanced and representative committee that can effectively provide advice on matters affecting East Gippsland's agricultural sector.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following themes in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 1: Community wellbeing and social responsibility
Outcome – A stronger collaborative community that is actively engaged and supported

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Decision-making is streamlined, efficient, and responsive to community needs

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

In line with the Charter, an EOI process was undertaken. The publicly advertised process sought to gain applications for the position of industry representatives, and was sought through:

- Public notice in the local newspaper
- Advertised on Council's website
- Promoted in Business Connect Newsletter and AgriNews
- Emailed to agricultural organisations, peak bodies and agencies

Climate Change

This report is assessed as having no direct impact on climate change.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

1. CONFIDENTIAL - Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Membership Appointment [**5.2.1.1** - 2 pages]
2. Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee Unconfirmed Minutes 13 August 2026 [**5.2.1.2** - 4 pages]

East Gippsland Shire Council
Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee
Unconfirmed Minutes

For meeting held on
Thursday 13 August 2026
8.00am to 9.30am
Gippsland Agricultural Centre,
345 Bengworden Rd, Bairnsdale 3875

1. Procedural

Attendees:

Members: Alister Micallef, Brodie Anderson (FFG – Proxy), Chris Jehu, Edward Mauger, Joanne Trevaskis, Kate Commins, Leecia Angus (GAgG), Rohan Reynolds, Simon Johnson, Skye Royle (EGCMA – Proxy), Ty Mason

Councilors: Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr John White

Guests: Andrew Sheridan (Landcare), Jen Smith (GAgG), Jess Horton (AgVic), Luke Vinton (DEECA)

East Gippsland Shire Council staff: Blanche Evans (EGSC), Fiona Weigall (EGSC), Kate Allen (EGSC), Kaylene Wickham (EGSC), Melissa Johnston (EGSC), Nathan Misiurka (EGSC), Prue McTaggart (EGSC), Wayne Richards (EGSC)

Online: David Scott (DEECA)

Chair: Mayor Cr. Jodie Ashworth

Minute taker: Andie Abraham (EGSC)

Item 1.1 **Acknowledgement of Country and welcome**
Chair welcomed members and guests. Thanks extended to the host venue Gippsland Agriculture Centre.

Item 1.2 **Apologies**
Apologies were noted from Bec Hemming (EGCMA), Rob Lightfoot, and Dianne Phillips (AgVic).

Item 1.3 **Confirmation of previous minutes**
Moved: Chris Jehu
Seconded: Ty Mason

Item 1.4 **Declaration of conflict of interest**
No conflicts of interest declared.

Item 1.5 **Actions from previous minutes – 21 May 2026**

Item 1.5.1 **Looking Ahead Review**

- Wellington Shire confirmed participation in a review of the Looking Ahead document.
- Discussions commenced with CMA and Wellington Shire.
- A Project Control Group will be established involving ASAC members, agencies and Wellington farmers to guide the project.

ACTION:

Council to establish a Looking Ahead Project Control Group subcommittee and invite ASAC representation.

Item 1.5.2 Rural Land Use Strategy Review

- Councillor workshop undertaken to provide direction for review scope.
- Strategic Planning team likely to attend a future meeting to discuss the review process and engagement opportunities.
- ASAC members will be invited to contribute to the review process.

- ***ACTION:***

Council to establish a Looking Ahead Project Control Group subcommittee and invite ASAC representation.

.

Item 1.5.3 Pest Animal Management Advocacy

Members highlighted the need for stronger evidence quantifying impacts and costs and that this is a cross border issue.

Key themes:

- Quantify economic losses.
- Gather impact case studies from producers.
- Investigate cost-benefit evidence relating to aerial baiting and control programs.
- Strengthen advocacy through state and federal channels.
- Improve awareness of reporting pathways.

ACTIONS:

Council to establish a working/sub-committee to support development of additional evidence and data for the advocacy campaign.

Council to explore opportunities to source and analyse existing regional and national data from industry bodies including Meat & Livestock Australia and Rural Councils Victoria.

Council to do a communications campaign encouraging farmers and landholders to report pest animal sightings, attacks and impacts via existing reporting systems.

Council to circulate a proposed project scope to ASAC for feedback before commencing any research project.

Item 1.5.4 Livestock Exchange Review

- Independent review completed.
- Existing management model remains the preferred approach.
- Opportunities for operational improvements identified.
- Council will continue managing the facility.

Item 1.5.5 Plantation Paper

- Draft paper completed and under management review.
- Will be circulated following internal review processes for feedback.

2. Discussion

Item 2.1 Weed Management Update

Presentation received from Kate Allen (EGSC), Luke Vindon (DEECA) and Andrew Sheridan (Landcare).

Key Issues Raised

- Roadside weed management funding remains limited relative to the size of the road network.
- Concern regarding African Lovegrass spread.
- Challenges associated with absentee landholders and ongoing compliance.
- Reduced weed extension and education services.
- Importance of coordinated community-led weed control programs.
- Need for greater alignment between agencies and land managers.

ACTIONS:

Council to continue to advocate for greater coordination between Council roadside weed management programs and VicRoads management activities through the CEO office.

Advocacy Identified

- Increased roadside weed funding.
- Reinstatement of extension officers and educational support programs.
- Improved weed compliance outcomes for persistent non-compliance cases.

ACTIONS:

Council to continue advocacy for roadside weed funding and educational programs.

Item 2.2 Biosecurity Preparedness Update (H5N1 Bird Flu)

Presentation received from Jess Horton (Agriculture Victoria) and Council Emergency Management staff.

Updates:

- H5N1 detections confirmed in wild bird populations in Victoria.
- No detections in poultry within East Gippsland.
- Housing order currently applies to poultry producers in designated areas.
- Emphasis remains on Avoid, Record, Report.

Council has undertaken preparedness planning including:

- PPE procurement.
- Waste management planning.
- Public communications.
- Customer service response preparedness.
- Emergency response procedures.

ACTION:

Continue Council preparedness activities and public communication using Agriculture Victoria and DEECA guidance.

3. Reports

Item 4.2 **Circulated reports for noting by exception**

Reports from Agriculture Victoria, Food & Fibre Gippsland, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Gippsland Agricultural Group and the EGSC Agribusiness Development Officer were circulated with the agenda. Reports were noted by exception.

Drought Support Update from AgVic

Agriculture Victoria advised:

- Drought assistance programs have been extended to 30 September 2026 which include:
  - One-on-one advisory services.
  - Farm infrastructure grants.
  - Over the Farm Gate community event funding and,
  - Rural Financial Counselling Services

Update from East Gippsland Shire Council on ASAC Membership Recruitment

- Eight applications received for two vacant positions.
- Selection process underway.
- Appointment expected following Council endorsement in October.
- New members anticipated to attend November 2026 meeting.

5. Meeting Close

Item 5.1 **Meeting close**

Meeting closed with next ASAC meeting scheduled for 12 November 2026 at the Council Chambers, East Gippsland Shire Council.

5.3 Assets and Environment

5.3.1 Public Amenities (Toilets) Service Review Final Report

Authorised by General Manager Assets and Environment

Purpose

This report is to present the final Public Amenities Service Review and seek Council's endorsement of the findings and recommendations of the review, as outlined in **Attachment 1.**

Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***endorses the findings and recommendations of the Public Amenities Service Review, as outlined in Attachment 1 to the report; and***

2. ***notes that the Public Amenities Service Review and a summary of its findings and recommendations will be published on Council's website, and the review outcomes communicated to the community members and stakeholders who participated in the review.***

Key Points

- The Public Amenities Service Review provides an evidence-based assessment of Council's public amenities network and establishes a strategic framework to guide future service delivery, asset management and investment decisions.

- The review was informed by asset and operational data, site assessments, benchmarking, stakeholder engagement and community consultation.

- Community engagement undertaken between December 2025 and February 2026 generated more than 650 pieces of feedback. Cleanliness, safety and reliability were consistently identified as the most important factors influencing people's experience of public amenities.

- The review does not recommend the immediate closure or decommissioning of any facility. Any future proposal that may significantly affect a facility, location or user group would be subject to further assessment and community engagement.

- The recommendations do not commit Council to specific capital projects or expenditure outside existing planning and budget processes.

- Subject to Council endorsement, the review and a summary of its findings and recommendations will be published on Council's website.

- Other opportunities including the use of CCTV to monitor vandalisms and the opportunity to sell advertising withing high profile sites will also be further investigated.

Discussion

The Public Amenities Service Review provides a comprehensive assessment of Council's public amenities network, including asset condition, accessibility, utilisation, service levels, maintenance requirements and future demand. It draws on asset and operational data, benchmarking, community and stakeholder engagement, and site assessments to identify opportunities to improve service delivery and support longer-term planning and investment decisions.

The review recommendations are focused on:

- improving the consistency and effectiveness of service delivery across the network, rebalancing the effort across the network where it is most needed;
- strengthening the evidence and data used to inform future decisions;
- progressively improving the condition, safety and accessibility of public amenities; and
- supporting more strategic service planning, asset management and investment.

The recommendations establish a strategic framework for future decision-making and do not commit Council to specific capital expenditure or site-specific changes outside existing planning and budget processes.

Implementation of the recommendations will occur progressively through future planning, budgeting, asset management and service delivery activities.

Implementation Considerations

As part of implementation, Council may investigate options to improve service delivery, safety, reliability and the longer-term sustainability of the public amenities network. These may include changes to service levels, alternative service delivery approaches including trialling different cleaning methods, improved transparency of cleaning and servicing, the application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles, and further assessment of facilities in poor condition.

Council may also investigate appropriate revenue opportunities, including sponsorship or advertising arrangements, where these are consistent with Council policy, community expectations and the function of the facility.

Any future proposal that may materially affect a specific facility, location or user group would be subject to further assessment, community engagement and Council consideration before a decision is made.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following themes in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 1: Community wellbeing and social responsibility
Outcome – A connected and inclusive community, where no one is left behind.
The review supports the provision of safe, accessible and fit-for-purpose public amenities that respond to community needs and enable participation by residents and visitors.

Theme 3: Making the most of what we've got
Outcome – Our assets are well maintained, utilised and meet community needs.
The review provides a strategic framework to guide the planning, renewal, upgrading and management of Council's public amenities network so that these assets continue to meet community needs.

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Decision-making is streamlined, efficient, and responsive to community needs.
The review establishes an evidence-based approach to future investment, service planning and asset management decisions relating to public amenities.

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

Community and stakeholder feedback informed the findings and recommendations of the Public Amenities Service Review. The consultation undertaken as part of the review is detailed in **Attachment 1** and provided valuable insight into community expectations, priorities and experiences of Council's public amenities network.

Subject to Council endorsement, officers will publish the final Service Review and a summary of its findings and recommendations on Council's website. The outcomes will also be communicated directly to participating community members and stakeholders, including an explanation of how their feedback informed the review.

The review establishes a strategic framework for future decision-making. Further investigation, data collection and analysis will therefore be undertaken as part of implementation. Community engagement will also occur where proposed changes may significantly affect facilities, locations or user groups.

Opportunities and Risks

Opportunities

- Improved alignment of public amenity service levels with community need, utilisation, risk and network priorities.

- Improved cleanliness, safety, reliability and overall user experience across the public amenities network.

- More consistent and transparent service delivery through the application of a defined service level framework and evidence-based decision-making.

- A more strategic approach to future service planning, asset management and investment decisions.

- Enhanced ability to prioritise future expenditure and investment, supporting long-term financial sustainability and value for money.

- Improved data, utilisation monitoring and service performance reporting to support continuous improvement and informed decision-making.

Risks

- Future changes arising from implementation of the review recommendations may generate community concern where they affect specific facilities, locations or user groups. This will be mitigated through targeted community engagement and Council consideration where appropriate.

- Implementation of recommendations may be influenced by future budget availability, resource capacity and competing organisational priorities.

- Balancing community expectations, service quality, accessibility and long-term financial sustainability across a large and geographically dispersed network may require trade-offs in future service and investment decisions.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

1. Public Amenities Service Review Final Report and Recommendations [**5.3.1.1** - 72 pages]

Public Amenities Service Review

Report and Recommendations

October 2026



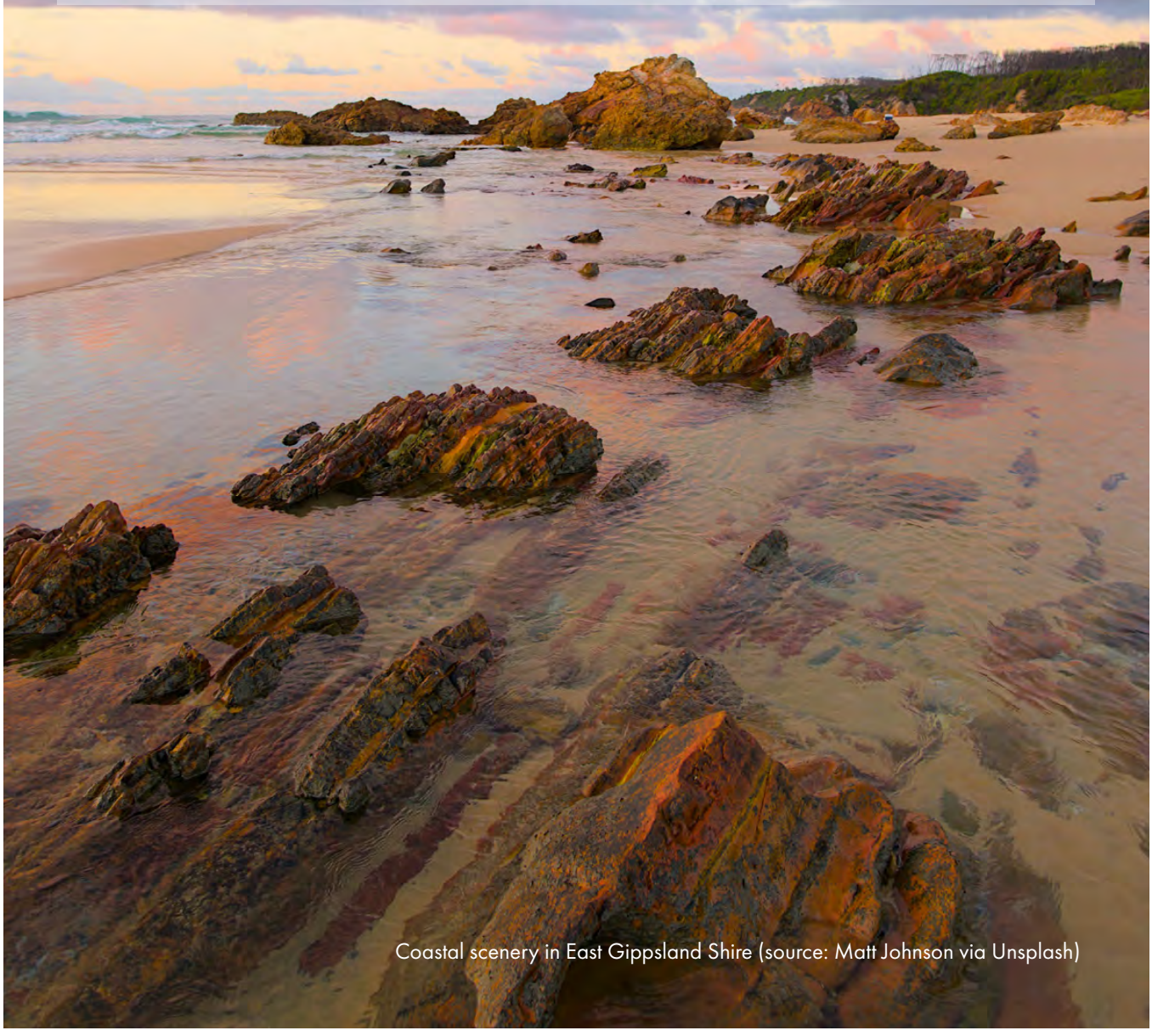
Chinaman's Creek Toilet Block, Metung

Acknowledgement of Country

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the 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, deliver services and support to our community.



Coastal scenery in East Gippsland Shire (source: Matt Johnson via Unsplash)

Executive summary

What this review is about

East Gippsland Shire Council provides public amenities across the Shire to support everyday use of town centres, parks, recreation areas and tourism destinations. These facilities contribute to health, dignity and community participation, particularly for younger and older people, families, people living with disability, and visitors spending extended time in public places.

Over time, East Gippsland Shire's (Council) network of public toilets has expanded in response to local needs, requests and opportunities. As a result, Council now operates a large number of facilities, each with differing levels of cleaning, availability and upkeep. Many decisions have been made on an ad-hoc basis, rather than through a deliberate, network-wide approach.

This is particularly relevant in East Gippsland, where dispersed towns create unique servicing challenges and require operational effort to be spread across a large geographic area. For this reason, the review considers public toilets as a holistic service, not just a collection of individual assets.

Council currently manages 88 public toilet facilities across the Shire, representing a substantial operational and asset base. Annual expenditure on cleaning and minor maintenance is in the order of $600,000 per year, with costs heavily influenced by how often toilets are cleaned, travel time required to service the facilities and reactive maintenance in high-use or remote locations.

The public toilet network also represents approximately $7 million in assets, with many facilities approaching or exceeding their typical service life. Decisions about service levels therefore have material financial, operational and community implications.

This review is focused on ensuring that this level of investment is applied through consistent evidence-based decision making, rather than ad-hoc actions.

This report provides a strategic direction, service framework and decision-making principles for Council's public amenities network. The report does not seek decisions on individual facilities. Any site-specific opportunities identified through the review would be subject to further assessment, targeted community engagement and future Council consideration.

The problem Council is trying to solve

The current public toilet network lacks a consistent framework for aligning service levels with community need, patterns of use and operational effort.

Council is attempting to deliver clean, safe and reliable facilities across a large and geographically dispersed network without a clear model for how service levels should be prioritised.

As a result, service effort is spread across many sites, limiting the ability to consistently meet community expectations where it matters most.

Community feedback is clear: people prioritise clean, safe and reliable facilities, particularly in the places they use most. However, the current service model distributes effort across a large number of sites, regardless of demand, location or risk, making it difficult to consistently achieve these outcomes.

The way the service is delivered adds further complexity. Managing cleaning and maintenance across a dispersed network requires coordinating contractors, travel, access and servicing schedules across very different locations. This creates operational constraints that limit flexibility and responsiveness, particularly in remote or lower-use areas. Service and whole-of-life cost information has not always been available, limiting Council's ability to fully understand the long-term implications of service level decisions.

As a result:

- Service effort is not always aligned with where it delivers the most community value across the network.
- High-use and high-risk locations are more likely to experience cleanliness, safety and reliability issues.
- Decisions about service levels are made incrementally, which leads to inconsistent service across similar locations and limits Council's ability to prioritise effort where it delivers the greatest community benefit.

The core issue is how service levels are targeted and applied across the network, rather than the number of facilities in isolation. Without a clear service model, Council cannot consistently prioritise service levels or direct operational effort to where it delivers the greatest community benefit.

This review addresses that by establishing a clear, network-wide approach to managing public toilets. Improving outcomes may involve a range of responses, including increased effort in priority locations, adjustments to service levels, alternative delivery approaches and optimising the network where appropriate.

This reflects Council's broader commitment to ensuring no community is left without reasonable access to essential services, recognising that while service levels may vary, access should be maintained where practical.

How this review was informed

To inform this review, Council combined community engagement, data analysis and internal validation. This included:

- Gathering feedback from the community on how public toilets are used and what matters most to users.
- Analysing the current network, including location, usage patterns, service levels and asset condition.
- Reviewing cleaning and maintenance arrangements to understand operational effort, cost drivers and constraints.
- Considering relevant benchmarks and approaches from other councils for comparable context.
- Working with internal teams to validate findings and incorporate operational knowledge not captured in existing data.

This approach ensures the proposed direction is grounded in both community expectations and the practical realities of delivering the service across a large and diverse network.

What the evidence tells us

Evidence from community engagement, asset data and network analysis consistently shows:

- East Gippsland maintains a comparatively extensive public amenities network relative to similar regional councils, providing approximately one public toilet for every 553 residents compared with approximately one per 712 residents in Mildura Rural City Council and one per 1,267 residents in Wellington Shire Council. This reflects the Shire's dispersed settlement pattern, extensive foreshore network and strong tourism role.
- Cleanliness and safety are more important than the number of facilities.
- Service levels vary across similar locations, with no consistent framework.
- Asset condition and lifecycle costs vary across the network, influencing the long-term value of maintaining, upgrading or consolidating different facilities.
- High-use and highly visible locations experience the greatest pressure on cleanliness, safety, vandalism and service reliability, making them the highest priority for targeted service improvements.
- Some lower-use or overlapping facilities require ongoing servicing that is difficult to justify at a network level.

Together, this demonstrates a need to move from a site-by-site approach to a deliberate, network-wide service model. These findings directly inform the proposed service framework and decision-making approach, based on demand, location, service role, asset condition and operational considerations.

Decision principles

These findings are translated into decisions using a consistent set of decision principles. Service level decisions across the network should be informed by:

- Demand and usage — how frequently and intensely facilities are used.
- Location and visibility — the role of the facility within a town, route or destination.
- Service role within the network — proximity to alternative toilets and level of overlap.
- Asset condition and lifecycle — including renewal needs and long-term investment implications.
- Operational effort and cost — the complexity and cost of delivering cleaning and maintenance.

These principles provide a clear and consistent framework for future service level decisions across the public toilet network.

What direction is proposed

To address the issues identified, this review proposes a shift from a reactive, site-by-site approach to a planned, network-wide service model to better align service levels with community expectations, patterns of use and operational realities across the network.

In practice, this involves applying a consistent approach to how service levels are prioritised, rather than treating all locations the same.

This includes:

- Prioritising higher levels of service (such as increased cleaning and reliability) at high-use and high-visibility locations.
- Applying appropriate and consistent service levels across similar types of locations.
- Adjusting service levels over time to better reflect demand, risk and usage patterns.
- Reviewing areas of duplication and overlap to ensure resources are directed where they deliver the greatest community benefit.

This approach does not treat individual facilities in isolation. It considers how the network performs as a whole and the role each facility plays within it.

Improving service outcomes across the network may involve increasing effort in priority locations, improving service consistency, or considering alternative approaches where they provide better long-term value for the network and community.

The purpose of this approach is to enable Council to deliver cleaner, safer and more reliable public toilets in the places the community relies on most, while maintaining reasonable access across the network. This includes varying service levels based on demand, location and operational considerations.

To support these decisions, the review sets out the following vision for the Shire's public toilet network:

> "East Gippsland Shire Council will manage public toilets as a networked service by deliberately differentiating service levels, concentrating effort where demand, visibility and community expectations are highest, and making transparent, evidence-based decisions that balance service quality, access, operational sustainability and network value."

What this enables

Applying this approach enables Council to more deliberately align service levels with community expectations, operational requirements and the role of each location within the network.

In practice, this means:

- Cleaner, safer and more reliable facilities in the locations the community uses most.
- More consistent and transparent service levels, so similar locations are managed in similar ways.
- Clearer and more transparent decision-making, with a defined basis for future service-level decisions across the network.
- Better use of operational effort and resources, by targeting service improvements, cleaning, maintenance and safety initiatives where they deliver the greatest community benefit.
- Prioritising service improvements ahead of realising any financial savings.

It also provides Council with a clearer foundation for responding to future requests, changes in demand, and emerging service issues, without reverting to incremental or ad-hoc decisions.

Overall, this approach supports a more deliberate, balanced and sustainable public toilet service across the network.

How this will be implemented

This direction will be supported through three strategic priorities focused on improving service quality, optimising the network and ensuring long-term sustainability (see Chapter 3):

- Strategic priority 1: Improve service quality, cleanliness, safety and reliability by prioritising operational effort at high-use, high-visibility and high-risk public toilets.
- Strategic priority 2: Optimise public toilet provision by reviewing duplication, overlap and network coverage, while considering alternative ways of maintaining service access where appropriate.
- Strategic priority 3: Address ageing facilities where asset condition is impacting service quality, reliability or agreed service levels.

The strategic priorities provide a framework for future decision-making across the public toilet network and support a range of responses, including service improvements, alternative delivery models, service re-balancing, network optimisation and future asset investment where appropriate.

Improving outcomes across the network may involve a range of responses, including increased service effort, safety and amenity improvements, alternative delivery approaches, service re-balancing and targeted investment. All approaches involve trade-offs and should be considered in the context of delivering the greatest overall community benefit.

The purpose of this review is to improve cleanliness, safety, reliability and overall user experience across the public toilet network by directing resources and effort to where they will deliver the greatest community benefit.

Table of contents

1.0 Context and service framework

1.1. Project context....9
1.2. Evidence informing the service-level decisions....10
1.3. Service intent for public toilets....12
1.4. Service-level framework / public toilet hierarchy....13
1.5. Applying the service-level framework to the existing network....17

2.0 Network analysis and evidence base

2.1. Purpose of this chapter....19
2.2. Analysis approach....19
2.3. Spatial distribution: Shire-wide....20
2.4. Spatial distribution: regional and district towns....22
2.5. Other towns, rural towns and remote settlements....30
2.6. Key transport routes....31
2.7. Public toilet typologies....32
2.8. Public toilet condition....33
2.9. Public toilet cleaning and maintenance....34
2.10. Public toilets in open spaces....37
2.11. Community and sporting facilities....38
2.12. Summary of challenges and opportunities....39

3.0 Strategic priorities

3.1. Vision, strategic priorities and actions....42
3.2. Strategic Priority 1....43
3.3. Strategic Priority 2....44
3.4. Strategic Priority 3....45

4.0 Implementation

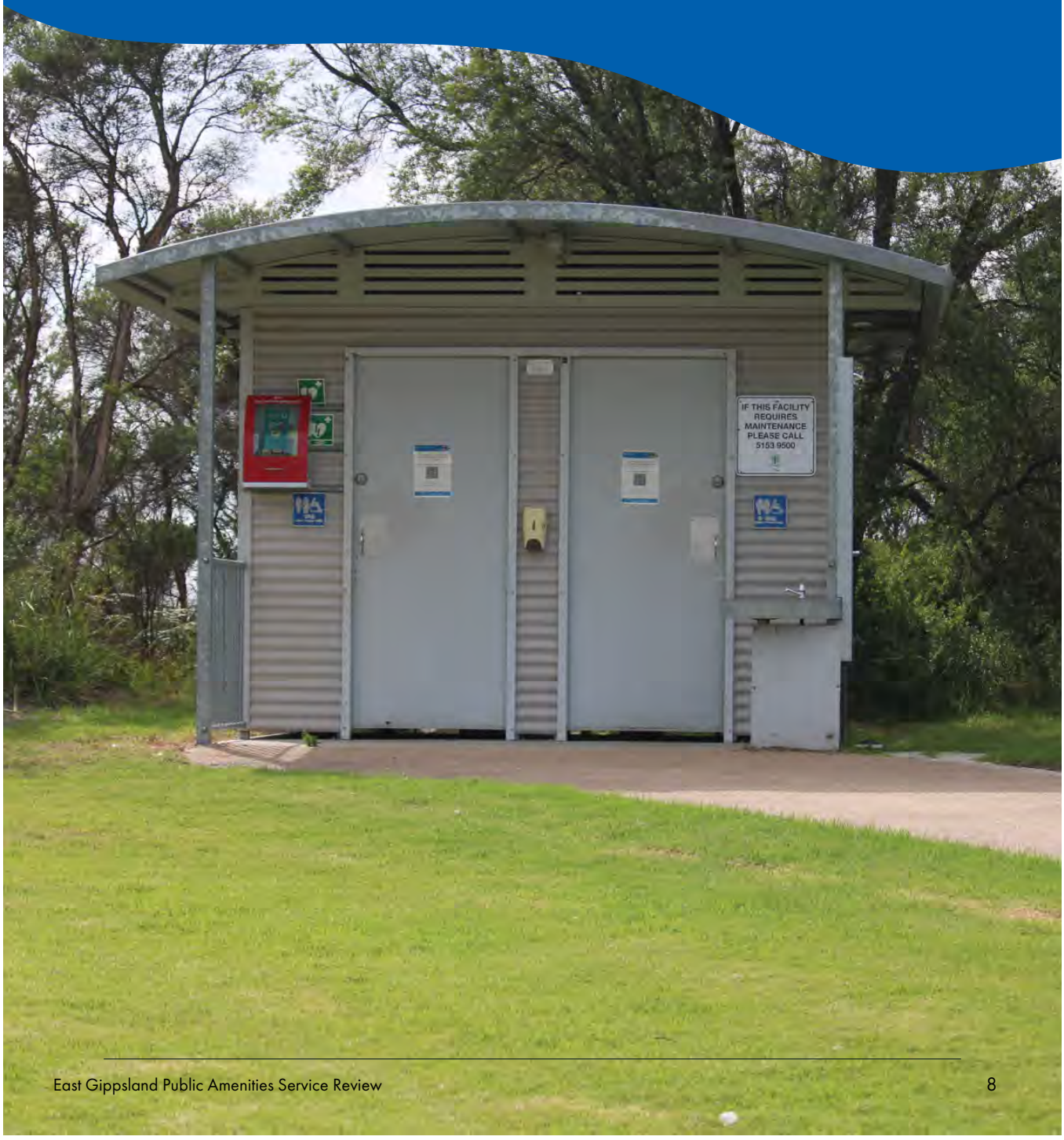
4.1. What implementation means for this review....49
4.2. Prioritisation tool for post-review decision making....51
4.3. Reference guidance for future decisions around capital works....53

Appendices

Appendix A: Public Toilet List Matrix....58
Appendix B: Summary of review of relevant strategies....62
Appendix C: Background and context to the review....64

CHAPTER 1

Context and service framework



1.1. Project context

East Gippsland Shire Council (Council) has undertaken a municipal-wide Service Review of public amenities[1]. The purpose of this review is to establish a clear and evidence-based framework to guide the future servicing, management and improvement of public toilet facilities across the municipality.

Public amenities, more commonly referred to as public toilets, are essential pieces of community infrastructure that play an important role in supporting positive health and wellbeing outcomes of the community. They enable inclusive participation in daily life and provide private spaces for people to undertake essential daily tasks with dignity.

This Service Review defines public toilets as 'a toilet that is located in a public space and is available for use by the community, free of charge'. This includes public toilets that may be standalone structures or co-located with other Council-managed buildings.

Council's role in providing public toilets

In Australia, there is no statutory requirement for local government to provide toilets in public spaces, however East Gippsland Shire is a key provider of public toilet facilities that are located in public spaces and are free to use.

Council performs several roles in public toilet planning, funding, provision and ongoing management including:

- **Planner:** Strategic role by planning for the provision, upgrade and long-term management of public toilets across the Shire.
- **Provider:** Major provider of public toilets on land which is owned and / or managed by Council to support community needs.
- **Partner / Collaborator:** Partner with other organisations and agencies to address the community's public toilet needs and priorities, through joint agreements, funding or other partnerships.
- **Advocate:** Advocates for the provision, upgrade or future management of public toilets in other places where Council is not the landowner, for example in state and national parks, some foreshore areas and in private developments.
- **Regulator:** Where Council is not the landowner or directly responsible for provision of public toilets, Council can play a role in regulating provision.

Planning for public toilets involves multiple stakeholders, with Council's role and level of influence varying depending on factors such as land ownership, governance arrangements, existing agreements, funding availability, and community needs.

Managing public toilets across a large and geographically dispersed municipality requires balancing service quality, coverage, reliability and affordability across the network. In practice, improving service outcomes may require different approaches in different locations, including increased service levels, reduced service levels, consolidation, alternative delivery models or targeted investment where appropriate.

High-use and highly visible facilities often have the greatest influence on community experience of the public toilet network. Where cleanliness, safety and reliability issues occur at these locations, the impacts are felt by more users and can affect confidence in the service as a whole.

Through the development and outcomes of this Service Review, Council is positioning itself to better cater to evolving community needs by deliberately differentiating service levels, concentrating effort where there is demand, focusing on locations where visibility and risk are highest, and making transparent trade-offs where service levels are reduced or facilities are consolidated.

1. For consistency, the term 'public toilets' is used throughout this document.

1.2. Evidence informing the service-level decisions

This section summarises the key evidence used to inform service-level decisions throughout the review. Collectively, the evidence demonstrates a consistent theme: improving service quality in priority locations requires deliberate trade-offs elsewhere in the network.

What drives the cost of providing public toilets

Cleaning frequency is a significant driver of operating costs across the public toilet network. More frequent servicing generally results in higher operating costs, particularly in locations requiring additional travel, larger facilities or increased servicing during peak visitation periods.

Understanding this relationship is important when considering service level decisions. Improving cleanliness, safety and reliability in priority locations may require additional investment or changes to how resources are allocated across the network.

What the community told us

To inform this Service Review, an extensive round of community engagement was undertaken between December 2025 and February 2026, with more than 650 pieces of feedback received from the community. Details of this engagement are provided in Appendix C. Community engagement consistently highlighted that how public toilets are serviced matters more than how many toilets there are.

Key findings from engagement include:

- Cleanliness is the single biggest factor influencing whether people use public toilets.
- Perceptions of safety and amenity (including vandalism, lighting and general condition) strongly influence usage, even where toilets are physically available.
- Expectations regarding cleaning and availability are higher in town centres, foreshore areas and visitor locations, and lower in smaller or less frequently used sites.
- Community feedback does not point to a need for uniformly high service levels everywhere, but rather reliable, wellmaintained facilities in the places people use most.

Overall, the engagement highlighted a clear expectation for improved service quality in priority locations. The current network does not consistently meet these expectations.

What the network analysis shows

Analysis of the existing network highlights how the service currently operates in practice, including where effort is concentrated, where duplication occurs, and where costs are difficult to justify.

Key findings include:

- Council manages a large and geographically dispersed network, with clusters of facilities located within activity centres and often close to one another.
- Cleaning frequency remains the primary driver of operating cost, particularly in high-use and tourism locations where daily or multiple daily cleaning is required.
- A small number of facilities account for a disproportionate share of vandalism, reactive maintenance and callouts, placing pressure on both budgets and service reliability.
- Some lower use facilities require a level of servicing that may not align with demand when considered across the broader network.
- Service flexibility can be constrained in remote locations due to contractor availability, travel schedules and servicing logistics.

These findings reinforce the need for a service-level framework that differentiates service provision based on demand, community use, risk and operating cost. Without a consistent framework, decisions are more likely to be made on an ad-hoc basis. This can lead to inconsistent service levels, uneven operating costs and a network that becomes increasingly difficult to manage across a large rural municipality.

How this evidence is used

The evidence noted above is applied throughout the remainder of this report to:

- Define appropriate service levels for different types of locations.
- Identify where service levels may be increased, reduced or delivered differently based on evidence.
- Direct higher service effort toward priority locations.
- Make service and cost trade-offs more transparent.

Later sections of the report demonstrate how this evidence informs the strategic priorities, service framework and decision-making principles outlined for the public toilet network.

Taken together, the evidence highlights a mismatch between where service effort is currently applied and where it is most needed. This supports the need for a more deliberate and network-wide approach to setting service levels, with clearer prioritisation of locations with the highest demand, community value and service risk.

1.3. Service intent for public toilets

Based on the evidence presented above, Council's intent is to provide a reliable, fit-for-purpose and sustainable public toilet service that is clean, safe and available in locations where demand and risk are highest, while also managing costs across a large and dispersed network.

This requires Council to deliberately focus service effort on the facilities used most frequently, while recognising that lower demand locations may require different service responses, including lower service levels, consolidation, alternative delivery approaches or removal where appropriate.

This service intent underpins the service-level framework described in the following section. The framework applies a small number of consistent service levels across the network and outlines the principles used to determine service expectations, amenity standards and the types of locations where different service levels may apply.

Approach to remote locations and boat ramp facilities

In applying the service-level framework, Council has established a clear position on the role of public toilets in remote locations and also at boat ramps.

For remote locations, maintaining reasonable access remains a priority, particularly where no alternative facility is available within a practical distance. In these cases, decisions will consider the role of the facility in supporting travel, tourism and local community use, recognising that service levels may vary based on demand and operational constraints.

For boat ramp locations, public toilet provision is not considered essential in all cases. While some high-use or strategically important sites may warrant provision, others may be serviced through nearby facilities where appropriate. Decisions will therefore consider demand, proximity to alternative toilets, and the broader role of the site within the network.

These positions ensure that service provision in these locations is guided by consistent principles, while allowing for flexibility based on local context.

This approach also reflects Council’s commitment to maintaining reasonable access to essential services, particularly in remote locations where alternatives may not exist.

1.4. Service-level framework / public toilet hierarchy

A public toilet hierarchy has been developed as part of this approach. This categorises facilities into four levels based on their importance and location, with each level assigned a standard for cleaning, fixtures and fittings, design considerations, capacity and typical locations.

The hierarchy is intended to guide future investment and network management decisions across East Gippsland Shire. The four levels are:

Level 1: Regional / destination public toilets

Level 2: Township public toilets

Level 3: Local public toilets

Level 4: Co-located public toilets

Minimum inclusions associated with each level are outlined in the following pages.



Level 1: Regional / Destination public toilets
Main Street Gardens Public Toilets, Bairnsdale



Level 2: Township public toilets Jemmys Point Lookout Public Toilets, Kalimna



Level 3: Local public toilets
Eastwood Toilet Block, Eastwood



Level 4: Co-located public toilets Day Avenue Public Toilet, Omeo

Level 1 – Regional / Destination public toilets

These public toilets are located in town centres, highly visited locations, or major tourist destinations in key townships (Regional Service Centre or District Towns). They are highly visible and are the go-to facility for both residents in the immediate area and visitors. These public toilets may include additional design features to improve the amenity and appearance of the toilet.

Table 2 - Features and criteria to assess and assign Level 1 facilities

Features	Minimum inclusions	
Minimum number of cubicles	4	
Configuration	• At least two accessible cubicles (unisex or all-gender) • One ambulant toilet to be provided	
Internal fittings	• Stainless steel or ceramic toilet • Toilet seat • Concealed cistern and pipes • Sanitary bins • Motion sensor lighting • Wall / door hooks • Baby change table / parents' room	• Dual flush • Jumbo roll • Foam hand soap and dispenser • Natural or artificial ventilation • Accessible fittings per AS1428.1 • Internal handwashing in all gender toilets • Mirror / reflective surface
External fixtures	• At-grade footpath with slope • Facility sited with access to an accessible car parking space • Signage (including Braille and tactile) showing opening hours, features inside the toilet, contact details / QR code to report maintenance issues and locations of accessible toilets • Lighting • Permeable privacy screening • CCTV may be provided • Rubbish bins	• Drinking fountain • Communal hand-washing facilities outside the cubicle may be provided • Safe and secure refuge for assistance animals • Dual water bowl and drinking fountain • Weather protection / canopy • May include public art / mural • If facility is located near a water feature such as a lake or beach, consideration for additional changing room/s or showers may be required
Opening hours	• 24 hours	
Minimum cleaning frequency*	• At least twice daily	
Example locations	• Lakes Entrance Esplanade Foreshore • Lakes Entrance Beach, The Hummocks • Main Street Gardens, Bairnsdale • Any open space classified as 'regional' under the Open Space Strategy	

Minimum cleaning frequency. Additional servicing may be required based on usage, seasonal demand, events or operational requirements.

Level 2 – Township public toilets

These public toilets are located in almost all townships. In larger townships, they can be found in commercial areas, parks, reserves, and foreshores. These mainly serve to fill gaps in the public toilet network between 'Regional / Destination public toilets' and 'Local public toilets'.

Table 3 – Features and criteria to assess and assign Level 2 facilities.

Features	Minimum inclusions	
Minimum number of cubicles	3	
Configuration	• At least one accessible cubicle (unisex or all-gender) • One ambulant toilet to be provided	
Internal fittings	• Stainless steel or ceramic toilet • Toilet seat • Concealed cistern and pipes • Sanitary bins • Motion sensor lighting • Wall / door hooks	• Dual flush • Jumbo roll • Foam hand soap and dispenser • Natural or artificial ventilation • Accessible fittings per AS1428.1 • Baby change table / parents' room may be provided in appropriate locations
External fixtures	• At-grade footpath with slope • Facility sited with access to an accessible car parking space • Signage showing opening hours, features inside the toilet, contact details / QR code to report maintenance issues • Lighting • Rubbish bins	• If facility is located near a water feature such as a lake or beach, consideration for additional changing room/s or showers may be required • Permeable privacy screening • CCTV may be provided • Drinking fountain • Communal hand-washing facilities outside the cubicle may be provided as best practice
Opening hours	• Limited: dawn to dusk	
Minimum cleaning frequency*	• At least three times a week	
Example locations	• At main shopping centres or commercial areas • Foreshores • Any open space classified as 'district' under the Open Space Strategy.	

*Minimum cleaning frequency. Additional servicing may be required based on usage, seasonal demand, events or operational requirements.

Level 3 – Local public toilets

These public toilets are located in small settlements or in residential areas away from commercial areas and tourist destinations. In smaller settlements, they are often found in the centre of town as the only public toilet in the area.

Table 4 – Features and criteria to assess and assign Level 3 facilities.

Features	Minimum inclusions	
Minimum number of cubicles	2	
Configuration	• At least one accessible cubicle (unisex or all-gender)	
Internal fittings	• Stainless steel or ceramic toilet • Toilet seat • Sanitary bins • Motion sensor lighting • Wall / door hooks • Dual flush	• Jumbo roll • Foam hand soap and dispenser • Natural or artificial ventilation • Accessible fittings per AS1428.1 • Baby change table / parents' room may be provided in appropriate locations
External fixtures	• At-grade footpath with slope • Facility sited with access to an accessible car parking space	• Lighting • Signage including Braille and tactile signage
Opening hours	• Limited: dawn to dusk	
Minimum cleaning frequency*	• At least two times a week	
Example locations	• At the centre of rural towns or small settlements • Any open space classified as 'neighbourhood' under the Open Space Strategy	

*Minimum cleaning frequency. Additional servicing may be required based on usage, seasonal demand, events or operational requirements.

Level 4 – Co-located public toilets

These facilities are located within or attached to community and Council buildings such as libraries, community centres, town halls and Council offices. Their servicing arrangements, features and opening hours are linked to the operation of the adjoining building. As a result, they are managed through separate operational processes and are outside the primary scope of this review.

1.5. Applying the service-level framework to the existing network

The service-level framework establishes clear expectations for how different types of public toilet facilities should operate, including opening hours, cleaning frequency and baseline service standards. Applying the framework to the existing network helps identify where current service provision aligns with demand and where service levels, service delivery approaches or network provision may require further consideration.

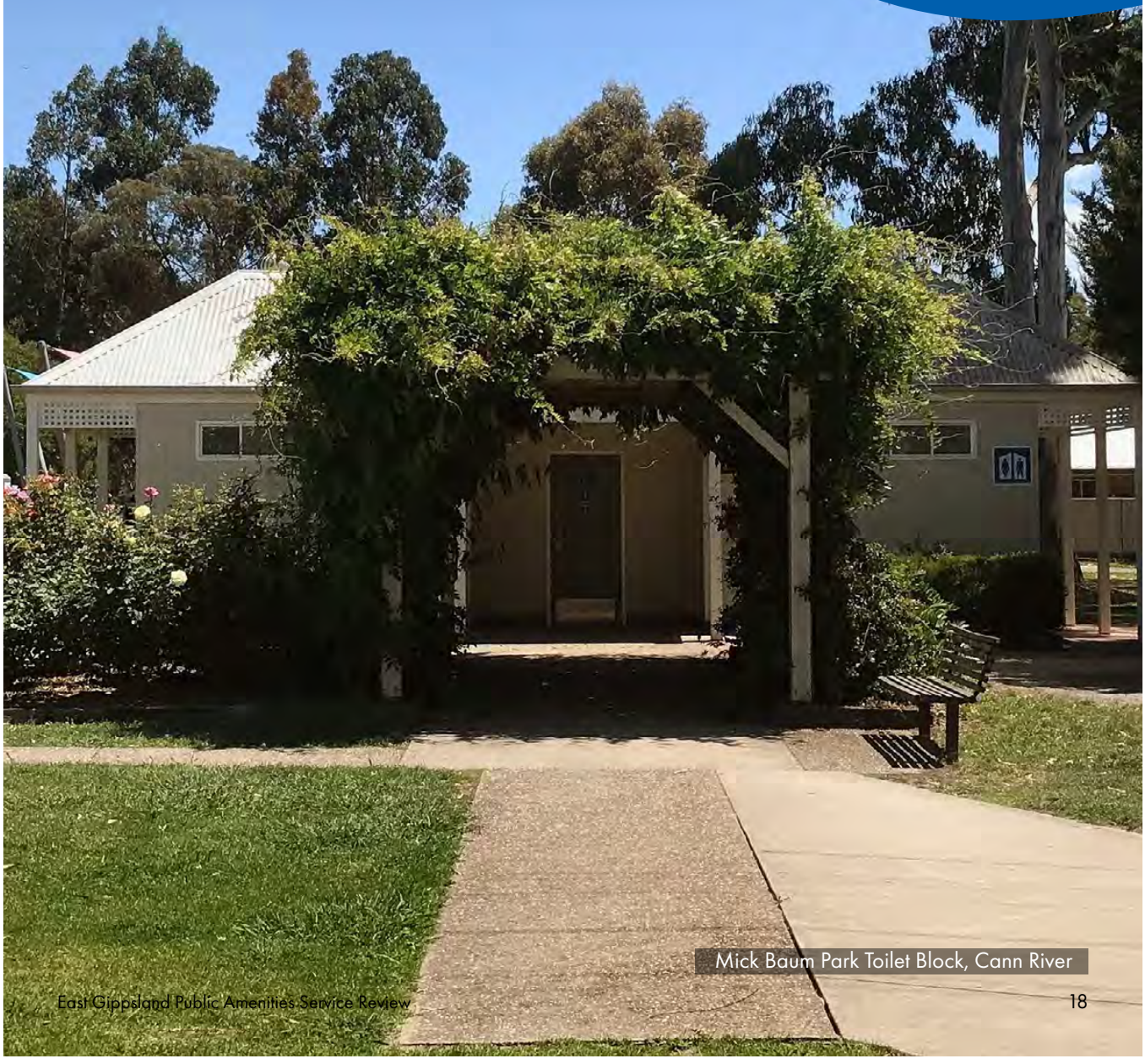
This includes identifying locations where service levels should increase to better meet expectations, locations where current service levels remain appropriate and locations where service levels, distribution or overall provision may no longer align with current patterns of use.

The analysis considers the network as a whole rather than assessing individual facilities in isolation. It provides a basis for considering where service levels may be maintained, increased or reduced, and where consolidation or decommissioning may warrant further consideration due to low demand or overlapping coverage. Applying the framework does not assume all facilities will continue to operate in their current form or at their current service level. In some locations, improving cleanliness, reliability and confidence of use at higher-demand facilities may require reduced service levels, consolidation or removal in lower-use areas.

This approach provides a more transparent basis for aligning the network with community expectations and long-term sustainability, while clearly identifying the trade-offs between cleanliness, coverage and affordability.

CHAPTER 2

Network analysis and evidence base



Mick Baum Park Toilet Block, Cann River

2.1. Purpose of this chapter

This chapter sets out the key evidence used to inform the service level framework, strategic priorities and decision-making approach described in Chapter 1. It examines how the existing public toilet network currently performs, where demand and servicing pressure are concentrated, and where overlap, inefficiency or risk is present across the network.

The analysis is intended to support clear, evidence-based service-level decisions by identifying where service effort is most needed and where different service responses may be appropriate.

The chapter focuses on how the network operates in practice across the Shire, including facility distribution, servicing arrangements and maintenance effort. While references are made to factors such as facility age, condition, design and location, these are included only where they affect service reliability, safety or operating cost.

This chapter is intended to validate the strategic direction and service level framework outlined in Chapter 1 by explaining the network-wide patterns, constraints and cost drivers that inform future decision-making.

2.2. Analysis approach

To understand the level of service currently provided across Council's public toilets network, this chapter establishes a clear evidence base against which service level decisions can be evaluated and explained. The analysis focuses on factors that influence how public toilets function as a service, rather than assessing individual facilities in isolation.

A network-wide, cross-cutting analysis has been undertaken to understand patterns of demand, servicing effort, reliability and overlap across Council-managed public toilets. The analysis draws on asset data provided by Council, supported by spatial analysis and desktop review.

Five key factors have been examined:

Distribution – the spatial distribution of the public toilet network across:

- East Gippsland Shire as a whole
- Key townships
- Smaller settlements and other locations

A full list of Council-managed public toilets within the scope of this review is provided in Appendix A, illustrating the scale, distribution and diversity of the network. The analysis in this chapter draws on that dataset to identify networkwide patterns and service pressures.

- Typology – the types of public toilet facilities currently provided across the Shire
- Condition – the age and condition of existing Council managed public toilets, where this affects service reliability or maintenance effort
- Usage – levels of use and cleaning frequency, where data is available
- Provision alignment – the proximity of public toilets to other key infrastructure and community services, including:
  - open space
  - community and sporting facilities
  - major transport connections

All analysis, data and statistics presented in this chapter are based on the 88 public toilet facilities within the Service Review scope. Where data is unavailable or incomplete, reasonable assumptions have been applied, with minimal adaptation or reinterpretation of existing information.

The analysis deliberately focuses on characteristics that affect demand, service effort, reliability and operating cost.

2.3. Spatial distribution: Shire-wide

Assessment criteria

There is no legislative requirement or prescribed standard that determines where public toilets must be located or how many facilities Council should provide. In assessing the spatial distribution of public toilets across East Gippsland Shire, the following considerations are relevant:

- The geographic size and settlement pattern of the municipality.
- The number, size and distribution of towns and settlements.
- Proximity of nearby towns and settlements in adjoining local government areas.
- Key activity nodes, community hubs and high use destinations.
- Walking distances, catchments and proximity between facilities.
- Major movement networks such as highways, trails and transport corridors.
- Comparative approaches to public toilet provision in similar regional and rural localities.

These considerations provide context for understanding how the existing network functions as a whole, including patterns of demand, service coverage and servicing effort across the municipality. Figure 1 below shows the location of Council managed public toilets across the Shire's planning districts.

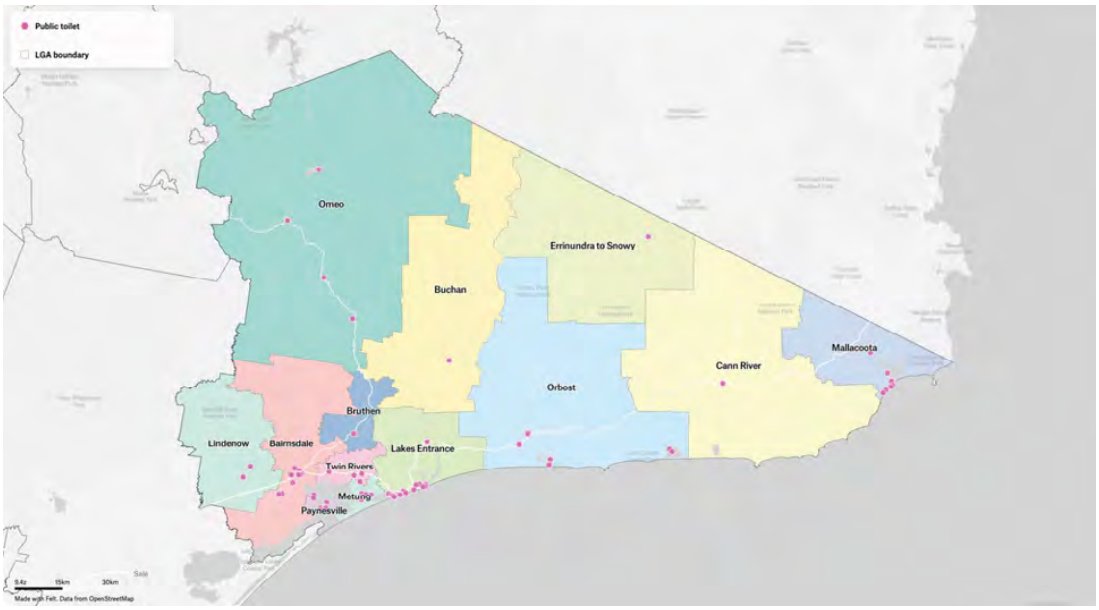


Figure 1. Location of Council-managed public toilets across East Gippsland Shire planning districts.

Key findings

Key characteristics of East Gippsland Shire's public toilet network include:

- The majority of Council managed public toilets are located within or around the major townships of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Paynesville, broadly aligning with population distribution, visitor activity and service demand.
- Smaller clusters of public toilets are located in Mallacoota and Orbost, reflecting their role as regional service centres and tourism destinations despite their smaller resident populations.
- The remaining facilities are dispersed across smaller towns and settlements such as Bemm River, Cann River and Omeo, often resulting in lower individual usage but higher servicing effort due to distance and travel requirements.
- Across the network:
  - 47 facilities (approximately 53%) are located on foreshores, beaches, rivers or coastal environments.
  - 31 facilities (approximately 35%) are located within inland parks, reserves or open spaces.
  - 10 facilities (approximately 11%) are located within or co-located with Council managed buildings, including libraries, visitor information centres, halls, aquatic facilities and an aerodrome.

On a per capita basis, East Gippsland Shire maintains a comparatively extensive public toilet network with approximately one facility for every 553 residents. By comparison, Mildura Rural City Council provides approximately one public toilet per 712 residents, and Wellington Shire Council approximately one per 1,267 residents. These councils were selected for comparison due to similarities in scale, regional context and, in Wellington's case, coastal settlement patterns.

East Gippsland's comparatively high level of public toilet provision reflects the Shire's dispersed settlement pattern, extensive foreshore network and strong tourism role. While these factors support a broader network than many comparable councils, they also create increased operating, maintenance and renewal obligations. This reinforces the importance of managing service levels, investment and operational effort strategically across the network.

Taken together, these patterns demonstrate that East Gippsland's public toilet network is both extensive and spatially diverse, reinforcing the need for a network-wide approach to aligning service levels with demand, risk and servicing cost, and supporting evidence-based decisions across the network.

2.4. Spatial distribution: regional and district towns

Assessment criteria

This section examines how public toilets are distributed within East Gippsland's regional and district towns, where population density, visitor activity and service demand are highest. The focus is on understanding clustering, proximity and overlap between facilities, rather than identifying new locations or gaps in provision.

The analysis is intended to inform decisions about service differentiation, consolidation and prioritisation within the existing network.

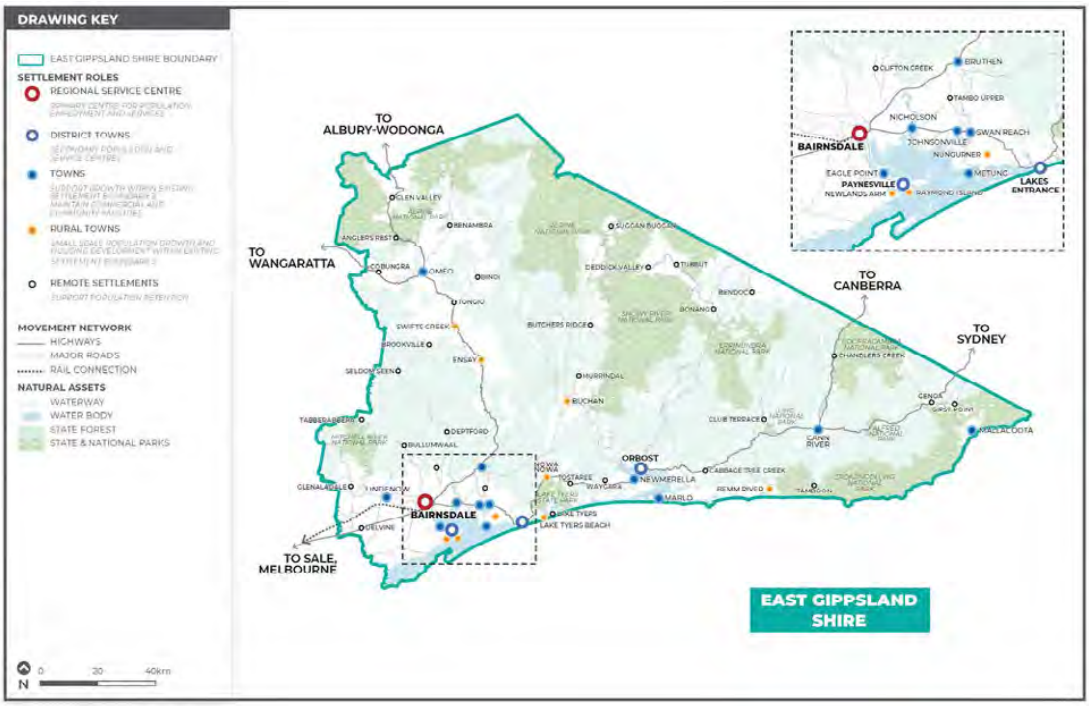


Figure 2. East Gippsland Shire's Settlement Framework Plan (source: East Gippsland Shire Council planning scheme)

Key findings

- Analysis of public toilet distribution across East Gippsland's regional and district towns identified several consistent patterns:
  - Public toilets are concentrated within town centres, foreshores and major activity areas, reflecting where people spend extended time and where demand for facilities is highest.
  - In several locations, multiple facilities are located within short walking distance of each other, creating service overlap within individual town centres.
  - These clusters often include a mix of standalone public toilets and toilets located within or adjacent to Council managed buildings or community facilities.
- While clustering improves coverage and convenience, it also increases the potential for:
  - Inconsistent service levels between nearby facilities.
  - Duplication of cleaning and maintenance effort.
  - Difficulty prioritising service investment when resources are spread thinly.

Regional Service: Bairnsdale

Bairnsdale is the only Regional Service Town in East Gippsland Shire Council and one of five in the Gippsland region. It is the largest township in the Shire with a population of 13,734 (as of 2021). As the largest town in East Gippsland, it plays a role as a regional service centre for the broader Gippsland region. Bairnsdale and surrounds are home to several key attractions, open spaces, and destinations including the Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre, City Oval, East Gippsland Art Gallery and the Mitchell River.

Key observations

- There are approximately 13 Council managed public toilets located within Bairnsdale and its immediate surrounds.
- A significant number of these facilities are located within the town centre and key civic and recreational precincts, including areas around Main Street, the Port of Bairnsdale and the Recreation Precinct.
- Several facilities are located within short walking distance of each other. Multiple public toilets are clustered within approximately 400 metres of one another in the central area, including standalone facilities and toilets co-located within Council managed buildings.
- Additional toilets are available nearby in community and sporting facilities that are not always open, such as recreation reserves and pavilions, further contributing to overall service availability within the town.
- This spatial arrangement results in strong overall coverage, but also creates overlapping service catchments within the town centre, where multiple facilities serve similar user groups and demand patterns.

From a service level perspective, Bairnsdale's distribution means that changes at individual sites do not occur in isolation. The presence of nearby alternatives provides flexibility to:

- Differentiate service levels between locations.
- Consider consolidation, alternative delivery approaches or service withdrawal where appropriate.
- Redirect cleaning and operational effort to locations where demand, cleanliness, safety and reliability matter most.
- These characteristics make Bairnsdale well suited to a network-based approach to service planning, allowing service levels and resources to be adjusted while maintaining reasonable access across the broader network.

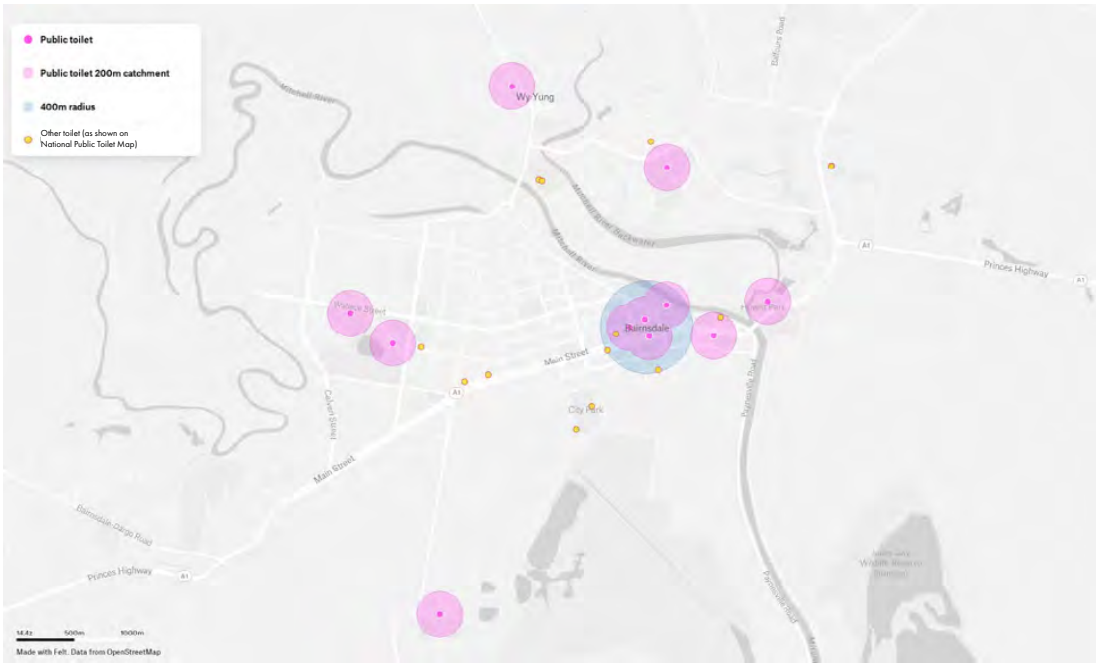


Figure 3. Distribution of public toilets in Bairnsdale and surrounds.

District Town: Lakes Entrance

Lakes Entrance is a major coastal township and one of East Gippsland's most significant tourism and visitor destinations, reflected in both the number and concentration of Council managed public toilets within the town.

Key observations

- Lakes Entrance contains approximately 17 Council managed public toilets, the highest number in any township in the Shire.
- Public toilets are heavily concentrated along the foreshore, near the Cunninghame Arm Bridge, boat ramps and key visitor attractions, where seasonal visitation and dwell times are highest.
- Two distinct clusters of facilities are evident within short walking distance of one another.
- A group of toilets located around Bullock Island, and
- A larger concentration along the Esplanade and foreshore precinct.
- Additional public toilets are also located at beach access points, jetties and parking areas, further contributing to a dense network of facilities across a relatively compact area.
- The cumulative effect of these clusters is strong overall coverage, but also significant overlap between facilities serving similar user groups and demand patterns.

From a service perspective, Lakes Entrance experiences pronounced seasonal peaks in use associated with holiday periods, events and favourable weather conditions. These peaks place sustained pressure on cleaning schedules, consumables, and reactive maintenance, particularly at highly visible and high-use sites.

The proximity of facilities means individual service changes can often be absorbed at a network level, provided service effort is deliberately prioritised. This creates opportunities to:

- Prioritise higher cleaning frequencies and reliability at key, high-use locations.
- Examine overlap between nearby facilities and opportunities to improve network efficiency.
- Rebalance service effort without materially reducing town-wide access.

Overall, Lakes Entrance's spatial distribution highlights the need for targeted prioritisation and differentiated service levels to manage high demand and reputational risk while maintaining appropriate access through a coordinated, network-based approach.

While some overlap in provision is evident, the complexity of Lakes Entrance – including seasonal demand, visitor patterns, and site-specific constraints means this has not been assessed uniformly across all locations. While the evidence presented in this review supports a number of strategic observations, broader optimisation of the network will require further place-based analysis before site-specific decisions are considered.



Distribution of public toilets in Lakes Entrance and surrounds.

District Town: Paynesville

Paynesville is a lakeside district town with a strong focus on boating, recreation and tourism, resulting in concentrated use of public spaces along the foreshore and ferry precincts.

