



Minutes

Scheduled Council Meeting

Tuesday 17 March 2026

to be held at 2:00 PM

Main foyer

Robinvale Community Arts Centre

37 Robin Street Robinvale. VIC 3549

Confirmed 21 April 2026

Chairperson.....

Public Access

Open to the public and live streaming from
Council's website: www.swanhill.vic.gov.au



Vision Statement

Built on strong foundations that embrace our rich History and natural environment, our region will be a place of progressions and possibility. We are a community that is happy, healthy and harmonious - we are empowered, we are respectful and we are proud.

Our Mission

We will lead, advocate, partner and provide efficient services and opportunities for growth and the wellbeing of our community, environment and economy.

Our Values

Council values our residents and community and will be responsive to their needs. In pursuing our objectives, we believe in, and are committed to, the following values:

Community engagement - We will ensure that our communities are consulted, listened to and informed.

Leadership - We will be at the centre of our community and by actively engaging our community we will form the collective view on strategic issues and will then express our views through strong advocacy and action.

Fairness - We will value and embrace the diversity of our community and ensure that all people are treated equally.

Accountability- We will be transparent and efficient in our activities and we will always value feedback.

Trust - We will act with integrity and earn the community's trust by being a reliable partner in delivering services, projects and providing facilities.

Table of Contents

1 Procedural Matters	5
1.1 Welcome	5
1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country	5
1.3 Opening Declaration	5
1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence	5
1.5 Directors / Officers Present	5
1.6 Confirmation of Minutes	6
1.7 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest	6
1.8 Joint Letters and Reading of Petitions	6
1.9 Public Questions Time	6
1.10 Open Forum	6
2 Officer Reports for Decision	7
2.1 Quarterly Performance Report to the Community - Dec 2025	7
2.2 Outcome of EOI Process - 103 Curlewis St Swan Hill	32
2.3 Business Facade Improvement Program 25/26 - Successful Recipients	35
2.4 Investment Options Robinvale Workers Accommodation Herbert Street	40
2.5 Asset Naming Submissions	51
2.6 Murray River Group of Council's (MRGC) Motions to Municipal Association of Victoria State Council May 2026	72
3 Decisions Which Need Action / Ratification	105
3.1 Councillor Briefings - Record of Attendance and Agenda Items	105
4 Notices of Motion	111
5 Foreshadowed Items	111
6 Urgent Items Not Included In Agenda	111
7 To Consider and Order on Councillor Reports	112
7.1 Cr Stuart King	112

7.2 Cr Les McPhee	113
7.3 Cr Terry Jennings.....	113
7.4 Cr Peta Thornton.....	114
7.5 Cr Philip Englefield.....	114
7.6 Cr Hugh Broad	114
7.7 Cr Lindsay Rogers	115
8 In-Camera Items	115
9 Close of Meeting	115

1 Procedural Matters

1.1 Welcome

Mayor, Cr King assumed the chair and declared the Scheduled Council Meeting - 17 March 2026 open at 2:00 pm

1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country

Mayor, Cr King read the Acknowledgement of Country.

"Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present."

1.3 Opening Declaration

Cr Rogers read the opening prayer.

"We beseech you Lord, that we may be granted wisdom, understanding and sincerity of purpose, in the decisions we are called on to make for the welfare of the people of the Rural City of Swan Hill."

1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence

CM 2026/22 Motion

That the apologies be accepted.

MOVED Cr Rogers

That the apology from Cr Broad be accepted.

SECONDED Cr Englefield

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

1.5 Directors / Officers Present

Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
Bruce Myers, Director of Community and Cultural Services
Stephen Fernando, Director of Corporate Services
Sharon Lindsay, Executive Assistant
Tamara Matthews, Executive Support

1.6 Confirmation of Minutes

1.6.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Recommendation/s

That the minutes of the Scheduled Council Meeting held on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 be confirmed.

CM 2026/23 Motion

MOVED Cr Jennings

That the minutes of the Scheduled Council Meeting held on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 be confirmed.

SECONDED Cr Rogers

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

1.7 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

Nil.

1.8 Joint Letters and Reading of Petitions

Nil.

1.9 Public Questions Time

Nil.

1.10 Open Forum

Nil.

2 Officer Reports for Decision

2.1 Quarterly Performance Report to the Community - Dec 2025

Directorate: Corporate Services

File Number: S16.28

Purpose: For Discussion

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

6. Transparency and Effectiveness – Ensuring Council is open, accountable and responsive, with services and decision-making that reflect community expectations. Objective 6.1: Deliver accessible, responsive and inclusive customer and community engagement.

6.1.3 Improve community engagement and participation in Council decisions.

Current Strategic Documents

Council Plan
10 Year Financial Plan
10 Year Major Project Plan
Budget

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

Council adopted the Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 on 16 September 2025. In October Council committed to presenting a combined and comprehensive quarterly report. The December 2025 Quarterly Performance Report to the Community, is presented and includes the Quarterly Financial Report, Major Projects Update, Development and Planning Update and Council Plan progress reporting.

Highlights from the December 2025 Report include:

- Opening of the Swan Hill Tourism and Cultural Experience Centre at Pioneer Settlement
- Completing the Art Gallery Redevelopment
- Adoption of the Swan Hill and Robinvale Drainage Strategy
- Processing 95.65% of all planning permit applications within timeline
- Reporting a favourable budget variance for 2025-26.

Once endorsed and approved by Council, the report will be placed on Councils website.

Discussion

Section 89 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) requires Council to undertake the preparation of its Council Plan and other strategic plans in accordance with the strategic planning principles.

The strategic planning principles are:

- (a) an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted;
- (b) strategic planning must address the Community Vision;
- (c) strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation;
- (d) strategic planning must identify and address the risks to effective implementation;
- (e) strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances.

On 16 September 2025, Council approved the Community Vision and Council Plan. 2025-2029. The Council Plan consists of 6 pillars, 17 Objectives and 57 strategies.

Section 18 of the Act requires a report on the implementation of the Council Plan to be provided to the community at least once a year. This report provides our first six monthly report on the implementation of the Council Plan.

Section 97 of the Act requires a quarterly budget report to be presented to the Council at a Council meeting which is open to the public. A summary version of the quarterly budget report and the major projects report presented to Council on 17 February 2026 is included in this report.

Once endorsed and approved by Council, the report will be placed on Councils website.

Consultation

Responsible officers were consulted and provided information and updates to contribute to this report. The Executive Leadership Team and Council have also been consulted.

Financial Implications

Nil.

Social Implications

Nil.

Economic Implications

Nil.

Environmental Implications

Nil.

Risk Management Implications

Not reporting on implementation of a Council Plan creates legal, governance, financial, and reputational risk for Council.

Attachments: 1. Draft Quarterly Progress Report to the Community - DEC 2025 [2.1.1 - 22 pages]

Options

1. Endorse and approve the release of the Quarterly Performance Report to the Community – December 2025
2. Endorse and approve the release of the Quarterly Performance Report to the Community – December 2025, once any requested edits have been approved by the CEO
3. Not endorse or approve the release of the Quarterly Performance Report to the Community – December 2025

Recommendation/s

That Council endorse and approve the release of the Quarterly Performance Report to the Community – December 2025

CM 2026/24 Motion**MOVED Cr Englefield**

That Council endorse and approve the release of the Quarterly Performance Report to the Community – December 2025

SECONDED Cr Thornton

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0



Quarterly Performance Report to the Community

December 2025



Acknowledgement

Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present.

Contents

Contents	3
Our Council	4
Quarterly Highlights	5
Performance against the Council Plan 2025-2029	8
Major Projects Update.....	12
Major Projects Completed – 1 July 2025 – 31 December 2025	13
Major Projects Plan - Quarterly Progress Report	14
Projects open for feedback	16
Development and Planning Update.....	17
VC Amendments	17
Environment.....	18
Governance and Management Checklist Review	19
Quarterly Financial Report	20
Statement of Income & Expenditure	21
Summarised Balance Sheet	22

Our Council

The Swan Hill Rural City Council consists of seven elected Councillors who together form the Council. The role of the Council is to provide good governance in its municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the community.



L-R (from top) – Cr Stuart King (Mayor), Cr Terry Jennings (Deputy Mayor), Cr Hugh Broad, Cr Philip Englefield, Cr Les McPhee, Cr Lindsay Rogers and Cr Peta Thornton.

"We have a great place to live, work and grow, shared by our diverse culture and connected community."

Quarterly Highlights

Highlights in our community during the quarter 1 October 2025 – 31 December 2025:

October

- Council invited residents, community groups and local organisations to share their ideas for projects, initiatives and programs to be considered in the development of the 2026/27 Council Budget.
- Council offered a 50% discount on the cost of any new domestic animal registrations, from that time until 31 December 2025.
- Swan Hill Regional Library, in partnership with Collins Booksellers Swan Hill, welcomed Australian author and commentator Peter FitzSimons and Tasmanian author Rachael Treasure.
- Swan Hill Regional Library held its annual Roving Storytime as part of Children's Week on Wednesday 22 October.
- Council's YouthInc team supported Manangatang P-12 College with its first-ever school dance - The Op Shop Ball - held on Friday 24 October at the Manangatang Town Hall. The event brought together Year 7–12 students from Manangatang P-12, Ouyen P-12, Tyrrell College, Robinvale College and Tooleybuc College for an evening celebrating fun, friendship and community.
- Local businesses were invited to attend Council's Doing Business with Council information sessions, designed to help suppliers and contractors better understand how to access and secure Council contracts.
- Council congratulated Cobram Estate Olives on being named Manufacturer of the Year - Medium Business at the 23rd Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Awards, held on 9 October 2025, and congratulated Select Harvests for being recognised as Regional Exporter at the 2025 Governor of Victoria Export Awards.
- Following a strategic review and extensive community engagement, Councillors resolved to undertake an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to determine if there was commercial interest in leasing or managing the Swan Hill Regional Livestock Exchange.
- Council formally adopted the Swan Hill and Robinvale Drainage Strategy, guiding the assessment and upgrade of stormwater infrastructure in those urban areas.
- Council adopted the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan (OWMP) 2025–2030, providing a framework for managing wastewater from properties not connected to the sewer system.
- Council sought community feedback on its proposal to sell the property at 103 Curlew Street, Swan Hill through an Expression of Interest process.



November

- A Murray Little Christmas was launched to encourage shared community spirit, joy and celebration across the region.
- Council joined the community for the annual Walk Against Family Violence, marking the beginning of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.
- Councillors unanimously elected Cr Stuart King as Mayor of Swan Hill Rural City Council for his third consecutive mayoral term.
- Welcomed Goulburn-Murray Water officially lifting the blue-green algae warning for Lake Boga, just in time for the busy summer season.
- Swan Hill Regional Library Service took an important step toward supporting health, wellbeing and inclusion by installing a free pads and tampons dispensing machine in the all-access toilet.
- Council invited the community to the Robinvale Euston Christmas Festival, which brought festive cheer to Caix Square on Friday 12 December from 5pm to 9pm.
- Opened the doors to the new Art Gallery of Swan Hill.



December

- Launch of the Business Façade Improvement Program, a new initiative offering grants of up to \$5,000 to eligible local businesses with a visible street frontage.
- Announced the return of the much-loved Youth Summer Camp in January 2026, offering young people aged 15–18 an unforgettable experience of adventure, learning and connection.
- Welcomed the Victorian Government’s decision to extend the freeze on the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) for a further two years, delivering important financial relief for primary producers navigating increasing pressures across the agriculture sector.
- Celebrated the opening of the new Swan Hill Tourism and Cultural Experience Centre at Pioneer Settlement on Monash Drive, Swan Hill.
- Cr Stuart King was elected as the 2026 Chair for the Murray River Group of Councils.
- Council and the community extended heartfelt support and condolences to Waverley Council and all communities affected, following the tragic events at Bondi Beach.
- Council approved the layout designs and external façade renders for the Swan Hill Regional Community Sports Hub, enabling the project to move into the detailed design phase and become “shovel ready”.
- We welcomed Transport for NSW releasing the preferred options report for the Swan Hill Bridge replacement.



Performance against the Council Plan 2025-2029

The Swan Hill Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029 was adopted by Council on 16 September 2025. This report is for the period 1 July 2025 – 31 December 2025.

Council Plan Pillar	Performance Highlights
 Growth & Development <i>Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses and attracting investment for a thriving future</i>	To support housing that meets community needs and enables future population growth, we have: - commenced the McCartney St Housing Project - continued to support the Greater Swan Hill Housing Action Committee and Housing Trust.
	To strengthen the visitor economy by showcasing the municipality's unique places, culture and experiences, we have: - progressed work to obtain cultural heritage approval of Pental Island Bridge and the tourism precinct. - continued to exhibit and work with local first nations people on business and cultural opportunities.
	To grow local businesses and attract new investment into the municipality, we have: - completed a strategic review of the Regional Livestock Exchange, with an expression of interest process underway. - met with the NSW and Victorian Cross Border Commissioners to discuss the Swan Hill bridge, water and sewerage services.
 Community & Liveability <i>Creating inclusive, connected communities with opportunities for everyone to learn, participate and feel proud of where they live</i>	To support learning and development opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, we have: - commenced consideration of a new Family, Youth and Children's Hub. - held initial discussions on the formation of an aged care network and Seniors Week Program. - supported early childhood services by providing data for grant applications - finalised planning for youth leadership camp.
	To celebrate and grow diverse arts, culture and creative events, we have: - partnered with theatre companies and studios to present workshops and performances and presented the 3-week art exhibition - 'Collide'. - completed a branding project and business plan for the Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery
	To foster a welcoming, inclusive and connected community we have: - circulated volunteer training opportunities to community groups. - provided logistical support across many community events, including the Mallee Almond Blossom Festival, Mallee Cruisers Show & Shine and Swan Hill October Market Day. - commenced review of Community Engagement Strategy.

	To improve access to health and wellbeing services, we have: - provided data and analysis to inform the Mallee Public Health Unit health profile (December 2025). - promoted 'Go Packs' to support people with disabilities in times of emergencies. - met with the new CEO of Swan Hill District Health to discuss housing and upgrade needs. - partnered with other agencies to plan for the 16 Days of Activism 2025. - reviewing Maternal and Child Health Hub concept.
Health & Wellbeing <i>Promoting healthy lifestyles, accessible services and safe environments that support wellbeing at every stage of life</i>	To promote healthy, inclusive and safe communities, we have: - contributed to 'Food for All' initiatives, which aim to improve food security, promote local produce, boost food literacy and facilitate access to adequate nutrition. - participated in the development of the Mallee Family Violence Executive Strategic Plan. - continued cultural safety training for all staff. - reviewed the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.
	To protect and enhance local land, biodiversity and natural assets for future generations, we have: - planted approximately 236 trees since July 2025, including 40 trees in Lake Boga, 30 in Nyah/Nyah West and 10 in Piangil. - continued development of an Urban Greening and Cooling Strategy. - commenced works on the Ten Steps Renewal, and awarded the contract for the Boat Mooring Platform, at Riverside Park Swan Hill. - started transitioning Council's high emissions petrol-powered small plant equipment, such as pole-saws, blowers and hedge trimmers, to electric. - embedded biodiversity and climate considerations in new infrastructure and capital works projects.
Environmental Sustainability <i>Protecting local land and resources while supporting communities to adapt and thrive in a changing climate</i>	To reduce waste and support a circular economy, we have: - commenced discussions on the implementation of the new Glass, and Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO), waste service. - commenced the development of an education and media campaign on correct recycling and waste reduction practices to reduce waste contamination. - commenced reviewing expressions of interest (EOI) submission to operate the new Ultima Composting Facility - commenced planning for the development of the Ultima Composting Facility Business Plan.

	To maintain and upgrade road infrastructure to support safe, efficient & accessible transport, we have: • worked with the Rail Freight Alliance to raise issues about the impact of the Sunshine Superhub works on freight to port. • advocated for more frequent and reliable rail services. • scoped and scheduled Councils gravel re-sheeting and the re-seal programs for 2025-26.
	To make the best use of Council assets to meet local needs and support long term sustainability, we have: • adopted a new Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025-2035. • allocated over \$15M for sustainable asset renewals and upgrades in 2025-26. • rehabilitated Tyntynder Roads and Little Beveridge Street and commenced works on Quambatook Road and Karnie Street. • commenced reviewing precinct models, such as the Gov Hub concept and other associated hub projects. • completed stage 1 of transition to new Total Assets Management System implementation.
	To improve connectivity between key precincts and cross-border infrastructure for regional growth, we have: • updated Murray Group of Councils advocacy document ahead of the Victorian State Election. • developed a consultant brief for a feasibility study into the design of the new railway crossing. • commenced consideration of actions to deliver the Integrated Transport Land Use Strategy.
	To reduce urban flood risk and support future development by improving drainage infrastructure, we have: • adopted the Swan Hill and Robinvale Drainage Strategy and commenced project considerations. • discussed water treatment plants, Murray Downs. services, Integrated Water Management and sewer services to smaller towns with Lower Murray Water. • commenced the development of a project scope to examine Stormwater Harvesting on undeveloped land at Swan Hill Racecourse to support a grant funding application.
Infrastructure <i>Investing in roads, facilities and public spaces that meet community needs and support growth into the future</i>	To enhance community facilities and open spaces to support recreation, inclusion and wellbeing, we have: • completed an annual audit of playgrounds. • renewed the Woorinen Playground, installed new fencing and play elements at Wemen Playground, and completed scoping works for Nyah Recreation Reserve. • completed McCallum Street and Centenary Park Toilet Projects. • commenced Ken Harrison Masterplan Development Project and undertaken consultation with user groups.

	<i>To deliver accessible, responsive and inclusive customer and community engagement, we have:</i> • <i>extended the 'Lets Talk' platform on Councils website to provide translation access in 14 additional languages, to increase community engagement and participation by diverse communities.</i> • <i>commenced planning for the upgrade of the Swan Hill Council customer service reception space.</i> • <i>commenced investigation of a new Customer Relationship Management System.</i>
Transparency & Effectiveness <i>Ensuring Council is open, accountable and responsive, with services and decision making that reflect community expectations</i>	To strengthen Councils internal capability, resources, systems and financial sustainability, we have: • supported the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) by advertising for locals to work for the Census. • drafted a new Workforce Plan and conducted Succession Planning Workshops with senior staff.



MAJOR PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTS

Art Gallery Redevelopment

– Building works were completed, and the facility was opened to the public on 28 November 2025. The redevelopment has been well received by the community

Swan Hill Tourism & Cultural Hub

– Building works were completed, with user groups relocating into the facility in late November 2025. A soft launch was undertaken in December 2025, enabling early activation of the space.

A formal opening ceremony for both facilities is planned on the 23 February 2026.

MAJOR PROJECTS STATUS THIS QUARTER

- 6 projects completed
- 10 projects in progress
- 7 projects in planning phase

Major Projects Update

Council is currently managing an active portfolio of major projects valued at approximately \$24 million, with delivery planned over the next 12 – 18 months.



Major Projects Completed – 1 July 2025 – 31 December 2025

Location	Project
Swan Hill	Tourism and Cultural Hub @ Pioneer Settlement
Swan Hill	Art Gallery Redevelopment
Swan Hill	Public Open Space - Tower Hill Stage 15
Swan Hill	McCallum Street Public Toilet Renewal
Swan Hill	Starter Blocks at Swan Hill Outdoor Pool
Swan Hill	Council Chamber Refurbishment
Swan Hill	Alan Garden Reserve - Filtration System Upgrade
Swan Hill	Bryan Street drainage upgrade (150m)
Swan Hill	Monash Drive Viewing platform irrigation and landscaping
Swan Hill	Pental Island Pedestrian Bridge Design
Robinvale	Latje Road Footpath, 398m
Robinvale	Centenary Park Public Toilet
Robinvale	Robinvale Caravan Park Bank Protection - Design, Consent & Permits
Manangatang	Footpath from CBD to P-12 School, 300m
Nyah	Nyah Community Centre Renewal
Hayesdale	Hayesdale-Kooloonong Road widening & rehabilitation
Woorinen North	Glover Road widening & rehabilitation

Major Projects Plan - Quarterly Progress Report

As of 31 December 2025, Council is managing an active portfolio of major projects valued at approximately \$24 million, with delivery planned over the next 12 to 18 months.

