

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5747	Anonymous	No	10/05/2023	No	Over the past twelve months there has been much work and community input provided into the development of an Active Transport strategy, including specific ideas regarding new cycling facilities and initiatives. There does not appear to be any funds being committed to following through to plan or implement any of the projects envisaged in the strategy.	Across Council operations, engineering, parks, and community partnerships programming addresses active transport. In conjunction with working with the Healthy Loddon Campaspe partnership, the development of the Active Transport Strategy will assist Council in the planning and prioritising of future projects to support active transport participation and infrastructure improvements. Achieving positive active transport outcomes continues as part of Council's normal operations.
5746	Anonymous	No	10/05/2023	No	Having been copied in by Margaret Panter to her submission that I presume will be emailed separately, can I just endorse completely what Margaret is saying about needle grasses. Margaret's knowledge and dedication has held this project together and her withdrawal will leave a significant gap to be filled, but which needs to be filled in this budget.	Over the past two years, Council has increased its budget allocation for the management of noxious weeds. This increase remains within the 2023/24 budget and future year budgets. The current Natural Environment budget does allow for some coordinated and strategic weed control operations to be undertaken effectively, particularly on known infestations.
DOC/23/20367	Business Mount Alexander		10/05/2023	Yes	Requesting \$5,000 support See attachment	Business Mount Alexander are the major business association in Mount Alexander Shire representing Castlemaine. This organisation provides support and guidance for businesses across the Shire and plays a large role in the everyday success of small businesses in the Shire. Support for local business associations is identified in the Council Plan 2021-2025 via the strategic action of "Support the business community to work together". If supported, this allocation could be managed through a Memorandum of Understanding, similar to other agreements.
DOC/23/20368	Castlemaine Fringe Festival		10/05/2023	Yes	Requesting \$10,000 See attachment	For the 2023 Fringe Festival, Council provided in-kind support through programming, staff time, and logistics estimated at around \$10,000. If supported, this allocation could be managed through a Memorandum of Understanding, similar to other agreements.
DOC/23/20369	Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club		10/05/2023	Yes	Concerns for environment See attachment	Over the past two years, Council has increased its budget allocation for the management of noxious weeds. This increase remains within the 2023/24 budget and future year budgets. The current Natural Environment budget does allow for some coordinated and strategic weed control operations to be undertaken effectively, particularly on known infestations.
DOC/23/20290	Tarrangower Cactus Control Group	Yes	10/05/2023	Yes	Concerns for environment See attachment	Over the past two years, Council has increased its budget allocation for the management of noxious weeds. This increase remains within the 2023/24 budget and future year budgets. The current Natural Environment budget does allow for some coordinated and strategic weed control operations to be undertaken effectively, particularly on known infestations.

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DOC/23/20289	Castlemaine Safe Space	Yes	10/05/2023	Yes	Requesting \$30,000 support See attachment	The work this organisation performs in addressing the incidence of suicide in our shire is quite unique. The group have previously been successful in receiving two Community Grants related to this initiative, and they also further negotiated in-kind support from Council through the provision of a room.
DOC/23/20166	Maldon Inc.	Yes	9/05/2023	Yes	Seeking support to pay for a part-time business coordinator for Maldon Inc. See attachment	Maldon Inc. are the major business association in Mount Alexander Shire representing Maldon. This organisation provides support and guidance for businesses and plays a large role in the everyday success of small businesses. Support for local business associations is identified in the Council Plan 2021-2025 via the strategic action of "Support the business community to work together". If supported, this allocation could be managed through a Memorandum of Understanding, similar to other agreements.
DOC/23/20188	Lois	Yes	10/05/2023	Yes	Concerns for environment See attachment	The responsibilities of Council's Natural Environment Officer include education in the community and advocacy for issues related to the natural environment.
DOC/23/20164	Allison	No	10/05/2023	Yes	See attachment	The matters raised by this submitter have been raised on previous occasions. Previous responses from Officers can be provided to Councillors on request.
DOC/23/20009	Margaret		9/05/2023	Yes	Concerns for environment See attachment	Over the past two years, Council has increased its budget allocation for the management of noxious weeds. This increase remains within the 2023/24 budget and future year budgets. The current Natural Environment budget does allow for some coordinated and strategic weed control operations to be undertaken effectively, particularly on known infestations.
DOC/23/20096	Marli	Yes	9/05/2023	Yes	Farnsworth Street drainage See attachment	a. The design of the drainage works on Farnsworth street are underway, following which the cost for construction will be confirmed and funding will be identified for the construction. b. The footpath works will be completed by the end of July 2023. c. Any major projects involving changes to precincts are undertaken according to Council's Community Engagement Policy.
5743	Anonymous	No	9/05/2023	No	The lack of funding for active transport (walking, cycling etc.) is disappointing. As well as being inexpensive forms of travel for residents, they are also popular with many visitors. Good facilities and a safe traffic environment can attract additional tourists, with consequent economic benefits to the Shire.	Across Council operations, engineering, parks, and community partnerships programming addresses active transport. In conjunction with working with the Healthy Loddon Campaspe partnership, the development of the Active Transport Strategy will assist Council in the planning and prioritising of future projects to support active transport participation and infrastructure improvements. Achieving positive active transport outcomes continues as part of Council's normal operations.

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No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5740	Anonymous	No	9/05/2023	No	As an active bike rider, who is currently working with council on the next 10-year Active Transport Plan, I am very disappointed that there appears to be no mention of funding for bike riding facilities or programs, or for road safety. The budget summary does mention \$207k for footpaths and trails and some of these facilities (trails) may be used by bike riders. The lack of any funding to promote, and increase the safety of, a transport mode that is healthy, environmentally friendly (zero CO2 travel), improves social cohesion, is fun, and can be used by most people, including those less fortunate, is very puzzling.	<p>Across Council operations, engineering, parks, and community partnerships programming addresses active transport. In conjunction with working with the Healthy Loddon Campaspe partnership, the development of the Active Transport Strategy will assist Council in the planning and prioritising of future projects to support active transport participation and infrastructure improvements. Achieving positive active transport outcomes continues as part of Council's normal operations.</p> <p>Budget allocations across many projects contribute to improving footpath and trail infrastructure, and the Financial Plan includes projected expenditure of over \$10 million over ten years for footpaths and trails.</p> <p>Council is actively engaging with the Department of Transport and Planning around strategic cycling corridors in our Shire.</p>
5739	Friends of the Box - Ironbark Forests		9/05/2023	Yes	<p>Concerns for environment</p> <p>See attachment</p>	Over the past two years, Council has increased its budget allocation for the management of noxious weeds. This increase remains within the 2023/24 budget and future year budgets. The current Natural Environment budget does allow for some coordinated and strategic weed control operations to be undertaken effectively, particularly on known infestations.
5738	Newstead Landcare		9/05/2023	Yes	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on the proposed budget for 2023-24.</p> <p>We are in a scientifically recognised biodiversity crisis. Habitat loss and degradation (e.g. by invasive species) is identified as a leading driver of biodiversity decline, along with other factors such as climate change. Mount Alexander Shire Council has the potential to make direct positive impacts on our natural environment on Council-managed land, and to encourage and motivate community members to take action on private land.</p> <p>Our group asks that funds be included in the draft budget to deliver and support environmental works such as noxious weed control and pest animal control (e.g. rabbits, foxes) to mitigate habitat degradation and improve biodiversity in our Shire. These actions also support our local ecosystems to be more resilient and therefore more adaptable in the face of a changing climate.</p> <p>Other funded works could include revegetation of indigenous species, protection of large old trees and other remnant vegetation, and threatened species conservation (e.g. Swift Parrots, Brush-tailed Phascogales, Spiny Rice Flower).</p> <p>Including funding for environmental works in the MASC budget would greatly support the work that we do as volunteers (along with numerous other landcare groups in the Shire) and promote landscape-scale environmental outcomes.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, Newstead Landcare</p>	<p>Much, if not all of the points in the submission have been raised, are in progress, or in the act of being formulated in varying degrees.</p> <p>Over the past two years, Council has increased its budget allocation for the management of noxious weeds. This increase remains within the 2023/24 budget and future year budgets. The current Natural Environment budget does allow for some coordinated and strategic weed control operations to be undertaken effectively, particularly on known infestations.</p>

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No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge. Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5737	Asha	No	9/05/2023	Yes	<p>Dear Mount Alexander Shire Council, Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on the proposed budget for 2023-24. As a resident and ratepayer of Mount Alexander Shire, I would like to see more of the budget allocated to caring for our natural environment on Council-managed and private land.</p> <p>I would like to see a stronger focus on resourcing for the implementation of the Mount Alexander Shire's Environment Strategy 2015-2025, as well as the long overdue revision of the Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2012-17. A critical part of this is ensuring adequate funding for staff time (ideally a small team and even a bush crew), as well as resources to allow for tangible on-the-ground action.</p> <p>As we know, we are already seeing the impacts of a changing climate in our region. Our special local ecosystems are needing to adapt quickly and radically to conditions they have never experienced, on top of other pressures such as invasive species. I ask that the draft budget include funds to support projects which will help build resilience to climate impacts, such as increasing connectivity between fragmented habitat (allowing species to move to cooler/wetter areas as needed), planting climate ready revegetation to improve genetic diversity, and supporting local native nurseries/native seed collection.</p> <p>I believe our community places a high value on our local natural environment. This still does not seem to be reflected in the proportion of past budgets dedicated to 'Environment and health', with this area receiving the lowest proportion of spending compared to other areas. Our local ecosystems are precious, providing strongholds for a number of highly threatened species. We live amongst Box-Ironbark Forests, of which only 17% remains since colonisation. Our highly disturbed landscapes need all the help they can get to recover and be resilient to ongoing pressures. Thank you for reading my submission.</p>	<p>Roadside Conservation Management Plan - an update to the Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2012-17 is currently underway and is scheduled for completion in 2023</p> <p>Climate - The Climate Strategy sets out our approach to addressing the impact of climate change and building resilience to climate change across our community.</p>
5736	Jane	Yes	9/05/2023	Yes	<p>I and my fellow residents who are concerned about the proliferation of graffiti in the town are very pleased to see the \$60K allocation for graffiti management. This is the first sign of real commitment and that we are being heard, so thank you for listening.</p> <p>However, I also agree with John Ellis (Chewton Chat editor), that forming (or reforming) a local committee of concerned citizens that includes councillors and police, and which meets regularly to work on solutions, is vital. I also support John's idea for a council-led community forum educating the public and demonstrating council's commitment to the strategies and penalties available under the Victorian Graffiti Prevention Act.</p> <p>Thank you again for listening. I look forward to hearing council's plans for spending this allocated money and tackling this disturbing and unsightly problem.</p>	<p>The allocation in this budget will allow Council to consider the suggestions, together with Victoria Police and State Government agencies, in the coming year.</p> <p>We will keep the community informed on the actions to address graffiti in our Shire through the Shire News and other platforms such as our website.</p>

