



Pyrenees
Shire Council

Minutes

Ordinary Meeting of Council

6:00 pm Monday 20 October 2025

Council Chambers

Beaufort Council Offices,
5 Lawrence Street, Beaufort

Wadawurrung Country

Members of the public may view the meeting virtually via the livestream

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. WELCOME	3
2. STREAMING PREAMBLE	3
3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	3
4. APOLOGIES.....	3
5. NOTICE OF DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS	3
6. CONFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES.....	3
7. BUSINESS ARISING	3
8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.....	4
9. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS	5
9.1. Councillor Activity Reports - September 2025.....	5
10. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS.....	7
10.1. Assembly of Councillors - September 2025	7
11. ITEMS FOR DECISION	9
11.1. Economic Development and Tourism	9
11.1.1. Economic Development Update	9
11.2. Asset and Development Services.....	18
11.2.1. Kerbside Waste & Recycling Collection Service	18
11.2.2. Green Waste Collection Services & Fire Preparedness	25
11.2.3. Ten Year Asset Plan - Public Consultation Submission Review.....	28
11.2.4. Statutory Planning User Survey 2025	30
11.2.5. Domestic Animal Management	38
11.3. Corporate and Community Services	42
11.3.1. S6 Delegations to Council Staff.....	42
11.3.2. Council Plan 2025-2029 Initiatives.....	44
11.3.3. Annual Report 2025	48
11.3.4. Christmas Closure Period.....	50
11.3.5. Audit and Risk Committee - June and September 2025	52
11.3.6. Project Update - October 2025.....	54
12. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND GENERAL BUSINESS	56
13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS	59
14. CLOSE OF MEETING	59

1. WELCOME

Mayor Cr Tanya Kehoe welcomed all to the meeting.

PRESENT

Mayor: Cr Tanya Kehoe

Councillors: Megan Phelan, Simon Tol, Rebecca Wardlaw, Damian Ferrari

Chief Executive Officer: Jim Nolan

Director Asset and Development Services: Douglas Gowans

Director of Corporate and Community Services: Jacinta Erdody

EA to CEO and Councillors: Chantelle Sandlant (minutes)

Senior Communications Officer: Fiona Henderson

Communications Officer: Helen D'Costa

2. STREAMING PREAMBLE

Mayor Cr Tanya Kehoe read the livestream preamble.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Mayor acknowledged the people past and present of the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Eastern Maar, Wotjabaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Nations, whose lands and waters the Pyrenees Shire operates on. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, and recognise and respect their customs, stewardship and continuing connection to Country.

4. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

5. NOTICE OF DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

6. CONFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Megan Phelan

That the Minutes of the:

- Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 15 September 2025;
- Closed Meeting of Council held on 15 September 2025; and
- Special Meeting of Council held on 29 September 2025,

as previously circulated to Councillors, be confirmed.

CARRIED

7. BUSINESS ARISING

There was no business arising (items taken on notice) from the previous meeting held 15 September 2025.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Trevor Davey of Waterloo

Question one:

I would like to bring up something I have raised before and just wondering what the update is. Over the last three or four weeks I have travelled a lot around the Council working and I am getting a lot of pensioners and farmers, all asking the same question I asked about a year ago. Is there ever going to be a new sign put on the highway saying you have entered the Pyrenees Shire or welcome to the Pyrenees Shire.

Response:

Mr Douglas Gowans thanked Mr Davey for the question and provided the following response:

As you might be aware Mr Davey, Council have recently done some small township signage work in a number of our small hamlets and communities and there had been quite a bit of work getting the template right, making sure it met with our branding book so that the Pyrenees Shire branding was correct. One of the more complicated issues with this project has been the entry to the shire signage and the updates that are required for that because there are some font changes and potentially some messaging changes that need to occur with that. That is something that I know the communications team are working on and my understanding is that it is Councils intention to finalise that project to be able to put new entrance signage up at the key road entrances to the Shire.

Question two:

Are you ever going to have a clock in reception so that someone knows the time? I had three pensioners in three days ask me the same thing and I looked as I walked in now and I couldn't find it. I think when they come to pay their bills they are always trying to look for the time.

Response:

Mr Jim Nolan thanked Mr Davey for the question and provided the following response:

I am happy to take that on board and I am sure that there is something we can do to have the time available in the foyer.

9. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS

9.1. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS - SEPTEMBER 2025

Cr Tanya Kehoe – Mount Emu Ward		
01/09/2025	Ballarat Liberal Ladies Coffee	Ballarat
01/09/2025	Councillor Workshop	Beaufort
03/09/2025	Hindmarsh Councillor and Officer Visit	Beaufort
04/09/2025	Rural Women's Wellbeing Expo	Beaufort
08/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Meeting	Beaufort
16/09/2025	Old Beaufort Primary School Drop-in Session	Beaufort
16/09/2025	Audit & Risk Committee Meeting	Beaufort
17/09/2025	The Mayors Institute – State Election Round Table	Virtual
19/09/2025	VLGA Lunch & Learn – Managing Conflicts of Interest	Virtual
19/09/2025	Rural Councils Victoria Committee Meeting	Virtual
25/09/2025	MAV Masterclass – Councillors Role in CEO Performance	Melbourne
29/09/2025	Special Meeting of Council	Virtual
30/09/2025	Welcome Speech – Outdoors Inc. Convention	Cave Hill Creek

Cr Simon Tol – Ercildoune Ward		
01/09/2025	Councillor Workshop	Beaufort
02/09/2025	Lexton Community Hub AGM	Lexton
03/09/2025	Hindmarsh Councillor and Officer Visit	Beaufort
08/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Constituent Meeting	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Meeting	Beaufort
16/09/2025	Waubra Hub Meeting	Beaufort
16/09/2025	Old Beaufort Primary School Drop-in Session	Beaufort
29/09/2025	Special Meeting of Council	Virtual

Cr Megan Phelan – De Cameron Ward		
01/09/2025	Councillor Workshop	Virtual
03/09/2025	Community Bushfire Meeting	Moonambel
08/09/2025	Council Briefing	Virtual
15/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Meeting	Beaufort
29/09/2025	Special Meeting of Council	Virtual

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw – Avoca Ward		
01/09/2025	Councillor Workshop	Beaufort
03/09/2025	Hindmarsh Councillor and Officer Visit	Beaufort
08/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
10/09/2025	Avoca Men's Shed AGM	Avoca
10/09/2025	Avoca Food Pantry – Food Deliveries	Avoca
11/09/2025	ALGWA Masterclass	Virtual
15/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Meeting	Beaufort
16/09/2025	Audit & Risk Committee Meeting	Virtual
18/09/2025	Avoca Primary School Concert	Avoca
23/09/2025	Defying the Drift Dinner	Longerenong
29/09/2025	Special Meeting of Council	Virtual

Cr Damian Ferrari – Beaufort Ward		
01/09/2025	Councillor Workshop	Beaufort
03/09/2025	Hindmarsh Councillor and Officer Visit	Beaufort
08/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Briefing	Beaufort
15/09/2025	Council Meeting	Beaufort
16/09/2025	Old Beaufort Primary School Drop In Session	Beaufort
29/09/2025	Old Beaufort Primary School PCG Meeting	Beaufort
29/09/2025	Special Meeting of Council	Virtual

Cr Damian Ferrari / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council notes this report.

CARRIED

10. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS**10.1. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS - SEPTEMBER 2025**

MEETING INFORMATION			
Meeting Name	Council Briefing		
Meeting Date	8 September 2025 commenced at 4.00pm and closed at 7.00pm		
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort		
Items Discussed	1. Safer Local Roads and Street Program (SLRSP) 2. Old Beaufort Primary School 3. Waubra Recreation Reserve Masterplan 4. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 5. CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy 6. 2025/26 Carryovers 7. Strategic Issues Raised by Councillors		
ATTENDEES			
Councillors	Mayor Cr Tanya Kehoe Cr Damian Ferrari Cr Rebecca Wardlaw Cr Simon Tol Cr Megan Phelan (virtual)		
Apologies	Nil.		
Staff	Jim Nolan (Chief Executive Officer) Douglas Gowans (Director Assets and Development Services) Jacinta Erdody (Director Corporate and Community Services) Daniel Potter (Manager Engineering) - item 1 Memphis Forte (Design & Projects Engineer) - item 1 Adam Boyle (Team Leader – Community Development) - item 3 Baylie Lang (Recreation Development Coordinator) - item 3 Glenn Kallio (Manager Finance) virtual - item 6		
Visitors	Kate De Pina (Public Realm Lab) - item 2 Philip Ward (Public Realm Lab) - item 2		
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES			
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting
Nil.			

MEETING INFORMATION			
Meeting Name	Council Briefing		
Meeting Date	15 September 2025 commenced at 4.00pm and closed at 5.45pm		
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort		
Items Discussed	1. PA25044 – 60 Ellis Road, Beaufort 2. Workforce Plan / EBA 3. Diversified Thriving Economy 4. Strategic Issues Raised by Councillors / Councillor only time 5. Evaluation		
ATTENDEES			
Councillors	Mayor Cr Tanya Kehoe Cr Damian Ferrari Cr Rebecca Wardlaw Cr Simon Tol Cr Megan Phelan		
Apologies	Douglas Gowans (Director Assets and Development Services)		
Staff	Jim Nolan (Chief Executive Officer) Jacinta Erdody (Director Corporate and Community Services) Rachel Blackwell (Manager Planning and Development)		
Visitors	Nil.		
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES			
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting
Nil.			

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Simon Tol

That Council notes this report.

CARRIED

11. ITEMS FOR DECISION

11.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

11.1.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Presenter: Jim Nolan - Chief Executive Officer

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Ray Davies – Manager Economic Development and Tourism

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 22/02/02

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform councillors on recent activities of the Economic Development and Tourism team over the September quarter 2025.

BACKGROUND

Economic Development Activities for the June quarter

Throughout the past quarter the focus of the Economic Development and Tourism team has been on the projects and activities outlined below:

- Economic Development and Investment Attraction Strategy
- Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees (SWNP) water supply project
- Business Friendly Council Program
- Digital Connectivity
- Agriculture Resilience Investigation
- Pyrenees Wine Growers Pop Up Cellar Door
- Beaufort by Twilight
- Cycle routes
- Support for drought affected businesses
- Small business support
- Events and tourism campaigns

Economic Development and Investment Attraction Strategy

In adherence with Councils Procurement Policy, proposals were received from seven reputable consultants in response to Councils Request for Quote for the EDIAS.

Procurement of the successful consultants has now been finalised with an inception meeting scheduled to meet with them on 15 October and consultation due to commence in early November. The final strategy is due to be completed towards the end of April 2026.

Expressions of Interest have been sought from leaders within the business community to form an Economic Task Force.

The role of the Taskforce and its members will be to:

- Share knowledge and industry insights with the consultants.
- Work collaboratively with Council, other Taskforce representatives and the consultants.
- Use their acute business management skills, experience and leadership skills to engage other business owners from their industry in the consultation process.
- Provide guidance to the consultant in the development of the strategy.

Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply

With low September rainfall and drought conditions continuing to prevail across much of the Shire, SWNP remains a regional priority with Pyrenees Shire Council as the lead agency on behalf of project partners, GWM Water, Central Highlands Water, Northern Grampians, Central Goldfields and Pyrenees Shire Councils.

The draft business case advises the benefits of SWNP in providing a reliable, fit for purpose water supply include:

1. **An economic uplift of \$101.3 million** per annum.
2. Improved water access and productivity for farming and viticulture enterprises will **contribute to higher household incomes and improved farmer health.**
3. **Increased property values, growing economies and more jobs**
4. Access to environmental water for **improved waterway health**
5. Provide **opportunities for cultural water** for traditional Owners
6. **Safety and resilience.** Factored into the design of the pipeline are Emergency water supply points located approximately every six kilometres along the pipeline which will provide ready access for firefighting and water for livestock for those properties choosing not to connect to the reticulated General Stock and Domestic network. The proposed EWSP's will be managed by GWMWater rather than relying on Council operated Emergency Water Supply Points.

To further strengthen the case for the project GWM Water are continuing to progress the Traditional Owner component of work to assess aspirations and needs for cultural water which will be concluded in early 2026. Spring surveys are due to be undertaken during mid-November.

A meeting was held with the Member for Ripon, senior Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action staff, advisers to the Minister for Water and representatives of the project partners on 5 August.

As a result of this meeting DEECA have completed a detailed review of the draft business case and identified areas where further detail is desirable.

The next steps are to work with GWM Water and project partners to address the feedback provided by DEECA.

