

# MINUTES

## Of the Meeting of Council

Tuesday 16 June 2026



At 6.30 PM in the  
Mount Alexander Shire Council Chamber,  
Civic Centre  
Corner Lyttleton Street and Lloyd Street, Castlemaine VIC  
3450.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

**To start the official proceedings**

**I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Djaara country  
of which the members and elders of the Djaara community and their  
forebears have been custodians for many centuries  
and have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.  
We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.**

**Council Meetings are audio and video recorded and are made available to the public via  
electronic media including YouTube.**

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## **1. PRESENT**

Councillors: Matthew Driscoll, Tony Cordy, Lucas Maddock, Philip Walker, Bill Maltby, Toby Heydon, and Rosie Annear.

Officers: Chief Executive Officer (Darren Fuzzard), Director Infrastructure Development (Michael Annear), Director Corporate Services (Julie Landy), Interim Director Healthy Communities (Kath Skinner) and Manager Governance and Risk (Leanne Brown).

## **2. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Councillor Rosalie Hastwell.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Nil.

## **4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

### **4.1. Meeting Of Council - 19 May 2026**

The unconfirmed minutes of the Meeting of the Mount Alexander Shire Council held at 6.30 pm on 19 May 2026 at the Mount Alexander Shire Civic Centre have been circulated to Councillors.

The unconfirmed minutes have also been posted on the Mount Alexander Shire Council website, pending confirmation at this meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Mount Alexander Shire Council held on 19 May 2026 be confirmed.**

**Moved: COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**Seconded: COUNCILLOR ANNEAR**

**CARRIED**

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## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mayor thanked the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Darren Fuzzard for his years of service and wished him all the best with his future endeavours.

Councillor Driscoll said it had been a pleasure to work with the CEO and acknowledged his service to Council.

Councillor Cordy thanked the CEO for his long-standing service, noting that Darren had been an inspiration to both Councillors and staff.

Councillor Walker expressed appreciation for the CEO's guidance, dedication and professionalism during his time as a new Councillor.

Councillor Maddock said he was grateful for the privilege of working with the CEO and wished him all the best for the future.

Councillor Maltby stated that this was his second time serving as a Councillor whilst Darren Fuzzard has been CEO and noted he is held in the highest regard. He thanked Darren for his service.

Councillor Annear described the working relationship with the CEO as outstanding and said he would be missed. She thanked him for his service over the past 10 years.

## 6. PUBLIC TIME

### MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

That standing orders be suspended at 6.38 pm.

### SECONDED: COUNCILLOR WALKER

### CARRIED

a. Laurel Kanost, (Read by Councillor Annear.)

*"Thank you for considering the suitability of an organic waste system for the Mt Alexander Shire.*

#### ***Permaculture Centre Of Excellence***

*The region of Castlemaine through to Hepburn shires comprise the home and centre of excellence of the internationally recognised and practised Permaculture closed loop system, with living inventor/teachers/mentors integrated within the shire. This extends and includes the regenerative agriculture / keyline practitioners also active in the shire with leading international reputations. The co-founder of the permaculture movement settled in the district in order to undertake the practical application and proof of concept through the permaculture garden research project at Melliodora, Hepburn Springs <https://med-etc.com/natur/Ldw-perma/ENGL/004f01-permaculture-garden-institute-Melliodora-Australia.html>.*

*The proposal to adopt the European import, smart city-style organic waste system will undermine the 40+ years' practical demonstration and work by the local leading permaculture community to implement on a continuous improvement basis, the resilient, closed-loop recycling systems by which many shire households live.*

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*These systems ensure Castlemaine's food sovereignty, and support local habitat for native animal, bird and insect life. Our waste connects us to our climate change footprint and holds us accountable for our use of resources.*

*A commercial approach to organic waste such as a shire organic waste system is rejected on the basis of our regions' internationally-recognised local permaculture living practice here in central Victoria. The community must support and build this living centre of excellence as a regional showcase, and the YIMBY composting system alternative is one such outcome of community building and neighbourhood resilience permaculture inspired projects.*

**How can the shire support the existing regenerative closed loop systems and community resilience?**

*The shire's energy is welcomed to integrate complimentary systems in the regenerative closed loop systems already active in the shire. Suggested areas of support for the shire residents include:*

**FIRE**

*Investing in a biochar facility to utilise council tree pruning / fire load reduction in surrounding forests would allow activated charcoal to be returned to the mining soils around town, and be sold to residents, assisting to meet climate change targets and cool the forest surrounds.*

*"Taking woody material out of the waste stream and converting it to biochar not only prevents the carbon stored in the wood to be emitted as greenhouse gas but provides a mechanism to actively draw-down carbon from the atmosphere. Furthermore, adding biochar to soils increases their water retention that can be used by plants during periods of drought. This can make farming, horticulture and roadside plantings more drought resilient, actively cools the surrounding areas, and ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in the Yarra Ranges and beyond." (<https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Our-services/Climate-and-environment/Sustainable-communities/Biochar-Facility#section-3>)*

*As the charcoal must be activated with biodiverse bacteria, using organic waste within the shire (eg worm farm composting at the biochar site) can be implemented with the biochar system.*

*A biochar facility would assist in addressing lessons learned from the Harcourt fires which stopped 20m from the Castlemaine shire signs due only to change in winds. Surrounding fire-load of grass and forest floor are outstripping the CFA ability to contain the fires. The combustible heat intensity of unmanaged community and forested land (State or Federal forests) has become an OHS issue for residents and the CFA. Occupational Health and Safety compel the region to take action to reduce the risks which have been illuminated in the Shire. A biochar facility would be a measurable yardstick of change for the fire risks posed for the shire.*

*In addition, the mosaic cool fire burning history of Kurrajong CFA NSW may be leading thought for our shire <https://www.khrfs.org/good-fire-bad-fire/>. Resurrection of cool burning practices within our shire, combined with the innovation of biochar production such as implemented by the Yarra Ranges shire, can assist as an active response to the heat radiation (OHS) issues and fire load; see <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Our-services/Climate-and-environment/Sustainable-communities/Biochar-Facility> (FAQ <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Our-services/Climate-and-environment/Sustainable-communities/Biochar-Facility#section-3>).*

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## FLOOD

*The mining history of the area has contributed to the inability of the surrounding hillsides to hold water. Return of activated charcoal to the soils in the surrounding forest hillsides using keyline/swale design of regenerative practices would enable the rainfall runoff to slow before reaching the town streets and gutters which add to the creek flooding experienced in our township.*

*Council could additionally apply permaculture best practice to 'cut in' its own kerbs and gutters on long hillside streets to redirect the rainfall runoff into nature strips, which could be dug into for water reservoir capacity and planted with native pollinators.*

## FOCUS

*The Hub (for example) could become a focal point for community permaculture closed loop resources such as:*

*Council activated charcoal (biochar) sales*

*Native pollinator seedling collections and <https://nalderun.net.au/bush-tucker/> natives*

*Books/resources on permaculture, local planting guides, local publishing on permaculture & regenerative agriculture*

*Hives & bee resources*

*Harcourt Cider 'horticultural vinegar' (30% vinegar for natural weed reduction rather than pesticides)*

*Organisation of community fire load reduction days (yard tidy, grass slashing)*

### **Practical Observations of existing Organic Waste Systems**

*Based upon the Bendigo experience, this style of proposed system introduces an additional annual service fee on all residents, and penalises those who wish to rejuvenate the hydrophobic mining soils of our town with their own resources, such as organic waste, as opt-out of the service is generally not available without penalty (in the form of a fee).*

*Organic waste systems also apparently introduce a licence for shire (or third party?) auditors to enter private property to inspect whether compost is being made on premises which opt out of the green waste system. Whether with or without bundled consent, this is clearly a potential for breach of privacy and or property rights where a local council has no right of entry at law ( <https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/about-us/plans-strategies-and-documents/kerbside-organics-exemption-policy> "Properties with an organics exemption will incur an annual fee to cover the cost of administering the exemption process. This includes bin inspections, assessments, audits and other exemption-related administrative tasks. The fee for the 2024/2025 financial year is \$16.")*

*Collection of organic waste reduces unnecessary landfill/methane production. However, compulsory participation for shire residents is applied as a result of meeting commercial minimums to make the program viable for the supplier of the service. This does not justify administrative penalties such as opt out fees or entry onto private land whether by [compelled] consent or not, to be applied by the council on behalf of its residents.*

*Thank you for your time.*

*Laurel Kanost"*

- The Director Infrastructure Development (DID) responded by thanking Ms Kanost for sharing her observations regarding permaculture experiences within Central Victoria, the potential benefits of biochar and opportunities for increasing the circularity within waste management. Consideration will be given to points aligned with Council's future decision on the management of organic waste at a future Meeting of Council.

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b. Edwina Reid, Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club

Ms Reid advised that she was speaking on behalf of the Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club, North Castlemaine Cricket Club and the Wesley Hill Facilities Committee Asset Committee. She noted that over the past 12 months, the groups have worked closely with Council Officers to develop concept plans for the Wesley Hill facility, with a shared vision to better support participation in sport, particularly soccer and cricket.

Ms Reid stated that Wesley Hill is the most diverse sporting hub in the Shire, supporting cycling, netball, junior football, soccer, school events and community recreation, with the indoor stadium also hosting basketball, netball and martial arts. While this project has been driven by growth in soccer participation, the need for upgraded amenities has long been identified by the North Castlemaine Cricket Club, which currently has only a small portable building with one toilet and no change facilities, limiting growth, particularly for female players.

She advised that soccer use is also high, with 79 junior games to be played this year and several hundred people attending at times, all relying on one toilet. Poor drainage has already caused match cancellations, and improvements to drainage, field expansion and lighting are needed, particularly as the Chewton ground is deteriorating.

Ms Reid noted that a multi-use pavilion with a social space would benefit cricket, soccer and other users of the reserve and broader community. All three stakeholder groups support the upgrades and request that Council endorse the concept plans and progress to the next stage of design.

- The Mayor acknowledged Ms Reid's statement.

**MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**That standing orders be resumed at 6.51 pm.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR WALKER**

**CARRIED**

**7. PETITIONS AND LETTERS**

Nil

**8. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Nil.

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## 9. OFFICER REPORTS

### 9.1. Organisation

#### 9.1.1. Adoption of 2026-2027 Budget

This Report is for Decision

Responsible Director: Director Corporate Services, Julie Landy

Responsible Officer: Manager Finance, Keith Caldwell

Attachments: 1. 2026/2027 Budget [9.1.1.1. – 62 pages]

#### Executive Summary

Having prepared the Proposed Budget 2026/2027 and having received and heard from submitters and considered all submissions received, Council is now able to consider the formal adoption of the Budget 2026/2027.

The Budget has been prepared having considered Council's priorities and commitments as well as strategic documents such as the Asset Plan 2025-2029, Council Plan 2025-2029 and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

The 2026/2027 Budget is in line with Council's 10-year Financial Plan, which supports the Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 and key strategies. The Budget is a sustainable and strategic plan that seeks to build on existing initiatives to provide important works and services to our community, as well as prioritising significant long-term infrastructure projects that enhance the liveability of our community.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Adopts the Budget 2026/2027, including the Schedule of Fees and Charges, annexed to this resolution, in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and relevant regulations.**
- 2. Gives public notice of this decision to adopt the Budget 2026/2027.**
- 3. Having received and considered public submissions, and having publicly heard from some of these submitters, acknowledges their contribution to the budget process and thanks them for their contribution.**
- 4. Declares an amount of \$31,070,000 which Council intends to raise by general rates and service charges for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027. The amount is calculated as follows:**

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>General Rates</b>                            | <b>\$25,206,000</b> |
| <b>Service Charges</b>                          | <b>\$5,497,000</b>  |
| <b>Supplementary Rates and Rate Adjustments</b> | <b>\$ 92,000</b>    |
| <b>Interest on rates and charges</b>            | <b>\$275,000</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>\$31,070,000</b> |

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5. Notes that final valuations have now been received from the Valuer General, and adjustments have been made to differential rates to ensure compliance with the Fair Go Rates System.
  6. Declares that General Rates be raised by the application of Differential Rates as detailed in Council's Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 and as required under section 94(2)(i) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and section 161(2) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.
  7. Furthermore, in declaring a Differential Rate for rateable land, the respective characteristics specified below will form the criteria for each differential rate so declared:
    - a. General Rate – Applies to residential properties and home-based businesses that are conducted at residential premises. Vacant land that is not farm land and cannot be developed for residential purposes is also classified as general.
    - b. Farm Rate – applies to any land which is “farm land” within the meaning of Section 2(1) of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*. Farm land means any rateable land:
      - i. That is not less than 2 hectares in area; and
      - ii. Is used primarily for grazing (including agistment), dairying, pig farming, poultry-farming, fish-farming, tree-farming, beekeeping, viticulture, horticulture, fruit-growing, or the growing of crops of any kind or for any combination of those activities; and
      - iii. That is used by a business:
        - That has a significant and substantial commercial purpose or character.
        - That seeks to make a profit on a continuous or repetitive basis from its activities on the land.
        - That is making a profit from its activities on the land, or that has a reasonable prospect of making a profit from its activities on the land, if it continues to operate in the way it is operating.
    - c. Vacant Land Rate –any land that is rateable land:
      - i. that does not have a dwelling and can be developed for residential purposes; or
      - ii. Vacant commercial or industrial land.
    - d. Commercial Rate – any land that is occupied for the principal purpose of carrying out the manufacture or production of, or trade in, goods or services, or residential properties that are predominately used for the purposes of short-term accommodation rental.
    - e. Recreational Rate – all rateable land upon which sporting, recreational or cultural activities are conducted, and including buildings that may be ancillary to such activities. These properties have a rate of zero set in accordance with the *Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963*.
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8. Declares that a Trust for Nature Covenant rebate of 100% applies to the site value of the portion of land covered by the covenant.
9. Determines each differential rate by multiplying the General Rate by the relevant differential percentage as indicated in the following table:

| Differential Rate | Differential % | 2026/2027 rate in \$ |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| General           | Base           | 0.0026854            |
| Farm              | 80%            | 0.0021483            |
| Commercial        | 130%           | 0.0034910            |
| Vacant Land       | 200%           | .0053708             |
| Recreational      | 0%             | .0000000             |

10. Records that it considers that each Differential Rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of Council functions.
11. Confirms that no amount is fixed as the minimum amount payable by way of General Rate in respect of each rateable land within the municipal district.
12. Declares an Annual Service Charge, for the collection and disposal of refuse, in respect of the 2026/2027 financial year. The annual service charges are the sum of, and based on the criteria, set out below:
- The Annual Service Charge (large garbage bin and recycling bin) of \$720 will apply to properties where a garbage collection service is provided, and the capacity of their refuse bin is approximately 140 litres.
  - The Annual Service Charge (small garbage bin and recycling bin) of \$496 will apply to properties where a garbage collection service is provided, and the capacity of their refuse bin is approximately 80 litres.
13. Adopts the following arrangements for interest on rates and charges:
- Declares that interest is to be charged in accordance with Section 172 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, on any amounts of rates and charges that have not yet been paid by the date fixed by the Minister in accordance with Section 167(2) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.
  - That the interest to be charged is at the rate, fixed under Section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983*, that applied on the first day of July immediately before the due date for payment, calculated from the date on which the instalment was due.
14. Authorises the Director Corporate Services to levy and recover general rates and annual service charges described earlier in this resolution, in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*.

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**MOVED COUNCILLOR MADDOCK**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR WALKER**

**CARRIED.**

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## Context

The purpose of this report is for Council; having developed a proposed Budget 2026/2027 and considered public submissions, and after declaring differential rates in accordance with the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029; to adopt the attached Budget 2026/2027. The Budget has been prepared having considered Council's priorities and commitments as well as strategic documents such as the Financial Plan 2025-2035, Asset Plan 2025-2029, Council Plan 2025-2029 and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

Council gave public notice for budget submissions to be received from 28 October to 28 November 2025. Public notice was given in the Midland Express and via SHAPE Mount Alexander. An Unscheduled Meeting of Council was held on 24 March 2026 to hear the submitters who wished to speak to their submissions.

## Issues

The 2026/2027 Budget is in line with Council's 10-year Financial Plan, which supports the Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 and key strategies. The Budget is a sustainable and strategic plan that seeks to build on existing initiatives to provide important works and services to our community, as well as prioritising significant long-term infrastructure projects that enhance the liveability of our community. The Budget features a range of initiatives across diverse sectors including early and middle years, economic development, climate change, sport, and recreation, as well as affordable housing.

By investing in new and existing infrastructure, Council plays a vital role in the local economy by supporting our businesses and residents and enabling confidence in the direction of our community and our economy.

As part of the consultation process, Council received 34 submissions and 23 community members/organisations spoke to their submissions at an Unscheduled Meeting of Council to hear public submissions held on the 24 March 2026.

## Finance and Resource Implications

To develop the Budget, Council has used the Best Practice Guide 'Model Budget' provided by Local Government Victoria. The Budget details both the operating and capital income and expenditure for Council for the 2026/2027 financial year. The Budget includes detailed information on the operating result, capital expenditure and rating, as well as cash and investments, borrowings, and reserve balances. The proposed Budget 2026/2027 includes:

- funding for projects and initiatives included in various Council plans and strategies
- sufficient cash to meet upcoming obligations, with further information provided on Council's unrestricted cash balance.

An operating surplus of \$2.9 million is proposed, inclusive of \$9.5 million of capital grant income. This operating surplus assumes no early receipt of the 2026/2027 Financial Assistance Grant from the Federal Government. Excluding "non-recurrent" capital grants, the underlying operating deficit is \$7.6 million.

## Risk Analysis

### Financial risk:

While a level of financial uncertainty is always present in our economy, Council and our community continue to experience increasing levels of financial uncertainty due to a combination of factors including:

- 
- Global instability affecting supply chains with potential for supply shortages and ongoing inflationary impacts.
  - The impact of natural disasters in Australia and locally and the flow on effect for supply chains for materials and contractors.
  - Sustained high inflation rates and, in trying to address this issue, increases to the cash rate by the Reserve Bank of Australia.

The above may not always impact Council directly, but indirectly Council may see their combined effect in factors such as higher Contract prices, or difficulty in sourcing contractors or employees.

The Budget is based on a 2.75 per cent increase to average rates income in the context of much higher levels of inflationary pressure. This increase to average rates is set in accordance with the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System. Around 60 per cent of Budget funding comes from rates.

As in previous years, Council has not applied for a variation to the rate cap; and conscious of cost-of-living pressures for the community, will once again absorb increasing costs within current allocations, which limits revenue available to fund new projects and initiatives and/or reduces the potential scope of projects.

Council will continue to monitor and report on its financial performance throughout the financial year and respond to issues as they arise.

Information risk:

All care and diligence have been taken in preparing the Budget, using information and estimates available at the time. Monitoring and reviewing financial results over the 2025/2026 financial year will help manage any unforeseen financial variations.

Reputation risk:

Failure to adopt the Budget by the required statutory date may pose a reputational risk to Council regarding expectations of ratepayers and our relationship with the State Government. It also presents a challenge to staff who require the Budget to be adopted so they can plan and manage the delivery of their works, services, and projects at the commencement of the financial year. By providing our community with opportunities to provide input or feedback on the budget, and an opportunity to speak directly to Councillors, Council is seeking to manage its reputational risk by being accessible to members of the public, hearing what they have to say, and considering any requests.

**Climate Impact Statement**

In preparing the Proposed Budget 2026/2027, Council can choose to allocate funds to address the impacts of climate change directly or indirectly. Council is directly addressing the impacts of climate change by:

- Progressing multi-year projects including construction of the Castlemaine and Campbells Creek levees.
- Continuing to fund its Carbon net zero goals.
- In recognising how important trees are to our environment, increasing the budget allocation for tree management and maintenance.

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## Gender Equity Statement

While this report does not directly address gender equity principles, gender equity is a consideration in the planning and delivery of projects and operations funded by Council. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and to further promote the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

## Alternate Options

There are no alternate options as adoption of an annual budget is a legislative requirement as per the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## Communication and Consultation

### Consult:

We will keep our community informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision. We will seek community feedback on drafts and proposals.

As in previous years, Council's Budget has been developed in consideration of Council's priorities and commitments as well as Council's Financial Plan, Asset Plan, Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Community consultation was undertaken by:

- Seeking public submissions and input on ideas and suggestions for the budget from 28 October 2025 to 28 November 2025.
- Hearing submitters speak, if they wished, at an Unscheduled Meeting of Council on 24 March 2026. From 34 submissions, 23 community members/organisations also spoke to Councillors about an idea or project for the proposed budget.
- Considering those submissions and speakers before adopting the Budget.