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5735	Anonymous	No	9/05/2023	No	Reducing the Local Partnerships Program (a 4 year funding program that enables MASC landcare groups to tackle weeds more efficiently, knowing they will be able to do follow-up treatment via this funding) from a maximum of \$5000pa to a maximum of \$2000pa is a retrograde step. It reduces motivation, enables weeds to get further out of control, undoes the value of the first LPP round of funding and devalues volunteering. Landcare volunteers have their eyes on the ground and can respond more efficiently if they have sufficient backup funding to enable them to move at the right time. Building in more flexibility by lifting the limit to somewhere closer to what it was in the first round would likely not cost more than \$40,000 per annum but the ROI would be more like \$120,000. No contractor can match that.	<p>The Local Partnerships Program has not reduced in funding.</p> <p>With most of the original participating groups coming off a four-year project cycle, the original guidelines were updated and reissued to all relevant community groups with only a few minor revisions from the original document. The annual funding limit of up to \$2,000 per year remained the same however, as was also the case 4 years ago, groups could seek greater funding on a case by case basis.</p> <p>New submissions for the program were due by April 15 and engaging with the Natural Environment Officer in the development of all plans was a key requirement of the project.</p>
5734	Anonymous	No	9/05/2023	No	<p>Just briefly the lack of breadth for emergency management - only 'undertake preventative measures to reduce risk from fire' is mentioned. Perhaps this is due to costings blowing out should the council write 'risk from all natural threats/disasters'. However it is clear with climate change and recent and not so recent events, that flood and storms need to be included in the language. I would suggest a change in language to indicate intention if nothing else in your Strategic Plan. It appears short sighted unless your advisors can forecast the future.</p> <p>On 2.3 A resilient & growing local economy, re Planning services ... working with partners & continue investigations for social housing feasibility. I would encourage real bravery in going against conservative options - medium density, cost effective, immediate build (or as immediate as it can be 0-3 years), community landscaped, inclusive of different demographics and reflecting real need. I missed the feedback opportunity for housing, but social housing needs to look different too, respectful above all else and no creating ghettos of inappropriate mixes of people without support.</p>	<p>Emergency management: The budget description quoted has been expanded as suggested. Council has made a strategic commitment to address risks associated with various forms of natural disasters, including those that are occurring more frequently due to the climate change. Allocations have also been made in the draft budget to address these concerns, including \$2.5 million for flood levee design and construction. Council has also received state government funding to expand the work that we are doing in the area of flood recovery and building resilience to future flooding events.</p> <p>Affordable housing: The comments regarding social and affordable housing are noted. An allocation of \$170,000 has been made in the draft 2023/24 budget to progress the development of social and affordable housing.</p>
5733	Anonymous	No	9/05/2023	No	The \$2.5m for flood levy design and construction may be a wise investment in Newstead and Campbells Creek. However, I have fought the need for it beside Barkers Creek in Castlemaine for 6 years or so. Therefore, as such construction seems an inevitability beside Barkers Creek now, the levy's objective and design criteria, then later the designs as well, should be exhibited for all ratepayers to comment on before any construction preparation starts. Flemington racecourse's flood wall comes to mind.	Information on these projects has been available, and continues to be available, on Council's website. Information will continue to be updated as these projects progress.
5732	Anonymous	No	8/05/2023	No	A well put together budget document. Compliments to the officers involved.	The feedback is noted.

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge. Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5731	Anonymous	No	7/05/2023	No	<p>Maldon road fogerty gap road needs proper fixing, there are still pot holes and crumbling on the edges going both way please fix asap!! Spending \$33k is not good enough you need to allocate more funds and fix the road properly. Traffic speed on bendigo-maldon rod should be reduced to 60kms hour because the semi trailers going to and from the gold plant are dangerously driving fast and residents cant get out of the side roads safely. They will cause a major accident!!</p> <p>All houses should have road side curb bin collection but still dont.</p> <p>Again the budget funds are highly concentrated on Castlemaine, very dissapointing.</p>	<p>The condition of Fogartys Gap Road is noted and will be assessed by our maintenance team. Council has, over the last two years, invested more than \$2.6 million in repairing and widening the road to improve safety for all road users. These works will continue into the 2023/24 financial year.</p> <p>The Bendigo Maldon Road is managed by the Department of Transport and Planning, and your concerns have been passed on to them for consideration.</p> <p>Approximately 85 per cent of households in the Shire are provided with a kerbside waste and recycling collection service. Households outside of the designated kerbside collection service areas have access to the Castlemaine and Maldon waste transfer stations.</p>
5730	Madeleine		7/05/2023	Yes	<p>Good afternoon. My name is Madeleine of Chewton and I would like to propose an allowance of \$15,000 be made in either the Community Safety and Amenity, or the Community Partnerships budget sections to provide basic showering and hygiene facilities for rough sleepers and/or vulnerable members of the Mt Alexander community.</p> <p>I'm a member of the Phoenix Chewton CWA and a volunteer with Orange Sky laundry services. I think we are all aware of the desperate plight people are finding themselves in with the lack of rentals and the increase in the cost of living. Many people are not only going without food but are also living in tents or other basic accommodation without the necessary means to wash themselves and their clothes.</p> <p>After some investigation I discovered Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre has set up a shower and washing facilities by refurbishing a building that was already there. The cost was around \$18,000 and was sponsored by Hepburn Shire Council, Central Highlands Rural Health and Community Bank Daylesford. Towels and toiletries are provided and a supply of clean clothes from the local OP Shop.</p> <p>This initiative would not be the sole responsibility of Council but a combination of service groups including Orange Sky, CWA etc as volunteers to run the service. Buildings such as the Community Centre and Safe House could be fitted with the appropriate equipment and be a hub for those who find themselves in a vulnerable situation. Offering a quiet rest area with tea, coffee, food and pamphlets for other services would be available if needed.</p>	<p>Currently, Council have open to the public two DDA toilet and shower facilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Harcourt (beside swimming pool) 2.Wesley Hill Stadium.

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5729	Anonymous	No	4/05/2023	No	Taradale mineral springs is a fantastic playground, far from needing an update. Chewton playground on the other hand is tiny and outdated!	<p>The proposed project does not include any changes to the Taradale Mineral Springs Playground. The playground will be complemented by an upgrade to the tennis court area, turning this into an active space for older children, youths, and teens. This project has been informed by community request and co-design of facilities, and is being funded by external grants.</p> <p>The Chewton Playground will be included in Council's Playground Renewal Program, which will guide future works for the upgrade of existing facilities.</p>
5728	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	This document obscures spending on specific, named organisations. In seeking Council's commitment or otherwise to the Castlemaine Art Museum, a community service that is in dire need, I can find no mention apart from the community organisation Friends of the Castlemaine Art Museum. Does Council continue to contribute \$30,000 p.a. to the Museum in this budget? This document provides no answer. It is a cynical exercise in obfuscation over the transparency and accountability ratepayers might rightly expect.	Council has a commitment to the Castlemaine Art Museum and there is a current allocation of \$30,000 for them in this budget under Cultural Asset Support.
5727	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	I was hoping the paved footpath would be continued from Chewton to Castlemaine. Or at least the walking tracks between Chewton and Castlemaine improved, ie. levelled and gravelled properly. The walking tracks are too hard to ride on, and not easy to walk on even with good walking shoes. Cycling on the main road with big trucks and cars that regularly cut corners and go over the lines at the edge is to risk your life.	There is currently no footpath works planned at this location, however it will be added to our proposed works list for consideration in a future budget.
5726	Michele	No	3/05/2023	Yes	An annual plea for the gardens - arguably the Botanic gardens and the smaller horticultural parks are the most used Council services after roads and footpaths. Any reduction of their maintenance and even considering improvements fit into the Council's green, sustainability, and inclusiveness agenda. The Council should be proud of these assets and keep promoting them for tourism and locals' wellbeing.	<p>Restoration works have been completed to restore a range of elements including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main Entrance Gates - Fountain - Former Kiosk - Former Tearooms - Pathways.
5725	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	Obviously you can't please everyone with a budget but there is 0 funding allocated to Elphinstone!! WHY??	<p>Recent works in Elphinstone include upgrade of the Cricket Clubrooms as well as streetscape works.</p> <p>The 2023/24 Draft Budget includes additional funding towards the management of Elphinstone Reserve.</p>
5724	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	Walkability within the urban and suburban areas of Castlemaine is pretty bad, especially if you are in a wheelchair or pushing a pram. I think more effort should be directed towards footpaths and trails.	<p>Council's Pathways Asset Management Plan sets out the strategic direction of management of pathways across our Shire including future renewal and upgrade works. It also informs budget allocations in the ten-year Financial Plan.</p> <p>When undertaking works, our paths and trails are designed and constructed to, at least, the Australian Standard.</p> <p>Over the past five years, Council has spent almost \$4m on footpaths.</p>

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge. Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5723	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	Needs to be budget for implementation of the Reconciliation Plan. Much more funding for footpaths and for trails, including those not yet fixed after the floods. Thanks	<p>Reconciliation Plan - The draft budget includes \$10,000 for the Indigenous Roundtable and \$6,000 for Nalderun. In addition, an update to the Reconciliation Action Plan is underway.</p> <p>Council's Pathways Asset Management Plan sets out the strategic direction of management of pathways across our Shire including future renewal and upgrade works. It also informs budget allocations in the ten-year Financial Plan.</p> <p>When undertaking works, our paths and trails are designed and constructed to, at least, the Australian Standard.</p> <p>Over the past five years, Council has spent almost \$4m on footpaths.</p>
5722	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	Was hoping to see a commitment to the Castlemaine-Maryborough Rail Trail in the budget this year.	Council and the Central Goldfields Shire have committed funds to a feasibility study for this project, of which the outcome is unknown. Any future works will be subject to funding from the State Government.
5720	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	Sport is more important than safe roads and footpaths for safely getting around? The \$ given to recreation facilities is more than roads and foot paths combined. This is greatly disappointing.	<p>In addition to annual maintenance programs, over the past five years Council has spent almost \$22 million on capital works for roads and pathways. Over the past five years, Council has not spent more on recreation than on roads and footpaths i.e. for every dollar spent on buildings and improvements, \$1.65 is spent on roads and footpaths.</p> <p>The majority of new or improved recreation assets are substantially funded through grant programmes from the State and Federal governments.</p>
5719	Anonymous	No	3/05/2023	No	It's imperative that the council maintains and makes sure that all roads drainage are cleared of leaves and branches specially around Butterworth & Brown Streets which is currently blocked, also it's about time the council seals Butterworth Street, during heavy rain soil and gravel flows towards Brown Street, will be much appreciated if this matter is attended to as soon as possible.	<p>There is an annual maintenance program for Council's drainage network. The drainage issues noted here will be assessed by the maintenance team.</p> <p>The request for an upgrade to Butterworth Street was considered in a prior year budget and the following resolution of Council was made in December 2019: Officers to consult with residents and interested citizens about the proposed road sealing and drain upgrades for Butterworth, Brown and Farnsworth Streets to enable Council to make a more informed decision at a future Meeting of Council.</p> <p>The consideration of works on Butterworth Street will be reviewed during the 2023/24 financial year.</p>
5718	Jo	No	3/05/2023	No	Just wanted to say that the current playground at the Taradale Mineral Springs Reserve is absolutely fantastic. We often drive from Castlemaine just to use that space. It's great that a 'youth space' is being created, but perhaps the playground doesn't need a renewal, as it's so wonderful as it is!	The proposed project does not include any changes to the Taradale Mineral Springs Playground. The playground will be complemented by an upgrade to the tennis court area, turning this into an active space for older children, youths, and teens. This project has been informed by community request and co-design of facilities, and is being funded by external grants.

