



Ararat Rural City

# MINUTES

## COUNCIL MEETING

**Tuesday 31 March 2026**

Held in the Council Chambers, Shire Offices  
(Livestreamed)

Commenced at 6.00pm

Council:

Cr Bob Sanders (Mayor)

Cr Jo Armstrong

Cr Rob Armstrong

Cr Peter Joyce

Cr Teli Kaur

Cr Luke Preston

Cr Bill Waterston

A recording of this meeting is being made for the purpose of verifying the accuracy of the minutes of the Council Meeting.

The recording is being streamed live via Facebook, to improve transparency between council and the community and give more people the opportunity to view what decisions are being made. You do not require a Facebook account to watch the live broadcast, simply enter [www.facebook.com/araratruralcitycouncil](https://www.facebook.com/araratruralcitycouncil) into your address bar.

Recordings of Council Meetings (excluding closed sessions) are made available on Council's website.

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**PRESENT:** Cr J Armstrong, Cr R Armstrong, Cr Peter Joyce, Cr Teli Kaur, Cr Luke Preston, Cr Bob Sanders, Dr Tim Harrison - Chief Executive Officer, Phuong Au - Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Chandra Willmott - Chief Operating Officer, Rebecca Rodger - Major Projects Lead, Thomas Duncan - Theatre Technical Officer

## SECTION 1 - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

### 1.1 LIVE STREAMING

Council is keen to engage with members of the community and live streams the formal Council Meetings to make them accessible. The stream is available to view on Council's Facebook page from 6pm and on Council's website following the Council Meeting.

### 1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE

#### ***Traditional acknowledgement - CR J ARMSTRONG***

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

#### ***Opening Prayer - CR PRESTON***

Almighty God, we humbly ask you to help us, as elected Councillors of the Ararat Rural City Council. Guide our deliberations. Prosper what is your will for us, to your honour and glory and for the welfare and benefit of the people whom we serve in the Ararat Rural City.

#### ***Councillors Pledge - CR R ARMSTRONG***

We will faithfully and impartially carry out and exercise the functions, powers, authorities and discretions invested in us under the *Local Government Act 2020* and any other Act to the best of our skill and judgement.

### 1.3 APOLOGIES

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That the apology of Cr Bill Waterston be accepted.*

#### **MOVED CR KAUR SECONDED CR R. ARMSTRONG**

**That the apology of Cr Bill Waterston be accepted.**

**No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5309/26**

#### 1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

##### RECOMMENDATION

*That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 24 February 2026 be confirmed.*

##### **MOVED CR PRESTON SECONDED CR JOYCE**

**That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 24 February 2026 be confirmed.**

**No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5310/26**

## 1.5 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A Councillor who has a conflict of interest in a matter being considered at a *Council meeting* at which he or she:

- 1 is present must disclose that conflict of interest by explaining the nature of the conflict of interest to those present at the *Council meeting* immediately before the matter is considered; or
- 2 intends to be present must disclose that conflict of interest by providing to the *Chief Executive Officer* before the *Council meeting* commences a written notice:
  - (a) advising of the conflict of interest;
  - (b) explaining the nature of the conflict of interest; and
  - (c) detailing, if the nature of the conflict of interest involves a Councillor's relationship with or a gift from another person, the:
    - name of the other person;
    - nature of the relationship with that other person or the date of receipt, value and type of gift received from the other person; and
    - nature of that other person's interest in the matter,and then immediately before the matter is considered at the meeting announcing to those present that he or she has a conflict of interest and that a written notice has been given to the *Chief Executive Officer* under this sub-Rule.

The Councillor must, in either event, leave the *Council meeting* immediately after giving the explanation or making the announcement (as the case may be) and not return to the meeting until after the matter has been disposed of.

**There were no Declarations of Conflict of interests received.**

## SECTION 2 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### 2.1 PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

- 1 Unless *Council* determines to consider it as an item of urgent business, no motion (other than a motion to receive the same) may be made on any petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application until the next *Council meeting* after that at which it has been presented.
- 2 It is incumbent on every Councillor presenting a petition or joint letter to acquaint himself or herself with the contents of that petition or joint letter, and to ascertain that it does not contain language disrespectful to *Council*.
- 3 Every Councillor presenting a petition or joint letter to *Council* must:
  - write or otherwise record his or her name at the beginning of the petition or joint letter; and
  - confine himself or herself to a statement of the persons from whom it comes, the number of signatories to it, the material matters expressed in it and the text of the prayer or request.
- 4 Every petition or joint letter presented to *Council* must be in *writing* (other than pencil), typing or printing, contain the request of the petitioners or signatories and be signed by at least 12 people.
- 5 Every petition or joint letter must be signed by the persons whose names are appended to it by their names or marks, and, except in cases of incapacity or sickness, by no one else and the address of every petitioner or signatory must be clearly stated.
- 6 Any signature appearing on a page which does not bear the text of the whole of the petition or request may not be considered by *Council*.
- 7 Every page of a petition or joint letter must be a single page of paper and not be posted, stapled, pinned or otherwise affixed or attached to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition or joint letter.
- 8 If a petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application relates to an operational matter, *Council* must refer it to the *Chief Executive Officer* for consideration.

## 2.1.1 PETITION - COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS AT GREVILLEA COURT PARK, ARARAT NORTH

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27921

### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A petition was received for consideration at the February 2026 Council Meeting. This report provides the outcome of the consideration of the request.

### **DISCUSSION**

The petition that was received at the February 2026 Council Meeting requested that Council consider installing a durable, weather resistant picnic table with seating and a small set of outdoor gym equipment (e.g. stepper, pull up bars, sit-up bench) suitable for community use. The petitioners stated that the inclusion of these items at the park would encourage community connection, promote health and wellbeing, inclusivity and enhance local pride.

This request has been thoroughly considered and the particulars of this matter are presented below.

### **Location & Current Conditions**

The location of the requested new community infrastructure in a small 'pocket' park off Grevillea Court, shown in pink in the image below. This is approx. 1km north-east of the Ararat Railway Station. There is a small playground in the centre of the park, with a few mature trees. The sides of the park are mostly enclosed by corrugated metal panel fencing from the adjoining properties.



### **Cost Considerations**

The costs involved with meeting the request from petitioners includes the capital costs for installing the new infrastructure and the ongoing maintenance costs for the assets. Based on recent rates for similar equipment and installation costs, the capital costs is estimated to be between \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Due to the location and layout of the site, there are lower levels of passive surveillance. Its location away from an activity centre and being at the end of the two small streets of Grevillea and Timmins Streets means there is lower rates of incidental foot or vehicle traffic that could observe activity within the park. The layout of the site being bounded mostly by solid metal fencing with a small opening on Smith Street also makes it difficult for any passive surveillance to occur. This increases the risk of vandalism and other

undesirable activity, which increases the ongoing maintenance costs to Council to clean and repair the new assets.

Based on these costs, this request is considered to have low value for money in terms of the broader community benefits, and this report recommends that the requested infrastructure not be installed in Grevillea Court, Ararat.

### **Policy considerations**

There are a number of similar pocket parks in Ararat, some of which have playground equipment while others are just open space. These parks do not represent an efficient or effective means of providing recreation spaces for residents. They tend to be difficult and expensive to maintain with limited community utilisation. Council investment will have more impact in larger parks or recreation facilities. If Council chooses to fund works in this park. It may lead to pressure to further develop other, similar sites.

### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

#### ***Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives***

#### **6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management, and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

- 6.1** Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.
- 6.2** Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.
- 6.3** Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.

#### ***Budget Implications***

There are no budget implications arising from the recommendation.

#### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

Not applicable

#### ***Sustainability Implications***

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

#### ***Risk Assessment***

A risk assessment on the requested infrastructure has been undertaken and the recommendation is that the assets are not installed.

#### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

This report responds to a petition from community.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

- 1. Ararat Rural City Council does not undertake improvements to the Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North as requested in the community petition, and*
- 2. Council engages with the petitioners to discuss and identify more efficient and/or effective community infrastructure options for the site.*

**MOVED CR PRESTON  
SECONDED CR KAUR**

**That:**

- 1. Ararat Rural City Council does not undertake improvements to the Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North as requested in the community petition, and**
- 2. Council engages with the petitioners to discuss and identify more efficient and/or effective community infrastructure options for the site.**

**Cr Preston, Cr Kaur and Cr J. Armstrong spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5311/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

A copy of the Grevillea Court Petition is provided as Attachment 2.1.1

## Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

*100 people signed petition.*

To: Ararat Rural City Council Why

these matters:

- Encourages community connection: A picnic table provides a welcoming space for families, friends, and neighbours to gather, share meals, and strengthen social ties.
- Promotes health and wellbeing: Outdoor gym equipment offers free, accessible opportunities for exercise, supporting physical and mental health for people of all ages.
- Inclusive for all generations: These additions make the park more usable for children, parents, older residents, and visitors alike.
- Enhances local pride: Investing in Grevillea Court Park demonstrates commitment to the wellbeing of Ararat North residents and encourages greater use of public spaces.

Our request:

We ask the Council to prioritise funding and installation of:

1. A durable, weather-resistant picnic table with seating.
2. A small set of outdoor gym equipment (e.g., stepper, pull-up bars, sit-up bench) suitable for community use.

Community voices:

By signing this petition, we show our collective support for making Grevillea Court Park a more vibrant, inclusive, and healthy space for everyone.

We as residents will attempt to maintain equipment, and report any vandalism.








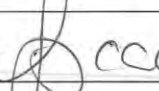


Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name        | Address              | Signature   |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Zac Howarth | Ararat               | Z. Howarth  |
| K. Howarth  | ARARAT NORTH         | [Signature] |
| S Price     | Ararat North         | SP          |
| J. Phillips | Ararat               | JP          |
| N. Corbett  | Deem st              | [Signature] |
| Georgia P   | Baird Street         | [Signature] |
| B. Jerram   | Langford St Ararat   | [Signature] |
| D. JACKSON  | 344 BARKLY ST ARARAT | D Jackson   |
| J. Jones    | ARARAT NORTH         | [Signature] |
| Y Powell    | Ararat               | [Signature] |



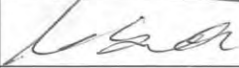

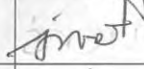
Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name                | Address                         | Signature           |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Anthony J Smith     | Churchill Ave <sup>Ararat</sup> | Anthony J Smith     |
| Amanda Holbrough    | Mitchell Road                   | A. Holbrough        |
| David Holbrough     | Mitchell Road                   | D. Holbrough        |
| Josie Bandido       | Mitchell Road.                  | Josie Bandido       |
| Rosemary Bandido    | Mitchell Road                   | R Bandido           |
| Khloe Campbell      | North Road                      | Khloe Campbell      |
| PAUL JOHNS          | ARARAT <sup>NTM</sup>           | Paul Johns          |
| Michael             | ARARAT                          | Michael             |
| Adaw Mihecal Magyik | Barkly Street Ararat            | Adaw Mihecal Magyik |
| Sarah Love          | Mitchell Rd                     | Sarah Love          |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name             | Address          | Signature   |
|------------------|------------------|---|
| Luke Lancaster   | Grevillea Court  |    |
| Seth Lancaster   | Faye Street      |    |
| Rohan Lancaster  | Mitchell Rd      |    |
| Damien Lancaster | Grevillea Court  |    |
| Lily Lancaster   | Mitchell Rd      |    |
| Melanie Rowley   | Grevillea court. |   |
| Carol Davies     | Grevillea crt    |  |
| Peace Naishitt   | Grevillea crt    |  |
| Kim GARD         | GREVILLEA CRT    |  |
| Bridget Scanlon  | Grevillia crt.   |  |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name            | Address             | Signature   |
|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| Sonia Faisal    | 8 Grevillea Court   | Sonia   |
| Faisal          | GREVILLEA COURT     | Faisal  |
| Jasheed Meys    | Grevillea           | Jasheed   |
| Verron Rani     | Grevillea           | VR  |
| Marianne Bailey | McGibbon St         |    |
| A. Bailey       | McGibbon St         |     |
| Mary Schwendk   | Campbell St         |    |
| Parteasana      | Smith St. Ararat    |   |
| Quin Egan       | Tatymon Ararat      |  |
| Kerry Rhoads    | M'Neill St. Ararat. | Kerry Rhoads  |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name           | Address      | Signature   |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Joanne Ralph   | Ararat       | J. Ralph    |
| Gaylene        | Ararat       | G. E. Baker |
| Daniela        | Ararat N.    | [Signature] |
| Alberto        | Ararat north | [Signature] |
| Snezana        | Ararat       | [Signature] |
| Michelle Healy | Magston      | [Signature] |
| Andreea H.     | CATHCAJET    | [Signature] |
| Karen H        | "            | [Signature] |
| Ada Fryer's    | Ararat       | [Signature] |
| Toni Riley     | Melbourne    | [Signature] |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name             | Address                  | Signature       |
|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Jaimie Hall      | 19 Brooke Dr D/East 3108 | J Hall          |
| SANDRA FERGUSON  | 21 HENDERSON ST ARARAT   | Sandra Ferguson |
| GRAEME FERGUSON  | " " " "                  | Graeme Ferguson |
| Sharon Vince     | 47 High St ARARAT        | S. Vince        |
| ADI DELANA       | ARARAT NORTH             | Adi Delana      |
| DAVID STARRICK   | ARARAT                   | David Starrick  |
| OLIVIA LANGMAID  | Fay St Ararat            | Olivia Langmaid |
| matthew millikin | Fay St Ararat            | m. millikin     |
| Sharon Vella     | Fay St Ararat            | S. Vella        |
| Allan Pascoe     | ARARAT                   | allan Pascoe    |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name              | Address     | Signature           |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| JAN CLOWE         | Mayston     | J. Clowe            |
| DARYL ALLEN       | ARARAT      | <del>D. Allen</del> |
| OSCAR KALANC      | ARARAT      | Oscar               |
| Linda Jenkins     | Ararat      | L. Jenkins          |
| Alisha McDonald   | Ararat      | A. McDonald         |
| BRAXTON CLEWLEY   | ARARAT      | B. Clewley          |
| Rick Hunter       | Timnor st   | R.H                 |
| Bradley Carrant   | Fay st      | B. Carrant          |
| MATTHEW PAYNE     | SMITH ST    | M. PAYNE            |
| Charmaine Midgley | Campbell st | C. Midgley          |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name            | Address      | Signature  |
|-----------------|--------------|--|
| monica dickeson | Ararat       | M. Dickeson  |
| Telisha Ward    | Ararat       | T. W   |
| Leray Link      | Ararat       | L. Link  |
| Beau Hayman     | Ararat       | B. Hayman  |
| TEX HOWARTH     | GREVILLEA ST | T. HOWARTH.  |
| BRAD H          | Smith st     |   |
| SAM Herman      | Grevellia st |   |
| OSCAR. B        | mitchell st  |  |
| Ronin. H        | murphy ST    | R. Hude  |
| mitchell Telfer | Blake st     | MTelfer  |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name            | Address     | Signature                |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Laura faye      | mitchell RD | L.faye                   |
| Shane Quinn     | ararat      | S.Quinn                  |
| malikai Pink    | Ararat      | mpmk                     |
| Shonelle. C     | ararat      | sc                       |
| Adam Koda       | Ararat      | AK                       |
| Stacyon Turich  | Ararat      | STurich                  |
| Joshua Midgelly | Herz        | <del>Josh</del> midgelly |
| Daniel Smith    | Ararat      | D.smith                  |
| Yasmaine church | Ararat      | ya church                |
| chbe chilcott   | Ararat      | Cchillcott               |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name           | Address      | Signature  |
|----------------|--------------|------------|
| Kelly Ann<br>K | Smith Street | K Ann<br>K |
| Chloe Chayc    | Ararat       | Chayc.     |
| Emily . C      | Ararat       | EC         |
| Isabella . Z   | Ararat       | Izzy       |
| Rebecca D      | Smith        | Reb D      |
| Shane Combone  | Smith        | S Comb     |
| Kodi . M       | Murphy Rd    | KM         |
| K . D . M      | Grevillia    | K D M      |
| Geoffery . H   | Blake        | G Hardman  |
| Jesse Spencer  | Ararat       | J Spencer  |

Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North

| Name            | Address      | Signature          |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Roxy Pereyra    | Ararat North | <i>Rox</i>         |
| Mick Curby      | Ararat       | <i>Mick Curby</i>  |
| Ray Carlson     | Ararat       | <i>Ray Carlson</i> |
| Zayden KENT     | ARARAT       | <i>ZKENT</i>       |
| LEN DANIELS     | ARARAT       | <i>LDANIELS</i>    |
| Stacey Dawes    | Ararat       | <i>S Dawes</i>     |
| Tersea Christie | Ararat       | <i>T. Christie</i> |
| James Payner    | Ararat       | <i>J Payner</i>    |
| Lucas Jordans   | Ararat       | <i>L Jordans</i>   |
| Alisha Howarth  | Ararat       | <i>A Howarth</i>   |

## SECTION 3 - REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION

### 3.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR TOWN ENTRANCES

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27922

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report recommends approval of a community engagement plan to gather community input on the upgrade of the town's eastern entrance point.

This report recommends that Council approve the proposed community engagement plan to seek community input on the upgrade of the town's Eastern entrance sign. The existing entrance signage, while functional, has become dated in appearance and no longer reflects the town's identity. The proposed engagement will be conducted via Engage Ararat.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Town entrances serve as important visual entry points, shaping the first impressions of visitors and reinforcing a sense of identity for residents. The existing eastern entrance signage has served the community for many years; however, its style and presentation no longer reflect the town's character.

The signage appears dated and lacks the welcoming presence expected of our township.

Recognising the significance of this entry point, Council has identified the need to revitalise this town entrance to better represent local identity and community pride.

It is recommended that submissions for the eastern Town Entrance sign ideas be put to public consultation via Engage Ararat which will then be presented back to Council for consideration at a future Council meeting.

#### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

##### ***Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives***

#### **4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE**

We will ensure that we plan, fund and develop new infrastructure in ways that deliver strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

##### ***Budget Implications***

The Community Engagement process for developing new design concepts for town entrance signage will be delivered within the existing operational resources. Should Council choose to proceed to detailed design or construction of a new entrance sign following the engagement phase, additional funding allocations will be required and will be presented for consideration as part of future budget development processes.

### **Policy/Relevant Law**

This report aligns with the Council's legislative obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, which requires Council to ensure meaningful and accessible opportunities for community participation in decision making.

### **Sustainability Implications**

The engagement process presents an opportunity to incorporate durable, low-maintenance materials and environmentally conscious design elements into future town entrance concepts. The engagement process also supports social sustainability by ensuring the final designs reflect community identity and value.

### **Risk Assessment**

The project presents a low level of risk, with the primary risks relating to community expectations and compliance with road safety or regulatory requirements. These risks will be mitigated through a transparent engagement process and clean communication about the scope and future stages of the project.

### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement is to be undertaken through Engage Ararat and presented back to Council at a later meeting date.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

- 1. Council undertake public consultation for ideas for town entrance signage via engage Ararat.*
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.*

### **MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR KAUR**

**That:**

- 1. Council undertake public consultation for ideas for town entrance signage via engage Ararat.**
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.**

**Cr Joyce, Cr Kaur and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5312/26**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no Attachments in relation to this item.

### 3.2 DRAFT ARARAT RURAL CITY SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-36

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27923

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In June 2025, Council began working with CommunityVibe to develop a new Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan.

After a period of extensive consultation and engagement with community and stakeholders from June to November 2025, the draft Strategy and Action Plan is presented to Council. These documents will be made available to community for final consultation and feedback before returning to a Council Meeting for final consideration.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The latest Ararat Rural City Recreation and Open Space Strategy is over 20 years old. While there have been site specific master plans, facility studies and activity specific strategies since 2003, these were no longer be contemporary and did not represent the current needs of the community. A consolidated, municipal-wide Sport, Active Recreation and Open Spaces Strategy was proposed to provide a clear roadmap for the coordinated delivery of welcoming, accessible and motivational sport and recreation infrastructure that meets present and future needs.

Council sought and were awarded grant funding from through Sport and Recreation Victoria to develop a new 10 year Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. The process to develop the new strategy involved an assessment of Council's existing plans, strategies and documents, and analysis of demographic and physical activity trends, and community and stakeholder engagement and consultation.

The community of Ararat are passionate about their sport and active recreation, with 335 members of the community engaged in surveys (207), listening posts (81), children's drawings (47) and a written submission (1). This project engaged with 50 different stakeholders, including representatives from sports clubs, State Government, Council, and community organisations. The range and number of sport and active recreation opportunities desired by community and stakeholders was diverse and large.

The Strategy provides a framework to foster increase participation in physical activity and guide Council's investment decisions in sport and active recreation over the next 10 years. The Action Plan provides the key next steps to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

The next step is to present the draft Strategy and Action Plan to the community for review before presenting the final documents to Council for final consideration.

#### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

##### ***Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives***

#### **1. GROWING OUR PLACE**

We will create the settings to support growth across our municipality through an improved planning scheme, actively pursuing new housing options and exploring models for in-migration.

**1.3** Work with other levels of government, business, educational institutions and not-for-for profits to develop programs to increase in-migration to Ararat Rural City to grow our population.

**4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE**

We will ensure that we plan, fund and develop new infrastructure in ways that deliver strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed, and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

**4.2** Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.

**4.3** Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability.

**5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE**

We will work with the communities of Ararat Rural City to maintain social cohesion, support community activity and cultural life, and enhance safety.

**5.2** Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.

**5.3** Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community.

***Budget Implications***

There are no budget implications arising from the draft Strategy and Action Plan. These documents will assist in providing the strategic frameworks for future investments by Council and potentially State and Federal Government partners.

***Policy/Relevant Law***

ARCC Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

Sport and Recreation Victoria's Active Victoria 2022-2026

Various State Sporting Association strategic plans and documents

***Sustainability Implications***

The Sport and Action Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and the Action Plan are expected to have a positive economic, social and environmental impact in Ararat Rural City.

***Risk Assessment***

The extensive consultation and engagement that has been undertaken has reduced the risk that the Strategy and Action Plan will be inconsistent with the priorities of the Ararat Rural City community.

***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

Extensive consultation and engagement has already occurred during the development of the draft Strategy and Action Plan. A final round of community review of the draft documents is proposed before the final documents are presented to Council for consideration.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

- 1. Council receives the Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan for community consultation; and*
- 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to release the draft documents for community review and feedback*

**MOVED CR KAUR  
SECONDED CR JOYCE**

**That:**

- 1. Council receives the Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan for community consultation; and**
- 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to release the draft documents for community review and feedback**

**Cr Kaur and Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5313/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy: Action Plan 2026-36 are provided as Attachment 3.2

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

# Ararat Sport and Active Recreation Strategy

## 2026-2036



Ararat Rural City

## Traditional Acknowledgement

Ararat Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and recreate - the Eastern Maar, Barengi Gadjin (the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, and Jupagulk peoples of the Wotjobaluk Nations), and Wadawurrung peoples, and recognise their connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the within named party to which it is addressed ("the Communityvibe client") only. All recommendations by Communityvibe are based on information provided by or on behalf of the Communityvibe client and Communityvibe has relied on such information being correct at the time this report is prepared. Communityvibe shall take no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to the Communityvibe client or to any third party whether direct or consequential as a result of or in any way arising from any unauthorised use of this report or any recommendations contained within.

Report Date: March 2026

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### Supported by:



This Ararat Sport and Active  
Recreation Strategy is supported  
by the Victorian Government

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Ararat Rural City Council | Ararat Sport and Active Recreation Strategy | 2026-2036



Image: West Vic News Pty Ltd

## Executive Summary

Ararat Rural City Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy provides a framework to foster increased participation in physical activity and to guide Council's investment in sport and active recreation over the next 10 years. Supported by four key pillars of places, people, partnerships and processes, the vision for sport and active recreation in the Rural City is: "Ararat Rural City: an active, inclusive and connected community"

Additional principles guide Council's direction. These include:

- Liveable and connected
- Accessible and inclusive
- Equitable
- Sustainable
- Evidence-based
- Multi-purpose and adaptable
- Optimisation
- Collaboration.

By responding to evolving participation trends, i.e. balancing traditional sports such as AFL football, netball, tennis and cricket with active recreation opportunities such as walking, cycling, pilates and swimming, Council seeks to ensure diverse opportunities for all residents. Reducing barriers and increasing participation by under-represented groups such as people with disability, First Nations people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, older adults, women and girls, and those facing socioeconomic disadvantage is also a key focus.

The strategy emphasises the importance of accessible, fit-for-purpose facilities and recognises that achieving these outcomes requires partnerships with clubs, organisations, government agencies, health and private sectors. Supported by extensive community and stakeholder engagement, the strategy identifies key objectives and actions to help Council achieve equity and transparency, which in turn, positions Council to deliver improved places, spaces, and physical activity participation rates across the municipality.

Ararat Rural City Council | Ararat Sport and Active Recreation Strategy | 2026-2036



Image: West Vic News Pty Ltd

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to develop a framework to support Council to best invest its resources to encourage increased participation in sport and active recreation, particularly by people who may experience barriers to participation (i.e. people with a disability; Aboriginal Victorians; culturally and linguistically diverse communities; disengaged young people; LGBTQ+ people, people aged 60 years and over; women and girls; socioeconomically disadvantaged communities) and those who are currently not sufficiently active to achieve health benefits.

We know that community sport, such as football, netball, tennis and basketball have high levels of participation in the greater Ararat region. At the same time, an increasing number of our community take part in active recreation activities such as walking, cycling, swimming, pilates, bushwalking and going to the gym. This strategy aims to respond to trends in participation and also achieve a balance so that a diversity of sport and active recreation opportunities are available to all members of our community.

This strategy also aims to provide guidance to improve places and spaces where people take part in physical activity to ensure that we have a suite of accessible, inclusive and fit for purpose facilities.

Council cannot achieve increased participation and improved facilities on its own. It is reliant on establishing and maintaining effective relationships with a broad array of partners including clubs / organisations, government agencies, regional and state sporting associations, the health sector and the private sector, and will require additional internal and external resources to deliver desired outcomes. Objectives and actions contained within this strategy are guided by evidence of need to ensure equity and transparency.

## 1.2 Methodology

In order to prepare the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, the following activities were undertaken:

- assessment of various plans and documents to understand the strategic directions of Ararat Rural City Council and other key stakeholders such as Sport and Recreation Victoria and State Sporting Associations
- analysis of demographic data and projections
- audit of sport and active recreation facilities to assess condition and identify opportunities for improvements (combination of in person and desk-based assessment)
- assessment of physical activity trends and participation data
- engagement with 335 members of the community through surveys (207), listening posts (81), and children's drawings (47) and written submissions (1)
- engagement with 50 stakeholders (e.g. sports club representatives, State Government representatives, relevant Council staff, community-based organisations, etc).

### 1.3 Ararat Rural City

Ararat Rural City covers an area of 4,211 square kilometres and is situated on the Western Highway, approximately 198 kilometres west of Melbourne, midway between Ballarat and Horsham. Its main towns are Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Mininera, Moyston, Pomonal, Stratham, Tatyoon, Warrack, Westmere, Wickliffe and Willaura.

For thousands of years, the Djab Wurrung traditional owners were located on much of the land that currently makes up Ararat Rural City. Their rich culture comprised of approximately 4,000 people across some 40 clans.



<sup>1</sup> Map of Ararat Rural City. Source: Department of Transport and Planning - VICNAMES.  
<https://maps.land.vic.gov.au/lassi/VicnamesUI.jsp>

### 1.4 Sport and active recreation in Ararat Rural City

Ararat Rural City offers residents an enviable rural lifestyle. It features endless opportunities for sport and active recreation in its outdoor settings including hiking in the world-renowned Grampians (located at its doorstep), a wide range of aquatic sports at its various waterways, mountain bike riding in bushland and many other active recreational pursuits. It also features a diversity of sporting facilities and community spaces, providing opportunities for activities such as basketball, yoga, tennis, AFL football, netball, skateboarding, dancing, lawn bowls, croquet, cricket, gymnastics, soccer, horse riding and golf. The total value of playgrounds, cycleways, recreation, leisure and community facilities is in excess of \$50 million<sup>1</sup>.

One of Council and the community's largest undertakings in recent years is the upgrade of Gordon Street Recreation Reserve to include female friendly change rooms and social facilities, soccer fields, athletics facilities and a Ninja play course.

Image: West Vic News Pty Ltd

### 1.5 Benefits of sport and active recreation

There are significant benefits that can be achieved by our community through participation in sport and active recreation. From a health and wellbeing perspective, physical activity participation can result in improved physical and mental wellbeing, the development of strong social connections and increased resilience. From an economic perspective, income from events and classes / lessons or sale of sports and recreation goods and services can bring more money into the community and create local employment. From an environmental perspective, participation in outdoor activities can create a greater appreciation of the natural environment and a desire to protect places and spaces for future generations to recreate. The provision of inclusive, accessible and diverse sport and active recreation pursuits also enhances liveability and can play a role in attracting new residents to move to Ararat Rural City to live.

<sup>1</sup>Ararat Rural City Council Asset Plan 2025-35:  
<https://www.ararat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-10/CM%20Agenda%20251028%20-%20Attachment%203.1.pdf>





### 1.6 Challenges facing sport and active recreation in Ararat Rural City

Some of the challenges that impact sport and active recreation in Ararat Rural City now and in the future include:

- Less than one third of adults participating in sufficient physical activity for health benefits
- Accessing enough participants to make some activities viable
- Decline in volunteers to help deliver sport and active recreation opportunities and to maintain facilities
- Cost of participating in and delivering sport and active recreation activities
- Increased community expectations around the quality of facilities and the breadth of opportunities available
- A number of facilities that are under-utilised or surplus to demand, and others that are operating at or near capacity
- Several facilities that are not inclusive
- Ageing infrastructure
- High construction costs of new sport and active recreation infrastructure
- Increased competition for grants
- Keeping up with technology and impact of technology
- Impacts of climate change (including an increasing number of bushfires)
- Tightening of Local Government and State Government budgets
- Limited resources at the Council level to undertake sport and active recreation planning and delivery.