The early engagement helped to inform Councillors during the Budget development and ensured that community priorities were considered and captured in the budget where possible.

All submissions were reviewed, and recurring themes identified from the feedback included the need for continued Council support for the following types of activities or investments:

- Community groups
- Our business community
- Festivals and Events
- Arts and Tourism
- The Environment
- Continued Investment in Infrastructure such as:
  - Roads and road and pedestrian safety
  - Drainage, and
  - Recreation, sporting and community facilities.

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## **Legislation**

### Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020

Part 3 of the Regulations detail further requirements regarding the provision of information in the budget document.

### Local Government Act 1989

Part 8 details the requirements for rates and charges on rateable land.

### Local Government Act 2020

Division 2 of the Act details budget processes.

### Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983

This legislation details the penalty interest rate applied to overdue rates payments.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must:

- Prepare and adopt a budget for each financial year and the subsequent three financial years commencing 1 July by 30 June (Section 94(1)).
- Ensure that the budget gives effect to the Council Plan and contains the information required under Section 94(2).
- Prepare the budget in accordance with:
  - Section 96(1)(a) - The financial management principles.
  - Section 96(1)(a) – Council's Community Engagement Policy.
  - Comply with guidelines established under Section 161, including Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating.

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

### Council Plan 2025-2029

Organisation - A responsive, trusted and effective Council.

A responsive and transparent Council providing genuine, inclusive and accessible community engagement and communications.

## **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support employees, volunteers and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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## **9.2. Communities**

### **9.2.1. 2026 Mount Alexander Shire Council Investment Prospect**

This Report is for Decision

Responsible Director: Director Infrastructure and Development, Michael Annear

Responsible Officer: Grants Coordinator, Jade Leishman

Attachments: 1. 2026 Mount Alexander Shire Council Investment Prospectus  
[9.2.1.1 - 28 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the 2026 Mount Alexander Shire Council Investment Prospectus, as a targeted advocacy document for the upcoming State Government election focused on projects that are investment-ready and strategically positioned for external investment opportunities.

Council has developed the Investment Prospectus 2026 as a coordinated advocacy and funding tool to support the delivery of Council's priority projects. The Investment Prospectus responds to increasing population growth, an aging demographic and rising demand for housing, infrastructure and community services, alongside the financial constraints faced by Council in delivering these outcomes independently. It presents a clear, evidence-based case for external investment and positions Mount Alexander Shire Council as a strong partner for State and Federal Governments.

The document brings together a targeted suite of 11 investment ready priority projects across four key investment areas: Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Infrastructure and Economic Development. These projects have been refined through Council's strategic planning processes and structured consistently to articulate the project need, investment case, alignment to government priorities and funding required. Collectively, they represent a balanced and investment-ready pipeline that will enable housing growth, strengthen community infrastructure, improve service access and support local economic development.

Endorsement of the Investment Prospectus will provide Council with a clear and unified platform for advocacy, enabling more effective engagement with government, funding bodies and strategic partners. It will support coordinated messaging across Council and strengthen our ability to secure external investment.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Approves the 2026 Mount Alexander Shire Council Investment Prospectus as a key advocacy document for use in presenting investment opportunities to State Government, funding bodies and strategic partners.**
- 2. Notes that the Investment Prospectus will be reviewed periodically to reflect emerging priorities, project readiness and investment opportunities.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**CARRIED.**

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## Context

The development of the 2026 Mount Alexander Shire Council Investment Prospectus (Investment Prospectus) has been undertaken to consolidate and strengthen Council's approach to advocacy and external funding. The Investment Prospectus builds on a range of prior work, including directorate priority setting, and the development of targeted documents such as the Harcourt Recovery Prospectus.

Through this work, Council has identified the need for a single, coordinated document that clearly articulates priority projects and provides a consistent platform for engagement with State and Federal Governments, funding bodies and strategic partners.

The Investment Prospectus has been developed collaboratively across Mount Alexander Shire Council, with input from relevant service areas to confirm project scope, readiness and alignment to Council's strategic plans, including the Council Plan 2025-2029, the Municipal Public Health and Well Being Plan 2025-2029, and supporting plans and strategies. The final document reflects a refined and prioritised list of projects that are suitable for external investment and advocacy over the current Council term.

## Issues

Council is required to make strategic decisions about how it positions and advocates for its priority projects in an increasingly competitive funding environment. Historically, advocacy has been undertaken across multiple processes and documents, which can lead to inconsistency in messaging and duplication of effort.

The Investment Prospectus seeks to address these challenges by:

- Consolidating priority projects into a single, coordinated document
- Providing a consistent structure and language for external engagement
- Improving alignment between Council priorities and government funding programs
- Strengthening Council's ability to present investment-ready proposals

The Investment Prospectus complements, but does not replace, the Harcourt Recovery Prospectus. While the Investment Prospectus provides a Shire-wide advocacy framework focused on a range of investment ready projects, the Harcourt Recovery Prospectus remains a standalone advocacy document supporting recovery, resilience and renewal outcomes associated with the 2026 Harcourt bushfires. Together, these documents provide Council with a coordinated approach to advocacy that recognises both broader municipal priorities and the specific recovery needs of the Harcourt community.

During development, the following considerations have informed the final structure of the Investment Prospectus, including:

- The need to limit the number of projects to maintain focus and clarity.
- The importance of presenting projects at a level suitable for external audiences.
- Balancing infrastructure, social and economic investment priorities.
- Ensuring alignment with Council's strategic direction and community needs.

Project inclusion has been guided by strategic alignment, project readiness and suitability for external investment and advocacy opportunities. While the Investment Prospectus includes projects located through the municipality, many projects deliver benefits that extend beyond their physical location and support broader Shire-wide outcomes. The Investment Prospectus

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is not intended to provide a geographically balanced distribution of projects, nor does it seek to represent all Council priorities.

The Investment Prospectus has been developed within the context of the upcoming Victorian State Election, providing Council with a coordinated platform to advocate for investment ready projects. It is not intended to represent every Council priority project and will continue to evolve as projects progress, funding is secured and new opportunities emerge. The periodic review will ensure continued alignment with emerging priorities, project readiness and investment opportunities.

### **Finance and Resource Implications**

Endorsement of the Investment Prospectus does not commit Council to any expenditure. The document is intended to support advocacy and funding activities and does not in itself, represent an approval of funding towards listed projects. The projects included in the Investment Prospectus are at varying stages of development and would require external funding and/or future Council budget consideration to progress to delivery. Where projects advance through successful funding applications or partnership opportunities, detailed financial implications, including Council contributions, will be considered through standard budget and reporting processes.

Information contained within the Investment Prospectus, including project scopes and indicative costings, reflect Council's current understanding and is accurate at the time of publication (June 2026). Project details may be subject to further investigation, design development and cost review as projects progress toward funding and delivery.

Projects progressing beyond advocacy will continue to be subject to Council's standard planning, budgeting and decision-making processes.

The development of the Investment Prospectus has been undertaken within existing resources, primarily through the Grants Team with direction from the Executive Team and input and guidance from relevant Council Officers. Ongoing use of the Investment Prospectus will require periodic review and updating to maintain accuracy or alignment with funding opportunities, which is expected to be managed within existing resources.

### **Risk Analysis**

#### Financial Risk:

As outlined in Council's Risk Appetite Statement:

Council has a low appetite for not managing our financial position.

**Key Risk:** There is a risk that inclusion of projects within the Investment Prospectus may create an expectation of future Council financial commitment, including capital co-contributions, ongoing operational costs and lifecycle maintenance where external funding is secured. There is also a risk that unsuccessful funding applications may result in sunk costs associated with project development and readiness in design and advocacy activities.

**Mitigation:** The risk is mitigated by:

- Ensuring the Investment Prospectus is clearly positioned as an advocacy and investment tool, not a funded program of projects.
- Subjecting all projects progressing beyond advocacy to Council's standard budget, and capital works planning and approval processes.

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- Assessing co-contribution requirements, operational impacts and lifecycle costs prior to committing to delivery.
  - Prioritising funding opportunities aligned to Council's financial capacity and strategic objectives.
  - Maintaining clear messaging regarding the purpose of the Investment Prospectus as an advocacy and investment document focused on investment-ready projects.

*Residual Risk:* Residual financial risk is considered low to moderate, as Council retains full control over all future funding commitments through formal decision-making processes.

Reputational Risk:

As outlined in Council's Risk Appetite Statement:

Council has a low appetite for actions that may harm Council's reputation.

*Key Risk:* There is a risk that inclusion of projects in the Investment Prospectus may be interpreted by the community or stakeholders as a commitment to deliver all listed initiatives, potentially leading to reputational impact if projects are delayed, reprioritised or not funded. There is also a risk that inconsistent use of the Investment Prospectus in the advocacy activities could impact Council's credibility with government and funding partners.

*Mitigation:* This risk is mitigated by:

- Clearly communicating that the Investment Prospectus is an advocacy and investment document, rather than a delivery commitment.
- Ensuring consistent messaging across Councillors and Council officers when using the document externally.
- Maintaining transparency regarding project status, funding dependencies and delivery timeframes.
- Regularly reviewing and updating the Investment Prospectus to ensure accuracy and relevance.

*Residual Risk:* Residual risk is considered low, as external funding outcomes and project delivery timelines are not fully within Council's control.

Asset Risk:

As outlined in Council's Risk Appetite Statement:

Council has a low appetite for not managing our financial position.

*Key Risk:* There is a risk that projects delivered as a result of the Investment Prospectus may create additional asset management, maintenance and renewal obligations for Mount Alexander Shire Council. Without appropriate planning, this could place pressure on Council's long-term asset base and financial sustainability.

*Mitigation:* This risk is mitigated by:

- Applying Mount Alexander Shire Council's asset management and capital works planning frameworks to all projects progressing to delivery.
- Undertaking lifecycle costing, maintenance planning and renewal forecasting during project development.
- Ensuring new assets are aligned with service levels and long-term asset strategies.

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- Considering operational and maintenance implications as part of funding and delivery decisions.

*Residual risk:* Residual asset risk is considered low, provided that asset planning and lifecycle considerations continue to be embedded in project development and delivery processes.

### **Climate Impact Statement**

The Mount Alexander Shire Council Investment Prospectus identifies a range of projects that will have both direct and indirect impacts on climate outcomes, with an overall positive contribution to environmental sustainability, climate resilience and reduced emissions over time.

Several projects within the Investment Prospectus support climate outcomes through improved infrastructure efficiency, more sustainable land use and strengthened community resilience. This includes projects that enable smaller and well-located housing, improve active and community transport connections and upgrade existing infrastructure to contemporary standards, which can reduce long term energy use and emissions. Investment in planning and enabling infrastructure also supports more coordinated and sustainable growth, reducing the need for reactive or inefficient infrastructure delivery in the future.

In addition, a number of projects incorporate elements of climate adaptation and resilience, including improved asset durability, consideration of flood and environmental risks, and strengthening of community infrastructure to respond to changing climate conditions. Social infrastructure projects, particularly those supporting health, wellbeing and community connection, also contribute to community resilience in the face of climate-related impacts.

While the Investment Prospectus itself does not commit Council to specific construction or operational activities, individual projects will be subject to detailed design, environmental assessment and compliance with relevant climate, sustainability and asset management frameworks as they progress.

Overall, the Investment Prospectus supports a coordinated and forward-looking approach to investment that aligns with Council's commitment to sustainability, climate resilience and responsible growth.

### **Gender Equity Statement**

A Gender Impact Assessment was not required; however, gender equity principles have been considered in the development of individual projects to the advancement of gender equality.

### **Communication and Consultation**

The development of the Investment Prospectus has been undertaken through the collation of previously identified Council priorities and internal consultation across Council, with direction and guidance by members of the Executive Team and input from relevant service areas to confirm project scope, strategic alignment, readiness and funding positioning. This has included collaboration with project leads and subject matter experts to ensure that each project accurately reflects current needs, priorities and opportunities for external investment. The Investment Prospectus has also been considered by Councillors as part of its development and refinement prior to endorsement.

The Investment Prospectus also builds on previous engagement and consultation processes undertaken through Council's strategic planning work, including the Council Plan 2025-2029, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, and associated strategies. As such,

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the projects included reflect priorities that have been informed by community engagement, service planning and identified infrastructure and service needs across the Shire.

The Investment Prospectus is primarily an advocacy document intended for external audiences, including State and Federal Governments, funding bodies and strategic partners. It is not proposed to undertake specific community consultation on the Investment Prospectus itself. However, individual projects will be subject to appropriate community engagement and consultation processes as they progress through planning, design and delivery phases, in accordance with Mount Alexander Shire Council's engagement frameworks.

The Investment Prospectus is also intended to support consistent advocacy messaging across Councillors, and Council officers.

Following Council endorsement, the Investment Prospectus will be used as a key communication and advocacy tool to support engagement with government and funding stakeholders. Opportunities may also exist to communicate the Investment Prospectus more broadly to the community to increase awareness of Council's priority projects and advocacy efforts.

## **Legislation**

### Local Government Act 2020

The development of the Investment Prospectus supports Council in fulfilling its role under the *Local Government Act 2020*, including promoting the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district (Section 9) and applying principles of good governance and strategic planning. The Investment Prospectus provides a coordinated approach to advocacy and investment that aligns with Council's strategic objectives and community priorities.

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

The Investment Prospectus has been developed to support the implementation of Council's adopted plans and strategies by attracting external investment toward identified priorities.

### Council Plan 2025-2029

The Investment Prospectus supports delivery of Council's adopted plans and strategies by identifying projects that are sufficiently developed to support advocacy and external investment discussions. The Investment Prospectus directly supports delivery of the Mount Alexander Shire Council Plan 2025-2029 by aligning priority projects to Council's key focus areas and strategic objectives.

#### *Focus Area: Communities – Healthy, connected and inclusive communities*

The Investment Prospectus includes a range of community and social infrastructure projects that support increased participation, improved access to services and stronger community connection. These projects contribute to the development of vibrant townships and ensure community infrastructure continues to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population.

#### *Focus Area: Infrastructure – Appropriate, accessible and climate resilience infrastructure*

The Investment Prospectus identifies priority infrastructure projects that respond to current capacity constraints, asset renewal needs and future growth. These projects support well-maintained fit for purpose infrastructure and align with Council's strategic priority to plan for

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and invest in infrastructure that meets community needs and supports long term sustainability

*Focus Area: Wellbeing Economies – Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment*

Economic development and tourism focused projects within the Investment Prospectus support local business growth, employment opportunities and economic diversification. These initiatives contribute to a resilient and sustainable local economy and align with Council's priorities to strengthen the visitor economy and support local enterprise.

#### Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 – 2029

The Investment Prospectus is strongly aligned with the Mount Alexander Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, which identifies key priorities including improving mental health and wellbeing, preventing family violence, supporting children and young people, and strengthening social connection.

The inclusion of targeted projects within the Prospectus, particularly those focused on mental health service access, family violence response and early years and youth services, directly supports these priorities. These projects promote early intervention, improve access to locally delivered services and contribute to addressing the social determinants of health across the Shire.

#### **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

#### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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### **9.2.2. Petition - Asking Mount Alexander Shire Council to Join the Super Tuesday Bike Count 2027 - April 2026**

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Director Infrastructure and Development, Michael Annear

Responsible Officer: Manager Engineering, Philip Garner

Attachments:

1. Active Transport Strategy Action Plan January - December 2026 [9.2.2.1 - 3 pages]
2. CONFIDENTIAL:- Petition - Asking Mount Alexander Shire Council to Join the Super Tuesday Bike Count [9.2.2.2 - 12 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

Following adoption of the Active Transport Strategy in 2023, Council Officers have been working across the organisation and with the community on implementation of the strategy. Councillors were last briefed on the strategy on 9 December 2025. The Annual Action Plan 2026 was also noted at the Council Meeting on 16 December 2025.

A petition requesting Council to join the Super Tuesday data collection program in 2027 was tabled and accepted at the Meeting of Council 16 April 2026. The petition seeks Council to join the Bicycle Network Super Tuesday count to provide data to inform the State Government of the benefits of investing in cycling infrastructure within Mount Alexander Shire to better demonstrate need and secure funding for safer cycling infrastructure.

The following report responds to the request and outlines the recommended approach for the long-term collection of data for multiple active transport modalities.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

1. **Approves the continued use of Active Transport data capture activities being completed and coordinated by Mount Alexander Shire Council.**
2. **Notes data captured by Mount Alexander Shire Council will be shared with the Department of Transport and Planning and Bicycle Network.**
3. **Notes that Council Officers will write to the Lead Petitioner on the outcome of this Report.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR MADDOCK**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR WALKER**

**CARRIED**

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## Context

Following adoption of the Active Transport Strategy in 2023, Council Officers have been working across the organisation and with the community on implementation of the strategy. Councillors were last Briefed on the Strategy on 9 December 2025. The Annual Action Plan 2026 was also noted at the Meeting of Council on 16 December 2025.

There has been progress made in a number of areas including delivery of active transport programming in primary schools, State Government advocacy, successful grant applications for active transport infrastructure and studies, and the strengthening of relationships with key community stakeholders, organisations and government departments.

A petition relating to data capture to inform active transport infrastructure needs and the justification of funding support was tabled and accepted at the 16 April 2026 Council Meeting. The petition was formally signed by 11 people and is deemed compliant with Section 12.2.5 of the Governance Rules 2023.

The petition stated:

*Castlemaine is a proud cycling hub in regional Victoria, with 25% of commuters riding to work in the 2021 Census - over three times the national average - and many more residents cycling daily for school, errands, and recreation. Yet this high level of cycling activity coincides with a higher rate of bicycle crashes in the region, meaning our streets are already heavily used by riders but not yet safe enough.*

*Good decisions need good data, and the Mount Alexander Shire's upcoming transport-data work will only count if it aligns with state and federal standards. A 2025 Infrastructure Victoria report already identified Castlemaine as a priority due to its high crash rate for cyclists, yet it deferred major investment because of a low projected benefit-cost ratio that fails to capture our real-world cycling volumes and safety needs.*

*Joining the Bicycle Network Victoria Super Tuesday Bike Count 2027 would change that. It is Australia's largest, standardised cycling survey, generating reliable, comparable data that shows how much Castlemaine really rides - and how urgently we need safer bike lanes, connected routes, and fair investment in cycling infrastructure. Let's make Castlemaine's cycling culture visible and safer.*

Council have allocated \$20,000 in the 2025/2026 budget to undertake data capture for active transport. Council officers, in consultation with the Active Transport External Working Group, are undertaking this data capture in the following ways:

- Desktop collation of existing active transport related data (various sources)
- Purchase of Vivacity camera technology for detailed site analysis
- Data capture event (5 May 2026)

The Active Transport Strategy Annual Action Plan 2026 (attached) has the following relevant actions:

- Action 3.2.1.2 - Undertake desktop audit of all available Active Transport Data from Council and other organisations such as DTP, PTV and VicPol along with data from online platforms such as Strava.
- Action 3.2.1.2 - Undertake data capture on high use active transport sites to help inform future works.

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## Issues

### Data Capture Event – May 2026

Council Officers organised a data capture event on Tuesday 5 May 2026. With a mix of Council Officers and community volunteers collecting data at 14 locations (listed below). Two other sites in Castlemaine were planned, unfortunately these were not able to be covered on the day due to the availability of volunteers.

| No | Location                                     | Town            |
|----|--|-----------------|
| 1  | Castlemaine Railway Station (Kennedy Street) | Castlemaine     |
| 2  | Kennedy Street / Walker Street               | Castlemaine     |
| 3  | Castlemaine Secondary                        | Castlemaine     |
| 4  | Barker Street at Templeton Street            | Castlemaine     |
| 5  | Princess Street at Campbells Creek Trail     | Campbells Creek |
| 6  | Farnsworth Street at Thomas Street           | Castlemaine     |
| 7  | Midland Highway / Fryers Road (Five Flags)   | Campbells Creek |
| 8  | Pyrenees Highway                             | Newstead        |
| 9  | Harmony Way                                  | Harcourt        |
| 10 | High Street / Hospital Street                | Maldon          |
| 11 | Pyrenees Highway / Angus Street              | Chewton         |
| 12 | Duke Street / Murphy Street                  | Wesley Hill     |
| 13 | Maldon Road (at rail crossing)               | McKenzie Hill   |
| 14 | Blanket Gully Road / Fryers Road             | Campbells Creek |

*Table 1: Sites where Active Transport Data has been collected*

In preparation for this event, around 18-20 sites were highlighted as suitable for data collection. The aim for the next round of collection (early 2027) will be to complete a minimum of 20 sites. The initial site list (and others) will be repeated over a number of years to collect consistent and repeating datasets to identify priority and trends.