Key observations

- There are five Council managed public toilets located within Paynesville, primarily along the eastern and southern foreshore areas within public parks and reserves.
- Additional Council managed toilets are located in neighbouring settlements, including Raymond Island and Newlands Arm, contributing to overall service availability within the immediate area.
- Several facilities are located within close proximity of one another. In particular, four Council managed toilets (Progress Jetty, Pier 70, Ferry Reserve and Slip Road Foreshore) are located within approximately 400 metres of each other across Paynesville and Raymond Island.
- Council is currently constructing a new public toilet at Gilsenan Reserve, which will also be located within short walking distance of existing foreshore facilities and will service regular markets, playground and skatepark users.
- Council managed public toilets are also located at both ferry terminal crossing points and at key boat ramps and jetties, reflecting Paynesville's role as a boating destination.
- A limited number of non-council public toilets are available within nearby facilities, such as clubs and community buildings, though access varies depending on operating hours and use.

From a service level perspective, Paynesville's public toilet network provides strong overall coverage within a compact geographic area, with multiple facilities serving overlapping catchments along the foreshore and ferry precincts. This spatial arrangement creates flexibility to:

- Differentiate service levels between nearby facilities.
- Prioritise cleaning and reliability at higher use locations.
- Avoid unnecessary duplication of servicing effort.

The clustering of facilities, including the addition of the Gilsenan Reserve toilet, reinforces the need for a coordinated, networkbased approach to service management. Rather than assessing each facility in isolation, service decisions in Paynesville are best informed by overall access, proximity, usage and network function across the town, allowing service levels and resources to be adjusted while maintaining appropriate coverage for residents and visitors.



Figure 5. Distribution of public toilets in Paynesville.

District Town: Orbost

Orbost is a smaller district town that functions as a local service centre for surrounding rural and agricultural areas, with a compact town centre and relatively concentrated public toilets provision.

Key observations

There are two Council managed public toilets located within the Orbost town centre, including facilities at Wolseley Street and Forest Park.

- These facilities are located within close proximity of each other, providing overlapping coverage within a small geographic area.
- Additional toilets are available within community and sporting facilities in the broader precinct, although access varies depending on operating hours, events and management arrangements.
- There are no Council managed public toilets located at some recreation and sporting facilities, with reliance placed on nearby town centre facilities instead.

From a service level perspective, Orbost's public toilets network provides adequate coverage relative to its scale, with limited spatial separation between facilities. This arrangement supports a network-based approach to service management, where:

- Service levels can be considered collectively rather than site-by-site.
- Reliance on a smaller number of well-maintained facilities is feasible.
- Decisions about service levels or consolidation can be assessed without materially reducing overall access within the town.

Overall, Orbost's spatial distribution reinforces the importance of aligning service effort with actual demand and town scale and supports the application of consistent service level expectations within a compact network rather than maintaining multiple standalone service points.

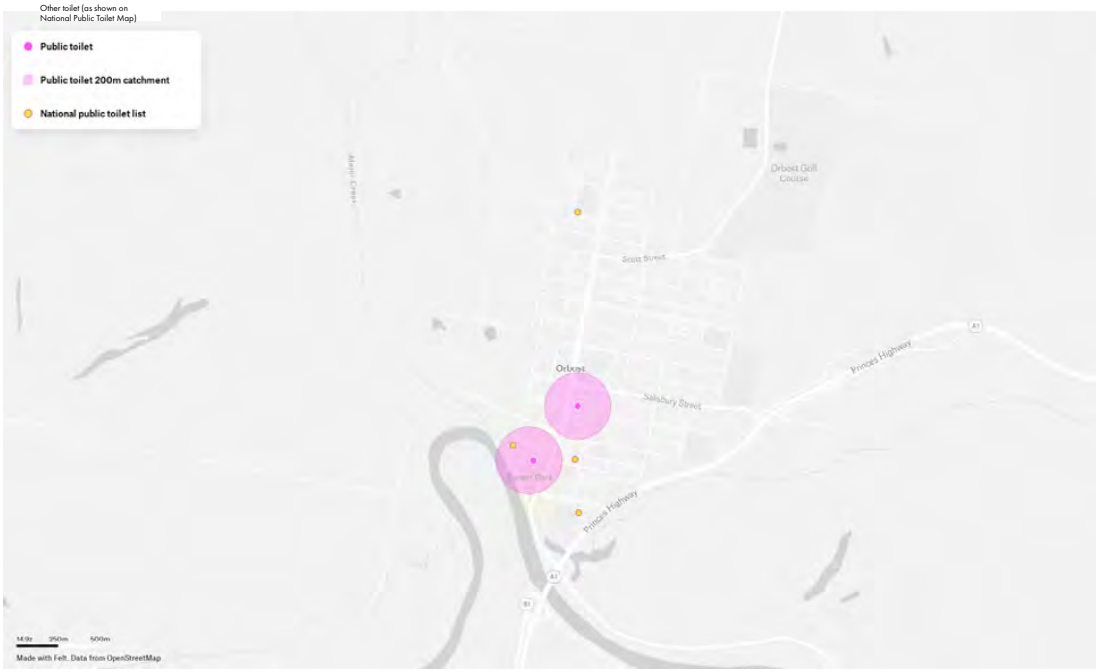


Figure 6. Distribution of public toilets in Orbost.

Key Town: Mallacoota

Mallacoota is a remote coastal township located in far eastern East Gippsland, functioning as both a local service centre and a key tourism destination adjacent to Croajingolong National Park. Its geographic isolation and seasonal visitation patterns have a significant influence on how public toilets are provided and serviced.

Key observations

- There are seven Council managed public toilets located within Mallacoota (noting there are other toilets in the caravan park out of the scope of this review)
- Two facilities are located within the town centre, within close proximity of each other.
- One facility is located to the north of the town centre along the Wallagaraugh River.
- Four facilities are located along the southern foreshore and beach areas, servicing recreational and visitor use.
- An additional Council managed toilet is located at the Mallacoota Aerodrome.
- Non-council public toilets are also available at locations such as Mallacoota Wharf, Tip Beach and a recreation reserve northwest of the town centre, though these are owned and managed by other authorities and fall outside Council's direct control.

From a service level perspective, Mallacoota's public toilets network is characterised by a higher number of facilities relative to resident population, reflecting the town's tourism role, dispersed activity areas and limited alternative toilets. However, the spatial distribution also means that several facilities serve similar coastal or recreational use patterns, particularly along the southern foreshore.

The remote location of Mallacoota has important implications for service delivery:

- Travel time and contractor availability materially affect cleaning schedules and cost.
- Maintaining service reliability during peak periods is more challenging.
- Changes to service delivery models (such as reliance on locally based staff) have a greater impact on service outcomes than in larger towns.

These characteristics reinforce the need for a network-based approach to service management in Mallacoota, where decisions about service levels, delivery models and resource allocation are considered collectively rather than on a facility-by-facility basis. This approach supports maintaining appropriate access for residents and visitors while managing servicing effort, cost and reliability in a remote context.



Figure 7. Distribution of public toilets in Mallacoota.

Key Town: Omeo

Omeo is a small alpine township located along the Great Alpine Road, functioning as a local service centre for surrounding alpine and rural communities and as a stopover destination for visitors travelling through the region.

Key observations

- There are three Council managed public toilets located within Omeo.
- Two of these facilities are located on Day Avenue, including:
  - A public toilet within the Omeo Visitor Information Centre / Council office building.
  - An outward facing toilet block connected to the same structure.
- A third Council managed public toilet is located at Livingstone Creek Reserve.
- All three facilities are located within close proximity, with walking distances of approximately 400 metres or less, resulting in overlapping service catchments within the town.
- Additional toilet facilities are available at locations such as the Omeo Caravan Park, Omeo Historical Park and Museum and the Oriental Claims Historic Area. These are not Council managed and have varying levels of public accessibility.

From a service level perspective, Omeo's public toilets network provides strong centralised coverage relative to the town's size and demand, with multiple facilities serving a compact area. This spatial arrangement means that:

- Service access is not dependent on any single facility.
- Changes to individual sites can be assessed in the context of nearby alternatives.
- Maintaining multiple standalone services in close proximity may create opportunities to review how service effort is allocated across the network.

Overall, Omeo's spatial distribution supports a network-based approach to service management, where service levels are considered collectively across the network, allowing cleaning and maintenance effort to be aligned with demand, condition and practicality rather than applied uniformly across all sites.



Figure 8. Distribution of public toilets in Omeo.

2.5. Other towns, rural towns and remote settlements

Provision in other locations across East Gippsland Shire

Table 5 summarises provision of public toilets across East Gippsland Shire's other Towns, Rural Towns and Remote Settlements. In East Gippsland Shire, Towns, Rural Towns and Remote Settlements together form a dispersed settlement network that supports communities across a large rural municipality. Larger Towns provide key residential areas, services, infrastructure and commercial activities that serve both local residents and surrounding rural areas. Rural Towns play a supporting role by providing smaller-scale housing, basic services and community facilities for nearby farming and rural communities while maintaining a strong rural character. Remote Settlements are small and isolated communities with limited services that primarily support local residents, tourism or resource-based activities.

These locations are often found in between District Towns and located far from Regional Service Centres. They may be located along major roads, which act as the main access point through to and from the towns.

Table 5 – High-level summary of findings of public toilets in other Towns, Rural Towns and Remote Settlements

Township type	Key findings
Towns Eagle Point, Metung, Lindenow, Bruthen, Swan Reach, Johnsonville, Nicholson, Newmerella, Marlo and Cann River	Each township contains up to three Council-managed public toilets. Most existing toilets are located in the town centre. Several public toilets are located in recreation reserves (Newmerella and Eagle Point) and near boat ramps / jetties (Eagle Point, Johnsonville, Metung and Marlo)
Rural Towns Raymond Island, Newlands Arm, Nungurner, Swifts Creek, Buchan, Bemm River, Ensay, Nowa Nowa, Lake Tyers Beach	Most of these Rural Towns contain one or two Council-managed public toilets, except Lake Tyers Beach which has three public toilets. Existing toilets are often located in the town centre and occasionally found near foreshores or boat ramps where present.
Remote Settlements Including places such as: Club Terrace, Bonang, Bendoc, Cabbage Tree Creek, Tambo Upper	Council-managed public toilets are only provided in Benambra, Bendoc, Bonang, Gipsy Point and Lake Tyers. Remote Settlements are often located amongst Crown land or State / National parks. Public toilets in these locations are generally provided by Parks Victoria and other State Government bodies. In settlements, they are often located next to or within community halls in the centre of town.

Overall, public toilet provision across East Gippsland's smaller towns, rural towns and remote settlements reflects the differing roles these locations play within the broader network. Service decisions in these locations should consider demand, proximity to alternatives, tourism activity, community need and the availability of services provided by other agencies.

2.6. Key transport routes

There are two major highways that pass through East Gippsland Shire. These are key transport routes for residents, travellers and visitors stopping at or passing through East Gippsland Shire. The major roads are:

- Princes Highway - main road connecting Melbourne to East Gippsland Shire and more broadly, Victoria to New South Wales. The Highway passes through the towns of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Orbost.
- Great Alpine Road - main road leading to and from Alpine Shire and a key tourism destination leading to Mount Hotham. It begins in Bairnsdale and passes through the towns of Bruthen, Ensay, Swifts Creek and Omeo.

Key findings

- Along the Princes Highway Council-managed public toilets are located in the towns of Bairnsdale, Nicholson, Swan Reach, Kalimna, Lakes Entrance, Nowa Nowa, Orbost, and Cann River.
- Additionally, along the Great Alpine Road, Council-managed public toilets are located in the towns of Bruthen, Ensay, Swifts Creek and Omeo.
- Along these major transportation corridors, non-Council owned or managed facilities are present between Council managed facilities.
- VicRoads is responsible for providing and managing rest areas along these two major roads. Many rest areas include basic amenities such as parking, picnic areas and public toilets, which help support travellers in locations where towns or council-provided facilities may be limited or widely spaced. In rural regions such as East Gippsland, these roadside facilities complement local government public toilet networks by filling spatial gaps between townships and providing essential amenities for travellers.

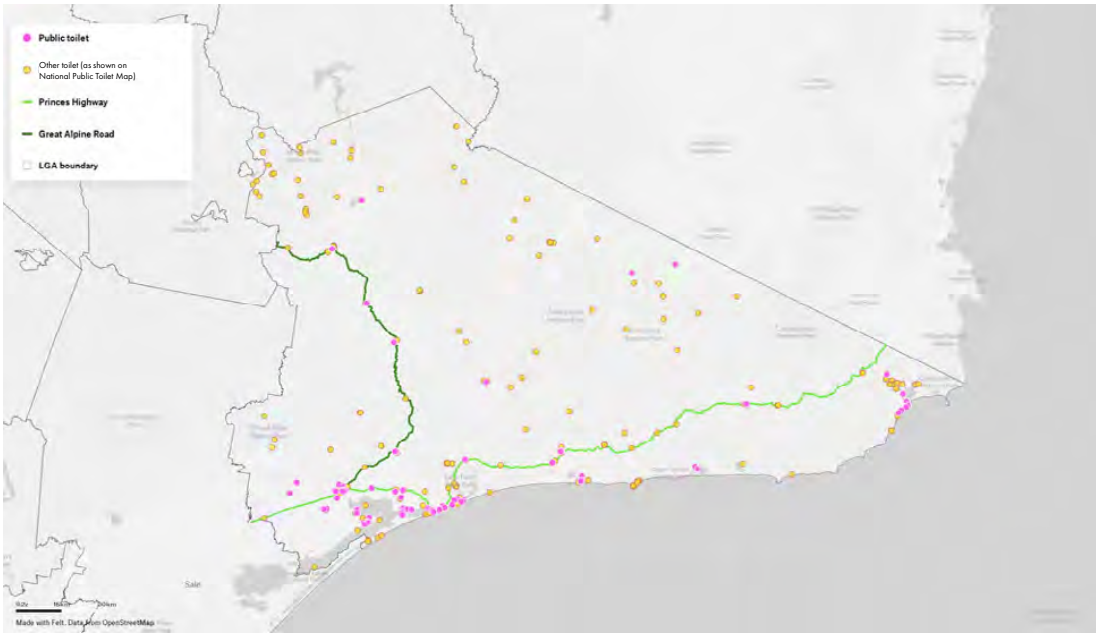


Figure 9. Distribution of public toilets along Princes Highway and Great Alpine Road.

2.7. Public toilet typologies

There are two main public toilet typologies across East Gippsland Shire:

- **Standalone public toilets**: single structures that are built separately and stand independently of other buildings. Common configurations of public toilets are either as single cubicle(s), a row of cubicles or a toilet block.
- **Co-located public toilets**: facilities that are connected to or located within another building. These facilities share plumbing and electrical services with the building in which they are located. These facilities can be found in clubrooms, libraries, office buildings, public halls and recreation centres.

In addition to these two typologies, Council also provides two Changing Places facilities. These facilities differ from standard accessible or disabled public toilets as they include additional features such as an adult change table, ceiling hoist, a central toilet with grab rails on either side, privacy screens, large circulation space and some of them may also contain shower facilities. While not in the scope of this Service Review, Changing Places facilities play an important role in improving accessibility in the broader network of public toilets. They are located in Lakes Entrance and Cann River. For more detail on Changing Places facilities, please see **Chapter 4**.

Key findings

When evaluating the network of 88 Council-managed public toilets across East Gippsland Shire, the following observations are made:

- 76 public toilets (86%) are standalone public toilet structures
- 12 public toilets (14%) are co-located public toilet facilities.
- Of the co-located toilets, six are co-located in recreation reserves pavilions or club change rooms, five are located in Council information centres or office buildings, and one is located in a public hall.



Standalone public toilet structure as a single cubicle Lions Club Toilet, Bruthen



Co-located public toilet structure Day Avenue Toilet Block, Omeo



Standalone public toilet structure as a row of cubicles configuration Jemmys Point Lookout Public Toilet, Kalimna



Toilet block configuration Bonang Toilet Block, Bonang

2.8. Public toilet condition

The age and condition of Council-managed public toilets vary across East Gippsland Shire. Over the past 20 years, Council data includes an asset condition rating ranging from 1(excellent) to 10 (very poor). The dataset also includes information on the age of the facility; however, it is noted that this reflects the year when the public toilet was first entered into Council's asset database rather than the actual construction date. As a result, the exact age of some facilities is unknown and based on some general assumptions.

The typical lifespan of a public toilet facility can range between 20-30 years, noting that refurbishment of facilities can add more than 10 years to their useful life. The practical lifespan of a public toilet is dependent on a range of factors such as construction, usage, cleaning frequency and previous refurbishments.

Information on asset age and condition is included here to illustrate where service reliability and operating effort may be constrained over time.

This section does not assess or prioritise capital works and should not be interpreted as an upgrade or renewal program. Decisions about asset investment sit outside the near-term service decisions this review is intended to inform. This has been included for context only.

Key findings

The following observations about the condition of Council-managed public toilets are made:

- The average condition rating of Council-managed public toilets is 4.8, on a scale from 1 (excellent) to 10 (very poor).
- 33 public toilets have a condition rating between 3 and 6, broadly representing 'average' condition.
- 27 public toilets have a condition rating between 7 and 10, representing 'poor' to 'very poor' condition.
- Condition data is not available for one public toilet.
- The following observations relate to the recorded age of public toilets:
    - 11 public toilets have been constructed within the past five years.
    - 55 public toilets are recorded as being 15 years or older.
    - The average recorded age of Council's public toilet facilities is 22.7 years.
    - These figures indicate that, while Council has invested in several new facilities in recent years, a significant proportion of the network is ageing and may require increased maintenance, renewal or future investment.
- These factors provide important context for future planning and help explain why some facilities require greater servicing effort to maintain acceptable service levels.

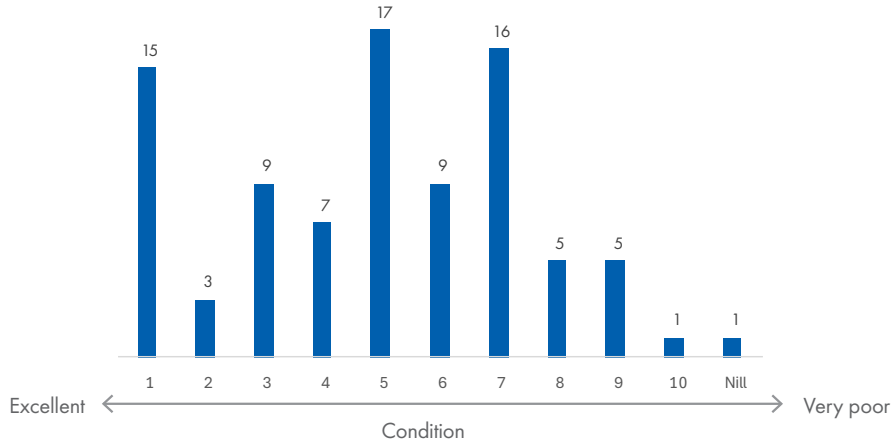


Figure 10. Distribution of public toilets in each condition rating (noted that one facility does not have a condition rating)

2.9. Public toilet cleaning and maintenance

Why cleaning and maintenance matter for service-level decisions

Findings in this section are critical because cleaning frequency is the primary driver of both service quality and controllable operating cost within Council's public toilets network.

The analysis shows that:

- Higher cleaning frequencies are strongly associated with improved perceptions of cleanliness, reliability and confidence of use, particularly in highly visible town centres and tourism locations.
- Scheduled cleaning represents the largest proportion of annual operating costs, meaning even small changes in frequency have material budget implications.
- A small number of facilities generate a disproportionate share of reactive maintenance, vandalism and call-outs, placing pressure on both budgets and service reliability despite frequent servicing.

These findings explain why service rebalancing, rather than uniform service increases, is required. Improving cleanliness and reliability in high-use and high-risk locations may require a reallocation of resources within the existing network, including consideration of service levels, service delivery approaches and service provision in lower-use or overlapping locations.

For decision makers, this means:

- Cleaning frequency is a deliberate service choice, not a background operational setting.
- Decisions about consolidation or decommissioning are inseparable from decisions to improve service outcomes elsewhere.
- Maintaining the current network without rebalancing would continue to dilute service effort and limit Council's ability to meet community expectations in priority locations.

This evidence underpins the service level framework and strategic priorities outlined in Chapter 1 and demonstrates why a network-wide approach to managing cleaning and maintenance is essential for delivering a reliable, affordable and sustainable public toilet service.

Public toilet cleaning and maintenance as a service driver

Cleaning and day-to-day servicing of Council-managed public toilets are governed by agreed service levels under two contracts:

- Cleaning of Nominated Buildings
- Cleaning and Minor Maintenance (for East Gippsland Shire Council's Public Toilets, Barbecues and Slop Hoppers)

Community engagement confirms cleanliness is the most important factor influencing public toilet use, and increasing cleaning frequency is the most requested service improvement. The cost data shows that the primary cost driver is scheduled cleaning (periodic services), particularly at high-use destinations and tourism locations where service frequencies are daily or greater. Reactive works (call-outs, plumbing, graffiti removal and repairs) are generally lower per event but can become material at hotspot facilities due to repeat incidents and service disruption.

Appendix A details the specific facilities covered under each contract. When analysing the contracts, schedules and maintenance, the following insights are observed:

- Most public toilets in East Gippsland Shire are cleaned at least once per week.
- 15 public toilets in high use locations are cleaned 365 or more times annually (equivalent to at least once a day). Of these, 10 toilets are cleaned more than once a day.
- 21 public toilets are cleaned less than 100 times annually (roughly equates to under twice a week).
- The most serviced public toilet (Baum Park in Cann River) is cleaned twice a day (excluding extra cleans conducted during peak holiday periods).
- The least serviced public toilet, Anglers Drive (Gipsy Point Boat Ramp) in Gipsy Point, is cleaned 20 times annually (roughly equates to less than twice a month).

- Scheduled cleaning drives the majority of controllable operating cost; increasing frequency at high-use locations has the largest budget impact.
- Indicative unit costs vary widely between sites, suggesting remoteness/logistics, access constraints and site configuration materially influence price, not just frequency.
- Reactive works display repeatable 'schedule-of-rates' patterns (e.g., toilet roll holder replacement, lock/latch, call-outs), enabling better forecasting and prevention business cases.
- A small number of hotspot facilities appear to generate disproportionate reactive workload (repeated call-outs, graffiti and fixture replacement). Targeted CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and fixture standardisation may reduce repeat costs.
- Seasonal uplift and event-based servicing creates sharp cost increases (weekends/public holidays), reinforcing the need for planned peak-period resourcing in tourism areas.
- Clearly communicating the cleaning schedules for public toilets - including the days on which they are serviced - may help improve community understanding of Council's resource allocation and manage expectations regarding cleaning frequency.

Public toilets cleaning and minor maintenance

The scope of this contract covers inspections, cleaning and minor maintenance of nominated public toilets, including internal and external areas, approaches and surrounds, supply of consumables, opening and closing of nominated facilities, callouts, and reporting obligations. The contract also covers other assets including slop hoppers and barbecues; however, these are not relevant to the scope of this service review.
Appendix A provides agreed service levels included within the contract and forms the basis for monitoring service delivery performance.

Scheduled cleaning frequencies

Table 6 provides examples of scheduled cleaning frequencies currently applied across the network. Cleaning frequencies vary based on demand, location, accessibility, seasonality and operational requirements. Understanding these variations provides important context for how service effort is currently distributed across the network and supports future consideration of service level expectations.

Council is continuing to improve service-level reporting, asset information and operational performance data to support more informed decision-making across the network. Better information on facility usage, cleaning demand and consumable consumption will strengthen future service level reviews and help Council target service effort where it delivers the greatest community benefit.

Council has commenced strengthening its approach to contract management through regular service reviews, site inspections, performance monitoring and improved reporting. These activities are intended to improve visibility of service performance, support informed service level decisions and strengthen accountability for service delivery outcomes. Further opportunities to improve contract management, reporting and service delivery models have been identified through this review and are discussed in subsequent sections. Future contract reviews may also investigate alternative cleaning approaches, technologies and service delivery methods where they demonstrate improved service outcomes and are operationally feasible.

Table 6. Examples of current cleaning frequencies across the public toilet network

Facility	Cleaning Frequency
Baum Park	Normal – Twice Daily, Christmas - Thrice Daily, Easter – Twice Daily, Holidays – Twice Daily
All Abilities Playground	Normal – Daily, Christmas - Twice Daily, Easter – Twice Daily
Bullock Island Road	Normal – Daily, Christmas - Twice Daily, Easter – Twice Daily
Main Street Gardens	Normal – Daily, Christmas - Twice Daily, Easter – Twice Daily
Esplanade – Lakes Foreshore Footbridge	Normal – Daily, Christmas - Twice Daily, Easter – Twice Daily

Top hotspot facilities – damage, vandalism and call-outs (preliminary)

Analysis of reactive maintenance, vandalism and call-out records identifies a small number of public toilet facilities that disproportionately drive service demand, reactive maintenance activity and cost. Table 7 below outlines the number of incidents from July 2024 to January 2026.

Table 7 – Highest reactive maintenance, vandalism, graffiti and call-outs by facility.

Facility	Commentary and reasoning
Main Street Gardens	The most significant hotspot, recording at least 20 vandalism/graffiti incidents, over 15 call-outs, and more than 10 damage repairs across the reporting period. This reflects sustained antisocial behaviour, repeat graffiti within days of removal, and frequent after-hours responses. High reactive maintenance demand, repeated after-hours responses and operational inefficiencies.
The Hummocks, Lakes Entrance	Remote location leading to high cost of periodic cleans and maintenance including graffiti cleaning, damage repair and event callout.
Wolseley Street	High number of vandalism incidents with approximately 26 incidents of vandalism /graffiti incidents (10), call-outs (6), and more than 10 damage repairs.
Lakes Entrance - Footbridge	Major hotspot, with 10 vandalism/graffiti incidents, 6 call-outs, and 10+ damage repairs, including repeated toilet seat, lock, bin and dispenser replacements. High seasonal visitation and overnight activity significantly increase wear, damage and service demand, requiring rapid response to maintain acceptable service levels.
Nicholson Mall	Reports of the facility being used as temporary shelter have coincided with increased maintenance demand and call-outs. The facility has also experienced repeated vandalism and graffiti, aligning with broader safety concerns in the area.

While increased cleaning may improve presentation, some locations may require targeted safety, surveillance and design interventions to address the underlying causes of vandalism, anti-social behaviour and poor user experience.

2.10. Public toilets in open spaces

Overview

This section considers how the existing public toilets network aligns with the function and hierarchy of open spaces, for the purpose of understanding service demand and duplication, not to identify locations for new provision.

The East Gippsland Open Space Strategy (2025-2035) provides a strategic and long-term framework for the provision of public open space in East Gippsland Shire. Of relevance, the Open Space Strategy outlines recommendations on where public toilets should be provided based on the open space function and hierarchy. These are outlined and summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8 – Summary of public toilet recommendations in open spaces

Open space function/ hierarchy	Public toilet requirement
Sport Function	
Regional	Must be provided
District	Must be provided
Neighbourhood	May be provided (consider if there is a higher hierarchy open space nearby that can provide this function)
Recreation Function	
Regional	Must be provided
District	Must be provided
Neighbourhood	May be provided (consider if there is a higher hierarchy open space nearby that can provide this function)
Local	Should not be provided

Key findings

Overall, there is strong alignment between the current provision of public toilets and the service expectations outlined in the Public Open Space Strategy. There are 17 'district' or 'regional' level open spaces across East Gippsland Shire. Of these spaces, all have public toilets; although it should be noted that Genoa Wayside, and Swifts Creek Caravan Park are managed by Committees of Management. There are 12 'neighbourhood' level open spaces across East Gippsland Shire. Of these spaces, all have public toilets or are within proximity to an existing toilet.

These foreshore open spaces are popular with both residents and visitors. While Lakes Entrance Esplanade Foreshore is close to several regional open spaces, its long, linear layout means toilet facilities are required along the full length of the foreshore. However, this needs to be balanced with the costs and efficiencies of providing this service and it is acknowledged that providing a public toilet at every activity node is not feasible. Given the number of toilets within close proximity in Lakes Entrance, there may be opportunities to review how service provision is distributed across this part of the network, subject to service level assessment and community input.

As outlined in the Public Open Space Strategy, Council should continue to monitor 'neighbourhood' level open spaces for future needs, especially in those currently without public toilets.

East Gippsland Shire Council provides several public toilets at boat ramp facilities. Some of these locations have a range of services and infrastructure which supports this toilet provision, however there are several where the only facility is the boating infrastructure. The convenience of this for boat users is acknowledged, however this is an area where the costs and benefits warrant further consideration.

2.11. Community and sporting facilities

Overview

Council owns and operates a range of community facilities including libraries, community halls, community hubs, surf life-saving clubs and visitor information centres. These facilities are regularly open to the public and usually have public toilets that are generally free to use. Access to these facilities is, however, linked to operational and opening hours of the building, which limits public access.

Additionally, there are many sporting clubs and pavilions across East Gippsland which include bowls clubs, tennis clubs and pavilions in recreation reserves. Similarly, the use of public toilets in these facilities is often restricted to certain times of the week (e.g. on events or game days) and for club members. This makes accessibility of these facilities even more restrictive than community facilities; however, it does present an opportunity to increase service levels without additional capital works.

These community facilities form part of a larger network of social infrastructure that supports community health and wellbeing in East Gippsland. These facilities could play a role in expanding and supplementing public toilet provision across the Shire. As libraries and visitor information centres already form part of the scope of this review, the remaining facilities may be categorised into the following groups:

- Community halls and neighbourhood houses.
- Sports facilities, including clubhouses, pavilions and swimming pools.
- Visitor attractions, including museums and art galleries.
- Lifesaving clubs and coast guards.

Key findings

- There are approximately 30 Council-managed public toilets located within 200 metres of an existing community or sporting facility. This proximity indicates a high degree of overlap between standalone public toilets and those located within community infrastructure.
- Sport and recreation facilities, including club houses and swimming pools, form part of the broader public toilets landscape across East Gippsland. These facilities often contain toilets that may be available for public use; however, access varies depending on operating hours and management arrangements. In many larger towns, these facilities are near Council managed public toilets, contributing to overlapping service coverage. In some cases, however, facilities are located beyond a reasonable walking distance from existing public toilets and may present opportunities to supplement public toilet provision where service gaps exist.
- The East Gippsland Sporting Facilities Plan (2023) identifies that several toilets within sporting facilities are currently inadequate, inaccessible or not DDA compliant, and require upgrade. Where upgrades are planned, there may be opportunities for Council to advocate for these facilities to be opened for broader public use, supported by appropriate funding, agreements and management arrangements.
- Recent developments and upgrades of recreation reserve facilities have increasingly included externally accessible toilets. This allows for more flexible use and creates opportunities for these facilities to function as designated public toilets, supporting access outside of organised sport. Over time, this approach may help position recreation reserves as multi-use, community-accessible facilities that support service provision on a more consistent, seven-day basis.
- Community facilities, including halls, neighbourhood houses, libraries and visitor information centres, also contribute to the broader network of accessible toilets. These facilities are more likely to be open to the public; however, access is still tied to operating hours and may not provide consistent coverage across the day or week.
- There are multiple examples across the Shire where community and sporting facilities could help supplement public toilet provision, particularly in smaller or rural settlements where standalone public toilets are limited or absent. However, realising this opportunity would require appropriate resourcing, clear access arrangements, and consideration of impacts on facility management and maintenance.

2.12. Summary of challenges and opportunities

The analysis in this chapter highlights several interconnected challenges affecting the performance, affordability and consistency of the public toilets service when considered at a network scale. These challenges are not uniform across the Shire and are strongly shaped by geography, patterns of use and the historical development of the network. The network is large and geographically dispersed, resulting in significant variation in travel time, servicing effort and operating cost between locations.

Key challenges

- Capital and operating resources are spread across a larger and more geographically dispersed network than in many local government areas with comparable populations.
- Inconsistent service levels across facilities with similar demand, driven by incremental decisions rather than a shared service framework.
- Clustering and overlap of facilities in some locations, alongside lower-use facilities in areas with limited demand, creating challenges in aligning service effort with need.
- High reliance on increased cleaning frequency at a small number of high-use or problem sites, placing pressure on available resources.
- Limited ability to improve service reliability everywhere without making deliberate trade-offs elsewhere in the network.
- East Gippsland experiences significant seasonal fluctuations in visitation, with sharp increases during peak holiday periods and major events. These population surges place additional demand on public toilets, particularly in key tourism locations.
- Current service delivery arrangements can make it difficult to adjust service levels in response to seasonal fluctuations in demand. Facilities experience heavy use during peak tourist periods and lower use at other times, creating opportunities to better align service effort with changing patterns of demand over time.
- Community expectations of public toilet services vary, and public toilets have historically attracted community concern. Recent feedback reinforces ongoing issues related to cleanliness, accessibility and service levels. These concerns are most pronounced in high use locations and during peak visitor periods.

Key opportunities

- There is an opportunity to better align public toilet service levels with patterns of use and risk, recognising seasonal peaks and high demand locations while avoiding over-servicing facilities with consistently low demand.
- Service levels currently vary between facilities with similar usage, location and risk characteristics. There is an opportunity to establish clearer and more consistent service expectations across comparable sites to improve equity and transparency.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen evidence-based decision-making through improved utilisation monitoring, consumable tracking and service performance data to better understand patterns of demand, identify service pressures and inform future service level adjustments across the network.
- Existing cleaning contracts limit Council's ability to adjust service levels in response to changing demand, creating an opportunity to better align contract arrangements with agreed service levels over time.
- Clearly defining and communicating what different service levels mean in practice could help manage community expectations and reduce confusion about what users can reasonably expect at different locations.
- There is an opportunity to improve customer experience outcomes through targeted investment in safety, visibility, amenity, vandalism prevention and other design measures that improve community confidence in using public toilets.
- There is an opportunity to make more deliberate and consistent use of utilisation data, customer feedback and operational insights to inform service prioritisation, service levels and future investment decisions.
- Service effort and investment could be more deliberately focused on high use and higher risk locations, with a clearer rationale for the ongoing role and service level of lower use facilities across the broader network.

- In some locations, public toilets are located within overlapping service catchments. These situations may present opportunities to rationalise provision where appropriate, enabling Council to redirect resources toward improving the maintenance, cleaning and servicing of remaining facilities.

Some ageing or high incident facilities require disproportionate servicing effort. Addressing this through service design, consolidation or future planning could improve overall service sustainability.

There are opportunities to partner with other organisations, including State Government agencies, local sporting clubs and Committees of Management, to support the provision and maintenance of public toilets where this aligns with local needs and responsibilities.

Financial sustainability and efficiency outcomes

The outcomes of this review support Council's broader objectives of ensuring assets are appropriately utilised, service levels are aligned with community need, and resources are directed toward areas of greatest community benefit. The proposed approach supports Council's long-term financial sustainability objectives by helping Council better align service levels, operational effort and future investment with community need and network priorities. This aligns with Council Plan objectives relating to making the most of Council assets and supports the Financial Sustainability Strategy by promoting service levels and investment decisions that are aligned with community need, affordability and long-term asset sustainability.

The proposed approach recognises that maintaining the current network and service model without optimisation is likely to place increasing pressure on future operating and renewal budgets while limiting Council's ability to improve service outcomes in priority locations. The review therefore provides a framework to support more affordable and sustainable longterm service delivery.

- East Gippsland maintains a comparatively extensive public amenities network relative to similar regional councils, resulting in higher operating, maintenance and renewal obligations.
- The review provides a framework for aligning service levels, operational effort and future investment with community need, utilisation and service priorities.
- The proposed approach supports more deliberate allocation of resources toward facilities that provide the greatest community benefit and network value.

Overall implication

Taken together, these challenges and opportunities demonstrate that meaningful improvement in public toilets outcomes is most likely to be achieved through deliberate service re-balancing, rather than expanding the network or applying uniform service levels. A network-wide approach enables Council to better align service effort with demand, make trade-offs explicit, and improve reliability and confidence of use within existing resource constraints.



Chinaman's Creek toilet block, Metung

CHAPTER 3

Strategic priorities



Bullock Island Toilet Block, Lakes Entrance

3.1. Vision, strategic priorities and actions

The findings from community engagement, network analysis and operational evidence have informed a clear direction for how Council should manage the public toilets service over the near to medium term. Rather than treating each facility in isolation, this Service Review focuses on how the network performs as a whole and where deliberate service level decisions will have the greatest impact.

The vision and strategic priorities below are intended to support a more consistent, reliable and sustainable public toilets service, recognising that not all facilities need to be serviced in the same way and that trade-offs are required to manage a large and geographically dispersed network.

The strategic priorities and associated directions reflect an evidence-based assessment of:

- Community expectations and feedback.
- Patterns of use, risk and community demand.
- Operating and servicing effort.
- Service overlap and network efficiency.
- Known operational constraints and opportunities.

A prioritisation tool is included later in this report to support future decision-making once the service level framework is endorsed. That tool is designed to guide how future proposals, requests or investment considerations are assessed, rather than to retrospectively justify or rank the actions identified in this section.

Vision

East Gippsland Shire Council will manage public toilets as a networked service by deliberately differentiating service levels, concentrating effort where demand, risk and community need are greatest, and making transparent, evidence-based decisions that balance service quality, access, operational sustainability and community benefit.

Strategic priorities

To achieve this vision, three strategic priorities have been identified to improve service outcomes, optimise the network and support long-term sustainability. The intent of these priorities is to improve cleanliness, safety, reliability and overall user experience across the network by directing effort and resources where they deliver the greatest community benefit.

- **Strategic priority 1**: Improve service quality, cleanliness, safety and reliability by prioritising operational effort at high-use, high-visibility and high-risk public toilets.
- **Strategic priority 2**: Optimise public toilet provision by reviewing duplication, overlap and network coverage, while considering alternative delivery methods where appropriate.
- **Strategic priority 3**: Address ageing facilities where asset condition is impacting service quality, reliability or agreed service levels.

The following sections outline associated directions for each strategic priority. These directions are intended to guide future decision-making and highlight where different service responses may improve service outcomes across the network. They are presented to support further consideration, engagement and Council decision-making, and may change or not proceed once broader community, political and place-based factors are considered. The directions on the following pages do not represent fixed or final decisions for any individual facility. Future decisions regarding implementation, including any site-specific changes, should be informed by the service-level framework, evidence base and decision principles established through this review.

3.2. Strategic Priority 1: Improve service quality, cleanliness, safety and reliability by prioritising operational effort at high-use, high-visibility and high-risk public toilets.

Community feedback and operational evidence consistently identify cleanliness, safety and reliability as the most important factors influencing public toilet use. Across the community engagement, respondents made 2,288 selections about the improvements they would most like to see. Better cleaning was the most commonly selected improvement, accounting for 34% of selections. Vandalism, poor condition, safety concerns and lack of consumables were also commonly raised, particularly in highly visible town centre and tourism locations.

Operational evidence shows that cleaning frequency is the primary driver of controllable operating costs, while a small number of facilities generate disproportionate reactive maintenance, vandalism and service issues. High-use and highly visible locations experience the greatest pressure on cleanliness, safety, vandalism and service reliability and therefore provide the strongest opportunity to improve community outcomes through targeted service improvements.

This strategic priority focuses on where additional service effort delivers the greatest service and community benefit, rather than attempting to apply the same response across the entire network. It recognises that Council's resources are finite and that improving outcomes in priority locations requires deliberate and evidence-based prioritisation.

Where service levels are rebalanced, opportunities will be considered to redirect operational effort toward improving service outcomes elsewhere within the public toilet network. Council will also continue strengthening utilisation, demand, consumable and service performance reporting and monitoring to support evidence-based service level decisions, identify emerging service pressures, improve responsiveness and assess the effectiveness of future service changes.

Service improvements may include:

- Increasing cleaning frequency at selected high-use or highly visible locations.
- Adjusting cleaning frequency during peak seasons, holidays and major events.
- Improving the reliability of consumables such as toilet paper and hand soap.
- Considering whether safety, visibility and user experience outcomes are being achieved at priority locations, including assessing opportunities to apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles where anti-social behaviour, vandalism or perceived safety concerns are affecting community use.
- Changing service delivery models where this improves responsiveness and value for money, particularly in remote locations.
- Investigating opportunities to improve cleaning effectiveness, service quality and value for money through future contract reviews, alternative cleaning methods and emerging industry practices where feasible.

Importantly, this priority does not seek to establish a uniform minimum standard across all facilities, nor does it assume that increased cleaning is required everywhere. Many public toilets across the Shire are appropriately serviced relative to their level of use and risk. In lower use locations, maintaining existing service levels — or reducing them where justified — supports a more balanced and sustainable network overall.

Directions under this priority are informed by:

- Demonstrated patterns of use and visitation, including seasonal peaks.
- Community use, risk and service importance within town centres and key destinations.
- Incident history, including vandalism, anti-social behaviour and repeat reactive maintenance.
- The role each facility plays within the broader service network.

In practice, improving cleanliness and confidence of use in high priority locations will often rely on concentrating service effort where demand, visibility and operational risk are greatest. This approach is directly linked to Strategic Priority 2, where opportunities to reduce service overlap or improve network efficiency can enable operational effort to be redirected toward locations where service performance matters most to the community.

Opportunities to improve service outcomes should be informed by community feedback, demand, operational risk and user experience. Improvements may be achieved through service delivery changes, safety and amenity measures, or other operational responses. Different issues require different responses, with actions informed by the underlying cause. The intent of this priority is to improve cleanliness, safety, reliability and confidence of use across the network.

3.3. Strategic Priority 2: Optimise public toilet provision by reviewing duplication, overlap and network coverage, while considering alternative delivery methods where appropriate.

Network optimisation is a service improvement approach that aligns public toilet provision with community need, demand and network value. It recognises that improved outcomes may be achieved through service rebalancing, alternative delivery models and, where appropriate, changes to facility provision.

This Service Review has identified opportunities to better align public toilet provision with community needs, service outcomes and network value. In some cases, this includes facilities that may be surplus to service requirements when considered at a network level. These facilities are typically located within close proximity to alternative toilets, experience consistently low utilisation, are in poor condition, or require a high level of servicing effort relative to the benefit they provide. In these cases, continued operation delivers limited network value while contributing to fragmented service levels and avoidable operating cost.

The focus of network optimisation is therefore on maintaining or improving overall service outcomes, rather than assessing individual facilities in isolation. Consideration is given to the availability of nearby alternatives, accessibility requirements, patterns of use, and the likely impact on service reliability, safety and community outcomes.

To improve overall network performance, four potential optimisation pathways are identified:

- **Retain service / change delivery model**: The existing service outcome is retained, with alternative delivery arrangements considered where they better align service provision with demand, operational requirements and value for money.
- **Trial reduced service levels**: Cleaning frequency is deliberately reduced as an interim step to understand impacts on community use, feedback and service outcomes before any future decision is made.
- **Restrict access**: Remove from cleaning contract and withdraw from the network as a public toilet option.
- **Decommission**: Council may directly decide to close facilities under its control, or advocate for closure where approval from another land manager is required, removing the facility from the public toilet network.

Alternative delivery models may include partnerships, revised servicing arrangements, seasonal service responses or other approaches that more closely align service provision with patterns of demand while maintaining appropriate access and service outcomes. Improved utilisation and demand data may help identify locations where these approaches warrant further investigation.

Any proposal to consolidate or decommission a facility would require further assessment, including consideration of service demand, community use, accessibility and the availability of nearby alternatives.

Opportunities to optimise service provision should be considered in locations that are low-use, overlapping, experience limited demand, or provide limited network value when considered across the broader network level.

These locations typically exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- Located within a short walking distance of another public toilet providing an equivalent or higher level of service.
- Consistently low utilisation relative to servicing effort.
- Limited network value when considered alongside demand, service outcomes and future operating, maintenance and renewal requirements.
- High levels of vandalism, reactive maintenance or safety concerns.
- Governance or land tenure arrangements that limit Council's ability to manage the service effectively.

While the evidence base supports a network-wide approach to considering rationalisation, it is acknowledged that reducing or withdrawing a service may affect some users. Any proposal to consolidate or decommission a facility, restrict access or make a material reduction in service provision will be subject to targeted engagement with the affected community and Council before a final decision is made. Engagement will focus on explaining the service trade-offs involved and how consolidation supports more reliable, equitable and sustainable public toilets outcomes across the Shire as a whole.

Consistent with the intent of this review, efficiencies realised through network optimisation should initially be reinvested into improving cleanliness, safety, reliability and overall service performance across the network. Consideration of any future financial savings would be subject to Council being satisfied that agreed service outcomes are being achieved.

Any future service changes considered under Priority 2 should be implemented in a staged and considered manner. Service outcomes should be monitored through operational data, incident reporting and community feedback to assess whether intended benefits are being achieved. Clear communication will be important in helping the community understand how network optimisation supports improved service outcomes and long-term sustainability across the Shire.

3.4. Strategic Priority 3: Address ageing facilities where asset condition is impacting service quality, reliability or agreed service levels.

The age and condition of some public toilet facilities constrain Council's ability to deliver reliable, safe and cost-effective service outcomes over time. While decisions about capital upgrade, renewal or replacement are outside the scope of this Service Review, understanding these constraints is important to contextualise current service performance and inform future planning processes.

Council's public toilets network includes facilities that vary significantly in age and condition. Across the network, 49 public toilets are approaching the end of their useful life and 27 facilities are rated as being in poor or very poor condition. Older facilities are more likely to experience service disruption, require repeat reactive maintenance, and deliver poorer user experiences, even where cleaning effort is maintained.

Importantly, asset condition should not be assumed to be a service level issue. While some concerns can be addressed through operational changes such as cleaning frequency or other service delivery improvements, issues relating to the physical condition, functionality or design of a facility may require consideration through future upgrade, renewal or replacement programs. Similarly, safety concerns may require different responses, such as improved lighting, visibility or the application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. Identifying the underlying issue is therefore critical to determining the most appropriate response.

Asset condition should not be considered in isolation. Decisions relating to upgrade, renewal, replacement or decommissioning should be informed by the role of the facility within the network, demonstrated demand, service outcomes and broader community benefit. Poor condition alone does not determine the future of a facility.

From a service perspective, ageing and poor condition facilities matter because they:

- Increase the frequency of faults and unplanned closures.
- Require disproportionate reactive maintenance effort.
- Limit the effectiveness of increased cleaning in improving user confidence.
- Heighten safety risks and reduce user confidence, particularly in high-use locations.

This review does not prioritise or recommend capital investment. Instead, it highlights where asset condition may be undermining service reliability, particularly at facilities that play an important role in the network due to their level of use, community importance or role within the broader network.

Priority for future consideration should be given to:

- High-use or high-priority facilities that are in poor or very poor condition.
- Locations where asset constraints prevent service outcomes being achieved despite increased cleaning effort.
- Facilities where condition contributes to repeat vandalism, safety concerns or negative community perception.

Recommended actions fall into two broad categories based on land tenure:

- **Upgrade (Council-managed land)**: Where Council controls the asset and can directly consider renewal or replacement through future capital and asset planning processes.
- **Advocate (Crown or other land)**: Where Council must work with the relevant land manager to seek approval or partnership arrangements for any future upgrade.

Importantly, decisions to upgrade, renew or replace facilities should come after decisions about service levels, network role and consolidation. In some locations, consolidation or decommissioning may represent a more appropriate long-term response than continued investment in ageing infrastructure.

The facilities identified in this section are therefore noted as future planning considerations only. This information is intended to inform Council's asset management, capital works and long-term financial planning processes, rather than establish commitments or priorities through this Service Review.

Facilities that may be subject to future consolidation or decommissioning are generally not considered renewal priorities, as renewal investment should be directed toward facilities expected to continue serving a long-term role within the network.

Table 9 – Directions for facilities identified as future planning considerations, based on their condition and role in supporting agreed service levels.

Public toilet location	Action	Rationale
Port of Bairnsdale	Upgrade	• The facility services a key waterfront destination and continues to play an important role within the Bairnsdale public toilet network. • Asset condition is increasingly constraining service outcomes despite ongoing maintenance. • Community feedback identified safety concerns, including reports of frequent antisocial behaviour. • The facility recorded 19 significant fault reports in 2025 which led to frequent closures. **Upgrade planning for this facility has already been included in Council's approved capital program, with initial concept planning commenced. Inclusion here does not represent a new or additional commitment arising from this Service Review, but reflects alignment between previously endorsed capital planning, the service level issues identified in this review and public consultation.*
Benambra	Replacement	• Existing toilets located within the hall are in poor condition and not optimally located. • Construction of the replacement public toilet building at Dejarlais Park is due to commence.

This Service Review does not identify spatial gaps or unmet demand for new public toilet provision. In many locations, the absence of a public toilet reflects deliberate planning outcomes based on settlement patterns, open space hierarchy and proximity to private toilets.

Over time Council may encounter opportunities to partner with other organisations such as Committees of Management, sporting clubs, community facilities, or other levels of government where the shared use of existing toilets supports agreed service level outcomes.

Any such opportunities would be considered on a case-by-case basis through established place-based planning, open space planning or asset management processes. They are not proposed, assessed or prioritised through this Service Review, and do not imply expansion of the public toilets network.

Table 10 – East Gippsland Open Space Strategy: Public toilet provision recommendations

Open space function	Recommendation
Neighbourhood Sporting Reserve	Might have*
District Sporting Reserve	Must have
Regional Sporting Reserve	Must have
Local Recreation Reserve (park)	Shouldn't have
Neighbourhood Recreation Reserve (park)	Might have*
District Recreation Reserve (park)	Must have
Regional Recreation Reserve (park)	Must have

Might have* (consider if there is a space of a higher hierarchy available to provide these assets)

CHAPTER 4

Implementation



For est Park Toilet Block, Orbost

4.1. What implementation means for this review

For service levels and rebalancing the network

This chapter explains how the service-level framework and strategic priorities should be applied in practice if endorsed. It does not introduce new decisions, commit Council to specific actions, or reopen questions about service levels, consolidation or network size. Those matters are addressed in earlier chapters.

Implementation of the service-level framework is applied facility-by-facility to confirm the appropriate service role, identify where service levels may be maintained, increased, reduced or delivered differently, and understand the operational and cost implications of those choices.

In practice, this means the framework is used to guide deliberate decisions about cleaning frequency, operational effort, provision of toilets and consumables, or the delivery model for a given toilet within the existing network. Not all facilities are expected to align fully with every element of a service level immediately, and transitional or staged responses may be appropriate where service changes affect community access or expectations.

The service-level framework provides a consistent decision basis, while allowing Council to apply judgement informed by local context, evidence and engagement.

For the purposes of this review, implementation is focused on applying agreed service level decisions to the existing public toilets network.

If endorsed, implementation of this review would involve:

- Applying the endorsed service framework to guide future service level decisions across the network.
- Improving utilisation, consumable and service performance monitoring to strengthen the evidence base for future service level reviews and network decisions.
- Undertaking appropriate community engagement prior to any site-specific decisions that may materially change service levels or public access.
- Monitoring service performance over time through complaints, incident data and operational feedback.
- Informing future asset planning where ageing facilities are constraining Council's ability to deliver the agreed service level.

Implementation is therefore primarily an operational and service decision-making exercise, supported by evidence, operational data and a consistent service level framework. The success of the service model should be assessed over time through measures such as community feedback, cleanliness and service quality complaints, vandalism and incident trends, service reliability, consumable availability and utilisation data. These measures will help Council understand whether service changes are improving outcomes for the community and achieving the intended benefits of the review.

This review does not implement, commit to, or prioritise:

- Capital upgrades, renewals or replacement programs.
- Construction of new public toilets.
- Detailed asset investment programs or funding allocations.
- Reassessment of Council's broader spatial planning framework for public toilet provision.

Where capital works, upgrades or partnership opportunities are referenced in later sections, they are included as future considerations or contextual guidance only. They do not represent additional actions or commitments arising from this review.

This approach allows Council to improve reliability, cleanliness, safety and confidence of use in priority locations while ensuring future investment decisions follow clear decisions about the role and service level of facilities within the network.

For the community

Subject to Council endorsement of the proposed direction, Council will provide the community with a further update on the outcomes of the review. This will explain how community feedback informed the service framework and strategic priorities, the direction endorsed by Council, and the next steps arising from the review.

This communication will focus on the overall direction of the review rather than decisions about individual facilities. It will provide transparency about how community input was considered and how it influenced Council's approach to managing the public toilet network.

The review does not propose final decisions about individual facilities. Any future proposal affecting a specific public toilet, including changes to service levels, access, delivery arrangements or the facility's ongoing operation, would be considered on a case-by-case basis. These proposals would be subject to further assessment, targeted engagement with the affected community and Council consideration before a final decision is made.

4.2. Prioritisation tool for post-review decision making

The prioritisation tool on the following page is intended to support future decisions relating to public toilet provision, including upgrade, renewal, service level and network planning decisions. It provides a structured process for assessing demonstrated need, Council's role, alignment with strategic priorities, existing provision and asset condition before significant infrastructure decisions are made.

The tool is not intended to replace Council's operational service management processes. Matters such as cleaning frequency, consumable availability, contractor performance, routine maintenance and day-to-day service delivery should continue to be managed through normal operational arrangements.

Not all issues require application of the prioritisation tool. Safety concerns, vandalism, asset condition and maintenance matters should continue to be managed through existing operational, renewal and asset management processes, with the tool applied where broader strategic decisions are required.

Asset condition issues may require further investigation through Council's asset management and renewal planning processes, which may ultimately inform upgrade, renewal or replacement decisions. Identifying the underlying issue is therefore an important first step before determining whether application of the prioritisation tool is required.

The purpose of the tool is to support transparent, evidence-based decision-making while ensuring future infrastructure decisions remain aligned with the service-level framework and strategic direction established through this review.

Over time, improved utilisation, service performance and community feedback data will strengthen the evidence base for decisions made using this framework.

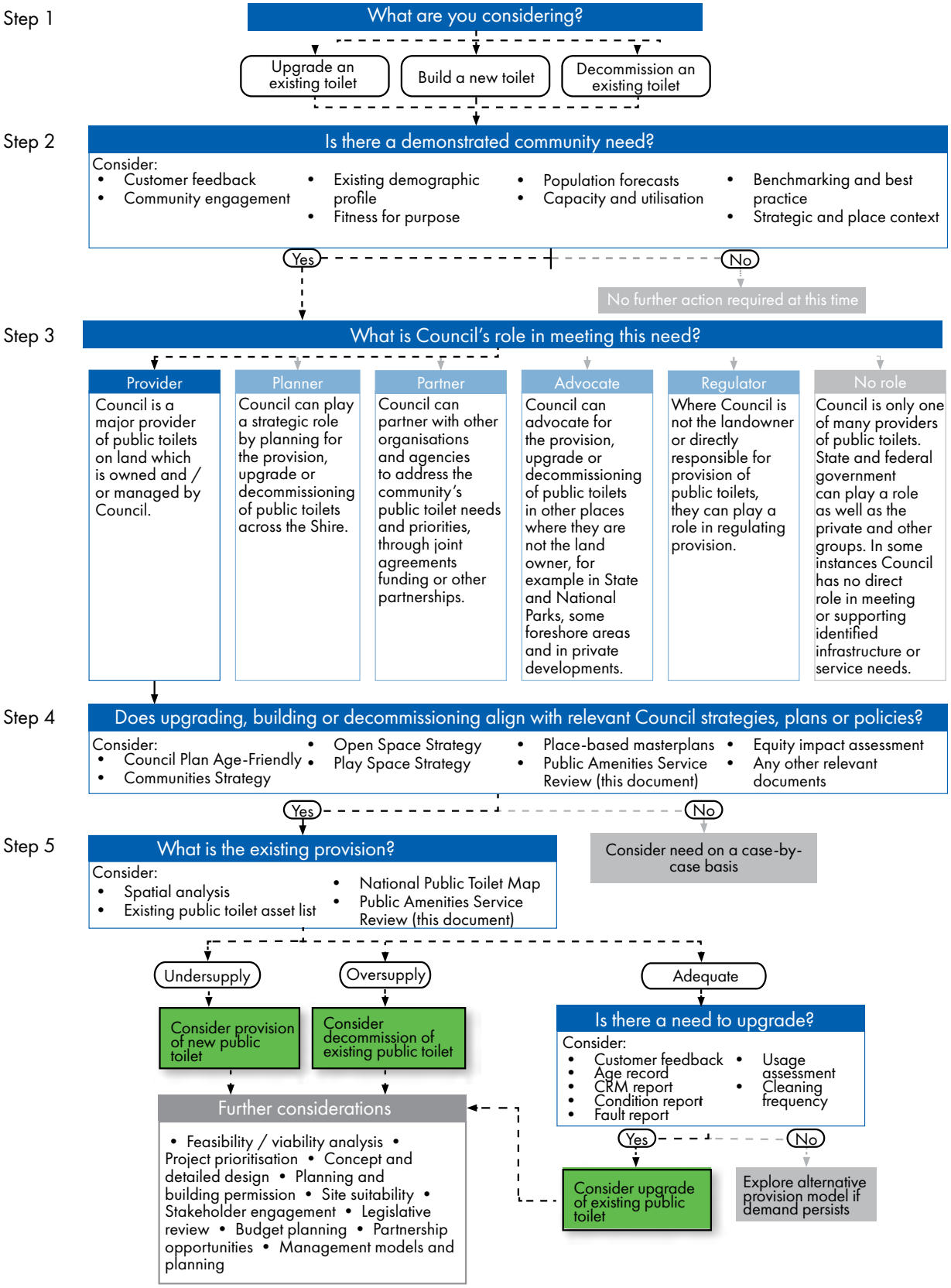


Figure 11. Public toilets decision-support prioritisation tool. This tool is provided to support consistent and transparent assessment of future proposals relating to Council's public toilets network.

4.3. Reference guidance for future decisions around capital works

This section summarises recognised good practice principles relevant to public toilet design, accessibility, safety and maintenance. It is included as reference guidance only, to support consistency in future decision-making where upgrades or changes are considered through separate planning, budget or asset management processes. The current section includes best practice material on universal design, cleaning and maintenance, changing places facilities and safety / CPTED considerations.

The following principles do not represent actions, commitments or priorities arising from this Service Review. They do not alter or replace the service-level decisions, cleaning frequencies or trade-offs outlined earlier in this report.

Universal design and accessibility

Universal design is not just about catering for people with physical mobility requirements, it also considers people with intellectual disabilities, diverse sociocultural preferences and other demographic factors. Everyone uses public toilets; however, some users rely on the use of public toilets more than others to be able to experience daily outdoor life and the enjoyment of public spaces.

Current regulatory and statutory standards (including AS 1428) focus on physical disability and do not consider the broader range of diverse needs amongst the community.

In this context, it is appropriate to consider universal design principles that cater for the needs of all users, rather than just those with physical mobility requirements. Public toilets should be designed to be safe, accessible and easy to use for the widest possible range of users. It is important to ensure that future upgrades and installations of new toilets adopt the key principles of universal design, shown opposite.

In addition to catering for people with physical disabilities, the principles consider the needs of:

- Women
- People who are visually impaired
- Older people
- Parents, carers, infants, children and young people
- Gender diverse people
- People with diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

Key considerations: design guidelines for public toilets

- Equitable in use - The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- Flexibility in use - The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- Simple and intuitive use - Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the users' experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.
- Perceptible information - The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- Tolerance for error - The design minimises hazards and adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- Low physical effort - The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.
- Size and space for approach and use - Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of users' body size, posture or mobility.

Cleaning and maintenance

Cleaning frequency and maintenance responses should continue to be aligned to the endorsed service level framework and operational evidence set out earlier in this report. Earlier sections already identify scheduled cleaning as a primary cost driver, note differences in cleaning frequency across the network, and link cleaning effort to use, demand, risk and service trade-offs.

In that context, this section is not intended to introduce new service standards or generic expectations of increased cleaning across the network. Rather, it highlights that future maintenance responses are most effective when they are:

- Matched to actual levels of use and risk.
- Informed by operational data and incident patterns.
- Supported by durable fixtures and fittings where future upgrades occur.
- Supported by clear communication about differences in service levels between locations.

Changing Places facilities

Changing Places facilities were introduced in Australia in 2014 and there are currently 259 certified facilities across the country. They are designed to meet the needs of people with a disability and their carers.

These facilities differ from standard accessible or disabled public toilets as they include additional features such as an adult change table, ceiling hoist, a central toilet with grab rails on either side, privacy screens, large circulation space and some of them may also contain shower facilities. To be a certified Changing Places facility, it must be built and accredited as a Changing Places facility, in accordance with the Changing Places Design Specification 2020.

Changing Places facilities should be provided in key destinations including tourism destinations, major shopping centres, sports venues, museums, art galleries, theatres, entertainment venues and major passenger transport hubs.

According to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing website, there are two certified Changing Places facilities in East Gippsland Shire, located at Lakes Entrance and Cann River; and a new facility in Mallacoota planned. While East Gippsland does not currently have a certified Changing Places facility in Bairnsdale, the All-Abilities Playground includes an allabilities toilet facility that provides a higher level of accessibility than a standard accessible public toilet. The facility incorporates enhanced accessibility features but does not currently meet all requirements of the Changing Places Design Specification and is therefore not accredited as a Changing Places facility.

Key considerations: advocating for Changing Places facilities

- Promote and communicate the availability of the Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK) system.
- Advocate to Changing Places Australia for inclusion of the Cann River facility on the Changing Places Australia online map.
- Explore the feasibility of providing a certified Changing Places facility in Bairnsdale and other high-use locations where demand and community need can be demonstrated. The assessment should include engagement with people and groups who use Changing Places facilities.



Changing Places Facility in Lakes Entrance



Interior of Changing Places facility in Lakes Entrance

Improving safety

Historically, public toilets have been known as 'hotspots' for anti-social behaviour and undesirable activity. If a toilet is perceived to be unsafe, unhygienic or dangerous, users will generally avoid the facility. From a user perspective, perceptions of safety can be as influential as actual
or recorded levels of anti-social behaviour. There are a number of factors that contribute to negative safety perceptions:

- Poor integration into the streetscape / public realm.
- Obstruction behind dense landscaping or away from passive surveillance.
- Age, condition and cleanliness of the facility.
- Presence of graffiti or vandalism.
- Loitering.
- Lack of natural or artificial light.
- Not being able to lock the door manually.

There are many ways that design can minimise anti-social behaviour and contribute to positive perceptions of safety. For example, the objectives of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) establish guiding principles to reduce the incidence and perceptions around crime and safety.

CPTED principles are widely used to reduce opportunities for crime and improve perceptions of safety through environmental design.

CPTED principles, adapted for public toilets

- Consider whether it affects the likelihood of users being exposed to risk (for example during hours of darkness).
- Consider whether organised surveillance measures are in place (such as regular security patrols or cameras).
- Discourage loitering by avoiding the placement of, or considering removal of existing infrastructure including seating or public telephones in close proximity to toilet entrances.
- Ensure entrances to public toilets are clearly visible from the street and other public areas. Measures such as colour contrast, wayfinding and clear sightlines can improve visibility and ease of identification.
- Use durable, vandal-resistant and easy-to-clean materials and fixtures.

Overall, this Implementation chapter is intended to support practical application of the service level framework and strategic priorities in this review, while also providing a clear governance framework for future decisions. It does not expand the scope of the review into capital delivery, new public toilet provision or broader spatial planning. Those matters remain subject to separate strategies, processes and funding decisions.

Appendices

Appendix A: Public Toilet List Matrix Note: Where a public toilet forms part of a larger Council-owned facility, asset values and depreciation figures relate to the whole facility. Cleaning frequencies reflect current contracted service arrangements only and do not represent future service levels recommended by this review.