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5717	Louise	Yes	3/05/2023	Yes	Seeking \$10,000 support Please see attachment	Council has an Events Grants program and Community Grants program, under which this proposal could be considered.
5699	Anonymous	No	29/04/2023	No	Needs to be vastly more for footpaths and trails. I'm told there is no funds to engage with DJAARA as the Traditional Owner representative body and defined members of the municipal community. Huge issue that needs to be incorporated into the budget.	Footpaths and trails - Council's Pathways Asset Management Plan sets out the strategic direction of management of pathways across our Shire including future renewal and upgrade works. It also informs budget allocations in the ten-year Financial Plan. Over the past five years, Council has spent almost \$4m on footpaths. DJAARA - Resources to engage DJAARA and other community groups are included in project budgets.
5698	Anonymous	No	27/04/2023	No	Harcourt barely gets a mention	Items for Harcourt within the proposed budget include new sporting lighting at the Recreation Reserve. Additionally, the Reserve has had various major upgrades over the past two years: - New female friendly changerooms - New playground (plus another at Stanley Park) - Upgraded men's changeroom, to be now all gender facility - Pavilion upgrade works - Irrigation and drainage improvements. Over the past five years Council has spent in excess of \$3 million at Harcourt, and Council continues to implement the recommendations of Plan Harcourt.
5697	Anonymous	No	26/04/2023	No	I think it is alarming and concerning that the budget allocated for graffiti removal is \$19k more than the budget for climate. Whilst I acknowledge that graffiti removal is an important endeavor and will greatly benefit the facade of the town, I think it is disgraceful that it is valued more highly than investing in the climate and our future.	Council has received an overwhelming number of requests to manage graffiti and this budget line is to assist with responding to graffiti damage. The budget allocation for graffiti includes human resource and material costs. The budget allocation for climate change is for specific initiatives, and has not included the human resource costs associated with the work that council undertakes. Staff from across our entire organisation actively engage in and undertake work related to addressing the impact of our changing climate. Council's Climate Change strategy, due for endorsement at the end of June, sets out our vision and strategic goals. This will inform future budget allocations.

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS - 2023/2024 BUDGET

No.	Name	Request to be heard	Date received	Acknowledge. Sent	Summary	Officer Comment
5695	Nicola	No	22/04/2023	Yes	I am supportive of the proposed 3.5% rate rise. It is essential that Council can raise adequate funds to deliver local services and initiatives to support the wellbeing of our whole community. The 3.5% rise is much lower than inflation. Many property holders in Mount Alexander are financially comfortable and can well afford this increase. For those property holders who are struggling financially there should be provision for payment plans and, where appropriate, rate discounts. Building a strong, healthy, sustainable local community and local economy, and protecting our natural environment, is important to us all – we cannot do this together unless our Council has sufficient financial resources. A lower rate increase would be short-sighted and would hurt us all.	Each 0.5% increase in rates income is equivalent to approximately \$109,000, so a 3.5% rate rise is equal to \$765,000 in income. In accordance with Council's Financial Hardship Policy, officers are available to discuss flexible payment arrangements e.g., a payment plan, or a financial hardship arrangement e.g., waiving of interest, or deferral of payment.
5694	Anonymous	No	20/04/2023	No	I couldn't care less about sporting facilities and change rooms. The town is growing too fast and no proper roundabouts or traffic lights where their is congestion and near impossible to get out. No parking any more in town. Rates exorbitant and no hard garbage collection for our rates. Glad woollies is coming. No more estates please. Enough is enough.	The comments are noted.
DOC/23/1 9685	Brodie		7/05/2023	Yes	Just reading through the budget and want to know what has happened to the campbell's creek-Castlemaine bike path?! I was told by council last year that it was due for completion by the end of this financial year. Then told again a few months ago that it had been pushed back due to the floods. And now it appears to have dropped off the budget all together!	This project is progressing, with completion of the trail planned for 2023/24.

Hello,

My name is Louise and I am a Castlemaine resident. Last year I was diagnosed at the age of 35 as Autistic - level 2. Since then, my entire life direction has changed. I have learnt about the awful quality of life standards that Autistic people endure - 54 year expected life span, double the disability unemployment rate, 70% of Autistic people have a mental illness and Autistic people are 9 times more likely than the general public to die by suicide. It is suspected that 1 in 33 people worldwide are Autistic, this makes us one of the largest minorities in the world. However according to the UN discrimination against Autistic people is the rule, and not the exception. Sadly, my six year old son and I have experienced this in both kindergarten and school settings within the shire.

I am currently studying a Graduate Certificate of Autism through Griffith University so that I may better understand Autism and its history, advocate for Autistic people and build Autistic community. I have recently founded the not for profit organisation ARCANE: Autistic-led Regional Culture Arts Neurodiversity Education and Employment. Three local Autistic and/or neurodivergent women are on the board as well as my seventeen year old son who spends his holidays in the shire. Together we are organising Sensory Sanctuary neurodiversity arts festival to be held at Castlemaine Goods Shed during the June/July school holidays and featuring over 100 events. These include community events such as a masquerade, glow disco, kids dance party and lantern parade; skill development and life transition workshops such as Get Funded! With Malcolm Sanders of Regional Arts Victoria, hands on neurodivergent-specific career guidance, lived experience advocacy and storytelling; parent education and professional development including Victorian government preferred early childhood providers for such training on Autism awareness, sensory inclusion, Autistic play styles and how to support them; and LEGO therapy; a parent/carer wellbeing group; group therapy sessions and many small-scale creative workshops for people of all ages. Event facilitators are 70% Autistic or neurodivergent. People will come from as far away as Traralgon and Albury to take part in the festival.

We are also hoping to raise the money to create a mobile sensory sanctuary that can be used to increase sensory and disability access to community events throughout the Shire. It is my aim to design the sensory sanctuary through a community consultation process that involves interactive performing arts where the participant-audience experiences various sensory tents, talks about how they feel in the different environments and then designs a sensory space of their own. This will teach people (especially children) in our local community about their sensory likes, dislikes and how to advocate for them. Through basing the final design on this consultation, we can ensure that the mobile sensory sanctuary meets the sensory and accessibility needs of a diverse range of people within our community. The mobile sensory sanctuary will be able to be deployed similarly to the wash against waste trailer and manned by trained professionals so that not only are we providing sensory access to ensure greater inclusion in community events across the shire, but we are also raising awareness of Autism and neurodiversity.

I am asking for \$10,000 to help meet these goals.

\$5000 towards the consultation process for the mobile sensory sanctuary; and

\$5000 towards the coordination of Sensory Sanctuary Neurodiversity Arts Festival in 2024

This project pertains to the following values expressed in the council documents inclusive environments, disability access and social inclusion, celebrating diversity, quality early childhood (we are already being asked to include local kinders and family day cares in the consultation process), a thriving and connected diverse community that is resilient and well serviced with spaces for all, supporting those left behind, and support community organisations working with them, assist those who are disadvantaged, prioritise community health and wellbeing, commitment to social justice, looking out for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable people, accessibility for people living with disabilities, access for people living with disabilities to employment and education, support people facing personal or systemic challenges to be more fully able to partake in what the shire has to offer.

We are a welcoming community where everybody has access to services and supports, and opportunities for education, employment and creative and social pursuits. Keep asking us questions and listen to not just the loud community but the quiet ones too. We can be a more inclusive and accessible community for people with disability or who are isolated by difference.

A healthy, connected and inclusive community

Services in our community are accessible and coordinated

Our community is inclusive and connected

Our community feels safe, regardless of identity or circumstance

Our community is physically and mentally healthy

We are attracting and building investment in our cultural and creative community. 5% of our local population need daily help due to a disability. Recognise, support and celebrate the diversity within our community. Support events that celebrate our community and bring people together. Support tourism sector to respond to new opportunities and recover from the COVID pandemic. Promote economic opportunities for social inclusion. Develop tourism products that champion our cultural and social values. Support and advocate for high quality education for people of all ages. Promote an accessible range of services for all, including children, young people and families. Support training for career and life transitions (we are committed to mentoring Autistic and neurodivergent people including youth).

strategic objective: A healthy, connected, and inclusive community

strategic objective: an environment for people and nature

strategic objective: a resilient and growing local economy

- we are attracting and building investment in our cultural and creative community

This is a great opportunity for Mount Alexander to be at the forefront of disability access across the state and I hope that you will consider this proposal.

Kind regards,

Louise

Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests (Mount Alexander Region) is a long-standing and respected community group with around 150 members. Our group was formed in 1998 by people in the local community interested in working towards highlighting the significance of the Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands. The Friends exist:

- To promote respect for Indigenous culture and understanding of Indigenous land management practices.
- To work towards a common community approach to a healthy, sustainable, and productive landscape through conservation of natural vegetation on public and private land in the Mount Alexander Region.
- To campaign for wise and effective management of the Parks, Reserves and State Forests of the region and to support the inclusion of more crown land in conservation reserves.

Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests recommend the following for the 2023-24 Mount Alexander Shire Council draft budget:

1) An increase in staff time for caring for the natural environment

In the Mount Alexander Shire Council Environment Strategy 2015-2025, under 'Priority Area 4: Sustainability and Environment Team is a corporate resource', one of the Key Strategic Tasks is to 'Utilise internal sustainability and environment expertise particularly at project scoping stages'. As much faith as we have in the Natural Environment Officer, we do not feel that this task can be achieved with just one staff member. A great deal of time is required to achieve the bare minimum when it comes to such a role. Additional team members with environmental science or equivalent qualifications should be employed to aid in providing internal expertise and other support.

In order for Council to meet the legal requirements of noxious weed management and flora and fauna conservation (e.g. pest species management as laid out in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, the conservation of critically endangered Spiny Rice Flower on Council-managed roadsides), we need a qualified and experienced staff team with adequate resourcing. An environmental bush crew would go a long way towards helping Council achieve these goals. This could be led by an experienced mentor, and be a great opportunity to employ young people in our region who want to gain skills in land management and conservation.