The information collected in May 2026 included:

- two hour morning peak window
- split into 30 minute entries
- pedestrians (with direction)
- bike riders (with direction)

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- number of mobility aids
  - gender comment
  - age comment
  - other comment (scooters, E-bikes, dog walkers, prams, etc)

As the count was organised by Council Officers and community volunteers, the only cost to Council was for staff time to organise and also attend the count locations on the morning.

Learnings from the event included suggestions for refinement to the collection form template, important suggestions for future locations and suggestions for alternative times of the year for the data to be captured (i.e. warmer months).

### Super Tuesday Bike Counts

Bicycle Network is an Australia wide bicycle advocacy organisation with the aim to encourage better riding conditions, infrastructure investment and increased participation.

Bicycle Network organise a number of data collection streams including Super Tuesday (commuters) and Super Sunday (recreational riders). They have around 60 participating Councils across Australia.

The Super Tuesday counts are held on the first Tuesday in March each year in the morning peak (7.00 am to 9.00 am). Bicycle Network coordinates the counts, receives locations from Councils, organises volunteers and produces a summary report with data captured. The Super Tuesday counts are focussed on bike counting and volume and do not include pedestrians. It is understood that pedestrians could be added to the project scope on request. At the time of writing, Officers were still confirming this detail with Bicycle Network.

The cost of each site to Councils is approximately \$420 per site. The following totals are provided below to indicate the budget required to participate in Super Tuesday in the next round (March 2027):

- \$5,880 per year – 14 sites within the Shire, equivalent to the number of sites completed in 2026
- \$8,400 per year – 20 sites within the Shire, desired minimum number of sites to collect in future

### Comparison

Council Officers have reviewed approaches to data capture and as mentioned above are drawing on existing data sources and have invested in a mobile data capture tool. In addition, Council Officers together with the Active Transport External Working group identified the benefit of undertaking field data capture at identified sites across the Shire.

The benefit of capturing data on cyclist and pedestrian movements is magnified when data is captured over multiple time periods. This helps to understand trends of movement which better inform actions and strategies to support cycling, walking, and other active transport modalities.

In looking at options for the capturing of field data over multiple years, Council Officers considered joining the Super Tuesday counts. However, due to the cost of participating in the Super Tuesday count it was identified that Mount Alexander Shire Council would only be able to confirm participation in financial year 2025/2026. Without ongoing budget allocations, there

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is no security to engage in Super Tuesday counts and the benefit of capturing data annually to understand trends will be lost.

As an alternative, Council officers established an in-house data capture model which enabled volunteers to participate alongside Officers. This provided flexibility in determining what data would be captured as well as the ability to implement over multiple years without the reliance on a third-party provider.

Following the 2026 data capture event, Council Officers remain of the view that internal delivery of the data capture event is the most cost efficient to Mount Alexander Shire Council and the most suitable model to continue with in 2027 and beyond.

Council Officers will engage with the Lead Petitioner to inform them of this decision and discuss the potential support they can provide to future field data counts that are planned in 2027 and beyond.

#### Use of Data

The data captured will be collated and analysed by Officers to establish a baseline from which future data capture events can be assessed against and trends identified. The data will also be shared with the Department of Transport and Planning, and Bicycle Network to inform their own data sets.

#### **Finance and Resource Implications**

Council have allocated \$20,000 in the 2025/2026 Budget to undertake data capture for active transport.

The ultimate benefit of data capture comes from the repetition over repetitive timeframes. The Super Tuesday count, conducted by a third party, would require financial investment each year. Council officers have established a data capture approach that reduces the financial cost and provides Mount Alexander Shire Council with the raw data, enables adjustment of the data set over time and importantly engages our community into the process. As outlined above, it is recommended that the data collection continue to be completed internally, primarily due to budget constraints.

#### **Risk Analysis**

As outlined in the Risk Appetite Statement the following risks apply to this report:

##### Financial Risk

Council has a low appetite for not managing our financial position.

*Key Risk:* There are not adequate funds to deliver on data capture activities across multiple years.

*Mitigation:* The establishment of a low-cost model supported by volunteers and staff reduces the cost to Council and also provides opportunities to engage the committed active transport (cycling, walking etc) community in the Shire.

*Residual Risk:* Low

##### Reputation Risk

Council has a low appetite for actions that may harm Council's reputation.

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**Key Risk:** There are many community members and community groups who are highly engaged in improving the active transport network, facilities and opportunities across the shire. Some of these groups have voiced frustration about the pace at which the strategy is being implemented, advocating for faster action.

**Mitigation:** Council Officers will continue to work closely with these groups through the External Working Group and broader community consultation during key projects, such as finalisation of the Aspirational Maps, to ensure that community input is considered. This consultation will also enable Council Officers to educate external community stakeholders on the processes that are required to deliver projects in line with organisational procedures and policies such as Council's Capital Works Investment Framework and Procurement Policy.

**Residual Risk:** Low

#### Community Engagement

Council has a high appetite for consulting the community.

**Risk:** Council respects the diverse opinions of individual community members, community groups, and other stakeholders, and have a high appetite for engagement, input, and feedback in relation to decision making, policy and strategy development, and current and potential services and programs

**Mitigation:** Through the External Working Group, Council continues to engage with the community on the implementation of active transport initiatives. There will be opportunities for broader community engagement via discreet project delivery throughout the lifespan of the strategy.

**Residual Risk:** Low

#### Environmental Sustainability

Council has a high appetite for environmental sustainability

**Risk:** We have a high appetite for opportunities in investments that contribute to the sustainability of the environment and supporting the community.

**Mitigation:** Investing in active transport is essentially investing in projects and initiatives that will contribute to the sustainability of the environment. Promoting and providing infrastructure for modes of active transport will help to reduce reliance on cars, thereby reducing emissions. Data collection is critical to enabling projects to move forward and be funded.

**Residual Risk:** Low

#### **Climate Impact Statement**

Alignment with the Climate Change Strategy was prioritised during the development of the Active Transport Strategy.

An optimum outcome of successful implementation of the Active Transport Strategy would be an increase in active transport participation of community members throughout the Shire, reducing reliance on motor vehicle transport, supporting a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Any infrastructure projects that may be developed as part of the strategy, will seek to use construction practices that reduce the impact on the environment.

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## Gender Equity Statement

It is considered that this report goes towards promoting gender equity principles as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and does not contribute to the promotion of inequalities.

A Gender Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as part of this data collection project. Data collection of gender is undertaken for Councils recent data collection exercise as well as Super Tuesday bike counts.

A Gender Impact Assessment would be undertaken during further project stages of active transport route prioritisation and future design of active transport projects.

## Alternate Options

The alternative to the Mount Alexander Shire Council lead data capture approach is to participate in the Bicycle Network or another third-party data collection process. Council may decide to allocate funding to complete data collection via the Super Tuesday count. If this option is taken it is recommended that ongoing funding (\$9,000/pa) is committed to so that collection, trend analysis and refinement can be undertaken over a period of years to track our usage.

However, this is not recommended as the Mount Alexander Shire Council data collection approach established in 2026 has proven successful and allows for the strengthening of the relationship with our engaged active transport community and reduces the cost of data capture.

## Communication and Consultation

The lead Petitioner has not been contacted as part of the review process, as the request is clear with no clarification required. Following Council consideration of the petition, the lead petitioner will be contacted by Council Officers to inform them of the outcome.

## Legislation

Road Management Act 2004

Road Safety Act 1986

Road Safety Road Rules 2017

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Victorian Disability Act 2006

The above listed legislation is adhered to when undertaking planning, design and construction of all active transport studies and capital works.

## Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2025-2029

*Focus Area: Natural Environments - Enhanced and protected natural environments.*

- A Shire that understands and cares for our environment.

*Focus Area: Infrastructure - Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure.*

- Well-maintained, actively used infrastructure.
- Accessible, safe and inclusive infrastructure for all ages and backgrounds.

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### Active Transport Strategy 2023-2033

The data collection tasks are strongly aligned with the Active Transport Strategy 2023-2033 and Annual Action Plan 2026, which aim to create safe, sustainable, accessible and connected active transport network across the Shire.

Data collection of existing and proposed walking and cycling connections will help to inform decision making and priorities.

### Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

Strategic Priority: Increasing Active Living

Objective: Create safer, more inclusive environments for walking, cycling and play

Strategies and Actions:

- Advocate for upgraded footpaths, crossings and lighting in priority areas.
- Consideration of community active transport infrastructure focusing on vulnerable cohorts and locations e.g. schools, active retiree villages and activity centres.

### Disability Inclusion Action Plan

- Action 1.4.5 Engage with the Disability Inclusion Action Group to seek input into the prioritisation of new footpaths and renewal works.
- Action 1.4.7 Explore opportunities to upgrade existing high use paths in parks to improve accessibility at the time of renewal.
- Action 1.4.9 Explore ways to improve the safety of road crossing options for pedestrians within renewal and upgrade works on council managed roads.

### Climate Change Strategy

- Action Area 3: Council delivers infrastructure and advocacy that supports a well-connected low carbon transport system.

### **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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### **9.2.3. 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Annual Plan Progress Report Quarter 3**

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Interim Director Healthy Communities

Responsible Officer: Interim Director Healthy Communities

Attachments: 1. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 3 [**9.2.3.1** - 12 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Annual Plan (the Annual Plan) outlines the actions for the financial year that will be undertaken as priorities, in alignment with the strategic priorities of the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

In Quarter 3 - 2025/2026, all 18 current year actions are in progress, and remain on track to be completed by 30 June 2026.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council notes the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Annual Plan Progress Report for 2025/2026 - Quarter 3.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR ANNEAR**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**CARRIED**

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## **Context**

The 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan provides a shared vision and coordinated strategy for protecting, promoting and improving the health and wellbeing of all residents across the Shire. It responds to community needs, addresses the social, commercial and economic determinants of health, and supports collective action to reduce inequities and build resilience. The 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan outlines what Council will do in partnership with government, health and community service organisations over the next four years to protect, promote and improve community health and wellbeing across the shire. The actions for 2025-2029 that will be implemented as priorities from the Council Plan 2025-2029.

The purpose of the Plan is to: -

1. Set Strategic Direction.
2. Collaborate with Stakeholders.
3. Promote Health and Wellbeing.
4. Involve the Community.
5. Address Health Determinants.
6. Measure Progress.

The quarterly progress report is prepared to inform Councillors and the community on progress against agreed actions.

## **Issues**

The quarterly report will provide an update on:

- the status of each project
- its progress towards completion
- if completed, the date completed, which can be compared to the target completion date
- an overall comment.

## **Quarter Three Reporting**

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 3 (the Progress Report) includes a dashboard indicating action status and action completion in chart form, and a detailed report of each action including a comment of progress undertaken in Quarter 3 of 2025/2026.

In summary (as per attached), the Progress Report notes that status of Quarter 3 actions as:

- Thirteen actions are complete.
- The remaining 5 actions have a progress status of between 40% (x 2) through to 85% complete.

Included in the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan are six key priority areas to focus on in the coming four years: -

| Focus Area  | Objective  |
|---|--|
| 1. <b>Improving Wellbeing</b>                               | 1.1 Reduce psychological distress and suicide risk & increase social connection and access to mental health support.   |
| 2. <b>Increasing healthy eating and food security</b>       | 2.1 Increase fruit and vegetable consumption & reduce food insecurity and improve access to healthy, affordable food.  |
| 3. <b>Increase active living</b>                            | 3.1 Increase daily physical activity across all age groups & create safer, more inclusive environments for walking, cycling and play.  |
| 4. <b>Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use</b>           | 4.1 Reduce risky alcohol and drug use, including that for adults and young people & increase access to early intervention, prevention and harm reduction programs.   |
| 5. <b>Tackling climate change and its impacts on health</b> | 5.1 Strengthen community resilience to climate impacts in acknowledgement of the different ways groups are impacted e.g. gendered impacts of climate change, access to heating and cooling, etc. & reduce health risks from heat, ultraviolet exposure and extreme weather events. |
| 6. <b>Preventing violence and promoting gender equity</b>   | 6.1 Reduce family violence and discrimination & promote gender equity, safety, and respect in all settings.  |

## Finance and Resource Implications

Projects and initiatives contained in the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan are fully funded in the 2025/2026 Budget. Many projects are contained within and funded from an annual operating budget.

## Risk Analysis

### Financial Risk

Managing financial risk for the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Annual Plan commences by allocating special or operational funds to resource the delivery of Annual Plan actions. Projects are only selected where funding has been allocated through the annual budget process, which includes grant funding that has been or will be received within the financial year the project is scheduled to commence. Selecting projects this way mitigates the risk of projects not being fully funded.

Allocated budgets are analysed monthly and half yearly ensuring funds are tracked throughout the project lifecycle. Managing projects this way ensures funds stay within allocated budgeted amounts, and/or changes are identified early enabling project review.

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### Reputation Risk

Presentation of the Progress Report involves reputation risk and opportunity. While there is reputational risk associated with the reporting of incomplete items, this report also presents an opportunity to communicate and celebrate the achievement of completed actions in alignment with the objectives of the 2025-2029 Council Plan and the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

### **Climate Impact Statement**

The 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan has a dedicated pillar of Tackling Climate Change and its impacts on health. This pillar has identified 11 strategic priorities and initiatives for completion over the life of the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan – and incorporates (but not limited to) projects such as:

- integrate health adaptation into all climate and emergency planning
- improve current cool spaces use and awareness
- codesign resilience hubs and cooling centres with at-risk groups
- support local energy efficiency and literacy initiatives to reduce heat impacts
- develop the Mount Alexander Shire Heatwave Plan
- advocate for increased water quality and UV protective shade in public spaces
- map gaps in local climate health responses and develop targeted emergency action plans.

### **Gender Equity Statement**

It is considered that this report goes towards promoting gender equity principles as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and does not contribute to the promotion of inequalities. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the Act and to further promoting the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

All projects selected for the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan must consider gender equity principles as a standard process when they are initiated. This process ensures that projects undertaken are aligned with Council's commitment to meet its obligations and to promote gender equality.

### **Alternate Options**

There is no legislative requirement for Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan reporting to be undertaken on a quarterly basis, however, in the interest of transparency, regular reporting of such information to our community is good practice.

### **Communication and Consultation**

Some of the individual projects within the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan involve community consultation or consultation with relevant stakeholders. Where consultation is required, projects undertaken will follow Council procedure regarding community consultation as outlined in the Community Engagement Policy.

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## **Legislation**

### Local Government Act 2020

Council has adopted a Council Plan for 2025-2029 in accordance with section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), together with a budget for 2025/2026, in accordance with section 94 of the Act.

The Council Plan sets out the aspirations of Council and the strategies and objectives to achieve Council's vision for Mount Alexander Shire: Working together for a healthy, connected shire. The budget allocates resources to the activities and services that Councillors have identified as important to achieve Council's vision.

The Annual Plan is prepared each year, with progress in delivering projects reported to Councillors and the community each quarter. Progress and outcomes are reported annually in the Annual Report in accordance with the Act. The Annual Plan is structured around the five focus areas of the Council Plan:

- Communities - Healthy, connected and inclusive communities
- Natural Environments - Enhanced and protected natural environments
- Infrastructure - Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure
- Wellbeing Economies - Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment
- Organisation - A responsive, trusted and effective Council

### Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Section 26 of the Act requires each Council to prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years within 12 months of a council general election.

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2025 sets 10 priorities for public health and wellbeing in Victoria. The priority areas are: -

- improving sexual and reproductive health
- reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use
- improving wellbeing
- Increasing healthy eating
- Increasing active living
- Reducing harm from alcohol and drugs
- Tackling climate change and its impacts on health
- Reducing all forms of violence
- Decreasing antimicrobial resistance across human and animal health
- Reducing injury

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

### Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (Annual Plan 25/26)

### Economic Development Strategy

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Early Years Plan

Middle Years Plan

Youth Plan

Climate Change Strategy

Active Transport Strategy

Council Plan 2025-2029 (Annual Plan 25/26)

Focus Area: Communities - Healthy, connected and inclusive communities.

- A strong, connected network of community-led wellbeing initiatives.
- Vibrant townships, reflecting local spirit and aspirations.
- Services and initiatives are delivered equitably.
- Council decisions, services, planning are actively informed by the diverse voices of all people from across the Shire.
- Strong relationships with Traditional Owners, First Nations, groups and community members.

### **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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### **9.3. Natural Environments**

#### **9.3.1. Development Contributions Policy Review**

This Report is for Decision

Responsible Director: Director Infrastructure and Development, Michael Annear

Responsible Officer: Coordinator Strategic Planning, Nathan Lord  
Manager Development Services, Georgina Hope

Attachments: 1. Development Contributions Policy 2026 [9.3.1.1 - 4 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this paper is to present the reviewed Development Contributions Policy 2026 to Council for adoption.

The current Development Contributions Policy was adopted by Council in December 2022 and is now due for review. The Development Contributions Policy sets out Council's approach to the fair and equitable collection of development contributions to fund essential higher order infrastructure where land is developed within the Shire.

The review has been completed and, for the reasons presented in this report, finds that the Development Contributions Policy remains effective and fit for purpose. Therefore, no changes are proposed to the Development Contributions Policy.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Adopts the Development Contributions Policy 2026.**
- 2. Directs the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Minister for Planning to advocate for infrastructure contributions reforms being extended from metropolitan to rural and regional areas.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**CARRIED**

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## Context

### Introduction

Mount Alexander Shire is experiencing population growth and demand for new residential development, which is creating pressure for the provision or upgrading of new higher order infrastructure. This includes roads, shared paths, and drainage infrastructure and community facilities. To fund this infrastructure, Council has determined that the cost of this infrastructure should be shared equitably between Council and developers/landowners into the future. These are called development contributions.

The Development Contributions Policy was first prepared and adopted by Council in 2022 to ensure a fair and equitable approach to the collection of development contributions in the Shire. The Policy applies to landowners developing land in the Mount Alexander Shire, where the land is located in an area covered by an Infrastructure Plan. The Development Contributions Policy 2022 states that it is to be reviewed triennially; therefore, a review is now required.

At time of writing, Council has three completed Infrastructure Plans, one for the Diamond Gully Structure Plan area, one for the Campbells Creek South area, and one for Harcourt. These areas are those experiencing the most 'greenfield' development pressure and so have strong need of new infrastructure to services these growing communities.

The Development Contributions Policy formally establishes Council's approach to collecting contributions via the Section 173 Agreement process, in those areas that have an Infrastructure Plan. The Development Contributions Policy is needed to provide organisational support for collecting development contributions moving forward. Furthermore, the Development Contributions Policy provides transparency to the public on Council's approach to collecting contributions.

### Background research and conclusions in reviewing the current Development Contributions Policy

The Strategic Planning Unit has led the review with support from internal Council Units including Engineering, Statutory Planning, Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, Economy and Culture, and Finance. These Units are involved in the negotiating, administering, collecting, monitoring and utilisation of development contributions.

In December 2025, a workshop was held between these units to discuss their experiences and issues with development contributions processes, as well as any legislative changes that had occurred since the Development Contributions Policy was first introduced in 2022. From this, the group was able to contemplate any changes to the Policy that may be required.

The group looked at a number of issues related to the collection of development contributions, including:

- The current legislative context facilitating the collection of development contributions.
- The collection of contributions across the whole Shire, including areas where no Infrastructure Plan exists.
- The opportunities and challenges for each collection mechanism, including a Development Contributions Plan incorporated into the Planning Scheme, the use of planning permit conditions to collect contributions, or whether Section 173 Agreements should still be used.

- The types of development Council should be collecting contributions for, for example commercial development, public art, multi-dwelling residential development, or subdivision development.
- Council's organisational capacity to prepare, administer, collect, and monitor Development Contributions now and over the long-term.
- Learnings from how Council has negotiated with developers to collect development contributions in Campbells Creek South, Diamond Gully, and Harcourt over the last few years.

Council Officers also undertook a comparative analysis which compared other council approaches to development contributions across the State.

This was all done within the context of planning legislation that governs development contributions, and the guidance that exists for how councils should go about collecting them.

The review found that the legislation facilitating the collection of development contributions remains the same as found in 2022. That is Part 3B of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, titled 'Development Contributions', as well as Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, titled 'Responsible authority may enter into agreements'. In this respect, the Development Contributions Policy remains effective and fit for purpose as it is premised on this legislative framework.