## 2.0 Sport and active recreation context

The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is supported by a strong evidence base and aligns closely with the strategic directions contained within State and Local Government plans and visions:



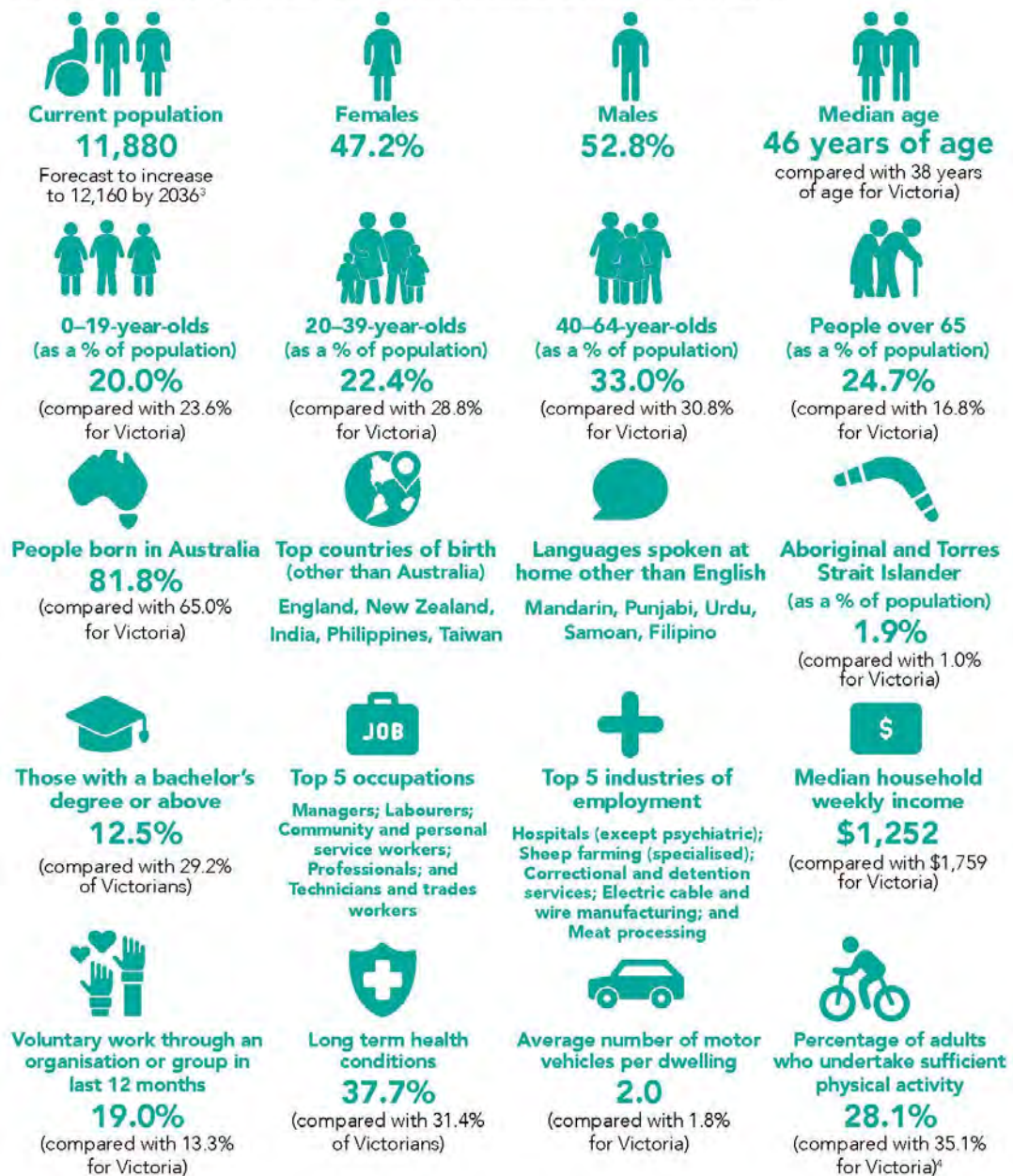
A total of 23 documents were reviewed (a summary is available in the Appendix). Key messages from these documents focused on:

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Places</b>       | liveable communities, multi-use facilities, safety, equity, facility planning   |
| <b>People</b>       | resilience, self-reliance, inclusion, wellbeing, diversity  |
| <b>Partnerships</b> | effective communication, joint-use opportunities, workforce and volunteer capacity  |
| <b>Processes</b>    | effective governance, environmental management, compliance with standards and regulations, using data and insights to inform decisions, targeted information, evidence of feasibility and demand. |

## 3.0 Our community

### 3.1 Ararat Rural City Council residents

The following table provides an overview of the Ararat Rural City community based on the last available Australian Bureau of Statistics Census<sup>2</sup> from 2021:



<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census QuickStats (Ararat Rural City Council). <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA20260>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Planning (2023) Victoria in the Future 2023 Report. <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/Data-spatial-and-insights/discover-and-access-planning-open-data/victoria-in-future>

<sup>4</sup> Victorian Population Health Survey 2023. <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/victorian-population-health-survey-2023>

## 4.0 Sport and active recreation participation and trends

### 4.1 Most popular physical activities in Victoria

In recent years, there has been a shift away from organised sport to more informal recreational activities that can be undertaken in small groups, alone, or at varying times of the day. The following table<sup>3</sup> shows the most popular physical activities (organised and non-organised) for people 15 years of age and over in Victoria between July 2024 and June 2025 and the most popular activities for children during that time:

| Rank | Activity - adults      | % of people over 15 | Rank | Activity - children    | % of children |
|------|------------------------|---------------------|------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1    | Walking (Recreational) | 51.2%               | 1    | Swimming               | 24.9%         |
| 2    | Fitness/Gym            | 31.9%               | 2    | Australian Football    | 10.9%         |
| 3    | Running / jogging      | 17.0%               | 3    | Basketball             | 10.4%         |
| 4    | Bush walking           | 16.0%               | 4    | Football / soccer      | 10.3%         |
| 5    | Swimming               | 12.9%               | 5    | Gymnastics             | 6.0%          |
| 6    | Cycling                | 8.8%                | 6    | Tennis                 | 5.1%          |
| 7    | Pilates                | 7.6%                | 7    | Dancing (recreational) | 4.3%          |
| 8    | Basketball             | 5.9%                | 8    | Netball                | 4.2%          |
| 9    | Tennis                 | 5.6%                | 9    | Cricket                | 4.2%          |
| 10   | Yoga                   | 5.1%                | 10   | Walking (Recreational) | 3.8%          |

### 4.2 Sport and active recreation trends

The sport and active recreation landscape is constantly changing. The table below describes some of the trends currently occurring in the industry and within rural Victorian communities which should be considered when planning facilities, programs and services in the future:

| People  | Places   | Processes  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased participation in individual lifestyle activities</li> <li>Growth of female participation in specific sports</li> <li>Participation in growth sport and active recreation activities, e.g. pilates, park run, pickle ball, mountain bike riding.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liveability</li> <li>Informal play</li> <li>Outdoor fitness equipment</li> <li>Active transport and linkages</li> <li>Safety</li> <li>Climate change</li> <li>Community hubs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programming</li> <li>Accessibility and inclusion</li> <li>Planning</li> <li>Multi-purpose design and diversity</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Management and maintenance</li> <li>Modified versions of existing sports</li> <li>Technology</li> </ul> |

<sup>3</sup> Clearinghouse for Sport - Ausplay Data - Victoria July 2024-June 2025 - <https://www.ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/research/ausplay/results>

## 5.0 Council's involvement in sport and active recreation

### 5.1 Council's current role in the planning and delivery of sport and active recreation opportunities

Ararat Rural City Council currently provides a number of sport and active recreation programs, services and facilities as a community benefit. The following tasks are undertaken by staff across several different units:

- **Provision of facilities** – provides a range of places and spaces where physical activity can occur in the community. These places and spaces include formal sports facilities such as ovals and hardcourts, indoor fitness centre, shared trails, swimming pools, parks and playgrounds.
- **Management and maintenance of facilities** – manages and maintains sport and active recreation assets owned by Ararat Rural City Council, including the indoor fitness centre, swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, some shared trails and some sports facilities.
- **Funding** – Council's Community Support Grants Program has a sport and recreation / health and wellbeing stream which enables clubs and organisations to apply for funding for innovative or new projects that increase opportunities for participation in physical activity for all (including women, people with disabilities and juniors). The program does not cover capital building or maintenance costs but regards projects that address inequity highly.
- **Advocacy** – advocates to State and Federal Government and other relevant agencies on behalf of clubs / organisations and the community for improved sport and active recreation facilities, programs or services

that can be added to the project pipeline and reviewed as and when funding becomes available.

The areas where Council provides more limited support compared with many other Victorian Local Government Authorities includes:

- **Strategic planning** – undertakes, facilitates or supports strategic planning for sport and active recreation facilities (e.g. assisting with recreation reserve master plans, play space strategies and trails strategies) and to increase participation in physical activity.
- **Promotion of sport and active recreation opportunities** – provides some promotion of clubs / organisations and sport and active recreation programs and events via Council's promotional tools, e.g. website and social media pages.
- **Club / organisational support** – provides some information and advice to enable clubs / organisations to deliver a diversity of sport and active recreation opportunities in the community. Clubs have specifically highlighted the need for additional support from Council.
- **Partnership development** – consults with relevant groups, organisations and government agencies (e.g. State Sporting Associations and Sports Central) to collaboratively plan for and deliver sport and active recreation opportunities for residents.

**Ideally additional resources will be made available so that sport and recreation planning and delivery will be more coordinated and so that clubs / organisations can be better supported.**

## 6.0 Summary of community and stakeholder engagement

A number of community and stakeholder engagement activities were undertaken to help identify sport and active recreation needs within Ararat Rural City. A total of 386 people provided feedback as part of the strategy development:

- 207 community surveys
- 81 people who participated in one of the three community listening posts
- 47 drawings from children
- 16 Club and Community Asset Committee surveys
- 34 people who took part in the 13 key stakeholder meetings
- 1 submission from a community member

Results of this consultation is interspersed within the strategy in the relevant sections. A community engagement report has been prepared to provide further detail of feedback received. In summary, key points raised during consultations include:

- New programs and activities desired include fitness / health and wellbeing activities, water-based activities, modified sports, junior sports, women's sport and less traditional activities

- Need to enhance participation opportunities and tailor design programs for groups who are traditionally underrepresented in sport and active recreation, e.g. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities
- Need to consider different models of sports delivery, e.g. more flexible, social and casual
- Facility upgrades and developments desired include aquatics, trails, tennis and netball courts, playgrounds, sports court / ground lighting, improved amenities
- Need to improve accessibility and safety of facilities
- Need to enhance support for clubs and organisations that may be challenged with the condition of facilities, declining volunteers, income generation, participation, compliance, etc.
- Need for improved information about sport and active recreation opportunities that are available
- The cost of participating in sport and active recreation is prohibitive for some people.

## 7.0 Planning framework

Information gathered in the research and consultation phase of the project identified eight key planning principles to guide the provision of sport and active recreation in Ararat Rural City over the next 10 years. From these planning principles, a vision has been developed. This vision aligns with the direction of Ararat Rural City's Council Plan and Community Vision and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Four key pillars have also been identified, each with an objective and several actions. Each of these aspects when combined, provides a framework to inform Council and the broader community of the types of facilities, programs and services Ararat Rural City Council will invest in over the next 10 years to achieve an active, inclusive and connected community.

### 7.1 Vision

Ararat Rural City Council's vision for sport and active recreation is:

**“Ararat Rural City: an active, inclusive and connected community”**



## 7.2 Planning principles

Eight planning principles have been developed to support the vision. Everything Ararat Rural City Council does in the sport and active recreation area will be guided by these principles:

| Principle                          | What it means to us   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Liveable and connected</b>      | Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs or services will help to create a more liveable community, i.e. one where people are socially connected to one other; there is a sense of belonging; the area feels safe; and there is quality infrastructure to support community activities and lifestyles.   |
| <b>Accessible and inclusive</b>    | Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to increase access for all abilities and be inclusive of everyone regardless of abilities, age, gender, cultural background and socio-economic status.  |
| <b>Equitable</b>                   | Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• equity of provision across Ararat Rural City (based on the appropriate level of provision for towns and areas, i.e. larger towns with larger catchments are more likely to be able to support facilities, programs or services for more specialised or 'regional level' sport and active recreation activities); and / or</li> <li>• equity for people who may be traditionally disadvantaged (e.g. First Nations people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people, people with disabilities, females and older adults).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Sustainable</b>                 | Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs and services will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider environmentally sustainable design principles and materials as part of their construction or development; and / or</li> <li>• be financially sustainable to develop, operate and maintain wherever possible.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Evidence-based</b>              | Any proposed new facility developments or major upgrades will ideally be subjected to a feasibility study and / or business case to demonstrate need and sustainability. Advice should also be sought as part of the evidence base from industry professionals including State Government staff and relevant State Sporting Associations.<br><br>Further, any new programs or services will be implemented based on evidence of need or evidence of likely benefits to the community, e.g. the increase or maintenance of existing physical activity levels.  |
| <b>Multi-purpose and adaptable</b> | Facilities can be used in multiple ways by more than one group (unless it is a regional level single-purpose facility or a facility that has no option for sharing with others due to specialisation of infrastructure); and / or facilities, programs or services can be adapted to meet changing needs.   |
| <b>Optimisation</b>                | Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to better use existing facilities, programs or services rather than necessarily developing new ones (unless need is clearly demonstrated).  |
| <b>Collaboration</b>               | Wherever possible, facility developments / upgrades, programs and services will be developed in partnership with other organisations to maximise the use of limited resources and to improve outcomes.  |

### 7.3 Four Pillars and objectives

The four pillars that this plan focuses on, and their related objectives, are:

| <br><b>Pillar 1:<br/>Places</b>                            | <br><b>Pillar 2:<br/>People</b> | <br><b>Pillar 3:<br/>Partners</b>   | <br><b>Pillar 4:<br/>Processes</b>                  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>To provide a diversity of accessible, inclusive and fit-for-purpose sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.</p> | <p>To encourage and support increased participation in sport and active recreation by the community.</p>         | <p>To work in partnership with clubs, community organisations, state / regional sporting associations, education sector, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.</p> | <p>To develop strategic plans, policies and tools to guide Council's decision making and investment in sport and active recreation</p> |

## 8.0 Pillar 1: Places

**To provide a diversity of accessible, inclusive and fit-for-purpose sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.**

### 8.1 Existing places and spaces

Ararat Rural City Council, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Parks Victoria, Grampians Wimmera Mallee (GWM) Water, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, schools and the private sector provide a diverse range of places and spaces where physical activity occurs within the Ararat Rural City Council region.

Ararat Rural City Council primarily provides sports fields / courts / greens, parks, playgrounds and shared trails, as well as some indoor sports facilities and swimming facilities.

Some local residents utilise facilities in other municipalities (e.g. Stawell Athletics Club

facilities and Beaufort Swimming Pool) and in some instances, people who live in other municipalities utilise facilities within Ararat Rural City, (e.g. the soccer fields at Gordon Street Recreation Reserve in Ararat are used by a Stawell Soccer Club). Residents of Ararat Rural City also use regional level facilities in Ballarat and Horsham for activities and competitions, e.g. aquatics, basketball, hockey, etc.

In addition to formal sporting programs, there are a variety of active recreational programs and activities undertaken in Ararat Rural City Council by community organisations, health organisations and the private sector in halls, indoor stadiums and parks including gym, yoga, strength classes, swimming lessons, personal training and dance and martial arts. There is an opportunity for Ararat Rural City to promote these organisations to help achieve positive health and wellbeing outcomes within the community.





## 8.2 Community demand for places and spaces

Many of the issues identified through the audit were also identified through the community survey and key stakeholder engagement.

Sport and recreation facility upgrades desired by the community

The top 10 facility upgrades identified by the community include:

- Ararat Fitness Centre redevelopment
- Mountain bike trail development
- Lake Bolac walking track development
- Gordon Street Recreation Reserve athletics track upgrade
- Kokoda Park upgrade
- Lake Bolac Tennis Club redevelopment
- Moyston Recreation Reserve Netball Courts upgrade
- Alexandra Oval netball court covered spectator area
- Disk golf development
- Squash courts in Ararat

## 8.3 Key facility directions

Some of the key suggestions emanating from the community engagement activities undertaken include:

- improvements at some of the larger recreation reserves (which should be identified through master plans)
- aquatic improvements (which should be included in an Aquatic Centre review)
- play space improvements (which should be included in a play space strategy)

- track / trail / path improvements (which should be included in a tracks, trails and footpath strategy).

There are not sufficient resources available to undertake all of these works, and a process of justification needs to be undertaken to determine the feasibility of such developments i.e. Council needs to respond to feedback from community consultation about potential future facility upgrades. To assist with this prioritisation process, a capital works assessment tool has been developed, aligned with Council's vision and planning principles for sport and active recreation (refer to Appendix).

### 8.3.1 Aquatics and Fitness opportunities

The most desired facility upgrade identified by the community through the survey is the upgrade of Ararat Fitness Centre, which incorporates a 25-metre indoor heated pool, toddler pool, spa, sauna, indoor sports courts, gym, gymnastics centre and squash courts. This facility has a municipal catchment and is used for activities such as swimming, basketball, Futsal, gym / group fitness, gymnastics and birthday parties. Survey respondents were keen to see an upgrade to the gym / fitness area (with designated space for spin class and group fitness and new equipment); pool (including hydrotherapy), changerooms and additional basketball courts with spectator seating.

Ararat Rural City Council is currently reviewing its options regarding aquatic facilities. Other existing pool upgrades to be considered include Willaura and Lake Bolac.

### 8.3.2 Walking and cycling

Two of the most popular physical activities in Ararat Rural City are walking and cycling. These two activities are one of the most effective ways of encouraging more people to become more active.

One of the most desired developments in terms of walking and cycling include the development of the Ararat Hills Mountain Bike Park in the Ararat region, building on the existing network of mountain bike trails locally. The other most desired development, according to survey respondents, is the development of the Lake Bolac walking track. It is envisaged that this is a staged development involving the construction of a walking track project around the perimeter of Lake Bolac. Stage 1 is from the township to the cemetery reserve. Stage 2 is from the Picnic Point Camping Ground to the South Beach. There are 7 stages in total.

There was also some support for upgrading Cemetery Creek walking track, including the installation of several bridges, as well as developing a bike track for toddlers and children to teach them to ride safely.

Whilst a number of suggestions for tracks and trails were received through the engagement process, ideally a tracks, trails and footpath strategy should be developed to identify trail and path network developments, upgrades and renewals needed by the community.

### 8.3.3 Play spaces

Play spaces provide an important place for children and families to develop physically and socially and enjoy the experience of free play. Council manages many of the local play spaces. The main ones include:

- Alexandra Gardens
- Ararat Skate Park
- Centenary Park (Marx Crescent)
- Hewitt St
- Kokoda Park
- Lake Bolac Playground (near the library)
- Pomonal Recreation Reserve
- Willaura Recreation Reserve

Ararat Rural City Council does not currently have a formal play strategy to guide its provision of play across the municipality. Ideally a review of the location of all play spaces needs to occur, along with an assessment of the remaining life span; size of play space; condition of play spaces; the type and diversity of play opportunities provided; the catchment of play spaces; the age range for each play space; supporting infrastructure such as paths, seats and shade; areas of over- or under-supply; accessibility; the value of play opportunities provided; and some principles to guide the provision of play. Budgets should also be established for capital works, upgrades, renewals and maintenance.

#### 8.3.4 Recreation Reserve improvements

Through community and stakeholder engagement, various suggestions have been made regarding improvements to recreation reserves throughout the municipality. To ensure that there is a strong evidence of need and that any proposed works are likely to be developed / upgraded / renewed in the best possible position, it is recommended that master plans are undertaken for major reserves.

A master plan was undertaken for Alexandra Oval in 2018. It identified a range of justified and prioritised works. User groups of the site are methodically working through the action plan. Other recreation reserves that would benefit from a master plan include Centenary Park and Kokoda Park. Any sites wishing to undertake significant works in the future should also consider undertaking a master plan. This could include Buangor Recreation Reserve, Green Hill Lake Reserve, Lake Bolac Recreation Reserve, Mininera Recreation Reserve (Conna Wilson Reserve), Moyston Recreation Reserve and Willaura Recreation Reserve. For smaller clubs (e.g. Ararat Pony Club), a master plan could be undertaken internally if there is the skills base to do so, but for larger sites, it may be necessary to contract external providers. In association with recreation reserve master plans, a health check of user groups should also be undertaken to identify any concerns about their longevity (i.e. ensuring that projects at recreation reserves are only funded where user groups are likely to remain active in the foreseeable future).

#### 8.3.5 Public toilets

The provision of public toilets can greatly enhance usage of public open spaces and people's ability to participate in community life, particularly for families with young children or for people who may need to access toilets quickly due to ageing or health issues. Community feedback identified a need for upgraded public toilets (including an accessible toilet) near the netball courts at Moyston Recreation Reserve.

Within public toilets, baby change facilities enable families to more easily enjoy parks and recreation reserves, knowing that safe and comfortable facilities are available for their usage. For people with severe or profound disabilities, fully accessible public toilet facilities known as Changing Places can significantly improve access for people with disabilities to recreational and community spaces and would enable people with disabilities from other areas to enjoy outings in Ararat Rural City.

### 8.3.6 Environmental sustainability

Initiatives to reduce their impact on the environment, including roof top solar panels, inground irrigation systems and water tanks at various recreation reserves, passive heating and cooling in buildings, low use shower heads in change rooms, use of recycled materials in building construction, etc are being embraced by a number of clubs across Ararat Rural City. Sport and Recreation Victoria requires projects to incorporate Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) features. By designing facilities according to ESD principles, significant benefits can be achieved including:

- Reduction in energy and therefore cheaper operating costs
- Protection and conservation of water
- Less materials going to landfill due to re-use
- Less waste
- Less pollution
- Less transportation costs and impacts by buying locally.

Ararat Rural City Council will need to ensure that environmental sustainability options are included in design projects and funding applications for facility renewals and upgrades.

### 8.3.7 Impact of climate change

Ararat Rural City Council is not immune from the impacts of climate change. Warming temperatures and an increase in the number, duration and severity of heatwaves increases the number of extreme fire risk days and the length of the bushfire season. Pomonal has been particularly impacted by bushfires in the last few years.

High temperatures can result in an increased need for cooling in sport and recreation facilities. An increase in fire risk requires the need to design facilities to withstand fire as much as possible.

High temperatures also have an impact on participation, as many activities are called off once the temperature hits 35 degrees or above to reduce the likelihood of people suffering from heat stress while playing sport. Some people are likely to stop participating in summer sports as a result of potential heat stroke and sunburn. High temperatures can also contribute to blue-green algae outbreaks in local waterways such as Green Hill Lake and Lake Bolac, therefore impacting water sports.

Lower rainfall levels may impact the condition of playing fields and the availability of water to irrigate playing fields. Intense rainfall events may result in flooding of playing fields and buildings and the cancellation of games.

## 8.4 Hierarchy

To help identify the level of infrastructure development at a particular sport and recreation site, a hierarchy has been developed. This hierarchy refers to the reach or area the facility is intended to serve as well as their size and quality of the space and infrastructure.

Using Sport and Recreation Victoria's Pipeline Project hierarchy and State Sporting Association Facility Guides, the majority of facilities in Ararat Rural City Council are classified as local. There are a few regional level facilities, but no state or national level facilities:

| Hierarchy Level                  | Definition  | Key Types of Sporting Infrastructure  | Key Types of Community Infrastructure   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Local Facility</b>            | In a hierarchy of provision local is defined as sport and active recreation opportunities that service a small physically definable, suburb or rural locality and small townships by one organisation.<br><br>Examples include Tatyoon Recreation Reserve and Ararat Pony Club. | Single sports fields with training lights, 1-2 netball courts, basic change / social facilities with player change rooms, umpire change rooms, kiosk, bar, small function space / meeting space, office, first aid / trainer room, storage, accessible toilets.                                     | Car parking, public toilets, playground, picnic/barbecue areas, walking tracks, seating               |
| <b>Regional Facility</b>         | In a hierarchy of provision Regional is defined as sport and active recreation that serve the needs of the residents of more than one municipality.<br><br>Examples include Alexandra Oval and Gordon Street Recreation Reserve.  | Multiple sports fields/ courts, aquatic centres, stadiums, grandstands, lighting for night use. Change / social facilities with player change rooms, umpire change rooms, kiosk, bar, kitchen, large function space / meeting space, office, first aid / trainer room, storage, accessible toilets. | Car parking, public toilets, playground, picnic/barbecue areas, walking tracks, seating               |
| <b>State / National Facility</b> | In a hierarchy of provision State/ National is defined as sport and active recreation opportunities that serve a whole state. Their characteristics are generally more significant than regional facilities.<br><br>There are no state or national level facilities in ARCC.    | Elite stadiums, specialist sporting complexes, high-performance training centres, broadcast facilities  | Major event infrastructure, hospitality suites, media centres, extensive public transport connections |

### 8.5 Asset renewal / rationalisation – unused or dilapidated assets

Council's Asset Plan 2025-2035 highlights Ararat Rural City Council's approach to asset development, renewal and decommissioning. In terms of sport and active recreation facility development or renewal, Council's approach is around integrated planning and understanding the importance of individual projects to community outcomes. It is also about ensuring that projects which are identified through project evaluation models are then incorporated into long term planning documents and that funding sources and whole of life costs are identified.

Some of the unused or dilapidated facilities in the municipality are located on Crown Land, e.g. Pura Pura Tennis Courts. In this instance, Council has no responsibility for the site.

### 8.6 Cost of construction

Construction costs for sport and recreation infrastructure have grown significantly in recent years. At the same time, community demands for facilities of a certain standard or type has increased, whilst Council budgets are getting tighter. All of this is causing pressure on the ability of Councils to provide new park and leisure facilities, while also still maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure. To help reduce construction costs, careful project management will need to be undertaken, with particular attention given to key points where construction costs can be reduced, e.g. planning, feasibility study or business case, design and documentation and procurement.



## 9.0 Pillar 2: People

**To encourage and support increased participation in sport and active recreation by the community.**

### 9.1 Current physical activity participation in Ararat Rural City

#### Participation levels by adults in sport and active recreation

According to the Victorian Population Health Survey 2023<sup>6</sup>, only 28.8% of women and 31.5% of men in Ararat participated in 150 minutes or more per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

#### Most popular sport and active recreation activities in Ararat Rural City

Through the community survey undertaken as part of the strategy - primarily filled out by females (66.7%) aged between 30-54 - Ararat Rural City Council residents (predominantly adults) identified the following 10 most popular activities that they currently participate in:

| Rank | Activity                       | Number of survey respondents<br>n = 207 | % of participation by Ararat RCC residents who completed the survey | % participation by Victorian residents over 15 |
|------|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 1    | Walking                        | 153                                     | 73.9%   | 51.2%  |
| 2    | Bushwalking / hiking           | 125                                     | 60.4%   | 16.0%  |
| 3    | Swimming / aquatics            | 112                                     | 54.1%   | 12.9%  |
| 4    | Gym / strength training        | 99                                      | 47.8%   | 31.9%  |
| 5    | Playgrounds / nature play      | 88                                      | 42.5%   | Not recorded                                   |
| 6    | Fitness class, e.g. spin class | 81                                      | 39.1%   | Included with gym                              |
| 7    | Fishing                        | 70                                      | 33.8%   | Not recorded                                   |
| 8    | Running / jogging              | 70                                      | 33.8%   | 17.0%  |
| 9    | Football (AFL)                 | 69                                      | 33.3%   | 4.1%   |
| 10   | Athletics                      | 66                                      | 31.9%   | 1.5%   |

<sup>6</sup> Victorian Agency for Health Information (2023) Victorian Population Health Survey 2023. <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/victorian-population-health-survey-2023>

### How people participate in sport and active recreation

When asked in what capacity they participate in these activities, the most common response was as 'an occasional informal activity with friends or family', followed by 'on my own'. The third most common response was 'as part of a sports club', followed by 'in an organised group with an instructor'.

### Participation trends in sport and active recreation by local residents

Ararat Rural City survey respondents show a similar pattern to Victorian trend data in that they have an increased likelihood of engaging in informal, individual physical activities as opposed to organised sporting activities. This trend highlights the need to consider both active recreation activities alongside structured sporting opportunities.

Some notable differences are the higher percentage of people who bushwalk / hike in the Shire (possibly due to the proximity of the Grampians and other nearby bushland) and a higher percentage of people who take part in athletics, which may be to do with the new athletics facilities in Ararat.

### Children's participation in sport and active recreation

Children who attend early years services were invited to draw their favourite sport and active recreation activities. 47 drawings were received. Key themes emerging from these drawings indicate that play spaces are of significant value to children. Play spaces and areas of open space create opportunities for children to learn skills that help them to succeed in and enjoy sport and active recreation activities, e.g. learning how to cooperate and play with others, challenge themselves and develop physical skills such as running, climbing, swinging, balancing, throwing, etc. The top 13 activities mentioned by children (in order of priority) include:

- Sliding (7)
- Playing in muddy puddles (7)
- Football (5)
- Soccer (4)
- Dancing (3)
- Motorbike riding (3)
- Swimming (3)
- Swinging (3)
- Trampolining (3)
- Kicking a ball (2)
- Riding a bike (2)
- Riding a horse (2)
- Throwing a ball (2)

There was insufficient data from children aged 5-18 to make any statements about the most popular activities, although based on enrolments in sport and active recreation activities and Victorian physical activity trends for children, it is anticipated that the following sport and active recreation activities are likely to be popular:

- Swimming
- Basketball
- Australian Football
- Netball
- Tennis
- Dancing
- Gymnastics
- Walking.

Junior cricket is in a period of redevelopment and football (soccer) is emerging.

## 9.2 What activities would local residents like to do

### Desired sport and active recreation activities

According to the community survey, the top 10 most desired activities by those who responded to this question include:

1. Yoga
2. Dancing
3. Fitness classes / gym
4. Pilates
5. Swimming
6. Volleyball
7. Walking
8. Cycling
9. Martial arts
10. Pickleball.