Over the past eight years, we have observed that roles dedicated to the natural environment in Mount Alexander Shire Council transitioned from a department to a small team, then to a single part-time (thankfully now full-time) role in the Parks and Gardens department. We recommend that Mount Alexander Shire Council allocate sufficient funds in the draft budget for more permanent paid staff time to:

- deliver on the goals described in the MASC Environment Strategy 2015-25
- undertake environmental restoration works (such as pest species management and revegetation) on Council-managed land
- plan and enact conservation actions for local biodiversity and threatened species.

2) Commitment to ongoing funds for environmental works each year

Management of environmental weeds relies on long-term planning and commitment of resources for follow-up control. Seeds of many noxious weed species can remain in the soil for decades after initial treatment. Without ongoing monitoring and management, the outcomes of previous control will quickly be lost, meaning that the initial efforts and funds put towards the work were essentially wasted. Effective ongoing weed management also leads to a reduced need for herbicide use in the long run.

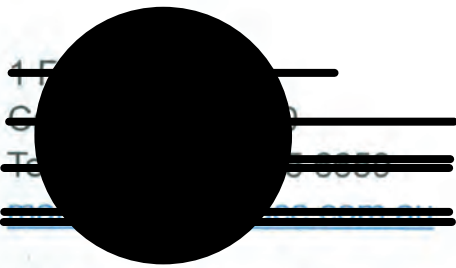
A commitment to increased ongoing funding for on ground environmental works is needed in order to protect and enhance our Shire's biodiversity values and natural resources.

While we acknowledge that this Council runs on limited resources, we believe that the proportion of spending on the environment in our Shire does not accurately reflect how highly it is valued by our local community.

Funding for the environment in Australia has been cut further and further back over the past decade (see here and here). In the face of the biodiversity crisis, now is the time to increase spending on caring for biodiversity values. We believe that Mount Alexander Shire Council has a leading role to play. As well as increasing funds for the natural environment in the draft budget, we request that Mount Alexander Shire Council advocate to higher levels of government to invest not only in new environmental projects, but also in the day-to-day activities which are key to caring for our natural environment in the light of human disturbances (e.g. pest species management, revegetation, protection of remnant vegetation).

Thank you for your attention in reading our submission.

Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests
www.fobif.org.au



**2023/2024 Budget
Chief Executive Officer
Mount Alexander Shire Council
PO Box 185
Castlemaine Victoria 3450**

Dear Mr Fuzzard

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL DRAFT BUDGET 2023/2024

I wish to comment specifically on the SERVICES AREAS:
ENGINEERING AND OPERATIONS.

I wish to raise issues which are relevant to these areas. I find no specific reference to these issues nor any performance outcome indicators around such issues.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES

1. The need for specific provision for a **Farnsworth Street Hill Drainage Redesign and Remediation Project** to be prioritised and completed within the 2023-2024 Budget period.
I have had detailed communications with the Chief Executive Officer, Director Infrastructure and Development and the Manager, Engineering as early as August 2020 when sub-division work altering soil levels and the removal of some mature large trees and removal of ground-covering vegetation began to take place on land abutting 37 Farnsworth Street and later at 41 Farnsworth Street on the Farnsworth Street Hill. There was also insertion of a bitumen road without consultation with the neighbourhood increasing the run-off problem.

These actions also included the installation of some unsuitable drainage pipes, blocking of existing drains and consequent flood damage to my property downhill at 1 Forest Street.

In January 2022 the property was further damaged because of extremely heavy rainstorms and the inability of the existing drainage, culvert and gutter provisions to divert water. This resulted in my lodgement with the Shire of a Formal Request for Assistance Number 22053801. Lacking any action to assist my dilemma I purchased and laid emergency sandbag protection against further damage to my property. This task was completed with the assistance of a kindly neighbour as I am a single householder in my eighties.

From February 2022 until August 2022 I made continuous attempts to obtain a Shire commitment to the redesign of the drainage at Farnsworth Street Hill. Site visits were made by the Engineering Department and rudimentary cleaning of some of the drains was undertaken by an outside contractor.

In the meantime there has been no specific indication of any footpath being constructed from View Street to Forest Street as scheduled some years ago despite it being in a previous budget and increases in local bicycle and footpath traffic in the area.

2. I have detailed files of written correspondence on these matters, photographs of storm damage relating to these matters which are ongoing issues.
3. I have already incurred personal expenditure of \$2673.62 to protect the front of my property from further damage. There has been no remedial work done to the channelling damage under the house or at the rear of the house. All this expenditure is recorded with appropriate receipts available.

REQUEST FOR ACTION

I request Council to:

- A. Confirm the Farnsworth Street Hill Drainage Redesign Project as a project to be funded within the 2023/2024 Budget and completed within that time frame
- B. Clarify the status of the proposed Footpath from View Street to Forest Street and articulate the relationship between that Project and the flooding/drainage rectification outlined in A above.
- C. Commit to a general enhancement of neighbourhoods and encouragement of ratepayers to co-operate with the Shire in mutual development of neighbourhoods rather than degradation of neighbourhoods due to lack of oversight.

I would like to attend the Special Meeting with Council on

Tuesday May 23 2023

Marli Wallace

Materials Available On Request:

Correspondence File of all correspondence between Marli Wallace and Staff Of Mount Alexander Shire
Photographs of property damage and surrounding drains etc
Receipts for expenditure on flood/damage mitigation

Submission – Proposed Budget 2023-2024

I thank Council for its previous responses to budget submissions from residents and community groups. This response increased the Natural Environment Officer (NEO) hours to full time, initially added \$10,000 to the weeds budget, and in the last budget, added another \$10,000 on top of that.

During the last decade about 50 volunteers involved with the Needle Grass Project have donated several thousand hours of work to the council. I have co-ordinated this project as a volunteer and in recent years I've spent about 200-400 hours a year on it. I now need to retire from it, as I can no longer do so much physical work and I urgently need to do other work I've been neglecting due to my commitment.

In my budget submission of 19 January 2023, I requested that Council fund the continuing removal of needle grass -type weeds (stipoid weeds) after I retire and I repeat my request here.

I acknowledge that flood repair and recovery has strained this year's budget.

The floods not only damaged roads and paths, but in some places, promoted the growth of Noxious Weeds such as blackberries.

Just as not repairing flood damage to roads and paths has long term consequences, so too does not controlling invasive weeds. The phrase "One year's seeding means seven year's weeding" is an understatement with stipoid weeds, which can last much longer than 7 years in the soil.

The Draft Budget doesn't mention weed removal. It does mention \$50,000 for Christmas decorations and celebrations and \$40,000 for hosting business awards, neither of which is essential, and neither of which would cost Council more in the future if not done now. In contrast, with weed control, which is essential, the more spent now, the less that needs to be spent later – putting off spending now exponentially increases the spending needed in the future.

Natural Environment is a very small part of Council's budget, and an increase in it for essential work would make a relatively minor dint in the budget. The budget proposes to spend \$239,000 on Environment & Sustainability, which includes the vitally important area of decreasing greenhouse emissions, and, presumably, natural environment (this isn't specified). This is less than 0.5% of the total budget (\$48.45m). It's also the same figure as for the previous year, which because of inflation, means it's less than last year in real terms.

Margaret Panter
(Needle Grass Project Volunteer Co-ordinator)

9  Castlemaine 3450

9 May 2023

Attachments: Map showing progress with stipoid weed removal in Castlemaine
Initial budget submission (19 Jan 23)

As well as digging out or spraying, stipoid weed control involves frequently checking sites, mapping and making notes. It's most efficient if all this is done by the same person, rather than one person checking, documenting and mapping, then organising another to do the removal.

The \$50,000 for Christmas decorations and celebrations could easily fund a part time weed worker for a year with lots left over. This worker could deal with stipoid weeds in season, then tackle other invasive weeds, many of them Noxious, such as Blackberries, Gorse, Broom, Bridal Creeper, St Johns Wort and Cape Tulip at other times.

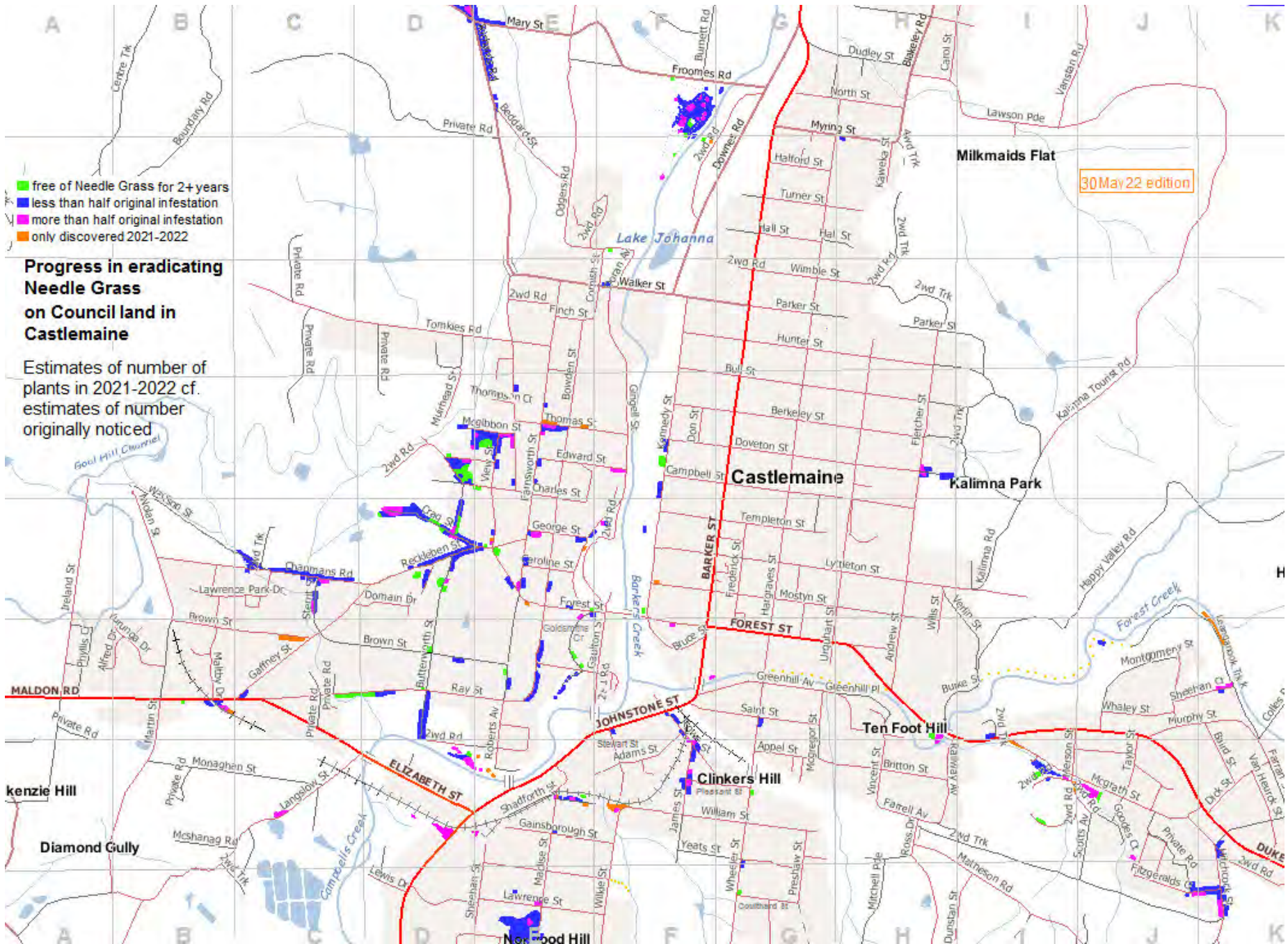
Alternatively, if Council asked the NEO to organise outside firms to do this work, I estimate that that would cost about \$10,000 for stipoid weeds and at least a similar amount for the other weeds that a weed worker could do, plus about 150 hours of the NEO's time needed to be spent in checking sites, mapping them, organising for the work to be done and documenting it. That would take time off other natural environment work, which is already a huge work load for one person.

