



Ararat Rural City

MINUTES

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 26 May 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 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, Cr Bill Waterston, 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, Harry Belcher - Town Hall Trainee

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 ROB 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 JO ARMSTRONG

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 BILL WATERSTON

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

There were no Apologies.

1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28 April 2026 be confirmed.

MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR KAUR

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28 April 2026 be confirmed.

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5347/26**

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 Interest 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.

There were no Petitions or Joint letters received.

SECTION 3 - REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION

3.1 ADOPTION OF THE ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL BUDGET 2026-27

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28964

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

In accordance with Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020, Council is required to prepare a budget for each financial year and the subsequent 3 financial years by 30 June each year, or any other date fixed by the Minister by notice published in the Government Gazette.

Section 96 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to develop the budget in accordance with the financial management principles and its community engagement policy.

This report presents the Budget 2026/27 for adoption after it has been presented to community for community consultation and engagement.

DISCUSSION

The 2026/27 Budget sets out Council's continued commitment to responsible financial management, strong service delivery, and strategic investment in the municipality's long-term economic growth and wellbeing. Building on the efficiencies achieved over the past eight financial years, this Budget focuses on maintaining essential services, renewing critical community assets, and ensuring that ratepayers receive value for money.

In preparing the 2026/27 Budget, Council has prioritised sustainability and prudent decision-making in an environment of rising operating costs and evolving community expectations. The Budget provides for ongoing investment in infrastructure, community facilities, and service improvements, ensuring that Council can meet current needs while planning for future growth and resilience.

A core feature of the 2026/27 financial year is a substantial capital works program, with a \$15,797,000 investment dedicated to strengthening enabling infrastructure, supporting local economic activity, and enhancing liveability across the municipality. At the same time, Council continues to pursue operational efficiencies, internal capability building, and service refinements to keep cost pressures low and deliver better outcomes for residents.

Key Budget Influences include:

- a. Ararat Rural City Council's 2026/27 Budget has a 2.25 percent rate rise. This is a 0.5 percent discount on the rate cap for 2026/27 of 2.75 percent and a net increase of 3.75 percent in nine years.

By contrast, had Council increased rates to the level allowable under the State Government's Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) over the nine-year period including 2026/27, this would have increased the total burden to ratepayers by 22.00% during that same period.

- b. In July 2022, Council adopted key drivers of financial sustainability, which form the basis for developing the 2026/2027 Budget. These drivers of financial sustainability are:

Rating

Maintenance of the "pie model" to provide some form of long-term rating equity and reduce rate shock across rating sectors based on annual valuation fluctuations.

Debt

Debt is only used to fund strategic infrastructure outcomes with an emphasis on intergenerational equity.

Asset Preservation

Maintain the asset renewal and upgrade ratio to at least 110% of depreciation.

Surplus Budgets

Maintain cash and operating surpluses in each financial year.

Managing Expenditure

Managing expenditure is a key driver of financial sustainability at Ararat Rural City Council.

Rate Rises

Rate rises will be kept to a minimum based on seeking organisational efficiency. These efficiencies will be returned to the ratepayer as a dividend through lower rate rises or rate cuts.

Service Standards

Expenditure savings and ratepayer dividends will not come at the price of lower service standards.

Key elements of Council's 2026/2027 Budget are:

- \$200,000 for the Moyston Recreation Reserve public toilet upgrade
- \$100,000 for a walking track around the Pomonal Recreation Reserve oval, supported by the Victorian Government's Pomonal Council Support Fund for 2024 Bushfires
- \$548,000 for a new roundabout at the Queen & Moore Street intersection, funded by the Victorian Government's Safer Local Roads and Streets Program
- \$100,000 for young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College
- \$100,000 for Community Support Grants
- \$100,000 for the successful business Façade Improvement and Kick Start Grants Programs
- \$1,800,000 renewing rural gravel roads through resheeting or treatments such as OTTA Seal
- \$1,000,000 to seal urban gravel roads and laneways
- \$750,000 to fund Year 5 of Council's five-year commitment to improve urban drainage systems
- \$400,000 to upgrade footpath network
- \$300,000 to renew kerb and channel assets
- Continuing to fund free access to Outdoor Pools
- Continuing the YEAH Crew, with support from the Victorian Government's Engage! program
- Continuing to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families to access kindergarten and Pre-Prep, with support from the Victorian Government's CALD Outreach Initiative program
- Continuing the delivery of \$7.38 million of enabling infrastructure to unlock housing at the Prestige Mill site, funded by the Federal Government's Housing Support Program
- Continuing the delivery of a total of over \$10 million worth of road and bridge upgrades on Buangor-Ben Nevis Road, funded by Council and the Federal Government under the Roads to Recovery and the Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program

Revenue

Council's first considerations in framing the 2026/2027 Budget are on the revenue side. Key considerations are:

- returning efficiency dividends to the community through a 2.25 percent rate rise
- ensuring a commitment to maintaining relativities in rating burden by each identified rating sector
- attempting to ease the impact of rates rises on individual ratepayers
- avoiding where possible "rate shock" experiences of large and unexpected rate increases.

It is proposed that the best mechanism for ensuring this is to propose a rating approach in 2026/2027 that, as far as possible, provides similar revenue outcomes across each sector as 2025/2026. Council believes that the approach taken is perfectly consistent with Section 101 (1)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020 where “financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community”.

In the 2026 valuation there have again been some shifts in valuations across the classes of properties, although these have not been as significant as 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. The 2026 valuation has again yielded some asymmetry in valuations compared to the previous year. The table below demonstrates the nature of this uneven distribution of revaluations between 2025 and 2026:

Rates Sector	Total 2025 CIV	Total 2026 CIV	Increase/Decrease in CIV - 2025 to 2026	Average % change in CIV
General	\$2,037,664,000	\$2,109,417,000	\$71,753,000	3.52%
Commercial	\$160,970,000	\$167,197,000	\$6,227,000	3.87%
Industrial	\$53,613,000	\$56,741,000	\$3,128,000	5.83%
Farm	\$4,331,530,300	\$4,319,081,000	-\$12,449,300	-0.29%
Total	\$6,583,777,300	\$6,652,436,000	\$68,658,700	1.04%

If the current 0.39 farm differential rate and 1.35 commercial/ industrial differential rates are maintained there will be a change in relativities in rates burden between farm, commercial/industrial and general rates between 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 (assuming a 2.25% rate cap increase), as shown in the table below.

Rates Sector	Rating Differential 2025/2026	2025/2026	2026/2027
General	1.00	51.8%	52.7%
Commercial	1.35	5.4%	5.5%
Industrial	1.35	1.7%	1.9%
Farm	0.39	41.1%	40.0%

The mechanism for maintaining relativities in rate burden between rating sectors, created through asymmetries in valuation movement is through alteration of rating differentials. The table below demonstrates the impact of a movement in farm rate differential from 0.39 to 0.405 and a retaining of the commercial/industrial rate at 1.35 on adjusting the relative rate burden.

Rates Sector	Rating Differential 2025/2026	2025/2026 Rates Burden	Rating Differential 2026/2027	2026/2027 Rates Burden
General	1.00	51.8%	1.00	51.9%
Commercial	1.35	5.4%	1.35	5.4%
Industrial	1.35	1.7%	1.35	1.8%
Farm	0.39	41.1%	0.405	40.8%

Council is proposing a change in the farm rate differential from 0.39 to 0.405 and no change in the commercial/industrial differential of 1.35 in order to ensure relative burden between rating sectors is maintained from 2025/2026 to 2026/2027.

Minor amendments to the number of assessments, CIV and rates figures in Section 4.1.1 have been made since the Draft Budget 2026/2027 was released for public consultation as a result of updated valuation information from the Valuer-General Victoria Office. These amendments have also resulted in changes to some indicators in Section 5.

A 2.25 percent rate increase in 2026/2027

Council has budgeted for a 2.25 percent increase to rates in 2026/2027, which is a 0.5 percent discount on the rate cap for 2026/27 of 2.75 percent, in order to ensure that the community receives a dividend for improved organisational efficiency and cost savings

Expenditure

The key driver of the 2026/2027 Budget expenditure is to continue to deliver long-term, sustainable value to the Ararat Rural City community. This will be achieved by focussing on the following key areas:

- strategic renewal of Council's key assets
- driving organisational effectiveness through managing performance and efficiency
- implementing a digital transformation program
- implementation of key projects contained in Council's adopted advocacy program
- ongoing commitment to service review

The proposed Ararat Rural City Council Budget 2026/2027 document outlines the key expenditure areas, which are informed by Council's operational activity, key projects and the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Other considerations

The waste management kerbside collection charges for residential properties will increase by approximately 2.75%, with fees rounded up to the nearest dollar, to contribute to increased costs for waste management services.

The Municipal Charge will be fixed at \$96 for 2026/2027.

The budgeted operating result for 2026/2027 is a surplus of \$4.624 million, compared to a budgeted result of \$2.050 million surplus in 2025/2026.

The budgeted cash flow statement indicates an increase in cash & cash equivalents of \$0.001 million.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

This report aligns with the Council Plan 2025-29 in the following areas:

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

The Draft Budget has been prepared within the following parameters:

- The Draft Budget proposes the following differential rates - general rate - 100%, commercial and industrial rate - 135% of the general rate and farm rate - 40.5% of the general rate
- A 2.25% increase in the total amount received from general rates and charges;
- No increase in the Municipal Charge which will remain at \$96 per rateable property in 2026/2027;

- A balanced budget in terms of a cash result and an operating surplus of \$4.624 million in terms of an accrual accounting result;
- A net increase in cash and cash equivalents of \$0.001 million;
- A capital works program of \$15.797 million;
- No new loan borrowings; and
- Capital budgets have been prepared in accordance with good asset management principles.

More detailed information is contained in the Budget document.

Policy/Relevant Law

Council is required under Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020 to prepare a budget for each financial year. The budget contains the Financial Statements, a description of services and initiatives to be funded in the budget, service outcome indicators, and major initiatives to be undertaken during the financial year and the performance measures in relation to each major initiative.

Sustainability Implications

All environmental, social and economic impacts have been considered during the development of the Budget 2026/2027.

Risk Assessment

Council must implement the principles of sound financial management, which includes managing financial risks faced by Council and ensuring that decisions are made and actions taken having regard to their financial effects on future generations.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The Draft Budget 2026/27 was released for community consultation and engagement from Friday 20 March 2026 with 5 week period for submissions that closed on Friday 24 April 2026. The Draft Budget document and a Snapshot summary was available online via Engage Ararat, available from the Council Office and distributed across the municipality as part of the face-to-face community engagement sessions held at the dates, times and locations in the table below. A drop-in session was also held at the Ararat Rural City Council offices at 59 Vincent Street, Ararat on Friday 27 March 2026, from 9:00am-2:00pm.

Location	Time and Date
Ararat Town Hall	5:30pm, Monday 23 March 2026
Buangor Cobb & Co	10:30am, Wednesday 25 March 2026
Elmhurst Mechanics Institute	3:30pm, Wednesday 25 March 2026
Lake Bolac Info & Business Centre	1:30pm, Monday 23 March 2026
Moyston Community Hall	1.00pm, Tuesday 24 March 2026
Pomonal Community Hall	11.00am, Tuesday 24 March 2026
Tatyoan Hall	12:00pm, Thursday 26 March 2026
Willaura Memorial Hall	3.00pm, Tuesday 24 March 2026

There were 9 online submissions, 27 attendees to the community engagement sessions and 2 letters received. Council wishes to thank everyone who participated in the engagement process and took the time to provide feedback.

A copy of the feedback is in the attached Community Consultation Report, along with responses to the feedback. As a result of the consultation process, a number of projects have been added to the capital works program for 2026/27, these include:

- Sealing of Green Street in Elmhurst from the Bush Nursing Centre to Elmhurst-Glenpatrick Road.
- The footpath on Main Street, Willaura, from the supermarket to the Police Station will be upgraded, and a pedestrian ramp outside the Willaura bank will be incorporated into this project.

Other requests and suggestions have been reviewed, with several to be investigated further and considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council, having considered the Draft Budget 2026/2027 and having distributed the budget for community consultation, resolves as follows:

1. To adopt the Budget 2026/2027, comprising the 2026/2027 financial year plus the subsequent three financial years 2027/2028 to 2029/2030, pursuant to Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020
2. To declares Rates and Charges for the 2026/2027 financial year as follows
 - a. An amount of \$18,228,943 be declared as the amount which Council intends to raise by General Rates, Municipal Charge and Annual Service Charges which amount is calculated as follows:

	Amount
General Rates	
Residential	\$7,593,901
Commercial	\$812,577
Industrial	\$275,761
Farm	\$6,297,220
Municipal Charge	\$649,344
Annual Service Charges	
Kerbside Collection Charges	\$2,600,140
TOTAL	\$18,228,943

- b. A general residential rate of 0.3600 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value be declared for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027
- c. A commercial/industrial differential rate of 0.4860 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value be declared for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027
- d. A farm differential rate of 0.1458 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value be declared for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027
- e. Council resolves to adopt a municipal charge of \$96 per rateable assessment for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027
- f. Annual Service Charge be declared for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 on properties where the service is provided, as follows:
 - g. Kerbside collection - 4 bin system \$483
 - h. Kerbside collection - 3 bin system \$428
 - i. Kerbside collection - additional 140 litre garbage \$169
 - j. Kerbside collection - additional 240 litre recycling \$146
 - k. Kerbside collection - additional 240 litre organics \$146
 - l. Kerbside collection - additional 80 litre glass \$25
3. To declare the Fees and Charges for the 2026/2027 financial year, contained in Section 6-Schedule of Fees and Charges of the Budget document.

**MOVED CR KAUR
SECONDED CR JOYCE**

That Council, having considered the Draft Budget 2026/2027 and having distributed the budget for community consultation, resolves as follows:

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3. To declare the Fees and Charges for the 2026/2027 financial year, contained in Section 6- Schedule of Fees and Charges of the Budget document.

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

**CARRIED 7/0
5348/26**

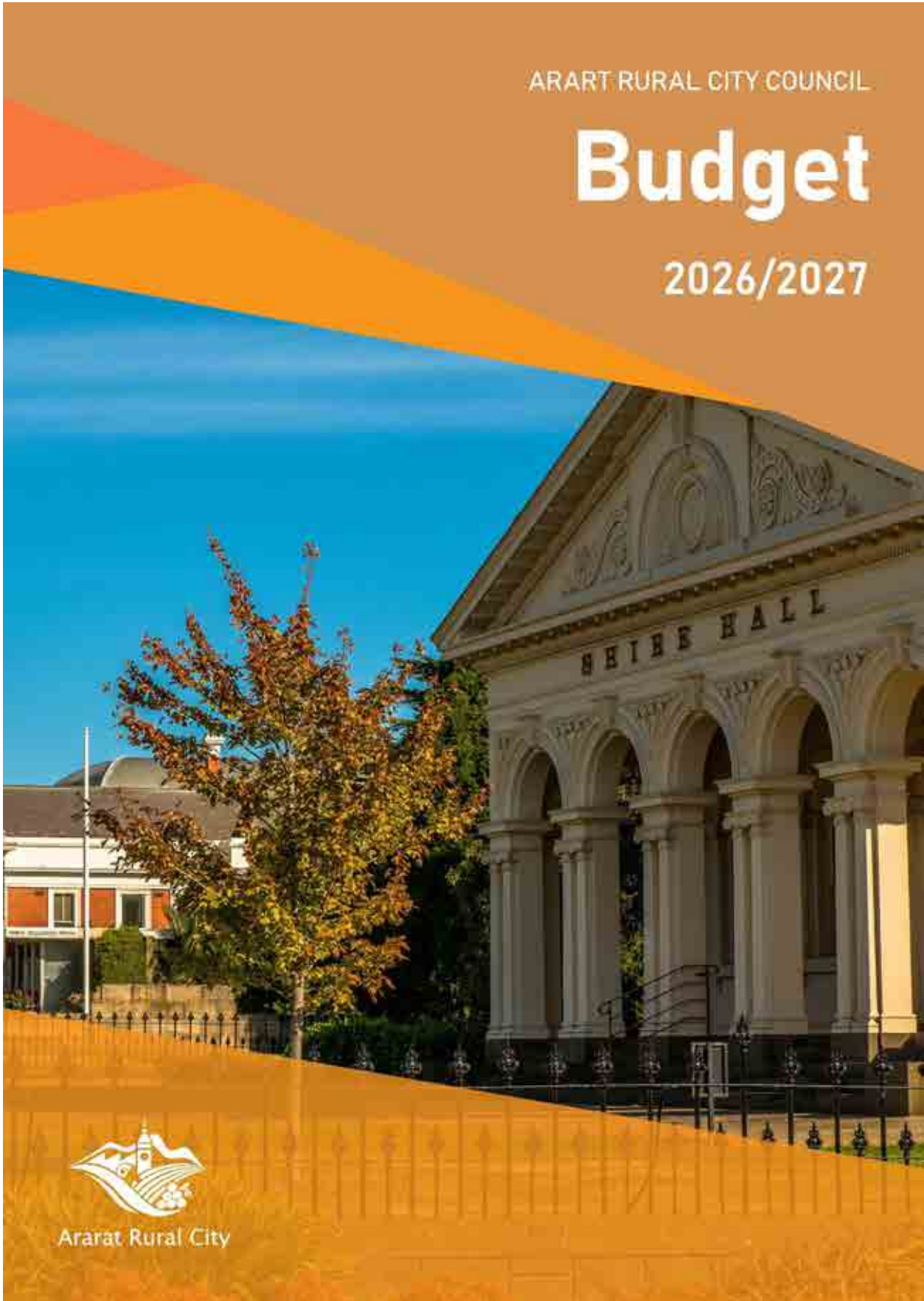
ATTACHMENTS

The Ararat Rural City Council Budget 2026/27 is provided as Attachment 3.1a and The Community Consultation Report - Draft Budget 2026/27 is provided as Attachment 3.1b

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

Budget

2026/2027



Ararat Rural City

Traditional Acknowledgement

Ararat Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, the Eastern Maar, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk, 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.

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Executive Summary

The 2026/27 Budget sets out Council's continued commitment to responsible financial management, strong service delivery, and strategic investment in the municipality's long-term economic growth and wellbeing. Building on the efficiencies achieved over the past eight financial years, this Budget focuses on maintaining essential services, renewing critical community assets, and ensuring that ratepayers receive value for money.

In preparing the 2026/27 Budget, Council has prioritised sustainability and prudent decision-making in an environment of rising operating costs and evolving community expectations. The Budget provides for ongoing investment in infrastructure, community facilities, and service improvements, ensuring that Council can meet current needs while planning for future growth and resilience.

A core feature of the 2026/27 financial year is a substantial capital works program, with a \$15,797,000 investment dedicated to strengthening enabling infrastructure, supporting local economic activity, and enhancing liveability across the municipality. At the same time, Council continues to pursue operational efficiencies, internal capability building, and service refinements to keep cost pressures low and deliver better outcomes for residents.

The Budget projects a financially sustainable result for 2026/27, including a comprehensive operating surplus of \$4,624,000, and an underlying operating deficit of \$376,000. These outcomes reflect disciplined financial stewardship and a commitment to maintaining a strong balance sheet, ensuring that Council remains well-placed to manage future challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Highlights and new initiatives for 2026/27

- \$200,000 for the Moyston Recreation Reserve public toilet upgrade
- \$100,000 for a walking track around the Pomonal Recreation Reserve oval, supported by the Victorian Government's Pomonal Council Support Fund for 2024 Bushfires
- \$548,000 for a new roundabout at the Queen & Moore Street intersection, funded by the Victorian Government's Safer Local Roads and Streets Program
- \$100,000 for young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College
- \$100,000 for Community Support Grants
- \$100,000 for the successful business Façade Improvement and Kick Start Grants Programs
- \$1,800,000 renewing rural gravel roads through resheeting or treatments such as OTTA Seal
- \$1,000,000 to seal urban gravel roads and laneways
- \$750,000 to fund Year 5 of Council's five-year commitment to improve urban drainage systems
- \$400,000 to upgrade footpath network
- \$300,000 to renew kerb and channel assets
- Continuing to fund free access to Outdoor Pools
- Continuing the YEAH Crew, with support from the Victorian Government's Engage! program
- Continuing to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families to access kindergarten and Pre-Prep, with support from the Victorian Government's CALD Outreach Initiative program
- Continuing the delivery of \$7.38 million of enabling infrastructure to unlock housing at the Prestige Mill site, funded by the Federal Government's Housing Support Program
- Continuing the delivery of a total of over \$10 million worth of road and bridge upgrades on Buangor-Ben Nevis Road, funded by Council and the Federal Government under the Roads to Recovery and the Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program

Key Budget Influences

- a) Ararat Rural City Council's 2026/27 Budget has a 2.25 percent rate rise. This is a 0.5 percent discount on the rate cap for 2026/27 of 2.75 percent and a net increase of 3.75 percent in nine years.

By contrast, had Council increased rates to the level allowable under the State Government's Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) over the nine-year period including 2026/27, this would have increased the total burden to ratepayers by 22.00% during that same period.

Year	ARCC Rate increase	FGRS increase
2018/2019	0.00%	2.25%
2019/2020	2.50%	2.50%
2020/2021	-1.00%	2.00%
2021/2022	-1.50%	1.50%
2022/2023	0.00%	1.75%
2023/2024	0.00%	3.50%
2024/2025	0.00%	2.75%
2025/2026	1.50%	3.00%
2026/2027	2.25%	2.75%
TOTAL	3.75%	22.00%

- b) In July 2022, Council adopted key drivers of financial sustainability, which form the basis for developing the 2026/27 Budget. These drivers of financial sustainability are:

Rating

Maintenance of the "pie model" to provide some form of long-term rating equity and reduce rate shock across rating sectors based on annual valuation fluctuations.

Debt

Debt is only used to fund strategic infrastructure outcomes with an emphasis on intergenerational equity.

Asset Preservation

Maintain the asset renewal and upgrade ratio to at least 110% of depreciation.

Surplus Budgets

Maintain cash and operating surpluses in each financial year.

Managing Expenditure

Managing expenditure is a key driver of financial sustainability at Ararat Rural City Council.

Rate Rises

Rate rises will be kept to a minimum based on seeking organisational efficiency. These efficiencies will be returned to the ratepayer as a dividend through lower rate rises or rate cuts.

Service Standards

Expenditure savings and ratepayer dividends will not come at the price of lower service standards.

Key Statistics

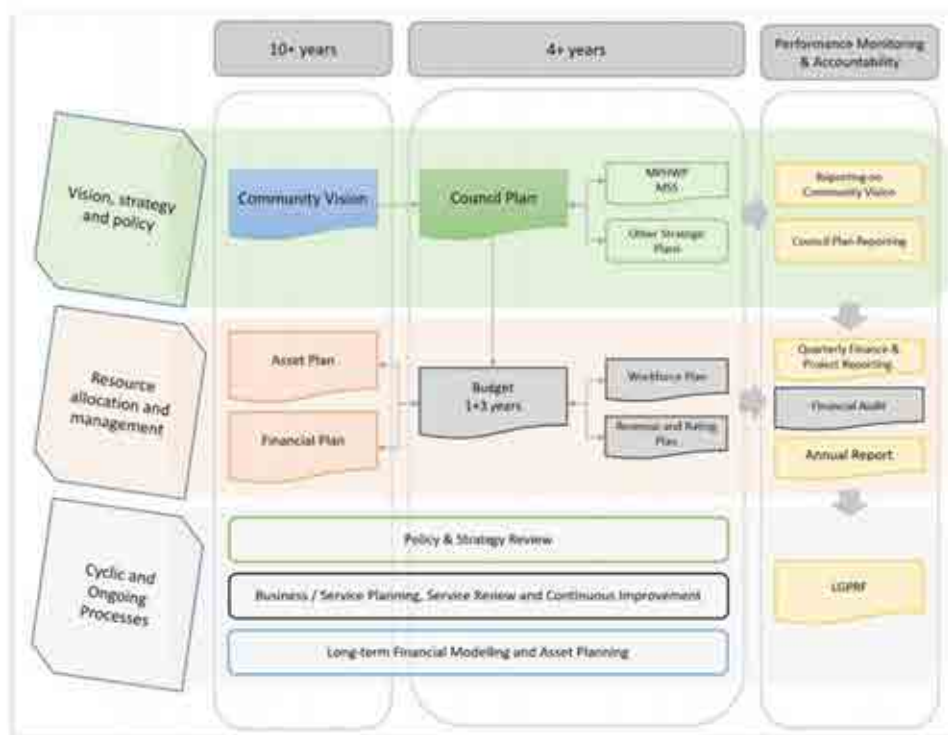
Key Statistics	2025/26 Budget \$million	2026/27 Budget \$million
Total Revenue	\$34.430	\$38.607
Total Expenditure	\$32.380	\$33.983
Accounting Result	\$2.050 Surplus	\$4.624 Surplus
(Refer Income Statement in Section 3)		
Underlying operating result:		
(Note: Underlying operating result is an important measure of financial sustainability as it excludes income which is to be used for capital from being allocated to cover operating expenses)	\$0.560 Surplus	\$0.376 Deficit
Cash result:		
(Refer Statement of Cash Flows in Section 3)		
This is the net funding result after considering the funding requirements to meet loan principal repayments and the reserve transfers.	\$0.588 Surplus	\$0.001 Surplus
Total Capital Works Program	\$12.437	\$15.797
- Council operations (rates funded)	\$8.609	\$8.206
- External grants	\$3.828	\$7.591

1 Link to the Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework

The Budget is closely associated with three key long term Council plans: Community Vision 2035, Asset Plan 2025-2035, and the Financial Plan 2025-2035. There are links to the planning window of the current Council through the Council Plan 2025-2029 and the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.

1.1 Legislative Planning and Accountability Framework

The diagram below depicts the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework that applies to local government in Victoria. At each stage of the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework there are opportunities for community and stakeholder input. This is important to ensure transparency and accountability to both residents and ratepayers. The Council Budget is a key element of resource planning both for the current financial year and for its projected impact over a four-year planning cycle. The Council Budget 2026/27 will provide the basis for Council planning across the remainder of the 2025-2029 Council Plan window.



Source: Department of Government Services

To provide focus in resource planning Council has developed a local model, ARCC Planning and Budgeting Framework, which picks up the key elements of the planning and accountability model. This is shown on the model provided on the next page.



1.1.1 Key Planning Considerations

Service Level Planning

During 2018/2019, Council undertook a substantial internal review of all services. The review provided an opportunity to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of Council services, and yielded significant organisational savings.

The implementation of the Local Government Act 2020, and Council's adoption of the Community Engagement Policy and Public Transparency Policy provided a timely juncture for Council to undertake more broad-based reviews of its services, involving higher levels of community engagement and participation. Reviews of key community-facing services will continue in 2026/27.

1.2 Our Purpose

Council's purpose is defined by the Community Vision 2035.

Over the next ten years Ararat Rural City Council will develop into a community characterised by:

- Strong population growth trajectories that buck trends in rural Victoria.
- Continuous and sustainable economic development, which is focussed on job creation, through value adding in agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and tourism.
- Leadership in pragmatic approaches to local environmental management.
- Sustainable and effective local transport networks underpinned by careful technical and financial planning undertaken jointly between asset users and asset owners.
- Communities that are enhanced by access to artistic, cultural, sporting, and recreational opportunities that meet needs and expectations.
- Strong and robust democratic processes underpinned by transparent governance, good financial management and organisational innovation.

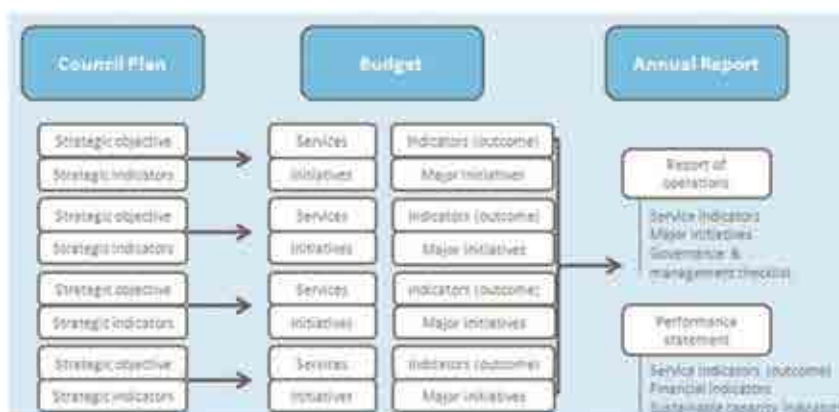
1.3 Strategic Objectives

The following table identifies and describes Council's six strategic objectives for the period 2025-2029.

Strategic Objective	Description
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 immigration.
2. Building robust local economies	We will develop strong relationships to build and strengthen a diverse local economy, focussed on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality.
3. Preserving our environment	We will take pragmatic approaches to ensuring that Ararat Rural City Council takes a regional lead in responsible environmental management and engagement with the circular economy.
4. Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure	We will ensure that we plan, fund, and develop new infrastructure in ways that delivers strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed, and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.
5. Enhancing community life	We will work with the communities of the Ararat Rural City to maintain social cohesion, support community activity and cultural life, and enhance safety.
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

2 Services and service performance indicators

This section identifies the alignment between strategic objectives in the Council Plan 2025-2029, key areas of Council service delivery, new initiatives related to strategic outcomes, and the budget allocated to the key services and activities. To support transparency and accountability, Council is required by legislation to identify major initiatives and major service outcome indicators in the Budget and report against them in the Annual Report. The relationship between these accountability requirements in the Council Plan, Budget and Annual Report is shown below.



Source: Department of Government Services

2.1 Strategic Objective One – 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.

We will do this through:

- Developing a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth.
- Supporting innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.
- Working with other levels of government, business, educational institutions and not-for profits to develop programs to increase in-migration to Ararat Rural City to grow our population.

2.1.1 Services

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Planning	The statutory planning service is responsible for administering the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme. It considers new planning scheme amendment proposals and reviews the Municipal Strategic Statement of the Ararat Planning Scheme.	233 (536) <u>(303)</u>	234 (549) <u>(315)</u>
Building Control	This service provides statutory building services to the Council community including processing of building permits, fire safety inspections, audits of swimming pool barriers and investigations of complaints and illegal works.	72 (335) <u>(263)</u>	72 (366) <u>(294)</u>
Environmental Health	This service protects the community's health and well-being by coordinating food safety programs, Tobacco Act activities, and oversees wastewater systems and installations. The service also works to rectify any public health concerns relating to unreasonable noise emissions, housing standards and pest controls.	80 (241) <u>(161)</u>	80 (246) <u>(166)</u>

2.1.2 Service Performance Outcome Indicators and 2026/27 targets

These indicators are currently based on appropriate Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) performance measures with targets set for 2026/27.

Domain / Indicator / Performance Measure	Computation	2026/27 Target
Responsiveness		
Food Safety		
Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications. (Percentage of critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications that are followed up by Council)	[Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance outcome notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance outcome notifications about food premises] x100	98%
Statutory Planning		
Planning applications decided within the relevant required time (percentage of regular and VicSmart planning application decisions made within the relevant required time)	[Number of planning application decisions made within 60 days for regular permits and 10 days for VicSmart permits / Number of planning application decisions made] x100	90%

Statutory Planning

Time taken to decide planning applications	Median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application	30 days
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2.1.3 Major Initiatives

Council will undertake the following major initiatives during 2026/27 to support **Growing Our Place**:

Initiative	Budget 2026/27
Complete the delivery of \$7.38 million of enabling infrastructure to unlock housing at the Prestige Mill site, funded by the Federal Government's Housing Support Program which commenced in 2025/26.	Remainder of \$7.38m
Early Years CALD Outreach Initiative, supported by the Victorian Department of Education	\$132,600

2.1.4 Strategic Performance Indicators and 2026/27 targets

Performance Indicator	2025-2029 target	2026/27 target
Strategic land use planning framework targets	Annual targets met	Annual targets met
Available residential land increase	600 lots	150 lots
Residential housing stock increase	300 properties	75 properties
% of new residential housing is affordable	25%	25%
ARCC population increase	1000	250

2.2 Strategic Objective Two - Building Robust Local Economies

We will develop strong relationships to build and strengthen a diverse local economy, focused on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality.

We will do this through:

- Partnering with Federation University Australia to deliver the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct with a focus on engaging with local agribusiness, industry and community.
- Working 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 “behind the meter” power.
- Engaging with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism and local businesses to improve the quality of experience and drive growth in high yield tourist outcomes.

2.2.1 Services

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Economic Development	The economic development service assists in facilitation of business opportunity across the municipality. It aims to grow the local business sector and provide support for growth and development in employment. This service includes the Visitor Information Centre operations.	28 (606) (578)	28 (584) (556)

2.2.2 Service Performance Outcome Indicators and 2026/27 targets

There are currently no LGPRF performance measures related to Building Robust Local Economies.

2.2.3 Major Initiatives

Council will undertake the following major initiatives during 2026/27 to support **Building Robust Local Economies**:

Initiative	Budget 2026/27
Moyston Recreation Reserve public toilet upgrade to support visitation and tourism	\$200,000
Continuation of business Facade Improvement and Kick Start Grants programs	\$100,000
Contribution to Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism	\$90,000

2.2.4 Strategic Performance Indicators and 2026/27 targets

Performance Indicator	2025-2029 target	2026/27 target
Percentage increase in jobs in local economy	15%	5%
Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct annual engagement and development targets	8	2
Circular economy business park and lead tenants in agricultural value-add sector established	2	1
Increase in tourism visitation to Ararat Rural City	50%	15%
Increase 4 star and above accommodation options	80	20
Establish a municipal measure of economic growth for annual reporting.	Economic growth on target	Targets met for 2026/27

2.3 Strategic Objective Three - Preserving Our Environment

We will take pragmatic approaches to ensuring that Ararat Rural City Council takes a regional lead in responsible environmental management and engagement within the circular economy.

We will do this through:

- Positioning 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.
- Developing innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste.
- Partnering with local organisations and scientific experts to implement the Environment Strategy 2024-34, with a focus on the circular economy, emissions reduction and sustainable management of Council assets.

2.3.1 Services

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Waste Management	This service provides for collection and processing of four materials streams from household collection: general waste, mixed recyclables, glass, and green organics. Council has committed to local processing where possible. Council has local processing of green organics and glass at the Ararat Transfer Station.	2,967 (3,054) <u>(87)</u>	3,080 (3,158) <u>(78)</u>
Natural Resources & Sustainability	This service promotes environmentally sustainable development principles, coordinates and implements environmental projects and works with other services to improve Council's environmental performance. Projects include roadside pest, plant and animal and renewable energy projects.	74 (79) <u>(5)</u>	74 (79) <u>(5)</u>
Parks & Gardens	This service covers a range of areas such as grass and turf cutting, tree pruning, planting, removal, planning and street tree strategies, management of conservation and parkland areas, creeks, and other areas of environmental significance. The function is responsible for playground maintenance and safety improvement programs.	0 (1,538) <u>(1,538)</u>	0 (1,557) <u>(1,557)</u>
Emergency Management	This service includes emergency services management and fire prevention. Additional grant-funding will assist with funding the service in 2026-27.	179 (155) <u>24</u>	161 (135) <u>26</u>

2.3.2 Service Performance Outcome Indicators and 2026/27 targets

These indicators are currently based on appropriate LGPRF performance measures with targets set for 2026/27.

Domain / Indicator / Performance Measure	Computation	2026/27 Target
Environment		
Waste Management		
Kerbside collection waste to landfill per serviced property (amount of waste collected from kerbside waste collection services that is sent to landfill per serviced property)	Amount of waste in tonnes (t) collected from kerbside waste collection services that is sent to landfill / Number of serviced properties	0.45
Responsiveness		
Waste Management		
Kerbside collection bins missed	Number of kerbside collection bins missed/Number of scheduled kerbside collection bin lifts	8 bins
Cost		
Waste Management		
Cost of kerbside waste collection services (direct cost of kerbside waste collection services per serviced property)	Direct cost of kerbside waste collection services / Number of serviced properties	\$520.00

2.3.3 Major Initiatives

Council will undertake the following major initiatives during 2026/27 to support **Preserving Our Environment**:

Initiative	Budget 2026/27
Seek environmentally and economically beneficial outcomes for compost derived from Garden Organics processing	Existing internal resources and grant funding
Implement Year Two Initiatives from the Environmental Strategy	Existing internal resources and grant funding

2.3.4 Strategic Performance Indicators and 2026/27 targets

Performance Indicator	2025-2029 target	2026/27 target
Decrease waste to landfill	20%	5%
Decrease total waste and recyclables tonnage collected	20%	5%
Achieve annual Environment Strategy outcomes	Implementation Plan on target	Year 2 initiatives completed

2.4 Service Objective Four - Developing and Maintaining Key Enabling Infrastructure

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

We will do this through:

- Ensuring that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2025-2035.
- Working directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.
- Delivering 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.

2.4.1 Services

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Design & Project Management	This service conducts capital works planning for Council's main civil infrastructure assets including roads, laneways, car parks, foot/bike paths, drains, and bridges. This service undertakes design and supervision of Council's capital works program. Most staffing and design costs are capitalised within completed projects.	21 (684) <u>(663)</u>	25 (1,276) <u>(1,251)</u>
Property Maintenance & Capital	This service prepares maintenance management programs for Council's property assets including municipal buildings, pavilions, and other community buildings. The service also includes emergency building and facility maintenance. This service includes capital expenditure on Council's property assets to optimise their strategic value and service potential.	0 (925) <u>(925)</u>	0 (1,358) <u>(1,358)</u>
City Services	This service includes street lighting, aerodrome operations and operations, maintenance, and cleaning of public conveniences throughout the municipality.	5 (776) <u>(771)</u>	5 (793) <u>(788)</u>
Infrastructure Miscellaneous	This service includes private works, maintenance of water supplies and emergency bores.	0 (75) <u>(75)</u>	0 (37) <u>(37)</u>

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget	Budget
		Income	Income
		Expenses	Expenses
		Surplus/(deficit)	Surplus/(deficit)
Road Maintenance	This service provides for management and maintenance on Council's infrastructure incorporating roads, bridges, drainage, footpaths, kerb and channel, street furniture, line marking and signage.	0 (3,335) <u>(3,335)</u>	0 (3,350) <u>(3,350)</u>
Major Plant	This service operates, maintains & purchases Council's major plant and equipment, to meet functionality and safety needs and to maximise the performance and minimise operational cost of the fleet.	0 (1,450) <u>(1,450)</u>	0 (1,450) <u>(1,450)</u>
Major Plant Recoups	Plant used on works generates plant hire income used to fund operations and maintenance and the replacement of the major plant.	0 1,450 <u>1,450</u>	0 1,450 <u>1,450</u>
Minor Plant	This service purchases and maintains Council's minor plant and equipment, including trailers.	0 0 <u>0</u>	0 9 <u>9</u>
Infrastructure - Capital	This service provides for capital expenditure on Council's infrastructure incorporating roads, bridges, drainage, footpaths, kerb and channel, streetscapes, and car parks. This budget includes recurrent grants from Victorian Grants Commission and Roads to Recovery.	5,516 (9,764) <u>(4,248)</u>	5,817 (8,011) <u>(2,194)</u>
Funded Infrastructure Projects - Capital	This service includes the delivery of one-off capital infrastructure projects partly or wholly funded by non-recurrent government grants.	0 0 <u>0</u>	5,000 (6,250) <u>(1,250)</u>

2.4.2 Service Performance Outcome Indicators and 2026/27 targets

These indicators are currently based on appropriate LGPRF performance measures with targets set for 2026/27.

Domain / Indicator / Performance Measure	Computation	2026/27 Target
Environment		
Roads		
Sealed local roads below the intervention level (percentage of sealed local roads that are below the renewal intervention level set by Council and not requiring renewal)	[Number of kilometres of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100	100%

Cost

Roads

Cost of sealed local road reconstruction	Direct cost of sealed local road reconstruction/Square metres of sealed local roads reconstructed	\$40.00
Cost of sealed local road resealing	Direct cost of sealed local road resealing/Square metres of sealed local roads resealed	\$6.50

2.4.3 Major Initiatives

Council will undertake the following major initiatives during 2026/27 to support **Developing and Maintaining Key Enabling Infrastructure**:

Initiative	Budget 2026/27
Buangor-Ben Nevis Road Upgrade	\$6,250,000
Rural gravel roads renewal through resheeting, sealing or OTTA seal treatments	\$1,800,000
Road reconstruction program	\$1,457,000
Urban Road and Laneway Sealing or alternative treatment	\$1,000,000
Urban drainage renewal	\$750,000
New roundabout at the Queen & Moore Street intersection	\$548,000
Footpath and cycleway improvement program	\$400,000
Bridge renewal program	\$400,000
Kerb and channel	\$300,000

2.4.4 Strategic Performance Indicators and 2026/27 targets

Performance Indicator	2025-2029 target	2026/27 target
Staged progress on Aradale Development Strategy implementation:	Implementation Plan on target	Targets met for 2026/27
Quarterly meetings with the Rural Roads Group	Quarterly meetings achieved	Meetings held for 2026/27
Completion of 2026/27 Capital Work program		Complete by 30 June 2027

2.5 Service Objective Five - 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.

We will do this through:

- Opening up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership, and engagement in decision-making.
- Developing models of volunteering that recognise, support, and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.
- Partnering with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community.