Project Title	Work Completed %	Est Completion	Overall Status
Swan Hill Tourism and Cultural Hub <i>(Restoration works to be completed by Feb 2028 as a condition of the Heritage Permit for the project)</i>	95	02/28	
Riverside Park Mooring Platform	Design 95 Construction 0	11/26	<i>Behind Schedule</i>
Milloo St Boat Mooring Platform - Design	95	03/26	<i>Behind Schedule</i>
Ten Steps Renewal	70	03/26	
Retaining Wall Swan Hill	99	02/26	
Tyntynder Rd Rehabilitation	0	02/26	
Little Beveridge St Reconstruction	0	02/26	
Swan Hill Sporting Hub - Design	50	04/26	
Woorinen South Footpath	0	05/26	
Robinvale Community Arts Centre – Electrical Switchboard upgrade	0	06/26	
Robinvale Workers Accommodation	50	06/26	
Ken Harrison Reserve Irrigation Upgrade	0	06/26	
Quambatook Road Construction	0	07/26	

Project Title	Work Completed %	Est Completion	Overall Status
Robinvale Riverfront Terraces	0	11/26	
Pental Island Bridge	Design – 100 Construction - 0	11/26	
Karine Street Reconstruction	0	12/26	
Nyah Cricket Pavillion	10	04/27	

Status Criteria

The following project delivery confidence assurance criteria has been used to assess overall project status.

GREEN	AMBER	RED
Successful delivery of the project to time, cost and quality appears highly likely.	Successful delivery appear feasible but significant issues already exist, requiring timely management attention.	Successful delivery of the project to cost, time and/or quality does not appear achievable.
There are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to significantly threaten delivery.	These issues appear resolvable at this stage and if addressed promptly, should not impact on cost, time or quality.	The project may need re-baselining and/or the overall viability reassessed.



Projects open for feedback



Council's [Let's Talk](#) webpage displays projects currently open for community feedback. Below is a selection of projects that were open between 1 October 2025 – 31 December 2025, and those currently open and inviting community submissions.

Project	Summary
Swan Hill Project Masterplan	Swan Hill Rural City Council is preparing a Masterplan for the Central Business Precinct – the main streets and key connections between the CBD, the Murray River and the Showgrounds. The Masterplan will guide future streetscape upgrades, planting, shade, parking, walking and cycling connections, and public spaces.
Asset Naming	Council is inviting members of the community to submit naming suggestions, we are particularly seeking to recognise prominent women from the region and to include local Aboriginal language onto our Asset Naming Masterlist.
Swan Hill Intersections	Council has resolved to further advocate to the State Government for improvements to the Murlong Street/McCallum Street intersection and the Gray Street/Campbell Street intersections. We are asking individuals to report current near misses or accidents online
Calling all Creatives	Register to help Council create more character, charm and culture in our community spaces through public art opportunities.
Sale of land at 103 Curlewis St Swan Hill	Swan Hill Rural City Council (Council) gives notice under Section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020 (Act) of its intention to sell the property located at 103 Curlewis Street, Swan Hill VIC 3585 (Volume 12251 Folio 296) via expression of interest.



STATUTORY PLANNING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE

1 OCT – 31 DEC 2025

- 28 applications received, 25 were new and 3 were amended permit applications.
- 95.65% of all applications were processed within the timeframe
- Median processing for all applications was 40 days.
- 20 Permits were issued and 3 permits were not issued/withdrawn.
- No appeals were lodged.

NOTEABLE PERMIT APPLICATIONS

- Stage 2 of Yana St, Swan Hill subdivision (Sunrise Boulevard) was lodged late November 2025, yielding 119 lots.
- Carrazza Court, Robinvale – 3 parcels of land being subdivided to yield 6 lots.
- 45 & 47 Butterworth St, Swan Hill – 6 lot Subdivision.

SWAN HILL PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW IS UNDERWAY

Development and Planning Update

The total estimated value of approved planning permits issued between 1 Oct 2025 – 31 Dec 2025 was \$4 million.

There were 33 applications determined this quarter:

- 10 involved pre-application meetings
- 10 required further information
- 12 applications were advertised/notice given
- 1 attended a Council Briefing

Percentage of planning permit applications processed within timeframe (1 Oct 2025 – 31 Dec 2025) were:

- 100 % of VicSmart Applications
- 94.12% of Standard Applications

VC Amendments

The Victorian government prepares and authorises VC amendments. A VC amendment makes changes to the Victorian Planning Provisions (denoted by V) and one or more planning schemes (denoted by C). Amendments change the way land can be used or developed, and the basis for making planning decisions in the future.

Amendments approved in the last quarter include:

C79 – Rezoned land at 42 Monash Drive from Transport Zone 1 to Commercial 1 Zone, applies the Environmental Overlay to the land, and associated changes.

VC278 – Applies significant overlays to 17 waterways within the Yarra and Waterways of the West catchments.

VC290 – Enables an abattoir, when siting, design and amenity conditions are met.

VC291 – Includes new 2025 'Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation'; and makes changes so that certain planning applications can be referred directly to Fire Services Victoria.



[Pictures: L- R Little Murray River Masterplan Workshop, Pest control at EF Butler Reserve] – See Environment Report next page.

Environment

Council sought initial community consultation on our Urban Greening and Cooling Strategy which included guided tours for members of the community, led by Mike Smith and Associates and Ryder Arboriculture and Environment.

During the tours the consultants listened to community feedback and discussed the positive cooling impact that increased urban tree planting can have.



Little Murray River Masterplan

Council sought community feedback on the Little Murray River Masterplan, which included meeting with the Kurrek Yukal (Friend of Country) team from Wamba Wamba and walking along the section of the Little Murray River the plan focuses on.

Workshops were also held for interested community groups which were well attended.

Noxious weed and pest control

Council undertook noxious weed and pest control in several locations across the shire including - Happy Valley Robinvale, EF Bulter Reserve, Ultima Sports Complex, Chisholm Reserve and Nyah Recreation Reserve.

Governance and Management Checklist Review

The completion of the Governance and Management Checklist is an annual reporting requirement prescribed in the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. This table provides an update on progress towards meeting the requirements by 30 June 2026.

Item No	Checklist Item	Meets Requirements
1	Community engagement policy	Being Reviewed
2	Community engagement guidelines	Being Reviewed
3	Financial Plan	YES
4	Asset Plan	YES
5	Revenue & Rating Plan	YES
6	Annual Budget	YES
7	Risk Policy	YES
8	Fraud Policy	YES
9	Municipal emergency management planning - meetings	YES
10	Procurement policy	YES
11	Business continuity plan	YES
12	Disaster recovery plan	Being Reviewed
13	Complaint policy	Being Reviewed
14	Workforce plan	YES
15	Payment of rates and charges hardship	YES
16	Risk Management Framework	YES
17	Audit & Risk Committee	YES
18	Internal audit	YES
19	Performance Reporting Framework	YES
20	Council Plan Reporting	YES
21	Quarterly budget reports	YES
22	Risk reports	YES
23	Performance reports	YES
24	Annual Report	YES
25	Councillor Code of Conduct	YES
26	Delegations	YES
27	Meeting Procedures	YES – Model Rules being developed by Vic Government

Quarterly Financial Report

Summary

A summarised Statement of Income and Expenditure and a summarised Balance Sheet for the six months ended 31 December 2025 are included with this report.

The Income Statement includes all sources of Council revenue and expenditure incurred in its day-to-day operations. Expenditure listed in the Income Statement does not include the cost of asset purchases or sales, loan repayments, capital works expenditure, or reserve funds. It does, however, include depreciation as an expense.

Overall, the operating surplus of \$17.9M is \$7.14M below the December year to date budget of \$25.03M.

At this stage of the financial year, a review of operational requirements has determined that the full year forecast result is expected to be better than budget. Many of the variances to budget at this stage are due to the timing of works and the full year results are expected to remain on budget unless noted below.

Major variations to budget as at 31 December 2025 are explained by way of notes on the attached reports.

The below financial summary provides an explanation of key variances to budget that are expected to remain for the financial year:

Budget items.	Forecast Variances	
	As at 31/12/2025	Favourable/Unfavourable
Grants Commission – Financial Assistance Grants <i>(including Transfer from Reserve) Approved Financial Assistance Grant higher than budget.</i>	\$283,075	Favourable
Grants Commission – 2024/25 Overpayment <i>Final calculation of the 2024/25 Financial Assistance Grant undertaken by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission resulted in a reduced allocation to Council.</i>	(\$28,600)	Unfavourable
Supplementary Rates <i>Additional rates raised via developments.</i>	\$13,000	Favourable
Victorian Electoral Commission - Voting Fines <i>Voting fines received are higher than forecast.</i>	\$21,235	Favourable
WorkCover Premiums <i>Final premium calculation for 2024/25 resulted in a refund of \$19,815 paid to Council.</i>	\$19,815	Favourable
Insurance – Industrial Special Risk <i>Premium paid was below forecast. Change to risk advisor/broker has given Council access to insurance options at a lessor cost.</i>	\$279,000	Favourable
IT Security Tactical Defence <i>Upgrade from CrowdStrike.</i>	(\$122,000)	Unfavourable
Employee costs – vacant positions <i>Vacant positions throughout Council to December 2025.</i>	\$371,000	Favourable
Interest income <i>Higher than forecast cash holdings in the year to date.</i>	\$254,000	Favourable
Net Variation to 2025/26 Budget	\$1,090,525	Favourable

Statement of Income & Expenditure

SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE FOR THE 6 MONTHS ENDING 31/12/2025

	Actual Year To Date 31/12/2025 \$000	Budget Year To Date 31/12/2025 \$000	\$ Variance To Budget \$000	% Variance To Budget	Original Annual Budget 2025/26 \$000	Notes
OPERATING INCOME :-						
Rates, garbage charges and marketing levy	34,820	34,740	80	0.2%	34,740	
Statutory fees & fines	427	570	(143)	-25.1%	1,140	1
User fees	2,386	2,334	52	2.2%	4,668	
Grants - operating (recurrent)	3,398	5,413	(2,015)	-37.2%	10,826	2
Grants - operating (non-recurrent)	294	137	158	115.4%	273	3
Grants - capital (recurrent)	900	1,262	(362)	-28.7%	2,524	4
Grants - capital (non-recurrent)	1,655	6,608	(4,953)	-75.0%	13,216	5
Contributions - cash non recurrent	107	132	(25)	-18.6%	263	
Interest income	1,279	1,025	255	24.8%	2,049	6
Proceeds from disposal of assets	635	50	586	1182.8%	99	7
Other revenue	1,367	3,600	(2,233)	-62.0%	7,199	8
TOTAL INCOME	47,268	55,869	(8,601)	-15.4%	76,997	
OPERATING EXPENSES :-						
Employee benefits	10,496	11,330	(834)	-7.4%	22,660	
Contract payments, materials & services	10,229	9,543	687	7.2%	19,085	
Bad & doubtful debts	3	1	3	0.0%	1	
Depreciation	8,061	8,061	0	0.0%	16,121	
Finance costs	27	40	(13)	-32.5%	80	
Other expenses	557	1,862	(1,305)	-70.1%	3,724	9
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	29,373	30,836	(1,463)	-4.7%	61,671	
BUDGET RESULT SURPLUS	17,896	25,033	(7,138)	-28.5%	15,326	
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRESS :-						
Capital works/asset purchases	11,351	21,035	(9,684)	-46%	42,069	10
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) AFTER CAPITAL ITEMS	6,545	3,999	2,546	64%	(26,743)	

1 The Statutory fees and fines unfavourable variance relates to income below budget for Building (\$108k) and Planning Permits (\$35k).

2 Fifty per cent of Council's 2025/26 Victoria Grants Commission allocation was received in June 2025.

The full year result for the Victoria Grants Commission allocation will be \$254,475 better than forecast due to an additional \$236,951 from the indexation of our allocation in the 2026 year and \$46,122 for a Local Roads Data Project, less \$28,598 being an overpayment from 2025.

3 Operating non-recurrent grant funds received includes Economic Development (\$200k) Regional Precincts Partnership Program. This funding is for planning and design of future projects for Transforming the Heart of Swan Hill Precinct.

4 Timing issue. Roads to Recovery grant funding will be received in full by the end of the financial year.

5 Timing issue. Capital grant funding to be received upon completion of projects.

6 Interest income is favourable in comparison to the budget, due to higher than forecast cash holdings and interest rates.

7 Proceeds from disposal of assets includes higher than forecast disposal of assets to date.

8 Timing issue. The unfavourable variance is due to lower than forecast Tower Hill sales, along with the December EPA Levy not yet raised.

9 Timing issue. Other Expenses variance is due to non-recurrent project expenditure being lower than forecast.

10 Significant capital works projects forecast for the 2025/26 year are the completion of the Art Gallery redevelopment, Pioneer Settlement Tourism & Cultural Hub, Swan Hill Showgrounds Regional Hub, Tower Hill development, Robinvale Workers Accommodation - McCartney Court and Karinie Street reconstruction.

Summarised Balance Sheet

**SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL
SUMMARISED BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31/12/2025**

	Last Year Actual As At 30/06/2025 \$000	This Year Actual As At 31/12/2025 \$000	\$ Movement Y.T.D. \$000	Budget As At End 2025/26 \$000
CURRENT ASSETS:-				
Cash and Cash Equivalents	51,870	53,165	1,295	19,213
Trade & Other Receivables	8,788	21,770	12,982	8,794
Inventories	242	282	40	112
Other Assets	1,553	367	(1,186)	8,653
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	62,453	75,584	13,131	36,772
CURRENT LIABILITIES:-				
Trade & Other Payables	6,611	1,860	(4,751)	8,896
Trust Funds & Deposits	489	1,266	777	414
Unearned Income/Revenue	2,562	5,441	2,879	0
Provisions	5,028	4,851	(177)	4,623
Interest Bearing Loans & Borrowings	785	787	2	292
Lease Liabilities	123	123	0	111
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	15,598	14,328	(1,270)	14,336
NET CURRENT ASSETS	46,855	61,256	14,401	22,436
NON-CURRENT ASSETS:-				
Trade & Other Receivables	50	50	0	50
Property, Plant, Equipment & Infrastructure	693,342	685,819	(7,523)	714,620
Right-of-use Assets	450	450	0	325
Intangible Assets	3,584	3,430	(154)	3,569
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	697,426	689,749	(7,677)	718,564
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES:-				
Interest Bearing Loans & Borrowings	995	851	(144)	255
Lease Liabilities	340	340	0	707
Provisions	2,930	3,263	333	3,382
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	4,265	4,454	189	4,344
TOTAL NET ASSETS	740,016	746,551	6,535	736,656
EQUITY:-				
Accumulated Surplus & Reserves	348,777	355,311	6,534	345,461
Asset Revaluation Reserve	391,239	391,240	1	391,195
TOTAL EQUITY	740,016	746,551	6,535	736,656

2.2 Outcome of EOI Process - 103 Curlewis St Swan Hill

Directorate: Corporate Services

File Number: **AST-PR-48007-02**

Purpose: For Decision

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

5. Infrastructure – Investing in roads, facilities and public spaces that meet community needs and support growth into the future. Objective 5.2: Make the best use of Council assets to meet local needs and support long-term sustainability.

5.2.1 Use Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan to guide investment, maintenance and utilisation.

6. Transparency and Effectiveness – Ensuring Council is open, accountable and responsive, with services and decision-making that reflect community expectations. Objective 6.2: Strengthen Council's internal capability, resources, systems and financial sustainability.

6.2.4 Maintain long-term financial sustainability.

Current Strategic Documents

Council Plan

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

To present the outcome of the Expression of Interest (EOI) process for the proposed sale of 103 Curlewis Street and to seek Council's approval to commence negotiations with the shortlisted proponent.

Discussion

Council owns the land located at 103 Curlewis Street Swan Hill, Vic 3585 (Volume 12251 Folio 296). The property was acquired from GrainCorp in December 2021 as part of a dual acquisition, which also included 42 Monash Drive, Swan Hill VIC 3585.

Following Council's October 2025 resolution to commence the statutory process under Section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020, public notice and community engagement were undertaken, and after considering submissions, Council resolved to proceed with the proposed sale.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) process ran from 12 December 2025 to 1 February 2026. Following the EOI process, a shortlisted submission was identified that

presents both a positive commercial outcome and potential economic benefits for Council.

The shortlisted submission proposes repurposing the front two silos for a hospitality-based redevelopment, with accommodation in the rear silo. The proponent has also identified potential opportunities for car parking on adjoining land. As this adjoining land is Crown land, zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone, and managed by Council as Committee of Management, Council would need to consider if they are willing, to allocate any portion of it for dedicated car parking to support the proposed redevelopment. Any works or improvements on this land would require landowner consent from Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). These constraints may influence the feasibility or scale of the proponent's intended redevelopment.

Additionally, Council will need to consider incorporating specific conditions into the Contract of Sale, such as granting Council a first right to repurchase the property and establishing a defined timeframe for the development to be completed.

Consultation

Council completed the statutory process under s114 of the Local Government Act 2020, with community engagement undertaken and Council having resolved to proceed with the sale.

Financial Implications

The proposed purchase price submitted through the EOI reflects a commercially reasonable outcome that Council would be able to consider for acceptance.

Social Implications

Nil.

Economic Implications

The proposal may generate positive economic outcomes through reactivation of an underutilised site, increased visitation and support for local employment.

Environmental Implications

Any future redevelopment would be subject to normal planning and building requirements, including consideration of environmental matters through the statutory approval process.

Risk Management Implications

Risks relate primarily to development feasibility and the need for external approvals for adjoining Crown land. These risks can be mitigated through appropriate contractual conditions and oversight of development obligations.

Attachments: Nil

Options

1. Authorise Council staff to commence discussions with the shortlisted proponent and proceed in good faith to negotiate the terms of the proposed sale.
2. Council may choose not to advance the the shortlisted submission and may instead:
 - Re-advertise the property through a subsequent EOI process; or
 - Engaging a sales agent or broker to assist with the sale.

Recommendation/s

That Council authorise Council staff to commence discussions with the shortlisted proponent and proceed in good faith to negotiate the terms of the proposed sale.

CM 2026/25 Motion

MOVED Cr Jennings

That Council authorise Council staff to commence discussions with the shortlisted proponent and proceed in good faith to negotiate the terms of the proposed sale.

SECONDED Cr Rogers

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

2.3 Business Facade Improvement Program 25/26 - Successful Recipients

Directorate: Development and Planning

File Number: S17-01-08-01

Purpose: For Decision

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

1. Growth and Development – Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses, and attracting investment for a thriving future. Objective 1.1: Support housing that meets community needs and enables future population growth

1.1.1 Support diverse housing to meet community needs.

1.1.2 Strengthen Council's planning and coordination capacity to enable housing growth.

1.1.3 Proactive strategic planning for future land use.

1. Growth and Development – Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses, and attracting investment for a thriving future. Objective 1.2: Strengthen the visitor economy by showcasing the municipality's unique places, culture, and experiences.

1.2.1 Grow the visitor economy.

1.2.2 Support a range of accommodation options to attract and retain overnight visitors.

1. Growth and Development – Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses, and attracting investment for a thriving future. Objective 1.3: Grow local businesses and attract new investment into the municipality.

1.3.1 Be a business-friendly destination.

1.3.5 Support businesses to build a strong local workforce that meets industry needs.

Current Strategic Documents

Economic Development Strategy 2024-2030

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information in relation to the 2025/2026 Façade Improvement Program and make recommendations to Council on which applications should receive funding.

Discussion

The Business Façade Improvement Program (FIP) provides funding of up to \$5,000 per application to support eligible businesses with visible street frontage to upgrade their facades, enhancing the appeal of our municipalities' commercial and shopping precincts.