### 9.3 Enablers to participation

Through the community survey, local residents told us that they would be more likely to participate in sport and active recreation primarily if their activity of choice is available locally and if facilities were better quality and had more availability around their usage.

To encourage local residents to take part in or increase participation in physical activity, we need to reduce barriers to participation, e.g. cost, transport, clubs that are not welcoming, opening times, etc. We also need to consider trying to establish some new activities; improving facilities; activating spaces; improving accessibility; supporting volunteers; and providing more information about what is available.

The following key directions have been identified in order to help increase or maintain participation in sport and active recreation by residents of Ararat Rural City:

- Improve accessibility - improvement physical access to a building and the user's experience; provide greater access to spaces such as sports fields or pavilions that organisations were previously not permitted to use or not permitted to use at certain times; reduce some of the barriers to participation such as lowering the cost of activities, providing transportation to the activity, providing a culturally safe space, providing equipment free of charge for the activity or providing childcare, for example.
- Provide and promote free / low-cost sport and active recreation opportunities - promote the State Government's Get Active Kids Voucher Program<sup>8</sup>; consider the establishment of a sports library where local residents can borrow equipment; continue to provide free facilities that encourage participation in physical activity, e.g. outdoor fitness equipment, pump tracks, skate parks, playgrounds and shared trails.
- Activate places and spaces - provide events; shade, seats; lighting; signage; informal recreation equipment and public art.

<sup>8</sup> Victorian State Government (2025) Get Active Victoria - Kids Voucher Program. <https://www.getactive.vic.gov.au/vouchers/>

### 9.4 Increasing participation by under-represented communities

There are specific groups within the community that are under-represented in terms of sport and active recreation participation, i.e. women; girls; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; people with a disability; LGBTQI+ community; culturally and linguistically diverse people; people from low incomes or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage; and disengaged youth.

#### Girls and women

Girls and women face a range of barriers to participating in sport and active recreation. These include lack of appropriate facilities (such as open showers and urinals in change rooms), limited access to training and competition times, body image concerns, high costs, sports facilities primarily designed for and dominated by boys, perceived safety risks, lack of public toilets and juggling child-rearing responsibilities. In addition, inflexible uniform requirements and the need to commit to seasonal or term-based fees can discourage casual participation, especially for those working shifts.

Strategies to address these barriers include ensuring facilities are female-friendly (with private change spaces and equitable access to amenities), relaxing uniform rules to accommodate comfort and body image concerns, provision of more lighting and better passive surveillance of areas, provision of more public toilets, offering child minding or fenced play areas near sports venues, and providing flexible, low-cost or casual participation options. Encouraging champions for female teams and promoting inclusive programs also help foster a supportive environment for girls and women to take part in sport and active recreation.

There is strong demand by women and girls for active recreation opportunities too, including activities such as yoga, dancing, pilates, walking and horse riding. A gender lens needs to be applied to Council's sport and active recreation expenditure to ensure that adequate provision is made for active recreational opportunities that appeal to women and girls.

It is important to engage with women and girls in any developments to identify, understand and address barriers to participation. Make Space for Girls<sup>9</sup> provides some excellent tools to assist with this. Consideration may also be given to encouraging clubs to become a member of the CORE Alliance, who's vision is for safe, equal and respectful communities in the Grampians region (with a focus on preventing violence against women and children). CORE is facilitated by Women's Health Grampians.



<sup>9</sup> Make Space for Girls: <https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/about-us>

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community**

To increase participation by the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community, it is essential to create welcoming, inclusive, and culturally safe environments. This can involve providing information about physical activity opportunities in multiple languages, engaging with CALD community leaders to understand specific needs, and offering culturally appropriate programs and activities. Some of the key activities identified by Council's settlement staff and State Sporting Associations that are of interest to members of the Fijian, Samoan and Karen communities are volleyball, soccer, swimming lessons, badminton and table tennis. Creating partnerships with local multicultural organisations and ensuring staff and volunteers receive cultural awareness training also help foster trust and break down barriers.

Other effective strategies include promoting low-cost or free participation options, facilitating access to facilities through community transport programs, and offering flexible participation models that accommodate different cultural and religious practices. Providing equipment free of charge and ensuring the availability of family-friendly spaces can further encourage involvement. Most importantly, ongoing consultation with CALD community members is key to identifying and addressing barriers, ensuring that sport and active recreation opportunities are truly accessible and appealing to all.

### **People with disabilities**

To encourage participation in physical activity by people with disabilities, it is important to consider their individual needs and desires. Ensuring that facilities are accessible and inclusive is essential, including features such as ramps, accessible toilets, Braille signage, hearing loops, quiet spaces and equipment that

can be used by people with varying abilities. The use of Universal Design Principles and compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is important.

Providing a range of activity options—including adaptive sports, modified group classes, and social or recreational programs—can also help foster engagement. Additionally, promoting a welcoming and supportive environment, offering flexible participation options, and raising awareness about available programs encourage greater involvement from people with disabilities. Engaging directly with people with disabilities and their carers to understand and address specific barriers is key to developing effective and inclusive opportunities for physical activity.

### **Older adults**

To encourage participation in physical activity by older adults, it's crucial to provide a variety of accessible and enjoyable options that cater to different interests and abilities. Initiatives might include offering walking and cycling opportunities on off-road trails and in dog parks, low-impact activities like golf, and aquatic programs such as swimming, aqua aerobics, and hydrotherapy. Modified sports—like pickleball and walking soccer—can make participation more accessible, while softer playing surfaces, such as synthetic or cushioned courts, help reduce injury risk.

Exercise programs in community halls, including yoga and pilates, as well as strength training and chair exercise classes, are beneficial for maintaining health and wellbeing. Gentle outdoor exercise sessions, such as tai chi, can also appeal to older adults seeking a social and supportive environment. Importantly, designing programs that promote social connection, flexibility, and fun, while considering accessibility and affordability, will help older adults feel welcome and motivated to stay active.

## 10.0 Pillar 3: Partners

**To work in partnership with clubs, community organisations, state / regional sporting association, education sector, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.**

A diverse range of organisations are responsible for delivering or facilitating sport and active recreation opportunities in Ararat Rural City including:

- Ararat Rural City Council
- Grampians Health
- Sport and Recreation Victoria
- State Sporting Associations
- Department of Environment Energy and Climate Action (DEECA)
- Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations
- Parks Victoria
- Schools
- Sports Central
- Private sector

Collaborations between these different groups can ensure better health, social, economic and environmental outcomes are achieved and ensure that limited resources are maximised. These organisations can also help Ararat Rural City achieve its goal of increased physical activity participation as identified in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Details about the roles and responsibilities of each partner and some of the key issues and priorities are included in the Appendix.



## 11.0 Pillar 4: Processes

**To develop strategic plans, policies and tools to guide Council's decision making and investment in sport and active recreation.**

### 11.1 Tools, policies, strategies and procedures

To guide decision making, based on equitable and transparent principles, the use of tools, policies, strategies and procedures can be beneficial. Currently Ararat Rural City is guided by a variety of plans, strategies, policies and laws, including, but not limited to the following:

- Council Plan 2025-2029
- Community Vision 2035
- Statement of Commitment to Gender Equality
- Local laws
- Risk Management Framework
- Strategies, e.g. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan; and Municipal Road Management Plan
- Master plans, e.g. Alexandra Oval
- Policies, e.g. Asset Management Policy; Child Safe Policy; Community engagement policy

Some process gaps or process improvements have been identified through the preparation of this strategy. To improve future planning and investment decisions, several tools should be developed as part of the implementation phase of this strategy.

### 11.2 Infrastructure planning

A key role of Ararat Rural Council is to undertake sport and recreation infrastructure planning on behalf of the community. This would involve the development of masterplans, specialised strategies (playspace / aquatic / tracks and trails), concept designs, schematic designs, site investigations, costings etc. This information will then feed into Council's project pipeline.

### 11.3 Information sharing

Ararat Rural City Council, clubs and organisations should utilise a diversity of communication tools (both online and hard copy) to increase awareness of existing sport and active recreation opportunities in the municipality by local residents, including: online community directories; websites; social media; posters; banners / signage; letterbox drops; presentations and targeted emails to established networks.

### 11.4 Asset Database





Whilst Council has a list of its assets, the information provided is limited. As part of the development of this strategy, a more comprehensive database of activities has been produced, incorporating information (where available) such as location, facilities, management, user groups, contact information, etc, as well as photos of each site. This needs to be updated periodically.

### 11.5 Capital works assessment tool

A capital works assessment tool has been developed, based on the planning principles within this strategy, to help Council prioritise one project over another. Refer to the Appendix for details.

## 12.0 Key directions of the strategy

Key areas of focus include of the Ararat Rural City Council Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2026-2036) include:

|   |  |
|---|--|
|    | <b>PILLAR 1 – PLACES</b>   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving existing facilities wherever possible</li><li>• Developing a new indoor sports stadium in Ararat</li><li>• Improving paths, tracks and trails for recreational purposes</li></ul>  |
|    | <b>PILLAR 2 – PEOPLE</b>   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing some new sport and active recreational opportunities, e.g. pickleball court, outdoor volleyball net, disc golf</li><li>• Improving active recreational opportunities</li><li>• Better activating spaces</li><li>• Providing improved participation opportunities for women and girls; CALD communities; people with disabilities; and older adults</li></ul>  |
|  | <b>PILLAR 3 – PARTNERS</b>   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting clubs and volunteers</li><li>• Working with partners to share resources</li></ul>   |
|  | <b>PILLAR 4 – PROCESSES</b>  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Securing more resources to undertake sport and active recreation planning functions</li><li>• Developing planning tools and frameworks to assist Council to make informed sport and active recreation investment decisions</li><li>• Master planning for reserves and undertaking works at various reserves (e.g. pavilion upgrades, court resurfacing, lighting, shade, play spaces, etc)</li><li>• Improving information about sport and active recreation opportunities available</li><li>• Improving sustainability and accessibility through the use of industry guidelines, e.g. Environmentally Sustainable Design and Universal Design Principles</li><li>• Securing additional resources to provide sport and recreation planning, programs and services for the community</li><li>• Play space planning</li><li>• Undertaking an aquatics review</li></ul> |

A separate action plan has been developed to provide greater detail in relation to the key directions of the Ararat Rural City Council Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

In recognition of the fact that sport and active recreation crosses over into many areas within Ararat Rural City, it is important that a multi-disciplinary team is established to oversee and

implement this strategy. It is suggested that this group meets at least twice per year to monitor actions and that once per year all actions are reviewed and modified if needed. Ideally one officer will be given the responsibility of overseeing actions and coordinating meetings. A new sport and active recreation strategy should be developed in 2036.

Image: West Vic News Pty Ltd



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To reduce environmental impact, residents and interested parties are encouraged to access the report via Council's website, [www.ararat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au)



Ararat Rural City

[www.ararat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au)

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

# Ararat Sport and Active Recreation Strategy ACTION PLAN 2026-2036



Ararat Rural City

## Traditional Acknowledgement

Ararat Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and recreate - the Eastern Maar, Barengi Gadjin (the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, and Jupagulk peoples of the Wotjobaluk Nations), and Wadawurrung peoples, and recognise their connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the within named party to which it is addressed ("the Communityvibe client") only. All recommendations by Communityvibe are based on information provided by or on behalf of the Communityvibe client and Communityvibe has relied on such information being correct at the time this report is prepared. Communityvibe shall take no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to the Communityvibe client or to any third party whether direct or consequential as a result of or in any way arising from any unauthorised use of this report or any recommendations contained within.

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### Supported by:



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Recreation Strategy is supported  
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Image: West Vic News Pty Ltd

# 1.0 Action Plan




The following action plan describes the key initiatives identified through research, community engagement and the facility audit. Many of these initiatives will require external funding. In terms of priority, the following is used:





|                        |     |            |
|------------------------|-----|------------|
| <b>High priority</b>   | »»» | 0-4 years  |
| <b>Medium priority</b> | »»  | 5-9 years  |
| <b>Low priority</b>    | »   | 10 years + |
| <b>Ongoing</b>         | ^   | Continuous |



## PILLAR 1: PLACES

To provide a diversity of accessible, inclusive and fit-for-purpose sport and active recreation places and spaces for the community.



| Place                             | Details   | Partners  | Resources   | Priority   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Pipeline projects</b>          | Develop and maintain a pipeline of future sport and active recreation infrastructure projects that is updated annually including proposed infrastructure type, location, scope, timing, and cost. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>• Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations</li> </ul>  | Staff time to establish the pipeline of sport and active recreation infrastructure projects annually          | Ongoing<br> |
| <b>Larger recreation reserves</b> | Undertake master plans for larger recreation reserves in the municipality. Through the master planning process, identify key priorities and work towards implementing these key priorities.       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>• Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action</li> </ul>  | Funds to undertake master plans and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants).     | High<br>   |
| <b>Aquatic facilities</b>         | Undertake an Aquatic Review to explore options regarding aquatic facilities in Ararat, including potential pool upgrades at Willaura and Lake Bolac.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake Bolac Recreation Reserve Committee of Management</li> <li>• Willaura Recreation Reserve Committee of Management</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul> | Funds to undertake an aquatic review and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants) | High<br>  |

| Place                           | Details   | Partners   | Resources   | Priority   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Indoor sports facilities</b> | Undertake an Indoor Sports Facility Review to explore options regarding indoor sports facilities in Ararat suitable for sports such as basketball, indoor netball, volleyball, Futsal, gymnastics, gym, etc.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>• State Sporting Associations</li> </ul>  | Funds to undertake an indoor sports facility review and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)  | High<br>      |
| <b>Tracks and trails</b>        | Undertake a Tracks and Trails Strategy to guide the planning, provision, management, maintenance and promotion of tracks and trails (including recreational paths, hiking trails, mountain bike tracks, pump tracks, BMX, etc) across the municipality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking and cycling groups</li> <li>• Recreation Reserve Committees of Management</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>• Parks Victoria</li> <li>• Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action</li> <li>• Water authorities</li> <li>• Neighbouring Local Government Authorities</li> </ul> | Funds to undertake a tracks and trails strategy and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)  | High<br>      |
| <b>Play spaces</b>              | Undertake a play strategy to guide Ararat Rural City Council's planning, provision, management, maintenance and promotion of play across the municipality.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul>  | Funds to undertake a play strategy and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)   | Medium<br>  |
| <b>Community suggestions</b>    | Explore the list of suggestions received from community members during the consultation phase of the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (as identified in the Community Engagement Report).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific groups</li> <li>• Recreation Reserve Committees of Management</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>• Parks Victoria</li> <li>• Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action</li> <li>• Water authorities</li> </ul>   | <p>Staff time to explore, further scope and determine feasibility of some of the options.</p> <p>Funds to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)</p> | Ongoing<br> |

## PILLAR 2: PEOPLE



To encourage and support increased participation in sport and active recreation by the community.

| Place                     | Activity   | Details   | Partners  | Resources                   | Priority   |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>General population</b> | Work in partnership with sports clubs, Sports Central and State Sporting Associations to run an annual sport and recreation open day | This sport and recreation open day / come and try day will enable local residents to learn about what types of physical activities are available and perhaps get to try out some of these activities.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports clubs</li> <li>• Sports Central</li> <li>• State Sporting Associations</li> </ul>   | Staff time                  | High<br>      |
| <b>Women and girls</b>    | Facilitate / advocate for facilities, services and programs that support participation of women and girls in physical activity.      | <p>Facilities may include spaces for activities such as yoga, pilates and dance, along with female friendly change facilities; and improved lighting.</p> <p>Services may include a component in community grants programs that prioritises women and girls; casual participation fees; child minding; and policies that ensure equal access to facilities.</p> <p>Programs may include yoga, pilates, dance, walking, horse riding, etc.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports clubs</li> <li>• Health centres</li> <li>• Ararat Fitness Centre</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• Sports Central</li> <li>• State Sporting Associations</li> </ul> | Staff time<br>Project costs | Ongoing<br> |

Ararat Rural City Council |  
Ararat Sport and Active Recreation Strategy ACTION PLAN | 2026-2036

| Place                           | Activity   | Details  | Partners   | Resources                              | Priority |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|----------|
| <b>CALD communities</b>         | Facilitate / advocate for facilities, services and programs that support participation of CALD communities in physical activity.         | <p>Facilities may include outdoor volleyball courts and rugby fields.</p> <p>Services may include low cost / free activities; transportation; communications in community languages; accommodating different cultural and religious practices, etc.</p> <p>Programs specifically tailored towards CALD communities may include volleyball, soccer, cane ball, rugby, water safety program, women's learn to swim lessons, men's learn to swim lessons.</p>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council's settlement staff</li> <li>• Sports clubs</li> <li>• Ararat Fitness Centre</li> <li>• Health centres</li> <li>• Churches</li> <li>• Sports Central</li> <li>• State Sporting Associations</li> </ul>     | <p>Staff time</p> <p>Project costs</p> | Ongoing  |
| <b>People with disabilities</b> | Facilitate / advocate for facilities, services and programs that support participation of people with disabilities in physical activity. | <p>Facilities may include ramps, accessible toilets, Braille signage, hearing loops, quiet spaces – guided by DDA compliance and Universal Design Principles.</p> <p>Services may include a component in community grants programs that prioritises people with disabilities; low cost / free activities; transportation; flexible participation options, etc.</p> <p>Programs may include adaptive sports; modified group classes; and social or recreational programs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability organisations</li> <li>• Sports clubs</li> <li>• Ararat Fitness Centre</li> <li>• Health centres</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• Sports Central</li> <li>• State Sporting Associations</li> </ul> | <p>Staff time</p> <p>Project costs</p> | Ongoing  |

| Place               | Activity   | Details  | Partners  | Resources                              | Priority |
|---------------------|--|--|---|--|----------|
| <b>Older adults</b> | <p>Facilities may include walking / cycling trails, aquatic facilities, gyms, sports facilities, halls, parks and gardens, etc.</p> <p>Services may include a component in community grants programs that prioritises older adults; low cost / free activities; transportation; flexible participation options, etc.</p> <p>Programs may include modified sports; low impact sport and recreation activities; and social or recreational programs.</p> | <p>Facilities may include outdoor volleyball courts and rugby fields.</p> <p>Services may include low cost / free activities; transportation; communications in community languages; accommodating different cultural and religious practices, etc.</p> <p>Programs specifically tailored towards CALD communities may include volleyball, soccer, cane ball, rugby, water safety program, women's learn to swim lessons, men's learn to swim lessons.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned Activity Groups</li> <li>Senior Citizens</li> <li>Sports typically catering for older adults, e.g. croquet and lawn bowls</li> <li>Ararat Fitness Centre</li> <li>Health centres</li> <li>Private sector</li> <li>Sports Central</li> <li>State Sporting Associations</li> </ul> | <p>Staff time</p> <p>Project costs</p> | Ongoing  |

## PILLAR 3: PARTNERS






To work in partnership with clubs, community organisations, state / regional sporting associations, education sector, government agencies and the private sector to facilitate sport and active recreation opportunities for the community.

| Place                        | Activity  | Details   | Partners  | Resources  | Priority |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|------------|----------|
| <b>Private sector</b>        | Seek opportunities to work with private sector providers of sport and active recreation to deliver physical activities at events as appropriate.                                  | This sport and recreation open day / come and try day will enable local residents to learn about what types of physical activities are available and perhaps get to try out some of these activities.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private sector</li> </ul>  | Staff time | Ongoing  |
| <b>Partner organisations</b> | Promote initiatives and programs from partner organisations that are designed to improve accessibility by people from under-represented communities / groups in physical activity | Focus on under-represented groups such as people with disabilities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities; girls and women; older adults; people from low socio-economic backgrounds) to sport and active recreation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports clubs</li> <li>Health organisations</li> <li>Community groups</li> <li>Schools</li> </ul> | Staff time | Ongoing  |

## PILLAR 4: PROCESSES



To develop strategic plans, policies and tools to guide Council's decision making and investment in sport and active recreation.

| Place                                    | Details   | Partners   | Resources        | Priority   |
|--|---|--|------------------|--|
| <b>Policies, processes and resources</b> | Investigate allocating resources to sport and active recreation planning, facility management, promotion, club support, partnership development and advocacy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be determined</li> </ul>   | To be determined | Highest<br>   |
|  | Continue to update existing tools, policies, strategies and processes as required.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>  | Staff time       | Ongoing<br>   |
|  | Participate in formal and informal regional sport and recreation networks to share information with neighbouring Local Government Authorities.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>Local Government Authorities in the region</li> </ul>                                  | Staff time       | Ongoing<br> |
|  | Support the implementation of existing plans with a sport and active recreation focus (e.g. master plans and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> <li>Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>DEECA</li> <li>State Sporting Associations</li> </ul> | Staff time       | Ongoing<br> |
|  | Continue to update the Asset Database as new information becomes available or conditions change.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>  | Staff time       | Ongoing<br> |

| Place                                   | Details   | Partners   | Resources   | Priority     |
|---|---|--|---|--------------|
| <b>Facility management and planning</b> | Continue to plan for and provide free public places and spaces such as parks, playgrounds, shared trails, outdoor fitness equipment, pump tracks, etc for sport and active recreation participation by local residents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> <li>• DEECA</li> <li>• Parks Victoria</li> </ul> | Staff time<br>Facility development and maintenance budgets            | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|   | Promote universal design and compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements in facilities.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs and organisations</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul>         | Staff time<br>Potentially funds to improve accessibility              | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|   | Ensure that all new sport and active recreation facility developments, upgrades and renewals incorporate Environmentally Sustainable Design principles (playing surface, clubrooms / change rooms and surrounds).       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs and organisations</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul>         | Funds to implement ESD features                                       | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|   | Design any facility developments or upgrades to include consideration of needs to respond to potential climate change impacts.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs and organisations</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul>         | Funds to implement initiatives that respond to climate change impacts | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|   | Ensure that consideration is given to the development of female change facilities in pavilions.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs and organisations</li> <li>• Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul>         | Funds to provide female change facilities at pavilions                | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|   | Establish or enhance working relationships with schools throughout the municipality to enable discussions about shared facility planning to help reduce duplication and to maximise asset usage.                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools</li> </ul>  | Staff time  | Ongoing<br>↑ |

| Place                                | Details  | Partners   | Resources  | Priority |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|----------|
| <b>Programming and activation</b>    | Support initiatives by partner organisations that increase participation in sport and active recreation.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> <li>State Sporting Associations</li> <li>Health organisations</li> <li>Schools</li> </ul>                          | Staff time<br>Potentially some promotional funds | Ongoing  |
|                                      | Continue to promote clubs / organisations through Council's Community Directory and expand the level of information available about each club / organisation.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> </ul>  | Staff time                                       | Ongoing  |
|                                      | Monitor the impact of potential participation barriers and implement measures to improve accessibility as required.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>  | Staff time                                       | Ongoing  |
| <b>Club / organisational support</b> | Encourage multi-use of facilities and the delivery of additional activities by clubs / organisations (e.g. social / modified activities) as an add-on to their traditional offerings.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> <li>Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul>   | Staff time                                       | Ongoing  |
|                                      | Continue to support clubs / organisations to develop new programs, train volunteers, etc. through the Community Grants program.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> </ul>  | Staff time                                       | Ongoing  |
|                                      | Work in partnership with Sports Central and relevant State Sporting Associations to bring additional resources to Ararat Rural City to support clubs / organisations and local residents to deliver physical activity opportunities and to be more active. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports Central</li> <li>Relevant State Sporting Associations</li> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> <li>Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul> | Staff time                                       | Ongoing  |

| Place                                 | Details  | Partners  | Resources  | Priority     |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|------------|--------------|
| <b>Club / organisational supportc</b> | Explore opportunities to better support clubs and their volunteers in relation to issues such as governance, planning, policy development, programming, information and advice regarding grant applications. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> <li>Sports Central</li> <li>State Sporting Associations</li> <li>Sport and Recreation Victoria</li> </ul> | Staff time | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|                                       | Promote any government initiative that provides funding or training for potential coaches / sports administrators locally  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Government</li> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> <li>Sports Central</li> </ul>   | Staff time | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|                                       | Commit to nominating sport and active recreation volunteers to awards programs in the region to recognise and reward them for their service.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports Central</li> <li>State Sporting Associations</li> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> </ul>  | Staff time | Ongoing<br>↑ |
|                                       | Continue to liaise with clubs and organisations to understand their specific issues and needs and provide support or advocacy as appropriate.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports Central</li> <li>State Sporting Associations</li> <li>Clubs and organisations</li> </ul>  | Staff time | Ongoing<br>↑ |

## 2.0 Implementation and evaluation

In recognition of the fact that sport and active recreation crosses over into many areas within Ararat Rural City, it is important that a multi-disciplinary team is established to oversee and implement this plan. It is suggested that this group meets at least twice per year to monitor actions and that once per year all actions are reviewed and modified if needed. Ideally one officer will be given the responsibility of coordinating meetings. A collaborative partnership-based approach should also be developed and maintained with Sport and Recreation Victoria in the implementation of actions and regular review of the strategy. A new sport and active recreation plan should be developed in 2035.



## Contact Council

**Municipal Offices:**

59 Vincent Street, Ararat VIC 3377

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(03) 5355 0200

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(03) 5352 1695

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[www.ararat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au)

**Postal address:**

PO Box 246  
Ararat VIC 3377

To reduce environmental impact, residents and interested parties are encouraged to access the report via Council's website, [www.ararat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au).



Ararat Rural City

[www.ararat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au)

### 3.3 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES 2026

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27924

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

It has been one year since Council adopted its 2025 Advocacy Program. This report provides highlights of the successes from the previous 2025 Advocacy Program, and provides an updated list of Priorities for 2026, which include:

- New indoor multi-sports facility at the Alexandra Oval Reserve
- A&J McDonald Centre Redevelopment
- Local roads funding
- Achieving the full extent of the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline
- Connecting Valorify to the gas grid
- A north-south heavy vehicle route for the Pyrenees Highway

#### **DISCUSSION**

At the March 2025 Council Meeting, the advocacy priorities for the Ararat Rural City were confirmed for 2025. A number of the 2025 priorities have been achieved or significantly progressed.

Several key achievements from the 2025 Advocacy Program include:

- Ararat Rural City secured over \$3.5 million from the Victorian Government's Regional Worker Accommodation Fund Round 2 in August 2025 to bring 25 new homes to Ararat.
- \$745,000 was awarded for the Jack and Jill Kindergarten Refurbishment in April 2025, and a new kindergarten has been earmarked at Ararat West Primary School in February 2026
- An additional \$15 million was announced by the State Government in July 2025 for the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline, with another \$15.6 million invested by Grampians Wimmera Mallee (GWM) Water. Council are continuing to advocate for additional funding from the Federal Government to complete the Mininera Extension.
- \$5 million in grant funding was secured in August 2025 from the Federal Governments' Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program for the Buangor-Ben Nevis Road Upgrade
- A speed reduction to 80km/hr was put in place in August 2025 on a well known narrow bridge on the Western Highway, and the upgrade has reached a major milestone with the Cultural Heritage Management Plan being approved in March 2026.

Council's advocacy priorities for 2026 will focus on six major community-shaping projects and critical local issues that urgently need government action. These high-impact initiatives will strengthen our region's economy, improve liveability and secure essential services for the future.

The 2026 Advocacy Priorities are:

#### **NEW INDOOR MULTI-SPORTS FACILITY**

New recreational facilities that are functional, accessible, and inclusive are needed. Plans feature 3 basketball courts, gymnastics facilities, a squash court, female friendly change rooms, a first aid room and more. We will be seeking \$12 million towards this project.

### **A&J McDONALD CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT**

Much of this building is not in current use due to its lack of essential infrastructure and disability access. A vast redevelopment would be delivered in partnership with Grampians Community Health. We will be seeking \$15 million towards this project.

### **LOCAL ROADS FUNDING**

Local Roads Funding is sought to seal urban gravel roads and laneways in Ararat. We will be seeking \$1.5 million towards this project.

### **WATER PIPELINE**

The full extent of the East Grampians Rural Water Pipeline Project is essential for rural communities and economies. A core 2026 priority is to complete the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline. Council will be advocating strongly for a further \$34 million for this project.

### **CONNECTING RENEWABLE GAS**

Connect Valorify to the gas grid to enable green biogas to be fed directly into the existing grid, eliminating unnecessary costs and carbon emissions for transporting gas on trucks. A \$2 million contribution is sought for this project.

### **NORTH-SOUTH HV ROUTE**

A north-south heavy vehicle route for the Pyrenees Highway is needed to remove large trucks from the Ararat CBD. Council will be advocating for \$5 million for the necessary studies and investigations.

To support Council's efforts, an Advocacy Priorities 2026 document has been prepared. The format of this document enables each priority to be presented and shared with Federal and State Governments.

### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

#### ***Alignment to Council Plan 2025-29 Strategic Objectives***

The 2026 Advocacy Priorities aligns with all strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29

#### ***Budget Implications***

The work to advocate for these priorities will be undertaken by existing resources and has no budget implications.

#### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

N/A

#### ***Sustainability Implications***

N/A

#### ***Risk Assessment***

There is little material risk in implementing the advocacy program. Failure to achieve effective progress on these key issues may impede positive economic, social and environmental outcomes for Ararat Rural City.

#### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

These key advocacy issues have been identified through community, stakeholder and intergovernmental engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Endorses the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026*
2. *Publishes the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 document on Engage Ararat, and*
3. *Continues to advocate to State and Federal governments on the key priorities identified in the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 document to move them forward and achieve outcomes for the community.*

**MOVED CR KAUR  
SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG**

**That Council:**

1. **Endorses the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026**
2. **Publishes the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 document on Engage Ararat, and**
3. **Continues to advocate to State and Federal governments on the key priorities identified in the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 document to move them forward and achieve outcomes for the community.**

**Cr Kaur and Cr J Armstrong spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5314/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 are provided as Attachment 3.3



Ararat Rural City Council has identified a number of major community-shaping projects and critical local issues that urgently need government action. These are high-impact initiatives that will strengthen our region's economy, improve liveability, and secure essential services for the future.

