



Pyrenees
Shire Council

Minutes

Ordinary Meeting of Council

6:00 pm Monday 20 April 2026
Council Chambers
Beaufort Council Offices,
5 Lawrence Street, Beaufort

Wadawurrung Country

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

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1. WELCOME

Mayor Cr Damian Ferrari welcomed all to the meeting.

PRESENT

Mayor: Cr Damian Ferrari

Councillors: Megan Phelan, Simon Tol, Rebecca Wardlaw, Tanya Kehoe

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 Damian Ferrari 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

Mr Douglas Gowans declared of conflict of interest (direct) in relation to item 11.3.4 - Emergency Management Roles.

6. CONFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Megan Phelan

That the Minutes of the:

- Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 16 March 2026; and
 - Closed Meeting of Council held 16 March 2026,
- 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 16 March 2026.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Trevor Davey of Waterloo

Question one:

I am wondering why a Council of this size would appoint an assistant Mayor when money is tight and I just don't understand what obligations that would make.

Response:

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

Essentially the Local Government Act does provide for the opportunity for Council to appoint a Deputy Mayor. Certainly, a Council is required to have a Mayor, it is an option for a Council to have a Deputy Mayor. The purpose of having a Deputy Mayor is to provide an alternative for representation when the Mayor is unavailable and also it is an opportunity for a Councillor to get an experience of some of the activities involved in being a Mayor for their professional development and to provide an avenue for future Mayor potentially. It is not uncommon for Councils to have a Deputy Mayor, as you perhaps appreciate, the role of Mayor can at times become quite demanding and it is an avenue for being able to share the load. It is an option for Council, there is a purpose, there is an avenue for it. At the end of the day, it is a decision of the Council and the Council has resolved that as at the last Statutory meeting. I hope that provides some sort of context for you and it is an option available, there is a legal capacity for it and it is not uncommon in Councils to have a Deputy Mayor, albeit, most of those larger metropolitan councils certainly have Deputy Mayors but a number of rural councils also do have Deputy Mayors. I hope that provides some context.

Mr Davey

Who is the Deputy Mayor?

Mayor, Cr Damian Ferrari

Cr Wardlaw.

Question two:

I am a strong communicator as a scientist and I am finding it difficult to get responses and answers from Councillors on their phone, it has been going for quite some time. Is there something wrong with the phone systems, are they not adequate enough, are the message banks not right. I am hoping the Council can look at that as well.

Response:

Mayor, Cr Damian Ferrari thanked Mr Davey for the question and provided the following response: I do note that I certainly have had connectivity issues and probably where I live, the phone service there is quite poor, but I certainly do at times have difficulty, some days are better than others and I know other councillors have had connectivity issues too but it is something we have raised internally. We will continue to look at that and make sure we try and get the best coverage so we can provide that service.

Cr Kehoe

Just on that too, we had a discussion about the safety networks that we need to have, obviously because we have had some terrible security breaches and that can be another hinderance when you are trying to work off satellite. Again, in regional areas we need to look at coverage as well.

9. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS**9.1. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS - MARCH 2026**

Cr Damian Ferrari – Beaufort Ward		
02/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
06/03/2026	Streatham – Skipton Fire Recovery Network Meeting	Skipton
11/03/2026	MAV ‘The Future is Local’ State Election Campaign Launch	Melbourne
12/03/2026	Streatham – Skipton Fire Recovery – Council Collaboration	Camperdown
12/03/2026	MAV Delegate Connect Session	Online
13/03/2026	GBAC Committee Meeting	Online
16/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
16/03/2026	Council Meeting	Beaufort
17/03/2026	Audit & Risk Committee Meeting	Beaufort
19/03/2026	Council Wrap with ABC	Phone
19/03/2026	MAV Mayors Institute Forum – Leading Healthy Communities	Melbourne
23/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
25/03/2026	Mayor & CEO Meeting with Martha Haylett	Online
27/03/2026	Western Highway Action Committee Meeting	Melbourne
29/03/2026	Avoca Races	Avoca

Cr Tanya Kehoe – Mount Emu Ward		
02/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
06/03/2026	Streatham – Skipton Fire Recovery Network Meeting	Skipton
12/03/2026	Streatham – Skipton Fire Recovery – Council Collaboration	Camperdown
16/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
16/03/2026	Council Meeting	Beaufort
23/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
26/03/2026	RCV Committee Meeting	Online

Cr Simon Tol – Ercildoune Ward		
02/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
03/03/2026	Sunraysia Highway Improvement Committee Meeting	Online
03/03/2026	Waubra playground site inspection	Waubra
06/03/2026	Lexton Rec. irrigation possibilities	Lexton
09/03/2026	Evansford Road work discussion with constituents	
16/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
16/03/2026	Council Meeting	Beaufort
21/03/2026	Avoca Petanque	Avoca
22/03/2026	VFBV West Region Rural Championships	Lexton
22/03/2026	Avoca Riverside Market	Avoca
22/03/2026	Avoca Car Show	Avoca
23/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
24/03/2026	Meeting with Mt Misery – Motorbike event	
24/03/2026	Waubra Community Fund Meeting	

Cr Megan Phelan – De Cameron Ward		
02/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
14/03/2026	Hub Community Gathering	Landsborough
16/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
16/03/2026	Council Meeting	Beaufort
22/03/2026	VFBV West Region Rural Championships	Lexton
22/03/2026	Vintage Car Muster	Avoca
23/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
29/03/2026	Avoca Races	Avoca

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw – Avoca Ward		
02/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
08/03/2026	International Women’s Day event	Beaufort
10/03/2026	Avoca Golf Club meeting	Avoca
16/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
16/03/2026	Council Meeting	Beaufort
17/03/2026	Audit & Risk Committee Meeting	Online
23/03/2026	Council Briefing	Beaufort
25/03/2026	Mayor & CEO Meeting with Martha Haylett	Online
29/03/2026	Avoca Races	Avoca

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Simon Tol

That Council notes this report.

CARRIED

10. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS
10.1. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS - MARCH 2026

MEETING INFORMATION			
Meeting Name	Council Briefing		
Meeting Date	2 March 2026 commenced at 4.00pm and closed at 7.10pm		
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort		
Items Discussed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism Midwest Victoria 2. Financial Impact of Natural Disasters 3. Update – DEECA Committee of Management Insurance 4. Streatham Yalla-Y-Poorra Fire Recovery 5. Strategic Issues Raised by Councillors 		
ATTENDEES			
Councillors	Mayor Cr Damian Ferrari Cr Tanya Kehoe (virtual) 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) Ray Davies (Manager Economic Development & Tourism) - item 1		
Visitors	Amy Maiden (Tourism Midwest Victoria) - item 1 John Pandazopoulos (Tourism Midwest Victoria) - item 1		
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES			
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting
Nil			

MEETING INFORMATION			
Meeting Name	Council Briefing		
Meeting Date	16 March 2026 commenced at 4.00pm and closed at 5.50pm		
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort		
Items Discussed	1. 2026/27 Budget Workshop Three 2. Council Meeting Preparation 3. Councillor only time		
ATTENDEES			
Councillors	Mayor Cr Damian Ferrari Cr Tanya Kehoe (4.50pm) Cr Rebecca Wardlaw	Cr Simon Tol Cr Megan Phelan	
Apologies	Nil.		
Staff	Jim Nolan (Chief Executive Officer) Douglas Gowans (Director Assets and Development Services) Jacinta Erdody (Director Corporate and Community Services) Glenn Kallio (Manager Finance) - item 1, item 2		
Visitors	Nil.		
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES			
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting
Nil			

MEETING INFORMATION			
Meeting Name	Council Briefing		
Meeting Date	23 March 2026 commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.00pm		
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort		
Items Discussed	1. Waste App 2. 2026/27 Budget Workshop Four 3. Enterprise Agreement and Multi-Employer Bargaining 4. Strategic Issues Raised by Councillors		
ATTENDEES			
Councillors	Mayor Cr Damian Ferrari Cr Tanya Kehoe Cr Rebecca Wardlaw (online)	Cr Simon Tol Cr Megan Phelan (online)	
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 Philip Diprose (Waste and Contracts Administration Officer) – item 1 Glenn Kallio (Manager Finance) - item 2		
Visitors	Nil.		
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES			
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting
Nil			

Cr Tanya Kehoe / 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 provide councillors with an overview of population growth, economic activity in the Pyrenees and an update on recent activities of the Economic Development and Tourism team.

BACKGROUND

Economic Development Strategic Context

Pyrenees Economic Development and Investment Attraction Strategy

Council is currently updating its economic development strategy with a new version currently under review in draft form.

The draft strategy aligns with Pillar 2 in the Council Plan 2025-2029 “Promote a Diversified, Thriving Economy”

- A. Support the growth and diversification of new and existing businesses, with a focus on key sectors, innovation, and attracting investment.
- B. Deliver coordinated and facilitated planning and economic development outcomes to support community aspirations and foster business and tourism growth.
- C. Promote and support community events and the visitor economy to celebrate local culture, promote tourism, and stimulate the local economy.
- D. Advocate for improved transport infrastructure, support job creation, and invest in workforce development to enhance connectivity and economic opportunities.

After extensive research and consultation, the draft strategy has identified five key strategic themes being:

1. Agriculture and Agribusiness; is the primary economic driver
2. Population, housing and development enablement; supports workforce growth
3. Tourism; attracts external demand and creates expenditure in the local economy
4. Local Value adding; retains economic activity
5. Workforce; underpins all sectors

Central Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

The Central Highlands REDS is due to be reviewed

The key priorities of the current REDS are:

- Enhance the regional value add and collaboration across the agri-food supply chain
- Continue to grow and develop the visitor and creative economies
- Strengthen the renewable energy and waste management industries
- Enhance the innovation ecosystem

Summary of population growth and economic activity

Population Growth

Council set a base line target in its 2020 Towards 10,000 Economic Development Strategy for population of 8,000 people by 2025.

While during the twelve-month period to the end of June 2024 the Shire’s population grew by 173 people (2.22%) to 7,958 the degree of population growth to June 2025 was more modest at 31 additional residents resulting in an Estimated Resident Population of 7,957-.