Asset ID	Site Name	Locality	Control	Condition (1-10)	Replacement Cost (2026)	Depreciation	Written Down Value	Annual Depreciation	Contract	Cleaning Frequencies				
										Normal - 41 Weeks	Christmas - 5 Weeks	Easter - 2 Weeks	Other - 4 Weeks	No. Cleans
21774	All Abilities Playground	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	2	$205,000	-$55,991	$149,009	$5,125	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
200519	Main Street Gardens	BAIRNSDALE	Owned by Crown	3	$562,925	-$191,049	$371,876	$18,764	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
21516	Nicholson Street Mall	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	4	$141,247	-$62,680	$78,567	$4,708	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
200153	Port of Bairnsdale	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	7	$160,000	-$121,360	$38,640	$3,200	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	156
200152	Cemetery Road	BAIRNSDALE	Owned by Crown - Local CoM	6	$70,000	-$47,119	$22,881	$1,750	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Friday	Friday	Friday	Friday	52
19347	WORLD Centre Precinct	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$4,708,907	-$111,231	$4,597,676	$78,482	CON1473 - Buildings	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	104
200065	22 Service Street (Bairnsdale Library)	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	3	$4,045,000	-$1,158,901	$2,886,099	$50,563	CON1473 - Buildings	Daily except Sunday	Daily except Sunday	Daily except Sunday	Daily except Sunday	280
200142	BARC - 80 McKean Street	BAIRNSDALE	Owned by Crown	5	$9,214,628	-$3,301,719	$5,912,908	$153,577	CON1473 - Buildings	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200436	Bairnsdale Aerodrome	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	7	$105,000	-$80,678	$13,956	$2,625	CON1473 - Buildings	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200556	Bairnsdale Aerodrome	BAIRNSDALE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	8	$110,000	-$96,044	$13,956	$2,750	CON1473 - Buildings	None	None	None	None	0
215853	Howitt Park (North)	BAIRNSDALE EAST	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$145,000	-$24,604	$120,396	$3,625	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily & market once a month	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	425
200550	Bemm River Foreshore Reserve	BEMM RIVER	Owned & Managed by EGSC	3	$85,000	-$27,216	$57,784	$2,125	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Friday	Mon, Fri	Friday	Friday	57
200417	Dolly's Garden	BEMM RIVER	Owned by Crown	5	$35,000	-$19,560	$15,440	$875	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Friday	Friday	Friday	Friday	52
200136	74 Foster Street	BENAMBRA	Owned by Crown - Local CoM	8	$250,000	-$205,282	$44,718	$6,250	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Council Crew	Tue, Sat	Tue, Sat	Tue, Sat	22
200156	30 Dowling Street	BENDOC	Owned & Managed by EGSC	5	$230,000	-$116,455	$113,545	$4,600	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Monday	Mon, Wed, Fri	Mon, Wed, Fri	Mon, Wed, Fri	74
200315	213A Bonang Highway	BONANG	Owned by Crown	4	$125,000	-$57,313	$67,687	$2,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	111
200086	Main Street Centre Median (Bruthen)	BRUTHEN	Owned by Crown	5	$165,000	-$94,066	$70,934	$4,125	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
8658	Main Street Service Road West	BRUTHEN	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$30,000	-$5,194	$24,806	$750	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Friday	Friday	Friday	Friday	52
200088	26 Main Road	BUCHAN	Owned by Crown	9	$185,000	-$167,823	$17,177	$3,700	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	176
200023	Baum Park	CANN RIVER	Owned by Others - EGSC Contrib	4	$185,000	-$87,529	$97,471	$4,625	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Twice Daily	Thrice Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	763
13433	Eagle Point Foreshore	EAGLE POINT	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$3,310,024	-$86,212	$3,223,813	$55,167	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Twice Daily	Daily	Mon, Sat	139
200220	Rivermouth Road	EAGLE POINT	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	10	$130,000	-$129,000	$1,000	$2,600	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	111
200379	Ensay Recreation Reserve	ENSAY	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$105,000	-$80,678	$24,322	$2,625	None	None	None	None	None	0
200433	Anglers Drive	GIPSY POINT	Owned & Managed by EGSC	5	$35,000	-$18,560	$16,440	$875	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	104
1996	Harry Clues Memorial Park	JOHNSON-VILLE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$190,000	-$30,115	$159,885	$3,800	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	104
17401	Jemmys Point Lookout Reserve	KALIMNA	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$348,529	-$9,088	$339,441	$6,868	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	104
200097	Kalimna Jetty - Nth Arm Bridge	KALIMNA	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	8	$100,000	-$80,850	$19,150	$2,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Sat	139

Asset ID	Site Name	Locality	Control	Condition (1-10)	Replacement Cost (2026)	Depreciation	Written Down Value	Annual Depreciation	Contract	Cleaning Frequencies				
										Normal - 41 Weeks	Christmas - 5 Weeks	Easter - 2 Weeks	Other - 4 Weeks	No. Cleans
200437	Lake Tyers Boat Ramp	LAKE TYERS	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$60,000	-$34,388	$25,612	$1,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	176
200284	Lake Tyers Recreation Reserve	LAKE TYERS	Owned & Managed by EGSC	9	$155,000	-$141,068	$13,932	$3,100	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Sat	Mon, Sat	Mon, Sat	Sat	59
215843	75 Bream Road	LAKE TYERS	Owned & Managed by EGSC	2	$35,000	-$9,560	$25,440	$875	None	None	None	None	None	0
200102	Lake Bunga Foreshore	LAKE TYERS BEACH	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	9	$145,000	-$131,483	$13,517	$2,900	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	111
4135	Bullock Island Road	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$619,751	-$25,941	$593,810	$20,658	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
200099	Esplanade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$200,000	-$114,626	$85,374	$5,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
215841	Cunninghame Arm - Ocean Beach	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$505,000	-$281,544	$223,456	$10,100	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Twice Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	219
200496	Marine Parade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	5	$305,000	-$159,304	$145,696	$7,625	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200094	Esplanade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$145,000	-$82,604	$85,374	$3,625	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200096	Esplanade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$160,000	-$123,701	$85,374	$4,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
215852	Eastern Beach Foreshore Reserve (play)	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	3	$260,000	-$97,013	$162,987	$6,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
78311	Apex Park	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$120,000	-$17,690	$102,310	$4,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
200109	2/4 Marine Parade (VIC)	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	6	$595,000	-$356,059	$238,941	$9,917	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200500	Esplanade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	7	$105,000	-$80,678	$85,374	$2,625	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Twice Daily	Twice Daily	Daily	413
215850	Cunninghame Arm - Ocean Beach	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	6	$55,000	-$37,022	$223,456	$1,375	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Friday	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Friday	66
200098	Marine Parade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	9	$120,000	-$109,020	$145,696	$2,400	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	Mon, Fri	104
200273	Esplanade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	6	$545,000	-$331,884	$85,374	$10,900	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Sat	139
200099	Esplanade - Foreshore	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$200,000	-$114,626	$85,374	$5,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Twice weekly	Twice weekly	Twice weekly	Twice weekly	104
200457	12-18 Mechanics Street	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	3	$1,785,000	-$622,176	$1,162,824	$29,750	CON1473 - Buildings	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200108	43 Palmers Road (LARC)	LAKES ENTRANCE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	6	$5,571,554	-$3,597,159	$1,974,395	$90,306	CON1473 - Buildings	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200414	Amy Shand Reserve	LINDENOW	Owned & Managed by EGSC	8	$160,000	-$139,701	$20,299	$4,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Tue, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Tue, Sat	94
200365	Lindenow South Recreation Reserve	LINDENOW SOUTH	Owned by Crown - Local CoM	3	$175,000	-$106,238	$68,762	$3,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	111
77511	Bastion Point Boat Ramp Precinct	MALLACOOTA	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	4	$70,000	-$33,119	$36,881	$1,750	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200499	Betka Beach	MALLACOOTA	Owned & Managed by EGSC	6	$70,000	-$47,119	$22,881	$1,750	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
211527	Mallacoota Recreation Reserve	MALLACOOTA	Owned & Managed by EGSC	3	$210,000	-$64,285	$145,715	$4,200	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200123	Lakeside Drive Foreshore	MALLACOOTA	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$140,000	-$108,238	$31,762	$3,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200509	70 Maurice Avenue	MALLACOOTA	Owned & Managed by EGSC	5	$770,000	-$422,605	$347,395	$12,833	CON1473 - Buildings	Council Crew	Council Crew	Council Crew	Council Crew	Council Crew
200015	Marlo Foreshore	MARLO	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	8	$175,000	-$141,238	$33,762	$3,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Council Crew	Council Crew	Council Crew	Council Crew	Council Crew

Asset ID	Site Name	Locality	Control	Condition (1-10)	Replacement Cost (2026)	Depreciation	Written Down Value	Annual Depreciation	Contract	Cleaning Frequencies				
										Normal - 41 Weeks	Christmas - 5 Weeks	Easter - 2 Weeks	Other - 4 Weeks	No. Cleans
211563	Brodribb River Reserve	MARLO	Owned & Managed by EGSC	6	$60,000	-$37,388	$22,612	$1,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200026	Triangle Park	MARLO	Owned by Crown	5	$140,000	-$73,238	$66,762	$3,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200090	Lake King Foreshore (Beach Road)	METUNG	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$205,000	-$147,991	$57,009	$5,125	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200089	Shaving Point	METUNG	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	9	$85,000	-$76,973	$8,027	$1,700	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Fri	139
3522	109 Metung Road	METUNG	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	1	$380,000	-$41,231	$338,769	$7,600	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
12320	460 Rosherville Road	METUNG	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$97,346	-$4,879	$92,467	$1,947	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200261	300 Metung Road	METUNG	Owned by Crown	7	$75,000	-$56,388	$18,612	$1,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200316	Boxes Creek	METUNG	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	6	$45,000	-$30,291	$14,709	$1,125	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Second Friday of Month	Friday	Friday	Second Friday of Month	32
200469	Newlands Arm Foreshore	NEWLANDS ARM	Owned & Managed by EGSC	4	$50,000	-$23,656	$26,344	$1,250	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184
200518	Newmerella Recreation Reserve	NEWMERELLA	Owned & Managed by EGSC	3	$170,000	-$54,432	$115,568	$4,250	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200177	Nicholson River Reserve (Boat Ramp)	NICHOLSON	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$175,000	-$132,238	$42,762	$3,500	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	156
200449	Princes Highway (VicRoads)	NOWA NOWA	Owned & Managed by EGSC	5	$145,000	-$75,604	$69,396	$3,625	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200225	Nungurner Jetty Foreshore	NUNGURNER	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	4	$85,000	-$38,973	$46,027	$1,700	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Friday	Mon, Thu, Sat	Tue, Sat	Friday	68
200040	179 Day Avenue	OMEO	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$295,000	-$209,258	$85,742	$5,900	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Council Crew	Daily	Daily	Daily	77
200413	Livingstone Creek Reserve	OMEO	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$155,000	-$88,335	$66,665	$3,875	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Council Crew	Daily	Daily	Daily	77
200150	179 Day Avenue	OMEO	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	4	$3,082,910	-$1,290,314	$85,742	$51,382	CON1473 - Buildings	Council Crew	Daily	Daily	Daily	77
18607	Forest Park	ORBOST	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$356,095	-$9,496	$346,599	$7,122	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200446	5 Wolseley Street	ORBOST	Owned & Managed by EGSC	5	$155,000	-$81,335	$73,665	$3,875	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200210	Esplanade Foreshore	PAYNESVILLE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$350,000	-$195,476	$154,524	$7,000	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
20013	Esplanade Foreshore	PAYNESVILLE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$55,000	-$42,022	$154,524	$1,375	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	365
200207	Slip Road Foreshore	PAYNESVILLE	Owned & Managed by EGSC	7	$385,000	-$272,523	$112,477	$7,700	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	131
200209	Fort King Road Foreshore	PAYNESVILLE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	5	$245,000	-$136,333	$108,667	$4,900	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	11
200429	Sunset Cove Reserve	PAYNESVILLE	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$70,000	-$49,095	$20,905	$1,400	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Sat	11
11930	Ferry Reserve	RAYMOND ISLAND	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$96,809	-$6,065	$90,744	$2,420	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Thu, Sat	Daily	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	184
200398	2030A Princes Highway	SWAN REACH	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$90,000	-$68,265	$21,735	$1,800	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Fri	Daily	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Fri	131
200041	6867 Great Alpine Road	SWIFTS CREEK	Owned by Crown	7	$195,000	-$138,408	$56,592	$3,900	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Council Crew	Daily	Daily	Daily	77
200100	Lake Tyers Township	TOORLOO ARM	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	7	$195,000	-$140,574	$54,426	$4,198	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Mon, Wed, Fri	Daily	Daily	Mon, Wed, Fri	184

Asset ID	Site Name	Locality	Control	Condition (1-10)	Replacement Cost (2026)	Depreciation	Written Down Value	Annual Depreciation	Contract	Cleaning Frequencies				
										Normal - 41 Weeks	Christmas - 5 Weeks	Easter - 2 Weeks	Other - 4 Weeks	No. Cleans
200157	Fishermans Landing	TOORLOO ARM	Owned by Crown - EGSC CoM	6	$90,000	-$59,265	$30,735	$1,800	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Mon, Thu, Sat	Sat	66
17214	61 Gatehouse Drive (Tuluba Park Play)	WY YUNG	Owned & Managed by EGSC	1	$176,513	-$4,707	$171,806	$3,530	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Monday, Friday	Monday, Friday	Monday, Friday	Monday, Friday	104
215851	Bullumwaal Road Reserve (Wy Yung play)	WY YUNG	Owned & Managed by EGSC	2	$50,000	-$13,656	$36,344	$1,250	CON1531 - Public Toilets	Monday, Friday	Monday, Friday	Monday, Friday	Monday, Friday	104

Appendix B: Summary of review of relevant strategies

Document	Brief description	Themes / strategies / actions relevant to Service Review
Council Plan 2025-29	The Council Plan details what Council aims to achieve over a four-year period, how it plans to achieve it and how it will measure success. The Council Plan focuses on four themes: • Community wellbeing and social responsibility • Prosperity • Making the most of what we've got • Managing Council well	Theme 1 – Community wellbeing and social responsibility • Outcome – A stronger collaborative community that is actively engaged and supported. • Priority – Support the social wellbeing of our community. • Relevant Focus: Develop plans for our community infrastructure to ensure sustainable growth and enhance our quality of life in a financially responsible manner. • Priority – We work with local communities to deliver a shared future. • Relevant Focus: Provide inclusive and equitable access to our services, processes, and facilities for all community members. Manage recreation facilities, parks, and open spaces to meet the community's expectations and priorities. Theme 3 – Making the most of what we've got • Outcome – Our assets are well maintained, utilised and meet community needs. • Priority – Make the most of Council assets. • Relevant Focus: Review renewal and maintenance programs to ensure our infrastructure, including public toilets, remains safe, reliable, and efficient.
Community Vision 2040 (Reviewed 2025)	The Community Vision 2040 reflects the aspirations, values and priorities of East Gippsland's community. It describes the desired future for East Gippsland by 2040. The Community Vision is: "In 2040, our people, place, environment and economy will be inclusive, connected, sustainable and resilient for the growth and wellbeing of our unique and diverse communities."	Theme – Our Place will be accessible, safe, connected, and healthy • Relevant priorities: - The municipality's infrastructure systems meet the future needs of the community, businesses, industries and visitors - Community infrastructure and facilities are designed and maintained in line with the accessibility standards
Draft Public Toilet Strategy 2016	The Draft Public Toilet Strategy was developed because of an identified need for a logical priority order for the renewal, increased provision and decommissioning of public toilet facilities.	The Draft Strategy identified standard design principles and a framework for considering service level changes, facility consolidation and future provision when appropriate.

Document	Brief description	Themes / strategies / actions relevant to Service Review
Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032	The Economic Development Strategy aims to achieve a high level prosperity for the region. It outlines nine focus areas, further defined by several strategies.	• Economic opportunities include retrofitting buildings and infrastructure to be climate resilient. • Strategies include developing both physical and digital public tourist infrastructure to enable a high-quality visitor experience.
Open Space Strategy 2025-2035	The Open Space Strategy provides a strategic and long-term framework for the provision, characteristics and standards for public open space across the municipality. It contains a vision: "East Gippsland Shire Council will plan, provide and manage a diverse range of attractive, appealing and sustainable public open spaces that protect and enhance sensitive environments, support a range of physical activity participation opportunities and enhance the character of townships and neighbourhoods." The Strategy focuses on three directions: • Optimise • Enable • Coordinate	Notes which types and hierarchies of open space should have public toilets. • Optimise actions: - 1.8 Improve Existing Open Spaces - 1.9 Universal Design for Inclusive Open Spaces • Coordinate actions: - 3.4 Finalise strategies supporting infrastructure in open space
Ageing Well in East Gippsland: Age-friendly Communities Strategy 2017-2030	Based on the World Health Organization's age-friendly cities model, the strategy sets goals to improve the quality of life of older people.	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings By 2030: Public spaces and buildings are designed and maintained to promote safe, engaged and connected communities. The design of public space, facilities and furniture ensures accessibility for older people and encourages effective interaction and inclusion for all age and cultural groups.
Asset Plan FY2026-2035	The Asset Plan sets Council's strategic approach to managing its infrastructure and community assets that support services across East Gippsland Shire's localities.	• Notes that ageing buildings require increased investment to ensure they remain safe, fit for purpose and able to support agreed service levels. • Supports the consideration of asset condition, renewal requirements and long-term sustainability within future decision-making. • Reinforces the need to align renewal investment with the agreed role and service level of facilities.
Customer Experience Strategy	The Customer Experience Strategy drives Council's commitment to proactively accommodate new trends in customer expectations and deliver high-quality customer experience from all areas of Council.	• Public toilets are identified as a Council service used by the community. It is noted that the way Council designs and delivers such services will need to be reassessed to meet customers' needs and expectations, while doing so in an affordable and efficient way.

Appendix C: Background and context to the review

Council's role in public toilets

There is no statutory requirement for local government to provide public toilets; however, East Gippsland Shire Council is a major provider of public toilets located in public spaces and available for community use.

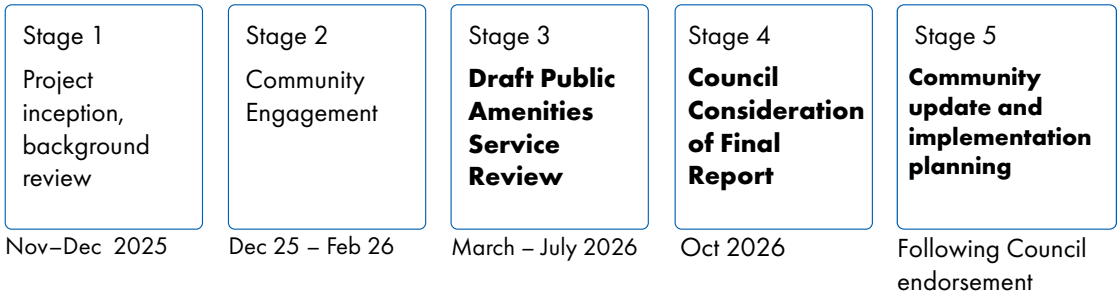
Council performs several roles in public toilet planning, funding, provision and ongoing management including:

- **Planner:** strategic role in planning for the provision, upgrade, renewal and long-term management of public toilets across the Shire.
- **Provider:** major provider of public toilets on land which is owned and / or managed by Council.
- **Partner / Collaborator:** partner with other organisations and agencies to address the community's public toilet needs and priorities, through joint agreements, funding or other partnerships.
- **Advocate:** advocate for the provision, upgrade or decommissioning of public toilets in other places where they are not the landowner, for example in State and National Parks, some foreshore areas and in private developments.
- **Regulator:** Where Council is not the landowner or directly responsible for provision of public toilets, they can play a role in regulating provision.

Planning for public toilets involves many stakeholders and the role and level of influence from Council depends on a range of factors such as land ownership, governance and agreement structures, funding and community needs.

Council has a responsibility to plan for the health and wellbeing of its community as outlined in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. The *Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020* also requires Councils to actively promote gender equality in the community services they provide. This includes undertaking an Equity Impact Assessment for all strategies and plans that affect gender equality and inclusion.

Figure 12. Public Amenities Service Review process



East Gippsland Shire context

Located in Victoria's south-east, East Gippsland Shire is the state's second largest municipality by geographic area covering a diverse range of environments, from coastal and riverine areas to high country and mountainous regions. Over 80% of the Shire is covered by national parks, including The Lakes National Park and Snowy River National Park. The Shire comprises 150 townships and small rural settlements split across 12 districts outlined in Figure 13 below. The Shire is home to approximately 48,000 residents. Approximately half of the Shire's total population live in the coastal townships of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville and surrounding areas.

As a popular tourist destination, seasonal visitation causes the population of the Shire's coastal townships to increase significantly during peak periods. The population of Lakes Entrance – which has a resident population of more than 6,500 in 2021 - may increase to more than 45,000 people during the summer holiday period.

When considering future public toilet provision and service levels, several community and demographic factors are particularly relevant:

- The Shire's population is ageing, with a median age of 52 years (an increase from 50 years in 2016).
- More than 30% of the Shire's population are aged 65 years or over. In some townships the proportion of older residents is higher.
- 5.4% of adults identify as LGBTQIA+
- More than a quarter of the population identify as living with a disability
- 214 people living in East Gippsland are experiencing homelessness (source: forecast ID)
- East Gippsland's population is forecast to increase by approximately 10,000 people by 2046.
- East Gippsland is projected to have a 57% increase in population aged over 60 years by 2046 (source: forecast ID)
- Paynesville and Bairnsdale are projected to experience dwelling growth of more than 40% by 2046.

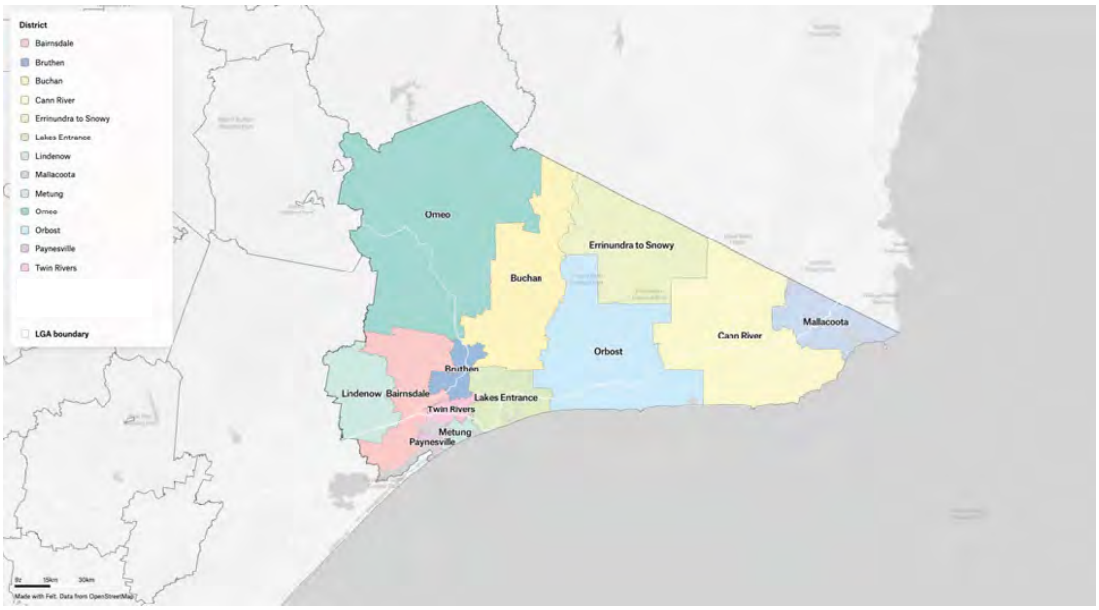


Figure 13. East Gippsland Shire districts

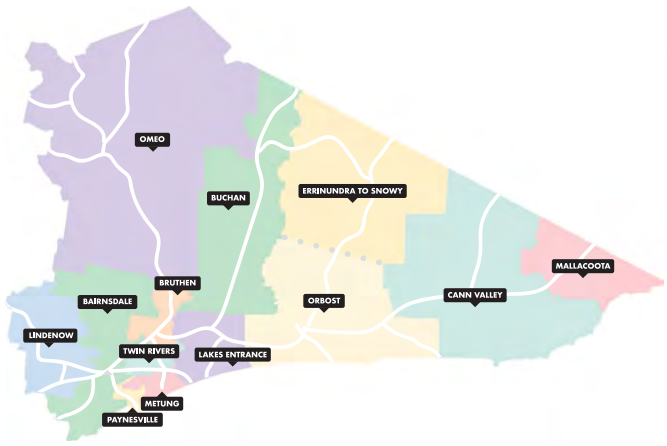
Community profile

Our People

Age 0-29
27.7%

Age 65+
30.9%

Life expectancy
F 85.2 years
M 79.2 years
[expectancy at birth]



East Gippsland Total Population
49,179
[2023]

Forecast Population 2046
59,979

52
median age
10 years less for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

3.5%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

79.6%
Were born in Australia

5.4%
adults reported as identifying LGBTIQA+
(VPHS 2023)

43,084
People who only speak English

19.2%
Volunteered with a group or organisation in the past 12 months.

28.4%
reported having a disability
(self-reported - VPHS 2023)

6,040
provide unpaid care for a person living with a disability, chronic illness and/or aged.
F 14.6% M 10.1% [2021]

Households

2.2
average household size

66.1%
Family households
(ABS 2021)

31.4%
Lone person households
(ABS 2021)

48.1%
below the minimum weekly wage
F 53.4% M 43%

$605
Median weekly individual income
$772 Victoria

31.7%
Experience rental stress
30% or more income spent on rent.

58.4% Overall livability score
Perception of what residents believe makes somewhere a good place to live and how they experience the area.
(Gippsland Views 2024 id profile)

Data collected from: Home | East Gippsland Shire | Community profile (id.com.au)
Home | East Gippsland Shire | Population forecast profile (id.com.au)
Population Health - Gippsland Primary Health Network (gphn.org.au)

Policy Context

Summary of relevant strategies

When undertaking a holistic service review of public toilets, it is important to consider relevant directions and priorities from existing plans and strategies that have been adopted by Council.

The following table summarises the relevance of each strategy and its relationship to the key themes influencing public toilet provision. A detailed analysis of each document is presented in **Appendix B**.

	Location	Design	Access and inclusion	Management
Council Plan 2025-29 (including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)			●	●
Community Vision 2040 (Reviewed 2025)			●	●
Open Space Strategy 2025-2035	●	●	●	●
Ageing Well in East Gippsland: Age-friendly Communities Strategy 2017-2030		●	●	
Asset Plan FY2026-2035	●			●
Customer Experience Strategy		●		
Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032		●		
Place-based strategies and masterplans	●	●	●	●

Community engagement feedback

Engagement method

To inform this Service Review, community engagement was undertaken between December 2025 and February 2026, resulting in more than 650 pieces of feedback from the community.

A summary of engagement activities and levels of engagement is shown below.

1,200 visits Your Say Project page visits	**377** Number of long surveys completed	**271** Number of short surveys completed
56 Total number of engagement days	**33%** Proportion of feedback that was provided by visitors	**3** Other feedback (mapping pins)

General feedback: usage and type (long survey)

Public toilet usage

Most survey respondents indicated that they use public toilets in East Gippsland on a weekly basis. Out of 377 long survey responses:

- 43% use public toilets weekly
- 28% use public toilets several times a week,
- 18% use public toilets monthly.

Top locations people use public toilets:

- Parks and playgrounds (28% of long survey responses).
- Car parking areas / on the street (23% of long survey responses)
- Inside community facilities (e.g. libraries) (17% of long survey responses)
- Private businesses / premises such as a cafe or pub (14% of long survey responses)

Preferred public toilet types

The preferred types of public toilets were:

- Individual cubicles (29% of long survey responses).
- Toilet blocks (26% of long survey responses).
- Co-located public toilets (16% of long survey responses).
- Accessible cubicles (10% of long survey responses).

When it comes to the most important fixtures and fittings inside a public toilet, 377 long survey respondents made 1,640 selections where community feedback identified the following:

- Toilet paper (20% of selections)
- Hand soap (17% of selections)
- Hand-drying facilities, either paper towel or electric (15% of selections)
- Rubbish bins (12% of selections)
- Selected lighting (8% of selections)

General feedback: Satisfaction and improvements (long and short survey)

The survey on the Your Say project page also sought to understand community sentiments on the overall condition of public toilets in East Gippsland and their desired improvements.

Overall level of satisfaction with public toilets

Overall, respondents who completed the long survey felt that public toilets across East Gippsland could be improved:

63% of respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall condition of public toilets in East Gippsland. Reasons provided include:

- Lack of cleanliness
- Broken fixtures / fittings (either due to age or vandalism)
- Lack of toilet paper / soap
- Feeling unsafe due to antisocial behaviour, poor visibility or poor lighting

22% of long survey respondents felt that the overall condition of public toilets was acceptable across the Shire. Feedback varied regarding overall levels of cleanliness, accessibility and safety of public toilets, however this group of respondents felt that public toilets were generally well-located.

14% of long survey respondents felt satisfied or very satisfied with public toilet conditions across the Shire. Feedback from these respondents recorded satisfaction with location, opening hours and cleanliness.

Reasons people avoid using public toilets

Out of 1,280 total selections from 648 respondents across the long and short surveys, people avoid using a public toilet due to:

- Poor cleanliness (33% of responses)
- Vandalism and appearance (14% of responses)
- Lack of toilet paper and soap (15% of responses)

Top improvements the community would like to see

There is a strong desire to see more frequent cleaning of East Gippsland Shire's public toilets. Out of 2,288 total selections from 648 respondents across the long and short surveys, the top improvements the community wanted were:

- Better cleaning (34% of responses)
- Application of anti-vandalism materials (14% of responses)
- Better lighting (11% of responses)
- Better supply of fixtures and fittings e.g. toilet paper, hand soap, sanitary bins (10% of responses)
- More accessible features (7% of responses)
- The remaining responses were split between having more shower facilities, real-time / online information, better signage and wayfinding, increasing opening hours and an increased supply of baby change facilities.

Level of satisfaction: a comparative analysis

To contextualise community sentiment in East Gippsland Shire, a high-level scan of feedback from other local government areas was undertaken. Based on publicly available information for City of Ballarat, Indigo Shire Council, Mildura Rural City Council and City of Kingston, the following observations are made:

- Level of satisfaction: No data was recorded indicating community members' general level of satisfaction of public toilets in the above municipalities. However, the City of Kingston reported that the majority of respondents reported the cleanliness of their public toilets was 'average', and the majority of Indigo Shire's community members reported that the overall condition of public toilet they used most often was rated 'average'.
- Public toilet priorities: Community members in the City of Ballarat and Mildura Rural City Council regarded public toilet cleanliness as the most important priority. No data was recorded on public toilet priorities for the City of Kingston and Indigo Shire Council.
- Improvements to existing public toilet provision: Increasing cleaning frequency was the most commonly reported method to improve existing public toilet provision. This was followed by providing new public toilet facilities and improving accessibility features.

Location-specific feedback

Across both long and short surveys, there were a number of specific public toilets or locations mentioned for improvement or provision. The locations most frequently referenced in community feedback were:

- Bairnsdale Main Street Gardens, Bairnsdale (19% of responses)
- Nicholson Street, Bairnsdale (14% of responses)
- Bairnsdale Library, Bairnsdale (6% of responses)
- St Mary's Church, Bairnsdale (5% of responses)*
- Esplanade Foreshore (Cunninghame Arm bridge), Lakes Entrance (4% of responses)
- Esplanade Foreshore (Progress Jetty), Paynesville (4% of responses)
- Shaving Point, Metung (4% of responses)
- Port of Bairnsdale, Bairnsdale (3% of responses)
- Howitt Park (North), Bairnsdale (2% of responses)
- Genoa Wayside, Genoa (2% of responses)*

Two of the public toilets listed above (marked with an *) fall outside the scope of this Service Review, however, have been included in this summary for accurate reporting.

Where specific comments or feedback were provided, further analysis of these locations indicates a clear pattern of community concern around cleanliness and condition. Specific feedback about each toilet is provided below:

- The Nicholson Street public toilet in Bairnsdale received the most mentions with consistent feedback and suggestions to decommission the facility due to antisocial behaviour, negative perceptions of safety and frequent faults.
- Respondents would like to see the toilet block next to St Mary's Church (Bairnsdale) to remain open. Feedback indicated that the nearby Bairnsdale Main Street Gardens and Nicholson Street public toilet is poorly cleaned and feels unsafe. It is acknowledged that there are three nearby public toilets that provide service coverage in this area.
- A range of feedback provided suggested that the Port of Bairnsdale public toilet block requires upgrading in order to modernise the facility and improve perceptions of safety. This is in line with previous community sentiment that found the facility to be unsafe and in poor condition.
- The Esplanade Foreshore (Cunninghame Arm Bridge) public toilet in Lakes Entrance was identified as a facility that is frequently used and respondents would like to see improvements in accessibility.
- Community indicated the importance of the Genoa Wayside public toilet block for local residents and visitors and expressed a desire to see it upgraded. It is noted that this facility is not within the scope of this Service Review.
- Community would like to see the old public toilet block along Marine Parade (near the war memorial), Lakes Entrance replaced with a new modern facility.
- Residents living in Metung have indicated that they would like to see a new toilet located in the Metung Village Green as there is currently no public toilet in this location. It is acknowledged that this location is within 200m from the Lake King Jetty public toilets.

EAST GIPPSLAND
SHIRE COUNCIL

East Gippsland Shire Council
273 Main Street
PO Box 1618 Bairnsdale VIC 3875

(03) 5153 9500
eastgippsland.vic.gov.au
EastGippyShire
PO Box 1618, Bairnsdale 3875

Council Offices

Bairnsdale
Corporate Centre
273 Main Street (PO Box 1618),
Bairnsdale VIC 3875

Lakes Entrance
18 Mechanics Street, Lakes Entrance

Mallacoota
70 Maurice Avenue, Mallacoota

Omeo
179 Day Avenue, Omeo

Orbost
1 Ruskin Street, Orbost

Paynesville
55 The Esplanade, Paynesville

in collaboration with:

CoFutures...

5.3.2 CON2026 1746a - Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services

Authorised by General Manager Assets and Environment

Confidentiality Notice

The information contained in the **Confidential Attachments 1 to 3** 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 tenderers to disadvantage by disclosing commercially sensitive information.

Purpose

To seek Council approval to award Contract CON2026 1746a - Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***awards Contract CON2026 1746a - Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services to the preferred tenderers identified in the Contract Award Summary provided at Confidential Attachment 1, in accordance with the schedule of rates set out in that attachment for the following separable portions:***

    a) ***Separable Portion A - Kerbside Collection of residential General Waste, Recycling, Organics and Glass (2030/31 Regional Zone only) for an initial term of 10 years commencing 1 March 2027, with two options to extend for periods of two years each;***

    b) ***Separable Portion B - Collection of Public Place Bins (including Street Litter Bins and Public Place Recycling Bins) and Event Services, for an initial term of 10 years commencing 1 March 2027, with two options to extend for periods of two years each;***

    c) ***Separable Portion C - Booked Hard Waste Collections, including Customer Service and Community Education, for an initial term of 5 years commencing 1 February 2028, with two options to extend for periods of two years each; and***

    d) ***Separable Portion D - Material Recovery Facility (MRF) operations, acceptance and processing of Recycling and Glass, for an initial term of 10 years commencing 1 March 2027, with two options to extend for periods of two years each;***

2. ***authorises the Chief Executive Officer to approve variations to each separable portion (shown as part 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d above) in accordance with the Contract Award Summary provided at Confidential Attachment 1, subject to the conditions specified in that attachment;***

3. ***authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to finalise the terms and to execute the necessary contract documents;***

4. ***notes that the successful tenderers will be published on Council's website following execution of the contract documents and after unsuccessful tenderers have been formally notified; and***

5. ***resolves that all Confidential Attachments to this report and all discussions relating to it remain confidential.***

Key Points

Council provides kerbside, street litter and event waste collection services across East Gippsland under one contract, including operation of the Materials Recovery Facility. The current contract was awarded for an initial 10-year term with two extension options. Council exercised the first two-year extension in August 2024, and the current term expires at the end of February 2027.

Council adopted its 10-Year Waste and Recycling Transition Plan (Plan) in December 2025. The plan was informed by extensive community consultation, kerbside audits, financial modelling and market research and includes recommendations that informed the CON2026–1746 tender specifications, including:

- Introducing Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) kerbside collection services;
- Providing booked hard waste services;
- Phasing the expansion of collection areas; and
- Delivering best value by managing household costs.

The *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021* requires Councils to provide access to glass, FOGO, mixed recycling and general rubbish streams. CON2026 - 1746 supports these reforms while retaining glass collection as a future service option.

The RFT was released on 3 June 2026 for the provision of Kerbside collection services and recycling processing (comprising general waste, recycling, FOGO, glass, booked hard waste, street litter and public place recycling bin servicing, and recyclables processing). Submissions were received by the closing date of 29 July 2026.

A Contract Award Summary is provided at **Confidential Attachment 1.** The Tender Evaluation Report at **Confidential Attachment 2** provides the results of quantitative and qualitative assessments of each tender response and recommends the award of each separable portion. An independent Probity Advisors report is provided at **Confidential Attachment 3.**

The recommendation before Council is limited to accepting the tendered pricing for each separable portion of Contract CON2026 1746a – Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services. Council will determine future fees and charges for recovery of cost to Council for the delivery of contracted services (and other services such has landfill disposal) through its annual budget process, informed by the tendered pricing.

Discussion

Council completed a service review to improve efficiency and support the transition to a circular economy. The review considered current waste practices, demographic trends, literature and legislation, and informed Council's 10 Year Waste and Recycling Services Transition Plan adopted by Council November 2025.

Council then sought industry feedback through a Request for Information process before progressing to a Request for Tender for future waste collection and processing services.

The tender evaluation process for CON2026 1746a - Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services is provided with the Tender Evaluation Report provided at **Confidential Attachment 2.**

A summary of the tender process and other supporting information is provided in the following discussion, including alignment with State Government legislation and financing of contracted services.

Respondents were invited to submit offers for one or more of the following separable portions:

- Separable Portion A: Kerbside Collection of residential General Waste, Recycling, Organics and Glass (2030/31 Regional Zone only) including Customer Service and Community Education.

- Separable Portion B: Collection of Public Place Bins (including Street Litter Bins and Public Place Recycling Bins) and Event Services.

- Separable Portion C: Booked Hard Waste Collections, including Customer Service and Community Education.

- Separable Portion D: Material Recovery Facility (MRF) operations, acceptance and processing of Recycling and Glass.

The RFT was advertised on 3 June 2026 with conforming submissions received by the closing date of 29 July 2026.

The Tender Evaluation Panel assessed the submissions using a value-for-money approach against weighted criteria for financial value (25%), capacity (30%), capability (30%), local contribution (5%) and sustainability and environment (10%).

No probity issues or residual risks were identified during the evaluation.

<u>Aligning services with State Government Policy and regulations:</u>

A number of significant service changes have been sought in the scope of the proposed Contract as a result of Council's Service Review and in response to Victorian Government policy and regulatory requirements.

The *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021* requires councils to provide glass, FOGO, mixed recycling and general rubbish streams.

The Draft Household Waste and Recycling Standards (Draft Standards) proposed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), including a household glass-only service by July 2027. The service standards and practicability criteria are yet to be finalised. Officers consider kerbside glass collection practicable only in parts of East Gippsland, with drop-off services more appropriate elsewhere, subject to the final Standards.

Delays in finalising the Standards create planning challenges, but Council needs to continue progressing a new kerbside service contract.

Council's Transition Plan directs that planning for kerbside glass should occur from 2027, with implementation by 2030 in larger urban centres. This timing does not fully align with State Policy; however, no mandatory start date has been set. Recycling Victoria (now part of the Environment Protection Authority) has been consulted on Council's proposed approach. CON2026 - 1746 aligns with this direction by including this as an optional service which may be taken up in future.

While officers support improved glass recovery, the costs are difficult to justify given the limited business case and expected benefits following the introduction of the Container Deposit Scheme. Council is working with 35 other Victorian councils to seek deferral of mandatory kerbside glass collection because of household cost impacts, limited reduction in landfill and the success and potential expansion of the Victorian Container Deposit Scheme. A decision on introducing a glass collection service will be made in future. The tender includes schedule-of-rates pricing should Council proceed with this option.

Financing contracted services:

Price was evaluated for each Separable Portion using each compliant tenderer's submitted rates and expected annual service numbers and scenarios to project costs to Council over the contract term for each Separable Portion (inclusive of annual increases projected growth).

It is noted that these services will however be charged under a schedule of rates.

Kerbside Collection (Separable Portion A) and Recycling Processing Services (Separable Portion D) are provided by way of schedule of rates (reviewed annually to incorporate CPI increases and additional household collection service numbers).

These services are funded from revenue generated by service charges applied to those households which receive a kerbside waste and recycling service.

Booked hard waste services (Separable Portion C) will provide residents in designated collection areas with access to one paid, pre-booked collection. Additional collections are also available with the tendered services. The service is planned to commence in 2028, allowing time to complete preliminary planning, inform the community, and set customer fees for collection and disposal based on the tendered pricing.

Public Litter and Event Waste Collection Services are funded by Council's General Waste Levy charge as part of their general property rates.

The service charges and levy required to meet the cost of this contract will be set through Council's annual budget process, starting with the 2027/28 budget. The recommendation before Council is therefore limited to accepting the tendered pricing for each separable portion of Contract CON2026 1746a - Kerbside Collection and Recycling Processing Services.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following themes in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 3: Making the most of what we've got
Outcome – Our assets are well maintained, utilised and meet community needs

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust

The provision of kerbside collections and associated waste and recycling services is a legislative requirement of Council and is consistent with Council's Transition Plan.

Collaborative Procurement

Collaborative procurement has previously been considered by Council as part of the Gippswide Kerbside Collection contract process. Council determined to withdraw from the Gippswide Collaborative Procurement Project based on the recommendation of Officers. The recommendation of the Officers was made in light of several factors including a view that optimal value was not likely to be achieved for Council by collaborative procurement in this case.

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

A Community Engagement Report 2025 outlining consultation activities and feedback provided by residents and stakeholders was undertaken as part of the Waste and Recycling Service Review. This report has been made available to Councillors.

Opportunities and Risks

Waste and recycling services create jobs at various levels, from collection and sorting to processing and management. These jobs contribute to local economies and provide employment opportunities.

Ensuring community access to waste disposal and recycling services provides benefits to the environment by mitigating potential litter pollution. Recycling services reduce waste to landfill and associated costs. Effective waste management also reduces health risks associated with improperly disposed waste, such as pollution and disease transmission, which improves quality of life for communities.

It is important that essential kerbside waste and recycling collection services (Separable Portion A, B and D) continue to be provided for the community. It is therefore necessary that Council secure these services prior to the current term expiring at the end of February 2027. The award of Separable Portion C – Booked Hard Waste collection is a new service offering. The commencement of this service will follow the determination of customer payment terms based on tendered pricing; completion of service introduction plan and allocations being included within the 2027 – 2028 budget.

The tender specifications and schedule-of-rates pricing for Separable Portions A and C include the option to provide complementary customer services. A decision on introducing complimentary customer service options will be made in future. The tender includes schedule-of-rates pricing should Council proceed with this option.

Given the length of each contract term and ongoing uncertainty in goods and services delivery caused by global market volatility, geopolitical instability, supply chain disruption, inflation and changing regulatory conditions, Council has included a Pricing Adjustment Direction mechanism in the Conditions of Contract to provide flexibility where required.

Climate Change

This report considers potential climate change risks and impacts relevant to the Officer recommendation and aligns with the applicable climate change functions, categories, and legislative obligations, as detailed below:

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020 (including ss. 8-9)

Category

Corporate/Strategic/Council Plan: Consideration is given to climate change in corporate, strategic or council plan(s) and includes responses to direct and indirect impacts.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

1. CONFIDENTIAL - Contract Award Summary [**5.3.2.1** - 9 pages]
2. CONFIDENTIAL - Tender Evaluation Report [**5.3.2.2** - 19 pages]
3. CONFIDENTIAL - Probity Report CON2026 1746a [**5.3.2.3** - 6 pages]

5.4 Business Excellence

5.4.1 Annual Report 2025/26

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Purpose

To present the draft Annual Report 2025/26 (Annual Report), as presented at **Attachment 1**, for formal consideration. The Annual Report meets the regulatory obligations required by the *Local Government Act 2020 (*the Act) and the Local Government Better Practice Guide Model report.

Recommendation

That Council adopts the Annual Report 2025/26 as presented at Attachment 1 to the report.

Key Points

The Annual Report highlights the significant achievements of the Council throughout the 2025/26 financial year. The Annual Report also highlights Council's efforts in advocacy, capital works projects delivered, community programs and organisational performance.

Highlights of the 2025/26 year include:

- Community satisfaction improved across several key measures, including Council's overall performance, direction, communication and opportunities for the community to provide feedback. Council also adopted a new Community Engagement Policy and continued to strengthen accessible and inclusive engagement.

- Council progressed key plans and strategies to guide East Gippsland's future, including its first Organisational Plan 2025-2029 and Workforce Plan 2025-2029, the Reconciliation Action Plan, the Homes for Everyone Position Paper and the development of the Omeo Place-Plan.

- Council delivered $30.4 million in capital works during 2025/26, completing important infrastructure upgrades while continuing to maintain and renew roads, bridges, drainage, buildings, recreation facilities and public spaces across the shire.

- New digital systems and services improved the way Council operates and supports the community. This included the rollout of new finance and payroll systems, the launch of MyLot to provide property-specific planning information, and VendorPanel to make it easier for local suppliers to identify and respond to procurement opportunities.

- Council continued to support economic resilience and regional growth through business support, workforce and industry partnerships, Local Development Strategies for Swifts Creek, Orbost and Nowa Nowa, and regional promotion. The Visit East Gippsland website launched in September 2025, supported by new photography and videography showcasing the region.

Key results in the financial statements

The 2025/26 financial year reflected Council's continued commitment to responsible financial management, organisational resilience and creating long-term value for our community.

Despite a challenging external environment, including escalating fuel costs, continued increases in construction pricing and project delivery delays, Council maintained a sound financial position, progressed key strategic priorities and retained a strong financial foundation to support continued service delivery and infrastructure investment. The year also highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong focus on long-term financial sustainability in an environment of rising costs and constrained revenue growth.

The financial statements include the comprehensive income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, statement of changes in equity and statement of capital works, and summarise Council's financial position as at 30 June 2026. Key results in the financial statements are as follows:

- Council delivered a strong net operating result of $7.7 million. This was $1.5 million below the adopted budget, reflecting a range of timing and operational factors during the year. While the net operating result is an important financial measure, the underlying result provides a more meaningful indicator of Council's long-term financial sustainability, as it assesses whether recurring revenue is sufficient to fund ongoing services and operations. For 2025/26, Council recorded an underlying deficit of $3.1 million, indicating that recurring expenditure exceeded recurring revenue for the year.

- Council generated $152 million in total revenue, which was 4.9% or $7.2 million above budget. This was driven by early financial assistance grant payments, stronger-than-expected user fees, and increased investment returns. Operating expenditure totalled $144.3 million, exceeding budget by 6.4% ($8.7 million), largely due to higher employee costs, depreciation, and asset write-offs associated with capital renewals.

- Council delivered $30.4 million in capital works, completing key infrastructure upgrades while rescheduling other major projects to 2026/27 due to design, planning, and environmental considerations. This represents 41.3% of the total adopted capital works budget of $71.7 million.

Cash and financial assets were maintained at $118 million, safeguarding Council's liquidity and ability to respond to future needs. Debt remained steady at $8.5 million, well within sustainable levels and aligned with long-term projections. Council achieved $2 million of the $2.5 million efficiency savings target set for 2025/26.

Key financial sustainability indicators

Long-term financial sustainability is essential to our ability to continue delivering services, maintaining assets and responding to community needs. In 2025/26 there continued to be a strong focus on improving efficiency, managing costs and making the best use of available resources.

This is particularly important as Council continues to respond to cost pressures and the legacy of major expenditure associated with recovery and resilience works following the Black Summer Bushfires. Council is also continuing to advocate to the Victorian and Commonwealth governments for more equitable and sustainable funding arrangements to support local service delivery.

The table below shows the 2025/26 key financial indicators, measured against Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) risk ratings.

Indicator	Target	2025/26	2024/25	Risk rating
Net result %	>0%	5.08%	14.70%	Low
Underlying surplus/ (deficit) %	>0%	-2.21%	-3.64%	Medium
Liquidity/Working Capital (ratio)	150%	509.77%	333.37%	Low
Asset renewal %	100%	77.22%	103.02%	Low
Indebtedness	60%	20.58%	16.97%	Low
Unrestricted Cash	>80%	129.55%	170.6%	Low

Performance Statement

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) requires Councils to report against prescribed indicators and measures, as part of their annual report.

Data and information have been collected and finalised to meet the requirements of the LGPRF. This information is used in both the Report of Operations and the Performance Statement in the Annual Report. Only the data in the Performance Statement must be audited.

There is a larger set of indicators which will be reported through the LGPRF framework and published on the VAGO and Victorian Government websites.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following theme in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust

Climate Change

This report is assessed as having no direct impact on climate change.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

1. Annual Report 2025-26 [**5.4.1.1** - 209 pages]

East Gippsland Shire Council

Annual Report 2025–26

For the year ended 30 June 2026



EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Acknowledgement of Country

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the 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, deliver services and support to our community.



Bruthen Yarning Circle. Photo credit: Felix McKay.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country 2
Message from the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer 4
Section one: introduction 5
Our Community Vision 2040 6
Council Vision 6
Our Values 6
Highlights and major achievements 13
Challenges 21
The year ahead 22
Section two: the year in review 23
Summary of financial performance 24
Advocacy 33
Description of operations 35
Major capital works 36
Awards and Recognition 44
Civic events 46
East Gippsland Australia Day Awards 47
Events and tourism 49
Culture and creativity 50
Section three: our Council 51
Our Council 52
Regional profile 52
Your Councillors 55
Section four: our people and organisation 56
Our people, our purpose 57
Workplace Health and Safety 59
Staff profile 61
Section five: our performance 63
Integrated Planning Framework 64
Council Plan 66
Section six: governance, management and other information 112
Governance and management checklist 120
Statutory information 124

This annual report is prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

Images from this report may not be reproduced without written permission from East Gippsland Shire Council.

Cover image: Our School Crossing Supervisors, including Greg, play an important role in supporting the safety of students and families each school day.

Mayor and Chief Executive Officer message

We are pleased to present East Gippsland Shire Council's Annual Report for 2025-26.

This year has been one of progress, partnership and continued focus on the priorities that matter most to our communities. Guided by the Council Plan 2025/29, we have worked to strengthen community wellbeing, support local prosperity, protect and make better use of our natural and built assets, and manage Council in a responsible, transparent and sustainable way.

We delivered important community infrastructure projects, supported local businesses and industries through change, advanced planning for future growth, and continued to advocate strongly for the services, investment and policy support East Gippsland needs. We also made progress on key long-term priorities including housing, emergency preparedness, public land management, economic transition, digital transformation and service improvement.

Community connection remained central to our work. We continued to support volunteers, community organisations, First Nations communities, young people, older residents and local partners who all play an important role in making East Gippsland a welcoming and resilient place to live.

The adoption and progression of key plans and strategies, including our Reconciliation Action Plan, Organisational Plan, Community Engagement Policy, Homes for Everyone Position Paper and Service Delivery Framework, will help guide our work over the years ahead.

Community satisfaction improved across many key measures, including overall performance, Council direction, communication and opportunities to provide feedback. Libraries, events, recreation facilities, visitor services and community programs continued to bring people together, while major capital works and local infrastructure projects improved facilities, access and liveability.



The year did present significant challenges. Rising costs, cost shifting from other levels of government, housing pressures, emergency events and increasing service demand continued to affect Council and our communities. Internally, several major projects also required additional coordination, clearer sequencing and stronger project governance as teams adapted to new systems, competing priorities and more complex delivery requirements. These challenges highlight the importance of long-term planning, careful financial management, strong delivery disciplines and ongoing advocacy to ensure East Gippsland receives fair and sustainable support.

We thank our Councillors, staff, volunteers, community groups, Traditional Owners, government partners, businesses and residents for their contribution throughout the year. The achievements outlined in this report reflect the collective effort of many people working together for the benefit of East Gippsland.

As we look ahead, Council remains committed to listening to our community, delivering services that are responsive and accessible, investing in infrastructure that supports growth and wellbeing, and advocating for the future our region deserves.

Together, we will continue to build a connected, inclusive, resilient and prosperous East Gippsland.

Councillor Jodie Ashworth, Mayor
Fiona Weigall, Chief Executive Officer

Section one: introduction



The 2025-26 Annual Report emphasises our commitment to transparency and accountability. This document details our accomplishments, challenges and financial management, all aligned with our strategic objectives.

Inside, you will find information on how we followed the Council Plan 2025/29 and achieved the 2025-26 Annual Budget goals, ensuring the responsible use of resources for the benefit of the community.

The report also provides information about the elected Council, our organisation, and key statutory details. To understand our financial status, please refer to the Audited Financial Statements for the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

We were proud to support the inaugural Bairnsdale Holi Colour Festival, which took place in March and filled Nicholson Street Mall, Bairnsdale, with colour and music.

Our Community Vision 2040

In 2040, our people, place, environment and economy will be inclusive, connected, sustainable and resilient for the growth and wellbeing of our unique and diverse communities.

- **Our Communities**: Will include, encourage, respect, and value everyone.
- **Our Place**: Will be accessible, safe, connected, and healthy.
- **Our Environment**: Will be managed and preserved for all generations.
- **Our Economy**: Will be sustainable, innovative, and supportive of existing and emerging industries.

Council Vision

East Gippsland is an inclusive and innovative community that values our natural environment, puts community at the centre of Council decision-making and creates the conditions in which communities can thrive.

Our Values

Our values are Respect, Collaboration, Integrity and Accountability. Our values are embedded into all that we do, creating a great place to work that delivers quality services to our customers and community.

- **Respect**
  We treat all with courtesy and dignity.
- **Collaboration**
  We build and maintain productive relationships.
- **Integrity**
  We focus on taking the correct course of action.
- **Accountability**
  We are responsible for our actions and outcomes.



Kaylene Williamson (GLaWAC), Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Arthur Allen, Deputy Mayor Cr Tom Crook and Mayor Jodie Ashworth with conferees, Bibin Kandathilputhenpura Baby, Merin Kandathilputhenpura Bibin, Sara Kandathilputhenpura Bibin, Mini Varhese at our January Citizenship Ceremony held in Bairnsdale.

Profile: East Gippsland

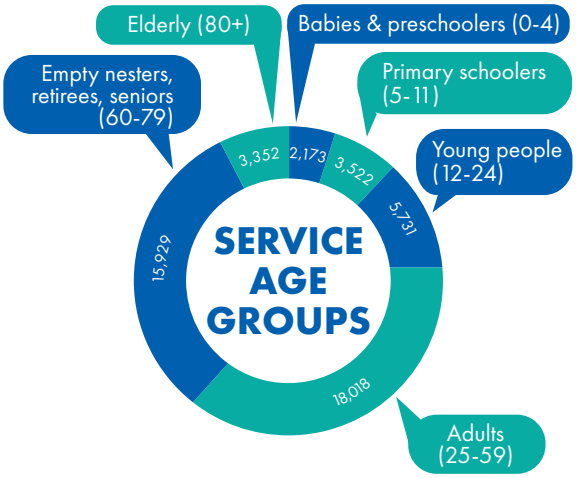
Figures are from the 2021 Census unless otherwise stated.

POPULATION (ERP 2025)
49,669

POPULATION DENSITY
(population per km²)
2.37

AGE TRENDS

The median age of the community is 52 years, with 39% of the population aged over 60 years. Lone person households make up 29% of all households, with 32.5% of households made up of couples without children, indicative of an older population.



MEDIAN AGE

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
	52	43

EAST GIPPSLAND POPULATION BY DISTRICT (ERP 2025)

DISTRICT:

Bairnsdale	17,805	Mallacoota	1,296
Bruthen	1,135	Metung	2,405
Buchan	459	Omeo-Swifts Creek	1,364
Cann River	356	Orbost	4,018
Lakes Entrance	8,609	Paynesville	6,588
Lindenow	2,599	Twin Rivers	3,063

IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY (%)

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	3.5	2.0
Overseas born population	11.9	12.4
Language at home other than English	4.0	7.1
Poor English proficiency	0.6	1.1

HEALTH

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
Proportion of population with need for assistance due to disability.	7.7%	6.9%
Proportion of population with one or more long-term health conditions.	39.7%	37.2%

TOP 3 LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
Arthritis	13.6%	11.2%
Mental Health	10.5%	10.9%
Asthma	9.2%	9.9%

HOUSING

Full ownership of homes is the dominant tenure type in the East Gippsland Shire, with around a quarter of all homes being owned with a mortgage and around a fifth of homes rented. Almost one-third of all households are people who live alone. The average household size in the Shire is 2.2 persons per household.

HOUSEHOLDS

	% EAST GIPPSLAND	% REGIONAL VICTORIA
Families with children	19.1	24.6
Families with young children	10.1	13.5
Families with mixed-age children	2.8	3.5
Families with older children	6.2	7.6
Couples without children	32.5	28.0
Lone person households	29.0	37.5

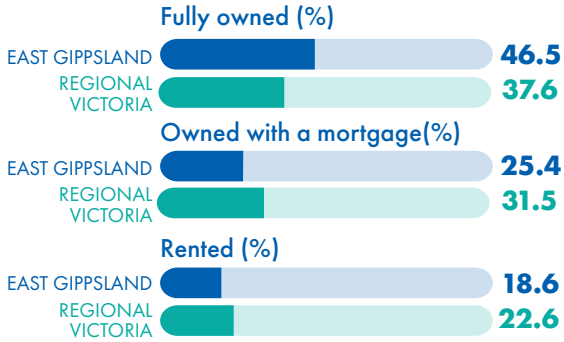
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC WELLBEING

	% EAST GIPPSLAND	% REGIONAL VICTORIA
Labour force participation	48.4	57.4
Employment rate	95.6	95.9
Unemployment rate	4.4	4.1
Change in employment rate 2016-2021	2.0	1.9

TOP 5 INDUSTRIES OF EMPLOYMENT (%)

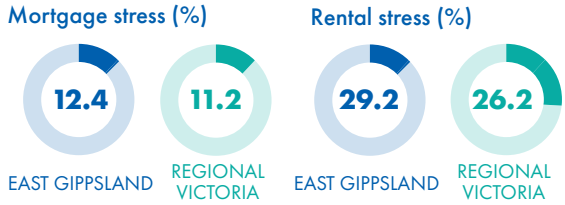
EAST GIPPSLAND		REGIONAL VICTORIA	
Healthcare & social assistance	19.7	16.8	Healthcare & social assistance
Construction	11.3	9.4	Education & training
Retail trade	9.4	9.6	Retail trade
Education & training	10.0	9.4	Construction
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	7.5	7.8	Manufacturing

HOUSING TENURE



HOUSING COSTS

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
Monthly mortgage repayments	$1,354	$1,430
Weekly median rent payment (Dec 2025)	House $490 Unit $388	House $500 Unit $410



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
$1,115	$1,369

MAIN 3 METHODS OF TRAVEL TO WORK

	EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
Car as driver	63.3%	61.6%
Worked at home	12.6%	15.1%
Did not go to work	11.0%	11.1%

YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT FROM EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (%)



SEIFA index of socioeconomic disadvantage

EAST GIPPSLAND	REGIONAL VICTORIA
963	985

SEIFA socioeconomic disadvantage rank out of all Victorian LGAs

EAST GIPPSLAND: 63rd (out of 80)

FAST FACTS 2025–26

Aerodromes

- We manage three aerodromes: Bairnsdale, Mallacoota and Orbost.

Animal management

- We helped rehome 203 animals.
- 163 of collected animals were reclaimed by their owners.

Aquatic and recreation centres

- Aquatic facilities were visited 52,765.
- 1,513 active members at the Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance aquatic and recreation centres.

Arts and culture

- 16,208 tickets sold.
- 73% of audiences said their experience exceeded expectations.
- 93% rated the quality of performances highly.

Asset management

- We manage:
  - 3,008km of roads.
  - 204,744m^2 off-street car park area – equivalent to 28 soccer fields.
  - Three timber and 188 concrete bridges.
  - 31 footbridges.
  - 267.5 hectares of parks and gardens.
  - 296km of footpaths and shared paths.
  - 73km of walking trails.

FAST FACTS 2025–26

Caravan parks and campgrounds

- We operate one commercial caravan park – Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park – and three free stopover campgrounds in Genoa, Cann River and Swifts Creek. Travellers who want to support the facilities are encouraged to shop at local businesses in the towns they visit.
- Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park had 12,652 bookings.

Civic events

- Welcomed 94 individuals as new Australian citizens.
- Delivered 16 civic events, including three citizenship ceremonies and our Australia Day Awards.

Customer service

- Received 48,659 phone calls, with 86.65% answered within 45 seconds.
- Received 96,865 recorded contacts with 99.53% of requests resolved by 30 June 2026.
- 133,572 customers attended service centres.
- Our Happy or Not customer feedback kiosks were available at our service centres and the Bairnsdale Library, with 93% of responses rating the service as Very Happy or Happy.

Engagement and communications

- Our Facebook page grew by 15% to 13,503 followers.
- Our 1,655 Facebook posts had a reach of more than 4.6 million.
- 475,474 website visits.
- Issued 205 media releases.
- 50,347 people visited our online engagement platform Your Say.
- *Community Matters* newsletter subscribers grew 15.9% to 2,875 and 25 editions were published.

Environmental and public health

- Carried out 382 food premises inspections.
- Held 58 community vaccination sessions.
- Vaccinated 2,415 people:
  - 711 year 7 and 10 students.
  - 1,042 through community sessions.
  - 662 at corporate sessions.
- Inspected 526 septic systems:
  - 390 site inspections of existing septic tank system.
  - 136 site inspections of new septic tank system.

FAST FACTS 2025–26

Environmental sustainability

- Our seven public electric vehicle charging stations have avoided 64 tonnes of CO2 emissions in the past year.
- There were over 5,944 charging sessions:
  - Cars came from 663 postcodes from around Australia.
  - 74% visited from outside East Gippsland, contributing to our visitor economy.

Events

- 313 individual events were supported and 108 event permits issued.

Libraries

- Libraries were visited 263,345 times.
- Our libraries have 14,470 registered members, including:
  - 5,998 active members last year.
- Loaned out 278,725 books and resources.
- Our two mobile library service vehicles travelled over 60,000km, visiting more than 36 communities.

East Gippsland Livestock Exchange

- 96 sales held.
- Throughput of 58,502 cattle and 46,686 sheep.

Marinas

- Our three commercial marinas – Metung (145 berths including 24 dry berths), Chinaman's Creek Metung (69 berths) and Slip Bight Paynesville (220 berths) – achieved occupancy rates of 87%, 96%, and 88% respectively.
- Managed 53 public jetties, 28 fishing platforms and 34 boat launching ramps.

FAST FACTS 2025–26

Planning and building approvals

- Median days taken to decide planning applications 52.5 days ~ 18% improvement from last year.
- 492 planning permit applications lodged.
- 535 planning permit applications determined.
- Estimated work based on permit value of $138m.

Vegetation

- Managed approximately 6,000km of roadside vegetation.
- Managed 500Ha of land with the majority being parks and gardens.
- 734km of regionally controlled and regionally prohibited weeds on roadsides were inspected and treated.

Waste and recycling services

- 1,318,817 kerbside garbage and recycling bin lifts.
- 7,667.27 tonnes of kerbside waste was diverted from landfill.