With the state election approaching, Council is calling on all parties to commit the funding and support needed now to deliver the transformative projects our community deserves.

#### NEW INDOOR MULTI-SPORTS FACILITY

New recreational facilities that are functional, accessible, and inclusive are needed. Plans feature 3 basketball courts, gymnastics facilities, a squash court, female friendly change rooms, a first aid room and more.

*Seeking \$12 million*

#### WATER PIPELINE

The full extent of the East Grampians Rural Water Pipeline Project is essential for rural communities and economies. A core 2026 priority is to complete the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline.

*Seeking \$34 million*

#### A&J McDONALD CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Much of this building is not in current use due to its lack of essential infrastructure and disability access. A vast redevelopment would be delivered in partnership with Grampians Community Health.

*Seeking \$15 million*

#### CONNECTING RENEWABLE GAS

Connect Valorify to the gas grid to enable green biogas to be fed directly into the existing grid, eliminating unnecessary costs and carbon emissions for transporting gas on trucks.

*Seeking \$2 million*

#### LOCAL ROADS FUNDING

Local Roads Funding is sought to seal urban gravel roads and laneways in Ararat.

*Seeking \$1.5 million*

#### NORTH-SOUTH HV ROUTE

A north-south heavy vehicle route for the Pyrenees Highway is needed to remove large trucks from the Ararat CBD.

*Seeking \$5 million for study*

#### Stay Informed

To find out more about Council's 2026 Advocacy Priorities, visit [engage.ararat.vic.gov.au](https://engage.ararat.vic.gov.au), or contact us on (03) 5355 0200 or email [council@ararat.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@ararat.vic.gov.au).

### 3.4 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27925

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 28 February 2026.

Based on the information provided by responsible officers and managers Council's overall financial performance is in line with budget.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council must establish and maintain a budgeting and reporting framework that is consistent with the principles of sound financial management.

#### **Key Financial information:**

##### **Income Statement (Attachment 1)**

The Income Statement measures how well Council has performed from an operating nature. It reports revenues and expenditure from the activities and functions undertaken, with the net effect being a surplus or deficit. Capital expenditure is excluded from this statement, as it is reflected in the Balance Sheet.

Attachment 1 shows that Council generated \$27.434 million in revenue and \$24.667 million in expenses to 28 February 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$2.767 million for the eight months ended 28 February 2026.

##### **Income**

**Rates and charges** account for 54% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26. Rates and charges are recognised when the rates have been raised, not when the income has been received. An amount of \$18.309 million has been recognised as income for the eight months ended 28 February 2026.

**User fees** account for 5% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$1.188 million has been received to 28 February 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

**Recurrent Operating Grants** total \$3.833 million to 28 February 2026, including \$1.880 million from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission for general purpose grants and \$1.220 million for the local roads grants.

**Non-recurrent Operating Grants** total \$1.629 million to 28 February 2026. Council has been successful in obtaining several grants that had not been budgeted for, as detailed in the table below. The amounts shown as unearned income will be treated as income in future accounting periods once the performance obligations of the grant have been met.

| <b>Non-Recurrent Operating Grants</b>                            | <b>Budget<br/>2025/26<br/>\$'000</b> | <b>Income<br/>2025/26<br/>\$'000</b> | <b>Unearned<br/>Income<br/>\$'000</b> |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ararat Housing Transition  | -                                    | -                                    | 300                                   |
| Digital Twin Victoria  | -                                    | -                                    | 950                                   |
| Free Public WiFi Services  | -                                    | -                                    | 1,289                                 |
| Supported Playgroups   | 67                                   | 46                                   | -                                     |
| Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy | -                                    | -                                    | 36                                    |
| CALD Outreach Workers Initiative                                 | 129                                  | 129                                  | -                                     |
| Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub                          | -                                    | 61                                   | 58                                    |
| Natural Disaster Relief  | -                                    | 158                                  | -                                     |
| Council Support Fund - Pomonal Fires                             | -                                    | -                                    | -                                     |
| Council Support Fund - Streatham Fires                           | -                                    | 400                                  | -                                     |
| Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings                    | 55                                   | 55                                   | -                                     |
| Centenary Park Dog Park  | 100                                  | 9                                    | 66                                    |
| Queen Street Housing Program                                     | -                                    | 486                                  | 5,211                                 |
| Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct                           | -                                    | -                                    | 400                                   |
| Early Career Educators   | -                                    | 73                                   | 31                                    |
| Ararat Active Bike Network                                       | 266                                  | -                                    | -                                     |
| Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility             | -                                    | -                                    | 504                                   |
| Primary Producer Support Payment                                 | -                                    | 125                                  | -                                     |
| Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund                           | -                                    | 50                                   | -                                     |
| Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)                              | -                                    | 37                                   | -                                     |
|  | <b>617</b>                           | <b>1,629</b>                         | <b>8,845</b>                          |

**Non-recurrent Capital Grants** total \$1.746 million to 28 February 2026, as detailed in the table below. The amounts shown as unearned income will be treated as income in future accounting periods once the performance obligations of the grant have been met.

| <b>Non-Recurrent Capital Grants</b>                                  | <b>Budget<br/>2025/26<br/>\$'000</b> | <b>Income<br/>2025/26<br/>\$'000</b> | <b>Unearned<br/>Income<br/>\$'000</b> |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Pedestrian Infrastructure Program                                    | -                                    | -                                    | 50                                    |
| Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Recreation Reserve Pavillion Redevelopment | -                                    | -                                    | 50                                    |
| Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Cobb & Co Stables                          | -                                    | 29                                   | 25                                    |
| Pony Club Sports Arena   | 1,490                                | 321                                  | 112                                   |
| Queen Street Housing Program   | -                                    | -                                    | 1,683                                 |
| Ararat Library Lighting & Exterior Upgrade                           | -                                    | 45                                   | 6                                     |
| TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program                             | -                                    | 90                                   | 401                                   |
| Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade                                     | -                                    | 75                                   | -                                     |
| Mount William Road Reconstruction                                    | -                                    | 1,174                                | 826                                   |
| Footpath-Ararat Retirement Village & Sports Precinct                 | -                                    | -                                    | 35                                    |
| Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)                                  | -                                    | 12                                   | 1                                     |
|  | <b>1,490</b>                         | <b>1,746</b>                         | <b>3,189</b>                          |

**Note**

It is important to note the following:

1. The Grants Operating (recurrent) figure in the Original Budget was \$8.909 million and in the Current Budget is recorded as \$4.721 million, as \$4.188 million was paid to Council in 2024/25 by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC) for the 2025/26 financial year.

Council has still received the expected VLGGC income, to be spent in 2025/26, however it will be reported over two financial years.

2. Unearned revenue received in prior years has been adjusted between the Original Budget and Current Budget with an additional \$6.659 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent), \$0.386 million for Grants Capital (recurrent) and \$2.282 million for Grants Capital (non-recurrent) included in the Current Budget on the assumption that each of the grant projects will be completed during the 2025/26 financial year.
3. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$2.050 million to a surplus of \$3.028 million for 2025/26. The year-end variance is a surplus of \$0.085 million when the actual year to date expenses are compared to the year to date budget.

### **Expenses**

**Employee Costs** account for approximately 37% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the eight months ended 28 February 2026 Council has incurred \$8.545 million in employee costs. These costs include several grant-funded positions not budgeted for, and organisation restructure costs.

**Materials and Services** account for approximately 28% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the eight months ended 28 February 2026, Council has incurred \$8.084 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2024/25 that are expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.

### **Note**

It is important to note the following:

There has been an increase in expenditure on materials and services from \$9.186 million in the Original Budget to \$13.357 million in the Current Budget for 2025/26. This has resulted from a carry forward amount of \$4.171 million from the 2024/25 financial year surplus and unspent grant funds which will be used to complete the projects in 2025/26.

### **Balance Sheet (Attachment 2)**

The Balance Sheet is one of the main financial statements and reports Council's assets, liabilities and equity at a given date, in this case 28 February 2026. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$9.813 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$27.791 million as at 28 February 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$6.076 million from \$14.841 million to \$20.917 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$3.699 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$6.765 million as at 28 February 2026.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$19.792 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$1.110 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$1.612 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$3.234 million, which includes grants received by Council, where in accordance with accounting standards, they are held as a liability until grant-related performance obligations have been met.

### **Statement of Cash Flows (Attachment 3)**

The Statement of Cash Flows shows how changes in the Statement of Financial Position and Income Statement affect Cash and Cash Equivalents, and breaks down the analysis to operating activities, investing activities and financing activities.

The Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the financial year of \$14.841 million have increased by \$6.076 million to \$20.917 million as at 28 February 2026.

Net cash of \$10.587 million was provided by operating activities, \$4.030 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.481 million was used in financing activities.

Investing activities includes payments for property, plant and equipment, and infrastructure.

#### Financial Performance Indicators (Attachment 4)

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework requires Councils to report various performance indicators at the end of each financial year.

A full list of financial performance indicators is included in Attachment 4.

| Indicator   | 30/6/2025 | 28/02/2026 |
|---|-----------|------------|
| <p><b>Working capital</b><br/> <i>Measure - Current assets compared to current liabilities.</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 100% to 400%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that sufficient working capital is available to pay bills as and when they fall due. High or increasing level of working capital suggests an improvement in liquidity</p>   | 122%      | 154%       |
| <p><b>Loans and borrowings</b><br/> <i>Measure - Loans and borrowings compared to rates.</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 0% to 70%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that the level of interest-bearing loans and borrowings should be appropriate to the size and nature of a council's activities. Low or decreasing level of loans and borrowings suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations</p> | 0.86%     | 0.22%      |
| <p><b>Indebtedness</b><br/> <i>Measure - Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 2% to 70%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that the level of long-term liabilities should be appropriate to the size and nature of a Council's activities. Low or decreasing level of long-term liabilities suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations</p>         | 7.83%     | 8.47%      |
| <p><b>Rates concentration</b><br/> <i>Measure - Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 30% to 80%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that revenue should be generated from a range of sources. High or increasing range of revenue sources suggests an improvement in stability</p>  | 49.39%    | 71.37%     |
| <p><b>Expenditure level</b><br/> <i>Measure - Expenses per property assessment</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$2,000 to \$10,000<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of expenditure suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency</p>  | \$4,936   | \$3,288    |
| <p><b>Indicator - Revenue level</b><br/> <i>Measure - Average residential rate per residential property assessment</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - \$700 to \$2,000<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of rates suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency</p>   | \$2,002   | \$2,033    |

| Indicator   | 30/6/2025 | 28/02/2026 |
|---|-----------|------------|
| <p><b>Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected</b></p> <p>The internal audit conducted in 2019 on Rates Revenue and Rate Debtor Management found no routine or regular reporting of large and long outstanding rates debtors.</p> <p>The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report.</p> <p>As at 28 February 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$5.803 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$3.337 million. In percentage terms 72.0% of the rates raised have been collected at 28 February 2026 compared to 70.2% up to 28 February 2025. The increased percentage up to 28 February 2026 includes payments totalling \$2.489 million received under the Victorian Government's Drought Support Package for Primary Producer Support Payments, which represents a 40% rate reduction on farm-rated properties.</p> <p>Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest.</p> <p>Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2025/26 there are 2,495 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,653 assessments in 2024/25.</p> | 87.8%     | 72.0%      |
| <p><b>Indicator - Asset Renewal &amp; Upgrade</b></p> <p><i>Measure - Asset renewal &amp; Upgrade compared to depreciation</i></p> <p>Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 40% to 130%</p> <p>Assessment of whether council assets are being renewed or upgraded as planned. It compares the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, replacing or upgrading existing assets with depreciation. Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate there is a lesser risk of insufficient spending on Council's asset base.</p>  | 100.75%   | 48.76%     |

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework provides "Expected ranges" for each indicator. The framework has been developed to consider results at the end of the financial year so some results during the year are outside the expected range due to the timing of receipts and payments.

Explanations are provided in Attachment 4 for those indicators that are outside the "expected ranges".

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

#### **6 STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices

- 6.1** Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation, and rating fairness

#### **Budget Implications**

Council's financial performance is in line with expectations.

#### **Policy/Relevant Law**

Section 97 - Quarterly Budget Report of the Local Government Act 2020 states:

1. As soon as practicable after the end of each quarter of the financial year, the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to the Council at a Council meeting which is open to the public.
2. A quarterly budget report must include–
  - a. a comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date; and
  - b. an explanation of any material variations; and
  - c. any other matters prescribed by the regulations.
3. In addition, the second quarterly report of a financial year must include a statement by the Chief Executive Officer as to whether a revised budget is, or may be, required.

### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

### **Risk Assessment**

Council is required to establish and maintain a budgeting and reporting framework that is consistent with the principles of sound management and this report assists Council in meeting that requirement.

### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

Council's financial performance reports will continue to be published monthly.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

1. *The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 28 February 2026 be received and adopted.*

### **MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR PRESTON**

**That:**

1. **The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 28 February 2026 be received and adopted.**

**Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5315/26**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators are provided as Attachment 3.4

Attachment 1  
Comprehensive Income Statement for the eight months ended 28 February 2026

|   | Original<br>Budget<br>\$'000 | Current<br>Budget<br>\$'000 | YTD<br>Budget<br>\$'000 | YTD<br>Actual<br>\$'000 | YTD<br>Variance<br>\$'000 | Variance  |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Income</b>   |                              |                             |                         |                         |                           |           |
| Rates and charges   | 18,425                       | 18,425                      | 18,247                  | 18,309                  | 62                        | 0%        |
| Statutory fees and fines  | 277                          | 277                         | 165                     | 150                     | (15)                      | -9%       |
| User fees   | 1,631                        | 1,641                       | 1,123                   | 1,188                   | 65                        | 6%        |
| Contributions - cash capital  | -                            | -                           | -                       | 34                      | 34                        | 0%        |
| Contributions - cash operating  | 93                           | 93                          | 6                       | 16                      | 10                        | 167%      |
| Grants - operating (recurrent)  | 8,909                        | 4,721                       | 3,629                   | 3,833                   | 204                       | 6%        |
| Grants - operating (non-recurrent)  | 617                          | 7,276                       | 1,412                   | 1,629                   | 217                       | 15%       |
| Grants - capital (recurrent)  | 2,338                        | 2,724                       | 300                     | 152                     | (148)                     | -49%      |
| Grants - capital (non-recurrent)  | 1,490                        | 3,772                       | 1,290                   | 1,746                   | 456                       | 35%       |
| Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, plant and equipment                                      | 20                           | 20                          | -                       | (33)                    | (33)                      | 0%        |
| Other income  | 630                          | 630                         | 420                     | 410                     | (10)                      | -2%       |
| Fair value adjustments for investment property  | -                            | -                           | -                       | -                       | -                         | 0%        |
| Share of net profits/(losses) of associates and joint ventures accounted for by the equity method | -                            | -                           | -                       | -                       | -                         | 0%        |
| <b>Total income</b>   | <b>34,430</b>                | <b>39,579</b>               | <b>26,592</b>           | <b>27,434</b>           | <b>842</b>                |           |
| <b>Expenses</b>   |                              |                             |                         |                         |                           |           |
| Employee costs  | 11,961                       | 11,961                      | 8,147                   | 8,545                   | 398                       | 5%        |
| Materials and services  | 9,186                        | 13,357                      | 8,234                   | 8,084                   | (150)                     | 2%        |
| Bad and doubtful debts  | -                            | -                           | -                       | -                       | -                         | 0%        |
| Depreciation  | 10,469                       | 10,469                      | 6,979                   | 7,408                   | 429                       | 6%        |
| Amortisation - right of use assets  | 308                          | 308                         | 205                     | 306                     | 101                       | 49%       |
| Borrowing costs   | 2                            | 2                           | 2                       | 3                       | 1                         | 50%       |
| Finance costs - leases  | 60                           | 60                          | 40                      | 82                      | 42                        | 105%      |
| Other expenses  | 394                          | 394                         | 303                     | 239                     | (64)                      | -21%      |
| <b>Total expenses</b>   | <b>32,380</b>                | <b>36,551</b>               | <b>23,910</b>           | <b>24,667</b>           | <b>757</b>                | <b>3%</b> |
| <b>Surplus for the year</b>   | <b>2,050</b>                 | <b>3,028</b>                | <b>2,682</b>            | <b>2,767</b>            | <b>85</b>                 | <b>3%</b> |
| <b>Other comprehensive income</b>   |                              |                             |                         |                         |                           |           |
| Net asset revaluation increment   | -                            | -                           | -                       | -                       | -                         |           |
| <b>Total comprehensive result</b>   | <b>2,050</b>                 | <b>3,028</b>                | <b>2,682</b>            | <b>2,767</b>            | <b>85</b>                 |           |

**Attachment 2**

**Balance Sheet as at 28 February 2026**

|   | 28/02/2026<br>\$'000 | 30/06/2025<br>\$'000 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Assets</b>                                 |                      |                      |
| <b>Current assets</b>                         |                      |                      |
| Cash and cash equivalents                     | 20,917               | 14,841               |
| Trade and other receivables                   | 6,765                | 3,066                |
| Financial assets                              | -                    | -                    |
| Inventories                                   | 109                  | 71                   |
| Prepayments                                   | -                    | -                    |
| <b>Total current assets</b>                   | <u>27,791</u>        | <u>17,978</u>        |
| <b>Non-current assets</b>                     |                      |                      |
| Trade and other receivables                   | 4                    | 4                    |
| Investments in joint venture                  | 1,527                | 1,527                |
| Property, plant and equipment, infrastructure | 636,303              | 639,714              |
| Right of use assets                           | 1,478                | 1,784                |
| Investment property                           | 2,615                | 2,615                |
| <b>Total non-current assets</b>               | <u>641,927</u>       | <u>645,644</u>       |
| <b>Total assets</b>                           | <u>669,718</u>       | <u>663,622</u>       |
| <b>Liabilities</b>                            |                      |                      |
| <b>Current liabilities</b>                    |                      |                      |
| Trade and other payables                      | 1,247                | 2,357                |
| Trust funds and deposits                      | 1,927                | 315                  |
| Unearned Income                               | 12,571               | 9,337                |
| Provisions                                    | 2,165                | 2,175                |
| Interest-bearing loans and borrowings         | 40                   | 156                  |
| Lease liabilities                             | 145                  | 426                  |
| <b>Total current liabilities</b>              | <u>18,095</u>        | <u>14,766</u>        |
| <b>Non-current liabilities</b>                |                      |                      |
| Provisions                                    | 285                  | 286                  |
| Interest-bearing loans and borrowings         | -                    | -                    |
| Lease liabilities                             | 1,412                | 1,412                |
| <b>Total non-current liabilities</b>          | <u>1,697</u>         | <u>1,698</u>         |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>                      | <u>19,792</u>        | <u>16,464</u>        |
| <b>Net Assets</b>                             | <u>649,926</u>       | <u>647,158</u>       |
| <b>Equity</b>                                 |                      |                      |
| Accumulated surplus                           | 298,268              | 295,501              |
| Reserves                                      | 351,658              | 351,657              |
| <b>Total Equity</b>                           | <u>649,926</u>       | <u>647,158</u>       |

Attachment 3

Statement of Cash Flows for the eight months ended 28 February 2026

|   | Eight months<br>to 28/02/2026    | Forecast Year<br>End to<br>30/06/2026 |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|   | Inflows/<br>(Outflows)<br>\$'000 | Inflows/<br>(Outflows)<br>\$'000      |
| <b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>                         |                                  |                                       |
| Rates and charges   | 15,875                           | 18,545                                |
| Statutory fees and fines  | 154                              | 277                                   |
| User fees   | 1,526                            | 1,794                                 |
| Grants - operating  | 7,897                            | 8,363                                 |
| Grants - capital  | 3,016                            | 3,370                                 |
| Contributions - monetary  | 204                              | 278                                   |
| Interest received   | 346                              | 500                                   |
| Trust funds and deposits taken                                      | 168                              | -                                     |
| Other receipts  | 96                               | 253                                   |
| Net GST refund/payment  | 303                              | 733                                   |
| Employee costs  | (9,151)                          | (11,960)                              |
| Materials and services  | (11,499)                         | (17,277)                              |
| Trust funds and deposits repaid                                     | 1,953                            | -                                     |
| Other payments  | (301)                            | (394)                                 |
| <b>Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities</b>          | <b>10,587</b>                    | <b>4,482</b>                          |
| <b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>                         |                                  |                                       |
| Payments for property, plant and equipment, infrastructure          | (4,119)                          | (12,999)                              |
| Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment, infrastructure | 89                               | 1,050                                 |
| Proceeds from investments   | -                                | -                                     |
| Payments for investments  | -                                | (500)                                 |
| <b>Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>          | <b>(4,030)</b>                   | <b>(12,449)</b>                       |
| <b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>                         |                                  |                                       |
| Finance costs   | (3)                              | (2)                                   |
| Repayment of borrowings   | (117)                            | (156)                                 |
| Proceeds from borrowings  | -                                | -                                     |
| Interest paid - lease liability                                     | (82)                             | (60)                                  |
| Repayment of lease liabilities                                      | (279)                            | (296)                                 |
| <b>Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities</b>          | <b>(481)</b>                     | <b>(514)</b>                          |
| Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents                | 6,076                            | (8,481)                               |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year    | 14,841                           | 14,841                                |
| <b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>           | <b>20,917</b>                    | <b>6,360</b>                          |

Printed 16/03/2026

**Attachment 4**  
**Financial Performance Indicators for the eight months ended 28 February 2026**

**Result**                      **Material Variations**

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**LIQUIDITY**

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**Dimension - Operating position**

**Indicator - Adjusted underlying result**

*Measure - Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)*

3.85%

[Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / Adjusted underlying revenue] x100

No material variation

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

-30% to 30%

Framework

Indicator of the broad objective that an adjusted underlying surplus should be generated in the ordinary course of business. A surplus or increasing surplus suggests an improvement in the operating position

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**Dimension - Liquidity**

**Indicator - Working capital**

*Measure - Current assets compared to current liabilities*

154% No material variation

[Current assets / Current liabilities] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

100% to 400%

Framework

Indicator of the broad objective that sufficient working capital is available to pay bills as and when they fall due. High or increasing level of working capital suggests an improvement in liquidity

**Indicator - Unrestricted cash**

*Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities*

34.89% No material variation

[Unrestricted cash / Current liabilities] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

10% to 300%

Framework

Indicator of the broad objective that sufficient cash which is free of restrictions is available to pay bills as and when they fall due. High or increasing level of unrestricted cash suggests an improvement in liquidity

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**OBLIGATIONS**

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**Dimension - Obligations**

**Indicator - Loans and borrowings**

*Measure - Loans and borrowings compared to rates*

0.22% No material variation

[Interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

0% to 70%

Framework

Indicator of the broad objective that the level of interest bearing loans and borrowings should be appropriate to the size and nature of a council's activities. Low or decreasing level of loans and borrowings suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations

*Loans and borrowings repayments compared to rates*

0.66% No material variation

[Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

0% to 30%

Framework

**Financial Performance Indicators for the eight months ended 28 February 2026** **Result**      **Material Variations**

**Indicator - Indebtedness**

*Measure - Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue* 8.47% No material variation  
 [(Non-current liabilities / Own source revenue) x100]

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 2% to 70%

Indicator of the broad objective that the level of long term liabilities should be appropriate to the size and nature of a Council's activities. Low or decreasing level of long term liabilities suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations.

**Indicator - Asset renewal and upgrade**

*Measure - Asset renewal & Upgrades compared to depreciation* 48.76% No material variation  
 [Asset renewal expenses / Asset depreciation] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 40% to 130%

Indicator of the broad objective that assets should be renewed as planned. High or increasing level of planned asset renewal being met suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations.

**STABILITY**

**Dimension - Stability**

**Indicator - Rates concentration**

*Measure - Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue* 71.37% No material variation  
 [Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 30% to 80%

Indicator of the broad objective that revenue should be generated from a range of sources. High or increasing range of revenue sources suggests an improvement in stability.

**Indicator - Rates effort**

*Measure - Rates compared to property values* 0.28% No material variation  
 [Rate revenue / Capital improved value of rateable properties in the municipality] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 0.15% to 0.75%

Indicator of the broad objective that the rating level should be set based on the community's capacity to pay. Low or decreasing level of rates suggests an improvement in the rating burden.

**EFFICIENCY**

**Dimension - Efficiency**

**Indicator - Expenditure level**

*Measure - Expenses per property assessment* \$3,288.49 No material variation  
 [Total expenses / Number of property assessments]

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$2,000 to \$5,000

Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of expenditure suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency.

**Indicator - Revenue level**

*Measure - Average rate per property assessment* \$2,032.93  
 [Total rate revenue (general rates and municipal charges) / Number of property assessments] **Outside Expected Range** The average rate per property assessment is slightly above the expected range.

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$700 to \$2,000

Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of rates suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency.

### 3.5 PRIVACY POLICY

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27926

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report seeks Council adoption of the Council's Privacy Policy. The policy sets out how Council collects, uses, discloses, stores and manages personal information, and the rights of individuals to access and correct their personal information. Adoption supports Council's obligations under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) (where applicable), and promotes consistent, transparent and privacy-protective practices across Council services.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The Privacy Policy provides Council's overarching statement on privacy and the handling of personal information collected through Council services, programs, facilities, compliance activities, community engagement and digital channels. It describes the types of personal information Council may collect, the purposes for which it is collected, how it is used and disclosed, how it is stored and protected, and how individuals can access and seek correction of their information or make a privacy complaint.

Subject to Council's decision, the policy will be published on Council's website and communicated internally. Operational procedures, forms and staff guidance materials will be aligned to the policy as required. The policy will be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect legislative changes, organisational changes, and lessons learned from any privacy incidents or complaints.

#### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

##### ***Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives***

#### **6 STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management, and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

- 6.2** Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.

##### ***Budget Implications***

There are no direct budget implications arising from adoption of the Privacy Policy. Implementation will be managed within existing resources, noting that any future system or process improvements identified through implementation may be considered through normal budget processes.

##### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

Relevant legislation and guidance includes the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) (including the Information Privacy Principles), the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) where Council handles health information, and the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic) in relation to recordkeeping. The policy also supports Council's broader information security and governance arrangements.

### ***Sustainability Implications***

There are no direct economic, social or environmental impacts arising from adoption of the policy. Improved privacy practices support organisational sustainability by strengthening governance, reducing the likelihood of privacy incidents, and maintaining community confidence in Council services.

### ***Risk Assessment***

Adoption of the Privacy Policy reduces governance and compliance risk by setting clear expectations for handling personal information. Residual risks relate to inconsistent implementation or staff awareness; these will be managed through communication, training, and periodic review of procedures and compliance.

### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

The updated policy has been developed as an organisational governance document. Relevant internal stakeholders (including service areas that collect personal information) will be informed as part of implementation. The policy will be made publicly available to support transparency and assist community members to understand how Council manages personal information.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

1. *Council adopts the Privacy Policy*

### **MOVED CR KAUR SECONDED CR J ARMSTRONG**

**That:**

1. **Council adopts the Privacy Policy**

**Cr Kaur and Cr J Armstrong spoke for the motion**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5316/26**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

The Privacy Policy is provided as Attachment 3.5



Ararat Rural City

# Privacy Policy



## DOCUMENT CONTROL

Category Type: Policy

Type: Council

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Last Review Date: 19 January 2021

Date Approved:

Next Review Date: January 2030

Revision No: 2

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Councillors
- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Operating Officer

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The information in this document is correct as at the date of publication but is subject to change. Please check Ararat Rural City Council website [www.ararat.vic.gov.au](http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au) to make sure this is the latest version.

Date of publication: 31 March 2026



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Ararat Rural City

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Ararat Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, the Eastern Maar, Barengi Gadjin (the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, and Jupagulk peoples of the Wotjobaluk Nations), and Wadawurrung peoples, and recognise their connection to the land and waterways. We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





## 2. Purpose

Ararat Rural City Council (Council) considers the protection of an individual's privacy to be an integral part of its commitment to accountability and integrity. The purpose of this Policy is to outline Council's framework for the responsible and fair handling of personal and health information.

Specifically, this Policy aims to:

- Promote public confidence by explaining how Council collects, holds, uses, and discloses personal and health information.
- Help employees understand their obligations to prevent the unnecessary collection or unlawful use of information.
- Ensure Council balances its Public Transparency Principles under Section 58 of the Local Government Act 2020 with the protection of confidential information.
- Outline the processes for individuals to request access to, or correction of, their information, primarily through the Freedom of Information Act 1982.
- Provide a clear pathway for individuals to lodge a complaint regarding suspected breaches of privacy.
- Ensure Council manages privacy and information in accordance with relevant legislation, notably the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, Health Records Act 2001, Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, Freedom of Information Act 1982 and Public Records Act 1973.
  - Specifically, this Policy ensures Council's compliance with the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) set out in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and the Health Privacy Principles (HPPs) set out in the Health Records Act 2001.





### 3. Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors, employees, volunteers, and contractors of Ararat Rural City Council. It covers all personal and health information held by Council, including information collected directly from individuals or sourced from third parties, regardless of the format (written, electronic, or visual such as CCTV).