Projects funded may include:

- Repainting of building facade and windows;
- Installation/upgrade of business signage;
- Renewal of exterior lighting or awning/structure;
- Digital displays;
- Repair or replacements of verandas;
- Improvements to frontages (e.g. server windows, bi-fold doors or large windows) - excluding security screens and doors;
- Cleaning of existing facade and removal of redundant signage/air conditioning units or hoardings;
- Minor repairs, maintenance, or reinstatement of missing elements of the facade; and
- Limited permanent interior improvements (if visible from the exterior)

An assessment panel comprising of the Mayor Cr. Stuart King, Cr. Terry Jennings, Director Development and Planning, and the Development Manager, evaluated all applications against the criteria.

Each application was assessed with the following factors considered to determine priorities for funding:

- Increased appeal of the business frontage;
- Use of local trades/suppliers to undertake proposed works;
- Increased visual amenity of the towns streetscape; and
- Compliance with the application requirements.

Applications

A total of 13 applications were received for the 2025/2026 round; 12 have been recommended for funding.

This was the first year of the Council offering the facade grants and the response from the community was extremely encouraging. It is intended that a review of the program be undertaken with the aim to refine and enhance the funding program based on feedback received from applicants and panel members.

In addition to the completed applications there were a further 16 applications partially completed, and Officers will contact the various businesses as part of the review to seek feedback on why the application may not have been completed.

The annual budget for the Facade Improvement Program is \$50,000.

Successful Grants

Successful applicants will contribute approximately \$69,910 to match Council's \$43,795 worth of grant funds. This will result in at least \$113,000 worth of upgrades being completed before the end of 2026.

The program is recommending support for 12 businesses located throughout the municipality including Swan Hill, Robinvale, and Manangatang.

List of recommended applications

Facade Improvement Program			
Business name	Address	Type of works	Total Funded
Robinvale Meats Pty Ltd	42 Perrin St Robinvale 3549	Installing/upgrading signage, Other: Window graphics	\$ 1,782.50
Robinvale Car Wash	208 Bromley Rd Robinvale 3549	Installing/upgrading signage, Renewing lighting, Removal of cladding, removal of unwanted materials e.g., signage, cladding, hoardings	\$ 3,431.22
The Manangatang Family Hotel	45-47 Wattle St Manangatang 3546	Installing/upgrading signage, Removal of cladding, removal of unwanted materials e.g., signage, cladding, hoardings, Reinstatement of lost materials or elements to the façade	\$ 5,000.00
Vernon Steel Pty Ltd	13-23 Thurla St Swan Hill 3585	Installing/upgrading signage, Other: fencing	\$ 5,000.00
Swan Hill Windows & Kitchens	20 Stradbroke Ave Swan Hill 3585	Painting, Installing/upgrading signage	\$ 3,272.50
My 2 Girls	221 Campbell St Swan Hill 3585	Painting, Cleaning existing facade	\$ 5,000.00
Home. Life	224A Campbell St Swan Hill 3585	Other: Installation of awning on front veranda	\$ 1,083.50
One Body Health & Wellness	139 Campbell St Swan Hill 3585	Painting, Installing/upgrading signage, Cleaning existing facade	\$ 4,431.00
Swan Hill Club	5/5-17 McCallum St Swan Hill 3585	Installing/upgrading signage	\$ 2,640.00
Robinvale Post Office	30 George St Robinvale 3549	Painting, Installing/upgrading signage, Cleaning existing facade	\$ 2,155.00
Sala Thai Wellness/Swan Hill Tattoo Parlor	79A-B Chapman St Swan Hill 3585	Painting, renewing lighting, Repairing/replacing verandah	\$ 5,000.00

Hairdresser Swan Hill North Shopping Centre	79C Chapman St Swan Hill 3585	Painting, renewing lighting, Repairing/replacing verandah	\$ 5,000.00
			\$ 43,795.72

The one unsuccessful application was not supported as it was considered the proposal was to meet existing franchise requirements, and some of the works were internal and not contributing to the facade. The applicant will be notified of this assessment.

Consultation

The community was made aware of the funding opportunities through local newspapers, Council's website, social media posts detailing guidelines, submission dates, link to Smarty grants application portal.

To complement this process, Swan Hill Incorporated have utilised their communication avenues to promote the new grant program.

Financial Implications

Council set a budget of \$50,000 for the Facade Improvement Program for the 2025-2026 round. There is an amount of approximately \$6,000.00 still unallocated and it is suggested that this be carried forward into the next financial year to add to the new funding allocation which has been included in the draft 26/27 budget.

This would allow for the consideration of additional applications for funding that are likely to be received.

Alternatively, the amount could be considered during the remainder of the current financial year in the event the Council received an approach for facade funding, and it was deemed that it should receive a funding allocation.

Social Implications

Council's investment in shopfront façade improvements enhances the visual appeal of our streetscapes, creating a more attractive and welcoming environment for both visitors and locals.

Economic Implications

Projects to the value of approximately \$113,000 will be completed by successful applicants. Proposed works must be completed within six months of receiving successful notification.

As part of the assessment criteria, applicants who nominated local tradespeople and suppliers to complete their façade improvement works were prioritised. This approach supports a larger economic benefit for our region by encouraging the use of local businesses

Environmental Implications

Nil.

Risk Management Implications

Successful applicants will be required to enter a Funding Agreement with Council. This will be to ensure that the applicant organisation is aware of its responsibilities in terms of delivering the project safely, by qualified persons, to relevant standards and with appropriate insurances in place.

Attachments: Nil

Options

1. That Council approve the 2025-2026 Facade Improvement Program successful applications.
2. That Council does not approve the 2025-2026 Facade Improvement Program successful applications.

Recommendation/s

That Council approve the 2025-2026 Facade Improvement Program allocation and notify the successful applicants.

CM 2026/26 Motion**MOVED Cr Jennings**

That Council approve the 2025-2026 Facade Improvement Program allocation and notify the successful applicants.

SECONDED Cr Rogers

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

2.4 Investment Options Robinvale Workers Accommodation Herbert Street

Directorate: Development and Planning
Author: Project Manager
File Number: S 11-27-19
Purpose: For Decision

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

1. Growth and Development – Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses, and attracting investment for a thriving future. Objective 1.1: Support housing that meets community needs and enables future population growth
1.1.1 Support diverse housing to meet community needs.

Current Strategic Documents

Robinvale Housing Strategy
Swan Hill Residential Development Strategy-2006-2030

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the proposed housing project at 49 Herbert Street Robinvale. This project is utilising the savings from the Rural Workers Accommodation Fund at 3 McCartney Court, Robinvale Project, subject to approval for the funding variation from the State Government.

Discussion

Council received funding to deliver 10 workers accommodation dwellings at 3 McCartney Court Robinvale for a total value of \$5.5m (\$5m grant funding, \$500,000 Council contribution). Construction of the dwellings and development of the site is well advanced. There are likely to be substantial savings and Council is seeking approval to reallocate this funding to provide further housing in Robinvale.

Based on this outcome, Council has explored options for delivering additional dwellings utilising the underspend. The alternative would have been to return this underspend back to the State Government at the completion of the project.

Council Officers investigated several Council owned sites in Robinvale and assessed their suitability for housing. It has been determined that 49 Herbert Street would be the most appropriate location for additional dwellings.

These new dwellings would be leased to partner organisations for 5 years as per the funding requirements, in the same way that the original 10 dwellings in McCartney Court will be.

Preliminary work has been undertaken on the cost-benefit analysis as well as identifying the opportunity to deliver 2 additional dwellings on this site utilising offsite construction (modular homes) to maximise efficiency and ensure flexibility in future. A modular building is a pre-engineered structure constructed in sections (modules) off-site within a controlled factory environment, then transported and assembled on-site.

Preliminary investigations explored two options as below:

- B) 2 dwellings – 3 bedroom each (each dwelling around 90 – 130m²)
- B) 3 dwellings – 2 bedroom each (each dwelling around 70 – 100m²)

The project team prefer proceeding with 2 dwellings each of 3 bedrooms considering:

1. **Cost-benefit Analysis:** whole of life cost, return on investment, and forecasted market price after five years support more towards 2 dwellings.
2. **Area Availability:** The available area is also more suited for 2 dwellings each of 3 bedrooms rather than 3 dwellings with 2 bedrooms each.
3. **Market Demand:** There is a more demand for 3 bedroom dwellings than 2 bedroom dwellings to suit families. This came out from stakeholder consultation.

Proceeding with modular/prefabricated houses instead of onsite construction aims to expedite project completion. It also means that the housing could be removed in the event of the land being required for commercial purposes in the future.

Completion of the 2 additional dwellings, subject to approval, is scheduled for completion in May 2027.

Scope The proposed scope includes delivering 2 houses with complete landscaping and car parks having a total of 6 bedrooms. Initial concept planning has been done to identify opportunities and high level cost estimates have been worked through. Subject to approval, the project team will progress to detail the works with the following activities:

1. Planning permit application
2. Detailed design – civil, landscaping.
3. Building tender – design and construct
4. Building permit – by successful contractor
5. Variation approval from the funding body to utilise the surplus funds from the McCartney Court Project.

Council has submitted a variation of time and scope for the parent project – 3 McCartney Court Workers Accommodation, to the funding body which is under the consideration of the Victorian government.

Site Location: This site, located at 49 Herbert Street in Robinvale, is across the road from the Robinvale Resource Centre and is approximately 876m² in size. The land is very flat with very minimal vegetation on the site and investigations into the site reveal that the site has been vacant for a significant period.

As per the proposed dwelling configuration (please refer Option 3), the dwellings are orientated to face Herbert Street with vehicle access to the rear of the site which faces Ginn Road. The driveways from the dwellings will lead to Ginn Road which is a one-way road having access from Ginn Lane exiting to Herbert Street. (Please refer the overall site plan in the attachment).

Consultation

Council has consulted with the funding agency, Regional Development Victoria. Further, if approved, Council will advertise the planning application, and the community will be afforded the opportunity to comment or make a submission.

Council has been consulting on future tenants for the 10 dwellings at McCartney Court and this has identified the need for further accommodation in Robinvale to support key workers across health, education and agriculture.

Financial Implications

Management of the McCartney Court Workers Accommodation project is progressing well and is likely to provide surplus fund that might be invested in further housing in Robinvale.

When funding approval is given and the project has scope has been finalised, Council will seek interest to develop the site through a fair and open tender process.

Based on current costings of the project, Council may be required to make a monetary contribution. This will subject to finalisation of the costs associated with the project which can only be known after receiving the quotes through tenders. It is reasonable at this stage to cap the costs at \$100,000.

Social Implications

The proposed Herbert Street project will provide a further 6 bedrooms to the existing 3 McCartney Court project which will create 22 bedrooms. One of the key drivers for the State Government in providing the funding for key workers is the increase of bedrooms for essential workers.

Economic Implications

More housing for workers drives economic expansion by increasing the total demand for goods, and services boosting the overall economic development.

Environmental Implications

As with any other construction process, there will be some impact on the environment during the construction phase, however, this will be minimal as the houses will be modular.

Further considerations will be made as part of the landscaping activities in compliance with the planning requirements ensuring the houses blend with the surrounding landscape.

Risk Management Implications

Potential risks that will need to be considered and managed fall under the following headings:

- Final approval of the Variation from the Funding Body
- Town planning approvals
- User groups and market demand
- Construction risk
- Environmental risk during construction
- Contract Management

It is recognised that risks change as the project proceeds, with risks that were significant in initial stages of the project diminishing in later stages and vice versa.

- Attachments:**
1. Pozi - Swan Hill 20260305104840 [2.4.1 - 1 page]
 2. Overall Map of Site [2.4.2 - 1 page]
 3. Concept Plan Herbert St Workers' Accommodation [2.4.3 - 4 pages]

Options

1. That Council proceeds with the development of 49 Herbert Street Robinvale based on the construction of 2 dwellings each having 3 bedrooms subject to the Rural Worker Accommodation Fund Grant Variation which is currently under consideration by the Victorian Government, to utilise the funding savings from the 3 McCartney Court Robinvale project, with a monetary cap of \$100,000 in Council funds toward the project.
2. That Council does not proceed with the Herbert Street Housing Project and returns the funding savings from the 3 McCartney Court Project to the State Government.

Recommendation/s That Council:

1. **Proceed with the development of 49 Herbert Street Robinvale based on the construction of 2 dwellings each having 3 bedrooms subject to the Rural Worker Accommodation Fund Grant Variation to utilise the surplus funding from the 3 McCartney Court Robinvale project; and**
2. **Sets a cap of \$100,000 as Council's cash contribution toward the project.**

CM 2026/27 Motion

MOVED Cr Englefield

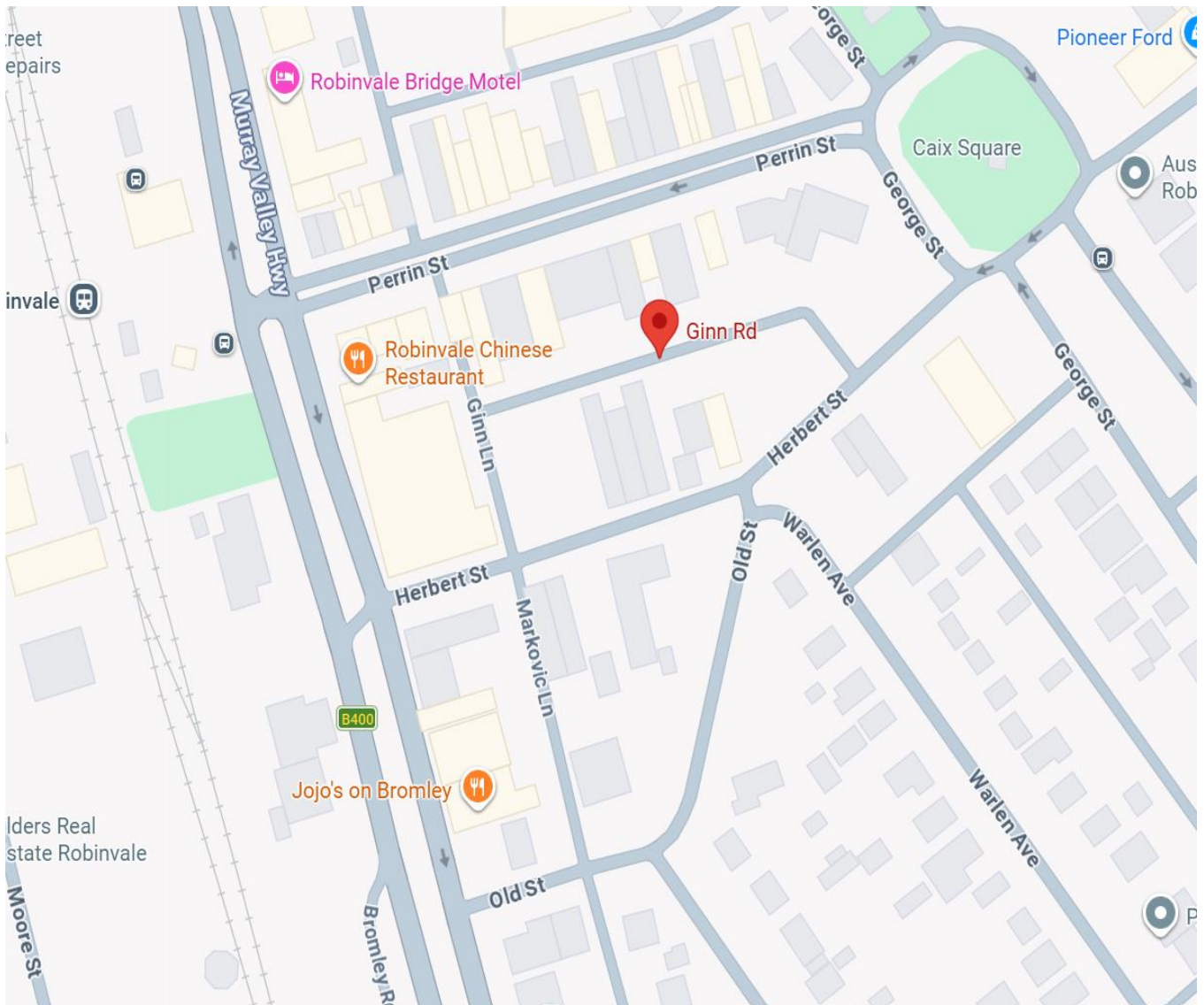
That Council:

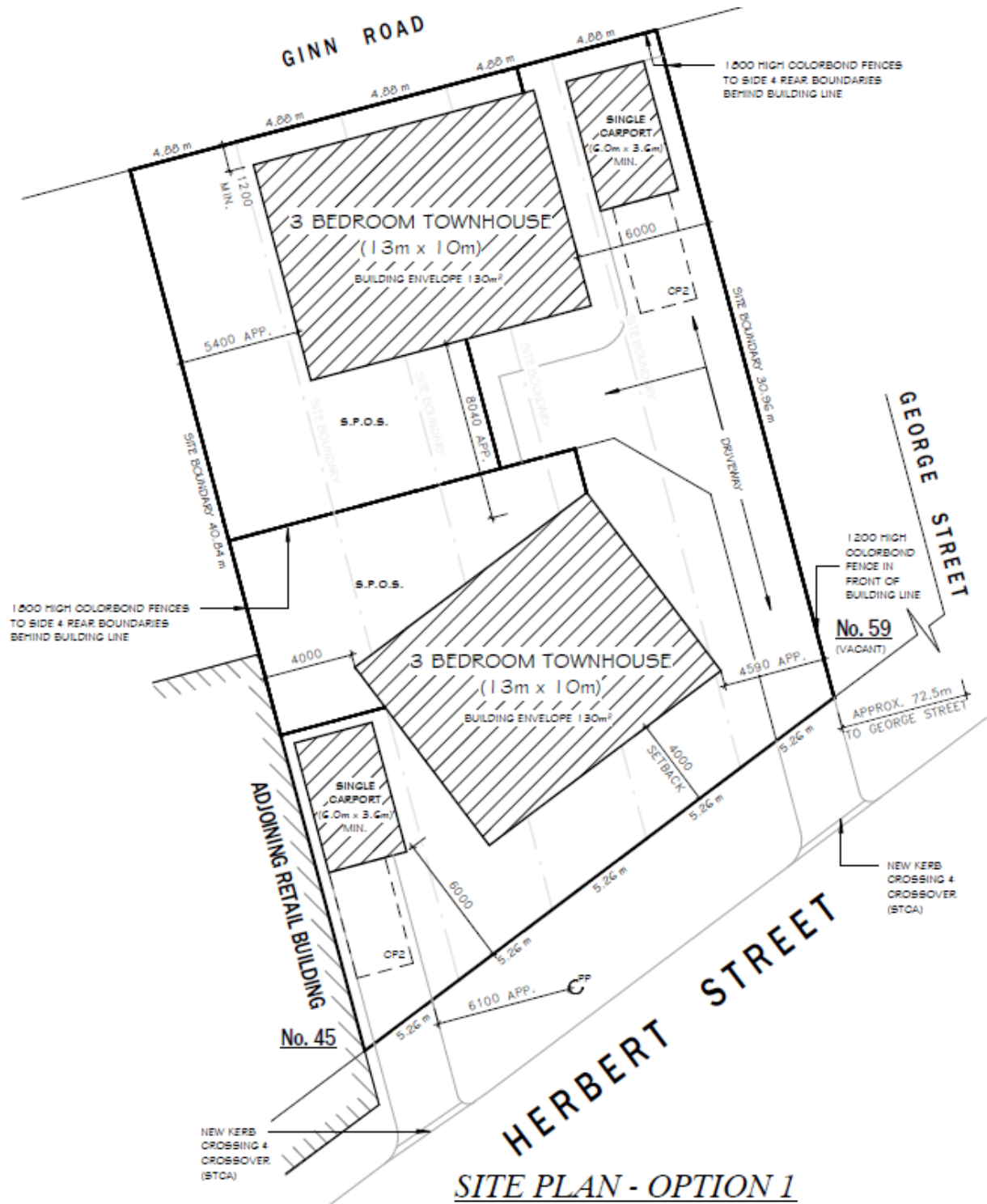
1. **Proceed with the development of 49 Herbert Street Robinvale based on the construction of 2 dwellings each having 3 bedrooms subject to the Rural Worker Accommodation Fund Grant Variation to utilise the surplus funding from the 3 McCartney Court Robinvale project; and**
2. **Sets a cap of \$100,000 as Council's cash contribution toward the project.**