Allan and Evelyn helping a customer at Bairnsdale Landfill.

Highlights and major achievements



We are committed to supporting East Gippsland communities by delivering essential services, new infrastructure, and driving projects. We've organised community celebrations and events and provided funding opportunities to help our region flourish. These initiatives align with our strategic goals to enhance the quality of life and strengthen community bonds.

CEO Fiona Weigall, Youth Resilience Officer Tara Wilson, Community Resilience Officer Tayla Chippindall, and Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth, at the East Gippsland Candlelight Vigil, held on Wednesday 6 May in partnership with Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, Gippsland Community Legal Service and Youth Ambassadors, as part of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month.

Theme 1 – Community wellbeing and social responsibility

We foster a strong sense of belonging, inclusion and shared responsibility so people across East Gippsland feel supported, valued and able to participate in community life.

How this theme is important for the health and wellbeing of our community.

Feeling connected, included and supported is essential to community wellbeing. When people have opportunities to participate, access services and contribute to local life, communities are healthier, safer and more resilient.

Supporting community health and wellbeing

We placed community health and wellbeing at the centre of our planning, services and partnerships through the Council Plan 2025–29, which incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. This work supports Council's annual reporting obligations under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

We have worked with health services, community organisations and government partners to improve access to services, strengthen local partnerships and support healthier, safer and more inclusive communities.

- Integrated health and wellbeing considerations into strategic and place-based planning, recognising the role of housing, community infrastructure, transport, open space and social connection in creating healthy and liveable communities.
- Advanced housing advocacy through adoption of the Homes for Everyone Position Paper and support for initiatives that improve housing affordability, availability and diversity.
- Supported initiatives to prevent family violence and promote respectful relationships through partnerships, awareness campaigns and community education.
- Strengthened community resilience through emergency planning, support for vulnerable community members and partnerships with Traditional Owners, community organisations and service providers.
- Supported healthy ageing, diversity and inclusion through programs, events and initiatives that encouraged participation, connection and wellbeing.
- Marked significant community events including NAIDOC Week, IDAHOBIT Day and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.
- Continued to support the Youth Ambassadors program, providing opportunities for young people to contribute to community projects, events and Council decision-making.
- Demonstrated civic leadership through citizenship ceremonies, volunteer recognition and community celebrations.

Supporting and celebrating volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in community life across East Gippsland.

We supported 77 volunteer Committees of Management with funding, governance support, facility planning and maintenance assistance, helping keep community halls, sportsgrounds and recreation reserves operating across the region. Through an investment of approximately $320,000, and the continued efforts of local volunteers, these important community spaces remained active, accessible and well used. We also continued to provide insurance coverage for 43 Crown-owned assets managed by volunteer committees.

We worked with committees to identify training needs in governance, succession planning, financial management, grant readiness and volunteer retention. In Tubbut, we supported the merger of two Committees of Management, reducing administrative burden and strengthening the sustainability of local community assets.

During National Volunteer Week, we delivered a volunteer spotlight campaign and recognised 47 volunteers through the East Gippsland Volunteer Honour Roll, bringing the total number recognised since 2022 to more than 300.

Reconciliation and First Nations partnerships

We continued to strengthen our commitment to reconciliation, developing and submitting our Reconciliation Action Plan to Reconciliation Australia for endorsement. The plan provides a clear pathway to strengthen relationships with First Nations communities and embed reconciliation across our organisation.

Strengthening partnerships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations and First Nations communities through emergency management planning, cultural heritage projects and community wellbeing initiatives continued. We also supported the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust gateway project and participated in National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and other community-led events, helping strengthen cultural connection, reconciliation and self-determination.

Strengthening engagement

We adopted a revised Community Engagement Policy to support more consistent, inclusive and transparent engagement across Council. The policy sets clearer expectations for how we listen, share information and involve the community in decisions that affect them.

The policy helps ensure community perspectives are heard and considered in decision-making.

Building community resilience and emergency preparedness

Emergency preparedness and resilience were strengthened through community-led planning, local partnerships and targeted infrastructure investment.

New Community Emergency Management Plans were developed for Lakes Entrance, Nowa Nowa and Lake Tyers Beach, along with three plans developed in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. This builds on a network of 46 Local Incident Management Plans and 20 Community Emergency Management Plans across the shire.

Emergency relief training was delivered in Mallacoota, Cann River, Orbost, Buchan and Omeo. We also invested in backup generators, satellite communications and improved emergency communications to support stronger local response capability. Victoria's first local government Emergency Dashboard continued to provide residents with a central source of emergency information and updates.

Connecting through libraries

Our libraries continued to be welcoming community hubs that support lifelong learning, literacy, digital inclusion and social connection.

Libraries were visited more than 263,000 times, had 5,998 members and loaned more than 278,000 books and resources. Our two mobile library vehicles travelled more than 60,000km, visiting more than 36 communities.

A major milestone was East Gippsland Libraries joining the Libraries Victoria network, giving members access to almost one million items across participating library services. Libraries also continued to deliver programs for all ages, including children's activities, community education, technology support and after-hours events, helping residents learn, connect and participate in community life.

Theme 2 – Prosperity

We support sustainable economic growth by helping local businesses, industries and communities adapt, invest and create opportunities for the future.

How this theme is important for the health and wellbeing of our community.

Access to work, learning and local business opportunities supports people's independence, wellbeing and connection to community. A strong local economy also helps communities adapt to change and remain resilient into the future.

Supporting local businesses and investment

Opportunities for local businesses were strengthened by improving the way suppliers can engage with us. A reviewed Procurement Policy reinforced our commitment to supporting local businesses and contractors where feasible and competitive. The total spend on local suppliers this year was $22,983,908.62.

VendorPanel, a new procurement platform, was launched to make it easier for suppliers to identify and respond to opportunities. More than 40 local businesses attended a contractors' breakfast to learn about Council procurement processes, upcoming projects and tendering opportunities.

Investment in roads, bridges, facilities, waste services and renewal programs also supported local jobs and businesses while maintaining the infrastructure our communities rely on.

More detail on major project delivery is included in the Capital Works Projects section of this report.

Supporting communities through economic transition

Communities adapting to economic change continued to be supported through our involvement in Local Development Strategies (LDS) across Swifts Creek, Orbost and Nowa Nowa.

As the host agency for the Swifts Creek LDS and a key partner in the Orbost and Nowa Nowa initiatives, we worked alongside communities, government agencies and regional stakeholders to identify local opportunities, support community-led projects and strengthen long-term economic resilience. This included participation in innovation working groups and regional advocacy to improve transition outcomes for communities affected by the end of native timber harvesting.

Supporting skills and workforce development

A skilled and adaptable workforce is essential to East Gippsland's long-term prosperity. We continued to work with education providers, industry and community partners to support local workforce development, employment pathways and initiatives that help attract and retain talent across the region.

These efforts help address workforce challenges, create opportunities for local people and support the future growth of East Gippsland's economy.

Planning reform

We continued to advocate for planning processes that work for regional communities and monitored reforms arising from the review of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and Plan for Victoria.

We supported Municipal Association of Victoria advocacy, wrote to Legislative Council members outlining concerns, participated in planning reform seminars and updated internal permit assessment processes in response to system reforms.

We also strengthened our advocacy for housing by adopting the Homes for Everyone Position Paper, providing a clear statement on the housing challenges facing the region and identifying priorities to improve housing affordability, availability and diversity.

Access to housing remains critical to workforce attraction, economic growth and the long-term sustainability of our communities.

Faster planning decisions

Statutory planning decision timeframes continued to improve during 2025–26, supported by ongoing process improvements and a focus on more efficient assessment practices. The average time to decide planning applications reduced to 52.5 days, down from 96 days in 2022/23 and below the State KPI of 60 days.

More than two-thirds of planning applications and almost three-quarters of VicSmart applications were decided within statutory timeframes. While complex applications can take longer, these results demonstrate continued progress in making the planning process more efficient, responsive and easier to navigate for applicants and the community.



Stuart McConnell, General Manager Assets and Environment, presenting at our annual Contractors' Breakfast.

Making planning information easier to access

MyLot was launched to improve the customer experience and streamline planning services.

The online tool provides property-specific planning information, helping residents, businesses and developers understand planning controls, permit requirements and application processes before lodging an application.

By improving access to planning information, MyLot helps reduce barriers to investment and supports informed decision-making.

Building connected and inclusive communities

Advocacy for initiatives that strengthen social connection and improve access to services continued.

We developed a detailed proposal for the Community Connector Program, designed to help people access local services, build social connections and strengthen community participation, particularly in communities experiencing change and transition.

Through ongoing advocacy and partnership development, we sought support for future implementation of the program and the positive contribution it can make to community wellbeing and economic resilience.

Theme 3 – Making the most of what we've got

We use our assets and natural resources wisely, so they continue to support community life, protect the environment and serve future generations.



Project Supervisor, Dale Stephenson, discussing the upgrades to the Mallacoota Hall during a Councillor visit.

How this theme is important for the health and wellbeing of our community.

A healthy environment, reliable infrastructure and well-managed community assets all support quality of life. Roads, bridges, parks, facilities, waste services and natural areas help people stay connected, active, safe and prepared for the future.

Managing and protecting our natural assets

Investment in the long-term management of our natural environment is made through strategic planning, advocacy and on-ground initiatives. This included a stronger focus on environmental sustainability, biodiversity and climate resilience, while advocating for improved public land and pest animal management.

We also continued to work with government agencies and regional partners to advocate for better management of public land and natural resources, recognising their importance to the environment, local communities and the regional economy.

Maintaining and renewing community assets

We maintained and renewed the roads, bridges, drains, buildings, recreation facilities and public spaces that communities use every day. These programs helped keep assets safe, functional and fit for purpose.

By investing in the upkeep of community infrastructure, we are protecting the value of these assets, extending their useful life and ensuring they continue to support community wellbeing, connectivity and economic activity across East Gippsland.

Managing waste and resources responsibly

Waste and resource recovery services saw more than 1.3 million kerbside garbage and recycling bin lifts completed and more than 7,600 tonnes of kerbside waste diverted from landfill.

These services play an important role in protecting public health, preserving natural resources and supporting more sustainable communities.

Planning for sustainable growth

A major milestone was the progression of Planning Scheme Amendment C172egip, establishing a long-term framework for the sustainable development of the Paynesville Growth Area. The amendment provides around 25 years of residential land supply while protecting environmental values, community character and key natural assets through coordinated land use and infrastructure planning. This work helps ensure future growth is carefully managed and supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Strategic planning projects in Lucknow and Bairnsdale were progressed to help unlock future residential, industrial and commercial development opportunities in a coordinated and sustainable way.

Alongside these projects, planning scheme amendments and strategic planning initiatives continued to strengthen the planning framework, providing greater certainty for communities, landowners and investors while protecting the environmental and landscape values.

Improving access and connectivity

We reviewed our approach to Raymond Island Ferry passes, creating a simpler and more efficient system for regular users while supporting the ongoing operation of this vital transport link for residents, businesses and visitors.

East Gippsland airports continued to provide essential infrastructure supporting emergency services, business activity, pilot training and regional connectivity. Ongoing management and maintenance of the airports ensured it remained a valuable community asset and an important part of the region's transport network.



Councillors Arthur Allen and John White attended the Nagle College National Tree-Planting Day event.

Preparing for climate resilience and future challenges

Advocacy for infrastructure and policy responses that strengthen resilience to climate, environmental and economic change included work to support public land management, drainage and flood resilience projects, strategic planning for future growth areas, and initiatives that help communities adapt to changing environmental conditions while protecting the natural assets.

Community-led environmental activities, including National Tree Planting Day activities, complemented Council's broader efforts to protect and enhance the region's natural environment.

Climate risk considerations also continued to be embedded into Council planning and decision-making processes, helping identify long-term risks, opportunities and priorities for future investment.

Theme 4 – Managing Council well

We manage Council responsibly, transparently and sustainably so we can deliver services, make good decisions and maintain community trust.

How this theme is important for the health and wellbeing of our community.

Well-managed services, strong governance and accessible processes help people feel informed, included and supported. They also make it easier for Council to respond to community needs and deliver better outcomes over time.

Modernising the way we work

A major organisational milestone was the rollout of new finance and payroll systems. Extensive training, testing, communication and support helped staff transition to new ways of working. The new systems have improved financial and payroll processes, strengthened governance and created a foundation for future digital improvements.

Driving continuous improvement

The completion of a new Service Delivery Framework has provided us with a clear and consistent approach to planning, reviewing and improving services. The framework includes a comprehensive service catalogue, service performance measures and prioritisation tools to guide evidence-based decision-making and support Council's service review program.

Business improvement initiatives progressed across multiple service areas, including customer response management, process redesign, performance reporting automation and service reviews. These improvements reduced duplication, improved customer experiences and strengthened organisational performance, delivering efficiency savings equivalent to $203,000.

Aligning our people, performance and priorities

The adoption this year of our first Organisational Plan 2025–2029 and Workforce Plan 2025–2029 has provided us with a coordinated approach to workforce planning, organisational development, business improvement and strategic priorities, helping ensure Council has the capability, leadership and workforce needed to deliver services and respond to future community needs.

The plans also supported Council's commitment to create a diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace through initiatives that strengthen workforce capability, leadership development, succession planning, talent attraction and employee retention, while progressing actions under the *Gender Equality Act*.

Community engagement

Strengthening community engagement to better inform decision making was reinforced with a new Community Engagement Policy setting clearer expectations for how engagement is planned, delivered and reported across Council.

The online engagement platform Your Say continued to provide an important way for residents to access information, share feedback and participate in consultation, with 50,347 visits during the year.

Our broader communication channels also helped keep the community informed, including 475,474 website visits, more than 4.6 million Facebook reach, 205 media releases and 25 editions of the fortnightly *Community Matters* newsletter.

Community Satisfaction Survey results showed positive progress, with satisfaction with opportunities to provide feedback increasing by nine points to 56, and perceptions of how well Council keeps the community informed increasing by nine points to 57.

Challenges

Like many regional councils, we continued to operate in a challenging environment shaped by rising costs, growing service demand and increasing expectations from our community.

Our key challenges for 2025–26 included:

- Rising costs, growing service demand and increasing community expectations continued to place pressure on our resources and financial sustainability.
- Global economic conditions and fuel price increases contributed to higher operating, transport and waste service costs.
- Cost shifting from other levels of government, including changes to levies and regulatory requirements, continued to increase financial pressure on councils and ratepayers.
- Securing external funding remains critical to delivering infrastructure and services in a constrained funding environment.
- Housing affordability and availability continued to affect communities across East Gippsland, reinforcing the need for coordinated action and advocacy.
- Bushfire activity during the summer highlighted the ongoing importance of emergency preparedness, resilience and recovery planning.
- The increasing frequency and complexity of emergency events continue to place pressure on communities, infrastructure and service delivery.
- Major system changes, including new finance, payroll, procurement and safety reporting platforms required significant training, process redesign and adjustment as teams moved to more efficient ways of working.
- Delivery of several major projects at the same time reinforced the need for clearer sequencing, stronger governance and more consistent project management practices across Council.

While these challenges are significant, they also reinforce the importance of long-term planning, collaboration and advocacy. We will continue to work with communities, government partners and industry to address emerging issues, advocate for a fairer share of investment, and ensure East Gippsland remains a resilient, sustainable and prosperous region into the future.



Council joined Victoria Police, CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria and the Paynesville Coast Guard for a large-scale emergency management exercise on Raymond Island, using the Sampson barge and Council's water taxi Ugly Betty to test emergency access during a simulated ferry outage.

The year ahead

Looking ahead to 2026-27, we will continue to build on this year's progress by delivering a coordinated program of place-based planning, strategic infrastructure investment and community-focused initiatives that respond to the changing needs of our municipality.

The year ahead will continue to require careful balancing of community expectations, service delivery needs and long-term financial sustainability. A continued focus on prudent financial management, delivery of our capital works program and securing external funding will ensure we can invest in priority infrastructure and services while maintaining our commitment to responsible stewardship of community resources.

Priority actions include completing place plans and commencing planning in new districts, implementing the first year of the Reconciliation Action Plan, and advancing accessibility, recreation and active transport initiatives that support health, wellbeing and connectivity across East Gippsland.

Strong advocacy will continue for improved roads, health services, public land management, housing availability and workforce development, alongside targeted programs that support local businesses, industries in transition and employment pathways for our communities.

Investment in community infrastructure, including planning for growth areas, stormwater management, recreation facilities and cultural assets, will help support sustainable growth and enhance quality of life. We will also continue to maintain and renew our extensive road network to keep communities connected and improve resilience across the region.

Continuing to improve engagement, service delivery and digital transformation will help ensure our services remain accessible, responsive and easy to use.

Together with ongoing environmental stewardship, climate resilience initiatives and the transition to new waste and recycling services, these actions will help position East Gippsland as a connected, inclusive, resilient and financially sustainable community for the future.



Cr Ian Trevaskis, Orbost and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry Secretary, Garry Squires, Marlo Residents' and Ratepayers' Association President, Shayne Boyd, CEO Fiona Weigall and Place Facilitator Coordinator, Kath Macdonald at an Orbost Stakeholders' Meeting.

Section two: year in review



Waste and Recycling Education Officer, Megan West, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Orbost resident, Les Joiner, at the annual Orbost Show.

Summary of financial performance

The 2025-26 financial year reflected Council's continued commitment to responsible financial management, organisational resilience and creating long-term value for our community. Despite a challenging external environment, including escalating fuel costs, continued increases in construction pricing and project delivery delays, Council maintained a sound financial position, progressed key strategic priorities and retained a strong financial foundation to support continued service delivery and infrastructure investment. The year also highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong focus on long-term financial sustainability in an environment of rising costs and constrained revenue growth.

The Long-term Financial Plan remains central to Council's financial decision-making, providing a framework to guide the effective allocation of resources, respond to changing economic conditions and ensure the ongoing delivery of essential services.

While Council remains financially sound, as demonstrated by its financial sustainability indicators, longer-term risks associated with the underlying operating position have been identified. In response, Council has commenced the development of a Financial Sustainability Strategy that will provide a framework for identifying future efficiencies, reviewing service delivery, asset management and funding approaches, and strengthening Council's long-term financial sustainability.

The results achieved during the year demonstrate disciplined financial planning, a continued focus on maintaining essential services and a considered approach to capital investment, while laying the foundations for the Financial Sustainability Strategy to guide future decision-making and improvement opportunities.

Highlights

- Council delivered a strong net operating result of $7.7m. This was $1.5m below the adopted budget, reflecting a range of timing and operational factors during the year. While the net operating result is an important financial measure, the underlying result provides a more meaningful indicator of Council's long-term financial sustainability, as it assesses whether recurring revenue is sufficient to fund ongoing services and operations. For 2025-26, Council recorded an underlying deficit of $3.1m, indicating that recurring expenditure exceeded recurring revenue for the year.
- Council generated $152m in total revenue, which was 4.9% or $7.2m above budget. This was driven by early financial assistance grant payments, stronger-than-expected user fees, and increased investment returns.
- Operating expenditure totalled $144.3m, exceeding budget by 6.4% ($8.7m), largely due to higher employee costs, depreciation, and asset write-offs associated with capital renewals.
- Council delivered $30.4m in capital works, completing key infrastructure upgrades while rescheduling other major projects to 2026-27 due to design, planning, and environmental considerations. This represents 41.3% of the total adopted capital works budget of $71.7m.
- Cash and financial assets were maintained at $118m, safeguarding Council's liquidity and ability to respond to future needs.
- Debt remained steady at $8.5m, well within sustainable levels and aligned with long-term projections.
- Council achieved $2m of the $2.5m efficiency savings target set for 2025-26.

Financial sustainability indicators

Long-term financial sustainability is essential to our ability to continue delivering services, maintaining assets and responding to community needs. In 2025-26 there continued to be a strong focus on improving efficiency, managing costs and making the best use of available resources. This is particularly important as Council continues to respond to cost pressures and the legacy of major expenditure associated with recovery and resilience works following the Black Summer Bushfires.

Council is also continuing to advocate to the Victorian and Commonwealth governments for more equitable and sustainable funding arrangements to support local service delivery.

The table below shows the 2025-26 key financial indicators, measured against Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) risk ratings.

Indicator	Target	2025-26 Result	2024-25 Result	Risk Indicator
Net operating result (%)	>0%	5.08%	14.70%	Low
Adjusted underlying result (%)	>0%	(2.21%)	(3.64%)	Medium
Adjusted underlying result $	>0%	($3.121)	($5,135)	Medium
Liquidity (%)	150%	509.77%	333.37%	Low
Indebtedness (%)	< 60%	20.58%	16.97%	Low
Asset renewal gap (%)	100%	77.22%	103.02%	Medium





Charmaine Sellings and Deputy Mayor Tom Crook and Cr Arthur Allen with Colleen Harney at the Elders Gathering in 2026. The annual Elders Gathering brings Elders and community together to reflect, connect and celebrate the strength, wisdom and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders across East Gippsland.

Asset renewal

Council remains committed to responsibly maintaining and renewing its infrastructure to ensure long-term service delivery for the community. In 2025-26, a total of $23.1m was invested in asset renewal works, representing approximately 47.6% of the adopted renewal budget. While this was below target, the variance was due to the deferral of some major projects to 2026-27, including the Bairnsdale Runway Extension, IT system renewals, and road, drainage, waste, and open space improvements. These delays were primarily driven by timing, environmental approvals, and updated asset condition assessments.

Council's long-term asset management plans continue to guide renewal priorities, ensuring assets are maintained in a cost-effective and sustainable manner that meets current and future community needs.

Asset class	Renewal ($'000)	Upgrade ($'000)	New ($'000)	Total ($'000)
Property	2,365	982	924	4,271
Plant and Equipment	4,357	115	892	5,364
Infrastructure	16,422	1,235	3,091	20,748
Total Capital Expenditure	23,144	2,332	4,906	30,383

Cash holdings

Council's cash and cash equivalents totalled $118m at the end of the 2025-26 financial year, a decrease on the prior year. This movement is primarily attributable to the timing of payments, with accounts payable invoices relating to the prior financial year settled during 2025-26.

Debt management

During the 2025-26 financial year, Council's debt levels decreased slightly, reflecting ongoing repayment efforts alongside investment in essential infrastructure and community facilities. Total borrowing at year-end stood at $8.5m, down from $9.1m in the previous year. Council continued making monthly repayments on the loan from Treasury Corporation Victoria (TCV) throughout the year. This reduction aligns with Council's Long-term Financial Plan and supports the delivery of major capital projects, many of which span multiple years and offer lasting benefits to the community.

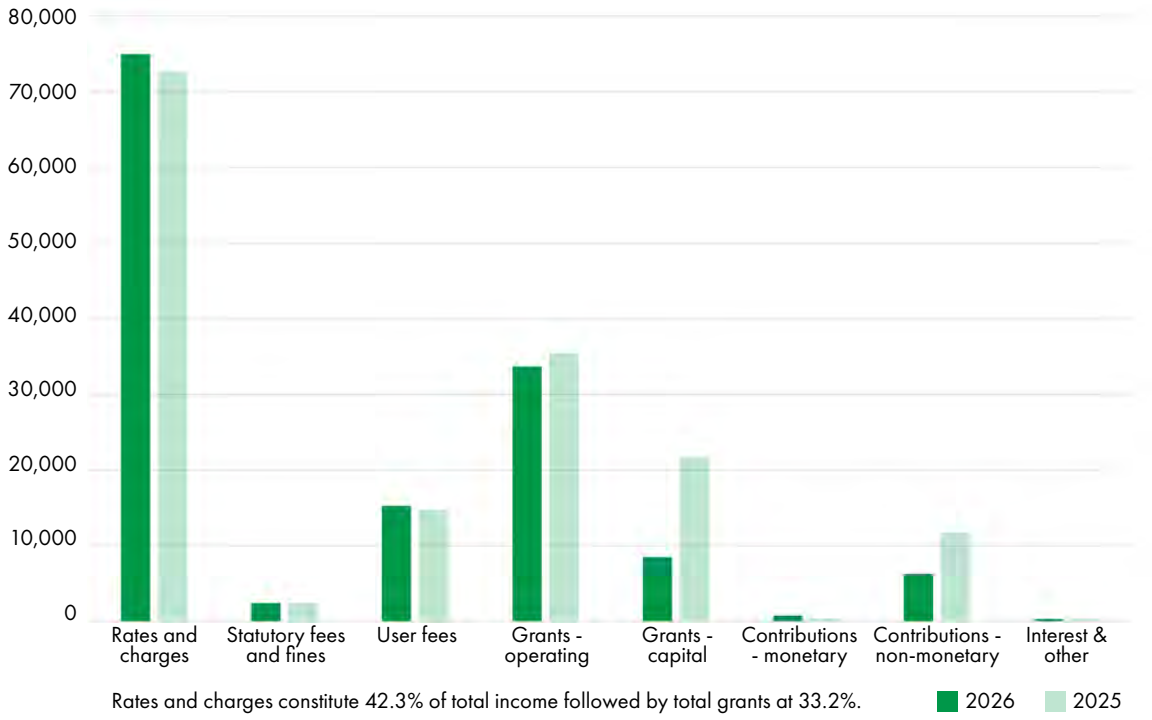
Operating revenue

In 2025-26, Council generated a total income of $152m, representing an increase of $7.2m compared to the previous year.



Deputy Mayor Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Bernie Farquhar in the Mallacoota Service Centre during a Council in the Community visit.

Total revenue: 2026 vs 2025



Rates and charges constitute 42.3% of total income followed by total grants at 33.2%.

Rates and charges

Rates income represents a significant source of income and contributed $74.9m (49%) of total revenue. This income goes directly to maintaining essential services such as waste collection, road maintenance, and local facilities.



Mayor Cr John White and Cr Joanne Eastman participating in the 2025 NAIDOC March in Bairnsdale.

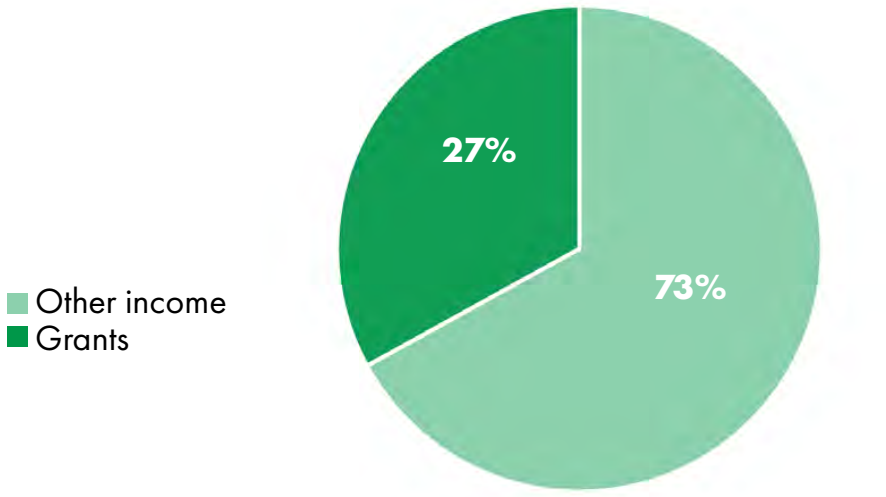
Grants

These remained a key source of income in 2025-26, collectively contributing $42.1m (27%) of total revenue.

- Operating grant revenue totalled $33.7m in 2025-26, a decrease of $1.74m (4.9%) compared with the previous year. The decrease reflects lower levels of one-off grant funding received during the year. Financial Assistance Grants from the Victorian Grants Commission, which provide flexible funding to support the delivery of Council services, increased by approximately 3%. Consistent with sector-wide funding arrangements, Council received $17.7m in advance Financial Assistance Grant funding for 2026-27, which was recognised as revenue in the 2025-26 financial year.
- Similarly, capital grants decreased slightly by $13.3m (61%), from $21.7m in 2024-25 to $8.4m in 2025-26. The decline was mainly due to delays in the delivery of some major capital works projects, which will now be completed and recognised in the 2026-27 year.

Together, grants continue to play a critical role in supporting both day-to-day operations and long-term infrastructure investment.

Grant income as a % of total income



User charges

Income increased by $532,000 in 2025-26. This increase was driven by higher patronage across indoor recreation centres and pools, strong performance at the Livestock Exchange, and increased bookings at key holiday parks such as Mallacoota Foreshore and Swift Creek, marinas and waste management services. These results reflect strong community and visitor engagement with Council facilities and help diversify revenue beyond rates.

Contributions: Monetary and non-monetary

Council recognised $7.1m in contributions during 2025-26, including cash contributions and community infrastructure provided through development projects. These contributions help support local facilities and services without placing additional costs on ratepayers.

Of the total, $763,000 was received as cash contributions, while $6.3m related to assets transferred to Council, such as roads, footpaths, drainage and other infrastructure constructed by developers and then handed over to Council for ongoing management.

Total contributions were $5.0m lower than in 2024-25, largely because fewer developer-constructed assets were transferred to Council during the year. In the previous year, a significant number of roads, footpaths and drainage assets were completed and handed over, resulting in a higher value of contributions being recognised.

Cash contributions increased by $364,000 compared with the previous year, reflecting higher levels of developer and other operating contributions. While the value of infrastructure assets transferred to Council was lower than the exceptionally high levels seen in 2024-25, it remained above the amount anticipated in Council's 2025-26 budget.

These contributions continue to play an important role in supporting growth across the municipality and enhancing community infrastructure for current and future residents

Interest and other income

Interest and Other income totalled $9.6m in 2025-26, $2.2m lower than the previous year. This was mainly due to a reduction in interest earnings and lower natural disaster recovery funding compared with the elevated levels received in 2024-25. Despite this decrease, both revenue sources performed better than budgeted, providing additional support for Council's ongoing operations and recovery activities.

Operating expenditure

Operating expenditure totalled $144.3m in 2025-26, down $1.9m (1.34%) from the previous year. The most significant contributor to this reduction was a decrease in Other Expenses, reflecting lower asset write-off costs than those recorded in 2024-25.

Employee costs increased by $1.3m (2.8%) during 2025-26. The increase was primarily driven by annual salary increases under Council's Enterprise Agreement, the employment of unbudgeted grant-funded positions, and increased use of casual staff to support service delivery. Employee costs also reflected the delivery of projects and initiatives by Council staff that had originally been planned to be undertaken by external consultants, resulting in expenditure being brought in-house rather than incurred through contracted services.

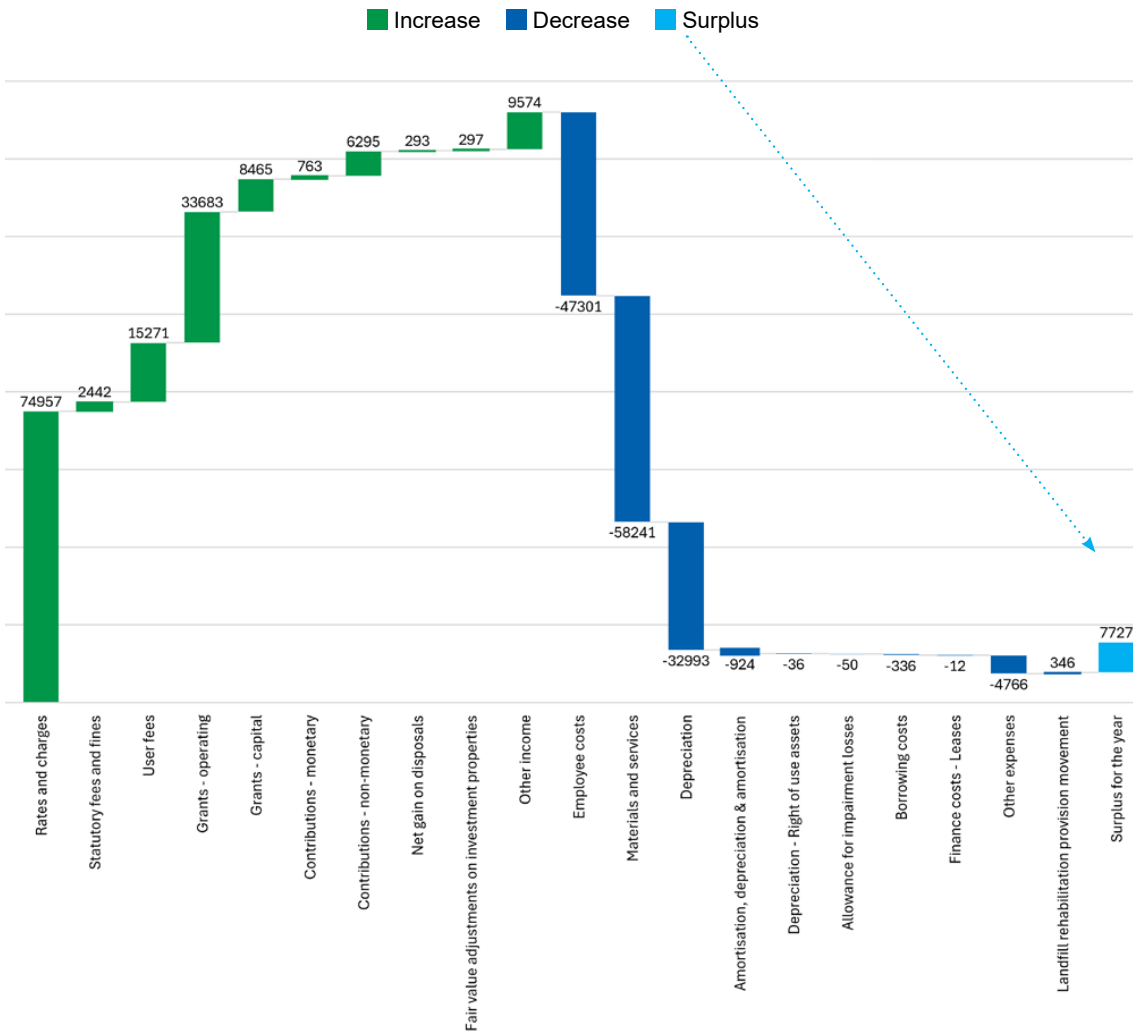
Materials and services expenditure increased by $0.915m (1.6%), reflecting additional grant-funded works carried forward from the previous financial year, together with higher costs associated with delivering Council's ongoing operational and maintenance programs.

Depreciation and amortisation expenses increased by $1.2m (4.0%) as new assets, including completed capital works and developer-contributed infrastructure, were added to Council's asset base and commenced depreciation. This increase was partially offset by lower amortisation of intangible assets, reduced depreciation of right-of-use assets and lower impairment expenses.

Other expenses decreased by $4.7m, largely due to a reduction in asset write-offs associated with infrastructure renewal projects. Asset write-offs are non-cash accounting adjustments that remove the value of assets from Council's records when they are replaced or renewed. The lower level of write-offs in 2025-26 was the most significant contributor to the reduction in operating expenditure for the year.

In addition, Council's landfill rehabilitation provision recorded a favourable movement of $617,000, reflecting updated estimates of future rehabilitation costs and changes in discount rate assumptions used to calculate the long-term liability.

Income and expenditure flow chart: 2025-26



Summary of Capital Works allocations

Council's total capital works expenditure for the 2025-26 financial year was $30.4m, representing an underspend of $41.3m compared to the adopted budget of $71.7m.

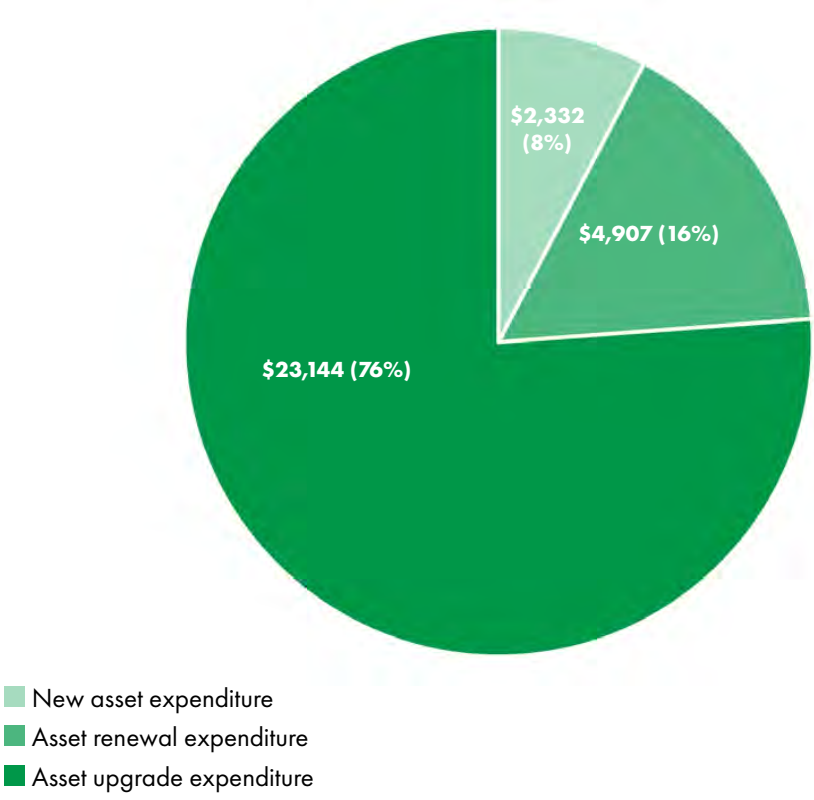
The underspend was due to several major infrastructure projects being carried forward into the 2026-27 financial year, including;

- Bairnsdale Runway Extension and Lighting Upgrade – $6.8m.
- Bairnsdale Aerodrome Rehabilitation of Taxiway and Hangar Apron $3m.
- Gippsland Lakes Shared Community Hub $2.5m.
- Digital Services Initiatives $4.9m.
- Roads infrastructure $3m.



Mayor Cr John White, Deputy Mayor Cr Sonia Buckley, Councillors and staff during a site visit to Bastion Point, Mallacoota.

Allocation of capital expenditure: 2025-26



Asset revaluation gain

Council's asset base increased by $128.8m during 2025-26 following a revaluation of infrastructure and specialised building assets. In accordance with Council's asset valuation policy, infrastructure assets are comprehensively revalued every four years, with annual reviews of relevant construction cost indices undertaken in intervening years. Historically, index movements have not triggered a revaluation unless they exceeded 10 per cent.

During 2025-26, the relevant construction price index increased by more than 10 per cent. This increase reflected significant cost pressures experienced across the construction sector in recent months, driven by global supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, inflationary pressures and broader global economic uncertainty. Following advice from Council's external auditors, infrastructure asset values were updated to reflect these higher replacement costs.

The revaluation resulted in an increase of $112.8m in the value of roads, bridges, drainage and other infrastructure assets, together with a $16.0m increase in specialised buildings based on updated Valuer-General assessments. The revaluation ensures Council's asset values more accurately reflect current replacement costs and aligns Council's approach with valuation practices adopted across the Victorian local government sector.

The increase is a non-cash accounting adjustment and does not affect Council's rates, cash position or operating result. However, it increases the value of Council's net assets reported on the balance sheet and will result in higher depreciation expenses being recognised in future years, reflecting the higher replacement value of Council's assets.



Rohan and Hedley Clemm with Cr Barry Davis at the East Gippsland Field Days.

Advocacy

Advocacy is one of the ways we work to secure the investment, services and policy support East Gippsland needs to thrive.

We have an important role in advocating for projects and initiatives that matter to our communities and contribute to building a safe, sustainable and resilient shire. This advocacy, and supporting public communications, includes regular meetings with Members of Parliament from the Australian and Victorian governments and Opposition, local Members of Parliament, and maintaining positive working relationships with other local government organisations, regional and state advocacy groups, and statutory authorities.

Lobbying for projects, service improvements (eg train services) and funding streams (road maintenance) to be included in Commonwealth and Victorian budget development remained an ongoing important advocacy function.

Councillors and executive members can also hold representative positions on external advisory committees, boards and peak bodies to ensure that East Gippsland is represented in regional, state, and national arenas. These can include Rural Councils Victoria, National Timber Councils Association, One Gippsland, Australian Coastal Councils Association, Timber Towns Victoria, and Australian Local Government Association.

Our advocacy contributed to several positive outcomes for the region. This included supporting a $2.75m Victorian Government investment in feral pig control and helping secure changes to the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund levy.

Council supported a commercial fishing industry dinner in Lakes Entrance, where representatives shared insights into the sector's history, current challenges, and its critical role in the regional economy. Key discussion points included proposed offshore wind developments, their impact on fishing grounds, and the need for a community benefit fund that reflects potential local impacts.

We also adopted the Homes for Everyone Position Paper, setting out Council's role in supporting better housing outcomes across the region.

Victorian Election priorities

We strengthened our advocacy approach by reviewing and consolidating priorities to develop a clearer advocacy framework.

Twelve of those items, informed by the Council Plan and community needs, were identified as Victorian Election priorities.

- $1.5 billion statewide regional road maintenance package
- Reform of the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund levy
- Improved investment in public land management
- More focus on forestry transition
- A new emergency department for Bairnsdale Hospital
- Revitalisation of the Bairnsdale CBD
- Improvements to traffic capacity on Princes Highway East – Bairnsdale to Lucknow
- Drainage upgrades to improve flood resilience in Lakes Entrance
- A new indoor stadium for Lakes Entrance
- A new CFA station for Lakes Entrance
- Drainage infrastructure to unlock housing development in Lucknow
- Intersection upgrades to support growth in Paynesville



Cr Jodie Ashworth, Mayor Cr John White, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Sonia Buckley, Senator Bridget McKenzie and Cr Arthur Allen during a meeting in October 2025.

Other advocacy

Council was proactive in putting items forward to the Municipal Association of Victoria State Council for discussion and adoption by councils across the state, calling on the Victorian Government to:

- Make available a $1.5 billion roads maintenance package to deliver urgent road maintenance and vegetation management works across the statewide road network, addressing the diminishing quality and safety of the road network, and to introduce a funding stream to identify and address road safety, reduced travel time and 'last mile constraints' impacts for the freight and visitor economy.
- Protect and enhance the amenity of state-owned public land (including national parks and the natural estate, arterial roads and freeways and railway land) across Victoria by increasing investment and routine maintenance, workforce solutions and programs to address management practices on public land.
- Make legislative changes to ensure a more equitable contribution from property owners within lifestyle/residential villages towards the services provided by councils, including property valuations and rating assessments on individual dwellings, and residential/lifestyle villages paying municipal charges based on the number of individual dwellings within the village rather than as a single entity.
- Resourcing to support health outcomes by adequately resourcing the management and delivery of programs across the state, with a particular focus on into rural and regional areas to support the complex social determinants that lead to negative health outcomes, such as domestic violence and homelessness.
- Work with the Commonwealth Governments and Victorian local government to ensure councils are sustainably resourced to continue providing critical services and infrastructure to local communities.

Council was also active in supporting community-based advocacy, including:

- Funding for a new Bairnsdale Regional Health Service emergency department
- Bush nursing services
- Omeo Community Hub as a Neighbourhood House
- Family violence
- Public transport (V/Line train services)



East Gippsland was represented at the Rural Councils Victoria Victorian Election Platform launch by Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth and CEO Fiona Weigall, who joined Deputy Premier Ben Carroll and Eastern Region MP Tom McIntosh at Parliament House to advocate for investment in rural and regional communities.

Description of operations

We are committed to enhancing the wellbeing and prosperity of our community through a comprehensive range of services, programs, projects, and infrastructure. Our strategic objectives are achieved by providing essential services and facilities, offering support, and advocating for the needs of our community. To ensure these goals are met effectively, we employ a variety of performance indicators and measures.

Under both Victorian and Australian legislation, our responsibilities include:

- Maintaining community infrastructure
- Managing land use planning and building control
- Overseeing domestic animal control
- Protecting the environment
- Supporting local businesses.

Each of these areas is integral to fostering a thriving and resilient community.



Corringle Creators, Susan Martin and Kylie Martin at the Deadly in Gippsland First Nations Expo with Aboriginal Engagement Officer, Courtney Pettersen (centre).

Major capital works – completed

We continued to invest in infrastructure that strengthens communities, improves safety, supports local economies and enhances quality of life across East Gippsland.

While several large projects will continue into 2026-27, many others were completed and are already delivering benefits for residents, businesses and visitors. The following highlight some of the capital works and infrastructure improvements delivered across the shire.

Buchan Recreation Reserve

The upgrade has delivered improved facilities to support sport, recreation, community activity, and emergency preparedness and response.

The redevelopment includes a new multi-purpose pavilion, upgraded netball courts, changerooms, community gathering spaces, storage, spectator areas, improved links between recreation spaces, a commercial-grade kitchen, solar and battery storage, backup generator capability, and emergency relief and shelter facilities.

A community celebration and official opening was held in June 2026 to mark completion of the project and recognise the contribution of funding bodies, local volunteers, community members and project partners

Sarsfield Recreation Reserve and Community Hall revitalisation

The Sarsfield Recreation Reserve and Community Hall revitalisation project has delivered a new multi-purpose community centre and major upgrades across the reserve, including accessible amenities, a commercial kitchen, play and recreation spaces, fitness equipment, landscaping, improved access and parking, and upgraded sporting facilities.

The project was officially opened with a community celebration in May 2026, marking an important milestone in Sarsfield's ongoing recovery and resilience following the Black Summer bushfires.



Officially opening the Buchan Recreation Reserve are Peter Favaloro, president of the Buchan Recreation Reserve committee and Buchan Pony Club, had the honour of cutting the ribbon on the front deck with Federal Member for Gippsland, Darren Chester, East Gippsland Shire Council Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth, Buchan Recreation Reserve committee member, Susie Edwards and Member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull, and the crowd of local supporters.



Community members, project partners and dignitaries – including Senator Raff Ciccone, Federal Labor Senator for Victoria; Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester; Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth, former Mayor Cr John White, and local leaders including Simon Hof, Kate Nelson and Cathy McLellan – gathered to mark the completion of the $3.8m Sarsfield Recreation Reserve and Community Hall redevelopment.

Hoddinott Reserve, Lucknow, upgrade

Works included a new interactive and nature-based play elements, picnic facilities, seating, shade and landscaping have created a more inviting and accessible community space.

A key feature was the installation of a culturally significant turtle sculpture developed in partnership with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, recognising and celebrating the cultural heritage of the area. A community opening was planned for July 2026.



The Mallacoota Streetscape upgrade has made the town centre safer and easier to move through.

Mallacoota streetscape

Improved pedestrian connections, upgraded footpaths, landscaping, new street furniture, enhanced parking arrangements and traffic calming measures have transformed Maurice Avenue and the Mallacoota town centre.

The upgrade has made the town centre safer and easier to move through, while supporting local businesses and improving the visitor experience in one of East Gippsland's most popular coastal destinations.

Nicholson Street footpath renewal, Orbost

Around 115 metres of footpath between McLeod Street and Clarke Street was renewed, replacing infrastructure damaged by tree roots and reducing ongoing maintenance and accessibility issues.

Works included a new concrete footpath with exposed aggregate edging, garden beds, replacement tree planting and drainage investigations.

The upgrade created a safer, more accessible and more attractive town centre environment for residents and visitors.



Marlo Foreshore improvements works improved safety, access and amenity while supporting the long-term activation and management of the foreshore.

Marlo Foreshore improvements

Works progressed this year under the Marlo Foreshore Management Plan, helping improve one of East Gippsland's most popular coastal recreation destinations.

The project delivered barbecue and picnic facilities, pathways, accessible parking, seating, bicycle stands and supporting infrastructure.

These works improved safety, access and amenity while supporting the long-term activation and management of the foreshore precinct. Boat ramp access was maintained throughout construction to minimise disruption for the community and visitors.



The official ribbon cutting at the opening of Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve, attended by The Honourable Tom McIntosh MP, Victorian Legislative Council Member for Eastern Victoria; Darren Chester, Federal Member for Gippsland; Tim Bull MP, Member for Gippsland East; Mayor Cr John White; Deputy Mayor Cr Sonia Buckley; CEO Fiona Weigall; and representatives of the Swifts Creek Committee of Management, ODFNL, players, volunteers and supporters.

Buchan drainage investigations and renewal

Drainage investigations in Buchan have provided important new information about the condition and performance of the township's underground drainage network.

CCTV inspections and cleaning were completed for the first time since installation, helping identify future renewal priorities.

The project also delivered an innovative trenchless pipe repair beneath Buchan–Orbost Road, using fibreglass lining to restore a critical drainage asset without major excavation. This reduced disruption and strengthened local flood resilience.

Bosworth Road Dog Park upgrade, Bairnsdale

The upgrade has created a more accessible, welcoming and enjoyable space for dogs and their owners.

Works included new agility and play equipment, accessible pathways, improved gates, a picnic shelter, drinking water, landscaping, shade planting and upgraded amenities.

The improvements support recreation, social connection and greater use of public open space.



The transformation of a former landfill site at Bosworth Road, Bairnsdale, into a dog park has created a more accessible, welcoming and enjoyable space for dogs and their owners.

Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve

The $2.9 million upgrade delivered a new multi-purpose pavilion and competition-standard netball and tennis courts. It replaced ageing facilities with modern, accessible infrastructure including changerooms, umpire facilities, court lighting and improved pedestrian access.

It's now a contemporary hub for sport, recreation and community events, supporting participation.

Buchan–Orbost Road landslip repair

Buchan–Orbost Road landslip repair works restored an important section of road connecting Buchan and Orbost – a key transport link for local communities, businesses and agriculture.

The project addressed a significant embankment failure risk that emerged following pavement movement and ground instability identified in 2024 and has improved the long-term stability of the road.

The repair works included construction of a 75m retaining wall supported by anchor rods beneath the road pavement, installation of new guardrail, reconstruction of road pavement and associated line marking.

This investment supports an ongoing commitment to maintaining resilient road infrastructure and ensuring safe and reliable access across our rural road network.



Our electric vehicle charging network now includes seven Council-managed charging stations, including one at Mallacoota.

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

East Gippsland's public electric vehicle charging network continued to grow with new charging infrastructure installed in Buchan and Mallacoota and support provided for fast-charging facilities in Lakes Entrance.

The network now includes seven Council-managed charging stations, helping meet growing demand from residents and visitors while contributing to Council's sustainability objectives.

The network recorded more than 5,944 charging sessions and delivered 144MWh of renewable electricity, avoiding an estimated 64 tonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions.



A new playground installation at Harry Clues Reserve in Johnsonville.

Community infrastructure improvements

Several community infrastructure projects were completed, improving the everyday facilities used by residents and visitors.

Works were completed on recreation reserve lighting upgrades, building renewals, access improvements and public amenity upgrades. These include a new playground installation at Harry Clues Reserve in Johnsonville, public amenity upgrades in Omeo, improvements at Gilsenan Reserve in Paynesville, and a new Changing Places facility in Cann River.



Road safety works in Church Street, Lakes Entrance.

Maintaining our road network

East Gippsland's road network is critical to connecting communities, supporting freight movement and providing access to services across the region.

During 2025-26, we continued to invest in the renewal of local road infrastructure through targeted road rehabilitation projects identified through asset condition assessments and ongoing network monitoring.

Corringle Road, Newmerella – major road rehabilitation

Road rehabilitation works were completed on a 1.6-kilometre section of Corringle Road, Newmerella. A cement, foamed bitumen and new crushed rock surface layer saved around 8,000 tonnes of crushed rock production and transport, finishing the job in just seven days.

Tamboon Road, Cann River – major road rehabilitation

Road rehabilitation works were completed on sections of Tamboon Road, Cann River.

The project renewed the road pavement and surface, improving road condition and long-term performance while extending the service life of the asset and supporting reliable access for road users.

Major capital works – in progress

While many major projects were completed during the year, progress also continued on large-scale projects that will shape East Gippsland in the years ahead. These projects span sport and recreation, transport, waste and community infrastructure, supporting wellbeing, economic development and regional resilience.

WORLD Sporting Precinct

Key achievements included finalising the detailed design and awarding of construction contracts for the new soccer pitches and pavilion.

The works, in addition to completed netball and hockey works already completed, will provide high-quality sporting facilities, support local participation and strengthen East Gippsland's ability to attract regional sporting events.

Construction is expected to continue throughout 2026-27.



Construction contracts for the new soccer pitches and pavilion at the WORLD Sporting Precinct have been awarded. These works are in addition to completed netball and hockey works.

Slip Road Maritime Precinct

Major upgrades on new seawalls, jetty berths, a service jetty, commercial boat ramp, drainage infrastructure and improved public access areas.

These works are transforming the precinct into a modern maritime hub that supports recreational boating, local marine businesses and tourism across the Gippsland Lakes. Final stages will be completed in early 2026-27.



New seawalls, jetty berths, a service jetty, commercial boat ramp, drainage infrastructure and improved public access areas under construction at the Slip Road Maritime Precinct in Paynesville.

Lakes Entrance Indoor Stadium

Community consultation was undertaken, including establishment of a community reference group to help shape the project. Detailed design progressed for a three-court facility that could support a range of indoor sporting and community activities.

The stadium remains a key regional priority, with Council continuing to advocate for funding to enable construction.

Cann River Waste Transfer Station upgrade

Planning progressed on detailed design, cultural heritage investigations and planning approvals.

The upgrade will improve waste management infrastructure and site functionality, supporting more efficient service delivery and meeting the future needs of the Cann River community.

Omeo Justice Precinct

Conservation and renewal works continued with a focus on the restoration of the precinct's historic courthouse buildings and associated heritage assets.

Works included building conservation, refurbishment, internal fit-out, painting and finishing works to preserve the structures and prepare them for future community and visitor use.

As one of Victoria's most intact 19th century police and court complexes, the precinct will play an important role in supporting heritage tourism, community activity and the preservation of Omeo's history. Works were nearing completion at the end of the financial year.

Bairnsdale Airport runway extension and lighting upgrade

Planning progressed on a major upgrade to aviation infrastructure at Bairnsdale Airport during 2025-26. Work focused on concept design, environmental approvals and tender preparation for the runway extension and upgraded lighting.

Once complete, the upgrade will improve access for air ambulance, firefighting and other critical service aircraft, strengthening emergency response capability while supporting future aviation growth and economic development.

Organic waste processing facility

Significant progress was made on a new organic waste processing facility next to the Bairnsdale Regional Landfill.

Environmental approvals and planning processes advanced, positioning the project for construction. Once operational, the facility will process organic waste, divert material from landfill and convert it into valuable resources.

The project will strengthen Council's resource recovery capability, reduce waste sent to landfill and support more sustainable waste management outcomes.



Stage one of the Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre roof renewal was completed.

Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre roof renewal

Stage one of the BARC roof renewal project was completed, addressing ageing roof infrastructure and priority repair requirements across key areas of the facility.

Works included upgrades to roof sections servicing the plant room, gym, reception area and wet change rooms, improving the safety, reliability and functionality of one of Council's most heavily used community assets.

Further stages of the renewal program will continue throughout 2026-27.

Howitt Park pedestrian bridge replacement

Planning commenced for the replacement of the existing pedestrian bridge at Howitt Park, Bairnsdale.

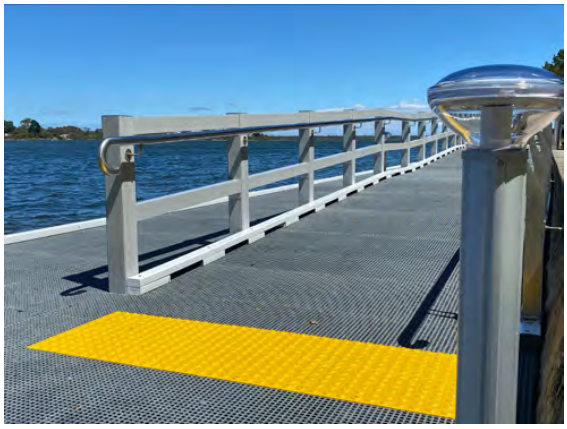
The project will deliver a new pedestrian bridge to improve safety, accessibility and connectivity for park users, providing a reliable crossing that supports access to sporting, recreation and open space areas throughout the reserve.

The project is scheduled for delivery in 2026-27.

Krauatungalung Walk, Lakes Entrance – Stage 2, Section 4

Construction commenced on the next stage of the Krauatungalung Walk in Lakes Entrance.

The project will deliver a new boardwalk connection along the foreshore, extending the shared path network and improving accessibility while supporting the long-term vision for a continuous waterfront walking experience.



The renewed Metung Boardwalk.

Metung Boardwalk revitalisation

Renewal works commenced on sections of the Metung Boardwalk as part of Council's asset renewal program.

The project will replace ageing boardwalk infrastructure and improve safety, accessibility and long-term durability, helping maintain this important community and visitor asset.

Timber bridge renewal

Planning and design activities continued for the renewal of timber bridges on Hollands & O'Briens Road and Healeys Road, Omeo.

These projects will replace the existing timber bridges with a modern structure designed to improve safety, reliability and long-term resilience for road users.

Once completed, the new bridges will provide a more durable crossing with reduced maintenance requirements, improved load capacity and greater resilience to bushfire and extreme weather events.

The project forms part of Council's ongoing program to replace its remaining timber road bridges and ensure reliable access for residents, freight operators, emergency services and visitors.

Road rehabilitation and safety improvements

Works continued across Council's sealed road network to renew road pavements that had reached the end of their service life and improve the safety and functionality of key transport routes. The program focused on rehabilitating and strengthening road infrastructure to improve road condition, extend asset life and support reliable access throughout East Gippsland.

Construction also continued on Stage 2 of the Marine Parade Safety Upgrade in Lakes Entrance. The project will deliver road, drainage and pedestrian safety improvements, together with upgraded intersections and supporting infrastructure, improving safety and functionality for all road users.

Awards and Recognition



East Gippsland Shire Council representatives Zoe Delaney and CEO Fiona Weigall receive the Award for Community Assets & Infrastructure (Projects $5–$20 million and population less than 50,000) from Sue Wilkinson, President of LGPro (left).

LGPro Award Winner – Community Assets & Infrastructure – Eagle Point Foreshore Hub Development

We received the LGPro Award in the Community Assets & Infrastructure category (Projects $5–$20 million and population less than 50,000) for the Eagle Point Foreshore Hub Development. The award recognised our commitment to delivering high-quality public infrastructure that enhances community wellbeing, accessibility and visitor experiences.

The $5.5m project transformed the Eagle Point foreshore into a vibrant waterfront destination that complements the natural beauty of Lake King and meets the needs of residents and visitors alike. The development delivered a purpose-built community hub, upgraded play areas, improved pedestrian safety, modern amenities, erosion-control measures and environmentally sensitive landscaping.

Since its completion, the precinct has become a valued community gathering place that supports recreation, tourism and social connection.



East Gippsland and Wellington Shire Council representatives Phill Phillipou, Sharon Jankowiak and Denise Lovett receive the award for Innovative Leadership Initiative from Sue Wilkinson, President of LGPro (left).

LGPro Award Winner – Innovative Leadership Initiative

We received the LGPro Award in the Innovative Leadership Initiative category for the Shared Services Initiative: Rural Councils Records Management Transformation, delivered in partnership with Wellington Shire Council.

The project introduced a shared cloud-based Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS), creating a contemporary and secure platform for managing information across both organisations.

The initiative strengthened information governance, improved data security and accessibility, and reduced costs through a collaborative shared-service model. By modernising records management practices and creating new opportunities for innovation and collaboration, we have established a strong foundation for future service improvements and enhanced outcomes for councils and their communities.

Sally Isaac Memorial Scholarship Fund Award

With Council support, Selina Lancaster received a High Commendation in the Sally Isaac Memorial Scholarship Fund Award, an LGPro award recognising emerging leaders in local government.

The recognition highlighted Selina's professional development, leadership and service to the East Gippsland community.



Council aerodromes staff Doug Sward and Richard Bakos at Bairnsdale Airport after it was named Small Regional (Non-RPT) Airport of the Year for 2025 at the Australian Airports Association National Conference.

Small Regional Airport of the Year Award – Bairnsdale Airport

Bairnsdale Airport was named Small Regional (Non-RPT) Airport of the Year for 2025 at the AAA National Conference. This was the airport's third national win in this category and fifth national award in eight years.

The nomination highlighted major upgrades that are strengthening emergency response, aviation safety and community resilience, including the Air Ambulance Patient Transfer Facility, modernised fuel facility and enhanced perimeter security fencing.

WORLD Sporting Precinct recognised

The WORLD Sporting Precinct, Bairnsdale, was recognised at an industry level when 'Transforming the WORLD' was shortlisted for the Parks and Leisure Australia Community Facility of the Year Award (Victoria/Tasmania), highlighting the value of the precinct as a major community and recreation asset.

Victorian Top Tourism Town Awards 2025 – three finalists

East Gippsland was well represented at the 2025 Victorian Top Tourism Town Awards, presented by the Victoria Tourism Industry Council, with three of our towns named finalists in their categories: Lakes Entrance (Top Tourism Town), Paynesville (Top Small Tourism Town) and Marlo (Top Tiny Tourism Town).

While the titles were awarded elsewhere, finalist status placed all three towns on the state-wide stage, recognising the strength of their visitor experiences and the collaborative efforts of local tourism operators, businesses, volunteers, and residents.

We were proud to support each town through the awards process, and this recognition reflects East Gippsland's growing reputation as one of Victoria's most compelling tourism destinations.



Mayor Cr John White and wife Leanne and the Melbourne Cup at Government House in 2025.

Civic events

Opportunities for community members to participate, engage and celebrate alongside Councillors, staff and project partners are provided through our civic events program. Activities include citizenship ceremonies, project openings, community celebrations, recognition events, and participation in major town and regional events such as agricultural shows. Council also supported the presentation of Rotary Community Awards at Council meetings, recognising individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to their local communities.

We also worked closely with local groups, schools and organisations to ensure a broad cross-section of the community is involved and represented.

In May 2026, as part of National Volunteer Week, 48 outstanding volunteers were added to the East Gippsland Volunteer Honour Roll. This roll acknowledges the dedication and years of service contributed by local community members. These new inductees joined a growing group of changemakers who embody commitment and generosity, bringing the Honour Roll to more than 300 recognised volunteers. The Honour Roll is permanently featured on Council's website.

This year, John Waller stood alone as East Gippsland's only 50+ year Honour Roll inductee. Five decades of volunteering is a remarkable legacy and a powerful reminder of the extraordinary contribution volunteers make to communities across the region.

Across three citizenship ceremonies we welcomed 94 new Australian citizens from around the world to East Gippsland. Ceremonies provided an opportunity to celebrate the diversity, stories and contributions of our newest community members.

Official project openings continued to play an important role in recognising community achievement and celebrating investment in local infrastructure. These events brought together residents, volunteers, funding partners and project stakeholders to acknowledge the collective effort behind each project and the benefits they will provide for communities into the future.

Communities celebrating official project openings:

- Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve upgrade
- Lakes Entrance Changing Places facility
- Mallacoota –Mudbrick Pavilion, Hall and Streetscape
- Omeo – Mountain Bike Trails, Livingstone Park and Streetscape
- Crooke Street Wetlands, Bairnsdale
- Sarsfield Recreation Reserve and Community Hall revitalisation
- Lindenow South Recreation Reserve lighting upgrade
- Wy Yung Recreation Reserve lighting upgrade
- Buchan Recreation Reserve redevelopment



The Changing Places facility in Lakes Entrance was opened in November. The ribbon was cut by upper house member for eastern Victoria, Tom McIntosh, joined by East Gippsland Shire Mayor Cr John White, Councillors Tom Crook and Arthur Allen, representatives from the Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association including Bruce Hurley and Sharen Cameron, Gippsland Disability Advocacy Executive Officer Leanne Wishart, architect Angus McKay, and Council staff and community members. Changing Places facilities provide accessible, safe, and private changeroom and toilet amenities for people with disability and high support needs so they can fully participate in community life. Another Changing Places facility has since been constructed in Cann River.

East Gippsland Australia Day Awards

More than 200 people gathered at Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club to celebrate the 2026 East Gippsland Community Awards ahead of Australia Day.