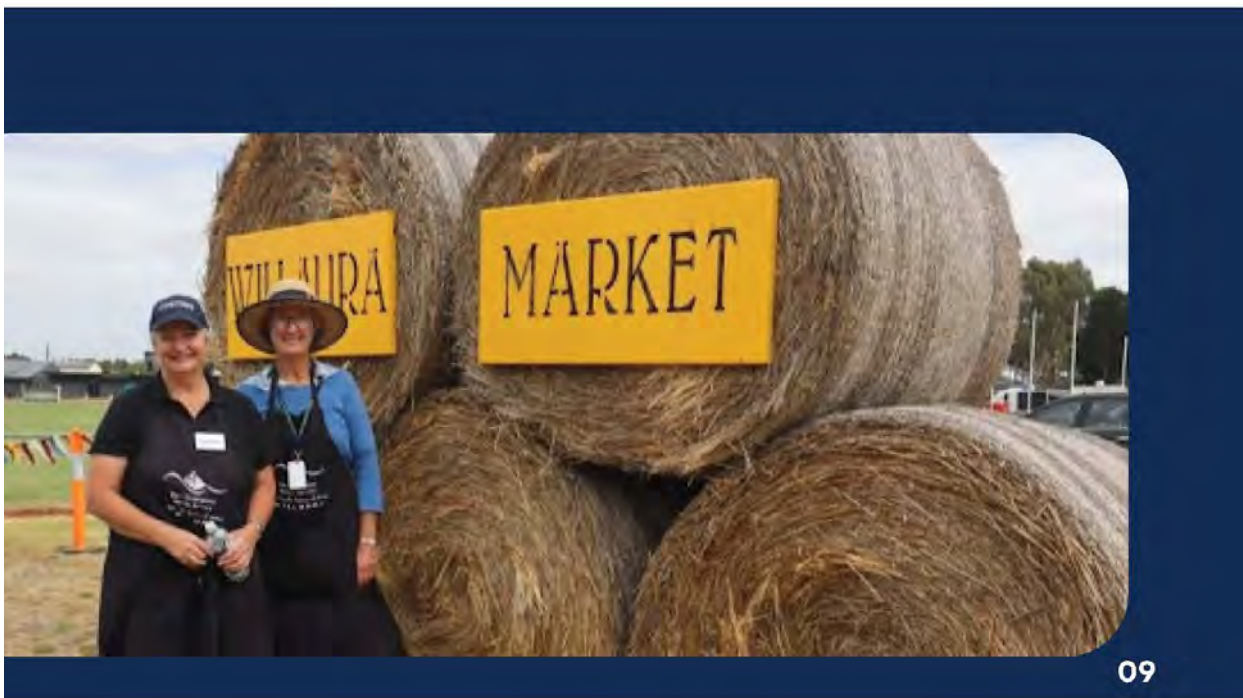


## 4. Definitions

| Term                     | Definition   |
|--------------------------|--|
| Council                  | Ararat Rural City Council  |
| Confidential Information | Any information, record, or data held by Council that is subject to legal non-disclosure requirements under Victorian statute. This term encompasses the prescribed meaning by Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2020 which covers matters of commercial, legal, and safety sensitivity.   |
| Health Information       | Defined by the Health Records Act 2001 as personal information or an opinion collected by Council regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Status: An individual's physical, mental, or psychological health or disability (past, present, or future).</li> <li>• Service Provision: Information about health services provided, or to be provided, to an individual, including their expressed wishes for future care.</li> <li>• Associated Data: Any personal information collected in the course of providing a health service (such as maternal and child health or aged care services).</li> <li>• Genetic &amp; Organ Data: Genetic information that may predict future health outcomes, or information related to organ and tissue donation.</li> <li>• Exclusions: This definition excludes any information specifically prescribed as exempt under the Act.</li> </ul> |
| HPPs                     | Health Privacy Principles, as described in the Health Records Act 2001.  |
| IPPs                     | Information Privacy Principles as described the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.  |
| NDB Scheme               | Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme  |
| Personal Information     | Defined by Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 as 'information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database), that is recorded in any form and whether true or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion, but does not include information of a kind to which the Health Records Act 2001 applies'.   |
| Primary Purpose          | The original reason information was collected.   |
| Secondary Purpose        | A purpose other than the primary purpose information was collected.  |



| Term                  | Definition  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Sensitive information | <p>Sensitive is a subset of personal information, it is defined in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 as information or an opinion about an individual's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) racial or ethnic origin; or</li> <li>(b) political opinions; or</li> <li>(c) membership of a political association; or</li> <li>(d) religious beliefs or affiliations; or</li> <li>(e) philosophical beliefs; or</li> <li>(f) membership of a professional or trade association; or</li> <li>(g) membership of a trade union; or</li> <li>(h) sexual preferences or practices; or</li> <li>(i) criminal record</li> </ul> <p>that is also personal information</p> |
| Unique Identifier     | <p>A unique identifier (IPP) and an identifier (HPP) is a number, letter, or symbol assigned to an individual to assist with identification. In this document both will be referred to as 'unique identifier'.</p>  |





## 5. Policy

Council believes that the responsible handling of personal information is a cornerstone of democratic governance and transparent service delivery. We are strongly committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy.

To ensure this, Council maintains full compliance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and the Health Records Act 2001. We manage all personal and health information in strict accordance with the 10 Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) and 11 Health Privacy Principles (HPPs), ensuring that data is collected, handled, and stored with the highest level of integrity. As such this Policy is structured as per the IPP's and HPP's as described below.

| IPP                                  | HPP   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Principle 1 - Collection             | Principle 1 - Collection  |
| Principle 2 – Use and Disclosure     | Principle 2 – Use and Disclosure  |
| Principle 3 – Data Quality           | Principle 3 – Data Quality  |
| Principle 4 – Data Security          | Principle 4 – Data Security and Data Retention                                  |
| Principle 5 – Openness               | Principle 5 – Openness  |
| Principle 6 – Access and Correction  | Principle 6 – Access and Correction   |
| Principle 7 - Unique Identifiers     | Principle 7 - Identifiers   |
| Principle 8 - Anonymity              | The original reason information was collected.                                  |
| Principle 9 – Transborder Data Flows | A purpose other than the primary purpose information was collected.             |
| Principle 10 – Sensitive Information | Principle 10 – Transfer or closure of the practice of a health service provider |
|                                      | Principle 11 – Making information available to another health service provider  |



## 5.1 Collection (IPP & HPP 1)



Council will only collect personal information that is necessary for its functions and activities or required to under legislation. This includes, but is not limited to service delivery, civic administration, public safety (such as operating CCTV in public places) and community engagement. When creating a project that requires data collection Council will use a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) (link available in 'Other References' section - OAIC nd). The PIA ensures that only information that is necessary to the project is collected, and that the management of the information is properly considered prior to the acquisition of data.

### 5.1.1 Methods of Collection

Council will collect information only by lawful and fair means and not in an unreasonably intrusive way. Information may be collected either directly from the individual, via official forms (digital or paper), correspondence (email/letter), or during face-to-face or telephone interactions, or indirectly from third parties, such as statutory authorities, legal representatives, or contracted service providers, but only where the individual has consented or where direct collection is not reasonable or practicable.

Council will not collect sensitive information or health information unless:

- The individual has provided explicit consent; or
- The collection is required or authorized by law (under the Health Records Act 2001); or
- The collection is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the life or health of any individual.

Council recognizes the vulnerability of children and will generally seek the consent of an authorised representative (such as a parent or guardian) before collecting personal information of a child under the age of 18. Council may however, exercise discretion where:

- Obtaining parental consent would hinder the delivery of essential services; or
- The young person is deemed to have sufficient maturity to understand the nature of the collection and provide their own informed consent.



### 5.1.2 Privacy Statement

Where practical a statement outlining Council's position on the handling of personal and health information will be used at all points of collection and all outgoing correspondence that may require personal information. This applies to hardcopy and electronic communication. This statement could be provided in a form similar to the following:

*"Ararat Rural City Council is committed to protecting your privacy. The Personal and/or Health Information collected by Ararat Rural City Council is used for [insert municipal purposes]. The Personal and or Health Information will be used solely by Council for these purposes or directly related purposes. Council may disclose this information to other organisations if required by legislation. The applicant understands that Personal and/or Health Information provided is for the above purpose and that he or she may apply to the Council for access to and/or amendment of the information. Requests for access and/or correction should be made to the Privacy Officer, Ararat Rural City Council, PO Box 246, Ararat Vic 3377. Phone: 5355 0261. Email: council@ararat.vic.gov.au"*



## 5.2 Use and Disclosure (IPP & HPP 1)

Council will only use or disclose information for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless a permitted exception applies for a secondary purpose as outlined below:

- the secondary purpose is related to the primary purpose of collection, or
- an individual would reasonably expect disclosure of the information for a secondary purpose; or
- an individual has consented to the use or disclosure; or
- the use of the information is required for research, analysis of statistics, in the public interest, other than for publication in a form that identifies any individual (if it is impracticable for Council to seek an individual's consent for disclosure); or
- Council reasonably believes that the use or disclosure is necessary to lesson or prevent:
  - a serious or imminent threat to an individual life, health, safety or welfare, or that of the public; or
  - a serious threat to public health, public safety or public welfare; or
- Council has reason to suspect that unlawful activity has been, is being or may be engaged in, and uses or discloses personal information as a necessary part of its investigation of the matter or in reporting its concerns to relevant persons or authorities; or
- The use and disclosure is required by Law Enforcement Agencies including ASIO and ASIS; and make a written record of the use or disclosure.

Family violence information sharing: Council may collect, use and disclose personal and/or health information where it is permitted or required to do so to assess or manage family violence risk, or to promote the safety of a person, in accordance with applicable Victorian family violence legislation (including the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)) and any associated information sharing schemes. In these circumstances, Council will only share information that is relevant and necessary for the purpose, and will make and retain an appropriate written record of the collection, use or disclosure.

In all instances where information is used or disclosed for a secondary purpose Council will make a formal written record of the use or disclosure and store this record within Council's official Document Management System.

Internal use of information by Council staff and Councillors consists of activities such as:

- Searching electronic or physical records to provide customer service.
- Using personal data to make administrative decisions or process payments.
- Integrating data into Council's centralized databases to ensure service continuity.

Council may disclose information to external organisations such as contracted service providers and statutory authorities and agencies, to fulfill its functions.



## 5.3 Data Quality (IPP & HPP Principle 3)

Council will take reasonable steps to ensure that personal and health information is relevant and to the extent necessary, accurate, complete and up to date for the purpose for which it is to be used.





## 5.4 Data Security and Data Retention (IPP & HPP 4)

Council is committed to safeguarding the personal and health information it holds, utilising a combination of technology, policy, and physical security to protect data from unauthorized activity.

Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal and health information—regardless of the format (electronic or paper)—is protected from:

- Unauthorised access and alteration
- Improper use
- Unlawful or accidental destruction or loss

Council will not hold personal or health information for longer than is necessary and manages the retention and disposal of records in accordance with the Public Records Act 1973, Health Records Act 2001 and Public Records of Victoria (PROV) Standards and Retention and Disposal Authorities (PROV, 2024).

Specifically, in accordance with HPP 4.2 of the Health Records Act 2001, Council will not delete health information unless at least 7 years have passed since the last service was provided (or until the individual attains 25 years of age for records collected during childhood).

Council aligns its security practices with the Victorian Protective Data Security Framework (VPDSF) ((OVIC, 2024 ) and the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards (VPDSS)(OVIC, 2026). Council endeavors to exceed its requirements under Part 4 of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 when implementing the 12 standards established by the VPDSS on the protection of public sector information.

If Council becomes aware of a data breach or that an individual's information has been inappropriately handled, it will, in line with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioners (OAIC) advice (OAIC, 2025):

- Contain the data breach to prevent any further compromise of personal information.
- Assess the data breach by gathering the facts and evaluating the risks, including potential harm to affected individuals and, where possible, taking action to remediate any risk of harm.
- Notify individuals and the Commissioner if required. If the breach is an 'eligible data breach' under the NDB scheme, it may be mandatory for the entity to notify.
- Review the incident and consider what actions can be taken to prevent future breaches.



## 5.5 Openness (IPP & HPP 5)

Council's Privacy Policy is available to the public on the Council website. The policy details the Council's management of personal and health information.

On request by an individual, Council will take reasonable steps to inform that person, in general terms of what information it holds on the individual, for what purpose this information is held and how the information is collected, held, used and disclosed.

## 5.6 Access and Correction (IPP & HPP 6)

Individuals whose information has been collected may contact Council for access to that information. Access will be provided except in the circumstances outlined in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, Health Records Act 2001 or the Freedom of Information Act 1982 applies. For personal information this will be assessed according to the information sharing flowchart. (OVIC, 2020) Appendix A of this document.

If it is established that information held by Council is inaccurate, incomplete, misleading, or not up to date, Council will take reasonable steps to correct the information.

Council will provide written reasons for refusal of access to, or refusal to correct health information.

If a request for access is denied, Council will provide written reasons for the refusal. The process for requesting access to personal & health information held by Council will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 1982 and addressed to the:  
**Freedom of Information Officer,**  
**Ararat Rural City Council,**  
**PO Box 246, Ararat 3377.**  
**[foi@ararat.vic.gov.au](mailto:foi@ararat.vic.gov.au)**

Ararat Rural City Council remains committed to protecting individual privacy and ensures that any personal or health information is managed in accordance with the relevant Acts.



## 5.7 Unique Identifiers (IPP & HPP 7)

Council will only assign its own unique identifier to an individual if the assignment is reasonably necessary to carry out its functions and activities effectively.

Council will not adopt as its own unique identifier any unique identifier that has been assigned to an individual by another government agency or organisation.

Council will not use or disclose a unique identifier assigned to an individual by another government agency unless the consent of the individual has been obtained, or if the use or disclosure is required or authorized by law.

In accordance with the Health Records Act 2001, Council will not require an individual to provide a unique identifier in order to obtain a service unless that provision is required by law or is directly connected to the purpose for which the unique identifier was originally assigned.



## 5.8 Anonymity (IPP & HPP 8)

Council must, whenever it is lawful and practicable, give individuals the option of not identifying themselves when supplying information or entering into transactions with Council.

Anonymity may limit Council's ability to process a complaint or another matter; Council reserves the right to take no action on any matter where an individual has chosen not to supply relevant personal information so that Council can adequately perform its functions.

Where an individual chooses to remain anonymous, Council will still adhere to the privacy principles for any information that is collected. If identification is required by law for a specific transaction or function, Council will inform the individual of the necessity to provide their details and the consequences of not doing so.



## 5.9 Transborder Data Flows (IPP & HPP 9)

Council may transfer personal and/or health information about an individual to someone (other than the organisation or the individual) who is outside Victoria only when the data transfer conforms with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and/or the Health Records Act 2001.

This transfer of information may occur in limited circumstances, such as:

Council reasonably believes the recipient of the information is subject to a law, binding scheme or contract which effectively upholds principles for fair handling of the information that are similar to the IPPs; or

- The individual consents to the transfer; or
- The transfer is necessary for the performance of a contract between the individual and Council; or
- The transfer is for the benefit of the individual; or
- It is impracticable to obtain the consent of the individual to that transfer, and the individual would be likely to give consent; or
- The information transferred will not be held, used or disclosed by the recipient of the information inconsistently with the IPPs.





## 5.10 Sensitive Information (IPP & HPP 10)

Council will not collect sensitive information unless:

- The individual has provided explicit consent; or
- The collection is required or authorised by law; or
- The collection is necessary for the establishment, exercise, or defence of a legal or equitable claim; or
- The collection is necessary to prevent serious or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the life or health of any individual, where the individual whom the information concerns:
  - Is physically or legally incapable of giving consent to the collection; or
  - Physically cannot communicate consent to the collection

Council may also collect sensitive information if it is necessary for research or the compilation of statistics relevant to government-funded targeted welfare or educational services, provided there is no reasonably practicable alternative, and it is impracticable to seek the individual's consent.





## 5.11 Transfer or closure of the practice of a health provider (HPP 10)

If Council discontinues the delivery of a health service it will manage all health information in accordance with the Health Records Act 2001. Notice of the closure to past service users will be provided directly and by way of a notice in the local newspaper.

## 5.12 Making information available to another health service provider (HPP 11)

Council will make health information relating to an individual available to another health service provider if requested to do so by the individual. this will be done in accordance with the Health Records Act 2001, Council will. Council reserves its right to charge a fee for this service in accordance with the Health Records Regulations 2012.



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## External Contractors and Outsourced Services

Where an external contractor deals with personal information on behalf of the Council, they will be required to comply with the relevant legislation, notably the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 or the Health Records Act 2001.

Council acknowledges it remains liable for a contractor's interference with privacy unless an enforceable contract is in place.





## 6. Complaints

If any persons feel aggrieved by Council's handling of personal information or health records about themselves, they may make a complaint to:

**Privacy Officer**

**Ararat Rural City Council**

**PO Box 246, Ararat Vic 3377**

**Phone: 5355 0200.**

**Email: [council@ararat.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@ararat.vic.gov.au)**

Every complaint will be investigated as soon as possible (but no later than five (5) business days) and the complainant will be provided with a written response.

Alternatively, any person may make a privacy complaint to Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner or the Health Complaints Commissioner using the appropriate forms downloaded from their websites: Commissioners may decline to hear the complaint if it has not first been made to Council).

**Office of the Commission of Information  
Commissioner (OVIC)**

See more at:

<https://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/for-the-public/privacy-complaints/>

Telephone: 1300 006 842

Email: [enquiries@ovic.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ovic.vic.gov.au)

Or post to: PO Box 24274, Melbourne Vic  
3001

**Health Complaints Commissioner**

See more at:

<https://hcc.vic.gov.au/make-complaint>

Telephone: 1300 582 113



## 7. Review

This policy must be reviewed at least once during each 4-year term of the Council, or as dictated by changes in state or federal legislation.

## 8. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.



## 9. Human Rights Statement

It is considered that this policy is compatible with the relevant human rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Council has reviewed this policy and determined that it does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter. The responsible and fair handling of personal and health information is a key component of protecting an individual's right to privacy, which is a fundamental human right.

## 10. Gender Equality

It is considered that this policy is compatible with the relevant gender equality principles identified in the Gender Equality Act 2020.



# 11. References and Related Documents

## Legislation: Federal

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

## Legislation: State

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic).

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic).

Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic).

Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

Health Records Regulations 2012 (Vic).

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Public Records Act 1973 (Vic).

## Standards and Guidelines

OVIC (Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner) (2024). Victorian protective data security framework v2.1. Victoria State Government. [www.ovic.vic.gov.au](http://www.ovic.vic.gov.au), accessed 5 January 2026.

OVIC (Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner) (2026). Victorian Protective Data Security Standards v2.0. Victoria State Government. [www.ovic.vic.gov.au](http://www.ovic.vic.gov.au), accessed 5 January 2026.

## Council Related Policies & Procedures

Public Transparency Policy 2025.



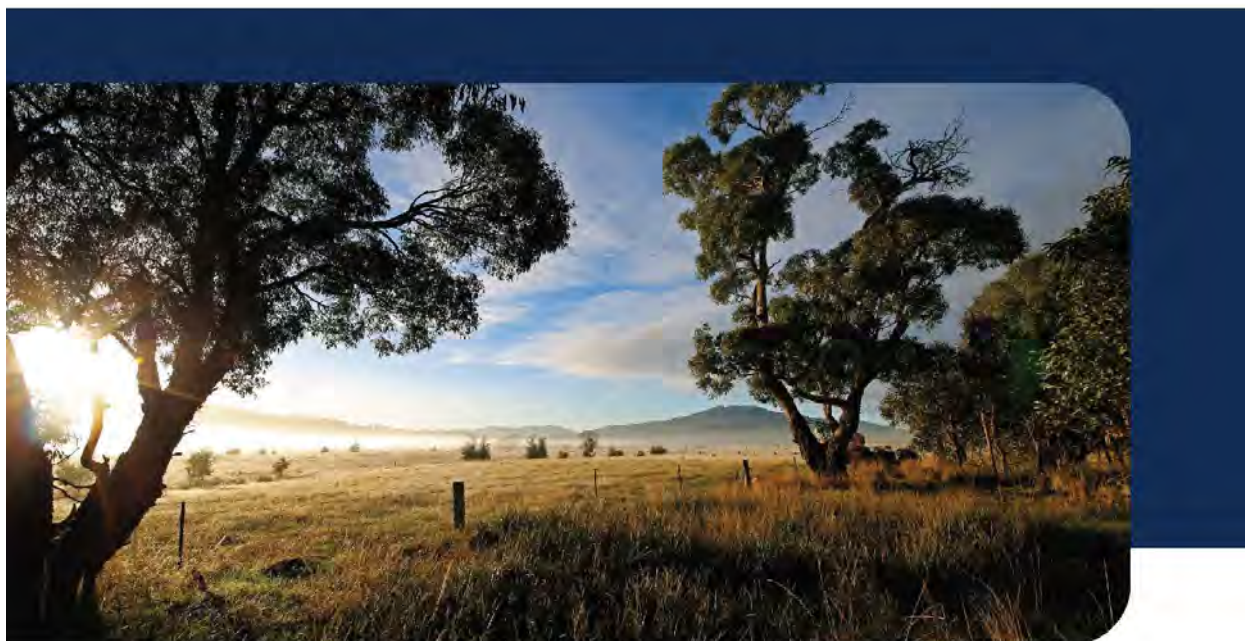
## Other References

OAIC (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner) (2025). Part 3: Responding to data breaches – four key steps. [online]. Australian Government. Available at: [www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-guidance-for-organisations-and-government-agencies/preventing-preparing-for-and-responding-to-data-breaches/data-breach-preparation-and-response/part-3-responding-to-data-breaches-four-key-steps](http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-guidance-for-organisations-and-government-agencies/preventing-preparing-for-and-responding-to-data-breaches/data-breach-preparation-and-response/part-3-responding-to-data-breaches-four-key-steps). Accessed 6 January 2026.

OVIC (Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner) (2020). Privacy Considerations for Local Government. [online]. Victoria State Government. Available at: [www.ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/local-government-and-privacy/](http://www.ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/local-government-and-privacy/). Accessed 5 January 2026.

OVIC (Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner) (nd). Privacy Impact Assessment Tool. [online]. Victoria State Government. Available at: [www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-guidance-for-organisations-and-government-agencies/privacy-impact-assessments/privacy-impact-assessment-tool](http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-guidance-for-organisations-and-government-agencies/privacy-impact-assessments/privacy-impact-assessment-tool). Accessed 5 January 2026. [[Privacy impact assessment tool](#) | OAIC]

PROV (Public Record Office Victoria) (2024). Retention and disposal authorities (RDAs). [online]. Victoria State Government. Available at: [www.prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/how-long-should-records-be-kept/retention-and-disposal-authorities-rdas](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/how-long-should-records-be-kept/retention-and-disposal-authorities-rdas). Accessed 5 January 2026.

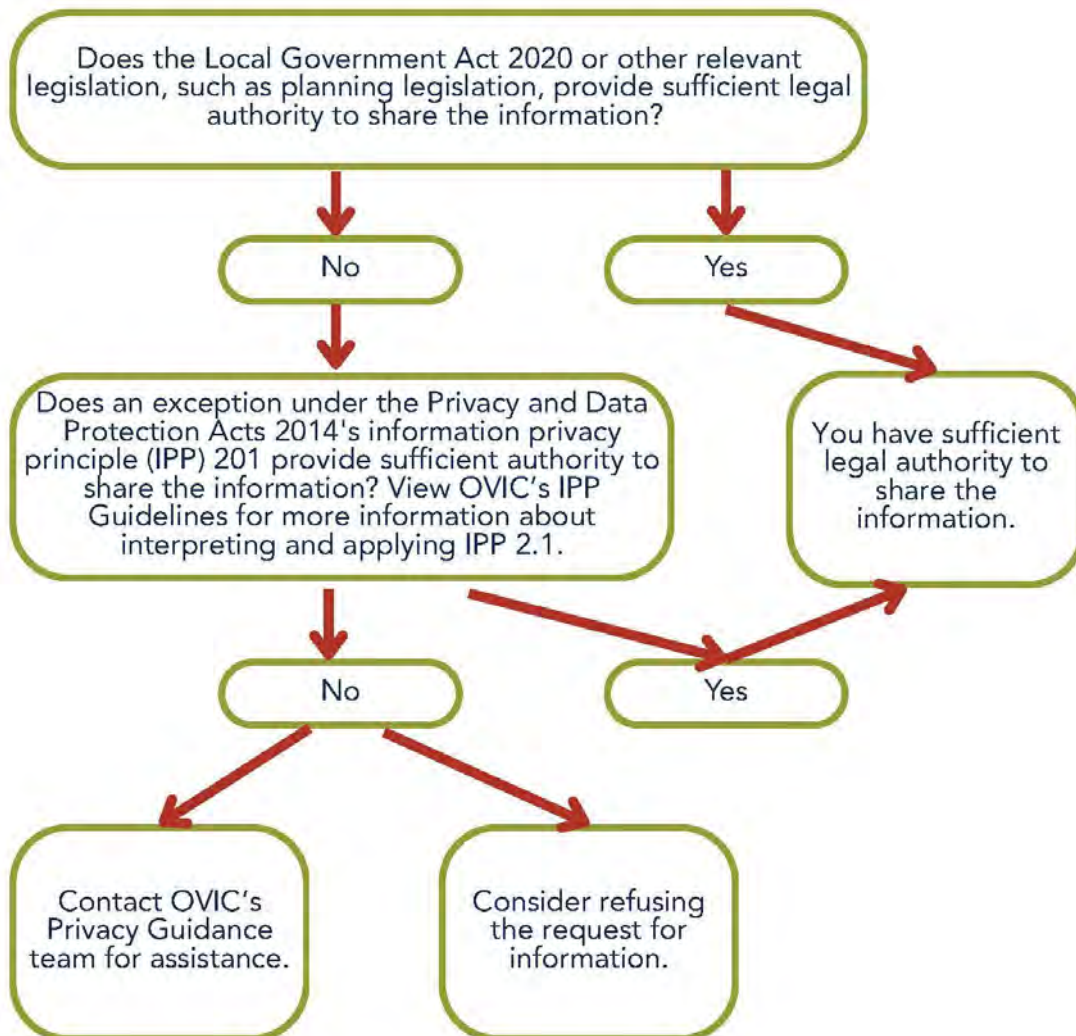


# Appendices





## Appendix A Information Sharing Flowchart



Information sharing flowchart (OVIC, 2020).





## Contact Us

Ararat Rural City Council

59 Vincent Street,  
Ararat, Victoria, Australia 3377

Ph: (03) 5355 0200  
Email: [council@ararat.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@ararat.vic.gov.au)



### 3.6 GENDER EQUALITY AUDIT & GEAP CONSULTATION

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** HUMAN RESOURCES LEAD  
**DEPARTMENT:** HUMAN RESOURCES  
**REFERENCE:** 27927

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2025 Workforce Gender Audit and Progress Report provide the Gender Equality Commission with an update on Council's progress towards achieving gender equality and highlights areas requiring further attention within the confines of the seven gender equality indicators. The seven gender equality indicators are:

1. Gender composition of the workforce.
2. Gender composition of the governing body.
3. Gender pay gap.
4. Sexual harassment.
5. Recruitment and promotion practices.
6. Leave and flexible working arrangements.
7. Gendered segregation of the workforce.

Under the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)*, Council is required to consult with staff and Councillors when developing its Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). Staff consultation is currently underway, and feedback from Councillors is being sought to help identify priorities and inform the development of the 2026-2030 GEAP.

Consultation supports Council to not only meet its legislative obligations, but also to ensure future actions are practical, relevant, and aligned with organisational priorities. Councillor feedback will assist in shaping a GEAP that supports an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable workplace.

#### **DISCUSSION**

##### **Background and Purpose of Consultation**

Council is required under the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)* to take positive action to improve gender equality in the workplace. As part of this, Council undertakes regular workforce gender audits, progress reports, and develops a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) to address any gaps or areas for improvement. The 2025 workforce gender audit builds on the audits completed in 2021 and 2023, allowing Council to review progress, identify emerging trends, and highlight areas where further work may be needed. This work then informs the development of the next GEAP.

Consultation with staff and Councillors is a required part of developing the GEAP. Seeking feedback helps ensure the GEAP reflects the experiences of our workforce and the priorities of Council. It also helps make sure the actions we develop are practical, realistic, and capable of making a meaningful difference across the organisation.

Beyond meeting legislative requirements, consultation is an important way for Council to better understand workplace experiences and identify opportunities to strengthen inclusion and equity. Involving staff and Councillors in this process supports shared ownership of gender equality outcomes and helps ensure future initiatives align with Council's broader organisational and workforce objectives.

## Key Findings in Detail

### 1. Gender Composition

Overall, staff gender balance has improved slightly since 2023, with women representing 49.03% of employees. Senior leadership continues to show strong female representation at 60%, while the governing body remains predominantly male (70%), indicating an ongoing area for attention. Part-time roles are disproportionately filled by women, highlighting potential impacts on career progression and workforce participation.

### 2. Pay and Remuneration

The mean total remuneration gap across all staff is 1.34% in favour of men. At the senior leadership level, the gap is 24.12%, indicating inequality in pay that requires attention in recruitment, promotion, and remuneration policies. However, this figure is not completely reflective of the broader leadership group, as it includes the CEO's remuneration, which can skew the results. Median and base salary measures also show some persistent gaps across occupational groups.

### 3. Workplace Culture and Safety

Flexible work is accessed more frequently by women (22.3%) than men (13.39%), suggesting potential barriers for male staff to utilise flexible arrangements. Sexual harassment reporting remains low, with only one formal complaint in 2025. Staff consultation will provide further insight into workplace culture, perceptions of inclusion, and barriers to reporting.

### 4. Occupational Segregation

Some roles remain highly gendered, particularly operational positions. Administrative and community-facing roles continue to be female-dominated. Feedback from staff and Councillors will help identify practical strategies to improve representation across all roles and support equitable career progression.

## Gender Equality Snapshot - Key Indicators

| Indicator                            | 2025 Position                  | Trend                    | What This Means / Considerations                                       |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Overall Workforce Gender Composition | 49.03% W / 50.32% M / 0.65% SD | Improved from 2023       | Balanced workforce overall, but distribution varies across roles.      |
| Senior Leadership Composition        | 60% W / 40% M                  | Stable improvement       | Strong female leadership: ongoing monitoring required.                 |
| Governing Body Composition           | 30% W / 70% M                  | Slight improvement       | Remains male dominated; impacts organisational perspective.            |
| Part-Time Workforce                  | 32.9% W / 1.3% M               | Men decreased            | Flexible roles still mostly taken by women: career progression impact. |
| Gender Pay Gap - All Staff           | 1.34% (Men higher)             | Improved                 | Low overall gap but varies by occupational group.                      |
| Gender Pay Gap - Senior Leaders      | 24.12% (Men higher)            | Increased                | Persistent inequality at senior levels.                                |
| Flexible Work Uptake                 | 22.3% W / 13.39% M             | Increased                | Women still access more; consider barriers for men.                    |
| Parental Leave Uptake                | 100% W                         | Decline in average weeks | Traditional caring roles still gendered; opportunity to                |

|                             |                                |                    |  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--|
|                             |                                |                    | encourage shared responsibilities.   |
| Sexual Harassment Reporting | 1 report                       | Slight increase    | Low reporting may indicate underreporting or positive culture; further insight needed. |
| Recruitment Gender Balance  | 53.66% W / 46.34% M            | Improved           | Recruitment practices support balance.   |
| Promotion Balance           | 52.94% W / 47.06% M            | Stable             | Promotions appear balanced; perceptions and experience data still important.           |
| Occupational Segregation    | Some roles are highly gendered | Minor improvements | Operational roles male dominated; admin/community roles female dominated.              |

### Next Steps

The staff survey is underway to gather feedback on the audit findings, workplace experiences, and ideas for improving gender equality. Once complete, the results will be analysed and used to help shape priorities for the 2026-2030 GEAP.