SECONDED Cr Rogers

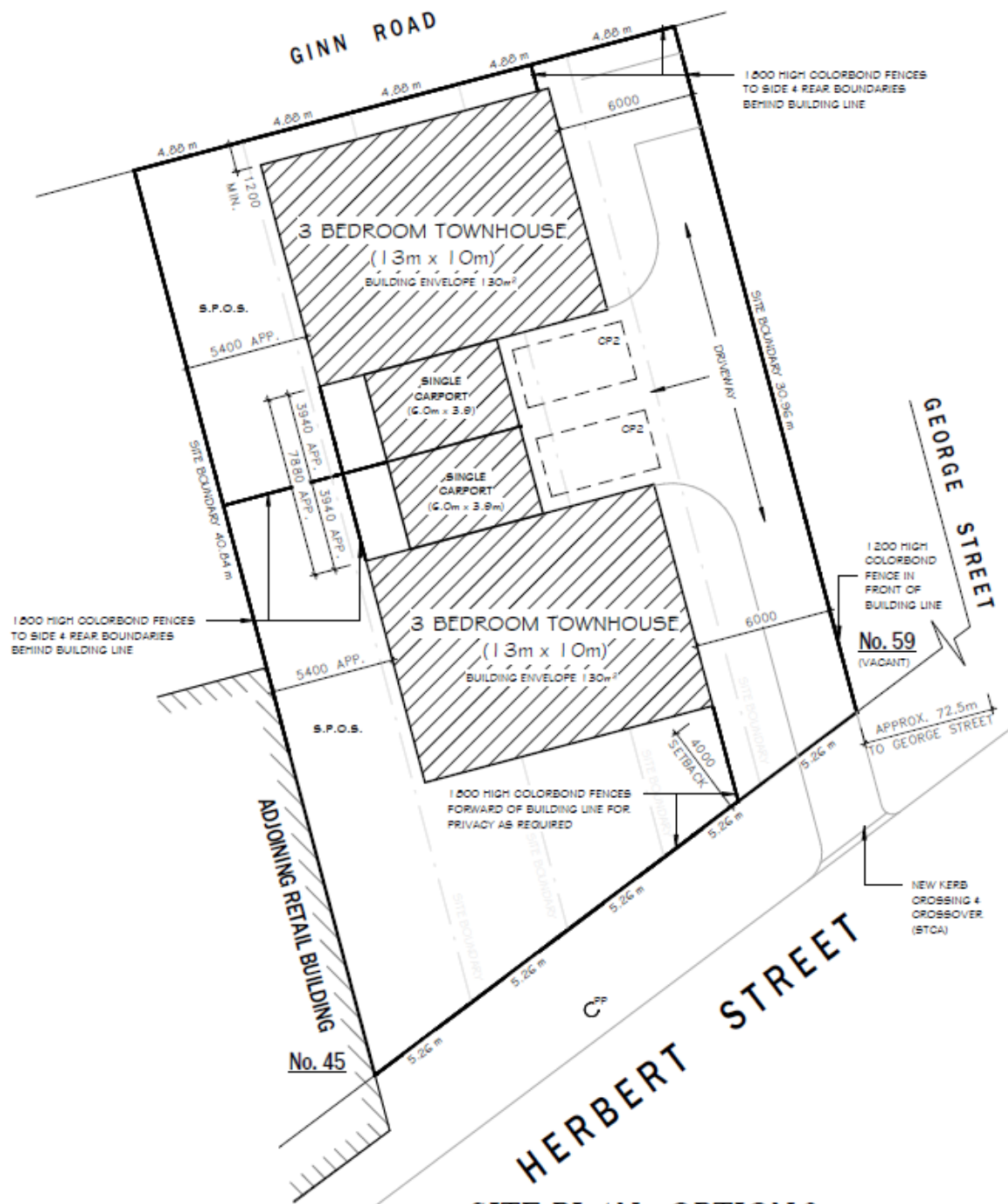
The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0





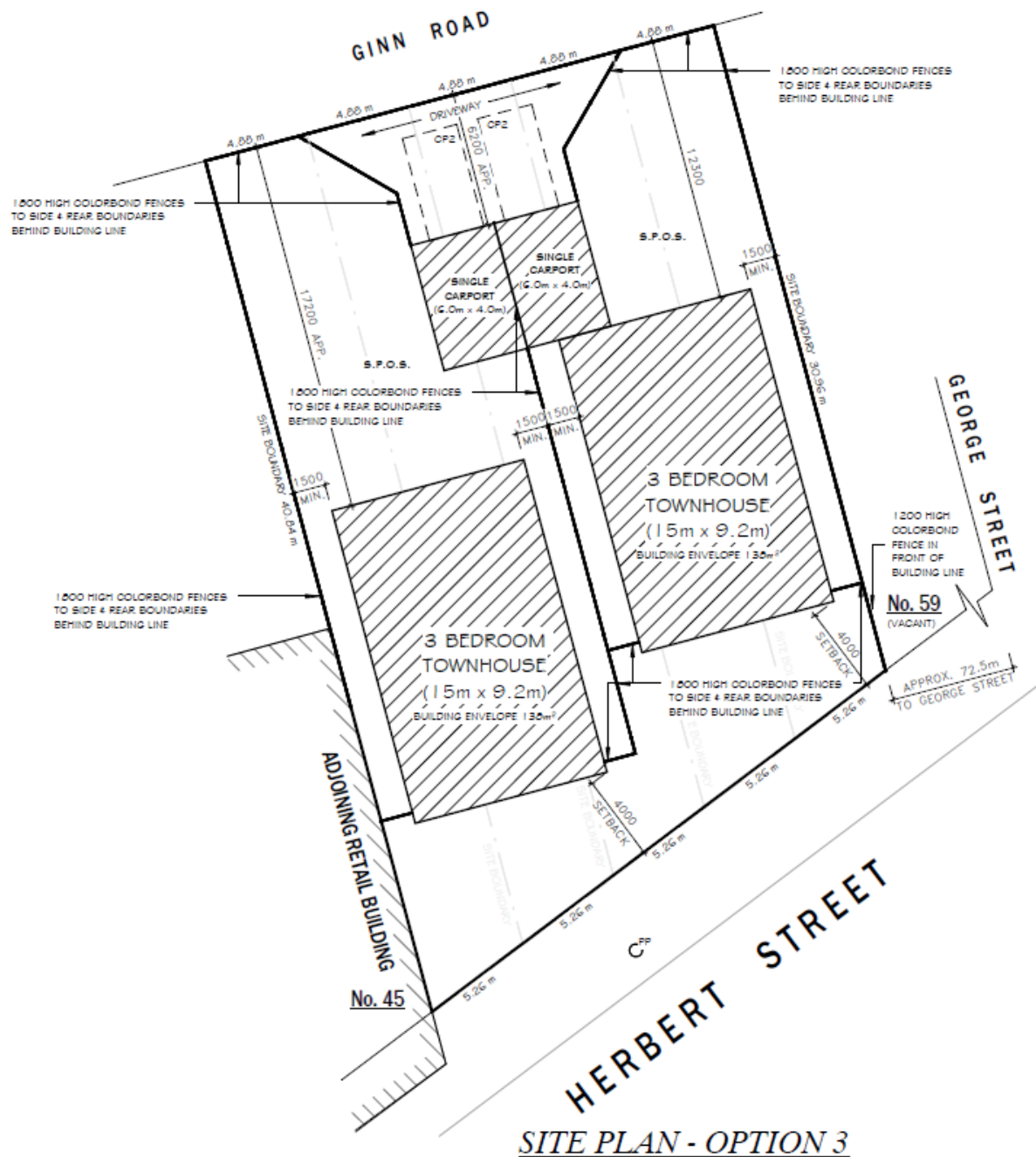


2 Dwellings each of 3 Bedrooms



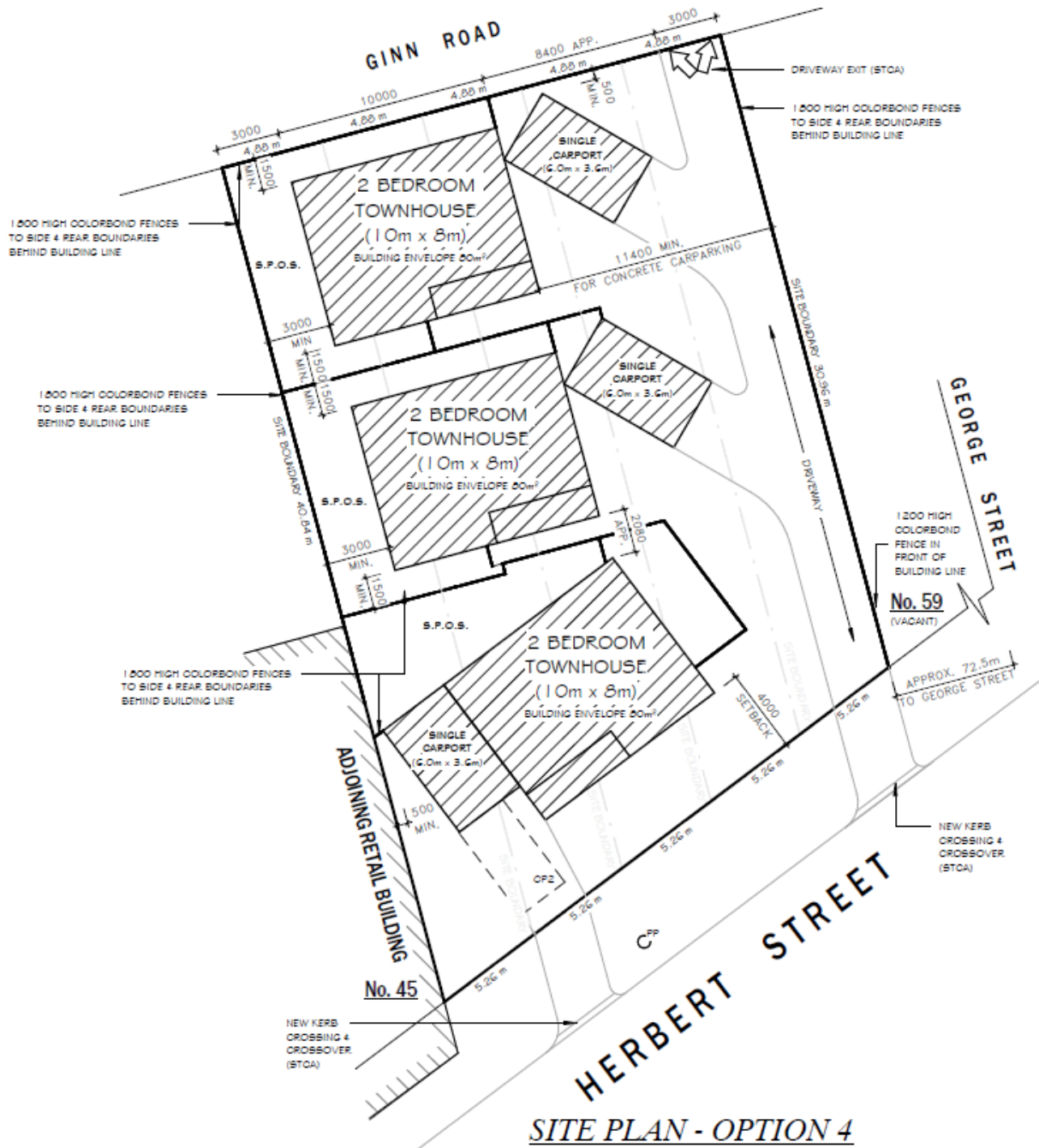
SITE PLAN - OPTION 2

2 Dwellings each of 3 Bedrooms



2 Dwellings each of 3 Bedrooms

Preferred option considering Land Area, Planning Criteria, Stakeholder preference, and financial benefits



SITE PLAN - OPTION 4

3 Dwellings each of 2 Bedrooms

2.5 Asset Naming Submissions

Directorate: Infrastructure
File Number: S11-01-01
Purpose: For Decision

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

1. Growth and Development – Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses and attracting investment for a thriving future. Objective 1.1: Support housing that meets community needs and enables future population growth
1.1.2 Strengthen Council’s planning and coordination capacity to enable housing growth.

2. Community and Liveability – Creating inclusive, connected communities with opportunities for everyone to learn, participate and feel proud of where they live. Objective 2.3: Foster a welcoming, inclusive, and connected community.
2.3.1 Strengthen community participation and connection.

6. Transparency and Effectiveness – Ensuring Council is open, accountable and responsive, with services and decision-making that reflect community expectations. Objective 6.1: Deliver accessible, responsive and inclusive customer and community engagement.
6.1.5 Engage with local Registered Aboriginal Party and First Nations communities.

Current Strategic Documents

No strategic documents applicable.

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

This report informs Council of submissions received regarding commemorative asset naming proposals received during 2025, consistent with Council’s Asset Naming Guidelines.

Discussion

The “Naming rules for places in Victoria 2022” has several statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities and these requirements are reflected in PRO/INFRA500 Asset Naming Guidelines (Attachment 1).

The Asset Naming Guidelines specifies that asset name proposals will be assessed on an annual basis for compliance with the general principals outlined within the naming rules and Council’s guidelines.

The Asset Name Master List provides a list of pre-approved names for the use by Developers or Council to select from when naming assets. These names are nominated by the public and are mostly commemorative in nature.

Commemorative names must be publicly advertised for a period of 30 days. After the advertising period, Councillors can then consider any proposals with the public submissions and consider the addition of the name to the pre-approved Asset Naming Master List.

Council Let’s Talk page has a permanent topic open for asset naming submissions. Throughout 2025, seven submissions were made to the Let’s Talk Portal (attachment 1) and two nominations were made via alternate means.

Of the nine submissions, four names are considered commemorative and are deemed compliant with the asset name principles.

Proposed name (Area)	Description
Rosaia (Heirloom Estate)	Rosaia used to own the land at Heirloom Estate with the matriarch of the family still living there up until sale of the site to Coronation Developments. A former farm that has provided fruit and vegetables in its previous life to the wider community.
Nicholls (Swan Hill Area)	Bevan and Letty Nicholls were recently honoured by having their names added to the First Nations Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll showing their dedication to caring for others, encouraging young people and promoting Aboriginal culture that has left a lasting legacy. Both were very active members in the past, on the Swan Hill Shire working with projects such as the Pioneer Settlement and the Gem. Bevan Nicholls worked as a groundsman and cultural teacher when asked to speak to school students attending the Pioneer Settlement on excursions.

Proposed name (Area)	Description
Mitchell (Lake Boga Area)	The Mitchell family has lived on Back Boga Road since 1949 and has been an active part of the Swan Hill and Lake Boga communities for generations. Llew Mitchell moved to the area with his family when he was 12 years old. As an adult, Llew took over the family farm and spent his life working the land as a dedicated farmer. He spent countless hours tending to the paddocks along this laneway and throughout the surrounding area, contributing significantly to the agricultural landscape of the region.
Katis (Robinvale Area)	Nick and Aspacia Katis came to Australia from Greece and cleared the land in the Tol Tol area. With their sons John Katis and Chris Katis, who were around 12 and 10 years old when they came to Australia, they ran a grape block as it was called back then. Nick and Aspacia have long passed away as has their son Chris who passed away last year. The other son John is the only one remaining from their family of four and he is now 81. It would be lovely for him to have his family honoured in this way should council see fit.

Two further proposals fit the theme of local or native flora and fauna. These proposals would be available to be used by developers as they are compliant with the pre-approved theme of Local/native flora and fauna as per the Asset Naming Guidelines:

- Plains Wanderer
- Bustard

Three submissions were rejected due to being non-compliant. They were as follows:

- Vicious Hairy Mary – anonymous submission - this palm tree is endemic to Northeast Queensland and is not native to the region
- Martin Corner – Proposed by a resident as a potential name for the McCallum St toilet block (attachment 2). This name is non-compliant as it has no link to the local region.
- Andrew Street, Chinkapook (attachment 3) – rejected due to the proposal commemorating a person that is still alive. The proposal also referred to a track that was not on the road reserve.

Feedback regarding non-compliant proposals has been provided to submitters where possible.

Consultation

The Asset Naming Policy and Procedure requires asset naming proposals to be publicly advertised, and community comment invited. The four compliant names were advertised for public comment on Let's Talk between 22 January 2026 and 24 February 2026 and in the Guardian (23 January 2026).

In addition to the public advertising, the proposer was sent a formal invitation to encourage family and friends to make further submissions in support of the names.

8 Submissions were received via Let's Talk (attachment 4) and a submission was received via email (attachment 5). All submissions were in support of the proposed names. There were no objections received.

Proposed name (Area)	For	Against	Submissions
Rosaia (Heirloom Estate)	1	0	I fully support all four proposed names and commend Council for the thorough and thoughtful work undertaken to source the background information behind each option. The research reflects strong respect for local history, community values, and cultural context, and it is clear that considerable care has been taken to ensure the names are meaningful, appropriate, and well-grounded. Council's diligence has provided a solid foundation for informed decision-making, and I sincerely thank them for the quality and depth of this work.
Nicholls (Swan Hill Area)	0	0	No Submissions received
Mitchell (Lake Boga Area)	3	0	The property has been in the Mitchell family for 4 generations. The laneway in question runs between property owned by the Mitchell family. It is just a laneway that is used by us and other travellers heading to the Jampot Road. Our proposal is that it remains a laneway named Mitchell Lane. It would be beneficial for it to be named so that in the event of fires, emergency services know where to go. There was an incident at the end of 2025 and the fire truck had no idea where to locate the issue as the lane is currently not named at all. I grew up on the farm and watched my dad, Llew Mitchell farm the area and keep the roads clean. He was a great contributor to the area of Lake Boga. It would be a great honour for his memory and legacy to the area and to his farm The land in question is surrounded, both sides, by property owned by the Mitchell family. It would make sense, that a small lane that runs through the property, to be named as such. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts.

Proposed name (Area)	For	Against	Submissions
Katis (Robinvale Area)	5	0	I am a long-term local resident and the son of the late Chris Katis. I am submitting this in support of recognizing my family's 70-year history and contribution to the Robinvale and Tol Tol district.
			As a member of the Katis family and the son of the late Chris Katis, I have a direct interest in seeing our family's history in the Robinvale district officially recognized. Our family has been part of the fabric of this community since my grandparents arrived in 1957, and I wish to support the formal commemoration of their hard work and public service
			I am the daughter of the late Chris Katis and the niece of Cr John Katis. My interest in this proposal is deeply personal, as I wish to see the 70-year legacy of my family—beginning with my grandparents Nikolaos and Aspasia in 1957—honored in the region they helped build. Having grown up in Robinvale, I have seen firsthand the dedication my father and uncle had for this community, and I am committed to ensuring their historical and civic contributions are formally recognized by the Council.
			I live and work in Robinvale. It's a wonderful little town that deserves the recognition of the original farmers who immigrated here.
			Letter Received - Refer attachment 1

Mitchell and Katis were originally proposed as names for two unmaintained roads listed in the Register of Public Roads. As non-maintained roads and laneways are generally not signposted due to the risk of creating expectations about maintenance levels, the submitters were consulted. Following this consultation, they confirmed they were comfortable with both names being added to the Asset Naming Master List for possible use in future naming opportunities.

Financial Implications

No financial implications.

Social Implications

Asset Naming can present Council with an opportunity to be inclusive and recognise prominent locals and first nations people.

Economic Implications

Having pre-approved names within an asset naming master list can assist with faster approval of sub-divisions.

Environmental Implications

No environmental implications.

Risk Management Implications

Seeking public feedback regarding asset name proposals helps to identify potential issues with commemorative names prior to the name being used.