Despite the shire's major weed problem, spending money on weeds is not a bottomless pit if done wisely. Haphazardly sprinkling little bits of weed control occasionally on dense infestations does little. But **persistently and thoroughly** targeting one (or several) types of weeds in the early stage of invasion in one (or several) areas can achieve a major reduction and sometimes eradication in those areas. By targeting one group of weeds in one area, the Needle Grass Project has greatly reduced stipoid weeds in Castlemaine (see attached map). And thorough and persistent volunteer and Council work over several years has reduced the infestations of the prickly Noxious Weed Caltrop (*Tribulus terrestris*) in Castlemaine, so that it now appears to have been eradicated in most sites.

Summary

I'm requesting that Council include in the Budget:

1. Funds for continuing the progress made in getting rid of stipoid weeds from 1 July 2023, when this will be no longer co-ordinated by a volunteer. My recommendation would be for a part time weed worker who could also tackle other invasive weeds.
2. Increased funding for Natural Environment personnel so that as well as dealing with stipoid and other invasive weeds in parks and on roadsides, Council can
 - (a) ensure that its positive environment policies (especially on roadside vegetation) are understood and implemented by other departments such as Infrastructure, Planning and Works
 - (b) better look after natural areas such as the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens Flora & Fauna Reserve.



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i wish to make the following comments re Council's budget.

There should be no reason to raise the interest rate to 3.5%. It is always easier to do this than actually look at the overspending, inefficiencies etc than to making serious changes making better \$ value.

- the upgrade of Frederick St. This is predominately benefiting one multi millionaire family, as no traders operate from this area. This money would be better spent on the upgrade of the Toilets in Lyttleton St. Currently there has been a broken door hanging off the entry to the disabled toilet for over a week (yes reported). Carers are forced to hold a curtain up to cover door so their client can use same. Is this how low we have become treating our disabled like this?

This cubicle also has a broken toilet holder (none), not soap is provided, and no bin. The council have been vigilant in painting out the regular graffiti. The cleaning firm as have residents suggested that the walls be either tiles or use surface that can be just washed down with water. This apparently works well in other towns.

No CCTV is outside to provide footage of those active in this. Are the gates actually locked at 9 p.m as suggested on the sign?

Visitors judge the town on its public facilities, mmm this one would not rate highly.

- The graffiti allocation , lets hope this is actually used, especially in the CBD, and there is a mammoth lot on the fence line viewed from the steam train behind Adams st area. Maybe a more serious effort by police to actually issue fines, which are put through to court would assist here.

- The Council should deal seriously with the unbalance of rates. The bricks and mortar buildings in CBD carries the commercial rate charges for business. It is about time those who worked from home, many without permits, parking, or even registered, gaining a nice tidy sum, are being carried by those in commercial areas paying the rates, charges, meeting all permit conditions etc. Whilst Council have only thought about Air B & B's , there are many, many in our shire operating , with an ABN getting it easy.

- Issue more fines, especially for dog infringements. We have a very weak area here, maybe 4 fines issued with any luck. Just issuing parking fines is not enough. Also could we step up the other by-laws issues , eg; parking on the road side verge, trailers, caravans etc parked there as well . These people are affecting safe passage for the disabled and those with children etc. The biggest offender is Green Folly. I was told Council did not want to upset the manager!!! Really well, she has upset many a ratepayer and resident by not providing the necessary parking on site, and allowing her customers to cut off the footpath. Yes it is Vic Roads as well, but it is overdue this disregard for general public trying to walk along Duke street.

- Good to hear the change rooms are being dealt with at Camp Reserve. Maybe the CWA can finally have their rooms back.

- Another point is when a contractor is called in to do a job, can someone please see the job is done correctly, this will save us \$\$\$ because it means the job will last longer, and not have to be redone and inconvenience everyone.

- Bring back a decent tip face transfer station. Improve the shop so as less is going to landfill. Remove the 2nd bin that is around the streets, as the recycled ones are only emptied into the main rubbish collection and cost considerable amounts to have made.

- Review the need for so many staff at the info centre. Shepparton has only one full time employee (plus relief). Wangarratta has only 2. Why do we have so many, and what are they doing" there is also a lot of volunteers involved. The other places I mentioned also have more local produce creating a better promo for the town and more jobs indirectly.

- Scrap the business awards, few business take it seriously and many pay handsomely for someone to put together their entry, which creates an unfair advantage for those more cashed up, or who have more skilled people in that area to create the entry, which is often artificial. This money would be served better by hiring more locals to carry out jobs, the Council and staff knowing what actually is in town, and supporting same.

- Cut catering budget, and holding events for specific groups in community. We are all part of the shire, and this practice is dividing residents.

- If the Christmas funds are divided up as last year. Could you please advise the Castlemaine community earlier than the same day it is on so as we may participate? It appeared to be a childrens acitivity , excluding others once again. Once I had sent my letter to santa, drawn on the ashphalt , and watched the bubble clown, what next ???? Yes the choir were good, Santa didn't have any lollies left and there seemed to be about 5 paid staff in attendance wondering what to do as well.

Regards,

Allison Nye, Barker St trader and community member, plus dual rate payer

To: Chief Executive Officer
Mount Alexander Shire Council
PO Box 185 Castlemaine, Vic. 3453
info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

8th May 2023

From: Lois Denham

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Re: Submission to 2023-24 Mount Alexander Shire Budget

I am actively involved in Landcare in the shire, on my property and with the Barkers Creek Land Care and Wildlife Group. Our group has found the assistance of Matt McEachran the Council's Environmental Officer invaluable. We are pleased that the Council has slightly increased the environmental budget to change the Environmental Officers position from part to fulltime. Thank you, it is a good start as it provides some more assistance with environmental restoration and habitat rehabilitation in the Shire.

I and many other Shire residents are very disappointed that Environment and Health budget makes up just 1.6% of the Councils overall budget as per 2022 rates notice (I assume that is 0.8% each?). What message does that give to rate payers about how serious the council is about tackling environmental issues and biodiversity loss? For me it says that the Council's commitment to environmental issues is a perfunctory action, something to keep 'the greenies' quiet. Given the challenges our shire faces with our damaged environment, weed infestation, loss of habitat and biodiversity loss how can the Council possibly allow such a tiny allocation of the budget for such an important issue?

Consequently I request Council increase the allocation of funding in the budget for Environmental to include the salary of a suitably qualified full time position of an Environmental Education and Community Liaison Officer. I see such a position as complimentary to the current Environmental Officers position. I conceive the Environmental Educators role would include some of these significant activities:

1. Advocacy and liaison with State and Federal Government bodies to increase environmental funding to the Shire and/or with assisting local environmental groups to apply for appropriate funding grants.
2. Liaising with and supporting local environmental groups
3. Assisting land holders to better manage their land through education, with links to local voluntary and environmental businesses.
4. Promoting and providing examples of 'best practice' in environmental management.

In closing I would also like to add my support to all organisations that are requesting an increase in funding resources to manage and rectify environmental degradation in our area.

I would like to have the opportunity to address Council to support my proposal

Lois Denham



██

██



MALDON INC BUSINESS CASE

May 2023

Maldon Inc (MINC) is Maldon's unique business association. MINC represents 75+ local businesses. Most businesses are in the tourism sector, such as shops, restaurants, local accommodations, cultural and entertainment venues, local traders, service businesses, and primary producers.

Maldon Inc members received the following:

- A dedicated page for their business on the maldon.org.au website to promote their venture.
- Promotion of Maldon as a tourist destination to the broader community.
- Local connections, resources, and knowledge.

At the last Annual General Meeting in October 2022, a group of five members with a set of complementary skills decided to step up and become the new committee of the organisation - the *new* Maldon Inc.

The committee members work as volunteers. Where previous committee meetings were held *once per month*, the new committee has been meeting/working *every week* - as a result, in the first 12 weeks we held the equivalent of 12 months of meetings. In that 12 weeks, the focus was to update the Committee about the organisation's role, to identify the current members, to modernise the back-of-

house systems/processes, and to keep the financial and membership information up to date.

At the same time, maintaining “business as usual” by promoting key events, and engaging with members, partners, and the local council. It is becoming clear that this situation is not sustainable due to the amount of workload.

Considering that:

- Maldon’s economy depends on tourism, and it is one of the top 10 Victorian destinations - only two-hours from Melbourne. It is always fully booked on public holidays and for specific events organised by Maldon’s community organisations and leaders when *the town doubles its population*. All businesses focus on opening their doors from Thursday to Sunday, whereas other towns’ businesses usually close on weekends.

- The future business opportunities that tourism will bring to the area when the 2026 Commonwealth Games commence, where Maldon is a key location (between three of the four host cities of Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo). This will support current and new businesses to make ‘Stronger Maldon businesses, a stronger Maldon community, and a stronger Maldon’. The Committee has realised that **Maldon Inc needs to jump to the next level and have at least a part-time officer** that:

- coordinates the promotion of the growing calendar of events that different organisations and community leaders do during the year.

- engages and supports to thrive and grow current and new members’ businesses.

Call to action to Mount Alexander Shire:

As the leading investor of the Maldon, our call to action is to ask Council to help us to pay for a part-time business coordinator for Maldon Inc. This will give time to the Committee members to focus on advocacy to attract more tourists and new resources from the government and private investors to develop the town's economy.

It will also allow work towards analysing new income streams to make Maldon Inc sustainable as a business - one that leads by example. In doing this, Maldon Inc is giving local businesses a "voice" and creating conversations between fellow members, community groups, and key stakeholders, including local, state and federal government representatives, and business groups.

We look forward to having the opportunity to make a more formal presentation to support our request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Barry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barry Robinson
President Maldon Inc.

Castlemaine Safe Space

Council Budget Bid

May 2023



We are requesting a grant of \$30K with a secondary option of \$20K to enable us to continue this much needed & vital local service in the Castlemaine area.