2.5.1 Services

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget	Budget
		Income	Income
		Expenses	Expenses
		Surplus/(deficit)	Surplus/(deficit)
		\$'000	\$'000
Gallery TAMA	This service includes the operations, projects, exhibitions, acquisitions, and administration of the Ararat Gallery TAMA.	100 (451) <u>(351)</u>	105 (467) <u>(362)</u>
Town Hall	This service operates and manages the Ararat Town Hall which provides artistic programs for the region. Savings have been made through projected increases in usage and bar sales.	210 (738) <u>(528)</u>	225 (790) <u>(565)</u>
Gum San Chinese Heritage Museum	Management of Gum San has been handed over to the Friends of Gum San. Council has an MOU with the group and continues to provide financial and maintenance support.	0 (24) <u>(24)</u>	0 (29) <u>(29)</u>
Community & Events Support	This service provides for the employment of community development staff who work with communities to develop community action plans and implement other community building initiatives.	75 -131 <u>-56</u>	75 -130 <u>-55</u>
Community Support Grants	This service provides grants to community organisations for projects, events, sponsorships, and minor capital and community infrastructure.	0 (100) <u>(100)</u>	0 (100) <u>(100)</u>
Youth Services	This service provides services to young people.	0 (100) <u>(100)</u>	0 (100) <u>(100)</u>
Ararat Fitness Centre & Outdoor Pools	This service operates and maintains a range of recreational facilities including aquatic facilities, indoor (1) and outdoor swimming pools (3). The Ararat Fitness Centre provides an extensive range of recreational programs and opportunities accessible to individuals of all ages, genders and abilities which contribute to the general wellbeing of the community.	539 (1,251) <u>(712)</u>	569 (1,316) <u>(747)</u>

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Alexandra Oval Community Centre, Gordon Street Recreation Reserve & Great Hall	This service operates and maintains the Alexandra Oval Community Centre, Gordon Street Recreation Reserve and Great Hall. The facilities provide the Ararat and greater Grampians community, clubs, and businesses with a centrally located, high quality, modern, flexible, dynamic, multipurpose community and recreation spaces.	155 (196) <u>(41)</u>	150 (207) <u>(57)</u>
Library Services	This service provides public library services at the Ararat Library, the Lake Bolac Business and Information Centre and through the mobile library outreach service to rural communities.	165 (476) <u>(311)</u>	165 (452) <u>(287)</u>
Children Services	This service provides family-oriented support services including maternal and child health, immunisation and early childhood education and support.	365 (409) <u>(44)</u>	352 (435) <u>(83)</u>
Community Safety	This service maintains and improves the health and safety of people, animals, and the environment in the municipality by providing animal management services including a cat trapping program, a dog and cat collection service, a pound service, a registration and administration service, and an after-hours emergency service. This service also includes the operations of school crossings and parking enforcement.	138 (280) <u>(142)</u>	155 (369) <u>(214)</u>
Funded Recreation Projects - Capital	This service includes the delivery of one-off capital building projects partly or wholly funded by non-recurrent government grants.	1,490 (1,490) <u>0</u>	0 0 <u>0</u>

2.5.2 Service Performance Outcome Indicators and 2026/27 targets

These indicators are currently based on appropriate LGPRF performance measures with targets set for 2026/27.

Domain / Indicator / Performance Measure	Computation	2026/27 Target
Community		
Aquatic facilities		
Utilisation of aquatic facilities	Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Population	4 visits
Library services		
Library membership (Percentage of the population that are registered library members)	[Number of registered library members / Population] x100	20%
Library visits per head of population	Number of library visits / Population	2.5 visits
Maternal and child health services		
Participation in the MCH service (Percentage of children enrolled who participate in the MCH service)	[Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the financial year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	85%
Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children (Percentage of Aboriginal children enrolled who participate in the MCH service)	[Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the financial year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	85%
Cost		
Library services		
Cost of library services (direct cost of library services per head of population)	Direct cost of library services / Population	\$30.00

2.5.3 Major Initiatives

Council will undertake the following major initiatives during 2026/27 to support **Enhancing Community Life**:

Initiative	Budget 2026/27
New walking track around the Pomonal Recreation Reserve oval, supported by the Victorian Government's Pomonal Council Support Fund for 2024 Bushfires	\$100,000
Community and Events Grants Programs	\$100,000
Programs for young people through Crazy Ideas College	\$100,000
Youth Events, Activities and Happenings (YEAH) Crew, supported by the Victorian Government's Engage! Program	\$55,000
New multicultural events	\$10,000

2.5.4 Strategic Performance Indicators and 2026/27 targets

Performance Indicator	2025-2029 target	2026/27 target
Increase in annual visitation to the Ararat Art Gallery	80%	20%
Increase in community use of the Town Hall	40%	10%
Increase in audience sizes at commercial and funded performances at the Town Hall	80%	20%
Increase participation in community organisations in Ararat Rural City	20%	5%

2.6 Service Objective Six - 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.

We will do this by:

- Delivering responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation, and rating fairness.
- Ensuring appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.
- Continuously improving 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.

2.6.1 Services

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Corporate Revenue	This service includes Council's rates and charges revenue, interest income and general-purpose grant funds received from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission.	21,190 0 <u>21,190</u>	21,825 0 <u>21,825</u>
Financial Services & Corporate Support	This service predominantly provides financial based services to both internal and external customers including the management of Council's finances, procurement practices and contracting of services, raising rates and charges and the processing of accounts payable and receivables. This service includes corporate expenses including stationery, telecommunications, revenue collection fees and valuations.	76 (981) <u>(905)</u>	64 (779) <u>(715)</u>
Customer Services	This service includes the customer service function.	0 (252) <u>(252)</u>	0 (284) <u>(284)</u>
Property Operations	This service is responsible for the operations of Council's assets, including insurances and utility charges such as water and electricity. The service also includes Council's building, land and property leases and licenses.	243 (164) <u>79</u>	183 (153) <u>30</u>
Property Development - Capital	This service includes the purchase and sale of Council properties.	950 (950) <u>0</u>	0 0 <u>0</u>
Vehicles	This service operates, maintains and purchases Council vehicles, excluding major plant and equipment, to meet functionality and safety needs and to maximise the performance and minimise operational cost of the fleet.	108 (447) <u>(339)</u>	104 (422) <u>(318)</u>

Business area	Description of services provided	2025/26	2026/27
		Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000	Budget Income Expenses Surplus/(deficit) \$'000
Strategy, Advocacy and Engagement (CEO's Office)	This area includes Chief Executive Officer and executive support. It also includes communications, marketing, strategy, community engagement and government relations.	0 (1,202) <u>(1,202)</u>	0 (1,126) <u>(1,126)</u>
CEO Projects	One-off operational projects and initiatives that are partly or wholly funded by non-recurrent government grants are managed from the CEO's Office.	1,250 (1,271) <u>(21)</u>	257 (288) <u>(31)</u>
Human Resources	This service provides Council with strategic and operational organisation development support. The service develops and implements strategies, policies, and procedures through the provision of human resources and industrial relations services. The service includes training programs and business excellence. This service also includes payment of salaries and wages to Council employees.	0 (389) <u>(389)</u>	0 (411) <u>(411)</u>
Governance	This service provides support to the Mayor, Councillors, and executive support. This service provides statutory and corporate support services to Council, including coordination of business papers for meetings of the Council and maintenance of statutory registers. This service also provides facilities maintenance grants for recreation reserves & public halls and coordinates risk management.	0 (1,329) <u>(1,329)</u>	0 (1,456) <u>(1,456)</u>
Business Transformation	This service includes service reviews and business improvement.	0 (492) <u>(492)</u>	0 (677) <u>(677)</u>
Information Services	This service provides, supports, and maintains reliable and cost-effective communications and computing systems, facilities and infrastructure to Council staff enabling them to deliver services in a smart, productive, and efficient way.	0 (975) <u>(975)</u>	0 (1,036) <u>(1,036)</u>

2.6.2 Service Performance Outcome Indicators and 2026/27 targets

These indicators are currently based on appropriate LGPRF performance measures with targets set for 2026/27.

Domain / Indicator / Performance Measure	Computation	2026/27 Target
Governance		
Community engagement		
Satisfaction with the opportunities offered by Council to be consulted on or engaged in Council decisions (community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council)	Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on community consultation and engagement	75
Financial decisions		
Total unpaid rates and charges (total unpaid rates and charges and unpaid interest on rates and charges for all financial years as a percentage of all rates and charges for the financial year)	[Sum of unpaid rates and charges and unpaid interest on rates and charges for all financial years / Sum of all rates and charges for the financial year] x100	4.61%

2.6.3 Major Initiatives

Council will undertake the following major initiatives during 2026/27 to support **Strong and Effective Governance**:

Initiative	Budget 2026/27
Development of digital and permit applications forms to provide more options for community to interact with Council at times and in ways that suit them	\$53,174

2.6.4 Strategic Performance Indicators and 2026/27 targets

Performance Indicator	2025-2029 target	2026/27 target
Return efficiency dividends to community through rate reduction	Annual rate rise within the rate cap	2.25% rate rise, 0.5% less than the rate cap of 2.75%
Maintenance of effective risk management regime	Annual approval by Audit and Risk Committee	Annual approval by Audit and Risk Committee
Growth in participation in engage.ararat.vic.gov.au	Growth of 40%	Annual growth of 25%

2.7 Reconciliation with Budgeted Operating Result

Strategic Objective	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Expenditure	Revenue
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Growing our place	(775)	1,161	386
Building robust local economies	(556)	564	28
Preserving our environment	(4,214)	4,929	711
Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure	(13,445)	21,066	7,621
Enhancing community life	(2,589)	4,395	1,796
Strong and effective governance	(5,619)	5,632	1,013
Total	(27,212)	38,767	11,555
Expenses added in:			
Capital expenditure	15,797		
Depreciation	(11,089)		
Amortisation – right of use assets	(459)		
Written down value on assets sold	(80)		
Lease repayment	455		
Transfer from reserves	(117)		
Transfer to reserves	79		
Surplus/(Deficit) before funding sources	(22,626)		
Funding sources added in:			
Rates and charges revenue	16,365		
Waste charge revenue	2,600		
General purpose financial assistance grant	8,285		
Total funding sources	27,250		
Operating surplus/(deficit) for the year	4,624		

3 Financial Statements

This section presents information regarding the Financial Statements and Statement of Human Resources. The budget information for the year 2026/27 has been supplemented with projections to 2029/30.

This section includes the following financial statements prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

- Comprehensive Income Statement
- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Changes in Equity
- Statement of Cash Flows
- Statement of Capital Works
- Statement of Human Resources

Comprehensive Income Statement
For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	Budget		Projections		
		2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Income						
Rates and charges	4.1.1	18,425	18,965	19,441	19,929	20,430
Statutory fees and fines	4.1.2	277	293	300	307	315
User fees	4.1.3	1,631	1,700	1,743	1,787	1,831
Grants - Operating	4.1.4	9,526	9,379	9,488	9,738	10,024
Grants - Capital	4.1.4	3,828	7,591	3,858	3,858	2,923
Contributions - monetary	4.1.5	93	89	89	89	89
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment		20	20	20	20	20
Other income	4.1.6	630	570	562	555	548
Total income		34,430	38,607	35,501	36,283	36,180
Expenses						
Employee costs	4.1.7	11,961	12,845	13,270	13,711	14,166
Materials and services	4.1.8	9,186	9,078	8,988	9,176	9,509
Depreciation	4.1.9	10,469	11,089	11,366	11,650	11,941
Depreciation - right of use assets	4.1.10	308	459	459	310	97
Borrowing costs		2	-	-	-	-
Finance costs - leases		60	88	56	23	4
Other expenses	4.1.11	394	424	435	445	457
Total expenses		32,380	33,983	34,574	35,315	36,174
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		2,050	4,624	927	968	6
Total comprehensive result		2,050	4,624	927	968	6

Balance Sheet

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	Budget		Projections		
		2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Assets						
Current assets						
Cash and cash equivalents		6,488	4,881	4,908	4,936	4,960
Trade and other receivables		2,285	2,865	2,865	2,865	2,885
Inventories		60	60	60	60	60
Prepayments		-	-	-	-	-
Total current assets	4.2.1	8,813	7,806	7,833	7,861	7,885
Non-current assets						
Trade and other receivables		3	1	-	-	-
Investments in associates, joint arrangement, and subsidiaries		1,998	2,027	2,027	2,027	2,027
Property, infrastructure, plant & equipment		314,678	646,174	647,047	647,943	647,907
Right-of-use assets		778	866	407	97	-
Investment property		1,535	2,615	2,615	2,615	2,615
Total non-current assets	4.2.1	318,992	651,683	652,096	652,682	652,549
Total assets		327,805	659,489	659,929	660,543	660,434
Liabilities						
Current liabilities						
Trade and other payables		1,024	1,640	1,640	1,640	1,640
Trust funds and deposits		303	280	280	280	280
Contract and other liabilities		-	-	-	-	-
Provisions		2,104	2,150	2,150	2,150	2,150
Interest-bearing liabilities	4.2.3	-	-	-	-	-
Lease liabilities	4.2.4	314	487	353	116	-
Total current liabilities	4.2.2	3,745	4,557	4,423	4,186	4,070
Non-current liabilities						
Provisions		293	290	290	290	290
Interest-bearing liabilities	4.2.3	-	-	-	-	-
Lease liabilities	4.2.4	519	469	116	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	4.2.2	812	759	406	290	290
Total liabilities		4,557	5,316	4,829	4,476	4,360
Net assets	4.2.5	323,248	654,173	655,100	656,067	656,074
Equity						
Accumulated surplus		109,959	311,975	312,902	313,869	313,876
Reserves		213,289	342,198	342,198	342,198	342,198
Total equity	4.3.1	323,248	654,173	655,100	656,067	656,074

Statement of Changes in Equity
For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	Total \$'000	Accumulated Surplus \$'000	Revaluation Reserve \$'000	Other Reserves \$'000
2026 Forecast					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		647,158	295,501	338,368	13,290
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		2,390	2,390	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	9,422	-	(9,422)
Balance at end of the financial year		649,549	307,313	338,368	3,868
2027 Budget					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		649,549	307,313	338,368	3,868
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		4,624	4,624	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	(79)	-	79
Transfers from other reserves		-	117	-	(117)
Balance at end of the financial year	4.3.1	654,173	311,975	338,368	3,830
2028					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		654,173	311,975	338,368	3,830
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		927	927	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		655,100	312,902	338,368	3,830
2029					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		655,100	312,902	338,368	3,830
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		968	968	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		656,067	313,869	338,368	3,830
2030					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		656,067	313,869	338,368	3,830
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		8	8	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		656,074	313,876	338,368	3,830

Statement of Cash Flows

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

Notes	Budget	Budget	Projections		
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities					
Rates and charges	18,545	18,967	19,444	19,929	20,430
Statutory fees and fines	277	293	300	307	315
User fees	1,794	1,871	1,917	1,965	2,014
Grants - operating	9,526	9,379	9,468	9,738	10,024
Grants - capital	3,828	7,591	3,858	3,858	2,923
Contributions - monetary	93	89	89	89	89
Interest received	400	400	388	376	365
Other receipts	253	187	192	196	201
Net GST refund / payment	733	721	707	721	750
Employee costs	(11,960)	(12,845)	(13,270)	(13,711)	(14,166)
Materials and services	(10,106)	(9,988)	(9,888)	(10,093)	(10,460)
Other payments	(394)	(424)	(435)	(445)	(457)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) operating activities 4.4.1	12,989	16,241	12,790	12,930	12,028
Cash flows from investing activities					
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment	(12,437)	(15,797)	(12,320)	(12,626)	(11,984)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment	1,050	100	100	100	100
Payments for investments	(500)	-	-	-	-
Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities 4.4.2	(11,887)	(15,697)	(12,220)	(12,526)	(11,884)
Cash flows from financing activities					
Finance costs	(2)	-	-	-	-
Repayment of borrowings	(156)	-	-	-	-
Interest paid - lease liabilities	(60)	(88)	(56)	(23)	(4)
Repayment of lease liabilities	(296)	(455)	(487)	(353)	(116)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) financing activities 4.4.3	(514)	(543)	(543)	(376)	(120)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash & cash equivalents	588	1	27	28	24
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	5,900	4,880	4,881	4,908	4,936
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	6,488	4,881	4,908	4,936	4,960

Statement of Capital Works
For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	Budget		Projections		
		2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Property						
Buildings		2,040	950	950	950	950
Total property		2,040	950	950	950	950
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery and equipment		500	500	500	500	500
Fixtures, fittings and furniture		100	45	-	-	-
Library books		40	45	45	45	45
Total plant and equipment		640	590	545	545	545
Infrastructure						
Roads		8,207	11,907	8,475	8,781	8,139
Bridges		400	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Footpaths and cycleways		400	400	400	400	400
Drainage		750	750	750	750	750
Total infrastructure		9,757	14,257	10,825	11,131	10,489
Total capital works expenditure	4.5	12,437	15,797	12,320	12,626	11,984
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure		1,828	238	238	238	238
Asset renewal expenditure		8,702	12,575	9,983	10,243	9,698
Asset upgrade expenditure		2,107	2,984	2,099	2,145	2,048
Total capital works expenditure	4.5	12,437	15,797	12,320	12,626	11,984
Funding sources represented by:						
Grants		3,828	7,591	3,858	3,858	2,923
Council cash		8,609	8,206	8,462	8,768	9,061
Total capital works expenditure	4.5	12,437	15,797	12,320	12,626	11,984

Statement of Human Resources
For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	Budget	Budget	Projections		
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Staff expenditure					
Employee costs - operating	11,961	12,845	13,270	13,711	14,166
Employee costs - capital	1,136	1,182	1,212	1,242	1,273
Total staff expenditure	13,097	14,027	14,482	14,953	15,439
	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
Staff numbers					
Employees	127.8	131.7	131.7	131.7	131.7
Total staff numbers	127.8	131.7	131.7	131.7	131.7

A summary of human resources expenditure categorised according to the organisational structure of Council is included below:

Department	Budget 2026/27 \$'000	Comprises		
		Full Time \$'000	Part time \$'000	Casual \$'000
Growing our place	697	428	269	-
Building robust local economies	428	249	81	98
Preserving our environment	2,066	1,808	11	247
Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure	3,757	3,382	116	259
Enhancing community life	2,814	1,362	988	464
Strong and effective governance	3,083	2,350	705	28
Total permanent staff expenditure	12,845	9,579	2,170	1,096
Capitalised labour costs	1,182			
Total expenditure	14,027			

A summary of the number of full time equivalent (FTE) Council staff in relation to the above expenditure is included below:

Department	Budget 2026/27 FTE	Comprises		
		Full Time FTE	Part time FTE	Casual FTE
Growing our place	5.4	3.0	2.4	-
Building robust local economies	3.7	2.0	0.8	1.0
Preserving our environment	22.5	20.0	0.1	2.3
Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure	49.9	46.0	1.4	2.5
Enhancing community life	27.0	13.0	9.6	4.4
Strong and effective governance	23.2	18.0	4.9	0.3
Total staff	131.7	102.0	19.1	10.6

3.1 Summary of Planned Human Resources Expenditure

For the four years ending 30 June 2030:

	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Growing our place				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	108	112	115	119
Men	320	331	342	353
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	269	278	287	297
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Growing our place	697	720	744	769
Building robust local economies				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	133	137	142	147
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Vacant positions	116	120	124	128
Permanent - Part time				
Women	81	84	88	89
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Building robust local economies	330	341	352	364
Preserving our environment				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	-	-	-	-
Men	1,808	1,868	1,930	1,994
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	-	-	-	-
Men	11	11	12	12
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Preserving our environment	1,819	1,879	1,942	2,006
Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	773	799	825	853
Men	2,609	2,696	2,765	2,878
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	116	120	124	128
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure	3,498	3,614	3,734	3,858

	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Enhancing community life				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	736	763	768	814
Men	624	645	666	688
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	830	858	886	916
Men	158	163	169	174
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Enhancing community life	2,350	2,428	2,509	2,592
Strong and effective governance				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	1,889	1,952	2,017	2,084
Men	268	298	307	318
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Vacant positions	173	179	185	191
Permanent - Part time				
Women	441	456	471	486
Men	264	273	282	291
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Strong and effective governance	3,055	3,156	3,261	3,370
Casuals, temporary and other expenditure	1,096	1,132	1,170	1,209
Capitalised labour costs	1,182	1,212	1,242	1,273
Total staff expenditure	14,027	14,482	14,953	15,439

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
Growing our place				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Men	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Growing our place	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4
Building robust local economies				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Vacant positions	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Permanent - Part time				
Women	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Building robust local economies	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
Preserving our environment				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	-	-	-	-
Men	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	-	-	-	-
Men	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Preserving our environment	20.1	20.1	20.1	20.1
Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Men	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Men	-	-	-	-
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure	35.3	35.3	35.3	35.3
Enhancing community life				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Men	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Permanent - Part time				
Women	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6
Men	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Enhancing community life	22.6	22.6	22.6	22.6

	2026/27 FTE	2027/28 FTE	2028/29 FTE	2029/30 FTE
Strong and effective governance				
Permanent - Full time				
Women	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
Men	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Vacant positions	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Permanent - Part time				
Women	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1
Men	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Persons of self-described gender	-	-	-	-
Total - Strong and effective governance	22.9	22.9	22.9	22.9
Casuals and temporary staff	10.6	10.6	10.6	10.6
Capitalised labour	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Total staff numbers	131.7	131.7	131.7	131.7

4 Notes to the Financial Statements

4.1 Comprehensive Income Statement

4.1.1 Rates and charges

Rates and charges are required by the Act and the Regulations to be disclosed in Council's Budget.

As per the Local Government Act 2020, Council is required to have a Revenue and Rating Plan which is a four year plan for how Council will generate income to deliver the Council Plan, programs and services and capital works commitments over a four-year period.

In developing the Budget, rates and charges were identified as an important source of revenue. Planning for future rate increases has therefore been an important component of the financial planning process. The Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) sets out the maximum amount councils may increase rates in a year. For 2026/27 the FGRS cap has been set at 2.75%. The cap applies to both general rates and municipal charges and is calculated on the basis of Council's average rates and charges.

The level of required rates and charges has been considered in this context, with reference to Council's other sources of income and the planned expenditure on services and works to be undertaken for the community.

Council has prepared the Budget based on a 2.25% increase in the amount raised by general rates and municipal charges.

This will raise total rates and charges for 2026/27 to \$18.965 million.

4.1.1(a) The reconciliation of the total rates and charges to the Comprehensive Income Statement is as follows:

	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Change	%
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
General rates*	14,509	14,980	471	3.2%
Municipal charge*	643	649	6	0.9%
Service rates and charges	2,505	2,600	95	3.8%
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	100	100	-	0.0%
Trust for Nature rebate	-11	-11	-	0.0%
Interest on rates and charges	96	52	-44	-45.8%
Revenue in lieu of rates	583	595	12	2.1%
Total rates and charges	18,425	18,965	540	2.9%

*These items are subject to the rate cap established under the FGRS

4.1.1(b) The rate in the dollar to be levied as general rates under section 158 of the Act for each type or class of land compared with the previous financial year:

Type or class of land	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Change
	cents/\$CIV	cents/\$CIV	
General rate for rateable general properties	0.3643	0.3600	-1.2%
General rate for rateable commercial properties	0.4918	0.4860	-1.2%
General rate for rateable industrial properties	0.4918	0.4860	-1.2%
General rate for rateable farm properties	0.1421	0.1458	2.6%

4.1.1(c) The estimated total amount to be raised by general rates in relation to each type or class of land, and the estimated total amount to be raised by general rates, compared with the previous financial year:

Type or class of land	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Change	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
General	7,329	7,594	265	3.6%
Commercial	783	813	30	3.8%
Industrial	253	276	23	9.1%
Farm	6,144	6,297	153	2.5%
Total amount to be raised by general rates	14,509	14,980	471	3.2%

4.1.1(d) The number of assessments in relation to each type or class of land, and the total number of assessments, compared with the previous financial year.

Type or class of land	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Change	
	Number	Number	Number	%
General	5,410	5,458	48	0.9%
Commercial	308	312	4	1.3%
Industrial	114	119	5	4.4%
Farm	1,815	1,616	1	0.1%
Total number of assessments	7,447	7,505	58	0.8%

4.1.1(e) The basis of valuation to be used is the Capital Improved Value (CIV).

4.1.1(f) The estimated total value of each type or class of land, and the estimated total value of land, compared with the previous financial year:

Type or class of land	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Change	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
General	2,011,804	2,109,417	97,613	4.9%
Commercial	159,240	167,197	7,957	5.0%
Industrial	51,378	56,741	5,363	10.4%
Farm	4,324,012	4,319,081	-4,931	-0.1%
Total value of land	6,546,434	6,652,436	106,002	1.6%

4.1.1(g) The municipal charge under Section 159 of the Act compared with the previous financial year:

Type of Charge	Per Rateable Property	Per Rateable Property	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$	%
Municipal	\$ 96	\$ 96	-	0.0%

4.1.1(h) The estimated total amount to be raised by municipal charges compared with the previous financial year:

Type of Charge	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$	%
Municipal	643,104	649,344	6,240	1.0%

4.1.1(i) The rate or unit amount to be levied for each type of service rate or charge under Section 162 of the Act compared with the previous financial year:

Type of Charge	Per Rateable Property	Per Rateable Property	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$	%
Kerbside collection - 4 Bin System	470	483	13	2.8%
Kerbside collection - 3 Bin System	417	428	11	2.6%
Kerbside collection – additional 140 litre Garbage	165	169	4	2.4%
Kerbside collection – additional 240 litre Recycling	142	146	4	2.8%
Kerbside collection – additional 240 litre Organics	142	146	4	2.8%
Kerbside collection – additional 80 litre Glass	24	25	1	4.2%

4.1.1(j) The estimated total amount to be raised by each type of service rate or charge, and the estimated total amount to be raised by service rates and charges, compared with the previous financial year:

Type of Charge	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$	%
Kerbside collection - 4 Bin System	2,083,510	2,159,010	75,500	3.6%
Kerbside collection - 3 Bin System	392,814	413,020	20,206	5.1%
Kerbside collection – additional 140 litre Garbage	18,810	17,745	-1,065	-5.7%
Kerbside collection – additional 240 litre Recycling	7,668	7,884	216	2.8%
Kerbside collection – additional 240 litre Organics	1,278	1,606	328	25.7%
Kerbside collection – additional 80 litre Glass	792	875	83	10.5%
Total	2,504,872	2,600,140	95,268	3.8%

4.1.1(k) The estimated total amount to be raised by all rates and charges compared with the previous financial year:

	Forecast	Budget	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
General rates	14,509	14,980	471	3.2%
Municipal charge	643	649	6	0.9%
Service rates and charges	2,505	2,600	95	3.8%
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	100	100	-	0.0%
Trust for Nature rebate	-11	-11	-	0.0%
Interest on rates and charges	96	52	-44	-45.8%
Revenue in lieu of rates	583	595	12	2.1%
Total Rates and charges	18,425	18,965	540	2.9%

4.1.1(l) Fair Go Rates System Compliance

Ararat Rural City Council is required to comply with the State Government's Fair Go Rates System (FGRS). The table below details the Budget assumptions consistent with the requirements of the Fair Go Rates System.

	2025/26	2026/27
Total Annualised General Rates & Municipal Charges	\$14,928,426	\$15,282,978
Number of rateable properties	7,447	7,505
Base Average Rate	\$2,004.62	\$2,038.37
Maximum Rate Increase (set by the State Government)	3.00%	2.75%
Capped Average Rate	\$2,064.76	\$2,092.37
Maximum General Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	\$15,376,279	\$15,703,260
Budgeted General Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	\$15,152,346	\$15,628,804
Budgeted Supplementary Rates	\$100,000	\$100,000
Budgeted Total Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	\$15,252,346	\$15,728,804

4.1.1(m) Any significant changes that may affect the estimated amounts to be raised by rates and charges.

There are no known significant changes which may affect the estimated amounts to be raised by rates and charges. However, the total amount to be raised by rates and charges may be affected by:

- The making of supplementary valuations.
- The variation of returned levels of value (e.g., valuation objections and appeals).
- Changes of use of land such that rateable land becomes non-rateable land and vice versa.
- Changes of use of land such that farm land becomes general land and vice versa.
- Granting single farm enterprises the exemption from payment of the municipal charge.
- Granting of Trust for Nature rebates.

4.1.1(n) Differential Rates

Rates are essentially property taxes that allow Council to raise revenue to fund delivery of a range of services to their municipal community. Importantly, it is a taxation system that includes flexibility for councils to utilise different tools in its rating structure to accommodate issues of equity and to ensure fairness in rating for all ratepayers. Councils can use these tools in different ways to yield results seen as fair by their communities.

Council utilises a rating structure comprised of three key elements. These are:

- **General Rates** – Based on property values (using the Capital Improved Valuation methodology), which are indicative of capacity to pay and form the central basis of rating under the *Local Government Act 1989*. Within the General rating model are four differentiated rating sectors: General, Industrial, Commercial and Farm.
- **Service Charges** – A 'user pays' component for Council services to reflect benefits provided by Council to ratepayers who benefit from a service. The only Service Charge applied by Council is the Waste Charge, applied to domestic waste management.
- **Municipal Charge** – Council applies a Municipal Charge as a 'fixed rate' portion per property or single farm enterprise, to cover some of the fixed administrative costs of Council.

Impact of 2026 Valuation

The expected final outcome of the 2026 general revaluation has been a 3.52% increase in valuations for general/residential properties, a 3.87% increase in commercial valuations, a 5.83% increase in industrial valuations and a 0.29% decrease in farming valuations.

The following table illustrates the expected changes in capital improved valuations for each class of property as a result of the revaluation.

Class of Property	2025 Capital Improved Value (CIV) \$	2026 Capital Improved Value (CIV) \$	% Change in CIV from 2025 to 2026
General	2,037,664,000	2,109,417,000	3.52%
Commercial	160,970,000	167,197,000	3.87%
Industrial	53,613,000	56,741,000	5.83%
Farm	4,331,530,300	4,319,081,000	-0.29%
Totals	6,583,777,300	6,652,436,000	1.04%

A revaluation does not result in additional rate income for Council; even with no increase in the total amount raised by rates and municipal charges, some ratepayers may pay more in rates and others may pay less than the previous year, depending on the percentage change in the value of the individual properties.

General Rates

The formula for calculating General Rates, excluding any additional charges, arrears or additional supplementary rates is:

$$\text{Valuation (Capital Improved Value)} \times \text{Rate in the Dollar (Differential Rate Type)}$$

The rate in the dollar for each rating differential category is included in Council's annual Budget and represents Council's key mechanism for building a rating model that shares rating burden predictably and fairly between the four rating sectors.

Rates and charges are an important source of revenue, accounting for 49% of the budgeted operating revenue expected to be received by Council in 2026/27. The collection of rates is an important factor in funding Council services. Planning for future rate increases is therefore an essential component of the long-term financial planning process and plays a significant role in funding both additional service delivery and the increasing costs related to providing Council services.

Council makes a further distinction when administering general rates by applying a rating differential based on the purpose for which the property is used; that is, whether the property is used for general, commercial, industrial, or farming purposes. This distinction is based on the concept that different property categories should pay a fair and equitable contribution, taking into account the benefits those properties derive from the local community.

Ararat Rural City Council has made a clear decision, supported by the outcomes of the Rating Strategy Advisory Group (RSAG) and Citizen's Jury, and by the community more generally, that rating fairness is measured by a consistent sharing of "rates burden" between rating sectors from year to year. It has become known as the "pie model" through the RSAG process. It means that each year, each rating sector should contribute a very similar amount of the rating "pie". This reflects the intent of Section 101(1)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020 which requires that councils "seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community".

To maintain consistency in the percentage of rating burden across the four rating sectors, it is critical to understand that the differential is not a "discount" or a fixed element that underpins rating fairness. Rather, it is an economic lever to be used to ensure that the current rates burden is maintained between rating sectors.

This equilibrium in burden between rating sectors is often disturbed through asymmetric changes in property valuations between rating sectors. If valuations in one sector increase or decrease disproportionately to the overall movement in valuations, the proportion of rates paid by one sector becomes skewed, and this needs to be adjusted through alteration of one or more differentials.

Council will continue to attempt to minimise the impact of rating burden on the entire municipal community through seeking ongoing organisational efficiencies during the life of the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029. These savings will be returned as a dividend to community.

There is a general "understanding" in the local government sector that forgoing the opportunity to increase rates to the maximum allowed under the FGRS results in significant losses in future revenue which undermines ongoing organisational sustainability, particularly in small rural councils. ARCC challenges this thinking; delivering ongoing and sustainable efficiencies has the same impact on long term sustainability as increasing the rate base. There may be rate increases in the period 2025-2029, to meet increased costs, but the first option to be exercised will always be efficiency dividends.

Valuation Methodology

Ararat Rural City Council applies Capital Improved Value (CIV) to all properties within the municipality to take into account the fully developed value of the property. This basis of valuation considers the total market value of the land plus buildings and other improvements. The CIV approach also provides the most effective mechanism for Council to raise differential rates under the *Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating, 2013*.

Rationale for Differential Rating Sectors

Council believes each differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of council functions. The application of the "pie model" in terms of a generally accepted community measure of rating equity has been discussed previously as a key driver of the rating sectors developed under Council's Revenue and Rating plan 2025-2029.

Details of the objectives of each differential rate, the classes of land which are subject to each differential rate and the uses of each differential rate, are set out below.

GENERAL RATE

Definition: General land is any rateable land which does not have the characteristics of Farm Rate land and Commercial/Industrial Rate land.

Objectives: To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations and to ensure that the differential rate in the dollar declared for defined General Rate land properties is fair and equitable, having regard to the cost and the level of benefits derived from provision of Council services.

Characteristics: The characteristics of the planning scheme zoning are applicable to the determination of vacant land which will be subject to the rate of residential land. The vacant land affected by this rate is that which is zoned residential under the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and

Classes: Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described below:
a) used primarily for residential purposes; or
b) any land that is not defined as Farmland or Commercial/Industrial Land.

Use of Rate: The General Differential Rate is the default rate in instances where land does not meet the characteristics of any other differential rate. It will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate: 100% of General Rate.

Use of Land: Any use permitted under the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic

Location: Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme

Zoning: The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Types of

Buildings: All buildings which are already constructed on the land, or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

FARM RATE

Definition: Farm Land means any rateable land within Council's municipal district defined as farm land under Section 2 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, on the condition that the owner or occupier of the land is a person carrying on the activities defined by the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, and who is regarded as a Primary Producer by the Australian Taxation Office.

Section 2(1) of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960* states:

- a) Farm Land means any rateable land that is 2 or more hectares in area.
- b) Used primarily for primary producing purposes from its activities on the land; used primarily for grazing (including agistment), dairying, pig farming, poultry farming, fish farming, tree farming, bee keeping, viticulture, horticulture, fruit growing or the growing of crops of any kind or for any combination of those activities; and

That is used by a business –

- That has a significant and substantial commercial purpose of character
- That seeks to make a profit on a continuous or repetitive basis from its activities on the land; and
- That is making a profit from its activities on the land, or that has a reasonable prospect of making a profit from its activities on the land if it continues to operate in the way that it is operating.

Objectives: To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations and to ensure that the differential rate in the dollar declared for defined Farm Rate land properties is fair and equitable, having regard to the cost and the level of benefits derived from provision of Council services with considerations to maintain agriculture as a major industry in the municipal district, to facilitate the longevity of the farm sector, and to achieve a balance between providing for municipal growth and retaining the important agricultural economic base.

Characteristics: The characteristics of the planning scheme zoning are applicable to the determination of farm land which will be subject to the rate of Farm land. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and

Classes:

Farm land having the relevant characteristics described below:

- a) used primarily for primary production purposes by an owner or occupier who is regarded as a Primary Producer by the Australian Taxation Office; or
- b) any land that is not defined as General Land or Commercial/Industrial Land.

Use of Rate: The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which the Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate: The level of the rate will be determined annually by Council and the community in preparation and adoption of Council's Budget. The Farm differential is an economic lever required to maintain consistency in rating burden between rating sectors. It is proposed to be 40.5% of the General Rate in 2026/27.

Use of Land: Any use permitted under the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic

Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme

Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings: All buildings which are already constructed on the land, or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL RATE

Although acknowledged as two separate rating sectors, the rationale for striking a Commercial/Industrial differential rate is the same and will be described as a single class in the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.

Definition: Commercial/Industrial Land is any land which is:

- Used primarily for carrying out the manufacture or production of, or trade in goods or services (including tourist facilities and in the case of a business providing accommodation for tourists, is prescribed accommodation under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act (Vic) 2008*; or
- Unoccupied building erected which is zoned Commercial or Industrial under the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme; or
- Unoccupied land which is zoned Commercial or Industrial under the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Objectives: To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations and to ensure that the differential rate in the dollar declared for defined Commercial/Industrial Rate land properties is fair and equitable, having regard to the cost and the level of benefits derived from provision of Council services.

The commercial businesses of Ararat Rural City Council benefit from significant ongoing investment by Council in services and infrastructure. Council also notes the tax deductibility of Council rates for commercial properties which is not available to the residential sector, and the income generating capability of commercial based properties.

The Commercial differential rate is applied to promote the economic development objectives for the Ararat Rural City Council as outlined in the Council Plan. These objectives include a significant ongoing investment to create a vibrant economy and include the maintenance and improvement of tourism infrastructure, construction and maintenance of public infrastructure, development and provision of health and community services, and the general provision of support services and promotion of business in the municipality.

Characteristics: The characteristics of the planning scheme zoning are applicable to the determination of vacant land which will be subject to the rate applicable to Commercial/Industrial Land. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and Classes: Commercial/Industrial having the relevant characteristics described below:

- used primarily for commercial purposes; or
- any land that is not defined as General Land or Farm Land.

Use of Rate: The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate: The level of the rate will be determined annually by Council and the community in preparation and adoption of Council's Budget. The differential rate is an economic lever required to maintain consistency in rating burden between rating sectors. It is proposed to be 135% of the General Rate in 2026/27. It is less likely that the Commercial/Industrial differential will need to be altered significantly from budget to budget as there are much less volatile property markets in these two rating sectors.

Use of Land: Any use permitted under the Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic

Location: Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme

Zoning: The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Ararat Rural City Council Planning Scheme.

Types of

Buildings: All buildings which are already constructed on the land, or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

4.1.2 Statutory Fees and Fines

	Budget		Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Infringements and costs	23	38	15	65.2%
Town planning fees	215	215	-	0.0%
Land information certificates	15	15	-	0.0%
Permits	24	25	1	4.2%
Total statutory fees and fines	277	293	16	5.8%

Statutory fees relate mainly to fees and fines levied in accordance with legislation and include town planning fees, and animal and parking fines. Increases in statutory fees are made in accordance with legislative requirements.

Statutory fees are forecast to increase by 5.8% or \$0.016 million compared to 2025/26.

A detailed listing of statutory fees is included in Section 6.

4.1.3 User Fees

	Budget		Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Leisure centre	539	569	30	5.6%
Childcare/children's programs	11	11	-	0.0%
Registration and other permits	150	150	-	0.0%
Building services	70	70	-	0.0%
Waste management services	458	480	22	4.8%
Ararat Town Hall charges	160	175	15	9.4%
Visitor Information Centre	5	5	-	0.0%
Alexandra Oval	110	115	5	4.5%
Gordon St Oval	40	30	-10	-25.0%
Road occupancy	10	10	-	0.0%
Other fees and charges	78	85	7	9.0%
Total user fees	1,631	1,700	69	4.2%

User fees relate mainly to the recovery of service delivery costs through the charging of fees to users of Council's services. These include use of leisure, entertainment and other community facilities and the provision of waste management services.

User fees are projected to increase by 4.2% or \$0.069 million compared to 2025/26.

A detailed listing of user fees is included in Section 6.

4.1.4 Grants

Grants are required by the Act and the Regulations to be disclosed in Council's Budget.

	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Grants were received in respect of the following:				
<i>Summary of grants</i>				
Commonwealth funded grants	10,385	10,876	491	4.7%
State funded grants	2,969	6,094	3,125	105.3%
Total grants received	13,354	16,970	3,616	27.1%
(a) Operating Grants				
<i>Recurrent - Commonwealth Government</i>				
Financial Assistance Grants	8,047	8,285	238	3.0%
<i>Recurrent - State Government</i>				
Aged care	3	3	-	0.0%
School crossing supervisors	16	16	-	0.0%
Libraries	155	155	-	0.0%
Maternal and child health	354	341	-13	-3.7%
Culture	140	140	-	0.0%
Administration	60	48	-12	-20.0%
Emergency Management	60	60	-	0.0%
Environment	74	74	-	0.0%
Total recurrent grants	8,909	9,122	213	2.4%
<i>Non-recurrent - State Government</i>				
Maternal and child health	67	69	2	3.0%
Community Development	184	188	4	2.2%
Recreation	366	-	-366	-100.0%
Total non-recurrent grants	617	257	-360	-58.3%
Total operating grants	9,526	9,379	-147	-1.5%
(b) Capital Grants				
<i>Recurrent - Commonwealth Government</i>				
Roads to recovery	2,338	2,591	253	10.8%
Total recurrent grants	2,338	2,591	253	10.8%
<i>Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government</i>				
Recreation	1,490	-	-1,490	-100.0%
Transport	-	5,000	5,000	100.0%
Total non-recurrent grants	1,490	5,000	3,510	235.6%
Total capital grants	3,828	7,591	3,763	98.3%
Total Grants	13,354	16,970	3,616	27.1%

Operating grants include all monies received from State and Federal sources for the purposes of funding the delivery of Council's services to ratepayers. Overall, the level of operating grants is projected to decrease by 1.5% or \$0.147 million compared to 2025/26.

Capital grants include all monies received from State and Federal sources for the purposes of funding the capital works program. Overall, the level of capital grants is projected to increase by 98.3% or \$3.763 million compared to 2025/26.

4.1.5 Contributions

	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Monetary	93	89	-4	-4.3%
Total contributions	93	89	-4	-4.3%

Contributions relate to monies paid by the community in regard to community projects.

Contributions are projected to decrease by 4.3% or \$0.004 million compared to 2025/26.

4.1.6 Other Income

	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Interest	400	400	-	0.0%
Investment property rental	230	170	-60	-26.1%
Total other income	630	570	-60	-9.5%

Other income relates to a range of items such as property rentals and other miscellaneous income items. It also includes interest revenue on investments.