In terms of the findings from recent comparative analysis work which compared other council approaches to development contributions across the State, there were ten councils that responded to the survey, which asked:

- Does your Council utilise Section 173s?
- Does your Council have a formal incorporated Development Contributions Plan?
- Do you collect contributions shire-wide or only certain areas?
- Which Council unit leads the preparation, administration, monitoring, and reporting of the Section 173s/ fully incorporated Development Contributions Plan?
- What resources have you used in the preparation, administration, monitoring, and reporting of the Section 173s/ fully incorporated Development Contributions Plan? Do you have a dedicated Development Contributions officer?
- Any further comments?

A mixture of metro and regional councils responded.

Across the benchmarked councils, development contributions are most commonly collected through formal Development Contributions Plans that are implemented via a Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO) into their planning schemes, often supplemented by Section 173 Agreements in specific circumstances (e.g. staged payments, works-in-kind).

Most councils prefer incorporated DCPOs for certainty and enforceability, with contributions typically tied to subdivision or development milestones (e.g. Statement of Compliance) and indexed over time. Application varies significantly; some councils apply DCPOs municipal-wide with multiple charge areas (e.g. Banyule, Whitehorse, Moonee Valley), while others limit them to growth precincts or activity centres (e.g. Bass Coast, Latrobe, Wangaratta). A consistent theme is that DCPOs require strong justification (nexus, apportionment, infrastructure need), and several councils noted emerging alternatives such as Infrastructure Contributions Plans (ICPs).

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In terms of resourcing, councils consistently highlight that administering development contributions is resource-intensive and multidisciplinary. Most rely on a combination of Strategic Planning (policy and scheme amendments), Statutory Planning (collection and enforcement), Finance (fund management and reporting), and Capital Works/Engineering (project delivery). Many councils use external consultants particularly for initial DCPO preparation, costings, and cash flow modelling while internal governance often includes cross-department working groups. Resourcing models vary from no dedicated officer (smaller councils without a fully incorporate DCPO) to part-time roles or fully dedicated DCPO officers and finance specialists, with some larger or growth-area councils employing multiple development contributions staff to manage indexing, invoicing, and reporting.

A key insight is that successful systems rely not just on policy, but on internal capability, financial expertise, and coordinated governance, with several councils noting that administration costs and complexity can outweigh benefits in lower-growth areas.

When Mount Alexander Shire Council's comparatively low-growth scenario is considered in conjunction with its low-level resourcing for the development and maintenance of Development Contributions programs (i.e. no dedicated development contributions specialist, officer role or team), it is recommended that Council should continue to collect development contributions via the lowest cost and least resource-intensive mechanism, which continues to be the Section 173 Agreements pathway. In this respect, Council's current Development Contributions Policy remains, again, effective and fit for purpose.

Council Officers also reviewed the scope of the current Development Contributions Policy, including:

- The possibility of collecting development contributions as a shire-wide 'blanket' development contributions amount (beyond the boundaries of our three Infrastructure Plan areas). However, this approach is not supported as it does not address the strategic justification requirements outlined within planning legislation and guidance regarding development contributions. That is to say, a development contribution, at a basic minimum, should only be collected for infrastructure items that are costed and known to be needed in a catchment area. Without this information, Council would be in a weak position when negotiating for the development contributions, and it is reasonable to suggest that if a developer challenged this at VCAT, such a challenge would be successful given Council's lack of strategic justification for collecting the contributions. Moreover, the associated financial reporting and monitoring obligations would be complex, as it would be unclear what the contributions are to be used for.
- Collecting development contributions across the whole Shire on a permit by permit basis, as development applications are received. The review discovered that the process of understanding what the higher order infrastructure needs are in response to development would be incredibly resource intensive in this scenario, too.

For this process to be successful, it would be akin to preparing an Infrastructure Plan for an entire growth area. Council's Engineering Unit would need to have the time and resources available to understand the higher order infrastructure needs of a catchment area, not just the land subject to the development at that time. Without that information, only local level infrastructure needs can be understood within reasonable timeframes. And local level infrastructure needs are already being captured via permit conditions.

The only way to understand what the higher order infrastructure needs will be for an area subject to development growth, is through undertaking a higher order infrastructure needs analysis for the catchment area. In other words, an Infrastructure Plan is required. To undertake this process on a permit by permit basis is not as efficient as preparing an Infrastructure Plan for an area prior to a permit application being received and would be a greater burden on council resources.

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Overall, the review found that for any chance of success for Council to collect development contributions effectively, it is clear that an Infrastructure Plan needs to be in place. From this, we can see that the current scope of the Development Contributions Policy remains effective and fit for purpose as it proposes to only collect development contributions within areas where an Infrastructure Plan has been prepared.

In light of the above, the Review of Council's Development Contributions Policy finds that no change is required to the policy at this time. Officers; therefore, recommend that Council approve the reviewed Development Contributions Policy 2026 as attached to this report.

## **Issues**

### Exclusion of land outside of an Infrastructure Plan

The Development Contributions Policy does not apply to the development of land (including multi-lot subdivisions) outside of an Infrastructure Plan area. This is because the strategic basis for collecting development contributions has not been established in these locations. Specifically, essential higher order infrastructure requirements have not been identified, no demand analysis has been undertaken, and therefore no clear 'nexus' has been demonstrated between development and the infrastructure that would be funded. It is not feasible to undertake this level of strategic and technical analysis on a case by case basis as planning applications are received, given the significant time and resource requirements involved.

This approach is explicitly stated at Section 2 of the Development Contributions Policy where it says:

The policy applies to landowners developing land in the Mount Alexander Shire, where:

- The land is located in an area covered by an infrastructure plan that has been prepared by Council.
- Development contributions will not be sought in areas where no infrastructure plan exists.

In those areas where no Infrastructure Plan exists, infrastructure delivery must instead be funded through alternative mechanisms, such as Council's capital works budget or State and Commonwealth government grants. Reliance on these sources can place increased pressure on Council's finite financial resources and may result in the cost of growth related infrastructure being borne by existing ratepayers rather than by new development or, worst case, never being delivered at all (due to lack of funding).

### What Do We Mean by 'Nexus'?

A fundamental requirement when seeking development contributions is the establishment of a clear nexus between new development and the infrastructure to be funded. In a planning context, nexus refers to the demonstrated relationship showing that development generates demand for specific infrastructure, that the infrastructure is required to service that development, and that it is reasonable for the development to contribute to its cost. This requirement is well established in planning legislation, practice notes, and relevant case law, and underpins the lawful and defensible collection of development contributions.

In practical terms, nexus requires Council to identify the type, scale and location of infrastructure needed as a direct response to development growth within a defined catchment. This includes demonstrating that the infrastructure is not required to address existing deficiencies, but rather to accommodate additional demand generated by future development. Infrastructure Plans prepared by Council perform this role by assessing growth projections, identifying higher order infrastructure needs, and apportioning costs in a transparent and equitable manner. Without this strategic basis, Council would be exposed to

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a heightened risk of legal challenge, particularly at VCAT, due to insufficient justification for contributions sought.

You can begin to see how the concept of 'nexus' underlies the Key Principles of the Development Contributions Policy, which are that:

- New development often generates a demand on existing infrastructure.
- New development should share the cost burden of providing future higher order infrastructure (new or upgraded) with Council, where their development creates the need to provide it.
- Infrastructure projects identified within a catchment that Council will collect development contributions for must be either:
  - Intrinsic to the health, safety, or well-being of the community, or
  - Consistent with community expectations of what is required to meet its health, safety, or well-being.
- Council will act consistently and transparently in its approach to the collection of contributions.

Is all Development within an Infrastructure Plan area subject to Development Contributions?

Not all development gives rise to a requirement for development contributions. Contributions are only sought from forms of development that are likely to generate additional demand for higher order infrastructure, most commonly the creation of new residential lots or dwellings that increase population and service demand. Other forms of development that do not result in a material increase in demand, such as minor buildings and works, alterations to existing dwellings, or changes of use that do not increase intensity, are not subject to development contributions. This targeted approach ensures that contributions are applied proportionately and equitably, consistent with planning legislation and guidance, and reinforces the requirement to clearly demonstrate a nexus between the development and the infrastructure being funded.

Section 2 of the Development Contributions Policy states:

The policy applies to landowners developing land in the Mount Alexander Shire, where:

- The land is located in an area covered by an infrastructure plan that has been prepared by Council.
- The landowner is undertaking development of a type subject to development contributions according to an infrastructure plan prepared by Council.

This means that each infrastructure plan area must detail the types of development that will be subject to development contributions. This affords Council the opportunity to tailor their infrastructure plans to the development likely to occur in each area.

For example, in the Diamond Gully Infrastructure Plan area, no commercial development is anticipated to occur in that area, therefore there is no need to identify a commercial development contributions rate.

In the case of the Harcourt Infrastructure Plan area, Council decided to tailor their approach to collecting development contributions to say that only subdivisions that would create more than three new lots would be subject to development contributions. In so doing, subdivisions that would create less than three new lots (i.e. a two lot subdivision), would not be subject to development contributions. This was seen as a way of reducing the cost burden on the 'Mum and Dad' developers, who are less likely to deliver large volumes of new housing or generate

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demand at a scale that justifies a contribution toward higher order infrastructure. This was considered appropriate in the unique Harcourt development context, given that.

- Harcourt's infrastructure needs are greater than other areas, resulting in a higher per lot development contributions rate.
- It was understood that the majority of new development would come from two growth areas that were being rezoned as part of Amendment C94malx (implementing Plan Harcourt 2025). In these locations, the scale of future subdivision applications would be in the many dozens to hundred-plus new lots. By ensuring that contributions were captured from these larger scale developments, Council would ensure that there would still be an adequate sharing of the cost burden of higher order infrastructure between growth generating development and Council, while avoiding disproportionate impacts on small scale development.

The approach reflects a proportionate and context specific response to growth, enabling Council to tailor contribution requirements to the scale and nature of development within different communities, while ensuring contributions remain equitable and aligned with the infrastructure demand generated.

#### Have any development contributions been used to date?

Since 2020, the year the first infrastructure plan came into operation, development contributions received by Council have been used to design and upgrade infrastructure, for example, upgrading Diamond Gully Road. On top of this, numerous infrastructure items have been delivered as 'works-in-kind' by developers, where the developer pays for and constructs the infrastructure to the equivalent value of the per lot development contributions rate.

This demonstrates the practical value of development contributions as an effective and transparent mechanism to translate growth into tangible infrastructure outcomes that directly benefit the community.

#### Use of Section 173 Agreements as the Preferred Mechanism

As touched upon earlier, given Council's low growth context and limited internal resourcing, Section 173 Agreements remain the most appropriate and effective mechanism for securing development contributions. Section 173 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 provides flexibility for Council to negotiate contributions that are directly linked to adopted Infrastructure Plans, while allowing agreements to be tailored to site specific circumstances, staging, timing of payments, or delivery of works in kind.

Unlike a fully incorporated Development Contributions Plan Overlay, Section 173 Agreements can be implemented without the significant upfront cost, time, and ongoing administrative burden associated with Planning Scheme amendments, formal indexing regimes, and complex financial reporting. Importantly, they still allow Council to embed strong nexus by referencing endorsed Infrastructure Plans, clearly identifying infrastructure items, contribution amounts, indexing methods, and triggers for payment. This approach ensures contributions are transparent, enforceable, and proportionate, while remaining aligned with Council's organisational capacity.

In this context, the continued reliance on Section 173 Agreements represents a prudent, low risk approach that enables Council to secure essential higher order infrastructure from development, while maintaining legal defensibility, financial accountability, and operational efficiency.

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### Method of Calculating Contributions Rates

Infrastructure Plans apply the general cost apportionment method to calculate contributions rates. This method is used in preparing a formal Development Contributions Plan and includes the following steps:

1. Dividing the area into analysis areas based on information collection regarding existing and future development.
2. Quantifying the development in each analysis area showing existing and projected future development.
3. Converting projections into common demand units using equivalence ratios, to quantify the total demand for infrastructure expected in each analysis area.
4. Confirming the infrastructure projects and costs that are justified to be included in the Infrastructure Plan contributions rate.
5. Calculating the infrastructure levy per demand unit payable for each infrastructure project.

This process typically involves reviewing the development context of the areas to determine a projected total yield (number of dwellings/residents) for the area. The infrastructure required to enable development of the areas is then identified, which includes nominating shared infrastructure projects that will benefit the entire area and should therefore be contributed to by development. A per lot rate based on this total cost of infrastructure is then concluded.

It is recommended that the general cost apportionment method continues to be used for the preparation of any future Infrastructure Plans within the Shire, as this is the approach used in formal Development Contributions Plans and it is clear and transparent for Council and the community.

### Determining the Need for Infrastructure Plans

Council Officers will continue to monitor development and its impact on infrastructure to ensure the existing infrastructure has the capacity to accommodate growth, and where it may not, that this is planned for. This will be done through ongoing discussions between relevant council units, and through the future Strategic Planning work programming.

The Strategic Planning Team prepares township-based strategies to plan for housing growth, which will provide clear direction on where growth and increased housing is likely to occur. This will assist in understanding where additional or upgraded infrastructure may be needed, which will provide an understanding on where/when Infrastructure Plans should be prepared.

### Implementation and Administration

The Development Contributions Policy, together with the Infrastructure Plans, will continue to be used as the strategic basis for collection of contributions and/or works in kind for delivery of infrastructure in areas where an infrastructure plan has been prepared. The collection of contributions will involve negotiations between Council and landowners/applicants. The timing of these negotiations depends on whether the land is to be rezoned prior to development occurring or whether the land is already zoned for its intended purpose (in which case negotiations will occur during the planning permit application process).

Given the long-term horizon in which rezoning, and development occurs, costs identified for infrastructure are subject to price indexing to reflect the increase in costs each year. The capital costs of all infrastructure items in the reports reflect the year in which the reports were prepared. The infrastructure costings are indexed annually to adjust for inflation and changes

to land values. The specific indexing method is identified within each subsequent Section 173 Agreement.

## Infrastructure Contributions Reform

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) is proposing a new and simpler infrastructure funding system to help deliver the things communities will need into the future. Officers reviewed this simpler system in the hope that it could be used in place of our current Development Contributions Policy. In doing so, the resource and finance burden placed on Council to administer its own contributions system would be dramatically reduced, given that the new and simpler system would be State led, with standardised contributions rates set by the State.

Under this new system, developers will pay a standardised contribution of \$11,350 for each new home they deliver. They will also pay \$114 per square metre for new commercial space or \$57 per square metre for industrial space.

The review has found that Council is unable to utilise this new contribution system because it will only apply to train and tram zone activity centres for the foreseeable future. As shown in Figure 1 below, no townships of the Shire are noted train and tram zone activity centres.

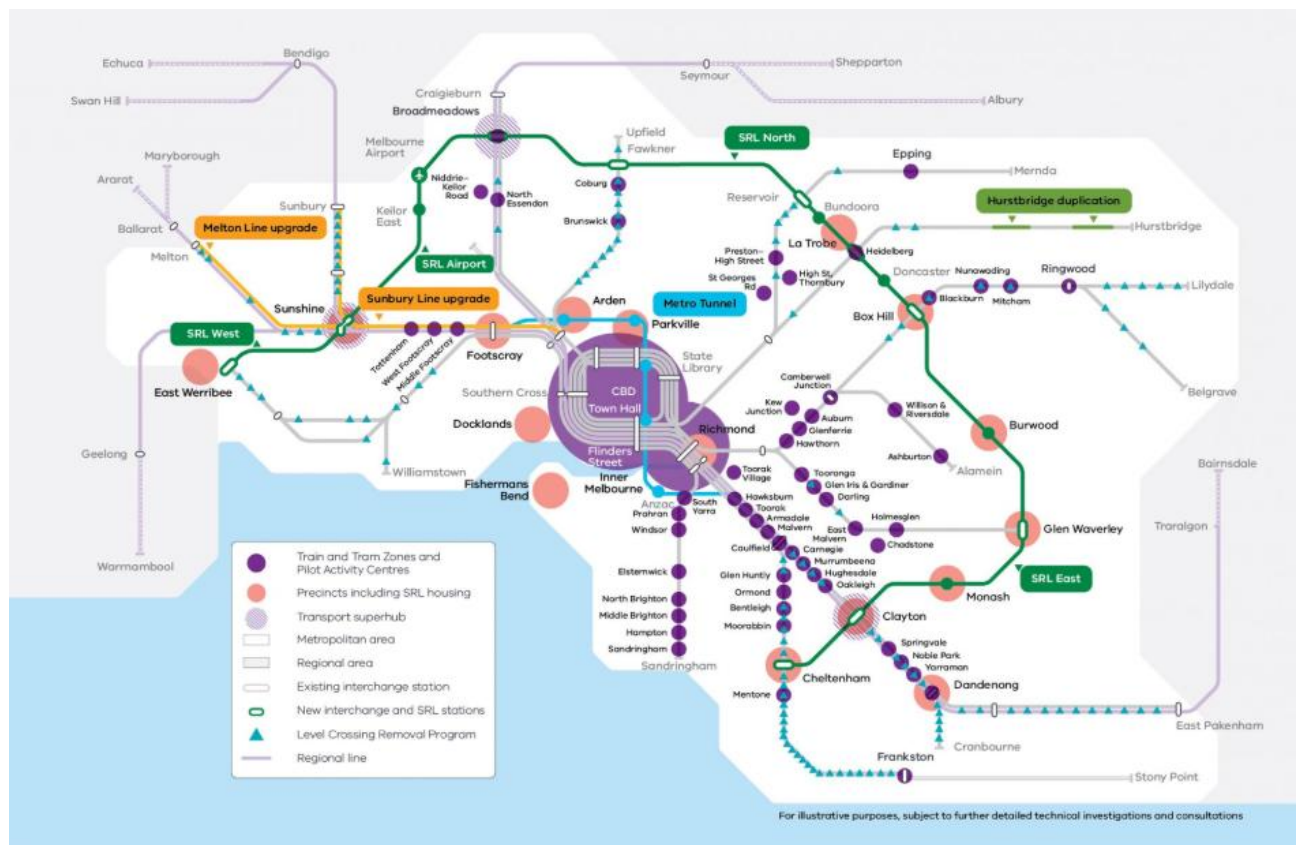


Figure 1 | Map of Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres (DTP 2026)

DTP plan for councils to begin imposing contributions on eligible planning permits from January 2027 for the first 10 pilot activity centres, and July 2027 for the 48 train and tram zone activity centres in Stages 1 and 2. This allows time for the development industry to prepare for the change, and to minimise impacts on the property market.

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DTP's initial reforms focus on changes to locations where most new housing will occur, in tram and train zones, creating a simpler and more flexible system that will increase infrastructure funding for these growing communities.

According to DTP, they have been working closely with councils and industry representatives on an Infrastructure Contributions Working Group on state-wide reforms to infrastructure contributions. The Working Group's advice will inform considerations for broader state-wide reforms in the longer term.

### **Finance and Resource Implications**

The policy review has been prepared in-house by multiple units. Should the reviewed policy be adopted, this is expected to maintain a level of resourcing requirements across several business units. This includes:

- Strategic Planning: Lead and provide technical input/advice in the preparation of infrastructure Plans and carry out the negotiations with developers/landowners of land located in an endorsed IP area that is subject to rezoning to a residential zone.
- Engineering: Provide technical input/advice to preparation of Infrastructure Plans.
- Parks, Gardens and Community Facilities: Provide technical input/advice to preparation of Infrastructure Plans.
- Statutory Planning: Carry out the negotiations with developers/landowners of land located in an endorsed IP area where development is proposed through a planning permit application.
- Finance: Manage the contributions reserve accounts for each IP area, including recording information, reconciling, applying the indexation to amounts, and process invoicing.

Reporting on development contributions will also demand ongoing resources to ensure that collecting and spending is transparent and traceable.

### **Risk Analysis**

#### Financial Risk (Low appetite)

*Key Risk:* Council is unable to adequately fund higher order infrastructure required to support population growth if development contributions are not effectively collected.

#### *Mitigation Actions:*

- Continue to apply the Development Contributions Policy in conjunction with Infrastructure Plans to establish a clear nexus between development and infrastructure.
- Use Section 173 Agreements to secure financial contributions or works-in-kind from developers.
- Index infrastructure costs to ensure contributions keep pace with inflation and rising delivery costs.
- Ongoing cross-department coordination (Strategic Planning, Finance, Engineering) to monitor infrastructure demand and funding gaps.

*Residual Risk:* Low to Moderate. Risk is reduced through established processes; however, some risk remains due to uncertainty in development timing and contribution realisation. This is considered acceptable within Council's low appetite for financial risk.