Set against the backdrop of dusk over the waterways, the event brought people together from across the region to recognise dedicated volunteers, community leaders and local events that make a lasting contribution to East Gippsland.

The awards recognised contributions across Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year and Community Event of the Year, with 23 nominations received.



Australia Day Ambassador Dr Patrick Kinsella, with Citizen of the Year Tracey Ah Sam and Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth.

Citizen of the Year – Tracey Ah Sam

For more than 30 years, Tracey has contributed to the Omeo community through leadership, generosity and sustained volunteer service.

Her work has supported the Omeo Recreation Reserve, local clubs, community events and initiatives including the Omeo Alpine Shears and Omeo Rodeo.

Tracey's dedication has helped keep Omeo connected, resilient and active across generations.



Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Ian Trevaskis, Australia Day Ambassador Dr Patrick Kinsella, Young Citizen of the Year Chelsea Wellman, Cr Joanne Eastman, Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth and Deputy Mayor Cr Tom Crook.

Young Citizens of the Year – Banjo Jackson and Chelsea Wellman

Banjo was recognised for his leadership as Chair of the Youth Ambassadors and College Captain at Nagle College. Through community events and advocacy on issues such as youth homelessness and access to opportunity, Banjo has shown strong leadership and commitment to young people across the region.

Chelsea was recognised for turning personal experience into advocacy, raising awareness of road safety and sharing her family's story with schools, sporting clubs and community groups across East Gippsland.



A crowd of more than 200 people came together in Lakes Entrance to celebrate the annual East Gippsland Australia Day Awards.

Community Event of the Year – The Breast Care Support Fund of East Gippsland

This volunteer-led initiative provides practical support to families affected by breast cancer, including groceries, fuel, meal vouchers, wigs, mastectomy bras and beauty treatments.

Fundraising events, including the 50 Shades of Pink Party and a high tea at Rivendell Farm Estate, raised $25,000, with funds spent locally to support East Gippsland families and businesses.

Special Recognition Award – East Gippsland Winter Festival

The inaugural Special Recognition Award was presented to the East Gippsland Winter Festival, recognising its role in connecting communities across the shire through inclusive events that celebrate local creativity, places and people.



Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth with representatives from The Breast Care Support Fund of East Gippsland who were recipients of Community Event of the Year award.



Adam Bloem, representing the East Gippsland Winter Festival, with Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth.

Events and tourism

East Gippsland continued to strengthen its reputation as a destination for major sporting, recreational and community events. Through sponsorship and the Pathways to Growth program, we supported a diverse calendar of events that attracted participants and visitors from across Victoria and beyond, contributing to the local economy while showcasing the region's natural landscapes, waterways, towns and visitor experiences.

The East Gippsland Winter Festival once again brought communities together through a month-long celebration of food, arts, culture and nature across the region. Council support assisted in growing the festival's reach and profile, creating opportunities for local businesses, artists, event organisers and community groups to participate in one of East Gippsland's signature tourism events.

Major sporting and recreational events continued to draw competitors and spectators to the region and showcased East Gippsland as a destination for adventure, endurance and participation-based events.

The Paynesville Classic Boat Rally and Maritime Festival, Gippsland Lakes Boat Show and Hooked on Lakes (Lakes Entrance) and many bream fishing competitions celebrated the maritime heritage and recreational assets of our lakes and rivers while encouraging visitation, community participation and economic activity.

Dates	Event	Our role
20 June – 20 July 2025	East Gippsland Winter Festival 2025	Sponsorship and Pathways to Growth*
12 - 13 July	Winter Enduro 2025	Sponsorship
18 - 20 July	Twin Rivers Bream Classic 2025	Sponsorship
16 - 17 Aug	Marlo Bream Classics (Round 4)	Sponsorship
13 - 14 Sep	2025 Atomic East Gippsland Bream Classic	Sponsorship
13 - 14 Sep	The Joyride Rookie Cup	Sponsorship
4 - 5 Oct	2025 Victoria Mountain Bike Series (VDHS)	Sponsorship
22 - 23 Nov	Metung Bream Classic (Grand Final)	Sponsorship
28 - 30 Nov	Lovells Alpine Rally of East Gippsland	Sponsorship
13 - 15 Feb	Victorian Masters Open Squash Tournament	Sponsorship
27 Feb - 1 Mar	Paynesville Classic Boat Rally & Maritime Festival	Pathways to Growth*
27 Feb - 1 Mar	Gippsland Lakes Boat Show	Sponsorship
8 Mar	Hooked on Lakes	Pathways to Growth*
14 Jun	The Butterfly Effect Bairnsdale	Sponsorship

* Pathways to Growth is a program that helps event organisers improve their events and ensure they are sustainable and successful in the long term.

Culture and creativity

Culture and creativity continued to support community wellbeing, social connection, economic activity and regional identity across East Gippsland.

A major highlight was the *Summit on Tour* and inaugural Creative Summit, which brought together creatives, organisations, community members and partners to explore the future of creativity in East Gippsland.

Feedback from these events and broader engagement through the Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2033 helped shape a new Culture and Creativity Funding Model. Endorsed during the year and commencing in 2027, the model will make creative investment across the shire clearer, fairer and easier to access.

In response to community feedback, we launched the Creative Link newsletter to share opportunities, celebrate local achievements and strengthen connections across East Gippsland's growing creative network.

Touring programs, exhibitions and creative partnerships helped bring arts and cultural experiences to communities across East Gippsland. Activities in places such as Mallacoota and Lake Tyers Beach, along with productions like *Shore Break*, gave regional audiences better access to contemporary performance close to home. The Forge also presented a broad program of performances and events, including Tiny Festival of Practice, which featured local, Australian and European artists and helped strengthen participation, connection and creative expression across the shire.

The annual Youth Art Prize also provided opportunities for emerging young artists to showcase their work and be recognised for their creativity and talent.

The Forge Theatre continued to play an important role as a cultural destination and community venue, with 16,208 tickets sold across performances, workshops, talks and community events. Audience research was undertaken for the first time during the year, with 23% of patrons saying their experience met expectations and 73% saying it exceeded expectations. Furthermore, 92% said they would attend future



events. These results show strong audience support for The Forge as a place for performance, learning, connection and creativity.

The Forge also launched its inaugural *IMMERSIVE* program, supporting 68 local creatives to develop and showcase new work. The program created more than 450 participant and audience engagements, with many projects continuing through new performances, exhibitions and creative ventures across East Gippsland.

Creative partnerships also supported broader Council priorities, including waste minimisation, tourism, education and community development. Projects such as *The Box Show* combined arts and sustainability education, while the Forge continued to host community events, workshops, talks and artist development opportunities.



Youth Art Prize winners Eliza Moore, Leah Brutovic, Ella Jansen, Holly Love, Lily Nickless and Asha Andrews at the presentation held at the Forge Theatre, Bairnsdale.

Section three: our Council



Human Resources Recruitment Officer, Justine Harms and Library Customer Service Officer, Emily McAlpine at the East Gippsland Jobs Expo.

Our Council

East Gippsland is characterised by its distinctive qualities, which present both advantages and challenges. The region boasts a remarkable natural setting, with the Gippsland Lakes and rugged coastline defining its southern boundary, and the High Country forming a picturesque backdrop. The area is marked by historical rural landscapes and pristine bushland, which encapsulate its communities. These features are fundamental to the region's thriving tourism industry.

Regional profile

East Gippsland's economy is anchored by primary industries including agriculture, forestry, and fishing, with beef, dairy, timber, wool, mutton/lamb and seafood being key outputs. Health care and social assistance are the largest employers, driven by an aging population. Construction and retail trade also play significant roles, supporting local development and services.

Tourism is vital, attracting visitors to our lakes, forests, and coastline, while education, manufacturing, and emerging renewable energy projects contribute to a steadily evolving regional economy. East Gippsland Shire's population is forecast to be 51,248 in 2026 and is expected to grow to 59,979 by 2046. The region supports 4,930 active and GST-registered businesses, while the unemployment rate was 5.0% in the December 2025 quarter, down from 6.1% at the same time the previous year.

These indicators point to ongoing population growth, a diverse business base and improving labour market conditions, while also highlighting the importance of continuing to support workforce development, housing availability and business resilience across East Gippsland.

Further information on East Gippsland's population, economy and community trends is available through Council's .id Community Profile and Economic Profile:

- Community profile: profile.id.com.au/east-gippsland
- Population forecast: forecast.id.com.au/east-gippsland
- Economic profile: economic.id.com.au/east-gippsland

Economic development

We continued to work with local businesses, industry, government and regional partners to support investment, employment, workforce development and economic resilience across East Gippsland.

- Facilitated industry engagement and collaboration activities designed to strengthen relationships with local businesses and industry sectors, identify emerging opportunities and challenges, and inform advocacy on issues affecting economic growth. This included progressing actions to strengthen business and industry engagement, support industry transition, encourage investment and employment opportunities, and support initiatives aligned with the Gippsland Food, Drink and Agritourism Strategy.
- Supported local procurement and business participation through initiatives such as an annual Contractors' Breakfast and Procurement Workshop, helping businesses better understand and access Council opportunities.
- Enhanced digital engagement and regional promotion through the rollout of new online platforms, including the redevelopment of the Invest East Gippsland website and promotion of success stories.
- Strengthened workforce pathways through partnerships with employers, education providers and training organisations to help meet current and future workforce demands.
- Advocated for investment, infrastructure and policy setting changes that support business growth, tourism, agribusiness and regional development.

Agriculture

We supported East Gippsland's agricultural sector through leadership development, business resilience initiatives and advocacy on issues affecting farming communities.

- Brought together graduates from all three cohorts of the Ag Leadership Program to reflect on the lasting impact of the initiative. Participants shared stories of increased confidence, stronger leadership skills, new business ventures and greater involvement in community advocacy.
- Farmers explored strategies to strengthen business resilience, manage financial pressures and adapt to changing conditions through the Business of Farming series events.
- Partnered with Gippsland Agricultural Group (GAgG) to undertake pasture improvement trials at our Skeene Creek property, supporting research and knowledge sharing to improve farm productivity and resilience.
- The Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee continued to provide a strong voice for local farming communities, informing Council advocacy and helping identify priorities for the sector.
- Hosted visits for Members of Parliament to demonstrate the impacts of drought and invasive pests on agricultural productivity and farming communities across the shire.
- Shaped Council's Pest Animal Management Advocacy Paper.
- Contributed to advocacy highlighting the impacts of feral pigs, wild dogs and deer on agricultural productivity and regional livelihoods. This included helping secure a $2.75m investment in feral pig control activities across eastern Victoria.

Visitor economy

East Gippsland was promoted as a visitor destination through destination marketing, visitor servicing and regional partnerships. Bushfire activity in some parts of East Gippsland further afield impacted some of the summer holiday trade.

- In partnership with Destination Gippsland, visitor marketing activities continued to build awareness of East Gippsland's tourism experiences, strengthen regional brand visibility and attract new audiences.
- The tourism promotion Wonders Campaign reached an estimated two million people and generated more than 170,000 engagements.
- A new Visit East Gippsland website was launched, supported by a summer visitor servicing campaign and ongoing enhancements to improve the visitor experience.
- Twenty-five visitor signage kiosks featuring QR-code access to tourism information were installed across the region, providing visitors with easy access to local attractions and experiences.
- The new Bairnsdale Visitor Information Centre at the Corporate Centre was opened, providing a modern and welcoming space and cost efficiencies.
- Mobile visitor information services during peak visitation periods increased to ensure visitors could continue to access support and information where they needed it.
- A collaborative photography and videography project produced more than 200 new promotional images and videos showcasing the region's landscapes, experiences and communities.
- Media coverage in national and international tourism publications helped raise awareness of East Gippsland as a destination.
- Marlo was named a finalist in the 2026 Victorian Top Tourism Town Awards, reflecting the strong partnership between Council, local businesses and the community in promoting the town's visitor appeal and unique character.



Youth Agritech Expo event organiser, Lily McCole, Agribusiness Development Officer, Kaylene Wickham, exhibitor Anthony James from Farm and Forest Drones and Youth Space volunteer, Barry Rogers.

Supporting forestry transition communities

A focus of our work with communities affected by the native timber harvesting transition was supporting locally led economic development in Swifts Creek, Orbost and Nowa Nowa.

As the host agency for the Swifts Creek Local Development Strategy and a key partner in the Orbost and Nowa Nowa initiatives, we worked alongside communities, government agencies and regional stakeholders to identify local opportunities, progress community-led projects and strengthen economic resilience. Through Local Development Strategy Innovation Working Groups, communities advanced local priorities and explored opportunities to support future economic growth.

A Business Support Voucher Program and related initiatives supported 31 local businesses to strengthen planning capability, access forestry transition funding opportunities and pursue business development and diversification opportunities. Working with DEECA, we promoted available support programs were promoted and we advocated for stronger long-term outcomes for transition communities.

Land use planning and strategic development work to help identify and enable future economic opportunities in transition communities was progressed, including advancing planning and investigation work for the Omeo and Swifts Creek Structure Plan to support future growth and investment.

In Swifts Creek, implementation of the community-led Local Development Strategy continued, supporting opportunities in areas such as nature-based recreation and tourism, education and skills, and value-added primary industries to help diversify the local economy.

We also played a strong advocacy role, calling for a review of forestry transition funding programs and advocating for a more transparent, flexible and place-based approach to funding delivery. This included advocating for streamlined grant processes, clearer reporting on funding outcomes, longer-term support for affected communities and greater investment in East Gippsland communities experiencing the impacts of forestry transition.

Councillors

East Gippsland Shire Council is an unsubdivided municipality consisting of nine Councillors, who represent the whole shire and its diversity.

The Council was elected and officially sworn in on 11 November 2024. It comprises five new Councillors along with four returning Councillors from the previous term. The Council is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the shire and providing leadership for its governance.



Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth
0428 778 168
cr.ashworth@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Arthur Allen
0429 630 474
cr.allen@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Barry Davis
0428 746 961
cr.davis@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Joanne Eastman
0428 814 390
cr.eastman@egipps.vic.gov.au



Mayor Cr John White
0498 001 531
cr.white@egipps.vic.gov.au



Deputy Mayor Cr Tom Crook
0429 554 064
cr.crook@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Sonia Buckley
0429 567 229
cr.sbuckley@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Bernie Farquhar
0428 291 458
cr.farquhar@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Ian Trevaskis
0428 159 518
cr.trevaskis@egipps.vic.gov.au

Section four: our people and organisation



To bring our Council Plan strategies to life, we rely on a dynamic, diverse, and skilled team working together to achieve meaningful outcomes for our community. By fostering a strong, supportive culture and maintaining robust structures and adaptable systems, we empower our employees to thrive and make a real impact.

Open Space team members Jon Tew, Kim Kitchen and Harley Rose tending to the Main Street Gardens, Bairnsdale.

Our people, our purpose

Our people are at the heart of everything we do. Across the shire, our employees bring dedication, expertise and a strong commitment to serving the community, delivering the services, projects and support that help make East Gippsland a great place to live, work and visit. Their efforts, often behind the scenes, are fundamental to achieving the priorities of the Council Plan and responding to the evolving needs of our communities.

Aligning our organisation for the future

Recognising that strong community outcomes depend on a strong organisation, we adopted our inaugural Organisational Plan 2025–2029. The plan aligns our people, culture, leadership, service delivery, continuous improvement and financial sustainability efforts around a shared vision.

Developed with input from employees, the plan establishes a common direction, strengthens accountability and supports a high-performing, values-driven workplace.

Attracting and growing local talent

To support workforce growth and future skills development, we strengthened our workforce attraction initiatives through partnerships with schools, training providers and employment programs.

Activities included participation in the East Gippsland Jobs Expo, involvement in the Job Jump and Broadening Horizons programs and the development of an Industry Experience Program to help attract emerging talent to local government.

Building skills and capability

Seventeen corporate training programs were delivered to support workforce development and organisational capability, including corporate induction, designated first aid training, and peer support officer and fire warden training.



East Gippsland was proud to host the NIDR Gathering on Gunaikurnai Country – welcoming delegates from across Australia to our region for several days of connection, learning and collaboration.

Additional learning opportunities focused on leadership development, workplace health and safety, Equity Impact Assessments, emergency management capability and organisation-wide training to support the implementation of new business systems.

We continued to build cultural capability through the rollout of First Nations cultural awareness training. Developed in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations, the program provides practical, place-based learning that deepens understanding of First Nations cultures, histories and knowledge.

Supporting staff through digital change

A significant organisational transformation was the implementation of new finance and payroll systems. This introduced more efficient ways of working and was supported by extensive staff training, testing programs, drop-in support sessions, and ongoing communication to help employees build confidence with the new systems.

The successful transition reflects the adaptability of our people and their commitment to continuous improvement.



Cr Arthur Allen attended the Anzac Day memorial event in Lakes Entrance.

Listening to our people

The annual all staff engagement survey provided employees with the opportunity to share feedback on workplace culture, leadership, communication, wellbeing and overall engagement.

Participation increased significantly, with 406 employees contributing feedback and an overall response rate of 65%, up 8% from the previous year.

Feedback is used to inform ongoing improvement initiatives and support a positive, connected and high-performing workplace culture.



Staff members from across different teams come together to connect and celebrate at the 2025 All-Staff Event.

Supporting wellbeing and inclusion

Supporting employee wellbeing remained a key focus throughout the year, with a range of initiatives designed to promote physical health, mental wellbeing, inclusion and social connection.

- Employee Assistance Program and peer support – awareness of confidential wellbeing support was strengthened through the relaunch of the Peer Support Officer Program and ongoing promotion of wellbeing services, ensuring staff could access informal peer support and professional assistance when needed.
- Gender Equality and Inclusion – Council's 2025–2029 Gender Equality Action Plan was developed, supported by staff engagement, capability building and activities that promoted understanding of equity, inclusion and respectful workplaces. New Equity Impact Assessment resources, training materials and an internal resource hub were developed to help embed equitable decision-making.
- Staff connection and participation – through the Staff Consultative Committee and awareness campaigns, employees were encouraged to participate in significant health, wellbeing and inclusion events throughout the year, including World Mental Health Day, International Men's Day, International Women's Day, Inclusion at Work Week, Safe Work Month and the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

Workplace Health and Safety

We continued to strengthen our commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of employees, volunteers and contractors through a range of initiatives designed to build a safer and more proactive workplace culture. The establishment of health and safety representatives, designated working groups and a formal OH&S Committee has improved communication, consultation and shared ownership of safety across the organisation.

To further enhance safety management, a new platform to improve incident and hazard reporting, injury management and safety performance monitoring was implemented. Monthly site inspections were introduced at employee-operated and customer-facing sites, helping teams identify hazards, strengthen local risk controls and build safety awareness in day-to-day operations.

A strong focus was placed on consultation, education and early intervention. Health and safety representatives were trained across the organisation, safety stewardship meetings were introduced with coordinators, and expanded health, safety and wellbeing education was delivered through onboarding induction, hazard awareness training and targeted programs, including bullying and harassment prevention.

Our approach to psychosocial health and wellbeing advanced, working through the requirements of new psychosocial hazard legislation and using survey insights. Key organisational risks were identified, and action planning commenced to address areas such as change management, organisational justice, workplace relationships and employee support. This work provides a foundation for continued improvement in workplace wellbeing and psychological safety.

For the year, 121 hazards and 54 incidents were reported across the organisation. Increased hazard reporting, supported by targeted training and stronger safety engagement, provides evidence of a growing safety culture where risks are identified and managed proactively. WorkCover outcomes also improved, with lost time injuries decreasing by 33.3% and lost days decreasing by 44.46% compared with the previous financial year.



The team behind the Omeo Mountain Bike Trails.

Organisational structure changes

To support the delivery of our strategic priorities and strengthen organisational capability, we implemented two structural changes.

In June 2026 we established a Projects and Planning directorate, bringing together key planning and project functions to provide greater coordination of strategic projects, growth planning and infrastructure delivery.

We also established a Project Management Office to improve project governance, consistency and oversight.

These changes strengthen our ability to deliver complex projects, manage future growth and ensure organisational resources remain aligned with Council priorities and community needs.

Organisational structure as at 30 June 2026



Staff profile

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires the establishment of a 'Code of Conduct' for Council staff. Under the code, staff are required to:

- Act impartially
- Act with integrity and avoid conflicts of interest
- Accept accountability for results
- Provide responsive service

The Staff Code of Conduct provides a set of guidelines that connect staff decision-making, behaviour and actions to the vision, objectives, and standards of the organisation. It is designed to guide staff on the standards expected of them as they carry out their work. Those standards include honesty and integrity, and commitment to treating all people with courtesy and respect.

Total staff numbers

The figures below represent the organisation's total staff numbers, including casuals and limited-tenure staff.

Year	Total staff	FTE
2025–26	638*	417.82
2024/25	639*	440.4
2023/24	644*	427
2022/23	602*	383.4**
2021/22	561*	359.63

** Including casuals and limited-tenure staff. Excluding the Chief Executive Officer and staff on parental leave.*

*** Staff EFT numbers include limited-tenure Bushfire Recovery, other limited-tenure roles, and calculated component for casual and capitalised roles.*



Our annual Living Our Values Awards recognise individuals and teams who demonstrate our values and make a positive contribution to our organisation and community.

Total staff numbers by salary band and gender (as at 30 June 2026)

Employment Classification	Total staff	Female staff	Male staff	Self-described gender staff	Undisclosed gender staff
Band 1	**24**	9	14	-	1
Band 2	**42**	21	19	-	2
Band 3	**186**	73	98	-	15
Band 4	**106**	74	26	-	6
Band 5	**85**	51	31	-	3
Band 6	**102**	56	41	-	3
Band 7	**46**	23	22	-	1
Band 8	**25**	14	11	-	0
Senior Executive Officer / Senior Officer	**22**	7	15	-	0
Total	**638****	**328**	**277**	**2***	**31**

** To protect anonymity, self-described gender has not been declared at band level, due to low figures.*

Job level by gender

Job level	Total staff	Female staff	Male staff	Self-described gender staff	Undisclosed gender staff
Chief Executive Officer	**1**	1	-	-	-
General Manager	**3**	1	2	-	-
Manager	**19**	6	13	-	-
Coordinator	**56**	32	24	-	-
All other staff	**559**	288	238	-	31
Total	**638**	**328**	**277**	**2**	**31**

** To protect anonymity, self-described gender has not been declared at band level, due to low figures.*

Staff numbers by directorate (as at 30 June 2026)

Work type/ gender	Chief Executive Officer team	Assets and Environment	Business Excellence	Place and Community	Total
Full time – Female	9	27	52	33	**121**
Full time – Male	2	116	24	24	**166**
Part time – Female	2	25	44	27	**98**
Part time – Male	0	28	7	13	**48**
Casual – Female	0	14	35	60	**109**
Casual – Male	0	19	7	37	**63**
Non-Binary/ Undisclosed	0	10	11	12	**33**
Total	**13**	**239**	**180**	**206**	**638**

** To protect anonymity, self-described gender has not been declared at job level.*

Section five: our performance

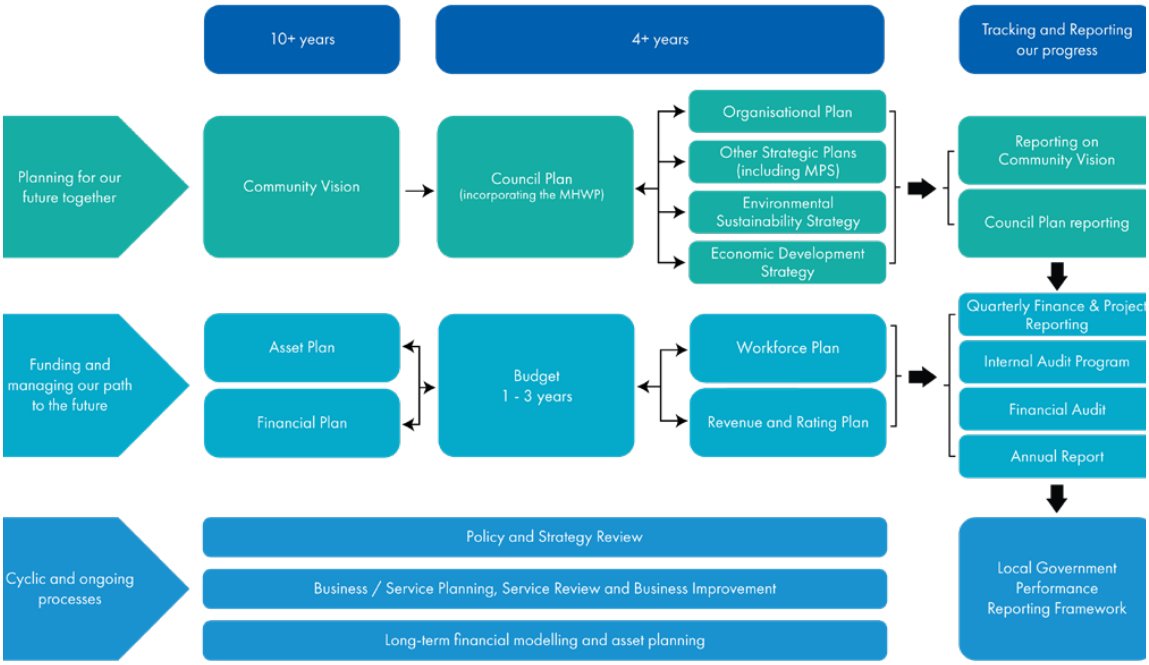


This section of the Annual Report offers a snapshot of our progress in achieving the strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan 2025–29, along with key indicators to track our progress.

Cr Sonia Buckley officially opens the Omeo MTB Park with contractors, stakeholders and community members.

Integrated Planning Framework

Our Integrated Planning Framework sets out Council's approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting, showing the relationships between our key planning and reporting documents.



MHWP – Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan
MPS – Municipal Planning Strategy



Cr Bernie Farquhar and Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth adding items to the Apex Club of Bairnsdale time capsule.



Cr Barry Davis attending the Anzac Day memorial event in Ensay.

Community Satisfaction Survey

The annual Victorian Community Satisfaction Survey helps us understand how the community views Council's performance, services and responsiveness. Conducted on behalf of the Victorian Government, it also allows results to be compared with similar councils and helps identify areas for improvement.

The 2026 results showed improvement across most key measures:

- Overall performance increased by 2 points to 53
- Council direction improved by 5 points to 48
- Community views on how well Council spends public funds increased by 3 points to 45

These results show progress and reflect ongoing work to strengthen service delivery, communication and community engagement.

Communication and engagement results improved:

- Satisfaction with opportunities to provide feedback increased by 9 points to 56
- Perceptions of how well Council keeps the community informed increased by 9 points to 57
- Customer service remained one of Council's strongest performing areas, maintaining a score of 66, with most residents who had interacted with Council reporting a positive experience.

The survey also highlighted areas where further improvement is needed, including value for money, decision-making and communication. These areas remain a focus for improvement and reflect broader challenges facing local government, including cost-of-living pressures and rising community expectations.

Results will help guide future service planning, customer experience improvements and community engagement.

The survey was conducted independently by Klein Research on behalf of Local Government Victoria. Further information and survey results are available on Council's website and through the Victorian Government's Community Satisfaction Survey reporting program.

In addition to this survey, we also sought feedback from our community and customers throughout the year. This feedback is used to continually review and improve services. Services for which customer feedback regular sought includes town planning, customer service and library services. Councillors are also briefed on this feedback quarterly.



Our Community Impact Grants support local groups, like the Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, to deliver projects that strengthen communities.

Delivering on the Council Plan

The Council Plan 2025–29 sets out what we are working to achieve, how we will get there and how progress will be measured. It also incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, helping guide Council's work to support healthier, more connected and more resilient communities.

The following pages report on our performance against the four strategic objectives of the Council Plan. They show what was delivered, how services performed and where further work is needed.

Performance is measured through:

- Major initiatives set out in the Annual Budget
- Council Plan strategic indicators
- Local Government Performance Reporting Framework indicators
- Cost of services

Theme 1 – Community wellbeing and social responsibility

We foster a strong sense of belonging, inclusion, and shared responsibility, ensuring that all members of our community are supported, valued, and empowered to thrive together.

Four-Year Outcomes:

- A connected and inclusive community, endeavouring not to leave anyone behind
- A stronger collaborative community that is actively engaged and supported

Theme 2 – Prosperity

We embrace sustainable economic growth, fostering opportunities that enhance livelihoods, innovation, and long-term financial stability for our diverse communities.

Four-Year Outcomes:

- Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises
- A well-functioning planning system that responds to our communities' needs

Theme 3 – Making the most of what we've got

By using our assets and natural resources wisely, we protect them, adapt to change, and support future generations.

Four-Year Outcomes:

- Natural assets are well-managed and protected
- Our cultural heritage is managed and preserved
- Our assets are well maintained, utilised and meet community needs

Theme 4 – Managing Council well

We ensure effective leadership, transparent decision-making, and responsible management, fostering trust and collaboration to build a resilient and forward-thinking community.

Four-Year Outcomes:

- Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust
- Decision-making is streamlined, efficient, and responsive to community needs

Theme 1 – Community wellbeing and social responsibility

Outcome: A connected and inclusive community, endeavouring not to leave anyone behind.

Major initiative: Develop place plans that strengthen community engagement across our region. These plans will align and prioritise community needs and service levels.

Progress: A place plan for the Omeo district was developed bringing together the district's vision, character, demographic profile and local priorities. Input was gathered through surveys, in-person sessions, a roadshow across Benambra, Omeo, Swifts Creek and Ensay, and a Place Planning Steering Committee. The plan will move into its final stage of engagement in early 2026-27. Work started on the Lindenow Place Plan, with data collection, background review and early engagement underway through a newly established working group.

Major initiative: Advocate for appropriate levels of accessible health and wellbeing services to address the needs of our growing and ageing community.

Progress: Advocacy priorities were refined and we worked with regional partners on improved health, wellbeing and transport services. This included advocacy for the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service emergency department, bush nursing services, family violence prevention and support services, and improved public transport connections.

Council also worked with health, education and community service providers to make sure local needs and service gaps were clearly represented to decision-makers.

Major initiative: Support participation in recreation and physical activity and pathways for our young and not so young community members.

Progress: We supported people of all ages to take part in sport, recreation and physical activity through recreation centres, community facilities and events. Major events, including the Bairnsdale and District Basketball Association Junior Regional Tournament and the NRL Hogs Tour, brought people together and encouraged participation. Council also worked with Committees of Management on future facility improvements, helping ensure recreation infrastructure continues to meet local needs and support active, healthy communities.

Major initiative: Work to enhance the accessibility of our towns and community health by developing and implementing active transport projects with a focus on promoting health and wellbeing and meeting infrastructure gaps.

Progress: We improved town accessibility through a range of active transport projects and footpath works. Priority footpath projects were delivered through capital works and in-house construction, giving us more flexibility to deliver pedestrian connections in communities including Bairnsdale and Orbost. Planning also progressed on future active transport projects, including early work to inform an integrated Active Transport Strategy. The strategy will guide investment in walking and cycling infrastructure, close network gaps and support safer, more connected pathways across East Gippsland.

Outcome: A connected and inclusive community, endeavouring not to leave anyone behind.

Major initiative: Identify the non-sporting facility needs of communities, supporting current and potential future user groups, and prioritise shared facility use.

Progress: Asset condition assessments were completed and a levels-of-service prioritisation tool developed to identify facility needs, understand asset capacity and guide future investment. Key milestones included completing the final draft Bairnsdale Education Hub Masterplan, securing grant funding for a new Bairnsdale Senior Citizens facility, completion of the Sarsfield Recreation Reserve and Community Hall Revitalisation, and progressing the Public Amenities Service Review. This work will inform future community infrastructure planning, support shared use of facilities and help respond to changing local needs.

Major initiative: In collaboration with community partners, advocate for improvements to public and community transport across the shire.

Progress: We completed the East Gippsland Community Transport Directory, working with local providers to map available services, confirm details and set up processes to keep information current. Demand for transport information remained strong, with transport among the most viewed categories in the directory. Community Directory roadshows raised awareness of available options and encouraged providers to keep their listings up to date. The directory has improved access to transport information and provides clearer evidence to support advocacy for better transport services across the shire.

Major initiative: Implement the Sporting Facilities Plan and the Public Open Space Strategy and undertake sporting facility planning for areas and sports not addressed through these existing plans.

Progress: Concept planning for the Lakes Entrance Indoor Stadium was completed and detailed design work progressed. Funding was secured for new netball changerooms at Lindenow Recreation Reserve and we also progressed the West Bairnsdale Master Plan review. The East Gippsland Open Space Strategy was adopted, with early actions underway including master planning for the Port of Bairnsdale, Fort King and Raymond Island. A new play space at Johnsonville and upgrades at Skidale Reserve were delivered. These projects will guide future investment in sport, recreation and open space, and help improve facilities used by communities across East Gippsland.

Major initiative: Implement engagement practices that encourage community involvement in our projects and services and respond to the engagement preferences of local communities.

Progress: We adopted a revised Community Engagement Policy, setting clearer expectations for how engagement is planned, delivered and reported. Staff were also supported with training, practical tools and improved processes to help strengthen engagement. Community engagement activity continued to grow, particularly on major infrastructure projects, with more focus on using methods that suit each community and keeping participants informed about project progress and outcomes. This work is helping Council listen more consistently and use community feedback to inform projects, services and decisions.

Major initiative: Provide inclusive and equitable access to our services, processes, and facilities for all community members.

Progress: Improvements were completed at Gilsenan Reserve, Paynesville, and Lakes Entrance Service Centre. Construction also commenced on the next stage of the Krauatungalung Walk, Lakes Entrance, and the Dinni Birraark walking trail extension, and planning progressed for the Slip Bight Marina carpark extension.

These projects improve access, connections and everyday facilities, helping more people move around and use community spaces across East Gippsland.

Outcome: A connected and inclusive community, endeavouring not to leave anyone behind.

Major initiative: Implement our Reconciliation Action Plan and deliver on our obligations under the Closing the Gap national agreement.

Progress: As part of our reconciliation work, we completed a two-year implementation plan and achieved conditional endorsement of our Reconciliation Action Plan from Reconciliation Australia. The year also included engagement with First Nations communities and activities to recognise National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. This work is helping build stronger relationships, improve cultural understanding and guide the next stage of Council's reconciliation work.

Major initiative: Manage recreation facilities, parks, and open spaces to meet the community's expectations and priorities.

Progress: The Public Open Space Strategy was completed providing guidance on the management and development of our public open spaces. We work closely with our Committees of Management to ensure our Recreation Reserves are well managed and maintained for community use as well as sporting activities. An upgrade of the Bosworth Road Dog Park was completed providing a range of upgrades to encourage and support use.

We commenced a review of developer-contributed recreation and open space infrastructure to support long-term planning.

The review is collecting information on asset condition, maintenance needs and future renewal requirements. This will help Council plan, maintain and fund recreation and open space assets more sustainably and make clearer decisions about future investment and service levels.



NRL HOGS Tour came to Bairnsdale for the first time, with a free clinic at the WORLD Sporting Precinct helping grow junior rugby league in East Gippsland.

Outcome: A stronger collaborative community that is actively engaged and supported.

Major initiative: Work with partners to support remote community health and wellbeing, and opportunities for youth.

Progress: Through place-based planning in the Omeo district and our place facilitation model across the Shire, we strengthened advocacy for better access to health, education and transport services. Local programs also supported community wellbeing, connection and resilience. We secured VicHealth funding for the East Gippsland Active Communities Project, creating new opportunities to support health and wellbeing for children and young people in rural and remote communities.

Major initiative: Implement our Culture and Creativity Strategy to enhance the cultural life of all our communities.

Progress: The Culture and Creativity Service Agreement Review was completed and implementing recommendations commenced. The review will support a more strategic, transparent and sustainable approach to funding and sector support. We connected artists and communities through initiatives including the Youth Art Prize, community pottery workshops, the Orbost Show, Paynesville Boat Rally and the Holi Festival in Bairnsdale. At the Forge Theatre, the month-long IMMERSIVE program and a diverse calendar of community-led and professional events attracted more than 4,850 patrons. These activities supported local creativity, showcased talent and added to the cultural life of communities across East Gippsland.

Major initiative: Develop plans for our community infrastructure to ensure sustainable growth and enhance our quality of life in a financially responsible manner.

Progress: We completed the Bullock Island Concept Plan Review, progressed the Fort King Landscape Management Plan, and advanced the Swifts Creek Public Realm Masterplan to detailed concept design for a new skate park and play space.

Significant progress was made on the Stormwater Management Plan, which will guide infrastructure investment and management over the next decade. Shaped by community and stakeholder input, these plans will help prioritise future projects, identify funding needs and support sustainable growth across the shire.

Major initiative: Provide a strong advocacy voice for health, education and support agencies that work on the ground to support communities.

Progress: We worked with health and education partners, Members of Parliament and Ministers to advocate on public transport, patient access to health services, a proposed Rural and Regional Growth Fund, the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service emergency department, the Omeo Community Hub, the Swifts Creek Bush Nursing Centre, education infrastructure, and social and affordable housing.

We worked with Gippsland TAFE, Federation University and workforce partners to align local education pathways with regional workforce needs, including transitioning industries, new energy and offshore wind. A key focus was linking education and training providers with workforce attraction and retention work, including development of the Workforce Welcome Program. This will help keep local learning opportunities connected to the region's business and residential attraction efforts.

Outcome: A stronger collaborative community that is actively engaged and supported.

Major initiative: Develop a policy position and advocacy program for homelessness and affordable and social housing.

Progress: The Homes for Everyone position paper was adopted to provide a clear position on the housing challenges facing East Gippsland. The position sets out our approach to housing diversity and homelessness response. Work will now focus on an action plan and reporting approach to support implementation and track progress against housing priorities.

Major initiative: Support social and affordable housing and housing diversity through land use planning.

Progress: Amendment C169egip was gazetted, strengthening local planning policy support for social and affordable housing. We also adopted a housing position paper to guide future work.

Permit-ready community housing and Victorian Government housing developments were prioritised to support timely delivery of new housing opportunities. We also continued to respond to planning system reforms, working with government and industry stakeholders and adapting our practices as changes emerged.

Major initiative: Advocate for and support initiatives that prevent all forms of violence, including family violence, by collaborating with local organisations and agencies to raise awareness through education and ensure those affected are supported.

Progress: Work continued with local organisations, service providers and government agencies on initiatives that prevent family violence and promote safer, more respectful communities. Through the East Gippsland Partners in Violence Prevention network, the East Gippsland Community Safety Committee and other community organisations, we delivered awareness campaigns, community events and training that encouraged respectful relationships and raised awareness of support services. Key initiatives included the 16 Days of Activism campaign, Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month, the Respect Colour Fun Run and the inaugural East Gippsland Candlelight Vigil.

We also worked with Victoria Police and community partners to better understand and respond to increased family violence risks following emergency events, so people affected can be connected with appropriate support.

Major initiative: Support community organisations and health partners to deliver initiatives aimed at promoting healthy eating, active living (including active movement and shifting attitudes towards physical activity) and reducing harm from gambling addiction, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes and other drugs.

Progress: Work continued with community organisations, health services and regional partners on initiatives that promote healthy eating, active living and community wellbeing, while also helping reduce harm from gambling, alcohol and other drugs. Through the Victorian Local Government Partnership and Engage! programs, we supported the Youth Art Prize, Gippy Girls Can and the Active Travel to School program, creating practical opportunities for young people and community members to be active and involved.

We also worked with Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, GippSport, Reclink Australia and Orbost Regional Health to build local capacity and improve access to health and wellbeing programs. Regional partnerships, including Orbost District Together and the Gippsland Primary Prevention Partnership, continued to support healthier and more connected communities across East Gippsland.

Outcome: A stronger collaborative community that is actively engaged and supported.

Major initiative: Value, promote and celebrate the unique cultural, social, and individual differences within our community, fostering a welcoming environment and strengthening community bonds.

Progress: Council continued to guide communications, awareness activities, education campaigns and events that celebrate and recognise the diverse cultures, histories and lived experiences within our community, including during key dates of cultural and social significance such as NAIDOC Week, Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month and Reconciliation Month. This year we also completed Equity Impact Assessments across a range of policies, programs and services to embed equity considerations into planning and decision-making.

Major initiative: Collaborate with partners to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable community members are planned for and addressed.

Progress: We worked closely with community organisations, health services, education providers, Aboriginal organisations and government agencies to better understand and respond to the needs of vulnerable community members. Through engagement, demographic analysis, district planning and partnerships, we identified emerging needs, service gaps and barriers to participation for children, young people, older residents and First Nations communities. Key initiatives included progressing our Reconciliation Action Plan, implementing the Kindergarten Central Registration Service and Infrastructure and Services Plan, supporting the Youth Ambassadors program and Youth Focus Network, and delivering resilience initiatives with health and emergency management partners. This work is helping inform our planning, advocacy and decision-making so the needs of vulnerable community members are recognised and addressed.



Mayor Cr John White and Cr Ian Trevaskis joined the Deddick Valley community in November and Council staff at Bonang Hall for an afternoon of connection and community spirit.



Council supports key cultural events including NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week.

Strategic indicators

Performance against the Council Plan's strategic indicators.

Strategic indicator	Target	2025-26	Comments
Community participation in Council engagement opportunities.	Increased participation year-on-year through the Your Say online engagement platform	50,347	Community participation increased in 2025-26, with 50,347 visits recorded on the Your Say platform, up from 19,100 in 2024-25.
Percentage of the municipal population that are active library members (recording a transaction in the past 3 years)	≥ 15%	29.13%	Recently purchased library collection results have remained consistent over recent years, with 51.83% of the collection purchased within the past five years. In response to rising collection costs, staff reviewed the size, quality and use of the library collection and adjusted expenditure strategically to ensure resources continue to meet community needs. This approach supports a relevant, well-managed and sustainable collection for library users across East Gippsland.
Number of community members volunteering in Committees of Management	≥ 500 volunteers	573	Committees of Management were supported by 573 volunteers. Their contribution helps keep local facilities, reserves and community spaces active, well cared for and available for community use. Council supports these committees with maintaining funding, guidance, master planning and project work.
Number of visits to aquatic facilities per population	≥ 11 visits	10.62	Aquatic facility visits were just below last year's achievement at 10.62 visits per head of population, mainly due to the temporary closure of the BARC for essential roof works from January to March 2026. The works were needed to keep the facility safe and functional and will support continued use by the community once complete.
Community perception of safety	Baseline year	67	Community perception of safety scored 67 in the 2026 Community Satisfaction Survey, indicating that residents generally feel safe across East Gippsland.

Strategic indicator	Target	2025-26	Comments
Percentage of affordable housing available for purchase and rent within the community.	31.1%	66.5% (purchase) 93.1% (rent)	Housing Monitor (.id) East Gippsland Shire dwelling sales data (December 2025) showed that 66.5% of dwelling sales in East Gippsland were classified as affordable, representing 636 of 957 sales. Most affordable sales were larger homes with three or more bedrooms (444 sales), indicating continued availability of family sized housing across the municipality. Rental data for the same period showed that 93.1% of rentals were classified as affordable, representing 524 of 563 rentals. The median weekly rent was $500 for houses and $380 for units. Affordability varied across townships, ranging from 57.1% in Mallacoota to 100 % in Bruthen, Orbost, and Omeo and Swifts Creek, with Bairnsdale at 96.4%, Lakes Entrance at 90.7% and Paynesville at 91.2%.



Councillors visited the High Country in November, meeting with residents and businesses to discuss tourism, infrastructure and opportunities for the town's future.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

The Victorian Government's compulsory service measures relevant to this goal are shown below:

Indicator / Measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Animal management					
Timeliness Time taken to action animal requests[1]	2.24	3.51	3.02	1.24	The average time taken to action animal requests improved significantly in 2025–26, reducing to 1.24 days compared with 3.02 days last year. This reflects a stronger focus on timely responses, improved internal processes and the ongoing commitment of the animal management team to responding quickly to community requests.
Service standard Animals reclaimed[2]	23.08%	27.85%	24.46%	30.87%	The proportion of animals reclaimed increased to 30.87%, up from 24.46% last year. This improvement reflects continued efforts to reunite pets with their owners through timely responses, effective animal identification processes and ongoing community education about registration and responsible pet ownership.
Service standard Animals rehomed[3]	21.85%	57.02%[4]	40.53%[4]	55.62%	The proportion of animals rehomed increased to 55.62%, up from 40.53% last year. This improvement reflects continued work to find suitable new homes for animals with Council and Animal Aid continuing to promote adoptions through media and Animal Aid holding some adoption specials on advertised evenings.
Service cost ($) Cost of animal management service[5]	14.99	15.20	14.82	15.90	The cost of the animal management service decreased slightly due to lower direct service delivery costs.
Health and safety Animal management prosecutions[6]	100%	100%	100%	100%	There were two animal management prosecutions, both of which were successful. This maintains a 100% success rate and reflects Council's focus on taking enforcement action where appropriate to support community safety, responsible pet ownership and compliance with animal management requirements.

[1] [Number of days between receipt and first response action for all animal management requests / Number of animal management requests]
[2] [Number of animals reclaimed / Number of animals collected]
[3] [Number of animals rehomed / Number of animals collected]
[4] [Number of animals rehomed / Number of unclaimed collected animals]
[5] [Direct cost of the animal management service / Number of registered animals]
[6] [Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Total number of animal management prosecutions]

Indicator Measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Aquatic facilities					
Service standard Health inspections of aquatic facilities[7]	0	0.5	1.0	1.0	As per the requirement of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, all aquatic facilities were inspected at least once by an authorised officer during the reporting period. Aquatics staff also assessed water quality five times daily, with records of results maintained at each location.
Utilisation Utilisation of aquatic facilities[8]	6.07	9.23	9.93	10.62	Aquatic facility visits were just below target at 10.62 visits per head of population, mainly due to the temporary closure of the BARC for essential roof works from January to March. The works were needed to keep the facility safe and functional and will support continued use by the community once complete.
Service cost ($) Cost of aquatic facilities[9]	4.06	5.25	5.08	5.89	The increase is associated with maintenance of facilities for essential roof works to keep the facility safe which also caused service disruptions that have decreased revenue.

[7] [Number of authorised officer inspections of Council aquatic facilities / Number of Council aquatic facilities]
[8] [Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population]



Staff members Leonie and Claire at Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre (BARC) indoor pool.

Indicator measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Food safety					
Timeliness Time is taken to action food complaints[10]	1.73	2.25	2.18	2.20	Time taken to action food complaints has reduced from 2.48 to 2.2 days. For 2025 we investigated 44 food complaints compared to 31 in 2024. We ensure all food complaints are investigated within 3 days.
Service standard Food safety assessments[11]	124.64%	115.86%	99.74%	97.95%	382 of 390 registered premises received an annual food safety assessment in 2025 compared with 386 of 387 registered food premises in 2024.
Service cost ($) Cost of food safety service[12]	$771.83	$809.40	$838.43	$767.87	The cost of the food safety service decreased due to lower service delivery costs.
Health and safety Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications[13]	100%	100%	90%	100.00%	A total of three critical or major non-compliances were followed up, all of which are now compliant.
Food safety samples[14]	-	107%	101.92%	103.92%	In accordance with Section 32A of the *Food Act 1994*, 102 food safety samples were required to be obtained and analysed during the calendar year. Council collected 106 samples.

[10] [Number of days between receipt and first response action for all food complaints / Number of food complaints]
[11] [Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that receive an annual food safety assessment by the *Food Act 1984* / Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that require an annual food safety assessment by the *Food Act 1984*] x100.
[12] [Direct cost of the food safety service / Number of food premises registered or notified in accordance with the *Food Act 1984*]
[13] [Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about food premises] x100
[14] [Number of foods samples obtained / Required number of food samples]

Indicator measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Libraries					
Utilisation Library loans per population[15]	-	5.23	5.67	5.61	We recorded 5.61 loans per head of population, reflecting continued community use of library collections and resources. This outcome was supported by strong borrowing of both physical and digital items, with libraries continuing to provide accessible collections, programs and mobile library services that support learning, connection and participation.
Resource standard Recently purchased library collection[16]	51.24%	51.27%	51.69%	51.83%	Recently purchased library collection results have remained consistent over recent years, with 51.83% of the collection purchased within the past five years. In response to rising collection costs, staff reviewed the size, quality and use of the library collection and adjusted expenditure strategically to ensure resources continue to meet community needs. This approach supports a relevant, well-managed and sustainable collection for library users across East Gippsland.
Service cost ($) Cost of library service per population[17]	21.99	24.24	25.13	25.59	Cost of service has increased slightly during the year.

[15] [Number of collection item loans (including digital materials eg. audio books, e-books) / population]
[16] [Number of library collection items purchased in the last 5 years / Number of library collection items] x100
[17] [Direct cost of the library service / population]



CEO Fiona Weigall and Mayor Cr John White were on hand to congratulate winemaker Alastair Butt, Lightfoot Wines, at the 2025 Wine Gippsland Awards.

Indicator measure	Results				Comments
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
Participation Library membership[18]	-	12.34%	26.74%	29.13%	Library membership remained strong, with 29% of East Gippsland residents recording a library transaction in the past three years. Continued investment in library collections, programs, digital resources and community activities supported ongoing community participation and helped maintain strong membership levels across the municipality.
Library visits per population[19]	-	4.99	5.10	5.30	Library visits increased to 5.30 visits per head of population, up from 5.10 last year, showing continued growth in community use of our library spaces and services. This result was supported by strong use of branch and mobile library services, community programs, and continued access to collections and resources across East Gippsland.

[18] [The sum of the number of registered library members in the last three financial years / The population] x 100
[19] [Number of library visits / The population]



Our library staff, including Jorja Box and Kay Quinn, create welcoming community spaces where people can learn, connect and discover something new.

Cost of our services

The following statement provides information about the services funded in the Annual Budget 2025-26.

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Committees of Management	We support 77 Committees of Management to maintain sportsgrounds, recreation reserves and halls. The partnership aims to improve the quality of life in communities, increase participation in sport, recreation, arts and environmental activities and overall enhance our facilities. Committees of Management are committees of volunteers appointed by Council to look after Council owned or managed facilities. Some have responsibilities under the Victorian Government and look after Crown assets.	296.13 320.00 23.87
Community resilience	We provide support and advocacy for sector and community members around social inclusion, accessibility, community planning, participation, capacity building, social activities and events. Our team conducts research and development on social issues affecting our community (mental health, affordable housing, violence prevention) and works directly with community and community organisations to connect community with available services while supporting Council's community engagement functions.	1,232.92 920.70 (312.22)
Community Planning	This service is responsible for a broad range of project and community facilitation work including place facilitation functions for remote areas; developing place-based plans; developing long term plans for specific asset classes; and functions. It is future facing and delivers longer-term benefits for the community.	1,706.83 2,009.93 303.10
Emergency management	We have several key roles in emergency management, including implementing state preventative strategies, such as planning and building codes, and planning for natural disasters. Others include: Local risk management and emergency planning » Community education, awareness and preparedness » Risk reduction strategies » Equipment support » Support community recovery programs » Manage community needs in all emergency management processes » Provide support and recovery assistance to those affected by emergencies	1,689.95 1,508.32 (181.64)

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Environmental and public health	Our role is to monitor and enforce public health regulations to provide community health and wellbeing. This is achieved through issuing permits and conducting inspections to gain compliance with food safety, public health and onsite wastewater management systems. We also provide vaccinations through the National Immunisation Program for infants, school children, and adults in a comfortable, safe and friendly environment across the shire.	437.80 396.54 (41.27)
Libraries	We operate six libraries - Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Mallacoota, Omeo, Orbost, and Paynesville - offering books, online resources, free computer and Wi-Fi access, training, activities, and more. Our mobile library serves remote locations fortnightly. An online catalogue, digital services, and self-scanners at two branches make it easier to browse and borrow from home, work, or on the go.	856.27 850.13 (6.14)
School crossings	Our school crossing supervisors ensure local families get to and from school safely every morning and afternoon at 16 locations.	243.74 210.82 (32.92)



Eva, Environmental Health Officer, carrying out an inspection as part of Council's work to protect public health.

Theme 2 – Prosperity

Outcome: Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises.

Major initiative: Leverage local strengths to create more opportunities for businesses, enhancing economic resilience and ensuring spending positively impacts the community.

Progress: Direct business engagement, site visits, Business Concierge support and targeted industry forums helped build relationships, identify local opportunities and better understand business needs. Local procurement was also supported through the annual Contractors' Breakfast and Procurement Workshop, while ongoing promotion of VendorPanel helped suppliers learn about and access Council procurement opportunities.

Major initiative: Focus our effort on initiatives that drive business and job growth for communities and industries in transition, such as the timber industry.

Progress: Targeted business support, place-based economic development and advocacy continued to assist communities and industries experiencing transition. Through the Business Support Voucher Program, delivered in partnership with DEECA, 79 businesses accessed specialist advice and support. This helped generate 31 Expressions of Interest to the Forestry Transition Fund. We also continued to support community-led Local Development Strategy and Futures projects in Swifts Creek, Orbost and Nowa Nowa, while advocating for transition funding and investment opportunities. The East Gippsland Economy Value and Impact Assessment added evidence to support future advocacy, economic resilience, diversification and job creation.

Major initiative: Foster a supportive environment where agribusinesses can flourish and contribute to the local economy.

Progress: Agribusiness work focused on connecting producers, researchers, industry partners and government agencies to explore value-add opportunities and strengthen local supply chains. Work continued on the Towards 2030 Gippsland Food, Drink and Agritourism Strategy through industry engagement, investment promotion and support for initiatives including the Gippsland Wine Show and Seafood Market Opportunity Assessment. This work helped identify growth opportunities, support market diversification and reinforce the role of agribusiness in the local economy

Major initiative: Plan and develop Council infrastructure and services to support business growth.

Progress: Infrastructure and service initiatives progressed across the region to support economic growth, tourism and community wellbeing. This included road safety improvements, intersection upgrades, new pedestrian crossings and ongoing advocacy for freight network enhancements. We also partnered with First Nations organisations to deliver the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust boomerang replacement project, the Hoddinott Reserve playground upgrade with GLaWAC, and the Orbost landfill revegetation project with Moogji. The Mallacoota Streetscape project was completed early in 2025-26, creating a more attractive and functional commercial precinct that supports local businesses and visitor activity. Planning also advanced for a new organic composting facility at the Bairnsdale Regional Landfill, strengthening local infrastructure, resource recovery and sustainable growth across the region.

Outcome: Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises.

Major initiative: Review the Procurement Policy to prioritise local contractors (where feasible and competitive) to support local business and job growth.

Progress: In December a revised Procurement Policy was finalised with clearer procurement principles and a stronger focus on supporting local suppliers where appropriate and competitive. In addition, stage one of the new VendorPanel system was also implemented, improving communication with local suppliers, streamlining procurement processes and making Council opportunities easier to access.

Major initiative: Complete the Bairnsdale 2050 Plan and initiate projects that support growth, enhance the town's presentation to attract investment, and improve the quality of life for our community.

Progress: Work progressed on the Bairnsdale 2050 Plan, with Councillors briefed on the draft plan in May 2026. The plan will provide a long-term framework to guide growth, investment and improvements to Bairnsdale's liveability and presentation. Community consultation and finalisation of the plan will continue in 2026, helping shape future projects that support economic development and quality of life in Bairnsdale.

Major initiative: Proactively seek new investment opportunities for commercial and industrial areas.

Progress: We laid the groundwork for stronger investment attraction across commercial and industrial areas. The Regional Marketing Strategy and Action Plan progressed through stakeholder engagement, market analysis and participation in Economic Development Australia's Investment Facilitation Community of Practice. This work helped build a clearer picture of how East Gippsland is viewed by potential investors.

Phase one of the INVEST research program was completed to better understand investor perceptions, with local business engagement planned as the next stage. Investment case studies also progressed with Metung Hot Springs and Gippsland Lakes Medical Imaging, providing practical examples to support future investment promotion. While the Invest East Gippsland platforms were not relaunched during the year, this work established a stronger evidence base and project plan for future investment attraction.

Major initiative: Advance our planning for cultural and civic hubs, creating spaces that celebrate our heritage and support community activities.

Progress: Work continued on planning and advocacy for cultural and civic infrastructure, with a focus on revitalising Bairnsdale's CBD.

We explored alternative funding opportunities and continued advocacy ahead of the Victorian State Budget and election. This helped keep the opportunity on the agenda as a long-term priority for cultural participation, community activity and East Gippsland's creative identity and heritage.

Major initiative: Investigate mechanisms to address shop vacancies and revitalise CBDs.

Progress: A commercial vacancy mapping project was scoped, drawing on approaches used by other councils. Engagement with commercial real estate agents and the INVEST research program helped build a clearer picture of local market conditions and improved referral pathways to the Business Concierge.

The Local Law review commenced, supported by Business Acceleration Fund grant funding through a joint submission with Wellington Shire Council. Public safety and amenity in key centres were supported through completion of the 2025-26 public CCTV program requirements, including the 2026 CCTV Panel of Providers tender to improve procurement efficiency and program reliability across the Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance CBDs.

Outcome: Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises.

Major initiative: Our commercial services such as caravan parks, marinas, airports and livestock exchange meet the needs of our current and future communities.

Progress: Planning and review work helped set the future direction for commercial services. The Strategic Master Plan for the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park commenced, supported by consultant engagement, technical analysis and community, stakeholder and First Nations engagement.

The Bairnsdale Airport Master Plan review advanced, with a consultant brief and request for quotation prepared to guide the next stage of work in 2026-27.

At the East Gippsland Livestock Exchange, the commercial review recommended retaining the current operating model, with future work to focus on business improvements. A revised leasing approach for the Eagle Point Foreshore Hub and Café was progressed, including engagement of a local real estate agent. This generated renewed market interest and an initial proposal now under review.

Major initiative: Actively promote East Gippsland as a vibrant and welcoming community to attract and grow a skilled workforce.

Progress: Marketing to promote East Gippsland as a great place to live, work and build a future progressed.

The Regional Marketing Strategy was developed through stakeholder engagement, refined messaging and a shared regional story, supported by research into how people outside the region view East Gippsland. Planning also began for a Faces of East Gippsland campaign to showcase the people, businesses and communities that make the region an attractive place to live and work. This work provides a stronger base for future workforce attraction and population growth initiatives.

Major initiative: Promote East Gippsland's features and experiences to investors and tourists.

Progress: A regional marketing framework was progressed to promote East Gippsland across the live, work, visit and invest pillars. The four-year Regional Marketing Action Plan was developed through stakeholder engagement, brand and perception research and investment attraction research. This work was integrated into the new 2026–2030 Economic Development Action Plan, creating a single framework to guide regional marketing and investment activity. While the Invest East Gippsland website was not relaunched during the year, completed INVEST research and investment case studies helped make future investment promotion more targeted and credible.

Major initiative: Support East Gippsland's tourism offerings to attract visitors.

Progress: A regional marketing framework was progressed to promote East Gippsland across the live, work, visit and invest pillars. The four-year Regional Marketing Action Plan was developed through stakeholder engagement, brand and perception research and investment attraction research. This work was integrated into the new 2026–2030 Economic Development Action Plan, creating a single framework to guide regional marketing and investment activity. While the Invest East Gippsland website was not relaunched during the year, completed INVEST research and investment case studies helped make future investment promotion more targeted and credible.

Outcome: Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises.

Major initiative: Support our economy to grow, collaborate and attract new markets and increase market share.

Progress: We supported business growth, innovation and market development through targeted programs, partnerships and practical business support. Local businesses were connected with the Small Business Mentoring Program, Business Victoria resources, the Business Support Voucher Program, industry forums and succession planning support.

We also helped businesses explore interstate and international market opportunities, including connecting Lakes Entrance Fishermen Limited and the Mallacoota Abalone Cooperative with AusIndustry and supporting participation in the Why India, Why Now program.

Funding and training opportunities were promoted through *Business Matters*, *Agri News* and the East Gippsland Grant Finder. Council's participation in the Business-Friendly Councils initiative reviewed the end-to-end business journey and informed practical improvements, including the Business Kit, clearer enquiry pathways and a stronger Business Concierge service.

Major initiative: Support existing learning hubs to provide opportunities to study locally.

Progress: We worked with local employers, education providers and government agencies to support workforce development and local learning pathways. This included collaboration with TAFE Gippsland, the Agricultural Leadership Program, the Gippsland Jobs Hub, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Monash Rural School of Health and Bairnsdale Regional Health Service. The live and work pillars of the Regional Marketing Strategy and Action Plan helped align workforce attraction, learning opportunities and local demand. This work provides a base for future initiatives that support people to study, train and build careers locally.

Major initiative: Advocate for reskilling to prepare the workforce for new opportunities.

Progress: Businesses and industries were supported to respond to changing economic conditions and prepare for emerging opportunities.

This included investment facilitation, business support and targeted project development across sectors such as hemp, agri-tech, renewable energy, seafood value-adding and tourism.

Through the Business Support Voucher Program, 31 businesses were assisted to pursue Forestry Transition Fund applications, helping build capability and explore new pathways for growth. We also delivered the Omeo and District Visitor Economy Prospectus, facilitated net zero supply chain discussions and released the Economic Insights report. These activities provided better information to support economic resilience, diversification and job creation.

Major initiative: Advocate for wrap around services to encourage and retain hard-to-get skills in the region, ensuring our community benefits from a stable and skilled workforce.

Progress: Advocacy continued for workforce attraction and retention initiatives to support economic growth and community sustainability. A key milestone was the development and submission of a funding application for the Community Connector Program, now known as the Workforce Welcome Program, to the Forestry Transition Community Development Fund. The proposal was informed by engagement through the Orbost, Nowa Nowa and Swifts Creek Futures projects and supported by education, health and government partners.

Outcome: Thriving, self-sufficient communities with strong local businesses and social enterprises.

Major initiative: Advocate for local training pathways to enhance skill development and career opportunities.

Progress: The East Gippsland Jobs Expo was delivered in partnership with Workforce Development Australia and the Department of Jobs and Skills, attracting 300 attendees and 29 exhibitors. The event connected job seekers with local employment, training and career opportunities with participation increasing significantly compared with previous years.. The Gippsland Jobs Hub was also launched, providing a digital platform to connect local employers and job seekers. Planning began for future Skills Expo and Jobs Expo activities, so these events continue to respond to changing labour market conditions and workforce needs.



Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth joined the team at Paynesville Chemist to encourage our community to buy local and support local.

Outcome: A well-functioning planning system that responds to our communities' needs.

Annual initiative: Advocate to State Government for planning process efficiencies.

Progress: We advocated for planning reforms that work for regional communities and make planning processes more efficient. While opportunities to participate directly in the review of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* were limited, we supported Municipal Association of Victoria advocacy and wrote to Legislative Council members outlining local concerns. We also monitored reforms linked to the Plan for Victoria, took part in planning reform seminars and updated permit assessment processes so we could respond to changes in the planning system.

Annual initiative: Simplify and streamline planning and regulatory processes.

Progress: We made practical improvements to make planning and regulatory processes clearer, more consistent and easier to navigate. The Statutory Planning Process Improvement Action Plan was adopted and implementation began, with several actions completed. Further template, process and standardisation improvements are underway through grant-supported project work. Planning Scheme Amendment C169egip was completed to provide clearer local policy direction. Amendment C159egip was gazetted and is now operating, strengthening Erosion Management Overlay provisions. Amendment C165egip, which corrects errors and anomalies in the planning scheme, was finalised and lodged with the Minister for approval.

Annual initiative: Assist businesses, developers and residents to navigate planning permits and regulations.

Progress: We improved access to planning and business support so residents, businesses and developers could better understand requirements and move through processes with more confidence. The Business Concierge service recorded more than 316 direct business engagements and site visits, and supported the Jobs Expo, Contractors' Breakfast and Buy Local campaign. Participation in the Business Friendly Councils initiative and development of a new Business Kit also helped improve the business journey. The MyLot self-service planning tool became fully functional on our website, providing property-specific planning information and achieving strong and increasing use with a confirmed 95 % accuracy rate.