Business Friendly Council Program

Council's participation in the Victorian Governments "Business Friendly Councils" initiative was reported to Council in July.

The aim of this initiative is to develop a "Business Friendly Culture" across the organisation and improve the efficiency of the permit process and the customer experience with council **so new businesses can start operating sooner and existing businesses wanting to expand or diversify can streamline their council interactions.**

Councils who have already participated in the program are realising the benefits of streamlined business permit approval processes, more connected teams, and internal practice efficiencies. These benefits include reduced time and resources required of councils to deliver core business permitting functions, reduced time for businesses to receive permits and cost savings to local businesses.

At the time of developing this report staff have completed:

1. An initial planning meeting attended by the Economic Development Team with the consultants and Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) staff to map out the scope and delivery of the program

2. A council research and preparation phase by Eco Dev including submission of five case study businesses who have recently been through a regulatory approvals process. These businesses were then interviewed by the consultants delivering the program in preparation for delivery of the next phase of the program
3. An on-site deep dive session at Council offices involving staff members from Front Line Services, Planning, Building, Health, Engineering, Local Laws and Economic Development. This session shared recent case study information and examined the current state, key challenges and identified priority areas for action
4. Business Insight Gathering by Eco Dev. Additional feedback was sought from the various Council departments and an examination of the local needs and priorities completed in preparation for the next phase of the program
5. Two day "Sprint Workshop" to refine the project focus areas, promote the BFC culture, conduct "Train the Trainer" sessions to build internal capacity and to consolidate the learnings, strengthen BFC leadership capacity and provide access to tools to embed and sustain practices across Council. Staff representatives from regulatory services, corporate services and economic development attended this event and identified the overarching pillars as:
 - Why:
 - Economic prosperity
 - Diversified economy
 - Pro-active service delivery
 - Liveable places and connected community
 - How:
 - Elevating Council as a partner to business
 - Build a strong Business Friendly Council culture
 - Complete the four application phases within defined timelines (Prepare, Apply, Assess and Support)
 - What:
 - Attract investment
 - Reduce costs to business and council
 - Enhance Council reputation as being business friendly

There are two further events to occur to finalise delivery of the program:

1. A final workshop for the Eco Dev Team to receive a customised implementation plan (informed by the earlier workshop activities). The plan will outline the agreed focus areas, next steps and actions for rollout and identify any resourcing requirements
2. A Check-In at 50 days to review progress against the implementation plans, share early wins and challenges, and to provide targeted support to sustain momentum and adjust actions as needed.

Following completion of these stages the responsibility to resource and implement the proposed BFC plan rests with Council.

Digital Connectivity Plan

Significant NBN infrastructure upgrades are improving digital access across the Pyrenees:

- **New Fixed Wireless Towers at Lexton and Skipton** are now live, providing improved internet options for residents.
- **Towers under construction at Waterloo and Navarre**, with connections expected **early 2026**.
- **Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)** upgrades are now available (at customer request) in **Avoca and Beaufort**, allowing faster and more reliable internet connections.
- A **new low-orbit satellite service** (similar to Starlink) is anticipated to launch **mid-2026**.

Check your address for NBN availability - <https://www.nbnco.com.au/connect-home.../check-your-address>

NBN Community Engagement Sessions Delivered and upcoming

- Lexton Hub Pub – 28 August | 4:30–7:30pm
- Lexton Hub Pub – 5 September | 4:30–6:30pm
- Avoca Information Centre – 5 September | 10am–12:30pm
- Waterloo Community Hall – 6 September | 10am–12pm
- Beeripmo Development Centre – 9 October | 12pm–2pm
- Beaufort Agricultural Show – 16 November | 9:30am–4:30pm
- **Tech Connect Workshop** – Beaufort Library | 9 October | 10–11am
- Avoca Senior Citizens – Lunch 5 November

Resilient Agriculture Investigation

This project is being delivered through a regional collaboration of Central Highlands Councils as one of the five priority actions in the Central Highlands Drought Resilience Implementation Plan.

Commerce Ballarat have been engaged by Agriculture Victoria to deliver the actions in the implementation plan with Federation University having been engaged by Commerce Ballarat to develop the Resilient Agriculture Report.

The objectives of the report are:

1. Undertake a detailed study on agricultural options for the region giving consideration to the natural and built assets and those issues affecting the agricultural sector including drought, climate change and options for value added agriculture.
2. Summarise the outcomes of prior studies and investigate any gaps and opportunities for diversification of agriculture, value add to regional produce and identify what steps are necessary to facilitate the investment required to capitalise on these opportunities.

Desktop investigations have now been completed, and a consultation is about to be undertaken through one-on-one interviews with farmers and agribusiness organisations over the next two months.

The final report is scheduled for the end of March 2026.

Pyrenees Wine Growers Pop Up Cellar Door

Pyrenees Wine Growers Pop-Up Cellar Door (Ballarat) – Supporting the collective of twelve Pyrenees wineries to establish a *pop-up cellar door* at **The George Hotel, Ballarat**, from mid-November. This initiative will showcase the Pyrenees wine region to new audiences and strengthen regional tourism links.

Beaufort by Twilight

Planning and coordination of this year's event is well progressed with invitations being extended to twenty-five Beaufort businesses to participate in this years program.

Cycle Routes

Developing cycle routes was identified as a priority in the 2024 Pyrenees Local Area Action Plan (tourism strategy). Several meetings have now been held with DEECA over the past twelve months to create some gravel cycle loops in Trawalla State Park using existing roads from Beaufort Lake. Draft maps have now been developed with agreements to be drafted by DEECA for agreed terms between DEECA and Council on the implementation of the trails.

Two cycle loop trails from Moonambel are also being investigated at present and were presented for community feedback during the June drop-in session at Moonambel and via the Council website.

Drought Support

Prevailing dry conditions continue to place pressure on the Pyrenees farming community, while broader economic challenges persist for many small businesses. The Economic Development team continues to provide **one-on-one assistance**, connecting businesses with programs and agencies such as **RFCS Victoria West** and **Tourism Midwest Victoria** to help build resilience, skills, and sustainability.

Council's monthly Industry Newsletter continues to update farmers on initiatives by the Victorian and Commonwealth Government to assist farmers. These initiatives include:

- Farm drought support grants; according to Agriculture Victoria data, approximately 30% of farms in the Pyrenees have accessed this support
- One on One farm advisory service
- Farm group technical events
- Interstate movement of hay and fodder freight network
- On farm kangaroo control rebate program
- Look over the farm gate events support
- Rural Financial Counselling Service
- Commonwealth assistance programs:
 - Farm Household Allowance
 - Concessional loans and
 - Tax concessions

Further details are available at agriculture.vic.gov.au/drought

Events Overview – July to September 2025

While this quarter is traditionally a quieter period for events, July to September 2025 saw a diverse calendar of activities across the Pyrenees.

A major highlight was the inclusion of the **Pyrenees Trail** as part of the **Ballarat International Foto Biennale** for the first time. Participating wineries — **Dalwhinnie**, **Taltarni**, **Bigibila**, and **Blue Pyrenees Estate** — along with the **Avoca Visitor Information Centre**, hosted photographic exhibitions showcasing the region's creativity and character.

Community groups also delivered a number of successful events aimed at **drought support and recovery**, benefitting from the Victorian Government's *Over the Farm Gate* grant initiative and Council's **Recovery Support Fund**.

Key events included:

- **Beaufort Big Day Out** – Bendigo Bank Complex, Beaufort
- **For Farmers' Sake** – Beaufort Hotel
- **Just a Farmer** Movie Screening – Avoca Town Hall

Event Support (July–September 2025)

- **12 formal event applications** received. Of these, **3 events** were held during the July–September period, with the remainder scheduled for the October–December quarter.
- **43 events** across the Shire received **marketing and promotional support**, up from **29 events** in the same period last year — demonstrating growing local engagement and activation.

Tourism

Digital Statistics July to September 2025

Facebook

	Organic Posts Reached	Organic Page Visits	New Followers
Jul – Sep 2024	52,790	1,340	37
Jul – Sep 2025	78,548	1,253	52

Instagram Organic Posts

	Posts Reached	Page Visits	New Followers
Jul – Sep 2024	1,953	193	30
Jul – Sep 2025	2,369	176	49

Paid advertisements reached 25,102 Instagram and Facebook users in the last quarter compared to 18,651 in the September 2024 quarter.

Visit Pyrenees Website

- 7.1K Users during the September quarter
- 7K of those users were new users
- Most visited pages were Wineries, Festivals and Events, Winery accommodation blog, Road to Red, Mount Cole State Forest.

Road to Red

The Road to Red campaign commenced in June through to August with a strong seasonal focus on the region's renowned red wines, cosy cellar doors, and the inviting warmth of wood fires. Designed to promote winter travel through the Pyrenees wine region, the campaign highlighted the soul-warming experiences unique to this time of year. Visitors were encouraged to explore at their own pace through a self-guided drive itinerary, with supporting content available via the Visit Pyrenees app. The campaign aimed to boost visitation during the cooler months by tapping into the appeal of comfort, connection, and local produce.

Room to Roam

The Room to Roam campaign was developed in response to Tourism Marketing Victoria's audience segmentation research, which revealed that visitors are most drawn to regional destinations offering wide open spaces, scenic beauty, and a strong connection to nature. The campaign invites travelers to experience the Pyrenees as a place where freedom and tranquility meet — where there's truly "room to roam." It highlights the region's stunning landscapes, fresh country air, and the opportunity to slow down, explore, and reconnect.

Through evocative imagery and storytelling, Room to Roam showcases the Pyrenees as the perfect blend of adventure, nature, and culinary delights. Visitors are encouraged to discover authentic experiences — from hiking through rolling hills to sampling local wines and produce. To reach our target audience, the campaign has featured advertising and editorial placements in Eat Play Stay, Ballarat Living, and Goldfields Getaway, supported by a coordinated social media campaign and digital advertising to extend our reach and engagement.

Pyrenees Shire Council



Room to roam in the Pyrenees

Discover freedom where the air is crisp and clean and scented with wildflowers

There's a feeling you get in the Pyrenees that's hard to put into words — but you know it the moment you arrive. It starts with the horizon, stretching wide in every direction. The kind of wide that makes your decisions drop and your breath deepen. Here, under open skies and surrounded by rolling vineyards, forested peaks and winding country roads, you'll find the space to truly roam.

Spring is a season of awakening and in the Pyrenees it feels particularly magical. The air is crisp and clean, scented with wildflowers and the earthy promise of rain-soaked soil. Vibrant birdsong once more fills the air, and the hills are vibrant with green and yellow daffodils. It's a time to slow down, to truly connect with the land, to breathe in the fresh air and feel the warmth of the sun on your face. This is the time to explore — on foot, by bike or simply by following your curiosity.

There are adventures for every pace. Hike through the towering trees of Mount Cole or take the winding trail to Pigeon Falls and feel the rush of the forest all around you. Pitch

a tent beneath the stars or set up on the shores of Deepans Lake where every bend reveals a new vista across the countryside. And when you stop, the region's coffee shops are ready to welcome you with bold, vibrant flavours and stories passed straight from the people who make them. Sip a glass of Cabernet Franc or Shiraz as eagles soar overhead. Dive under the vines at Blue Pyrenees Estate where every color is paired with a view. Or discover hidden gems like Dovevine and Sales Padstock where the view is as memorable as the setting.

And it's not just about nature and wine — though you'll find plenty of both. It's about reconnecting with the land, with yourself, with those you love. It's about space — the sort that clears your mind and fills your heart.

In the Pyrenees, there's no need to rush. There's just room. Room to breathe. Room to explore. Room to roam.



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ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply

Advocacy efforts for this project are being targeted to the Victorian Governments Water for Victoria Policy:

“Victoria's "Water for Victoria" plan focuses on managing water resources for a healthy environment, a prosperous economy, and thriving communities”

- **Improving water system efficiency and innovation.** The project presents an opportunity to discontinue harvesting saline ground water for rural towns like Avoca, Landsborough, Navarre, Redbank and Amphitheatre and to connect Moonambel with a township supply

- **Supporting Aboriginal interests;** Traditional Owner water assessments are currently in progress and due to be finalised by early Feb 2026. GWM and Djaara are progressing the study in collaboration with Barengi Gadjin and Eastern Maar traditional owners
- **Strengthening waterway health.** Less reliance will be required by farmers on farm dams and groundwater bores enabling improved health of waterways and groundwater systems. There may also be less dependence on groundwater and desalination systems currently operating for various urban supplies.
- **Increasing community and customer focus in decision making.** The three council partners issued letters to over 2,500 non-urban landholders within the 354,000-hectare footprint of the project at the commencement of the feasibility study in 2023. Landowners will have the alternative to voluntarily opt in to the scheme and an expression of interest program has deemed the project as feasible and subsequently led to the business case.
- **Ensuring financial and performance sustainability of water corporations.** The project will conclude GWM Waters' water grid network and provide Central Highlands Water with a less costly and more environmentally friendly option for urban supplies for a number of towns that now rely on saline groundwater supplies, some requiring desalination. Desalination plants are operating at Avoca and the joint Landsborough/Navarre township supply.