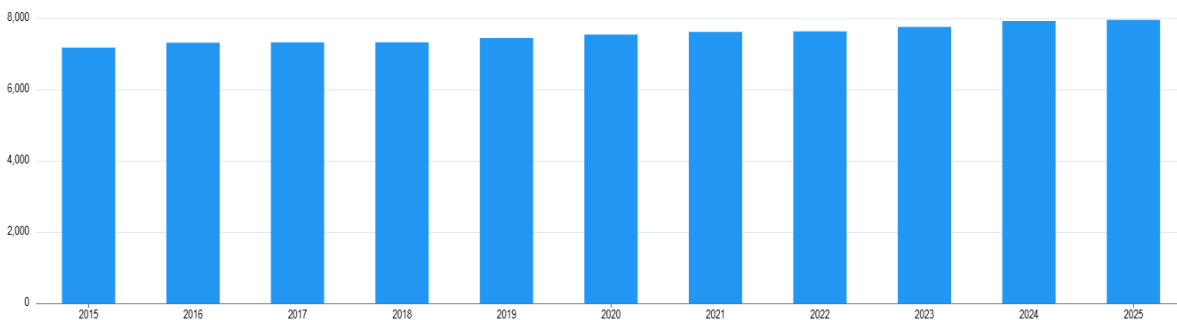
Since the Economic Development Strategy was adopted by Council in 2020 the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate the Shires population has grown by 413 people at an average annual rate of 1.09% while over a ten-year period the rate has been 1.08%.

Should this rate of population growth continue, then the Shires population will reach 9,000 people by 2037 and 10,000 people by 2047. This will be dependent on a range of factors including housing demand, access to employment, availability of land for housing development and access to affordable means of transport as a number of existing members of the workforce are commuting outside of the Shire. Latest ABS data indicates that of the 2,715 residents who are working, an estimated 1,195 are working outside of the Shire.

Figure 1 Population

Pyrenees

Population



Years	Pyrenees	Growth Rate	10 year average growth rate
2015	7,179		
2016	7,316	1.9%	
2017	7,325	0.1%	
2018	7,327	0.0%	
2019	7,449	1.7%	
2020	7,544	1.3%	
2021	7,619	1.0%	
2022	7,635	0.2%	
2023	7,759	1.6%	
2024	7,926	2.2%	
2025	7,957	0.4%	1.08%

Source: <https://app.remplan.com.au/pyrenees/economy/trends/population>

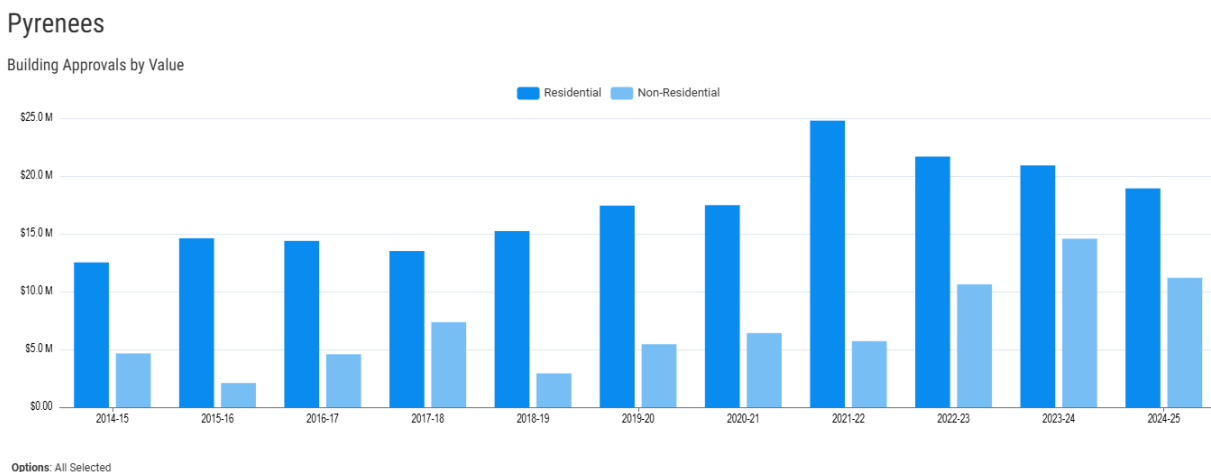
Remplan is a registered trademark of Compelling Economics.

Building approvals

Council has continued to play an active role in population growth through residential development and the purchase of land at Avoca and Beaufort for this purpose. Furthermore, the development of ten new dwellings at Burke St Beaufort has been made possible through funding of \$3.4M under the Victorian Governments “Regional Worker Accommodation Fund”. A further sum of \$2 million has been secured from the Commonwealth Government to progress the Burke St Beaufort subdivision.

While the value of residential building approvals has reduced by \$1.99 million or 9.5% during 2024-25 compared with the previous year the number of residential building approvals declined from 38 to 24 with an annual average of 45 approvals per year for the five year period up to and including 2023-24.

Figure 2 Building approvals by value



Options	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Residential	\$17,478,600	\$24,788,000	\$21,679,300	\$20,916,000	\$18,926,000
Non-Residential	\$6,420,200	\$5,718,100	\$10,629,300	\$14,577,000	\$11,194,000
Total	\$23,898,800	\$30,506,100	\$32,308,600	\$35,493,000	\$30,120,000

Source: <https://app.rempln.com.au/pyrenees/economy/trends/building-approvals-value>

Figure 3 Building approvals by count

Options	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
New Houses	32	63	46	38	24
New Other Residential	0	0	0	0	0
Total	32	63	46	38	24

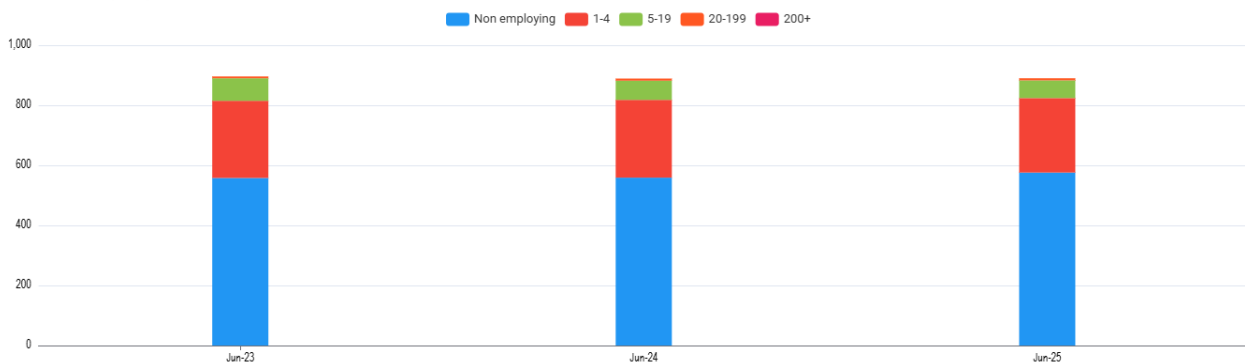
Source: <https://app.rempln.com.au/pyrenees/economy/trends/building-approvals-count>

Figure 4 Business Counts (Staff)

While business counts remain relatively static, the number of jobs in the Pyrenees has increased from 1,667 in 2011 to 2,001 in 2016 and 2,219 in 2021 according to ABS statistics with a Census due later in 2026.

Pyrenees

Business Counts (Staff)



Staff Size: All Selected | Industries: All Selected

A summary of current business counts by staff is represented in the table below

		Pyrenees		
Staff Size	Staff Size	Jun-23	Jun-24	Jun-25
Non employing	Non employing	558	559	576
	1-4	257	259	248
	5-19	75	64	59
	20-199	6	7	7
	200+	0	0	0
Total		896	889	890

Source <https://app.remplan.com.au/pyrenees/economy/trends/business-counts-staff>

Economy

Gross Regional Product

Gross Regional Product increased in both real and nominal terms in the year ending 30 June 2025.

Nominal GRP increased by \$24.623 million (5.17%) to \$500.912 million and in real terms by \$14.375 million (3.02%) to \$490.660 million continuing the trend of recent years.

Nominal GRP is a measurement that shows growth but is also affected by the change in prices (inflation or deflation).

Real GRP only shows growth and prices will be based off a single point in time, in this case June 2024 prices.

Despite difficult seasonal conditions the Shires agricultural sector continues to support growth in GRP as illustrated in the next section of this report.

Figure 5: Gross Regional Product



Options: All Selected

Source: <https://app.rempla.com.au/pyrenees/economy/trends/gross-regional-product>

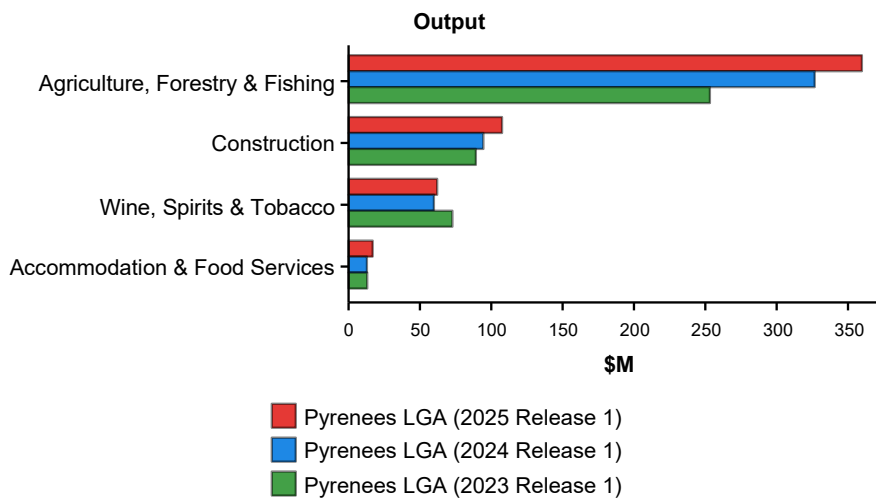
Key Propulsive Sectors

Councils' 2020 Economic Development Strategy identified Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction and Tourism as the key private industry sectors contributing to the Shires economy.

The total output estimate for Pyrenees LGA is \$964.621 million.

The selected sectors contribute \$546.249 million (56.6%) of total output.

Figure 6. Economic output of key private sectors



Selected industry sectors in Pyrenees LGA ranked by Output

Industry Sector	Pyrenees LGA (2025 Release 1)		Pyrenees LGA (2024 Release 1)		Pyrenees LGA (2023 Release 1)	
	\$M	%	\$M	%	\$M	%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$359.743	37.3%	\$326.647	36.7%	\$253.220	32.1%
Construction	\$107.552	11.1%	\$94.471	10.6%	\$89.202	11.3%
Wine, Spirits & Tobacco	\$62.092	6.4%	\$59.799	6.7%	\$72.760	9.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	\$16.862	1.7%	\$12.853	1.4%	\$13.076	1.7%
Sub-Total	\$546.249	56.6%	\$493.770	55.4%	\$428.257	54.3%
Other	\$418.372	43.4%	\$396.776	44.6%	\$360.308	45.7%
Total	\$964.621	100.0%	\$890.546	100.0%	\$788.565	100.0%

Source: Remplan

Agriculture

The March forecasts by ABARES for 2025-26 (which precede recent international conflicts impacting fuel and fertiliser prices) include the following key points:

- Gross value of agricultural production expected to reach \$101 billion in 2025–26.
- Gross value of agricultural production to fall by 6% to \$95 billion in 2026–27.
- Livestock and livestock product value to fall 8% to \$43 billion, reflecting lower prices and volumes.
- Value of crop production to fall 5% to \$52 billion reflecting lower production volume.
- Agricultural export value to fall by 9% to \$73 billion driven by lower livestock product and grain exports.
- Average farm business profit to fall in 2026-27 driven by lower crop and livestock receipts.