Other income is forecast to decrease by 9.5% or \$0.060 million compared to 2025/26.

4.1.7 Employee costs

	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
Wages and salaries	11,398	12,253	855	7.5%
Less capitalised wages and salaries	-1,136	-1,182	-46	4.0%
WorkCover	316	281	-35	-11.1%
Superannuation	1,320	1,430	110	8.3%
Fringe benefits tax	63	63	-	0.0%
Total employee costs	11,961	12,845	884	7.4%

Employee costs include all labour related expenditure such as wages, salaries, and on-costs such as allowances, leave entitlements, employer superannuation, etc.

Employee costs are forecast to increase by 7.4% or \$0.884 million compared to 2025/26.

Movements in employee costs are influenced by a number of factors:

- Renegotiation of Council's Enterprise Agreement (EA).
- An increase in Council's WorkCover premiums.
- Movement of some staff in line with the Local Government Award upon their work anniversary.
- Various externally funded positions impact on employment staff costs from year to year.

Refer to Section 3 for the Statement of Human Resources, along with a summary of human resources expenditure categorised according to the organisational structure of Council and a summary of the number of full time equivalent (FTE) Council staff in relation to the expenditure.

4.1.8 Materials and services

	Budget	Budget	Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
Materials and services	5,699	5,556	-143	-2.5%
Contract Payments	839	799	-41	-4.9%
Plant and equipment maintenance	1,450	1,537	87	6.0%
Utilities	768	767	-1	-0.1%
Consultants	430	420	-10	-2.3%
Total materials and services	9,186	9,079	-108	-1.2%

Materials and services include the purchases of consumables, payments to contractors for the provision of services and utility costs.

Materials and services are forecast to decrease by 1.2% or \$0.108 million compared to 2025/26.

4.1.9 Depreciation

	Budget		Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Property	2,626	2,660	34	1.3%
Plant & equipment	776	819	43	5.5%
Infrastructure	7,067	7,610	543	7.7%
Total depreciation	10,469	11,089	620	5.9%

Depreciation is an accounting measure which attempts to allocate the value of an asset over its useful life for Council's property, plant and equipment including infrastructure assets such as roads and drains. The increase of \$0.620 million for 2026/27 has resulted from a revaluation of Council's assets undertaken during 2024/25, and is primarily due to significant market increases in the cost to replace property and infrastructure assets.

4.1.10 Amortisation – Right of Use Assets

	Budget		Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Right of use assets	308	459	151	49.0%
Total amortisation - right of use assets	308	459	151	49.0%

Amortisation is an accounting measure to allocate the value of the right of use asset across the life of the asset. Council has entered into leases for several major plant items with the right to use the vehicles amortised over the term of the leases.

4.1.11 Other Expenses

	Budget		Change	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Auditors' remuneration - External (Victorian Auditor-General)	50	55	5	10.0%
Auditors' remuneration - Internal	65	75	10	15.4%
Councillors' allowances	279	294	15	5.4%
Total other expenses	394	424	30	7.6%

Other items of expense relate to a range of unclassified items including Councillors allowances, Mayoral allowance, and audit fees.

Other expenses are forecast to increase by 7.6% or \$0.030 million compared to 2025/26.

4.2 Balance Sheet

4.2.1 Assets

Cash and cash equivalents include cash and investments such as cash held in the bank and in cash on hand, and the value of investments in deposits or other highly liquid investments with short term maturities of three months or less. These balances are projected to decrease by \$1.607 million compared to 2025/26.

Trade and other receivables are monies owed to Council by ratepayers and others. Short term debtors are not expected to change significantly in the Budget.

By 2026/27 Council will have invested \$2.000 million in a joint venture with a private investor to address the availability of affordable housing for the growing labour force within the municipality. The venture will see four new houses constructed per year over the next 15 years, for a total of 60 new homes, to be leased for a period of four years and then sold.

Property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment is the largest component of Council's worth and represents the value of all the land, buildings, roads, vehicles, equipment, etc which has been built up by Council over many years.

A right of use asset has been included in the 2026/27 budget due to Council holding five leases for major plant items. The right of use asset will be amortised over the term of the leases.

4.2.2 Liabilities

Trade and other payables are those to whom Council owes money as at 30 June. These liabilities are budgeted to remain consistent with 2025/26 levels.

Provisions include accrued long service leave, annual leave and rostered days owing to employees. These employee entitlements are expected to remain consistent during 2026/27.

Interest-bearing loans and borrowings are borrowings of Council. Current loans will be fully repaid by Council in 2025/26 and Council is budgeting to take out no new loans in 2026/27.

Council holds seven leases for major plant and equipment. Balances are separated into current and non-current lease liabilities.

4.2.3 Borrowings

The table below shows information on borrowings specifically required by the Regulations.

	Budget	Budget	Projections		
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000
Amount borrowed as at 30 June of the prior year	157	-	-	-	-
Amount proposed to be borrowed	-	-	-	-	-
Amount projected to be redeemed	-157	-	-	-	-
Amount of borrowings as at 30 June	-	-	-	-	-

4.2.4 Leases by Category

As a result of the introduction of AASB 16 Leases, right-of-use assets and lease liabilities have been recognised as outlined in the table below.

	Budget	Budget
	2025/26 \$	2026/27 \$
Right-of-use assets		
Plant and equipment	777,716	865,873
Total right-of-use assets	777,716	865,873
Lease liabilities		
Current lease Liabilities		
Plant and equipment	313,819	487,439
Total current lease liabilities	313,819	487,439
Non-current lease liabilities		
Plant and equipment	518,550	468,877
Total non-current lease liabilities	518,550	468,877
Total lease liabilities	832,369	956,316

4.2.5 Net Assets

This term is used to describe the difference between the value of total assets and the value of total liabilities. It represents the net worth of Council as at 30 June.

The increase in net assets of \$330.925 million results predominantly from the operating surplus, asset revaluations and the net movement of non-current assets.

4.3 Statement of Changes in Equity

4.3.1 Equity

Total equity is projected to increase by \$330.925 million during the year. Total equity always equals net assets and is made up of the following components:

- Asset revaluation reserve which represents the difference between the previously recorded value of assets and their current valuations.
- Other reserves that are funds that Council wishes to separately identify as being set aside to meet a specific purpose in the future and to which there is no existing liability. These amounts are transferred from the Accumulated Surplus of the Council to be separately disclosed.
- Accumulated surplus which is the value of all net assets less Reserves that have accumulated over time. \$4.624 million of the increase in accumulated surplus results directly from the surplus for the year. An amount of \$0.038 million (net) is budgeted to be transferred to accumulated surplus from other reserves. This is a transfer between equity balances only and does not impact on the total balance of equity.

4.4 Statement of Cash Flows

4.4.1 Net cash flows provided by/used in operating activities

Operating activities refers to the cash generated or used in the normal service delivery functions of Council. Cash remaining after paying for the provision of services to the community may be available for investment in capital works, or repayment of debt.

The increase in net cash flows from operating activities of \$3.252 million is mostly due to an increase in capital grants of \$3.763 million.

The net cash flows from operating activities does not equal the surplus (deficit) for the year as the expected revenues and expenses of Council include non-cash items which have been excluded from the Cash Flow Statement.

4.4.2 Net Cash Flows Provided by/used in Investing Activities

Investing activities refers to cash generated or used in the enhancement or creation of infrastructure and other assets. These activities also include the acquisition and sale of other assets such as vehicles, property, and equipment.

The payments for investing activities represent the proposed capital works program disclosed in Section 4.5. The payments for property, infrastructure, plant, and equipment are budgeted to increase by \$3.360 million due to the increase in non-recurrent capital grants budgeted in 2026/27.

4.4.3 Net Cash Flows Provided by/used in Financing Activities

Financing activities refers to cash generated or used in the financing of Council functions and include borrowings from financial institutions. These activities also include repayment of the principal component of loan repayments for the year.

Council's current loan will be fully repaid in 2025/26 and Council is budgeting to take out no new loans in 2026/27.

Council currently holds seven leases for major plant and equipment. For 2026/27 the interest for the lease liabilities will be \$0.088 million and the lease repayments will be \$0.455 million.

4.5 Capital Works Program

This section presents a listing of the capital works projects that will be undertaken for the 2026/27 year, classified by expenditure type and funding source.

4.5.1 Summary

	Budget	Budget	Change	%
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	
Property	2,040	958	-1,082	-53.4%
Plant and equipment	588	598	-50	-7.8%
Infrastructure	9,757	14,257	4,500	46.1%
Total	12,437	15,797	3,360	27.0%

	Project Cost \$'000	Asset expenditure types			Summary of Funding Sources			
		New \$'000	Renewal \$'000	Upgrade \$'000	Grants \$'000	Contrib. \$'000	Council cash \$'000	Borrowings \$'000
Property	950	228	235	474	-	-	950	-
Plant and equipment	598	-	598	-	-	-	598	-
Infrastructure	14,257	-	11,749	2,508	7,591	-	6,068	-
Total	15,797	228	12,577	2,982	7,591	-	8,206	-

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4.5.2 Capital Budget

Capital Works Area	Project Cost \$'000	Asset expenditure types			Summary of Funding Sources			
		New \$'000	Renewal \$'000	Upgrade \$'000	Grants \$'000	Contrib. \$'000	Council cash \$'000	Borrowings \$'000
PROPERTY								
Buildings								
Community projects	950	228	235	474	-	-	950	-
TOTAL PROPERTY	950	228	235	474	-	-	950	-
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT								
Plant, Machinery and Equipment								
Vehicle Purchases	240	-	240	-	-	-	240	-
Motor Plant Purchases	260	-	260	-	-	-	260	-
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture								
Computer Equipment	45	-	45	-	-	-	45	-
Library books								
Bookstock	45	-	45	-	-	-	45	-
TOTAL PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	598	-	598	-	-	-	598	-
INFRASTRUCTURE								
Roads								
Gravel road resurfacing and alternative surfacing	1,800	-	1,800	-	-	-	1,800	-
Reveal program	1,000	-	1,000	-	-	-	1,000	-
Buzsog-Bee Nests Road reconstruction	6,250	-	5,313	937	5,000	-	1,250	-
Road reconstruction program	1,457	-	1,238	219	1,391	-	66	-
Urban gravel to seal	1,000	-	-	1,000	-	-	1,000	-
Major patching	100	-	100	-	-	-	100	-
Kerb and channel renewal program	300	-	300	-	-	-	300	-
Bridges								
Bridge renewal program	1,200	-	1,020	180	1,200	-	-	-
Footpaths and Cycleways								
Footpaths and cycleways	400	-	340	60	-	-	400	-
Drainage								
Urban drainage	750	-	630	112	-	-	750	-
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE	14,257	-	11,749	2,508	7,591	-	6,068	-
TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS	15,797	228	12,577	2,982	7,591	-	8,206	-

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4.6 Summary of Planned Capital Works Expenditure

For the years ending 30 June 2028, 2029 & 2030

2027/28	Total \$'000	Asset Expenditure Types			Grants \$'000	Funding Sources		
		New \$'000	Renewal \$'000	Upgrade \$'000		Contributions \$'000	Council Cash \$'000	Borrowings \$'000
Property								
Buildings	550	238	238	474	-	-	550	-
Total Property	550	238	238	474	-	-	550	-
Plant and Equipment								
Fleet, machinery and equipment	500	-	500	-	-	-	500	-
Library books	45	-	45	-	-	-	45	-
Total Plant and Equipment	545	-	545	-	-	-	545	-
Infrastructure								
Roads	8,476	-	7,204	1,271	2,956	-	3,817	-
Bridges	1,200	-	1,020	180	1,200	-	-	-
Footpaths and cycleways	400	-	340	80	-	-	400	-
Drainage	750	-	638	112	-	-	750	-
Total Infrastructure	10,825	-	9,202	1,623	3,856	-	8,967	-
Total Capital Works Expenditure	12,326	238	8,985	2,897	3,856	-	8,662	-

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2028/29	Total \$'000	Asset Expenditure Types			Grants \$'000	Funding Sources		
		New \$'000	Renewal \$'000	Upgrade \$'000		Contributions \$'000	Council Cash \$'000	Borrowings \$'000
Property								
Buildings	550	238	238	474	-	-	550	-
Total Property	550	238	238	474	-	-	550	-
Plant and Equipment								
Fleet, machinery and equipment	500	-	500	-	-	-	500	-
Library books	45	-	45	-	-	-	45	-
Total Plant and Equipment	545	-	545	-	-	-	545	-
Infrastructure								
Roads	8,751	-	7,464	1,287	2,956	-	8,123	-
Bridges	1,200	-	1,020	180	1,200	-	-	-
Footpaths and cycleways	400	-	340	80	-	-	400	-
Drainage	750	-	638	112	-	-	750	-
Total Infrastructure	11,151	-	9,462	1,659	3,856	-	7,273	-
Total Capital Works Expenditure	12,626	238	10,245	2,143	3,856	-	8,768	-

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2023/24	Asset Expenditure Types				Funding Sources			
	Total \$'000	New \$'000	Renewal \$'000	Upgrade \$'000	Grants \$'000	Contributions \$'000	Council Cash \$'000	Borrowings \$'000
Property								
Buildings	950	238	238	474	-	-	950	-
Total Property	950	238	238	474	-	-	950	-
Plant and Equipment								
Plant, machinery and equipment	500	-	500	-	-	-	500	-
Library books	45	-	45	-	-	-	45	-
Total Plant and Equipment	545	-	545	-	-	-	545	-
Infrastructure								
Roads	8,140	-	8,919	1,221	1,721	-	8,617	-
Buildings	1,200	-	1,020	180	1,200	-	-	-
Footpaths and cycleways	400	-	340	80	-	-	400	-
Drainage	750	-	850	110	-	-	750	-
Total Infrastructure	10,490	-	8,917	1,573	2,921	-	7,567	-
Total Capital Works Expenditure	11,985	238	9,700	2,047	2,921	-	8,082	-

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5 Targeted Performance Indicators (Council Selected)

The following table highlights Council's current and projected performance across eight targeted performance indicators selected by Council from the range of prescribed performance measures contained in the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. These indicators provide a useful analysis of Council's intentions and performance and should be interpreted in the context of the organisation's objectives.

Results against these indicators and targets will be reported in Council's Performance Statement included in the Annual Report.

Domain / Indicator	Measure	Notes	Actual	Budget	Target	Target Projections			Trend
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
Community									
Aquatic facilities	Utilisation of aquatic facilities Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Population		5.87	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	0
Community									
Library services	Library visits per head of population Number of library visits / Population		2.17	No Target Set	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	*
Responsiveness									
Statutory planning	Time taken to decide planning applications Median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application		30.00	30.00	30	30	30	30	0
Responsiveness									
Waste management	Kerbside collection bins missed Number of kerbside collection bins missed/number of scheduled kerbside collection bin lifts		10.56	2.00	8	8	8	8	*
Cost									
Roads	Cost of sealed local road reconstruction Direct cost of sealed local road reconstruction / Square metres of sealed local roads reconstructed		\$30.44	\$50.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	0
Cost									
Roads	Cost of sealed local road resurfacing Direct cost of sealed local road resurfacing / Square metres of sealed local roads resurfaced		\$6.51	\$8.00	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.50	0
Environment									
Roads	Population density per length of road Population/Kilometres of local roads		4.76	4.30	4.88	4.95	5.01	5.08	0
Financial forecasting									
Population	Infrastructure per head of population Value of infrastructure / Population		\$50,702.88	\$26,247.23	\$53,883.76	\$53,263.80	\$52,852.81	\$51,873.92	0

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5a. Targeted Performance Indicators (Mandatory)

The following tables highlight Council's current and projected performance across a selection of targeted service and financial performance indicators. These indicators provide a useful analysis of Council's intentions and performance and should be interpreted in the context of the organisation's objectives.

The targeted performance indicators below are the prescribed performance indicators contained in Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. Results against these indicators and targets will be reported in Council's Performance Statement included in the Annual Report.

Targeted Service Performance Indicators – Mandatory

Domain / Indicator	Measure	Notes	Actual	Budget	Target	Target Projections			Trend
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	+/-
Governance Community Engagement (Council decisions made and implemented with community input)	Satisfaction with the opportunities offered by Council to be consulted on or engaged in Council decisions Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council		59	75	75	75	75	75	0
Environment Roads (sealed local roads are maintained and renewed to ensure a safe network)	Sealed local roads below the intervention level Number of km of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / km of sealed local roads		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0
Responsiveness Statutory Planning (Councils decide on planning applications and fulfil their legislative duties in a timely manner)	Planning applications decided within the relevant required time Number of planning application decisions made within the relevant required time / Number of planning application decisions made		79.80%	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%	0
Environment Waste Management (waste is minimised and sustainability is promoted)	Kerbside collection waste to landfill per serviced property Waste is managed collected from kerbside waste collection services sent to landfill / Number of serviced properties		Less Measure	Less Measure	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	0

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Targeted Financial Performance Indicators – Mandatory

Domain / Indicator	Measure	Notes	Actual	Budget	Target	Target Projections			Trend
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	+/-
Financial Management Liquidity (sufficient working capital and cash is available to cover \$200,000)	Current assets compared to current liabilities Current assets / current liabilities		125.75%	225.33%	171.28%	177.38%	187.79%	193.23%	+
Financial Forecasting Asset Renewal and Upgrade (renewal and upgrade of assets is planned and delivered)	Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation Asset renewal and upgrade expenses / Asset depreciation	1	306.70%	103.20%	160.31%	106.50%	109.33%	96.37%	0
Financial Management Rates Concentration (revenue is generated from a range of sources)	Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue Rate revenue / adjusted underlying revenue	2	49.20%	55.94%	56.43%	54.70%	54.93%	56.47%	0
Financial Management Expenditure and revenue level (resources are used efficiently in the delivery of services)	Expenses per property assessment Total expenses / no. of property assessments		\$4,935.81	\$4,348.08	\$4,328.86	\$4,982.42	\$4,813.92	\$4,679.08	0

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5b. Financial Performance Indicators

The following table highlights Council's current and projected performance across a range of key financial performance indicators. These indicators provide a useful analysis of Council's financial position and performance and should be interpreted in the context of the organisation's objectives. The financial performance indicators below are the prescribed financial performance indicators contained in Part 2 of Schedule 3 of the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. Results against these indicators and targets will be reported in Council's Performance Statement included in the Annual Report.

Domain / Indicator	Measure	Notes	Actual	Budget	Target	Target Projections		Trend	
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	460
Financial Forecasting Indebtedness (level of long term liabilities is appropriate to the size and nature of a Council's activities) Loans and borrowings (level of interest bearing loans and borrowings is appropriate to the size and nature of Council's activities)	Non-current liabilities compared to own-source revenue Non-current liabilities / own source revenue		7.83%	3.87%	3.52%	3.84%	4.28%	4.25%	+
	Loans and borrowings compared to own-source revenue Interest bearing loans and borrowings / own source revenue		0.72%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	+
	Loans and borrowings repayments compared to own-source revenue Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / own source revenue		0.72%	0.75%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	+
Population (population is a key driver of a Council's ability to fund the delivery of services to the community)	Expenses per head of population Total expenses / Population		\$3,145.38	\$2,700.81	\$2,832.01	\$2,846.07	\$2,889.74	\$2,901.81	0
Revenue and grants (revenue is generated from a range of sources in order to fund the delivery of services to the community)	Own-source revenue per head of population Own source revenue / Population		\$1,856.07	\$1,700.19	\$1,798.98	\$1,816.43	\$1,838.34	\$1,858.57	+
	Recurrent grants per head of population Recurrent grants / Population		\$1,138.00	\$800.06	\$876.73	\$1,080.71	\$1,099.22	\$1,023.05	+

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Domain / Indicator	Measure	Notes	Actual	Budget	Target	Target Projections		Trend	
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	460
Financial Management Liquidity (sufficient working capital and cash is available to cover expenses) Operating Position (an adjusted underlying surplus is generated in the ordinary course of business) Rates effort (rating level is set based on the community's capacity to pay) Expenditure and revenue level (resources are used efficiently in the delivery of services) Rates collection (rates and charges are being responsibly collected)	Cash compared to current liabilities Cash / current liabilities		100.51%	173.24%	107.11%	110.87%	117.62%	121.87%	+
	Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / Adjusted underlying revenue	3	-0.55%	1.79%	-4.12%	2.81%	2.87%	0.02%	+
	Rates compared to property value Rate revenue / CV of rateable properties in the municipal district		0.27%	0.28%	0.29%	0.29%	0.29%	0.29%	0
	Average rate per property assessment General rates and municipal charges / no. of property assessments		\$2,001.88	\$2,048.07	\$2,094.54	\$2,124.04	\$2,155.74	\$2,187.43	+
	Rates and charges DEM Unpaid rates and charges / all rates and charges	New Measure	New Measure		4.61%	4.50%	4.38%	4.28%	0

Key to Forecast Trend:

- + Forecasts improvement in Council's financial performance/financial position indicator
- 0 Forecasts that Council's financial performance/financial position indicator will be steady
- Forecasts deterioration in Council's financial performance/financial position indicator

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Notes to Indicators

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1. Asset Renewal

This percentage indicates the extent of Council's renewal and upgrade of assets against its depreciation charge (an indication of the decline in value of its existing capital assets). A percentage greater than 100 indicates Council is maintaining its existing assets, while a percentage less than 100 means its assets are deteriorating faster than they are being renewed and upgraded, and future capital expenditure will be required to renew and upgrade assets. The total capital works program for 2026/27 is \$15.797 million.

2. Rates Concentration

Reflects the extent of reliance on rate revenues to fund all of Council's on-going services. This indicator demonstrates Council relies heavily on rates as a source of income. The trend indicates Council will continue to be reliant on rate revenue compared to all other revenue sources.

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3. Adjusted Underlying Result

An indicator of the sustainable operating result required to enable Council to continue to provide core services and meet its objectives. The adjusted underlying result calculation includes recurrent capital funding such as Roads to Recovery funding.

6 Schedule of Fees and Charges

Council provides a range of services and its main sources of income are Rates and Charges and Government Grants. Costing services is complex. The full cost of delivering services or providing a facility includes the direct cost, such as the cost of labour which could include part of the supervisor's wage, materials, and plant hire to provide that service; and indirect costs such as a range of "back office" operations that are not directly tied to the service, such as payroll processing, information technology costs.

Pricing services is also complex as Council provides numerous "public" services (eg. public parks) as well as "private" services (eg. waste collection, leisure centres and pools). Ideally, full cost recovery should be applied to "private" services. In reality, recipients of the service may not be able to afford the full cost recovery. As full cost recovery is not possible for a number of services, Council is required to use rate income and other sources of income, such as the Victorian Grants Commission general assistance grant, to subsidise the cost of providing these services.

Council reviews the income generated from fees and charges every year as part of the Budget process. Council recognises statutory fees are set by legislation/regulation but attempts to maximise the amount of income generated from other user fees.

This schedule presents the fees and charges of a statutory/non-statutory nature which will be charged in respect to various goods and services during the financial year 2026/27.

Fees and charges are based on information available at the time of publishing and may vary during the financial year subject to any changes in Council's policy or legislation.

PRICING BASIS	
(Z) Zero Cost Recovery	This good/service is provided at no cost. The costs are met entirely from rates and general purpose income. Generally, where there is no fee or charge, the service provided is not mentioned in the fees and charges list.
(P) Partial Cost Recovery	The price for this good/service is set to make a significant contribution towards the cost-of-service provision. The remainder of the costs are met from rate and general purpose income.
(F) Full Cost Recovery	The price for this good/service is set to recover the cost-of-service provision.
(R) Regulatory	The price for this good/service is a statutory charge set by government regulation.
(M) Market Price	The price for this good/service is set by reference to prices charged for similar goods/services by like Councils or competitors.

Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Administration								
Freedom of Information:								
Application Fee	Per Request	Non-Taxable	\$33.00	\$34.30	\$0.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Access Charge - Search Time	Per Hour	Non-Taxable	\$25.20	\$26.30	\$0.70	2.8%	Statutory	R
Access Charge - Printing (A4)	Per Page	Taxable	\$0.20	\$0.20	-	-	Statutory	F
Land Information Certificate	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$30.00	\$31.40	\$0.00	2.0%	Statutory	R
Priority Request - Land Information Certificate	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$80.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Direct Debit Rejection Fee	Per Rejection	Taxable	\$6.00	\$6.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Request for Refund of Overpaid Rates	Per Refund	Taxable	\$25.00	\$25.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Repeat Rate Notice Fee	Per Notice	Taxable	\$10.00	\$10.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Library								
Library - Damaged/lost items	Per Item	Taxable	cost of replacement	cost of replacement	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Library - Processing	Per Item	Taxable	\$6.00	\$6.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Library - Book Out/ per person	Per Person	Taxable	\$44.00	\$44.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Library - Bags	Per Item	Taxable	\$3.00	\$3.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Library - Debt collection	Per Item	Taxable	\$15.00	\$15.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Gum San Great Hall Hire								
Local Community Groups								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$100.00	\$100.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Commercial/Private								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$500.00	\$500.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Ararat Gallery YAMA								
Gallery membership:								
Single	Per Person	Taxable	\$45.00	\$45.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Double/Family	Per Family	Taxable	\$60.00	\$60.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Single (Consolation)	Per Person	Taxable	\$35.00	\$35.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Ararat Town Hall								
Whole Complex (kitchen, upper room, green room, dressing rooms, foyer)								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$1,560.00	\$1,560.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$500.00	\$500.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
In-Between Days (Unused)	Per Day	Taxable	-	\$150.00	\$150.00	100.0%	Non-statutory	F
Men Auditorium								
Venue Hire - Ticketed Event / Performance								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$450.00	\$450.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Rehearsal/Barra-k (non-performance day)								
Standard	Per Hour	Taxable	\$75.00	\$75.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Community	Per Hour	Taxable	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$2.00	7.1%	Non-statutory	F
Ball stage								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$450.00	\$450.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$250.00	\$250.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Piano - Steinway Baby Grand								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Community	Per Event	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Flano Tinting	Per Event	Taxable	Quoted	Quoted			Non-statutory	P
Projector	Per Event	Taxable	\$50.00	\$30.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Festoon Lights	Per Event	Taxable	\$150.00	\$170.00	\$20.00	13.3%	Non-statutory	P
Security (if required)	Per Event	Taxable	Quoted	Quoted			Non-statutory	P
Front of House Staff	Per Event	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Technician	Per Event	Taxable	\$70.00	\$70.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Stand stone Art & Craft Room hire								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$100.00	\$100.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Stand stone Green Room hire								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$100.00	\$100.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Stand stone Foyer Hire								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$300.00	\$240.00	\$60.00	20.0%	Non-statutory	P
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$100.00	\$120.00	\$20.00	20.0%	Non-statutory	P
Stand stone Supper Room Hire								
Standard	Per Event	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Community	Per Event	Taxable	\$100.00	\$100.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Ticket Selling Commission								
Standard	Per Ticket	Taxable	\$4.50	\$4.50	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Community - Paid ticket Event	Per Ticket	Taxable	\$0.50	\$0.50	-	-	Non-statutory	P
All venues - catering tea and coffee	Per Person	Taxable	\$2.00	\$2.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Town Hall Auditorium - out of contracted hours	Per 15 mins	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Planning								
Reg 6 Fees for Amendment to Planning Scheme								
Stage 1 - For considering a request to amend a planning scheme	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$3,482.00	\$2,547.80	\$94.70	2.7%	Statutory	R
Stage 2								
For considering up to 10 submissions	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$17,160.00	\$17,632.70	\$466.70	2.7%	Statutory	R
For considering 11 to 20 submissions	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$34,292.40	\$35,236.60	\$928.40	2.7%	Statutory	R
For considering in excess of 20 submissions	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$45,840.00	\$47,098.20	\$1,254.40	2.7%	Statutory	R
Stage 3 - For adopting the amendment	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$546.30	\$561.30	\$15.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Reg 6 Fees for Applications for permits under Section 47								
Class 1 - Use only								
To develop land or to use and develop land for a single dwelling per lot and undertake development ancillary to the use of land for a single dwelling per lot if the estimated cost of development is								
Class 2 - \$10,000 or less	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 3 - more than \$10,000 but not more than \$100,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$714.40	\$734.00	\$18.60	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 4 - more than \$100,000 but not more than \$500,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,462.50	\$1,502.90	\$40.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 5 - more than \$500,000 but not more than \$1,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,540.10	\$1,623.40	\$43.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 6 - more than \$1,000,000 but not more than \$2,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,697.60	\$1,744.30	\$46.50	2.7%	Statutory	R
VicSmart application if the estimated cost of development is								
Class 7 - \$10,000 or less	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 8 - more than \$10,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$447.50	\$500.60	\$112.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 9 - VicSmart application to subdivide or consolidate land	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Class 10 - VicSmart application (other than a class 7, 8 or 9 permit)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R
To develop land (other than for a single dwelling per lot) if the estimated cost of development is:								
Class 11 - less than \$100,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,202.80	\$1,335.45	\$36.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 12 - more than \$100,000 and not more than \$1,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,756.00	\$1,804.70	\$48.10	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 13 - more than \$1,000,000 and not more than \$5,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$3,874.70	\$3,980.70	\$108.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 14 - more than \$5,000,000 and not more than \$15,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$8,615.90	\$10,148.10	\$270.25	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 15 - more than \$15,000,000 and not more than \$50,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$29,123.30	\$29,820.30	\$787.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 16 - more than \$50,000,000*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$85,455.10	\$87,290.40	\$1,781.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 17 - To subdivide an existing building	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 18 - To subdivide land into two lots	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 19 - To effect a realignment of a common boundary between lots or consolidate two or more lots	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 20 - All other subdivisions of land (per 10) lots created	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 21 To: a) create, vary or remove a restriction within the meaning of the Subdivision Act 1988; or b) create or remove a right of way; or c) create, vary or remove an easement other than a right of way; or d) vary or remove a condition in the nature of an easement (other than right of way) in a Crown grant.	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 22 - A permit not otherwise provided for in the regulation	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Reg 11 Fees for Applications to Amend Permits under Section 72:								
Class 1 - Amendment to a permit to change the use of land allowed by the permit or allow a new use of land	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 2 - Amendment to a permit (other than a permit to develop land for a single dwelling per lot or to use and develop land for a single dwelling per lot or to undertake development ancillary to the use of land for a single dwelling per lot) to change the statement of what the permit allows or to change any or all of the conditions which apply to the permit	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Amendment to a class 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 permit, * if the cost of any additional development permitted by the amendment is:								
Class 3 - \$10,000 or less	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 4 - more than \$10,000 but not more than \$100,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$714.40	\$754.00	\$18.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 5 - more than \$100,000 but not more than \$500,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,482.50	\$1,562.30	\$40.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 6 - more than \$500,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,580.10	\$1,832.40	\$43.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Amendment to a permit ** that is the subject of VicSmart application, if the estimated cost of the additional development is:								
Class 7 - \$10,000 or less	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 8 - more than \$10,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$447.50	\$500.60	\$15.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 9 - Amendment to a class 8 permit *	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 10 - Amendment to a class 10 permit **	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$228.90	\$233.10	\$6.20	2.7%	Statutory	R

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. - GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Amendment to a class 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 or 16 permit *if the estimated cost of the additional development to be permitted by the amendment is:								
Class 11 - \$100,000 or less	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,302.60	\$1,338.40	\$35.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 12 - more than \$100,000 but not more than \$1,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,756.60	\$1,804.70	\$48.10	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 13 - more than \$1,000,000	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$3,674.70	\$3,766.70	\$92.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 14 - Amendment to a class 17 permit *	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 15 - Amendment to a class 18 permit *	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 16 - Amendment to a class 19 permit *	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 17 - Amendment to a class 20 permit * (per 100 lots created)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 18 - Amendment to a class 21 permit *	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Class 19 - Amendment to a class 22 permit	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$1,496.10	\$1,537.00	\$40.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
* Refer to Reg 9 Fees to see the relevant Class of permit.								
Reg 15 For a Certificate of Compliance	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$369.80	\$379.90	\$10.10	2.7%	Statutory	R
Reg 16 For an agreement to a proposal to amend or void an agreement under section 173	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$748.00	\$769.50	\$20.50	2.7%	Statutory	R
Reg 18 Where a planning scheme specifies that a matter must be done to the satisfaction of a responsible authority, Minister, public authority or municipal Council	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$369.80	\$379.90	\$10.10	2.7%	Statutory	R

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. - GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Subdivision Fees								
Reg 6 For Certification of a Plan of Subdivision	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$398.40	\$203.60	\$5.40	-2.7%	Statutory	R
Reg 7 Alteration of plan under section 19(2) of the Act	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$126.10	\$129.50	\$3.40	2.7%	Statutory	R
Reg 8 Amendment of certified plan under section 19(1) of the Act	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$159.70	\$164.10	\$4.40	2.8%	Statutory	R
Public Open Space Valuation								
Statement of Compliance Final Inspection	Per Application	Taxable	\$550.00	\$594.00	\$14.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Advertising of Planning Application - letters only	Per Application	Taxable	\$260.00	\$287.00	\$7.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Advertising of Planning Application - letters and signs within Arent	Per Application	Taxable	\$110.00	\$113.00	\$3.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	F
Advertising of Planning Application - letters and signs outside Arent	Per Application	Taxable	\$200.00	\$226.00	\$6.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	F
Extension of Time - 1st Request	Per Application	Taxable	\$330.00	\$338.00	\$8.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Extension of Time - 2nd Request	Per Application	Taxable	\$235.00	\$241.00	\$8.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Extension of Time - 3rd Request	Per Application	Taxable	\$470.00	\$483.00	\$12.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Secondary Consent	Per Application	Taxable	\$700.00	\$723.00	\$18.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Planning Enquiry Fee	Per Enquiry	Taxable	\$330.00	\$338.00	\$8.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Environmental Health								
Septic Tank Application Fees								
Construct, Install or alter - up to 8 2 hours assessment	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$821.70	\$844.20	\$22.50	2.7%	Statutory	R
Construct, Install or alter - additional hours or part thereof	Per hour or part	Non-Taxable	\$162.50	\$166.70	\$2.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Construct, Install or alter - Maximum fee	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$2,276.60	\$2,336.30	\$62.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Minor Alteration	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$826.20	\$843.30	\$17.10	2.7%	Statutory	R
Transfer	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$168.90	\$171.50	\$4.80	2.8%	Statutory	R
Amend permit	Per Amendment	Non-Taxable	\$174.50	\$179.30	\$4.80	2.8%	Statutory	R

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Exemption - up to 2.6 hours assessment	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$248.00	\$253.40	\$6.00	2.6%	Statutory	R
Exemption - additional hours or part thereof	Per hour or part	Non-Taxable	\$99.00	\$102.60	\$2.70	2.7%	Statutory	R
Exemption - Maximum fee		Non-Taxable	\$1,032.30	\$1,060.80	\$28.30	2.7%	Statutory	R
Renewal of septic tank application	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$159.70	\$143.50	-\$3.00	-2.7%	Statutory	R
Food Act Food Premises Registrations								
Class 1 - Food premises that predominantly handle potentially hazardous food that is served to wholesale groups	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$545.00	\$559.00	\$14.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Class 2 - Food premises handling any potentially hazardous unpackaged foods	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$460.00	\$472.00	\$12.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Class 2 Community Group - Class 2 Premises, where the premises is primarily a community group or not for profit organisation	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$215.00	\$223.00	\$8.00	3.7%	Non-statutory	F
Class 2a - Accommodation gateway premises preparing and/or cooking of potentially hazardous foods which are served to guests for immediate consumption. A home based premises preparing or cooking of potentially hazardous foods using hot fill process ie. chutney, relish, salsa, tomato sauce	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$395.00	\$405.00	\$10.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Class 3 - Food premises handling unpackaged low risk foods or selling potentially hazardous pre-packaged foods	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$350.00	\$358.00	\$8.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Class 3 Community Group - Class 3 Premises, where the premises is primarily a community group or not for profit organisation	Per Application	Non-Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Class 4 - Food premises handling pre-packaged low risk foods	Per Application	Non-Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Foodtrailer Registration								
Class 2 & 3 - Foodtrailer per event	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$33.00	\$34.00	\$1.00	3.0%	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Class 2 & 3 - Temporary Stall (Fixed Premises as well as Foodtrailer) Annual fee	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$93.00	\$95.00	\$2.00	2.2%	Non-statutory	F
Class 2 - Foodtrailer - Community Group Temporary/Mobile	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$160.00	\$165.00	\$5.00	2.8%	Non-statutory	F
Class 3 - Foodtrailer - Community Group Temporary/Mobile	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$114.00	\$117.00	\$3.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Class 2 - Foodtrailer - Temporary/Mobile	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$290.00	\$297.00	\$7.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Class 3 - Foodtrailer - Temporary/Mobile	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$210.00	\$215.00	\$5.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Class 4 - Foodtrailer - Mobile	Per Application	Non-Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Requested Inspection and Report on a Premises	Per Application	Taxable	50% of relevant Registration Fee	50% of relevant Registration Fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Urgent Requested Inspection and Report on a Premises (less than 7 days notice)	Per Application	Taxable	\$450.00	\$461.00	\$11.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Initial Registration of New Premises	Per Application	Non-Taxable	Additional 50% of relevant Registration Fee	Additional 50% of relevant Registration Fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Late Payment Fee	Per Application	Non-Taxable	50% of relevant Registration Fee	50% of relevant Registration Fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Additional Fee for inspection due to non-compliance	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$300.00	\$308.00	\$8.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	F
Additional Fee for Sampling non-compliance	Per Application	Non-Taxable	At cost + 60%	At cost + 60%	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Health Act Registrations								
Prescribed Accommodation	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$460.00	\$472.00	\$12.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	F
Tattoo/Ear Piercing/Beauty & Physical Therapy/Barbers/Electrolysis	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$370.00	\$379.00	\$9.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Handwasher/Physical Therapist	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$185.00	\$190.00	\$5.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	F
Mobile/Pop Up/Low Risk	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$160.00	\$165.00	\$5.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Private Caravan Park	Per Application	Non-Taxable	As Prescribed in the Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks) Regulations 2010	As Prescribed in the Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks) Regulations 2010	-	-	Statutory	R
Building								
Building Permit Application Fees								
Item 1 Class 1B & 2-6 Residential & Commercial works other than Class 1A								
Up to \$50,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$1,900.00	\$1,946.00	\$46.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$50,001 to \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$2,500.00	\$2,563.00	\$63.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$100,001 to \$150,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$3,700.00	\$3,783.00	\$83.00	2.5%	Statutory	F
\$150,001 to \$200,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$5,000.00	\$5,125.00	\$125.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
> \$200,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,300.00	\$6,459.00	\$159.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Item 2 Class 1A All Dwellings - Single Detached Houses or attached Multi-Units Development								
Up to \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$2,500.00	\$2,563.00	\$63.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$100,001 to \$150,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$3,700.00	\$3,783.00	\$83.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$150,001 to \$200,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$5,000.00	\$5,125.00	\$125.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$200,001 to \$250,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,300.00	\$6,459.00	\$159.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$250,001 to \$500,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,800.00	\$7,073.00	\$173.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
> \$500,000	Per Application	Taxable	Large Projects Negotiable	Large Projects Negotiable	-	-	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Item 3 Class 1A Dwellings - Extensions/ Alterations (including Demolitions)								
Up to \$10,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$1,900.00	\$1,946.00	\$46.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$10,001 to \$20,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$2,500.00	\$2,563.00	\$63.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$20,001 to \$50,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$3,700.00	\$3,783.00	\$83.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$50,001 to \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$5,000.00	\$5,125.00	\$125.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$100,001 to \$150,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,300.00	\$6,459.00	\$159.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
> \$150,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,800.00	\$7,073.00	\$173.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Item 4 Class 1A Dwellings - Internal Alterations/ Minor Works								
Up to \$10,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$1,900.00	\$1,946.00	\$46.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$10,001 to \$20,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$2,500.00	\$2,563.00	\$63.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$20,001 to \$50,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$3,700.00	\$3,783.00	\$83.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$50,001 to \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$5,000.00	\$5,125.00	\$125.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
> \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,300.00	\$6,459.00	\$159.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Item 5 Class 10A/10B Minor Works - Gates, Carports, Pools, Fences, etc.								
Up to \$5,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$1,900.00	\$1,946.00	\$46.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$5,001 to \$10,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$2,500.00	\$2,563.00	\$63.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$10,001 to \$20,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$3,700.00	\$3,783.00	\$83.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$20,001 to \$50,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$5,000.00	\$5,125.00	\$125.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
\$50,001 to \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,300.00	\$6,459.00	\$159.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
> \$100,000	Per Application	Taxable	\$6,800.00	\$7,073.00	\$173.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Item 7 Sundry Any Additional Inspectors								
Commercial	Per Application	Taxable	\$550.00	\$564.00	\$14.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Commercial	Per Application	Taxable	\$550.00	\$564.00	\$14.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Pools and spas registration & compliance								
Registration fees	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$38.10	\$37.10	-\$1.00	-2.6%	Statutory	R
Search fee	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$53.80	\$55.10	\$1.50	2.8%	Statutory	R
Lodgement of certificate for pool barrier compliance	Per Application	Taxable	\$23.20	\$23.60	\$0.80	2.6%	Statutory	R
Lodgement of certificate for pool barrier non-compliance	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$437.10	\$449.00	\$11.90	2.7%	Statutory	R
Regulation 45(1) Lodgement Fee under section 30 of the Act and clause 1(1) of Schedule 2 to the Act	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$136.30	\$142.10	\$3.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Building Certificate Fees								
Regulation 52 Fees for Requests for Information under Regulation 51(1), 51(2) or 51(3) of the Regulations	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$53.80	\$55.10	\$1.50	2.8%	Statutory	R
Additional Building Fees								
Regulation 30 - Maximum Fee for Report and Consent								
(1) Under section 29A of the Act	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$98.30	\$98.30	\$2.60	2.7%	Statutory	R
(2) Permit referred under Parts 6 or 10 or under Regulation 132(1) or 134(2)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$328.80	\$338.70	\$9.10	2.8%	Statutory	R
QA1 Permit referred under Part 5	Per Application	Taxable	\$461.40	\$478.60	\$12.70	2.8%	Statutory	R
(3) Permit referred under regulation 119(4)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$354.50	\$363.70	\$12.70	2.8%	Statutory	R
(4) Permit referred under regulation 133(2) (Legal Point of Discharge)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$238.20	\$244.70	\$6.50	2.7%	Statutory	R
Amendment and/or extension of Building Permits, Amendment of Approved Plans	Per Application	Taxable	\$262.50	\$269.00	\$6.50	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Building Notice - Administration Fee	Per Application	Taxable	min \$250 + double building permit fee if applicable	min \$250 + double building permit fee if applicable	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Building Order - Administration Fee	Per Application	Taxable	min \$250 + double building permit fee if applicable	min \$250 + double building permit fee if applicable	-	-	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Temporary Structure Siting Approval	Per Application	Taxable	\$450.00	\$461.00	\$11.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Temporary Structure Siting Approval - Community Activity	Per Application	Taxable	\$275.00	\$283.00	\$7.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Places of Public Entertainment Occupancy Permit								
Low Risk (less than 5,000 people)	Per Application	Taxable	\$410.00	\$420.00	\$10.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	F
Medium Risk (more than 5,000 but less than 15,000 people)	Per Application	Taxable	\$1,400.00	\$1,435.00	\$35.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
High Risk (more than 15,000 people)	Per Application	Taxable	\$4,400.00	\$4,510.00	\$110.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Provide Copy of Building Permit or Occupancy Permit (with owners consent)	Per Permit	Taxable	\$71.00	\$73.00	\$2.00	2.8%	Non-statutory	F
Provide Copy of Building Permit including plans (with owners consent)	Per Permit	Taxable	\$71.00	\$73.00	\$2.00	2.8%	Non-statutory	F
Additional Inspection Fee - eg. for non-compliance	Per Application	Taxable	\$550.00	\$564.00	\$14.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Additional Inspection Fee - Lapsed Permits	Per Application	Taxable	\$550.00	\$564.00	\$14.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Essential Services Determination Report	Per Application	Taxable	\$550.00	\$564.00	\$14.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Reports other	Per Hour	Taxable	\$275.00	\$283.00	\$7.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	F
Required for Building Permits / Occupancy Certificate or Plans	Per Permit	Taxable	\$71.00	\$73.00	\$2.00	2.8%	Non-statutory	F
Administration Fee (Change to a Permit Application)	Per Application	Taxable	25% of current fee	25% of current fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Animal & Child Health								
Immunisation Charges	Per Item	Non-Taxable	\$26.00	\$26.30	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Booster Pump Hire	Per Hire	Taxable	\$80.00	\$85.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Meningococcal B vaccine	Per Dose	Taxable	\$130.00	\$130.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Waste Management								
Transfer Station Charges								
Air conditioners, Refrigerators, Freezers - Ararat and Lake Blain only	Per Item	Taxable	Free if de-gassed	Free if de-gassed	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Aluminum, brass, copper, steel, scrap metals	Per Item	Taxable	Free	Free	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Batteries (lead acid vehicle batteries)	Per Item	Taxable	-	\$10.00	\$10.00	100.0%	Non-statutory	Z