A dry winter and minimal spring rain have left farm water stores depleted with some farmers still carting water while paying for supplementary feed throughout winter. The strain is compounding across households, businesses and landscapes.

Without intervention:

- Business viability is undermined
- Financial, health and emotional pressures escalate
- Cultural, recreational and environmental assets decline
- Traditional owner aspirations for cultural water will be denied
- Fire preparedness is compromised

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 2 - Economy

2a. Support growth and diversification of new and existing businesses.

2b. Coordinated and facilitated planning fostering business and tourism growth.

2c. Support community events and visitor economy.

2d. Advocate for transport infrastructure, job creation and workforce development.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

This report provides an overview of various projects in which prior consultation will have occurred.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

While the financial and risks have been reported previously for most projects mentioned in this report, there may be resourcing implications to implement the Business Friendly Council program.

These will become clearer once Council receives its implementation plan and will be reported in due course.

CONCLUSION

SWNP

There is a compelling case for funding of the SWNP water supply project which has:

- An estimated build cost (including contingency allowance) of \$159 million
- Benefit cost ratio of 1.489
- Is estimated to generate an economic uplift of \$101.3 million per annum
- Requires \$120 million in government funding.

A dry winter and minimal spring rain have left farm water stores depleted with some farmers still carting water while paying for supplementary feed throughout winter. The strain is compounding across households, businesses and landscapes.

Without intervention:

- Business viability is undermined
- Financial, health and emotional pressures escalate
- Cultural, recreational and environmental assets decline
- Traditional owner aspirations for cultural water will be denied
- Fire preparedness is compromised

The project partners are seeking a partnership commitment from the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments of \$120 million to deliver the project

Business Friendly Council

Council is due to receive a customised implementation plan at a workshop in mid-October which may have resourcing implications to be considered and subject to a future report to Council.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council:

1. Notes the report.
2. Seeks an election commitment from the State Government and Opposition Parties to fund the SWNP project in collaboration with Northern Grampians and Central Goldfields Shire Councils.
3. Receives a further report on implementation of the Business Friendly Council program in early 2026.

CARRIED

11.2. ASSET AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

11.2.1. KERBSIDE WASTE & RECYCLING COLLECTION SERVICE

Presenter: Douglas Gowans - Director Asset and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Daniel Potter – Manager Engineering

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 68/08/06

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council consideration to make changes to the kerbside collection service which include introduction of Food Organic's and Garden Organic's (FOGO), changes to collection frequency and bin size and consideration to allow soft plastic recycling within the kerbside comingled recycling collection.

BACKGROUND

2025 Waste Community Survey

The 2025 waste survey was open between 24th August to 30th September 2025 where 158 responses were received. This survey asked 25 questions and included 7 questions relating to components of FOGO recycling. A summary of the main questions/responses is included below:

- 42% of respondents would accept kerbside collection frequency changes with FOGO introduction.
- 61% of responses didn't support a kerbside collection service comprising a 3-weekly 240ltr landfill, fortnightly 240ltr recycling, 8-weekly 120ltr glass and fortnightly 240ltr FOGO. The main reason this is not supported is due to the 3-weekly landfill collection.
- 25% of responses were supportive of an early implementation of a FOGO service with 51% of these supportive residents from Avoca & Beaufort. Snake Valley residents also supported early implementation.
- 28% of respondents place garden organics material into landfill or burn the organics material. This material can be recycled into topsoil, etc.
- 23% of respondents place food organics into landfill. This material can be recycled into topsoil, etc.

Pyrenees Shire Council's Engineering team frequently review the waste & recycling service to ensure an efficient and 'best value' service to the community that complies to Federal and State government requirements while also considering environmental benefits.

As a part of this continual analysis and management of the waste & recycling service, there are several changes that can be made to Pyrenees Shire Council's current kerbside collection service that can provide a better service and better conform to current/future proposed State Government requirements.

These proposed changes included within this report have been mainly developed considering the following:

- Kerbside bin presentation rates. Data provided by council's kerbside collection Contractor.
- Kerbside bin audits with the latest bin audit completed in 2024.
- Legislation requirements, mainly the '*Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*', '*Draft Regulations*' & '*Draft Service Standards*'.
- Services provided by other surrounding councils.
- Pyrenees Shire Councils 'Waste & Collection Strategy' & 'Transition Plan'.
- Pyrenees Shire Council Budget – including the 25/26 budget & future budgets.
- Waste & Recycling Rates Charges and,
- 2025 Waste Survey Results.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The following includes details on three proposed changes to the current kerbside collection service.

Greenwaste/FOGO kerbside collections & landfill bin collection changes

The introduction of a kerbside FOGO collection service is a requirement of the State Government's *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021* and regulations that require a 4-bin system by July 2027.

While it is a state government requirement to introduce a FOGO service, there are several factors why an early kerbside FOGO collection service should be considered within Pyrenees Shire Council prior to July 2027. These include:

- Waste audit results reported a high volume of FOGO material within landfill bin at roughly 30% of the landfill bin volume.
- Environmental and sustainability benefits by reducing waste to landfill with removing FOGO material from the household's landfill bins (Red lidded bin).
- Pyrenees Shire Council's 'Waste & Collection Strategy' and 'Transition Plan' approved by Council in Dec 2020 included the implementation of an early kerbside FOGO service to start in July 2026 instead of the initial required State Government timeframe of by 2030.
- Landfill disposal costs are greatly increasing each year with the current cost at \$233 per tonne verses the \$155-175 per tonne for the disposal/composing of FOGO.
- Current options exist for the disposal & composting of FOGO exist within the region and surrounding Councils including City of Ararat. Other options for disposal of FOGO will be investigated via an open tender prior to any implementation of a kerbside FOGO collection service.
- All the surrounding councils have implemented or have a confirmed schedule for the implementation of a kerbside FOGO collection service,
- The current availability of kerbside bins. It is anticipated that as it gets closer to July 2027, where all Victorian Council's are required to have a 4-bin system, the bins will be harder to procure due to the demand for bins,
- Changes to the current kerbside collection scheduling require advanced notice, with details on collection frequencies and volumes, to enable procurement of services like collection trucks & disposal location.
- An incremental implementation of a FOGO collection service will enable trial/error tests to resolve any major issues vs a full-scale implementation.
- Opportunity within Avoca & Beaufort who already have a Greenwaste bin can be easily converted to a FOGO bin at no cost.
- Current community interest & current residents waste practices with some results from the 2025 Waste Survey below:
 - 25% of respondents (39/158) say yes to an early implementation of a kerbside FOGO collection service (13% of respondents (20/158) don't know)
 - 28% of respondents (45/158) place garden organics material into landfill or burn the organics material. This material can be recycled into topsoil, etc.
 - 23% of respondents (37/158) place food organics into landfill. This material can be recycled into topsoil, etc.
 - 42% of respondents (66/158) would accept kerbside collection frequency changes with FOGO introduction. (38/158 outside of existing garden organics collection area)

There are several different options regarding the collection frequency and locations/towns to consider when introducing a kerbside FOGO collection. These include changes to the current landfill bin frequency and/or bin sizes with evidence suggesting that changing the landfill bin collection frequency will change the recycling behavior of residents.

The following is a 2-phase implementation method:

Phase 1 – Early 2026:

- Allow Food Organics (FO) in the existing 240ltr green waste (GO) bins in Avoca and Beaufort, converting these bins to FOGO bins and collecting fortnightly instead of monthly (4-weekly),
- Change the frequency and bin size of the existing 120ltr weekly landfill collection to a fortnightly 240ltr collection.

This option has a high benefit in terms of costs and environmental considerations. It also will influence and make residents think about removing more food organic material and comingled recycling material from their landfill bin due to the frequency of the landfill bin.

The cost to introduce this service would be very minimal and potentially ‘cost-neutral’ or a decrease due to the reduction in cost per tonne of landfill vs FOGO (\$233 vs \$165) and a reduction of transport costs with 2 less collections per month/shorter distance to dispose of the FOGO material (Ararat vs Stawell).

Residents can also request additional bins for an annual fee. Currently, the cost for an extra landfill bin is \$150 per year, as outlined in the council’s fees and charges, and is applied to the resident’s rates notice. If the proposed change to weekly landfill bin collection is approved, this \$150 fee will be reviewed and is likely to be reduced.

Additional option with the phase 1 implementation in early 2026:

- Introducing a fortnightly kerbside 240ltr FOGO collection service to other smaller towns like Snake Valley, Waubra, Lexton, Amphitheatre, Redbank, Moonambel, Raglan, Natti Yallock, Landsborough, Crowlands & Evansford and,
- Include an ‘opt-in’ option for the properties on the routes between these smaller townships/collection areas.
- No other changes to the rural fortnightly 240ltr landfill collections at this stage.

Some residents that don’t currently have a green waste collection have expressed their interest in a green waste collection service through the 2025 waste survey and through typical council communications with the waste team. The number of residents that have made this request is around 30 residents with many of these within the Snake Valley area. 28 of these 30 residents have properties over 4000 sqm but would still like a kerbside Greenwaste/FOGO collection service.

Additional investigation and community consultation would be required to confirm and determine effective areas for collection. This may be based on criteria like a minimum number of properties within an area, and capacity of collection vehicles, etc.

This option would likely increase the annual waste & recycling rates fee due to the extra transport costs. It is estimated this will cost an additional \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year, meaning property waste & recycling annual rates fee would increase by \$12-\$25 per year on top of the existing \$603 rates fee per property.

Phase 2 – 1 July 2027:

- Introduce a shire wide fortnightly FOGO service to all properties that currently have bins to make a 4-bin system and,
- No other changes to the rural fortnightly 240ltr landfill collections at this stage.

This is the State Government requirement for the introduction of a 4-bin system by July 2027. It is not recommended to implement this option at this stage due to the cost of implementation/transport costs and would likely raise community concerns for many residents that typically dispose of their FOGO waste by different methods.

Ultimately, Pyrenees Shire Council will be required by the State Government to implement a 4-bin system by July 2027, but it is recommended to plan for this option to be implemented between April-June 2027 to meet the requirement and avoid penalties.

It is estimated that the introduction of a full shire wide kerbside FOGO collection will cost an additional \$200,000-\$250,000 per year, meaning property waste & recycling annual rates fee would increase by \$50-\$65 per year on top of the existing \$603 rates fee per property.

Glass Kerbside Collections

It is proposed to change the frequency of the current monthly (4-weekly) 120ltr glass bin (purple lid bin) kerbside collection to a bi-monthly (8-weekly) kerbside collection across the full shire.

There are several reasons why this is proposed which include:

- The presentation rate for glass collections is very low at 20% (data from kerbside collection contractor & 2025 waste survey results),
- Glass bins are only 30% full when collected (data from 2024 waste audit, etc),
- Many glass containers are collected through the container deposit scheme (CDS) which has greatly reduced the amount of glass collected from when the service was introduced in July 2021.
- Inefficient use of the kerbside collection truck which drives around the shire not collecting bins as they haven't been presented, and Council/residents still pay for the bin collection. This means that Council is greatly overservicing residents, and residents are paying for a service they are not using.
- Cost savings of around \$40,000 per year of the \$80,000 budget per year for collection. Potential to save rate paying residents who receive a collection, \$10 per year.

Some potential negative items that have been considered in the review of the kerbside glass collection frequency include:

- Negative views from residents for a longer collection schedule due to their individual glass volume. Council's waste team would be able to offer an additional bin at a cost to the resident for collection if requested. This additional bin is currently \$50 per year in the 25/26 Council fee schedule and would be reviewed to around \$30 per year if the collection interval is reduced to every 8 weeks.
- Even though there are many reasons that residents don't want a separate kerbside glass bin collection, it is a requirement of the State Government's '*Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*' and regulations to have by July 2027.
- There is a minor risk that 'draft service standards' based off the '*Circular Economy Act 2021*' have not been adopted by the State Government and this service standard may include a recommended frequency of the kerbside glass collection. Even though the draft service standard hasn't been adopted, it is likely that the frequency of each of the 4-bin system will be determined by each Council.
- Residents may forget to put their glass bin out on scheduled collections. A solution to be investigated further includes a system for residents to register for an automatic reminder text message or email the night before the scheduled collection.