Locally, the region has remained in drought for many, with famers located between Streatham and Skipton having also been impacted by fire in January.

The Economic Development Team continues to promote Agriculture Victoria's Drought Support and Fire Recovery Programs which include:

- Farm clean up grants of up to \$75,000-
- Farm Drought Support Grants
- Farm Advisory Service
- Primary Producer Support Payments – south west Victoria
- Household Financial Relief payments – south west Victoria
- Catchment Management Authority (CMA) Drought Employment Program
- Moving hay and fodder across states
- Duties and fees relief package
- Mental health and community support for Victorian farmers
- On-Farm Kangaroo Control Rebate Program
- Statewide and south-west regional drought coordinators
- Small Business Financial Counsellor – south west
- Water management to support practical measures to provide greater access to water

Seasonal rainfall forecasts for May – July by the Bureau of Meteorology

Rainfall for the 3-month period from May to July is likely to be below average (60% to more than 80% chance) for much of eastern and south-west Australia.

- Maximum temperatures over May to July are likely to be above average (60% to greater than 80% chance) across most of Australia.
- Most of the southern half of Australia has an increased chance of unusually high maximum temperatures² (over 50% chance), with the highest chances (over 80% chance) across eastern New South Wales and neighbouring border regions, north-east Tasmania, and south-west Western Australia.
- Minimum temperatures are likely (60% to greater than 80% chance) to be above average across Australia
- There is an increased chance of unusually high minimum temperatures² (over 50% chance) for much of Western Australia and south-east Australia

Economic Development Activities

Progress continues on Economic Development projects outlined below.

Economic Development Strategy

Council's new economic development and investment attraction strategy is coming to a conclusion with a draft under review at the time of developing this report. It is expected that the strategy will be presented to Council in May.

Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Rural Water Supply

The preliminary draft business case for the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply Project was endorsed by Council in November 2024.

Subsequent to this DEECA completed a detailed review of the draft strategy in September 2025. The review identified a number of areas for further investigation, which predominantly include more granular detail on environmental benefits, undertaking cultural heritage assessments, geotechnical investigations and design work.

Recent work subsequent to the DEECA review has included consultation with Traditional Owner groups to incorporate Aboriginal Water Assessments. This work was overseen by GWMWater with Dja Dja Wurrung project managing the completion of water assessments in collaboration with Barengi Gajin Land Council and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.

An extension in funding timelines for the business case has enabled a number of these important investigations to be completed to strengthen the business case which is being finalised at the time of this report.

The business case identifies that additional funds of up to \$5 million are required to complete essential investigations necessary, prior to the project being ready to receive funding for the construction phase.

This next stage entails detailed investigations and design development to confirm the final project scope and reduce delivery risks prior to committing to full construction funding.

This stage would include:

- geotechnical investigations to better understand ground conditions along pipeline corridors
- detailed pipeline alignment and hydraulic design
- environmental approvals and environmental water planning
- cultural heritage investigations and Traditional Owner engagement
- planning approvals pathway and land access negotiations
- refinement of cost estimates and delivery schedules.

Early geotechnical investigations are particularly important with pipeline projects of this type where higher-than-anticipated rock excavation can result in significant construction cost increases.

Completion of this stage will enable the development of a fully developed project design and delivery plan, providing greater confidence in project costs, environmental outcomes and delivery timeframes.

Implementing Beaufort Linear Masterplan

Funding of \$111,000- to develop an off-leash dog park was approved last year and progress includes:

- Engagement with a cultural heritage consultant and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to undertake assessments for cultural heritage purposes
- Having extracted soil samples from the site which are being tested by laboratory services to understand if there are risks of the site being contaminated

A further funding application amounting to \$370,000 (Exc GST) was submitted to the Victorian Governments Integrated Water Management Program in March

Should the funding submission be successful, it will enable council to:

1. Complete detailed designs
2. Undertake Cultural Heritage Management Plans and
3. Commence the renaturing and landscaping of the creek at Beggs Street between Neill St and the Western Highway as proposed in the masterplan.

Completion of items 1 and 2 above will bring the project to a shovel ready status for further construction phases as future funding opportunities arise.

Beaufort Lake Caravan Park

Following installation of new cabins in March and June last year, further civil works have been commenced to:

- Demolish two blocks of ensuites to make way for additional powered sites
- Convert one of the existing ensuite blocks to meet the needs of clients with disabilities

Business Friendly Council Program

Council officers participated in a series of workshops for this program late last year and are working through improvements to the website at present.

The Business Friendly Council Program is aimed at reducing the time it takes for businesses to receive regulatory approvals to commence their operations thereby reducing costs for the proponent by avoiding delayed income streams.

The Program is supported throughout the draft economic development strategy as a means of support to the business community and an enabler of investment.

The Program incorporates a “Concierge Officer” role to act as a single point of contact to support business enquiries from initial enquiry through to completion of all regulatory requirements.

This Concierge Officer role would require additional resourcing equivalent to .6 of a full-time employee and has budgetary implications of around \$70,000- p.a. (wages and oncosts) subject to EBA implications. Funding of this position would allow the Events Officer role to be separated from the “Business Support and Events Officer” position that is currently in place.

Shop Façade Program

Ongoing follow up has been occurring with five applicants under the Shop Façade Program who are due to finalise their project by 30 June to conclude this program. Two of these projects have recently been acquitted.

Fire Recovery and Drought

Since the Streatham to Skipton Fires in January the Economic Development team continues to support recovery efforts in conjunction with Councils' Recovery Team as mentioned earlier in this report.

Central Highlands Regional Drought Resilience Plan

Council has taken the lead role for the delivery of a "Resilient Agriculture Report", which is one of the five projects being implemented under the Central Highlands RDRP.

The objectives of the Agri Resilience project 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.

The Centre for E- research and Digital Innovation (CERDI) at Federation University who have completed similar studies previously have developed a draft report which is currently being reviewed by members of the projects steering committee.

The report is due to be finalised by the end of April.

Event & Business Support Report – January to March 2026

Pyrenees Shire Events Overview

This quarter delivered a diverse calendar of events across the Pyrenees Shire. While overall visitor numbers remained relatively consistent, heightened fire risk in January impacted several events and attendance levels. The fuel crisis and had a direct impact on recent events.

The January Beaufort Market was postponed to February, while *Dreaming Together – A Big Beaufort Weekend* experienced cancellations of several workshops and reduced participation in those that proceeded. The annual HarvFest Black Tie Ball was also affected by the loss of facilities at Carranballac Recreation Reserve, with Council supporting relocation to Mininera Reserve in Ararat Rural City.

Despite these challenges, community groups have demonstrated strong resilience, including the highly successful Carranballac Recreation Reserve fundraiser held at the Royal Hotel, Snake Valley.

Key events included:

- **Pyrenees Shire Australia Day (Beaufort):** Delivered in partnership with the Waterloo Community Group. Despite extreme heat, the event was well attended and positively received.
- **Katherine Outback Experience (Amphitheatre):** A new touring event that attracted approximately 500 attendees and wells supported in our community. The event required a Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) permit and additional Council support.
- **Avoca Autumn Races:** Attendance declined from approximately 1,000 in 2025 to 500 in 2026, influenced by the shift to a Sunday race day and increased fuel costs. The Committee anticipated this and were not surprised with the outcome. Planning is underway to align future promotion with *Pyrenees Unearthed* to create a coordinated weekend offering in Avoca as both event fall on the same weekend in 2027.

- **Beaufort Car & Truck Show and Beaufort Walkfest:** Both events reported reduced attendance, largely attributed to rising fuel costs.

Event Support (January to March 2026)

- 18 formal event applications received
- 14 events were delivered during the quarter, with the remainder scheduled for April–June
- 37 events across the Shire received marketing and promotional support

Business Support Overview

The Easter long weekend delivered a welcome boost to our business in the visitor economy, with many reporting strong trading. Accommodation bookings continue to hold, although uncertainty in the current economic climate remains a concern and continues to weigh on confidence.

Key initiatives this quarter included:

- **Business Victoria Workshop – Winning Government Grants and Tenders (Beaufort):** Ten registrations were received; however, only two participants attended. While attendance was low, those present gained valuable, practical insights into securing future funding opportunities.
- **Farmers Day Out (Ballarat Showgrounds):** Council supported fire-affected farmers by offering free tickets; however, uptake was limited. Council also hosted a promotional stall showcasing Visit Pyrenees, the Pyrenees Wine Growers Ballarat pop-up cellar door, and the upcoming *Pyrenees Unearthed* event.
- **Pyrenees Wine Growers Pop-Up Cellar Door (Ballarat):** Ongoing support is being provided to establish and grow this initiative at The George Hotel, strengthening exposure of the Pyrenees wine region to new audiences and enhancing regional tourism connections.
- **Visit Pyrenees Website Upgrade:** Integration with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) now allows event listings to automatically populate the Visit Pyrenees “What’s On” calendar and app. This reduces duplication and saves time for event organisers.
- ATDW listings also expand reach through major tourism platforms including Visit Victoria, Tourism Midwest Victoria, Visit Ballarat and Ballarat in the Know—providing access to a potential audience of over 80 million visitors and 10.5 million annual users via Visit Victoria alone.

Upcoming business support includes:

- **Grounded: Business Clarity Free Workshop Series** - This 4-week workshop is here to help businesses reset, refocus and move forward with confidence. Think of it as a 4-week boot camp. This workshop will be ran every Monday morning in May.
<https://www.pyrenees.vic.gov.au/Community/Events-and-activities/2026-Grounded-Business-Clarity-Workshop-Series>
- **The Small Business Bus is visiting Beaufort**
When: Monday 11 May | 10 am- 4 pm
Where: Beaufort Band Rotunda
Details and Registration here: <https://www.pyrenees.vic.gov.au/Community/Events-and-activities/2026-5-Small-Business-Bus-Beaufort>

Spendmapp Data here - [Pyrenees's February 2026 sees a 19.0% increase in year-on-year spending.](#)

Our visitor spend is holding strong in February the March data may tell a very different picture.