- Attachments:**
1. Attachment 1 Naming Proposals [**2.5.1** - 1 page]
 2. Attachment 2 Naming Proposal - Andrew st Redacted [**2.5.2** - 2 pages]
 3. Attachment 3 Naming Proposal - Martin Corner Redacted [**2.5.3** - 1 page]
 4. Attachment 4 - 2026-02-24 Asset Naming Submissions Redacted [**2.5.4** - 9 pages]
 5. Attachment 5 Katis submission Redacted [**2.5.5** - 2 pages]

Options

1. That Council approve the addition of Rosaia, Nicholls, Mitchell and Katis to the Asset Naming Master List for future use in asset naming.
2. That Council does not approve the addition of Rosaia, Nicholls, Mitchell and Katis to the Asset Naming Master List for future use in asset naming.
3. Advise the submitters of the outcome.

Recommendation/s

That Council;

1. **Approve the addition of Rosaia, Nicholls, Mitchell and Katis to the Asset Naming Master List for future use in asset naming; and**
2. **Advise the submitters of the outcome.**

CM 2026/28 Motion

MOVED Cr Jennings

That Council;

1. **Approve the addition of Rosaia, Nicholls, Mitchell and Katis to the Asset Naming Master List for future use in asset naming; and**
2. **Advise the submitters of the outcome.**

SECONDED Cr Thornton

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

Contribution ID	Date Submitted	Proposed name	Please use the space below to assign meaning to your proposal	Classification	Select the location the proposed name is to be used	Is this word from an Aboriginal language?	Does this name represent a prominent female?
				Historic person or event Significant local feature or landmark Specific site feature Traditional or appropriate Indigenous name Long-term community service recognition Local eminent person Early local settler National prominence Native plant or animal Other	Beverford Boundary Bend Lake Boga Manangatang Nyah/Nyah West Plangil Robinvale Swan Hill Ultima Wood Wood Woorinen/Woorinen South Anywhere in the Local Government Area Other	Yes No Unsure Please indicated Indigenous language group	Yes No Unsure
13806	Dec 08, 2025, 02:	Rosaia Way	Rosaia used to own the land at Heirloom Estate with the matriarch of the family still living there up until sale of the site to Coronation Developments. A former farm that has provided fruit and vegetables in its previous life to the wider community.	1	1	1	1
13415	Aug 08, 2025, 07:	Nicholls	Bevan and Letty Nicholls were recently honoured by having their names added to the First Nations Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll showing their dedication to caring for others, encouraging young people and promoting Aboriginal culture that has left a lasting legacy. Both were very active members in the past, on the Swan Hill Shire working with projects such as the Pioneer Settlement, the Gem. And Bevan Nicholls worked as a groundsman and cultural teacher when asked to speak to school students attending the Pioneer Settlement on excursions. see Swan Hill Guardian dated 28 June 2025. link: https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au				
			The Mitchell family has lived on Back Boga Road since 1949 and has been an active part of the Swan Hill and Lake Boga communities for generations. There is currently an unnamed laneway that begins at the corner of Back Boga Road and extends to Jam Pot Road. This laneway runs adjacent to farmland that has been worked by members of the Mitchell family for decades. Lew Mitchell, my grandfather, moved to the area with his family when he was 12 years old. As an adult, Lew took over the family farm and spent his life working the land as a dedicated farmer. He spent countless hours tending to the paddocks along this laneway and throughout the surrounding area, contributing significantly to the agricultural landscape of the region. In April 2024, Lew passed away. In recognition of his lifelong commitment to farming and the family's longstanding connection to the area, we respectfully propose that the unnamed laneway be officially named "Mitchell Lane" in his honour.				
5654	Apr 06, 2025, 07:	Mitchell Lane	We believe this would be a fitting tribute to Lew's legacy and to the Mitchell family's contribution to the community over the past 75 years.	1	1	1	1
5434	Feb 16, 2025, 07:	Calamus Radialis, commonly known as vicious hairy mary - native Australian palm tree	The Plains-wanderer (<i>Pedionomus torquatus</i>) is one of Australia's rarest, least known and most threatened birds. Dependent on native grasslands for their survival, their habitat includes areas of Swan Hill LGA as well as other parts of Victoria state.	1		1	1
5433	Feb 16, 2025, 05:	Plains-Wanderer	The Australian Bustard (<i>Ardeotis australis</i>) is one of Australia's largest birds. The bustard stands at about a metre high, with a wingspan around twice this length. They're commonly referred to as the Plains Turkey, and in Central Australia as a Bush Turkey.	1		1	1
5432	Feb 16, 2025, 12:	Bustard		1		1	1
5334	Feb 04, 2025, 05:	Katis Road	The road runs along two boundaries of which was once our family farm on Tol Tol Road in Robinvale. I believe it has no name as there is no signage. My grandparents Nick and Aspacia Katis who came to Australia from Greece cleared the land and then along with their sons John Katis and Chris Katis who were around 12 and 10 years old when they came to Australia ran a grape block as it was called back then. My grandparents have long passed away and my uncle Chris passed away last year, my father John is the only one remaining from their family of four he's now 81. It would be lovely for him to have his family honored in this way should council see fit. Many thanks for your consideration.	immigrants	1	1	1

Incident 467514

Generated on 06-01-2026 11:53:38

#	467514
Category	Assets/General Enquiry/Asset naming
Title	request_road_naming_Andrews
Complaint	
Description	Heya I'm enquiring on whether it is possible to have Surname made as a street sign, the street currently doesn't have a sign. It is Located in Chinkapook, my father has owned the house opposite the street for many years , and it has been in the family for quite some time, Gary Andrews is 85 and I thought it'd be nice to do it for him. The street is off Nelson street , on google maps it passes through the green square .in Chinkapook, there area few streets there with no names Dan Andrews
Contact	Dan Andrews
Notes	
Parent ID	0
Request time	23-04-2025 12:10:58
Status	Closed (declare as record)
Records File No.	S11-01-01
Records Related File No.	
Urgency	Low
Priority	Normal
Due Date	
Submit user	
Request user	
Assigned to	Laura O'Dwyer
Location	
Admin group	Assets
Weight	0
Escalation Level	20
Resolution	Response sent
Close time	23-04-2025 14:28:28
Activities	
Messages	23-04-2025 12:10:58 [REDACTED] SWANHILL.VIC.GOV.AU\council Street sign Heya I'm enquiring on whether it is possible to have Surname made as a street sign, the street currently doesn't have a sign. It is Located in Chinkapook, my father has owned the house opposite the street for many years , and it has been in the family for quite some time, Gary Andrews is 85 and I thought it'd be nice to do it for him. The street is off Nelson street , on google maps it passes through the green square .in Chinkapook, there area few streets there with no names Dan Andrews 23-04-2025 14:27:57 SWANHILL.VIC.GOV.AU\leodw1 d [REDACTED] Re: Street sign #467514 Hi Dan, Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding a road name proposal. You can find our Asset Naming Guidelines and formally submit a naming proposal via our website: Asset Naming Policy – Swan Hill Rural City Council I have had assessed your request against a number of rules that are set down by Geographic Names Victoria, and I regret to inform your proposal in non-compliant due to the following: * The road in question, while it exists on google maps, it is not formally a road and therefore cannot be named. It appears the track goes through property titles on an old subdivision and is not on road reserve and cannot be named as such.* Places and roads should not be named after people that are still living as community sentiment around a person may change over time. Names of deceased individuals must also meet at least a two-year waiting period before they can be commemorated. I'd recommend refining a submission to focus on historical figures — ideally the original settlers or earlier generations. Including the stories and contributions of wives and daughters is also encouraged. From 2023 to

2027, Geographic Names Victoria (GNV) aims for at least 70% of new commemorative naming proposals to recognise women.

All naming submissions are reviewed annually (around October) for compliance with the Naming Rules. Compliant names are then advertised for public comment before progressing to Council for final approval.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need further guidance.

Regards,

Laura O'Dwyer
Enterprise Assets Manager
Swan Hill Rural City Council

[REDACTED] Sent: 23/04/25 12:10 PM
To: SWANHILL.VIC.GOV.AU\council Subject: Street sign Heya I'm enquiring on whether it is possible to have Surname made as a street sign, the street currently doesn't have a sign. It is Located in Chinkapook, my father has owned the house opposite the street for many years , and it has been in the family for quite some time, Gary Andrews is 85 and I thought it'd be nice to do it for him. The street is off Nelson street , on google maps it passes through the green square .in Chinkapook, there area few streets there with no names Dan Andrews

Main CI

History

21/05/25 11:28 AM Escalation Agent Incident changed Escalation rule name: Alfresco RM Archival
23/04/25 2:28 PM SWANHILL.VIC.GOV.AU\leodw1 Incident changed Incident #467,514 has been changed to Closed (declare as record)
Incident #467,514 resolution has been changed to Response sent
23/04/25 12:17 PM SWANHILL.VIC.GOV.AU\aduffin Incident changed Incident #467,514 has been assigned to Laura O'Dwyer
Incident #467,514 category has been changed to Assets
Incident #467,514 sub category has been changed to General Enquiry
Incident #467,514 third level category has been changed to Asset naming
Incident #467,514 title has been changed to request_road_naming_Andrews
Incident #467,514 assigned group has been changed to Assets
23/04/25 12:10 PM Email Rules Service record changed Email Rule Applied: Council at Swanhill
23/04/25 12:10 PM [REDACTED] Incident changed New Incident #467,514

Main Asset

Main project

Main task

Links to other Items

To The Mayor

CLERK JAMES

Hi

Hope the new toilets are good as they look.

Just thinking back over the years = Gwen Meredith the
play writer, "Had a program on the radio called Blue Hills
and were every body meets, was, Martin Corner = This is
perfect name for the Toilet Block = We all meet there
at times: I would like to thank the council getting

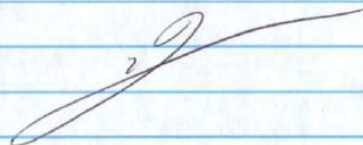
this problem toilet fixed, so fast = We seniors can now rest.
I hope the health inspector keeps checking on them, so they
don't get below health standards, like the old block.

To stop damage a time lock, may help say, 6 AM to 7 PM.
the drunks can use the pub toilets and smash them up
not the new block:

I still find Swanhill the cleanest town, no rubbish
on the streets only lam picons.

Thanks

9 DEC 2025		FILE #	511-01-01
NAME	LAURA	DOC #	AST-BU-36786
	SHARON	Security	
DATE			



Let's talk

Please outline your feedback regarding name submissions: Results

Jan 22, 2026 - Feb 15, 2026

Project: Asset Naming Master List proposals - January 2026 - have your say!

Form: Please outline your feedback regarding name submissions:

Tool Type: Form

Activity ID: 275

Exported: 2026-02-24 08:27:15

Exported By: [REDACTED]

Filter By: No filters applied.

Response No:
1

Contribution ID: 13820

Member ID:

Date Submitted: Feb 15, 2026, 08:43 PM

Q1

Name:

Short Text

Steven Katis

Q2

Email address:

Email

[REDACTED]

Q3

Postal address:

Short Text

[REDACTED]

Q4

What name submission are you interested in?

Multi Choice

Katis (Robinvale Area)

Q5

Your position on this name?

Multi Choice

I support this name

Q6

What is your interest in the naming proposal?

Long Text

I am a long-term local resident and the son of the late Chris Katis. I am submitting this in support of recognizing my family's 70-year history and contribution to the Robinvale and Tol Tol district.

Q7

Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?

Long Text

I strongly support the "Katis" name being added to the Master List for the following reasons:
Longevity: Our family has been farming and living in the Tol Tol/Robinvale area since 1957.
Leadership: My uncle, John Katis, served on the local Council for over 20 years.
Advocacy: My father, Chris Katis, was a dedicated local businessman and a tireless advocate for local issues -water rights, better roads, and community infrastructure.
Community: Our family has been deeply involved in local life for three generations.
The Katis name represents the hard work of the migrant families who built this region and deserves formal recognition.

Response No:
2

Contribution ID: 13819
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Feb 15, 2026, 08:40 PM

Q1
Short Text

Name:
Nick Katis

Q2
Email

Email address:
[REDACTED]

Q3
Short Text

Postal address:

Q4
Multi Choice

What name submission are you interested in?
Katis (Robinvale Area)

Q5
Multi Choice

Your position on this name?
I support this name

Q6
Long Text

What is your interest in the naming proposal?
As a member of the Katis family and the son of the late Chris Katis, I have a direct interest in seeing our family's history in the Robinvale district officially recognized. Our family has been part of the fabric of this community since my grandparents arrived in 1957, and I wish to support the formal commemoration of their hard work and public service

Q7
Long Text

Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?
I support this proposal as the Katis name is synonymous with the development and service of the Robinvale and Tol Tol areas:
Agricultural Pioneers: My grandparents, Nikolaos and Aspasia, were among the early migrant families in Tol Tol (1957) who developed the land into productive vineyards, a legacy carried on by my father and uncle.

Dedicated Advocacy: My father, Chris Katis, was a passionate voice for the town. Through his business (Katis Wear) and his involvement in local issues, he fought for better infrastructure, housing, and water security for all growers in the Mallee.

Public Leadership: My uncle, John Katis, gave over two decades of service to the Swan Hill Rural City Council, including time as Mayor, focusing on the growth and prosperity of the Robinvale ward.

Community Roots: For three generations, our family has lived, worked, and invested in this town—from local food businesses like The Corner Shop to long-standing involvement with the Robinvale-Euston Football Netball Club. Naming an asset after the Katis family honors a 70-year commitment to the region and recognizes the migrant families who built the local community.

Response No:
3

Contribution ID: 13818
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Feb 15, 2026, 08:36 PM

- Q1 Name:**
Short Text Michelle Paproth
- Q2 Email address:**
Email [REDACTED]
- Q3 Postal address:**
Short Text [REDACTED]
- Q4 What name submission are you interested in?**
Multi Choice Katis (Robinvale Area)
- Q5 Your position on this name?**
Multi Choice I support this name
- Q6 What is your interest in the naming proposal?**
Long Text I am the daughter of the late Chris Katis and the niece of Cr John Katis. My interest in this proposal is deeply personal, as I wish to see the 70-year legacy of my family—beginning with my grandparents Nikolaos and Aspasia in 1957—honored in the region they helped build. Having grown up in Robinvale, I have seen firsthand the dedication my father and uncle had for this community, and I am committed to ensuring their historical and civic contributions are formally recognized by the Council.
- Q7 Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?**
Long Text This is my family name, and I support this proposal to recognize nearly 70 years of significant contribution to the Robinvale and Tol Tol districts:
Historical Roots: My grandparents settled in Tol Tol in 1957, pioneering 60 acres of vines and helping establish the local horticultural industry.
Civic Service: My uncle, John Katis, served as a Swan Hill Rural City Councillor for over 20 years, including terms as Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
Community Advocacy: My father, Chris Katis, was a prominent local businessman (Kaytis Wear) and a dedicated advocate for water rights, infrastructure, and housing. He also served as a vital translator and support for the local Greek community.
Ongoing Legacy: The Katis family remains deeply embedded in Robinvale through local business, the Robinvale-Euston Football Netball Club, and three generations of family who continue to live and work in the town today.
This name honors both our local migrant history and decades of tireless service to the community.

Response No:
4

Contribution ID: 13816
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Jan 31, 2026, 08:36 PM

Q1

Name:

Short Text

Nanette Mitchell

Q2

Email address:

Email

[REDACTED]

Q3

Postal address:

Short Text

[REDACTED]

Q4

What name submission are you interested in?

Multi Choice

Mitchell (Lake Boga Area)

Q5

Your position on this name?

Multi Choice

I support this name

Q6

What is your interest in the naming proposal?

Long Text

Have been a part of the Mitchell family and have lived on the Mitchell property for nearly 80 years.

Q7

Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?

Long Text

The property has been in the Mitchell family for 4 generations. The laneway in question runs between property owned by the Mitchell family.
It is just a laneway that is used by us and other travellers heading to the Jampot Road.
Our proposal is that it remains a laneway named Mitchell Lane.
It would be beneficial for it to be named so that in the event of fires, emergency services know where to go.

There was an incident at the end of 2025 and the fire truck had no idea where to locate the issue as the lane is currently not named at all.

Response No:
5

Contribution ID: 13815
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Jan 24, 2026, 05:14 PM

Q1
Short Text

Name:
Wendy Gesch

Q2
Email

Email address:

Q3
Short Text

Postal address:

Q4
Multi Choice

What name submission are you interested in?
Mitchell (Lake Boga Area)

Q5
Multi Choice

Your position on this name?
I support this name

Q6
Long Text

What is your interest in the naming proposal?
The Mitchell family have lived and still live on the farm this road services.
Llew Mitchell worked the land and kept the roads around their farm.

Q7
Long Text

Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?
I grew up on the farm and watched my dad, Llew Mitchell farm the area and keep the roads clean.
He was a great contributor to the area of Lake Boga.
It would be a great honour for his memory and legacy to the area and to his farm

Response No:
6

Contribution ID: 13814
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Jan 24, 2026, 04:55 PM

- Q1 Name:**
Short Text Leona Grant
- Q2 Email address:**
Email [REDACTED]
- Q3 Postal address:**
Short Text [REDACTED]
- Q4 What name submission are you interested in?**
Multi Choice Mitchell (Lake Boga Area)
- Q5 Your position on this name?**
Multi Choice I support this name
- Q6 What is your interest in the naming proposal?**
Long Text I am a daughter of Llew Mitchell. We are third and fourth generation farmers in this area.
- Q7 Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?**
Long Text The land in question is surrounded, both sides, by property owned by the Mitchell family. It would make sense, that a small lane that runs through the property, to be named as such.
Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts.

Response No:
7

Contribution ID: 13813
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Jan 23, 2026, 02:11 PM

Q1

Name:

Short Text

Tracy McLoughlan

Q2

Email address:

Email

[REDACTED]

Q3

Postal address:

Short Text

[REDACTED]

Q4

What name submission are you interested in?

Multi Choice

Rosaia (Heirloom Estate)

Q5

Your position on this name?

Multi Choice

I support this name

Q6

What is your interest in the naming proposal?

Long Text

Local Resident

Q7

Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?

Long Text

I fully support all four proposed names and commend Council for the thorough and thoughtful work undertaken to source the background information behind each option. The research reflects strong respect for local history, community values, and cultural context, and it is clear that considerable care has been taken to ensure the names are meaningful, appropriate, and well-grounded. Council's diligence has provided a solid foundation for informed decision-making, and I sincerely thank them for the quality and depth of this work.

Response No:
8

Contribution ID: 13812
Member ID:
Date Submitted: Jan 22, 2026, 04:02 PM

Q1

Name:

Short Text

Debbie McLoughlan

Q2

Email address:

Email

[REDACTED]

Q3

Postal address:

Short Text

[REDACTED]

Q4

What name submission are you interested in?

Multi Choice

Katis (Robinvale Area)

Q5

Your position on this name?

Multi Choice

I support this name

Q6

What is your interest in the naming proposal?

Long Text

I live and work in Robinvale. It's a wonderful little town that deserves the recognition of the original farmers who immigrated here.

Q7

Reason for the name being unsupported/supported?

Long Text

I love the original farming families in this area and think they should be honoured.