The Local Law review commenced, which will support reducing red tape, especially for businesses needing permits. This is supported by Business Acceleration Fund grant funding through a joint submission with Wellington Shire Council.

Annual initiative: Secure future land and housing supply in accordance with the Housing and Settlement Strategy 2023, Plan for Victoria and associated plans for Paynesville, Eagle Point, Lucknow/East Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Omeo/Swifts Creek and Lindenow.

Progress: Amendment C172egip was gazetted, rezoning significant land in Paynesville and helping unlock long-term residential growth.

The Lucknow Precinct Structure Plan refresh was finalised in draft, supported by grant funding, and prepared for Councillor briefing and community consultation. Structure planning for Omeo and Swifts Creek progressed following community consultation, with final drafts moving toward future Council consideration.

We continued to support and guide developer-led rezoning proposals at Lake Tyers Beach, and Racecourse Road and Lucknow Street in Bairnsdale and Lucknow. We also advocated for trunk infrastructure and headworks investment through Plan for Victoria submissions, engagement with the Department of Transport and Planning, and support for MAV advocacy to unlock housing-enabling infrastructure.

Outcome: A well-functioning planning system that responds to our communities' needs.

Annual initiative: Deliver the Lakes Entrance Northern Growth Strategy to enable long-term land supply.

Progress: Work continued on the Lakes Entrance Northern Growth Area as a long-term land supply priority. The planning scheme amendment was lodged with the Department of Transport and Planning for authorisation, positioning the project for public exhibition if authorised.

Design work advanced on the first stage of the Lakes Entrance Northern Growth Area Drainage Strategy. This included functional layout options for the regional wetland and review of supporting catchment and drainage information. This work supports future growth by planning for the infrastructure needed to enable sustainable development in Lakes Entrance.

Annual initiative: Finalise the Coastal and Marine Management Plan.

Progress: The East Gippsland Shire Council Coastal and Marine Management Plan was completed and adopted, setting direction for coastal and marine areas managed by Council. The plan has been submitted for Ministerial approval, with work underway on a Resource Plan to support implementation. This provides a foundation for coordinated coastal planning, asset management and environmental stewardship.

Annual initiative: Initiate strategies that facilitate adequate supply of zoned residential, industrial and commercial land to support growth shire-wide.

Progress: We advanced strategic land supply work to support future residential, industrial and commercial growth across the shire.

The draft industrial land supply analysis for Bairnsdale was completed and progressed through internal review, providing evidence for future consultation and Council consideration. Broader planning work also continued through growth area projects, planning scheme amendments and advocacy for infrastructure investment that supports development readiness. The review of Rural Living Zone schedules did not proceed further during the year, with available investment redirected to higher-priority land supply pressures, particularly industrial land.



The East Gippsland Shire Council Coastal and Marine Management Plan was completed and adopted, setting direction for coastal and marine areas managed by Council.

Strategic indicators

Performance against the Council Plan's strategic indicators.

Strategic indicator	Target	2025-26	Comments
Number of ABN registrations	Number of ABN registrations	4,776	The number of actively trading businesses in East Gippsland has remained relatively stable compared with 4,744 registrations in 2024-25. Business registrations continue to outpace known business closures; however, it should be noted that business exits are not directly tracked through this measure.
Number of visitors to our region	Increase in visitors compared to previous year Data source - djsir.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-support/research	1,067,615	East Gippsland welcomed 1,067,615 visitors across the July and June 2026 financial year. This baseline year, using new DoTS data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA), reflects growth that supports local businesses, jobs and our communities' ongoing economic strength, while providing a benchmark for future visitation.
Feedback from local businesses on satisfaction with economic support and development efforts	Increased Satisfaction compared to previous year	Survey to commence in 2026-27	The local business satisfaction survey is to be distributed in July 2026.
Feedback from community members on their satisfaction with the planning system	≥ Large Rural Council average	47	Planning and building permit satisfaction improved significantly from 40 to 47, one point below the large rural council and statewide results of 48. In addition to the annual Community Satisfaction Survey, we introduced quarterly customer surveys to hear directly from people who have used planning services. This regular feedback is helping identify what is working well, where customers need clearer information, and where processes can be improved.
Percentage of planning applications decided within the specified timeframe (60 days for regular permits and 10 days for VicSmart permits)	55%	67.75%	Applications decided within the required timeframe reached 67.75%, surpassing the 55% target. This improvement reflects sustained effort to streamline planning processes and deliver more timely decisions for the community. Encouragingly, the result is supported by improved community satisfaction, evident through user surveys and the Community Satisfaction Survey 2026.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

The Victorian Government's compulsory service measures relevant to this goal are shown below:

Indicator Measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Roads					
Satisfaction of use Sealed local road requests[20]	92.51	34.15	49.32	49.40	Sealed local road requests increased slightly, reflecting continued community attention on the condition, safety and maintenance of the local road network. We used these requests alongside routine inspections, defect reporting and asset data to help prioritise maintenance, renewal and response works across the shire.
Condition Sealed local roads below the intervention level[21]	97.36%	96.03%	96.24%	96.19%	This represents a negligible decrease of 0.05% compared with the previous reporting period. Such a minor variation is within expected annual fluctuations and indicates that overall network condition has remained stable.
Service cost ($) Cost of sealed local road reconstruction[22]	68.54	192.13	459.20	110.13	The increase was due to Council's road maintenance contractor entering liquidation preventing the progression of the reseal program for an extended period. Following the procurement of a replacement contractor, construction rates were revised and increased to align with prevailing market conditions, resulting in higher reconstruction costs than those historically achieved under the previous contract.
Service cost ($) Cost of sealed local road resealing[23]	8.43	10.75	9.60	58.44	The reason for the significant increase is because Council's road contractor entered liquidation which impacted the amount of road reseals we could complete. As a result of having to engage a replacement contractor the costs to deliver the resealing program increased, this was also due to increased fuel costs. Costs were further impacted as the revised program comprised smaller, geographically dispersed priority works that did not achieve the economies of scale typically available through larger bundled contracts, as observed in previous years, resulting in higher than market unit rates and mobilisation costs.

[20] [Number of sealed local road requests / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100
[21] [Number of kilometres of sealed local roads below the intervention renewal level set by Council / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100
[22] [Direct cost of sealed local road reconstruction / Square metres of sealed local roads reconstructed]
[23] [Direct cost of sealed local road resealing / Square metres of sealed local roads resealed]

Indicator Measure	Results				Comments
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
Satisfaction Satisfaction with sealed local roads[24]	43	41	40	50	Sealed local road satisfaction improved strongly from 40 to 50, showing a significant positive shift in how the community views the condition of local sealed roads. This reflects ongoing investment in road renewal, resealing, maintenance and safety works across our extensive road network. While maintaining roads across such a large municipality remains challenging, this result shows improved community confidence.

[24] [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads]



Omeo streetscape revitalisation works were completed in July.

Indicator Measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Statutory Planning					
Timeliness Time taken to decide planning applications[25]	96	94	64	52.5	The median time taken to decide planning applications improved to 52.5 days, continuing a strong downward trend from 96 days in 2022/23. This reflects sustained effort to streamline assessment processes, with 67.75% of all applications and 72.88% of VicSmart applications now determined within the statutory timeframe. While more complex standard applications continue to take longer, this result demonstrates clear and consistent progress in delivering faster, more responsive planning decisions for the East Gippsland community.
Service standard Planning applications decided within 60 days[26]	37.12%	36.41%	56.07%	67.75%	Applications decided within the required timeframe reached 67.75% for the year, surpassing the target of 55%. This improvement reflects sustained effort to streamline planning processes and deliver more timely decisions for the community. Encouragingly, the result is supported by rising community satisfaction, evident in both the survey completed by service users and Community Satisfaction Survey 2026.
Service cost ($) Cost of statutory planning service[27]	1,823.28	3,339.14	3,553.64	3,715.73	The cost of the statutory planning service increased slightly. During the same period, Council improved planning application processing times and increased the proportion of applications determined within statutory timeframe.
Decision making Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT[28]	70.00%	40%	61.54%	100.00%	Five Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) matters involving Council were recorded during the financial year. Three Council planning decisions were appealed to VCAT, with all three determined in Council's favour. The remaining two matters were withdrawn or struck out.

[25] [The median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application]
[26] [Number of planning application decisions made within 60 days for regular permits and 10 days for VicSmart permits/ Number of planning application decisions made] x100.
[27] [Direct cost of statutory planning service / Number of planning applications received]
[28] [Number of VCAT decisions that did not set aside Council's decision in relation to a planning application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning applications] x100.

Cost of our services

The following statement provides information about the services funded in the Annual Budget 2025-26.

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Economic development and business support	We aspire to nurture a thriving and diverse economy that attracts investment and generates inclusive local employment. This extends to providing business support in the form of workshops and mentoring programs as well as investment facilitation and attraction. We work closely with other government agencies and industry, particularly around tourism and agriculture.	1,030.05 1,243.26 213.22
Events	We support, promote and approve (through event permits, resources and funding) over 200 events each year in partnership with our community and business sectors. These range from national days of significance through to tourism-driven events that highlight our region and what we have to offer, helping to drive our visitor economy and enhance social wellbeing and liveability.	358.20 370.50 12.29
Livestock Exchange	The East Gippsland Livestock Exchange in Bairnsdale includes 351 pens with automatic refill water, scanning bays, weigh stations, 13 loading races, stock agent office facilities, AVDATA truck wash and shower facilities, and yarding capacity of 3,000 cattle and 3,500 sheep/lambs. The fully accredited saleyards host sales weekly, including sheep, prime cattle and store cattle.	(717.58) (533.18) 184.40
Planning and building	Strategic planning guides development, promotes sustainable design, and supports heritage conservation through regular updates to the East Gippsland Planning Scheme. Statutory Planning processes planning applications, ensuring orderly development in line with laws and policies, while providing advice, making decisions, and representing Council at VCAT. The services also enforce statutory building regulations under the Victorian Building Code. These include providing advice on building permits and legislation, fire safety inspections, audits of swimming pool barriers and investigations of complaints and illegal works.	1,910.96 2,610.24 699.28

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Tourism	We operate accredited Visitor Information Centres in Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance that help over 180,000 visitors each year with places to stay, play, eat and explore. Visitor information services extend to Bruthen, Cann River, Mallacoota, Omeo, Paynesville, Orbost and our mobile Visitor Information Service. We support promotion, industry development and networking of tourism businesses including via our official visitor guide, Visit East Gippsland website and social media. Council also invests in infrastructure that enhances the visitor experience and supports the visitor economy.	884.00 714.62 (169.38)



The East Gippsland Winter Festival, including the Bruthen Medieval Winter Fire Festival, brought the community together for a month of unforgettable events, entertainment and winter fun across the Shire.

Theme 3 – Making the most of what we've got

Outcome: Natural assets are well-managed and protected.

Annual initiative: Invest in Council's natural areas to manage the threat from pests, enhance preservation of biodiversity and explore future offset opportunities. Develop management plans for key areas, work with partners to deliver on-ground works and advocate for external funding.

Progress: We progressed development of the East Gippsland Bushland Strategy, including appointing a consultant, confirming the project plan and engagement approach, and completed key background work. This included a literature review, mapping refinement, review of the 2022 ETHOS Strategy and development of ecological prioritisation criteria. Engagement started with Youth Ambassadors and key agencies, with broader community engagement prepared for delivery in 2026-27. The strategy will guide future bushland management and inform environmental management plans for selected reserves.

Annual initiative: Advocate to State and Federal governments to promote the use of public land for nature-based recreation, natural values management and economic development opportunities.

Progress: A position statement was developed on the use of public land for recreation and economic development, informed by targeted engagement with Council, community members and stakeholders. The position recognises that well-managed public land can protect natural habitat and threatened species, reduce pest plant and animal impacts for adjoining landholders, and support recreation, tourism and local economic outcomes. Advocacy was supported by a supplementary Pest Management Study prepared by the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee, Ministerial correspondence and communications.

Annual initiative: Work with partners to champion the development of an ecological audit of the Gippsland Lakes and a Gippsland lakes research and education centre dedicated to environmental research and education, including regular auditing of the health of the Gippsland Lakes.

Progress: Through the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee, we supported regional action to improve the health of the Gippsland Lakes and strengthen collaboration between agencies, community and government. The committee helped oversee Victorian Government investment and renewed its membership to support ongoing governance. Key outcomes included completion of the Crooke Street wetland project to improve water quality entering Jones Bay, protection of key flora and fauna on the outer barrier, and waterway improvements at Magees Gully to reduce urban stormwater impacts on MacLeod Morass. Working with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority as lead agency, this work supported monitoring, education and the evidence needed to consider a future Gippsland Lakes Research and Education Centre.

Annual initiative: Advocate for agreements between State, Local Government, and the community to ensure long-term stewardship of natural areas, including incorporating local knowledge and community aspirations in the management of Crown land.

Progress: We advocated for a strong outcome from the Great Outdoors Taskforce and reinforced public land management as a Victorian election priority. This work highlighted the importance of long-term stewardship of natural areas that reflects local knowledge, community aspirations and the environmental, social and economic value of East Gippsland's public land.

Outcome: Natural assets are well-managed and protected.

Annual initiative: Review flood mapping, schedules, and policy using the best available data, considering climate change, sea level rise, and increased rainfall intensity.

Progress: Peer reviews of existing flood studies were completed and draft mapping was prepared. Following a Victorian Government announcement that Catchment Management Authorities are now responsible for flood studies and flood amendments, this work was handed to the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. We will continue to support future studies and amendments where required, helping ensure flood planning is informed by work completed to date and aligned with regional catchment management responsibilities.

Annual initiative: Incorporate findings of the Climate Risk Assessment Project into strategic planning and decision-making to mitigate risk and adapt to a changing environment, ensuring our community is well-equipped to handle these challenges.

Progress: Stages 2 and 3 of the Climate Risk Assessment progressed, completing data collection, validation and climate risk modelling across built, social, economic and infrastructure areas. Asset-level and district-level risk assessments, including infrastructure interdependency analysis, were developed to support future adaptation, resilience and investment decisions. Work also advanced on the online Climate Risk Assessment interface, including dashboards, reporting tools and adaptation planning functionality, with completion scheduled for 2026-27.

Annual initiative: Advocate for community-led forest management by creating opportunities for local involvement in managing sections of state forest, with a focus on biodiversity, fire mitigation, and other uses.

Progress: We advocated for more opportunities for locally led forest management through targeted engagement with government agencies and monitoring of emerging policy. Our advocacy focused on place-based decision-making that supports environmental stewardship, economic diversification and long-term community resilience, including engagement with the proposed Healthy Forest Plan for Orbost. Public land management remains an important advocacy priority, particularly in the context of forestry transition, and continues to inform our broader economic development and regional resilience work.

Annual initiative: Partner with community, industry and social enterprise to increase recycling and develop circular economy opportunities across East Gippsland.

Progress: We advanced circular economy and waste reduction initiatives with regional partners. This included participating in a Regional Development Victoria roundtable that identified practical reuse, recycling and materials recovery opportunities, and working with Tambo Waste to engage the building and construction sector on waste reduction and safe battery disposal. The East Gippsland Second-hand Guide was developed to promote local reuse, while the Skeene Creek demonstration farm partnership with Gippsland Agriculture Group continued through site upgrades and composting trials. We worked with East Gippsland Water on recycled Class A water, reuse and stormwater harvesting opportunities to support long-term water security for the Bairnsdale Sport and Recreation Reserve and environmental benefits for MacLeod Morass.

Outcome: Natural assets are well-managed and protected.

Annual initiative: Implement educational programs and awareness campaigns to enhance community resilience, readiness and understanding of climate-related issues and minimise the impact of natural disasters.

Progress: Climate resilience, adaptation planning and emergency management were strengthened through climate risk modelling across our asset base, creating a dataset to support future adaptation and investment planning. We continued to chair the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee and advisory groups, progressed the East Gippsland Fire Management Plan, static water tank planning and the Relief and Recovery Operational Plan, and secured and managed recovery and resilience funding.

Community-led initiatives also improved local preparedness, including Community Emergency Management Plans, RediCommunities, emergency information screens, more than 900 Metung Emergency Information Booklets and the National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Gathering.

Annual initiative: Partner with community, industry and social enterprise to increase recycling and develop circular economy opportunities across East Gippsland.

Progress: Council endorsed the Waste and Recycling Service Review and Transition Plan in November 2025 and progressed priority actions, including planning for future kerbside waste and recycling services and a public tender process. Council also participated in joint advocacy on the proposed introduction of mandatory glass collection services and the release of Victorian Government service standards to guide future kerbside requirements, aligning services with Recycling Victoria policy.

Annual initiative: Design waste services for efficiency and to reduce landfill.

Progress: Building on the endorsed Waste and Recycling Service Review and Transition Plan, we completed the first stages of the Waste Services Review, including planning for future kerbside services and a public tender process. An Expression of Interest process was also completed to advance construction and operation of the Organic Composting Facility. Following EPA licence approval and Council's decision to grant a planning permit, the next phase of the tender process is ready to commence in 2026-27.

Annual initiative: Work with communities to plan for natural disasters and emergencies, strengthening capacity, infrastructure, resilience, preparedness, and recovery.

Progress: Community-led emergency planning expanded across high-risk communities, Aboriginal organisations and remote townships. Community Emergency Management Plans were developed for Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyers and Nowa Nowa, alongside three Aboriginal Community Emergency Management Plans and completion of the tenth Aboriginal plan – a significant milestone in supporting Aboriginal-led emergency management and self-determination. Local Incident Management Plans were reviewed and updated for communities including Metung, Nungurner, Buchan, Flaggy Creek, Newlands Arm, Raymond Island and Orbost. The focus also shifted from plan development to implementation through preparedness workshops, community engagement and advocacy for sustainable models that strengthen preparedness, response, recovery and long-term resilience.

Outcome: Our cultural heritage is managed and preserved.

Annual initiative: Advocate for funding to create a heritage skills knowledge hub, dedicated to preserving and promoting heritage skills.

Progress: Early investigation and concept work continued for a heritage skills hub, including how it could align with broader public land management and heritage priorities. Related heritage work progressed through the collaborative History in Motion funding application. The project seeks to capture oral histories, digitise archival material and create a lasting digital storytelling archive for future generations.

Annual initiative: Manage, preserve, and promote the cultural heritage of our community by delivering projects and programs designed to protect historical sites, support cultural events, and engage the community in preserving their cultural identity.

Progress: Several initiatives that celebrate East Gippsland's history, culture and creative identity were advanced. The Omeo Justice Precinct Masterplan progressed through final public exhibition, with community feedback informing refinements ahead of formal adoption in 2026-27. Cultural and creative practitioners were promoted through CreativeLink, BraveArts and the Creative Summit, helping build sector connection and visibility.

Local cultural experiences were also promoted through Destination Gippsland and Visit Victoria, including the East Gippsland Winter Festival, the Holi Festival of Colour and new Australian Tourism Data Warehouse listing requirements. Local storytelling and heritage preservation were supported through *This is Swifts Creek* and the *History in Motion* funding application. The Service Agreement Review also recognised the need to explore greater support for heritage initiatives.

Annual initiative: Work with First Nations people to recognise and celebrate their rich cultural heritage, connection to country and rights to self-determination.

Progress: Working with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust and Moogji Aboriginal Council we supported First Nations cultural inclusion, self-determined planning and Aboriginal-led recovery. This included programming First Nations creative works such as *SAPLINGS*, Dane Simpson and *South East Now* through the East Gippsland Art Gallery, and incorporating First Nations perspectives into the draft Public Art Policy. Aboriginal Community Emergency Management Planning continued, alongside actions from the Aboriginal and Cultural Recovery and Resilience recommendations. First Nations and community engagement also informed the guiding principles of the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park Master Plan and the Coastal and Marine Management Plan. The reinstated boomerang at the entrance to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust was delivered in partnership with Trust management and was another important cultural outcome.



Deputy Mayor Cr Tom Crook presenting a Community Impact Grant to Tambo Valley Golf Club.

Outcome: Our assets are well maintained, utilised and meet community needs.

Annual initiative: Conduct a review of Council assets and actively engage with our community on the rationalisation of under-utilised and end of life assets and promote co-location of user groups rather than exclusive use.

Progress: We progressed planning for an organisation-wide asset optimisation review, with rationalisation opportunities identified for future consideration.

Condition data and emerging service levels for buildings and open space assets are being used to refine renewal planning and identify assets that are at end of life, underused or no longer aligned with Council Plan priorities.

Annual initiative: Continue to prioritise the maintenance of roads, drainage and footpaths, considering how important they are for our community.

Progress: Road, drainage and footpath maintenance continued to be a key priority, recognising the importance of these assets to community safety, connectivity and access.

Annual initiative: Complete a review of our aquatic and recreation facility assets to identify appropriate maintenance and renewal programming for each site.

Progress: We progressed a detailed review of aquatic and recreation facility assets, including new asset registers, condition assessments and critical systems reviews. Condition assessments were completed for the Lakes Entrance Aquadome and continued for the Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre and Orbost Outdoor Pool. The East Gippsland Aquatic Strategy also progressed, with a Community Reference Group established, specialist consultants appointed and engagement underway. Following an independent safety assessment of the Bairnsdale Outdoor Pool, Council resolved in May 2026 to progress the Aquatic Strategy to help determine the facility's future role and guide future investment. This work supports more informed planning for aquatic and recreation facilities across the shire.

Annual initiative: Ensure the accessibility of community assets by mapping accessibility features and conducting audits.

Progress: Accessibility audits, advice and design work were actioned across priority infrastructure, including Swan Reach Recreation Reserve, the Nowa Nowa Sculpture Walk, Paynesville Library, the Council Corporate Centre, Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre Changing Places and Omeo Soldiers Memorial Hall. Sport and Recreation Victoria's Design for Everyone Guide was incorporated into access audit benchmarks for Council's recreation spaces, creating a more consistent approach to accessibility across future projects. These audits and design investigations are informing future works to improve access, inclusion and usability across community facilities and public spaces.

Annual initiative: Increase our focus on maintaining and renewal of existing assets over the creation of new ones, focussing on cost management and community need.

Progress: Renewal planning across key asset classes, including stormwater drainage, open space, roads, footpaths, buildings, marine assets, fleet and plant, was advanced. Draft renewal programs are being developed using existing condition data to better understand asset performance, risk and future investment needs.

Service levels for buildings and open space are also under review to support future budget planning and ensure renewal priorities are informed by community needs, asset condition and long-term service expectations. This work will support more transparent and sustainable asset management across the organisation.

Outcome: Our assets are well maintained, utilised and meet community needs.

Annual initiative: Work with partners to identify strategies and incentives to encourage private landowners to take an active role in managing weeds on council and crown land adjacent to their properties.

Progress: Strong engagement with Landcare groups and the community through the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program was maintained.

Local knowledge was used to identify infestations, assess reports and include suitable sites in the annual treatment program. Advice was also provided on legislation, landholder responsibilities and control priorities. Regional partnerships continued through the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee, the Far East Eden working group and the Regional Catchment Strategy. Completion of the Gippsland Lakes Invasive Pests Plan and support for the Good Neighbour Program and Southeast Coastal Ranges project helped advance shared priorities, advocacy and funding opportunities.

Annual initiative: Review renewal and maintenance programs to ensure our infrastructure, including public amenities remains safe, reliable, and efficient.

Progress: The Road Management Plan was reviewed, in line with statutory requirements. Reviewed the 2024-25 and 2025-26 (in progress) fire slashing seasons to identify improvements for future delivery. The review considered seasonal scheduling, coordination, environmental and cultural heritage requirements, and communication with CFA and DEECA. Maintenance planning also progressed for key coastal and marine assets.

A best-practice maintenance and dredging approach was implemented for Bastion Point Boat Ramp.



Celebrating the new Crooke Street Wetlands in Bairnsdale with Youth Ambassadors, community and project partners.

Strategic indicators

Performance against the Council Plan's strategic indicators.

Strategic indicator	Target	2025-26	Comments
Council sealed local roads and footpaths meeting service level needs	≥ 95%	96.19%	This result reflects the completion of road maintenance and renewal programs during the year, including resealing, pavement repairs, drainage works and other targeted improvements.
Capital renewal programs driven by renewal modelling using updated condition data	Capital renewal programs	To commence in 2026-27	Ten-year capital renewal programs have been developed for all asset classes using the latest condition data. Council officers are now progressing the development of service levels to clarify priorities and align these programs with service needs, balancing community expectations, the organisation's long-term commitment to financial sustainability and the value delivered through our services. This work is expected to be completed in 2026-27 to inform the 2027/28 renewal program.
Percentage of the Capital Program delivered by the end of the financial year	≥ 70%	74%	Council delivered 74% of its Capital Program during 2025-26, meeting the target of 70% against the revised budget. This result reflects continued investment in renewing and upgrading community infrastructure, including roads, drainage, buildings and recreation assets across the shire. Where projects extended beyond the financial year, works have been carried forward for completion in 2026-27.
Number of people utilising the Omeo Mountain Bike Trail	Increased utilisation compared to previous year	49,598 (baseline year)	The Omeo Mountain Bike Trail attracts visitors and supports tourism and economic activity in the high country. During the year, Council undertook ongoing trail maintenance and asset renewal activities to maintain trail quality, safety and the visitor experience, ensuring the trail remains a premier mountain biking destination.
Number of community members participating in environmental conservation projects	Baseline year	777	A total of 777 volunteers participated in Landcare grant projects across East Gippsland with EGCMA during 2024-25. This baseline result provides a benchmark for measuring future community participation in environmental conservation activities.
Community satisfaction with appearance of public areas	≥ Large Rural Council average	65	Community Satisfaction Survey result for Council's Appearance of Public Areas services are on par with those of other large shires in Victoria. The community perception for East Gippsland scored higher than the Victorian state average of 63.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

The Victorian Government's compulsory service measures relevant to this goal are shown below:

Indicator Measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Waste collection					
Service standard Kerbside collection bins missed[29]	1.75	2.4	2.02	2.82	For every 10,000 scheduled bin lifts, 2.82 bins were missed. While this represents a slight increase on the previous year, the result remains well within Council's target. Council continues to work closely with contractors to monitor performance, identify recurring issues and improve collection outcomes for the community.
Service cost ($) Cost of kerbside garbage collection service[30]	70.55	78.11	74.40	81.06	The cost of the kerbside garbage collection service increased slightly during the year due to higher service delivery costs, including higher fuel costs.
Service cost ($) Cost of kerbside recyclables collection service[31]	75.59	78.90	79.78	76.64	The cost of the kerbside recyclables collection service decreased slightly during the year due to the reduced volume associated with the Container Deposit Scheme. The reduction reflects lower direct service delivery costs relative to the number of kerbside recyclables bins serviced.
Waste Diversion Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill[32]	53.07%	49.18%	49.30%	48.30%	The Container Deposit Scheme has continued to contribute to a decrease in the weight of kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill. Council continues to work with community to ensure waste is recycled where possible

[29] [Number of kerbside garbage and recycling collection bins missed / Number of scheduled kerbside garbage and recycling collection bin lifts] x10,000
[30] [Direct cost of the kerbside garbage bin collection service / Number of kerbside garbage collection bins]
[31] [Direct cost of the kerbside recyclables bin collection service / Number of kerbside recyclables collection bins]
[32] [Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100

Cost of our services

The following statement provides information about the services funded in the Annual Budget 2025-26.

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Boat ramps and marinas	Our waterways contribute to our economy through industry, tourism, and recreation with over 1 million people visiting East Gippsland each year. We provide and maintain: » 3 marinas » 50 jetties » 31 boat launching ramps » 68 seawalls » 24 fishing platforms » 21 fish cleaning tables	(799.90) (747.94) 51.97
Aerodromes	We own and operate three airports, located at Bairnsdale, Mallacoota and Orbost. The airports accommodate both business and recreational aircraft, including aerial firefighting, air ambulance, chartered services and a flying school. Both Bairnsdale and Mallacoota also have fuel facilities, offering AVGAS and JET A1. The airports are important to facilitate access to air ambulance, emergency and visiting professional services.	1,049.49 1,079.42 29.92
Building maintenance	We own properties and buildings that serve various purposes, contributing to the community through direct Council services, community-based services, recreational and sporting activities, and commercial activities, including: » Recreation facilities » Community services buildings » Municipal buildings » Public amenities » Other buildings including children's services, commercial buildings and aerodromes.	4,084.34 2,567.65 (1,516.69)
Caravan parks and campgrounds	We manage four caravan parks and stop-over campgrounds at Cann River, Genoa, Mallacoota, and Swifts Creek. Marlo, Orbost, Omeo, Eagle Point, Bemm River, Eastern Beach Lakes Entrance, and Bairnsdale Riverside caravan parks are on lease arrangements.	(1,243.40) (1,100.52) 142.87

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Environmental planning and sustainability	We address a range of environmental issues on Council-owned or -managed land, including the Mosquito Management Program, pest plants and animals, and urban waterways. Our team develops environmental policies and strategies, coordinates and implements various environmental projects, and collaborates with other services to improve the Council's environmental performance. A key focus is reducing greenhouse gas emissions and utility usage within Council operations. This also includes community awareness programs and initiatives aimed at encouraging and supporting reduced energy and resource consumption.	213.04 567.83 354.79
New and replaced infrastructure and Project Management	This service delivers infrastructure to meet the service needs of our community, this function manages the capital and major works program, from detailed design and community engagement through to the attraction of funding, tendering projects and managing contractors through the construction phase.	5,017.09 4,167.84 (849.25)
Open Space	We maintain over 350 hectares (about 175 Melbourne Cricket Grounds) of open space across East Gippsland. This includes the maintenance and ongoing improvement of sporting facilities, gardens, recreational grounds, parks and natural bushlands to create active and passive environments for enjoyment of residents and visitors	6,657.81 6,617.25 (40.56)
Raymond Island Ferry	The Raymond Island Ferry links Raymond Island to Paynesville. The ferry operates from early morning to late in the evening every day. Annually, the ferry services over 300,000 vehicles and over 250,000 pedestrians.	1,751.99 1,624.33 (127.67)
Roads, bridges, footpaths and drainage	We maintain a 3,008km network of roads, registered on our Public Road Register- 1,338km sealed and 1,669km unsealed. We carry out maintenance on all our roads, mostly to a programmed schedule. We are responsible for road safety on roads we manage; advocate on road safety issues, including speed zones, to other road agencies; and consider road naming requests and tourist signage applications.	16,425.77 16,858.47 432.70
Waste and recycling services	We are striving to improve our waste facilities and services to maximise the recovery of waste before it enters landfill. We are responsible for waste collections, processing and disposal.	8,240.55 8,620.03 379.48

Theme 4 – Managing Council well

Outcome: Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust.

Our focus: We will enhance community engagement by:

- Making our budgets and financial documents easier to understand.
- Engaging with our community early to ensure their voices are heard from the start.
- Targeting engagement to the ways our communities prefer to connect with us.
- Using a range of approaches to engage with and report back to our community.

Progress: Community engagement was strengthened by making key information clearer, more accessible and easier to understand. Simple fact sheets were developed for the Budget, Long Term Financial Plan and Rating and Revenue Plan, covering topics such as the underlying result, capital investment, the rate cap and pensioner rebates. Quarterly performance reports were also improved with clearer commentary and graphs.

Engagement and communication plans supported major projects including public amenities, stormwater, foreshore planning and the Raymond Island Ferry pass review. Place-based engagement, including the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park Master Plan, demonstrated the value of face-to-face conversations in building trust and informing decisions. Closing the loop updates, Your Say news items, newsletters and other engagement tools helped improve transparency, accountability and organisational capability.

Our focus: Deliver high-quality, responsive, and compassionate customer service to prioritise and effectively address the needs and well-being of our community

Progress: Customer Response Management (CRM) system improvements included embedding CRM dashboards into daily operations, enabling more consistent monitoring of customer enquiries, service performance and response times. Further enhancements commenced during the year, including workflow mapping, service category reviews and process improvements. These initiatives contributed to improved service delivery outcomes, with 98.87% of customer enquiries responded to within required timeframes.

Our focus: Through our Digital Transformation Program, we will simplify systems and processes to make it easier to do business with us and help the community find what they need. This includes a transparency hub, website upgrade, online mapping services, and a new finance system for online payments and improved self-services.

Progress: The Digital Transformation Program was progressed across several priority areas. The Council IQ transparency portal was developed and is ready to launch in 2026-27, while a new website with chatbot will go live alongside Council IQ. Stage one of a new online mapping system was completed through stakeholder engagement, scoping and collaborative procurement with Wellington Shire Council, with rollout planned for 2026-27.

The new finance system went live in February, including key finance and payroll modules. We are in the final stages of testing online payments which wwill also go live in 2026–27, further improving self-service in this area. MyLot, Council's online planning tool, is now fully functional, with strong take-up and a confirmed 95% accuracy rate.

Together, these improvements are making it easier for the community to access information, complete tasks online and do business with Council.

Outcome: Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust.

Our focus: Design and implement our Organisational Plan to drive continuous improvement.

Progress: The Organisational Plan was endorsed by the Executive Leadership Team, providing a clear internal roadmap to guide how Council delivers on its priorities over the next four years. The Plan strengthens alignment between the Council Plan, workforce planning and day-to-day operations, giving staff greater clarity about priorities, expectations and how their work contributes to organisational performance and community outcomes.

Our focus: Ensure that our services are efficient and meet the needs of our community

Progress: Service planning foundations were strengthened with the Service Planning Framework endorsed, the Project Management Framework completed and now being embedded across projects, and the General Local Law review started (supported by Business Acceleration Fund grant funding through a joint submission with Wellington Shire Council).

Significant work progressed on community services and public amenity (toilets) service reviews; while completion of two full reviews within the year was extended into the next reporting period to allow additional stakeholder consultation, establishing a robust, evidence-based foundation for future service optimisation.

Business service improvements delivered measurable efficiency gains, with improvements valued at approximately $203,000. This result reflects the benefits of process redesign, service reviews, workflow improvements and better use of systems to reduce duplication and improve the way services are delivered.

The Financial Sustainability Strategy is progressing and, following delays at inception, is now expected to be completed in September 2026.



Our Open Space team connecting with students at a Careers Expo, in Cann River and Orbost, showcasing career opportunities at Council.

Strategic indicators

Performance against the Council Plan's strategic indicators.

Strategic indicator	Target	2025-26	Comments
Percentage of customer enquiries responded to within required timeframes	>95%	98.87%	Council consistently exceeded its target for responding to customer enquiries within required timeframes, demonstrating a strong organisational commitment to customer service. This performance reflects the collective effort of staff across the full customer journey, from accurately capturing customer requests, allocating them to the appropriate service area, through to timely completion and communication back to the customer. Continued monitoring of performance, refinement of processes and collaboration across service areas will ensure Council maintains this high standard of service while continuing to improve the customer experience.
Reduction in the number of customer complaints	Fewer complaints than previous year	180	The number of community complaints decreased from 361 in 2024-25 to 180 in 2025-26. Customer complaint numbers remained consistently low throughout the year, demonstrating a strong organisational focus on customer service and continuous improvement. While the nature of complaints changed throughout the year in response to emerging community issues, staff across Council worked proactively to resolve concerns, improve communication and strengthen service delivery. This sustained performance reflects a positive organisational culture where managing customer concerns is a shared responsibility and an important measure of service quality.
Community satisfaction with consultation and engagement	≥ Large Rural Council average	56	Community satisfaction has improved compared to the previous year, reflecting Council's continued focus on responding to community feedback, delivering priority projects and services, and strengthening communication and engagement with the community

Strategic indicator	Target	2025-26	Comments
Increased effectiveness of Council engagement activities	Increased engagement participation compared to previous year	6,426	We have improved the effectiveness of engagement activities by strengthening planning processes, increasing the use of digital engagement tools and in-person opportunities, and improving the quality and accessibility of project information. Earlier planning and adjustments to engagement approaches have increased our effectiveness in hearing from more people and closing the loop on decisions. Examples include earlier Budget engagement and the use of QR codes at sites for the public toilet engagement. Overall, the results show progress toward more timely, targeted and accessible engagement that supports informed community participation in Council decision-making.
Percentage of community engagement plans developed for Council projects	100%	100%	Engagement planning for Council projects has continued to mature, with plans developed for all key capital, strategic and service-related projects. Significant projects include the Raymond Island Ferry Pass review, development of the Mallacoota Foreshore Park Master Plan, the Public Toilets Review, Stormwater Management, Annual Budget and the Aquatic Strategy.
Efficiencies achieved from business service improvements	Increased efficiency	$203,000	Business service improvements delivered measurable efficiency gains, with improvements valued at approximately $203,000. This result reflects the benefits of process redesign, service reviews, workflow improvements and better use of systems to reduce duplication and improve the way services are delivered. These efficiencies are helping Council work more effectively, support better customer outcomes and strengthen long-term organisational performance.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

The Victorian Government's compulsory service measures relevant to this goal are shown below:

Indicator Measure	Results 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Comments
Governance					
Transparency Council resolutions at meetings closed to the public[33]	14.29%	14.29%	11.54%	11.20%	The proportion of Council resolutions made in closed meetings was 11.20%, compared with 11.54% in the previous year. Closed meetings are used where required to meet legislative obligations relating to confidentiality.
Consultation and engagement Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement[34]	41	41	46	56	Community satisfaction has improved compared to the previous year, reflecting Council's continued focus on responding to community feedback, delivering priority projects and services, and strengthening communication and engagement with the community.
Attendance Councillor attendance at Council meetings[35]	91.98%	91.98%	99.26%	100%	Note – this indicator includes both attendance at Council Meetings and approved leave recorded in Council meeting minutes. Councillor attendance was 100%, with all Councillors recorded as attending all Council meetings held during the reporting period. Council supports attendance through advance meeting scheduling, provision of meeting materials and ongoing support for Councillor participation.
Service cost ($) Cost of elected representation[36]	54,313.56	54,009.11	53,184.78	59,209.44	The increase in cost is attributed to the new mandatory professional development training that Councillors are required to do.
Satisfaction Satisfaction with Council decisions[37]	47	44	47	47	Community satisfaction with Council decision making is consistent with the previous year.

[33] [Number of council resolutions made at ordinary or special meetings of council, or at meetings of a special committee consisting only of councillors, closed to the public / Number of council resolutions made at ordinary or special meetings of council or at meetings of a special committee consisting only of councillors] x100

[34] [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed on community consultation and engagement

[35] [The sum of the number of councillors who attended each ordinary and special council meeting / (Number of ordinary and special council meetings) x (Number of councillors elected at the last council general election)] x100

[36] [Direct cost of the governance service / Number of councillors elected at the last council general election]

[37] [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed in making decisions in the interest of the community]

Cost of our services

The following statement provides information about the services funded in the Annual Budget 2025-26.

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Customer service	We have Customer Service Centres in six locations, providing access to Council and library services, and meeting room facilities. Outreach centres in Bendoc, Buchan and Cann River help with lodging forms, witness documents, accessing our website and public documents and more. Our call centre operates from 8.30am to 5 pm Monday to Friday and an after-hours service is available outside of these times for urgent matters.	2,651.42 2,593.81 (57.61)
Community leadership and advocacy	Council provides leadership on issues of importance to East Gippsland and advocates on behalf of the community and its vision for the future. It does this through strong, transparent, accountable leadership and the development of strong relationships with key stakeholders and other levels of government.	1,618.34 1,877.39 259.05
Finance	This service predominantly provides financial based services to both internal and external customers including the management of Council's finances and the management of rates and charges.	(2,759.85) (334.72) 2,425.13
Governance	This service provides a range of governance, statutory and corporate support services to Council, including coordination of business papers for meetings of the Council and its committees; coordination of arrangements for Council and committee meetings; and the maintenance of statutory registers and the conduct of municipal elections. An Audit Committee supports this service. This service also provides the framework, oversight and advice to support Council in complying with statutory procurement and contracting provisions.	4,209.90 4,325.29 115.39
Communications, Community Engagement and Civic Events	This service oversees the delivery and provision of advice on communications and engagement activities. The service also conducts civic events to recognise and celebrate community achievements.	1,084.49 1,484.00 399.51

Business area	Description of services provided	Net Cost Actual Budget Variance Surplus/ (deficit) $'000
Information services	The service provides a range of centralised and integrated services related to technology, data management, cybersecurity, ICT infrastructure and telecommunications, Information Management, Business Systems and Application Management and new and emerging technologies to assist Council to meet its business and legislative requirements and to assist staff to deliver services in a smart, productive and efficient way.	7,040.48 6,832.71 (207.77)
Property management	The management of Council's property portfolio including purchases, sales, leases and licenses to ensure land under Council's ownership or management is used effectively and in the best interests of current and future generations is delivered through this service.	389.42 423.12 33.70
Risk management and compliance	This service oversees the Council's risk and compliance framework, fostering prudent and responsible management in decision-making and service delivery. It ensures the highest standards of legislative compliance across all Council functions and minimises risk exposure through proactive and comprehensive systems and processes. Additionally, this service addresses Occupational Health and Safety, safeguarding the health and safety of all employees, contractors, and volunteers through robust management systems, procedures, and adherence to relevant legislation.	2,659.58 2,903.74 244.16
Human resources	This service provides human resource management including recruitment, learning and development, payroll and industrial relations services.	2,057.30 2,191.12 133.82
Strategy and performance	This service supports the development of the Council Plan and organisational performance reporting functions. It drives continuous improvement and conducts regular service reviews, sets improvement targets, and ensures our people resources are allocated effectively to meet service needs.	805.29 892.38 87.09

Section six: governance, management and other information



Our mobile visitor information vans bring visitor information to our tourist areas.

East Gippsland Shire Council is a public statutory body, which operates under the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

The Act sets out the role of Council, as an elected body, to provide leadership for the good governance of the East Gippsland Shire. Council's elected members and employees work within systems and processes to ensure they comply with all Acts administered by the Council.

Council is committed to effective and sustainable forms of democratic and corporate governance as the key to ensuring that council and its administration meet the community's priorities. The community has many opportunities to provide input into Council's decision-making processes including community consultation, public forums such as community meetings and the ability to make submissions to Special Committees of Council.

Council's roles and responsibilities

Council is committed to working in partnership with the wider community and other levels of government, to create and achieve the best opportunities possible for all people in East Gippsland. Key responsibilities of Council include:

- Guaranteeing good governance in the performance of its roles and responsibilities.
- Prioritising the best outcomes for the East Gippsland community.
- Making decisions that consider economic, social, and environmental sustainability of East Gippsland, including, where possible, mitigating and planning for climate change.
- Addressing the diverse needs of the local community in decision making.
- Advocating for the needs and desires of the community across East Gippsland.
- Providing leadership through strategic objectives, monitoring progress, and adapting to changes to support the community.
- Fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in the Council activities.
- Ensuring transparency of decision making and accessibility to publicly available information.



Wayne Burton - Sustainability and Climate Change Coordinator, Carina Turner - Sustainability and Waste Minimisation Officer, Nathan Misiurka - Manager Sustainability and Waste Minimisation, and Michelle Shugg, East Gippsland Landcare Facilitator, at Gippsland Agricultural Group's Spring Field Day in Bairnsdale.

Meetings of Council

Council is committed to transparent governance in decision-making. Council meetings are open to the public and are also livestreamed via Council's YouTube channel. Meetings are generally held on Tuesday evenings from 6pm. Meeting dates are published on Council's website.

Meetings provide an opportunity for community members to submit a question to the Council and speak on matters of interest to the community. Details for this are available on Council's website.

The business to be considered by Council is set out in an agenda, which is available on Council's website from 1pm on the Friday before the meeting.

In 2025-26, there were 15 Council meetings, comprising 12 scheduled, two unscheduled and one statutory meeting for the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Council meeting attendance

The following table provides a summary of Councillor attendance at Council meetings in 2025-26:

Councillor	Council meetings
Cr Arthur Allen	15
Cr Jodie Ashworth	15
Cr Sonia Buckley	15
Cr Tom Crook	15
Cr Barry Davis	13
Cr Bernie Farquhar	15
Cr Joanne Eastman	14
Cr Ian Trevaskis	15
Cr John White	14

Councillor allowances

Under section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Councillors are entitled to receive an allowance while performing their duty. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are also entitled to receive a higher allowance. The Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (the Tribunal) is responsible for setting allowances for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors.

The Tribunal has classified each Council into one of four Council allowance categories. East Gippsland is classified as a Category 2 Council.

The annual allowances that applied from 1 July 2025 to 17 December 2025 were Mayor $115,347, Deputy Mayor $57,673 and Councillor $35,049. From 18 December 2025, the annual allowances were Mayor $118,303 and Deputy Mayor $59,152. The Councillor allowance remained unchanged throughout the reporting period.

Councillor expenses

Under section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is required to reimburse a Councillor for expenses incurred whilst performing their duties as a Councillor. Council is also required to adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of expenses for Councillors in accordance with section 41 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The policy provides guidance for the payment of reimbursements of expenses and the provision of resources, facilities and other support to the Mayor and Councillors to enable them to discharge their duties.

The following table details the total expenses for all Councillors during the 2025-26 financial year.

Councillor	Base allowance $	Remote area travel allowance $	Total allowances paid $
Cr Arthur Allen	35,851	0	35,851
Cr Jodie Ashworth	84,449	0	84,449
Cr Sonia Buckley	43,688	2,172	45,860
Cr Tom Crook	47,777	0	47,777
Cr Barry Davis	35,145	0	35,145
Cr Joanne Eastman	35,145	0	35,145
Cr Bernie Farquhar	35,145	0	35,145
Cr Ian Trevaskis	33,893	0	33,893
Cr John White	66,691	0	66,691
Total	**417,784**	**2,172**	**419,956**

Office Expenses include Telephone and Stationery. Conferences/Training, Delegate and Other Council representation costs include related accommodation and travel expenses.

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Councillors must observe the Model Councillor Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct is to include the standards of conduct expected to be observed by Councillors while performing their duties and functions as Councillors, including prohibiting discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment) and vilification.

The Model Councillor Code of Conduct applies to all Victorian Councils and is prescribed by the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020*.

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises when a personal or private interest of a Councillor or officer in a matter may compromise their ability to act impartially and in the best interests of the community.

The *Local Government Act 2020* outlines the scope for determining conflicts of interest by an individual. Only an individual can decide if they have a conflict of interest in a matter. Council's Governance Rules address how a Councillor or staff member deals with a conflict of interest. The Governance Rules are available on the Council's website. A Conflicts of Interest Register captures the conflict disclosures by Councillors and is publicly available on Council's website.

Committees

The *Local Government Act 2020* allows councils to establish the following types of committees:

- Delegated committees
- Joint delegated committees
- Community asset committees
- Audit and Risk Committee

Councils may also establish advisory committees for the purpose of providing advice to Council.

Delegated committees

Under section 63 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a delegated committee established by Council must include at least two Councillors and may include other persons appointed by Council who are entitled to vote. Pursuant to section 11 of the Act, Council may delegate powers, duties and functions to a delegated committee.

Council has no delegated committees.

Joint delegated committees

Under section 63 of the Local Government Act 2020, two or more Councils may resolve to establish a joint delegated committee. A joint delegated committee must include at least one Councillor from each of the participating councils.

Council has not established any joint delegated committees.

Community asset committees

Council may also establish a community asset committee under section 65 of the *Local Government Act 2020* for the purpose of managing a community asset in the municipality and may consist of as many members as necessary in order to achieve its purpose.

These types of committees act under the power of delegation by the Chief Executive Officer, subject to any specified conditions and limitations specified in the Instrument.

Council has not established any community asset committees.

Advisory committees

Advisory committees have no decision-making powers and may only make recommendations to the Council. The following table contains a list of all advisory committees established by the Council that are in operation and the purpose for which each committee was established:

Committee	Councillors	Officers	Other	Purpose
Audit and Risk Committee	2	0	3	The Committee's primary role is to provide oversight, advice and guidance on Council's frameworks, systems and controls relating to: » Legislative and good governance compliance; » Financial and performance reporting; » Risk management with a focus on strategic risks; and » Internal and external audit.
Chief Executive Employment and Remuneration Committee	4	0	1	Considers and makes recommendations to Council regarding the: » Selection and appointment of an Independent Member » Performance monitoring of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), including achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) » Annual review of the CEO's performance against the KPIs » CEO's remuneration Recruitment, appointment (or reappointment) of a CEO, where required.

Committee	Councillors	Officers	Other	Purpose
East Gippsland Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee	2	0	14	Provides advice, guidance and recommendations to Council on matters affecting the agriculture sector in East Gippsland and its communities.
Marina Consultative Committee	2	0	6	Forms part of Council's consultation framework for the operation of services and facilities at the Metung, Chinaman's Creek and Slip Bight marinas.

Audit and Risk Committee

Under section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* Council must establish an Audit and Risk Committee.

The Audit and Risk Committee's role is to monitor and provide advice to Council on financial reporting, internal control, compliance, and risk management. It does this by providing independent advice on matters within its Charter to support Council decision-making.

The Committee performs an advisory function only. It has no executive powers or authority to implement actions in areas over which management has responsibility, and no delegated financial responsibility. It does not have any management functions and operates independently of management.

In December 2025, Council adopted an updated Audit and Risk Committee Charter to strengthen governance arrangements and align with best practice. This included clarifying that the Independent Chair is appointed by Council, formalising recruitment processes through a dedicated panel, and revising the Committee's membership composition to support independence and effective oversight.

The Committee now comprises five members: three independent external members, one of whom is appointed by Council as Chair, along with the Mayor of the day and one other Councillor appointed annually by Council.

This revised structure supports clear accountability in appointments, strengthens the Committee's independence, and enables more focused and effective oversight of Council's governance, risk, and financial management practices.

In 2025–26 the Audit and Risk Committee members were:

Councillors

- Cr John White (Mayor): July 2025 – November 2025
- Cr Jodie Ashworth (Mayor): November 2025 – June 2026
- Cr Jodie Ashworth (Councillor): July 2025 – November 2025
- Cr Joanne Eastman: July 2025 - June 2026

Independent Committee Members

- Celeste Gregory: July 2025 – November 2025 (Chair 2024 and 2025)
- Jason Hellyer: July 2025 – October 2025
- Susan Lloyd: July 2025 – June 2026
- Mark Dupè (Chair): February 2026 – June 2026
- Sarah Philpott: February 2026 – June 2026

Internal audit

The internal audit process assists Council and the Chief Executive Officer to assess, monitor and improve the effectiveness of risk management and governance processes and controls. The Internal Auditor reports on activities to the Audit and Risk Committee regularly throughout the year.

The function is undertaken by an independent external provider. A risk-based three-year Internal Audit Plan (IAP) is revised annually to ensure the audit resources remain focused on the appropriate areas. The review process considers Council's risk framework, the Council Plan, the impact of any change on operations, systems, or the business environment, prior audit coverage, outcomes and management input. The IAP is reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee annually.

External audit

Council is externally audited by the Victorian Auditor-General's representatives to provide an assurance that financial statements reflect the financial position at the end of the financial year.

For 2025-26, the annual external audit of Council's Financial and Performance Statements was conducted by the Victorian Auditor-General's representative, RSD Audit.

Risk management

Council remains committed to strengthening organisational resilience and supporting effective decision-making through a proactive and integrated approach to risk management. During 2025-26, Council continued to enhance its risk management framework through the implementation of an updated Risk Management Strategy, strengthened risk management practices and enhanced risk reporting.

A significant focus during the year was the redevelopment of risk registers and review of risk profiles across Council's business units to strengthen the identification, assessment and management of strategic, operational and emerging risks. This work increased risk ownership, improved consistency in risk assessments and enhanced oversight of key risks, controls and treatment actions.

Council also continued to build its resilience and preparedness through ongoing business continuity planning. Together, these initiatives have strengthened Council's risk management capability, supported a more consistent approach to managing risk across the organisation and enhanced oversight of strategic, operational and emerging risks.

Governance and management checklist

As outlined in section 98(3)(d) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and regulation 9(2)(c) of the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* (the Regulations), the results of Council's assessment against the Governance and Management Checklist are set out below in the form prescribed by the Regulations.

Governance and management Items	Assessment	
1 Community Engagement Policy Policy under section 55 of the Act outlining Council's commitment to engaging with the community on matters of public interest.	Policy adopted in accordance with section 55 of the Act. Date of adoption: 17 February 2026	✓
2 Community Engagement Guidelines Guidelines to assist staff to determine when and how to engage with the community.	Guidelines Date of commencement of current guidelines: 17 February 2026	✓
3 Financial Plan Plan under section 91 of the Act outlining the financial and non-financial resources required for at least the next 10 financial years.	Plan adopted in accordance with section 91 of the Act. Date of adoption: 23 June 2025	✓
4 Asset Plan Plan under section 92 of the Act setting out the asset maintenance and renewal needs for key infrastructure asset classes for at least the next 10 years.	Plan adopted in accordance with section 92 of the Act. Date of adoption: 23 June 2025	✓
5 Revenue and Rating Plan Plan under section 93 of the Act setting out the rating structure of Council to levy rates and charges.	Plan adopted in accordance with section 93 of the Act. Date of adoption: 23 June 2025	✓
6 Annual Budget Plan under section 94 of the Act setting out the services to be provided and initiatives to be undertaken during the budget year and the funding and other resources required.	Adopted in accordance with section 94 of the Act. Date of adoption: 23 June 2025	✓
7 Risk Policy Policy outlining council's commitment and approach to minimising the risks to Council's operations.	Policy Date of commencement of current policy: 21 October 2025	✓
8 Fraud Policy Policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to minimising the risks to Council's operations.	Policy Date of commencement of current policy: 5 May 2020	✓

Governance and management Items	Assessment	
9 Municipal Emergency Management Planning Participation in meetings of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.	Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) meetings attended by one or more representatives of Council (other than the chairperson of the MEMPC) during the financial year Dates of MEMPC meetings attended: » 5 September 2025 » 4 December 2025 » 5 March 2026 and » 4 June 2026	✓
10 Procurement Policy Policy under section 108 of the Act outlining the principles, processes and procedures that will apply to the purchase of goods and services by Council.	Policy adopted in accordance with section 108 of the Act Date of adoption: 16 December 2025	✓
11 Business Continuity Plan Plan setting out the actions that will be undertaken to ensure that key services continue to operate in the event of a disaster.	Plan Date of commencement of current plan: 29 May 2026	✓
12 Disaster Recovery Plan Plan setting out the actions that will be undertaken to recover and restore business capability in the event of a disaster.	Plan Date of commencement of current plan: 29 May 2026	✓
13 Complaint Policy Policy under section 107 of the Act outlining Council's commitment and approach to managing complaints.	Policy developed in accordance with section 107 of the Act. Date of commencement of current policy: 16 December 2021	✓
14 Workforce Plan Plan under section 46 of the Act outlining Council's commitment and approach to planning for current and future workforce requirements.	Plan developed in accordance with section 46 of the Act. Date of commencement of current plan: 1 July 2025 (finalised March 2026)	✓
15 Payment of Rates and Charges Hardship Policy Policy outlining Council's commitment and approach to assisting ratepayers who are experiencing financial hardship or difficulty paying their rates.	Policy Date of commencement of current policy: 27 August 2024	✓
16 Risk Management Framework Framework outlining Council's approach to managing risks to the Council's operations.	Framework Date of commencement of current framework: 21 October 2025	✓

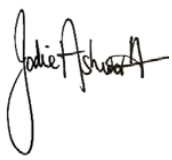
Governance and management Items	Assessment	
17 Audit and Risk Committee Advisory committee of Council under section 53 and section 54 of the Act whose role is to monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures, monitor Council's financial reporting, monitor and provide oversight on internal and external audit functions.	Established in accordance with section 53 of the Act. Date of establishment: 16 December 2025	✓
18 Internal Audit Independent accounting professionals engaged by the council to provide analyses and recommendations aimed at improving Council's governance, risk and management controls.	Engaged Date of engagement of current provider: 30 October 2024	✓
19 Performance Reporting Framework A set of indicators measuring financial and non-financial performance, including the performance indicators referred to in section 98 of the Act.	Framework Date of adoption of current framework: 29 June 2021	✓
20 Council Plan Report Report reviewing the performance of the council against the Council Plan, including the results in relation to the strategic indicators, for the first six months of the financial year.	Report Date of report: » 21 October 2025 » 18 November 2025 » 17 March 2026 » 19 May 2026	✓
21 Quarterly Budget Reports Quarterly reports to the Council under section 97 of the Act comparing actual and budgeted results and an explanation of any material variations.	Reports presented to Council in accordance with section 97(1) of the Act Dates reports presented: » 21 October 2025 » 18 November 2025 » 17 March 2026 » 19 May 2026	✓
19 Risk Reports (6-monthly reports of strategic risks to council's operations, their likelihood and consequences of occurring and risk minimisation strategies)	Reports Dates of reports: » 25 August 2025 » 23 February 2026 » 25 May 2026	✓
23 Performance Reports Six-monthly reports of indicators measuring financial and non-financial performance, including performance indicators referred to in section 98 of the Act.	Reports Dates of reports: » 21 October 2025 » 19 May 2026	

Governance and management Items	Assessment	
24 Annual Report Annual Report under sections 98 and 99 of the Act of containing a report of operations and audited financial and performance statements.	Presented at a meeting of the Council in accordance with section 100 of the Act. Date of presentation: 21 October 2025	✓
25 Councillor Code of Conduct Code under section 139 of the Act setting out the standards of conduct to be followed by Councillors and other matters.	Reviewed and adopted in accordance with section 139 of the Act Date reviewed and adopted: 20 November 2024	✓
26 Delegations Documents setting out the powers, duties and functions of Council and the Chief Executive Officer that have been delegated to members of staff, in accordance with sections 11 and 47 of the Act.	Reviewed in accordance with section 11(7) of the Act and a register kept in accordance with sections 11(8) and 47(7) of the Act Date of review under section 11(7): 21 October 2025	✓ ✓
27 Meeting Procedures Governance Rules under section 60 of the Act governing the conduct of meetings of Council and delegated committees.	Governance Rules adopted in accordance with section 60 of the Act Date Governance Rules adopted: 30 August 2022	✓

I certify that this information presents fairly the status of Council's governance and management arrangements.



Fiona Weigall
Chief Executive Officer
Dated: 17 September 2026



Cr Jodie Ashworth
Mayor
Dated: 17 September 2026

Statutory information

Information available for public inspection

Council has a Public Transparency Policy that commits to making Council information publicly available except where the information is confidential by virtue of legislation or not in the public interest. Publicly available information can be accessed on our website, where possible. Information not able to be placed on the website may be accessed on request for viewing in person.

Our Public Transparency Policy, available on our website, outlines the information that is publicly accessible.

Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) provides individuals with the right to request access to Council documents. There is an application procedure, and rights of access are limited by exemptions detailed in the FOI Act. Applications must be accompanied by an application fee and specific details of the documents requested.

Council received 43 applications during the reporting year. One request was transferred to or from another agency within this financial year. Additionally, three requests were carried forward from 2024-25.

	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
New applications / requests	43	33	36	39	26
Access granted in full	18	4	6	1	15
Access granted in part	3	6	3	12	6
No documents existed in the requested form / Act does not comply	1	1	1	5	2
Access denied	0	0	0	4	2
Withdrawn	1	1	2	2	1
Requests outstanding at end of financial year	5	3	3	3	0
Review by Office of Victorian Information Commissioner	1	0	2	1	0
Appeals lodged with VCAT	0	0	0	0	0
Fees collected ($)	739.20	294.30	445.20	642.60	752.50
Fees waived ($)	126.00	98.10	7	428.40	408.00
Charges collected ($)	924.03	189.86	386.00	424.30	0

Public Interest Disclosures

Council is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the organisation and compliance with the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*. The Act supports integrity in the public sector by encouraging the reporting of suspected improper conduct and detrimental action and providing protections for those who make disclosures.

Council's Public Interest Disclosure Policy and associated procedures establish the framework for receiving, assessing and reporting public interest disclosures and encourage the making of disclosures by staff, Councillors and members of the public. The Policy is publicly available on Council's website and includes information on how disclosures may be made and managed.

Council made no public interest disclosure notifications to the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC).

Privacy and Data Protection Act

The *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, along with the *Health Records Act 2001*, are designed to protect personal information.

Council's Privacy Policy was adopted on 30 April 2024 which guides how Council collects, uses and discloses personal information where it is necessary to perform Council functions or when required by law. Formal complaints can be made if people believe their privacy has been breached.

Further details about Council's approach to privacy are available on our website.

Contracts

Section 108(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to adopt a Procurement Policy which specifies the principles, processes and procedures that apply in respect to the purchase of works, goods and services.

Council's Procurement Policy was adopted 16 December 2025. Fifty formal procurement processes (including Requests for Tender, Requests for Quotation and Expression of Interest requests) were advertised. These complied with the expenditure thresholds and market engagement requirements as detailed in the Procurement Policy.

The details of all contracts are:

Year	Contracts awarded by Chief Executive Officer ($)		Total Contracts awarded	Contracts awarded by Council ($)	Total Contracts awarded
	< 250,000 (inc. GST)	< 500,000 (inc. GST)		>500,000 (inc. GST)	
2025-26	9	9	18	32	50

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-29

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires Council to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years. Council adopted the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026–2029 in March 2026 following community consultation, providing a four-year framework for responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, education and compliance activities across the municipality.

The plan helps Council provide a professional, consistent and proactive approach to domestic animal management services. This includes education and promotion of responsible pet ownership.

Council completed the following actions during the year:

- Attended the East Gippsland Field Days and the Orbost Show to provide education on responsible pet ownership.
- Enrolled two officers in required training courses, including Certificate IV in Animal Regulation and Certificate IV in Government Investigations
- Presented to the Animal Studies student group at TAFE Gippsland on animal management.

Year	Animal Impoundments	Reclaimed	Adopted	Euthanised	Transferred to Animal Aid Coldstream[1]
2025-26	555	163	203	130	22
2024-25	656	167	267	131	15
2023-24	474	134	219	67	8
2022-23	572	132	145	97	4

[1] Coldstream is the headquarters of Animal Aid, Council's pound services contractor

Food Act Ministerial Directions

Under section 7E of the *Food Act 1984*, Council is required to publish a summary of any ministerial directions received during the financial year in its annual report.

No such ministerial directions were received by Council during the financial year.

Road Management Act Ministerial Directions

Under section 22 of the *Road Management Act 2004*, Council must publish a copy or summary of any ministerial directions in its annual report.

No such ministerial directions were received by Council during the financial year.

Infrastructure and Development Contributions

Under section 46GM and 46QD of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, a Council that is a collecting or development agency must prepare and give a report to the Minister for Planning on infrastructure and development contributions including levies and works in kind and publish this report in its Annual Report.

For the 2025-26 year there were no infrastructure and development contributions made. Council did not collect any Community Infrastructure Levies or payments.

Section seven: Financial reports



Ella and Chase visiting the Mobile Library Van at East Gippsland Field Days in April.