Soft Plastics

Soft plastics are typically plastic packaging that are scrunch-able. For example, pet food bags, chip/bread/cereal/sweets packaging, bubble/clip wrap, or soft plastics with numbers 2, 4 and 5, etc.

These soft plastics are normally disposed of in red lidded landfill bins and sent to landfill. These soft plastics are 16% by volume of the material included within the landfill bin as per the the waste bin audit completed in 2024.

Officers are currently investigating if soft plastic can be accepted within the comingled recycling bin (yellow bin) within Pyrenees Shire Council. This soft plastic would be recycled similar to the soft plastic pilot program currently being undertaken by City of Ballarat.

City of Ballarat Council's pilot program for soft plastic recycling involves residents to register for the soft plastic recycling, receive plastic bags that are used to fill with accepted soft plastics, and then place their full soft plastic bags into the comingled recycling bin (yellow lid) where it sent to a recycling processor with the comingled recycling. The cost of this soft plastic recycling is at no additional cost to the residents who register with the bags paid by the 'Soft Plastic Stewardship'.

The soft plastics are recycled through APR in Melbourne, which is a Material Recovery Facility (MRF), where Pyrenees Shire Council's comingled recycling also is processed.

If soft plastics can be included within the kerbside comingled recycling bin at Pyrenees Shire Council, this will further decrease the amount of material to landfill.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Priority 3 - Environment

3d. Improve waste management to reduce landfill and reduce harm to the environment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Community satisfaction scoring

Community satisfaction scoring of the waste & recycling service has been very positive and is Pyrenees Shire Councils highest scoring service. A copy of the 2024 survey results is included below:

Summary of Pyrenees Shire Council performance



Services	Pyrenees 2024	Pyrenees 2023	Small Rural 2024	State-wide 2024	Highest score	Lowest score
 Waste management	71	69	67	67	Avoca, DeCameron residents	Mt Emu residents

2024 individual service area performance (index scores)

		2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Waste management	71	69	69	66	58	65	69	75	70	71

Previous community engagement:

A community survey on waste services was conducted in 2020 which was before the introduction of the shire wide landfill and recycling kerbside collection service. This survey included 3-4 questions that included components on FOGO. A summary of these question responses is included below:

- 80% of responses include support or potential support for the separation/diversion of food organics and garden organics from the landfill,
- support for a glass bin was higher than a green waste bin,

- 43% of responses support a separate FOGO bin,
- 63% of the responses already complete composting of food scraps.

Community information will be provided following any agreed changes to the existing kerbside services prior to their implementation.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Waste survey results - Final Oct 2025 [11.2.1.1 - 12 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are indicated within the 'Issue/Discussion' section of this report for each service change. As the waste service is a fee for service, these additional costs are paid by residents through the annual waste/recycling rates fee.

There are several main risk implications that include:

- penalties to Council for not implementing a FOGO kerbside collection by July 2027
- reputation damage and reduction of the community satisfaction results

These risks can be managed through the implementation of the FOGO service by July 2027 and effective community engagement/information.

CONCLUSION

The kerbside waste bin collection service is a vital service provided by Pyrenees Shire Council. It is essential that the service continues to deliver the best value to the community. The proposed changes aim to enhance the service and improve overall efficiency and sustainability.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorses changes to the frequency of the current monthly (4-weekly) kerbside glass collection to a bi-monthly (8-weekly) kerbside glass collection.
2. Endorses Officers to continue to investigate soft plastic recycling and implement an option if available which fits within current waste & recycling budgets.
3. Implements a staged fortnightly 240ltr kerbside FOGO collection service within Avoca & Beaufort in early 2026, including a change of the frequency and bin size of the current weekly 120ltr landfill bin to a fortnightly 240ltr collection.
4. Undertakes required activities to implement the shire-wide kerbside fortnightly 240ltr FOGO collection service to be activated by 1 July 2027, with allowance for bin purchase and pre-implementation activities in the 2026/27 budget year.
5. Undertakes community notification and education on any agreed changes to the kerbside collection services.

Cr Simon Tol / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council:

1. Receive a detailed investigation into the possibility of Council providing waste collection services moving into the future. Including purchasing assets, employing operators and securing a waste dump site.
2. Defer any changes to the current waste collection arrangements until further direction has been provided by the State Government.

CARRIED

11.2.2. GREEN WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES & FIRE PREPAREDNESS

Presenter: Douglas Gowans - Director Asset and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Douglas Gowans – Director Assets and Development

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 68/04/08

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider the current Green Waste collection options within the Shire in the lead up to the declared fire season.

BACKGROUND

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) declares the fire danger period for Victorian municipalities. Although the declaration of the fire danger period is dependent on the amount of rain, grassland curing and other local conditions, the fire danger period for the Pyrenees Shire is generally between November and May each year. Once declared the fire danger period is publicized widely by the CFA.

In the lead up to the declared fire danger period, Council has previously offered green waste disposal at transfer stations at no cost to the community. This arrangement was made some years ago and has been extended to cover the whole year rather than just the period preceding the fire danger period. The Pyrenees Shire transfer stations do come at a substantive cost due to the requirement for supervision and other factors including processing and disposal.

A recent Customer Action Request (CAR) submitted to Council sought to support residents in Redbank with additional green waste collection or communal green waste disposal has prompted this report for Council consideration.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The Pyrenees Shire do have some communities that are a distance away from a transfer station and Council have in the past had requests for more accessible and convenient green waste collection or disposal facilities. Redbank and Evansford are two locations within the Shire that are some distance away from their nearest transfer station, being 22 kms and 34 kms respectively.

Council understands that not everyone has either appropriate vehicles to transport green waste or the physical capabilities to handle green waste. Council is aware that some community service groups have identified people who may require assistance and have supported green waste pickups for those in need.

Council has had in the past a number of locations where green waste could be stockpiled to allow for more convenient disposal opportunities. A stockpile site near Crowlands was one such place. This created a whole range of issues in that it encouraged illegal dumping of hard waste and on multiple occasions Council were required to clean up the site at a significant cost. This site has subsequently been closed via Council resolution and has been rehabilitated.

Council has also previously explored having skip bins for various forms of waste and most recently a glass skip bin collection. These too have created amenity issues and have encountered contamination of the waste stream. Again, this was at a substantial cost to Council and unfortunately resulted in material that should have been able to be recycled and ultimately sent to landfill.

Council officers have recently approached the Shire transfer station contractor who have expressed concerns due to contamination and non-alignment with their current operation.

One option to explore would be the provision of skip bins in localities where transfer station access is further away.

Another option for future years would be to expand the kerbside green waste collection that is currently in Avoca and Beaufort. This would be best undertaken during the tender period at the expiration of the current contract, to ensure that Council will obtain the best value service cost.

Fire Preparation Process

As part of the annual fire preparation process, Council sends out pre-season advisory letters to Shire residents who received a Fire Prevention Notice in the previous year. These letters include a list of contractors to enable residents who cannot undertake the work themselves to engage a local contractor.

A further part of Council's fire season preparation is undertaking roadside spraying and slashing programs. The spraying program is limited to 100km of preapproved roadsides and is normally completed in August, followed by the roadside slashing program which includes 800km of strategic breaks on Shire roads, and typically begins in November. Depending on seasonal conditions and vegetation curing rates, Council officers commence property inspections and issue Fire Prevention Notices where necessary.

Council also promotes fire prevention and preparedness through media releases, social media updates, and advertising in the Pyrenees Advocate, to ensure the community stays informed and prepared throughout the fire season.

Residents seeking assistance from contractors can find a list on the Council website or by contacting the Community Safety & Amenity Team directly.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 3 - Nature Environment

3b. Mitigate risks, build community resilience and enhance responsiveness to natural disasters.

3d. Promote responsible waste practices.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Council promotes fire prevention and preparedness through media releases, social media updates and advertising in local print media, ensuring the community remains informed and ready throughout the fire season.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The cost of hiring a large skip bin varies depending on the size of the bin and the frequency of collection. For example, an 8m² skip bin can cost upwards of \$1,000.00 per bin per collection. However, cost comparisons can be limited due to many contractors being unwilling to operate beyond a certain range. If this option were to be further pursued, a suggested timeframe to offer the service in the lead up to the fire season would be a two-month period with weekly skip exchange. Therefore, the cost for this period would be approximately \$10,000.00 per locality.

If Council were to consider providing skip bins for green waste in locations such as Redbank, there is risk that the bins may be used for other forms of waste disposal and may be utilised in a way that benefits some but not others due to the frequency in which they would be required to be collected.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring residents have accessible options for green waste disposal remains an important part of Council's broader fire prevention strategy. Council has historically provided free green waste disposal at transfer stations and this approach continues to offer a consistent and cost-effective solution across the Shire.

Given the significant challenges experienced with alternative disposal methods—such as contamination, illegal dumping, and high ongoing costs—there is limited benefit in changing these arrangements. Maintaining the current system ensures continued support for fire preparedness without introducing additional financial or operational burdens.

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Simon Tol

That Council:

1. Continue to offer free green waste disposal at the four transfer stations including Avoca, Beaufort, Landsborough and Snake Valley.

CARRIED

11.2.3. TEN YEAR ASSET PLAN - PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUBMISSION REVIEW

Presenter: Douglas Gowans - Director Asset and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Tim Day – Manager Assets

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 06/12/06

PURPOSE

This report presents the Ten-Year Asset Plan to Council for consideration for adoption.

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Act 2020* (Act) requires Council to develop, adopt and keep in force an Asset Plan (Plan) in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices. The Plan requires a scope of at least the next 10 financial years.

The Plan must include information about maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning in relation to each class of infrastructure asset under the control of the Council.

The Draft Ten Year Asset Plan 2025-2034 has been exhibited to the public for feedback and comment in accordance with Council's deliberative engagement requirements.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The Ten-Year Asset Plan 2025-2034 (the Plan) is aligned with the Pyrenees Shire Council Plan and contributes to the delivery of its objectives. The Plan is also aligned with Council's long term financial plan and takes into account the Victorian Government's rate cap projected at similar level to the 2025/26 rate cap over the life of the plan.

The Plan considers current economic factors and endeavors to ensure Council's financial sustainability. The Plan is prepared based on the priorities for asset renewal through condition assessment of assets across different asset classes.

The Plan includes capital works projects that are currently planned and funded. Council may consider borrowing money for a specific asset class to allow for earlier delivery of strategic capital works projects.

Public notice of the Plan was given in accordance with Council's Engagement Strategy and an opportunity was provided for members of the public to make submissions including through the Engagement Hub on Council's website. This document has been amended in response to 2 internal submissions received and is presented now for adoption by Council.

Following submissions received, the Plan has been edited to address relevant issues. These include:

- Acknowledgement of traditional custodians;
- Elaboration on asset sustainability;
- Consistency of supporting text for each asset class;
- Minor changes to the order of road reconstruction projects.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 4 - Infrastructure

4a. Plan, build and maintain essential infrastructure.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Opportunity for public submissions to be received through the Engagement Hub on Council's website.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft 10 Year Asset Plan 2025-2034 [**11.2.3.1** - 25 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the Ten-Year Asset Plan is to reduce Council's financial risk through linking the forward planning of asset renewal to Council's Ten-Year Financial Plan. This will ensure expenditure on maintenance, renewal and new works align with Council's resource allocation. The renewal of assets also manages and reduces risk associated with asset impairment and failure.

CONCLUSION

The Ten-Year Asset Plan includes updated information in relation to infrastructure assets under the control of the Council.

The Ten-Year Asset Plan 2025-2034 is provided for adoption consideration by Council.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council:

1. Adopts the Ten-Year Asset Plan 2025-2034.

CARRIED

11.2.4. STATUTORY PLANNING USER SURVEY 2025

Presenter: Douglas Gowans - Director Asset and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Rachel Blackwell – Manager Planning and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: Planning

PURPOSE

This report presents the findings and recommendations from the Statutory Planning Services User Survey, conducted between May and August 2025, for consideration by the Council. The survey aimed to gather direct feedback from users of the Statutory Planning Service to inform future improvements in service delivery and internal processes.

BACKGROUND

In response to ongoing community feedback regarding the effectiveness and responsiveness of Pyrenees Shires Statutory Planning Services, the Council requested that the Planning Team undertake a comprehensive review of its current service delivery model and internal procedures. The goal of this review is to identify areas for improvement and ensure the service continues to meet the needs and expectations of the local community.

As part of this review process, a user survey was developed to collect qualitative data directly from recent service users. The survey targeted individuals who had submitted a planning permit application within the past two years, inviting them to share their recent experiences with the Statutory Planning Team.