The following will give a brief history of the Castlemaine Safe Space and will describe the need for and the importance of a local Safe Space in the Mount Alexander Shire. We will also include information about oversight of our Safe Space and our projected budget for the 2023 to 2024 financial year.

What is a Safe Space?

The Castlemaine Safe Space is:

- A non-clinical drop in centre for anyone who is in emotional distress, isolated or experiencing suicidal thoughts
- Free, all are welcome (open-door policy), no referrals required and there is no collection of ID details
- Staffed by Mount Alexander residents who have been trained to use their Lived Experience of emotional distress to support others
- Directed by values co-designed by our Mount Alexander community



A Brief History of Safe Spaces

- The concept of a Safe Space originated in the UK in 2014.
- From 2019, the QLD and NSW state governments have allocated \$36M to open nearly 30 financially supported Safe Spaces, all assisted with co-design by Roses in the Ocean. Three additional Safe Haven Cafes have opened in WA and Victoria.
- We are very proud to say that the *Castlemaine Safe Space is the first rural Safe Space to open in Australia.*



Roses in the Ocean is an internationally recognised lived experience of suicide organisation, which exists to save lives and reduce pain in individuals experiencing distress or suicidal thoughts. Roses in the Ocean empowers people with lived experience of suicidality to provide support to others at risk.

- Over the last few years they have developed a national project which assists in the rollout of community led Safe Spaces across Australia.
- This started with a Co-Design process with interested community members - the Co-Design for the Castlemaine Safe Space was carried out locally and led by Roses in the Ocean in late 2021.
- The outcome of the Co-Design process was then passed on to the Working Group - a group recruited from local volunteers, all with lived experience of emotional distress. This became the blueprint which the Working Group was required to implement. The Working Group has been meeting weekly since the beginning of 2022.
- We have a dedicated team of local peer volunteers who have been screened and trained to offer support to our guests.

Castlemaine Safe Space is the first & still currently the only rural Safe Space to open in Australia. There are currently TWO other rural communities in Victoria looking to the Castlemaine Safe Space as a model in the development of their own Safe Spaces.

Why Do We Need a Safe Space in MAS?

1. This is what our shire requested:

In 2020, Mount Alexander held a Suicide Prevention Community Forum. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the Forum was attended by 52 individuals. *Community members said:*

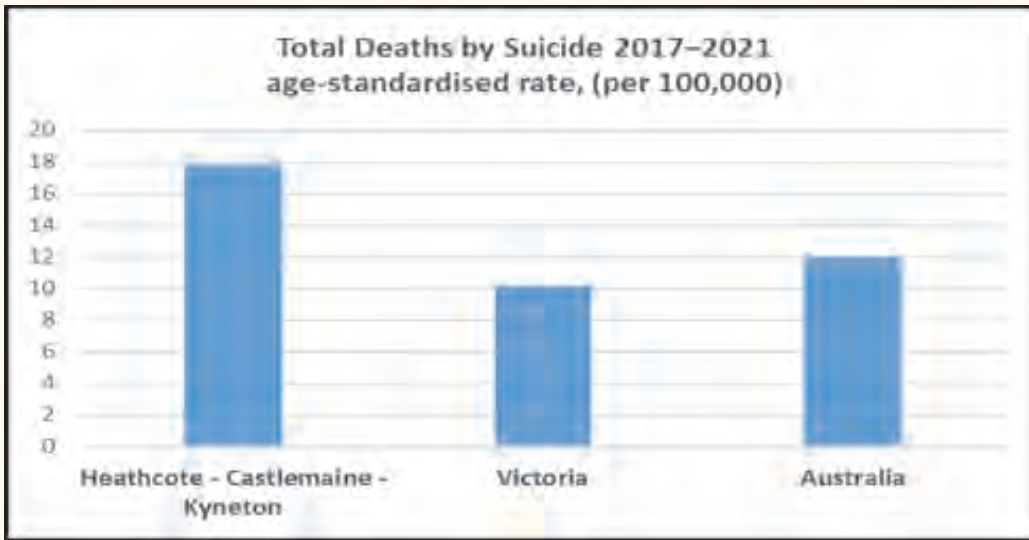
We had:

- Issues of accessibility & affordability of services
- Excessive waitlists
- Limited local outreach services
- Lack of early intervention/preventative measures
- Limited services addressing complex trauma
- Limited services for youth

We require:

- Safe Space & drop-in community centre
- Services advocating for 'whole of person' wellbeing
- Self-supporting therapeutic community access
- Open door support services
- Service that caters for all ages & diverse groups within the community

2. Our local suicide statistics & self-reported mental health condition rates are comparatively very high



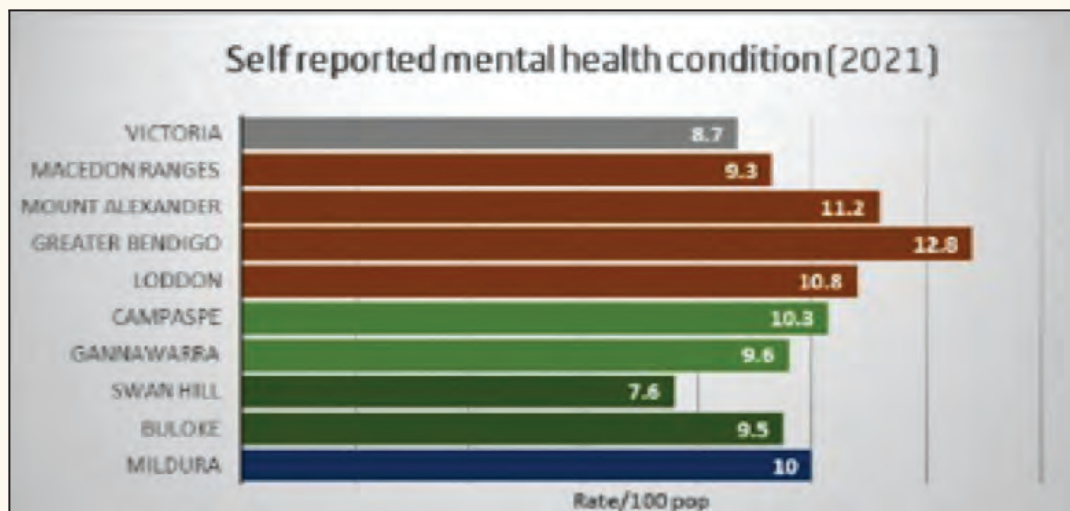
This graph illustrates our local geographical area rate of suicide vs Victoria and Australia by age-standardised rate (per 100,000) by age:

- The highest rate of suicides was amongst males in the 65+ age group
- Followed by males in the 45-65 age group

Retrieved from: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare National Mortality Database (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/national-mortality-database>)

Mental Health and Wellbeing Data:

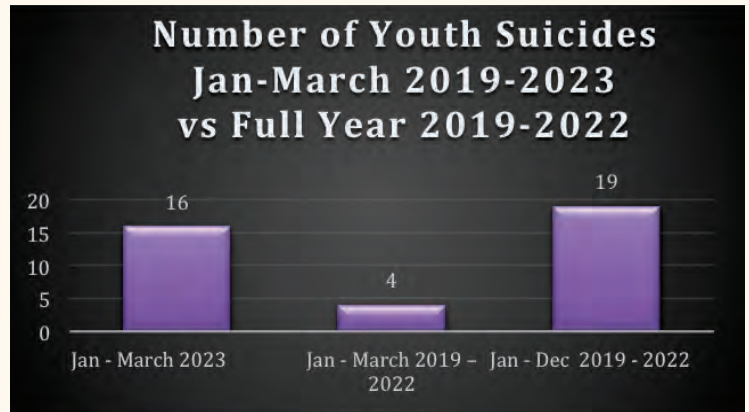
As demonstrated below, data from the Bendigo Health Website demonstrates that the Mount Alexander self-reported mental health condition rate in 2021 was higher than that of all other Loddon LGAs except Greater Bendigo.



3. 2023 - A Recent Update from the Victorian Coroners Court is Alarming !!

Between January and July 2022, the monthly average suicide rate was 58, consistent with previous years. However, between August and December 2022, the average number grew to 71, an increase of 23%. According to the Coroner, “*this might signal an emerging trend*” post-COVID, as the message of “looking out for your neighbour” and economic protection reduced, while housing and employment stress increased.

The coroner also flagged a **large increase in youth suicide in the first quarter of this year**, compared to recent years, and nearly as high as the full year rate in recent years.



4. The Demand for Mental Health Services Has Overtaken Supply

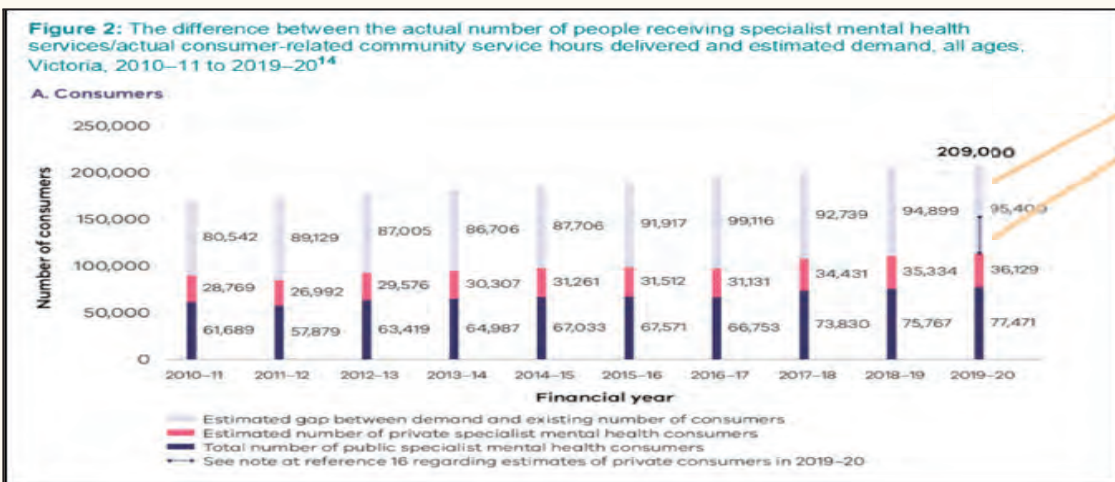
According to The Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health (2019 – 2021):

Demand has overtaken capacity.

- The system is overwhelmed and cannot keep up with the number of people who seek treatment, care and support.
- This is evident at all levels, from General Practitioners to Community Health Services, from individual mental health professionals to acute and emergency services.

Community-based services are undersupplied.

- Many people cannot access treatment, care and support close to their homes and in their communities.
- There is a large gap between the number of hours of community-based services provided by public specialist mental health services and the estimated demand as demonstrated by the charts below.