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Chemical containers (dumMUSTER) single use or pressure wash, dry, no lity	Per Item	Taxable	Free	Free	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Oil (waste automotive or domestic quantities only)	Per Item (max 20L)	Taxable	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$5.00	50.0%	Non-statutory	P
Paid								
less than 4 Litres	Per Item	Taxable	-	\$5.00	\$5.00	100.0%	Non-statutory	P
4 Litres & greater	Per Item	Taxable	-	\$10.00	\$10.00	100.0%	Non-statutory	P
Other recyclables (mixed/commingled): Cans, cardboard, glass bottles, drink cartons, paper, milk containers, plastics numbered 1-7	Per Load (240L bin or max 3m³)	Taxable	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$5.00	50.0%	Non-statutory	P
Building or commercial waste	Per Cubic Metre (max 3m³)	Taxable	\$70.00	\$70.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Concrete/bricks (uncontaminated) - Ararat only	Per Cubic Metre (max 3m³)	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
E-Waste per item or bag of mixed items (eg. TVs, DVDs, PCs, printers) Ararat only								
Small	Per Item/ Bag	Taxable	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$5.00	50.0%	Non-statutory	P
Medium	Per Item/ Bag	Taxable	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$5.00	25.0%	Non-statutory	P
Large	Per Item/ Bag	Taxable	\$35.00	\$35.00	\$0.00	18.7%	Non-statutory	P
Extra-Large	Per Item/ Bag	Taxable	\$50.00	\$55.00	\$5.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	P
Photocopiers	Per Item	Taxable	\$50.00	\$55.00	\$5.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	P
Gas bottles	Per Item	Taxable	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$10.00	100.0%	Non-statutory	P
General waste (household/domestic and contaminated green waste):								
120 Litre Bin	Per Load	Taxable	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$5.00	50.0%	Non-statutory	P
240 Litre Bin	Per Load	Taxable	\$15.00	\$20.00	\$5.00	33.3%	Non-statutory	P
Car boot load	Per Load	Taxable	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$5.00	25.0%	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility	Per Load	Taxable	\$00.00	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility (Level)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$35.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Single Axle Trailer / Utility (Heaped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility (Caped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$70.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer	Per Load	Taxable	\$40.00	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer (Level)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$45.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer (Heaped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$85.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer (Caped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$90.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Truck load	Per Cubic Metre (max 3m³)	Taxable	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$10.00	33.3%	Non-statutory	P
Green waste (uncontaminated):								
Minimum load / car boot	Per Load	Taxable	\$15.00	\$20.00	\$5.00	33.3%	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility	Per Load	Taxable	\$20.00	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility (Level)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$35.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility (Heaped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Single Axle Trailer / Utility (Caped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$70.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer	Per Load	Taxable	\$25.00	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer (Level)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$45.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer (Heaped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$85.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tandem Axle Trailer (Caped)	Per Load	Taxable	-	\$90.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Truck load	Per Cubic Metre	Taxable	\$20.00	\$35.00	\$15.00	75.0%	Non-statutory	P
Mattresses (all sizes)	Per Item	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Tyres (not taken in commercial quantities, add \$3.00 per tyre if on rim)								
Motor cycle	Per Item	Taxable	\$15.00	\$15.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Cars	Per Item	Taxable	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$5.00	25.0%	Non-statutory	P
Light truck	Per Item	Taxable	\$30.00	\$38.00	\$8.00	18.7%	Non-statutory	P
Heavy truck	Per Item	Taxable	\$60.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. - GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Super single	Per Item	Taxable	\$60.00	\$60.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Small tractor / grader (up to 1m diameter)	Per Item	Taxable	\$140.00	\$140.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Large tractor (more than 1m diameter)	Per Item	Taxable	\$250.00	\$255.00	\$5.00	2.0%	Non-statutory	P
Earth movers (if obtain price from site staff dependent on tyre size)	Per Item	Taxable	as determined	as determined	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Non-residential – Optional Waste Collection Services								
Garbage - 140 Litre	Per Bin	Non-Taxable	\$538.00	\$551.00	\$13.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	P
Recycle - 245 Litre	Per Bin	Non-Taxable	\$453.00	\$466.00	\$13.00	2.9%	Non-statutory	P
Glass - 80 Litre	Per Bin	Non-Taxable	\$70.00	\$72.00	\$2.00	2.9%	Non-statutory	P
Organics - 240 Litre	Per Bin	Non-Taxable	\$453.00	\$466.00	\$13.00	2.9%	Non-statutory	P
Community Safety (Local Laws)								
State Government Animal Levy (included in Registrations)								
Dog	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$4.84	\$9.06	\$4.26	84.0%	Statutory	R
Cal	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$4.84	\$9.06	\$4.26	84.0%	Statutory	R
Dog Registrations - for registration year ending 10 April 2028								
Dogs (within category of reduced fee - prescribed by Act) with Pensioner Concession	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$42.00	\$48.00	\$6.00	14.3%	Non-statutory	P
Dogs full fee	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$21.00	\$24.00	\$3.00	14.3%	Non-statutory	P
Dogs full fee with Pensioner Concession	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$131.00	\$144.00	\$13.00	9.9%	Non-statutory	P
Restricted breed/declared menacing/dangerous	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$250.00	\$275.00	\$25.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	P
Cal Registrations - for registration year ending 10 April 2028								
Cats (within category of reduced fee - prescribed by Act) with Pensioner Concession	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$38.00	\$42.00	\$4.00	10.7%	Non-statutory	P
Cats full fee with Pensioner Concession	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$18.00	\$21.00	\$3.00	16.7%	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. - GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Cats full fee	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$58.00	\$126.00	\$118.00	18.7%	Non-statutory	P
with Pensioner Concession	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$54.00	\$63.00	\$9.00	16.7%	Non-statutory	P
Domestic Animal Business Registrations								
Registered Community Forder Care Network Registrar	Per Person	Non-Taxable	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00	7.2%	Non-statutory	P
Animal Surrender Fee	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$100.00	\$100.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Found Fees	Per Animal	Non-Taxable	\$128 first day, plus \$38 for each additional day	\$150 first day, plus \$40 for each additional day	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Replacement dog/cat registration tags	Per Tag	Non-Taxable	\$15.00	\$15.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Parking Fines	Per infringement	Non-Taxable	\$60.00	\$62.00	\$2.00	3.3%	Non-statutory	P
Local Laws Permit Fees, Charges and Bonds Schedule 10								
NALL15. Burning of materials	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$28.00	\$29.00	\$1.00	3.6%	Non-statutory	P
NALL63 Lighting trees	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$189.00	\$189.00	\$4.00	2.4%	Non-statutory	P
NALL28. Woodless and Motorised Recreation Vehicles	Per Permit	Taxable	\$53.00	\$56.00	\$3.00	5.7%	Non-statutory	P
(Bond if required to protect Council asset (refundable))	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	as determined	as determined	-	-	Non-statutory	P
NALL38. Advertising signs	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	as determined	as determined	-	-	Non-statutory	P
NALL60. Activity within a Municipal Reserve - Permitted Activities	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$75.00	\$77.00	\$2.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	P
NALL62. Camping Prohibited on Council Land	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$60.00	\$62.00	\$2.00	3.3%	Non-statutory	P
NALL78. Camping on Private Property	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$50.00	\$52.00	\$2.00	4.0%	Non-statutory	P
NALL64 Filling on Council Land	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$130.00	\$133.00	\$3.00	2.3%	Non-statutory	P
NALL65. Parking on Municipal Reserve	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	as determined	as determined	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	GST Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
NALL22. Keeping animals or for life of animal or time kept at property	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$54.00	\$55.00	\$1.00	1.9%	Non-statutory	P
NALL43. Overage Tapping and Discharging Groundwater	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$270.00	\$277.00	\$7.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	P
NALL45. Constructing a Vehicle Crossings Bond if required to protect/replace asset (refundable)	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$75.00	\$77.00	\$2.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	P
NALL41. Collections Registration charities, religious or not for profit groups	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$75.00	\$77.00	\$2.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	P
NALL34. Roadside Trading or Performing	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$140.00	\$144.00	\$4.00	2.9%	Non-statutory	P
NALL36. Display of Goods for Sale	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$65.00	\$67.00	\$2.00	3.1%	Non-statutory	P
NALL37. Use of Council Land for Outdoor Eating Facilities – 3 tables & 12 chairs plus extra table & 4 chairs plus place menu board	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$75.00	\$77.00	\$2.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	P
NALL27. Race bulk rubbish container each subsequent 7 days	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$27.00	\$28.00	\$1.00	3.7%	Non-statutory	P
NALL50. Occupation of Roads Bond if required to protect/replace assets (refundable)	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$38.00	\$39.00	\$1.00	2.6%	Non-statutory	P
NALL33. Street Parties & Street Festivals	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$33.00	\$34.00	\$1.00	3.0%	Non-statutory	P
NALL31. Heavy or Long Vehicles on a Road or Private Property	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$70.00	\$72.00	\$2.00	2.9%	Non-statutory	P
NALL48. Asset protection Generally Bond if required to protect/replace asset (refundable)	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$8	\$8	-	-	Non-statutory	P
NALL18. Shipping Containers	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	determined	determined	-	-	Non-statutory	P
NALL50. Derelict, Abandoned and Unregistered Vehicles	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$75.00	\$77.00	\$2.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	P
NALL32. Storing of Vehicles	Per Permit	Non-Taxable	\$150.00	\$154.00	\$4.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	P
Fire Prevention Notice Contractor appointment administration fee	Per Notice	Taxable	\$60.00	\$62.00	\$2.00	2.5%	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	GST Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Schedule 13 Permit to Burn	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$110.00	\$113.00	\$3.00	2.7%	Non-statutory	P
Alexandra Oval Reserve								
Ground Hire								
Local Community (Innoc)								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Per Hour	Per Hour	Taxable	\$54.00	\$54.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Football Fields	Per Hire	Taxable	\$400.00	\$400.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Junior Clinics (BSA Provider)	Per Hire	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Commercial/ Private								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$350.00	\$350.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 2 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Netball Courts								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$80.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Per Hour	Per Hour	Taxable	\$25.00	\$25.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Junior Clinics (BSA Provider)	Per Hire	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Lights towers (Club & Netball Courts)								
1 x Tower	Per Hour	Taxable	\$20.00	\$20.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
2 x Towers	Per Hour	Taxable	\$40.00	\$40.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
4 x Towers	Per Hour	Taxable	\$80.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
6 x Towers	Per Hour	Taxable	\$120.00	\$120.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Change rooms (Facilities Pavilion)								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$80.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$140.00	\$140.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Junior Clinics (BSA Provider)	Per Hire	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Group Fitness	Per Hire	Taxable	\$60.00	\$60.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Fundish Centre								
Local Community Group								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$100.00	\$110.00	\$10.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	F
Commercial/ Private								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$500.00	\$500.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$240.00	\$40.00	20.0%	Non-statutory	F
Canteen/ Kitchen	Per Hire	Taxable	\$70.00	\$70.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Meeting Room								
Local Community Group								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$25.00	\$30.00	\$5.00	20.0%	Non-statutory	F
Commercial/ Private								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$125.00	\$125.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$75.00	\$75.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Asset Management								
Road Discontinuance Fee	Per Application	Taxable	\$750.00	\$750.00	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Work Within Municipal Road Reserves								
Works within carriageway or pathway >50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$724.50	\$744.50	\$18.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Works within carriageway or pathway >50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Works within carriageway or pathway ≤50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$350.00	\$405.80	\$10.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Works within carriageway or pathway ≤50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Minor works within carriageway or pathway >50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$156.20	\$160.60	\$4.20	2.8%	Statutory	R
Minor works within carriageway or pathway >50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Minor works within carriageway or pathway ≤20km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$156.20	\$160.60	\$4.20	2.8%	Statutory	R
Minor works within carriageway or pathway ≤20km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Works within the verge > 50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$395.00	\$405.80	\$10.80	2.7%	Statutory	R
Works within the verge > 50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Works within the verge ≤ 50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$500.00	\$527.00	\$27.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Works within the verge ≤ 50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Minor works within the verge > 50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$500.00	\$527.00	\$27.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Minor works within the verge > 50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F
Minor works within the verge ≤ 50km/h (statutory)*	Per Application	Non-Taxable	\$500.00	\$527.00	\$27.00	2.7%	Statutory	R
Minor works within the verge ≤ 50km/h (council)	Per Application	Non-Taxable	75% of statutory fee	75% of statutory fee	-	-	Non-statutory	F

*Statutory fees apply if council conditions are not met

Ararat Fitness Centre								
Casual Visit								
Adult Swim	Per User	Taxable	\$8.00	\$8.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Teen/Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$5.00	\$5.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Child Swim	Per User	Taxable	\$4.50	\$4.50	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Family Swim	Per User	Taxable	\$18.00	\$18.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Sauna & Spa	Per User	Taxable	\$5.00	\$5.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Sauna & Spa Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$4.50	\$4.50	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Group Fitness - Wet Area Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$8.00	\$8.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. - GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Group Fitness - Gym	Per User	Taxable	\$13.00	\$13.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Group Fitness - Gym Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$8.00	\$8.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Full Centre Direct Debit								
Adult	Per User	Taxable	\$17.50	\$17.50	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Teen/Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$15.00	\$15.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Family	Per User	Taxable	\$45.00	\$45.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Family Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$39.00	\$39.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Joining Fee	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Aquatic Only or Gym Only Prepaid								
Aquatic Only or Gym Only 12 month	Per User	Taxable	\$450.00	\$450.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only 12 month Teen/Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$225.00	\$225.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only 6 month	Per User	Taxable	\$203.00	\$203.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only 6 month Teen/Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$113.00	\$113.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only 3 month	Per User	Taxable	\$101.00	\$101.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only 3 month Teen/Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$37.00	\$37.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only Lessons Term	Per User	Taxable	\$125.00	\$125.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only Direct Debit								
Aquatic Only or Gym Only Direct Debit	Per User	Taxable	\$12.00	\$12.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Aquatic Only or Gym Only Direct Debit Teen/Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$11.00	\$11.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Swim Lesson Direct Debit	Per User	Taxable	\$14.00	\$15.00	\$1.00	7.1%	Non-statutory	M
10 Vial Pass								
Adult Swim	Per User	Taxable	\$55.00	\$55.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Adult Swim Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$45.00	\$45.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Child Swim	Per User	Taxable	\$40.00	\$40.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Spa and Sauna	Per User	Taxable	\$45.00	\$45.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Spa and Sauna Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$41.00	\$41.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	QOT Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. - GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. - GST \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee Increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Group Fitness - Wet Area Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$72.00	\$72.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Group Fitness - Gym	Per User	Taxable	\$120.00	\$120.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Group Fitness - Gym Concession	Per User	Taxable	\$7.00	\$7.00	-	-	Non-statutory	M
Outdoor Pools Season Pass								
Adult	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Child	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Family	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Outdoor Pool Casual								
Adult	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Child	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Family	Per User	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Hire Fees								
Swimming Lane Hire	Per Lane Per Hour	Taxable	\$35.00	\$40.00	\$5.00	14.3%	Non-statutory	M
Swim Instructor	Per Hour	Taxable	\$50.00	\$55.00	\$5.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	M
Life Guard	Per Hour	Taxable	\$50.00	\$55.00	\$5.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	M
Basketball Court Hire (casual)	Per Court Per Hour	Taxable	\$40.00	\$50.00	\$10.00	25.0%	Non-statutory	M
Basketball Court Hire (regular)	Per Court Per Hour	Taxable	\$38.00	\$45.00	\$8.00	21.0%	Non-statutory	M
Gordon Street Reserve								
AFL Oval Ground Hire								
Local Community Group								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Per Hour	Per Hour	Taxable	\$34.00	\$34.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Junior Class (SDA Provider)	Per Hour	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	GST Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Soccer Pitch (x2) Ground Hire								
Local Community Group								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Per Hour	Per Hour	Taxable	\$34.00	\$34.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Junior Clinics (SSA Provider)	Per Hour	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Commercial/Private - per oval/pitch								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$400.00	\$400.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$250.00	\$250.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Finale - per oval/pitch	Per Hire	Taxable	\$400.00	\$400.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Athletics Line Marking (minimum 2 hours)	Per Hour	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Lights Towers								
1 x Tower	Per Hour	Taxable	\$20.00	\$20.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
2 x Towers	Per Hour	Taxable	\$40.00	\$40.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
4 x Towers	Per Hour	Taxable	\$80.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Change rooms								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hour	Taxable	\$80.00	\$80.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$140.00	\$140.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Junior Clinics (SSA Provider)	Per Hire	Taxable	-	-	-	-	Non-statutory	Z
Community Rooms								
Local Community Group								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$200.00	\$200.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hour	Taxable	\$100.00	\$110.00	\$10.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	P
Commercial/Private								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$500.00	\$500.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Description of Fees and Charges	Unit of Measure	GST Status	2025/26 Fee Inc. GST \$	2026/27 Fee Inc. GST \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) \$	Fee increase / (Decrease) %	Basis of Fee	Pricing Basis
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hour	Taxable	\$200.00	\$220.00	\$20.00	10.0%	Non-statutory	P
Leby Street								
Walton Centre Meeting Room								
Local Community Group								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$25.00	\$25.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Commercial/Private								
Full Day (3 hours or greater)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$100.00	\$100.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P
Half Day (up to 3 hours)	Per Hire	Taxable	\$50.00	\$50.00	-	-	Non-statutory	P

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Ararat Rural City

www.araratrcc.gov.au



Community Consultation Report

Draft Budget 2026/27

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Introduction

As part of its budget development processes, Ararat Rural City Council undertakes community engagement in a manner that is designed to maximise engagement across the municipality. This engagement is also done in accordance with its Community Engagement Policy and Section 96 of the Local Government Act 2020. Several mechanisms of engagement were used to provide a range of options for feedback to be provided, these include:

- Use of the Engage Ararat website
- Distribution of plain language budget summaries across the municipality
- Face to face "town hall" meetings
- Social media posts to encourage community engagement
- Summaries be placed in local newspapers, and
- Mainstream media engagement around major budget initiatives

For the Draft Budget 2026/27, the following community engagement sessions were held:

Location	Date and Time
Ararat Town Hall	5:30pm, Monday 23 March 2026
Buangor Cobb & Co	10:30am, Wednesday 25 March 2026
Elmhurst Mechanics Institute	3:30pm, Wednesday 25 March 2026
Lake Bolac Info & Business Centre	1:30pm, Monday 23 March 2026
Moyston Community Hall	1:00pm, Tuesday 24 March 2026
Pomonal Community Hall	11:00am, Tuesday 24 March 2026
Tatooon Hall	12:00pm, Thursday 26 March 2026
Willaura Memorial Hall	3:00pm, Tuesday 24 March 2026

A drop-in session was also held at the Ararat Rural City Council offices at 59 Vincent Street, Ararat on Friday 27 March 2026, from 9:00am-2:00pm.

This report provides a record of the feedback received for the Draft Budget 2026/27. There were 9 online submissions, 27 attendees to the community engagement sessions and 2 letters received. Council wishes to thank everyone who participated in the engagement process and took the time to provide feedback.

Feedback Submitted Online via Engage Ararat

#	Submission	Response
1	<p>Generally the budget appears sound. I am glad there is emphasis on the community assets and cultural activities. I am concerned that the Ararat fitness centre are currently trying to reduce the deficit through cutting heating which will reduce membership and end in a less vibrant community. Have you considered making the facility more sustainable though renewable energy for heating? Or trying to make it appeal to more people?</p> <p>Love the continued focus on bringing quality entertainment to the town hall.</p>	<p>Council recognises the importance of the Ararat Fitness Centre to community health and wellbeing and has allocated an additional \$35,000 in funding from rates revenue in 2026/27. Council also supports the use of renewable energy for the Ararat Fitness Centre and there is already an extensive solar panel system installed. The Centre has been and will continue to find innovative new programs to appeal to more people, for example, the new PlayGym program delivered during the Easter 2026 school holidays. Thank you for your feedback on entertainment at the Town Hall.</p>
2	<p>Could Council please consider a "Changing Place" be incorporated into the new Fitness Centre? - where a hoist system can be used by carers to place people with a disability onto a toilet or adult size changing bench. It would allow people with severe disabilities and their families and carers to travel safely, stay out longer and participate fully in community life :)</p>	<p>Thank you for this suggestion, this will be considered as part of the development of the new indoor sports facility and aquatics facilities projects.</p>

3	Public and private investments in renewable energy microgrids for businesses and neighbourhoods to keep Ararat's energy zero emissions and independent from shockwaves	Council are open to innovative models that support emissions reductions and the use of renewable energy in Council operations.
4	<p>Upon reading the budget, I was disappointed to read that economic and demographic growth does not have a sustainable base. To sum it up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainable and affordable housing through north facing passive solar designs with a 60 cm eaves to let the winter sun but keep off the summer heat. Garden space for growing vegetables and fruit and nut trees and rain water roof collection for watering. Sustainable and affordable housing also translates into social safety and cohesion and food security. - more tree green spaces where people can gather helps not only to mitigate the climate but also with mental health. 	Thank you for your feedback. Ararat Rural City Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2024-34 includes goals for all new homes to have a minimum 7-star building standard under National Construction Code, reductions in potable water usage, and increases in canopy cover within all townships. Preserving our environment is also a key strategic objective of the Council Plan 2025-29, which directly guides the development of the Draft Budget and in Council's operations.
5	<p>I am writing to provide feedback on the current draft budget, specifically regarding the allocation of funding for our local indoor pool and its associated facilities.</p> <p>I would like to highlight the importance of prioritising ongoing maintenance and ensuring adequate funding for consistent heating of both the pool and the surrounding facility. The indoor pool is a valuable community asset that supports a wide range of users, including families, older residents, swimming groups, group fitness and individuals who rely on it for regular exercise and rehabilitation.</p> <p>In its current state, any shortcomings in maintenance or inconsistent heating can significantly impact usability, comfort, and overall community satisfaction. A well-maintained and properly heated facility encourages greater participation, supports public health outcomes, and maximises the return on the council's investment.</p> <p>I strongly encourage the council to consider increasing the budget allocation for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular and preventative maintenance of the pool and amenities - Reliable and consistent heating of the pool water - Adequate climate control within the indoor facility <p>Ensuring these aspects are properly funded will help maintain the pool as a safe, accessible, and welcoming environment for all members of the community.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft budget. I appreciate your consideration of this matter.</p>	Council recognises the importance of the Ararat Fitness Centre to community health and wellbeing and has allocated an additional \$35,000 in funding from rates revenue in 2026/27. This will support the ongoing maintenance and operation of the facility until plans for potential future aquatics facilities are confirmed.

<p>6 Overall, the draft budget is quite timid. While I'm pleased to see there is solid, conservative financial management in place, which is needed, we shouldn't be operating to such a big surplus and there needs to be more spend on dressing up both Ararat and our other towns. A balanced budget needs to cover major cap works, and a whole range of services. We are not doing enough to support tourism, our youths (eg we should have more playgrounds, skate parks, street murals etc), the arts is pretty bereft, and even our Christmas decorations are bare minimum and don't show our towns off at all.</p> <p>I was pleased to see our Eastern signage upgrade mentioned in recent council meeting minutes, but again, it's overdue and bare minimum. I'd love to see some small creative projects in the mix. That said, I'm excited to see things like the Pomonal Walking track included. I'd love to know what happened to the planned mountain bike track.</p>	<p>The comprehensive operating result is an accounting measure that shows the overall financial position, and it includes non-cash and asset value changes. The comprehensive operating surplus of \$4,624,000 does not unfortunately mean that Council has this amount available in cash to spend. A better indicator of whether the budget provides enough funds for capital works is the 'Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation', which is 140% for 2026/27. Asset renewal indicators above 100% mean that we are renewing our assets faster than they are degrading, and Council aims for an asset renewal ratio of at least 110% each year. Budgets for services are provided for each strategic objective of the Council Plan. E.g. the budget for Enhancing Community Life, which includes community support grants, youth, and recreation projects, is provided in section 2.5.1. with over \$4 million worth of expenditure in the 2026/27 financial year.</p>
<p>7 It's disappointing there isn't any budget allocation to at least start addressing the lack of parking at the Ararat Hospital. It's a problem that has been publicly acknowledged by council and directly impacts both staff and patients. Limited parking is also a problem at the railway station. More people are now using the train, even prior to the current free travel period, and the significant number of services now provided will only make train use even more popular. It would be relatively simple and inexpensive to extent the current Birdwood Avenue parking further along the Avenue. Another area that should receive at least some funding is planting and maintaining more, preferably deciduous, street trees. Even just a few trees planted and nurtured each year would provide a significant benefit over time.</p>	<p>Council is continuing to work with East Grampians Health Service on the parking needs of their patients, visitors, volunteers and employees.</p> <p>Council recognises that more and more people are using the train services. Much of the land around the Ararat Railway Station is owned by VicTrack. Council will advocate for more parking at the train station.</p>
<p>8 The Main Street needs much improvement particularly around the post office area and the pedestrian crossing. New colourful plants and improved landscaping please</p>	<p>This area will be inspected and possible upgrades will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.</p>
<p>9 It all sounds good but what about a walking track to Halls Gap?</p> <p>The council need to know that there are a couple of roads (under Ararat council) beyond Tunnel Road in Pomonal. If there are any vouchers for waste to be given out, or roadside clean-ups... it usually stops at Tunnel Road, what about Haiges Court? We pay rates too.</p>	<p>The walking track is noted for future engagement with VicRoads for a roadside path on Ararat-Halls Gap Road. There is an informal trail in the Grampians National Park from the Tunnel Road car park to the Boronia Trail via Long Gully, these will connect you to Halls Gap and are managed by Parks Victoria. The Victorian Fire Risk Register map is used to identify properties that are in a high to extreme bushfire area where green waste vouchers were issued. At that time of vouchers being issued, Haiges Court was not included in the highlighted area, however this map has since been updated to include Haiges Court.</p>

Summary of Discussions from the Community Engagement Sessions

There were a range of matters raised during the engagement sessions that were not related to the Draft Budget 2026/27. The non-budget matters have been summarised in the Community Engagement Program reports presented at Council Meetings. Below is a summary of feedback, queries and discussions related to the Draft Budget.

#	Query or Discussion	Response
Ararat		
10	Asked if the slope on the lake side of the cafe in Alexandra Gardens can be improved.	Suggestion has been reviewed. The existing path follows the existing fall of the land. Changing the slope would require a significant redesign of the area and considerable cost, making this financially unfeasible.
Buangor		
No matters raised		
Elmhurst		
11	At the December 2025 engagement session, attendees identified a number of roads that were priorities for dust suppression or sealing. These roads were reviewed to identify the order of priority. Green St from the Bush Nursing Centre to Elmhurst-Glenpatrick Road was agreed as the priority, then whichever road had the highest traffic counts and density of housing.	Sealing of Green St from the Bush Nursing Centre to Elmhurst-Glenpatrick Road will be delivered as part of the 2026/27 capital works program. The gathering traffic count data on other roads in Elmhurst will take time, so the potential upgrades to other roads will be considered in future financial years.
12	There is a dip in the road at Hillarys Road, Elmhurst, near the intersection with Pyrenees Highway, can this be filled in and levelled?	As this is in an area adjoining the Pyrenees Highway, Council will need to engage with VicRoads on any works and therefore is unable to be actioned immediately. This request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
13	Boundary Road, Elmhurst, between the intersections with Glenpatrick Road and Pyrenees Highway also needs some maintenance work	Same as above, this is in an area adjoining the Pyrenees Highway, Council will need to engage with VicRoads on any works and therefore is unable to be actioned immediately. This request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
14	Dust suppression on Boundary Lane and Darbyshires Road was requested, the latter is used by a lot of farm machinery and trucks.	Dust suppression methods have a short lifespan. Other options, such as OTTA seals, will be considered based on traffic count and other data. This request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
Lake Bolac		
15	Query was received on the status of the Lake Bolac Walking Track project.	A significant part of this project is in areas that Council does not own or manage. The sections that are in areas that Council has oversight have been considered against the urgency of other capital works and asset maintenance projects that had been planned, and the funds available. We were unable to include this project for the 2026/27 financial year. This project is noted for consideration as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.

Moyston		
16	Request for bin surrounds at the Recreation Reserve	This request has had an initial investigation. There are a number of bins on site. The optimal location for a permanent bin surround structure needs to be determined. This will be investigated and considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting
17	Queries regarding upgrades to the netball courts in Moyston and new change rooms	Funding from the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund was announced recently to upgrade the netball/tennis courts and begin planning for new changerooms close to the courts. Council's co-contribution towards these projects is included in the Draft Budget 2026/27.
Pomonal		
18	Request for walking/bike riding track from Pomonal Hall to Pomonal Estate	This is likely to require areas in the road reserve on Ararat-Halls Gap Road and Pomonal Road, which VicRoads is the road authority. This project is noted for future engagement with VicRoads and future capital works planning and budgeting.
19	There were queries regarding disposing of large volumes of green waste	These queries will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year.
20	Pomonal community requested to have their own rural skip bin.	This request will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year.
21	Query about walking tracks on the roadside on Robins Road.	This request has been considered against the urgency of other capital works and asset maintenance projects that had been planned, and the funds available. We were unable to include this project for the 2026/27 financial year. This project is noted for consideration as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
Tatooon		
22	In section 4.1.1(a), what is the 'revenue in lieu of rates'?	The line item 'Revenue in lieu of rates' captures revenue Council raises from properties under other legislation or via private agreement instead of general rates under the Local Government Act 1989 ¹ . For example, revenue under the Electricity Industry Act 2000 is calculated based on rates prescribed by the Victorian Government and the amount of energy generated, which can vary from year to year. An estimate of generation is used, which will be reconciled with actual generation that occurred that year in the calculation for the next period ^{2,3} .
23	In section 4.1.11, Other Expenses, how are the auditors' remuneration determined?	The External (Victorian Auditor-General) fees are set by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office under section 13 of the Audit Act (1994) to cover the reasonable costs and expenses that they incur. The internal budget covers independent members appointed to the Audit

¹ Local Government Better Practice Guide: Model Budget 2026-27, https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0014/223124/Model_Budget_2026-27_Better_Practice_Guide_FINAL.docx

² Payment in lieu of rates website, <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/payment-in-lieu-of-rates-for-electricity-generators>

³ Payment in lieu of rates factsheet, https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/594616/PLoR-fact-sheet.pdf

		and Risk Committee and the cost of undertaking the Strategic Internal Audit Program. The Committee members' remuneration is determined by Council at its discretion under section 53(6) and reflects the time commitment and responsibility involved in serving as a member of the Audit and Risk Committee.
	Willaura	
24	Area around the Willaura Cenotaph is likely to need some maintenance work in the future.	Area was tidied before ANZAC Day. Future works will be investigated and considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
25	Footpath between the Willaura supermarket and Police Station needs attention	This footpath will be upgraded as part of the 2026/27 footpath program.
26	Request for a new ramp for wheelchair/ scooter access from the road to the footpath outside the Willaura bank area.	This will be incorporated into the above footpath upgrade project.

Letters Received

(See next pages for copies of letters received)

Response to Letter 1

Thank you for your letter regarding housing, Norval Dam and carparking in Barkly Street. While the Council has strongly supported innovative housing models to increase the number of housing in Ararat Rural City, renewal of aging housing stock is also an important part of meeting today's housing needs. It allows homes that may be poorly insulated or that lack accessible features to be replaced with energy efficient and better quality homes.

Regarding Norval Dam, this site owned by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and GWMWater have a standpipe at this location. Your suggestion to enlarge and/or deepen this dam will be passed on to these organisations. The feedback regarding the carparking on Barkly Street has been provided to the 'Barkly Street CBD Parking Changes' project.

Response to Letter 2

Thank you to the Pomonal Resilience Group for your letter and for your ongoing commitment to bushfire preparedness. Thank you also for encouraging the Pomonal community to consider the existing strategies available to them, such as the option for additional green kerbside bins. If the Pomonal Resilience Group can, please also let Pomonal residents know that they may be able to save on travel costs by using the Halls Gap Transfer Station at 4300 Ararat-Halls Gap Road, Halls Gap.

Council looks forward to making bags of compost available at the Pomonal Markets, subject to the availability of staff. We will also increase communication of Council's waste management initiatives and promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste in the municipality.

The items for Council to consider that are related to skips in Pomonal will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year. The weekly green waste collection from September to mid-December, free waste disposal at transfer stations in October to mid-December, the annual free transfer station vouchers and free e-waste suggestions are unable to be committed to in the coming 2026/27 financial year. Elements of these items will continue to be considered for supporting sustainable waste management.

Council's Recovery Officer will continue to work with the Pomonal community, including with activities such as the creation of lists of contacts that can assist with preparing for the bushfire season.

Letter 1

PO Box 567
11.01.2026

COUNCILLORS,
ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL,
VINCENT STREET,
ARARAT, 3877.

Dear COUNCILLORS,

Re- COUNCIL'S ARARAT COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2026.
Re: INITIATIVES FOR HOUSING & GROWTH.

DURING THE LAST (5) FIVE YEARS I HAVE NOTICED HOW MANY OLD HOUSES ARE SOLD MOST OF WHICH ARE NOT FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE IN. MOST OF THESE HOUSES WHICH ARE SOLD ARE DEMOLISHED AND A NEW HOUSE BUILT. THIS MEANS ONE HOUSE DEMOLISHED AND OTHER BUILT IS NO GAIN IN HOUSING. IN DANLUN STREET BETWEEN BANFIELD AND DADDY STREETS FOUR (4) HOUSES WHICH WERE RIVERBANK WERE DEMOLISHED AND ONLY ONE WAS REBUILT BY THE OWNER. THE OTHER (3) THREE WERE PURCHASED AND ANOTHER HOUSE BUILT. THIS TO ME MEANS (3) AWAY FROM THREE MEANS NO GAIN IN HOUSING.

RECENTLY I WENT FOR A DRIVE IN THE MOUNTAIN, ANYONESH AND NORVAL AREAS. I WAS WAS AMazed HOW LOW IN WATER NORVAL DAM IS. THIS DAM IS A GREAT FERTILE TO FARMERS WHO RUN SHEEP OF WATER FOR STEAK. BECAUSE OF THE PRESENT STATE OF THE DAM HERE IS THE OPPORTUNITY OF ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL TO ENLARGE, DEEPEN, REMOVE OLD TRENCHES

②

AND MAKE A GRATED STORAGE FOR FARMERS TO USE
IN THE FUTURE.

RE: CAR PARKING IN BARRY STREET.

WHILST PEOPLE CAN PARK IN BARRY STREET
WITH NO LIMIT ON HOW LONG THEY CAN PARK
THERE, THEN THERE WILL ONLY CONTINUALLY BE
CONGESTION.

THERE HAS TO BE SOME METHOD TO MAKE
PEOPLE MOVE, SUCH AS A POST AT EACH PARKING
SPOT WITH A CAMERA WHICH RECORDS NUMBER PLATE
AND TIME, WHICH DELIVERS A CARD SAYING A
STIPULATED TIME OTHERWISE OTHERWISE A FINE
WILL APPLY.

John Smalley
Councillor
Ararat Council

ARARAT RURAL CITY RECEIVED 14 APR 2026 FILE NO BOOKING
--

Letter 2

Ararat Rural City Council
engaga@ararat.vic.gov.au

Pomonal Resilience Group
Subgroup of Pomonal Progress
Association (PPA)
C/- Post Office, Pomonal 3381

23/04/2026

Re: Submission for Ararat Rural City Council (ARCC) 2026/2027 budget

The Pomonal Resilience Group is a subgroup of Pomonal Progress Association, who work towards enhancing community wellbeing and resilience. A special team of Pomonal residents with a wide range of expertise, alongside the Pomonal Resilience Group, are currently working on the Pomonal Resilience & Wellbeing plan. Through this process and during the last couple of challenging years post-bushfires, community concerns have come to light.

One of our community's biggest priorities every year is **preparing our properties for the bushfire season and the 2024 bushfires proved that this is essential**. 2026/2027 predictions of unseasonably hot temperatures and low rainfall are a great concern - we need to work on our fuel reduction throughout the year and particularly during the high vegetation growth season. **Pomonal community need an annual green waste collection program to help us prepare for the bushfire season.**

The closure of the Pomonal Transfer Station has caused great concern for our community, particularly due to travel costs – the cost of fuel and the extra time it takes to get to the nearest transfer station at Ararat. **Pomonal residents are disadvantaged due to the distance from Pomonal to the nearest ARCC transfer station. This is impacting wellbeing and liveability.**

We support ARCC's compost program, where green waste is treated to make compost that can be purchased. We will continue to encourage our community to buy compost from ARCC. **The difficulty is getting locals to take their trailer loads of green waste to Ararat Transfer Station.** We want to support the Victorian Government/EPA sustainability standard of **reducing greenhouse gas emissions** by discouraging burn off or landfill of green waste.

The Pomonal community require assistance from ARCC in preparing for the bushfire season and in dealing with our waste in a sustainable manner throughout the year. We would like council to consider the following assistance in the 2026/2027 budget:

1. ARCC to sell bags of compost at Pomonal Markets to help promote the product and with a sign encouraging green waste disposal at the Ararat Transfer Station.
2. Weekly instead of fortnightly green waste bin kerbside pickup, September to mid-December.
3. Free green waste disposal at ARCC transfer stations October to mid-December.
4. Annual free transfer station vouchers (use any time within financial year) for property owners: 4 x green waste and 2 x general waste - trailer loads.
5. Green waste rubbish skips at Pomonal four times a year (quarterly).
6. General rubbish/hard garbage skips at Pomonal twice a year
7. Scrap metal skips at Pomonal twice a year and continue to accept scrap metal for free.
8. Make e-waste free to encourage people to recycle instead of putting in general rubbish bins.
9. Continue to minimise transfer station disposal prices to encourage recycling.
10. Expand/improve communication of ARCC's waste management initiatives and recommendations to our communities: increase advertising on social media, exposure at markets to show people the services you offer eg compost.
11. Assist Pomonal and other towns Progress Associations in creating a list of local bushfire hazard reduction/property maintenance contractors, with public liability insurance, who residents can pay, to assistance with cleaning up properties before bushfire season.

Pomonal Resilience Group encourage our Pomonal community to consider these strategies:

1. Fully utilise and correctly use, the existing kerbside waste collection four bin system, including green waste bin.
2. Reduce greenhouse emissions and support ARCC's compost program by getting green waste to Ararat Transfer Station, via any available means including green bins, trailers or any **extra services provided by ARCC in the next budget**.
3. If additional fortnightly green waste collection is required throughout the year, an additional kerbside service green bin can be ordered from ARCC for approximately \$147 – cheaper, safer and easier management than driving to the transfer station and paying \$15 plus fuel costs per car boot load.
4. Upcycle/re-purpose goods and participate in Pomonal Community Garage Sale trails to sell or give-away items to others for their use.
5. To comply with statewide legislation/council requirements and to help our CFA volunteers by reducing their callouts, regularly assess and manage own properties to reduce bushfire hazards eg clearing vegetation from fencelines. Seek advice from ARCC, PPA and contract experts when required to avoid dangers. Prepare your property so you do not receive compliance notices from ARCC (statewide legislation).