A total of 360 letters were mailed to these applicants, inviting them to participate in the survey. Participants were directed to complete the survey online via the Pyrenees Shire Council's Engagement Hub (<https://engage.pyrenees.vic.gov.au>). The survey was open for a three-month period, from May to August 2025.

A copy of the invitation letter and the survey questions is provided in **Attachments 1 and 2** of this report.

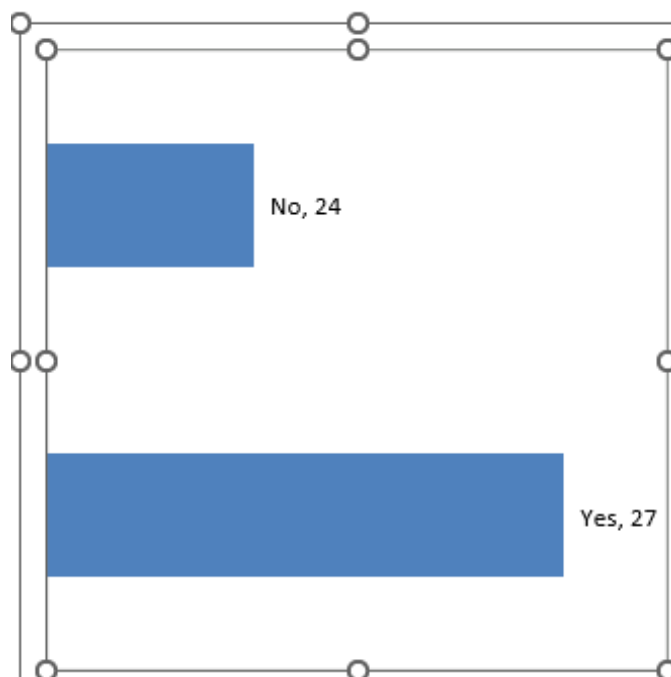
ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The Statutory Planning Services User Survey, conducted via the Pyrenees Shire Council Engagement Hub, generated 496 page views and attracted 237 unique visitors specifically engaging with the survey content. Of these, 51 individuals chose to participate, reflecting a positive level of community engagement and willingness to provide feedback on the Council's Statutory planning services. A copy of the user survey is provided as **Attachment 3** to this report.

A summary of survey responses is provided below. A spreadsheet containing detailed survey responses is provided at **Attachment 4** to this report:

Question 1: Was this the first time you have lodged a Planning Permit application with Pyrenees Shire Council?

- 54% of respondents were first-time applicants, indicating that a significant portion of users may be new to the planning process.
- 46% had previous experience lodging planning permit applications with the Council.

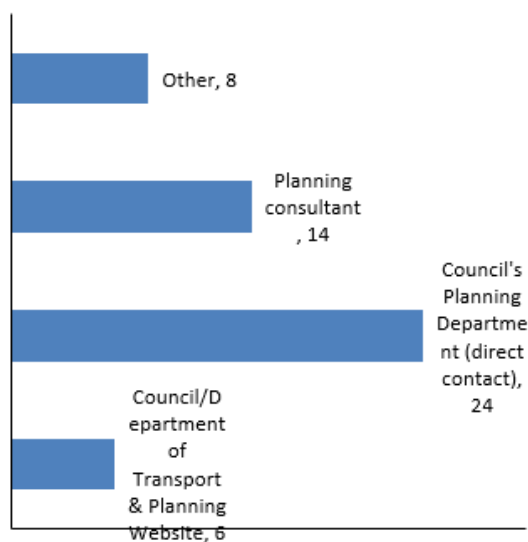


Question 2: Before submitting your application, did you seek any pre-application advice?

- 75% of respondents sought pre-application advice before lodging their planning permit application.
- 25% did not seek any advice prior to submission.

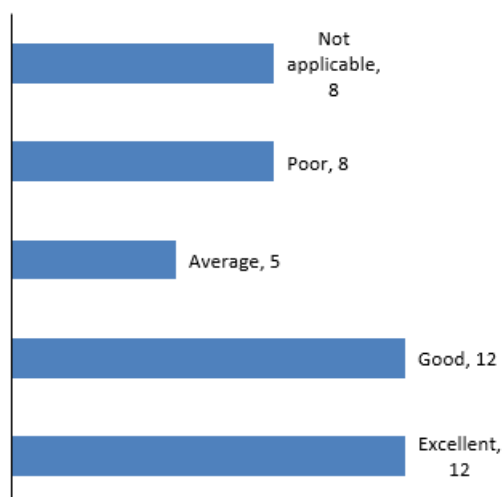
Question 3: If yes, where did you source this pre-application advice? (Multiple responses allowed)

- 61% contacted the Council's Planning Department directly.
- 56% consulted a planning consultant or other external sources.
- 15% accessed information via the Council and/or Department of Transport and Planning websites.



Question 4: If you received pre-application advice from the Council's Planning Department, how would you rate the quality and accessibility of the information provided?

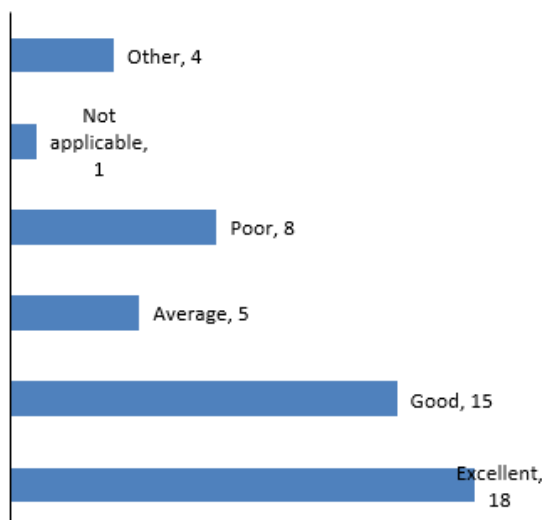
- 53% of respondents rated the advice as excellent or very good, highlighting positive experiences with timely, helpful, and informative support from planning officers.
 - Sample feedback included:
 - *"Outstanding support and advice. Thank you."*
 - *"All direct contact with officers was helpful and timely."*
 - *"The pre-application meeting was very valuable!"*
- 28% rated the advice as average or poor, with concerns raised around inconsistent information, delays in response times (especially compared to consultants), and a lack of proactive or transparent communication regarding potential permit conditions.
 - Representative comments included:
 - *"In terms of specific advice sought by us from the Planning Department, excellent. In terms of information being pro-actively offered to us by Council, specifically, Council being fully transparent around the potentiality of additional permits and agreements being attached as conditions to a Planning Permit, poor."*



Question 5: During the assessment of your Planning Permit application, the professionalism and responsiveness of Council officers was?

- 64% of respondents rated Council officers' professionalism and responsiveness as good or excellent, citing effective communication and timely processing.
 - Sample comments:
 - *"Everything was completed in projected timeframes and well communicated."*
 - *"All direct contact with officers was helpful and timely."*
- 25% rated the service as average or poor, raising concerns about delays, inconsistent communication, and lack of follow-up.
 - Representative feedback:
 - *"Responses were mostly very slow or non-existent."*
 - *"Follow-up emails were needed to get a response."*

- *"Very poor. The time it took was long, much longer than I have had to deal with in other shires."*

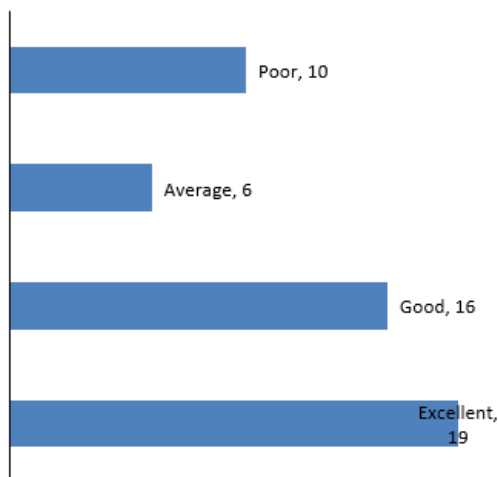


Question 6: Were objections received to your application, and if so, did you participate in a consultation meeting?

- Only 13% of applications received objections and involved consultation meetings to address those concerns.
 - Sample feedback included:
 - *"An objection was received, and I clarified my intentions which led to the objection being withdrawn."*
 - *"The requirement to have a finalized house design caused some issues."*
 - *"We were able to find a compromise."*
- The majority, 86%, of applicants were not involved in any objection or consultation process.

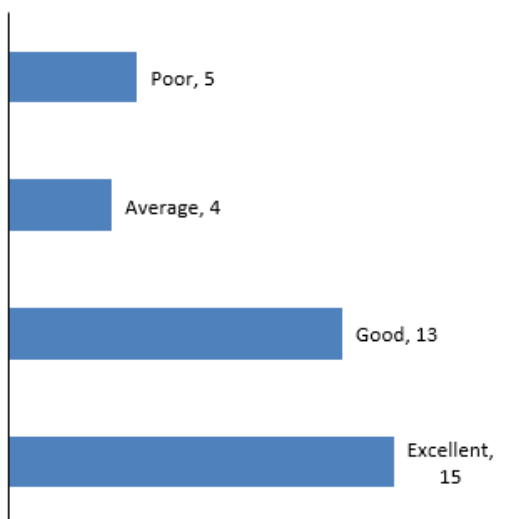
Question 7: In terms of your overall experience with Councils Planning Department, how would you rate it?

- 68% of respondents rated their overall experience as good or excellent, highlighting supportive, friendly, and timely service.
 - Positive feedback included:
 - *"Pleasantly surprised at the supportive and friendly response."*
 - *"Planning Officers were prompt and professional, with permits issued well within expected timeframes."*
 - *"Significantly better than other councils I deal with regularly."*
- 31% described their experience as average or poor, citing issues such as slow responses, confusing processes, and lack of transparency.
 - Critical comments noted:
 - *"Slow to respond to queries and poor understanding of overlays."*
 - *"The process was confusing, and staff did not recognize my lack of experience."*
 - *"Council is not fully transparent about potential additional permits or conditions attached to approvals."*



Question 8: If you have applied for a Planning Permit with other Councils, how would you rate your experience with Pyrenees Shire in comparison?

- 75% of respondents rated Pyrenees Shire's planning service as good or excellent compared to other councils.
- Many noted that Pyrenees Shire performs above average across the board, with positive comments on responsiveness and support.
 - Representative feedback included:
 - "I deal with 10-15 councils regularly, and Pyrenees stands out for its level of care and support."
 - "Response times are more than reasonable compared to other councils."
 - "In contrast to previous experiences elsewhere where there was little council engagement, Pyrenees provided a much better, more involved service."



Suggestions for Improvement

While many respondents praised the efficiency, professionalism, and supportive nature of the Statutory Planning Team, several valuable suggestions for further enhancing the service were also provided:

Positive Feedback Highlights

- Numerous respondents expressed high satisfaction with the current service, appreciating the friendly, thorough, and approachable support.
 - *"I'm impressed with the thorough and friendly approach. Very encouraging to potential new residents." (Permit applicant/landowner)*
 - *"Just keep doing what you are doing. The Planning Department puts all other Shires and City Planning departments to shame." (Developer)*
- Several noted feelings valued and respected throughout the process, with special commendations for individual staff members.
 - *"Please keep this level of service up. It's great to feel like a valued client rather than a nuisance or an annoying rate payer. High five to Virginia and her colleagues for the outstanding service and support. Amazing!" (Beaufort & Skipton Health Service)*
- The collaborative approach across departments on complex permits was seen as a strength and a model to build on.
- Well-considered Requests for Information (RFIs) and tailored permit conditions were also appreciated for their specificity and clarity.

Areas for Improvement

Potential areas for improvement/recommendations are included as follows:

Pre-Application Support

- To assist permit applicants there is an opportunity to provide clearer, upfront advice on the feasibility of proposals. Establishing a more formal and accessible pre-application process would help reduce uncertainty, minimise unnecessary costs, and improve application quality. The Small Business Council Program pilot is a promising initiative in this space and creates a model for early, cross-departmental collaboration that streamlines approvals and encourages integrated decision-making from the outset.

Improve the Functionality and Accessibility of the Greenlight Platform

- User experience improvements to the Greenlight platform particularly around document uploads and application tracking would reduce confusion and the need for follow-up contact. The council's participation in the Rural Councils Digital Transformation Project will enable significant enhancements in this area. Continued investment in digital tools will support more efficient internal processes and better service delivery for applicants.