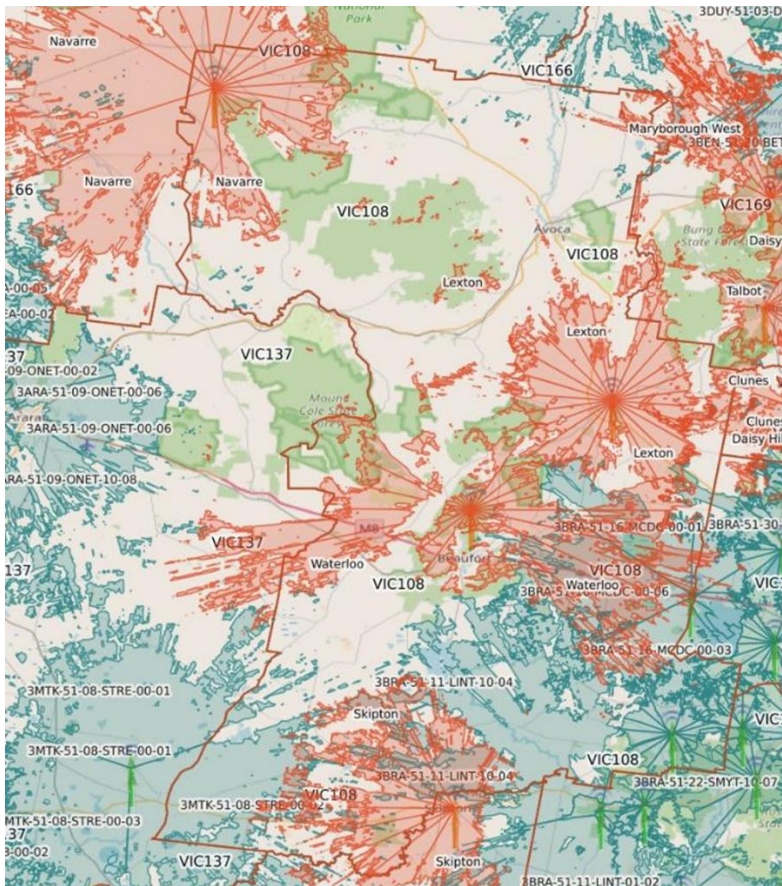
Digital Connectivity Update

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

The new **Waterloo Fixed Wireless Tower** is now live. Located at Musical Gully Reservoir, it provides improved connectivity to residents in Main Lead, Raglan, Crossroads and surrounding Beaufort areas, including Rifle Butt Road. Due to variations in topography and line of sight, residents are encouraged to check their address to confirm service availability and potential benefits.

NBN website - <https://www.nbnco.com.au/check-address>

Refer to this map- orange indicates the new fixed wireless coverage.



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

NBN Community Engagement Session:

Free Community BBQ

When: Thursday 16 April 12pm-2pm

Where: Waterloo Community Hall

Meet the NBN team, including NBN Local General Manager Chris Cusack. Residents are encouraged to attend, ask questions and learn how these new connectivity upgrades can benefit their home or business.

Tourism

Product Development

Developing cycle routes was an initiative included in Councils Local Area Action Plan to diversify and increase the number of experiences available in the Pyrenees.

Investigations have included discussions with DEECA representatives about opportunities in the Trawalla State Forest and Parks Victoria about a proposed loop north of Moonambel.

A new cycle loop has recently been established from Moonambel to the south using existing Council roads.

Room to Roam Seasonal Campaign

Originally launched in spring and extended through the summer months, the Room to Roam campaign was designed to capitalise on a time when people are naturally drawn to the outdoors. The campaign positioned the Pyrenees as an inviting destination to slow down, breathe, explore and reconnect with nature and wide-open spaces.

However, the summer period presented unexpected challenges. Widespread bushfires across the state created a heightened sense of risk among travelers, leading to increased hesitation around regional travel. In addition, public safety messaging from Parks Victoria during extreme heat periods discouraged visitation to national and state parks, which likely impacted nature-based travel to the region.

Despite these external factors, the Room to Roam campaign continued to promote the Pyrenees as a safe and welcoming escape—encouraging visitors to enjoy its open landscapes, fresh air and relaxed pace, and reinforcing its appeal as a destination for those seeking space, tranquility and meaningful outdoor experiences.

Digital Statistics - January to March 2026

Facebook

	Organic Posts Reached	Organic Page Visits	New Followers	Paid Ad Reach
Jan - Mar 2026	106,841	1,507	122	
Jan-Mar – 2025	94,915	1,353	98	

Instagram Organic Posts

	Posts Reached	Page Visits	New Followers	Paid Ad Reach
Jan-Mar 2026	16,365	130	49	
Jan – Mar 2025	3,324	221	1	

Visit Pyrenees Website

- 14,300 Users
- 9.3K was from a direct search, 3.7K organic search, 541 Referrals, 523 Socials
- Most visited pages were Pyrenees wineries, What’s On, Winery Accommodation, Dining, Avoca riverside Free Camping Mount Cole State Forest, Avoca Riverside free camp, Beaufort Cat and Truck Show.

Top Posts



Feeling the pinch of rising fuel prices? 🛢️ ...

Wed Apr 1, 5:51pm
 👁️ 5.9K ❤️ 22
 🗨️ 0 ➡️ 13



Tom Curtain Tour is coming to Amphithet...

Wed Feb 25, 9:54am
 👁️ 4.3K ❤️ 7
 🗨️ 1 ➡️ 11



Would you love to attend Pyrenees...

Sat Mar 7, 3:00pm
 👁️ 3.6K ❤️ 5
 🗨️ 0 ➡️ 9



Now that school is well and truly back, it's on...

Mon Feb 16, 6:12pm
 👁️ 3.4K ❤️ 12
 🗨️ 0 ➡️ 2



Feeling the pinch of rising fuel prices? 🛢️ ...

Wed Apr 1, 5:51pm
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Mon Feb 16, 6:12pm
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 🗨️ 0 ➡️ 2

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

A draft of the new economic development strategy is being reviewed at present and is expected to be provided to council in May before being placed on public exhibit.

The next quarter will see the Economic Development and Tourism Department focus on activities including:

- Ongoing advocacy for the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply and funding of the next stage of investigations estimated to be in the order of \$5 million. These funds are to be sought from higher levels of government.
- Finalising the installation of new powered sites at Beaufort Lake Caravan Park and refurbishing one of the ensuite blocks to accommodate people with disabilities
- Concluding the regions Regional Drought Resilience Plan “Resilient Agribusiness Report”
- Continuing progress with the Beaufort Dog Park Project
- Progressing the implementation of the Business Friendly Council Program
- Developing and implementing the winter tourism marketing campaign
- Progressing development of cycle tourism products near Beaufort and Avoca
- Continuing Council’s support to events organisations, in particular, but not exclusive to the Lake Goldsmith Steam Rally and Beaufort Art Exhibition and Sale in June.
- Hosting the “Grounded Business Clarity” series of four business workshops during May
- Hosting the Small Business Bus at the Beaufort Band Rotunda from 10- a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on 11 May
- Supporting the farming and business community during drought and following bushfires
- Submitting an application to the Victorian Tourism Industry Council Tourism Town Awards
- Implementing the Road to Red winter tourism campaign

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.

Pillar 4 - Infrastructure

4a. Plan, build and maintain essential infrastructure.

4b. Address communication disadvantage.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

This report summarises recent economic development activities including a range of different projects being undertaken where community consultation for individual projects has previously been reported to council.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Funding of the \$5 million required for the next stage of investigations for SWNP Water Supply is to be sought from higher levels of government

Implementing a dedicated “Concierge Officer” role is estimated to cost \$70,000- in wages and oncosts p.a. subject to EBA negotiations.

CONCLUSION

The 2020 Economic Development “Towards 10,000” Strategy is currently being updated, and the new draft strategy is currently being reviewed. It is expected that the new strategy will be reported to Council in May.

Population growth has remained steady and is marginally short of the base line target (from the 2020 strategy) of 8,000 people by June 2025.

Building approvals appear to have been influenced by Council investment in residential land developments over the past decade or so at Correa Park Beaufort. With the current development at Burke St Beaufort and with residential land at High St Avoca available for development in due course these assets will continue to stimulate development which caters for the Shires rising population.

The Pyrenees economy has continued to perform strongly over the past year reflected by increases in Gross Regional Product, output and jobs. Notable growth sectors are agriculture and the construction industry.

Ongoing advocacy is required to access \$5 million in funding to progress essential investigations for the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply project.

Resourcing is required to optimise the benefits of Councils participation in the Business Friendly Council program.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council:

1. Notes the report
2. Continues its advocacy for \$5 million funding required to progress the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply Project
3. Gives consideration to the role of a Concierge Officer in the 2026-27 budget to optimise the benefits of the Business Friendly Council Program
4. Receives a further report on the Economic Development Strategy in May

CARRIED

11.1.2. BEAUFORT LAKE CARAVAN PARK 2026-27 FEES AND CHARGES

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: 523046200

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to recommend the Beaufort Lake Caravan Parks site fees for the 2026/27 financial year.

BACKGROUND

The parks fees and charges were revised in 2025-26 after comparison to fees at other parks within 80 km of Beaufort.

The cost of operations is rising with the increased price of overheads, wages and materials and services.

It is expected that these costs will continue to rise due to overseas impacts on fuel supplies flowing through to the costs of other goods and services in addition to rising staff costs.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The cost of operating the Beaufort Lake Caravan Park is increasing and the Consumer Price Index at February 2026 was 3.7%.

It is proposed that the Parks site fees reflect the CPI increase mentioned above.

Table 1 outlines the current and proposed fees for sites at the Beaufort Lake Caravan Park.

Table 1

Site Type	BLCP fees for 2025-26	Proposed BLCP fees for 2026-27
Unpowered Site	\$30.00	\$30.00
Powered Site	\$40.00	\$42.00
Ensuites	\$45.00	\$47.00
Budget Cabin	\$95.00	\$98.00
Standard Cabin	\$120.00	\$125.00
Deluxe Cabin	\$135.00	\$140.00
Premium Cabin	\$145.00	\$150.00
DDA 2 BR	\$145.00	\$150.00
Studio cabin	\$120.00	\$125.00
Duplex	\$145.00	\$150.00

It is also proposed to apply CPI increases to:

- Annual sites
- Permanent residents

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.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Council operates the park as a commercial facility in competition with other accommodation providers and is required by legislation to operate on a competitive neutrality basis. The fees proposed are in line with industry standards for similar size caravan parks in the region, and no community consultation has been undertaken in this instance.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

An increase in the Parks fees is necessary to cover the increasing costs of operations.

CONCLUSION

An increase in fees and charges is proposed for 2026/27 to reflect CPI increases and accommodate rising costs as recommended in this report.

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Megan Phelan

That Council:

1. Endorses the proposed increase in fees across all Beaufort Lake Caravan Park sites for 2025-26 as outlined in this report.

CARRIED

11.2. ASSET AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

11.2.1. VICTORIA'S CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2026-30

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: Noel McKeegan – Environment and Sustainability Officer

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

File No: 30/18/06

PURPOSE

The intent of this report is to inform Council of the key impacts of climate change on the Pyrenees Shire Council and outline associated opportunities and strategic responses identified in *Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2026–30*.

BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government has released *Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2026–30*, which sets out the State's pathway to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 while aiming to strengthen economic growth, community resilience and environmental outcomes.