Thank you for considering this submission and please call or email me if you would like to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Sue Macaffer

suecolmacaffer@bigpond.com

On behalf of the Pomonal Resilience Group.

Phone 0407810389

3.2 BARKLY STREET CBD PARKING AUDIT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MAJOR PROJECTS LEAD
DEPARTMENT: INFRASTRUCTURE
REFERENCE: 28965

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

At the May 2025 Council meeting, Council approved a review of disability parking in the Barkly Street CBD. This work has been undertaken by our engineering team with a full audit of what parking is currently available and the suggested updates to meet current standards. The design has then been out for community consultation, this report details the community's response to the plan and options moving forward.

DISCUSSION

The audit of the Barkly Street CBD parking between Queen Street and View Point Street, Ararat, works have been completed by Council's engineering team.

Suggested CBD Parking plan provided for community consultation includes the following:

Total No. of Carparks:	201
Total No. of Accessible Parking bays:	11
Total No. of Motorcycle parking bays:	2
Total No. of Loading Bays:	11
Total No. of Taxi Bays:	2
Parking bays for vehicles exceeding 6m:	2

The proposed changes to the area include the following:

- In the proposed parking layout, total number of car parks has been reduced to 201 which will have new parking signs thus eliminating the metered reading & allowing 2-hour parking limit from 9am to 5.30 pm from Monday to Friday & 9am to 12pm on Saturday.
- The updated parking layout includes total number of 11 accessible car parks with associated shared zones as well as bollards in front of the shared zone to prevent other vehicles from parking. These include new bays to the east of the pedestrian in close proximity to the chemist, and also at the front of the Mess and Barracks and the Town Hall.
- Updated plan includes 11 loading bays modified to meet the minimum standard width (3.6m) plus the width required for off loading of goods. The width for off loading of goods is to be further discussed. It is good to provide around 1 to 1.2m.
- A new taxi zone (1) is provided in front of Lyal Eales Store (opposite to Bendigo Bank)
- One of the unidentified bays has been changed to a loading zone and other one to a parking bay for vehicles exceeding 6 metres

A total of 39 responses from the community consultation were received through Engage Ararat and letters/emails received to the project team and are summarised as follows:

- Accessible parking: Requests for more disabled bays near key destinations and closer to ramps; concern about bay length for wheelchair hoists deploying into traffic. *Note: a shared bay with linemarking and bollards has been provided for all accessible car parks in this design inline with Australian Standards.*
- Short-stay Parking Options: Suggestions for 10-15 minute bays near post office/ATMs/chemists, including a lunchtime time-window arrangement.

- Bay design: Calls to widen bays and adjust angles to reflect larger vehicles and improve ability to load children into car seats. *Note: the designs have been created to align with the Australian Standards as previously detailed.*
- Operations: Maintain and/or widen loading bays for delivery access; retain taxi bay for older residents with limited walking tolerance. *Note: the designs have been created to align with the Australian Standards as previously detailed.*
- Family bays debate: Multiple requests for parent/pram bays countered by a view that such bays are not necessary compared to disability needs.

One alteration has been made to the plan placing the taxi bay back in its original position adjacent to the chemist.

This feedback indicates strong community expectation that any alterations to Barkly Street parking will improve equitable access, particularly for people with disability and older residents, support CBD economic activity through better turnover, and reduce safety conflicts for pedestrians and cyclists.

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

Council has available funds as part of the capital works program for 2025/2026.

Policy/Relevant Law

- Road Management Plan
- Road Safety Act
- Local Government Act 2020
- ARCC Procurement Policy
- ARCC Asset Management Policy

Sustainability Implications

These projects will improve road safety for all users and provide a more sustainable road infrastructure for the council.

Risk Assessment

Low Risk – Risks will be managed through project planning and management procedures and works administration

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is to be undertaken through Engage Ararat and is presented within this report.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council accept the CBD Parking Plan as presented.

**MOVED CR JOYCE
SECONDED CR KAUR**

That:

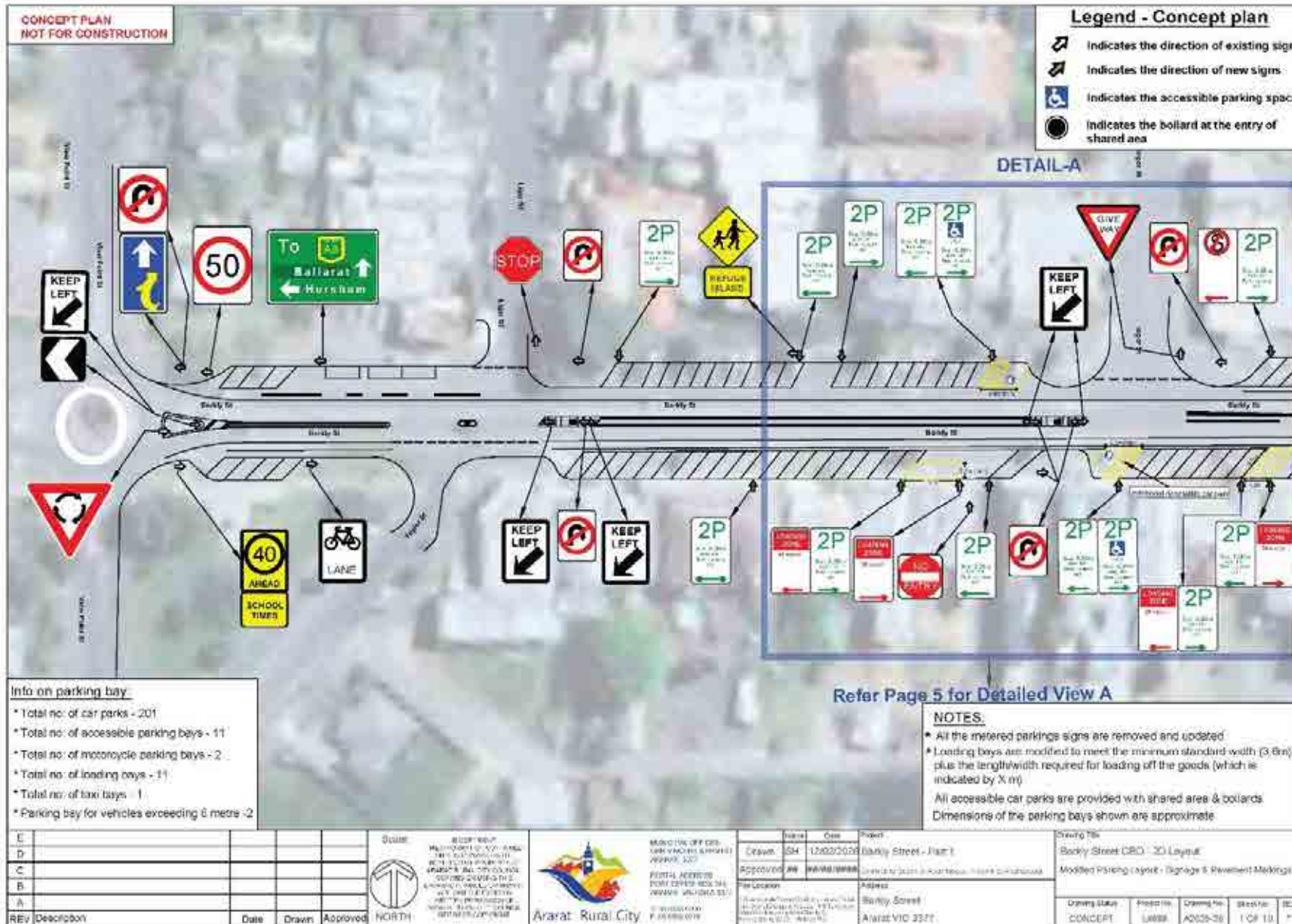
- 1. Council accept the CBD Parking Plan as presented.**

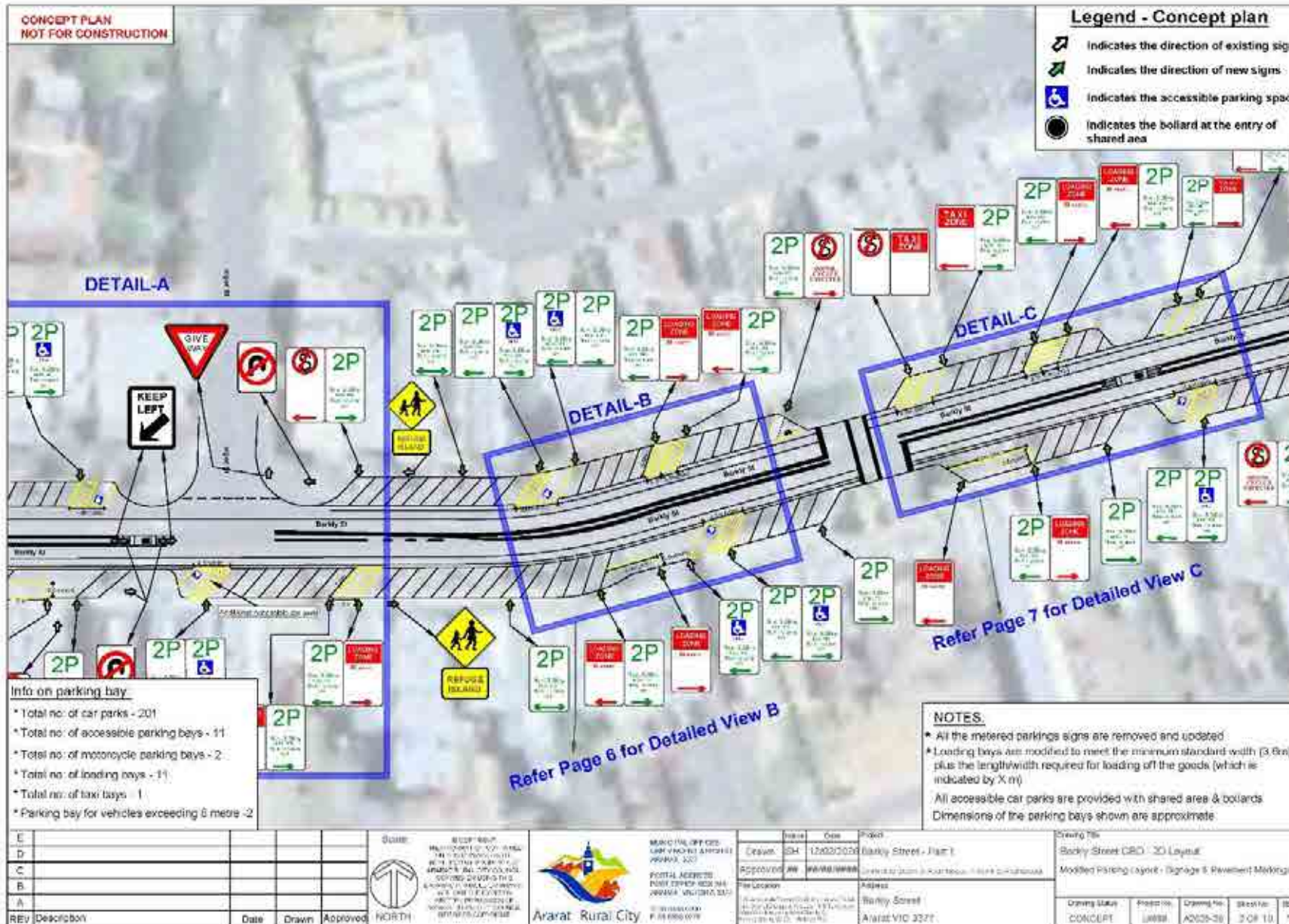
Cr Joyce and Cr Kaur spoke for the motion.

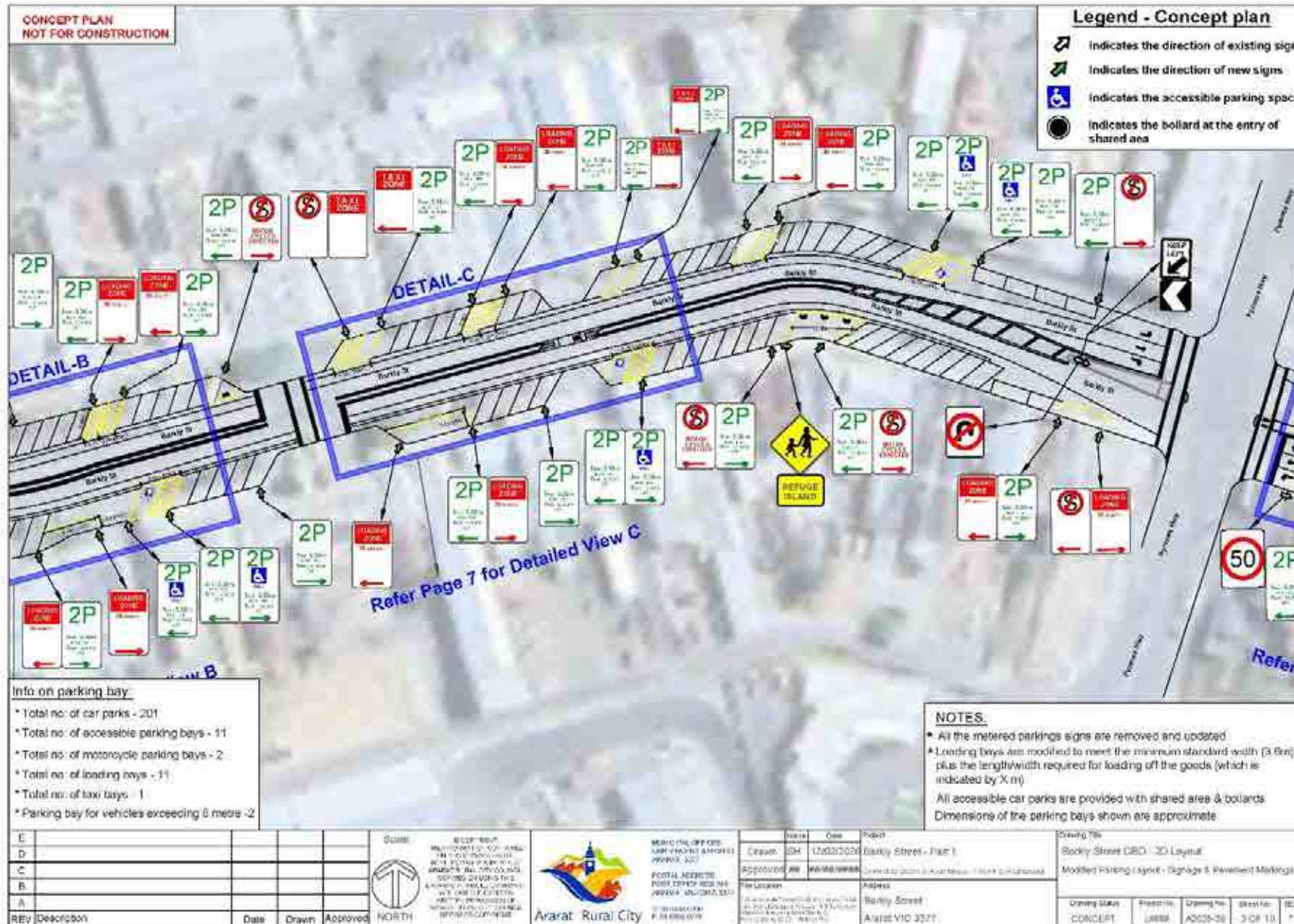
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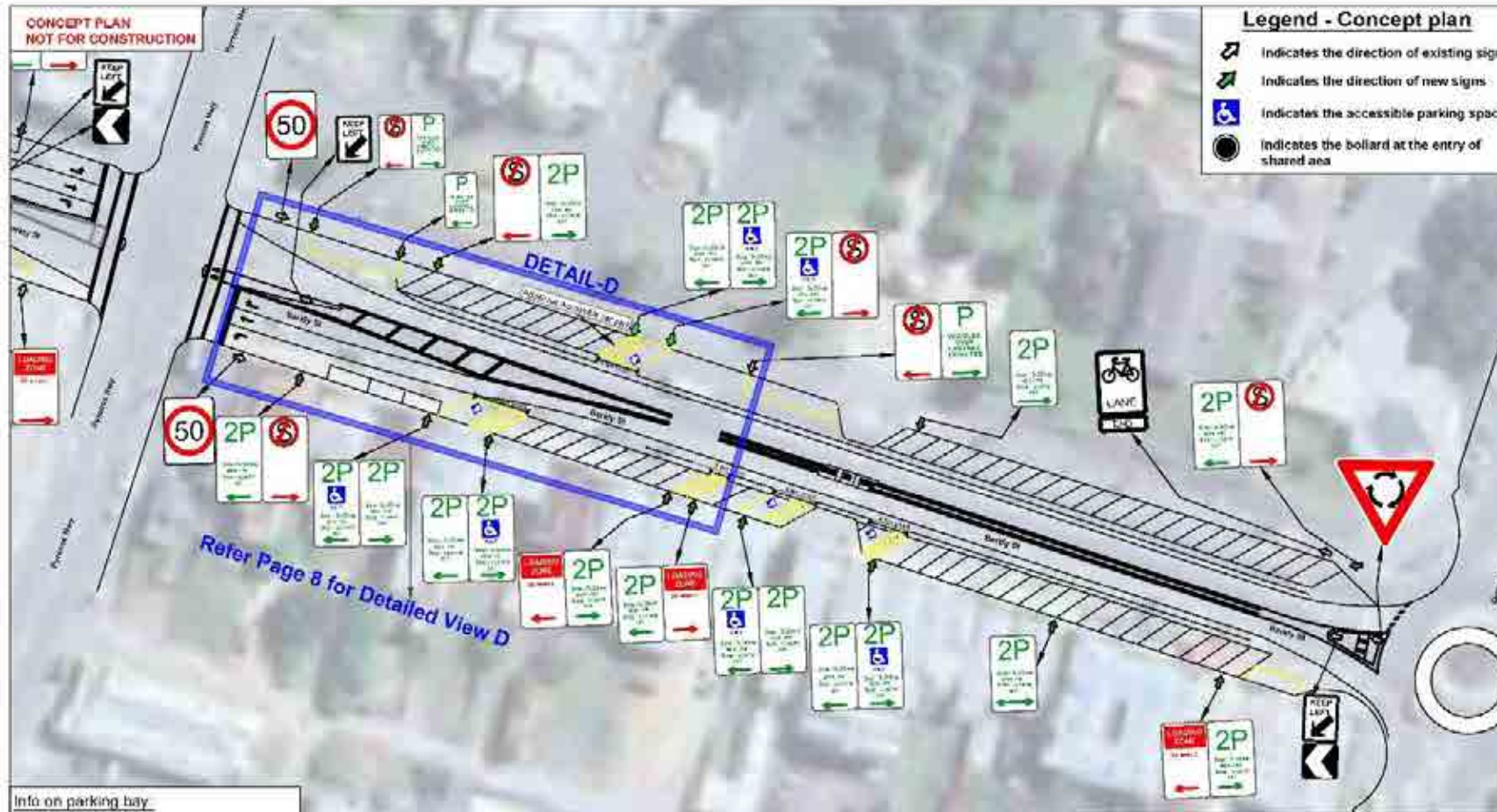
ATTACHMENTS

The Barkly Street concept plan is provided as Attachment 3.2





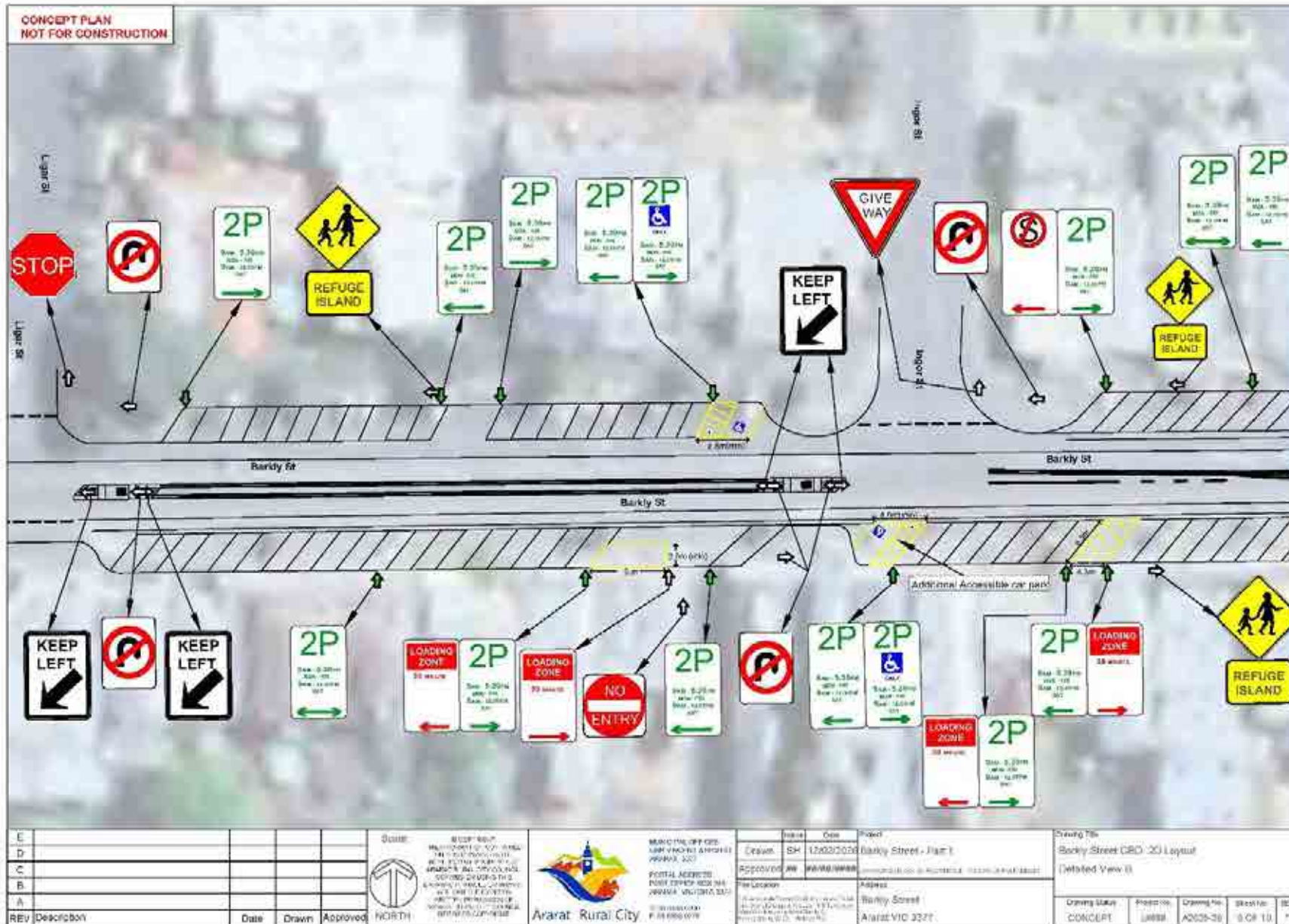


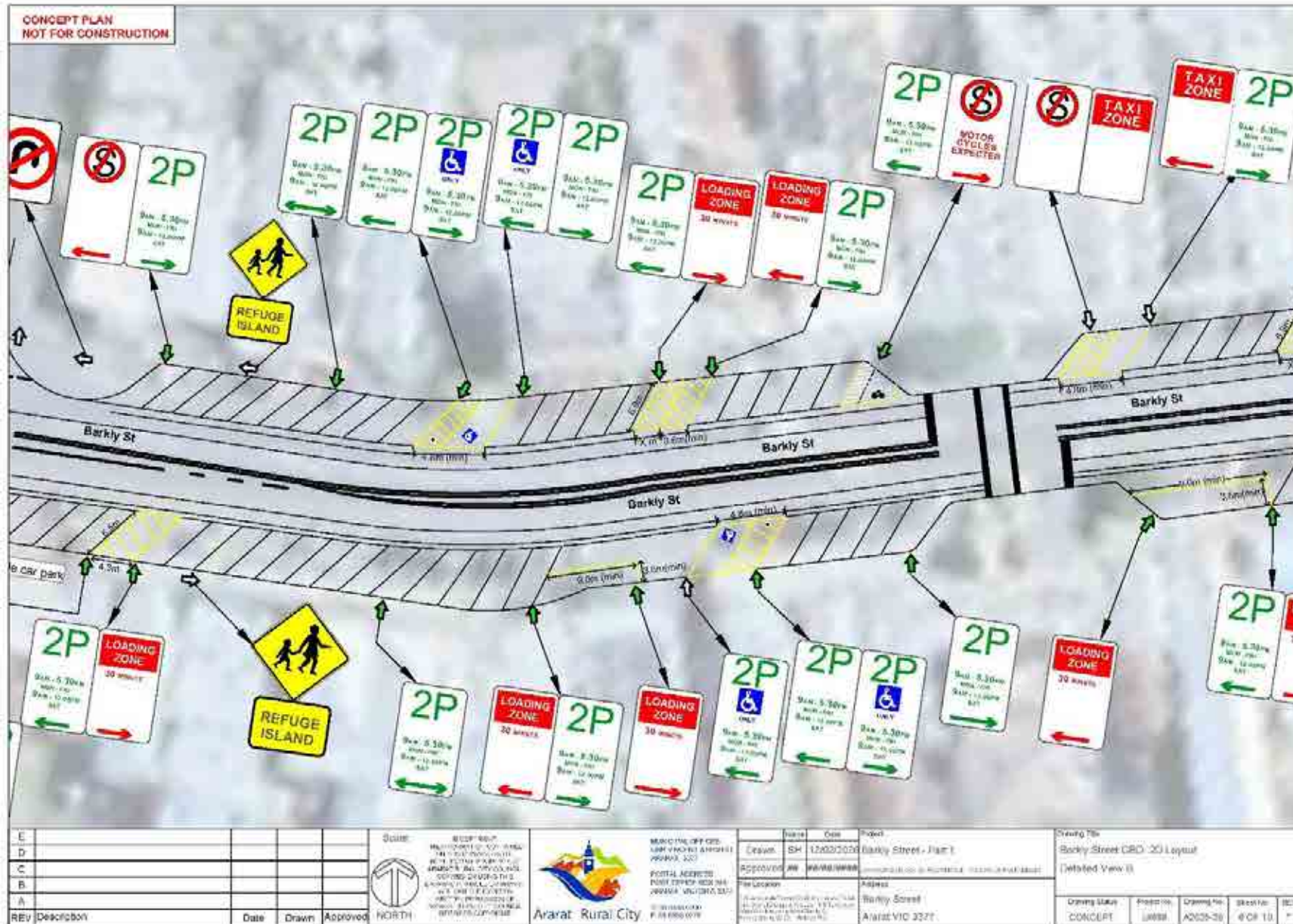


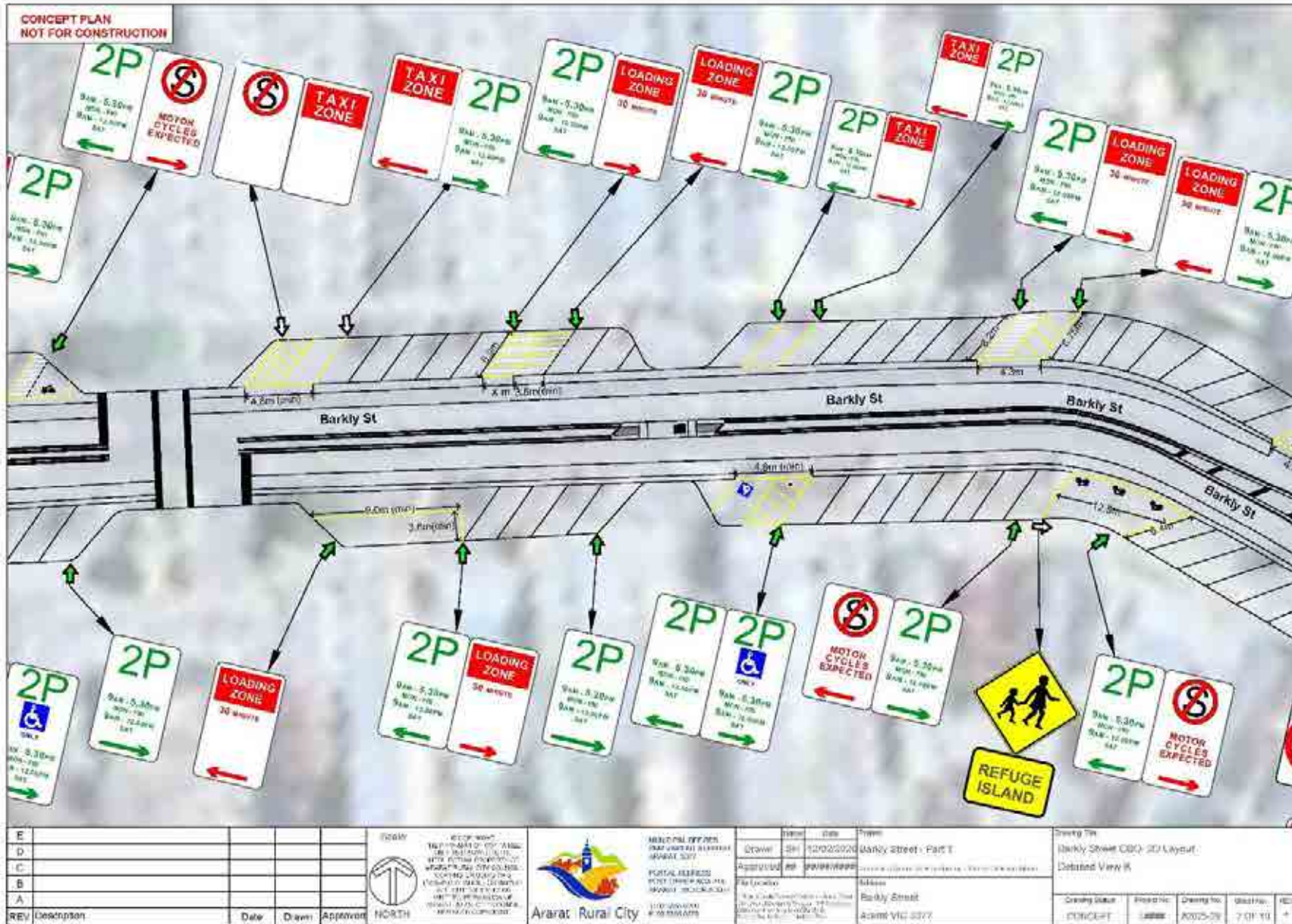
- Info on parking bay**
- * Total no. of car parks - 201
 - * Total no. of accessible parking bays - 11
 - * Total no. of motorcycle parking bays - 2
 - * Total no. of loading bays - 11
 - * Total no. of taxi bays - 1
 - * Parking bay for vehicles exceeding 6 metre -2

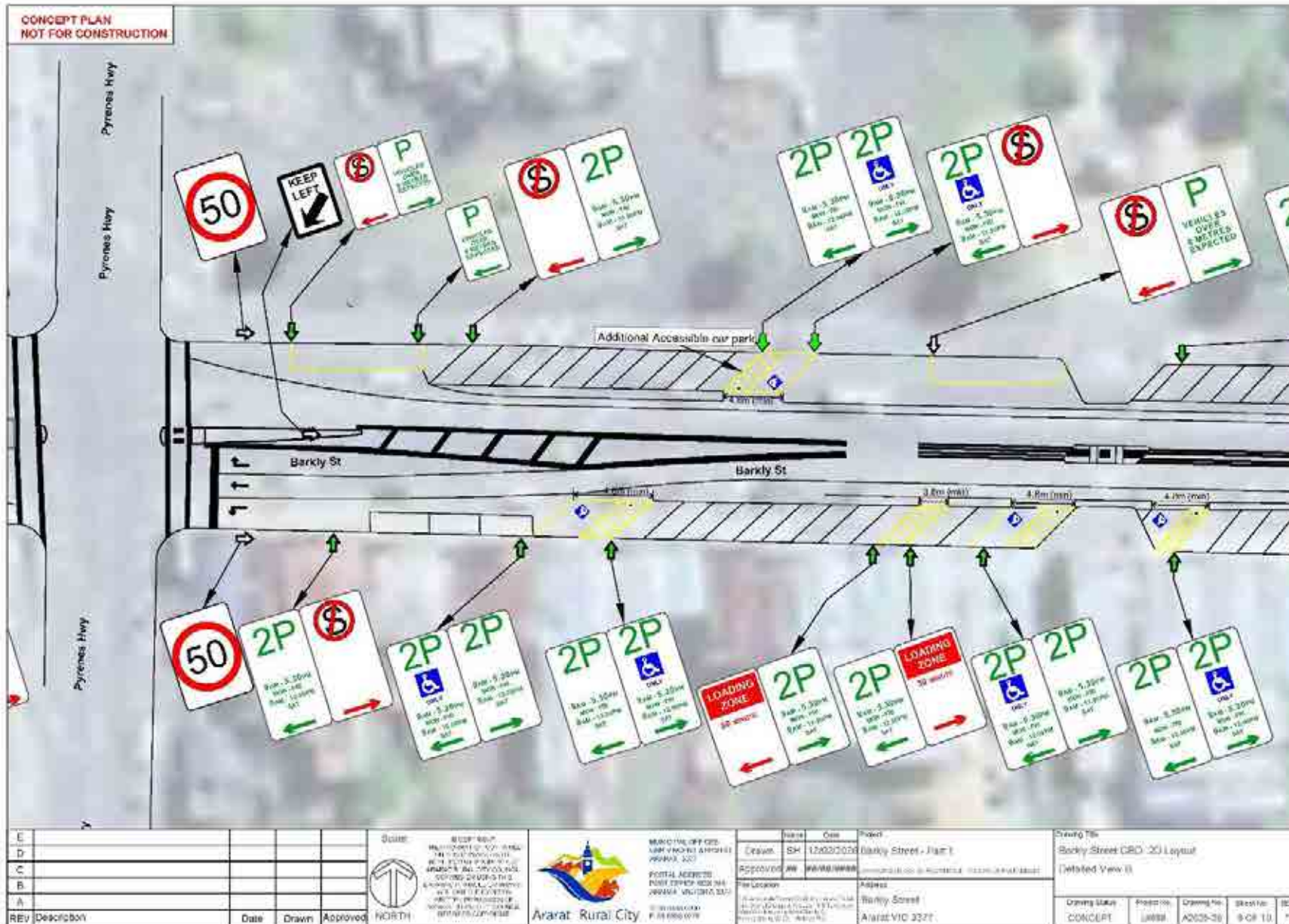
- NOTES**
- * All the metered parking signs are removed and updated
 - * Loading bays are modified to meet the minimum standard width (3.6m) plus the length/width required for loading off the goods (which is indicated by X m)
 - All accessible car parks are provided with shared area & bollards
 - Dimensions of the parking bays shown are approximate

E							MUNICIPAL OFFICE 100 WINDY HILLS AVENUE ARARAT VIC 3477 POSTAL ADDRESS ENRIE STREET 1000 WA ARARAT VIC 3477	Name: SH Date: 12/03/2025 Approved: [Signature] File Location: [Path] Address: Basky Street Ararat VIC 3477	Drawing Title: Basky Street CRD - 3D Layout Modified Parking Layout - Signage & Pavement Markings			
D												
C												
B												
A												
REV	Description	Date	Drawn	Approved				Driving Status: CONCEPT	Project No: 10888	Drawing No: A2025-38	Sheet No: 4 OF 10	ISD

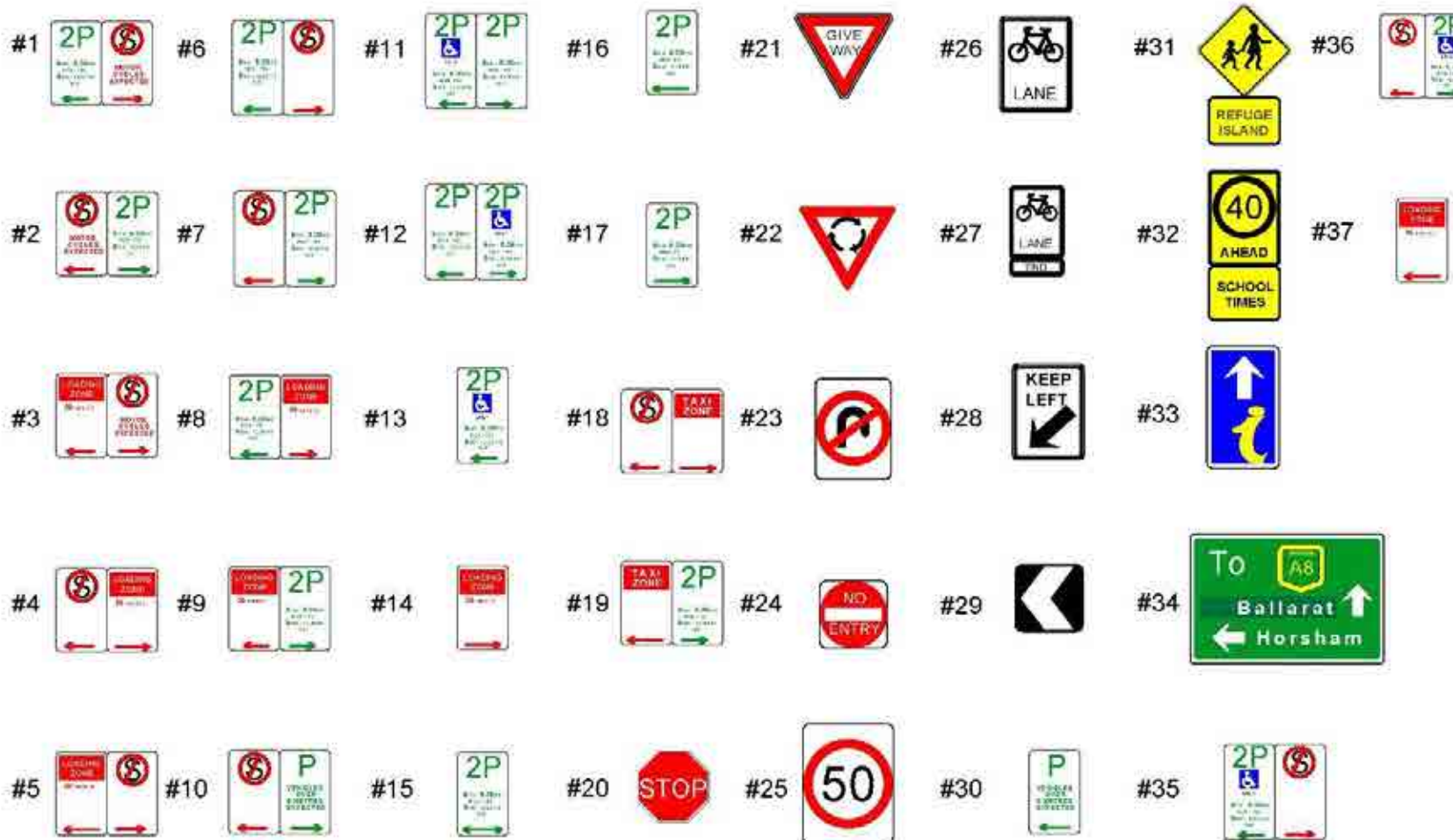








SIGN LEGEND



E					State			MUNICIPAL OFFICE 100 VICTORIA AVENUE ARARAT VIC 3471	Issue: 04/12/2025 Cost: \$0.00 Project: Backy Street - Part 1	Drawing Title: Backy Street CBD - 2D Layout Sign Legends
D								POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 1000 ARARAT VIC 3471	Approved: 04/12/2025 File Location:	Drawing No: A2025-29
C								Ararat Rural City P 08 6888 0000	Address: Backy Street Ararat VIC 3471	Sheet No: 9 of 10
B										Driving Status: CONCEPT
A										Project No: 10888
REV	Description	Date	Drawn	Approved						

Sign Legend - Details

Sign No	Sign Name & Code	Description
1	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	On the west side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday. No stopping on the east side as motorcycles are expected.
2	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	On the east side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday. No stopping on the west side as motorcycles are expected.
3	Loading Zone (R5-23) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	30 minute loading zone is indicated on the west side of the road and no stopping on the east side as motorcycles are expected.
4	No Stopping at any time (R5-35) & Loading Zone (R5-23)	No stopping on the west side & 30 minute loading zone is indicated on the east side of the road.
5	Loading Zone (R5-23) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	30 minute loading zone is indicated on the west side of the road and no stopping on the east side.
6	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	On the west side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday. No stopping on the east side.
7	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	On the east side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday. No stopping on the west side.
8	Loading Zone (R5-23) & 2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	30 minute loading zone is indicated on the east side of the road. On the west side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
9	Loading Zone (R5-23) & 2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	Loading zone is indicated on the west side of the road. On the east side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
10	No Stopping at any time (R5-35) & 1 Hour Parking area (R5-10)	No stopping on the west side & 1 hour parking area for vehicles over 9 metres is acted on the east side.
11	2 Hour accessible only parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & 2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	On the west side, 2 hour accessible only parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday. On the east side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
12	2 Hour accessible only parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & 2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	On the east side, 2 hour accessible only parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday. On the west side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
13	2 Hour accessible only parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	On the west side, 2 hour accessible only parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
14	Loading Zone (R5-23)	30 minute loading zone is indicated on the east side of the road.
15	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	On both the east side & west side of the road, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
16	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	On the west side of the road, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
17	2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	On the east side of the road, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
18	No Stopping at any time (R5-35) & Taxi Zone (R5-21)	No stopping on the west side & Taxi zone is indicated on the east side of the road.
19	Taxi Zone (R5-21) & 2 Hour Parking at specific times of operation (R5-2)	Taxi zone is indicated on the west side of the road. On the east side, 2 hour parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday.
20	STOP (R1-1)	-

Sign Legend - Details

Sign No	Sign Name & Code	Description
21	SIDEWAY (R3-2)	-
22	Roundabout (R1-3)	-
23	No U Turn (R2-3)	-
24	NO ENTRY (R3-4)	-
25	Speed Limit (R3-1)	Permanent speed of 50 km/h
26	Bicycle Lane (R7-1-4)	Indicates the start of Bicycle lane
27	Multipanel Combination - Bicycle Lane (R7-1-4) & END (R7-4)	Multipanel combination indicates the end of bicycle lane
28	KEEP LEFT (R2-5A)	Indicates the vehicles to keep left of the lane
29	Unidirectional Hazard Marker (D4-1-2)	-
30	1 Hour Parking area (R5-10)	1 hour parking area for vehicles over 9 metres is acted on the west side.
31	Multicombination of Pedestrian Crossing (W6-2A) & Refuge Island (W6-2F)	-
32	Multipanel combination of warning signs - Speed Limit (R3-1) with School Times (R4-8) in fluorescent yellow colour	Indicates the drivers ahead the 40 km/h speed zone ahead during school times
33	Information Sign	Indicates the information centre is towards the north direction
34	Single Panel, two direction advance direction sign (D1-4)	Indicates to go north for Ballarat end turn west to road for Horsham
35	2 Hour accessible only parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	On the west side, 2 hour accessible only parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday & no stopping on the east side.
36	2 Hour accessible only parking at specific times of operation (R5-2) & No Stopping at any time (R5-35)	On the east side, 2 hour accessible only parking applies from 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday to Friday & 9AM to 12pm on Saturday & no stopping on the west side.
37	Loading Zone (R5-23)	30 minute loading zone is indicated on the west side of the road.