Councillors are asked to please:

- Review the key findings and trends presented in this briefing.
- Provide feedback on areas of concern or priority.
- Suggest any additional actions or considerations to strengthen gender equality across Council.

Feedback from this discussion, combined with staff input, will inform the development of a GEAP that is both practical and aligned with Council's strategic goals.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

This work supports Council's commitment to a fair, inclusive and respectful workplace and contributes to achieving Council Plan objectives relating to strong governance, workforce sustainability, and community wellbeing.

#### **Budget Implications**

There are no budget implications arising

#### **Policy/Relevant Law**

*Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)*

#### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

#### **Risk Assessment**

There is a risk of non-compliance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)* if consultation is not undertaken or audit findings are not addressed. Engaging with staff and Councillors helps reduce this risk and supports the development of a practical and informed GEAP.

### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

Consultation is being undertaken with staff and Councillors to ensure the GEAP reflects workforce experiences and organisational priorities. Broader community engagement will be considered as part of ongoing gender equality initiatives where appropriate.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council*

1. *Note the findings of the 2025 Gender Equality Audit and Progress Report*
2. *Provide feedback on the key trends, areas of concern, and potential priorities for the 2025-2028 Gender Equality Action Plan.*

#### **MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR JOYCE**

**That Council**

1. **Note the findings of the 2025 Gender Equality Audit and Progress Report**
2. **Provide feedback on the key trends, areas of concern, and potential priorities for the 2025-2028 Gender Equality Action Plan.**

**Cr J Armstrong and Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5317/26**

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no Attachments relating to this item

### 3.7 ROAD NAMING PROPOSAL - MCADIE LANE

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27928

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council has received a request to formally name the unnamed laneway located between Elizabeth and McGibbony Streets, running parallel to Vincent and Palmer Streets, Ararat.

A former resident of an adjoining property has requested Council to consider the name *McAdie Lane*, in recognition of past residents associated with the site and their contribution to the local community.

This report requests Council to consider commencing the statutory consultation process to formally name the laneway.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The proposed name *McAdie Lane* seeks to recognise past residents associated with an adjoining property, who resided at the site for almost 60 years and have since passed away.

Mr Ian McAdie played an active role in several community organisations. He was instrumental in establishing the Ararat Bird Club, which held regular meetings at the nearby Anglican Church Hall. He was also involved in the Golden Gateway Parade and contributed extensively as a volunteer across a range of local facilities.

His contributions included volunteering his time at the Ararat Velodrome, where he assisted with laying concrete, as well as at the Ararat trotting track, where he regularly graded the surface between races. He was also known for operating the mobile start gates when they were first introduced.

Guidelines developed by Geographic Names Victoria provide direction to councils in relation to road naming. Preliminary checks indicate that *McAdie Lane* does not duplicate any existing road names within a 30-kilometre radius, consistent with Principle D - Ensuring Names are not Duplicated. However, the similar pronunciation to *McReady Track*, located within the Ararat Regional Park, may be considered a potential conflict. Although, the risk of confusion is considered low given the differing road types, and the fact that *McReady Track* is situated within a regional park setting rather than a town environment.

The road type "Lane" is considered appropriate, as it applies to a narrow roadway.

Council is now asked to consider whether to commence proceedings to officially name the laneway. To build awareness of the proposal and invite feedback, it is appropriate to undertake public consultation. This would include written notice to adjoining landowners, publication on Engage Ararat, and promotion through Council's social media channels. In accordance with the Naming Rules, consultation with the immediate community must be undertaken for a minimum period of 30 days.

A map showing the lane and surrounding area is provided below.



## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

#### **6 STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management, and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

#### **Budget Implications**

There are no budget implications arising from this report.

#### **Policy/Relevant Law**

Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1989 provides Council with the power to name roads. The Geographic Place Names Act 1998 provides for the naming and registration of place names.

#### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item.

**Risk Assessment**

Low.

**Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

Council's intention to name the road will be published on Engage Ararat. Abutting landowners and relevant stakeholders will also be consulted.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council:*

- 1. Advertise its intention to name the unnamed laneway located between Elizabeth and McGibbony Streets, running parallel to Vincent and Palmer Streets, Ararat, as McAdie Lane; and*
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.*

**MOVED CR KAUR  
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

**That Council:**

- 1. Advertise its intention to name the unnamed laneway located between Elizabeth and McGibbony Streets, running parallel to Vincent and Palmer Streets, Ararat, as McAdie Lane; and**
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.**

**Cr Kaur and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5318/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

## SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

### 4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 2026

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27929

#### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Community Engagement Program 2025/26 is a series of quarterly engagement outreach activities that aims to provide community with opportunities to ask questions, raise concerns and meet with Councillors and key staff at the Council. This monthly report provides a regular update to issues raised or upcoming plans for engagement activities.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council adopted the Community Engagement Program 2025/26 at the November 2025 Council Meeting. This Program outlined a schedule for engagement sessions to be held in December 2025, March and June 2026.

Council delivered the December 2025 round of engagements in Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Mininera, Moyston, Pomonal, Willaura where 49 issues were raised. Most of these have now been resolved or actioned. A small number remain pending the outcome of Council's budget process, and one outstanding matter relates to the reopening of a local pub, with Council staff continuing to work closely with the business owners to provide support.

The March 2026 round of engagement sessions is scheduled for 23 to 27 March 2026 with a focus on the Draft Budget 2026/27. The feedback on the Draft Budget will be presented after submissions close on Friday 24 April 2026.

Other non-budget issues will be presented in the March 2026 Report at the April Council Meeting.

#### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

##### ***Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives***

#### **6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management, and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

- 6.3** Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.

#### ***Budget Implications***

The Community Engagement Program 2025/2026 does not have any budget implications. This Program will be delivered within the existing resources and budget. The issues arising from the engagement sessions may have budget implications, these will be assessed on a case by case basis and may be considered for future budgets.

**Policy/Relevant Law**

Ararat Rural City Council's Community Engagement Policy

**Sustainability Implications**

The community engagement sessions will aim to coincide with other community events and activities, or locate the sessions in places where people may wish to visit. This is in recognition of the value of people's time and travel costs, and enables community members to achieve multiple activities in the one journey.

**Risk Assessment**

The attached Community Engagement Program 2025/26 includes a risk analysis and mitigation measures. This is a low risk Program.

**Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

This Program supports stakeholder collaboration and community engagement.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

- 1. Council receives the Community Engagement Program February 2026 report*

**MOVED CR R ARMSTRONG  
SECONDED CR JOYCE**

**That:**

- 1. Council receives the Community Engagement Program February 2026 report**

**Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5319/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no Attachments relating to this item

## 4.2 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - FEBRUARY 2026 UPDATE

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27930

### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides a regular update on the Housing Support Program – Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream (HSP-CEIS) funded project at 87 Queen St, also known as the former Prestige Mill site.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Recap**

The HSP-CEIS grant helps to resolve the barriers that have previously prevented this site from being financially viable to develop into assets that could provide better value for the community, such as housing. The grant unlocks the site by funding the cost of enabling infrastructure for 90 new dwellings, including planning, detailed designs, construction costs for roads, footpaths, kerb & channel, drainage, as well as costs for utility infrastructure such as power, water, sewerage, and NBN. The grant does not fund the cost to build the homes, however with the major barriers removed, private investment into housing will become viable.

#### **Progress Update**

Demolition works at the former Prestige Mill site have been paused after small amounts of non-friable (low-risk) asbestos was identified on site. WorkSafe Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority have been fully informed, and works will resume under strict environmental and safety regulations once site controls are in place.

#### *What is Non-Friable (Low Risk) Asbestos?*

The material identified at the former Prestige Mill site is non-friable asbestos, which is considered a low-risk form when it remains intact and is properly managed. Non-friable asbestos is asbestos that is firmly bound within a solid material such as cement sheeting, concrete, or building products. In this form, the asbestos fibres are tightly held within the product and do not become airborne unless the material is heavily damaged, cut, or crushed without controls in place.

This is different from friable asbestos, which is loose or crumbly and more easily releases fibres into the air. Friable asbestos requires more intensive control measures.

#### *Why the Risk is Low in This Situation*

- The asbestos identified is non-friable (bonded).
- It is being managed under strict regulatory controls.
- Licensed contractors are undertaking the works.
- An independent hygienist is supervising and conducting air monitoring.
- Dust suppression measures are in place.
- Any contaminated material will be transported by a licensed carrier to an approved landfill facility.

When non-friable asbestos is handled in accordance with these requirements, the risk to nearby residents is considered very low.

#### *What This Means for Residents*

There is no need for residents to take any additional precautions. The safety measures in place are designed to protect workers and the broader community. Council's priority is ensuring the site is managed safely, transparently, and in full compliance with environmental and workplace health regulations.

The engineering and civil design work for the roads, footpaths, kerb and channel, and utilities will be continuing in preparation for when the site is cleared and new infrastructure is able to be built.

### **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

#### ***Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives***

##### **1. GROWING OUR PLACE**

We will create the settings to support growth across our municipality through an improved planning scheme, actively pursuing new housing options and exploring models for in-migration.

##### **1.2** Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.

#### ***Budget Implications***

This project is funded by a \$7.3 million grant from the Federal Government's Housing Support Program: Community Enabling Infrastructure Fund.

#### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

Not applicable

#### ***Sustainability Implications***

Not applicable

#### ***Risk Assessment***

Demolition works are progressing in line with risk assessment and mitigation measures, ensuring that all identified hazards are being effectively managed and safety protocols are strictly followed.

#### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

Council officers have liaised closely with the site owners on this project. Project updates for the broader community are provided on Council's Engage Ararat website.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

1. Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - February 2026 Update report.

### **MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR KAUR**

**That:**

1. Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - February 2026 Update report.

**Cr Joyce and Cr Kaur spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5320/26**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item

#### 4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (FEBRUARY 2026)

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27931

#### OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council Plan 2025-29 contains 53 actions to be undertaken during the 2025/2026 (Year 1) financial year under the strategic objectives:

1. Growing our place
2. Building robust local economies
3. Preserving the environment
4. Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure
5. Enhancing community life; and
6. Strong and effective governance

These actions are provided in the Annual Plan 2025/26 and their progress is reported monthly at Council Meetings.

#### DISCUSSION

The Annual Plan 2025/26 contains 53 actions. Progress on these actions are summarised below, with the change from the previous monthly report shown in brackets.

| Status             | Number of Actions |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Completed          | 15 (+2)           |
| In progress 51-99% | 11 (-)            |
| In progress 0-50%  | 16 (-2)           |
| Not Started        | 0                 |
| Ongoing            | 11                |

Further details on each action is provided in the table below.

| Council Plan Objectives  | Actions   | Progress           | Officer Comment  |
|--|---|--------------------|--|
| 1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth. | 1.1.1 Complete a review of Council's Planning Scheme as required under Section 12B of the Planning Environment Act 1987 | In progress 0-50%  | Council officers are working with the Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) Regional Planning Hub on the Ararat Planning Scheme review. An updated timeframe from the Regional Planning Hub for the completion of the Review is Oct 2026. |
|  | 1.1.2 Establish annual targets for sustainable urban growth   | In progress 0-50%  | This action is closely linked to action 1.1.1 and will occur concurrently.   |
|  | 1.1.3 Complete the 'Unlocking Ararat North East' Structure Plan project   | In progress 51-99% | The second draft of the structure plan has been received and is being reviewed by Council officers.  |
| 1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the                    | 1.2.1 Deliver enabling infrastructure for well-located homes that address critical housing                              | In progress 0-50%  | See 'Housing Support Program Project Update' report for further details.   |

|  |  |                    |   |
|--|--|--------------------|---|
| capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.  | gaps in central Ararat, with support from the Housing Support Program: Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream.   |                    |   |
|  | 1.2.2 Continue to develop the Ararat Housing Enterprise P/L, delivering another four houses in Ararat during 2025/2026.                                  | In progress 0-50%  | Two homes are nearing completion of construction. Another two homes are due to commence construction, and pre-construction planning for another two homes is underway.  |
|  | 1.2.3 Work with developers to submit EOI application/s to the National Housing Infrastructure Facility Crisis and Transitional Housing (NHIF CT) program | Complete           | The EOI application has been submitted. This action is marked complete, however if the EOI is successful, a full application will be submitted and further updates will be provided.  |
| 1.3 Work with other levels of government, business, educational institutions and not-for-for profits to develop programs to increase in-migration to Ararat Rural City to grow our population.                               | 1.3.1 Complete the Jack and Jill Kindergarten Refurbishment, with support from the Building Blocks Improvement Grant                                     | In progress 0-50%  | Refurbishment works will commence in the April school holidays. Council is working closely with Y Kinders to minimise disruptions to families as much as possible during the works.   |
|  | 1.3.2 Establish a new childcare centre in Lake Bolac   | In progress 0-50%  | Council officers are continuing to liaise with potential childcare providers to deliver this project  |
|  | 1.3.3 Deliver the CALD Outreach Initiative   | In progress 51-99% | The CALD Outreach Officer is continuing to actively engage families and has recently organised cultural awareness training for early childhood educators, which was delivered on 18 March 2026.   |
| 2.1 Partner with Federation University Australia to deliver the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct with a focus on engaging with local agribusiness, industry and community.  | 2.1.1 Build stronger connections between AJTP and local industry, including promotion of industry internships for research students.                     | Ongoing            | The AJTP Advisory Group and the Future of the Regions group are focused on industry and stakeholder engagement. As PhD students commence their research projects the level of industry engagement is increasing.                        |
|  | 2.1.2 Work with Federation University, community and industry stakeholders to apply for a grant for National Science Week in August 2026                 | Complete           | The application has been submitted for a project titled 'Celebrating Science in Rural Communities'. The outcome was unfortunately unsuccessful. We will consider whether there is capacity to potentially deliver a smaller scale event |
|  | 2.1.3 Continue to support the delivery of TAFE courses at the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct  | Ongoing            | Cert 3 in Early Childhood Education and Care courses are continuing at the Precinct. The Ararat Best Start Workshop Series, supported by a Dept. Education Innovation Grant, will be recommencing on 4 March 2026.                      |
| 2.2 Work with other levels of government, local business, and private investors to develop a business park within Ararat Rural City, focused on agricultural value adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging | 2.2.1 Work with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and private sector partners to develop plans for the ARCC Circular Economy Precinct.      | Ongoing            | Council is working with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and a number of private sector partners to make a case for a state significant circular economy hub in Ararat  |
|  | 2.2.2 Continue to support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat   | Ongoing            | Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L.   |

|  |  |                      |  |
|--|--|----------------------|--|
| "behind the meter" power.  | which uses straw as the major input.   |                      |  |
|  | 2.2.3 Seek funding from the Victorian Government's \$10 million fund to unlock industrial trunk infrastructure to accelerate new industrial developments                     | Complete             | The Trunk Infrastructure Fund opened on 13 February 2026. Council will not be submitting an application and has instead provided support to emerging industries to apply. This action is marked complete. Council will continue to advocate for funding to be awarded to projects in Ararat Rural City |
| 2.3 Engage with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism and local businesses to improve the quality of experience and drive growth in high yield tourist outcomes.  | 2.3.1 Deliver the Ararat Hills Outdoor Adventure Precinct Feasibility Study  | In progress<br>0-50% | The establishment of the Project Control Group is underway.  |
|  | 2.3.2 Partner with local hospitality, accommodation, food and wine industry to develop an annual fine wine and food event within the municipality.                           | In progress<br>0-50% | The Economic Development team is continuing to liaise closely with the local industry to identify potential opportunities for an annual fine wine and food event.  |
|  | 2.3.3 Work with operators and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to deliver 4 star and above accommodation   | In progress<br>0-50% | Council is supporting the development of a range of accommodation businesses in the municipality.  |
| 3.1 Position Ararat Rural City Council as a prime mover in driving circular economy policy in waste management, including local processing and management of recyclables, and in use of renewable energy for Council purposes. | 3.1.1 Develop and adopt an ambitious business based on key partnerships and production of higher value outputs, that views municipal "waste" as an economic resource.        | In progress<br>0-50% | Investigation and development of other opportunities to produce higher value outputs from municipal waste is underway.   |
|  | 3.1.2 Continue to support PlastOil to develop a plastics recycling facility in Ararat  | Ongoing              | Council continues to strongly support PlastOil through the Economic Development team.  |
| 3.2 Develop innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste   | 3.2.1 Continue to support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat which uses straw as the major input.  | Ongoing              | Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L.  |
|  | 3.2.2 Work with Federal and State Government and private sector partners to plan, fund and develop a circular economy industrial precinct.                                   | In progress<br>0-50% | Council is working with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and a number of private sector partners to make a case for a state significant circular economy hub in Ararat.  |
|  | 3.2.3 Continue to advocate for greater policy confidence and support for renewable gas generation  | Ongoing              | This issue has been identified as a priority in the proposed 2026 Advocacy Priorities Council Meeting report.  |
| 3.3 Partner with local organisations and scientific experts to implement the Environment Strategy 2024-34, with a focus on circular economy, emissions reduction and   | 3.3.1 Deliver the Pomonal Community Hall Battery Project with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and with support from the 100 Neighbourhood Batteries Grants Program | In progress<br>0-50% | Indigo Power have undertaken site inspections and met with community members to discuss the project and answer queries. The new battery is expected to be installed by June 2026.  |

|   |   |                       |   |
|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| sustainable management of Council assets.   | 3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program  | In progress<br>51-99% | The tender for Roadside Weeds and Pest Program has been awarded and works are underway.   |
|   | 3.3.3 Explore a model for collaborating with community asset committees to use rooftop solar to increase use of renewable energy at community facilities. | Complete              | The application to the Community Energy Upgrades Fund Round 2 was unsuccessful. Council will continue to liaise with interested community asset committees to explore rooftop solar and renewable energy options at community facilities. |
| 4.1 Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2025-2035.   | 4.1.1 Develop the Asset Plan 2025-35  | Complete              | The Asset Plan 2025-35 was adopted at the October 2025 Council Meeting  |
|   | 4.1.2 Continue to advocate for the Western Highway Upgrade from Buangor to Ararat   | Ongoing               | Advocacy efforts are ongoing with the Western Highway Action Committee (WHAC). The CHMP has been approved in March 2026.  |
|   | 4.1.3 Continue to advocate for a North South Heavy Vehicle Route  | Ongoing               | This issue has been identified as a priority in the proposed 2026 Advocacy Priorities Council Meeting report.   |
| 4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.   | 4.2.1 Progress plans and costings for a new indoor sports facility and the outdoor pool upgrade   | In progress<br>0-50%  | Revised concept drawings have been prepared for the indoor sports facility after a review of accessibility and gender impacts.  |
|   | 4.2.2 Deliver the Community Road Safety Strategy  | In progress<br>51-99% | Preparation of the final draft Strategy is in progress.   |
|   | 4.2.3 Deliver the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy  | In progress<br>51-99% | The draft Strategy and Action Plan is presented to Council, see other report.   |
| 4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability. | 4.3.1 Deliver the 2025/26 Capital Works Program   | In progress<br>0-50%  | Refer to the Capital Works report.  |
| 5.1 Open up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making   | 5.1.1 Deliver artist and community group exhibits in the Barkly St Laneway and Community Wall within the Ararat Gallery TAMA                              | Complete              | This action was completed at the February 2026 Council Meeting.   |
|   | 5.1.2 Increase participation in programs at Ararat Gallery TAMA   | Complete              | This action was completed at the February 2026 Council Meeting.   |
|   | 5.1.3 Investigate ways to maximise scheduling of community events at the Town Hall  | Complete              | This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.  |
|   | 5.1.4 Identify innovative ways to increase the promotion and reach of performances at the Town Hall   | Complete              | This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.  |

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| 5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.  | 5.2.1 Deliver the first of three years of the Youth Events, Activities and Happenings (YEAH) Crew                        | In progress<br>51-99%                                 | The first meeting of the 2026 YEAH Crew was held on 25 February with a new group of young people from across the municipality.   |
|  | 5.2.2 Deliver young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College                            | In progress<br>51-99%                                 | [update pending]   |
|  | 5.2.3 Work with community groups to deliver an annual Volunteer Expo   | In progress<br>0-50%                                  | Planning for the National Volunteer Week celebrations in May are underway  |
|  | 5.2.4 Promote the benefits and achievements of volunteers, to encourage participation                                    | Ongoing   | Applications to join Council's volunteer team have opened. The application form and Frequently Asked Questions are available via Engage Ararat.  |
| 5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community. | 5.3.1 Develop the Disability Action Plan   | In progress<br>0-50%                                  | The first meeting of the Disability Action Plan Working Group was held on 21 January 2026, with passionate input from members about what is needed. The next meeting is scheduled for 25 March 2026.                                     |
|  | 5.3.2 Develop the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29   | Complete  | The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 was adopted at the October 2025 Council Meeting.  |
|  | 5.3.3 Hold quarterly meetings of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Working Group                                 | In progress<br>51-99%                                 | The first meeting of the 2026 CFCC Working Group was held on 18 March with a great mix of experiences, capabilities and enthusiasm.  |
|  | 5.3.4 Deliver multicultural events   | Complete<br>[will be complete by the Council Meeting] | Council partnered with many local community organisations for Harmony Day, held on Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> March 2026 at the Ararat Town Hall. This was the 2 <sup>nd</sup> of two events budgeted, so this action is marked complete. |
| 6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.  | 6.1.1 Deliver operational efficiencies to reduce avoidable overtime and improvements in casual staff rostering           | Complete  | This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.   |
|  | 6.1.2 Undertake a review of Council's insurance coverage and policies to ensure they continue to provide value for money | Complete  | This action was completed at the November 2025 Council Meeting.  |
| 6.2 Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.                          | 6.2.1 Deliver organisational efficiencies and improvements through IT infrastructure and systems upgrades                | In progress<br>51-99%                                 | IT infrastructure and systems upgrades are underway  |
|  | 6.2.2 Undertake the Strategic Internal Audit Program - 5 years.  | In progress<br>51-99%                                 | Progress is being made on the items in the Strategic Internal Audit Program.   |
|  | 6.2.3 Develop the 2026-2030 Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)   | In progress<br>51-99%                                 | Development of the 2026-30 GEAP is well underway   |
|  | 6.2.4 Ensure appropriate analysis of all inquiry and investigation reports   | Ongoing   | Each external enquiry and investigation undertaken in the local government sector is examined and  |

|  |   |          |   |
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|  | relevant to Council operations are examined and recommendations implemented.                          |          | appropriate actions undertaken. Significant issues and remedies are reported to the audit and risk committee. |
| 6.3 Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making. | 6.3.1 Deliver a new Customer Request Management System (CRMS) integrated with the Snap Send Solve app | Complete | This action was completed at the August 2025 Council Meeting.   |
|  | 6.3.2 Develop a regular biannual program of face-to-face community engagement opportunities           | Complete | This action was completed at the November 2025 Council Meeting.   |

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

The Annual Plan 2025/26 aligns with all strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29

### **Budget Implications**

The Annual Plan 2025/2026 does not have any additional budget implications. All actions in the Annual Plan have been budgeted in the 2025/2026 Budget or have no additional resourcing requirements.

### **Policy/Relevant Law**

Section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that Council produces a Council Plan for a minimum of a four year period. The Annual Plan is a document related to operationalising the Council Plan.

### **Sustainability Implications**

The Annual Plan provides specific actions that will be undertaken for the key theme 5. Preserving Our Environment.

### **Risk Assessment**

Implementing the Annual Plan has some inherent risks around project and program delivery on time, at cost and at an acceptable quality. These risks are managed through careful budget monitoring, a focus on effective project management and appropriate stakeholder engagement. Council has a commitment to improved performance across all of these areas.

### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

Stakeholders and community groups will be engaged during the development and delivery of the actions, where applicable.

## RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council receives the Annual Plan 2025/26 - February 2026 report

**MOVED CR JOYCE  
SECONDED CR J ARMSTRONG**

**That:**

- 1. Council receives the Annual Plan 2025/26 - February 2026 report**

**Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5321/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item

#### 4.4 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 2026

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27932

##### **OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Council has approved its 2025/2026 Capital Works Program as a fundamental component of the current budget. With a substantial capital works investment totalling \$12.437 million, the budget primarily targets infrastructure enhancements.

Key initiatives include:

- Year two of Mount William Road Construction - supported by Federal Government funding.
- Buangor Ben Nevis Road Construction - including replacement of bridge one at the Warrak end of the project.
- The covered sports arena at the Ararat Pony Club facilities.
- Urban Gravel to Seal Road Upgrades continuing to upgrade accessibility across urban areas.
- Maintenance of Footpaths, Drainage, and Kerb and Channel.

These projects underscore the Council's commitment to improving local infrastructure and fostering community development in the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

##### **DISCUSSION**

Council's 2025/2026 Capital Works Program continues our shift to reintroduction of larger road and bridge construction projects. The program's budget has substantial state and federal funding targeting road construction and safety initiatives.

The focus for 2025/2026 remains on renewing and updating Council assets, leveraging in-house capabilities, and supporting local employment and contractors, and the tender of works with the expectation of possible budget savings in a softening construction market.