Incident 526189

Generated on 24-02-2026 16:26:42

#	526189
Category	Assets/General Enquiry/Other
Title	Formal Submission: Asset Naming Proposal for the "Katis" Family – Robinvale
Complaint	
Description	Dear Assets Manager, Please find attached a formal rationale and supporting information for the inclusion of the Katis family name on the Swan Hill Rural City Council Asset Naming Master List. As a long-standing resident of Robinvale and the wife of the late Chris Katis, I am submitting this proposal to ensure our family's near 70-year contribution to this district is formally recognized. Our journey in this region began in 1957 when my late parents-in-law, Nikolaos and Aspasia Katis, settled in Tol Tol to build a life in the horticultural industry. This proposal honors not only their pioneer spirit but also the decades of civic service provided by my husband, Chris Katis, and my brother-in-law, Cr John Katis. Between my husband's advocacy for water rights and infrastructure and John's 20-plus years of service on the Council, our family has always been deeply committed to the prosperity of the Robinvale ward. I provide my full consent for the Katis name to be used for future asset naming. Our children and grandchildren continue to live and work in this community, and we believe this recognition is a fitting tribute to the migrant legacy that helped build modern Robinvale. I look forward to your confirmation of receipt and would be happy to provide any further historical details or documentation required by the Committee. Yours sincerely, Kaye Katis [cid:f3d47bbd-aeae-4867-8940-22c48ecef21f@AUSP282.PROD.OUTLOOK.COM] [cid:91dd6da7-ec97-4182-884f-e47c8b4fd1d5@AUSP282.PROD.OUTLOOK.COM]
Contact	
Notes	
Parent ID	0
Request time	15-02-2026 21:02:12
Status	Pending
Records File No.	
Records Related File No.	
Urgency	Low
Priority	Normal
Due Date	
Submit user	
Request user	
Assigned to	Laura O'Dwyer
Location	
Admin group	Assets
Weight	0
Escalation Level	0
Resolution	
Close time	
Activities	
Messages	15-02-2026 21:02:12 [redacted] Formal Submission: Asset Naming Proposal for the "Katis" Family – Robinvale Dear Assets Manager, Please find attached a formal rationale and supporting information for the inclusion of the Katis family name on the Swan Hill Rural City Council Asset Naming Master List. As a long-standing resident of Robinvale and the wife of the late Chris Katis, I am submitting this

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Page 1 of 2

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 16-02-2026 12:34:40 S [REDACTED] Re: Formal Submission: Asset Naming Proposal for the "Katis" Family – Robinvale #526189 Thank you, Kaye. All submissions will be returning to Council for consideration on the 17th March.

I will send an update after the Council meeting.

Laura O'Dwyer

Enterprise Assets Manager
 Swan Hill Rural City Council

[REDACTED] Sent: 15/02/26 9:02 PM To: assets@swanhill.vic.gov.au Subject: Formal Submission: Asset Naming Proposal for the "Katis" Family – Robinvale Dear Assets Manager, Please find attached a formal rationale and supporting information for the inclusion of the Katis family name on the Swan Hill Rural City Council Asset Naming Master List. As a long-standing resident of Robinvale and the wife of the late Chris Katis, I am submitting this proposal to ensure our family's near 70-year contribution to this district is formally recognized. Our journey in this region began in 1957 when my late parents-in-law, Nikolaos and Aspasia Katis, settled in Tol Tol to build a life in the horticultural industry. This proposal honors not only their pioneer spirit but also the decades of civic service provided by my husband, Chris Katis, and my brother-in-law, Cr John Katis. Between my husband's advocacy for water rights and infrastructure and John's 20-plus years of service on the Council, our family has always been deeply committed to the prosperity of the Robinvale ward. I provide my full consent for the Katis name to be used for future asset naming. Our children and grandchildren continue to live and work in this community, and we believe this recognition is a fitting tribute to the migrant legacy that helped build modern Robinvale. I look forward to your confirmation of receipt and would be happy to provide any further historical details or documentation required by the Committee. Yours sincerely, Kaye Katis [cid:f3d47bbd-aeae-4867-8940-22c48ecef21f@AUSP282.PROD.OUTLOOK.COM] [cid:91dd6da7-ec97-4182-884f-e47c8b4fd1d5@AUSP282.PROD.OUTLOOK.COM]

Main CI

History

16/02/26 12:34 PM SWANHILL.VIC.GOV.AUleodw1 Incident changed Incident #526,189 status has been changed to Pending
 15/02/26 9:02 PM Email Rules Service record changed Email Rule Applied: Assets
 15/02/26 9:02 PM [REDACTED] Incident changed New Incident #526,189

Main Asset

Main project

Main task

Links to other Items

2.6 Murray River Group of Council's (MRGC) Motions to Municipal Association of Victoria State Council May 2026

Directorate: Chief Executive Officer

File Number: N/A

Purpose: For Decision

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

1. Growth and Development – Building a resilient local economy, supporting businesses and attracting investment for a thriving future. Objective 1.3: Grow local businesses and attract new investment into the municipality.

1.3.3 Strengthen advocacy through regional and cross-border partnerships

Current Strategic Documents

Council Plan

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is calling for Notices of Motions for debate at State Council on **Friday 29 May 2026**. Swan Hill Rural City Council holds the Chair of the Murray River Group of Councils (MRGC) for 2026 and as such proposing to submit motions to the MAV on behalf of the MRGC.

Discussion

The MAV Strategic Plan 2024-2027 'Shaping our Future' sets out how MAV proposes to assist the Victorian Local Government sector to "innovate, adapt and thrive" with the goal of helping to build a more resilient and sustainable Victoria.

The Plan includes the following enabling priorities:

1. Active local democracy
2. Connected places
3. Health & wellbeing
4. Sustainable economy
5. FutureGen
6. First Peoples local government relations
7. Climate & regenerative design
8. Diversity, equity & inclusion
9. Resilience & recovery
10. Intergenerational infrastructure.

Motions to State Council are able to be submitted by member councils provided that the matter has been the subject of a resolution by that council; it is aligned with MAV strategic goals and / or is of critical significance to Local Government; and has not been the subject of a motion considered at the most recent State Council meeting.

The MRGC agreed six motions in relation to its advocacy strategy in 2025 that were subject of motions to the 2025 National General Assembly of ALGA.

Mayors and CEOs from the six member councils of MRGC discussed advocacy priorities at the recent MRGC meeting on 5 March 2026.

The Group confirmed the advocacy priorities remain and confirmed Murray River bridge investment as an advocacy priority and Victorian Government financial commitment to a new bridge at Swan Hill as the first and immediate priority for this topic.

Each of the proposed motions below align with one or more of the MAV strategic priorities.

Key Dates:

Motions submission close	Monday 30 March 2026
Amendments to motions due	Monday 6 April 2026
Distribution of State Council Business Papers	Wednesday 29 April 2026
MAV Delegates Pre-State Council Briefing	Thursday 7 May 2026
Nomination of substitute delegate form due	Friday 15 May 2026
Registrations close	Friday 15 May 2026
State Council Meeting	Friday 29 May 2026

Consultation

Regional partners through the Murray River Group of Councils have been engaged in the development and approval of the proposed resolutions over a number of years.

Financial Implications

Nil.

Social Implications

Increasing representation of the interests of northern Victorian communities.

Economic Implications

Nil.

Environmental Implications

Nil.

Risk Management Implications

Nil.

- Attachments:**
1. MRGC MAV Motions and Background - Final [2.6.1 - 8 pages]
 2. Scheduled Council Meeting minutes 15-10-2019 PG_5-21 [2.6.2 - 17 pages]
 3. Scheduled Council Meeting minutes 10-09-2024 PG_579-580 [2.6.3 - 2 pages]

Options

1. Council endorses the motions to be drafted for the MAV State Council
2. Council accepts some of the motions to be drafted for the MAV State Council
3. Council do not endorse these motions for MAV State Council

Recommendation/s

That Council resolve to submit the following motions separately to the upcoming MAV State Council meeting to be held on Friday 29 May 2026 on behalf of the Murray River Group of Councils.

WATER & THE BASIN PLAN

That the MAV State Council calls on the Australian Government to put Basin communities at the heart of Basin Plan delivery and future water reform by immediately ceasing the damaging water purchase programs in our irrigation districts which are leading to job losses, are putting food production in our region and food security for Australia at risk and are adding to the cost of living crisis.

MAV calls on the Australian Government to instead engage with communities and local governments to deliver a long-term sustainable future for irrigated food production in the Basin, together with improved environmental outcomes for the Basin's ecosystems. This is consistent with Council's agreed position as per motion 15 October 2019 (139/19 Motion) and again . (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 4, 5, 7, 10)

MURRAY RIVER BRIDGE INVESTMENT – SWAN HILL

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to commit to a long term Murray River Bridge renewal and investment program which locks in future funding for bridge renewal and investment required for the next 10 years and immediately commit \$100 million for the 2026/27 budget and over the forward estimates to fund its contribution to the first priority for that program: a new bridge at Swan Hill. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2, 4, 6, 10)

RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to establish a regional infrastructure resilience fund that will provide local councils with dedicated funding to identify and invest in resilient local infrastructure to ensure communities are better protected and connected even in the face of increasingly severe and frequent weather events. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 3, 4, 9, 10).

HOUSING – TRUNK INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to provide multi-year, regional housing development infrastructure funding for investment into essential trunk infrastructure such as sewerage, water, drainage, electricity, roads and communications, to facilitate residential housing development in regional and rural towns where the market is not delivering the needed housing opportunities. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2-10).

ROADS REPAIR FUND

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to provide an additional regional road maintenance and restoration fund that invests directly in regional and rural Local Government to fund the road infrastructure repair deficit and allow local councils to catch up on the road and bridge repair backlog facing councils across regional Victoria. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2, 3, 4, 9, 10).

SWIMMING POOL UPGRADES

That the MAV State Councils calls on the Victorian Government to establish a fund to support Local Government to replace and upgrade public swimming pools by providing financial assistance to local councils for the repair, replacement, and upgrading of aging public swimming pool facilities. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 3, 5, 8, 10).

ENERGY TRANSITION

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to ensure that communities hosting new energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure required for Victoria's energy transition, directly benefit from new investment to support job growth and in infrastructure upgrades ensuring that the regional Victorian communities directly impacted by it are not left behind in the race to transition our energy grid. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 3, 5, 8, 10).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

That the MAV State Council calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistance Grants to Local Government in even increments over the next ten financial years until the total funding to Australian amount is restored to 1% of the Australian Government tax revenue by the 2036/37 financial year. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2-10).

CM 2026/29 Motion**MOVED Cr McPhee**

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SECONDED Cr Englefield

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

Background to proposed MAV Motions



Prepared by: Geoff Turner, MRGC Executive Officer

Introduction

MRGC advocates collectively on behalf of the region covered by its six member councils: Moira, Campaspe, Loddon, Gannawarra, Swan Hill and Mildura.

The following motions are based on those put to the 2025 National General Assembly of the Australian Local Government Association, with the addition of the motion on Murray River Bridge Investment, and prioritising Swan Hill Bridge which has been a long agreed priority of the Group.

WATER & THE BASIN PLAN

That the MAV State Council calls on the Australian Government to put Basin communities at the heart of Basin Plan delivery and future water reform by immediately ceasing the damaging water purchase programs in our irrigation districts which are leading to job losses, are putting food production in our region and food security for Australia at risk and are adding to the cost of living crisis.

MAV calls on the Australian Government to instead engage with communities and local governments to deliver a long-term sustainable future for irrigated food production in the Basin, together with improved environmental outcomes for the Basin's ecosystems.

Background

The Commonwealth Government's current approach to Basin Plan delivery is putting our food production industry and our communities' prosperity at risk. The Murray River Group's six council areas produce some \$8.71 billion in food every year. The entire regional economy and 16,000 jobs depend on agriculture and food manufacturing across MRGC councils. Around half our 5000 farm businesses rely on irrigation.

As we prepare for a drier future with more intense and frequent extremes of weather, we need local, community led solutions both to ensuring a viable agriculture and food manufacturing sector into the future to produce local food for all Australians and also to ensure that unique valued environments across the region are sustained and nurtured.

Open market, non-strategic, buy backs are a blunt instrument that will increase the pressure on irrigation districts and on irrigators, inevitably pushing up the cost of living for all Australians. Worse, buy backs are not achieving the environmental outcomes the Basin Plan sets out and that our communities want.

There is a better way. Put communities at the heart of the Basin Plan and water reform. By working with local communities on a catchment level to design and implement local solutions that will deliver water savings for environmental watering and will reshape irrigation districts to allow them to be more efficient and continue to be viable into the future.

Transitioning to a lower water future will require innovation and investment in altering the irrigation network. Non-strategic, open market buy backs rip water from districts without regard to their long term operation. The evidence demonstrates that it increases water prices, increases farmer risk and exposure to the increasingly volatile temporary water market.

MURRAY RIVER BRIDGE INVESTMENT – SWAN HILL

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to commit to a long term Murray River Bridge renewal and investment program which locks in future funding for bridge renewal and investment required for the next 10 years and immediately commit \$100 million for the 2026/27 budget and over the forward estimates to fund its contribution to the first priority for that program: a new bridge at Swan Hill. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2, 4, 6, 10)

Background

MRGC has long advocated for investment in Murray River bridges both from Federal and State Governments. These crossings are critical transport and community links, supporting the daily lives of local communities and underpinning our regional and national economies.

Bridges are significant infrastructure project that require years in assessment, planning, design and construction. A strategic, long term approach is essential to guide investment and ensure these projects meet current and future needs.

For Higher Mass Limit vehicles that weight more than 62.5 tonnes or are oversize, options for crossing the Murray River are limited to either the new Echuca Bridge or the Euston-Robinvale Bridge, meaning heavy freight vehicles must make significant detours which take 3 - 3.5 hours from Swan Hill (VIC) to Murray Downs (NSW). When required, smaller vehicles can access nearer Nyah Bridge which is a 50-minute trip to cross the river.

MRGC's immediate priority is a new bridge at Swan Hill to replace the existing 120 year old lift span structure, which is urgently needed. Both the Federal and NSW Governments have committed construction funding. We are now calling on the Victorian Government to commit to \$100 million to cover their share of the construction costs, to be included in the 2026/27 budget and forward estimates.

The existing Swan Hill Bridge is a vital transport link for the region, supporting freight, emergency services, tourism and broader connectivity across the

Murray River. However, increasing traffic volumes, a high proportion of heavy vehicles, safety concerns and projected future growth mean the bridge no longer adequately meets the needs of all users or the wider region.

RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to establish a regional infrastructure resilience fund that will provide local councils with dedicated funding to identify and invest in resilient local infrastructure to ensure communities are better protected and connected even in the face of increasingly severe and frequent weather events. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 3, 4, 9, 10).

Background

2011 saw 1 in 100 year flood events across northern Victoria. 2016 saw severe flooding in some of the same areas and 2022 saw a repeat of the 1 in 100 event with many of the same roads, bridges, drains and other critical local infrastructure damaged again.

While taxpayer funds provided through the DRFA were provided (after long delays in some cases) to repair these assets, the strict rules and highly bureaucratic processes meant that they had to be repaired to the same standard as they were prior to the flood events – even if the base standard had been altered since the construction of the asset.

This was true even when an increased amount of funding in 2011 would have allowed for a more resilient construction standard to be substituted that would have prevented damage in 2016 and or 2022, ultimately saving taxpayer's money and communities and businesses much disruption.

Increasing frequency and severity of weather events across Australia means fire and flood recovery is a fact of life for councils. A funding stream that provides local councils with the resources to construct to a quality that will be resistant to damage will protect our local communities and will save the Commonwealth and State Governments – an ultimately all Australian taxpayers millions of dollars in repair bills.

HOUSING – TRUNK INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to provide multi-year, regional housing development infrastructure funding for investment into essential trunk infrastructure such as sewerage, water, drainage, electricity, roads and communications, to facilitate residential housing development in regional and rural

towns where the market is not delivering the needed housing opportunities. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2-10).

Background

Housing affordability and availability are issues affecting almost all communities across Australia. While housing affordability in the regions remain relatively better than in cities, lack of supply of family housing for purchase and highly constrained rental markets have become unwelcome features of northern Victorian and many regional Australian housing markets.

A lack of housing availability is stifling job growth and business expansion in our region according to employers across our council areas. Regional Victoria, has room to grow, available, identified land for expansion and resilient, vibrant communities.

Similar to all markets, population growth and a significant increase in land value for residential land across regional Victoria are drivers of insufficient housing supply.

In our region there also exist additional housing market factors specific to the regions that are further restricting the timely supply of new homes.

Regional and rural areas face higher upfront costs for associated enabling infrastructure (water, sewerage, roads, drainage, telecommunications, and electricity). They also face challenges in the availability of trades and suppliers which, with the relatively smaller size of projects affects developer economies of scale and risk appetite for developers to build homes in regional and rural towns.

Investment by governments to address this market failure will remove a key block on residential housing development in regional areas. Local Government is best placed to facilitate this and establish with their communities, the local housing solutions that will tackle their specific challenges.

ROADS REPAIR FUND

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to provide an additional regional road maintenance and restoration fund that invests directly in regional and rural Local Government to fund the road infrastructure repair deficit and allow local councils to catch up on the road and bridge repair backlog facing councils across regional Victoria. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2, 3, 4, 9, 10).

Background

Local Councils are responsible for 87 per cent of Victoria's road network. MRGC councils maintain over 23,000 kms of roads which is similar to the length of road assets that the State of Victoria manages. In the regions, these council maintained

roads are vital to keep our communities connected and provide access to health care, education, and other vital services. Regional roads are critical freight corridors relied upon for enabling produce to reach market here and for export. The freight task continues to increase, adding further pressure to the regional road network and impacting driver safety.

Despite increases in the Roads to Recovery federal funding, long term consistent underfunding of local government by Victoria means that there is a significant backlog of road maintenance across the country.

Investing in a one off local road maintenance "blitz" would have direct safety and efficiency dividends for all Victorians.

In Victoria despite only 1 in 5 people living in country Victoria, consistently between 50 and 60 per cent of road fatalities occur on regional roads. The majority of these are local people who die within 30kms of their homes.

Local governments in regional and remote Australia face the dual challenge of maintaining geographically extensive networks while having a relatively low revenue base from which to fund roadworks.

MAV identifies the maintenance backlog in Victoria alone as being around \$4 billion.

SWIMMING POOL UPGRADES

That the MAV State Councils calls on the Victorian Government to establish a fund to support Local Government to replace and upgrade public swimming pools by providing financial assistance to local councils for the repair, replacement, and upgrading of aging public swimming pool facilities. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 3, 5, 8, 10).

Background

The 1956 Olympics left a legacy of swimming pools across Australia that left an indelible impression on our national identity. Swimming pools provide essential opportunities for physical activity, contributing to the overall health and well-being of the community. With a strong culture of swimming in Australia, public pools are widely used for exercise, relaxation, and recreation, promoting a healthier lifestyle for all age groups. Swimming remains one of Australia's favourite sports according to Australian Government data.

These pools are reaching the end of their effective lives and many require urgent investment. Local Government has for many years now wrestled with unaffordable running costs and ongoing maintenance.

Many regional and rural councils have multiple outdoor concrete seasonal pools servicing widely spread, relatively small populations. The overall importance of these facilities means that closure is not an option for many.

It is estimated that \$8 billion will be required over the next decade to meet the infrastructure demands of public swimming pools across Australia.

Safe, accessible swimming pools are crucial to public health, not just for recreational swimming, but also for essential life-saving skills such as swimming and water safety education. Access to well-maintained public pools is fundamental in teaching water safety and survival skills, and helps to prevent tragic accidents.

Swimming pools provide a social function offering a space for community gather, engage in activities, and connect, especially important in rural and regional areas. In these areas, pools can serve as a vital resource for social cohesion and physical activity, fundamental to community wellbeing.

A significant funding investment over the next 10 years by The Victorian and Federal Governments in partnership with Local Councils would see our regional public swimming pools remain a key part of our communities for the next 50 years.

ENERGY TRANSITION

That the MAV State Council calls on the Victorian Government to ensure that communities hosting new energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure required for Victoria's energy transition, directly benefit from new investment to support job growth and in infrastructure upgrades ensuring that the regional Victorian communities directly impacted by it are not left behind in the race to transition our energy grid. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 3, 5, 8, 10).

Background

Northern Victoria is where the energy transition is occurring. A new 500KV interconnector, VNI-West is in the final planning stages. When complete it will provide a second link between the Victorian and NSW energy grids to stabilise the National Electricity Market, join Victoria's grid to the Snowy Hydro Battery and increase the capacity for renewable energy generation.

Investment in large scale renewable energy generation is already significant with planning approvals for projects that could deliver over 4GW of renewable energy to the grid already in place. Northern Victoria has the location, climate and available appropriate land to host electricity generation infrastructure to provide clean power for the future. This has made it a popular place for investors to propose projects.

Across the MRGC region, energy projects and transmission line upgrades are likely to impact our communities substantially over the next few years while much of the benefit will accrue to those living in the critical load centres of our capital cities.