E																			
D																			
C																			
B																			
A																			
REV	Description	Date	Drawn	Approved			<p>MUNICIPALITY OF ARARAT 126 BARKLY STREET ARARAT VIC 3477 PH: 08 8366 9999 WWW.ARARATVIC.GOV.AU</p>	<p>MUNICIPALITY OF ARARAT 126 BARKLY STREET ARARAT VIC 3477 PH: 08 8366 9999 WWW.ARARATVIC.GOV.AU</p>	<p>Drawn: SH 17/03/2025 Approved: JW 24/04/2025 File Location: Ararat VIC 3477</p>	<p>Project: Barkly Street - Part 1 Location: Ararat VIC 3477</p>	<p>Drawing Title: Barkly Street CRD - 3D Layout Sign Legend - Sign Name & Description</p>	<p>Drawing Status: CONCEPT Project No: 10888 Drawing No: A2025-36 Sheet No: 1088 10 Rev: 1</p>							

3.3 DRAFT COMMUNITY ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MAJOR PROJECTS LEAD
DEPARTMENT: INFRASTRUCTURE
REFERENCE: 28966

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

This report presents the draft Community Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 for consideration and endorsement by Council.

The Strategy establishes a long-term, evidence-based framework to reduce road trauma across the municipality, aligned with Vision Zero and the Safe System approach. It responds to local crash data, community feedback, and regional road safety risks, and sets clear targets and actions to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes within the Ararat Rural City Council.

DISCUSSION

The Community Road Safety and Action Plan 2025-2030 establishes a long term evidence based framework to reduce road trauma across the Ararat Rural City Council.

Between 2020 and 2024, the municipality has recorded 158 casualty crashes, including five fatalities and 83 serious injuries, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated and sustained road safety improvements.

The Action Plan outlines seven strategic goals, focusing on high risk rural roads, intersections, vulnerable road users, speed management and continuous improvement.

Key road safety risks identified include:

- High Speed rural roads and long distance travel
- Run off road crashes and roadside hazards
- High risk intersections
- Wildlife hazards on key corridors
- Exposure for vulnerable road users

The community priorities identified four key points:

- Fixing potholes and edge drop offs
- Intersection upgrades
- Speed limit reviews
- Improved school zone safety

The strategic goals of the strategy are as follows:

- Reduce fatal and serious injuries on rural roads
- Prevent run off road crashes
- Improve safety and high risk intersections
- Protect vulnerable road users
- Align speeds with road function and risk
- Improve safety for work related road use
- Strengthen data, monitoring and reporting

Key performance targets for the plan are:

- 30% reduction in fatal and serious injuries by 2030
- 10% reduction by 2027 (interim)
- 40% reduction at high-risk intersections
- 40% reduction for vulnerable road users

Key actions for the plan include:

- Treating high risk rural corridors (barriers, line marking, shoulders)
- Upgrading Intersections
- Expanding pedestrian and shared path infrastructure
- Undertaking speed reviews and traffic calming initiatives
- Delivering education and enforcement programs to the community
- Strengthening data collection and reporting.

The draft strategy as provided gives a clear strategic direction for Council to work towards and aligns with state and national road safety frameworks, the consideration of community priorities has been undertaken and will support Council when looking at funding applications in the future, building relationships with both state and federal government.

There are no significant changes to be made to the content of the strategy as presented, however the final draft will include a message from the mayor, updated maps and plans, relevant photos from within our works program, glossary, references and appendix. Once approved the final document will be returned to council for final approval and release to the community.

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

Implementation of the plan will be through:

- Capital Works and maintenance programs
- External funding opportunities supporting road safety
- Integration with existing asset management and infrastructure planning.

Policy/Relevant Law

- Road Management Act 2024
- National Road Safety Strategy
- Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030
- Local Government Act 2020
- ARCC Road Management Plan
- ARCC Asset Management Policy
- Council Plan and Community Vision

Sustainability Implications

The strategy strongly supports social sustainability by improving community safety, well being and liveability. By reducing trauma and improving equitable access to transport the strategy contribute to stronger and more connected communities. The strategy supports long term economic sustainability by reducing the economic costs of road trauma, supporting freight efficiency and safer transport routes,

particularly in our municipality with strong agriculture and industry reliance, and promoting the attractiveness of the municipality for tourism and investment into the future.

Risk Assessment

Key risks include continued road trauma without intervention and changing traffic patterns and environmental conditions which are able to be mitigated through data prioritisation, monitoring and reporting.

Collaborative Tendering Opportunity

NA

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Extensive stakeholder engagement including community workshops and online engagement through "Engage Ararat" has been undertaken. This feedback has directly informed the priorities and actions associated with this plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Endorse the draft Community Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030

**MOVED CR KAUR
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

That:

1. **Endorse the draft Community Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030**

Cr Kaur and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5350/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Draft Community Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 is provided as Attachment 3.3



Ararat Rural City

**Community Road Safety Strategy and Action
Plan Ararat Rural City Council
2025-2030**



From the Mayor

[Message from the Mayor emphasising the importance of road safety and the Council's commitment to Vision Zero]*** **MEDIA**

Acknowledgement of Country

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 recognises 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.

Author of report

This report was prepared by DWB Engineering in accordance with the scope of services engaged by Ararat Rural City Council.



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Ararat Rural City Council - About Our Municipality

Local Context

Overview and Demographic

Ararat Rural City has a population of over 11,000 people, based on 2021 census data, and is situated 198km west of Melbourne on the Western Highway, which connects the region to Adelaide. Ararat sits at an important road junction with the Pyrenees Highway, which connects northwestern Victoria with the Port of Portland in the south.

Ararat Rural City is the gateway to the world-renowned Grampians Region and is characterised by long travel distances, high-speed rural roads and a dispersed population, all of which influence road safety risk.

Advanced manufacturing, agriculture, food and wine production, construction, healthcare and tourism experiences underpin the economy.

Ararat is a major regional service centre in Victoria's mid-west and is supported by several small rural townships. Ararat Rural City has excellent schools, hospitals, transport connections and amenities that support a regional lifestyle.

Key Transport Networks

There are currently:

- 746 kilometres of Sealed Roads
- 1,420 kilometres of Unsealed Roads
- 240 kilometres of Natural Surface Roads

Road infrastructure is extensive within the Ararat Rural City Council, with current road surface volumes exceeding 740km of sealed road and 1400km of unsealed road. Road infrastructure serves the purpose of travel from one place to another, typically via vehicle or truck, but may also include other road-registered vehicles such as heavy farm equipment. There is also an increasing number of active transport users for work and recreational use in the region, with many natural surface trails and paths within the municipality.

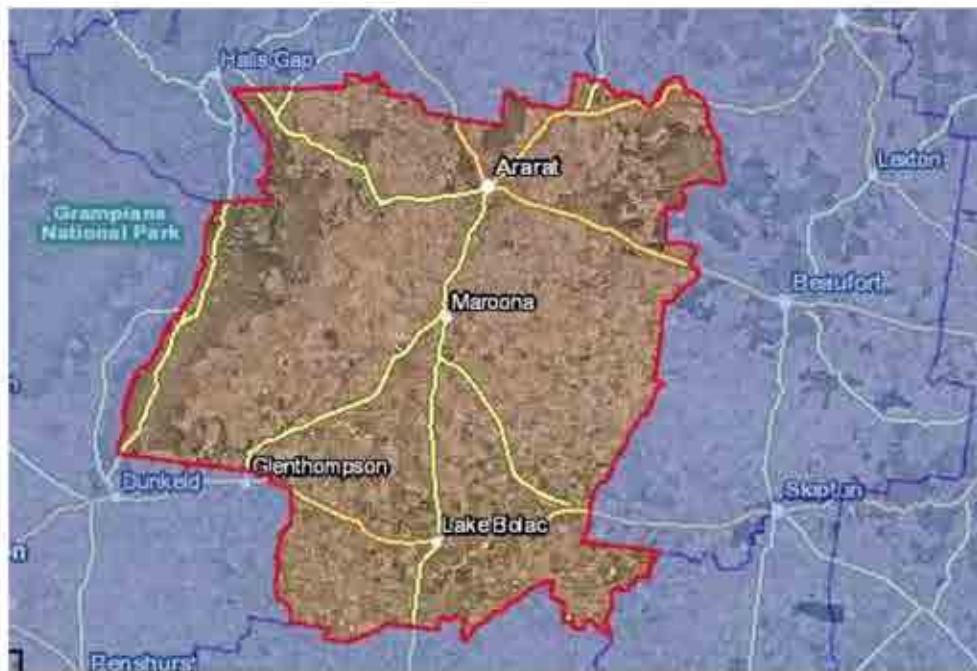


Figure 1: Ararat Rural City Council Municipality **NEED A BETTER MAP**

Arterial roads within the municipality are:

- Western Highway
- Glenelg Highway
- Mortlake-Ararat Road
- Ararat-Halls Gap Road
- Maroona-Glenthompson Road
- Rossbridge-Streatham Road
- Ararat-St Arnaud Road
- Pomonal Road
- Grampians Road
- Pyrenees Highway

There are 5 adjoining Municipalities, including:

- Pyrenees Shire Council
- Moyne Shire Council
- Southern Grampians Shire Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Corangamite Shire Council

Road Safety Challenges

Ararat Rural City Council manages an extensive and varied road network that plays a vital role in supporting local communities, businesses and visitors. The combination of long travel distances, high-speed rural roads, freight and agricultural traffic, and seasonal tourism increases road safety risk across the municipality. Recognising these local conditions is essential to ensuring road safety actions are well targeted, practical and focused on creating safer outcomes for everyone who lives in, works in or travels through Ararat Rural City.

Federal, State, and Local Government Context

This strategy does not exist in isolation; it aligns with the National Road Safety Strategy and Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030, which set the ambitious target of halving road deaths and reducing serious injuries by 2030. At a local level, this document supports the Ararat Rural City Council Plan 2021–2025 (current), specifically the objective to develop and maintain key enabling infrastructure. It also integrates with our Community Vision 2031, which aspires to create sustainable and effective local transport networks underpinned by careful technical and financial planning.

What is Happening on Our Roads?

Current Road Safety Issues

Recent analysis of crash statistics from 2020 to 2024 reveals that while the total number of crashes has fluctuated, the severity of trauma remains a critical concern. In these five years, there were 158 reported casualty crashes within the municipality. The most prevalent crash types are "run-off-road" incidents on straights and curves, which account for over 25% of all casualty crashes. Intersection safety is also a major issue, with "cross traffic" collisions accounting for 22 casualty crashes.

Road Safety Data

It was found Ararat Rural City Council recorded number of crashes has been fluctuating over the last 12 years, as shown below. Generally the number of crashes has fluctuated, the trend of the recorded incidents is towards zero; however, the rate is slow, approximately 1% per year.

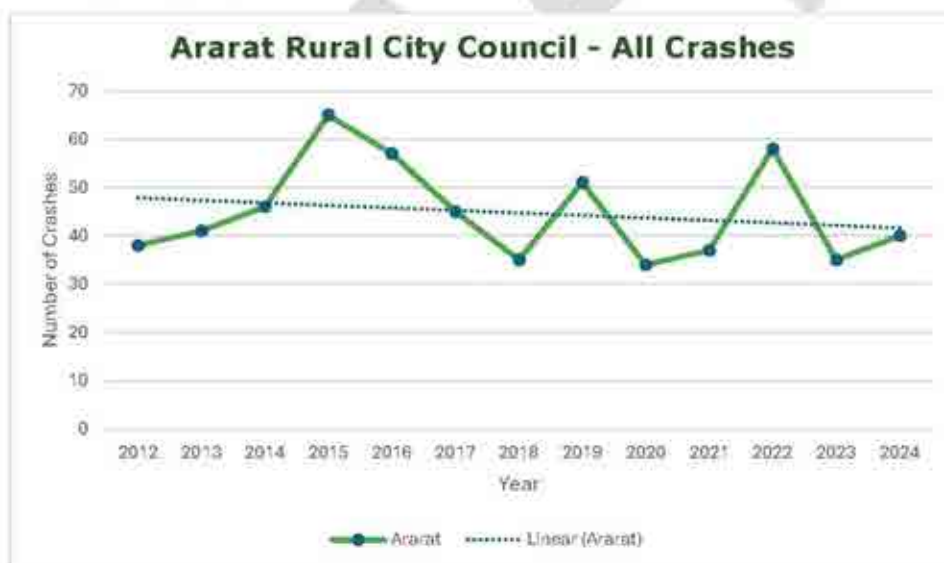


Figure 2: Ararat Rural City Council All Crashes 2012-2024

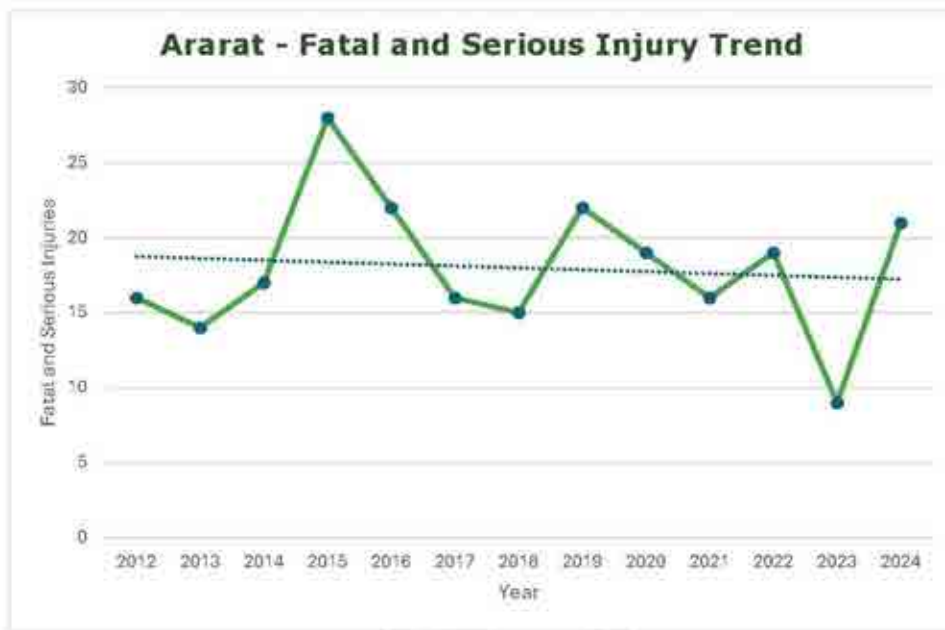


Figure 3: Ararat Rural City Council Fatal and Serious Injuries 2012-2024

Comparing against surrounding municipalities, Ararat Rural City Council has fewer serious and fatal injuries than its neighbouring councils. [The trends of surrounding councils are similar; however, Ararat Rural City Council has been the benchmark in the area for multiple years. The recorded statistics are fluctuating, and the trend towards zero is at a slow rate in comparison to other neighbouring councils.

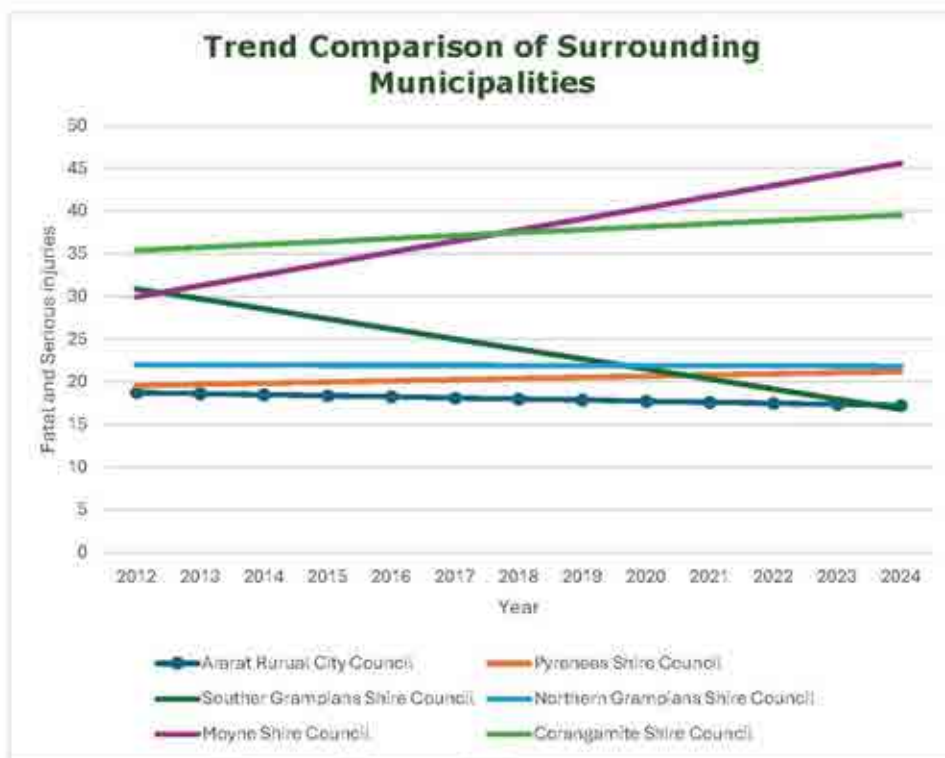


Figure 4 Trend Comparison of Surrounding Municipalities

What the Last Five Years of Data Tell Us

The following analysis is based on 5 years of verified crash data (January 2020 – December 2024) sourced from the Road Crash Information System (RCIS).

Over the five years, Ararat’s road network recorded 158 casualty crashes, resulting in significant human impact. Tragically, five lives were lost, with a concerning recent trend emerging—three fatalities occurred in 2024 alone after no fatalities were recorded in 2023. In addition in the same 5 year period, 83 people sustained serious injuries. Crash frequency peaked in 2022 with 43 casualty crashes and subsequently reduced to 29 in 2023 and 30 in 2024; however, despite this overall reduction, crash severity remains high, highlighted by the sharp increase in fatalities in the most recent year.

Analysis of Predominant Crash Types Using DCA (Definition for Coding Accidents) Classifications:

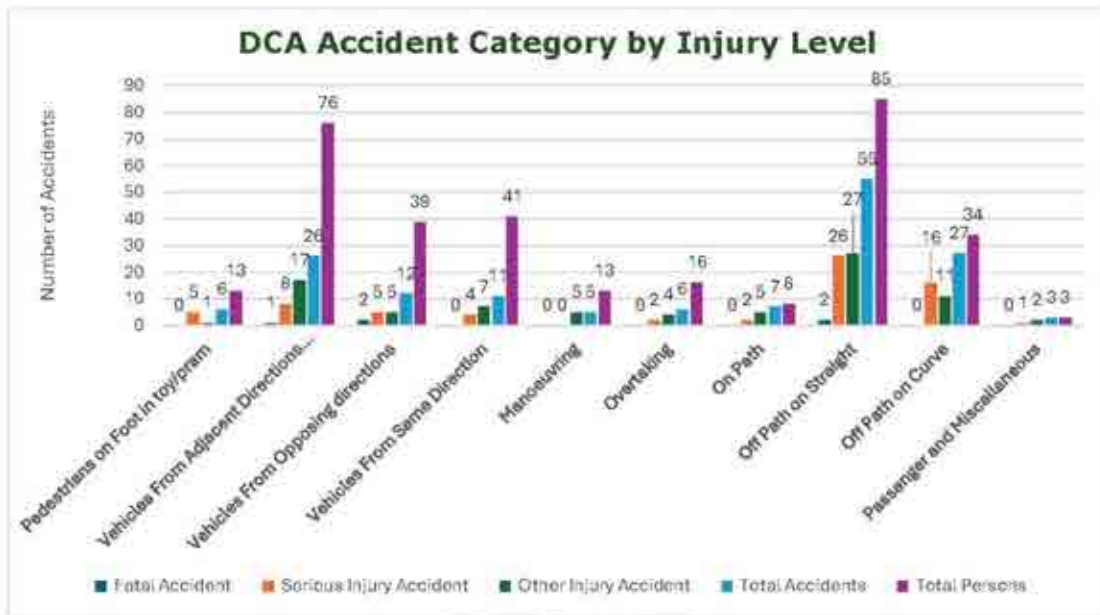


Figure 5 DCA Accident Category by Injury level 2020-2024

Run-off-road crashes represent the primary safety risk on the network, accounting for the majority of recorded trauma. The most common crash type was DCA 171 (left off road on a straight), with 23 crashes resulting in 11 serious injuries. This was followed by DCA 173 (right off road on a straight), which accounted for 17 crashes, including 10 serious injuries and two fatalities. DCA 181 (off right bend into an object) was also

significant, contributing to nine incidents and five serious injuries, further reinforcing run-off-road events as the dominant and most severe crash mechanism.

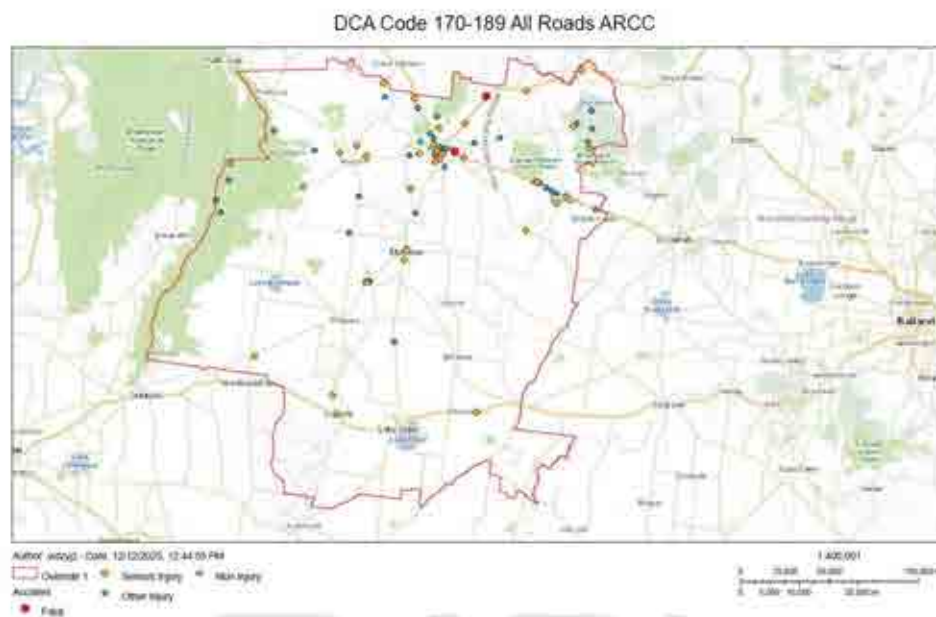


Figure 6 Run Off Road Crashes Over Ararat Rural City Council 2020-2024 **I NEED TO REDO TITLE ON HERE**

Figure 6 (above) shows all the runoff road categorised crashes throughout the municipality. It is noted that this type of crash occurs throughout the whole municipality, with clusters in Buangor and Ararat heavily on Arterial roads.

DCA Code 170-189 Non Declared Roads ARCC



Figure 7 Run Off Road Type Crashes on Non-Declared Roads 2020 - 2024

DCA Code 170-189 Non Declared Roads ARCC Speed Limit above 80km/h



Figure 8 Run Off Road Non-Declared Roads Above 80km/h 2020-2024

Roads managed by the Council with speed limits above 80km/h equate to over 33% of crashes under this category, and there were no trends in locations on non-declared roads.

Intersection crashes and opposing-direction crashes also present a significant safety concern due to their severity. DCA 110 (cross-traffic at intersections) was the second most common crash type, accounting for 13 incidents, including one fatality and seven serious injuries. Although less frequent, head-on collisions (DCA 120) were particularly severe, with eight crashes resulting in three fatalities and five serious injuries, highlighting the disproportionate risk associated with these crash types.

Vulnerable road users are disproportionately affected by crash trauma across the network. Motorcyclists are notably over-represented, with 25 riders involved in crashes, of whom 10 sustained serious injuries, representing a 40 per cent serious injury rate. Pedestrians are at even greater risk, with nine pedestrian crashes recorded, five of which resulted in fatal or serious injury, underscoring the extreme vulnerability of pedestrians when incidents occur.

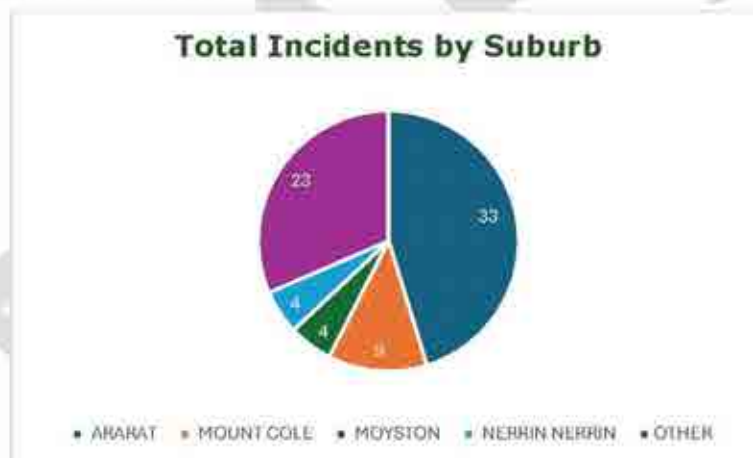


Figure 9 Total Incidents by Suburb 2020-2024

Spatial analysis indicates higher crash frequencies in Ararat and generally the Bush Trail recreational areas, such as Mount Cole. Ararat records almost three times as many crashes as the next township, Mount Cole. These figures are likely influenced by population distribution, as the Ararat city encompasses 59% of the municipality's population, meaning significantly higher populations and traffic activity than smaller surrounding townships. Mount Cole had 9 Incidents as shown in the figure above, indicating high recreational use with the bushland trails.

What You Told Us

To ensure this strategy reflects the lived experience of our residents, we undertook a comprehensive engagement process involving community workshops and the "Engage Ararat" online social mapping tool. This feedback provided a clear picture of the community's safety priorities and the specific locations where residents feel most at risk.

During the workshops, participants ranked potential safety interventions by priority. The results were decisive, with the community identifying four clear priorities for immediate action:

Fixing Potholes & Edge Drop-offs

This was identified by the community as the highest road safety priority. Residents highlighted that deteriorated road surfaces, particularly the combination of potholes within the traffic lane and significant edge drop-offs along sealed roads, create serious safety risks across the municipality. Potholes can lead to sudden steering or braking responses, vehicle damage and loss of control, while edge drop-offs increase the difficulty and danger of safely recovering a vehicle if it leaves the sealed surface. Together, these conditions significantly heighten the risk of run-off-road crashes and near-miss incidents, especially on high-speed rural roads and for heavy vehicles, agricultural machinery, motorcyclists and drivers unfamiliar with local roads. Addressing both potholes and edge drop-offs through proactive maintenance and targeted treatments is therefore critical to improving vehicle control, reducing crash severity and enhancing safety across the road network.

Intersection upgrades

Intersection upgrades were strongly supported by the community as a key measure to improve road safety. Residents identified intersections as locations where conflict between vehicles frequently occurs, particularly where traffic volumes, turning movements and sight distance limitations intersect. There was strong support for installing roundabouts or dedicated turning lanes as effective ways to reduce the number and severity of conflict points, improve traffic flow and make driver intentions clearer. These treatments were seen as particularly important on higher-speed approaches and at intersections used by heavy vehicles and visitors unfamiliar with the local road network. Upgrading intersections in this way is considered a critical step in reducing the likelihood and severity of crashes, particularly those involving cross-traffic and turning movements.

Speed limit reviews

Residents strongly supported the review of speed limits, particularly within residential areas, town centres and around schools, to ensure that posted speeds better reflect the surrounding road environment and level of activity. Community feedback highlighted concerns that existing speed limits in some locations do not adequately account for pedestrian movement, cyclist activity, roadside development and frequent turning movements. There was a clear expectation that speed limits should align with how roads are used, rather than solely their physical characteristics, and that lower speeds in high-activity areas would improve safety, comfort and amenity. Reviewing speed limits, supported by appropriate infrastructure and road design, was seen as an important step in reducing crash severity and creating safer, more liveable local streets.

School Zone Safety

School zone safety was identified as a top community concern, with strong support for redesigning school drop-off and pick-up areas to better protect children. Residents highlighted that congestion, vehicle turning movements, reversing, and informal stopping behaviours during peak school times create heightened safety risks for students, parents and staff. There was a clear desire for improved layouts that better separate vehicles from pedestrian movements, provide safer crossing points, and reduce conflict between cars, buses and active travel users. Redesigning school zones to improve visibility, traffic flow and speed management was seen as critical to creating safer school environments and encouraging safe travel to and from school. It was also noted that Ararat College do not have a designated crossing area with a supervised crossing person, creating an inferior environment with a higher likelihood of an incident occurring. It is not uncommon to find supervised school crossing at a high school in other nearby councils on arterial roads due to the higher volumes of traffic.

locations, which were described as contributing to frequent near-miss incidents. These issues were noted to be exacerbated during periods of higher traffic volumes and by drivers unfamiliar with the local road network. The combination of limited sight lines and ambiguous intersection layouts was seen to increase the risk of turning and cross-traffic conflicts, reinforcing the need for targeted intersection upgrades to improve visibility, clarify priority and reduce the likelihood of crashes.

Vulnerable Road Users

The safety of vulnerable road users was a strong theme in community feedback, with a clear demand for improved active transport infrastructure. A dedicated shared path along Warrak Road connecting to the Prison and Abattoir was identified as "essential" to support the safety of staff, visitors and other pedestrians and cyclists. Residents highlighted that the absence of separated infrastructure along this corridor forces vulnerable road users to travel close to high-speed traffic and heavy vehicles, significantly increasing the risk of serious injury in the event of a crash. Providing a dedicated shared path was viewed as a critical measure to separate active transport users from vehicle movements, improve accessibility and encourage safer, more sustainable travel options along this important employment corridor.

It was also noted during the community consultation that there was a strong demand for accessibility for people with disabilities, especially near amenities and key infrastructure such as medical centres and hospitals.

Wildlife Hazards

Wildlife hazards were consistently identified by the community as a significant road safety issue, particularly along the Ararat-Halls Gap Road. Residents reported frequent wildlife strikes involving kangaroos and deer, especially during dawn, dusk and night time periods when animal movement is most common, and driver visibility is reduced. These collisions were noted to pose serious risks not only to animal welfare but also to driver safety, with the potential for severe vehicle damage, loss of control and serious injury. There were strong calls for targeted speed reductions, improved warning signage and other mitigation measures to better reflect the heightened wildlife risk along this corridor and reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes.

Key Concerns

Ararat Rural City Council faces the challenge of addressing high-severity road trauma, evidenced by 158 casualty crashes and five fatalities between 2020 and 2024. Data analysis identifies "run-off-road" incidents on high-speed rural corridors and intersection collisions as the primary drivers of trauma, particularly on key origin-

destination routes. These statistical findings are strongly corroborated by community feedback, which prioritises the rectification of road surface hazards, specifically potholes and edge drop-offs and the engineering of safer intersections to mitigate cross-traffic type crash risks. Furthermore, the disproportionate severity of injuries among vulnerable road users, combined with localised risks such as wildlife strikes and school zone congestion, underscores the need for a strategic focus on forgiving infrastructure, speed management, and improved active transport links.

- Rossbridge-Streatham Road: High incidence of surface hazards contributing to loss-of-control risks. (Managed by DTP)
- Moyston-Great Western Road: Narrow shoulders contributing to run-off-road (DCA 171) incidents. Managed by DTP)
- Ararat-Halls Gap Road: High frequency of wildlife strikes and tourist traffic incidents. (Assumed not all incidents have been recorded, as there may only be vehicle damage.) (Managed by DTP)
- High St, Tobin St & View Point St Intersection: A known hotspot for cross-traffic (DCA 110) conflicts. (Managed by Council)

How We Will Move Towards Zero Trauma – Vision Zero & The Safe System

Principles of the Safe System

The safe system is internationally regarded as the most appropriate framework used to dramatically reduce road trauma.

Over the past ten years, for example, Sweden has reduced fatalities and serious injuries by almost 40%.

The Safe System framework has been committed to being utilised by Ararat Rural City Council for current and future road safety projects and initiatives to achieve further road trauma reductions throughout the municipality and set the standard for the region.



Figure 11: The Safe System Overview



Figure 12: The Safe System

The safe system framework is based upon the following 5 principles. Ararat Rural City Council are committed to applying these to current and future projects.

No death or serious injury occurring on our road network is acceptable.

Road Safety needs to focus on the reduction of fatalities and Serious Injuries.

People are Vulnerable

Vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, e-scooter riders and motorcyclists, face a myriad of risks on today's roads.

These individuals often lack the protective structures afforded by vehicles, making them particularly susceptible to serious injuries or fatalities in the event of a collision.

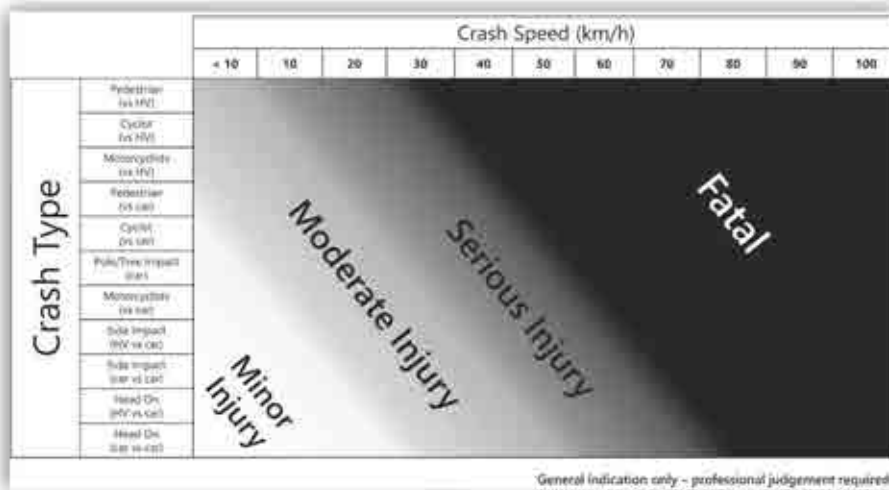


Figure 13: Severity Guidance Sheet (Figure 10.3, Austroads 2022)

People Make Mistakes

Humans are fallible and will inevitably make mistakes when driving, riding or walking. However, these crashes should not result in fatal and serious injury. The safe system recognises the unavoidable nature of human error, and rather than blaming the road user for an incident, there are a range of factors that contribute to a crash such as road design, road maintenance and road use.

Shared Responsibility

Creating a safe road network is everyone’s responsibility. The Ararat Rural City Council, local businesses, organisations and the community all have a role to play in order for us to move towards zero.

Elements of the Safe System

Safer Roads

Relates to both the road itself and the roadside. This considers ways to design, operate and maintain the road network to reduce the chance of a crash occurring as well as the consequence when one does occur.

Safer Speeds

Relates to the speed at which vehicles are likely to travel on the road. Factors that influence operating speeds include posted speed limits, the level of compliance with the

speed limit and physical constraints. Unsafe speeds can increase both likelihood and consequence of a crash.

Safer Road Users

Relates to road user behaviour, driver / rider training and licensing, levels of compliance and personal safety equipment, particularly in the case of vulnerable road users such as cyclists and motorcyclists.

Safer Vehicles

Relates to the safety features, including intelligent technologies that are incorporated into vehicles of different types, which contribute to crash avoidance and / or reducing the severity of crashes.

How Vision Zero Aligns with the Council Vision 2031

This strategy is directly linked to the Ararat Rural City Council Community Vision 2031. The Vision commits to "sustainable and effective local transport networks" where enabling infrastructure supports social and economic growth. By embedding the Safe System principles, we ensure that our transport network is not only efficient but fundamentally safe for all users, supporting our goal of being a place of strength, compassion, and self-reliance.

Our Role

Council plays a multifaceted role as a road manager, land-use planner, and community advocate. Our primary responsibility is the design, construction, and maintenance of the local road network. However, we also have a critical role partnership with State Government for improvements to arterial roads, facilitating road safety education, and partnering with Victoria Police and other agencies to address behavioural issues.

What Works in Addressing Road Trauma?

Safer Roads

Goal: Roads should be "forgiving" of errors and designed to minimize the severity of crashes.

- **Flexible Barriers:** Installing flexible roadside and centre-line barriers on high-speed roads can reduce run-off-road and head-on crashes by up to 85%.
- **Tactile Lines:** Audio-tactile edge and centre lines ("rumble strips") help alert drivers who are drifting. Studies show a 29% reduction in single-vehicle run-off-road crashes where these are used on rural roads.
- **Intersection Safety:**
 - **Roundabouts:** Consistently reduce casualty crashes by 70% to 80% by slowing traffic and changing impact angles.
 - **Safety Cameras:** Speed and red-light cameras at intersections have been shown to reduce casualty crashes by 47% on the leg of the intersection facing the camera.
- **Separation:** Dedicated paths for cyclists and pedestrians separate vulnerable users from heavy vehicles and high-speed traffic

Safer Speeds

Goal: Ensure travel speeds suit the safety standard of the road and the physical tolerance of road users.

Impact Tolerance: Research shows the risk of death or serious injury escalates rapidly above certain impact speeds:

- 30 km/h for a pedestrian struck by a car.
- 50 km/h for a side-impact crash.

- 70 km/h for a head-on crash.

Small Reductions Matter: A decrease of just 1 km/h in average traffic speed can result in a 3% decrease in injury crashes and a 4–5% decrease in fatal crashes.

Traffic Calming: Measures in residential streets (e.g., speed humps, slow points) can reduce injury crashes by 25%.

Safer People

Goal: Encourage safe behaviour and alert driving, while acknowledging human fallibility.

Enforcement: Intensive and targeted enforcement is effective. Random breath testing and drug testing create a "general deterrence" effect.

Alcohol Interlocks: These devices reduce re-offending by approximately 67% during the interlock period.

Graduated Licensing: Systems that require minimum supervised driving hours (e.g., 120 hours for learners) help young drivers build experience safely.

Protective Gear: Wearing a properly adjusted seatbelt reduces the risk of fatal or serious injury by up to 50%. For motorcyclists, protective clothing and helmets are critical.

Safer Vehicles

Goal: Promote vehicles that can prevent crashes or protect occupants during a crash.

Active Safety Technology:

- **Electronic Stability Control (ESC):** Reduces single-vehicle crashes by 32% and rollover crashes by 59%.
- **Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB):** Can reduce real-world rear-end crashes by 38%.
- **Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS) for Motorcycles:** Shown to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes by 39% in Australian conditions.

Side Curtain Airbags: Reduce the risk of death in driver-side crashes by 37%.

Fleet Safety: If every driver drove the safest vehicle in their class, death and serious injury would drop by an estimated 26%.

What Does Not Work

While the Ararat Rural City Council Road Safety Strategy prioritises evidence-based solutions, it's also important to acknowledge approaches that have been shown to have

limited effectiveness in reducing road trauma. Understanding what doesn't work helps us avoid investing resources in initiatives that are unlikely to yield significant or lasting safety improvements.

Training Without Experience: Traditional driver training that focuses on vehicle handling skills without an on-road context can lead to overconfidence and increased risk-taking behaviour. While mastering vehicle control is important, research suggests that such training, in isolation, doesn't necessarily translate to safer decision-making on real roads.

Fear Appeals Alone: "Shock and awe" advertising campaigns generally have diminishing returns if they are not supported by tangible enforcement and infrastructure improvements. While raising awareness is crucial, relying solely on fear-based messaging does not change the underlying system that allows mistakes to happen or provide practical strategies for safer behaviour.

Blaming the User: Relying on road users to be "perfect" at all times is ineffective. The Safe System approach recognises that human error is inevitable, and the system must be designed to accommodate it, rather than just punishing it. Focusing exclusively on individual responsibility ignores the critical role of road design, speed limits, and vehicle safety in preventing crashes and mitigating their severity.

One-Off Education: Short-term education programs without ongoing reinforcement or practical application have limited impact on long-term behavioural change. Sustainable safety improvements require continuous engagement, practical skill-building, and a supportive environment that reinforces safe choices over time.