Financial Report Contents

Certification of the Financial Statements 130
Victorian Auditor-General's Office Report 131
Financial Statements:
Comprehensive Income Statement 133
Balance Sheet 134
Statement of Changes in Equity 135
Statement of Cash Flows 136
Statement of Capital Works 137
Notes to the Financial Report
Note 1 Overview 138
Note 2 Analysis of our results 139
2.1 Performance against budget 140
2.2 Analysis of Council results by program 148
Note 3 Funding for the delivery of our services 149
3.1 Rates and charges 149
3.2 Statutory fees and fines 149
3.3 User fees 150
3.4 Funding from other levels of government 151
3.5 Contributions 154
3.6 Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment 154
3.7 Other income 154
Note 4 The cost of delivering services 155
4.1 Employee costs 155
4.2 Materials and services 156
4.3 Depreciation 157
4.4 Amortisation – Intangible assets 157
4.5 Depreciation – Right of use assets 157
4.6 Allowance for impairment losses 158
4.7 Borrowing costs 158
4.8 Finance Costs – Leases 158
4.9 Other expenses 159
Note 5 Investing in and financing our operations 160
5.1 Financial assets 160
5.2 Non-financial assets 162
5.3 Payables, trust funds and deposits and contract and other liabilities 163
5.4 Interest-bearing liabilities 164
5.5 Provisions 165
5.6 Financing arrangements 167
5.7 Commitments 168
5.8 Leases 169
Note 6 Assets we manage 172
6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment 172
6.2 Investment property 179

Note 7 People and relationships 180
7.1 Council and key management remuneration 180
7.2 Related party disclosure 183
Note 8 Managing uncertainties 184
8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities 184
8.2 Australian Accounting Standards issued but not yet effective 185
8.3 Financial instruments 185
8.4 Fair value measurement 187
8.5 Events occurring after balance date 188
Note 9 Other matters 189
9.1 Reserves 189
9.2 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to surplus/(deficit) 191
Note 10 Changes in accounting policies 191

Performance statement 192
Certification of performance statement 193
Victorian Auditor-General's Office audit report 194
Section 1. Description of municipality 196
Section 2. Service Performance Indicators 197
Section 3. Financial Performance Indicators 200
Section 4. Sustainable Capacity Indicators 204
Section 5. Notes to the accounts 206
5.1 Basis of preparation 206
5.2 Definitions 207
5.3 Other Matters 208

East Gippsland Shire Council

Annual Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Certification of the Financial Statements

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*, the Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.



Ernest Mhande
Responsible Accounting Officer
Dated: 18 September 2026
Bairnsdale

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial transactions of East Gippsland Shire Council for the year ended 30 June 2026 and the financial position of the Council as at that date.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render any particulars in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the Council and by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* to certify the financial statements in their final form.



Jodie Ashworth
Mayor
Dated: 18 September 2026
Bairnsdale



Tom Crook
Deputy Mayor
Dated: 18 September 2026
Bairnsdale



Fiona Weigall
Chief Executive Officer
Dated: 18 September 2026
Bairnsdale

Independent Auditor's Report

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

To the Councillors of East Gippsland Shire Council

Opinion	I have audited the financial report of East Gippsland Shire Council (the council) which comprises the: • balance sheet as at 30 June 2026 • comprehensive income statement for the year then ended • statement of changes in equity for the year then ended • statement of cash flows for the year then ended • statement of capital works for the year then ended • notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information • certification of the financial statements. In my opinion the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the council as at 30 June 2026 and their financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.
Basis for Opinion	I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of my report. My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.
Councillors' responsibilities for the financial report	The Councillors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020, and for such internal control as the Councillors determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial report, the Councillors are responsible for assessing the council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.

Level 31 / 35 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000
T 03 8601 7000 enquiries@audit.vic.gov.au www.audit.vic.gov.au

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the council's internal control
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Councillors
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Councillors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the council's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the council to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Councillors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.



MELBOURNE
21 September 2026

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

East Gippsland Shire Council

Comprehensive Income Statement

for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Note	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Income / Revenue			
Rates and charges	3.1	74,957	72,720
Statutory fees and fines	3.2	2,442	2,398
User fees	3.3	15,271	14,739
Grants - operating	3.4	33,683	35,424
Grants - capital	3.4	8,465	21,718
Contributions - monetary	3.5	763	399
Contributions - non monetary	3.5	6,295	11,708
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	3.6	293	329
Fair value adjustments on investment properties	6.2	297	377
Other income	3.7	9,574	11,871
Total income / revenue		152,040	171,683
Expenses			
Employee costs	4.1	47,301	45,997
Materials and services	4.2	58,241	57,326
Depreciation	4.3	32,993	31,704
Amortisation - Intangible assets	4.4	924	997
Depreciation - Right of use assets	4.5	36	80
Allowance for impairment losses	4.6	50	105
Borrowing costs	4.7	336	355
Finance Costs - Leases	4.8	12	14
Other expenses	4.9	4,766	9,427
Landfill rehabilitation provision movement	5.5	(346)	271
Total expenses		144,313	146,276
Surplus for the year		7,727	25,407
Other comprehensive income:			
Items that will not be reclassified to surplus or deficit in future periods			
Net asset revaluation gain	9.1	128,847	–
Total items which will not be reclassified subsequently to the operating result		128,847	–
Total other comprehensive income		128,847	–
Total comprehensive result		136,574	25,407

The above comprehensive income statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Balance Sheet

as at 30 June 2026

	Note	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5.1	80,044	86,005
Other financial assets	5.1	38,038	37,159
Trade and other receivables	5.1	11,437	10,417
Contract assets		3,515	2,337
Other assets	5.2	2,249	2,738
Total current assets		135,283	138,656
Non-current assets			
Trade and other receivables	5.1	59	99
Other financial assets	5.1	10	10
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	6.1	1,505,107	1,375,817
Investment property	6.2	13,318	13,030
Intangible assets	5.2	1,129	1,959
Right-of-use assets	5.8	429	465
Total non-current assets		1,520,052	1,391,380
Total assets		1,655,335	1,530,036
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5.3	9,198	16,105
Trust funds and deposits	5.3	4,022	3,821
Contract and other liabilities	5.3	3,737	7,204
Provisions	5.5	7,682	13,743
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.4	1,878	695
Lease liabilities	5.8	21	24
Total current liabilities		26,538	41,592
Non-current liabilities			
Contract and other liabilities	5.3	179	265
Provisions	5.5	13,844	8,067
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.4	6,622	8,501
Lease liabilities	5.8	514	547
Total non-current liabilities		21,159	17,380
Total liabilities		47,697	58,972
Net assets		1,607,638	1,471,064
Equity			
Accumulated surplus		540,704	533,426
Reserves	9.1	1,066,934	937,638
Total Equity		1,607,638	1,471,064

The above balance sheet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Statement of Changes in Equity

for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Note	Total $ '000	Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Revaluation Reserves $ '000	Other Reserves $ '000
2026					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		1,471,064	533,426	934,911	2,727
Surplus for the year		7,727	7,727	–	–
Net asset revaluation gain	6.1	128,847	–	128,847	–
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	–	(449)	–	449
Balance at end of the financial year		1,607,638	540,704	1,063,758	3,176
2025					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		1,445,657	508,156	934,911	2,590
Surplus for the year		25,407	25,407	–	–
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	–	(137)	–	137
Balance at end of the financial year		1,471,064	533,426	934,911	2,727

The above statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Note	2026 Inflows/ (Outflows) $ '000	2025 Inflows/ (Outflows) $ '000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Rates and charges		74,033	72,187
Statutory fees and fines		2,349	2,397
User fees		19,653	15,855
Grants - operating		33,367	37,139
Grants - capital		6,664	13,976
Contributions - monetary		763	425
Interest received		5,031	5,754
Reimbursements		3,194	4,675
Trust funds and deposits taken		10,947	9,870
Other receipts		1,541	1,803
Net GST refund		2,601	4,058
Employee costs		(47,091)	(45,256)
Materials and services		(73,425)	(59,932)
Trust funds and deposits repaid		(11,077)	(10,258)
Other payments		(2,153)	(3,117)
Net cash provided by operating activities	9.2	26,397	49,576
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	6.1	(31,723)	(44,461)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		651	1,949
Payments for investments		(205)	(37,159)
Net cash (used in) investing activities		(31,277)	(79,671)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Finance costs		(337)	(355)
Repayment of borrowings		(696)	(663)
Interest paid - lease liability		(12)	(14)
Repayment of lease liabilities		(36)	(60)
Net cash flow (used in) financing activities		(1,081)	(1,092)
Net (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		(5,961)	(31,187)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		86,005	117,192
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year [1]		80,044	86,005
Financing arrangements	5.6	10,300	10,996

(1) The above statement of cash flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Statement of Capital Works

for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Note	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Property			
Land		121	104
Total land		121	104
Buildings		4,075	7,615
Heritage buildings		75	19
Total buildings		4,150	7,634
Total property		4,271	7,738
Plant and equipment			
Plant, machinery and equipment		4,008	4,763
Fixtures, fittings and furniture		455	551
Computers and telecommunications		693	938
Library books		208	207
Total plant and equipment		5,364	6,459
Infrastructure			
Roads		6,665	11,872
Bridges		108	1,528
Footpaths and cycleways		1,022	1,326
Drainage		1,937	2,506
Recreational, leisure and community facilities		6,540	5,619
Waste management		512	161
Parks, open space and streetscapes		1,881	4,000
Aerodromes		24	53
Off street car parks		47	1,147
Other infrastructure		2,012	1,416
Total infrastructure		20,748	29,628
Total capital works expenditure	6.1	30,383	43,825
Represented by:			
New asset expenditure		4,907	9,652
Asset renewal expenditure		23,144	32,663
Asset upgrade expenditure		2,332	1,510
Total capital works expenditure		30,383	43,825

The above statement of capital works should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 1. Overview

Introduction

The East Gippsland Shire Council was established by an Order of the Governor in Council on 2 December 1994 and is a body corporate.

The Council's main office is located at 273 Main Street Bairnsdale Victoria 3875.

Statement of compliance

These financial statements are a general purpose financial report that consists of a Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Capital Works and Notes accompanying these financial statements. The general purpose financial report complies with Australian Accounting Standards (AAS), other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board, the *Local Government Act 2020*, and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.*

The Council is a not-for-profit entity and therefore applies the additional AUS paragraphs applicable to a not-for-profit entity under the Australian Accounting Standards.

Accounting policy information

1.1 Basis of accounting

Accounting policies are selected and applied in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported. Specific accounting policies applied are disclosed in sections where the related balance or financial statement matter is disclosed.

The accrual basis of accounting has been used in the preparation of these financial statements, except for the cash flow information, whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid.

The financial statements are based on the historical cost convention unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the notes to the financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The financial statements are in Australian dollars. The amounts presented in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified. Minor discrepancies in tables between totals and the sum of components are due to rounding.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated judgements are based on professional judgement derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of AAS's that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates relate to:

- the fair value of land, buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment (refer to Note 6.1.)
- the determination of depreciation for buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment (refer to Note 6.1.).
- the determination of employee provisions (refer to Note 5.5.).
- the determination of landfill provisions (refer to Note 5.5.)
- the determination of whether performance obligations are sufficiently specific so as to determine whether an arrangement is within the scope of *AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers or AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities* (refer to Note 3)
- the determination, in accordance with *AASB 16 Leases*, of the lease term, the estimation of the discount rate when not implicit in the lease and whether an arrangement is in substance short-term or low value (refer to Note 5.8)
- other areas requiring judgements

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 1. Overview (continued)

Unless otherwise stated, all accounting policies are consistent with those applied in the prior year. Where appropriate, comparative figures have been amended to accord with current presentation, and disclosure has been made of any material changes to comparatives.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)
Income and expenses are recognised net of the amount of associated GST. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

1.2 Impacts of other external events

Council has considered the ongoing external economic conditions that have contributed to volatility in international markets, disruption to global supply chains and continued inflationary pressures. Council has assessed the implications of these conditions for the financial report and has identified the following significant impacts and areas of estimation uncertainty:

Fuel prices:
Higher fuel prices during the year resulted in an unfavourable variance of $119,519 in relation to Council's own fleet and associated service delivery costs. This amount excludes indirect cost increases incorporated into the prices charged by contractors engaged across Council's capital and operating programs. While these impacts are not separately quantifiable, they are expected to have contributed to additional cost pressures across Council's capital and operating expenditure.

Infrastructure asset revaluation:
Higher-than-anticipated indexation rates applied in the valuation of infrastructure resulted in a net revaluation increment of $112,821,826, recognised in the asset revaluation surplus. The higher indexation reflects continued increases in construction, labour and material costs across the sector and the broader inflationary pressures affecting infrastructure delivery and replacement costs.

These matters involve significant judgement and estimation uncertainty, particularly in determining the expected future movement in input costs, construction costs, supply availability and market-based indexation rates. These factors remain subject to economic and market volatility and may change as conditions evolve. Council will continue to monitor these external factors and their potential impact on its financial position and financial performance and will revise relevant estimates and assumptions in future reporting periods as more reliable information becomes available.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2. Analysis of our results

Note 2.1 Performance against budget

The performance against budget notes compare Council's financial plan, expressed through its annual budget, with actual performance. The *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* requires explanation of any material variances. Council has adopted a materiality threshold of the lower of 10 percent or $500,000 where further explanation is warranted. Explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality threshold unless the variance is considered to be material because of its nature.

These notes are prepared to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.*

2.1.1 Income / Revenue and expenditure

	Budget 2026 $ '000	Actual 2026 $ '000	Variance $ '000	Variance %	Ref
Income / Revenue					
Rates and charges	74,425	74,957	532	0.71%	
Statutory fees and fines	2,693	2,442	(251)	(9.32)%	
User fees	14,268	15,271	1,003	7.03%	1
Grants - operating	23,973	33,683	9,710	40.50%	2
Grants - capital	18,929	8,465	(10,464)	(55.28)%	3
Contributions - monetary	430	763	333	77.44%	4
Contributions - non monetary	4,000	6,295	2,295	57.38%	5
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	725	293	(432)	(59.59)%	6
Fair value increment on investment properties	–	297	297	∞	7
Other income	5,364	9,574	4,210	78.49%	8
Total income / revenue	144,807	152,040	7,233	4.99%	
Expenses					
Employee costs	43,368	47,301	(3,933)	(9.07)%	9
Materials and services	55,602	58,241	(2,639)	(4.75)%	10
Depreciation	32,270	32,993	(723)	(2.24)%	11
Amortisation - intangible assets	1,133	924	209	18.45%	
Depreciation - right of use assets	76	36	40	52.63%	12
Allowance for impairment losses	23	50	(27)	(117.39)%	13
Borrowing costs	369	336	33	8.94%	
Finance costs - leases	1	12	(11)	(1,100.00)%	
Other expenses	2,734	4,766	(2,032)	(74.32)%	14
Landfill rehabilitation provision movement	–	(346)	346	∞	15
Total expenses	135,576	144,313	(8,737)	(6.44)%	
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	9,231	7,727	(1,504)	(16.29)%	

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

(i) Explanation of material variations

VarianceExplanation Ref

1. User fees exceeded budget by $1.003 million, mainly due to higher usage and activity across several facilities. The strongest contributors were the Livestock Exchange, which generated an additional $297,613 from increased sales, and the Eagle Point Foreshore Hub, which was $181,562 above budget. Waste landfill operations and transfer stations also exceeded budget by $148,348, while indoor recreation centres and pool memberships were $72,317 higher than expected due to increased patronage. Booking fees at Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park and Swifts Creek Caravan Park were $69,700 above budget, reflecting higher visitor numbers. The remaining $234,000 favourable variance related to other activities, including customer service centres, aerodromes and libraries.

2. Grants Operating: Grant income was $9.710 million higher than the adopted budget, mainly because an advance payment of $17,696 million being received in June 2026 from the Victoria Grants Commission for the 2026/27 financial year as an early payment of 80% of our Financial Assistance Grants.

3. Grants – Capital: Capital grants were $10.464 million below the adopted budget, mainly due to delays in several capital projects. As these projects are now expected to be completed in the 2026/27 financial year, the related grant funding was not recognised in the current year. Key projects with funding carried forward include Bairnsdale Runway 04/22 Extension and Lighting Upgrade ($5.000 million), Gippsland Lakes Shared Community Hub ($1.250 million), World Sports Precinct ($0.55 million), Bairnsdale Aerodrome rehabilitation of taxiway & hanger apron ($0.57 million) and Krauatungalung Walk Stage 2 - section 4 ($0.4 million).

4. Contributions Monetary: Monetary contributions were $333,000 above budget, mainly due to unbudgeted contributions received during 2025/26. These included Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve ($17,724), Lindenow Bowling Green ($30,188), Roads Sealed Area – Orbost ($69,000) and planning permits ($77,267). The remaining $140,000 related to other contributions.

5. Contribution-Non monetary:Non-monetary contributions were $2.295 million above budget, with contributed assets totalling $6.295 million compared with a budget of $4.000 million. Developer-contributed assets can vary significantly from year to year, depending on subdivision activity and the timing of asset handovers. In 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26, the value of assets transferred to Council was higher than usual due to the completion of several subdivisions. These contributions are difficult to forecast accurately, as the timing of development completion is often uncertain.

6. Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment: During the year, Council sold property, infrastructure, plant and equipment, resulting in a net gain that was $432,000 lower than budget. Variations in gains or losses on asset disposals are common, as the timing and value of asset sales can vary significantly and are difficult to predict in advance. The net proceeds realised depend on a range of factors, including market conditions, the condition of the assets at the time of sale, and Council's operational requirements. As a result, actual outcomes may differ from the amounts originally budgeted.

7. Fair Value Adjustments on investment properties: At the end of the year, the fair value of investment properties increased by $297,000. This increase was not included in the budget because fair value adjustments are difficult to predict accurately. Market conditions and property values can fluctuate unexpectedly due to factors beyond the Council's control, making it challenging to estimate these changes at the time of preparing the budget.

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

8. Other Income:Other income was $4,210 million higher than budgeted. This was due to additional investment income of $1.115 million earned during the year. The increase resulted from higher-than-expected interest rates and more cash available for investment. The cash came from grants received in advance of project delivery, along with unspent funds carried forward from incomplete capital projects at the end of the 2025/26 financial year.
External Agency Reimbursement contributed $1,449 million (which related to the Bogong High Plains Road Landslip $1.069 million, East Coast Low Flood Event July 2025 $0.260 million; Rain Event February 2025 $0.034 million and Severe Weather Event August 2024 $0.034 million and other $0.05 million) and the balance of $1,644 million is accounted by income from rental property and insurance recoveries.

9. Employee costs: Employee costs were $3.933 million above budget for the 2025/26 financial year. Council adopted a revised forecast for employee costs of $45,100 million in February 2026, increasing the budget by $1,732 million. The additional forecast was made up of:

    1. $561K in grant-funded roles that were not included in the adopted budget. These positions are fully funded by external grants
    2. $501K in budget transfers from Materials and Services to Employee Benefits, where work originally planned for consultants and contractors has been delivered internally by staff.
    3. $731K increase in casual wages, following a detailed budget review completed in Q2 to ensure adequate resourcing to maintain service delivery for the remainder of 2025/26.

    In the final quarter of 25/26, there was an additional $168K in grant funded roles that were not budgeted, and an additional $232K transferred from materials and services to employee costs. In addition to that we had $449K in employee costs that were not capitalised due to projects being carried forward.
    This accounts for $2.6M of the overspend. The remaining $1.291 million can be attributed to not achieving the budgeted vacancy rate of $2 million dollars which is built into the budget. This has been represented through exceeding budget for permanent wages, casual wages and overtime. This demonstrates that when we have vacancies or people who are sick we are filling those roles with existing permanent staff working more hours, casual staff and overtime which has fully realised the budgeted vacancy rate.

10. Materials & Services: Expenditure was $2.639 million above budget. Of this variance, $1.570 million relates to grant-funded projects carried forward from 2024/25 that were not included in the original 2025/26 adopted budget. The remaining $1.062 million is made up of:
    - Fuel – $0.120 million, reflecting increased fuel prices due to the events in the Middle East.
    - Vehicle and plant repairs and maintenance – $0.198 million, reflecting higher costs associated with maintaining Council's vehicle and plant fleet.
    - Government waste levy - $0.285 million increase in the State Government charge imposed on waste that is disposed of at landfill, noting that this is offset by increased landfill disposal revenue.
    - Utilities - $0.330 million the largest difference attributed to gas.

    Overall, the variance is therefore partly attributable to additional grant-funded works carried forward from the previous financial year, with the remainder reflecting higher costs incurred in delivering Council's ongoing operational and maintenance activities.

11. Depreciation expenses were $0.723 million higher than budgeted for the 2025/26 financial year. The main driver of this variance was an increase in the remaining useful lives of several infrastructure assets, following condition assessment updates made during the 2025/26 asset assessments. Another contributing factor was the significant volume of contributed assets, particularly roads and footpaths transferred to Council ownership through completed subdivisions. These contributed assets totaled approximately $6 million in 2025/26 (budget $4 million) compared to $9 million in 2024/25.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

12. Depreciation -right of use assets: This variance reflects the actual depreciation expense for leased assets during the year.

13 Allowance for impairment losses: Allowance for Impairment Losses was $27,000 higher than budgeted. This variance arose from the end-of-year assessment of doubtful debts, which identified a greater need for provision than initially expected. It reflects changes in payment behavior, economic conditions, and the age of outstanding debts, it can be difficult to estimate accurately at the time the budget is prepared.

14 Other Expenses: Other expenses are $2,032 million above budget driven by asset Write-Offs totaling $2,801 million for the year, despite $0.769 million savings across other lines items. When an asset—such as a road, footpath, or bridge—is upgraded or renewed, the old component it replaces is removed from the asset register and its remaining value is written off. This is standard accounting practice and ensures Council's asset records reflect only the current condition and value of infrastructure. While this appears as an expense in the financial statements, it aligns with the renewal and upgrade of community assets and does not represent a loss in service.

15 Landfill Provision Movement: This variance is due to an end-of-year adjustment to the present value calculation of Council's future obligation to rehabilitate landfill sites. Under AASB137 Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets, councils are required to set aside a provision for the future cost of restoring and monitoring landfill sites after they are closed. This provision is based on estimates of future rehabilitation costs, the expected timing of those costs, and discount rates used to calculate their present value. In this case, changes in assumptions such as updated cost estimates, revised timelines, or movements in the discount rate resulted in a $346,000 decrease in the required provision. While this does not represent an immediate cash inflow, it ensures that the financial statements accurately reflect Council's long-term environmental responsibilities.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

2.1.2 Capital works

	Budget 2026 $ '000	Actual 2026 $ '000	Variance $ '000	Variance %	Ref
Property					
Land	250	121	(129)	(51.60)%	1
Total land	250	121	(129)	(51.60)%	
Buildings	8,639	4,075	(4,564)	(52.83)%	2
Heritage buildings	105	75	(30)	(28.57)%	
Total buildings	8,744	4,150	(4,594)	(52.54)%	
Total property	8,994	4,271	(4,723)	(52.51)%	
Plant and equipment					
Plant, machinery and equipment	5,107	4,008	(1,099)	(21.52)%	3
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	50	455	405	810.00%	4
Computers and telecommunications	5,592	693	(4,899)	(87.61)%	5
Library books	209	208	(1)	(0.48)%	
Total plant and equipment	10,958	5,364	(5,594)	(51.05)%	
Infrastructure					
Roads	9,678	6,665	(3,013)	(31.13)%	6
Bridges	250	108	(142)	(56.80)%	7
Footpaths and cycleways	1,509	1,022	(487)	(32.27)%	
Drainage	4,620	1,937	(2,683)	(58.07)%	8
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	8,062	6,540	(1,522)	(18.88)%	9
Waste management	2,394	512	(1,882)	(78.61)%	10
Parks, open space and streetscapes	12,887	1,881	(11,006)	(85.40)%	11
Aerodromes	11,585	24	(11,561)	(99.79)%	12
Off street car parks	362	47	(315)	(87.02)%	13
Other infrastructure	412	2,012	1,600	388.35%	14
Total infrastructure	51,759	20,748	(31,011)	(59.91)%	
Total capital works expenditure	71,711	30,383	(41,328)	(57.63)%	
Represented by:					
New asset expenditure	10,685	4,907	(5,778)	(54.08)%	
Asset renewal expenditure	48,587	23,144	(25,443)	(52.37)%	
Asset upgrade expenditure	12,439	2,332	(10,107)	(81.25)%	
Total capital works expenditure	71,711	30,383	(41,328)	(57.63)%	

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

(i) Explanation of material variations

VarianceExplanation Ref

1. Land: The Land Acquisitions budget was under spent by $129,000 mainly due to the timing for purchase of Tambo bluff reserves ($105,000). These acquisitions are still expected to occur and have been carried forward for completion in the 2026/27 financial year.
   Land purchase delays occur due to factors such as extended negotiations, changes in project scope, dependencies on planning and legal processes.

2. Buildings: The building expenditure budget was underspent by $4.564 million. The variance is largely attributable to delays in the delivery of several projects, the majority of which are still underway and have been carried forward into 2026/27 and the Gippsland Lakes Shared Community hub ($2.505 million) is being rescoped and will be delivered in the future. These projects represent a total value of $2.059 million:
   - The balance remaining after completing the Bairnsdale Airport - Air Ambulance Victoria Transfer - $0.987 million, in consultation with the grant body, the remaining grant allocation has been directed to Bairnsdale Aerodrome rehabilitation of taxiway & hanger apron project.
   - Lakes Entrance Indoor Courts - $0.487 million.
   - Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park Fire Safety - $0.388 million.

3. Plant, machinery and equipment: The plant replacement program was under spent by $1.099 million and carried forward to 2026/2027 financial year.
   The variance was also due to updated condition assessments, which determined that some assets were still in good working order and did not yet require replacement.

4. Fixtures, fittings and furniture: expenditure exceeded budget by $405,000. The unfavorable variance is attributable to a budgeting methodology difference rather than additional expenditure. At the time of budget preparation, a number of capital projects were budgeted at the aggregate project level, without disaggregation into individual asset-class components. Following completion of year-end procedures, actual project costs were reviewed on an item-by-item basis and allocated to the appropriate asset class in accordance with their nature and function, consistent with the requirements of the applicable accounting standards. This process identified costs that had initially been budgeted against other asset categories(e.g. Buildings, Plant & Equipment) but were, on review, more appropriately classified as Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture.

   Accordingly, the reported variance reflects a reclassification between asset categories rather than a change in total project expenditure or overall capital spend. Total capital expenditure across the affected projects remains materially consistent with the approved budget; the variance is presented at the individual asset-class level to ensure the financial statements accurately reflect the composition of assets delivered during the year.

5. Computers and telecommunications: Spending on computers and telecommunications was $4.899 million below budget. This variance was primarily driven by the deferral of several key projects, which have been carried forward for completion in 2026/27 and 2027/28. Major projects affected include the Renewal and Upgrade of Corporate Systems ($1.223 million - 2026/2027) and the Digital Services Project ($2.479 million - 2027/28). In addition, approximately $364,923 related to the Public CCTV Refresh project.

6. Roads: Expenditure was $3.013 million below budget, primarily due to a contractor ceasing works, which required Council to reassign the affected contracts and procure alternative contractors. This resulted in unavoidable delays to a number of planned road projects. The unspent budget has been carried forward to 2026/27 to enable the outstanding works to be completed.

7. Bridges: Comprises of Major Culvert Renewal Program which underspend by $0.142 million and the work will be carried forward to 2026/27.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

8. Drainage : Expenditure was $2.683 million below budget, primarily due to the timing, deferral and completion of some of drainage projects. The Marlo Town Drainage Upgrade ($0.886 million) was deferred and is now scheduled for delivery in 2027/28. Similarly, the Integrated Water Management – Bairnsdale project ($0.223 million) has been deferred to 2027/28. The Lanes Road, Lucknow Drainage Solution ($0.205 million) was not completed during 2025/26, with the remaining budget carried forward to 2026/27 to enable completion of the works. The Eastern Beach Road Drainage Improvements ($0.517 million) were also not completed during the year, with the unspent budget carried forward to 2026/27.

   In addition, two drainage projects were completed for less than their approved budgets, resulting in savings of $0.503 million. The LENGA Drainage Project has also been deferred and will be considered for delivery in future years.

9. Recreational, leisure and community facilities: Expenditure is $1.522 million under budget with the projects listed below being deferred to future years pending Project Management Framework review:
   - West Bairnsdale Recreation Reserve Redevelopment– $0.587 million
   - Nowa Nowa Boat Jetty – $0.460 million
   - Seawall Renewal Program – $0.324 million

10. Waste management: Expenditure was $1.882 million below budget, primarily due to delays in the delivery of several projects:
    - Cann River Waste Transfer Station – $0.515 million
    - Bairnsdale Recycling Centre – $0.426 million
    - Bairnsdale Landfill Fire Ring Main – $0.331 million
    - Extension to Existing Recycling Storage Area – Bairnsdale WTS – $0.265 million
    - Extension to Existing Recycling Storage Area – Bairnsdale WTS – $0.128 million

11. Parks, open space and streetscapes: Expenditure was $11.006 million below budget, primarily due to delays in delivering a number of planned projects, changes to project scope and the reclassification of projects to other asset categories.
    Projects deferred to 2026/27: Several projects were not completed during 2025/26 and have been deferred to 2026/27, including:
    - The Slip Road Maritime Precinct – $0.603 million
    - Livingstone Park, Omeo Stage 1 & 2 – $0.478 million
    - Krauatungalung Walk Stage 2 – $0.710 million
    - Foreshore Management Plan Implementation – Marlo – $0.168 million
    - Benambra Dejarlais Park/Public Toilet – $0.270 million
    - Metung Boardwalk Revitalisation – $0.377 million

    Projects withdrawn or completed below budget: Two projects totaling $0.410 million were withdrawn and will be reconsidered in a future financial year. The Livingstone Park Community Facilities project was completed with a reduced scope, resulting in an underspend of $0.930 million.

    Reclassification of projects: The Slip Road Maritime Precinct project, originally budgeted within Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes, was reclassified to Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities at year-end, resulting in $6.097 million being transferred to that asset category.

    Overall, the variance largely reflects the timing of project delivery and changes in the classification or scope of projects, rather than a permanent reduction in Council's planned investment in parks, open spaces and streetscapes.

12. Aerodromes: Expenditure was $11.561 million below budget, primarily because a number of major aerodrome projects were not completed during 2025/26 and their budgets have been carried forward to future financial years.
    The main projects contributing to the underspend were:
    - Bairnsdale Runway 04/22 Extension and Lighting Upgrade – $6.839 million
    - Bairnsdale Aerodrome Rehabilitation of Taxiway and Hangar Apron – $3.143 million
    - Other aerodrome projects – $1.579 million relates to the timing of other project expenditure and associated carry-forwards. The underspend therefore primarily reflects project timing and the deferral of planned works, rather than the cancellation of the aerodrome program.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.1 Performance against budget (continued)

13. Off street car parks: The off street car parks budget was underspent by $0.315 million due to projects being carried forward including ; Parking Upgrade Lakes Entrance $0.100 million, Extension to Carpark - Slip Bight Marine Jetty 5 $0.183 and McCulloch Street Bairnsdale Carpark $0.032 million.

14. Other infrastructure: The other infrastructure budget was over spent by $1.600 million. The reclassification of $1.214 million Bairnsdale Runway 04/22 Extension & Lighting Upgrade from Aerodrome to Other infrastructure and two projects were reclassified out to roads and drainage amounting to $ 0.119 million.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 2.2 Analysis of Council results by program

2.2.1 Analysis of Council results by program

Council delivers its functions and activities through the following programs.

Office of the CEO
Activities associated with municipal governance including the Chief Executive Officer, communication engagement and advocacy .

Business Excellence
Activities associated with financial management, rate collection, risk management, valuations, information services and human resources, procurement, the cost of Councillors, corporate planning, customer service, libraries, regulatory services, governance administration and property services.

Place and Community
Activities associated with strategic and statutory planning, economic development and tourism, emergency management, family and childrens services, aged services, community planning, recreation facilities, Forge Theatre, development and bushfire recovery activities.

Assets and Environment
Activities associated with roads, bridges, drainage, signs, footpaths and street sweeping, parks and reserves, tree management, playgrounds, public toilets, waste and environmental management, asset management, capital works program, commercial business operations and fleet and plant management.

2.2.2 Summary of income / revenue, expenses, assets and capital expenses by program

	Income / Revenue $ '000	Expenses $ '000	Surplus / (Deficit) $ '000	Grants included in income / revenue $ '000	Total assets $ '000
2026					
Office of the CEO	2,869	2,869	–	–	–
Business Excellence	34,968	27,241	7,727	20,346	139,268
Place and Community	22,835	22,835	–	1,324	87,573
Assets and Environment	91,368	91,368	–	20,478	1,428,494
	152,040	144,313	7,727	42,148	1,655,335
2025					
Office of the CEO	1,852	1,852	–	–	–
Business Excellence	53,098	27,691	25,407	22,314	150,766
Place and Community	28,195	28,195	–	1,545	78,850
Assets and Environment	88,539	88,539	–	33,283	1,300,420
	171,684	146,277	25,407	57,142	1,530,036

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000

3.1 Rates and charges

Council uses Capital Improved Value (CIV) as the basis of valuation of all properties within the municipal district. The CIV of a property is the value of the land and all of its improvements.

The valuation base used to calculate general rates for 2025/26 was $19,909 million, (2024/25 $19,834 million). Commercial / Industrial rates valuation base for 2025/26 was $1,701 million (2024/25 $1,628 million), Farm rates valuation base for 2025/26 $3,004 million (2024/25 $2,970 million) and General rates valuation base for 2025/26 $15,204 million (2024/25 $15,236 million). The 2025/26 rate in the dollar for General rates was 0.00271314 (2024/25 0.00265466), Commercial / Industrial rates 0.00349995 (2024/25 0.00358379) and Farm rates 0.00200773 (2024/25 0.00199100).

General rates	53,238	51,642
Municipal charge	8,442	8,186
Waste management charge	12,013	11,664
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	624	639
Interest on rates and charges	537	488
Revenue in lieu of rates	103	101
Total rates and charges	74,957	72,720

The date of the general revaluation of land for rating purposes within the municipal district was 1 January 2025 and the valuation was first applied in the rating year commencing 1 July 2025.

Annual rates and charges are recognised as income when Council issues annual rates notices. Supplementary rates are recognised when a valuation and reassessment is completed and a supplementary rates notice issued.

3.2 Statutory fees and fines

Infringements and costs	306	309
Application Registration Fees	358	333
Animal Registrations	410	428
Town planning fees	1,032	773
Land information certificates	142	112
Permits	65	69
Other	129	374
Total statutory fees and fines	2,442	2,398

Statutory fees and fines (including parking fees and fines) are recognised as income when the service has been provided, the payment is received, or when the penalty has been applied, whichever first occurs.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
3.3 User fees		
Leisure centre and recreation	3,341	3,361
Raymond Island Ferry	317	382
Arts and Culture	253	213
Caravan Parks	2,565	2,724
Saleyards	1,380	1,245
Marinas	1,292	1,200
Child care/children's programs	51	72
Tourism	42	79
Building services	31	27
Waste management services	5,432	5,019
Other fees and charges	567	417
Total user fees	15,271	14,739
User fees by timing of revenue recognition		
User fees recognised over time	2,375	2,516
User fees recognised at a point in time	12,896	12,223
Total user fees	15,271	14,739

User fees are recognised as revenue at a point in time, or over time, when (or as) the performance obligation is satisfied. Recognition is based on the underlying contractual terms.

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
3.4 Funding from other levels of government		
Grants were received in respect of the following:		
Summary of grants		
Commonwealth funded grants	35,662	45,608
State funded grants	6,486	11,534
Total grants received	42,148	57,142
(a) Operating Grants		
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Financial Assistance Grants	28,266	31,064
Recurrent - State Government		
Arts and Culture	60	60
Asset Maintenance	186	226
Community Development	14	23
Community Laws	129	125
Emergency Management	240	120
Environmental Management	106	104
Libraries	384	383
Public Health	34	34
Total recurrent operating grants	29,419	32,139
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Community Development	–	(44)
Emergency Management	19	56
Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities	2,858	360
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Community Development	178	186
Community Laws	70	9
Arts and Culture	4	(6)
Economic Development	118	225
Bushfire Recovery	–	330
Emergency Management	650	385
Waste Management	–	55
Roads	7	10
Strategic planning	165	128
Human resource	4	2
Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities	148	1,542

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Non-recurrent - Other		
Other - Environmental Management	19	2
Other- Community Development	7	–
Other - Economic Development	11	9
Other - Strategic planning	–	22
Other - Libraries	6	14
Total non-recurrent operating grants	4,264	3,285
Total operating grants	33,683	35,424
(b) Capital Grants		
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Roads to recovery	3,933	2,950
Recurrent - State Government		
Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities	9	9
Total recurrent capital grants	3,942	2,959
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Buildings	25	318
Aerodrome	–	962
Footpaths and cycleways	–	1,177
Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes	353	2,394
Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities	–	2,584
Roads	208	4,044
Other Infrastructure	–	(257)
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Buildings	1,241	990
Other	–	189
Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes	2,132	2,234
Plant and Equipment	101	21
Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities	–	3,766
Waste Management	20	–
Environmental sustainability	–	150
Roads	443	–
Non- recurrent - Other		
Other - Environmental sustainability	–	187
Total non-recurrent capital grants	4,523	18,759
Total capital grants	8,465	21,718

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000

(c) Recognition of grant income

Before recognising funding from government grants as revenue the Council assesses whether there is a contract that is enforceable and has sufficiently specific performance obligations in accordance with *AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers*. When both these conditions are satisfied, the Council:

- identifies each performance obligation relating to revenue under the contract/agreement
- determines the transaction price
- recognises a contract liability for its obligations under the agreement
- recognises revenue as it satisfies its performance obligations, at the point in time or over time when services are rendered.

Where the contract is not enforceable and/or does not have sufficiently specific performance obligations, the Council applies *AASB 1058 Income for Not-for-Profit Entities.*

Grant revenue with sufficiently specific performance obligations is recognised over time as the performance obligations specified in the underlying agreement are met. Where performance obligations are not sufficiently specific, grants are recognised on the earlier of receipt or when an unconditional right to receipt has been established. Grants relating to capital projects are generally recognised progressively as the capital project is completed. The following table provides a summary of the accounting framework under which grants are recognised.

Income recognised under AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities		
General purpose	29,288	31,791
Specific purpose grants to acquire non-financial assets	8,538	22,345
Other specific purpose grants	1,444	1,480
Revenue recognised under AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers		
Specific purpose grants	2,878	1,526
	42,148	57,142

(d) Unspent grants received on condition that they be spent in a specific manner:

Operating		
Balance at start of year	2,727	1,393
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	–	2,727
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(658)	(1,393)
Balance at year end	2,069	2,727
Capital		
Balance at start of year	4,177	14,014
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	914	1,578
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(3,775)	(11,415)
Balance at year end	1,316	4,177

Unspent grants are determined and disclosed on a cash basis.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 3. Funding for the delivery of our services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
3.5 Contributions		
Monetary	763	399
Non-monetary	6,295	11,708
Total contributions	7,058	12,107
Contributions of non monetary assets were received in relation to the following asset classes.		
Land	1,322	4,162
Buildings Specialised	38	–
Roads	1,788	3,248
Drainage	2,155	2,973
Other infrastructure	35	113
Other	1	205
Footpath	956	1,007
Total non-monetary contributions	6,295	11,708

Monetary and non monetary contributions are recognised as income at their fair value when Council obtains control over the contributed asset.

3.6 Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

Proceeds of sale	651	1,949
Written down value of assets disposed	(358)	(1,620)
Total net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	293	329

The profit or loss on sale of an asset is determined when control of the asset has passed to the buyer.

3.7 Other income

Interest	4,660	5,568
Investment property rental	1,349	1,239
Reimbursements - Other	1,759	1,487
Reimbursements - Natural Disasters	1,435	3,188
Other	371	389
Total other income	9,574	11,871

Interest is recognised as it is earned.

Other income is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is recognised when Council gains control over the right to receive the income.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 4. The cost of delivering services

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000

4.1 Employee costs

4.1 (a) Employee costs

Wages and salaries	40,662	39,509
WorkCover	1,602	1,897
Superannuation	4,886	4,469
Fringe benefits tax	151	122
Total employee costs	47,301	45,997

(b) Superannuation

Council made contributions to the following funds:

Defined benefit fund

Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	22	21
	22	21

Accumulation funds

Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	1,442	1,430
Employer contributions - Australian Super	628	531
Employer contributions - Hostplus	416	370
Employer contributions - Vic Super	198	196
Employer contributions - other funds	2,184	1,921
	4,868	4,448
Employer contributions payable at reporting date	128	109

Contributions made exclude amounts accrued at balance date.

Most employees in the group are members of various accumulation funds including Vision Super, and other industry and retail funds. As of 30 June 2026, there were 2 employees in the defined benefit funds.

For 30 June 2026 the Vested Benefits Index (VBI) for the defined benefits fund is 116.9% and in a good financial position, and therefore it is expected that there will be no change to the Defined Benefit category's funding arrangements from prior years.

In the unlikely event that the Fund Actuary determines there is a shortfall, the Fund's participating employers would be required to make an employer contribution to cover the shortfall. It is anticipated any shortfall in subsequent years would be immaterial to the Council.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
4.2 Materials and services		
Contractors		
- Road maintenance	10,343	10,709
- Vegetation management	632	534
- Ferry maintenance	930	–
- Aerodrome Operations and maintenance	109	104
- Building maintenance	514	278
- Electrical Services	5	137
- Buchan recreation reserve	3,326	2,156
- Environmental Management	184	–
- Waste collection	5,029	4,906
- Waste Management	1,686	1,156
- Animal pound services	311	285
- Cleaning	1,132	1,123
- Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve	–	1,887
- Sarsfield recreation reserve	3,084	–
- Parks and gardens	101	638
- Consulting	19	–
- Other	435	220
Other materials and services		
Building maintenance	1,567	1,102
General maintenance	13,833	15,362
Utilities	2,544	2,427
Office administration	2,026	2,392
Information technology	4,492	3,589
Insurance	1,842	1,776
Consultants	2,450	4,665
Contributions	1,554	1,880
Other	93	–
Total materials and services	58,241	57,326

Expenses are recognised as they are incurred and reported in the financial year to which they relate.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
4.3 Depreciation		
Property		
Heritage buildings	287	285
Buildings - specialised	4,213	4,040
Total depreciation - property	4,500	4,325
Plant and equipment		
Plant machinery and equipment	2,646	2,379
Fixtures fittings and furniture	739	889
Computers and telecomms	906	683
Library books	205	182
Total depreciation - plant and equipment	4,496	4,133
Infrastructure		
Roads	14,891	14,596
Bridges	1,264	1,506
Footways and cycleways	1,286	1,357
Drainage	1,143	1,084
Recreational, leisure and community	823	1,014
Waste management	1,205	1,197
Parks open spaces and streetscapes	1,618	808
Aerodromes	245	241
Off street car parks	289	248
Other infrastructure	1,233	1,195
Total depreciation - infrastructure	23,997	23,246
Total depreciation	32,993	31,704

Refer to note 5.2(b), 5.8 and 6.1 for a more detailed breakdown of depreciation and amortisation charges and accounting policy.

4.4 Amortisation - Intangible assets		
Software	14	92
Landfill Airspace	910	905
Total Amortisation - Intangible assets	924	997

4.5 Depreciation - Right of use assets		
Property	36	70
Plant and Equipment	–	10
Total Depreciation - Right of use assets	36	80

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
4.6 Allowance for impairment losses		
Parking fine debtors	16	53
Animal fine debtors	50	17
Rates debtors	(14)	33
Other debtors	(2)	2
Total allowance for impairment losses	50	105
Movement in allowance for impairment losses in respect of debtors		
Balance at the beginning of the year	1,339	1,249
New allowances recognised during the year	56	105
Amounts already allowed for and written off as uncollectible	(11)	(18)
Amounts allowed for but recovered during the year	5	3
Balance at end of year	1,389	1,339

An allowance for impairment losses in respect of debtors is recognised based on an expected credit loss model. This model considers both historic and forward looking information in determining the level of impairment.

4.7 Borrowing costs		
Interest - Borrowings	336	355
Total borrowing costs	336	355

Borrowing costs are recognised as an expense in the period in which they are incurred, except where they are capitalised as part of a qualifying asset constructed by Council.

4.8 Finance Costs - Leases		
Interest - Lease Liabilities	12	14
Total finance costs	12	14

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 4. The cost of delivering services (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
4.9 Other expenses		
Auditors' remuneration - VAGO - audit of the financial statements, performance statement and grant acquittals	70	65
Auditors' remuneration - Internal Audit	55	48
Councillors' allowances	511	421
Operating lease rentals	157	281
Memberships/Subscriptions	447	419
Bank fees and charges	176	206
Legal fees	479	596
Assets written-off - Buildings	244	274
Assets written-off - Bridges	–	185
Assets written-off - Roads	1,118	3,372
Assets written-off - Open Space	106	37
Assets written-off - Drainage	19	129
Assets written-off - Other infrastructure	–	64
Assets written-off - Work in progress	811	–
Assets written-off - Car Park	–	273
Assets written-off - Other	41	1,939
Assets written-off - Footpath	420	193
Assets written-off - Recreation	43	197
Assets written-off - Software	–	707
Bad debt written off	6	20
Others	63	1
Total other expenses	4,766	9,427

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
5.1 Financial assets		
(a) Cash and cash equivalents		
Current		
Cash on hand	11	11
Cash at bank	80,033	43,001
Term deposits	–	42,993
Total cash and cash equivalents	80,044	86,005
(b) Other financial assets		
Current		
Term deposits	38,038	37,159
Total current other financial assets	38,038	37,159
Non-current		
Shares in Community Banks	10	10
Total other financial assets	38,048	37,169
Total cash and cash equivalents and other financial assets	118,092	123,174

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits at call, and other highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, net of outstanding bank overdrafts.

Other financial assets are valued at fair value, at balance date. Term deposits are measured at original cost. Any unrealised gains and losses on holdings at balance date are recognised as either a revenue or expense.

Other financial assets include term deposits and those with original maturity dates of three to 12 months are classified as current, whilst term deposits with maturity dates greater than 12 months are classified as non-current.

(c) Trade & Other Receivables		
Current		
Statutory receivables		
Rates debtors	8,250	7,018
Special rate assessment	606	607
Infringement debtors	1,221	1,134
Allowance for expected credit loss - infringements, rates and schemes	(1,320)	(1,268)
Net GST receivable	622	1,170
Non-statutory receivables		
Other debtors	2,127	1,827
Allowance for expected credit loss- other debtors	(69)	(71)
Total current trade and other receivables	11,437	10,417
Non-Current		
Statutory receivables		
Special rate scheme	59	99
Total non-current trade and other receivables	59	99
Total trade and other receivables	11,496	10,516

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

Short term receivables are carried at invoice amount. An allowance for expected credit losses is recognised based on past experience and other objective evidence of expected losses. Long term receivables are carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
(d) Ageing of receivables		
The ageing of the Council's trade & other receivables (excluding statutory receivables) that are not impaired was:		
Current (not yet due)	1,418	1,193
Past due by up to 30 days	185	35
Past due between 31 and 180 days	309	442
Past due between 181 and 365 days	64	81
Past due by more than 1 year	81	5
Total trade and other receivables	2,057	1,756
(e) Ageing of individually impaired receivables		
At balance date, other debtors representing financial assets with a nominal value of $69,000 (2025: $71,000) were impaired. The amount of the allowance raised against these debtors was $69,000 (2025: $71,000). They individually have been impaired as a result of their doubtful collection. Many of the long outstanding past due amounts have been lodged with Council's debt collectors or are on payment arrangements.		
The ageing of receivables that have been individually determined as impaired at reporting date was:		
Past due by more than 1 year	69	71
Total trade and other receivables	69	71

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
5.2 Non-financial assets		
(a) Other assets		
Accrued income	445	731
Prepayments	1,804	2,005
Other	–	2
Total other assets	2,249	2,738
(b) Intangible assets		
Software	121	41
Landfill air space	1,008	1,918
Total intangible assets	1,129	1,959

	Software $ '000	Landfill $ '000	Total $ '000
Gross Carrying Amount			
Balance at 1 July 2025	1,116	8,472	9,588
Other additions	93	–	93
Balance at 30 June 2026	1,209	8,472	**9,681**
Accumulated amortisation and impairment			
Balance at 1 July 2025	1,075	6,554	7,629
Amortisation expense	13	910	923
Balance at 30 June 2026	1,088	7,464	**8,552**
Net book value at 30 June 2025	41	1,918	1,959
Net book value at 30 June 2026	121	1,008	1,129

Intangible assets with finite lives are amortised as an expense on a systematic basis over the asset's useful life. Amortisation is generally calculated on a straight line basis, at a rate that allocates the asset value, less any estimated residual value over its estimated useful life. Estimates of the remaining useful lives and amortisation method are reviewed at least annually, and adjustments made where appropriate.

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000

5.3 Payables, trust funds and deposits and contract and other liabilities

(a) Trade and other payables

Current		
Non-statutory payables		
Trade payables	1,008	13,063
Accrued expenses	8,190	3,042
Total current trade and other payables	9,198	16,105

(b) Trust funds and deposits

Current		
Refundable deposits	2,809	2,470
Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund	489	427
Retention amounts	724	924
Total current trust funds and deposits	4,022	3,821

(c) Contract and other liabilities

Contract liabilities		
Current		
Grants received in advance - operating	2,069	2,727
Caravan Park and other	247	174
Prepaid Marina Income	105	126
Total current contract liabilities	2,421	3,027
Other liabilities		
Current		
Deferred capital grants	1,316	4,177
Total current other liabilities	1,316	4,177
Total current contract and other liabilities	3,737	7,204
Contract liabilities		
Non-current		
Prepaid Marina Income	179	265
Total non-current contract liabilities	179	265
Total contract and other liabilities	3,916	7,469

Trust funds and deposits
Amounts received as deposits and retention amounts controlled by Council are recognised as trust funds until they are returned, transferred in accordance with the purpose of the receipt, or forfeited. Trust funds that are forfeited, resulting in council gaining control of the funds, are to be recognised as revenue at the time of forfeit.

Contract liabilities
Contract liabilities reflect consideration received in advance from Marina and Caravan Park customers in respect of leases and licences paid in advance as well as grant funding for various operational projects that Council has yet to gain the right to the funds in accordance with funding agreements. Contract liabilities are derecognised and recorded as revenue when promised goods and services are transferred to the customer. Refer to Note 3.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

Other liabilities
Grant consideration was received from government funding bodies to support the construction of a number of capital projects. Grant consideration is recognised as income following specific guidance under AASB 1058 as the asset is constructed. Income is recognised to the extent of costs incurred-to-date because the costs of construction most closely reflect the stage of completion of the related capital projects. As such, Council has deferred recognition of a portion of the grant consideration received as a liability for outstanding obligations.

Purpose and nature of items
Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund - Council is the collection agent for the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund on behalf of the State Government. Council remits amounts received on a Quarterly basis. Amounts disclosed here will be remitted to the State Government in line with that process.

Retention Amounts - Council has a contractual right to retain certain amounts until a contractor has met certain requirements or a related warrant or defect period has elapsed. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the contractual obligations, or the elapsing of time, these amounts will be paid to the relevant contractor in line with Council's contractual obligations.

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
5.4 Interest-bearing liabilities		
Current		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	728	695
Other borrowings - secured	1,150	–
Total current interest-bearing liabilities	1,878	695
Non-current		
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	6,122	6,851
Other borrowings - secured	500	1,650
Total non-current interest-bearing liabilities	6,622	8,501
Total	8,500	9,196

Borrowings are secured by mortgages over the general rates of Council.

a) The maturity profile for Council's borrowings is:		
Not later than one year	1,878	695
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,785	4,283
Later than five years	2,837	4,218
Total	8,500	9,196

Borrowings are initially measured at fair value, being the cost of the interest bearing liabilities, net of transaction costs. The measurement basis subsequent to initial recognition depends on whether the Council has categorised its interest-bearing liabilities as either financial liabilities designated at fair value through the profit and loss, or financial liabilities at amortised cost. Any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value is recognised in net result over the period of the borrowing using the effective interest method.

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the interest bearing liabilities. The Council determines the classification of its interest bearing liabilities based on contractual repayment terms at every balance date.

In classifying borrowings as current or non-current Council considers whether at balance date it has the right to defer settlement of the liability for at least twelve months after the reporting period. Council's loan arrangements include covenants based on Council's financial performance and position at the end of the reporting period. These covenants are assessed for compliance after the reporting period based on specified financial ratios.

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	Employee provisions $ '000	Landfill restoration $ '000	Other $ '000	Total $ '000
5.5 Provisions				
2026				
Balance at the beginning of the financial year	8,298	13,250	262	21,810
Additional provisions	897	–	2	899
Amounts used	(618)	(253)	(8)	(879)
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	42	(346)	–	(304)
Balance at the end of the financial year	8,619	12,651	256	21,526
Provisions				
Provisions - current	7,588	94	–	7,682
Provisions - non-current	1,031	12,557	256	13,844
Total Provisions	8,619	12,651	256	21,526
2025				
Balance at the beginning of the financial year	7,853	13,234	186	21,273
Additional provisions	1,353	–	78	1,431
Amounts used	(912)	(255)	(2)	(1,169)
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	4	271	–	275
Balance at the end of the financial year	8,298	13,250	262	21,810
Provisions				
Provisions - current	7,249	6,494	–	13,743
Provisions - non-current	1,049	6,756	262	8,067
Total Provisions	8,298	13,250	262	21,810

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
(a) Employee provisions		
Current provisions expected to be wholly settled within 12 months		
Annual leave	3,004	2,875
Long service leave	378	395
Other Leave	91	120
	3,473	3,390
Current provisions expected to be wholly settled after 12 months		
Annual leave	288	306
Long service leave	3,827	3,553
	4,115	3,859
Total current employee provisions	7,588	7,249

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Non-Current		
Long service leave	1,031	1,049
Total Non-Current Employee Provisions	1,031	1,049
Aggregate Carrying Amount of Employee Provisions:		
Current	7,588	7,249
Non-current	1,031	1,049
Total Aggregate Carrying Amount of Employee Provisions	8,619	8,298

The calculation of employee costs and benefits includes all relevant on-costs and are calculated as follows at reporting date.

Annual leave
A liability for annual leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits as a current liability because the Council does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability. Liabilities for annual leave are measured at:
- nominal value if the Council expects to wholly settle the liability within 12 months
- present value if the Council does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

Liabilities that are not expected to be wholly settled within 12 months of the reporting date are recognised in the provision for employee benefits as current liabilities, measured at the present value of the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement.

Long service leave
Liability for long service leave (LSL) is recognised in the provision for employee benefits. Unconditional LSL is disclosed as a current liability as the Council does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement. Unconditional LSL is measured at nominal value if expected to be settled within 12 months or at present value if not expected to be settled within 12 months. Conditional LSL that has been accrued, where an employee is yet to reach a qualifying term of employment, is disclosed as a non-current liability and measured at present value.

Key assumptions:		
- discount rate	4.76%	4.20%
- index rate	2.25%	2.25%

(b) Landfill restoration

Current	94	6,494
Non-current	12,557	6,756
Total	12,651	13,250

Council is obligated to restore landfill sites to a particular standard. The forecast life of the site is based on current estimates of remaining capacity and the forecast rate of infill. The provision for landfill restoration has been calculated based on the present value of the expected cost of works to be undertaken. The expected cost of works has been estimated based on current understanding of work required to reinstate the site to a suitable standard. Accordingly, the estimation of the provision required is dependent on the accuracy of the forecast timing of the work, work required and related costs.

Council reviews the landfill restoration provision on an annual basis, including the key assumptions listed below.

Key assumptions:		
- discount rate	4.74%	4.20%
- index rate	4.00%	4.00%

(c) Native vegetation offset provision

Non-current	256	262
	256	262

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
5.6 Financing arrangements		
The Council has the following funding arrangements in place as at 30 June 2026.		
Bank overdraft	1,500	1,500
Credit card facilities	300	300
Treasury Corporation of Victoria facilities	6,850	7,546
Other facilities	1,650	1,650
Total Facilities	10,300	10,996
Used facilities	8,545	9,263
Unused facilities	1,755	1,733

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

5.7 Commitments

The Council has entered into the following commitments. Commitments are not recognised in the Balance Sheet. Commitments are disclosed at their nominal value and presented inclusive of the GST payable.

(a) Commitments for expenditure

	Not later than 1 year $ '000	Later than 1 year and not later than 2 years $ '000	Later than 2 years and not later than 5 years $ '000	Later than 5 years $ '000	Total $ '000
2026					
Operating					
Cleaning	1,301	1,104	60	–	2,465
Ferry Operations/Maintenance	465	51	45	–	561
Road Infrastructure Maintenance	720	61	–	–	781
Waste Management	3,483	219	24	–	3,726
Other Service Contracts	232	–	–	–	232
Total	6,201	1,435	129	–	7,765
Capital					
Roads	485	–	–	–	485
Recreation	9,498	–	–	–	9,498
Waste	108	–	–	–	108
Parks and Open Space	3,796	–	–	–	3,796
Drainage	2,036	–	–	–	2,036
Other	1,088	–	–	–	1,088
Total	17,011	–	–	–	17,011
2025					
Operating					
Recreation	3,510	–	–	–	3,510
Cleaning	1,063	691	749	–	2,503
Ferry Operations/Maintenance	570	193	92	–	855
Road Infrastructure Maintenance	701	701	58	–	1,460
Waste Management	5,034	3,180	1	–	8,215
Other Service Contracts	276	52	–	–	328
Total	11,154	4,817	900	–	16,871
Capital					
Recreation	5,228	–	–	–	5,228
Waste	666	–	–	–	666
Parks and Open Space	4,821	–	–	–	4,821
Drainage	837	–	–	–	837
Other	1,205	–	–	–	1,205
Total	12,757	–	–	–	12,757

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000

(b) Operating lease receivables

Operating lease receivables

The Council has entered into commercial property leases on its investment property, consisting of surplus freehold office complexes. These properties held under operating leases have remaining non-cancellable lease terms of between 1 and 10 years. All leases include a CPI based revision of the rental charge annually.

Future undiscounted minimum rentals receivable under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:		
Not later than one year	935	1,151
Later than one year and not later than five years	2,319	2,896
Later than five years	1,743	2,011
Total	4,997	6,058

5.8 Leases

At inception of a contract, Council assesses whether a contract is, or contains, a lease. A contract is, or contains, a lease if the contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration. To identify whether a contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset, it is necessary to assess whether:

- The contract involves the use of an identified asset;
- Council has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the asset throughout the period of use; and
- Council has the right to direct the use of the asset.

This policy is applied to contracts entered into, or changed, on or after 1 July 2019.

As a lessee, Council recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability at the lease commencement date. The right-of-use asset is initially measured at cost which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability adjusted for:

- any lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any lease incentives received; plus
- any initial direct costs incurred; and
- an estimate of costs to dismantle and remove the underlying asset or to restore the underlying asset or the site on which it is located.

The right-of-use asset is subsequently depreciated using the straight-line method from the commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset or the end of the lease term. The estimated useful lives of right-of-use assets are determined on the same basis as those of property, plant and equipment. In addition, the right-of-use asset is periodically reduced by impairment losses, if any, and adjusted for certain measurements of the lease liability.

The lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that rate cannot be readily determined, an appropriate incremental borrowing rate. Generally, Council uses an appropriate incremental borrowing rate as the discount rate.

Lease payments included in the measurement of the lease liability comprise the following:

- Fixed payments
- Variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, initially measured using the index or rate as at the commencement date;
- Amounts expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee; and
- The exercise price under a purchase option that Council is reasonably certain to exercise, lease payments in an optional renewal period if Council is reasonably certain to exercise an extension option, and penalties for early termination of a lease unless Council is reasonably certain not to terminate early.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

When the lease liability is remeasured in this way, a corresponding adjustment is made to the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset, or is recorded in profit or loss if the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset has been reduced to zero.

Under *AASB 16 Leases*, Council as a not-for-profit entity has elected not to measure right-of-use assets at initial recognition at fair value in respect of leases that have significantly below-market terms.

Council has 53 peppercorn/low value leases on land and buildings. Use of these properties is restricted to community service and welfare activities.

Right-of-Use Assets

	Property $ '000	Equipment $ '000	Total $ '000
2026			
Balance at 1 July 2025	465	–	465
Depreciation charge	(36)	–	(36)
Balance at 30 June 2026	429	–	429
2025			
Balance at 1 July 2024	558	35	593
Disposal	(23)	(25)	(48)
Depreciation charge	(70)	(10)	(80)
Balance at 30 June 2025	465	–	465

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 5. Investing in and financing our operations (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Lease Liabilities		
Maturity analysis - contractual undiscounted cash flows		
Less than one year	33	37
One to five years	147	140
More than five years	458	498
Total undiscounted lease liabilities as at 30 June:	638	675
Lease liabilities included in the Balance Sheet at 30 June:		
Current	21	24
Non-current	514	547
Total lease liabilities	535	571

Short-term and low value leases

Council has elected not to recognise right-of-use assets and lease liabilities for short-term leases of machinery that have a lease term of 12 months or less and leases of low-value assets (individual assets worth less than existing capitalisation thresholds for a like asset up to a maximum of AUD$10,000), including IT equipment. Council recognises the lease payments associated with these leases as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Expenses relating to:		
Short-term leases	130	219
Leases of low value assets	28	55
Total	158	274
Variable lease payments (not included in measurement of lease liabilities)		
Variable lease payments	38	73
Total	38	73

Variable lease payments are those that depend on an index or a rate, for example payments linked to the consumer price index, a benchmark interest rate or changes in market rental rates.