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### Compliance with Regulatory Obligations (No appetite)

**Key Risk:** Council seeks or imposes development contributions without sufficient strategic justification, resulting in legal challenge (e.g. VCAT) and potential non-compliance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

**Mitigation Actions:**

- Limit application of the Policy to areas with adopted Infrastructure Plans that clearly demonstrate infrastructure need and nexus.
- Ensure all agreements are executed in accordance with Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
- Maintain alignment with State planning policy and legislative requirements.

**Residual Risk:** Low. Strong legislative alignment and clear strategic justification significantly reduce risk, consistent with Council's no appetite for non-compliance.

### Reputation (Low appetite)

**Key Risk:** Perception from developers or the community that contributions are inconsistent, unclear, or inequitable, leading to reputational damage.

**Mitigation Actions:**

- Maintain a clear and publicly available Development Contributions Policy.
- Use Infrastructure Plans to transparently demonstrate how contribution rates are derived.
- Ensure consistent application of the Policy through internal processes and cross-team coordination.
- Communicate Council's approach through planning processes and public information.

**Residual Risk:** Low – Transparency and consistency reduce risk, aligning with Council's low appetite for reputational harm.

### Strategic Risk

**Key Risk:** Failure to approve the reviewed Policy results in a lack of strategic direction and reduced ability to secure infrastructure funding from development.

**Mitigation Actions:**

- Seek Council approval of the reviewed Policy to provide organisational clarity and direction.
- Continue strategic planning work to identify future Infrastructure Plan areas aligned with growth.

**Residual Risk:** Low (if approved) – Approval of the Policy maintains strategic alignment and supports delivery of Council objectives.

### People / Organisational Capability (High appetite)

**Key Risk:** Limited internal resourcing and capability impacts Council's ability to administer, negotiate, and monitor development contributions effectively.

**Mitigation Actions:**

- Continue to utilise the least resource-intensive model (Section 173 Agreements).
- Maintain cross-departmental collaboration in administration and monitoring.
- Use external consultants where required for technical inputs (e.g. infrastructure costing).

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*Residual Risk:* Moderate. Resourcing constraints remain but are actively managed through a proportionate approach. This is acceptable given Council's higher appetite for capability development and operational flexibility.

### **Climate Impact Statement**

Infrastructure Plans and development contributions aim to coordinate and manage the efficient and timely delivery of higher order infrastructure as our communities grow. Furthermore, infrastructure projects that are included in an Infrastructure Plan and are subsequently paid for by development contributions can help to mitigate and/or adapt to the impacts of climate change. For example, shared paths can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging active transport options.

### **Gender Equity Statement**

A Gender Impact Assessment was not required; however, gender equity principles have been considered in the development of the project / initiative to the advancement of gender equality. The Policy supports the fair and transparent collection of development contributions to fund infrastructure that benefits the whole community. This includes infrastructure such as shared paths, community facilities, and public spaces, which improve accessibility, safety, and participation for people of all genders.

In applying the Policy, Council will continue to consider how infrastructure delivery can support inclusive, safe, and equitable outcomes, including through the design and prioritisation of projects identified within Infrastructure Plans. This ensures that, as growth occurs, the provision of infrastructure contributes to creating accessible and inclusive environments for all members of the community.

### **Alternate Options**

An alternative option is to not approve the reviewed Developer Contributions Policy, this is not recommended due to the establishment of the policy communicating Council's approach to funding infrastructure for new development within our Shire, providing the community and developers clarity. The policy will further strengthen the position of Officers to negotiate development contributions.

A further alternative is to expand the policy application to all development within the Shire. It is not recommended to pursue this option. This option was considered during the review process; however, it is not recommended given the extensive resources across Council that would be required to develop infrastructure needs and justification of the nexus for each development. Such assessments would require a complex assessment of Council's infrastructure networks and growth projections on a case-by-case basis. This is not considered viable based on Council's current internal resources and capacity. It is also not considered appropriate given that the return from contributions is not likely to outweigh the initial investment of such work.

It is more appropriate to prepare Infrastructure Plans for areas which are projected to experience significant growth and development, to ensure that the strategic justification for the infrastructure is established and the negotiation of contributions can rely on this.

### **Communication and Consultation**

During the preparation of the Harcourt Infrastructure Plan, a summary of the draft Plan was made public during March – April 2022, and the feedback received was reviewed and presented to Council including Council officers' recommended response.

While the Campbells Creek and Diamond Gully Infrastructure Plans did not undergo dedicated public consultation, they have been made available to the public on request by

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developers/landowners (throughout the planning permit application process where development contributions were sought in these areas).

Council Officers have also communicated the approach to collecting contributions in various ways, throughout the planning permit application process, and also other ways such as the dedicated Development Contributions webpage on Council website, which provides an overview of the Section 173 Agreement approach, and the three Infrastructure Plans.

The approach to contributions will continue to be communicated with the public as relevant, such as through the Planning Scheme amendment or planning permit application process.

## **Legislation**

### Planning and Environment Act 1987

The strategic basis for the method of collecting contributions is established via Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. This allows for contributions to be collected via other mechanisms such as voluntary agreements, allowing for a responsible authority, either on its own or jointly with any other person or body, to enter into an agreement with an owner of land, or with a person in anticipation of that person becoming the owner of the land, in the area covered by a planning scheme for which it is a responsible authority.

### Mount Alexander Planning Scheme

The following state planning policies provide strategic justification for the provision of infrastructure with the support of development contributions:

- Clause 11 Settlement: 'Planning is to anticipate and respond to the needs of existing and future communities through provision of zoned and serviced land for housing, employment, recreation and open space, commercial and community facilities and infrastructure'.
- Strategy at Clause 11.02-1s Supply of urban land: 'Ensure the ongoing provision of land and supporting infrastructure to support sustainable urban development'.
- Strategy at Clause 11.02-3s Sequencing of development: 'Require new development to make a financial contribution to the provision of infrastructure such as community facilities, public transport, and roads'.
- Clause 19 Infrastructure: 'Planning for development of social and physical infrastructure should enable it to be provided in a way that is efficient, equitable, accessible and timely'; 'Planning should ensure that the growth and redevelopment of settlements is planned in a manner that allows for the logical and efficient provision and maintenance of infrastructure, including setting aside of land for the construction of future transport routes'; and 'Planning authorities should consider the use of development and infrastructure contributions in the funding of infrastructure'.

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

### Council Plan 2025-2029

*Focus Area: Infrastructure (Appropriate, accessible and climate resilient infrastructure)*

Objectives:

- Well-maintained, actively used infrastructure
- Accessible, safe, and inclusive infrastructure for all ages and backgrounds

- 
- Infrastructure designed to protect people, property, and the environment from natural disasters
  - Built and cultural heritage is safe guarded and celebrated.

#### Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

The 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan outlines what Mount Alexander Shire Council will do in partnership with government, health and community service organisations over the next four years to protect, promote and improve community health and wellbeing across the shire.

The Plan identified six key priority areas to focus on in the coming four years:

- Improving wellbeing
- Increasing healthy eating
- Increasing active living
- Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use
- Tackling climate change and its impacts on health
- Preventing all forms of violence

These priority areas will guide efforts to create a safe, healthy, and inclusive community. The plan follows the ideas of a wellbeing economy, an approach that puts people's health and quality of life at the centre of economic decisions.

The Development Contributions Policy and Infrastructure Plans also play an important role in supporting the health and wellbeing priorities identified in the Plan. By guiding the delivery of essential infrastructure, such as active transport links, road upgrades and community facilities, these tools help ensure that growth areas are planned in ways that promote healthy, connected, and sustainable communities.

#### **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

#### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, Council Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No Conflict of Interest

The Council Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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## **9.4. Infrastructure**

### **9.4.1. Approval of the Elsie Palmer Field Design for Soccer and Cricket**

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Director Infrastructure and Development, Michael Annear

Responsible Officer: Active Communities Coordinator, Troy Lyons

Attachments:

1. Concept Design - Elsie Palmer Field Redevelopment - May 2026 [9.4.1.1 - 2 pages]
2. Written Submissions - Elsie Palmer Field Design Community Consultation [9.4.1.2 - 4 pages]
3. Community Engagement Summary - Elsie Palmer Field Design [9.4.1.3 - 16 pages]
4. Gender Impact Assessment - Soccer Participation Facility Feasibility Study and Concept [9.4.1.4 - 8 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to present a concept design for approval for facility improvements at Elsie Palmer Field, Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve, allowing for combined soccer and cricket use.

The concept plan is stage two of the Soccer Participation and Facility Feasibility Study project which has been funded by Mount Alexander Shire Council, the State Government and Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club with the objective to better understand the current and future facility needs to support soccer participation, site selection for facility expansion and a concept design to ensure the project is investment ready.

The draft concept plan provides for two senior soccer pitches, which includes space allocation for four junior soccer pitches, a turf and synthetic wicket for cricket and siting for associated infrastructure. The concept plan has been published for community consultation, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Suggestions for improvements to the design have been included in the final draft.

Following community consultation, cost estimates have been developed which include site specific construction works, including creek realignment and retaining walls.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Notes the feedback received from the wider community consultation process.**
- 2. Approves the concept design for soccer and cricket facilities at the Elsie Palmer Field, Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve.**
- 3. Notes the staged approach for delivery of the overall project: stage one sports field and associated infrastructure; stage two pavilion and landscaping.**
- 4. Notes the estimated cost of \$13.65 million (in 2026 figures) to deliver the works included in the recommended concept design.**
- 5. Notes that advocacy continues to State and Federal Government for funding for upgraded facilities at Elsie Palmer Field, Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve.**
- 6. Notes that Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park will be retained for soccer use and that future upgrades will be required at this site to ensure it is compliant and fit for purpose.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR WALKER**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR ANNEAR**

**CARRIED.**

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## Context

The Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club is the Shire's only Soccer club and is currently based at Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park, which has been the club's home since the early 2000's.

The single senior sized soccer pitch at Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park is overused, significantly impacting Mount Alexander Shire Council's ability to maintain surface quality and playability.

Funding from Mount Alexander Shire Council, the State Government and the Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club has been utilised to deliver the following:

- Soccer Participation and Feasibility Study
- Detailed concept plan for soccer facilities at a site selected from recommendations in the feasibility study.

The feasibility study was delivered and presented at a Councillor Briefing in December 2024. Targeted consultation with key stakeholders for two short-listed locations was undertaken in early 2025. At the Meeting of Council on 15 July 2025, Council moved the following recommendation:

- 1. Notes that long-term requirements for soccer facilities are three senior size pitches.**
- 2. Endorses Elsie Palmer Field, Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve as the preferred site for mid-term soccer facility development, with the requirement for soccer and cricket to share this site on a seasonal basis.**
- 3. Approves Council Officers to proceed to develop a detailed concept plan at Elsie Palmer Field, Wesley Hill that maximises available space for soccer pitches, synthetic cricket wicket, turf cricket wicket, sports lighting, cricket nets and associated off-pitch infrastructure including changerooms, kiosk, clubroom, umpire rooms and storage.**
- 4. Notes that Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park will be retained for soccer use and that future upgrades will be required at this site to ensure it is compliant and fit for purpose.**

Relevant background information to the above resolution is that the Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve has facilities that provide for a number of different sports and user groups. Without compromising other sports and user groups use of the site, it would be difficult to provide three senior soccer pitches, and therefore it is necessary to retain the facility at Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park, where there is one senior sized soccer pitch. The intent is that junior soccer players would utilise Wesley Hill and senior players would play and train at Chewton. This reflects the focus of Wesley Hill being primarily a junior sporting precinct. It should also be noted that Castlemaine Goldfields Soccer Club and North Castlemaine Cricket Club agreed that they could share a facility at Wesley Hill.

Council Officers engaged the services of design consultants 2MH to develop the concept design at Elsie Palmer Field to accommodate two senior size soccer pitches and a cricket oval with a turf and synthetic cricket wicket.

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To help facilitate the concept design, a Project Working Group with representatives from interested sporting stakeholders was established. The group included representatives from:

- Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club (2)
- North Castlemaine Cricket Club (2)
- Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve Community Asset Committee (1)

A number of iterations of the draft concept designs were developed and refined with feedback from the working group. One of the key requests from the cricket club was to retain the existing turf wicket in the current location. The design has been developed to allow for this; however, it does have significant financial implications for the cost of the development.

The July 2025 Council Meeting paper outlined that Wesley Hill could accommodate a senior sized pitch and a junior sized pitch at Elsie Palmer Field with Doug Powell Oval being identified as an overflow ground when required. At this time the Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club indicated to meet their greatest short-term need of running multiple concurrent junior matches, they required a soccer pitch configuration on Elsie Palmer Field that maximises the available space through flexible sized pitches to cater for several different age groups.

Since that Meeting, Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club have grown participation and informed Council Officers that in order to meet both current and future demand there is a requirement to provide four junior sized pitches, up from an initial three for the entirety of their season, and the use of the Doug Powell Oval as overflow would not be sufficient. To accommodate this, the concept plan has been developed to include two senior sized pitches at Elsie Palmer, which can be overlaid with four junior pitches.

A draft concept design was published for community consultation in February - March 2026 and further feedback was incorporated into the concept designs.

Council Officers are now presenting the draft concept plan to Council for approval, which is a key deliverable of the State Government grant and a key step towards funding advocacy to deliver the capital works.

A staged approach to overall delivery has been discussed and proposed by the Project Working Group to maximise success of receiving grant funding as outlined in table one below.

The concept plan has focussed on the playing field elements which will be delivered in stage one, with indicative siting for the pavilion to be delivered in Stage Two.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Stage One</b><br><u>Optimal delivery timeframe – funding dependent:</u><br>Design – 2026/2027<br>Construction – 2027 and 2028. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soccer and cricket playing fields to include retention of turf wicket and new synthetic cricket wicket</li><li>• Boundary fencing</li><li>• Ball net between Elsie Palmer Field and Doug Powell Oval</li><li>• Pedestrian paths</li><li>• Cricket nets</li><li>• Sports lighting</li><li>• Car parking</li><li>• Storage shed</li><li>• Demolition of shed to the south of the existing field</li><li>• Demolition of the existing cricket pavilion</li></ul> |
|---|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolition of existing cricket nets</li> <li>• Provision of temporary change rooms</li> </ul> |
| <b>Stage Two</b><br><u>Optimal delivery timeframe – funding dependent:</u><br>Design – 2027/28<br>Construction – 2028 and 2029. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and construct pavilion and landscaping</li> </ul>                                      |

*Table 1: Staging of Capital Works*

## Issues

Broad community consultation was undertaken from 18 February 2026 to 16 March 2026. The plans were published on the Mount Alexander Shire Council Shape page, and a Community Information Session was held on site at Elsie Palmer Field. There were several themes identified from the consultation, which are outlined below.

### Themes and Community Identified Issues

Through the wider community consultation process there were two key themes that emerged as concerns: Car parking location and provision

The draft concept plans that were displayed for community consultation identified a large triangular area to the east of the Doug Powell Oval as a proposed car park. Currently this area is not developed and is natural open space. Fifteen respondents who identified as local residents provided feedback on the location and provision of car parking. Feedback identified an alternate location for the car parking or questioned if car parking was required and noted potential impact on fauna.

Feedback from the Project Working Group on the location of the carpark, included a request to provide carparking overlooking the Elsie Palmer Field to allow for viewing opportunities for soccer and cricket from vehicles.

### Location of Pavilion and Cricket Nets

Eleven respondents representing the cricket club suggested the location for the pavilion be reviewed to mitigate viewing impacts of looking into the sun, particularly during the afternoon.

Following the conclusion of the wider community consultation period, a meeting with the Project Working Group was held. The location of the pavilion was discussed and other options were considered.

The cricket club representative acknowledged the varied feedback from their membership about the location of the pavilion, however given the lack of available space at the Reserve, there is no other area that was large enough or suitable. All working group members accepted the various site constraints and agreed to progress the pavilion location in the north-eastern corner of the Elsie Palmer Field.

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### Design Updates following Community Consultation

The following updates were made to the draft concept design following the wider community consultation process:

- Relocation of the cricket nets from the eastern side of the field to the north-western corner.
- Re-configuration of the proposed playground footprint to fit in this area.
- A larger storage shed to be used for cricket maintenance equipment.
- Car parking: creation of a primary and secondary car park zones – both of which require additional investigation regarding size and siting during the next iteration of the design.
  - Primary – on the eastern side of Elsie Palmer Field. Potentially two levels. One on field level, the other on the embankment with an elevated view of fields. These car parking areas will have a closer connection to the new field and associated pavilion.
  - Secondary – on the eastern side of the Doug Powell Oval with a smaller footprint to limit impact on views from Scotts Avenue. This space could also be used by participants of the Doug Powell Oval.
- Access road/drop off area, amendments to align with the new car parking configuration.

Please note the siting on the plan for the cricket nets, storage shed, playground, car parking and access roads require further investigation which will form the next stage of detailed design prior to construction.

### Site Constraints

The report presented to Councillors at the Meeting of Council in July 2025 noted:

*Through the analysis of opportunities to expand the sporting fields at Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve, it revealed there are some existing site constraints. The Elsie Palmer Field footprint could be expanded to the east and west, however it is constrained on both sides by the existing cricket nets and the creek that traverses through the site.*

Through the finalisation of the concept plan, it was identified to accommodate the Cricket Clubs request to retain the turf and synthetic pitches in their currently location, and Castlemaine Goldfields Football Clubs needs of four junior/two senior pitches, that the current playing surface of Elsie Palmer Field would be required to be extended east wards over the creek, along with an access road and pedestrian access to the pavilion.

The creek bed is managed by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA), who have provided in principle support to divert the creek and extend the existing stormwater pipe by approximately 30 metres. This will allow the extension of the playing surface of the reserve to the east. All works in this section will be subject to a Works in Waterways Permit and also potential negotiation with Traditional Owners for a Land Use Activity Agreement. NCCMA has requested to work with Council to enhance the environmental value of this waterway outside of the development area and would likely make revegetation a condition of a future permit. These works and formal approval will be sought during the next phase of the project.

The second key site constraint is the rock wall (approximately two metres) to the south-west of the playing surface boundary. Through further investigation there is a requirement to excavate part of this wall and to build a substantial retaining wall along the south-western and western boundaries of the playing surface.

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Earthworks, retaining wall construction and creek diversion/pipe construction will add to the overall project cost as detailed in Finance and Resource Implications below.

### Pavilion Design

The concept design phase does not include the conceptualisation of a floor plan for the proposed pavilion. The detailed pavilion design will be undertaken in Stage Two. However, it was necessary to understand the total square meterage required for the pavilion to ensure that all supporting infrastructure can be accommodated on the site. It was agreed with the working group that a 600-800 m<sup>2</sup> spatial allocation for the pavilion would be required. Details of proposed provision within the pavilion are listed in table 2 below.

| Item                                  | Indicative size       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Change rooms and amenities (4)        | 164m <sup>2</sup>     |
| First Aid                             | 15m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Umpires change room and amenities (2) | 40m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Public toilets                        | 27m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Office/admin space                    | 30m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Storage (clubs)                       | 45m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Social Room                           | 100-150m <sup>2</sup> |
| Kitchen/Kiosk                         | 30m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Bar/Servery                           | 20m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Storage (social and kitchen)          | 38m <sup>2</sup>      |
| Circulation/services                  | 35m <sup>2</sup>      |
| TOTAL                                 | 594m <sup>2</sup>     |

*Table 2: Pavilion Facility Provision*

These dimensions meet State Sporting Association standards, including Cricket Australia and Football Victoria.

The siting of the pavilion on the attached Concept Plans is indicative only. Further research at a later stage will be required to confirm the location for the pavilion.

### Temporary Change Rooms

To deliver the larger sports field as shown in the design, it will be necessary to demolish the existing cricket pavilion. This is an old, light weight building, with limited functionality, one toilet and no change room facilities. There will be a requirement to provide temporary change rooms for cricket and soccer as a deliverable of stage one, to enable operation of the field, whilst funding is sought for Stage Two. This could result in a provision of lower capacity change room facilities for a number of years until funding for Stage Two is secured. To address this issue, a temporary change facility will need to be hired or purchased. This cost will need to be factored into the overall delivery cost for stage one including establishment

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costs (service connections, hire of facilities) for the temporary change rooms until such time as a permanent pavilion is delivered.

#### Cricket Nets

The current cricket nets will need to be demolished to allow for the pitches to be expanded. The indicative location for the cricket nets is in the north-western corner of the site. The Cricket Club have also requested an increase in provision from two to three cricket nets as the current provision restricts their training. While the required third net is supported by Cricket Victoria's facility planning guide, this will require further investigation from the perspective of available space and funding. The siting on the plan is indicative, and further investigation is required to ensure the siting of the nets is possible at this location, noting that there may be a requirement for a retaining wall.