Enhance Planning Team Responsiveness and Frontline Support

- The statutory planning team is currently operating with limited capacity (two of three positions filled) while managing a high volume of complex work. The council's support for upskilling customer service and administration staff is already helping to triage simpler enquiries, ensuring planners can focus on more technical matters. The introduction of a new customer management system through the Digital Transformation Project will further strengthen communication workflows and responsiveness. Continued staffing support and resourcing will be essential to sustain improvements.

Foster a Consistent, Community-Focused Approach

- We continue to reinforce a respectful, solution-oriented approach in all interactions with permit applicants. Treating permit applicants as valued community stakeholders helps build trust and facilitates smoother processes. This client-focused approach aligns with the Council's broader strategic objectives.

Increase Transparency in Application Timeframes

- While the planning team is guided by the statutory timeframes under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, delays can occur due to external referrals, objections, or complex application requirements. Clearer communication of expected timelines and performance benchmarks would help manage applicant expectations and improve public confidence.

Support Staff Capability and Consistency in Planning Advice

- The council's planning leadership team brings significant experience and continues to mentor and develop junior staff in a supportive environment. Ensuring team members stay informed about evolving planning rules and maintain consistency in advice is an ongoing focus. The council's investment in staff development and knowledge-sharing remains key to maintaining high standards in decision-making and community guidance.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE**Pillar 4 - Infrastructure**

4c. Support and facilitate appropriate land use.

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5b. Work constructively and in partnership to solve issues early and deliver outcomes building trust.

5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.

5d. Deliver high quality services with continuous improvement focus.

Pillar 1: Support and grow liveable places, connected communities

- Enable responsible development and population growth through strategic planning, affordable housing, and community-driven township planning that reflects local identity

Pillar 2: Promote a diversified, thriving economy

- Support the growth and diversification of new and existing businesses, with a focus on key sectors, innovation, and attracting investment
- Deliver coordinated and facilitated planning and economic development outcomes to support community aspirations and foster business and tourism growth

Pillar 4: Planning and building infrastructure for current and future needs

- Support the local community by facilitating appropriate land use planning outcomes

Pillar 5 Community centric leadership and proactive service delivery

- Foster a values-driven, inclusive culture where residents and community needs are central to all decision-making. Empower leadership at all levels to be responsive, accountable, and aligned with Council and community priorities.
- Work constructively and in partnership with individuals and communities to anticipate needs, solve issues early, and deliver outcomes that build trust and resilience.
- Ensure timely, clear, and consistent communication and build strong community relationships, underpinned by transparency and meaningful engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

A total of 360 letters were mailed to permit applicants, inviting them to participate in the statutory planning user survey. Participants were directed to complete the survey online via the Pyrenees Shire Council's Engagement Hub (<https://engage.pyrenees.vic.gov.au>). The survey was open for a three-month period, from May to August 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Statutory Planning Services User Survey Letter [**11.2.4.1** - 1 page]
2. Statutory Planning Services User Survey Questions [**11.2.4.2** - 2 pages]
3. 2025 statutory-planning-services-user-survey--report Attachment [**11.2.4.3** - 28 pages]
4. 2025 statutory planning services survey users results [**11.2.4.4** - 57 pages]

CONCLUSION

The Statutory Planning Services User Survey has provided valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of recent planning permit applicants. Overall, the feedback reflects a high level of satisfaction with the quality, professionalism, and responsiveness of the Pyrenees Shire Council's Statutory Planning Team. Many respondents praised the team for their supportive approach, timely communication, and above-average service compared to other councils.

The survey also identified key areas where improvements can be made to enhance the applicant experience. These include increasing transparency around permit conditions, improving the accessibility and responsiveness of staff, refining pre-application guidance, and enhancing digital tools for application management. Addressing these areas will not only improve service efficiency but also build greater trust and confidence within the community.

The Council's commitment to continuous improvement, informed by this user feedback, will ensure that the Statutory Planning Team continues to deliver effective, customer-focused planning services that meet the evolving needs of its residents and stakeholders.

Cr Damian Ferrari / Cr Simon Tol

That Council:

1. Notes the survey information contained within this report and thank the community for their participation in the survey.
2. Supports the implementation of improvements outlined in the report, including pre-application support, enhanced digital platform functionality, improved customer responsiveness, and a consistent community-focused approach.

CARRIED

11.2.5. DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

Presenter: Douglas Gowans - Director Asset and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Rachel Blackwell – Manager Planning and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 02/08/06

PURPOSE

This report aims to explore potential options for implementing a cat desexing program within the Shire and to clarify relevant legislation concerning animal welfare and responsible pet ownership.

BACKGROUND

This report was prepared in response to a Councillor request seeking that Council investigate options for a cat desexing program and review relevant state legislation concerning animal welfare, pet ownership, and age requirements for cat registration.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Victoria) is the primary legislation regulating the ownership of dogs and cats in Victoria. It promotes responsible pet ownership, supports animal welfare, and protects the community and environment from nuisance or dangerous animals. Key provisions of the Act include:

- Mandatory microchipping and registration of pets.
- Regulations regarding dangerous and restricted dog breeds.
- Requirements to prevent animal nuisance.
- Promotion of responsible pet ownership.

Under Section 10 of the Act:

- Owners must register all dogs and cats over three months of age with their local council and renew registrations annually.
- When registering a dog, owners must declare whether the animal is a restricted breed.
- Councils cannot amend or override this legislation, as it is governed at the state level.

The Act allows for the following exemption:

“A dog or cat that is the subject of written veterinary advice that the health of the dog or cat is liable to be significantly prejudiced if it is desexed.”

The written veterinary advice must:

- (a) Be provided by a veterinary practitioner following a personal examination of the animal; and
- (b) Include reasons why desexing would significantly prejudice the animal's health.”

Council's Role and Current Initiatives

The Pyrenees Shire Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) outlines the Council's strategies for managing domestic animals, promoting responsible ownership, and ensuring public and animal welfare. Key services include:

- Animal registration.
- Response to complaints.
- Community education on pet care and desexing.
- Existing Orders and Policies
- The current DAMP is provided as **Attachment 1**.

Additional ongoing activities include:

- Reduced registration fees for de-sexed animals.
- Participation in shelter partnerships (e.g., City of Ballarat shelter programs when available).
- Education programs promoting desexing, microchipping, and responsible ownership.
- Free cat trap loan program (12 traps available).
- Monitoring and enforcement of pet ownership limits via local laws.
- Rehoming discussions with residents owning excess animals.
- Issuing warnings, infringements, or prosecutions for non-compliance.

Despite efforts to manage the domestic animal population, cat overpopulation and high euthanasia rates remain a persistent issue in the Shire. Council officers continue to dedicate significant time and resources to managing stray and feral cats. While compulsory desexing and the 2008 cat curfew have helped, further action is required.

Council has demonstrated commitment to supporting low-cost desexing initiatives, particularly for concession card holders. This aligns with Objective 2 of the DAMP – Develop a Discounted Pet Desexing Program including the ability to apply for state and MAV grants for pet desexing programs as opportunities become available.

Current ongoing Initiatives also Include:

- Partial registration refund: Residents who desex their pets within 12 months of initial registration and provide a desexing certificate are eligible for a partial refund.
- Low-cost desexing services as part of the 4-year DAMP, with ongoing review and improvements planned.

Programs Delivered During This Plan Period:

- 2023: Regional Community Vet Clinic conducted pop-up desexing and microchipping clinics.
- 2024: The Vet Project; a mobile low-cost veterinary service delivered desexing clinics in Avoca and Beaufort.

Next Steps and Ongoing Commitments

Council is committed to improving animal welfare and reducing cat overpopulation across the Shire. The following initiatives and actions will guide future efforts:

Expand and Support Low-Cost Desexing Programs

- Introduce a Council Cat Desexing Voucher Program, partially subsidised and funded through Council's budget.
 - Partner with local veterinary clinics (e.g., Stawell, Maryborough, Beaufort) to negotiate fixed pricing (approx. \$150 for male cats, \$310 for females).
 - If Council allocated \$10,000 to the Cat Desexing Voucher Program and residents that qualified only had to pay \$50 out of their pockets, this would result in 100 vouchers for male cats to be desexed or 38 vouchers for female cats to be desexed.
 - Residents that qualify present a voucher to the vet, and the vet would invoice Council directly for the difference.
 - Vouchers would only be given to Pension Card Holders or residents that can qualify for financial hardship situations.
- Continue to deliver and promote other low-cost desexing services as part of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).

Encourage Early Pet Registration and Desexing

- Introduce a new registration category for animals under 12 months of age, with a \$0.00 fee:

- Category names: “Puppy Pending Desexing” and “Kitten Pending Desexing.”
- This initiative aims to:
 - Encourage early registration,
 - Provide a pathway for timely desexing,
 - Reduce non-compliance and overpopulation risks.

Strengthen Compliance and Legislative Alignment

- Monitor and enforce compliance with existing legislation and Council orders, including:
 - Mandatory desexing of first-time registered cats (excluding valid exemptions).
 - Animal number limits and nuisance prevention measures.
- Issue official warnings, infringements, or prosecute, where necessary, for breaches of local laws or the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Review Strategic Frameworks

- Review and update the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) within the next 12 months to:
 - Reflect current community needs,
 - Integrate new programs and initiatives,
 - Ensure ongoing compliance with state legislation.

Seek External Funding Opportunities

- Apply for grants and funding from:
 - State government,
 - The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV),
 - Other relevant agencies and programs.
- These funds will be directed towards supporting desexing programs, education, community outreach, and other animal welfare initiatives.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5d. Deliver high quality services with continuous improvement focus.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Community engagement on this matter will be undertaken as part of the review and update the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) within the next 12 months.

ATTACHMENTS

1. PSC Domestic Animal Management Plan [11.2.5.1 - 34 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Financial and risk implications are identified in the discussion above.

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Megan Phelan

That Council:

1. Includes the initiatives listed in this report in the upcoming review of the Pyrenees Shire Domestic Animal Management Plan, to ensure alignment with long-term strategic objectives and community needs.
2. Seeks opportunities for funding to support low-cost cat desexing programs for Pyrenees Shire.

CARRIED

11.3. CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

11.3.1. S6 DELEGATIONS TO COUNCIL STAFF

Presenter: Jacinta Erdody - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Kathy Bramwell – Acting Manager Governance and Performance

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/20/08

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council adoption of a revised S6 Instrument of Delegation from the Pyrenees Shire Council to members of Council staff.

BACKGROUND

Section 11(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* provides Council with the power to delegate to the Chief Executive Officer, via Instrument of Delegation, any power, duty, or function of a council under the Act other than one prohibited by section 11(2). Section 11(7) requires a council to review all delegations made under the Act within 12 months of a general election.

A range of other legislation also allows a council to delegate powers, duties, and functions under those Acts or Regulations to council staff.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The following Instruments of Delegation were reviewed in May 2025, using information provided through Maddocks Lawyers' service that monitors legislative change and provides updates on changes relevant to local government to support good governance and compliance.

- S5 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Chief Executive Officer
- S6 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Members of Council Staff

In July 2025, updates were received from Maddocks Lawyers that indicated additional powers or duties in the Planning & Environment Act 1987 that should be added to the S6 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Members of Council Staff. The following changes (marked in red) have been made to the attached document:

Planning and Environment Act 1987		
Provision	Thing Delegated	Delegate
-	Power to decide, in relation to any planning scheme or permit, that a specified thing may be altered or modified with Council's consent	DADS, MPD, SPL
-	Power to decide, in relation to any planning scheme or permit, that a specified thing may be done subject to Council's prior consent or must not be done without Council's prior consent	DADS, MPD, SPL
-	Power to decide, in relation to any planning scheme or permit, that a specified thing is required to be approved and or endorsed by Council	DADS, MPD, SPL
-	Power to approve and or endorse any plan or any amendment to a plan or other document in accordance with a provision of a planning scheme or condition in a permit	DADS, MPD, SPL

The updated S6 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Members of Council Staff is now provided to the Council for adoption.

No change was required to the S5 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Chief Executive Officer.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5d. Deliver high quality services with continuous improvement focus.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Management and review of Instruments of Delegation is a matter of compliance and does not require community engagement.

ATTACHMENTS

1. S6 Instrument of Delegation from Council to members of Council staff Oct20 (1) [11.3.1.1 - 69 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

It is a requirement under the *Local Government Act 2020* and other legislation to accurately record any delegation of powers, duties, or functions to members of Council staff to allow for proper and lawful administration of Council's functions and operations, without which all functions and operations would require daily resolution of the Council.

CONCLUSION

Lawful operation of Council administration requires delegations of authority to be authorised by the Council. It is good practice to review delegations at regular intervals or when significant changes occur. Updated legislative provisions received through Maddocks Lawyers in July require an update of the S6 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Members of Council Staff. No change was required to the S5 Instrument of Delegation – Council to the Chief Executive Officer formerly approved in May 2025.