Non-cancellable lease commitments - Short-term and low-value leases

Commitments for minimum lease payments for short-term and low-value leases are payable as follows:

Payable:		
Within one year	49	54
Later than one year but not later than five years	20	67
Later than five years	30	34
Total lease commitments	99	155

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

Summary of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	Carrying amount 30 June 2025 $ '000	Additions $ '000	Contributions $ '000	Revaluation $ '000	Disposal $ '000	Depreciation $ '000	Write-off $ '000	Transfers $ '000	Carrying amount 30 June 2026 $ '000
Property	329,381	–	1,360	16,026	(74)	(4,500)	(243)	3,056	345,006
Plant and equipment	21,798	–	–	–	(285)	(4,496)	(17)	5,432	22,432
Infrastructure	983,719	–	4,935	112,821	–	(23,997)	(1,720)	10,858	1,086,616
Work in progress	40,919	30,384	–	–	–	–	(811)	(19,439)	51,053
Total	1,375,817	30,384	6,295	128,847	(359)	(32,993)	(2,791)	(93)	1,505,107

Summary of Work in Progress	Opening WIP $ '000	Additions $ '000	Write-off $ '000	Transfers $ '000	Closing WIP $ '000
Property	7,157	4,271	(317)	(4,277)	6,834
Plant and equipment	406	5,364	–	(5,358)	412
Infrastructure	33,356	20,749	(494)	(9,804)	43,807
Total	40,919	30,384	(811)	(19,439)	51,053

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Land specialised $ '000	Land non specialised $ '000	Total land and land improvements $ '000	Heritage buildings $ '000	Buildings specialised $ '000	Total buildings $ '000	Work in progress $ '000	Total property $ '000
(a) Property								
At fair value 1 July 2025	195,648	4,770	200,418	20,299	221,142	241,441	7,157	449,016
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2025	–	–	–	(11,376)	(101,102)	(112,478)	–	(112,478)
	195,648	4,770	**200,418**	8,923	120,040	**128,963**	7,157	**336,538**
Movements in fair value								
Additions	–	–	–	–	–	–	4,271	4,271
Contributions	1,322	–	1,322	–	38	38	–	1,360
Revaluation	–	–	–	2,757	28,967	31,724	–	31,724
Disposal	(74)	–	(74)	–	–	–	–	(74)
Write-off	–	–	–	–	(879)	(879)	(317)	(1,196)
Transfers	113	–	113	–	2,943	2,943	(4,277)	(1,221)
	1,361	–	**1,361**	2,757	31,069	**33,826**	(323)	**34,864**
Movements in accumulated depreciation								
Depreciation and amortisation	–	–	–	(287)	(4,213)	(4,500)	–	(4,500)
Revaluation movement	–	–	–	(1,582)	(14,116)	(15,698)	–	(15,698)
Accumulated depreciation of write off	–	–	–	–	636	636	–	636
	–	–	**–**	(1,869)	(17,693)	**(19,562)**	–	**(19,562)**
At fair value 30 June 2026	197,009	4,770	201,779	23,057	252,211	275,268	6,834	483,881
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2026	–	–	–	(13,246)	(118,795)	(132,041)	–	(132,041)
Carrying amount	197,009	4,770	**201,779**	9,811	133,416	**143,227**	6,834	**351,840**

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Plant machinery and equipment $ '000	Fixtures fittings and furniture $ '000	Computers and telecomms $ '000	Library books $ '000	Work in progress $ '000	Total plant and equipment $ '000
(b) Plant and Equipment						
At cost 1 July 2025	28,826	13,991	4,840	5,938	406	54,001
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2025	(15,123)	(9,695)	(2,187)	(4,792)	–	(31,797)
	13,703	4,296	2,653	1,146	406	**22,204**
Movements in carrying value						
Additions	–	–	–	–	5,364	5,364
Disposal	(1,268)	–	–	–	–	(1,268)
Write-off	(200)	(141)	(1,223)	–	–	(1,564)
Transfers	6,219	(3,137)	2,034	208	(5,358)	(34)
	4,751	(3,278)	811	208	6	**2,498**
Movements in accumulated depreciation						
Depreciation and amortisation	(2,646)	(739)	(906)	(205)	–	(4,496)
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	983	–	–	–	–	983
Accumulated depreciation of write off	185	139	1,223	–	–	1,547
Transfers	(1,591)	2,394	(695)	–	–	108
	(3,069)	1,794	(378)	(205)	–	**(1,858)**
At cost 30 June 2026	33,577	10,713	5,651	6,145	412	56,498
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2026	(18,192)	(7,901)	(2,565)	(4,996)	–	(33,654)
Carrying amount	15,385	2,812	3,086	1,149	412	**22,844**

Plant and equipment are carried at historical cost.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Roads $ '000	Bridges $ '000	Footpaths and cycleways $ '000	Drainage $ '000	Recrea-tional, leisure and community $ '000	Waste management $ '000	Parks open spaces and streets-capes $ '000	Aerodromes $ '000	Off street car parks $ '000	Other infra-structure $ '000	Work in progress $ '000	Total infra-structure $ '000
(c) Infrastructure												
At fair value 1 July 2025	874,419	129,324	76,410	119,128	44,497	14,047	47,129	12,777	15,250	46,563	33,356	1,412,900
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2025	(228,515)	(27,290)	(23,532)	(45,761)	(16,646)	(7,316)	(22,741)	(2,698)	(3,474)	(17,852)	–	(395,825)
	645,904	102,034	52,878	73,367	27,851	6,731	24,388	10,079	11,776	28,711	33,356	**1,017,075**
Movements in fair value												
Additions	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	20,749	20,749
Contributions	1,788	–	956	2,155	–	–	1	–	–	35	–	4,935
Revaluation	100,951	13,018	8,105	13,550	3,362	1,624	9,584	1,479	1,932	4,170	–	157,775
Write-off	(2,097)	–	(719)	(25)	(100)	–	(242)	–	–	(26)	(494)	(3,703)
Transfers	8,282	(16,652)	(3,327)	1,379	(13,643)	–	38,658	742	2,433	(6,906)	(9,804)	1,162
	108,924	(3,634)	5,015	17,059	(10,381)	1,624	48,001	2,221	4,365	(2,727)	10,451	**180,918**
Movements in accumulated depreciation												
Depreciation and amortisation	(14,891)	(1,264)	(1,286)	(1,143)	(823)	(1,205)	(1,618)	(245)	(289)	(1,233)	–	(23,997)
Revaluation movement	(26,146)	(2,437)	(2,488)	(5,264)	(1,252)	(810)	(4,136)	(305)	(477)	(1,639)	–	(44,954)
Accumulated depreciation of write off	979	–	299	6	58	–	136	–	–	11	–	1,489
Transfers	(2,241)	6,038	1,483	–	5,677	–	(13,859)	–	(730)	3,524	–	(108)
	(42,299)	2,337	(1,992)	(6,401)	3,660	(2,015)	(19,477)	(550)	(1,496)	663	–	**(67,570)**
At fair value 30 June 2026	983,343	125,690	81,426	136,188	34,115	15,671	95,130	14,998	19,615	43,836	43,807	1,593,819
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2026	(270,814)	(24,953)	(25,525)	(52,163)	(12,985)	(9,331)	(42,218)	(3,248)	(4,970)	(17,189)	–	(463,396)
Carrying amount	712,529	100,737	55,901	84,025	21,130	6,340	52,912	11,750	14,645	26,647	43,807	**1,130,423**

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

Acquisition

Initial measurement

Council initially measures its property, infrastructure, plant and equipment assets at cost. The cost of an acquired asset is the fair value of the consideration that Council has provided at the date of acquisition plus any incidental costs attributable to the acquisition.

Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. Refer to Note 8.4 for more information on how Council measures fair value.

Where assets are constructed by Council, cost includes all materials used in construction, direct labour, borrowing costs incurred during construction, and an appropriate share of directly attributable variable and fixed overheads.

In accordance with Council's policy, the threshold limits have applied when recognising assets within an applicable asset class and unless otherwise stated are consistent with the prior year.

	Depreciation Period	Threshold Limit $ ´000
Asset recognition thresholds and depreciation periods		
Land and land improvements		
land	-	–
Buildings		
buildings	15-80 years	5
Plant and Equipment		
ferry equipment	40 years	1
plant, machinery and equipment	2-50 years	1
fixtures, fittings and furniture	5-50 years	1
computers and telecommunications	5-10 years	1
library books	10 years	1
Infrastructure		
road pavements and seals	18-80 years	5
road wearing course	15-60 years	5
road formation and earthworks		5
road kerb, channel and minor culverts	70 - 80 years	5
bridges	60-100 years	5
footpaths and cycleways	15-65 years	5
drainage	70 -100 years	5
recreational, leisure and community facilities	10-60 years	5
aerodromes	15-80 years	5
waste management landfill cells	4 years	5
waste management infrastructure	60 years	5
parks, open space and streetscapes	15-80 years	5
car parks	15-80 years	5
Intangible assets	10 years	1

Land under roads

Council recognises land under roads it controls at fair value after 30 June 2008.

Depreciation and amortisation

Buildings, land improvements, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and other assets having limited useful lives are systematically depreciated over their useful lives to the Council in a manner which reflects consumption of the service potential embodied in those assets. Estimates of remaining useful lives and residual values are made on a regular basis with major asset classes reassessed annually. Depreciation rates and methods are reviewed annually.

Where assets have separate identifiable components that are subject to regular replacement, these components are assigned distinct useful lives and residual values and a separate depreciation rate is determined for each component.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

Road earthworks are not depreciated on the basis that they are assessed as not having a limited useful life.

Straight line depreciation is charged based on the residual useful life as determined each year.

Depreciation periods used are listed above and are consistent with the prior year unless otherwise stated.

Repairs and maintenance
Where the repair relates to the replacement of a component of an asset and the cost exceeds the capitalisation threshold the cost is capitalised and depreciated. The carrying value of the replaced asset is expensed.

Leasehold improvements
Leasehold improvements are recognised at cost and are amortised over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the improvement, whichever is the shorter. At balance date there were no leasehold improvements.

Valuation of land and buildings
Valuation of land and buildings were undertaken by a qualified independent valuer Todd Svanberg, Certified Practicing Valuer CPV API Member: 63110, Senior Director, Commercial Compliance and Quality of JLL Public Sector Valuations Pty Ltd and Mark Pastor, Certified Practising Valuer CPV API Member: 63501, Senior Valuer JLL Public Sector Valuations Pty Ltd as at 30 June 2023. The valuation of land and buildings is at fair value, being market value based on highest and best use permitted by relevant land planning provisions. Where land use is restricted through existing planning provisions the valuation is reduced to reflect this limitation. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement. Where land use is not restricted, highest and best use is assumed to be current use, except the land is held for sale, or highly likely to be used for an alternative puspose within 12 months of the reporting date.

An index based revaluation was conducted in the current year for buildings only. This valuation was based on the Victoria Valuer-General's indices. A full revaluation of these assets will be conducted in 2026/27.

Specialised land is valued at fair value using site values adjusted for englobo (undeveloped and/or unserviced) characteristics, access rights and private interests of other parties and entitlements of infrastructure assets and services. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Any significant movements in the unobservable inputs for land and land under roads will have a significant impact on the fair value of these assets.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

Details of the Council's land and buildings and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2026 are as follows:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Specialised land	–	–	197,009	Jun/23	Independent
Non - Specialised land	–	4,770	–	Jun/23	Independent
Heritage buildings	–	–	9,811	Jun/26	Indexation
Buildings	–	–	133,416	Jun/26	Indexation
Total	–	4,770	340,236		

Valuation of Infrastructure
Valuation of infrastructure assets has been determined in accordance with an independent valuer Josef Wang B.Eng, Quantity Surveyor, Infrastructure valuer and Regina Sun Quantity Surveyor, APV Valuers and Asset Management as at 31 December 2023.
An index based revaluation was conducted in the current year as at 30 June 2026, this valuation was based on Construction industries producer price indices for Victoria, a full revaluation of these assets will be conducted in 2027/28.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

The valuation is at fair value based on current replacement cost less accumulated depreciation as at the date of valuation.

Details of the Council's infrastructure and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2026 are as follows:

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of valuation	Type of Valuation
Roads	–	–	712,529	Jun/26	Indexation
Bridges	–	–	100,737	Jun/26	Indexation
Footpaths and cycleways	–	–	55,901	Jun/26	Indexation
Drainage	–	–	84,025	Jun/26	Indexation
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	–	–	21,130	Jun/26	Indexation
Waste management	–	–	6,340	Jun/26	Indexation
Parks, open space & streetscapes	–	–	52,912	Jun/26	Indexation
Aerodromes	–	–	11,750	Jun/26	Indexation
Off street car parks	–	–	14,645	Jun/26	Indexation
Other Infrastructure	–	–	26,647	Jun/26	Indexation
Total	–	–	1,086,616		

Description of significant unobservable inputs into level 3 valuations

Specialised land and land under roads is valued using a market based direct comparison technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the extent and impact of restriction of use and the market cost of land per square metre. The extent and impact of restrictions on use varies and results in a reduction to surrounding land values between 0% and 90%. The market value of land varies significantly depending on the location of the land and the current market conditions. Currently land values range between $1.20 and $450.00 per square metre.

Specialised buildings are valued using a current replacement cost technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of buildings. Current replacement costs are calculated on a square metre basis and ranges from $84 to $6,730 per square metre. The remaining useful lives of buildings are determined on the basis of the current condition of buildings and vary from 15 years to 80 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of buildings are sensitive to changes in expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of buildings.

Infrastructure assets are valued based on the current replacement cost. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of infrastructure. The remaining useful lives of infrastructure assets are determined on the basis of the current condition of the asset and vary from 15 years to 100 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of infrastructure are sensitive to changes in use, expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of infrastructure assets.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 6. Assets we manage (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Reconciliation of specialised land		
Land under roads	3,058	2,642
Parks and reserves	69,612	68,864
Recreation and Leisure	59,497	59,443
Residential Land	844	825
Commercial Land	362	362
Aerodrome Land	15,802	15,802
Community Services Land	9,766	9,766
Business Centre/Library Land	4,669	4,669
Caravan Park Land	2,616	2,616
Carpark Land	4,642	4,642
Depot Land	832	832
Quarry Reserve Land	356	356
Drainage Reserve Land	16,177	16,053
Saleyard and Pound Facility Land	1,941	1,941
Waste Management Land	6,368	6,368
Road Reserves	467	467
Total specialised land	197,009	195,648

6.2 Investment property

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Balance at beginning of financial year	13,030	10,787
Additions	–	424
Transfer	–	1,442
Disposals	(9)	–
Fair value adjustments	297	377
Balance at end of financial year	13,318	13,030

Investment property is held to generate long-term rental yields. Investment property is measured initially at cost, including transaction costs. Costs incurred subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised when it is probable that future economic benefit in excess of the originally assessed performance of the asset will flow to the Council. Subsequent to initial recognition at cost, investment property is carried at fair value, determined annually by independent valuers. Changes to fair value are recorded in the comprehensive income statement in the period that they arise.

Valuation of investment property

Valuation of investment property has been determined in accordance with an independent valuation by Todd Svanberg, Certified Practicing Valuer CPV API Membeer 63110, Senior Director, Commercial Compliance and Quality of JLL Public Sector Valuations Pty Ltd and Mark Pastor, Certified Practising Valuer CPV API Member 63501, Senior Valuer JLL Public Sector Valuations Pty Ltd as at 30 June 2023.

The valuation is at fair value, based on the current market value for the property. An index based valuation was conducted in the current year. This valuation was based on Indices provided by the Victoria Valuer-General.

A full valuation of these assets will be conducted in 2026/27.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 7. People and relationships

7.1 Council and key management remuneration

(a) Key Management Personnel

Key management personnel (KMP) are those people with the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of East Gippsland Shire Council. The Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and General Managers are deemed KMP.

Details of KMP at any time during the year are:

Councillors	Councillors Jodie Ashworth (01/07/2025 to 20/11/2025)
	Councillors Jodie Ashworth (Mayor 21/11/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Arthur Allen (01/07/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Sonia Buckley (Deputy Mayor 01/07/2025 to 20/11/2025)
	Councillors Sonia Buckley (21/11/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Tom Crook (01/07/2025 to 20/11/2025)
	Councillors Tom Crook (Deputy Mayor 21/11/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Barry Davis (01/07/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Joanne Eastman (01/07/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Bernard Farquhar (01/07/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors Ian Trevaskis (01/07/2025 to 30/06/2026)
	Councillors John White (Mayor 01/07/2025 to 20/11/2026)
	Councillors John White (21/11/2026 to 30/06/2026)
Management	Fiona Weigall, Chief Executive Officer
	Sarah Johnston, General Manager Business Excellence
	Chris Stephenson, General Manager Place and Community (01/07/2025 to 07/06/2026)
	Chris Stephenson, General Manager Projects and Planning (08/06/2026 to 30/06/2026)
	Stuart McConnell, General Manager Assets and Environment
	Stuart McConnell, Acting Chief Executive Officer (07/07/2025 to 14/07/2025)

	2026 No.	2025 No.
Total Number of Councillors	9	14
Total of Chief Executive Officer and other Key Management Personnel	4	6
Total Number of Key Management Personnel	13	20

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

(b) Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

Remuneration comprises employee benefits including all forms of consideration paid, payable or provided by Council, or on behalf of the Council, in exchange for services rendered. Remuneration of Key Management Personnel and Other senior staff is disclosed in the following categories.

Short-term employee benefits include amounts such as wages, salaries, annual leave or sick leave that are usually paid or payable on a regular basis, as well as non-monetary benefits such as allowances and free or subsidised goods or services.

Other long-term employee benefits include long service leave, other long service benefits or deferred compensation.

Post-employment benefits include pensions, and other retirement benefits paid or payable on a discrete basis when employment has ceased.

Termination benefits include termination of employment payments, such as severance packages.

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Total remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	1,386	1,300
Other long-term employee benefits	26	24
Post-employment benefits	124	103
Total	1,536	1,427

	2026 No.	2025 No.
The numbers of key management personnel whose total remuneration from Council and any related entities, fall within the following bands:		
$10,000 - $19,999	1	6
$20,000 - $29,999	–	6
$30,000 - $39,999	5	1
$40,000 - $49,999	1	1
$50,000 - $59,999	1	1
$70,000 - $79,999	1	1
$80,000 - $89,999	1	–
$210,000 - $219,999	–	1
$230,000 - $239,999	–	1
$240,000 - $249,999	–	1
$270,000 - $279,999	1	–
$280,000 - $289,999	1	1
$290,000 - $299,999	1	–
$330,000 - $339,999	1	–
Total	14	20

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

(c) Remuneration of other senior staff

Other senior staff are officers of Council, other than Key Management Personnel, whose total remuneration exceeds $170,000 and who report directly to a member of the KMP.

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Total remuneration of other senior staff was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	175	172
Post-employment benefits	22	20
Total	197	192

	2026 No.	2025 No.
The number of other senior staff are shown below in their relevant income bands:		
Income Range:		
$190,000 - $199,999	1	1
Total	1	1

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
Total remuneration for the reporting year for other senior staff included above, amounted to:	197	192

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 7. People and relationships (continued)

7.2 Related party disclosure

(a) Transactions with related parties

During the period Council entered into the following transactions with related parties:

For the year ended 30 June 2026, Council paid $19,836.61 to suppliers and contractors related to Key Management Personnel on normal commercial terms and conditions. Details of these related party transactions for Key Management Personnel are as follows:

Cr Allen	Leftrade Pty Ltd - $6,700.26 for goods and service
	Paper Cranes Sushi Pty Ltd - $3,194.40 for catering services
Cr White	Melwood Investments Proprietary Limited - $6,171.20 for contract slashing
Cr Farquhar	Bernard Farquhar Pty Limited (T/A Powerhouse Shop) $ 3,170.75 for plumbing services

(b) Outstanding balances with related parties

The following balances totalling $343.20 are outstanding at the end of the reporting period in relation to transactions with related parties on normal commercial terms and conditions.

Cr Allen	Paper Cranes Sushi Pty Ltd - $343.20

(c) Loans to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of loans in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party as follows:

Nil

(d) Commitments to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of commitments in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the council to a related party are as follows:

Nil

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 8. Managing uncertainties

8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities

Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet, but are disclosed and if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable, respectively.

(a) Contingent assets

Contingent assets are possible assets that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council.

(i) Council is currently undergoing a process over a three year period to identify old drainage assets that are not currently recorded. At this stage Council is currently unable to value any of these found assets and will bring them to account in the future when valuations have been calculated.

(b) Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:
- possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council; or
- present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:

    - it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; or
    - the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Superannuation
Council has obligations under a defined benefit superannuation scheme that may result in the need to make additional contributions to the scheme, matters relating to this potential obligation are outlined below. As a result of the volatility in financial markets the likelihood of making such contributions in future periods exists.

Landfill
Council operates a number of landfills. Council will have to carry out site rehabilitation works in the future. Council has provided the Environment Protection Authority with a bank guarantee in their favour of $1.3 million to meet the remedial action financial assurance requirements for licenced landfill sites.

Liability Mutual Insurance
Council is a participant of the MAV Liability Mutual Insurance (LMI) Scheme. The LMI scheme provides public liability and professional indemnity insurance cover. The LMI scheme states that each participant will remain liable to make further contributions to the scheme in respect of any insurance year in which it was a participant to the extent of its participant's share of any shortfall in the provision set aside in respect of that insurance year, and such liability will continue whether or not the participant remains a participant in future insurance years.

MAV Workcare
Council was a participant of the MAV WorkCare Scheme. The MAV WorkCare Scheme provided workers compensation insurance. MAV WorkCare commenced business on 1 November 2017 and the last day the Scheme operated as a self-insurer was 30 June 2021. In accordance with the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 , there is a six year liability period following the cessation of the Scheme (to 30 June 2027). During the liability period, adjustment payments may be required (or received). The determination of any adjustment payments is dependent upon revised actuarial assessments of the Scheme's tail claims liabilities as undertaken by Work Safe Victoria. If required, adjustments will occur at the 3-year and 6-year points during the liability period, and will affect participating members.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

8.2 Australian Accounting Standards issued but not yet effective

Certain new Australian Accounting Standards and interpretations have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2026 reporting period. Council assesses the impact of these new standards.

The Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) has issued *AASB 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements.* When applicable AASB 18 supersedes AASB 101 *Presentation of Financial Statements.* AASB 18 aims to improve how entities communicate in their financial statements, with a focus on information about financial performance in the statement of profit or loss. It is expected to result in presentation and disclosure changes, primarily to Council's Comprehensive Income Statement. AASB 18 is expected to first apply to Council for the 2028-29 financial year.

8.3 Financial instruments

(a) Objectives and policies

The Council's principal financial instruments comprise cash assets, term deposits, receivables (excluding statutory receivables), payables (excluding statutory payables) and bank and TCV borrowings. Details of the material accounting policy information and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset, financial liability and equity instrument is disclosed in the notes of the financial statements. Risk management is carried out by senior management under policies approved by the Council. These policies include identification and analysis of the risk exposure to Council and appropriate procedures, controls and risk minimisation.

(b) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of Council financial instruments will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The Council's exposure to market risk is primarily through interest rate risk with only insignificant exposure to other price risks and no exposure to foreign currency risk.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk refers to the risk that the value of a financial instrument or cash flows associated with the instrument will fluctuate due to changes in market interest rates. Council's interest rate liability risk arises primarily from long term loans and borrowings at fixed rates which exposes Council to fair value interest rate risk / Council does not hold any interest bearing financial instruments that are measured at fair value, and therefore has no exposure to fair value interest rate risk. Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. Council has minimal exposure to cash flow interest rate risk through its cash and deposits that are at floating rates.

Investment of surplus funds is made with approved financial institutions under the *Local Government Act 2020*.
Council manages interest rate risk by adopting an investment policy that ensures:

- diversification of investment product;
- monitoring of return on investment; and
- benchmarking of returns and comparison with budget.

There has been no significant change in the Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing interest rate risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

Interest rate movements have not been sufficiently significant during the year to have an impact on the Council's year end result.

(c) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that a contracting entity will not complete its obligations under a financial instrument and cause Council to make a financial loss. Council has exposure to credit risk on some financial assets included in the balance sheet. Particularly significant areas of credit risk exist in relation to outstanding fees and fines as well as loans and receivables from sporting clubs and associations. To help manage this risk:

- Council has a policy for establishing credit limits for the entities Council deals with;
- Council may require collateral where appropriate; and

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

- Council only invests surplus funds with financial institutions which have a recognised credit rating specified in Council's investment policy.

Receivables consist of a large number of customers, spread across the ratepayer, business and government sectors. Credit risk associated with the Council's financial assets is minimal because the main debtor is secured by a charge over the rateable property.

There are no material financial assets which are individually determined to be impaired.

Council may also be subject to credit risk for transactions which are not included in the balance sheet, such as when Council provides a guarantee for another party. Details of our contingent liabilities are disclosed in Note 8.1(b).

The maximum exposure to credit risk at the reporting date to recognised financial assets is the carrying amount, net of any allowance for impairment of those assets, as disclosed in the balance sheet and notes to the financial statements. Council does not hold any collateral.

(d) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk includes the risk that, as a result of Council's operational liquidity requirements it will not have sufficient funds to settle a transaction when required or will be forced to sell a financial asset at below value or may be unable to settle or recover a financial asset.

To help reduce these risks Council:

- has a liquidity policy which targets a minimum and average level of cash and cash equivalents to be maintained;
- has readily accessible standby facilities and other funding arrangements in place;
- has a liquidity portfolio structure that requires surplus funds to be invested within various bands of liquid instruments;
- monitors budget to actual performance on a regular basis; and
- sets limits on borrowings relating to the percentage of loans to rate revenue and percentage of loan principal repayments to rate revenue.

The Council's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed on the face of the balance sheet and the amounts related to financial guarantees disclosed, and is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

There has been no significant change in Council's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing liquidity risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

With the exception of borrowings, all financial liabilities are expected to be settled within normal terms of trade. Details of the maturity profile for borrowings are disclosed at Note 5.4.

Unless otherwise stated, the carrying amounts of financial instruments reflect their fair value.

(e) Sensitivity disclosure analysis

Taking into account past performance, future expectations, economic forecasts, and management's knowledge and experience of the financial markets, Council believes the following movements are 'reasonably possible' over the next 12 months:

- A parallel shift of + 1.0% and - 1.0% in market interest rates (AUD) from year-end rates of 4.35%.

These movements will not have a material impact on the valuation of Council's financial assets and liabilities, nor will they have a material impact on the results of Council's operations.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

8.4 Fair value measurement

Fair Value Hierarchy
Council's financial assets and liabilities are not valued in accordance with the fair value hierarchy, Council's financial assets and liabilities are measured at amortised cost.

Council measures certain assets and liabilities at fair value where required or permitted by Australian Accounting Standards. AASB 13 *Fair value measurement*, aims to improve consistency and reduce complexity by providing a definition of fair value and a single source of fair value measurement and disclosure requirements for use across Australian Accounting Standards.

For assets, where the Council adopts a current replacement cost approach to determine fair value, the Council now considers the inclusion of site preparation costs, disruption costs and costs to restore another entity's assets in the underlying valuation.

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within a fair value hierarchy, described as follows, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole:

Level 1 —	Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
Level 2 —	Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and
Level 3 —	Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, Council has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

In addition, Council determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by re-assessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

Revaluation
Subsequent to the initial recognition of assets, non-current physical assets, other than plant and equipment, are measured at their fair value, being the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. (For plant and equipment carrying amount is considered to approximate fair value given short useful lives). At balance date, the Council reviewed the carrying value of the individual classes of assets measured at fair value to ensure that each asset materially approximated its fair value. Where the carrying value materially differed from the fair value at balance date, the class of asset was revalued.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 8. Managing uncertainties (continued)

Fair value valuations are determined in accordance with a valuation hierarchy. Changes to the valuation hierarchy will only occur if an external change in the restrictions or limitations of use of an asset result in changes to the permissible or practical highest and best use of the asset. In addition, Council undertakes a formal revaluation of land, buildings, and infrastructure assets on a regular basis ranging from 1 to 4 years. The valuation is performed either by experienced council officers or independent experts. The following table sets out the frequency of revaluations by asset class.

Asset Class	**Revaluation frequency**
Land	1 to 4 years
Buildings	1 to 4 years
Roads	1 to 4 years
Bridges	1 to 4 years
Footpaths and cycleways	1 to 4 years
Drainage	1 to 4 years
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	1 to 4 years
Waste management	1 to 4 years
Parks, open space and streetscapes	1 to 4 years
Aerodromes	1 to 4 years
Other infrastructure	1 to 4 years

Where the assets are revalued, the revaluation increases are credited directly to the asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that an increase reverses a prior year decrease for that class of asset that had been recognised as an expense in which case the increase is recognised as revenue up to the amount of the expense. Revaluation decreases are recognised as an expense except where prior increases are included in the asset revaluation reserve for that class of asset in which case the decrease is taken to the reserve to the extent of the remaining increases. Within the same class of assets, revaluation increases and decreases within the year are offset.

Impairment of assets

At each reporting date, the Council reviews the carrying value of its assets to determine whether there is any indication that these assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the assets carrying value. Any excess of the assets carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the comprehensive income statement, unless the asset is carried at the revalued amount in which case, the impairment loss is recognised directly against the revaluation surplus in respect of the same class of asset to the extent that the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that same class of asset.

The impairment policy above does not apply to Council's property, infrastructure, specialised buildings and other non-current physical assets subsequently measure at fair value. These are primarily non-cash generating assets of not-for-profit entities, which are typically specialised in nature and held for continuing use of their service capacity. Their recoverable amount is expected to be materially the same as fair value determined under AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement (Fair Value Measurement in italic font), with the consequence that AASB 136 Impairment of Assets (Impairment of Assets in italic font) does not apply to such assets that are regularly revalued.

8.5 Events occurring after balance date

No matters have occurred after balance date that require disclosure in the financial report.

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 9. Other matters

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $ '000	Increase (decrease) $ '000	Balance at end of reporting period $ '000
9.1 Reserves			
(a) Asset revaluation reserves			
2026			
Property			
Land and land improvements	153,259	–	153,259
Heritage buildings	–	1,175	1,175
Buildings	90,944	14,851	105,795
	244,203	16,026	260,229
Infrastructure			
Roads	507,762	74,805	582,567
Bridges	69,004	10,581	79,585
Footpaths and cycleways	31,594	5,617	37,211
Drainage	34,087	8,286	42,373
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	16,025	2,110	18,135
Waste management	1,329	814	2,143
Parks, open space and streetscapes	5,967	5,448	11,415
Aerodromes	3,389	1,174	4,563
Offstreet car parks	2,238	1,455	3,693
Other infrastructure	19,313	2,531	21,844
	690,708	112,821	803,529
Total asset revaluation reserves	934,911	128,847	1,063,758
2025			
Property			
Land and land improvements	153,259	–	153,259
Buildings	90,944	–	90,944
	244,203	–	244,203
Infrastructure			
Roads	507,762	–	507,762
Bridges	69,004	–	69,004
Footpaths and cycleways	31,594	–	31,594
Drainage	34,087	–	34,087
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	16,025	–	16,025
Waste management	1,329	–	1,329
Parks, open space and streetscapes	5,967	–	5,967
Aerodromes	3,389	–	3,389
Offstreet car parks	2,238	–	2,238
Other infrastructure	19,313	–	19,313
	690,708	–	690,708
Total asset revaluation reserves	934,911	–	934,911

East Gippsland Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 9. Other matters (continued)

The asset revaluation reserve is used to record the increased (net) value of Council's assets over time.

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $ '000	Transfer from Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Transfer to Accumulated Surplus $ '000	Balance at end of reporting period $ '000
(b) Other reserves				
2026				
Car Parking	193	–	–	193
Development Contribution Plans	196	–	–	196
Lakes Entrance Northern Growth Area	1	–	–	1
Recreational Land	2,193	330	(53)	2,470
Road Upgrading	126	–	–	126
Street Trees Reserve	18	172	–	190
Total Other reserves	2,727	502	(53)	3,176
2025				
Car Parking	193	–	–	193
Development Contribution Plans	196	–	–	196
Lakes Entrance Northern Growth Area	1	–	–	1
Recreational Land	2,074	119	–	2,193
Road Upgrading	126	–	–	126
Street Trees Reserve	–	18	–	18
Total Other reserves	2,590	137	–	2,727

The Recreation Land Reserve receives developer contributions for future development of public open space.

Development Contribution Plans receive contribution from developers upon the sale of land in a prescribed planning area.

The Car Parking Reserve receives developer funds for future development of public car parks.

The Road Upgrading Reserve receives contributions from developers for the future upgrade of specific roads as required by development plans.

Lakes Entrance Northern Growth Area receive contributions in accordance with the development plan.

Notes to the Financial Report
for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 9. Other matters (continued)

	2026 $ '000	2025 $ '000
9.2 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to surplus/(deficit)		
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	7,727	25,407
Non-cash adjustments:		
Depreciation/amortisation	33,953	32,781
Profit/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(293)	(329)
Fair value adjustments for investment property	(297)	(377)
Contributions - Non-monetary assets	(6,295)	(11,708)
Financing cost in financing activities	348	369
Write off property, plant and equipment	2,802	7,370
Bad debt written off	6	20
Change in assets and liabilities:		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(980)	(193)
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	201	(649)
Increase/(decrease) in contract assets	(1,178)	1,315
Increase/(decrease) in other assets	288	162
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(6,249)	3,873
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	(284)	537
(Decrease)/increase in trust funds and deposits	201	(316)
(Decrease)/increase in contract and other liabilities	(3,553)	(8,686)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	26,397	49,576

Note 10. Changes in accounting policies

There have been no changes to accounting policies in the 2025-26 year.

East Gippsland Shire Council

Performance Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2026

Certification of performance statement

In my opinion, the accompanying performance statement has been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.



Ernest Mhande, CPA
Principal Accounting Officer
Dated: 18 September 2026

In our opinion, the accompanying performance statement of the East Gippsland Shire Council for the year ended 30 June 2026 presents fairly the results of council's performance in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

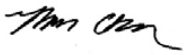
The performance statement contains the relevant performance indicators, measures and results in relation to service performance, financial performance and sustainable capacity.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render any particulars in the performance statement to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the council and by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* to certify this performance statement in its final form.



Jodie Ashworth
Mayor
Dated: 18 September 2026



Tom Crook
Deputy Mayor
Dated: 18 September 2026



Fiona Weigall
Chief Executive Officer
Dated: 18 September 2026

Independent Auditor's Report

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

To the Councillors of East Gippsland Shire Council

Opinion	I have audited the accompanying performance statement of East Gippsland Shire Council (the council) which comprises the: • description of municipality for the year ended 30 June 2026 • service performance indicators for the year ended 30 June 2026 • financial performance indicators for the year ended 30 June 2026 • sustainable capacity indicators for the year ended 30 June 2026 • notes to the accounts • certification of the performance statement. In my opinion, the performance statement of East Gippsland Shire Council in respect of the year ended 30 June 2026 presents fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with the performance reporting requirements of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.
Basis for Opinion	I have conducted my audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* which incorporates the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the performance statement* section of my report. My independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. My staff and I are independent of the council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the performance statement in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.
Councillors' responsibilities for the performance statement	The Councillors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the performance statement in accordance with the performance reporting requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 and for such internal control as the Councillors determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a performance statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Level 31 / 35 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000
T 03 8601 7000 enquiries@audit.vic.gov.au www.audit.vic.gov.au

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statement

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the performance statement based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the performance statement as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of this performance statement. As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Standards on Assurance Engagements, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the performance statement, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the council's internal control
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the performance statement, including the disclosures, and whether performance statement represents the underlying events and results in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Councillors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.



MELBOURNE
21 September 2026

Travis Derricott
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Section 1. Description of municipality

East Gippsland is a large and vibrant region in a beautiful natural setting, home to proud and involved communities that embrace and encourage self-reliance, responsibility and new ideas. The past 30 years have seen East Gippsland evolve from its rural origins to a flourishing economic and tourism region in Eastern Victoria, drawing more than one million visitors each year.

The region has kept its identity and sense of place as it has grown. The shire stretches from west of Bairnsdale to the New South Wales border, covering approximately 21,000 square kilometres or 10 percent of the State. East Gippsland has an Estimated Residential Population of approximately 49,669 residents (as of 30 June 2025 [1]).

East Gippsland's unique qualities are both its strength and challenges. The region is distinguished by its natural setting, with its southern edge defined by the Gippsland Lakes and rugged coastline and the rising backdrop of the High Country. Historical rural landscapes and natural bushland areas characterise the region and surrounding its communities.

As of 30th of June 2026, we are responsible for maintaining 3,008 km of roads, 3 timber and 188 concrete bridges, 31 pedestrian bridges, 267.5 hectares of parks and gardens and 296 km of footpaths and shared paths.

[1] .idcommunity East Gippsland Shire Estimated Residential Population Data

Section 2. Service Performance Indicators
For the year ended 30 June 2026

Dimension/indicator/measure	Results					Comments
	2023	2024	2025	2026		
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
Aquatic facilities ***Utilisation*** *Utilisation of aquatic facilities* [*Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population*]	9.23	9.93	10.64	11.10	10.62	Aquatic facility visits were just below target at 10.62 visits per head of population, mainly due to the temporary closure of the BARC for essential roof works from January to March 2026. The works were needed to keep the facility safe and functional and will support continued use by the community once complete.
Animal management ***Health and safety*** *Animal management prosecutions* *[Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions] x 100*	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%	There were two animal management prosecutions, both of which were successful. This maintains a 100% success rate and reflects Council's focus on taking enforcement action where appropriate to support community safety, responsible pet ownership and compliance with animal management requirements.
Food safety ***Health and safety*** *Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications* *[Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100*	100.00%	100.00%	90.00%	100.00%	100.00%	A total of 3 critical or major non-compliances were followed up, all of which are now compliant.

Dimension/indicator/measure	Results					Comments
	2023	2024	2025	2026		
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
Governance ***Satisfaction*** *Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement* *(Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council)*	45	41	46	54	56	Community satisfaction has improved compared to the previous year, reflecting Council's continued focus on responding to community feedback, delivering priority projects and services, and strengthening communication and engagement with the community.
Libraries ***Participation*** *Library membership* *[percentage of the population that are registered library members] x100*	NA	12.34%	26.74%	N/A	29.13%	Library membership remained strong, with 29% of East Gippsland residents recording a library transaction in the past three years. Continued investment in library collections, programs, digital resources and community activities supported ongoing community participation and helped maintain strong membership levels across the municipality.
Roads ***Condition*** *Sealed local roads below the intervention level* *(Percentage of sealed local roads that are below the renewal intervention level set by Council and not requiring renewal)*	97.37%	96.03%	96.24%	95.00%	96.19%	This represents a negligible decrease of 0.05% compared with the previous reporting period. Such a minor variation is within expected annual fluctuations and indicates that overall network condition has remained stable.
Statutory Planning ***Service standard*** *Planning applications decided within the relevant required time* *(Percentage of planning application decisions made within the relevant required time)*	37.12%	36.41%	56.07%	55.00%	67.75%	Applications decided within the required timeframe reached 67.75% for the year, surpassing the target of 55%. This improvement reflects sustained effort to streamline planning processes and deliver more timely decisions for the community. Encouragingly, the result is supported by rising community satisfaction, evident in both the survey completed by service users and Community Satisfaction Survey 2026.

Dimension/indicator/measure	Results					Comments
	2023	2024	2025	2026		
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per budget	Actual	
Waste Collection ***Waste diversion*** *Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill* *[Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100*	53.06%	49.18%	49.30%	48.00%	48.30%	The Container Deposit Scheme has continued to contribute to a decrease in the weight of kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill. Council continues to work with community to ensure waste is recycled where possible.

Section 3. Financial Performance Indicators
For the year ended 30 June 2026

Dimension / *indicator* / *measure*	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target as per Budget	2026 Actual	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast	2029 Forecast	2030 Forecast	Material Variations and Comments
Efficiency ***Expenditure level*** *Expenses per property assessment* *[Total expenses / Number of property assessments]*	$3,617.96	$3,990.98	$4,371.01	$3,988.00	$4,267.22	$4,085.88	$3,959.20	$4,016.27	$4,108.85	The reason that the expenses increase in 2024/25 and 2025/26 is due to two significant bushfire funded projects to rebuild community assets in Sarsfield and Buchan. These are operating expenses as Council does not own the land on which they are built.
Revenue level *Average rate per property assessment* *[Sum of all general rates and municipal charges / Number of property assessments]*	$1,691.66	$1,764.72	$1,806.87	$1,834.20	$1,842.25	$1,889.54	$1,941.22	$1,989.77	$2,039.51	Increase in line with the Council rate cap decision.
Liquidity ***Working capital*** *Current assets compared to current liabilities* *[Current assets / Current liabilities] x100*	307.46%	282.70%	333.37%	247.09%	509.77%	278.56%	214.26%	195.37%	189.28%	The ratio was higher than target due to the landfill rehabilitation project being deferred to 2027/28. This resulted in the associated rehabilitation provision being reclassified from current to non-current liabilities, reducing current liabilities and increasing the liquidity ratio.

Dimension / *indicator / measure*	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027	2028	2029	2030	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per Budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Unrestricted cash *Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities* *[Unrestricted cash / Current liabilities] x100*	89.62%	137.45%	86.26%	154.06%	129.55%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	This is a result of current liabilities being less than the previous year which is a result of less trade and other payables and less provisions because of project delivery timelines that have moved to 2027/28. Due to the changes in the performance framework, these indicators no longer form part of the 2026/27 budget, therefore no future forecast has been made.
Obligations ***Loans and borrowings*** *Loans and borrowings compared to rates* *[Interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100*	4.44%	14.11%	12.65%	11.42%	11.34%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	This indicates that borrowings are decreasing and no new loans have been taken up. Due to the changes in the performance framework, these indicators no longer form part of the 2026/27 budget, therefore no future forecast has been made.
Loans and borrowing repayments compared to rates *[Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100*	0.27%	0.57%	1.40%	1.43%	1.38%	2.85%	1.33%	1.19%	2.28%	A lump-sum loan repayment of $1.15 million is due in 2026/27, with a further loan repayment of $0.5 million due in 2029/30. These significant repayments increase the ratio in both years.

Dimension / *indicator / measure*	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027	2028	2029	2030	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per Budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Indebtedness *Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue* *[Non-current liabilities / Own source revenue] x100*	7.96%	18.17%	16.97%	16.72%	20.58%	13.79%	11.52%	8.92%	10.15%	This result reflects project delivery timeframes being shifted into future years.
Asset renewal and upgrade *Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation* *[Asset renewal and upgrade expense / Asset depreciation] x100*	97.34%	126.50%	107.79%	189.11%	77.22%	137.83%	162.52%	99.37%	105.94%	The actual result is less than the target due to $35.08 m of renewal and upgrade works being carried forward for completion in the 2026/27 year.
Operating position ***Adjusted underlying result*** *Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)* *[Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit)/ Adjusted underlying revenue] x100*	13.92%	-23.30%	-3.64%	-6.18%	-2.21%	-3.36%	-1.48%	-1.61%	-1.88%	For 2025/26 we reported an underlying deficit. We are currently completing a Financial Sustainability Strategy to assist in getting to a more sustainable financial position.
Stability ***Rates concentration*** *Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue* *[Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue] x100*	47.77%	65.56%	51.52%	58.91%	53.09%	58.01%	59.95%	60.66%	60.95%	Whilst rate income has been consistent and increased largely in line with the State Government rate cap, the timing of the receipt of the Financial Assistance Grants has impacted the adjusted underlying revenue which has caused variances over time.

Dimension / *indicator* / *measure*	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027	2028	2029	2030	Material Variations and Comments
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target as per Budget	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	
Rates effort *Rates compared to property values* *[Rate revenue / Capital improved value of rateable properties in the municipality] x100*	0.41%	0.36%	0.37%	0.37%	0.38%	0.38%	0.39%	0.39%	0.39%	

Section 4. Sustainable Capacity Indicators
For the year ended 30 June 2026

Indicator / measure [formula]	Results 2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Actual	Comment
Population *Expenses per head of municipal population* *[Total expenses / Municipal population]*	$2,417.94	$2,672.75	$2,974.36	$2,905.49	
Infrastructure per head of municipal population *[Value of infrastructure / Municipal population]*	$25,544.50	$23,687.77	$23,900.42	$26,240.27	The Infrastructure per Head of Municipal Population indicator increased by 9.79% compared to the previous year. This increase was mainly driven by the revaluation of Council's infrastructure assets during the year, which increased the recorded value of Council's infrastructure portfolio.
Population density per length of road *[Municipal population / Kilometres of local roads]*	16.46	16.34	16.39	16.51	
Own-source revenue *Own-source revenue per head of municipal population* *[Own-source revenue / Municipal population]*	$1,875.75	$1,995.40	$2,082.88	$2,070.39	
Recurrent grants *Recurrent grants per head of municipal population* *[Recurrent grants / Municipal population]*	$571.89	$94.02	$713.68	$671.67	Financial Assistance Grants are the Council's largest recurrent grant funding source. The inconsistency 2023/24 is due to the fact that we received the full grant payment in 2022/23 for 2023/24. Overall, we have little control of when the grants are paid to Council.

Indicator / measure [formula]	Results				Comment
	2023	2024	2025	2026	
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	
Disadvantage *Relative socio-economic disadvantage* *[Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage by decile]*	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	
Workforce turnover *Percentage of staff turnover* *[Number of permanent staff resignations and terminations / Average number of permanent staff for the financial year] x100*	14.20%	13.10%	13.20%	18.04%	Staff turnover increased from 13.20% in the previous year to 18.04% at the end of 2025/26. Continued monitoring of workforce retention and labour market trends will better support workforce planning and organisational capability.

Section 5. Notes to the accounts

5.1 Basis of preparation

Council is required to prepare and include a performance statement within its annual report. The performance statement includes the results of the prescribed, service performance, financial performance and sustainable capacity indicators and measures together with a description of the municipal district, an explanation of material variations in the results and notes to the accounts. This statement has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

Where applicable the results in the performance statement have been prepared on accounting bases consistent with those reported in the Financial Statements. The other results are based on information drawn from council information systems or from third parties (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Council's satisfaction survey provider).

The performance statement presents the actual results for the current year and the previous three years, along with the current year's target, if mandated by the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. Additionally, for the prescribed financial performance indicators and measures, the performance statement includes the target budget for the current year, and the results forecast for the period 2026-27 to 2029-30 by the council's financial plan.

The Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 requires explanation of any material variations in the results contained in the performance statement. Council has adopted materiality thresholds relevant to each indicator and measure and explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality thresholds unless the variance is considered to be material because of its nature.

5.2 Definitions

Key term	Definition
adjusted underlying revenue	means total income other than: • non-recurrent grants used to fund capital expenditure; and • non-monetary asset contributions; and • contributions to fund capital expenditure from sources other than those referred to above
adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)	means adjusted underlying revenue less total expenditure
annual report	means an annual report prepared by a council under section 98 of the Act
asset renewal expenditure	means expenditure on an existing asset or on replacing an existing asset that returns the service capability of the asset to its original capability
asset upgrade expenditure	means expenditure that— (a) enhances an existing asset to provide a higher level of service; or (b) extends the life of the asset beyond its original life
critical non-compliance outcome notification	means a notification received by council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the *Food Act 1984*, or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that poses an immediate serious threat to public health
current assets	has the same meaning as in the Australian Accounting Standards
current liabilities	has the same meaning as in the Australian Accounting Standards
food premises	has the same meaning as in the *Food Act 1984*
intervention level	means the level set for the condition of a road beyond which a council will not allow the road to deteriorate and will need to intervene
local road	means a sealed or unsealed road for which the council is the responsible road authority under the *Road Management Act 2004*
major non-compliance outcome notification	means a notification received by a council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the *Food Act 1984*, or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that does not pose an immediate serious threat to public health but may do so if no remedial action is taken
non-current liabilities	means all liabilities other than current liabilities
own-source revenue	means adjusted underlying revenue other than revenue that is not under the control of council (including government grants)
population	means the resident population estimated by council

Key term	Definition
rate revenue	means revenue from general rates, municipal charges, service rates and service charges
relative socio-economic disadvantage	in relation to a municipal district, means the relative socio-economic disadvantage, expressed as a decile for the relevant financial year, of the area in which the municipal district is located according to the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage of SEIFA
restricted cash	means cash, cash equivalents and financial assets, within the meaning of the Australian Accounting Standards, not available for use other than for a purpose for which it is restricted, and includes cash to be used to fund capital works expenditure from the previous financial year
SEIFA	means the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas published from time to time by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on its Internet site
unrestricted cash	means all cash and cash equivalents other than restricted cash

5.3 Other Matters

Overview of 2026

During the financial year Council continued to operate in a challenging environment shaped by rising costs, growing service demand and increasing expectations from our community. Our key challenges for 2025/26 included:

- Rising costs, growing service demand and increasing community expectations continued to place pressure on Council's resources and financial sustainability.
- Global economic conditions and fuel price increases contributed to higher operating, transport and waste service costs.
- Cost shifting from other levels of government, including changes to levies and regulatory requirements, continued to increase financial pressure on councils and ratepayers.
- Securing external funding remains critical to delivering infrastructure and services in a constrained funding environment.
- Housing affordability and availability continued to affect communities across East Gippsland, reinforcing the need for coordinated action and advocacy.
- Bushfire activity during the summer highlighted the ongoing importance of emergency preparedness, resilience and recovery planning.
- The increasing frequency and complexity of emergency events continue to place pressure on communities, infrastructure and service delivery.

While these challenges are significant, they also reinforce the importance of long-term planning, collaboration and advocacy. We will continue to work with communities, government partners and industry to address emerging issues, advocate for a fairer share of investment, and ensure East Gippsland remains a resilient, sustainable and prosperous region into the future.

East Gippsland Shire Council

273 Main Street
PO Box 1618 Bairnsdale VIC 3875

(03) 5153 9500
eastgippsland.vic.gov.au
EastGippyShire
PO Box 1618, Bairnsdale 3875

Council Offices

Bairnsdale
Corporate Centre
273 Main Street (PO Box 1618),
Bairnsdale VIC 3875

Lakes Entrance
18 Mechanics Street, Lakes Entrance

Mallacoota
70 Maurice Avenue, Mallacoota

Omeo
179 Day Avenue, Omeo

Orbost
1 Ruskin Street, Orbost

Paynesville
55 The Esplanade, Paynesville

5.4.2 Council Meeting Schedule 2027

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Purpose

To establish the dates, times, and locations for Council meetings in 2027.

Recommendation

That Council adopts the following Council Meeting dates for the 2027 calendar year, to be held at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street Bairnsdale:

Tuesday, 23 February (6.00 pm)	***Tuesday, 17 August (6.00 pm)***
Tuesday, 16 March (6.00 pm)	***Tuesday, 21 September (6.00 pm)***
Tuesday, 20 April (2.00 pm)	***Tuesday, 19 October (2.00 pm)***
Tuesday, 18 May (6.00 pm)	***Thursday, 11 November (Statutory) (6.00 pm)***
Tuesday, 15 June (6.00 pm)	***Tuesday, 16 November (6.00 pm)***
Tuesday, 20 July (2.00 pm)	***Tuesday, 21 December (2.00 pm)***

Key Points

Council Meetings are held regularly to carry out the ongoing business of Council.

At or before the last meeting each calendar year, Council must fix the date, time and place of all Council meetings and any delegated committee meetings for the following calendar year.

The proposed Council meeting schedule for the 2027 calendar year has been developed to enable Council to carry out its decision-making responsibilities effectively and efficiently and to ensure the Community are aware of the meeting dates and times. Every third Council Meeting is proposed to commence at 2.00 pm, with all other Council Meetings commencing at 6.00pm, providing greater flexibility for community members to attend meetings at different times.

Strategic Alignment

This report was prepared in accordance with section 60 (Governance Rules) and 61 (Council Meetings) of the *Local Government Act* 2020.

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following theme in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust
Outcome – Decision-making is streamlined, efficient, and responsive to community needs

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

The 2027 Council Meeting Schedule will be published on Council's website following adoption, providing the community with advance notice of meeting dates, times and locations.

Council meetings are open to the public and are livestreamed, recorded and published on Council's website.

The proposed schedule supports transparency and accessibility by enabling community members to plan their participation in Council meetings and engagement activities. Council's Governance Rules provide opportunities for community members to ask questions, make submissions and present petitions on matters of interest to them and the broader community.

Opportunities and Risks

This 2027 Council meeting schedule aims to enhance Council's operational efficiency, governance, and community engagement while balancing financial, environmental, and reputational considerations.

The implications of this report have been assessed against the following risk category:

Corporate Governance: A consistent meeting schedule enables Council to uphold strong governance practices by ensuring decisions are timely and regulatory requirements are met, supporting transparent community engagement.

Climate Change

This report is assessed as having no direct impact on climate change.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

Nil

5.4.3 S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation Planning and Environment Act 1987

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Purpose

This report seeks a resolution of Council to remake the S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation under the *Planning and Environment Act* 1987 (the Act).

Recommendation

That Council:

1. ***in the exercise of the powers conferred by section 147(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, resolves that David Ackland, Planning Compliance Officer and Tian Tian, Strategic Planner be appointed as Authorised Officers for the purposes of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the regulations made under that Act;***

2. ***authorises the Chief Executive Officer to remake and execute the S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation to reflect the above changes to Authorised Officers; and***

3. ***notes that the Instrument will come into force immediately following resolution of Council and will remain in force until Council determines to vary or revoke it, or until the Officer ceases to be employed by East Gippsland Shire Council.***

Key Points

Certain Council Officers are required to be appointed as Authorised Officers to exercise statutory powers under various Acts, regulations, and local laws in accordance with the provisions granted to them.

In most cases, Authorised Officers are appointed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) through the power of delegation conferred through the S5 Instrument of Delegation (Council to CEO).

However, the Act specifically requires that Authorised Officers for the purposes of that Act be appointed by resolution of Council.

The Act provides that certain activities on behalf of Council may only be undertaken by Council Officers authorised under the Act. These include the power to:

1. serve planning infringement notices (section 130);

2. enter any land at any reasonable time to carry out and enforce the Act, the regulations, a planning scheme, a permit condition, an enforcement order or a section 173 agreement (section 133); and

3. request the assistance of Victoria Police in the execution of the powers of entry (section 136).

Following staff movements within the Planning and Development team, the existing S11A Instrument made by Council on 21 April 2026 has been reviewed to ensure that relevant staff are able to fulfill the requirements of their roles.

The review identified that David Ackland, Planning Compliance Officer and Tian Tian, Strategic Planner require appointment as Authorised Officers to perform the functions of their roles.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following theme in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

All appointments as Authorised Officers and the Act are prepared in consultation with the Manager Planning and Development.

Opportunities and Risks

Appointing Authorised Officers gives Planning and Development staff the ability to carry out planning investigation and compliance activities, minimising the risks of failing to comply with the Act.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

Nil

5.4.4 Special Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

Purpose

This report is to present the confirmed minutes of the Special Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) meeting held on Monday 14 September 2026 for noting.

Recommendation

That Council notes the confirmed minutes of the Special Audit and Risk Committee meeting held Monday 14 September 2026, as presented at Attachment 1 to the report.

Key Points

The Committee is an independent advisory committee to Council established under section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Act). The Committee does not have any delegated powers, including executive powers, management functions or delegated responsibility. The Committee meets quarterly, and its role is to monitor, review and advise Council on the standard of its financial control, risk management and corporate governance.

Council's Committee comprises five members: three independent members, one of whom is appointed by Council as Chair; the Mayor of the day; and one other Councillor appointed annually by Council.

The Committee's charter, which is available on Council's website, outlines the functions and responsibilities of the Committee in assisting Council to fulfil its oversight and corporate governance responsibilities. The Charter provides for the structure and operation of the Committee.

Presenting the minutes of the Committee meeting demonstrates Council's ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability and represents an opportunity to further enhance community understanding and trust in Council's deliberative processes.

Strategic Alignment

This report has been prepared and aligned with the following theme in the Council Plan 2025-2029:

Theme 4: Managing Council well
Outcome – Council operates transparently and effectively with public trust

Consultation/Community Engagement/Impacts

No direct consultation was required in the preparation of this report. The minutes provide an open and transparent record of matters discussed at the Committee meeting, thereby supporting community confidence in Council's governance processes.

Opportunities and Risks

This report enhances transparency, strengthens community trust in Council's governance, and provides assurance to Councillors that financial, risk, and compliance frameworks are independently monitored. No material risks are identified, as the report is for noting only and does not require Council to make any decisions or delegate authority.

Climate Change

This report is assessed as having no direct impact on climate change.

Conflicts of Interest

Officers preparing this report have no conflict of interest to declare.

Attachments

1. Special Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes 14/09/2026 [**5.4.4.1** - 8 pages]

Minutes

East Gippsland Shire Council
Audit and Risk Committee

Special Meeting

Monday 14 September 2026 at 9:00 am

Microsoft Teams meeting

Index

1 Procedural 3

1.1 Recognition of Traditional Custodians 3

1.2 In Attendance 3

1.3 Apologies 3

1.4 Declaration of Conflict of Interest 3

1.5 Next meeting 3

2 Reports 4

2.1 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement 2025/26 4

2.2 Opportunity for discussion between Audit and Risk Committee members and External Auditor 8

3 Close of Meeting 8

1 Procedural

1.1 Recognition of Traditional Custodians

Chair, Mark Dupé welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians.

Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the 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, deliver services and support to our community.

1.2 In Attendance (online)

Committee Members
Mark Dupé, Chair
Sarah Philpott
Susan Lloyd
Councillor Joanne Eastman

Officers in Attendance
Sarah Johnston, General Manager Business Excellence
Other members as indicated for individual items

Observers
Deputy Mayor, Councillor Tom Crook
Councillor Arthur Allen
Councillor Bernie Farquhar

1.3 Apologies

Mayor, Councillor Jodie Ashworth
Fiona Weigall, Chief Executive Officer

1.4 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Nil

1.5 Next meeting

The next Audit and Risk Committee Meeting is scheduled to be held on Monday 23 November 2026 at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street Bairnsdale and online, commencing at 9:30 am.

2 Reports

2.1 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement 2025/26

Presented by Sarah Johnston General Manager Business Excellence
Ernest Mhande Chief Finance Officer
Portia Branton Manager Organisational Strategy and Performance

In Attendance:
Nick Bell, RSD Audit (Council's External Auditor)

The Committee considered Council's 2025/26 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement, together with the Auditor's Closing Report and Final Management Letter.

Management provided an overview of Council's financial performance for 2025/26, including the movement between the budgeted and actual operating result, employee costs, materials and services expenditure, asset write-offs, asset revaluations, capital works delivery and financial sustainability indicators.

Financial Statements

Discussion included:

- The impact of the early receipt of the Victorian Grants Commission payment, the timing of capital grants, non-monetary asset contributions and higher interest income on Council's operating result.

- Employee costs exceeding the adopted budget, including the effect of grant-funded positions, transfers from materials and services, expenditure associated with recreation centre casual wages and the vacancy allowance not being achieved.

    - Management advised that the difference between the budgeted and actual vacancy allowance was likely to include the cost of replacing employees absent from front-line service roles through casual employees or additional hours worked by permanent part-time employees. Management also advised on the additional controls put in place for 2026/27 to address the variances, including additional fortnightly reports to all Managers resulting from the implementation of a new finance system, monthly budget management meetings with Finance and Key Performance Indicators for employee costs and FTE budgets.

    - The need for further analysis of the employee cost variance was raised to identify its underlying causes and ensure service delivery requirements and workforce expenditure are appropriately managed.

- Materials and services expenditure, including operating grant expenditure carried forward from previous years, increased fuel and utility costs, the waste levy and vehicle and plant expenditure.

- The need to improve the forecasting and delivery of operating grant-funded projects to reduce the ongoing movement of expenditure between financial years.

- Asset write-offs arising when components of existing assets are replaced. Management advised that only the replaced component is written off and that some assets may require renewal before being fully depreciated due to their assessed condition. Work is continuing to improve asset condition information and longer-term asset management planning.

    - Council's asset revaluation methodology and the significant non-cash revaluation adjustment recognised during 2025/26. The Committee discussed Council's current 10 per cent threshold and whether applying indexation adjustments annually may avoid significant movements between comprehensive revaluations.

    - The adjusted underlying result, asset renewal performance and the importance of Council's Financial Sustainability Strategy in addressing longer-term financial sustainability risks.

- The need for ongoing reporting to the Committee and Council on employee costs, capital works delivery and the implementation of associated management controls.

Performance Statement 2025/26

Management presented the 2025/26 Performance Statement and highlighted Council's performance against the prescribed Local Government Performance Reporting Framework indicators (LGPRF).

The 2025/26 Performance Statement highlighted positive results across a number of key indicators, including improved community satisfaction with Council's consultation and engagement, statutory planning performance exceeding target, the condition of Council's sealed local road network remaining above the intervention level and continued strong community participation in Council's library services.

Discussion included:

- Attendance at Council's aquatic and recreation facilities, including whether attendance figures could distinguish between aquatic, gymnasium and other services. The Committee was advised that the audited measure must be reported in accordance with the definition prescribed under the LGPRF.

- The value of comparing the community's assessment of the importance of individual services with its assessment of Council's performance in delivering those services, particularly when considering service reviews and long-term financial sustainability.

- Forthcoming changes to the LGPRF, including a reduction in the number of indicators included in the audited Performance Statement. The Committee noted that Council may continue to monitor and report additional indicators outside the audited statement.

Auditor's Closing Report and Final Management Letter

Nick Bell presented the Auditor's Closing Report and Final Management Letter and advised that the audit was substantially complete and had been submitted to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) for final review.

Discussion included:

- The audit process, including the timely provision of information and assistance by Council officers, and audit work undertaken in relation to the implementation of Council's financial system. The Auditor advised that no deficiencies or Management Letter findings arose from the system implementation and that Council officers had been cooperative throughout the audit process.

- Audit adjustments relating to infrastructure asset revaluations, trade payables and an insurance expense recognised in the incorrect financial year, together with an unadjusted difference relating to landfill capping costs that was below audit materiality.

- A low-risk Management Letter recommendation regarding the review of assumptions and cost estimates supporting Council's landfill provision calculation, together with several business improvement opportunities relating to matters such as credit cards, terminated employees and out-of-date policies. The Auditor advised that these matters did not represent significant financial reporting or control risks requiring formal ongoing audit tracking.

- Contributions of non-monetary assets and the process by which assets are accepted into Council ownership, recognised on the asset register and incorporated into future maintenance, renewal and depreciation programs.

- Variances between budgeted and actual capital works expenditure, including the relationship between materials and services expenditure and carried-forward operating grants, and management explanations disclosed in Note 2.1 of the Annual Financial Statements.

- Sector-wide challenges affecting capital works delivery, including contractor availability, increasing construction costs, grant-funded programs and continuing natural disaster recovery activities.

- The Auditor's advice that there were no significant concerns or unresolved matters arising from the audit and they expected to give an unmodified audit opinion with the statements being presented fairly in accordance with the *Local Government Act* 2020.

Procedural Note

At 9.53 am, the meeting paused when the Chair, Mark Dupé, experienced technical difficulties and was disconnected from the meeting.

Susan Lloyd nominated Sarah Philpott to act as Chair during the Chair's absence. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Joanne Eastman.

Sarah Philpott assumed the Chair and the meeting resumed.

During this period, Councillor Joanne Eastman raised a question regarding the increase in key management personnel and executive remuneration reported for 2025/26. Management advised that the question required further examination and consultation with the Chief Executive Officer. The question was taken on notice, with a response to be provided to the Committee out of session.

Procedural Note

At 9.57 am, the meeting paused while Sarah Johnston received a telephone call from the Chair, Mark Dupé regarding his connection to the meeting. The meeting resumed at 9.59 am.

At 10.00 am, the meeting paused again when Mark Dupé was disconnected while reading the recommendation.

The meeting resumed at 10.02 am when the Chair, Mark Dupé rejoined by telephone and resumed the Chair.

Recommendation

The Audit and Risk Committee recommends that Council:

1. ***provides 'in principle' approval of the Annual Financial Statements 2025/26 as provided at Attachment 1, subject to the Auditor General's review;***

2. ***provides 'in principle' approval of the Performance Statement 2025/26 as provided at Attachment 2, subject to the Auditor General's review; and***

3. ***appoints two Councillors to certify the Annual Financial Statements 2025/26 and the Performance Statement 2025/26 in their final form.***

Moved: Susan Lloyd
Seconded: Sarah Philpott

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Procedural Note

Following consideration of item 2.1, the Committee moved into a confidential discussion with Council's External Auditor. Due to technical disruptions and participants entering and leaving the online meeting, the mover and seconder were not formally captured. All observers and management representatives left the meeting at 10.05 am. Vanessa Hack, Audit and Risk Committee Secretariat remained to provide technical support and facilitate the Chair's participation by telephone.

2.2 Opportunity for discussion between Audit and Risk Committee members and External Auditor

In Attendance:
Audit and Risk Committee members
Nick Bell, RSD Audit (Council's external Auditor)
Vanessa Hack, Audit and Risk Committee Secretariat

The Committee held a confidential discussion with Council's External Auditor.

The following is noted:

- RSD confirmed that the financial and related information was provided by the East Gippsland Shire Council team in a timely manner and that no major relationship or technical issues arose during the audit.

- The overall engagement was very positive, and RSD was complimentary of the Council team.

- RSD noted that its role in relation to the identified employee cost issues was limited by the scope of its engagement. The setting, reporting and oversight of this budget area is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee and Council. The Chair confirmed that employee costs would be monitored quarterly by the Committee to oversee the improvements identified by management for implementation in 2026/27.

- RSD provided similar feedback regarding the non-delivery of capital works and the resulting balance sheet impacts. The Chair advised that he would discuss these matters with the management team upon his return in approximately four to five weeks.

Recommendation

That the Committee return to open session.

Moved: Susan Lloyd
Seconded: Sarah Philpott

CARRIED

3 Close of Meeting

The Chair, Mark Dupé, declared the meeting closed at 10.25 am.

6 Mayoral Term Address

7 Urgent Business

8 Confidential Business

8.1 Council Business Matter

Confidentiality Notice

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 could adversely affect Council's ability to appropriately manage the matter and its associated processes.

8.2 Contract Matter

Confidentiality Notice

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 could prejudice Council's commercial interests by disclosing information relating to proposed contractual arrangements.

9 Close of Meeting