#### Playground

The Wesley Hill Master Plan was endorsed by Council in 2015 included provision for a playground between Doug Powell Oval and Elsie Palmer Field. It has been requested by the working group to include the playground as a deliverable with this project, especially given the increased use of the reserve for formal sport. The concept plan allows a provision of a Local Level 2 playground as outlined in the Council endorsed Playground Hierarchy and Levels of Service document. Further investigation into the siting of the playground and consultation regarding the equipment to be included will be undertaken following delivery of Stage 2 pavilion.

#### Upgrade Requirements for Chewton Soldier Memorial Park

It is necessary to retain the facilities at Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park to meet the required soccer facilities for the Shire. These facilities are functional but dated. There would be a level of investment required at Chewton to ensure the facilities remain fit for purpose for senior competition. Some of the proposed improvements include:

- Pavilion upgrades (Off field player, match official, spectator and amenity upgrades).
- Surface and irrigation upgrade on main competition pitch.
- Public toilet upgrades.

Scheduling of these works can be staged and delivered as and when there is funding available.

### Next Steps

Table three provides an indicative schedule for the next steps to progress and finalise this feasibility study and concept design stage of works.

| Timeframe | Tasks  |
|-----------|--|
| June 2026 | Councillor Briefing outlining the results from the wider community consultation. |
| June 2026 | Council Meeting to consider concept design approval.                             |
| June 2026 | Acquittal of Sport, Recreation Victoria grant for feasibility study project.     |
| Ongoing   | Detailed design for Stage One field development (funding dependent)              |
| Ongoing   | Funding advocacy   |

*Table 3. Timeline of next steps*

### **Finance and Resource Implications**

The total cost for the development of the feasibility study and concept design is \$95,000 This has been funded by:

- State Government: \$40,000.
- Council: \$50,000 – from the annual advanced design budget.
- Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club: \$5,000.

The concept design has also included a number of site investigations that will help inform this and future stages, for example geotechnical testing.

The estimated total cost to deliver all stages of the Elsie Palmer Field upgrade project is \$13,643,706 and is detailed below in Table 4. As the designs are concept only, it would be difficult to provide an accurate independent costing (Quantity Survey report) at this stage due to the lack of detailed design information. The cost estimate has been calculated using costs from known similar projects and generic industry rates, with a 30% on cost for contingency, 10% for design, 5% project management and 5% for cost escalation. Costs may vary significantly following detailed site, building and field of play design and further site investigation works.

The total estimated cost to deliver upgrades to Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park is estimated at \$1,986,000 and is detailed in Table 5 below, please note the Chewton costings were developed in 2025 for the feasibility study and as no design work has been undertaken for this site, costs have not been amended.

| <b>Elsie Plamer Field</b>                                     |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Stage One   | Cost             |
| Pitch and related ground redevelopment works                  | \$2,043,804      |
| <i>Cricket net construction</i>                               | <i>\$300,000</i> |
| Sports lighting - 100 lux LED pitch lighting across 2 pitches | \$500,000        |

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>Storage Shed</i>  | <i>\$100,000</i>   |
| <i>Footpaths</i>   | <i>\$100,000</i>   |
| <i>Temporary change facilities</i>   | <i>\$100,000</i>   |
| Car parking  | \$600,000          |
| <i>Creek re-alignment</i>  | <i>\$377,000</i>   |
| <i>Retaining wall</i>  | <i>\$415,000</i>   |
| Demolition: cricket pavilion, cricket nets, shed.                              | \$60,000           |
| Power Upgrade (sports lighting - Switchboard installation for the rear site)   | \$200,000          |
| Subtotal stage one   | \$4,795,804        |
|  |                    |
| Contingency on the above costs (30%)   | \$1,438,740        |
| Cost escalation on the above costs (5%)  | \$239,790          |
| Planning and design (10%)  | \$479,581          |
| Project Management (5%)  | \$239,790          |
|  |                    |
| <b>Total stage one</b>   | <b>\$7,193,706</b> |
|  |                    |
| <b>Stage Two</b>   |                    |
| New Pavilion inclusive of change facilities, social room and kiosk facilities. | \$3,150,000        |
| Provision for poor soil conditions (rock)                                      | \$200,000          |
| Services connections - Water and Sewer   | \$600,000          |
| Accessible Car parking, access road (built over new drain).                    | \$250,000          |
| Landscaping  | \$100,000          |
| Subtotal stage two   | \$4,300,000        |
|  |                    |
| Contingency on the above costs (30%)   | \$1,290,000.0      |
| Cost escalation (5%)   | \$215,000          |
| Planning and design (10%)  | \$430,000.00       |
| Project Management (5%)  | \$215,000          |

|                                    |                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Total stage two</b>             | <b>\$6,450,000</b> |
|                                    |                    |
| Estimated Total Stages one and two | \$13,643,706       |

*Table 4. High level cost estimates – Elsie Palmer Field Capital Works Delivery*

Items in italics totalling \$2,178,000 are items that were not included in the 2025 feasibility cost presented to Council. These new items have emerged as a result of creating a multi-sport facility that meets soccer and cricket needs, consultation feedback from stakeholders, site constraints and feedback from Sport and Recreation Victoria for provision of temporary change facilities.

| <b>Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park</b>  | <b>Cost</b>         |
|--|---------------------|
| Pitch and related ground redevelopment works   | \$550,000           |
| Existing off-field player, match official and spectator amenity upgrades, to include public toilet | \$865,000           |
| Car parking, access roads, landscaping, service upgrades   | \$240,000           |
| Planning design contingency (20%)  | \$331,000           |
| Estimated Total  | <b>\$1,986,000*</b> |

*Table 5. High level cost estimates – Chewton Soldiers Memorial capital works delivery*

\*Costs for Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park are based on estimates from 2024 with no site-specific detail or designs.

| <b>Summary of updated costs from Feasibility Study</b> |                      |                     |                   |  |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| <b>Item</b>  | <b>Original cost</b> | <b>Updated cost</b> | <b>Difference</b> | <b>Comment</b>   |
| Pitch redevelopment works                              | \$1,162,500          | \$2,043,804         | \$881,304         | Pitch size increase from 2025 feasibility study - 15,500m2 vs 17,815m2.<br><br>This has been requested by stakeholders to increase functionality of the playing fields for multiple concurrent junior matches. |
| Pavilion build   | \$1,856,000          | \$3,950,000         | \$2,094,000       | Pavilion size increase from 2025 feasibility   |

| Summary of updated costs from Feasibility Study |               |              |                    |  |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--|
| Item  | Original cost | Updated cost | Difference         | Comment  |
|   |               |              |                    | study - 320m2 vs 594m2.<br><br>Stakeholders requested inclusion of social room and kiosk/bar facilities. |
| Sports Lighting                                 | \$420,000     | \$500,000    | \$80,000           | Adjustment for pitch size change impacting material costs.   |
| <b>Total</b>                                    |               |              | <b>\$3,055,304</b> |  |

*Table 7 – Changes in costs from Feasibility Study*

It will be necessary to seek external funding to deliver on each stage of the overall project. Council contributions will likely be required, however at this stage it is not possible to estimate the amount.

## **Risk Analysis**

### Council's Risk Appetite Statement

Council's adopted Risk Appetite Statement includes having:

- A low appetite for reputational risk.
- A low appetite for financial risk
- A high appetite for community engagement

### Reputation Risk

As outlined in Council's Risk Appetite Statement:

Council has a low appetite for actions that may harm Council's reputation.

**Key Risk:** There is a reputational risk to Council if it does not progress the development of additional soccer facilities in a timely way. Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club have outgrown their current facilities, and the community has an expectation that Council supports and provides fit for purpose facilities for community sporting clubs. Given the recent and continued growth of soccer participation, there is a likelihood that the club will need to cap numbers of participants if additional facility provision is not addressed. This could result in prospective players needing to travel outside of the Shire to participate in soccer or consider alternative sporting activities. In addition, the change of seasonal user groups at Wesley Hill will require consideration and careful management to ensure harmonious integration of soccer at the reserve.

**Mitigation:** Implementing and delivering of an agreed timeline for capital works delivery will provide surety to the Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club and the community that Council deems the facility provision of high importance. Ongoing inclusion of all key stakeholders in

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consultation throughout the design development phase will support the inclusion of shared interests in the facility.

*Residual Risk:* Medium. A significant level of external funding is necessary to deliver the capital works. The timeline and ability to secure funding is an unknown at this stage. There will remain a level of reputational risk to Council that it is not progressing facility development to meeting the participation demands.

Financial Risk:

Council has a low appetite for not managing our financial position.

*Key Risk:* Given the scale and anticipated costs of the works, there is a risk that Council is unable to secure the required capital funding to implement the recommendations within the timeframes expected by the community. Significant external funding from State or Federal Government will be required to deliver on all development options.

*Mitigation:* Council Officers have commenced informal discussion with State and Federal parties regarding the project and needs. Draft concept designs were also provided to help support Football Victoria's Parliamentary Petition called "Level the Playing Field". This is a statewide campaign in the lead up to the State Election to ensure football receives a greater level of facility investment.

It is recommended to maintain this dialogue as the project progresses to an investment ready stage.

*Residual Risk:* Medium. Financial challenges of the State Government and uncertainty of future grants programs provide a risk to timely delivery of this project.

Community Engagement Risk:

Council has a high appetite for community engagement.

*Key risk:* Council do not consult adequately with the community which results in community feedback not being considered in the final designs.

*Mitigation:* Undertake both targeted and broad community engagement to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to engage and provide feedback. Close the loop on any engagement so that all residents feel heard and specific feedback is responded to appropriately.

*Residual risk:* Low. Council Officers have undertaken significant community consultation at key stages throughout development of both the feasibility study and the concept plan. Feedback received has informed the final draft concept plan. Council Officers will close the loop via the Shape platform following the Council Meeting.

Health and Wellbeing Risk:

*Key risk:* Delay in provision of soccer facilities will result in some community members either not accessing the sport or travelling outside of the shire to join an alternate club.

*Mitigation:* Timely delivery of the facilities is essential to mitigate the risk.

*Residual risk:* Medium. This will remain a medium risk until funding is secured as currently the only alternate site to Chewton for soccer is Elsie Palmer field, which has infrastructure deficits which limits use – for instance lack of sports lighting results in training in winter months only taking place at Chewton which impacts the condition of the ground for weekend

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matches. Already this season the club have had to cancel one day of matches due to weather conditions impacting the ground.

Maximising opportunity risk:

*Key risk:* This project is seeking to solve short and long-term issues to address soccer needs for the next 10-15 years. If the solution only addresses short term needs, it could be difficult to seek a further funding support in 5-10 year's time for another project.

*Mitigation:* Approving and advocating for the benefits of the expanded development within the one project scope and delivering upon two full sized soccer pitches to meet long term demand.

*Residual risk:* Medium. This will remain a medium risk until the level of funding to deliver the full project scope is secured.

**Climate Impact Statement**

Throughout the detailed design process, strong consideration will be given to ensuring that the design meets best practice standards for sustainability and Environmentally Sustainable Design. This could include the use of LED fittings for sportsground lighting, selection of drought tolerant and high wearing grass species, re-use of existing soil material for sports field upgrades or safe environmental options for synthetic surface products, and facility water needs.

Due consideration will be given to design informed by climate change modelling. Likewise, irrigation and future water sources will be investigated to support delivery of a drought tolerant facility.

**Gender Equity Statement**

A Gender Impact Assessment was completed at the project inception stage which included three recommendations to guide the promotion of gender equity principles:

1. Consider accessibility and inclusivity in site selection and concept designs.
2. Targeted consultation session with women, girls and gender diverse soccer players.
3. Align Fair Access Policy with project development.

The Secretary of the Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club undertook a targeted consultation session with the women's team (which includes some non-binary players).

Key themes that emerged from the discussion as being important were:

- Accessibility of paths of travel from car park to ground
- Proximity of the carpark to the grounds
- Safety of pedestrian connections from carpark to ground
- Lighting
- Ensuring there is adequate warmup space

The Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club has a strong level of female participation, with 192 registered players in 2025. The North Castlemaine Cricket Club are increasing their female membership and successfully fielded a women's team in the 2025/26 competition. With high levels of female participation, it will be key to ensure Fair Access principles are implemented at each stage of the project.

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## **Alternate Options**

There are three alternative options identified:

Option 1: Council to defer its approval and re-visit some aspects of the concept design.

- This option is not recommended as it would likely cause further delivery delays to the development of enhanced sporting infrastructure at the site, which could cause short term impacts on participation. It will also delay acquittal of the State Government grant, which could impact Council's ability to successfully receive funding from future grant rounds.
- Given the recent and continued growth in soccer participation, there is a likelihood that the club will need to cap numbers of participants if additional facility provision is not addressed in the short to medium term. In addition, further delays would defer Council's advocacy for delivery and potentially miss the opportunity for funding through election promises at the upcoming State Government election.

Option 2: Council consider a design option that will reduce costs and provide one senior and three junior sized pitches at Elsie Palmer Field, as opposed to two senior / four junior pitches.

- This option would provide an estimated saving of \$1,732,284, making the total project cost \$11,911,422. The development zone would be reduced resulting in:
- Reduced overall footprint for the playing fields (saving approximately \$544,284);
- Removing the need to build retaining walls along the south-western boundary (saving approximately \$622,500); and
- Removing the need to realign the creek on the eastern boundary of the playing fields (saving approximately \$565,500)
- If this option was supported, it would not meet the full participation needs of the Castlemaine Goldfields Football Club for three senior fields and would require negotiation with current user groups at Wesley Hill to designate Doug Powell Oval as an overflow ground. During the targeted consultation, one of the main user groups of Doug Powell Oval, Castlemaine Junior Football Club, noted that they were supportive of soccer being located at Wesley Hill as long as it didn't impact their usage of the reserve. If Doug Powell Oval were unavailable, an additional field/site and facility would need to be provided to meet all participation requirements of the club, which would further split operations of the club across three locations.

Option 3: Council consider a design option that will re-locate the centre cricket wicket from its current position and have it overlapping soccer fields. This option re-aligns the whole sports field area to re-position key infrastructure in the best and most efficient locations. This option reduces the overall footprint of the playing fields, however it does not fully eliminate the site constraints and a level of retaining wall construction would be required. Representatives from the soccer and cricket clubs have expressed this would not be a desirable design solution as there would be no separation from each sports fields of play and result in a lower quality playing surface quality for both sports. For example the turf cricket wicket would require extensive renovation and preparation at the end of the soccer season.

## **Communication and Consultation**

Significant community and stakeholder consultation has been undertaken throughout the various stages of this project.

As previously mentioned, a Project Working Group with representatives from interested sporting stakeholders was established to help provide feedback throughout concept design development.

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This included four meetings to review design plans and provide feedback on behalf of their club. Once the design plans were developed to a point of in principal agreement, a wider community consultation process was undertaken. Residents, players, parents and neighbours were invited to share their views on the draft concept designs before they are finalised.

Community consultation activities included:

- Shape page with background information about the project, draft plans, frequently asked questions and a small survey to guide feedback.
- Media release advertising opportunity for community to provide feedback.
- Mail out to residential properties that live nearby the reserve, which included a hard copy survey for residents who were unable to access the digital platforms.
- Project signage displayed at strategic locations throughout the Reserve and at Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park to advertise the opportunity to provide input and feedback.
- Community drop-in session.
- Women and gender diverse consultation session with soccer participants.

The four-week consultation period saw a strong response from the community, some of the key statistics from the Shape page include:

- 719 views across 489 unique visitors to the platform.
- 49 survey responses received from the broader community.
- 185 people downloaded the plans, which suggests nearly three quarters of these people were happy enough with the designs to not comment.
- Three people attended the onsite community information session.

Responses were received from a broad cross section of the community with an equal representation of soccer (15) and cricket club (14) participants and the wider community (20).

The attached Community Engagement Summary document highlights strong support for the project with an average rating of 3.3 out of 4.

Through analysis of the qualitative results, a number of key themes were identified. Please refer the table below for a summary of the key themes:

| Item                    | Number of positive comments | Number of negative comments | Comment   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| General Support         | 13                          |                             |   |
| Ground size/orientation | 25                          |                             |   |
| Pavilion                | 13                          | 11                          | Participants of the cricket club had concerns over the location and viewing (looking into the sun). |
| Cricket wicket          | 8                           |                             |   |

| Item                 | Number of positive comments | Number of negative comments | Comment   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Playground           | 8                           | 4                           | Suggestions for a bigger play space at a different location on the reserve. Concerns about proximity to future Optus tower.   |
| Car Parking          | 6                           | 15                          | Concern with developing existing open space area and impact upon Scotts Avenue residents. Design plans have been updated to address concerns.   |
| Soccer Fields        | 6                           |                             |   |
| Cricket nets         | 2                           | 11                          | Many respondents suggested the pavilion and training cricket net locations be swapped.<br><br>Design plans have been updated to relocate the cricket nets.  |
| Sharing/Multipurpose | 1                           |                             |   |
| Sports lighting      |                             | 2                           | One comment noted that existing sports lighting at Doug Powell Oval is bright and shines into nearby residents. There was a request for this to be adjusted if possible.<br><br>Another request for spill from new sports lighting to be minimised. |
| Traffic volume       |                             | 1                           | Concerns about the increase in traffic along McGrath Street.  |
| Wildlife             |                             | 4                           | Concerns were raised that the siting of car parks will impact wildlife who currently utilise the site for feeding. Likewise concerns about additional lighting impacting wildlife.  |
| TOTAL                | 82                          |                             |   |

*Table 8 Community Engagement Summary*

As previously mentioned, amendments were made to the plans following receipt of feedback. Site constraints is one of the main reasons for not implementing all suggested plan updates.

In addition to the broader community engagement, consultation has been undertaken with the State Sporting Associations, Football Victoria and Cricket Victoria, who are supportive of the development.

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## Legislation

### Building Act 1993

Any new public building (including a sporting pavilion) will be required to meet compliance with this legislation.

### Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010

Works proposed will need to consider a Land Use Activity Agreement with DJAARA.

### Planning Environment Act 1987

Planning permit application may be required for particular projects. These approvals will be sought during the detailed design phase.

## Strategies and Policy Impacts

### Council Plan 2025-2029

*Focus Area: Infrastructure - Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure.*

- Well-maintained, actively used infrastructure.

*Focus Area: Wellbeing Economies - Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment.*

- Increased access to meaningful local skills development, work and volunteering.

### Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029:

Strategic priority - Increase active living

Physical activity prevents chronic disease, improves mental health, and builds social connection

### Wesley Hill Recreation Reserve Master Plan (2015):

Staged implementation plan that guides facility upgrades at this site.

### Middle Years Plan 2023-2026:

Strategic priority – Active and outside

Kids have opportunities to be physically active, to care for the environment and connect with Country.

### Fair Access Policy (2024):

Principle 1: Community sports infrastructure and environments are genuinely welcoming, safe, and inclusive.

## Child Safe Standards

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures,

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and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No conflicts of interest

The Council Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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#### **9.4.2. Procurement Exemption - Frederick Street - Indigenous Art Work**

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Director Infrastructure and Development, Michael Annear

Responsible Officer: External Project Manager, Emir Ameti

Attachments: 1. Confidential Attachment - Phase 2 - Djandak Quote - Frederick Street - Mechanics Lane, Castlemaine [9.4.2.1 - 5 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a sole source procurement exemption to appoint DJANDAK for the provision of Djaara artwork, artist management, and the co-design component of the Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment project. The value of the work is \$440,000 (ex. GST) and was included as a key element in the successful grant application for the project.

The Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Streetscape Redevelopment is the first project to be delivered from the Castlemaine Streetscape Plan and Design Standards (2020), incorporating many of the design standards and recommendations outlined in that plan. As a flagship project, it sets the benchmark for how future streetscape upgrades across Castlemaine will reflect local identity, cultural values, and community aspirations.