Amended Instruments, once approved, will remain in force until further reviews are conducted in the future.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council, in the exercise of the powers conferred by section 11 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, and other legislation referenced in the attached Instrument, resolves that:

1. The members of council staff referenced in the S6 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Members of Council Staff attached, be authorised as set out in the Instrument.
2. The Chief Executive Officer is authorised to sign the Instrument on behalf of the Council.
3. The Instrument comes into force immediately after the Instrument is signed by the Chief Executive Officer.
4. Once executed, all former S6 Instruments of Delegation are revoked.

CARRIED

11.3.2. COUNCIL PLAN 2025-2029 INITIATIVES

Presenter: Jacinta Erdody - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Jacinta Erdody – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/20/06

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to consider community feedback on the presented draft initiatives that will underpin the work that will be undertaken to deliver against our Council Plan 2025-2029.

BACKGROUND

At the Special Meeting of Council on 23 June 2025 Council formally adopted the Council Plan 2025-2029 which set the strategic direction for the Council and the elected representatives over their elected term. Since this time, Councillors and Officers developed a suite of work to support and achieve the aspirations of the Council Plan.

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council 15 September 2025 Council supported the suite of drafted initiatives to seek public submissions. Submissions were sought via a survey which sought to understand the level of support to the document whilst also providing the opportunity for more specific feedback.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The survey received a total of 5 responses, which indicated:

Pillar	Initiative	Feedback	Proposed Response
Broadly		- Where initiatives are 'advocacy' based, would like to see elected representatives lead this with support of officers - Concerned with number of 'buzz' words which make it sound like a lot is happening but not flowing to ratepayers, should look to utilize things available from state/federal and guide locals to these initiatives/documents - Where initiatives are 'develop' be broader and more inclusive by stating 'develop in conjunction with key stakeholders'	- Ensure that officers consider available resources from other tiers of government before creating localized resources. - Through the development of identified initiatives ensure relevant community engagement is undertaken to enable community perspective where possible.

Pillar	Initiative	Feedback	Proposed Response
1A	Accessibility for all life stages	- Halls need to go beyond ramps that end in steps but consider hearing loops (for hearing impaired), raised pavement tiles (assist visually impaired) - Undertake a review of website data, initiatives and community grants information to ensure data is accessible by community with literacy challenges - Explore Inclusion grants to support ageing and those with disability to attend appointments, shopping, etc	- Council regularly explore grant opportunities and consider alignment to strategic direction and financial co-contribution implications to financial constraints. - Ensure content contained within our website meets required accessibility requirements.
1C.1	Conduct settlement planning to inform township plans and future housing development / housing needs for five townships which inform Community Action Plans	Add Collaborations from Economic Development and Community Development	Applied collaboration
1C.2	Deliver a range of development initiatives that enable additional housing/accommodation which is supported by existing and planned services	What are the type of development initiatives envisaged to enable additional housing or accommodation	Council led subdivision construction and forward planning (Beaufort and Avoca), Housing needs assessment being undertaken as a strategic planning project for major settlement areas.
2A.1	Participate, design and deliver initiatives to support our Business Community,	Add Collaborations from Regulatory Services	Applied collaboration
2A.2	Develop and increase availability of serviced industrial land to actively attract business and industry investment.	Consider reword to: Focus on investment attraction for existing serviced vacant industrial land	Note feedback. However, this review will look to better understand if the existing land is suitable and will therefore remain broad.
2D.1	Deliver and advocate for improved heavy-vehicle accessibility and other transport related improvements across the Pyrenees road networks	“across the Pyrenees road networks” may also refer to arterial roads which Council does not manage. This would be better written as “across the Council managed road network”. Add Collaboration from Works and Assets	Either option is viable. In practice we can lead/develop projects on Pyrenees road network and we can advocate for improvements on the Department Transport network. Applied collaboration

Pillar	Initiative	Feedback	Proposed Response
3C.1	Review and implement Climate Change Response Mitigation Plan, inclusive of: - Home energy efficient initiatives and education - Agricultural diversity opportunities	Add Collaborations from Economic Development	Applied collaboration
3D	Review and implement Waste and Recycling Strategy, inclusive of: - Food and Organics waste (FOGO) kerbside collection and management service - Community education on recycling and diversion from landfill	- Ensure that all residents get every bin - Information sheet that clearly defines what goes in each bin (images and minimal text to support all) - Consider Hard Rubbish collection at changing seasons - Consider becoming part of annual 'Big Garage Sale' initiative	- Note suggested considerations in relation to education material. - Consider other feedback through the review and implementation of the Waste and Recycling Strategy.
4A.2	Develop, review and implement Asset Management Plan, inclusive of annual capital works program.	Add Collaborations from Engineering and Works	Applied collaboration
4B.1	Implement Pyrenees Digital Communications Strategy	Change lead Accountability to Economic Development and add collaboration from Communications	Applied collaboration

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Community consultation was sought through both the overarching Council Plan 2025-2029 and the underpinning initiatives that will be delivered in support of the Plan. Details of submissions against the draft initiatives are contained within the body of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- 2025 2029 Draft Initiatives [11.3.2.1 - 10 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The draft initiatives clearly articulate where an initiative is subject to funding requirements and what will be delivered within annual operational budgets. Officers will continue to explore funding opportunities that will enable the progression of identified initiatives and subsequent actions for developed strategies.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of the Initiatives which underpin the Council Plan 2025-2029 will form the basis of the work that officers undertake to deliver against the strategic direction of Council and forms the basis of progress reporting throughout the life of the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council:

1. Adopts the draft Initiatives 2025-2029.
2. Accepts the proposed responses to submissions and changes to the draft initiatives as required to reflect response.
3. Acknowledges and thanks the community for their contribution and where a submission has not been made as anonymous authorise officers to formally respond.
4. Seeks quarterly progress reporting against adopted initiatives to demonstrate to our community the progress being made towards delivering expected outcomes.

CARRIED

11.3.3. ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Presenter: Jacinta Erdody - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Jacinta Erdody – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/17/02

PURPOSE

On behalf of the Pyrenees Shire Mayor, this report presents the 2025 Pyrenees Shire Council Annual Report.

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Act 2020*, Section 100, requires Council to have a Council meeting to consider the Annual Report.

This Section, requires the Mayor to report on the implementation of the Council Plan by presenting the Annual Report at a Council meeting open to the public within four months of the end of the financial year.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The Annual Report 2025 has been prepared in accordance with Section 98 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and contains outcomes against various matters as defined for the 2024/25 financial year:

- Operations of the Council which must contain:
 - A statement of progress on implementation of the Council Plan including strategic indicators;
 - A statement of progress in relation to the major initiatives identified within the budget or revised budget;
 - The prescribed indicators of service performance for services provided by Council and funded in the budget during the financial year;
- An audited performance statement which must contain:
 - Prescribed indicators of service, financial performance and sustainable capacity performance for the services provided by Council and funded within the financial year;
- Audited financial statements which must contain:
 - Any other information prescribed by the regulations including preparation in accordance with the regulations;
- A copy of the auditors report on the performance and financial statements; and
- Any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

The annual report provides a factual overview of the 2024/25 financial year, including statistical performance and financial information, information on the capital projects started and completed and information related to the economic status of the shire.

The Council administration delivers a range of “community facing” services, from:

- Economic development and Tourism;
- Child and family services;
- Recreation and Community Development;
- Financial sustainability through responsible budgeting;
- Emergency Recovery support and leadership;
- Library and Resource Centres;
- Waste management;
- Local roads maintenance and reconstruction;
- Asset and infrastructure management for Council owned and managed facilities;

- Planning, environmental health and development;
- Community safety and public health;
- Environmental sustainability; and
- Advocacy and communications.

Council's role also requires significant resources to administer Councils'.

This range of community services and infrastructure supports the wellbeing and prosperity of our community and performance is measured by service performance indicators and measures which are reported within the Annual Report.

Pyrenees Shire Council continues to experience economic and operational challenges across the community with continuing inflationary cost pressures within a rate capping environment, also with the impacts of natural disasters including flood and fire. Drought pressures are impacting the community's economic welfare. In addition, the State Governments changes to the Fire Service Levy to the Emergency Services Volunteer Fund has further impacted the living pressures of our community.

The individual financial statement results have been impacted by significant funding received from Government that relates to the delivery of services in the 2025/26 financial year. Taking this into account the 2024/25 financial year for the Pyrenees Shire Council resulted in a positive financial performance that was within the parameters of Councils 10 year financial plan.

The Annual Report continues to provide transparency and visibility of Council operations, services and financial management outcomes for the community. A digital copy of the draft Annual Report has been attached to this report and final copies will be made available when printed and digitally available on Council's website.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Promotion of our 2025 Annual Report will be provided to our community once final versions of the report are available in hard copy and digital versions.

ATTACHMENTS

1. PSC Annual Report 2024-25 Proof [**11.3.3.1** - 116 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

All financial and risk implications have been discussed in this report and in further detail within the Annual Report itself.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Annual Report of the Pyrenees Shire Council has been prepared in accordance with the legislative and regulatory requirements, allowing the Mayor to present the report to the community.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council accepts the Pyrenees Shire Annual Report 2025 as presented by the Mayor and enables any minor administrative amendments that may be identified through final proof reading.

CARRIED

11.3.4. CHRISTMAS CLOSURE PERIOD

Presenter: Jacinta Erdody - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Jacinta Erdody – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/20/06

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to request the Council's endorsement of the proposed closure of the Pyrenees Shire Council offices and other arrangements during the 2025/26 Christmas / New Year holiday period.

BACKGROUND

It has been the practice of the Pyrenees Shire Council to close during the Christmas / New Year holiday period. The holiday period closure enables staff to take a break with little impact on service delivery and at the same time provides the opportunity for staff to reduce outstanding annual leave and roster day off balances.

There is limited demand placed for municipal services over this period and the closure is generally accepted by the community.

Where mutually convenient, staff will also be encouraged to take additional annual leave around the positioning of the official office closures.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The following closures or service amendments are planned:

End of year staff break-up function

Each year the Pyrenees Shire Council holds an end-of-year break-up function to thank all staff for their contribution to the organization over the past 12 months. To facilitate this celebration, all areas will close at 12pm on that date.

It is proposed that the Council offices and services have the following opening hours during the holiday period:

Date	Council Offices (Lawrence St)	Municipal Depots	Information / Resource Centres	Emergency Management
Fri 19 Dec 25	Closed from 12pm for end of year staff break-up function			
Mon 22 Dec 25	9am – 5pm	Skeleton staff	10am – 5pm	In accordance with Municipal Emergency Management procedures. Council will have a roster for emergency response over the holiday period closure.
Tue 23 Dec 25	9am – 5pm	Skeleton staff	10am – 5pm	
Wed 24 Dec 25	9am – 3pm	Skeleton staff	10am – 3pm	
Thu 25 Dec 25	Christmas Day – Public Holiday			
Fri 26 Dec 25	Boxing Day – Public Holiday			
Sat 27 Dec 25	Closed	Closed	10am – 1pm	
Sun 28 Dec 25	Closed	Closed	10am – 1pm	
Mon 29 Dec 25	Closed – Staff Leave	Skeleton staff	10am – 5pm	
Tue 30 Dec 25	Closed – Staff Leave	Skeleton staff	10am – 5pm	
Wed 31 Dec 25	Closed – Staff Leave	Skeleton staff	10am – 3pm	
Thu 1 Jan 26	New Years Day – Public Holiday			
Fri 2 Jan 26	Closed – Staff	Skeleton staff	10am – 5pm	

Date	Council Offices (Lawrence St)	Municipal Depots	Information / Resource Centres	Emergency Management
	Leave			
Sat 3 Jan 26	Closed	Closed	10am – 5pm	
Sun 4 Jan 26	Closed	Closed	10am – 5pm	
Mon 5 Jan 26	Office Open		9am-5pm	

Notification of any other service changes over this period (e.g. waste and recycling) will be published within our weekly noticeboard and on social media.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1a. Inclusivity and accessibility.

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5a. Foster values driven inclusive culture, which is responsive, accountable and aligned to priority.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

All changes to Council Offices and services will be published within our weekly page and published on our social media pages.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSION

Closure of Council facilities during the holiday period is well accepted by our community and provides a great opportunity for our staff to take a step back and enjoy a break. Essential service delivery and appropriate resourcing for emergency response will be maintained during the holiday period.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council endorses the closure of the Pyrenees Shire Council offices and other arrangements during the 2025/26 Christmas / New Year holiday period as detailed in this report.