The Strategy recognises that climate change is already impacting Victoria, with increasing temperatures, more frequent and intense extreme weather events, and changing rainfall patterns. These impacts are particularly significant for regional and rural municipalities, where economies, infrastructure and communities are closely linked to climate-sensitive sectors such as transport and agriculture, which represents more than 50% of emissions in the Shire according to the Snapshot Community Climate Tool.

The Strategy outlines a range of initiatives across energy, transport, agriculture, land use and community resilience that are directly relevant to local government, including Pyrenees Shire Council.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Climate change presents a range of current and emerging risks for Pyrenees Shire, including:

- Increased temperatures and heatwaves, placing pressure on vulnerable populations, agriculture, infrastructure and the environment
- More frequent and intense bushfire conditions, particularly across rural landscapes and vegetated reserves.
- Variable and declining rainfall, contributing to drought conditions and water security challenges
- Increased risk of storm and flood events, impacting roads, drainage systems and community assets
- Impacts on agricultural productivity, affecting local economic stability and land use
- Environmental impacts, including vegetation stress and biodiversity decline

These impacts are expected to intensify over coming decades, requiring proactive planning and adaptation at the local level.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

Pillar 2 - Economy

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

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

Pillar 3 - Nature Environment

- 3a. Preserve and manage biodiversity and natural assets.
- 3b. Mitigate risks, build community resilience and enhance responsiveness to natural disasters.
- 3c. Support local industries and communities in adapting to climate change.

Pillar 4 - Infrastructure

- 4d. Advocate for fair renewable energy development.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Enter community engagement / consultation activities (community cuppas, engagement hub activities etc.)

ATTACHMENTS

1. victorias-climate-change-strategy-2026-30 [11.2.1.1 - 44 pages]
2. Snapshot Climate Report - Pyrenees - 2023 - last updated 2025-11-05 [11.2.1.2 - 2 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2026–30 outlines several investment pathways for building climate resilience and reducing emissions, noting that the Victorian Government has announced over \$8.5 billion in funding since the last Climate Change Strategy in 2021, and that every \$1 invested to improve resilience to climate change impacts could deliver a \$9.60 return on investment. Adaptation Action Plans to support the Strategy are currently being developed for 2027-31.

Given the distinct challenges faced by regional and rural Councils in responding to climate change, it is important that Council continues to advocate for targeted funding through regional partnerships such as the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance to ensure local priorities are effectively addressed.

CONCLUSION

Climate change presents increasing and complex challenges for Pyrenees Shire, particularly across infrastructure, agriculture and community wellbeing. At the same time, the transition to a low-carbon economy provides opportunities for regional growth. Continued advocacy, strategic planning and partnerships are important to ensure Council is well positioned to manage risks and realise opportunities for the community.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Simon Tol

That Council

1. Acknowledges the range of risks and initiatives contained within the Victorian Climate Change Strategy 2026-2030.
2. Continues to advocate for targeted funding through regional partnerships such as the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance to ensure local priorities relating to climate change mitigation are effectively addressed.

CARRIED

11.3. CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

11.3.1. RECOVERY PLAN - 2026 STREATHAM FIRE

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: 28/14/50

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for Council to approve a draft Fire Recovery Plan for the Yalla-Y-Poora Road, Streatham scrub/grassfire which started on 9 January 2026.

BACKGROUND

A detailed report of the Streatham fire was provided to Council at the February 2026 Ordinary Meeting of Council which outlined the impacted communities within the Pyrenees Shire Council.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Recovery and further recovery planning is now underway, and a draft recovery plan has been prepared, to be circulated separately for Councillors.

The plan provides some context and background information regarding the event, initial recovery activities, the agencies that will be involved in recovery activities, and the internal structure to oversee the implementation of the plan.

It is worth recognizing that this plan is Council's Recovery Plan and this sits alongside of the Economic and Community Recovery Network Recovery Action Plan which has been developed by the Network comprising the various agencies, community and the three councils.

It is important to note that the extent to which recovery activities can be delivered is dependent on available funding. Given the dynamic nature of disaster recovery, it will be necessary to make changes to the plan to reflect the changing needs of impacted communities. The plan has been designed to evolve over time and has the community at its core.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

A range of agencies and stakeholders have an interest in the recovery and the ongoing engagement will be critical factor to effective implementation of the plan.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2026 04 PSC AGRN1242 Fire Recovery Plan Jan2026 V2 0 DRAFT [11.3.1.1 - 16 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

This event has caused widespread damage to public and private assets and substantial personal hardship caused that will need to be considered through all initiatives and actions as we move forward. There is a financial risk to Council if the recovery effort is not managed carefully and in accordance with various funding streams.

CONCLUSION

The report and the draft Recovery Plan aims to support the recovery of impacted communities as a result of the 9th January 2026 grass/scrub fire at Yalla-Y-Poora Road Streatham.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council:

1. Approves the draft Fire Recovery Plan with or without any changes that may be needed, noting the dynamic nature of the recovery activity.
2. That a status update on the Fire Recovery Plan be brought to Council meeting in 3 months' time.

CARRIED

11.3.2. AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE BIENNIAL REPORT

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 meeting M019 held on 17 March 2026.

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

Drafted minutes of the meeting have been issued to members for approval. However, in accordance with the charter, the Chairperson is required to provide a bi-annual report to the committee that is made available to the Council at the March meeting which is now attached for Councillor awareness.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

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

ATTACHMENTS

1. Chair Bi- Annual Rept Mar 2026 [**11.3.2.1** - 8 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

All financial and risk matters were addressed within reports, minutes and biannual reports 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 the Chairperson's biannual report for Council records.

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Simon Tol

That Council:

1. Acknowledges and thanks the Chairperson, Mr Rod Poxon for his biannual report, and
2. Notes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee contained within the report.

CARRIED

11.3.3. COUNCIL PLAN 2025-2029 REVIEW OF DELIVERY

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 for Council to consider the previous progress reports against the Council Plan 2025-2029 and consider officer recommendations as to proposed changes to timing of delivery as a result of re-diversion of resources to the 2026 Streatham fire and budget constraints as a result of no available funding streams.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council adopted the Council Plan 2025-2029 in June 2025 and the suite of initiatives to deliver against the plan in September 2025.

Since this time, Council has experienced a further Emergency Event, being the Streatham Fire which occurred in January 2026. This event has had an impact to Council officers being able to focus on our defined business as usual, re-diverting attention to support the recovery of this event.

In addition to this matter, there were also some initiatives identified within year one of the plan which were subject to funding which as yet has not been able to be secured, ultimately impacting on Council's ability to deliver against the initiative.

Furthermore, other factors impacting Council's financial sustainability reported to the March Council Meeting will require operational savings in future years unless additional revenue is secured. To realise these savings, council will need to review a range of non-mandatory services during the 2026/27 year. This matter foreshadows a further adjustment that will be needed to the Council Plan.

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.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Council Plan Review Mar 26 (1) [11.3.3.1 - 9 pages]

Cr Simon Tol / Cr Tanya Kehoe

That Council:

1. Acknowledges that external factors beyond its direct control have emerged since the initial adoption of the Council Plan, including the January 2026 fire and the ability to secure external funding sources for some initiatives.
2. Resolves to adjust the timing of the initiatives identified in the attached report which will only be partially delivered or deferred from the current 2025/26 financial year.
3. Continues to receive quarterly progress updates on the 2025/26 Initiatives.

CARRIED

11.3.4. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ROLES

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: 28/06/04

Mr Douglas Gowans disclosed a conflict of interest (direct) relating to the personal appointment of duties in this report and left the meeting at 6.37pm.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the appointment of the mandated emergency management role of Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO).

BACKGROUND

Section 59 of the *Emergency Management Act 2013* provides for the emergency-related functions of a municipal council including:

- Nominating one of the following people to be the chairperson of the MEMPC – CEO or a nominated council officer.
- Appointing one or more Municipal Emergency Management Officers (MEMO).
- Appointing one or more Municipal Recovery Managers (MRM).

Section 60 of the Act provides for the preparation, consultation and review of Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs).

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The *Emergency Management Act 2013* requires councils to appoint a Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO). At its meeting of 20 August 2024, the Council appointed the Manager Governance & Performance as the MEMO.

With the changes to the occupant of this position, Council is required to nominate another officer to take this position. This role is usually fulfilled by the incumbent within the governance management position, however, as the newly appointed officer is yet to receive the appropriate training to fulfil the MEMO role, it is proposed that this role be temporarily transferred to the Director Assets & Development Services.

The key responsibilities of the MEMO are:

- Liaising with agencies in relation to emergency management activities for the municipal district, and
- Assisting in the coordination of the Emergency Management activities for the Council.

The role is the primary lead in municipal emergency management planning and preparation, supported by the Emergency Management Coordinator and deputy MEMOs.

It is now recommended that the Council resolves to appoint, with immediate effect, the:

- Director Assets and Development Services as the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO).
- Risk Management Coordinator as the Deputy Municipal Emergency Management Officer.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

Pillar 3 - Nature Environment

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The positions of MEMO and MRM are publicly disclosed to the community, but no external engagement was required before submitting for Council appointment. The draft Municipal Emergency Management Plan was put on exhibition for community feedback during October 2023, with no submissions being received.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

All financial and risk implications are included within the body of this report, where they exist.

CONCLUSION

Council is required to appoint a Municipal Emergency Management Officer under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*. The proposed interim appointment ensures continuity of Council's emergency management functions and legislative compliance.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Rebecca Wardlaw

That Council:

1. Appoints the Director Assets and Development Services as the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO).
2. Appoints the Risk Management Coordinator as the Deputy Municipal Emergency Management Officer.

CARRIED

Mr Douglas Gowans returned to the meeting at 6.39pm.

11.3.5. NP43 MARILYN RISE

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: Emily Beaton – Revenue and Road Naming Officer

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

File No: 58/02/08

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to finalise the naming process for an unnamed road between Johnsons Road and Andersons Road in Amphitheatre.

BACKGROUND

In October 2023, Council initiated community consultation regarding the naming of the currently unnamed road connecting Johnsons and Andersons Roads in Amphitheatre. A limited number of submissions were received, with Marilyn Rise identified as the preferred option based on community feedback and Marilyn’s recognised connection to the local area.

A second round of consultation proposing the name Marilyn Rise was undertaken in April 2024, during which one objection was received in May. The objection was assessed and determined not to have merit, as it did not raise any concerns or conflicts with the relevant naming principles.