Our Strategic Approach and Action Plan

Strategic Approach

Ararat Rural City Council is committed to the Safe System approach and the long-term vision of zero deaths and serious injuries on our road network. Consistent with Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030 and the principles of Vision Zero, Council recognises that road trauma is preventable and that no loss of life is acceptable.

Moving towards zero requires a fundamental shift in how road safety is planned, delivered and evaluated. Rather than focusing solely on individual road user behaviour, this strategy acknowledges that people make mistakes and are physically vulnerable, and that the road system must be designed and managed, so those mistakes do not result in death or serious injury.

Council's goals are therefore focused on reducing the likelihood of crashes occurring and, where crashes do occur, ensuring the forces involved are within levels the human body can tolerate. This will be achieved through a balanced application of the Safe System pillars — safer roads, safer speeds, safer road users and safer vehicles — and through strong partnerships with State Government, emergency services, industry and the community.

In a predominantly rural municipality such as Ararat, this means prioritising safety on high-speed rural roads, addressing run-off-road and intersection risks, protecting vulnerable road users in townships, and ensuring road environments support safe travel for residents, visitors and those who use the road network for work.

The overarching goal of this strategy is to provide clear strategic direction for Council's Road Safety Action Plan, guiding the prioritisation of resources and actions to achieve meaningful and sustained reductions in road trauma across the municipality.

Targets

The targets set out in this Road Safety Action Plan have been developed to align with and support Council's broader planning framework, including the Council Plan, Asset Management Plans, Active Transport and Lifestyle Strategy, Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Community Vision 2031. By aligning road safety targets with existing service levels, renewal priorities and strategic objectives, Council ensures that safety outcomes are integrated into core asset management, infrastructure investment and community wellbeing initiatives. This approach supports coordinated decision-making, maximises the effectiveness of available resources, and ensures that

road safety improvements contribute to wider goals such as accessibility, economic participation, environmental resilience and liveable communities.

These targets focus on reducing fatal and serious injuries, particularly in areas of highest risk within the municipality. They recognise that while zero is the ultimate goal, interim targets are critical to driving accountability, prioritising investment and monitoring effectiveness over time.

Council's road safety targets are:

- By 2030, achieve a minimum 30% reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes on Council-managed roads, relative to the 2020–2024 baseline.
- By 2027, achieve an interim 10% reduction in fatal and serious injuries, demonstrating early progress toward longer-term outcomes.
- Reduce fatal and serious injury crashes on high-speed rural roads by at least 30% by 2030, with a focus on run-off-road and head-on crash types.
- Reduce fatal and serious injury crashes at priority intersections by 40% by 2030.
- Reduce fatal and serious injuries involving vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) by 40% by 2030, particularly within townships and activity centres.
- Reduce fatal and serious injuries involving vehicles used for work, including heavy vehicles, by 25% by 2028.

Progress against these targets will be monitored annually by council assets department using verified crash data, supported by community feedback and local risk assessments. Targets will be reviewed and refined over time to reflect emerging trends, changes in the road network and advances in road safety practice.

Ararat Rural City Council – Safe System Action Plan (2025–2030)

This Action Plan translates Safe System goals into deliverable, measurable actions and clearly demonstrates alignment with the four Safe System pillars: Safer Roads, Safer Speeds, Safer Road Users and Safer Vehicles. It has been structured for direct inclusion in Council’s Community Road Safety Strategy and has been developed to align with Victoria’s Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030, as well as relevant State Government policies and Council plans, strategies and asset management frameworks that guide transport, infrastructure, safety and community wellbeing outcomes.

Goal 1: Reduce Fatal and Serious Injuries on High-Speed Rural Road

SMART Goal: By 2030, reduce fatal and serious injury crashes on high-speed rural local roads by at least 30%, with an interim reduction of 10% by 2027.

Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Treat high-risk rural corridors (shoulder sealing, audible edge lines, safety barriers)	✓				Kilometres treated; FSI crashes.	By 2030, achieve ≥30% reduction in fatal and serious injuries on treated corridors.	Council; DTP
Progressive roadside hazard removal program	✓				Number of hazards removed	By 2028, treat 100% of currently identified 'extremely high-risk' sites and 75% of 'high-risk' sites.	Council

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Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Rural speed environment reviews on priority corridors		✓			Reviews completed; speed compliance	By 2027, complete speed reviews on all priority corridors (generally defined as Link Roads, characterised by description in the Ararat Rural City Council Roads and transport Asset Management Plan)	Council; DTP
Community education on rural road risks (speed, fatigue, wildlife)			✓		Campaign delivery and reach	Annually deliver rural road safety education campaigns	Council; TAC

Goal 2: Prevent Severe Run-Off-Road Crashes

SMART Goal: By 2030, assess and treat 100% of identified high-risk run-off-road locations using Safe System-aligned treatments.

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Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Network-wide run-off-road risk assessment	✓				Percentage of network assessed	By 2027, assess 100% of the sealed rural road network to provide a Risk Score in accordance with a Network Roadside Risk Intervention Threshold (NRRIT)	Council
Develop Jurisdictional Policy for NRRIT	✓				Policy Developed	Jurisdictional Policy developed to meet Council's financial commitment and capacity	Council
Install delineation, curve warning and tactile linemarking	✓				Number of sites treated	Treat all priority sites within three years of identification	Council

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Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Upgrade high-risk curves with barriers or geometry improvements	✓				FSI crashes at treated sites	Due to the current absence of completed network-wide NRRIT assessments, the program will initially target locations identified as high risk through preliminary screening methods, including crash trends, roadside hazard characteristics, traffic exposure and operational considerations. Formal assessment against NRRIT criteria will continue throughout program development to validate and refine treatment priorities. By 2030, achieve ≥40% reduction in fatal and serious injuries at treated sites	Council; DTP

Goal 3: Improve Safety at High-Risk Intersections:

SMART Goal: By 2030, reduce fatal and serious injury crashes at priority intersections by 40%.

33

Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Upgrade priority intersections (roundabouts, turn lanes, splitter islands)	✓				Funding effectively invested	By 2029, allocate available program funding and percentage of capital works budget toward the treatment of high-risk intersections, prioritised in accordance with network risk and Safe System principles. By 2029, treat 100% of identified priority intersections	Council; DTP
Carry out existing condition Road Safety Audits on priority intersections	✓				No of Existing Condition Road Safety Audits	Carry out 5 existing condition road safety audits each year.	
Improve lighting, sight distance and linemarking	✓				Audit compliance	Implement 100% of 'extreme' RSA recommendations	Council
Undertake Road Safety Audits for all major intersection works	✓				Audit actions implemented	Implement at least 90% of High or Extreme road safety audit recommendations	Council

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Goal 4: Protect Vulnerable Road Users in Townships

SMART Goal: By 2030, reduce fatal and serious injuries involving pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists by 40%

Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Deliver pedestrian crossings, refuges and school-zone upgrades	✓	✓			Treatments delivered	By 2028, treat all identified high-risk pedestrian locations	Council
Expand shared path connections in Ararat and Moyston	✓				Kilometres delivered	By 2030, deliver continuous shared-path priority links based on community engagement through the development of the strategy.	Council
Motorcycle-focused curve and surface improvements	✓				Motorcycle FSI crashes	By 2030, achieve ≥40% reduction in motorcycle fatal and serious injuries	Council
Road safety education for schools and the community			✓		Program participation	Annually deliver road safety education across all schools	Council; TAC

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Goal 5: Align Speeds with Road Function and Risk

SMART Goal: By 2027, complete speed limit reviews on all Council-managed roads adjacent to townships, schools and high-risk corridors.

Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Evidence-based speed limit reviews		✓			Reviews completed	By 2027, complete speed reviews for all townships and priority corridors	Council; DTP
Implement traffic calming and gateway treatments	✓	✓			Operating speed changes	Achieve a minimum 10 km/h reduction in operating speeds where applied	Council
Support Victoria Police speed compliance activities		✓	✓		Enforcement activity	Support targeted enforcement activities annually	Victoria Police

Goal 6: Improve Safety for Those Using Roads for Work

SMART Goal: By 2028, reduce fatal and serious injuries involving vehicles used for work by 25%.

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Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Apply Safe System principles to all roadworks traffic management	✓	✓			Worksite compliance	From 2026, achieve 100% compliance at Council roadwork sites	Council
Improve heavy vehicle route geometry and shoulders	✓				Work-related FSI crashes	By 2028, achieve ≥25% reduction in work-related fatal and serious injury crashes for local businesses and the Council	Council
Council fleet safety standards (procurement)				✓	Fleet ANCAP rating	From 2026, ensure 100% of new fleet vehicles are 5-star ANCAP rated	Council

Goal 7: Strengthen Data, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

SMART Goal: By 2026, establish and maintain an annual road safety monitoring and reporting framework.

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Action	Safer Roads	Safer Speeds	Safer Road Users	Safer Vehicles	KPI / Measure	Targets	Lead Partners
Annual analysis of RCIS crash data	✓	✓	✓	✓	Annual report	Publish an annual road safety performance report	Council
Integrate community hazard and near-miss reporting	✓		✓		Issues logged and resolved	Achieve year-on-year improvement in issue resolution rates	Council
Annual review and update of the Action Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	Review completed	Annually review and endorse the Action Plan through Council	Council

Conclusion

Ararat Rural City Council is committed to improving road safety through a strategic and data-driven approach. This plan will be continuously reviewed to ensure effective implementation and a safer community for all road users.

DRAFT

Approved by:

[Name]

[Title]

Ararat Rural City Council

[Date]

For further inquiries or to report road safety concerns, contact [Council Contact Information].

DRAFT

References

This will be completed on final report*****

DRAFT

Glossary

Word / Phrase	Definition
Arterial Roads	A high-order, declared road designed for moderate to high volumes of traffic at higher speeds, acting as a principal route for moving people and freight between major regions, cities, and freeways.
DCA (Definition for Coding Accidents)	A structured, alphanumeric classification system used by Australian road authorities (VIC, TAS, SA) to categorise road crashes based on the movement and interaction of vehicles and pedestrians.
SMART Goal	A structured framework for setting objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable (or Attainable), Relevant (or Realistic), and Time-bound.

Appendix

This will be completed on final report*****

Definition Table

Non Declared Roads

DRAFT

3.4 BUILDING PERMITS

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28967

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

This report proposes a reassessment of the Council's capacity to issue building permits for small sheds, pergolas and carports to ensure the safety of ratepayers and the public.

DISCUSSION

Through the Municipal Building Surveyor, councils administer parts of the Building Act 1993 related to compliance with building regulations. Councils act as a regulator of building safety by undertaking inspections of buildings or sites when required, and issue notices and orders if necessary.

Council staff can assist with advice and technical information in regard to construction, alteration, extension, demolition or change of use for all types of buildings, but Council does not currently issue building permits. These are obtained through registered private building surveyors.

There have been concerns regarding the increasing difficulty of the cost of accessing private building surveyors for small sheds, pergolas and carports, resulting in these structures proceeding to be built without prior assessment of their structural adequacy, safety and suitability to be used or occupied. Rectifying structural, health and safety issues after being built is far more challenging and costly than addressing the issue in the design stage.

Given the difficulty of accessing private building surveyors for small jobs as described above, and the safety and financial risks to the public, it has become timely to reassess Ararat Rural City Council's capacity to issue building permits particularly for small sheds, pergolas and carports.

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's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.

Budget Implications

Budget implications will depend on the reassessment of capacity.

Policy/Relevant Law

Building Act 1993
Building Regulations 2018

Sustainability Implications

Not applicable

Risk Assessment

A reassessment of Council's building permitting capacity is expected to reduce risks to the public.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This report has been prompted by input from stakeholders and observations of an emerging trend in the building permit area related to small sheds, pergolas and carports.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *The CEO develops and executes a plan to establish and sustain Council's capacity to issue building permits by 30 September 2026*

**MOVED CR JOYCE
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

That:

1. **The CEO develops and executes a plan to establish and sustain Council's capacity to issue building permits by 30 September 2026**

Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5351/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

3.5 ARARAT RURAL CITY SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-36

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28969

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 draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan have been released for community consultation, and the final documents are presented to Council for final consideration.

DISCUSSION

The community of Ararat Rural City are passionate about their sport and active recreation. A framework is needed to foster increase participation in physical activity and guide Council's investment decisions in sport and active recreation over the next 10 years.

Following extensive community and stakeholder engagement, the draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan was received by Council at the March 2026 Council Meeting. The draft Strategy and Action Plan was released for a final round of community review and feedback, and submissions closed on 24 April 2026.

One submission was received, and a response is provided in the table below. In response to the submission, item 1.3 of the Action Plan has been updated to include "Ararat" as shown in bold: "Undertake an Aquatic Review to explore options regarding aquatic facilities in Ararat, including potential pool upgrades at Ararat, Willaura and Lake Bolac."

Council wishes to thank everyone who had participated in the community and stakeholder engagement during the development of the Strategy and Action Plan, as well as everyone who took the time to review the final draft documents.

Table 1. Submission received and response to the submission.

Submission
<p>The draft plan provides very little information about Council's intention for the indoor pool. Given the ageing population in Ararat and that the planning identifies swimming as one of the top three activities undertaken - this is very disappointing. The indoor pool as it currently stands is well beyond its use by date. It is currently so cold that it is almost unusable for children and older adults. The change rooms are in desperate need of a makeover.</p> <p>Council has talked about renovation/ redevelopment of the indoor heated pool for a number of years with funding allocated for scoping such developments. Nothing has changed. It is disappointing that so much money can be spent on football facilities, but facilities that are predominantly used by the wider community including older women are neglected.</p> <p>(Response on next page)</p>
Response

Thank you for your feedback. Council recognises the importance of the Ararat Fitness Centre to health and wellbeing and is already in the process of planning for new aquatics facilities in Ararat to meet the future needs of the community.

We are sorry to hear that the pool temperature may not have met the expectations of some patrons. The indoor pool is a shared, multi-use pool that accommodates a range of activities simultaneously, including learn-to-swim lessons, lap swimming and water aerobics classes. Aquatic industry guidelines generally recommend that shared indoor pools used for both lessons and lap swimming operate between 28–30 °C. The Ararat indoor pool is maintained within a balanced operating range of approximately 29–30 °C. This range provides a balance so that patrons undertaking continuous exercise, such as lap swimming or aqua aerobics, can participate safely without overheating, while still remaining comfortable for learn-to-swim participants.

Please be assured that we take feedback about the comfort and safety of our patrons seriously. We continue to monitor both pool temperature and patron feedback to ensure the most comfortable experience possible for all users, within the constraints of a shared facility.

Regarding the redevelopment of the Ararat Fitness Centre, Council had previously completed a feasibility study in 2022 on redeveloping the existing Ararat Fitness Centre, with a Stage 1 cost estimate of \$680,000. However, by 2024 when the Stage 1 redevelopment was planned, cost escalations in the construction sector combined with findings from detailed site inspections resulted in the cost estimate increasing to \$1.84 million for the Stage 1 works.

Council decided to investigate alternative options, including exploring the delivery of new facilities at another location. An upgrade of the Ararat Outdoor Pool to an indoor pool with a new and improved facilities was identified as the option to be investigated further. This work is being undertaken as part of action item 4.2.1 of the Annual Plan 2025/26, which is to progress plans and costings for both a new indoor sports facility and the outdoor pool upgrade. The feedback above, as well as the feedback received during the initial development stages of the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy and the Budget 2026/27 will be considered as part of the planning for the outdoor pool upgrade.

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.

2. 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.

3. 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 has also been undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council endorse the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan

MOVED CR KAUR SECONDED CR JOYCE

That:

1. Council endorse the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan

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

**CARRIED 7/0
5352/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 & The Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36: Action Plan are provided as Attachment 3.5

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

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

Prepared by:



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Supported by:



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

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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 | 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, Wickcliffe 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.



1. Map of Ararat Rural City. Source: Department of Transport and Planning - VOTAMES
<https://map4.vic.gov.au/loc/Victoria%20VIC>

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 million¹.

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.

¹Ararat Rural City Council Asset Plan 2025-35
<http://www.ararat.vic.gov.au/files/default/114925-51111000Agenda/2025/202502-3509Attachment%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:



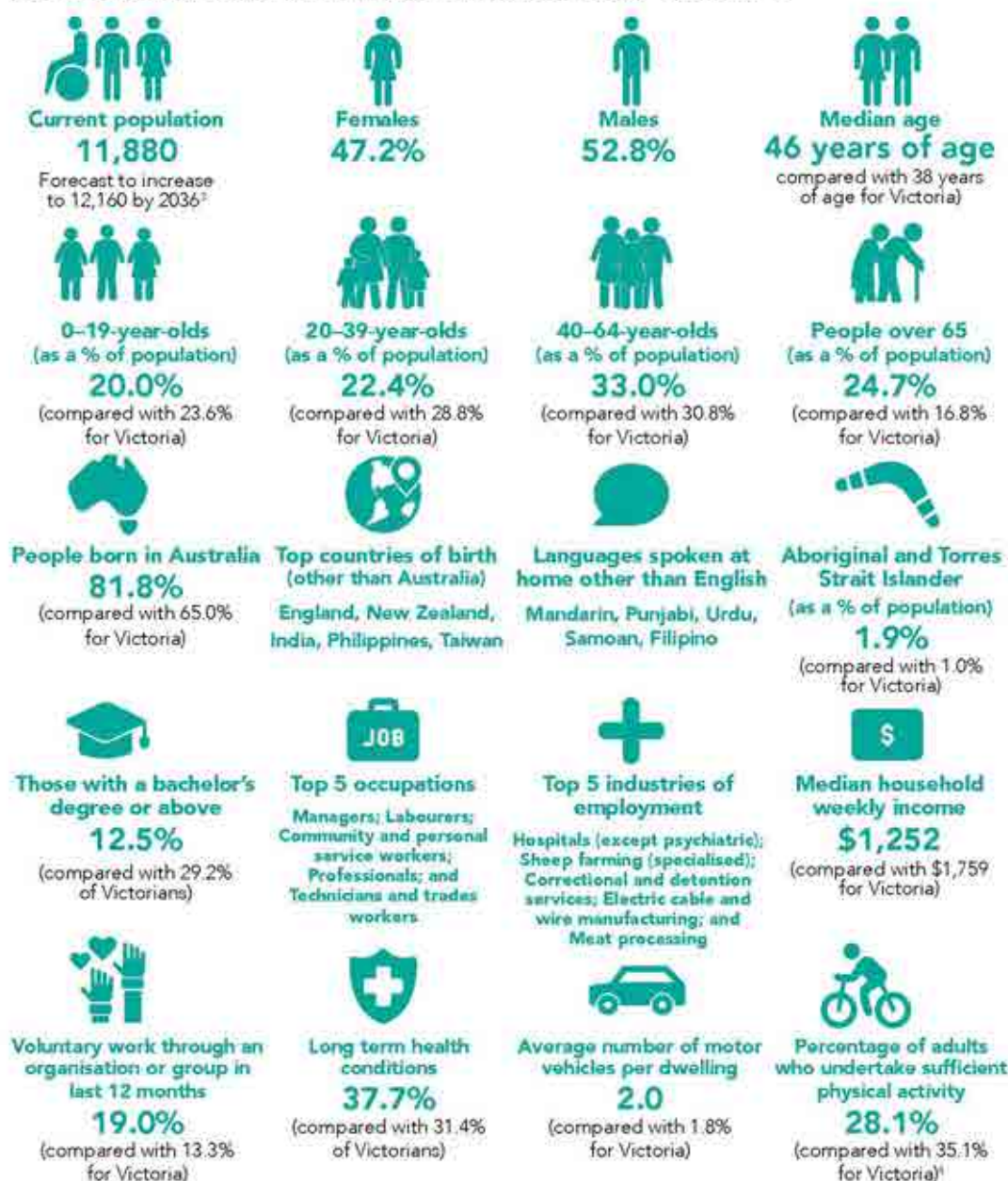
A total of 23 documents were reviewed (a summary is available in the Appendix). Key messages from these documents focused on:

Places	liveable communities, multi-use facilities, safety, equity, facility planning
People	resilience, self-reliance, inclusion, wellbeing, diversity
Partnerships	effective communication, joint-use opportunities, workforce and volunteer capacity
Processes	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 Census² from 2021:



² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census QuickStats (Ararat Rural City Council): <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-browser-data/quickstats/2021/GA2030>

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

⁴ Victorian Population Health Survey 2021: <https://aeh.vic.gov.au/reports/victorian-population-health-survey-2021>

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 table¹ 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"> Increased participation in individual lifestyle activities Growth of female participation in specific sports Participation in growth sport and active recreation activities, e.g. pilates, park run, pickle ball, mountain bike riding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liveability Informal play Outdoor fitness equipment Active transport and linkages Safety Climate change Community hubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programming Accessibility and inclusion Planning Multi-purpose design and diversity Sustainability Management and maintenance Modified versions of existing sports Technology

¹ 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
Liveable and connected	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.
Accessible and inclusive	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.
Equitable	Any facility developments / upgrades, programs or services are designed to ensure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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).
Sustainable	Any proposed facility developments / upgrades, programs and services will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider environmentally sustainable design principles and materials as part of their construction or development, and / or • be financially sustainable to develop, operate and maintain wherever possible.
Evidence-based	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. 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.
Multi-purpose and adaptable	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.
Optimisation	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).
Collaboration	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:

 Pillar 1: Places	 Pillar 2: People	 Pillar 3: Partners	 Pillar 4: Processes
<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.



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Town	Ararat	Buanger	Cathcart	Elmhurst	Green Hill Lake Reserve	Lake Bolac	Maroona	Mininera	Moyston	Pomonal	Pura Pura	Streatham	Tatyoon	Warrack	Wickcliffs	Willaura
Velodrome	X															
Tennis courts	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Swimming pool	X					X										X
Squash courts	X					X										
Soccer fields	X															
Skatepark	X															
Racecourse	X															
Playground	X			X	X	X			X	X				X	X	X
Path / trail	X				X	X										
Oval	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Outdoor fitness equipment	X					X										X
Indoor sports court	X															
Netball courts	X					X		X	X				X			X
Mountain bike facilities	X															
Motor sports / motocross	X															
Gymnastics centre	X															
Gym / fitness centre	X															
Golf club	X															
Golf course	X			X		X						X				X
Fire running track	X															X
Equestrian facilities	X															
Dance studio	X															
Croquet green	X															
Cricketer nets	X	X				X		X	X	X			X		X	X
Bowling green	X					X										X
Boocoe / petanque									X							
Boat ramp					X	X										
BMX	X															
Athletics	X															
Aerial / flying sports	X															
Archery	X															

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
Local Facility	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. 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.
Regional Facility	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. 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.
State / National Facility	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. 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 2023⁶, 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 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%

⁶ 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 Program⁸; 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.

⁸ Victorian State Government (2023) Get Active Voucher - 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; LGBTIQ+ 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.

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

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 Girls⁹ 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



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:

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

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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Ararat Rural City

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ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

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.

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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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:





High priority	»»»	0-4 years
Medium priority	»»	5-9 years
Low priority	»	10 years +
Ongoing	^	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
1.1 Pipeline projects	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"> • Sport and Recreation Victoria • Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations 	Staff time to establish the pipeline of sport and active recreation infrastructure projects annually	Ongoing 
1.2 Larger recreation reserves	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"> • Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria • Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action 	Funds to undertake master plans and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)	High 
1.3 Aquatic facilities	Undertake an Aquatic Review to explore options regarding aquatic facilities in Ararat, including potential pool upgrades at Ararat, Willaura and Lake Bolac.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Bolac Recreation Reserve Committee of Management • Willaura Recreation Reserve Committee of Management • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Funds to undertake an aquatic review and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)	High 

Place	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
1.4 Indoor sports facilities	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"> • Sport and active recreation clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria • State Sporting Associations 	Funds to undertake an indoor sports facility review and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)	High 
1.5 Tracks and trails	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"> • Walking and cycling groups • Recreation Reserve Committees of Management • Sport and Recreation Victoria • Parks Victoria • Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action • Water authorities • Neighbouring Local Government Authorities 	Funds to undertake a tracks and trails strategy and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)	High 
1.6 Play spaces	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"> • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Funds to undertake a play strategy and to implement key priorities (with the assistance of external grants)	Medium 
1.7 Community suggestions	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"> • Specific groups • Recreation Reserve Committees of Management • Sport and Recreation Victoria • Parks Victoria • Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action • Water authorities 	<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 

PILLAR 2: PEOPLE



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

Place	Activity	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
2.1 General population	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"> • Sports clubs • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations 	Staff time	High 
2.2 Women and girls	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"> • Sports clubs • Health centres • Ararat Fitness Centre • Schools • Private sector • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations 	Staff time Project costs	Ongoing 

Place	Activity	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
2.3 CALD communities	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"> • Council's settlement staff • Sports clubs • Ararat Fitness Centre • Health centres • Churches • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations 	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Project costs</p>	Ongoing ↑
2.4 People with disabilities	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"> • Disability organisations • Sports clubs • Ararat Fitness Centre • Health centres • Private sector • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations 	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Project costs</p>	Ongoing ↑

Place	Activity	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
2.5 Older adults	<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"> Planned Activity Groups Senior Citizens Sports typically catering for older adults, e.g. croquet and lawn bowls Ararat Fitness Centre Health centres Private sector Sports Central State Sporting Associations 	<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
3.1 Private sector	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"> Private sector 	Staff time	Ongoing
3.2 Partner organisations	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"> Sports clubs Health organisations Community groups Schools 	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
4.1 Policies, processes and resources	Investigate allocating resources to sport and active recreation planning, facility management, promotion, club support, partnership development and advocacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be determined 	To be determined.	Highest ▶▶▶
	Continue to update existing tools, policies, strategies and processes as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 	Staff time	Ongoing ▲
	Participate in formal and informal regional sport and recreation networks to share information with neighbouring Local Government Authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport and Recreation Victoria Local Government Authorities in the region 	Staff time	Ongoing ▲
	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"> Clubs and organisations Sport and Recreation Victoria DEECA State Sporting Associations 	Staff time	Ongoing ▲
	Continue to update the Asset Database as new information becomes available or conditions change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil 	Staff time	Ongoing ▲

Place	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
4.2 Facility management and planning	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"> • Sport and Recreation Victoria • DEECA • Parks Victoria 	Staff time Facility development and maintenance budgets	Ongoing ↑
	Promote universal design and compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements in facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Staff time Potentially funds to improve accessibility	Ongoing ↑
	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"> • Clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Funds to implement ESD features	Ongoing ↑
	Design any facility developments or upgrades to include consideration of needs to respond to potential climate change impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Funds to implement initiatives that respond to climate change impacts	Ongoing ↑
	Ensure that consideration is given to the development of female change facilities in pavilions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Funds to provide female change facilities at pavilions	Ongoing ↑
	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"> • Schools 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑

Place	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
4.3 Programming and activation	Support initiatives by partner organisations that increase participation in sport and active recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs and organisations • State Sporting Associations • Health organisations • Schools 	Staff time 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"> • Clubs and organisations 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑
	Monitor the impact of potential participation barriers and implement measures to improve accessibility as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nil 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑
4.4 Club / organisational support	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"> • Clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	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"> • Clubs and organisations 	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"> • Sports Central • Relevant State Sporting Associations • Clubs and organisations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑

Place	Details	Partners	Resources	Priority
4.5 Club / organisational support	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"> • Clubs and organisations • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations • Sport and Recreation Victoria 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑
	Promote any government initiative that provides funding or training for potential coaches / sports administrators locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Government • Clubs and organisations • Sports Central 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑
	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"> • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations • Clubs and organisations 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑
	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"> • Sports Central • State Sporting Associations • Clubs and organisations 	Staff time	Ongoing ↑

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.



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3.6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM 2026/2027

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28970

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

This report presents the Community Engagement Program 2026/27, which contributes to the Council Plan 2025-29 objective 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."

This program has been revised with learnings from the Community Engagement Program 2025/26, and outlines indicative dates and locations for the next financial year of engagement.

DISCUSSION

Ararat Rural City Council recognises that the involvement of the community in making decisions and plans is fundamental to good governance. The Ararat Rural City community is culturally diverse and engaged, rich with experience and expertise, whose participation is valued by Council.

The Council Plan 2025-29 strategic objective number 6.3 is to "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." To achieve this objective, Council has developed a regular program of face-to-face community engagement opportunities.

This Community Engagement Program 2026/27 will deliver proactive and meaningful engagement with the wider community, and also assists Council to effectively manage risks. This Program supports Councillors to fulfill their role as defined by the Local Government Act 2020. Councillors represent the interests of the municipal community in their decision making and in their contributions to the strategic direction of the Council.

Councillors are already well connected to their communities, and bring with them their lived experience as residents, farmers, business owners and active members of their community. However, some members of the community may not be engaged in the groups and communities that Councillors interact with. There are also new residents relocating to Ararat who have not met other locals yet, or there are existing residents who become socially isolated for various reasons.

This Program supports Councillors to continually maintain their awareness of the sometimes dynamic and diverse interests and needs of the municipal community. This Program can also help to support social inclusion and connectedness in our communities and support outcomes from the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29.

The attached Community Engagement Program 2026/27 document outlines how Council will engage with community, risk analysis and monitoring and evaluation. The attachment is a 'living document' and will be continually improved and updated to ensure it supports effective community engagement.

Quarterly 'rounds' of community engagement are proposed, with indicative dates and locations below:

Indicative Dates	Indicative Locations
14 to 18 September 2026	Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Tatyoon, Willaura
7 to 11 December 2026	Ararat, Lake Bolac, Mininera, Streatham, Warrak, Wickliffe, Willaura
22 to 25 March 2027 (Budget Engagement Sessions)	Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Tatyoon, Willaura
21 to 25 June 2027	Ararat, Lake Bolac, Mininera, Moyston, Pomonal, Streatham, Warrak, Wickliffe

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 2026/2027 does not have any budget implications. This Program will be delivered within the existing resources and budget.

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 2026/27 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 adopt the Community Engagement Program 2026/2027

**MOVED CR PRESTON
SECONDED CR JOYCE**

That:

- 1. Council adopt the Community Engagement Program 2026/2027**

Cr Preston and Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5353/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Community Engagement Program 2026/27 is Provided as Attachment 3.6



Community Engagement Program

2026/27

Version	Date	Description
1.0	14 May 2026	First draft.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Ararat Rural City Council recognises that the involvement of the community in making decisions and plans is fundamental to good governance. The Ararat Rural City community is culturally diverse and engaged, rich with experience and expertise, whose participation is valued by Council.

The Council Plan 2025-29 strategic objective number 6.3 is to “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.”

To achieve this objective, Council has developed a regular program of face-to-face community engagement opportunities.

1.2 Purpose

This Community Engagement Program will deliver proactive and meaningful engagement with the wider community, and also assists Council to effectively manage risks. This Program supports Councillors to fulfill their role as defined by the Local Government Act 2020. Councillors represent the interests of the municipal community in their decision making and in their contributions to the strategic direction of the Council.

Councillors are already well connected to their communities, and bring with them their lived experience as residents, farmers, business owners and active members of their community. However, some members of the community may not be engaged in the groups and communities that Councillors interact with. There are also new residents relocating to Ararat who have not met other locals yet, or there are existing residents who become socially isolated for various reasons. This Program supports Councillors to continually maintain their awareness of the sometimes dynamic and diverse interests and needs of the municipal community. This Program can also help to support social inclusion and connectedness in our communities and support outcomes from the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29.

The purpose of this document is to outline how Ararat Rural City Council will engage with the community. It is a living document that will be updated in response to the outcomes of engagement activities, stakeholder feedback, risk analysis and monitoring and evaluation.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this Community Engagement Program are:

1. To provide Councillors with opportunities to engage with community, which helps inform the Councillors’ decision making and contributions to the strategic direction of the Council
2. To provide opportunities for community to ask questions, raise concerns and meet Councillors and key staff at the Council.
3. For Council to provide regular and transparent updates on budget initiatives, projects, processes and outcomes to the wider community.
4. For Council to discuss potential projects and ideas, their purpose, objectives, expected benefits, potential impacts, and gather feedback from community and stakeholders.

1.4 Approach

Ararat Rural City Council will be guided by its Community Engagement Policy and the following principles in their communication and engagement with the community:

Table 1

Principle	Our Commitment
The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All community engagement is planned by clearly identifying the purpose, scope and objectives of the community's participation, in the community engagement plan. We will communicate the reasons for engagement with participants.
Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure the community has the information necessary to participate meaningfully in the engagement activities. We will endeavour to provide information that is objective, relevant, timely and easy to understand.
Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will identify the people, communities and stakeholders who are affected by and interested in the topic of engagement. We will reach out to our community to involve and hear from participants that represent the affected and interested groups.
Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will reduce physical, social and cultural barriers to participation. We will consider the needs and perspectives of all groups that may want to be involved in the process. We will seek to obtain the views of a broad cross section of the community, especially when there is a quiet majority. We will allow sufficient time for review of information and participation in varied engagement activities.
Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as the international standard for effective community engagement. We will be guided by IAP2 recommendations. We will inform participants of the level of influence they will have, as described in the IAP2 spectrum's promise to the public, and we will ensure they know the outcomes of any decisions made.

Ararat Rural City Council's stakeholder engagement approach is also informed by the Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). Each community or stakeholder group or individual will have different communication and engagement needs and expectations over the course of different initiatives and projects. Their participation level on each initiative or project will depend on their interests at the time. The table below provides a general overview of the different participation levels.

Table 2

Participation Level	Participation Goal
Inform	To keep stakeholders informed and raise awareness and understanding.
Consult	To seek feedback from stakeholders and report back on how their input has informed decisions.
Involve	To involve stakeholders in key decisions where appropriate to address their priorities and concerns.
Collaborate	To partner with stakeholders and incorporate their advice and recommendations into all aspects of decision making.
Empower	To hand decision making over to stakeholders and implement what they decide.

2. Engagement Plan for 2026/27

The table below outlines the general schedule and topics that will be discussed at the community engagement sessions in 2026/27. These topics are not restrictive. Additional topics for discussion, consultation and engagement may arise from time to time, and can be included in the engagement program. Some of these sessions will be informal in structure, but others, such as for the Budget, will have more structure to present the key messages.

Table 3. Indicative Engagement Dates for 2026/27

Qtr	Indicative Dates
1	14 to 18 September 2026
2	7 to 11 December 2026
3	22 to 25 March 2027 (Budget Engagement Sessions)
4	21 to 25 June 2027

Table 4. Indicative Locations and number of visits per township in 2026/27.

Township	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Visits
Ararat	1	1	1	1	4
Buangor	1		1		2
Elmhurst	1		1		2
Lake Bolac	1	1	1	1	4
Mininera		1		1	2
Moyston	1		1	1	3
Pomonal	1		1	1	3
Streatham		1		1	2
Tatooon	1		1		2
Warrak		1		1	2
Wickliffe		1		1	2
Willaura	1	1	1		3
Per Qtr	8	7	8	8	

The schedule of engagement sessions will include a mix of day time and evening sessions to provide a variety of options for community members to attend. The engagement sessions will aim to coincide with other community events and activities, or locate the sessions in places where people may wish to visit, while also aiming to avoid occupying areas that could be available for patrons of hospitality venues during peak trading periods. This is in recognition of the value of people's time and travel costs, supporting small businesses and enabling community members to achieve multiple activities in the one journey where possible.

A suitably friendly and informal name will be developed for the engagement sessions to help community members, who may be hesitant to attend these types of events, to feel more comfortable to attend. For example, if the session is during the day, it may be called a "Community Cuppa" or if in the evenings in a hospitality venue, it may be called "Cheers & Chats". Attendees from Council will include at least one Councillor and at least one senior Council officer. The goal is to visit each township at least twice a year.

The exact times and locations will be confirmed with the venues and published on the [Engage Ararat](#) website, in print newspapers and shared on social media.

3. Risk Analysis

The table below outlines general engagement risks that may be involved. Mitigation strategies or controls have been identified for each risk before a risk rating is applied. The organiser of the community engagement sessions will be the risk owner in most circumstances; however, this will be reviewed as this Program progresses.

Table 4

Risk Matrix		Severity				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Likelihood	Almost certain	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Very High
	Likely	Medium	High	High	Very High	Very High
	Possible	Low	Medium	High	High	Very High
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

Table 5

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategies (controls)	Risk Rating (after controls)
Mismatched or unmet expectations	Community or stakeholder disengagement due to unmet expectations.	Develop clear and consistent messaging about what the scope and purpose of the community engagement sessions. Ensure any queries are follow up and responded to, even if the outcome is not what the community was seeking.	Low (Unlikely/Minor)
Change in council resources	Staff turnover or reduced capacity to deliver engagement program.	Take a collaborative approach to engagement, with shared roles and responsibilities where possible. Ensure good documentation and information management for engagement sessions, processes, and resources. Review regularly.	Medium (Possible/Minor)
Lack of engagement	Lack of stakeholder engagement due to engagement fatigue or other barriers.	Involve local groups and aim to co-locate engagement sessions with existing events and activities. Promote via a range of digital and traditional methods. Monitor and review attendance patterns regularly and adjust accordingly.	Low (Unlikely/Minor)
Staff safety	Physical injury or exposure to abusive language/behaviour while conducting engagement activities.	Ensure council OH&S policies and procedures are known and followed. Identify and discuss any known risks prior to conducting engagement activities and implement preventative or precautionary measures.	Low (Unlikely/Minor)

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure effective stakeholder and community engagement, and continuous improvement, the following monitoring and evaluation activities will be conducted alongside implementation of this engagement program.

Table 6

Objectives	Measures of Success	Methods of Measurement
1. To provide Councillors with opportunities to engage with community, which helps inform the Councillors' decision making and contributions to the strategic direction of the Council	1.1 Councillor satisfaction with the engagement sessions and program	- Feedback from Councillors
2. To provide opportunities for community to ask questions, raise concerns and meet Councillors and key staff at the Council.	2.1 Community satisfaction with the engagement sessions and program	- Feedback from attendees - Council officer observations - Community Satisfaction Survey results for Consultation & Engagement
3. For Council to provide regular and transparent updates on budget initiatives, projects, processes and outcomes to the wider community.	3.1 Number of initiative and project updates provided 3.2 Number of stakeholders reached/engaged 3.3 Stakeholder responses (<i>qualitative</i>).	- Register of topics presented, attendee numbers and responses
4. For Council to discuss potential projects and ideas, their purpose, objectives, expected benefits, potential impacts, and gather feedback from community and stakeholders.	4.1. Number of proposed initiatives and projects discussed 4.2. Number of stakeholders reached/engaged 4.3. Quality of stakeholder input (<i>qualitative</i>).	- Register of topics presented and attendee numbers - Examples of how stakeholder input has informed decisions

5. Reference List

1. IAP2 International Federation, *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*, 2018, International Association for Public Participation, Available from: <https://engagementinstitute.org.au/resources/iap2-public-participation-spectrum/>
2. Ararat Rural City Council, 2025, Council Plan 2025-2029, https://www.ararat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-05/Council%20Plan%202025-29_FINAL.pdf
3. Ararat Rural City Council, 2021, Community Engagement Policy, <https://www.ararat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/Community%20Engagement%20Policy%20February%202021.pdf>

3.7 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28971

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 financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 30 April 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 \$30.981 million in revenue and \$30.732 million in expenses to 30 April 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$0.249 million for the ten months ended 30 April 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 \$18.317 million has been recognised as income for the ten months ended 30 April 2026.

User fees account for 4.74% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$1.474 million has been received to 30 April 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$3.893 million to 30 April 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 \$1.857 million to 30 April 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 2025/26 \$'000	Income 2025/26 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Ararat Housing Transition	-	-	300
Digital Twin Victoria	-	-	950
Free Public WiFi Services	-	-	1,289
Supported Playgroups	67	58	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	25	11
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	129	129	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	61	58
Natural Disaster Relief	-	158	-
Council Support Fund - Streatham Fires	-	400	-
Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings	55	55	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	100	36	39
Queen Street Housing Program	-	514	5,183
Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct	-	-	400
Early Career Educators	-	73	30
Ararat Active Bike Network	266	-	-
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility	-	131	373
Primary Producer Support Payment	-	125	-
Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund	-	50	-
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	42	-
	617	1,857	8,633

Non-recurrent Capital Grants total \$3.394 million to 30 April 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 2025/26 \$'000	Income 2025/26 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
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	1029	-
Queen Street Housing Program	-	-	1,683
Ararat Library Lighting & Exterior Upgrade	-	45	6
TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program	-	201	291
Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade	-	75	-
Mount William Road Reconstruction	-	2,000	-
Footpath-Ararat Retirement Village & Sports Precinct	-	12	23
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	3	9
	1,490	3,394	2,137

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 deficit of \$0.912 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 ten months ended 30 April 2026 Council has incurred \$10.648 million in employee costs. These costs include several grant-funded positions not budgeted for, and organisation restructure costs. Council has also incurred capitalised salary costs of \$0.669 million, which are included in capital works reporting rather than the income statement, as they are treated as part of the cost of creating or improving Council assets.

Materials and Services account for approximately 36.94% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the ten months ended 30 April 2026, Council has incurred \$10.029 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 30 April 2026. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$0.959 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$18.937 million as at 30 April 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have decreased by \$0.594 million from \$14.841 million to \$14.247 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$1.492 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$4.558 million as at 30 April 2026.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$17.131 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$0.364 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$0.123 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$1.436 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 decreased by \$0.594 million to \$14.247 million as at 30 April 2026.