CARRIED

11.3.5. AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE - JUNE AND SEPTEMBER 2025

Presenter: Jacinta Erdody - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Jacinta Erdody – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 32/04/04

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with an update of the Audit and Risk Committee meetings M016 held on 24 June 2025 and M017 held on 17 September 2025.

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Act 2020* Section 54 requires Council to establish an Audit and Risk Committee. The existing committee has three independent members and the charter was most recently reviewed and adopted at the March 2025 meeting.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

A copy of the approved minutes from the June 2025 meeting is attached, whilst the draft minutes from the meeting of September 2025 are attached for Council Information.

An overview of the June 2025 Audit and Risk meeting included:

- A report from the CEO in relation to emerging issues which included Renewable Energy, Essential Services Volunteer Fund and changes to the Rating and Revenue Plan;
- The committee received a presentation in relation to the Beaufort Accommodation Project;
- Regular reports from internal and external auditors were received;
- 2024/25 Quarterly financial reports were received and discussed which included pending asset valuation changes, along with drafted 25/26 Budgets;
- Governance, Risk and Compliance reporting; and
- The annual self assessment of the Audit and Risk Workplan.

An overview of the September 2025 Audit and Risk meeting included:

- A report from the CEO in relation to our progress against the Integrated Strategic Planning framework, Reconciliation and Traditional Owners overview and an update on previously discussed emerging issues
- The Committee Chair presented his bi-annual report on committee performance, a copy of which is attached
- Regular reports from internal and external auditors were received;
- The drafted 2024/25 Financial Statement and Performance Statement were considered and the committee recommended Council to adopt in principle
- A further report regarding asset valuations was presented which recommended all future asset valuations be conducted by a qualified third party valuer; and
- Regular Governance, Risk and Compliance reporting.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.

5d. Deliver high quality services with continuous improvement focus.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 20250624-_ M 016_-_ MINUTE S_-_ Audit Risk Committee Meeting_-_ 24 June 2025 [**11.3.5.1** - 28 pages]
2. 2025 09 16 DRAFT M017 MINUTES Audit Risk Committee Meeting 16 September 2025 [**11.3.5.2** - 26 pages]
3. Chair Rept Sep 25 [**11.3.5.3** - 8 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

All financial and risk matters were addressed within the reports and minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee.

CONCLUSION

Council continues to hold the Audit and Risk Committee meetings in accordance with our legislative obligations and approved Charter. This report provides an overview of the topics discussed at both the June and September 2025 meetings.

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council:

1. Notes the information contained within this report and its attachments; and
2. Receives the September 2025 report from the Committee Chair.

CARRIED

11.3.6. PROJECT UPDATE - OCTOBER 2025

Presenter: Jacinta Erdody - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Jacinta Erdody – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/21/08

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for the Council to receive a high-level update on key Council projects.

BACKGROUND

In the past, updates on Council projects have been reported regularly to Council and the community through information reports on Council meeting agendas, in addition to the project dashboard which has been developed in recent years and is accessible on Council's website.

Major projects are reported through the weekly community noticeboard and as provided in the summary of this report.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Currently our project register has 60 projects listed which range in complexity, funding and timelines.

Although Council has a Project Management framework, there is a need to review. The review process commenced last month with a workshop with the Senior Leadership Team to understand what was working well within the current framework, what needed to be improved, implemented and how we could more consistently look to manage our projects from inception through to delivery allowing for the opportunity to reflect and learn with an accountable approach and a lens of continuous improvement.

As this review progresses, the reporting framework for our projects will change to demonstrate a framework that drives accountability, engagement, and transparency. It is important to recognise that some of the below projects are multi-year projects and below is an overview of the complete project.

Project Category	Number of Projects	Total Budget
Community Projects	4	\$809,850
Capital Works	42	14,370,000
Emergency Recovery	3	\$16,606,000
ICT Projects	5	\$810,140
Strategic Reviews, Investigations and Feasibility	6	\$755,000
Total	60	\$33,350,990

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

- 5a. Foster values driven inclusive culture, which is responsive, accountable and aligned to priority.
- 5b. Work constructively and in partnership to solve issues early and deliver outcomes building trust.
- 5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.
- 5d. Deliver high quality services with continuous improvement focus.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

This report on progress of projects is intended to inform Council and Community on financial and timelines associated with projects.

Cr Damian Ferrari / Cr Simon Tol

That Council:

1. Notes this report.
2. Continues to provide updates and information to the community about the status of projects across the shire through various communication methods.
3. Acknowledges the strategic work being undertaken to improve our Project Management Framework.

CARRIED

12. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Ferrari

I have attended the usual Council briefings and meetings. I have had some meetings with the Old Beaufort Primary School, a PCG meeting and a drop-in session.

I have had some meetings with some constituents regarding the Beaufort Pool because that time for pool opening is coming around very quickly again.

I had a discussion with the Beaufort Scout group regarding repairs to their facility and I just highlighted that we need to have further discussions around that.

I had a meeting with a couple of councillors from Moyne Shire and we had some great healthy discussions and they are keen to visit the Pyrenees Shire and have a look around our municipality. It is really interesting when you speak to Councillors from other Councils that you know nothing about necessarily and you do not know those people, a lot of the issues that we face are very similar. So when we think about things that are happening in the Pyrenees, we are not alone and it is good that we have got those lines of communications with other councils where we as stakeholders can get together and have those discussions and sometimes we don't need to reinvent the wheel because it has already been done, so it can save a lot of time and if we collaborate we tend to have better outcomes. That was really interesting.

Cr Tol

Apart from what is listed in my activity report, I think it is really encouraging that what we started in the little local shire with the ESVF that now all of a sudden, we've got 79 Councils on board state-wide, fighting the ESVF for our residents which is great news.

We are coming into the festive season, and we will focus on the festive things that happen.

The Lexton golf club re-opened the other day after their massive efforts. It was great the turn out that they had. There was in-excess of 100 people there and all of the work that was done was done entirely by volunteers, volunteer labour getting that course up to a beautiful standard.

Whilst we are talking about Lexton, they had a farewell to Phil and Kerry on the weekend who have been running the Hub Pub, they are going to move closer down to Melbourne to be with family. They have done a remarkable job, there were 125 people there for dinner, which is a great turn out for a small little town.

Waubra Hub on a fundraising effort, they had a community dinner last week, they did 135 meals there, once again that's nearly the entire community.

I attended the Avoca races on the weekend, it was a great way to advertise the Pyrenees, the weather was perfect. The downfall was the que for the food and the bar, apparently it was an internet glitch with the swipe machines which they have addressed and hopefully rectified that.

Cr Wardlaw

It is hard to believe another month has gone already and yes we are on our way to Christmas.

In September I attended the Rotary Defying the Drift Dinner at Longerenong College – this is where they have 30 senior high school students attending a three day workshop where they travel by bus to agricultural businesses to learn about a future and opportunities that are available to young willing

participants of the industry. These student workshops during the three days focus on building relationships and confidence, especially in public speaking. The dinner provided opportunity for all 30 to speak during the evening. Adults were paired with students and the students interviewed the adults and impromptu spoke about the adult and told everyone else about who you were and what you did. Apparently, it is the first time that a councillor has attended as opposed to a working member of the council and it was extremely well received by Rotary. The event is really well worth going to and a very enjoyable evening.

I attended the Avoca Riverside Market on the 28th of September where I helped cook the fundraising BBQ. We sold out by 11.45am, we had made 60 bacon and eggs and 150 sausages. The weather was incredible, and the crowds turned up to have free rides on the camels. The Riverside Market committee funded this, and they should be commended for their efforts. Just a heads up for anyone interested, this Sunday, Bluey will be there for the kids. Once again it is these sorts of community groups that make the Pyrenees interesting, all of these little things that they do for others, it is just fabulous to see.

Cr Phelan

In addition to the meetings that are listed, as already mentioned during the meeting, I went to the official launch of 'The Hidden' at Bigibila which was part of the Ballarat Biennale, absolutely amazing photography by the artist capturing some tribal communities and cultures that will disappear as these people die out very sadly.

I had a number of visits to Redbank to check on the streetscape works and chatting with locals there.

I had a week off up North which was lovely, I had a bit of a holiday but flew back to be able to attend the Lions Club event at Lexton and be a speaker at that event. It was really great to be invited to speak to Lions Club members and others in the local community and be there as new members were inducted, three new members were inducted into the Lions Club which is pretty good for a small town. It was great to see again that community coming together and really supporting these sorts of events and to also hear about one of the great fundraising efforts by one of the local Lexton community members.

Cr Kehoe

I would just like to acknowledge 'The Hidden' and our incredible wineries, get out there with the beautiful weather that we are having, it is really awesome.

Recently I attended the BASHS hospital fund AGM. They do an incredible job to support our Beaufort and Skipton Health Services. Those hospitals are looking at different ways of creating more initiatives that can help all areas of health across our community, to encourage interns and nurses and doctors to be able to come and locate to our amazing area and to be able to take the stress off more acute areas like Ballarat, we are very grateful for that and thank them for all of the work that they do.

I have attended a lot of training this last month which has helped me as a Councillor and as a Mayor and I am very grateful.

I attended the Outdoors Inc. convention at Cave Hill Creek, it is an incredible program supporting the mental health of adults, it was amazing to see what they do and support people there.

We are trying to ramp up the advocacy while state government was sitting, Jim and I had some meetings with Ministers and bureaucrats last week.

I attended the Municipal Association of Victoria Annual Conference and State Council meeting the other week.

There were a number of highlights at the conference – Artificial Intelligence, AI, we're hearing it everywhere and it is becoming involved in all sectors but particularly in government sectors and there was huge focus on housing.

Some of the highlights from the State Council meeting, I was quoted in the annual report speaking to the extensive and the devastating impact that ESVF has had, in particularly in regional areas but also across the state. Again, we are really voicing our concerns wherever we can.

There was discussion around housing regulations, in particular rooming house regulations which relate to us. There was discussion around renewable energy projects, independent assessment around that and having more impact as local government.

A few other highlights were improving acute mental health and response programs, particularly in regional areas. Public pools came up which is very pivotal, again Cr Ferrari alluded to ours, because particularly in regional councils, a lot of the facilities are coming to the end of life and there are issues because of the age and when they were built, we know as a collective that we need government support to be able to maintain a really important asset for our communities.

We also looked at road funding. The Emergency Services and Volunteer fund came up again and a huge, united front to abolish that or if it is not going to be abolished, at least get better parameters, we are still on the abolish track and we will really fight for that.

Also waste levies was also a huge one which again came up in tonight's meeting. MAV are really advocating for a clear streamlined process for the voluntary hand back of crown land and assets from Council to state government or the other way around, but far better support is required.

Drought support and the realities around occupational violence was a highlight too.

A huge one for us as well is the farmers sovereignty over their land, we know with the WRL and the issues there, there is huge advocacy again with some changes to the Electricity Industry act 2000 which implements fines for property owners who obstruct, hinder or delay the entry of authorised officers to their property and sanctions authorised officers to use reasonable force to gain entry.

We've noted that the power imbalance between farmers and electricity operators is ridiculous and unconscionable, so we really want to be able to fight against that.

There was increased funding for regional infrastructure, and a non-competitive funding stream was asked for to replace the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program to make it a lot fairer for us as regional Councils. Also, improvements to the Planning Scheme amendments approval process, again that is related to an item we had tonight. I feel this latest MAV State Council meeting was really pivotal.

There are snakes about so people need to be very weary of that in our beautiful area, I know with farmers getting out and when harvest starts, they can be on the move a little bit more. Enjoy this beautiful weather.

13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

CLOSURE OF MEETING TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

That, pursuant to the provisions of Section 4.1.1(c) of Council's Governance Rules, and Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2020, the meeting be closed to the public in order to consider confidential items.

Cr Damian Ferrari / Cr Megan Phelan

That the meeting be closed to members of the public in accordance with Section 4.1.1(c) of Council's Governance Rules, and Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2020, in order to discuss the confidential reports listed below:

15.1 - Two (2) Wheeled Loaders Revised Recommendation

15.2 - Avoca Caravan Park Lease and Expression of Interest

CARRIED

The live streaming of Ordinary Meeting of Council - 20 October 2025 stopped at 7.34pm to consider confidential items.

The live stream re-commenced at 7.46pm and the Mayor chose to report on confidential items discussed in closed Council which are noted below.

Reports were considered on purchasing two wheeled loaders and the Avoca Caravan Park lease.

14. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Ordinary Meeting of Council - 20 October 2025 closed at 7.47pm.

Minutes of the Meeting confirmed _____

2025

Mayor Cr Tanya Kehoe