It is noted that one residential property will require readdressing, or alternatively the allocation of a secondary address, upon finalisation of the road naming. In March 2026, consent was formally provided by Marilyn’s family for the use of the commemorative name Marilyn Rise.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

In review of the proposal, the following points should be noted:

1. Marilyn Rise is a legitimate naming option and complies with the requirements set by the Registrar of Geographic Names and supports the Victorian Government’s Gender Equity Strategy 2023-2027. The name has a historical relationship to the area, being the name of a resident who lived in close proximity to the road in this proposal and who was involved in the local community, most prominently the Avoca and District CWA who noted Marilyn as a “valued member of the Branch, had a great sense of humour, was well liked and popular.”
2. The road type of “Rise” allows for both open-ended roads and cul-de-sacs and is described as a roadway going to a higher place or position.
3. As depicted on the map, the Department of Transport closed the railway crossing running along Thomsons Road, Amphitheatre, making safety and accessibility for at least one property a major concern as there is no currently named roads connecting the property to emergency services.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1a. Inclusivity and accessibility.

1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

Pillar 4 - Infrastructure

4a. Plan, build and maintain essential infrastructure.

ATTACHMENTS

1. NP43 Marilyn Rise Map [11.3.5.1 - 1 page]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Costs for the naming of the road are accommodated within the limits of Council's operating budget.

The naming of new roads and accurate addressing is important to ensure that residents are able to be located by emergency services and to receive mail. To mitigate the risk of errors, Council needs to comply with the "Naming Rules for Places in Victoria, 2022" and the Australian Standard for Rural and Urban Addressing (AS/NSZ 4819:2011).

CONCLUSION

Unnamed roads pose avoidable risks to public safety, service delivery, and administrative accuracy. Formalising the proposed road name, Marilyn Rise, will significantly support emergency services by enabling accurate location identification and faster response times.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Megan Phelan

That Council:

1. That Council adopts the name Marilyn Rise, which has historical ties to the area.
2. That Council forward a report to the Registrar of Geographic Names for consideration and gazettal of the name Marilyn Rise.

CARRIED

11.3.6. VOLUNTEER ASSET COMMITTEE SUPPORT

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: 38/02/08

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to consider how we continue supporting volunteer committees that manage State owned community assets that Council have historically insured whilst recognising the initial intent of earlier resolutions to hold the State accountable for State owned community assets.

BACKGROUND

A report presented to the 16 March 2026 Ordinary Meeting of Council sought direction from Council in relation to a phased approach to addressing ongoing support to volunteer committees as a result of an initial Council resolution from May 2025. At the March 2026 meeting, Council made the following decision regarding the extension of insurance coverage for the 2026/27 year:

“Defers its decision in respect of the payment of insurance for the 2026/27 financial year until clarification is sought from Councils insurer in respect of whether properties will be covered in the event that a claim is made and what documentation is required for that and that this be done as a matter of urgency.”

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Since this decision, officers have engaged with their existing insurer and sought clarification as to what would be required to ensure coverage of State-owned committee of management properties, and they have responded as follows:

“The determining factor is not ownership alone but whether Council has responsibility for insuring the asset. Where Council is responsible for the building insurance and the asset is declared on Council’s asset register and policy schedule, Council can lodge a claim under the insurance policy.”

Information regarding the application of the current policy is also contained in a report from JLT separately circulated.

It is worth noting that Council is currently going through a Procurement Australia tender process to more broadly test the market as to the potential policy options and savings beyond the sector wide standard insurance program.

Based on the above, taking the advice of our existing insurer and based on progress of existing insurance coverage, Council needs to consider the short term, medium term and longer term solutions which are outlined below:

Option	Timeline
Status Quo Continue providing coverage of State owned community assets for the 2026/27 year whilst the medium and longer term options and broader engagement are undertaken	Short Term
Shared insurance coverage model Council continue to insure and charge back part or all of the cost to the Committees	Medium Term
Review of Coverage In conjunction with Committees assess the asset to determine level	Medium Term

Option	Timeline
of insurance or whether the asset does not warrant insurance coverage	
Asset Rationalization and Review Conduct a review of community assets in conjunction with State, Committees and Council to better understand what assets may be deemed non-essential or duplicated	Long Term
Advocacy Motion to MAV State Council being held on 29 May 2026. Decision for this element was approved and progressed from March 2026 Council meeting.	Long Term
Insurance Model options Council seek that MAV act as an agent for Councils and secure mutual insurance on behalf of Councils/Communities using economies of scale to secure better pricing.	Long Term

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.

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Council officers will ensure that a collaborative approach is taken with the State Government appointed committees for which Council currently provide insurance coverage for to ensure that any future model ensures sustainability of the committees managing these valued community assets.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The coverage of insurance premiums within Council's insurance premium will be absorbed within the 2026/27 financial year whilst officers work with the State Government, appointed Committees and other bodies (MAV, Rural Council Victoria, etc) to ensure a financially sustainable model of insurance coverage beyond the 2026/27 financial year.

To mitigate the risk of coverage on these valuable community assets, officers will also need to work with any changed insurer to ensure any actions are undertaken by Council to ensure coverage in the event that a claim is required to ensure appropriate outcomes are achieved.

CONCLUSION

Council stands by their decision that the State Government should take responsibility for these valuable community assets. However, Council also recognises that the change in insurance coverage responsibility poses significant financial sustainability challenges and implications to impacted Committees and on this basis the following changes to the May 2025 Council decision are proposed.

Cr Simon Tol / Cr Tanya Kehoe

That Council:

1. Resolves to extend insurance coverage to State Government properties that have volunteer committees appointed to include the 2026/27 financial year to allow more time to work towards medium and longer term solutions.
2. Authorise Officers to proceed with other documented proposed options to enable sustainable insurance coverage options for State Government properties where there have been community committees of management appointed.
3. Ensure that any change in insurer continues to provide the same coverage of State-owned assets where Council deem it appropriate to continue insuring and retain asset on insurance register.

CARRIED

11.3.7. FINANCIAL REPORT MARCH 31 2026

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: Glenn Kallio – Manager Finance

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

File No: 32/08/18

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with an update on the financial performance for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026.

BACKGROUND

The provision of regular reports of Council's financial performance ensures that Council's financial management and associated processes are accountable, transparent, and responsible.

The attached financial report for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026, is a component of ensuring the accountability of the Council's operations. In line with good governance, it forms part of the public accountability process and reporting and includes the following Financial Statements.

- Comprehensive Income Statement
- Balance Sheet
- Cash Flow Statement; and
- Statement of Capital Works
- Capital Works Program

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Oversights of the current reporting period include:

1. Future borrowings were planned for the final \$625,000 Council contribution for infrastructure works relating to the Burke Street Workers Accommodation project. Originally this was planned for the 2026/27 budget. With the requirement to borrow the \$1,000,000 allocation this financial year it is prudent to borrow the funds for Council's contribution now. Whilst the contribution is \$625,000, \$125,000 is being provided through Council's infrastructure works leaving the remaining \$500,000.

With the current state of the economy and the expectation that interest rates will continue to rise throughout 2026/27 it is thought that to borrow now would result in future savings to Council.

2. Council has received additional funds for infrastructure works through the TAC Blackspot funding.
3. The certified flood works are expected to be completed by June 30 2026.
4. Current levels of cashflows are higher than expected due to the timing variation in capital works. Whilst from a financial perspective capital works is behind program, the capital works PCG indicates that the works will be completed this financial year. However, it should be noted that the capital works program for 2025/26 is approximately four (4) times the usual program of work due to larger than normal capital grant funding, and some projects will likely be delayed or deferred due to financial impacts of the fuel crisis and as a consequence of prioritising resourcing to fire recovery activity.
5. After initial concerns for the collection of outstanding rates the current collection rate is ahead of schedule after being approximately \$1m behind target for most of the financial year.

Current collection process has started, this process is outsourced with a third party company contacting ratepayers reminding them that payment of rates is overdue. Action being taken involves:

- Email
- Text messages
- Phone calls

A future report will be presented to Council that a number of properties be sold under section 181 of the *Local Government Act* for non payment of rates for a period of at least three (3) years. These properties would be all non residential properties.

6. The financial position of Council at this time remains with the long term financial plan of Council with no significant financial issues.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

- 5a. Foster values driven inclusive culture, which is responsive, accountable and aligned to priority.
5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

1. Finance Report [11.3.7.1 - 27 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

All financial implications are within this report and the attachment.

CONCLUSION

The review has ascertained that the financials for the 2025/26 year are operating within Council's 10-year financial plan.

Cr Rebecca Wardlaw / Cr Tanya Kehoe

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Financial Performance report for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026, and the projected forecasts for the year.
2. Resolves to borrow \$500,000 from the budget allocation of \$1,000,000 for the Council contribution of infrastructure works associated with the Burke Street Workers Accommodation project.

CARRIED

11.3.8. 2025/26 END OF SEASON POOL REPORT

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: Baylie Lang – Recreation Development Co-ordinator

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

File No: 56/08/08

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the 2025–26 pool season, including participation, operational outcomes, community feedback, and an update on Council’s ongoing aquatic planning process.

BACKGROUND

The 2025–26 pool season was characterised by strong community engagement, increased participation, and a diverse range of programs and events across all three facilities.

Cooler weather and an isolated asset issue at Avoca resulted in low early attendance in the season. Notwithstanding this, favourable conditions in the latter half supported consistent attendance across all facilities.

Overall, the season delivered positive outcomes through effective collaboration between Council, the service provider, and local community groups.

Table 1: Pool Highlights

Pool	Highlights
Beaufort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent operations with minor plant challenges (heat pumps) were managed without disruption to service delivery. - Strong programming outcomes, including increased lap swimming participation and a well-supported Aqua Aerobics program. - Delivery of community events, including multiple inflatable days and a peak attendance of 111 patrons during an end of season event.
Avoca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong community activation through events, inflatables, and expanded programs. - Growth in targeted user groups, including local football clubs and farmer exercise groups, contributing to increased attendance and engagement.
Landsborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable season with no major service disruptions, supported by key infrastructure upgrades (main circulation pump replacement). - Continued growth in community participation, particularly reflected in increased season pass sales. - Maintained high safety and compliance standards, achieving a gold endorsement in Pool Safety Assessment.

Table 2: Total Attendance – 3-Year Comparison

Venue	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Beaufort	5,156	4,602	5,011
Avoca	2,443	3,505	3,086
Landsborough	454	457	786
Total	8,053	8,564	8,883

Average daily patronage was 34.69 visits, with Table 3 outlining figures by asset.

Table 3: Average Daily Patronage 2025–26

Venue	Average Attendance
Beaufort	55.67
Avoca	39.06
Landsborough	9.03

Operational and Maintenance Summary

The season was successfully managed by Belgravia Leisure, with community feedback reflecting high satisfaction, particularly regarding:

- Staff professionalism
- Water quality
- Community programs and events

The Friends of the Pool groups in Avoca and Beaufort played a key role in community engagement. Notably, the Avoca Friends of the Pool Season Pass Initiative fully subsidised passes for families across several primary schools, enhancing accessibility.

Belgravia Leisure fully complied with contractual obligations for incident and complaint management, ensuring timely reporting and resolution.