The redevelopment includes place-based public art elements that have been carefully curated to embed Djaara voices and perspectives throughout the project. The engagement of DJANDAK, an enterprise of DJAARA, will enable Council to meet this objective by ensuring that cultural knowledge, artistic expression, and design decisions are led by the Traditional Owners of the land on which the project is situated.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Approves in accordance with section 8.10 Sole Sourcing of Council's Procurement Policy 2021, the engagement of DJANDAK to embed Djaara cultural values into the Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment project.**
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to execute a contract with DJANDAK for the provision of Djaara Artwork, Artist Management and Co-Design to the value of \$440,000.00 (excl. GST) for Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment project.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR MADDOCK**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**CARRIED.**

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## Context

Council was successful in receiving a \$12.19 million Federal Government grant through the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program. The funding is enabling the redevelopment of the Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Streetscape and includes:

- Installation of a pedestrian crossing in Lyttleton Street
- Undergrounding of overhead power lines and communications lines
- Improvements to public gathering spaces
- Improving street lighting
- Integration of both performance and temporal artworks
- The integration of Djaara art elements into the streetscape
- Improved connections between the Castlemaine central business district and the railway precinct

The project is being delivered by Mount Alexander Shire Council in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA), Castlemaine Library, Castlemaine State Festival and Castlemaine Fringe Festival.

## Issues

The project presents a significant opportunity to embed Djaara stories, language, and cultural knowledge within the public realm and strengthens community understanding of Country, fosters cultural visibility, and supports reconciliation through tangible action. It ensures that the redevelopment does more than improve physical infrastructure. It becomes a place that reflects thousands of years of custodianship, acknowledges the resilience and continuity of Djaara culture, and creates a more inclusive and truthful representation of the region's identity for current and future generations

As an enterprise of DJAARA, DJANDAK has been identified to contribute design input and oversight for the integration of Traditional Owner art elements to showcase Djaara culture across the project.

DJANDAK has completed Phase 1 of this component of the project, which included holding a Wartaka that has informed key art outcomes and themes for the project. This has been tabled with Councils Public Art Advisory Panel.

Following the outcomes of Phase 1, DJANDAK will develop a detailed brief to guide the embedding of Djaara cultural values into the public realm by including integrated public art and place-based storytelling through co-design with Djaara artists and members. This includes:

- Entry pavement artworks (B.1 Templeton Street entry, B.2 Lyttleton Street Entry North, B.3 Lyttleton Street Entry South, B.4 Mostyn Street entry)
- Finger Boards (D.1–D.3, locations TBC)
- Gutter sculpture (F at the heritage listed kerb) and custom gutter grates/covers (G.1–G.5 across north/south locations)
- Garden bed feature elements (H1 Templeton, H2 Central event space 1, H5–H6 Lyttleton, H7 Gather Small seating Southern, H8 Mostyn), plus overall raised garden bed materiality/shape/design (H ALL)

- Two feature sculptures in the central event area (H3 Central event space 2 and H4 Central event space 3) as the primary focal works
- Square set pavement treatments (M for stage audience gathering area and Town Hall entry)
- Interpretive sign (I.1, location TBC)

To support this objective a procurement exemption is sought in accordance with section 8.10 Sole Sourcing of Council's Procurement Policy (2021) to engage DJANDAK to undertake the work. The sole sourcing exemption is based on the requirement of delivering Traditional Owner input through DJANDAK, who is the single entity that can provide Djaara cultural values for the project.

Phase 2 of the is the final phase of the Traditional Owner art elements to showcase Djaara culture component of the Frederick Street Redevelopment Project.

### Finance and Resource Implications

This project is jointly funded by Mount Alexander Shire Council and the Federal Government Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program. The Fee Proposal for Phase 2 to embedding of Djaara cultural values into the public realm is \$440,000.00, inclusive of a \$120,000 contingency and is within the overall budget.

The current budget and expenditure estimated are detailed in Table 1 below:

| Item                                     | Cost (excluding GST)    |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>BUDGET</b>                            |                         |
| Grant funding                            | \$ 12,194,670.00        |
| Council contribution                     | \$ 249,600.00           |
| <b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>                      | <b>\$ 12,444,270.00</b> |
|  |                         |
| <b>EXPENDITURE FORECAST</b>              |                         |
| DJANDAK Phase 2 Engagement (This Report) | \$ 440,000.00           |
| <b>SUBTOTAL</b>                          | <b>\$ 440,000.00</b>    |
|  |                         |
| <b>OTHER PROJECT COSTS</b>               | <b>\$ 12,004,270.00</b> |
|  |                         |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE FORECAST</b>        | <b>\$ 12,444,270.00</b> |

Table 1: Project budget and expenditure

### Risk Analysis

#### Financial Risk:

Council's adopted Risk Appetite Statement notes a low appetite for financial risk, while investing in projects, programs, and initiatives that will provide increased benefit to the current community.

Risk: There is the possibility of art ideas that are developed not being able to be delivered within the available budget, however given that DJANDAK have previously been engaged to define key concepts this risk has been minimised. There is significant contingency built into the available budget to cover these possible variations.

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Mitigation: In preparing for delivery of the art elements, significant effort was undertaken short listing art element ideas. There is also considerable contingency built into the project budget.

Residual Risk: Given the complexity of the project and the mitigation actions, the residual risk is considered low and appropriate.

#### Reputation Risk:

Council's adopted Risk Appetite Statement notes a low appetite for reputational risk.

Risk: This project is complex and interacts with many stakeholders and could financially impact on some adjacent businesses. There are significant reputational risks, once art work on the ground commences including:

- The significant amount of time that has elapsed since the concept design received public feedback, some may not appreciate the final design or be upset they were not involved in the final design.
- New residents or businesses may not be aware of the project or have the opportunity for input.

Mitigation: The project team will continue to engage with impacted stakeholders during the construction phase. Mount Alexander Shire Council will also provide regular updates via various mediums during the project period.

Residual Risk: Given the complexity of the project and the ongoing mitigation actions, the residual risk is considered medium and appropriate.

#### Planning risk:

A planning permit has been obtained for the project. Advice has been obtained from Council's Statutory Planning team which has confirmed no additional planning approvals are required with respect to artwork.

#### Heritage risk:

There are multiple existing buildings with significant heritage value adjacent to the civil works. Risk is being mitigated through the careful selection and shortlisting of art ideas including the consultation of Council's heritage subject matter experts.

Mitigation: Council's heritage subject matter experts are providing advice on the project.

Residual Risk: The residual risk is considered low and appropriate.

### **Climate Impact Statement**

The project works generally aim to improve the green canopy within the Castlemaine Central Business District area and reduce the urban heating effect. The works aims to improve drainage along Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane making it more resilient to storm events.

The construction works will aim to incorporate recycled materials where possible such as the existing pavement material, reuse of granite kerb stones, recycled products used in paving materials.

### **Gender Equity Statement**

A Gender Impact Assessment was not completed for the public art elements of the project.

It is considered that this report does not promote gender inequities as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020*. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the Act and to further promote the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

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## **Alternate Options**

There is no alternative 'suppliers' that could provide the unique cultural services that are offered by DJANDAK.

Council officers have reviewed the Fee Proposal from DJANDAK and are of the opinion that the Fee Proposal provides value for money when considering the context and unique skill set required for the provision of cultural advice specifically required to be representative of the Djaara voices.

## **Communication and Consultation**

The Communication and Consultation Plan has been prepared for the project generally and is inclusive of the art elements. It highlights the importance of communicating with businesses and residents directly impacted and the wider community on this project. This has been ongoing and will continue through regular updates across various platforms, including print media, social media, Council website.

A Project Control Group and Project Governance Group have been operating with key stakeholders on the progress of the project and for key decision making and guidance where required.

## **Legislation**

### Statutory powers and implications

All goods and services purchased by Council must be compliant with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, the *Dangerous Goods Act*, *Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1987*, and associated regulations and codes of practice whenever applicable.

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

### Council Plan 2025-2029

#### Focus Area

Infrastructure: Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure

#### Objective

- Well-maintained, actively used infrastructure

Accessible, safe and inclusive infrastructure for all ages and backgrounds.

## **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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## **9.5. Wellbeing Economies**

Nil.

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## **9.6. Organisation**

### **9.6.1. Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report – Quarter 3**

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Director Corporate Services, Julie Landy

Responsible Officer: Corporate Reporting Officer, Sarah Smith

Attachments: 1. Council Plan - Annual Plan Actions 2025 20206 Progress Report  
Quarter 3 [9.6.1.1 - 14 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 (the Annual Plan) outlines the actions for the 2025/2026 financial year that will be undertaken as priorities, in alignment with the strategic priorities of the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Included in the Annual Plan are 24 current-year actions.

In 2025/2026 Quarter 3, two actions were completed, bringing the total number of completed actions for 2025/2026 to nine. 13 actions remain on track to be completed by 30 June 2026. Two actions are behind schedule and are likely to be rolled over into the 2026/2027 Annual Plan.

This report provides an update on the status of all actions in the 2025/2026 Annual Plan, with a comment on the progress toward each action.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council notes the Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 3.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR ANNEAR**

**CARRIED.**

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## Context

The Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 (the Annual Plan) outlines the actions for the 2025/2026 financial year that will be undertaken as priorities, in alignment with the strategic priorities of the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Included in the Annual Plan are 24 current-year actions.

Quarterly progress reports are prepared each quarter to inform Councillors and the community on Council's progress toward agreed actions in the Annual Plan.

## Issues

The quarterly report provides an update on:

- the status of each project
- its progress towards completion
- if completed, the date completed, which is compared to the target completion date
- an overall comment.

### Quarter 3 Reporting

The Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 3 (the Progress Report) includes a dashboard that indicates action status and action completion in chart form, and a detailed report of each action, which includes a comment of progress undertaken in quarter 3 of the 2025/2026 financial year.

In summary, the Progress Report notes that:

- Two actions were completed in Quarter 3, bringing the total actions completed to nine for 2025/2026.
- 13 actions are on schedule to be completed by 30 June 2026. This includes two actions that are behind schedule but can be recovered by 30 June 2026.
- Two actions have a status of behind schedule – not recoverable which means they won't be completed by 30 June 2026.

The two actions completed in Quarter 3 are:

| Action Code # | Action  | Focus Area           |
|---------------|---|----------------------|
| CP 2.2.4a     | Implementation of Forestree software completed.                       | Natural Environments |
| CP 4.3.4a     | Year One - FOGO and glass waste stream processing approach finalised. | Wellbeing Economies  |

The following four actions are behind schedule as at 31 March 2026:

| Action Status                     | Action Code # | Action  | Comments  |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---|---|
| Behind Schedule – Not Recoverable | CP 1.3.4a     | Aged Care Strategy to meet the needs of older adults living in the Shire developed.                                 | Current staffing resources have impacted on the timeframe of delivery for the Aged Care Strategy. Completion of this action will be undertaken in the 2026/2027 financial year. |
| Behind Schedule – Not Recoverable | CP 3.4.2a     | End Point provider appointed for network of public electric vehicle charging stations within Mount Alexander Shire. | Stakeholder-related delays have extended the tender timeline. Tender now to be awarded in Quarter 1 2026/2027 financial year.   |
| Behind Schedule – Recoverable     | CP 4.3.1a     | Industrial Land Strategy and design guidelines adopted.   | Final Strategy and Guidelines to be presented to Council in May 2026.   |
| Behind Schedule - Recoverable     | CP 5.2.2a     | Year One – Increase in organisational risk maturity from baseline measure.  | Risk maturity improvement activities are in progress. Activities that are behind schedule, or are not due to commence, will be completed by 30 June 2026.                       |

## Finance and Resource Implications

Projects and initiatives contained in the Annual Plan are fully funded in the 2025-2026 Budget. They are funded via the capital works program, annual operating budgets or funded as one-off initiatives. In some cases, funding has been sourced and secured through grant funding.

## Risk Analysis

### Financial Risk

Managing financial risk for the Annual Plan commences by allocating special or operational funds to resource the delivery of Annual Plan actions. Projects are only selected where funding has been allocated through the annual budget process, which includes grant funding that has been or will be received within the financial year the project is scheduled to commence. Selecting projects this way mitigates the risk of projects not being fully funded.

Allocated budgets are analysed monthly and half yearly ensuring funds are tracked throughout the project lifecycle. Managing projects this way ensures funds stay within allocated budgeted amounts, and/or changes are identified early enabling project review.

### Reputation Risk

Presentation of the Progress Report involves reputation risk and opportunity. While there is reputational risk associated with the reporting of incomplete items, this report also presents

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an opportunity to communicate and celebrate the achievement of completed actions in alignment with the objectives of the Council Plan 2025-2029 (the Council Plan).

### **Climate Impact Statement**

The Annual Plan actions contained within this Progress Report were implemented as priorities from the Council Plan. The Council Plan recognises the climate emergency and reflects Mount Alexander Shire Council's ongoing commitment to addressing climate change.

In preparing the Annual Plan, Council can choose to allocate funds to address the impacts of climate change directly or indirectly. In the Annual Plan, six actions directly address climate change:

- Biodiversity Strategy
- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
- Tree Management
- Public EV Charging
- Mount Alexander Business Awards
- Four Stream Waste and Recycling Service

### **Gender Equity Statement**

As this is a report of progress against an approved plan, gender equity is not directly addressed by this report. However, all projects selected for the Annual Plan must consider gender equity principles as a standard process when they are initiated. This process ensures that projects undertaken are aligned with Council's commitment to meet its obligations and to promote gender equality.

### **Alternate Options**

There is no legislative requirement for Annual Plan reporting to be undertaken on a quarterly basis, however, in the interest of transparency, regular reporting of such information to our community is good practice.

### **Communication and Consultation**

Some of the individual projects within the Annual Plan involve community consultation or consultation with relevant stakeholders. Where consultation is required, projects undertaken will follow Council procedure regarding community consultation as outlined in the Community Engagement Policy.

#### Inform:

*We will keep our community informed.*

The Meeting of Council minutes are published on Council's website and include all attachments, including the Progress Report.

### **Legislation**

#### Local Government Act 2020

Council has adopted a Council Plan for 2025-2029 in accordance with section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act), together with a budget for 2025/2026, in accordance with section 94 of the Act.

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The Council Plan sets out the aspirations of Council and the strategies and objectives to achieve Council's vision for Mount Alexander Shire: Working together for a healthy, connected shire. The budget allocates resources to the activities and services that Councillors have identified as important to achieve Council's vision.

The Annual Plan is prepared each year, with progress in delivering projects reported to Councillors and the community each quarter. Progress and outcomes are reported annually in the Annual Report in accordance with the Act. The Annual Plan is structured around the five focus areas of the Council Plan:

- Communities - Healthy, connected and inclusive communities
- Natural Environments - Enhanced and protected natural environments
- Infrastructure - Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure
- Wellbeing Economies - Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment
- Organisation - A responsive, trusted and effective Council

### **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

#### Council Plan 2025-2029

Actions in the Annual Plan progress the outcomes of the Council Plan.

#### Climate Change Strategy

The following eight actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Climate Change Strategy:

- Biodiversity Strategy
- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
- Tree Management
- Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment
- Public EV Charging
- Mount Alexander Business Awards
- Four Stream Waste and Recycling Service

#### Active Transport Strategy

The following two actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Active Transport Strategy:

- Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment
- Shared User Path – Castlemaine to McKenzie Hill

#### Economic Development Strategy

The following 15 actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Economic Development Strategy:

- Homelessness Project
- Childcare Feasibility Study

- 
- Inclusive Practices for Marginalised Aged Care Communities
  - Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
  - Maldon Worker Housing Project
  - Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust
  - Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment
  - Shared User Path – Castlemaine to McKenzie Hill
  - Maldon Playspace Design
  - Public EV Charging
  - Industrial Land Strategy and Design Guidelines
  - Public Art Commissions
  - Mount Alexander Business Awards
  - Nalderun Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

#### Waste Management Strategy

The following actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Waste Management Strategy:

- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
- Four Stream Waste and Recycling Service

#### **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

#### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

#### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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### **9.6.2. 2025/2026 Financial Management Report - Quarter 3**

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Director Corporate Services, Julie Landy

Responsible Officer: Manager Finance, Keith Caldwell

Attachments: 1. Finance Management Report - Quarter 3 - March 2026 [9.6.2.1 - 29 pages]

#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to present the Finance Report for the nine-month period ended 31 March 2026.

The Finance Report is presented to Council on a quarterly basis. This report was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 1 June 2026.

This Report provides a concise summary of financial performance against Council's Budget for the period, including an explanation of any material variances. This reporting assists in monitoring Council's achievement of objectives in the Financial Plan 2025-2035 and Annual Budget 2025-2026 whilst ensuring that Council is financially sustainable in the long term.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council notes the Finance Report for the nine-month period ended 31 March 2026.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**The recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR CORDY**

**CARRIED.**

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## **Context**

Regular review of financial performance and reporting of Council activities provides an overview as to how different programs and projects are being delivered. This reporting assists in monitoring Council's achievement of objectives in the Financial Plan 2025-2035 and Annual Budget 2025-2026 whilst ensuring that Council is financially sustainable in the long-term.

The Finance Report is presented to Councillors at a Councillor Briefing and a Meeting of Council on a quarterly basis. This report has also been presented to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Finance Report presented includes the following information:

- Income Statement
- Statement of Capital Works in Progress
- Balance Sheet
- Financial Ratios
- Investments
- Cash Flow Statement

## **Issues**

The Finance Report provides a snapshot of the year-to-date financial performance for the 2025/2026 financial year. The current budget includes adopted amounts for carry forward projects (capital projects, special projects, and operating items)

## **Finance and Resource Implications**

The Finance Report gives a concise summary of the financial performance against Council's Budget for the period.

## **Risk Analysis**

### Financial Risk:

In developing the Annual Budget, Council is prudently and proactively managing its financial obligations, sustainability, and risk. This Finance Report provides information on the organisation's performance against budget and, where material variances occur, an explanation is provided.

## **Climate Impact Statement**

In developing the annual Budget, Council can choose to allocate funds to address the impacts of climate change directly or indirectly. As this report is an overview of Council financial performance per se, no overall consideration has been given to the impacts of climate change. However, there may be one-off or capital projects that address the impact of climate change. These projects may not be specifically discussed in this report, but they are subject to additional oversight processes within the organisation.

## **Gender Equity Statement**

As this is a report of Council financial performance, it does not attempt to address gender inequities. There will be funded activities that address gender inequities, but these activities are not specifically discussed in this report.

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## **Alternate Options**

A quarterly budget report must be presented as soon as practicable after the end of each quarter of the financial year in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 Section 97 (1). As this is a legislated requirement, there are no alternative options.

## **Communication and Consultation**

Not Required.

Inform:

We will keep our community informed.

Explanations of major variances are provided by Council Officers responsible for the services and are summarised in the Finance Report.

## **Legislation**

### Local Government Act 2020

Section 97(1) of the Act requires the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to Council at a Meeting of Council which is open to the public.

Section 97(2) of the Act states that the quarterly budget report must include:

- A comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date.
- An explanation of any material variances
- Any other matters as prescribed by the regulations.

As no quarterly financial reporting regulations have been prescribed for the Act, Council Officers have continued to use the same format of reporting as in previous quarters.

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

### Council Plan 2025-2029

Focus Area: Organisation - A responsive, trusted and effective Council.

- A responsive and transparent Council.

Councillors will promote and ensure responsible financial management by receiving and reviewing quarterly financial reports, using agreed project management processes for large projects, and conducting regular internal audits of Council activities.

## **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

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We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

**Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

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### 9.6.3. Establishing Formal Positions of Council Policy Review

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Chief Executive Officer, Darren Fuzzard

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer, Darren Fuzzard

Attachments: 1. Establishing Formal Positions of Council Policy [9.6.3.1 - 4 pages]

#### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek the re-adoption of Council's *Establishing Formal Positions of Council Policy*.

The existing policy was created in 2024 in response to a request by Councillors to document their approach of *not adopting* a position on matters that are the subject of a referendum at a State or Federal level, or are international matters over which Council has no authority or responsibility.

The policy also formalised the process for responding to a rising number of requests being received from other Australian Local Government Authorities. Many of these requests related to matters which were of little direct relevance to the Mount Alexander Shire community and/or were a relatively low priority to Mount Alexander Shire Council.

The policy also provided, in instances where there may be merit in Council establishing a position on a specific matter, the basis on which such a decision (that is, whether to form a position or not) would be made.

The policy was initially intended to be reviewed within 12 months of adoption. However, given the extent of change in Councillors arising from the 2024 election, in discussion with the new Council, it was considered beneficial to delay this review.

The considerations that gave rise to the creation of the initial policy remain and reconfirming how Council responds to such matters by re-adopting the policy is recommended.

Following feedback from Councillors, the existing policy is understood to also reflect the desired approach of the current Council, and therefore, no material changes are proposed.