The growing gap between demand and supply for mental health services in Victoria



The rise of mental health vs physical health presentations at Victorian Emergency Departments 2008 - 2020

What CaSS has achieved so far:

- **We have been open and successfully operating for 18 months**
- **We have welcomed 194 guest visits since July 2022**
- **We have consistently provided the service over 76 sessions - twice a week since July 2022**
- **Peer Volunteers – Training & retention of significant numbers of highly committed local residents with Lived Experience who will help to ensure long term sustainability. These skills have been useful both in and out of the Safe Space**
- **We are gathering mental health data that is pertinent to the Shire**
- We have a regular presence at local markets, community lunches and events
- We've recently received Mt Alexander Grant of 3k for a specific publicity project
- Our diverse and capable Working Group continues to be committed to the Safe Space moving forward
- Tens of thousands of voluntary hours contributed so far
- We have developed a comprehensive induction book with risk mitigation procedures covering health and safety and our policy and procedures
- We have become incorporated and are in the process of applying for charitable status
- Our Working Group works collaboratively - we listen and are responsive to all feedback
- Our role in supporting the “missing middle” who can't or won't access clinical services, alongside those who will

Where CaSS is headed:

- **We are working hard towards opening our own premises in order to offer longer & more regular opening hours so that more guests can visit and benefit from the service**
- **By operating out of one central location we will avoid confusion, excessive rental fees and storage costs**
- **We plan on further training and upskilling our volunteers, giving them the knowledge and confidence to continue to use what they learn at the Safe Space as well as out in the broader community**
- We want to continue to expand the quality of the service that is currently provided by reaching out to the community and responding to their needs
- We want to increase our reach by letting the broader community know who we are and what is available to them
- We are aware that our guests have been predominantly male. We are currently researching methods of operation that addresses the needs of women & other minority groups
- We have plans to form a Community of Practice Coalition – ie with Social Prescribing, Orange Sky, Salvos, Sprout Soup Kitchen, My Housing Network etc. in order to share information and reduce duplication of services and unnecessary expenditure where services may overlap

What we're asking for:

CaSS Projected Annual Budget	
Training	5000
Resources - tea etc, games etc	1600
Utilities - electricity	2000
Admin worker costs	12000
Promotions, website, publicity	1600
Rental outgoings	7800
Total	30000

Projected Annual Rental Outgoings	
Rates estimate	2393
Waste Charges	446
Insurance	2321
Electricity	1000
Water rates	1400
Fire levy	240
Total	7800

Note: Cost of *actual* rent is not included in figures above

Castlemaine Safe Space is requesting \$30,000 in funding. This funding will enable us to continue to provide our essential services, with the continued heavy input of volunteer hours.

If we obtain \$20,000 in funding, we will be able to pay our administration costs and rental outgoings, however would have no means to purchase food for our hungry guests, pay for necessary training to ensure our volunteer staff are adequate equipped with the training they need to perform this role which comes with its associated risks, and be unable to pay for heating, publicity and other resources which need to be regularly restocked.

We see no better solution for the Safe Space than renting our own property, given the high costs of ad hoc room rental, lack of storage, and confusion for our guests and volunteers when we are continually required to change venues. In order to expand our opening times and reach all in the community who are in need, a residence of our own, and the ability to widely publicise a stable location and opening hours is essential. In order to maintain our dedicated group of volunteers, we also need to alleviate the burden of relocating heavy storage boxes and extensive set up, to ensure our Space is calm and offers ambience likely to reduce heightened levels of stress and anxiety for both guests and volunteers.

We have a grant from Roses in the Ocean for the next two years only which will cover most of our rent for that time. We are applying for other grants and we have canvassed the local business community with our business packs, explaining what the Safe Space is and asking for support. They have been supportive and shown goodwill but minimal financial support has been offered so far. Obviously, grant applications take a large amount of effort and time, reducing our ability to focus on providing our core services.

We are also in the process of applying for Charity status so that donations can be tax deductible.

How we are helping Council achieve their objectives:

Addressing Council Plan Pillars:

Pillar 1: A Healthy Connected and Inclusive Community: Safe Space contributes a sense of inclusiveness, diversity, and social connectedness in the local community.

Accessible and Co-ordinated: Free, Open-door (all ages, no-one is turned away), non-clinical, vision to form a Community of Practice Coalition in order to share information and reduce duplication of services and unnecessary expenditure where services may overlap

Inclusive and connected: Open door policy allows us to connect with members of the community who would otherwise not access services. Providing lifesaving information for the community to connect to other services

Safe regardless of identity or circumstance: Welcoming, non-judgemental service, highly diverse volunteer group

Supports the physical and Mental Health of the community: Primarily mental health oriented service. It has been proven that good mental health improves physical health. We also provide food and drink to guests which is often much needed.

Pillar 3: A resilient and growing local economy:

Research shows preventative services save on subsequent costs & expenses in the long and short term.

Research also shows that many working hours are lost due to mental health issues - early and ongoing intervention is one way of helping in this area.

Volunteers: We are providing training and upskilling; volunteers have expressed an increased sense of purpose and motivation, being able to use their newly gained skills out in the broader community

Castlemaine Safe Space Opening 2022



Thank you for your consideration!

Yours sincerely, Castlemaine Safe Space Working Group: Rosemary Gubbells, Rachel Stewart, Amy Sonsie, Helen Dewhurst, Kerrily Jennings & William Gonzalez



HALT Hope Assistance Local Tradies
1 Halford Street, Castlemaine
Victoria, 3450
0409756274
Jeremy@halt.org.au

To Whom It May Concern,

I write this testimonial on behalf of HALT, a local based health promotions charity, for SafeSpace, a critical program in the suicide prevention area in the Mt Alexander Shire.

Mental health affects every community and every Local Government Area (LGA) across Victoria, and every level of Government, both Local, State and Federal, need to contribute to suicide prevention programs like SafeSpace.

The suicide rate increased 9% last year across Victoria and after spending almost 10 years in the suicide prevention sector, I know that getting to people early, creating and providing an environment where people can go, sit, listen, be heard, and not judged, is vital.

I watched SafeSpace evolve and develop, admired, and respected the energy and enthusiasm of the team and the volunteers, especially knowing how tough it can be working in this sector.

We have lost 6 people/humans to suicide in the Mt Alexander Shire in the last 8 months, with the last 5 being men over 45 years of age.

I know that older men go to the SafeSpace for a cuppa and chat, amongst others, and worry what there is for people to go to and feel safe if the funding is not there for SafeSpace,

SafeSpace provide the warmth, the space, the potential life saving conversations and also the pathways for these people to access help at the very least.

With the rates of mental health and suicide increasing, we need to further look to supporting initiatives like SafeSpace and create a 'whole of community' approach to suicide prevention.

I have lived in the Mt Alexander Shire for 27 years, mostly because of the strong sense of community and support, so I urge the Mt Alexander Shire to support SafeSpace anyway possible please, we need, and can, do more.

Thank you.

Jeremy Forbes
HALT Founder
0409756274



VICTORIA POLICE

09/05/2023

Rachel STEWART
Castlemaine Safe Space
Castlemaine VIC 3450

Dear Rachel

**Letter of support for Castlemaine Safe Space and Safe Space Working Group –
Mount Alexander Shire**

I am writing to confirm Victoria Police support for a funding application by Castlemaine Safe Space to Mount Alexander Shire Council – to improve support for at risk community members and allowing more timely access to mental health support.

Having had some involvement with the Castlemaine Safe Space since its inception in July 2022 and knowledge of the high level of support provided to the community by the staff and volunteers, Castlemaine police would be very supportive of any opportunity for the Castlemaine Safe Space to continue and expand its capabilities.

The continuation of the Castlemaine Safe Space will increase community safety, wellbeing and mental health across the Shire. The initiatives of the Castlemaine Safe Space will increase the perception of safety for the local communities and provide support for key stakeholders such as Dhelkaya Health, Police and Ambulance Victoria.

I believe that that the continuation of the Castlemaine Safe Space will assist in the reduction of mental health and/or critical incidents across the Shire.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 54711450

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Darren McQueen', written over a large, loopy scribble.

Darren McQUEEN
Acting Inspector.



24 APRIL 2023

File Ref: Castlemaine Safe Space

To whom it may concern

Re: Castlemaine Safe Space

I am writing to you in support of the Castlemaine Safe Space in their submission for allocation of funds from your upcoming annual budget which will allow the Safe Space some short-term financial security in terms of being able to remain operational.

The Castlemaine Safe Space provides a free, no appointment or referral, non-clinical open-door service for any individual experiencing emotional distress, loneliness or suicidal thoughts, and is currently up and running having opened in July of last year.

Since opening there has been a high number of patient attendances and it has received enormous community support which has been made possible by the many hours of work done by volunteers and trained Peer volunteers.

Currently the coverage of costs relies solely on donations and grants which are time consuming to pursue and uncertain in their outcome. An annual input of funding from Council would allow them to spend more time providing best quality services to patients. The working group have demonstrated that they are sustainable in terms of volunteer hours, however struggle to find funding for mandatory Peer volunteer training, patient resources such as hot drinks and food, publicity and administrative costs.

Patient attendances to the Castlemaine Safe Space demonstrate the importance of such a service throughout the Mt Alexander Shire for those not able to access clinical mental health services in a timely manner, or who may choose to not attend clinical services or self-present at an emergency department.

Thanks for your consideration with this submission.

Yours sincerely

Paul Treloar

A/STM Central Goldfields/Mt Alexander



9/5/2023

To whom it may concern,

I write on behalf of headspace Bendigo to express support for the continued funding of the Castlemaine Safe Space initiative.

The Castlemaine Safe Space provides a free, no appointment or referral, non-clinical open door service for any individual experiencing emotional distress, loneliness or suicidal thoughts in the Castlemaine region.

This service compliments greatly existing mental health support options in the region to residents of the Castlemaine region.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lindsay Rose".

Lindsay Rose
Manager
headspace Bendigo

To: CEO, Mount Alexander Shire Council
P.O. Box 185, Castlemaine, Vic. 3450
info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

9th May 2023

From: Tarrangower Cactus Control Group
P.O. Box 344, Maldon, Vic. 3463
info@cactuswarriors.org

Re: Proposed 2023-2024 Mount Alexander Shire Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed 2023-2024 budget. The Tarrangower Cactus Control Group (TCCG) continues to be concerned by the very little funding the Mount Alexander Shire Council allocates to the maintenance of our natural environment, and the extremely low priority given to the preservation of our natural assets and indigenous biodiversity. One of the pillars of the Council Plan 2021-2025 is "An environment for people and nature" and one of the stated strategic objectives under this pillar is "we are maintaining, improving, and celebrating our places and spaces". TCCG believes Council is not fulfilling this objective by not maintaining and improving our natural environment, which also undermines the health and well-being of our people.