Unanticipated plant and asset issues were minimal, with the most significant at Avoca Pool. Early leak detection works caused 19 days of closure before peak summer demand. This was the only major disruption across all facilities.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Management of Pool Operations

The current service contract with Belgravia Leisure expires on 30 August 2026. In preparation for 2026–27, Council has commenced a Swimming Pool Service Delivery Options Review via an independent specialist consultant.

This review will provide an assessment of:

- Current service performance
- Alternative service delivery models
- Operational and financial benchmarking
- Stakeholder and community input

Strategic Planning

Officers are progressing a coordinated strategic review of pools through two key workstreams:

1. Invasive inspections and asset audits – providing evidence of asset conditions, lifespan, and renewal priorities.
2. Service delivery options review – evaluating operational models and operational sustainability.

The integration of these workstreams will provide Council with the evidence required to make informed decisions, balancing community needs, financial sustainability, and asset risk.

2026–27 Season Preparations

In preparation for the 2026–27 season, Council officers continue to work with Belgravia Leisure and specialist service contractors to support ongoing operations. At this stage, a detailed maintenance and capital works program has not been finalised due to ongoing invasive inspections and asset audits across all three facilities.

These investigations will:

- Inform annual maintenance planning through prioritised, evidence-based works
- Support long-term asset management and capital investment decisions

Once complete, officers will use the findings to develop a costed and prioritised program of works for 2026–27 and beyond, ensuring investment aligns with strategic objectives, identified risks, and safer operation of Council's pools.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

- 1a. Inclusivity and accessibility.
- 1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

Pillar 2 - Economy

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

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

- 5c. Ensure timely, clear and consistent communication underpinned by transparency.
- 5d. Deliver high quality services with continuous improvement focus.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Council and Belgravia Leisure have continued to maintain a strong and collaborative working relationship, supported by regular meetings to discuss operations, feedback, and monitor progress across all facilities. This partnership has developed over the course of the contract and has continued to strengthen throughout the 2025–26 season, contributing to positive operational outcomes and responsive service delivery.

In addition to ongoing community engagements by pool staff, council officers undertook a community satisfaction survey across January to March 2026, to inform the service delivery options review.

This resulted in 195 responses, which were positive regarding the services and facilities provided. Overall satisfaction was rated at 4.16 out of 5, with programming quality at 4.05 out of 5. Key community priorities included safety and supervision, facility cleanliness and maintenance, and the continued engagement of highly trained staff.

This strong feedback reflects the dedication and professionalism of Belgravia Leisure staff, reinforcing that seasonal management and engagement efforts have effectively met community expectations.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Table 4 provides the current financials as of 27/03/2026.

Table 4: 2025-26 financial overview

Venue	Budget	YTD	Variance
Beaufort	\$168,406.00	\$226,778.11	-\$58,372.11
Avoca	\$170,300.00	\$204,128.18	-\$33,828.18
Landsborough	\$108,680.00	\$112,015.00	-\$3,335.00
Maintenance*	\$85,000.00	-	\$85,000.00
Total	\$532,386.00	\$542,921.29	-\$10,535.29

*Actual maintenance expenditure was costed against individual assets to provide true cost of individual pool expense.

Table 4 provides a summary of costs, with the variation primarily attributable to two factors:

- Maintenance and reactive works – increasing demands associated with ageing infrastructure and plant. As assets continue to deteriorate, more frequent and unplanned repairs are required, placing additional pressure on operational budgets.
- Contract management fee – a service fee, as proposed by the contractor and incorporated by officers during the 2025–26 budget planning cycle, was not formally reviewed prior to Council’s budget adoption. This contributed to an accounting allocation that did not fully reflect actual contracted management costs.

Within the current YTD figures projecting a lower overall cost to last year’s budget, the average subsidy per pool visits in 2025-26 has decreased to \$61.11. Subsidy rates per facility are detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: subsidy rate per visit – 2025/26

Venue	Visits	Expense	Subsidy / Visit
Beaufort	5,011	\$226,778.11	\$45.25
Avoca	3,086	\$204,128.18	\$66.14
Landsborough	786	\$112,015.00	\$142.51
Total	8,883	\$542,921.29	\$61.11

Regional benchmarking

Finalised regional benchmarking data for the 2025–26 season has not yet been released. As part of the swimming pool service delivery options review, updated figures will be incorporated once publicly available to provide a current and robust comparison.

In the interim, the closest reference point is the 2024–25 data, summarised in Table 6 below, providing context on attendance, participation, and operational performance across comparable regional councils.

Table 6: know your council comparison

Council	PSC 25/26	PSC 24/25	Loddon 24/25	Buloke 24/25	Hindmarsh 24/25
Subsidy / visit	\$61.11	\$71.12	\$47.75	\$33.15	\$59.14
Visitation per capita	1.1	1.1	2.3	5.0	2.1

Analysis of previous years shows that non-pyrenees councils experienced notable increases in visits per capita and reductions in subsidy per visit. Contributing factors cited by these councils include:

- Loddon: “an increase in visitation to aquatic facilities can be attributed to favourable weather conditions, fewer facility closure days, and an incentivised membership offering for the 2024–25 season.”
- Buloke: “the pools were open for more days in 2024–25 compared to the previous year.”
- Hindmarsh: “for the 2024–25 outdoor pool season, council resolved to remove fees and provide free entry, resulting in a significant increase in utilisation.”

This benchmarking provides a reference framework for council and the service review consultant, helping to identify trends, measure relative performance, and guide future service planning.

Future financial risks

While officers have effectively managed expenditure throughout the 2025–26 season, potential financial considerations remain regarding invasive inspections and subsequent works at Beaufort Pool.

As part of the pool's lifecycle assessment, the liner will need to be temporarily removed to assess the structural integrity of the shell and undertake sample laboratory testing. Given the liner is approaching the end of its service life, with stretching and bubbling observed in recent years, a full replacement is considered a highly likely outcome of the process.

Further advice from industry specialists continues to refine estimated costs for a fully customised liner replacement. Current indications suggest that investment may exceed earlier forecasts, reflecting updated market conditions and the customised nature of the works. It is noted that liners are plastic welded onsite, and due to the age and condition of the existing liner, reliable re-welding is unlikely. Alternative repair methods, such as gluing, are not considered suitable for long-term use.

Additional costs may also be required to reinforce the pool shell to enable installation of a new liner. The full extent of these costs will be confirmed once the liner is removed and the shell fully assessed.

Officers will continue to monitor the project closely and provide updates as inspection outcomes and costs become clearer, ensuring Council can make informed operational and financial decisions prior to any further progression.

CONCLUSION

Council recognises the significant social, health, and recreational value of public swimming pools and continues to invest in their seasonal delivery. The annual review process and strategic planning ensure that ageing infrastructure is managed effectively, with financial and operational decisions proportionate to community demand and broader service obligations.

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Simon Tol

That Council

1. Receives and notes the end of year pool report for the 2025/2026 season.
2. Seeks a further report for both the operational model and outcomes of invasive testing.

CARRIED

11.3.9. NP52: PROPOSAL TO NAME UNNAMED ROAD OFF HILL STREET AND CALLISTER STREET, BEAUFORT AS MABEL COURT

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: Emily Beaton – Revenue and Road Naming Officer

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

File No: 58/02/08

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to finalise the naming process for an unnamed road off Hill Street and Callister Street, Beaufort.

BACKGROUND

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 16 of February 2026, Council resolved to commence the process for the naming of an unnamed road off Hill and Callister Streets in Beaufort.

The Council recommendation of Mabel Court was advertised in the Pyrenees Advocate, Maryborough & District Advertiser, Council's Website and the Shire Office Front Counter.

A letter was also sent to adjoining property owners on 18 February 2026. The advertisement also invited descendants of Mabel Thomas to contact Council regarding the use of Mabel's name. There have been no submissions pertaining to this naming proposal received by Council to date.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

In review of the proposal, the following points should be noted:

Mabel Court is a legitimate naming option and passes all of the tests set by the Registrar of Geographic Names and supports the Victorian Government's Gender Equity Strategy 2023-2027.

The name commemorates Mabel Thomas, an Australian community leader and philanthropist, born in Beaufort in 1870. The road type "Court" describes a short, enclosed roadway.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 1 - People

1a. Inclusivity and accessibility.

1b. Community safety and wellbeing.

Pillar 4 - Infrastructure

4a. Plan, build and maintain essential infrastructure.

ATTACHMENTS

1. NP52 Mabel Court Map [11.3.9.1 - 1 page]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Costs for the naming of the road are able to be accommodated within the limits of Council's operating budget.

The naming of new roads and accurate addressing is important to ensure that residents are able to be located by emergency services and to receive mail. To mitigate the risk of errors, Council needs to comply with the 'Statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities, 2016,' and the Australian Standards for Signing and Rural and Urban Addressing.

CONCLUSION

Unnamed roads pose avoidable risks to public safety, service delivery, and administrative accuracy. Formalising the proposed road name, Mabel Court, will significantly support emergency services by enabling accurate location identification and faster response times.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Simon Tol

That Council:

1. Adopts the name "Mabel Court" which has historical ties to the area, and
2. Forwards a report to the Registrar of Geographic Names for consideration of the name "Mabel Court".

CARRIED

11.4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

11.4.1. AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Presenter: Jim Nolan - Chief Executive Officer

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

Report Author: Jim Nolan – Chief Executive Officer

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

File No: 44/04/02

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for representatives to attend the National General Assembly (NGA) in Canberra on 23 - 25 June 2026.

BACKGROUND

The 2026 National General Assembly and Conference will be held in Canberra 23 - 25 June 2026.

The theme for the 2026 Conference is 'Stronger Together: Resilient. Productive. United.'. The NGA is an important opportunity to address national issues at the local level, and new ways the Australia Government could partner to strengthen the local government sector to advance community well-being, local economic development, create jobs, address environmental challenge, climate change and complex social issues such as housing affordability.

The Assembly also provides an avenue for the sector to consider motions from member councils to provide input into ALGAs activity and strategic direction.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

With the exception of 2017 and 2020, it has been the practice for the Mayor and CEO to attend the NGA. In the past, Council has also used the opportunity to undertake a range of advocacy work in conjunction with councils that form Greater Ballarat Alliance of Councils (GBAC).

A Parliamentary sitting of both houses is scheduled from 22 to 25 June 2026.

Councils have in the past used the opportunity to meet with relevant politicians and advisors to advocate on matters including funding, policy change and support around key regional issues such as road and rail transport funding, employment, telecommunications, health and wellbeing, emergency management and economic development.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Enabling Principles

b. Provide transparency and accountability

c. Use resources efficiently and effectively

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2026- NG A- Information- Flyer [11.4.1.1 - 7 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The delegation to Canberra will require Councils to meet their own participant costs associated with attendance at the NGA, flights, accommodation, cab fares and meals. These costs are in the order of \$2,500 each and have been provided for within Council's budget.

CONCLUSION

This event provides an opportunity for Pyrenees to participate at a national level in matters impacting on councils and the sustainability of local communities.