Key areas include:

- Enhanced roads reseal program.
- Urban drainage improvements
- Footpath network upgrades
- Major urban road gravel to seal program
- Year two of Mt William Road Reconstruction
- Roads to Recovery funded projects (Webb Street & McCrows Road Bridge)
- Safe Local Roads and Street funding projects

##### **Budget Status:**

As of 28 February 2026, 42% of the budget is expended which is an increase of 13% since 31 January 2026. A further 50% of the budget is committed with works expected to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Stage two of Mt William Road is currently underway with stabilising works progressing well. Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge Reconstruction is expected to reopen to traffic before the end of March. Bridge strengthening works at McCrows Road are due to commence on 30 March 2026 and Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge Strengthening (Buangor end over Billy Billy Creek) due to commence on 9 April 2026. Jack and Jill Kindergarten will commence in the last week of April with Council staff helping with removal of furniture and equipment and works to commence onsite from 6 April 2026.

| PROPERTY CAPITAL PROJECTS  | Budget             | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Community Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended (25/26) | Overall Total | %   | Notes  |
|--|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----|--|
| <b>Property Capital General</b>  | <b>\$166,000</b>   |                | \$166,000            |                        |                            |                               | \$86             | \$86          |     |  |
| <b>Minirera Recreation Reserve Toilet Upgrade</b>  |                    |                |                      |                        |                            | \$48,325                      | \$121,195        | \$169,520     |     | Works have commenced onsite.   |
| <b>Tatyoan Oval Upgrade</b>  |                    |                |                      |                        |                            |                               | \$11,393         | \$11,393      |     | Works are completed with some final issues to be rectified before final completion is issued   |
| <b>Video Cameras/Security - Ararat Skate Park</b>  |                    |                |                      |                        |                            |                               | \$6,421          | \$6,421       |     | These have been installed.   |
| <b>Video Camera/Security - Ararat Fitness Centre</b>                                       |                    |                |                      |                        |                            |                               | \$13,203         | \$13,203      |     | These have been installed.   |
| <b>Lake Bolac Club Rooms - Roof Upgrade</b>  |                    |                |                      |                        |                            | \$23,400                      |                  | \$23,400      |     | Works to be completed by 30 June 26  |
| <b>Alexandra Oval - Hot Water Service Replacements</b>                                     |                    |                |                      |                        |                            | \$22,854                      |                  | \$22,854      |     | Works to be completed by 30 June 26  |
| <b>Former Cobb &amp; Co Staging Stables</b><br><i>(Disaster Recovery Heritage Program)</i> | <b>\$60,000</b>    | \$60,000       |                      |                        | \$1,237                    |                               | \$29,137         | \$30,374      | 50% | Ararat Maintenance Plumbing has completed works on this project & and acquitted.   |
| <b>Ararat Pony Club - Covered Sports Area</b><br><i>(Play our Way Program)</i>             | <b>\$1,490,000</b> | \$1,490,000    |                      |                        | \$14,270                   | \$1,052,637                   | \$320,918        | \$1,387,825   | 93% | The design and construction of the undercover arena has been awarded to MKM Constructions works are to commence 16 February 2026. Lighting installation has been awarded to Matt Peel Electrical - this includes the installation of 3-phase power. Power Upgrade not expected until mid year with Powercor. |
| <b>Centenary Park - Dog Park</b><br><i>(Open Space for Everyone Program)</i>               | <b>\$112,000</b>   | \$100,000      | \$12,000             |                        | \$1,172                    | \$63,590                      | \$8,961          | \$73,723      | 66% | Works are commencing in February, all equipment and fencing is ordered and Parks & Gardens team to undertake installation.   |

| PROPERTY CAPITAL PROJECTS  | Budget             | Funding Amount     | Council Contribution   | Community Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended (25/26) | Overall Total      | %    | Notes  |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------|--|
| <b>Buangor Sports Pavilion Redevelopment</b><br><i>(Tiny Towns Program)</i>  | <b>\$631,000</b>   | \$50,000           | \$581,000<br>((\$220k Property Capital)<br>(\$361k Property Reserve) |                        | \$303                      | \$542,738                     | \$87,567         | \$630,608          | 100% | Building Permit has been approved and works are expected to commence in February.  |
| <b>Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment</b><br><i>(Building Blocks improvement grants program)</i>                                     | <b>\$745,000</b>   | \$745,000          |  |                        | \$26,000                   | \$539,734                     | \$82,735         | \$648,469          | 86%  | Works for this project have been awarded to:<br>Renovation Works - ISJ Building<br>Painting Works - Grampians<br>Painting and Decorating<br>Flooring - Choices Ararat<br>Switchboard Upgrade - CHS<br>Electrical<br>Works to commence week of 5 April 2026 |
| <b>Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade</b><br><i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i> | <b>\$700,000</b>   | \$560,000          | \$120,000  | \$20,000               | NA                         | \$403,550                     | \$3,914          | \$407,464          | 58%  | Tenders for Civil, Lighting and Fencing have been awarded under Council Delegation. Civil works are expected to commence on 7 April 2026 by SHS Civil.   |
| <b>Gordon Street Cricket Nets Upgrade</b><br><i>(Australian Cricket Infrastructure Grant)</i>  | <b>\$39,985</b>    | \$15,000           | \$24,985   |                        | NA                         |                               | \$35,301         | \$35,301           | 88%  | Synthetic carpet is being installed in February and concrete works have been completed, netting is the final works to be completed.  |
| <b>Pomonal Hall Battery Project</b><br><i>(Powering Resilience in the Regions Program)</i>   | <b>\$148,760</b>   | \$141,407          | \$7,353  |                        | NA                         |                               | \$7,353          | \$7,353            | 100% | Council have paid their contribution to the project. Indigo Power have been awarded this project - any further expenditure will be paid by CVGA.   |
| <b>Ararat Library Lighting and Exterior Upgrade.</b><br><i>(Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2024-25)</i>                           | <b>\$51,026</b>    | \$51,026           |  |                        | NA                         |                               | \$45,196         | \$45,196           | 88%  | External Painting and lighting have been completed.  |
| <b>TOTAL - PROPERTY CAPITAL</b>  | <b>\$4,550,771</b> | <b>\$3,212,433</b> | <b>\$1,318,338</b>   | <b>\$20,000</b>        | <b>\$42,982</b>            | <b>\$2,696,828</b>            | <b>\$773,380</b> | <b>\$3,513,190</b> |      |  |

| <b>PLANT &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>          | <b>Budget</b>    | <b>Committed/<br/>Contracted</b> | <b>Expended<br/>25/26</b> | <b>%</b>   | <b>Notes</b>   |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|--|
| Vehicle Purchases                     | <b>\$240,000</b> |                                  | \$204,131                 | 85%        | Replacement of 4 x Utilities and SUV                                     |
| Major Plant Purchases                 | <b>\$260,000</b> |                                  | \$113,000                 |            | New reach mower  |
| Fixtures, Fittings & Furniture        | <b>\$100,000</b> | \$61,128                         | \$15,990                  |            | Town Hall - New Speaker<br>IT Capital - Core Switch and WiFi Replacement |
| Book stock - Library Book Replacement | <b>\$40,000</b>  |                                  | \$33,497                  | 60%        |  |
| <b>TOTAL - PLANT &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>  |                  | <b>\$61,128</b>                  | <b>\$366,618</b>          | <b>66%</b> |  |

| <b>ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS</b>  | <b>Budget</b>      | <b>Funding Amount</b> | <b>Council Contribution</b> | <b>Previous Years Expenditure</b> | <b>Committed Expenditure (25/26)</b> | <b>Expended 25/26</b> | <b>Overall Total</b> | <b>%</b>    | <b>Notes</b>   |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|--|
| <b>Works By Others</b><br><i>Woorndoo Streatham Road - Completed by Moyne Shire</i> | <b>\$683,000</b>   |                       | \$683,000                   | NA                                | \$683,000                            |                       | \$683,000            | <b>100%</b> | Works for this road is being undertaken by Moyne Shire. The budget amount is Council's contribution  |
| <b>Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening &amp; Alternative Sealing</b>                     | <b>\$1,500,000</b> |                       | \$1,500,000                 | NA                                |                                      | \$359,475             | \$359,475            | <b>24%</b>  | \$1.5m budget reallocated from other line items. Additional OTTA Seal works include:<br>- Nott Road, Ararat (Pyrenees Hwy End)<br>- Sugarloaf Road |
| <b>Reseal Program</b>   |                    |                       |                             | NA                                |                                      | \$33,824              | \$33,824             |             | Reseal Program Completed in 24/25, current charge to this item is linemarking that was invoiced late and has been allocated to 25/26 budget.       |

| ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS   | Budget             | Funding Amount | Council Contribution   | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended 25/26 | Overall Total | %         | Notes  |
|---|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|--|
| <b>Urban Road - Gravel to Seal</b>  | <b>\$1,000,000</b> |                | \$1,000,000            | NA                         |                               | \$48,980       | \$48,980      | <b>5%</b> | Works Allocated for:<br>- Alexandra Avenue (in conjunction with SLRSP Funding)<br>- Coral & McNeil Street<br>- Maude Street (in conjunction with Pony Club Project)      |
| <b>ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM</b>  |                    |                |                        |                            |                               |                |               |           |  |
| <b>Buangor Ben Nevis Road</b><br><i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25 &amp; 25/26)</i> | <b>\$3,143,000</b> |                | \$2,143,000<br>(24/25) | \$269,592                  |                               | \$52,382       | \$321,974     |           | Stage One of Road works are expected to commence in the coming months inline with the bridge works, to be undertaken by internal crew                                    |
| <b>Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge Strengthening</b>                          |                    |                | \$1,000,000<br>(25/26) |                            | \$308,862                     | \$3,550        | \$312,412     |           | Bridge Strengthening has been awarded West Pacific Group and is to commence around April 2026  |
| <b>Buangor Ben Nevis Road</b><br><i>(SILRP Funding 25/26)</i>                 | <b>\$5,000,000</b> | \$5,000,000    |                        |                            |                               |                |               |           | Council contribution of \$1,250,000 required in 26/27 Budget   |
| <b>Mt William Road</b><br><i>(HSVPP Funding 24/25)</i>                        | <b>\$6,250,000</b> | \$5,000,000    | \$1,250,000            | \$217,582                  | \$869,268                     | \$1,379,880    | \$2,466,730   |           | Stage 1 of the works are complete with sealing finalised in December 25. Stage 2 will commence at the conclusion of harvest. All works must be complete by 30 June 2026. |
| <b>Webb Street Reconstruction</b><br><i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25)</i>         | <b>\$400,000</b>   |                | \$400,000              | \$13,822                   |                               | \$152,093      | \$165,915     | 100%      | Works have been completed with sealing of the road expected in late January, early February.   |
| <b>Churchill Avenue Reconstruction</b>  |                    |                | \$30,371               |                            |                               | \$30,371       | \$30,371      |           | Final invoices for works completed in June 26.   |
| <b>Ararat Active Bike Network</b><br><i>(Active Transport Fund)</i>           | <b>\$399,000</b>   | \$266,000      | \$133,000              | \$13,525                   | \$175,202                     | \$18,009       | \$206,736     | 52%       | Tenders have been awarded for linemarking, and shoulder sealing under the CEO's delegation   |

| ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS   | Budget             | Funding Amount | Council Contribution                               | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended 25/26 | Overall Total | %   | Notes   |
|---|--------------------|----------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----|---|
| <b>Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge 7001.14 Design and Construct</b><br><i>(Roads to Recovery - 25/26)</i> | <b>\$1,300,000</b> |                | \$1,300,000  | \$68,723                   | \$223,699                     | \$903,347      | \$1,195,769   | 92% | Contract No. 731 - Awarded July 2025 \$1.109m - Road and Bridge Pty Ltd \$100,000 allowance for Permits and Vegetation offsets. Works commenced onsite on 12 January 2026. Construction timeframe through until mid March 2026. |
| <b>McCrows Road Bridge</b><br><i>(Roads to Recovery - 24/25)</i>  | <b>\$350,000</b>   |                | \$350,000  | \$17,738                   | \$392,974                     | \$2,547        | \$413,259     |     | Works awarded to Waratah Constructions - work to commence early April 26. Additional cost to be paid from savings on Webb St Roads to Recovery costs.   |
| <b>Major Patching</b>   | <b>\$100,000</b>   |                | \$100,000  |                            |                               | \$61,911       | \$61,911      | 61% |   |
| <b>Bridges</b>  | <b>\$0</b>         |                |  |                            |                               | \$869          | \$869         |     | Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing   |
| <b>Footpath Renewal Program</b>   | <b>\$400,000</b>   |                | \$400,000  |                            | \$101,420                     | \$208,220      | \$309,640     |     |   |
| <b>Albert Street Footpath</b><br><i>(Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program 25/26)</i>                | <b>\$85,000</b>    | \$42,500       | \$42,500 taken from Footpath Renewal Program above |                            | \$48,621                      | \$2,044        | \$50,665      | 57% | Improving Pedestrian Accessibility to the Ararat Retirement Village and Sports Precinct - New Grant received September 2025. This project is currently out to tender.   |
| <b>Urban Drainage Works</b>   | <b>\$350,000</b>   |                |  |                            |                               | \$34,077       | \$34,077      | 6%  | Savings from Gravel to Seal and Footpath Construction line items to pay for septic units at Buangor and Mininera  |
| <b>Mininera Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade</b>   |                    |                | \$206,000  |                            | \$139,000                     | \$67,000       | \$206,000     |     | Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage. Money from Building Reserve  |

| ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS   | Budget             | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended 25/26 | Overall Total | %   | Notes  |
|---|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----|--|
| <b>Buangor Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade</b>  |                    |                | \$201,000            |                            | \$134,000                     | \$67,000       | \$201,000     |     | Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage, commencing week of 23 February 2026. Money from Building Reserve  |
| <b>Kerb and Channel</b>   | <b>\$0</b>         |                |                      |                            |                               | \$95,917       | \$95,917      |     | Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing Final payment for works on George Rd, carried over from 24/25.   |
| <b>Lake Bolac Kindergarten Carpark</b><br><i>(YMCA received funding for work)</i>                                   | <b>\$80,339</b>    | \$80,339       |                      | \$61,358                   |                               | \$12,559       | \$73,917      | 91% | Funding was received by the YMCA to undertake the carpark works at Lake Bolac Kindergarten. Council procured the contractor, and project managed the works with the funding amount being paid to Council on completion of the works. Work is now complete. |
| <b>Banfield Street - School Crossing</b><br><i>(Road Safety Program - School Safety Improvements 20-25)</i>         | <b>\$19,009</b>    | \$19,009       |                      | \$8,244                    |                               | \$4,369        | \$12,613      | 66% | <i>These works are complete.</i>   |
| <b>Queen Street Housing Support Program</b><br><i>(Housing Support Program - Community Enabling Infrastructure)</i> | <b>\$7,380,000</b> | \$7,380,000    |                      | \$152,580                  |                               | \$492,546      | \$645,126     | 9%  | <i>Planning Permit application has been approved.</i>  |

| ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS                   | Budget           | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended 25/26 | Overall Total | %   | Notes   |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----|---|
| <b>SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM</b>         |                  |                |                      |                            |                               |                |               |     |   |
| View Point, Tobin & Taylor St Intersections         | \$224,000        | \$224,000      |                      | \$581                      |                               | \$10,232       | \$10,813      | 5%  | The detailed design for this project is complete, and lighting design is being finalised, with procurement commencing in February 2026. This project will be run in conjunction with the Footpath project for Taylor Street.                |
| Ingor Street - Raised Crossing                      | <b>\$110,000</b> | \$110,000      |                      | \$600                      |                               | \$13,380       | \$13,980      | 12% | The detailed design for this project is complete, and procurement commencing in February 2026.  |
| King Street - Raised Crossing                       | <b>\$110,000</b> | \$110,000      |                      | \$4,702                    | \$41,000                      | \$11,619       | \$57,321      | 52% | Tenders have been received for this project and will be awarded in mid-January 2026.  |
| View Point & High St Intersection                   | <b>\$117,000</b> | \$117,000      |                      | \$1,526                    | \$64,500                      | \$12,724       | \$78,750      | 67% | Tenders have been received for this project and will be awarded in mid-January 2026.  |
| Moore & Princes Street Intersection                 | <b>\$131,000</b> | \$131,000      |                      | \$145                      |                               | \$5,543        | \$5,688       | 4%  | The detailed design for this project is complete, and procurement will commence in February 2026.   |
| Vincent Street & Alexandra Avenue - Raised Crossing | <b>\$321,000</b> | \$321,000      |                      | \$239                      |                               | \$20,545       | \$20,784      | 6%  | The detailed design for this project has been received; some alterations are being requested to make the works more amenable to the location. This project will be run in conjunction with the Gravel to Seal project for Alexandra Avenue. |

| ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS                            | Budget              | Funding Amount      | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended 25/26     | Overall Total      | %   | Notes   |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|---|
| Queen & Moore Street Roundabout                              | \$548,000           | \$548,000           |                      | \$1,531                    |                               | \$20,268           | \$21,799           | 4%  | The detailed design for this project is complete, and the lighting design is being finalised, with procurement commencing in February 2026. |
| <b>SAFE SYSTEM PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (23/24)</b> |                     |                     |                      |                            |                               |                    |                    |     |   |
| Barkly Street Raised Crossing                                | \$312,232           | \$312,232           |                      | \$398                      | \$153,156                     | \$2,990            | \$260,272          | 83% | This project has been awarded to Enoch Civil and commenced on 17 March 2026..   |
| High Street Raised Crossing                                  |                     |                     |                      |                            | \$99,750                      | \$3,978            |                    |     |   |
| <b>TOTAL - ROADS CAPITAL</b>                                 | <b>\$30,312,580</b> | <b>\$19,661,080</b> | <b>\$10,639,371</b>  | <b>\$832,886</b>           | <b>\$3,434,452</b>            | <b>\$4,132,249</b> | <b>\$8,399,587</b> |     |   |

| FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)   | Budget   | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended (25/26) | Overall Total | %   | Notes   |
|---|----------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----|---|
| <b>Roadside Weeds and Pest Program 25/26</b><br><i>(Funding of the same name)</i>                   | \$74,135 | \$74,135       |                      | NA                         | \$36,312                      | \$28,687         | \$65,000      | 0%  | This project has been awarded to Project Platypus, and they have commenced spraying and rabbit control in October.                              |
| <b>Sport &amp; Active Recreation Strategy</b><br><i>(Local Sports Infrastructure Funding 23/24)</i> | \$55,000 | \$40,000       | \$15,000             | \$12,452                   |                               |                  | \$12,452      | 23% | CommunityVibe is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been undertaken, and draft reporting is underway. |

| FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)  | Budget          | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended (25/26) | Overall Total | %   | Notes  |
|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----|--|
| <b>Community Road Safety Action Plan</b><br><i>(TAC Local Govt Funding)</i>  | <b>\$49,540</b> | \$49,540       |                      | \$437                      |                               | \$39,709         | \$40,146      | 81% | <i>DWB Engineering is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been completed and draft reporting is being compiled</i>                            |
| <b>Unlocking Ararat North East</b><br><i>(Streamlining for Growth 22/23)</i>   | <b>\$85,000</b> | \$85,000       |                      | NA                         | \$13,888                      | \$34,827         | \$48,715      | 57% | <i>Beveridge Williams is undertaking the works for this project. They are working with our Planning Department and Strategic Project Lead to progress the outcomes of the funding.</i> |
| <b>Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade - Participation Initiative.</b><br><i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i> | <b>\$50,000</b> | \$50,000       |                      | NA                         |                               |                  |               | 0%  | <i>This grant was received in July 2025 and will run in conjunction with the infrastructure project for Sports Lighting and accessibility upgrades.</i>                                |

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

The key financial drivers align strongly with the thrust of the Council Plan 2025-2029, particularly the following:

- 4.1** Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2025-2035.
- 4.2** Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.
- 4.3** Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability.
- 6.1** Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation, and rating fairness.

### **Budget Implications**

The 2025/2026 Capital Works Program represents a significant element of Council's 2025/2026 Budget. In the current civil construction market, it is essential that Council manages capital works expenditure carefully to ensure budget outcomes are met.

### **Policy/Relevant Law**

The 2025/2026 Capital Works Program complies with the program funded in the 2025/2026 Budget.

### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no environmental sustainability implications. Council is mindful of considering new innovative approaches to improve its sustainability and environmental footprint as a part of the Capital Works program.

### **Risk Assessment**

The 2025/2026 Capital Works Program was developed as a mitigation of the financial risks associated with market volatility currently being experienced in the civil and building construction sectors.

### **Innovation and Continuous Improvement**

Development of the 2025/2026 Capital Works Program represented an agile response to market conditions. A capacity to rework strategy based on a changing environment is a critical element in developing an innovative organisation.

### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

The 2025/2026 Capital Works Program has been developed as an element of the 2025/2026 Budget. There was extensive community engagement undertaken prior to adoption.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

1. *That Council receive the Capital Works Program - February 2026 report.*

### **MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR KAUR**

**That:**

1. **That Council receive the Capital Works Program - February 2026 report.**

**Cr J Armstrong, Cr Kaur and Cr Joyce spoke for the motion**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5322/26**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no Attachments relating to this item

#### 4.5 COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS - FEBRUARY 2026

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27933

#### OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any Conflict of Interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a Conflict of Interest requiring disclosure.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council received 15 applications for the February 2026 round of Community Support Grants. An assessment panel comprising two community members and the Deputy CEO assessed the applications and agreed to fund 10 of the applications, to the full requested amount with the exception of two applicants receiving a reduced amount. 1 additional applicant is successful pending clarification on budgetary items. If clarified, the successful number of applicants will be 11. The rejected applications were due to the following reasons:

1. No clear existing connection to Ararat.
2. Ineligible sole trader
3. No cash co-contribution shown in application. Encouraged to apply in a later round of Community Grants once engagement of the groups members support their idea further
4. Does not fit Community Support Grants Criteria

#### DISCUSSION

Community organisations are required to provide matching funding based on cash or in-kind contributions to support their project or event. Infrastructure projects are not included in the funding guidelines.

Council received 15 applications for the February 2026 round of Community Support Grants. An assessment panel comprising two community members and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer assessed the applications and agreed to fund 10 with a possible 11<sup>th</sup> applicant being successful pending further information. Of these applications, all except for two were granted the full amount.

The successful grants were as follows:

| Community Organisation                            | Purpose  | Amount  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Ararat and District Eight Ball Association</b> | Purchase of second-hand bus to be used to travel for tournaments which encourages players who don't have access to vehicles to participate   | <b>\$3000</b>                                     |
| <b>Ararat &amp; District Historical Society</b>   | To replace outdated computer at the Museum which will alleviate vulnerability for records being hacked. The computer is used for membership details and banking tasks  | <b>\$1533</b>                                     |
| <b>Ararat Basketball Association</b>              | iPad Replacement - used for official legal scoring on PlayHQ. The current iPads are having difficulties due to their age   | <b>\$1174</b>                                     |
| <b>Ararat City Band Inc</b>                       | Bandroom signage - to clearly identify the building along with enhancing recognition of the band within the community  | <b>\$396</b>                                      |
| <b>Ararat Legacy Club</b>                         | Ararat RSL for a Celebration Luncheon and the launching of an Anniversary Keepsake Book - Most of what was requested is outside the scope of the grant program, for example, paying for meals for members of a group is similar to paying for general admission, | <b>\$1000 (reduced amount - requested \$2353)</b> |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | which is ineligible. We will however support the Anniversary Keepsake Book if 2 copies were donated to the Langi Morgala Museum as a historical record that is available for the public to view. For this we'll grant \$1000. |   |
| <b>Ararat Neighbourhood House Inc</b>                   | Purchasing two new sewing machines and an overlocker for the ANH's sewing group   | <b>\$2500 (reduced amount - requested \$3750)</b> |
| <b>Ararat Pistol Club Inc</b>                           | Purchase of a ride-on lawn mower and build two garden beds with a small water tank for watering and drinking water  | <b>\$3000</b>                                     |
| <b>Ararat Motorcycle Club/Australian Ariel Register</b> | Hosting the Australian Ariel Register's annual National Ariel Rally on the 1st to the 4th of May 2026   | <b>\$2000</b>                                     |
| <b>Grampians United Football Club</b>                   | GUFC relaunch and renewal   | <b>\$3000 pending clarification</b>               |
| <b>Green Hill Lake Development Board</b>                | Construction of a birdhide on Green Hill Lake Foreshore   | <b>\$3000</b>                                     |
| <b>Wickliffe Lake Bolac Football Netball Club</b>       | Social rooms upgrade - new fridge and air conditioner   | <b>\$5000</b>                                     |

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

#### **5 ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE**

We will work with the communities of Ararat Rural City to maintain social cohesion, support community activity and cultural life, and enhance safety

#### **Budget implications**

The grants were all made within existing budgetary allocations

#### **Policy / Relevant Law**

Community & Event Support Guidelines

#### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

#### **Risk Assessment**

Risks have been assessed and understood by the grants committee. No unmanaged risks identified at this time.

#### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

The outcome of each grant was made in conjunction between the two external panel members and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. A Conflict of Interest was noted by one of the panel members for one of the applications, therefore was not involved in the decision.

## RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. That Council receive the Community Support Grants - February 2026 report.

**MOVED CR PRESTON  
SECONDED CR JOYCE**

**That:**

- 1. That Council receive the Community Support Grants - February 2026 report.**

**Cr Preston and Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5323/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item

## SECTION 5 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

### 5.1 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING

**AUTHOR'S TITLE:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 27934

#### OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on the 3 March 2026.

#### DISCUSSION

Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee meetings are provided to Council at the first available opportunity after clearance by the Audit and Risk Committee Chairperson. The report contains the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 3 March 2026

| Council Committees       | Councillor representative | Current meeting (as presented) | Next scheduled meeting/s |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Audit and Risk Committee | Cr Bob Sanders            | 03 March 2026                  | 02 June 2026             |
| Audit and Risk Committee | Cr Peter Joyce            | 03 March 2026                  | 02 June 2026             |

#### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

##### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

The report supports the strategic objective of the Council Plan 2025 - 2029:

##### **6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management, and implementation of effective community engagement practices

- 6.2** Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions.  
Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.

##### **Budget Implications**

No budget impact for the receiving of minutes.

##### **Policy/Legal/Statutory**

Section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states that Council must establish an Audit and Risk Committee.

Section 6.1 of the *Audit and Risk Committee Charter* states that minutes of Committee meetings will be provided to Council at the first available opportunity after clearance by the Committee Chairperson following each Committee meeting.

##### **Risk Assessment**

Council needs to be aware of issues raised in the minutes.

**Stakeholder Consultation and Communication**

Audit and Risk Committee members.

Councillor representation on Council Committees.

Chief Executive Officer and relevant Council officers.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*That:*

1. *the Audit and Risk Committee Meetings minutes of 03 March 2026 be received*

**MOVED CR JOYCE  
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

**That:**

1. **the Audit and Risk Committee Meetings minutes of 03 March 2026 be received**

**Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5324/26**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Audit and Risk Committee minutes as listed above are provided as Attachment 5.1.



## MINUTES

### Audit and Risk Committee

Tuesday 3 March 2026

Location: CEO's Office,  
59 Vincent St, Ararat

Commencing at 1:00 pm

**Audit and Risk Committee:**

Cr Bob Sanders (Mayor)  
Cr Peter Joyce  
Ms Jessica Adler  
Mr Greg Jakob  
Ms Janet Dore

**In attendance:**

Dr Tim Harrison  
Mr Bradley Ead  
Mr Ryan Schischka  
Ms Karissa Hogan  
Mrs Chandra Willmott  
Mr Glenn Carman

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**SECTION 1 – PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**1.1 APOLOGIES**  
No apologies

**1.2 DECLARATION OF DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Disclosure of Interests are to be made immediately prior to any relevant item being discussed.  
Janet Dore disclosed that she undertook an internal Building department review

**1.3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Minutes of the Internal Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 02 December 2025 be received.

**MOVED: Greg Jakobs**  
**SECOND: Janet Dore**

That the Minutes of the Internal Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 02 December 2025 be received.

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**SECTION 2- EXTERNAL AUDIT**

**2.1 EXTERNAL AUDIT - AUDIT STRATEGY FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2026**

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.31 Annually review and approve the external audit scope and plan proposed by the external auditor.

**BACKGROUND**

The Victoria Auditor General appoints a service provider to undertake the annual financial audit. Mr Ryan Schischka of Johnsons MME has been appointed by the Victoria Auditor-General's office to undertake the annual financial audit for the year ending 30 June 2026.

**DISCUSSION**

An audit strategy has been prepared to communicate to Council the proposed approach to the audit of its Financial Report and Performance Statement for the year ending 30 June 2026.

The Audit Act 1994 requires the Auditor-General to form an opinion on Council's Financial Report and Performance Statement.

When undertaking the financial audit, Section 3A of the Audit Act 1994 requires the Auditor-General to also consider the issues of waste, probity, and the prudent use of public resources.

The Performance Statement contains financial and non-financial data. Financial systems are predominantly established to capture financial data. Part of the audit is to review the systems that Council has in place to capture the financial data and non-financial data to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

Mr Ryan Schischka of Johnsons MME will attend the meeting remotely to present the draft Audit Strategy

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the audit strategy memorandum for the financial year ending 30 June 2026 be received.

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The draft Audit Strategy Memorandum is provided as Attachment 2.1

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### SECTION 3- FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

#### 3.1 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – ENDING 31 JANUARY 2026

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.6: Review the appropriateness of the format and content of periodic management financial reports and performance statements.

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 31 January 2026.

Based on the information provided by responsible officers and managers Council's overall financial performance is in line with budget.

##### DISCUSSION

Council must establish and maintain a budgeting and reporting framework that is consistent with the principles of sound financial management.

##### Key Financial information:

##### Income Statement (Attachment 1)

The Income Statement measures how well Council has performed from an operating nature. It reports revenues and expenditure from the activities and functions undertaken, with the net effect being a surplus or deficit. Capital expenditure is excluded from this statement, as it is reflected in the Balance Sheet.

Attachment 1 shows that Council generated \$25.677 million in revenue and \$21.556 million in expenses to 31 January 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$4.121 million for the seven months ended 31 January 2026.

##### Income

**Rates and charges** account for 54% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26. Rates and charges are recognised when the rates have been raised, not when the income has been received. An amount of \$18.145 million has been recognised as income for the seven months ended 31 January 2026.

**User fees** account for 5% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$1.084 million has been received to 31 January 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

**Recurrent Operating Grants** total \$2.772 million to 31 January 2026, including \$1.253 million from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission for general purpose grants and \$0.813 million for the local roads grants.

**Non-recurrent Operating Grants** total \$1.577 million to 31 January 2026. Council has been successful in obtaining several grants that had not been budgeted for, as detailed in the table below. The amounts shown as unearned income will be treated as income in future accounting periods once the performance obligations of the grant have been met.

| Non-Recurrent Operating Grants | Budget<br>2025/26<br>\$'000 | Income<br>2025/26<br>\$'000 | Unearned<br>Income<br>\$'000 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ararat Housing Transition      | -                           | -                           | 300                          |
| Digital Twin Victoria          | -                           | -                           | 950                          |
| Free Public WiFi Services      | -                           | -                           | 1,289                        |

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|  |            |              |              |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Supported Playgroups   | 67         | 41           | -            |
| Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy | -          | -            | 36           |
| CALD Outreach Workers Initiative                                 | 129        | 129          | -            |
| Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub                          | -          | 45           | 74           |
| Natural Disaster Relief  | -          | 558          | -            |
| Council Support Fund – Pomonal Fires                             | -          | -            | -            |
| Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings                    | 55         | 55           | -            |
| Centenary Park Dog Park  | 100        | 8            | 67           |
| Queen Street Housing Program                                     | -          | 456          | 5,241        |
| Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct                           | -          | -            | 400          |
| Early Career Educators   | -          | 73           | 30           |
| Ararat Active Bike Network                                       | 266        | -            | -            |
| Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility             | -          | -            | 280          |
| Primary Producer Support Payment                                 | -          | 125          | -            |
| Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund                           | -          | 50           | -            |
| Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)                              | -          | 37           | -            |
|  | <b>617</b> | <b>1,577</b> | <b>8,667</b> |

**Non-recurrent Capital Grants** total \$1.425 million to 31 January 2026, as detailed in the table below. The amounts shown as unearned income will be treated as income in future accounting periods once the performance obligations of the grant have been met.

| Non-Recurrent Capital Grants   | Budget<br>2025/26<br>\$'000 | Income<br>2025/26<br>\$'000 | Unearned<br>Income<br>\$'000 |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Pedestrian Infrastructure Program                                    | -                           | -                           | 50                           |
| Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Recreation Reserve Pavillion Redevelopment | -                           | -                           | 25                           |
| Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Cobb & Co Stables                          | -                           | 29                          | 25                           |
| Pony Club Sports Arena   | 1,490                       | 126                         | 307                          |
| Queen Street Housing Program   | -                           | -                           | 1,683                        |
| Ararat Library Lighting & Exterior Upgrade                           | -                           | 45                          | 6                            |
| TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program                             | -                           | 86                          | 407                          |
| Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade                                     | -                           | 72                          | 3                            |
| Mount William Road Reconstruction                                    | -                           | 1,065                       | 935                          |
| Footpath-Ararat Retirement Village & Sports Precinct                 | -                           | -                           | 35                           |
| Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)                                  | -                           | 2                           | 9                            |
|  | <b>1,490</b>                | <b>1,425</b>                | <b>3,485</b>                 |

**Note**

It is important to note the following:

1. The Grants Operating (recurrent) figure in the Original Budget was \$8.909 million and in the Current Budget is recorded as \$4.721 million, as \$4.188 million was paid to Council in 2024/25 by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC) for the 2025/26 financial year. Council has still received the expected VLGGC income, to be spent in 2025/26, however it will be reported over two financial years.
2. Unearned revenue received in prior years has been adjusted between the Original Budget and Current Budget with an additional \$6.659 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent), \$0.386 million for Grants Capital

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- (recurrent) and \$2.282 million for Grants Capital (non-recurrent) included in the Current Budget on the assumption that each of the grant projects will be completed during the 2025/26 financial year.
3. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$2.050 million to a surplus of \$3.028 million for 2025/26. The year-end variance is a surplus of \$1.482 million when the actual year to date expenses are compared to the year to date budget.