However, as an improvement to the existing process of applying the policy, Councillors have indicated a desire to receive a monthly summary of the instances in which it has been used. Accordingly, when the policy is applied a copy of the incoming correspondence and officer/CEO/Mayoral response (as appropriate) will be included in a Councillor Bulletin monthly.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Adopts the Establishing Formal Positions of Council Policy.**
- 2. Notes that a monthly report on the application of the policy will be included in the Councillor Bulletin.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR Maltby**

**That the recommendation be adopted.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR Cordy**

**CARRIED.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR Maddock**

That Council defer this matter to a future Meeting to enable sufficient time to enable Councillors to consider updates to this policy which would achieve a better balance between the administrative efficiencies it seeks and Councils' ability to consider requests from our community and the broader community on their merits.

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR Walker**

**NOT CARRIED.**

**COUNCILLOR MALTBY CALLED FOR A DIVISION.**

**Councillors for: Driscoll, Annear, Walker, Heydon, Cordy and Maltby.**

**Councillors against: Maddock.**

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## Context

For several years, Council has been requested to advise its position on specific matters that are being raised at a State, National and International political level. In each instance, the immediate previous and current Council has concluded that the Mount Alexander Shire Council taking a position on such matters is not appropriate.

Council also receives requests for support from other Councils within Victoria (most notably metropolitan Councils) and interstate. Many ask this Council to undertake lobbying activities to State or Federal Governments on matters that are of little relevance to Mount Alexander Shire's community.

Equally, the likely extent to which this Council's opinion influences the outcome determined by decision-makers in such remote and/or complex matters, raises concern about the value in using scarce Council resources on such endeavours.

The previous lack of adopted policy on how these matters would, or would not, be considered by Council also meant responses could appear (at least to those making the request) that Council does not support the cause. Whereas, past and current Councillors have consistently advised that it is going beyond their agreed remit is what is not supported.

As also noted in the previous report, Council's involvement in highly emotive and complex matters over which it has no authority, or ability to determine the result of, has the potential to cause greater divides and negative impacts within the community, rather than enabling a more accepted outcome.

The current policy has been in place since February 2024.

## Issues

### Applying the Policy

Since adoption, this policy has been applied regularly to assist in the efficient management of correspondence from Councils and other external/remote parties to the Mount Alexander Shire. To date, officers are not aware of any concerns being raised when Council has not provided the requested support (in accordance with the provisions of this policy).

In addition, the policy has been offered as a reference to assist Council when considering matters of some local relevance and/or considerable local importance. Such matters were included in the Council meetings of December 2024 and November 2025.

As demonstrated in those examples, the adoption of this policy did not prevent any Councillor from raising a matter that they felt required Council's consideration. Its existence, however, did support a structured approach to the response.

The application of the policy was discussed with current Councillors in late 2025 and early 2026. The feedback provided indicated overall support for it to continue as written. However, it was noted that, as the policy provides for the CEO and Mayor to determine the 'remoteness' of a matter (and therefore, the associated response), this may prevent other Councillors from becoming aware of what is being raised with Council.

In response, Councillors considered options to better address this point while also retaining the operational efficiency of the current approach. Overall, it was felt that retaining the current review mechanism of Mayor and CEO is appropriate however, to better enable oversight by all Councillors, a monthly report via Councillor Bulletin would be beneficial.

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Should Council accept the proposed recommendation and policy, a copy of relevant incoming correspondence and the associated determination of the Mayor/CEO in accordance with the policy will be included in a monthly Councillor Bulletin.

### Reviewing the Policy

The existing policy was adopted with a nominated initial review date of 12 months and then four yearly following Council elections. This proposal was adopted prior to the outcome of the 2024 election and did not anticipate the extent of change in the Council team. In discussion with the Councillors, it was determined that the policy review would benefit from additional time for newer Councillors to experience the advocacy expectations on Council and the extent to which it can respond.

Given the outcome of the 2028 election also cannot be foreseen, it is recommended that, if re-adopted, the policy review should take place towards the middle of the next term. Therefore, a four-year review is proposed.

That said, should this or the subsequent Council feel that the policy is no longer fit for purpose at any time, it can initiate an early review by formal resolution, or agreement with the Chief Executive Officer.

### Other Considerations

As previously noted, there has been little change in the internal and external operating environment for Council (as it relates to this policy) since the original policy was adopted in February 2024.

For this reason, the following sections are substantially repeated from the previous Council report:

The *Local Government Act 2020* - Part 2, Division 1, Clause 8 provides that:

- (1) The role of a Council is to provide good governance in its municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community.
- (2) A Council provides good governance if—
  - (a) it performs its role in accordance with section 9;
  - (b) the Councillors of the Council perform their roles in accordance with section 28.
- (3) In performing its role, a Council may—
  - (a) perform any duties or functions or exercise any powers conferred on a Council by or under this Act or any other Act; and
  - (b) perform any other functions that the Council determines are necessary to enable the Council to perform its role.
- (4) If it is necessary to do so for the purpose of performing its role, a Council may perform a function outside its municipal district.

Councils throughout Victoria have adopted a variety of interpretations about how these provisions should be enacted. Broadly however, it appears that the larger metropolitan Councils, and to an extent some of the regional cities, consider it more appropriate to engage in State, Federal and International political matters than do rural Councils. This is likely due, in part, to their greater levels of available resource, a stronger tendency to be aligned with

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political parties and the greater levels of diversity within their communities when compared to rural Councils.

For its part, Mount Alexander Shire Council has maintained that its primary focus is on ensuring the decisions over which it has responsibility and authority are as well-informed as possible.

As a small and highly resource-constrained Council, the ability to understand and analyse the complexities of national and international political matters is limited. A further challenge associated with such matters is the highly disruptive impact that they can have on 'business as usual' activities of Councillors and staff.

Adding to the resource challenge is the extensive and ongoing range of legislative changes being pursued at both State and Federal Government levels. These changes, often due to their direct and potentially significant implications for Council's own sustainability and ability to serve its community, tend to demand that greater advocacy effort is given to them.

As previously noted, Councils demonstrate a range of views about the extent to which their role in community leadership should extend to holding positions on matters, such as those that a referendum poses in the broader community or international matters.

Notwithstanding the philosophical question of whether it should do this or not, examples from the previous Council term and other Councils suggest that this Council taking a position on a matter in such circumstances, does not assure achievement of the desired result.

Another important factor in Council's decision on whether to invest in establishing a position, and undertaking advocacy, on a specific matter, must be a pragmatic assessment of the extent to which the ultimate decision-makers will be influenced by *this* Council's view. It is suggested that the more remote the matter from Mount Alexander Shire, the less impactful this Council's opinion will be and therefore, the less value there is in investing time and effort to form a view.

It is also often the case that overarching bodies, such as Municipal Association of Victoria, the Australian Local Government Authority, Rural Councils Victoria or the Victorian Local Government Association, are undertaking the necessary research and analysis to form and advocate a well-developed view on matters that impact this Council. In such instances, it is suggested that Council again consider the extent to which its own work to develop a position, or to undertake advocacy, is warranted.

Given the ongoing existence of the above considerations, the approach outlined in the existing policy is recommended to continue if the policy is re-adopted.

### **Finance and Resource Implications**

The policy was developed using in-house resources and was funded from the normal operating budget for wages. The review of the policy was also conducted in this way.

A key reason for establishing this policy was to formalise the pre-existing approach being taken by Council to manage its resources in the most efficient and impactful way, when requests on specific matters are raised. Re-adoption of the policy is expected to enable ongoing efficiency in this process by providing clear direction on what specific matters Council may, and will not, involve itself in.

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## **Risk Analysis**

### Council's Risk Appetite Statement

Council's adopted Risk Appetite Statement includes having:

- A low appetite for not actively managing Council's financial position.
- No appetite for deliberate violation of laws or regulatory requirements.
- A low appetite for actions that may harm Council's reputation – including with governments at other levels.
- A high appetite for respecting the diverse opinions of individual community members and other stakeholders, and for engagement, input and feedback into decision-making.
- The safety and wellbeing of Councillors, staff and the community as its highest priority.

### Financial Risk:

This policy aims to manage Council's financial (and resource) risk by establishing clear boundaries on what matters it will become involved in. It also requires that, for those matters where Council may consider becoming involved, the decision-making process will include information about the financial and resource implications of doing so.

Residual Risk (if adopted): Low

### Compliance with Regulatory Obligations:

The Council's strong focus on ensuring that it complies with laws and regulations is important in this matter, as it influences the amount of effort that goes into responding to regulatory changes proposed by the State and Federal governments. Attempting to ensure that the implications of legislative changes for Mount Alexander Shire are understood by governments, is therefore often given a high priority when allocating the organisation's resources towards advocacy efforts. The proposed limitations on the Council's involvement in other matters are reflective of this priority.

Residual Risk (if adopted): Low

### Reputation Risk:

This policy seeks to deal with reputational risk in many ways.

First, it establishes at a structural level what matters Council will not involve itself in; that is, in matters of foreign policy and those that are being prosecuted with the Australian public through State or Federal referendums. It is considered that this has been helping to avoid creating unmet community expectations on Council and has removed any surprises should a request be made.

Second, it seeks to maintain a positive and respected reputation with State and Federal Governments. It does so by limiting the Council's development of positions to those that have clear and strong connection to the Mount Alexander Shire, and to those that are not the subject of processes such as referendums.

Third, it sets out a review process to determine the merits of establishing a position on a new, specific matter; including the associated resource implications for Council and the likely impacts on other decision-makers if pursued. Under the policy, should a decision then be made to form a position, it also responds to the Council's commitment to appropriately engage with the community and other stakeholders.

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Residual Risk (if adopted): Low

Health and Safety Risk:

Matters being debated or negotiated at an international and national level are quite often highly complex and deeply heart felt by those who are directly impacted, or those with friends or family who are impacted. As previously noted, this policy makes it clear that Council will not get involved in such matters and therefore, reduces the expectations and consequent frustration, that might otherwise be felt. In doing so, it is anticipated that this is better supporting the health and wellbeing of community members, Councillors and staff involved in such requests by giving a clear and timely response.

It is also important to recognise the potential that Council's involvement in such matters has, of itself, to raise the level of emotion felt and expressed within the community. In addition to feelings of frustration that 'Council is going beyond its remit', those feeling aggrieved by Council for other reasons, may be more compelled to express stronger views on a matter because Council is involved. Hence, this polarising effect may ultimately create more negativity and division despite the best intentions of Council.

**Climate Impact Statement**

This policy does not of itself respond to climate change. However, requests for support from other Council areas across Australia are often climate-related and this policy enables more efficient responses to such requests. In turn, this permits more time for officers to focus on matters within the Shire that have a climate impact, and which Council can more readily address.

**Alternate Options**

There is no legislative requirement for Council to have this policy in place. It was developed to provide greater certainty about Council's role in a variety of situations and in doing so, to support better use of Council's limited resources for the Mount Alexander Shire community.

Council may choose to not re-adopt the policy.

Council may also choose to alter the policy before considering its adoption.

**Communication and Consultation**

This policy was initially developed to reflect the approach that Council was already applying informally. It has remained the adopted approach during the early years of the current Council term and no changes are proposed.

Accordingly, seeking community feedback is not proposed. However, if adopted, a copy of the renewed policy will be published on Council's website for the information of the community.

Inform:

We will keep our community informed.

As above, it is proposed that the community be informed of the policy if adopted by the Council.

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## **Legislation**

### Local Government Act 2020

This policy attempts to directly respond to the Council's role as defined in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **Strategies and Policy Impacts**

### Council Plan 2025-2029

Principle – A responsive and transparent Council.

Principle - Organisational systems are optimised and support data-informed decision making and a positive customer experience.

Adoption of this policy is intended to make clear what matters Council will, and will not, involve itself in when asked. When the Council does deem it appropriate to involve itself, the policy clarifies how the community may also be involved in that process. It also seeks to ensure that the investment of Council's limited resources is as impactful and efficient as possible.

## **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

### No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

## 10. DELEGATES REPORTS

Meetings attended by CEO and mayor from 20 May 2026 to 16 June 2026.

| MEETING   | CEO | MAYOR |
|---|-----|-------|
| Attended Guildford Biyal Day  |     | ✓     |
| Attended Volunteer Awards ceremony at Market Building, Castlemaine  | ✓   | ✓     |
| Tossed coin to commence 2026 Main Game at Camp Reserve  |     | ✓     |
| Attended the Student Ideas Pitch Workshop and Tour of the Mayor's Office with students from Grades 5-6 from local primary schools   |     | ✓     |
| Meeting with Maree Edwards MP to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire   | ✓   | ✓     |
| Attended the opening of the Castlemaine Jazz Festival at the Goods Shed   |     | ✓     |
| Attended the Mount Alexander Shire Council Biodiversity Strategy workshop   |     | ✓     |
| Attended the opening of the Castlemaine Rotary Arts Show  |     | ✓     |
| Meeting with Shadow Minister for Local Government, Bev McArthur MP  |     | ✓     |
| Attended the Launch of Reconciliation Week at Castlemaine Market Building   | ✓   | ✓     |
| Really Local Welcome  |     | ✓     |
| Attended the National Sorry Day Commemoration at the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens  |     | ✓     |
| Meeting with Castlemaine Mail following Meeting of Council  | ✓   | ✓     |
| ABC Central Vic radio interview   |     | ✓     |
| WIN TV interviews   |     | ✓     |
| Bendigo Advertiser interviews   |     | ✓     |
| Attended funding announcement by Lisa Chesters MP for the James Creek bridge replacement project (Deputy Mayor Matthew Driscoll; Councillor Phillip Walker; Michael Annear, Director Infrastructure and Development; Phil Garner, Manager Engineering also in attendance) | ✓   |       |
| Attended Loddon Campaspe Councils CEOs meeting  | ✓   |       |
| Gold Central Vic radio interview  | ✓   |       |

| MEETING  | CEO | MAYOR |
|--|-----|-------|
| Meeting with Gaelle Broad MP to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire   | ✓   |       |
| Attended Community Waste Reference Group meeting   |     | ✓     |
| Provided evidence at the 2026 summer fires public inquiry hearing at Harcourt  | ✓   | ✓     |
| Attended Rural Councils Victoria Committee CEOs meeting to discuss proposed 2026 State election platform   | ✓   |       |
| Attended Rural Councils Victoria Committee meeting as Loddon Campaspe's CEO representative   | ✓   |       |
| Held listening posts at Camp Reserve, Maxi IGA and Woolworths, Castlemaine   |     | ✓     |
| Mayor presided over Citizenship Ceremony (Lisa Chesters MP; Councillors Rosalie Hastwell and Phillip Walker; Julie Landy, Director Corporate Services; Michael Annear, Director Infrastructure and Development also in attendance)   | ✓   | ✓     |
| Gold Central Vic radio interview   | ✓   |       |
| Power, Prosperity and Planet book launch   |     | ✓     |
| MAINfm – Saltgrass Podcast – Discussion around waste management  |     | ✓     |
| Attended funding announcement by Maree Edwards MP for the Castlemaine Skatepark design project and Newstead Outdoor Exercise Equipment project (Michael Annear, Director Infrastructure and Development; Karen Evennett, Manager Parks Recreation and Community Facilities also in attendance) | ✓   | ✓     |
| Meeting with Maree Edwards MP to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire  | ✓   | ✓     |
| Meeting with Regional Director, Regional Development Victoria and Director A&NZ Flowserve to discuss matters of common interest for Castlemaine (Daniel Bone, Acting Manager Economy and Culture also in attendance)   | ✓   |       |
| Attended Loddon Campaspe Shire Councils Mayors and CEOs meeting (Councillor Phillip Walker also in attendance)   | ✓   | ✓     |
| Attended Victorian Goldfields World Heritage, Regional Partnership Summit  |     | ✓     |
| Meeting with CEO, Workspace to discuss lease of Etty Street, Castlemaine site  | ✓   |       |

| MEETING   | CEO | MAYOR |
|---|-----|-------|
| Co-Chaired (Mayor Heydon) Indigenous Roundtable   |     | ✓     |
| Meeting with CEO, Dhelkaya Health and Principal, Castlemaine Secondary College to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire  | ✓   |       |
| Onsite tour and meeting with General Manager – Maldon Gold Project, Kaiser Reef to discuss current and future activities (Michael Annear, Director Infrastructure and Development and Daniel Bone, Acting Manager Economy and Culture also in attendance) | ✓   | ✓     |
| Gold Central Vic radio interview  | ✓   |       |
| Meeting with developer to discuss potential tourism development opportunity for Mount Alexander Shire (Daniel Bone, Acting Manager Economy and Culture also in attendance)  | ✓   | ✓     |
| Meeting with representative from My Home Network  |     | ✓     |
| Meeting with Regional Director, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire  | ✓   |       |
| Meeting with Principal, Castlemaine Secondary College to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire   | ✓   |       |
| Meeting with resident to discuss potential funding donation opportunity   | ✓   | ✓     |
| Gold Central Vic radio interview  | ✓   |       |

Councillor Maddock advised that he attended a working bee at La Larr Ba Gauwa, the World Cup Event at the Castlemaine Goods Shed, the Main Game, Sorry Day and the signing of the Deed of Trust for Affordable Housing.

Councillor Walker noted he held Councillor Listening Posts in Chewton, Elphinstone and Taradale.

Councillor Annear advised that she has held Councillor Listening Posts at Camp Reserve, during the football/netball games, the Main Game, and the Castlemaine Farmers Market. She also noted that she attended the Goldfields Library Board Meeting.

Mayor Heydon and the CEO both spoke to the tabled Delegates Report. The CEO also thanked Councillors for their earlier words.

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## **11. NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **11.1 Notice of Motion 007/2026 - Water Standpipes – Review of Number, Location and Accessibility of Standpipes in Mount Alexander Shire**

#### **MOTION NOT MOVED.**

That Council:

1. Directs the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Managing Director of Coliban Water, requesting:
  - a) A review into the current number, location and efficiency of standpipes providing raw, recycled and potable water, to be undertaken in consultation with Council as soon as practicable in order to inform Coliban Water's next program of works
  - b) A budget commitment to locate and install additional standpipes as identified by the review, to be included in the next Coliban Water ESC Price Submission (that applies from 2028).

#### **Rationale**

Water standpipes provide an accessible source of water, during emergency situations including fire events. They also supply properties that are not connected to mains water and therefore require an additional water source during dry conditions. The main requirement is tanker access for household use while fire tanker filling should have back up power.

With the impacts of climate change, increased fire risk and more frequent drought conditions, water standpipes provide vital infrastructure for communities across Central Victoria including in Mount Alexander Shire. Currently, there are only three standpipes providing potable water within Mount Alexander Shire. These are owned and operated by Coliban Water and are located at Newstead, Maldon and Taradale. Issues associated with the three existing standpipes include:

- Impacts on residential, recreational and business locations due to access by heavy vehicles. Amenity and safety impacts include noise disruption and reversing and turning within a residential street. This is particularly problematic at the Fountain Street site in Maldon
- Reports of inadequate water pressure resulting in trucks taking up to an hour to fill and the formation of queues in Taradale.

Overall, there appears to be an inadequate number and distribution of standpipes to meet current and future needs.

Council Officers and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) – Loddon Mallee Region have recently asked that the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee note and approve the Harcourt Water Tanks Donation Project, which entails water tanks to be installed upon Department of Transport & Planning land and feed connections to Coliban Water mains for filling purposes. The water tanks are being donated as there was a disruption to Harcourt's water supply during the recent fire event in January 2026, due to the electric power supply failing, a water main rupturing and many open mains connections at severely damaged houses and sheds. It is understood that the water from these tanks would be available for firefighting purposes only.

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It is proposed that an alternative site be identified in Maldon in order to address the issues associated with the current location in Fountain Street, and also that two additional sites be identified and installed across the Shire in order to satisfy current and future need. It is suggested that potential sites for the two additional water pipes could include Sutton Grange, Barkers Creek Reservoir (where there was previously a standpipe) and/or Guildford.

Council would be pleased to work closely with Coliban Water to identify suitable sites for both raw and potable water.

**Officer Comment**

Council Officers support the proposed review of the location and operation of the three standpipes located within the Shire and further support the recommendation to identify and install additional standpipes within the Shire that could provide potable, recycled or raw water. If accepted, Council Officers will support Coliban Water through the review and investigation process.

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**12. URGENT SPECIAL BUSINESS**

Nil.

**13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

These reports are confidential in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020, which permits the meeting to be closed to consider confidential information.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council closes the Ordinary Meeting of Council 16 June 2026, in accordance with Section 66 (2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020, in order to consider confidential information as it contains as defined in the Local Government Act under Section 3, Definitions – Confidential Information:**

**(f) personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.**

**MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY**

**That the recommendation be adopted**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR Driscoll**

**CARRIED.**

**14. MEETING CLOSE.**

The Meeting closed at 9.04 pm.