It also provides an opportunity for advocacy and to engage directly with the Federal Government.

Cr Simon Tol / Cr Megan Phelan

1. That Council supports the participation of the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor, and the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to attend the ALGA National General Assembly and conference from 23-25 June 2026.

CARRIED

11.4.2. FUEL CRISIS

Presenter: Jim Nolan - Chief Executive Officer

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

Report Author: Jim Nolan – Chief Executive Officer

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

File No: -

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information about the impacts and potential impacts to Pyrenees due to the current fuel crisis.

BACKGROUND

The 2026 middle east conflict has created a fuel crisis causing global supply disruptions including conflict affecting oil transport routes. Australia has experienced rising diesel and petrol prices and intermittent supply shortages.

At a national level, measures have been taken to ensure supply and halving the fuel excise to 26.3c/litre as part of the National Fuel Security Plan. Refer link: [National Fuel Security Plan | PM&C](#)

At a state level, the Victorian government has introduced free public transport during April, and Emergency Management Victoria has implemented weekly monitoring and contingency planning, and guidance is also provided for key sectors: <https://www.vic.gov.au/fuel-supply>

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has consulted with the local government sector to develop advocacy priorities and support.

Rural Councils Victoria (RCV) has consulted rural councils to understand impacts and mitigation measures in place which it presented to the Victorian Fuel Forum. (Refer attached report)

At a local level, officers have assessed the risks and are continuing to monitor the situation. In the event of the crisis continuing or worsening, there will be budget and servicing implications, as well as impacts on business, community and local economy which are likely to trigger hardship considerations by Council.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The 2026 fuel crisis has created significant economic and operational challenges across Victoria.

Councils and communities are facing immediate and emerging impacts due to their reliance on fuel, and because of supply chain disruption.

Council relies heavily on fuel for road maintenance and construction and waste and recycling services.

Sustained shortages may lead to reduced service frequency, delays in infrastructure works, and require prioritisation of critical services.

Fuel price increases affect the community through higher transport costs, increased prices for goods and services, and reduced economic activity.

The agriculture sector is significantly impacted with diesel supply and price increase, as well as the increase in cost of urea during this critical sowing season.

While specific data is currently unavailable, there is a risk that declining visitation will be impacting winery cellar door visits.

The fuel increase is directly impacting other local businesses with higher operating costs and reduced customer spending.

Likely financial increases for various council activities are reported below along with a broader range of risks and mitigation measures which are and will be implemented should the crisis continue or worsen.

Some works have needed to be delayed or deferred including projects without immediate significant community impacts (e.g. some road reconstruction), while other roadworks where commitments have been made have continued in the interest of the community.

Among the significant long-term impacts are:

- Council's reduced capacity for asset renewal; in particular, reduced road surfacing and reconstruction will inevitably lead to deterioration of the road network and increased maintenance demand.
- Reduction in financial capacity to deliver service expectations impacting community satisfaction
- Broader community and economic impacts

Support from Council is sought to continue to implement measures to manage impacts of the crisis and to report back to Council on community impacts because of measures needing to be taken.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Pillar 5 - Community-Centric

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Engagement has occurred with state agencies and local peak bodies, MAV and RCV as reported above.

ATTACHMENTS

1. RCV - Briefing Paper- Fuel shortage impacts - March 2026 [11.4.2.1 - 16 pages]

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Critical council service areas are likely to see financial increases in the following range:

Road reconstruction	10-15%
Road Resealing	20-25%
Road Resheeting	10-15%
Road Maintenance	10-15%
Other capital	10-15%
Waste Management	10-15%
Parks and Gardens (incl roadside slashing)	10%
Light fleet	10%
Burke Street Housing and subdivision (remaining works)	10%

The below table contains some of the risks and possible mitigation measures should the crisis continue or deepen.

Risk	Possible additional mitigation measures
Introduction of fuel rationing impacting services	Develop fuel prioritisation plan for critical services
Waste collection cost escalation, fuel availability and service disruption	Review waste service charge to offset increased costs Review TS hours / service levels Review TS fees
Delays to road and infrastructure works. Reduced parks and open space maintenance	Reduce scope of works to match budget Prioritise essential road maintenance projects as per RMP. Prioritise high-use public spaces
Increase in operational costs	Review budgets; adjust service delivery levels if required
Reduced emergency response capability	Secure fuel reserves for emergency vehicles
Supply chain disruption for council materials	Identify secondary suppliers; maintain/increase stock levels
Staff commuting difficulties	Expand remote work and flexible scheduling Encourage carpooling and public transport options Invest in fleet efficiency
Increased community hardship	Coordinate with state welfare agencies Advocacy to govt Payment plans
Decline in mental health and wellbeing of staff	Increase resourcing support in People and Culture temporarily, communication, promote EAP,
Heightened Community conflict and/or tension	Increase complaints awareness and training for frontline staff
Local business impacts	Advocacy to government and business support

Cr Megan Phelan / Cr Tanya Kehoe

That Council:

1. Acknowledges the significant impacts of the current fuel crisis as outlined in this report.
2. Continues to work with other agencies and peak bodies to monitor and develop a strategic response and mitigation measures as required.
3. Supports decisions to be made to adjust the scope of capital works projects due to increased costs.
4. Consider any service adjustments that may be needed as part of the 26/27 draft budget process.
5. Continue to advocate to government in conjunction with peak bodies.

CARRIED

12. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Kehoe

- Acknowledged a very busy time for famers in the Mt Emu Ward, with land preparation and burn-offs underway following seasonal conditions
- Encouraging signs of recovery for farmers impacted by recent fires, with being able to see new growth and look forward to the new crops
- Expressed ongoing gratitude to emergency and support services assisting communities affected by fires across the region
- Urged residents to continue accessing support services, noting that recovery—especially mental health impacts—can take longer than expected
- Highlighted increased advocacy efforts ahead of upcoming elections
- Encouraged residents to engage with prospective candidates on key local issues
- Emphasised particular advocacy items including:
 - Emergency Services Volunteer Fund (ESVF)
 - Cost of living pressures
 - Fuel prices and regional affordability challenges
- Commended the strong sense of community collaboration within the shire
- Attended Secondary College School Council AGM:
 - Recognised the Secondary College as a key asset for the Shire
 - Noted ongoing building upgrades, including library and gym improvements
 - Praised staff efforts in providing opportunities for students
 - Encouraged community members to visit and view new facilities
- Noted attendance at upcoming ANZAC services across the region:
 - Snake Valley Dawn Service (6:30am)
 - Beaufort Morning Service (6:00am / 10:00am)
 - Stockyard Hill service (3.00pm)
 - Stockyard Hill Church Memorial - new memorial at former church site (4.00pm)
- Thanked volunteers and organisers supporting commemorative events
- Encouraged community participation in ANZAC weekend to honour service members

Cr Tol

- Worked collaboratively with Council’s executive team and planning department, to support approval of an off-road motorcycle event:
 - Event to be held at Mount Misery on 3 May
 - Commended planning staff for their efforts to find a way forward
 - Noted the success of the event for a long time
- Provided update on Waubra Playground upgrade:
 - Playground is nearing completion and looking fantastic
 - Area becoming an attractive stop for travellers

- Looking forward to ANZAC Day:
 - Early morning service attendance at Lexton
 - Distribution of wreaths around the district.
- Commented on local footy commencement:
 - Noted the return of football and netball competitions
 - Highlighted strong community participation and engagement
 - Positive to see competitive and well-supported local teams

Cr Phelan

- Noted that regular meetings have been ongoing, with focus on highlighting recent key events
- Attended Pyrenees Unearthed Festival:
 - Excellent turnout and strong community participation
 - Pleasing to see minimal impact from fuel cost concerns
 - Strong representation from local winemakers and producers
 - Attracted visitors from across the broader region, including Warrnambool, Beaufort, Ballarat and Echuca – lovely regional attraction for different communities.
- Attended the Volunteer Fire Brigade Victoria West Region Championships (Western District):
 - Significant participation with approximately 22 senior teams, 22 juniors and 13 different brigades
 - A really fantastic event which showcased the skills, training, and equipment used by volunteer firefighters

Cr Wardlaw

- Noted attendance at various events and activities
- Acknowledged Pyrenees Pétanque Club's recent tournament:
 - Unable to attend, but recognised it as a successful event
 - Attracted visitors to the region
- Attended the Avoca Races
 - Fantastic afternoon.
 - Positive community atmosphere and strong local engagement
- Attended Rheola Charity Carnival (not in Shire):
 - Strong turnout with approximately 2,000 attendees
 - Noted trend of locals supporting local events rather than travelling further afield
 - Positive outcome for local event organisers and community groups
- Acknowledged start of the football/netball season:
 - Wished all clubs and players well for the season
 - Intends to attend games throughout the year
- Raised concerns regarding seasonal conditions:
 - Indications of a potentially dry year ahead

- Ongoing pressure on farmers and the broader community
- Advocacy and engagement on water supply issues:
 - Communicating with Martha Haylett MP and Central Highlands Water
 - Exploring options for water access and supply for farm use, stock specifically and other needs
- Shared positive perspective on regional living and encouraged community to recognise and value local strengths despite challenges

Cr Ferrari

- Continued commitment to Skipton Fire Recovery Network meetings
 - ensuring community concerns are heard at the earliest opportunity Emphasised importance of direct engagement and listening to residents' experiences and priorities
- Meeting with Martha Haylett MP:
 - Productive online discussion highlighting key local issues
 - Ongoing commitment to raising and progressing advocacy matters
- Attended Avoca Races
 - Wonderful event
 - Favourable weather contributed to a successful day
 - Acknowledged efforts of organisers and volunteers
- Upcoming advocacy work:
 - Preparing for a busy period alongside the CEO
 - Planning direct engagement with government ministers and/or advisors
 - Focus on maximising those opportunities for the shire
- Community wellbeing:
 - Reinforced importance of looking out for one another during challenging times
 - Encouraged residents to check in on family, friends, and neighbours
 - Promoted open conversations around wellbeing and seeking support when needed

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 Simon Tol / Cr Tanya Kehoe

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 - Request for Payment in lieu of Farm rating differential – A2164
- 15.2 - Audit and Risk Committee Fee Review
- 15.3 - Lease – Avoca Gunga Hub
- 15.4 - Insurance

CARRIED

The live streaming of Ordinary Meeting of Council - 20 April 2026 stopped at 7.21pm to consider confidential items.

The live stream re-commenced at 7.59pm and the Mayor chose to report on confidential items discussed in closed Council which are noted below:

- A request for Payment in lieu of Farm rating differential.
- Audit and Risk Committee Fee Review
- Avoca Gunga Hub Lease
- Insurance

14. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Ordinary Meeting of Council - 20 April 2026 closed at 8.00pm.

Minutes of the Meeting confirmed _____

Mayor Cr Damian Ferrari