**Expenses**

**Employee Costs** account for approximately 37% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the seven months ended 31 January 2026 Council has incurred \$7.470 million in employee costs.

**Materials and Services** account for approximately 28% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the seven months ended 31 January 2026, Council has incurred \$7.033 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2024/25 that are expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.

**Note**

It is important to note the following:

There has been an increase in expenditure on materials and services from \$9.186 million in the Original Budget to \$13.357 million in the Current Budget for 2025/26. This has resulted from a carry forward amount of \$4.171 million from the 2024/25 financial year surplus and unspent grant funds which will be used to complete the projects in 2025/26.

**Balance Sheet (Attachment 2)**

The Balance Sheet is one of the main financial statements and reports Council's assets, liabilities and equity at a given date, in this case 31 January 2026. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$9.434 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$27.412 million as at 31 January 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$0.543 million from \$14.841 million to \$15.384 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$8.852 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$11.918 million as at 31 January 2026.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$18.290 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$1.401 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$0.249 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$3.349 million, which includes grants received by Council, where in accordance with accounting standards, they are held as a liability until grant-related performance obligations have been met.

**Statement of Cash Flows (Attachment 3)**

The Statement of Cash Flows shows how changes in the Statement of Financial Position and Income Statement affect Cash and Cash Equivalents, and breaks down the analysis to operating activities, investing activities and financing activities.

The Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the financial year of \$14.841 million have increased by \$0.543 million to \$15.384 million as at 31 January 2026.

Net cash of \$4.282 million was provided by operating activities, \$3.302 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.437 million was used in financing activities.

Investing activities includes payments for property, plant and equipment, and infrastructure.

**Financial Performance Indicators (Attachment 4)**

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The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework requires Councils to report various performance indicators at the end of each financial year.

A full list of financial performance indicators is included in Attachment 4.

| Indicator   | 30/6/2025 | 31/01/2026 |
|---|-----------|------------|
| <p><b>Working capital</b><br/> <i>Measure - Current assets compared to current liabilities.</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 100% to 400%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that sufficient working capital is available to pay bills as and when they fall due. High or increasing level of working capital suggests an improvement in liquidity</p>   | 122%      | 165%       |
| <p><b>Loans and borrowings</b><br/> <i>Measure - Loans and borrowings compared to rates.</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework – 0% to 70%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that the level of interest-bearing loans and borrowings should be appropriate to the size and nature of a council's activities. Low or decreasing level of loans and borrowings suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations</p> | 0.86%     | 0.22%      |
| <p><b>Indebtedness</b><br/> <i>Measure - Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework – 2% to 70%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that the level of long-term liabilities should be appropriate to the size and nature of a Council's activities. Low or decreasing level of long-term liabilities suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations</p>         | 7.83%     | 8.61%      |
| <p><b>Rates concentration</b><br/> <i>Measure - Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework – 30% to 80%<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that revenue should be generated from a range of sources. High or increasing range of revenue sources suggests an improvement in stability</p>  | 49.39%    | 74.92%     |
| <p><b>Expenditure level</b><br/> <i>Measure - Expenses per property assessment</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$2,000 to \$10,000<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of expenditure suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency</p>  | \$4,936   | \$2,876    |

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| Indicator  | 30/6/2025 | 31/01/2026 |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <p><b>Indicator - Revenue level</b><br/> <i>Measure - Average residential rate per residential property assessment</i><br/>                     Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - \$700 to \$2,000<br/>                     Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of rates suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency</p>  | \$2,002   | \$2,034    |
| <p><b>Indicator – Percentage of total rates collected</b><br/>                     The internal audit conducted in 2019 on Rates Revenue and Rate Debtor Management found no routine or regular reporting of large and long outstanding rates debtors.<br/>                     The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report.<br/>                     As at 31 January 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$11.492 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$9.026 million. In percentage terms 44.5% of the rates raised have been collected at 31 January 2026 compared to 37.0% up to 31 January 2025. The increased percentage at 31 January 2026 includes payments totalling \$2.054 million received under the Victorian Government’s Drought Support Package for Primary Producer Support Payments, which represents a 40% rate reduction on farm-rated properties.<br/><br/>                     Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest.<br/>                     Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2025/26 there are 2,495 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,653 assessments in 2024/25.</p> | 87.8%     | 44.5%      |
| <p><b>Indicator – Asset Renewal &amp; Upgrade</b><br/> <i>Measure - Asset renewal &amp; Upgrade compared to depreciation</i><br/>                     Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework – 40% to 130%<br/>                     Assessment of whether council assets are being renewed or upgraded as planned. It compares the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, replacing or upgrading existing assets with depreciation. Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate there is a lesser risk of insufficient spending on Council’s asset base.</p>   | 100.75%   | 51.09%     |

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework provides “Expected ranges” for each indicator. The framework has been developed to consider results at the end of the financial year so some results during the year are outside the expected range due to the timing of receipts and payments.

Explanations are provided in Attachment 4 for those indicators that are outside the “expected ranges”.

**KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

**Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

- 6 Strong and Effective Governance  
 We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices

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***Budget Implications***

Council's financial performance is in line with expectations.

***Policy/Relevant Law***

Section 97 – Quarterly Budget Report of the Local Government Act 2020 states:

1. As soon as practicable after the end of each quarter of the financial year, the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to the Council at a Council meeting which is open to the public.
2. A quarterly budget report must include—
  - a. a comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date; and
  - b. an explanation of any material variations; and
  - c. any other matters prescribed by the regulations.
3. In addition, the second quarterly report of a financial year must include a statement by the Chief Executive Officer as to whether a revised budget is, or may be, required.

***Sustainability Implications***

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

***Risk Assessment***

Council is required to establish and maintain a budgeting and reporting framework that is consistent with the principles of sound management and this report assists Council in meeting that requirement.

***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

Council's financial performance reports will continue to be published monthly.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 31 January 2026 be received.

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 31 January 2026 are provided as Attachment 3.1.

The attachment also includes a table of Percentage of Rates Collected to 31 January 2026 by Rating Option as requested at the most recent committee meeting.

**ACTIONS**

Dr. Tim Harrison to supply committee with the action plan for debtors

Unrestricted cash indicators at bottom of range and whilst still in range need to keep watch.

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**SECTION 4 – PRESENTATIONS  
4.1 CYBER SECURITY**

Business Transformation will give a presentation on Cyber Security measures for Ararat Rural City Council

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Cyber Security report be received.

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

Cyber Security FAQs provided as Attachment 4.1

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**SECTION 5 – CHAIRPERSONS UPDATE**

**5.1 Chairpersons Report – CONFIDENTIAL**

The Chairpersons report will be circulated prior to the meeting

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Chairperson's report be received.

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

Chairpersons Report provided as Attachment 5.1

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SECTION 6 - CEO UPDATE

6.1 CEO UPDATE – **CONFIDENTIAL**

The CEOs report will be circulated prior to the meeting

RECOMMENDATION

That the CEO's report be received.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

CEO Confidential Report provided as Attachment 6.1

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**SECTION 7 – INTERNAL CONTROLS**

**7.1 COUNCIL POLICY REVIEW UPDATE**

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.7: Review the adequacy and effectiveness of key policies, systems and controls for providing a sound internal control environment.

**BACKGROUND**

Council policies are reviewed on an ongoing and procedure review process.  
This report outlines two Administrative and Council Policies which are currently being reviewed.

**DISCUSSION**

Council has committed to reviewing policies through review process to ensure that all Council policies meet legislative requirements and established internal processes.

All Council policies are accessible to Councillors, Audit and Risk Committee and staff through Microsoft Teams, hard copies in tearooms at the Depot and Municipal Offices and on Council website.

The below table outlines all policies that will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committees as they come up for review.

| Council Policy   | Due     | Audit and Risk Committee |
|--|---------|--------------------------|
| Asset Management Policy  | Jan-15  | Mar 26                   |
| Audit and Risk Committee Charter   | Dec 26  | Dec 26                   |
| Community Engagement Policy  | Jan 30  | Dec 29                   |
| Complaints Handling Policy   | Jan 30  | Dec 29                   |
| Compliance Framework and Policy  | Jan 27  | Dec 26                   |
| Council Expenses and Support Policy  | Jul 28  | Jun 28                   |
| Councillor Code of Conduct   | Dec 28  | Dec 28                   |
| Councillor Gifts Policy  | Sept-29 | Sept 29                  |
| Election Period 2020 Policy  | Apr 28  | Mar 28                   |
| Fraud and Corruption Policy  | Dec 26  | Dec 26                   |
| International and Interstate Travel Policy   | Mar-28  | Mar 28                   |
| Investment Policy  | Feb-25  | Mar 26                   |
| Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy   | Sept-24 | Mar 26                   |
| Privacy Policy ( <i>prev Privacy &amp; Data Protection &amp; Health Records Policy</i> ) | Jan-25  | Mar 26                   |
| Procurement Policy   | Jun- 28 | Jun 28                   |
| Public Transparency Policy   | Sept 29 | Sept 29                  |
| Risk Management Policy   | Dec 25  | Mar 26                   |
| Social Media Policy  | Feb 28  | Dec 27                   |
| Valuation Policy - Major Asset Classes   | May-26  | Jun 26                   |
| <b>Administration Policy</b>   |         |                          |
| Conflict of Interest Policy  | Nov 28  | Sept 28                  |

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|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| Corporate Purchase Card Policy                        | Oct 27  | Dec 27  |
| Disposal and Sale of Items at Transfer Station Policy | Mar-26  | Jun-26  |
| Disposal and sale of minor assets policy              | Sep-25  | Mar 26  |
| Equal Employment Opportunity Policy                   | Mar-26  | Jun 26  |
| Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy                | Nov 28  | Sept 28 |
| Essential Safety Measures Policy                      | Mar-24  | Sept 25 |
| Health and Wellbeing Policy                           | Aug 25  | Sept 29 |
| Injury Management Policy                              | Sep-25  | Mar 26  |
| Municipal Emergency Policy                            | May-25  | Jun 25  |
| Occupational Health and Safety Policy                 | Sept 26 | Sept 26 |
| OHS Workplace Emergency Evacuation Policy             | Nov-25  | Mar 26  |
| Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace      | Aug 25  | Sept 28 |
| Public Interest Disclosures Procedure                 | Oct 25  | Mar 26  |
| Risk Management Framework                             | Dec 25  | Mar 26  |
| Staff Code of Conduct                                 | Jan 30  | Dec 29  |
| Staff Gift Policy                                     | Jan 30  | Dec 29  |
| Staff Grievances Policy                               | Sept-27 | Sept-27 |
| Vehicle Policy  | July 25 | Mar 26  |
| Workplace Anti-Discrimination & Harassment Policy     | Jun 26  | Jun 26  |

There are five policies / frameworks being presented for review at this meeting which are:

- Privacy Policy
- Disposal of minor assets
- Asset Management Policy
- Injury Management Policy
- Municipal Emergency Policy

The table below provides a list of the reviewed policies noting the main changes and a copy of the policies with track changes are attached.

| Administrative / Council | Policy Title                           | Last review and adopted | Current Review Date ready for Adoption | Next Review |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|-------------|
| Council                  | Asset Management Policy                | 15 February 2011        | March 2026                             | March 2030  |
| Council                  | Privacy Policy                         | 19 January 2021         | March 2026                             | March 2030  |
| Administrative           | Disposal & sale of minor assets Policy | 14 September 2021       | March 2026                             | March 2030  |
| Administrative           | Injury Management Policy               | 14 September 2021       | March 2026                             | March 2030  |
| Administrative           | Municipal Emergency Policy             | 5 May 2021              | March 2026                             | March 2030  |

The Privacy Policy has been updated to align the Health Privacy Principles (HPP) and the Information Privacy Principles (IPP) as well as making administrative changes.

The Asset Management Policy needed quite a few changes, mainly administrative as it had been many years since it was last reviewed but to also align with the current Council Plan and the Council Asset Plan.

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The other three policies have all been reviewed with only minor changes to roles and responsibilities.

The other change which Council has made to their outward facing policies is to change the formatting to a more engaging format as well as a two page fact sheet / quick guide to accompany it.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Council Policy Review Update be noted.**

**NOTED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Draft review of Privacy Policy as Attachment 7.1.1
- Draft review of Disposal of minor assets as Attachment 7.1.2
- Draft review of Asset Management Policy as Attachment 7.1.3
- Draft review of Injury Management Policy as Attachment 7.1.4
- Draft review of Municipal Emergency Management Policy as Attachment 7.1.5

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**SECTION 8 - RISK MANAGEMENT**

**8.1 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER REVIEW AND RISK REGISTER PROGRAM UPDATE**

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.14: Review Council's risk profile and the changes occurring in the profile from meeting to meeting and 5.15 Review Councils treatment plans for significant risks

**BACKGROUND**

Council's Strategic Risk Register is reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer on a regular basis and is presented to the Audit and Risk Committee.

**DISCUSSION**

The Chief Executive Officer ensures that strategic risks are identified and assessed, treatment options are prioritized and implemented, actions are assigned, and performance is monitored and reviewed.

The Chief Executive Officer has a yearly plan for viewing strategic risks with Ararat Rural City Council. The suggest program is outlined below which focuses on the highest risk areas earlier on in the program. Strategic risk reviews are mostly up to date Procurement and Emergency Management this month.

|                |                                    |               |  |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|--|
| July 2025      | Fraud and Corruption; Cyber Attack | January 2026  | Legislative Compliance                               |
| August 2025    | Asset Management                   | February 2026 | Workforce Planning                                   |
| September 2025 | Business Continuity                | March 2026    | Procurement; and Emergency Management                |
| October 2025   | Financial Sustainability           | April 2026    | Waste Management; and Occupational Health and Safety |
| November 2025  | IT Infrastructure                  | May 2026      | Strategic Leadership and Advocacy                    |
| December 2025  | Governance                         | June 2026     | Climate Change; and Records Management               |

The Chief Operating Officer continues to work with service owners to review the operational risks and set ongoing review dates. The table below outlines the timeframe for each of these reviews to take place over the next 6 months and continuing training for key service providers in using the system. Reviews have been completed up to the end of November.

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| Month     | Service Area  |
|-----------|---|
| February  | Local Laws, Municipal Building Services, Planning, Environmental Health, Environmental Management and Sustainability      |
| March     | Risk Management, Governance, Emergency Management, Insurance Management   |
| April     | Design and Project Management, Information Technology, Asset Management, Records Management, Graphic Information Systems, |
| May       | Maternal & Child Health, Occupational Health and Safety,  |
| June      | Sport and recreation, Tourism, Economic Development   |
| July      | Depot, Contracts and Procurement, Finance, Property Rates and Valuation,  |
| August    | Library Service, Events, Human Resource, Customer Services, Waste management  |
| September | Art Gallery / TAMA, Town Hall, Media and Communications   |

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Strategic Risk Review and Update Report be received.

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Strategic Risk Register is provided as Attachment 5.1

**ACTION**

Major Grants to be added on to the Strategic Risk Register

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**SECTION 9- FRAUD PREVENTION**

No Report Table

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**SECTION 10- INTERNAL AUDIT**

**10.1 INTERNAL AUDIT – STRATEGIC INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAM STATUS UPDATE**

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.23 Review progress of annual internal audit plan

**BACKGROUND**

Council appointed AFS & Associates from Bendigo as Council's Internal Auditors. This report outlines the audit program that was presented and accepted at the last Audit and Risk Committee meeting with the current status.

**DISCUSSION**

AFS & Associates have provided the internal Audit Program Review document which outlines the forward rolling four-year program for Council.

This Status Update includes:

- The current status of SIAP
- Past Issues Review
- Proposed change to the 2025/26 Internal audit program

| Topic                        | Current Timming               | Proposed Timing               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Long term Financial Planning | 24 August – 1 September 2026  | 28 September – 6 October 2026 |
| Economic Development         | 28 September – 6 October 2026 | 24 August – 1 September 2026  |

Commencing 4 May 2026, we will also be conducting a review of the current SIAP in consultation with management to maintain it as a four-year rolling program. We will present proposed revisions to the program to the 2 June 2026 meeting of the ARC for your review and endorsement.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Strategic Audit Program Status Update be received

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Strategic Internal Audit Program Status Update as Attachment 10.1

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**10.2 INTERNAL AUDIT – PAST ISSUES REVIEW**

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.25 Review reports on internal audit reviews, including recommendations for improvement arising from those review and aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.27 Monitor action by management on internal audit findings and recommendations.

**BACKGROUND**

Council appointed AFS & Associates from Bendigo as Council's Internal Auditors. Council has reviewed the recommendations made by the Internal Auditor in relation to the internal audit reviews and these are presented as an attachment to this report.

**DISCUSSION**

An Audit Review Recommendation Action Plan was developed to capture the recommendations highlighted in the various internal audits conducted by AFS.

Each year, AFS, as the internal auditors, conducts a review of the actions taken by management and confirm that they have been addressed the risks raised by the internal auditors. The next review will take place in May 2026, however this report is a progress report of those actions to date. Since the late Audit and Risk Committee meeting, there have been another 5 items which have been completed. Progress has increase due to engaging in an external consultant to help undertake some work in this area, and there is now 26 items sitting at 50% completed or greater once these have been completed, then works will begin on the outstanding items.

The Audit Recommendation Outcomes Action Plan, list the recommendations and subsequent outcomes and projected completion dates.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Audit Recommendation Outcome Updates report be received

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Audit Recommendation Outcomes Update Action Plan in included as Attachment 10.2

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### 10.3 INTERNAL AUDIT – AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT

Aligns with Audit and Risk Charter 5.28 Review the effectiveness of the internal audit function and ensure that it has appropriate authority within Council and has no unjustified limitations of its work

#### BACKGROUND

Council appointed AFS & Associates from Bendigo as Council's Internal Auditors. AFS distributed a survey to the four members of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and to the CEO to self-assess the Committee's performance against Ararat Rural City Council's Audit and Risk Committee Charter. Four responses were received. AFS has independently collated the responses of the survey and present the results in the attachment provided. The ARC last undertook a self-assessment of performance in 2023.

#### DISCUSSION

The over all average response score from Audit and Risk Committee Members on a scale of 1 to 6 was 4.95 (2023: 5.08) No area received a weighted score below 4.5 in the current assessment. This is a very strong result.

Of the 23 questions asked in the survey requiring a 1 (less than adequate) to 6 (more than adequate) rating, 14 achieving a weighted average score of 5.00 or more.

The highest rating area of performance (rating average score of 5.50) were:

- Q2 – ensuring reliable financial reporting and management information
- Q3 – reviewing and resolving issues raised by external auditors
- Q4 – Providing appropriate oversight and having knowledge of the internal control systems.
- Q16 – Reviewing VAGO findings and recommendations and monitoring ARCC responses.
- Q20 – Receiving reports from management on the findings of any examinations by regulatory or integrity agencies
- Q21 – Providing meeting minutes and relevant information to Councillors that is easy to understand and relevant for decision-making
- Q22 – Monitoring and evaluating performance and reporting opportunities for improvements through to Council

The Areas of responsibility receiving the lowest weighted average score of 4.5 were:

- Q5 – ensuring a program is in place to test compliance with systems (2023: 5.00)
- Q19 – reviewing processes for monitoring compliance with Councils Employee Code of Conduct by employees and contractors (2023: 4.50)
- Q25 – reviewing the adequacy of the ARC Charter (2023: 5.50)

The ARC continues to demonstrate strong performance. Notwithstanding, there were three areas where performance was deemed to have improved since the 2023 assessment and 2 areas where the performance rating had declined.

The area with the largest increase in performance (0.5):

- Q7 – determining the level and suitability of the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning
- Q9 – having oversight over risk areas and controls through the Fraud Control Plan
- Q22 – Monitoring and evaluating performance and reporting opportunities for improvement through to Council

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The performance score decreased 1.00 and 0.75 respectively in the following:

- Q14 – reviewing and approving the external audit scope and plan (-0.75)
- Q25 – reviewing the adequacy of the ARC Charter (-1.00)

**RECOMMENDATION**

**The Audit and Risk Committee Performance Self-Assessment report be received**

**RECEIVED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

**The Audit and Risk Committee Performance Self Assessment results included as Attachment 10.3**

**ACTION**

Committee to review the Charter at the June meeting

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**SECTION 11- GENERAL BUSINESS**

**11.1 INDUSTRY UPDATE- RECENT REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST**

**BACKGROUND**

AFS & Associates (AFS) are Council's Internal Auditors. AFS have provided an Industry Update report to be included in the agenda. The Industry Update report lists recent reports and publications that may be of interest to Ararat Rural City Council.

**DISCUSSION**

The Industry Update report lists 15 recent articles and reports, covering a range of different topics from sources such as: IBAC, IIA, and OVIC etc.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Industry Update report be noted.

**NOTED**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The industry Update report is provided as Attachment 11.1 (March)

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**SECTION 12 – FUTURE MEETINGS**

**12.1 FUTURE MEETING DATES**

Future meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee are scheduled as follows:

- Tuesday 2 June 2026 1pm
- Tuesday 15 September 2026 1pm
- Tuesday 21 December 2026 1pm
- Tuesday 2 March 2027 1pm

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**SECTION 13- NEXT MEETING/CHARTER ITEMS**

| June 2026         |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Ref. from Charter |   |
| 5.12              | View annually the effectiveness of Council's risk management framework  |
| 5.13              | Review Council's risk appetite statement and the degree of alignment with Council's risk profile  |
| 5.14              | Review Council's risk profile and the changes occurring in the profile from meeting to meeting  |
| 5.15              | Review Council's treatment plans for significant risks  |
| 5.16              | Review the insurance program annually prior to renewal  |
| 5.17              | Review the approach to business continuity planning arrangements.   |
| 5.19              | Receive reports from management about actual or suspected instances of fraud or corruption (as required)  |
| 5.20              | Review reports by management about the actions taken by Council to report such matters to the appropriate integrity bodies (as required)                                    |
| 5.23              | Review progress on delivery of annual internal audit plan   |
| 5.24              | Review and approve proposed scopes for each review in the annual internal audit plan (as required)  |
| 5.25              | Review reports on internal audit reviews, including recommendations for improvement arising from those reviews.   |
| 5.26              | Meet with the leader of the internal audit function at least annually in the absence of management  |
| 5.27              | Monitor action by management on internal audit findings and recommendations.  |
| 5.28              | Review the effectiveness of the internal audit function and ensure that it has appropriate authority within Council and has no unjustified limitations of its work          |
| 5.29              | Ensure that the Committee is aware of and appropriately represented regarding any proposed changes to the appointment of the internal audit service provider. (as required) |

## SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

### 6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

**AUTHOR'S TITLE:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 13039074

#### OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governance Rules state that if there is a meeting of Councillors that:

1. is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of *Council* or briefing Councillors;
2. is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
3. is not a *Council meeting*, *Delegated Committee* meeting or *Community Asset Committee* meeting, the *Chief Executive Officer* must ensure that a summary of the matters discussed at the meeting are:
  - a. tabled at the next convenient *Council meeting*; and
  - b. recorded in the minutes of that *Council meeting*.

#### DISCUSSION

As a requirement of the Governance Rules, a summary of matters discussed at the Council Briefings held since the last Council Meeting are presented to Council and will be recorded in the minutes.

| INFORMAL MEETINGS                      |
|--|
| Council Briefing held on 17 March 2026 |
| Council Briefing held on 24 March 2026 |

#### Matters discussed at the briefing:

- Draft Budget 2026/27
- CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee
- Town Entrances
- Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court, Ararat North
- Gender Equality and GEAP Consultation
- Road Naming Proposal - McAdie Lane
- Privacy Policy
- Draft Sports Strategy
- Advocacy Priorities
- Monthly Performance Report - February 2026
- Queen Street Housing - Contractor termination
- Impact of potential fuel pricing on operations
- Gravel to Seal - Alexandra Avenue
- Gravel to Seal - Coral & McNeil Streets
- Monthly Community Engagement Report
- Monthly Performance Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - January 2026
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan

- Community Grants - February 2026
- Capital Work Program - February 2026
- Building approvals
- Planning approvals under delegation

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### **Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives**

The report supports the strategic objective of the Council Plan 2025-2029:

#### **6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

- 6.3** Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.

#### **Financial**

There are no financial impacts for the receiving of Informal Meetings of Councillors.

#### **Policy/Relevant Law**

Reporting of Informal Meetings is in line with the requirements of the Governance Rules.

#### **Risk Assessment**

Following the requirements of the Governance Rules will ensure that Council meets its legislative requirements.

#### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

A summary of matters discussed at the Council Briefings are presented for community information.

### RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *the Informal Meetings of Councillors Report be received.*

### **MOVED CR J ARMSTONG SECONDED CR KAUR**

That:

1. **the Informal Meetings of Councillors Report be received.**

**Cr J Armstrong spoke for the motion spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5325/26**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

The Summary of Council Briefings are provided as Attachment 6.1.

## Councillor Briefing Agenda



**Date: Tuesday 17 March 2026**

**Commencement:** 5.00 pm

**Location:** Council Chamber, Shire Offices

**Councillors:** Cr Jo Armstrong  
Cr Rob Armstrong  
Cr Peter Joyce  
Cr Teli Kaur  
Cr Luke Preston  
Cr Bob Sanders  
Cr Bill Waterston

**Officers:** Deputy CEO, Phuong Au  
Chief Operating Officer, Chandra Willmott  
Major Projects Lead, Rebecca Rodger

### Disclosure of Conflict of Interests

---

Disclosure of Interests are to be made immediately prior to any relevant item being discussed (**Local Government Act 2020 - Section 131 and Chapter 5, Section 6 of the Governance Rules**).

### Matters Considered

1 Draft Budget 2026/27

Phuong Au

## Councillor Briefing Agenda



**Date: Tuesday 24 March 2026**

**Commencement: 5.00 pm**

**Location: Council Chamber, Shire Offices**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Councillors:</b> | Cr Jo Armstrong<br>Cr Rob Armstrong<br>Cr Peter Joyce<br>Cr Teli Kaur<br>Cr Luke Preston<br>Cr Bob Sanders                        |
| <b>Officers:</b>    | CEO, Dr Tim Harrison<br>Deputy CEO, Phuong Au<br>Chief Operating Officer, Chandra Willmott<br>Major Projects Lead, Rebecca Rodger |
| <b>Apologies:</b>   | Cr Bill Waterston   |

### Disclosure of Conflict of Interests

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Disclosure of Interests are to be made immediately prior to any relevant item being discussed (*Local Government Act 2020 - Section 131 and Chapter 5, Section 6 of the Governance Rules*).

#### 1. CEO Transition - Greg Jakob

- 1.1 CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee update

#### 2. Matters to be considered

- 2.1 Mayor's roundup
- 2.2 Town Entrances
- 2.3 Economic Development update
- 2.4 Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court, Ararat North
- 2.5 Gender Equality & GEAP Consultation
- 2.6 Road Naming Proposal - McAdie Lane
- 2.7 Privacy Policy
- 2.8 Draft Sports Strategy
- 2.9 Advocacy Priorities
- 2.10 Monthly Performance Report - February 2026
- 2.11 Queen Street Housing - Contractor termination
- 2.12 Impact of potential fuel pricing on operations
- 2.13 Gravel to Seal - Alexandra Avenue
- 2.14 Gravel to Seal - Coral & McNeil Streets

## Councillor Briefing Agenda



### 3. For noting

- 3.1 Monthly Community Engagement Report
- 3.2 Monthly Progress Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - February 2026
- 3.3 Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- 3.4 Community Grants - February 2026
- 3.5 Capital Works Program - February 2026
- 3.6 Building approvals
- 3.7 Planning approvals under delegation

**Dr Tim Harrison**

## **SECTION 7 - NOTICES OF MOTION**

*A notice of motion* must be in writing signed by a Councillor and be lodged with or sent to the *Chief Executive Officer* no later than 12.00pm (noon) and at least six (6) days prior to the Council Meeting to allow sufficient time for the *Chief Executive Officer* to include the *notice of motion* in agenda papers for a *Council meeting*.

**There were no notices of motion received.**

**SECTION 8 - URGENT BUSINESS**

Items cannot be admitted as urgent business other than by resolution of *Council* and only then if:

- 1 relates to or arises out of a matter which has arisen since distribution of the *agenda*; and
- 2 cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next *Council meeting*.

**No Urgent Business arising.**

## SECTION 9 - CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL)

In accordance with section 66(2)(a), 3(1) *Confidential Information (a)* of the Local Government Act 2020, the following agenda items are listed for consideration in the confidential section:

- Item 9.1 - CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee update
- Item 9.2 - Councillor - Request for leave of absence
- Item 9.3 - Gravel to Seal - Alexandra Avenue, Ararat
- Item 9.4 - Gravel to Seal - Coral & McNeill Street, Ararat
- Item 9.5 - 87 Queen Street, Ararat - Demolition Works & Site Clearing Works

## 6.59PM - CLOSURE OF COUNCIL MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

The Open Council Meeting will now be closed, but members of the public are welcome to rejoin the Council Meeting following the recommencement of the meeting.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That the meeting be closed to members of the public pursuant to section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 to consider confidential reports.*

### MOVED CR PRESTON

### SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG

**That the meeting be closed to members of the public pursuant to section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 to consider confidential reports.**

**No Councillor spoke for or against the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0**

**5327/26**

## 7.17PM - OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT

### RECOMMENDATION

*That the Open Council Meeting recommence.*

### MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG

### SECONDED CR KAUR

**That the Open Council Meeting recommence.**

**No Councillor spoke for or against the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0**

**5332/26**

**Gallery invited to return to Council Chamber.**

## LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *The confidentiality of the report in relation to Confidential Agenda Items 9.1,9.2, 9.3 9.4 and 9.5 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.*

### **MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG**

**That:**

1. **The confidentiality of the report in relation to Confidential Agenda Items 9.1,9.2, 9.3 9.4 and 9.5 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**

**No Councillor spoke for the motion.**

**CARRIED 6/0  
5333/26**

**Meeting closed at 7.17pm**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT PAGES 12572 - 12770 INCLUDING PAGES 914 - 930 OF THE CLOSED SESSION ARE CONFIRMED AND A TRUE AND CORRECT RECORD.

**MAYOR - CR BOB SANDERS**