Noxious weed control on both public and private land is critical to a healthy natural environment. Weeds displace our native flora and fauna species and are the underlying cause of the loss of native biodiversity. Mount Alexander Shire should play an essential role in weed control by the

- direct maintenance of weeds on public lands
- indirect control of weeds on private lands
- reducing reinfestations of weeds from public lands and non-compliant neighbours

Infestations of Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) have now become extensive within the Mount Alexander Shire. Control is extremely difficult due to the spread and density of the infestations on privately owned land. The Tarrangower Cactus Control Group believes this is mostly due to:

- the lack of knowledge of property owners about their responsibilities of weed control, and
- the lack of enforcement of noxious weed management

It is critical that local government engage with and educate new landowners, especially absentee and lifestyle property owners, because they cannot be contacted by our volunteer group.

The current single full-time Natural Environment Officer is working very hard but is struggling to effectively act on Council's commitment to protect and conserve our natural assets. The employment of more Natural Environment staff is necessary to:

- assist in increasing the awareness and knowledge of noxious weeds by property owners
- increase awareness and knowledge of weed control responsibilities, especially by absentee landowners
- increase enforcement of Local Law 19 "Noxious Weeds" with private landowners, especially absentee landowners
- review the Environment Strategy (2015-2025) and its objective to protect our natural environmental assets (scheduled to be done every 4 years)
- review the overdue Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2012-2017
- create a detailed Weed Management Plan for the Shire

The TCCG believes that by providing more funding and resources to address weed control in Mount Alexander Shire, that Council will improve both the health of our natural environment and our community members. Investing in the **employment of another full-time Natural Environment Officer** would align with the strategic objectives and increase Council's commitment to a healthy environment for our people and nature.

To Mount Alexander Shire Council from Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Submission on the Council's 2023-34 Draft Budget

Needle Grasses (*Nassella* species) are highly invasive weeds that threaten natural ecosystems. They also have a significant impact on the agricultural industry by lowering the productivity of pastures since they are not palatable and by causing animal health and welfare issues due to seeds penetrating the skin and tissue of grazing animals. Outbreaks of these weeds have been identified along roadsides in the Castlemaine area and in the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens. Because of their ability to stick to clothing, animals and machinery, the seeds are easily spread and create new infestations.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club (CFNC) has for many years supported the long-term volunteer program led by Margaret Panter (a CFNC member) to control Needle Grass (stipoid) weeds in two ways – managing funding for contractors to remove outbreaks of Needle Grass on Council land provided through Community Grants and Landcare grants; and through members volunteering for stipoid weed removal in the Botanical Gardens.

Margaret Panter has made a remarkable voluntary contribution to Council's environmental program of weed removal for well over a decade, mapping stipoid weed outbreaks, collaborating with Council staff, coordinating the contractor's work and the contributions of volunteers for weed removal in the Botanical Gardens in consultation with Gardens staff. However, she is unable to continue to the same degree. Over the past year or so she has helped train some of the Parks and Gardens staff in Needle Grass identification and removal, but the detailed work of surveying and mapping that she has done, and the coordination of the contractor's work must be taken over by Council staff after the completion of the current (final) 2022-23 funding round managed by CFNC. **We specifically ask Council to provide adequate funding to allow Council staff to undertake this work into the future as failure to do so will allow these weeds¹ to proliferate and spread, thus undoing the years of voluntary weed control that has been undertaken by the community.** In making this request we note that Council has legal responsibility under the Catchment and Land Protection Act ([CaLP Act](#)) to prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds on their land.

We also strongly recommend that Council provide funding for a Weeds Officer working under the supervision of the Natural Environment Officer. This position would be additional to the current Natural Environment Officer and other parks and gardens positions. Margaret has indicated that she will be happy to assist with the transfer of her expertise and of her maps of the Needle Grass weed locations. A Weeds Officer would also work across the Shire on the identification and control of other major weed infestations.

The Draft Budget does not address these issues directly, but we are concerned that's the proposed budget for the environmental aspects of Council's responsibilities appears to be unchanged from 2022-23.

We request that the Council's 2023-24 budget addresses the need for this new position as well as adequate ongoing funding for the weed removal program.

Peter S Turner, President CFNC

Reference: Talia Humphries and Singarayer K. Florentine 2021. A Comparative Review of Six Invasive *Nassella* Species in Australia with Implications for Their Management
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8223965/>

¹ Chilean Needle Grass is listed as a noxious weed that is a restricted weed in all Victorian catchments. Texas Needle Grass and Cane Needle Grass, while not currently listed have many of the same biological attributes and impacts. All three species can be found in the Castlemaine area.



10th May, 2023

Darren Fuzzard
Chief Executive Officer
Mount Alexander Shire Council
PO Box 185
Castlemaine, VIC, 3450

Dear Mr Fuzzard, Councillors and Council officers,

Re: 2023/2024 Mount Alexander Shire Budget – Request for support for Castlemaine Fringe

Castlemaine Fringe recently celebrated 30 years since the inaugural Fringe Festival of November 1992. Since its inception Castlemaine Fringe has actively supported and showcased our local community and emerging artists with a focus on accessibility, inclusion and participation.

Castlemaine Fringe is enjoying significant community support with an expanded membership base, increased community participation, strong local partnerships and a track record of delivering successful, inclusive and well attended community arts events.

Our 2023 Castlemaine Fringe Festival was a huge success and featured:

- in excess of 12,000 people attending 77 events and performances
- 200 performers employed directly by Fringe
- 35 arts technicians employed directly by Fringe
- 44 ticketed events where event hosts generated income
- 82 artists exhibiting in 69 shop windows throughout the Shire
- 7 local schools participated in Fringe lead events
- 8 social impact events which were attended by 750 people
- 9 curated exhibitions
- 33 free public events
- 13 theatre productions
- 32 music performances

Key events included the Monster Mash family celebration; Reactivate Street Party; Harmony Day multicultural lunch; Art Windows Trail; live-stream with the Ukraine Fringe Festival; panel discussions on how to Thrive as an Artist and Thrive with ADHD; a locals' documentary showcase featuring a commissioned film celebrating Fringe's 30 year anniversary and a successful program of live theatre, music and comedy productions.

This year's Festival saw a very strong partnership between the Fringe and Council, along with our colleagues at the Castlemaine State Festival. We are very keen to build on and strengthen these partnerships to the mutual benefit of all parties and to increase the sustainability of the local arts community.



We believe that the Fringe is uniquely placed to assist Council deliver key community goals around diversity, inclusion and accessibility. These values are at the core of who Fringe is and what Fringe does. This commitment is actively reflected in our programming and partnerships. We have strong engagement with diverse sectors of our community including our friends and colleagues in the LGBTQI community, the multicultural sector, people living with disabilities and First Nations people.

Fringe prides itself on generating opportunities for income and employment for people within the creative sector. Our recent Festival employed 200 performers and 35 art workers and technicians. Despite this, none of our events would be possible without the extensive support of our dedicated volunteer community. These volunteers undertake a huge array of works with a lot of time, energy and commitment spent in fundraising, grant seeking and generating income to make Fringe events possible. These financial pressures also expose the organisation to the risk of burn-out and potential loss of volunteer resources. It's a vicious catch-22 which we believe could be alleviated with core, operational funding.

As part of our partnership with Council, we are seeking on-going yearly funding to support the Castlemaine Fringe. We are asking for \$10,000 from the 2023 / 2024 Mount Alexander Shire Council Budget with a view to ongoing funding which will contribute towards our base operational costs, supporting the part time employment of a Festival Director, leading a core team of volunteers and development of our strategic plan for 2023-2028. This support will additionally enable us to plan for upcoming events, grow and develop partnerships and continue to develop the Fringe Festival and build on its reputation as a community led and delivered festival for local people, provides opportunities for connection and celebration and attracts visiting audiences.

We are excited about the possibilities of our community partnerships and look forward to exploring this further with you.

Thank you for your time and your support for the Castlemaine Fringe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "AJ", is written on a light-colored surface. The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alison Jones (Azy Jay)
Director, Castlemaine Fringe



10th May, 2023

Darren Fuzzard
Chief Executive Officer
Mount Alexander Shire Council
PO Box 185
Castlemaine, VIC, 3450

Dear Mr Fuzzard, Councillors and Council officers,

Re: 2023/2024 Mount Alexander Shire Budget – Request for BMA Funding

Business Mount Alexander Inc has been very pleased to strengthen its partnership with Mount Alexander Shire over the past 12 months thanks to support from Council's Economic Development team. We are grateful to have entered into an MOU with MASC guiding our partnership and allowing the two organisations to work together to deliver more effective outcomes for our local business community.

During the last 12 months time BMA has:

- Held a Creative Connections Conference showcasing the economic contribution of our creative industries sector, with skills development workshops.
- Partnered with Council to support the Mainstreet Australia National Conference which took place in Castlemaine.
- Held a series of Wellbeing Workshops and social events for the business community.
- Collated and distributed resources to support Wellbeing for the Business community.
- Hosted a networking lunch in Maldon.
- Partnered with Maldon Inc & the Castlemaine Fringe to deliver the Art Windows Trail project with 82 installations at 69 business locations throughout the Shire.
- Met with City of Goldfields representatives to explore potential partnerships.
- Provided feedback to the initial streetscape concept plans.
- Produced a second print run of the BUY LOCAL shopping bags originally commissioned by Rotary.
- Established a Hospitality Industry Network, seeking to support local producers, food and beverage providers and explore marketing and event opportunities for the sector.
- Produced a Festival Food & Drink Guide, mapping local hospitality outlets.

We are grateful for Council's support in providing funds to develop a Strategic Plan for the organisation. Work on this document is currently underway and is being supported by our new Committee of Management, who joined the organisation in September 2022. This core document will help provide structure and direction for BMA and ensure it meets the needs of its members and the broader business community.



A key challenge for the organisation is that funding provided by the State Government is always project specific. It has allowed us to pursue some great goals with the creative industries and hospitality sector and provide wellbeing workshops and resources for small businesses.

What is needed to assist Business Mount Alexander provide broad support for our business community is core funding to meet basic operational expenses such as marketing and promotion, IT expenses, networking events and the opportunity to support local businesses to connect, sharing information, resources, and lived experience. This would also allow us the opportunity to strengthen our partnerships with other business organisations such as Maldon Inc, Start Up Central Vic, Maryborough Committee for Business and Business Kyneton.

Through our partnership with MASC, BMA is able to assist Council meet key objectives within its Council Plan. We are able to disseminate information to and from the business community helping Council achieve effective communication within the sector; we support strategies contained in the Plan to provide a diverse and resilient economy and we active support and encourage innovative industries and individuals. We look forward to working with MASC to deliver this year's Mount Alexander Business Awards.

To assist us realise these goals, we kindly request that ongoing funding be allocated to support Business Mount Alexander to the amount of \$5,000 per annum.

Please don't hesitate to contact me on mobile: 0425 323 005 or by email on chair@businessmountalexander.org.au should you require any further information.

Thank you for your time and your support for Business Mount Alexander and the business community.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns
Chair
BUSINESS MOUNT ALEXANDER INC