Investment in local energy projects or other areas to assist critical regional industries, such as agriculture and food manufacturing which are suffering from higher and higher energy prices, will safeguard regional jobs and food production in Australia for all Australians.

Councils are ideally placed to facilitate appropriate local solutions that will deliver lasting benefit to communities

Other impacts of the transition will be felt in the regions from the temporary workforce. While welcoming local spend, providing temporary housing for hundreds of workers is a challenge. Councils are well placed to work with proponents and State and Federal Governments to find innovative solutions that would accommodate the temporary workforce and leave a positive legacy of longer term local housing market solutions.

Energy grid reliability is a key priority for investment from the energy transition to ensure that impacted regional communities do not miss out on the benefits of cheaper and more reliable electricity that the energy transmission upgrades and investment in new energy generation infrastructure are designed to deliver.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

That the MAV State Council calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistance Grants to Local Government in even increments over the next ten financial years until the total funding to Australian amount is restored to 1% of the Australian Government tax revenue by the 2036/37 financial year. (Aligned with MAV Strategic Plan Priority numbers: 2-10).

Background

30 years ago, the total Financial Assistance Grants supplied to Local Government was the equivalent to 1% of the Commonwealth national tax take collected by the Federal Government. Now, it is half that.

All levels of Government are facing increasing financial pressures. The Victorian local government sector is experiencing significant financial challenges.

As reported by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) the number of Victorian councils reporting on underlying operating deficit in 2022-23 compared to the results in 2018-19 has increased from 29% to 46%. This is despite, as VAGO points out, the early payment of Financial Assistance Grants preventing more councils reporting a deficit.

Commonwealth and State Government revenue bases grow in line with economic growth. This is not the case for Local Government. Rates are subject to arbitrary capping by the Victorian Government. The amount of Financial Assistance Grants made available to Local Government continues to decrease as percentage of total Commonwealth Government taxation revenue.

This is inevitably resulting in councils taking difficult decisions to reduce spending on services and infrastructure investment for communities.

SECTION B – REPORTS

B.19.106 COUNCIL POSITION IN RESPECT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer
File Number: S14-04-07-02
Attachments: 1 Management of the Murray Darling Basin

Declarations of Interest:

John McLinden - as the responsible officer, I declare that I have no disclosable interests in this matter.

Summary

This is a report in relation to Council's position paper on the Murray Darling Basin.

Discussion

The effective management of the Murray Darling Basin and its natural resources has a significant impact on the well-being of the Swan Hill community. Management decisions with respect of the natural resources within the Murray Darling Basin affect our communities' health and well-being, our economic prosperity and the environmental health of our region.

Council has for some time been considering the many issues intertwined in the management of the Murray Darling Basin and its effects on the Swan Hill community and has developed a position paper in relation to a number of these issues.

The attached position paper includes statements spelling out the way Council would like to see the Murray Darling Basin managed. It also calls on regulators to ensure that the basin plan is implemented in a way that contributes to the health, prosperity and strength of our communities and the position paper also calls for equity for all basin communities in a way that the basin is managed and in the way that the basin plan is implemented.

The position paper calls upon Governments and their instrumentalities to take action on numerous basin management issues that have a direct bearing on the communities of the Swan Hill region.

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

Environment - Sound policies and practices that protect and enhance our environment.

Options

Council may choose to adopt or make any alterations to the recommendation.

Recommendation

That Council

- 1. Adopts the “Management of the Murray Darling Basin” position paper October 2019 as its basis for advocacy.**
- 2. Forward copies of the position paper to appropriate members of parliament.**
- 3. Develop an advocacy campaign based on the 20 calls to action.**

MOVED Cr McPhee

That Council

1. Adopts the “Management of the Murray Darling Basin” position paper October 2019 as its basis for advocacy.
2. Forward copies of the position paper to appropriate members of parliament.
3. Develop an advocacy campaign based on the 20 calls to action.

SECONDED Cr Moar

MOVED Cr McKay an AMENDMENT to the Motion:

Consider the “Management of the Murray Darling Basin” position paper October 2019 after community consultation and ensure that all statements are referenced.

SECONDED Cr Johnson

The AMENDMENT was put and LOST.

MOVED Cr McKay an AMENDMENT to the Motion:

That the position paper be amended so that the sale of environmental water not be available to the corporate sector but used to support family farming and only be considered in time of drought and water security crisis.

Motion amendment LAPSED due to want of a seconder.

MOVED Cr McKay an AMENDMENT to the Motion:

That Council adds a further point 4, to the motion:

4. For an additional call to action in the position paper for a royal commission into the administration of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Seconded Cr Jeffery

The AMENDMENT was put and LOST.

Cr McKay Called for a division

For: Crs McKay, Jeffery and Johnson

Against: Crs McPhee, Benham, Moar and Young

139/19 Motion

MOVED Cr McPhee

That Council

- 1. Adopts the “Management of the Murray Darling Basin” position paper October 2019 as its basis for advocacy.**
- 2. Forward copies of the position paper to appropriate members of parliament.**
- 3. Develop an advocacy campaign based on the 20 calls to action.**

SECONDED Cr Moar

The Motion was put and CARRIED

Director of Corporate Services, Mr David Lenton returned to the Chambers at 6.49pm.



Executive summary

There are many competing interests for the water resources of the Murray Darling Basin. As in all complex matters where trade-offs occur, it's all a matter of balance.

The Murray Darling Basin Plan was developed through significant political negotiation between the states, the Commonwealth and various interest groups, including agricultural and environmental. The plan was seen as the basin communities' best attempt at striking a balance between the competing demands on the basin's water resources.

At Swan Hill Rural City Council, we want to see a system that is operated at its optimum level to maximise benefits to our communities, to the agricultural sector, to those whom consume our food both locally and across the globe, and to the ecosystems of our region and the basin in general.

This position paper has been developed to help us advocate on behalf of our community for improved Murray Darling Basin management. This paper explains Council's position, based on three key areas.

1. **Swan Hill Rural City Council wants the Murray Darling Basin managed in a way that:**
 - Provides water for agricultural production;
 - Supports a healthy ecosystem;
 - Allows for a range of recreational pursuits; and
 - Supports the many urban communities within the basin.
2. **Swan Hill Rural City Council wants to ensure the Basin Plan implementation contributes to the health, prosperity and strength of our communities. We believe:**
 - There is insufficient consideration of the socio-economic impacts of the plan on basin communities, both at the community-wide and enterprise level.
 - Buyback practices are threatening communities and the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District's (GMID) financial viability.
 - The accumulation of environmental water is disrupting irrigation delivery, leading to an inefficient system.
 - Environmental flows cannot be delivered because physical constraints in the system have not been dealt with.
 - The effectiveness of environmental water use is questionable.
3. **Swan Hill Rural City Council wants equity for all basin communities. We want:**
 - Greater transparency in the water market.
 - COAG to ensure that all states and their agencies do their fair share of reform and that this reform is done in a timely fashion.
 - Our community to be informed on the use of environmental water and the effectiveness of environmental watering programs.
 - Regulation to guard investment in high value horticulture against the indiscriminant issuing of licenses within an already strained system.

Introduction

Local Government plays a critical role in advocating for the interests of its community. It is clear that communities in the Swan Hill Rural City Council municipality are concerned about the management of the Murray Darling Basin.

Council is aware of the many competing interests in relation to the Murray Darling Basin's management. We are aware that the basin's management will be about compromise.

In developing this position paper, Council is also trying to strike a balance that best represents the views of its community.

Council understands that it is unrealistic to expect a return to a natural system within the Murray Darling Basin.

The basin now operates in a highly modified environment.

Since the time of European settlement the Murray Darling Basin has been drastically modified and developed. The arrival of agriculture has seen significant landscape change, including mass vegetation clearing, land forming and the development of drainage and irrigation systems. The basin is dotted with heavily settled urban communities and the system has numerous storage dams, flood mitigation dams, irrigation systems and highly modified stream channels.

There are many dependencies on our river systems.

The Murray Darling Basin provides water for human consumption that sustains the large population of the Murray Darling Basin.

The basin produces enormous quantities of food for the people of Australia and for export markets across the world. The waters that are shed from the basin and its fertile soils have previously been used for agricultural production very successfully.

The rivers of the basin also provide important active and passive recreation for local communities, and create tourism opportunities. The many reservoirs and dams constructed on our rivers and the natural lakes and wetlands provide numerous recreation opportunities.

With all this in mind, a return to a natural system could never be achieved.

Instead, our communities are calling for equitable outcomes for all competing interests.

Background

The management of water resources in the Murray Darling Basin is extraordinarily complex, involving different regimes in the four states through which the Murray and Darling rivers flow.

In times of plenty, all water entitlements can be taken up to sustain human life and for agricultural production, and enough water remains to keep our rivers and streams flowing and delivering a healthy environment for the Murray Darling Basin.

However, it is generally accepted that water resources of the Murray Darling Basin have been over allocated, and this becomes most obvious during times of low rainfall and drought.

This was evident during the millennium drought, which generally extended for the first decade of this century. At this time, different allocation practices in different states meant different economic and social outcomes for communities. Over allocation combined with drought also resulted in environmental stress in almost all of the Murray Darling Basin.

Prior to the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, in times of scarcity, it was the entitlement holders who took first rights to the water, and the environment only received any water left over. This meant that ecosystems that depend on our rivers and streams suffered greatly.

It is widely recognised among communities and water resource managers that the basin had been over allocated well before the millennium drought took hold. Work to develop a basin wide approach to managing water resources started in the 1990s. The Commonwealth's Water Act was passed in 2007, in the middle of the millennium drought, and its objectives were to optimise social, economic and environmental outcomes. The Murray Darling Basin Plan was developed to advance those objectives.

The Basin Plan and its operation are extremely complex. By way of summary though, the Murray Darling Basin Authority measured environmental values throughout the basin and identified just over 100 icon sites, chosen as representative of the ecosystems throughout the basin and on the basis of their ability to be studied and measured. An environmental plan was established to ensure the health of these icon sites and, ultimately, the health of the entire basin.

The plan identified that 2,750GL needed to be taken from productive consumption and returned to the environment. Many mechanisms have been used to obtain this water, including significant on-farm efficiency programs and irrigation system modernisation to reduce system losses, and an extensive campaign of entitlement buybacks by the Commonwealth and State governments.

The target for the return of water to the environment has been carved up between various sub-catchments and on a state-by-state basis. Returned water is used in line with environmental watering plans that are being, or have been, developed by each state.

In Victoria, Catchment Management Authorities and public land managers have significant input into the way in which environmental water is allocated.

Council's position

1. Swan Hill Rural City Council wants the basin managed in a way that:

- Provides water for agricultural production;
- Supports a healthy ecosystem;
- Allows for a range of recreational pursuits; and
- Supports the many urban communities within the basin.

Providing water for agricultural production

Agricultural production supported by water from the Murray Darling Basin is enormous. Australians have been very innovative and successful in harnessing water resources from the basin to produce food and fibre for the world on a global scale.

Victoria's water allocation policies have been more conservative than some others in the Murray Darling Basin, leading to a system that delivers high reliability in the supply of water to irrigators and urban communities. This has resulted in the growth of irrigated agriculture that is highly dependent on this water supply, and it has allowed permanent plantings to flourish.

This responsible approach to water allocation could now be seen as sowing the seeds of our own demise. When the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) enters the market looking to buy water for the environment from the consumptive pool, it is only natural that it would go to a market where reliability of supply is high.

For this reason, we have seen the CEWH target the GMID and extract large quantities of water from the consumptive pool. The CEWH ceased water buybacks in December 2012 as a condition of the Murray Darling Basin Plan being approved. Water transfer since December 2012 has been from agriculture to agriculture.

Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) now delivers approximately 1000GL of water per annum. This is down from about 1700GL that it delivered a decade ago. While G-MW has undertaken significant work to reduce its footprint and attempted to reduce its operating costs, G-MW has not been able to halve operating costs. This means that the cost of irrigation water and the cost of running the GMID continues to increase on a per megalitre basis. Ultimately, this reduces the viability of irrigation farms that still operate in the GMID.

We should all be concerned when the viability of our economy is threatened.

The loss of water from the GMID cannot be attributed solely to the purchase of water for the environment. The high reliability of GMID water delivery has also been targeted by irrigators outside of the GMID as a good value proposition. Large quantities of water have been purchased and transferred to irrigators outside GMID. This has typically been the practice of high-value horticulturalists who can afford the premium for high reliability water out of the GMID.

Council calls for:

- Water buyback from the consumptive pool should not be resumed.
- An inquiry into the contribution made to environmental flows from water buybacks on a valley-by-valley basis, with the aim of equalising the amount taken from each catchment.
- A statewide approach to addressing the issues caused by dewatered land (regardless of the cause of the dewatering).

Supporting a healthy ecosystem

Substantial irrigation developments and increasing urbanisation of the Murray Darling Basin has meant that the water available for environmental use has been reduced substantially.

Construction of dams on many of the rivers and streams to capture water for irrigation purposes, and the release of that water timed to meet irrigation demands has seen a significant upheaval of the rivers' flow regimes, leading to significant environmental degradation in parts of the basin.

It should be said that flow regimes, even within the natural ecosystems, are continually changing. Throughout northern Victoria there are many examples of wetlands where change can be seen over the course of the past 200 years. The vegetation within and surrounding wetlands has changed from box trees to river red gum, which require significantly different wetting and drying regimes to box trees. This demonstrates that the ecosystem is not static.

That said, the impact of the regulation of rivers and streams within the Murray Darling Basin has had a significant impact on environmental values within the basin. The development of environmental watering plans is key to ensuring that the water that has been made available to the environment as part of the Murray Darling Basin Plan is used in a way that is most effective for the environment throughout the whole of the basin.

Council calls for:

- A public information campaign to educate the basin community on all aspects of Environmental Watering Plans.
- An inquiry into the effect of the delivery of environmental water on other entitlement holders.

Allowing for a range of recreational pursuits

The waters of the Murray Darling Basin provide recreational and tourism opportunities that are vital to local communities. Many communities along the banks of the rivers and their tributaries depend upon fishing, camping, canoeing, walking, riding and various other leisure pursuits that people enjoy on the water.

A number of these communities are also geared up for tourism, which is invariably seasonal and which depends on the river system being healthy. For example, tourism experienced along the Murray River during holiday periods like Easter and during summer depend on strong river flows. In recent times, poor stream management has seen blackwater events (and in the Darling system this has led to mass fish kill). This damages river health and the supported ecosystem, as well as tourism and, in turn, the health and wellbeing of communities along the streams.

The release of water for irrigation purposes can and does deliver environmental benefits as it makes its way downstream, and it can also deliver benefits for recreational pursuits and tourism.

There needs to be more local consultation in relation to the use of our rivers and streams for recreational pursuits and tourism, and this needs to be factored into the management of water delivery.

Council calls for:

- A mechanism to allow the needs of tourism operators to be heard and considered by water system managers and regulators.

Supporting the many urban communities within the basin

Urban communities depend heavily on plentiful supplies of water for human consumption, and to support parks and gardens, playing surfaces and privately owned residential gardens, all of which contribute to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

In recent years we have observed stressed river systems suffering from declining environmental health and water quality, water rationing and a reduction in water quality. This has had significant impacts on the desirability of some urban locations within the basin. It is imperative that the Murray Darling Basin is managed in a way that never jeopardises the availability and the quality of water that supports our urban communities.

Urban communities within the basin are integral. Most people living within the Murray Darling Basin live in urban environments. Much of the debate on how to manage the basin is focused on irrigation and the environment, often to the exclusion of the importance of the urban communities that also depend on the basin's resources.

Within the hierarchy of water resource allocation in all states there are precedents for the supply of water for human consumption. In times of scarcity, rationing is applied to ensure that urban communities minimise their water consumption and that this consumption is pulled down to human needs above recreational and amenity values. This should be supported and maintained.

Council calls for:

- The implementation of environmental watering plans that also ensure that water quality is protected for urban communities.

2. Swan Hill Rural City Council wants to ensure that Basin Plan implementation contributes to the health, prosperity and strength of our communities. We believe:

There is insufficient consideration of the socio-economic impacts of the plan on basin communities

The removal of water from irrigation inevitably leads to a reduction in the region's irrigated agricultural outputs and reduces overall wealth of communities. As discussed earlier, the CEWH has targeted the GMID, removing a large volume of water from the district. It is predicted that, if buybacks are allowed to resume, this will eventually lead to the collapse of more vulnerable communities within the GMID, and perhaps to the collapse of some agricultural sectors such as dairying. These communities will undergo significant restructure and hardship as populations decline and the viability of services like health, education and police is jeopardised. Decreasing populations also negatively impact on a community's capacity for volunteerism and recreational pursuits.

In the past year, both sides of Federal politics have threatened to re-enter the water market. But there is a feeling that decision-makers are far removed from the basin and fail to fully grasp the impact on individual communities.

The recent Royal Commission by the South Australian Government called on more water to be provided to the environment, equal to the entire remaining consumption of the GMID. Such findings demonstrate a lack of understanding by decision-makers and some commentators.

This position paper started out discussing the need for balanced outcomes and no one doubts that prior to the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin plan, additional water was required for the environment. But, obtaining this water needs to be done in such a way so as to not jeopardise the communities still living in the Murray Darling Basin.

The Basin Plan has been in its implementation phase for five years, and communities are still calling for an improved understanding of the socio-economic impacts of the removal of water for environmental purposes. There is little evidence that enough work has been done in this area and without an adequate understanding of the socio-economic impacts, it is unlikely that government policy will be developed to assist these communities. This must occur if we are to see an equitable implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Water becoming a tradable commodity has caused hardship to some communities and benefit to others. The economics of the free market system have driven water from use on lower value crops to higher value crops. Communities like Swan Hill, Woorinen and Robinvale are flourishing as a result. While some choose to blame the Basin Plan, this is not entirely accurate. The unbundling of water from land, which occurred prior to the Basin Plan, has allowed this trade to occur.

Council calls for:

- The Commonwealth Government to research and report on the socio-economic impacts of the Basin Plan's implementation on basin communities.
- Policy to be developed and implemented to assist communities that are negatively impacted by the Basin Plan's implementation and the unbundling of water.
- Financial support for communities negatively impacted by the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Buyback practices are threatening communities and the GMID's financial viability

The indiscriminate purchase of water and targeting irrigation systems to obtain water from the consumptive pool for the environment will continue to have significant negative impact on communities unless there is change.

The GMID has been significantly reduced and now delivers only 1000GL per annum compared to 1700GL only 10 years ago. GMID's operating costs have not reduced in line with this, and so the per megalitre cost of water is now significantly higher in real terms than it was 10 years ago. This threatens the viability of lower value crops and will in time threaten the viability of individual farming enterprises, whole industries and the entire GMID system.

Only a small part of the Swan Hill Rural City Council community is supplied by the GMID but there will no doubt be a knock-on effect to our community.

The indiscriminate buyback of water has also drastically reduced populations in a number of small communities in northern Victoria. The buyback program started on the back of the millennium drought. Individual farming operations were carrying higher debt due to drought, and a number chose (or were forced to) to sell their water entitlements. Those enterprises now rely on temporary water on an annual basis to grow their crops and feed. This water comes at a substantially higher price and reduces overall viability to the point where many in the lamb, beef and dairy sector have exited.

Those who have exited are typically family farming operations and so our community is losing families as well. We have seen in some smaller communities a general winding down of the population, community activity and viability.

While the CEWH's practice of purchasing water from the consumptive pool is the most price efficient method for the Federal Government, it has caused significant damage to many communities in northern Victoria. Council does not support a return of buybacks in any form.

Council calls for:

- Water buyback from the consumptive pool should not be resumed.

The accumulation of environmental water is disrupting irrigation delivery.

Environmental water is held within the dams and storages across the Murray Darling Basin in the same way that any other entitlement holder stores water. Concerns have been expressed about the inequity of storing environmental water in the system storages, but these are largely based on an incorrect premise that the Federal Government has the right to store its environmental water free of charge.

Water purchased from the consumptive pool but held in storage is subject to the same rules and costs as irrigators - the same spill rules apply, the same storage fees are charged.

When environmental water is not delivered through the irrigation channel system, delivery shares and delivery charges are not born by the environmental water holder. If they were to use irrigation systems for any component of their water delivery, they too would pay, in turn supporting the irrigation system's financial viability.

The real impact of storing environmental water in the system storages is that it generally reduces the amount of water available to be stored for irrigation, increasing the likelihood of a spill, and decreasing the ability of individual irrigators to carry over water for future years.

Environmental water holders typically wish to build up large volumes of water and release them when they will have the most environmental benefit.

When they occur, spills do contribute to environmental outcomes. There is an argument that environmental water allocations should be reduced following a spill event as the environment has had its benefit. This would allow for additional storage volumes for irrigation in the year following a spill, ie. a wet year.

Council calls for:

- An inquiry into the effect of the delivery of environmental water on other entitlements holders

Environmental flows cannot be delivered because physical constraints in the system have not been dealt with

The environmental water holder now holds so much water in the Murray system that it is not possible to deliver all that water without causing significant man-made flooding.

The Barmah choke restricts the amount of water that can be delivered downstream of Barmah forest to a flow of 8600 ML per day. River operators report that with the water demands of high-value horticulture in the Riverland and Sunraysia, plus the demand for environmental flows to South Australia, the river system is operating at its limit.

There are concerns that in times of high demand (like extended periods of hot weather) that it will not be possible to deliver adequate water beyond the Barmah choke.

The Murray Darling Basin Plan was predicated on the assumption that significant environmental water would come to South Australia from the Darling system, but in practice, we are seeing the Murray doing all the heavy lifting. This, if not remedied, will cause environmental degradation to the banks and waterways of the Murray River. It will also cause significant economic losses to some of our high-value horticulture businesses, who will not be able to have water delivered during times of high demand.

Council calls for:

- Constraints management to be implemented as a matter of urgency.
- Water held for environmental purposes that cannot be delivered due to system constraints to be put on the market for irrigation.
- Revenues from the sale of environmental water to be used for implementing constraints solutions and improving river health.
- The mandating of environmental flows in the Murrumbidgee, Darling, Wakool and other tributaries to deliver environmental benefits where constraints cannot be effectively dealt with.

The effectiveness of environmental water use is questionable

There has been little reporting available to the public about environmental benefits being achieved through the use of environmental flows. Our community is demanding detail on the environmental benefits derived from the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

We have seen some high profile, disastrous environmental outcomes with blackwater events and fish kills, and reports of extended high river levels causing bank erosion, loss of vegetation and disruption to fish habitat.

There does not appear to be great transparency in how decisions are made for the provision of environmental flows. Council believes that much could be gained by providing localised input into the decision-making on the use of environmental flows.

Council accepts that decision-making in relation to environmental flows is particularly complicated and community consultation would be a difficult exercise, but that doesn't mean it is not necessary.

Our community wishes to have input into and get an understanding of how environmental water is used and would like to see reporting on the benefits that are coming from these environmental flows.

Council calls for:

- An inquiry into the effect of the delivery of environmental water on other entitlements holders
- A public information campaign to educate the basin community on all aspects of the Environmental Watering Plans.

3. Swan Hill Rural City Council wants equity for all basin communities. We want:

Greater transparency in the water market

Water has been scarce in the southern basin in recent times. This has resulted in higher temporary and permanent water prices, with significant trading activity. Irrigators feel at a disadvantage due to a significant lack of information regarding the market and an inability to find out whether individuals own water and how much.

There are suspicions around so-called water barons purchasing and hoarding water, and driving up the price.

Water and land were unbundled in 2007. This unbundling was intended to allow water to be traded as a commodity and to go to its highest value and best use. Many irrigators have taken advantage of this, and many entrepreneurial and horticultural developments have been made possible only through the trading of water.

Council calls for:

- All State and Federal politicians to publicly declare their water holdings.
- A published list of the top 20 water holders in each irrigation system.
- An inquiry into transparency in the water market.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to ensure that all states and their agencies do their fair share of reform

There is plenty of evidence that Victoria has led the way in implementing the reform measures necessary to see the Murray Darling Basin Plan implemented. Victoria has contributed far more water to the environmental pool through buybacks than any other state.

Victoria has achieved significant savings by piping the previously channelised domestic and stock systems.

Victoria has modernised the GMID channel system through the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP).

Victoria has implemented a very broad scale on-farm modernisation system aimed at saving water and returning the savings to the environment.

Our community should be concerned that Victoria appears to do the heavy lifting. While other states lag behind, the heavy lifting comes at significant economic cost and a loss of prosperity for our communities.

It's incumbent upon COAG to ensure that all states do their fair share of reform and that they do it in a timely way, so that those who are trying to do the right thing aren't unfairly disadvantaged.

Council calls for:

- A basin-wide audit of each state's compliance with its obligations under the Murray Darling Basin Plan, and this would be publicly reported. Its recommendations should be implemented by COAG.

Our community to be informed on the use of environmental water and the effectiveness of environmental watering programs

There is very little information about the decision-making processes that lead to the release of environmental flows. There is also very little reporting on the effectiveness of these environmental watering programs.

While much of the debate during the plan's development focussed on the Lower Lakes, including Lake Alexandrina, the Coorong and the Murray mouth, it is important that the whole of the basin receives benefits from environmental watering.

There appears to be a focus on ensuring that the Murray flows to the sea at all times, despite there being evidence that historically this was not the case.

What's important is that all communities, all ecosystems and all regions of the Murray Darling Basin receive a fair slice of the environmental benefits that come from the implementation of the plan, and that the community is informed at all times.

Council calls for:

- A public information campaign to educate the basin community on all aspects of the Environmental Watering Plans.

Regulation in the Murray delivery system to guard investment in high value horticulture against the indiscriminant issuing of licenses within an already strained system

The past 20 years have seen significant investment in permanent horticultural plantings. These plantings are high value crops and can afford the cost of water, even when the price is high. Permanent plantings must have water to survive and thrive. If water is not available upon demand, yields can be severely reduced and plants can die, resulting in economic loss.

With a significant increase in proposed plantings along the Murray from Swan Hill to Mildura on both sides of the river, there is a real fear among established horticulturalists that the Murray River delivery system will be strained beyond its capacity. Constraints in delivery might mean that water rationing is necessary. It is unreasonable to issue additional extraction licenses if it could jeopardise the health of existing investments.

The Victorian Water Minister recently called in all new water extraction licenses on the Murray system downstream of the Barmah Choke. Council supports this and calls on the NSW Water Minister to take similar action.

We seek a mechanism to ensure that all three states that abut the Murray downstream of the Barmah Choke act responsibly and in a way that promotes further development but not at the cost of existing horticulture.

Council calls for:

- Regulation of the Murray delivery system to guard against the indiscriminate issuing of licenses that could damage existing horticultural developments (until delivery constraints are dealt with).
- Compliance, metering and regulation to be uniformly implemented throughout the Murray Darling Basin.

Summary

Swan Hill Rural City Council calls for:

- Water buyback from the consumptive pool should not be resumed.
- An inquiry into the contribution made to environmental flows from water buybacks on a valley-by-valley basis, with the aim of equalising the amount taken from each catchment.
- A state-wide approach to addressing the issues caused by dewatered land (regardless of the cause of the dewatering).
- A public information campaign to educate the basin community on all aspects of Environmental Watering Plans.
- An inquiry into the effect of the delivery of environmental water on other entitlement holders.
- A mechanism to allow the needs of tourism operators to be heard and considered by water system managers and regulators.
- The implementation of environmental watering plans that also ensure that water quality is protected for urban communities.
- The Commonwealth Government to research and report on the socio-economic impacts of the Basin Plan's implementation on basin communities.
- Policy to be developed and implemented to assist communities that are negatively impacted by the Basin Plan's implementation and the unbundling of water.
- Financial support for communities negatively impacted by the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.
- Constraints management to be implemented as a matter of urgency.
- Water held for environmental purposes that cannot be delivered due to system constraints to be put on the market for irrigation.
- Revenues from the sale of environmental water to be used for implementing constraints solutions and improving river health.
- The mandating of environmental flows in the Murrumbidgee, Darling, Wakool and other tributaries to deliver environmental benefits where constraints on the Murray cannot be effectively dealt with.
- All State and Federal politicians to publicly declare their water holdings.
- A published list of the top 20 water holders in each irrigation system.
- An inquiry into transparency in the water market.
- A basin-wide audit of each state's compliance with its obligations under the Murray Darling Basin Plan, and this would be publicly reported. Its findings should be implemented by COAG.
- Regulation of the Murray delivery system to guard against the indiscriminate issuing of licenses that could damage existing horticultural developments (until delivery constraints are dealt with).
- Compliance, metering and regulation to be uniformly implemented throughout the Murray Darling Basin.



5.3 Impacts of Water Buybacks

Having given due notice, **Councillor Ann Young MOVED**

That Council continue to advocate against the implications of Current and Future open market Water Buy Backs within the Swan Hill Rural City irrigated farming areas through the Murray River Group of Councils and any other meetings with Federal Government politicians or officers.

Preamble

The Swan Hill Rural City Council has always recognised that irrigated horticulture is the biggest economic contributor to the region. This has been done over many years through various reports from within and outside Council on a range of subject areas.

The cropping types include table and wine grapes, stone fruit, vegetables, avocados, almonds, olives, citrus, nuts and some minor crop types.

The Robinvale to Swan Hill areas are renowned horticulture regions that supplies to markets throughout Australia and globally.

The water buy back initiative has previously led to district farmers selling their water and withdrawing from the industry. This has led to productive land becoming derelict dry land and, in many cases, abandoned. The impact on areas such as Lake Boga and Tresco has been huge and resulted in a very depressive landscape. This is now starting to happen in Woorinen with a renowned, historical property, that was an original soldier settlement property after the First World War (WWI), being left with no water and all trees removed. We need to consider if this is just the start of this happening and what will be the many effects and ramifications should it continue and increase.

This is a growing Australia-wide trend in horticulture and other farming industries that rely on irrigation water to support rural communities. We need to be ahead of these trends that are happening within our farming industries, so that we can deal with the results and put in place initiatives to best deal with the results.

Attachments: Nil

CM 2024/158 Motion

MOVED Cr Young



MINUTES - Scheduled Council Meeting - 10 September 2024

Having given due notice, **Councillor Ann Young MOVED**

That Council continue to advocate against the implications of Current and Future open market Water Buy Backs within the Swan Hill Rural City irrigated farming areas through the Murray River Group of Councils and any other meetings with Federal Government politicians or officers.

SECONDED Cr Moar

The Motion was put and CARRIED 5 / 2

3 Decisions Which Need Action / Ratification

3.1 Councillor Briefings - Record of Attendance and Agenda Items

Directorate: Chief Executive Officer
File Number: S15-05-06
Purpose: For Noting

Declarations of Interest:

Council officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the matter of this report.

Summary

The following report provides attendance details of Councillor Briefings on a monthly basis.

Discussion

Whilst Minutes have not been recorded, Agenda items and those in attendance are reported and presented to Council.

A briefing of Councillors is defined as a meeting that is planned or scheduled and where the matters being considered that are intended or likely to be the subject of a Council decision.

No formal decisions can be made at a briefing but rather direction can be given that is likely to lead to a formal decision of Council.

Details of the most recent briefings of Council are attached.

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

6. Transparency and Effectiveness – Ensuring Council is open, accountable and responsive, with services and decision-making that reflect community expectations.

Objective 6.1: Deliver accessible, responsive and inclusive customer and community engagement.

6.1.3 Improve community engagement and participation in Council decisions.

Current Strategic documents

No strategic documents applicable.

Key Legislation

There is no key legislation applicable

Attachments: 1. COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA
March [3.1.1 - 4 pages]

Options

Council Briefings are reported to ensure good governance and transparency.

Recommendation

That Council note the contents of the report.

CM 2026/30 Motion

MOVED Cr Thornton

That Council note the contents of the report.

SECONDED Cr Englefield

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA

17 February 2026 at 12.30pm, Swan Hill Town Hall, Council Chambers

AGENDA ITEMS

- Planning Permit 2017-038 8 Saleyards Road - update
- Goschen update
- Illuka update
- Murray Darling Basin Plan – Discussion Paper update

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- EPA tyres
- Robinvale Workers Accommodation Fund
- Riverside park
- EOI Saleyards
- VCAT (L.Rogers)
- 10 Steps update

ATTENDANCE

Councillors

- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Terry Jennings
- Cr Hugh Broad
- Cr Les McPhee
- Cr Lindsay Rogers
- Cr Peta Thornton
- Cr Philip Englefield

Apologies / Leave of Absence

- Nil

OFFICERS

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Bruce Myers, Director Community and Cultural Services (on-line)
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure (on-line)
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Stephen Fernando, Director Corporate Services

Other

- Nil

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Cr Lindsay Rogers declared a conflict of interest with the VCAT discussion and left the Council Chambers for this item (a direct conflict of interest as the owner of the land).

COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA

24 February 2026 at 10.00am, Swan Hill Town Hall, Council Chambers

AGENDA ITEMS

- Ken Harrison Rec Reserve Masterplan Update
- Hand out Fees and Charges
- Relocation of Lake Boga Caravan Parks Areas 4 and 5
- 103 Curlewis Street (EOI)
- Work Plan for Goschen Rare Earths and Mineral Sands Project
- Council Plan Action Plan

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Nil

ATTENDANCE

Councillors

- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Les McPhee
- Cr Hugh Board
- Cr Terry Jennings
- Cr Philip Englefield
- Cr Peta Thornton

Apologies / Leave of Absence

- Cr Lindsay Rogers

OFFICERS

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Bruce Myers, Director Community and Cultural Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure
- Stephen Fernando, Director Corporate Services
- Dennis Hovenden, Economic and Community Development Manager
- Jess Chislett, Procurement and Properties Coordinator
- Helen Morris, Organisational Development Manager

Other

- Matt Drysdale and Ben Manning – Solucio
- Paul McDonald Leo Guaraldo and Rebecca Carlton - Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Nil

COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA

3 March 2026 at 10.00am, Swan Hill Town Hall, Council Chambers

AGENDA ITEMS

- Pental Island Cultural Tourism Development Update
- Resource Ready Strategy
- Mallee CMA presentation
- Quarterly Performance Report to the Community - Dec 2025
- Strategic Planning Schedule
- Swan Hill Tourism & Cultural Experience Centre – Cladding
- Catch up with a Councillor
- Response to Public Budget Submissions

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Nil

ATTENDANCE

Councillors

- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Hugh Board
- Cr Lindsay Rogers
- Cr Terry Jennings
- Cr Philip Englefield
- Cr Peta Thornton
- Cr Les McPhee

Apologies / Leave of Absence

- Nil

OFFICERS

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Bruce Myers, Director Community and Cultural Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure
- Stephen Fernando, Director Corporate Services
- Helen Morris, Organisational Development Manager
- Alexandra Jefferies, Planning Manager
- Dennis Hovenden, Economic and Community Development Manager
- Jess Warburton, Pioneer Settlement Manager
- Jacinta Chaplin, Aboriginal Community Development Officer
- Grant Jones, Development Officer Facilities
- Jess Chislett, Procurement and Properties Coordinator
- Azam Suleman, Manager – Project Management Office
- Sharon Lindsay, Executive Assistant

Other

- James Kellerman, Nicole Wishart and Sarah Hale – Mallee CMA

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Nil

COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA

10 March 2026 at 10.00am, Swan Hill Town Hall, Council Chambers

AGENDA ITEMS

- Business Facade Improvement Program 25/26 - Successful Recipients
- Proposed Manangatang Battery Facility – Lukas McVey
- Workers Accommodation Herbert Street Project
- Asset Naming submissions
- Councillor/Directors question time
- VHM Project status

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Saleyards
- Ten Steps Riverside Park
- On-going inspections

ATTENDANCE

Councillors

- Cr Hugh Board
- Cr Lindsay Rogers
- Cr Terry Jennings (chaired)
- Cr Les McPhee
- Cr Philip Englefield (attended on-line)

Apologies / Leave of Absence

- Cr Peta Thornton
- Cr Stuart King

OFFICERS

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Bruce Myers, Director Community and Cultural Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure
- Stephen Fernando, Director Corporate Services
- Dennis Hovenden, Economic and Community Development Manager
- Arnab Das, Project Manager
- Amanda Smith, Economic Development and Events Support Officer
- Laura O'Dwyer, Enterprise Assets Manager
- Grant Jones, Development Officer Facilities

Other

- Lukas McVay and Matthew Hoare – Manangatang Pty Ltd
- Bernie Hyde, Brian Hansen and Stuart Reid (CEO) - VHM

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Nil

4 Notices of Motion

Nil.

5 Foreshadowed Items

Nil.

6 Urgent Items Not Included In Agenda

Nil.

7 To Consider and Order on Councillor Reports

7.1 Cr Stuart King

List events / meetings attended

Date	Organisation / Group	Details (if relevant)
18/02/2026	Rural Councils Victoria	Member event - launch of State election priorities
19/02/2026	MRGC	Meeting - Basin Plan Review
20/02/2026	Lake Boga Primary School	Presentation of Student Leader badges
23/02/2026	SHRCC	Official Opening of Art Gallery of Swan Hill & SH Tourism & Cultural Experience Centre
24/02/2026	SH Inc	Informal Cr catch up
25/02/2026	Victorian Murray Flood Plain Restoration Project (VMFRP)	Briefing re Nyah/Vinifera Project
26/02/2026	SHRCC	Advocacy Planning Session
27/02/2026	Rural Councils Victoria	Committee Meeting
02/03/2026	Rural Councils Vic	Planning meeting for Annual Forum in Swan Hill (Sept)
03/03/2026	SHRCC	Facade Improvement Grant Program Assessment
04/03/2026	SHRCC Library	Official Opening "Portrait of Many Paths" Exhibition
05/03/2026	MRGC	Qtrly Meeting
07/03/2026	SH Inc	SH Food & Wine Festival
10-11/03/2026	Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)	Basin Leaders Summit

7.2 Cr Les McPhee

List events / meetings attended

Date	Organisation / Group	Details (if relevant)
24/02/26	Swan Hill Inc	Catch up
24/02/26	Ultima Progress Association	Meeting
26/02/2026	MAV Briefing	online
6/03/2026	MAV Board meeting	
12/02/2026	MAV Delegate Session	

7.3 Cr Terry Jennings

List events / meetings attended

Date	Organisation / Group	Details (if relevant)
24/02/2026	SH Inc	Informal catch up with councillors
23/02/2026	SHRCC	Official Opening Art Gallery and Cultural Experience Centre
07/03/2026	SH Inc	Food and Wine Festival

7.4 Cr Peta Thornton

List events / meetings attended

Date	Organisation / Group	Details (if relevant)
18 Feb 26	Mallee Artists Swan Hill	25 Year gathering
18 Feb 26	Woorinen District Progress Association	General Meeting
19 Feb 26	Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance	Board Meeting
20 Feb 26	GMW Pumped District Customer Committee	Meeting
21 Feb 26	Art Gallery	Gala Dinner
24 Feb 26	ReAlliance	Councils and Renewables Webinar
26 Feb 26	Pumped District Renewal Customer Group	Workshop
28 Feb 26	Fierce and Instoppable	Book Launch
2 March 26	Coffee with a Councillor	Piangil
4 March 26	GMW Customer Committees	Basin Plan Discussion Paper briefing
4 March 26	Portraits of Many Paths	Exhibition Opening
12 March 26	ALGWA	Financials Masterclass

7.5 Cr Philip Englefield

Nil to report - Busy with harvest this past month.

7.6 Cr Hugh Broad

Nil to report.

7.7 Cr Lindsay Rogers

List events / meetings attended

Date	Organisation / Group	Details (if relevant)
16/02/2026	Lake Boga Inc.	Meeting
February / March	SHRCC	Councillor briefings

8 In-Camera Items

Nil.

9 Close of Meeting

There being no further business the Mayor, Cr King closed the meeting at 2:59 pm.