Net cash of \$9.714 million was provided by operating activities, \$9.696 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.612 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	30/04/2026
<p>Working capital <i>Measure - Current assets compared to current liabilities.</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 100% to 400% 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%	123%
<p>Loans and borrowings <i>Measure - Loans and borrowings compared to rates.</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 0% to 70% 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%	0.00%
<p>Indebtedness <i>Measure - Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue</i> Expected values 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</p>	7.83%	8.25%
<p>Rates concentration <i>Measure - Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue</i> Expected values 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</p>	49.39%	66.48%
<p>Expenditure level <i>Measure - Expenses per property assessment</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$2,000 to \$10,000 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</p>	\$4,936	\$4,094

Indicator	30/6/2025	30/04/2026
<p>Indicator - Revenue level <i>Measure - Average residential rate per residential property assessment</i> Expected values 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</p>	\$2,002	\$2,032
<p>Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected 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. The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report. As at 30 April 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$4.057 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$1.591 million. In percentage terms 80.4% of the rates raised have been collected at 30 April 2026 compared to 77.7% up to 30 April 2025. Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest. Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2025/26 there are 2,495 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,158 assessments in 2024/25.</p>	87.8%	80.4%
<p>Indicator - Asset Renewal & Upgrade <i>Measure - Asset renewal & Upgrade compared to depreciation</i> Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 40% to 130% 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%	85.50%

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 30 April 2026 be received and adopted.*

MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR KAUR

That:

1. **The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 30 April 2026 be received and adopted.**

Cr J Armstrong and Cr Kaur spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5354/26**

ATTACHMENTS

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators are provided as Attachment 3.7

Attachment 1
Comprehensive Income Statement for the ten months ended 30 April 2026

	Original Budget	Current Budget	YTD Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Variance	Variance
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
Income						
Rates and charges	18,425	18,425	18,263	18,317	54	0%
Statutory fees and fines	277	277	231	217	(14)	-6%
User fees	1,631	1,641	1,422	1,474	52	4%
Contributions - cash capital	-	-	-	34	34	0%
Contributions - cash operating	93	93	17	100	83	488%
Grants - operating (recurrent)	8,909	4,721	3,791	3,893	102	3%
Grants - operating (non-recurrent)	617	7,276	2,015	1,857	(158)	-8%
Grants - capital (recurrent)	2,338	2,724	1,169	1,138	(31)	-3%
Grants - capital (non-recurrent)	1,490	3,772	3,490	3,394	(96)	-3%
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, plant and equipment	20	20	-	(5)	(5)	0%
Other income	630	630	473	562	89	19%
Fair value adjustments for investment property	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Share of net profits/(losses) of associates and joint ventures accounted for by the equity method	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Total income	34,430	39,579	30,871	30,981	110	
Expenses						
Employee costs	11,961	11,961	10,216	10,648	432	4%
Materials and services	9,186	13,357	10,133	10,029	(104)	-1%
Bad and doubtful debts	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Depreciation	10,469	10,469	8,724	9,262	538	6%
Amortisation - right of use assets	308	308	257	383	126	49%
Borrowing costs	2	2	2	3	1	50%
Finance costs - leases	60	60	50	100	50	100%
Other expenses	394	394	328	307	(21)	-6%
Total expenses	32,380	36,551	29,710	30,732	1,022	3%
Surplus for the year	2,050	3,028	1,161	249	(912)	-79%
Other comprehensive income						
Net asset revaluation increment	-	-	-	-	-	
Total comprehensive result	2,050	3,028	1,161	249	(912)	

Attachment 2
Balance Sheet as at 30 April 2026

	30/04/2026 S'000	30/06/2025 S'000
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	14,247	14,841
Trade and other receivables	4,558	3,066
Financial assets	-	-
Inventories	132	71
Prepayments	-	-
Total current assets	18,937	17,978
Non-current assets		
Trade and other receivables	3	4
Investments in joint venture	2,027	1,527
Property, plant and equipment, infrastructure	639,637	639,714
Right of use assets	1,401	1,784
Investment property	2,615	2,615
Total non-current assets	645,683	645,644
Total assets	664,620	663,622
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	1,993	2,357
Trust funds and deposits	438	315
Unearned Income	10,773	9,337
Provisions	2,157	2,175
Interest-bearing loans and borrowings	-	156
Lease liabilities	73	426
Total current liabilities	15,434	14,766
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	285	286
Interest-bearing loans and borrowings	-	-
Lease liabilities	1,412	1,412
Total non-current liabilities	1,697	1,698
Total liabilities	17,131	16,464
Net Assets	647,489	647,158
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	295,750	295,501
Reserves	351,739	351,657
Total Equity	647,489	647,158

Printed 13/05/2026

Attachment 3
Statement of Cash Flows for the ten months ended 30 April 2026

	Ten months to 30/04/2026	Forecast Year End to 30/06/2026
	Inflows/ (Outflows) \$'000	Inflows/ (Outflows) \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities		
Rates and charges	16,662	18,545
Statutory fees and fines	227	277
User fees	1,885	1,994
Grants - operating	7,977	8,363
Grants - capital	4,124	4,370
Contributions - monetary	288	328
Interest received	487	500
Trust funds and deposits taken	334	-
Other receipts	106	253
Net GST refund/payment	755	783
Employee costs	(11,148)	(12,160)
Materials and services	(11,298)	(17,827)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(314)	-
Other payments	(371)	(394)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) operating activities	9,714	5,032
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for property, plant and equipment, infrastructure	(9,351)	(13,999)
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment, infrastructure	155	1,050
Proceeds from investments	-	-
Payments for investments	(500)	(500)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities	(9,696)	(13,449)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Finance costs	(3)	(3)
Repayment of borrowings	(156)	(156)
Proceeds from borrowings	-	-
Interest paid - lease liability	(100)	(118)
Repayment of lease liabilities	(353)	(426)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) financing activities	(612)	(703)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(594)	(9,120)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	14,841	14,841
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	14,247	5,721

Printed 13/05/2026

Attachment 4

Financial Performance Indicators for the ten months ended 30 April 2026

Result

Material Variations

LIQUIDITY

Dimension - Operating position

Indicator - Adjusted underlying result

Measure - Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)

-11.54%

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

No material variation

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

-20% to 20%

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

Dimension - Liquidity

Indicator - Working capital

Measure - Current assets compared to current liabilities

123% 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

Measure - Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities

18.46% 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

OBLIGATIONS

Dimension - Obligations

Indicator - Loans and borrowings

Measure - Loans and borrowing compared to rate

0.00% 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

Measure - Loans and borrowing payments compared to rate

0.87% 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 20%

Framework:

Financial Performance Indicators for the ten months ended 30 April 2026 **Result** **Material Variations**

Indicator - Indebtedness

Measure - Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue
[(Non-current liabilities / Own source revenue) x100]

8.25% No material variation

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 & Upgrade compared to depreciation
[(Asset renewal expenses / Asset depreciation) x100]

85.50% No material variation

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
[(Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue) x100]

66.48% No material variation

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 value
[(Rate revenue / Capital improved value of rateable properties in the municipality) x100]

0.28% No material variation

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
[(Total expenses / Number of property assessments)]

\$4,096.32 No material variation

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
[(Total rate revenue (general rates and municipal charges) / Number of property assessments)]

\$2,031.57

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

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28972

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 has received the results from the 2026 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey. This survey provides insight on how the community views the performance of Council. Council's overall performance against both small rural and state-wide averages has yet again demonstrated consistency across the board.

There are still opportunities for substantial services improvement in all areas of Council's operations that will again be a focus of activity in the next twelve months.

DISCUSSION

The Victorian Government coordinates the annual Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey (CSS). The survey gathers community feedback on council performance across five key service areas and is conducted on behalf of participating councils. In 2026, the survey was undertaken by the independent research organisation JWS Research. The survey was based on interviews with 400 randomly selected households conducted between 2 February and 15 March 2026.

The 2026 survey results were provided on Friday, 24 April 2026. Overall, the results indicate that Council continues to perform well in meeting community expectations. Compared with both similar small rural councils and the state-wide average, Ararat Rural City Council has maintained a strong performance. At the same time, the results highlight that there remains room for improvement across a number of service areas. While several areas are performing strongly, continued focus on service quality and responsiveness will be important over the next 12 months. It is also important to recognise that measuring service performance in a public sector context involves broader social, economic and political considerations than in the private sector.

The 2026 survey recorded a number of Council service areas with satisfaction scores above 70. These included Customer Service (72), Arts Centres and Libraries (77), Emergency and Disaster Management (74), Recreation Facilities (74), Waste Management (72), and the Appearance of Public Areas (73).

The table below shows the spread of services areas that had improved, the same or decreased levels of customer satisfaction from the 2025 Survey.

Changes in satisfaction ranking	Number
Improved on 2025 results	9
Stayed the same	5
Decreased on 2025 results	8

The table below demonstrates Council's sustained performance against like Council and the state average for 2025 and 2026

ARCC performance	2026		2025	
	Small Rural	State-wide	Small Rural	State-wide
Better than	15	22	21	22
Same as	5	0	0	0
Worse than	2	0	1	0

In a number of cases, Ararat Rural City Council rankings were around ten points higher than state and small rural averages. Examples are: Sealed local roads, Planning and Building Permits, Unsealed Road, and value for money

The tables below show results in key measured areas.

Services	Ararat 2026	Ararat 2025	Small Rural 2026	Overall 2026
 Overall performance	64	64	60	57
 Value for money	57	57	52	49
 Overall council direction	52	55	52	48
 Customer service	72	73	70	69
 Art centres & libraries	77	75	77	76
 Emergency & disaster mngt	74	75	70	68
 Recreational facilities	74	72	69	71
 Appearance of public areas	73	71	73	71
 Waste management	72	73	71	69
 Community & cultural	69	66	70	67

Services	Ararat 2026	Ararat 2025	Small Rural 2026	Overall 2026
 Elderly support services	67	67	67	62
 Bus/community dev./tourism	66	63	60	59
 Environmental sustainability	63	64	60	60
 Informing the community	61	61	62	60
 Lobbying	60	60	57	54
 Community decisions	60	59	56	52
 Local streets & footpaths	58	59	56	54
 Consultation & engagement	57	59	57	53
 Sealed local roads	57	56	48	46
 Planning & building permits	56	51	47	46
 Slashing & weed control	49	53	47	45
 Unsealed roads	49	48	46	40

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

This report links for the following Council Plan 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

There are no budget implications

Policy/Relevant Law

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework includes three measures taken directly from the Community Satisfactory Survey data.

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

Nil

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Careful analysis of the full 2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Report will provide significant data to base further continuous improvement activity in each service area.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This report is based on a survey of Ararat Rural City Council Residents seeking to measure their satisfaction with service delivery in several key service areas.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *That Council receive the Community Satisfaction Survey 2026 results*

**MOVED CR JOYCE
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

That:

1. **That Council receive the Community Satisfaction Survey 2026 results**

Cr Joyce, Cr Preston and Cr J Armstrong spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5355/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The final Community Satisfaction Survey 2026 is provided as 4.1

2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey

**Ararat Rural City
Council**





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<u>Detailed findings</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>Waste management</u>	<u>95</u>
<u>Overall performance</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>Business and community development and tourism</u>	<u>99</u>
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<u>Communication</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>Environmental sustainability</u>	<u>107</u>
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<u>Decisions made in the interest of the community</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>Appendix A: Index scores, margins of error and significant differences</u>	<u>125</u>
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<u>Informing the community</u>	<u>67</u>		
<u>Condition of local streets and footpaths</u>	<u>71</u>		
<u>Elderly support services</u>	<u>75</u>		
<u>Recreational facilities</u>	<u>79</u>		
<u>Appearance of public areas</u>	<u>83</u>		



Background and objectives

The Victorian Community Satisfaction Survey (CSS) creates a vital interface between the council and their community.

Held annually, the CSS asks the opinions of local people about the place they live, work and play and provides confidence for councils in their efforts and abilities.

Now in its twenty-seventh year, this survey provides insight into the community's views on:

- councils' overall performance, with benchmarking against other participating councils
- value for money in services and infrastructure
- community consultation and engagement
- decisions made in the interest of the community
- customer service, local infrastructure, facilities, services and
- overall council direction.

When coupled with previous data, the survey provides a reliable historical source of the community's views since 1998. A selection of results from the last ten years shows that councils in Victoria continue to provide services that meet the public's expectations.

Serving Victoria for 27 years

The CSS offers councils a long-term measure of how they are performing – essential for councils that work over the long term to provide valuable services and infrastructure to their communities.

Participating councils have various choices as to the content of the questionnaire and the sample size to be surveyed, depending on their individual strategic, financial and other considerations.



How to read index score charts in this report

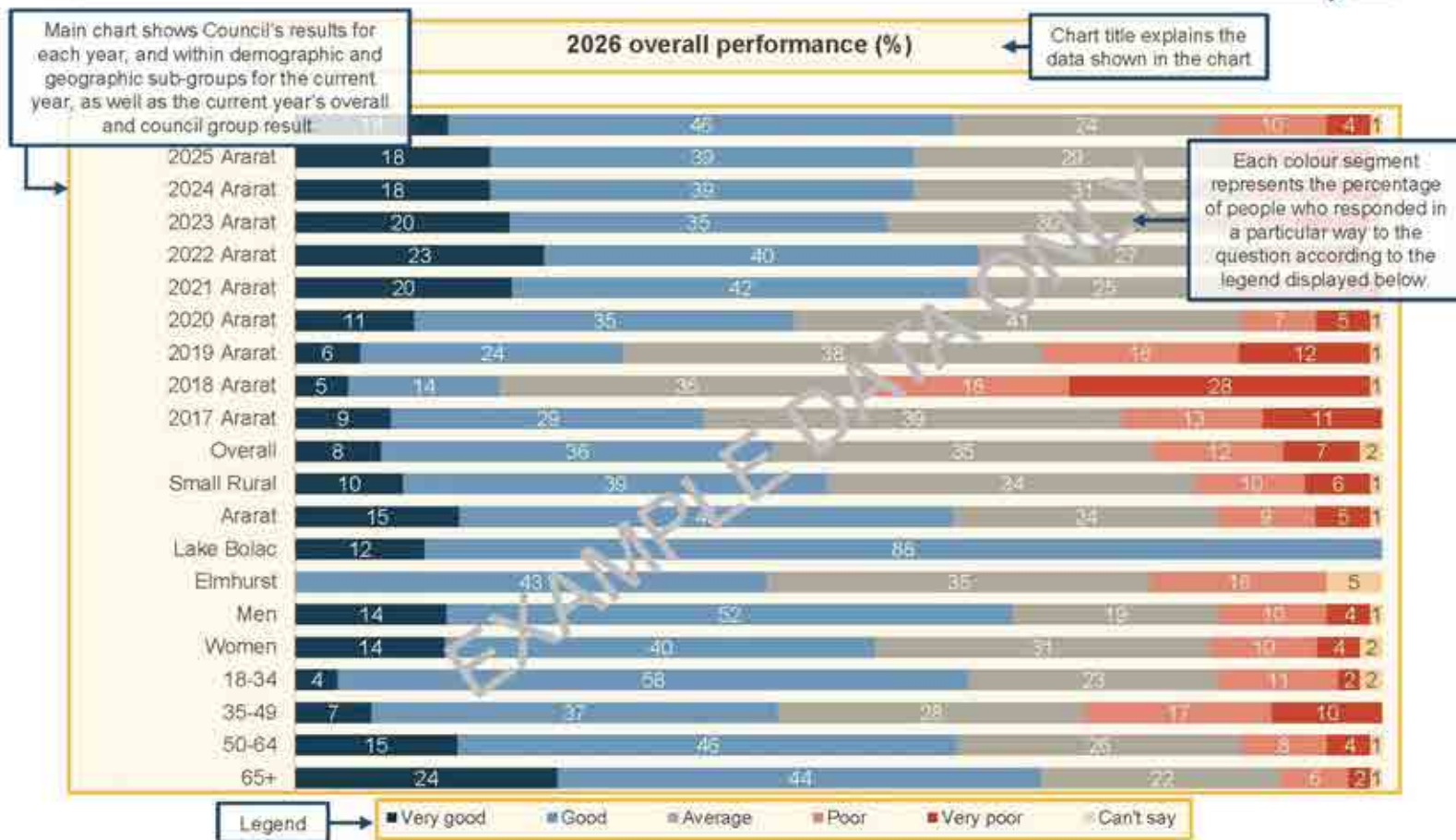


Question asked and base size(s)

Q3. ON BALANCE, for the last twelve months, how do you feel about the performance of Ararat Rural City Council, not just on one or two issues, BUT OVERALL across all responsibility areas? Has it been very good, good, average, poor or very poor?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.



How to read stacked bar charts in this report



Q3. ON BALANCE, for the last twelve months, how do you feel about the performance of Ararat Rural City Council, not just on one or two issues, BUT OVERALL across all responsibility areas? Has it been very good, good, average, poor or very poor?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9



Key findings and recommendations

Ararat Rural City Council – at a glance



Overall council performance

Results shown are index scores out of 100.



Ararat 64



Small Rural 60



Overall 57

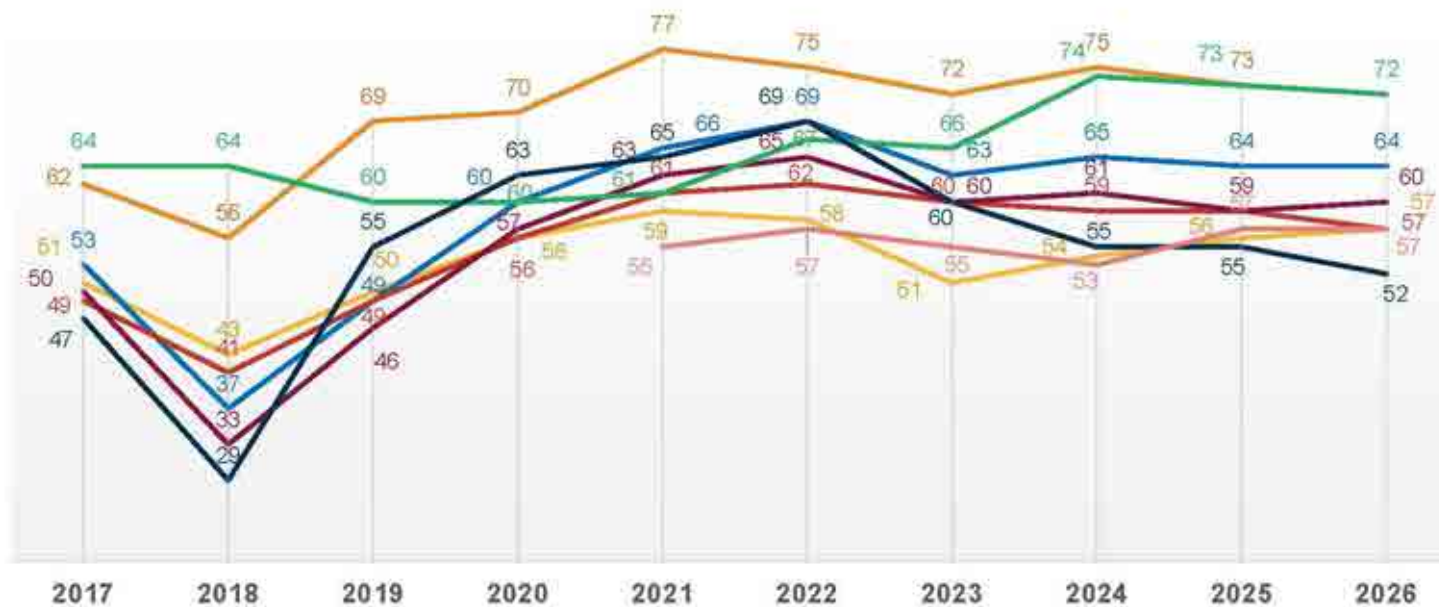
Council performance compared to group average

Top 3 performing areas		
	Art centres & libraries	▬ on par
	Emergency & disaster mngt	▲ higher
	Recreational facilities	▲ higher
Bottom 3 performing areas		
	Unsealed roads	▬ on par
	Slashing & weed control	▬ on par
	Planning & building permits	▲ higher
	Customer service	▬ on par



Summary of core measures

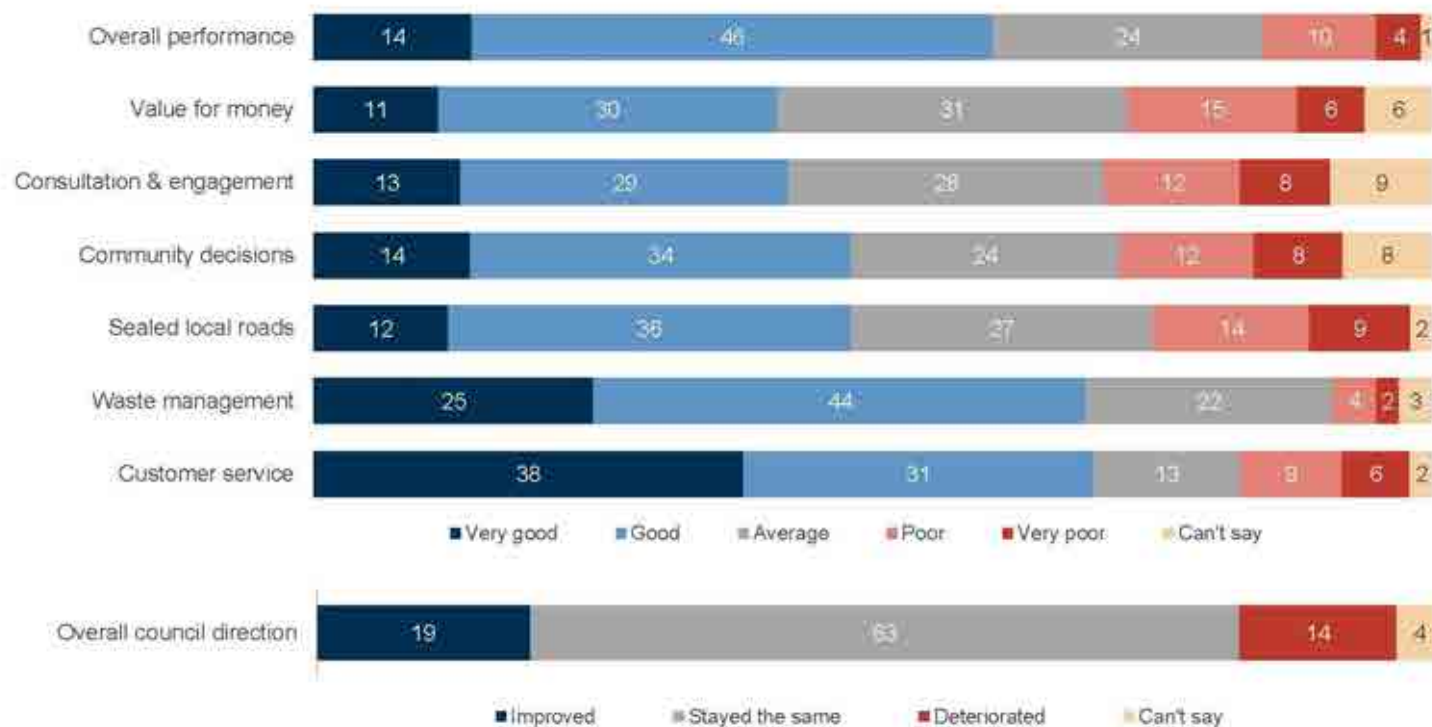
Index scores















Summary of core measures

Core measures summary results (%)















Summary of Ararat Rural City Council performance

Services	Ararat 2026	Ararat 2025	Small Rural 2026	Overall 2026	Highest score	Lowest score
 Overall performance	64	64	60	57	65+ years	35-49 years
 Value for money	57	57	52	49	65+ years	35-49 years
 Overall council direction	52	55	52	48	65+ years	18-34 years
 Customer service	72	73	70	69	50-64 years	35-49 years
 Art centres & libraries	77	75	77	76	Women	35-49 years, Men
 Emergency & disaster mngt	74	75	70	68	50+ years	18-34 years
 Recreational facilities	74	72	69	71	65+ years	18-34 years
 Appearance of public areas	73	71	73	71	Women	35-49 years
 Waste management	72	73	71	69	50+ years	18-34 years
 Community & cultural	69	66	70	67	65+ years	18-34 years

Significantly higher / lower than Ararat Rural City Council 2025 result at the 95% confidence interval. Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.





Summary of Ararat Rural City Council performance

Services	Ararat 2026	Ararat 2025	Small Rural 2026	Overall 2026	Highest score	Lowest score
 Elderly support services	67	67	67	62	65+ years	35-49 years
 Bus/community dev /tourism	66	63	60	59	65+ years	35-49 years
 Environmental sustainability	63	64	60	60	50+ years	18-34 years
 Informing the community	61	61	62	60	65+ years	35-49 years
 Lobbying	60	60	57	54	65+ years	18-34 years
 Community decisions	60	59	56	52	65+ years	35-49 years
 Local streets & footpaths	58	59	56	54	Men	18-34 years
 Consultation & engagement	57	59	57	53	65+ years	35-49 years
 Sealed local roads	57	56	48	46	65+ years	18-34 years
 Planning & building permits	56	51	47	46	65+ years	35-49 years

Significantly higher / lower than Ararat Rural City Council 2025 result at the 95% confidence interval
Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.



Summary of Ararat Rural City Council performance

Services	Ararat 2026	Ararat 2025	Small Rural 2026	Overall 2026	Highest score	Lowest score
 Slashing & weed control	49	53	47	45	Men	35-49 years, Women
 Unsealed roads	49	48	46	40	65+ years	35-49 years

Significantly higher / lower than Ararat Rural City Council 2025 result at the 95% confidence interval. Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.



Focus areas for the next 12 months

Overview

Perceptions of Ararat Rural City Council's overall performance have remained steady over the last three years, with this year's result unchanged from 2025. Performance perceptions on most metrics evaluated are also in line with 2025 results, with the exception of planning and building permits, where performance ratings improved significantly, and roadside slashing and weed control where performance ratings declined significantly.

Key influences on perceptions of overall performance

Council should focus on improving performance in the individual service areas that most influence perceptions of overall performance, namely, decisions made in the interest of the community and informing the community. Ensuring that Council is being transparent with residents around their decision making and prioritising information provision provide the greatest opportunities to drive up overall opinion of Council's performance.

Comparison to Overall and area grouping

On the core measures of overall performance and value for money, Ararat Rural City Council performs significantly higher than the Small Rural group average and the Overall average across participating councils State-wide (the Overall average). Beyond this, Council rates significantly higher than the Small Rural group average on close to half of the metrics evaluated and is rated in line with the group average on the rest. Council rates significantly above the Overall average on most metrics.

Opportunity to engage

Residents aged 35 to 49 years warrant extra attention in the year ahead as they rate Council lowest on several core measures, including overall performance and on many individual service areas. Residents in this age group have a high rate of contact with Council and provide the lowest ratings of customer service, so there is opportunity to use these service interactions to engage with them and work to rebuild positive perceptions.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Overall performance



Overall performance

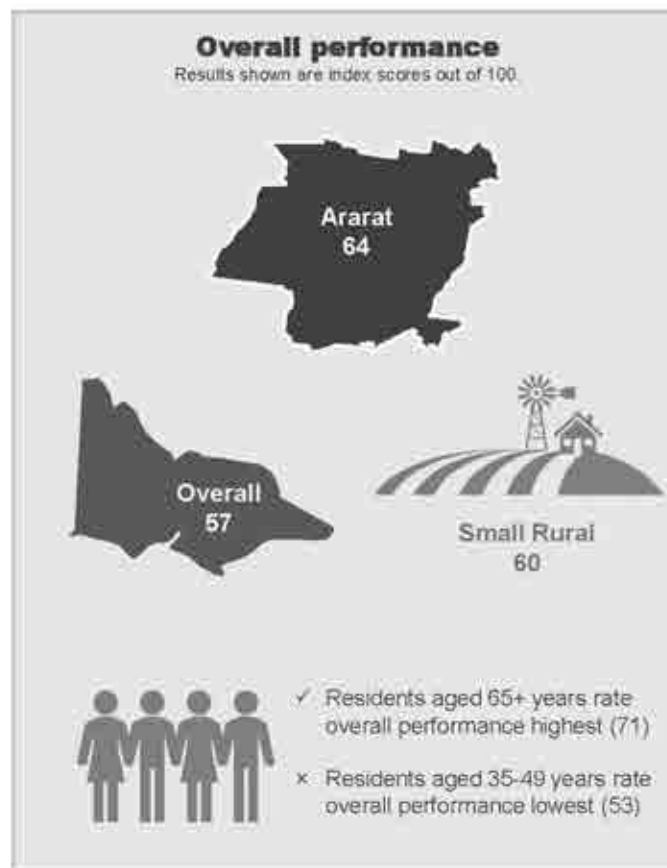
The overall performance index score of 64 for Ararat Rural City Council is equal to the 2025 result and has been relatively stable for the last few years.

Council's overall performance continues to rate statistically significantly higher (at the 95% confidence interval) than the Small Rural group and the Overall group average across participating councils State-wide (index scores of 60 and 57 respectively).

- Overall performance ratings remain highest among residents aged 65 years and over (index score of 71, significantly higher than average), and this year are lowest among those aged 35 to 49 years (index score of 53, significantly lower than average).
- Since the previous evaluation, overall performance ratings saw a significant seven-point improvement among residents aged 18 to 34 years, reversing the six-point loss that occurred in 2025.

Four in 10 residents (41%) rate the value for money they receive from Council in infrastructure and services as 'very good' or 'good'. This is nearly double the 21% who rate Council as 'very poor' or 'poor'. Value for money is rated as 'average' by 31% of residents.

- Residents aged 65 years and above (index score of 65) rate value for money significantly higher than the Council average (57), while 35 to 49 year olds (43) rate value for money significantly lower than average.





Overall performance

2026 overall performance (index scores)

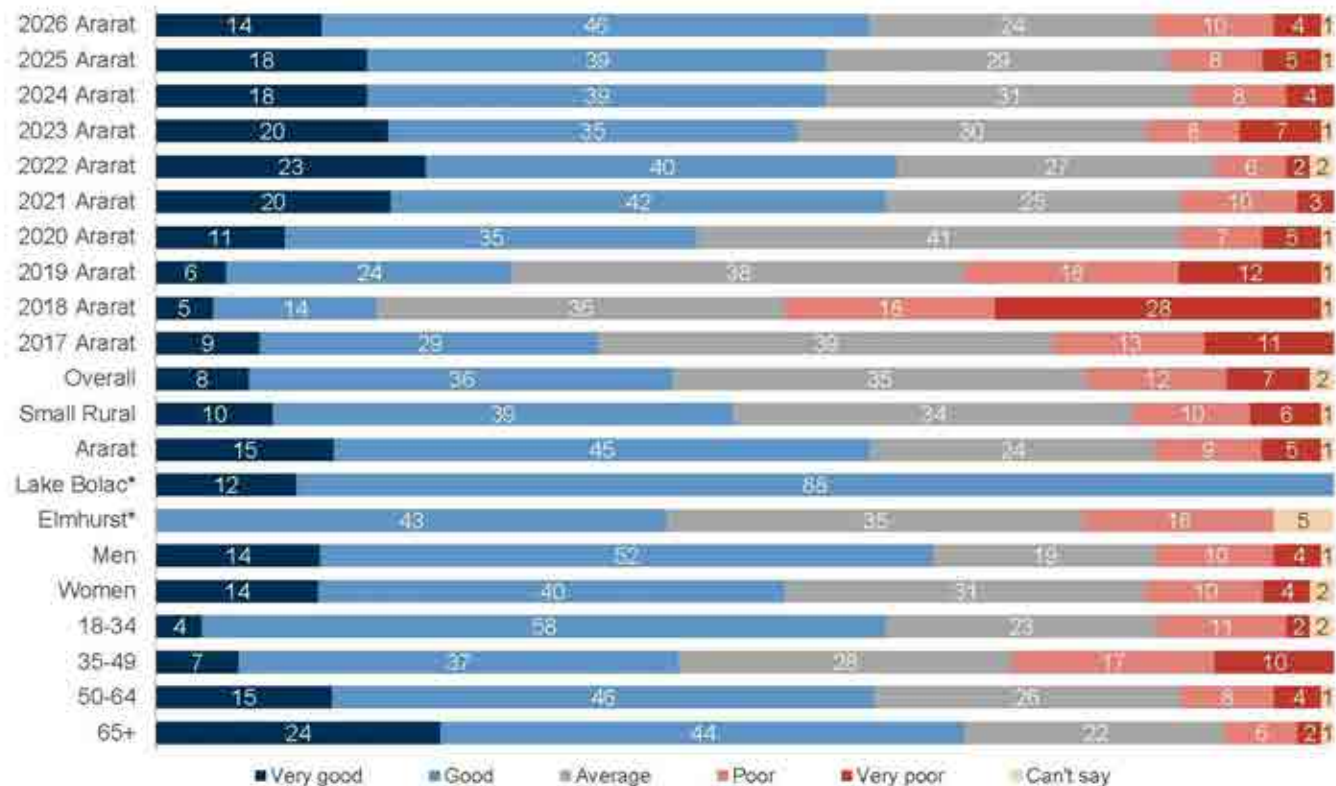
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	78*▲	67	83	74	70	72	32	29	19	48
65+	71▲	71	69	70	75	73	63	52	41	54
Men	65	64	66	63	69	65	58	48	33	50
50-64	65	66	62	61	66	63	61	50	39	54
Ararat	64	64	65	63	69	66	60	49	37	53
Ararat	64	64	64	63	70	66	61	51	41	54
Women	63	65	64	63	69	67	62	50	43	56
18-34	63	56	62	65	70	63	60	52	42	53
Small Rural	60▼	54	53	55	58	60	56	58	56	58
Elmhurst	57*	55	58	53	67	62	54	66	38	50
Overall	57▼	53	54	56	59	61	58	60	59	59
35-49	53▼	61	61	50	62	62	53	40	27	50

Q3. ON BALANCE, for the last twelve months, how do you feel about the performance of Ararat Rural City Council, not just on one or two issues, BUT OVERALL across all responsibility areas? Has it been very good, good, average, poor or very poor?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Overall performance

2026 overall performance (%)



Q3. ON BALANCE, for the last twelve months, how do you feel about the performance of Ararat Rural City Council, not just on one or two issues, BUT OVERALL across all responsibility areas? Has it been very good, good, average, poor or very poor?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Value for money in services and infrastructure

2026 value for money (index scores)

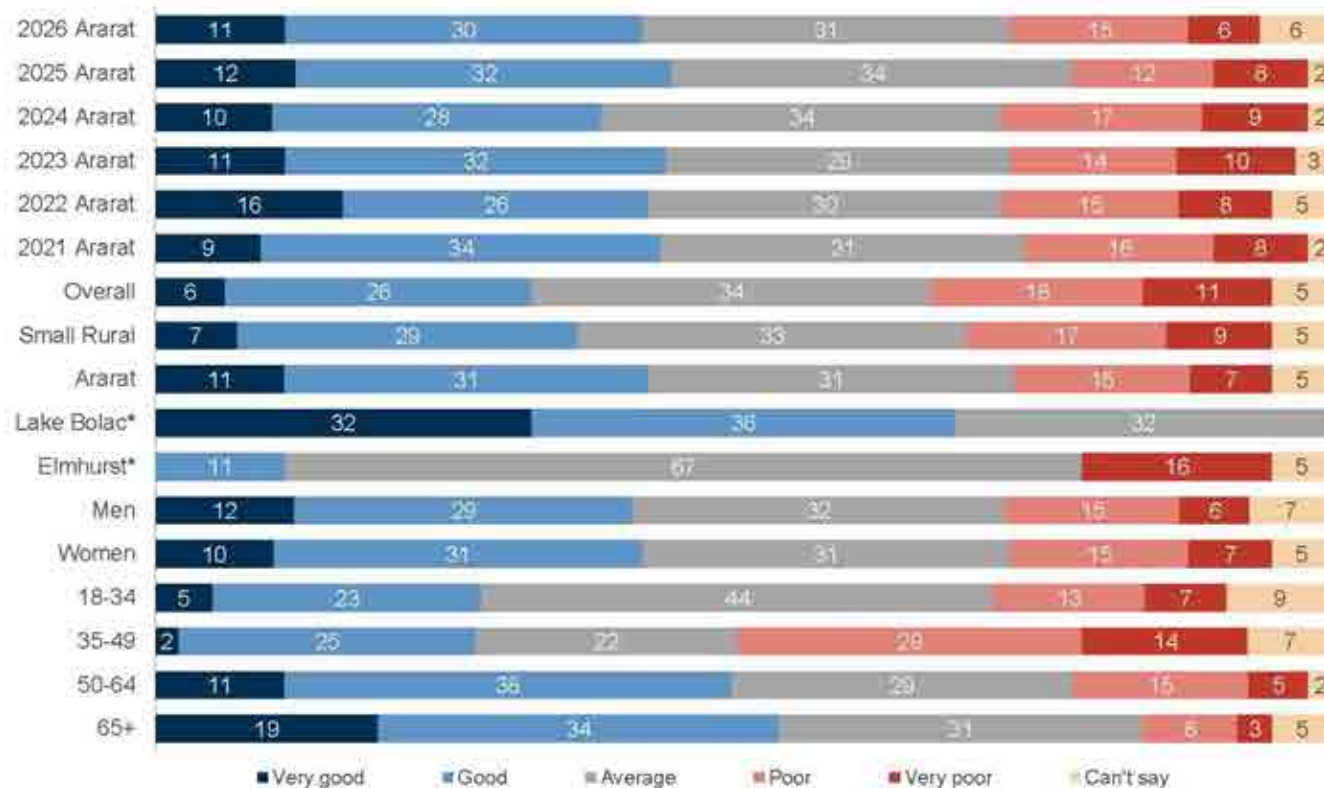
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Lake Bolac	75*▲	62	61	55	48	41	n/a	n/a	n/a
65+	65▲	65	61	64	66	64	n/a	n/a	n/a
50-64	59	55	47	54	54	52	n/a	n/a	n/a
Men	57	57	53	55	55	55	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	57	57	53	55	57	55	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	56	57	53	55	60	56	n/a	n/a	n/a
Women	56	56	52	55	60	56	n/a	n/a	n/a
Small Rural	52▼	47	47	49	51	52	n/a	n/a	n/a
18-34	52	49	48	54	61	48	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall	49▼	47	48	49	53	54	n/a	n/a	n/a
Elmhurst	44*▼	49	46	45	47	65	n/a	n/a	n/a
35-49	43▼	53	46	39	41	50	n/a	n/a	n/a

Q3b. How would you rate Ararat Rural City Council at providing good value for money in infrastructure and services provided to your community?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 21 Councils asked group: 8
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Value for money in services and infrastructure

2026 value for money (%)



Q3b. How would you rate Ararat Rural City Council at providing good value for money in infrastructure and services provided to your community?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 21 Councils asked group: 8
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Top performing service areas

Ararat Rural City Council continues to perform best in the area of art centres and libraries (index score of 77), improving slightly this year (up two index points) and reversing the three-point decline experienced in 2025.

- Council performs in line with the Small Rural group and Overall averages for councils in this service area.
- Ratings have improved significantly in the past 12 months among residents aged 18 to 34 years (index score of 79, up 11 points). This represents a turnaround from 2025 when ratings among this group were the lowest of all demographic groups.

Emergency and disaster management, and recreational facilities, are Council's next highest rated service areas (both with an index score of 74). Council performs significantly higher than the Small Rural and Overall average in each of these service areas.

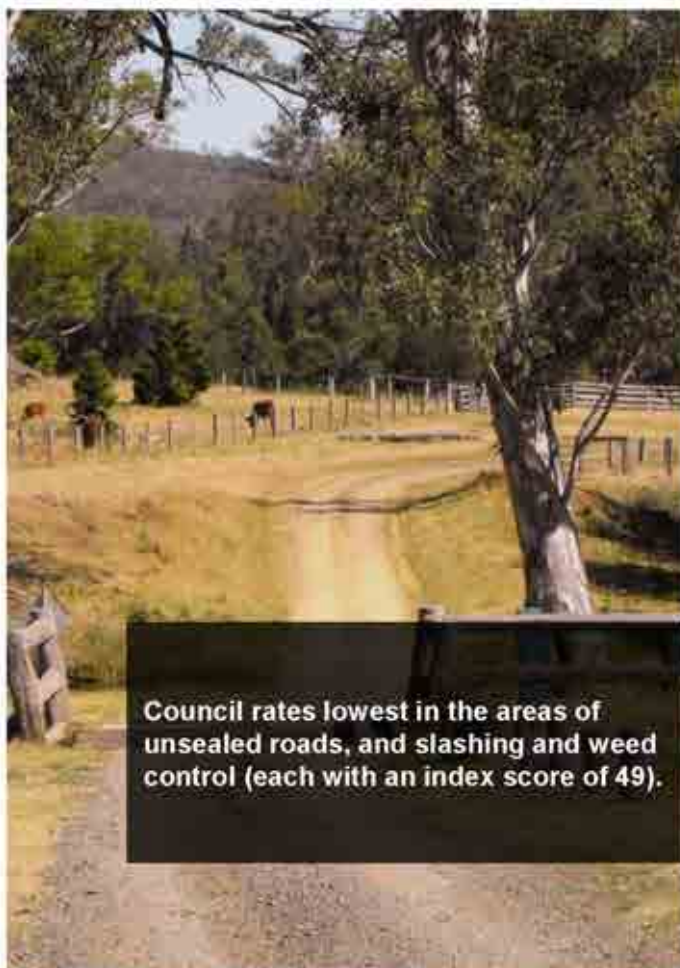
- In both service areas, ratings are lowest among residents aged 18 to 34 years and are significantly lower than the Council average.
- In contrast, in both service areas mentioned, ratings are higher than Council average among residents aged 65 years and over. In the case of recreational facilities, their rating is significantly higher than the Council average.



Art centres and libraries (index score of 77) is the area where Council performed best in 2026.



Low performing service areas



The lowest performing service areas of those evaluated are the maintenance of unsealed roads, and roadside slashing and weed control (each with an index score 49). Council performs in line with the Small Rural group but significantly higher than the Overall average in both service areas.

- Notably, these service areas have the highest net differentials between importance and performance, suggesting further efforts to improve performance here is warranted.
- Perceptions of slashing and weed control declined significantly (down four index points) since the previous evaluation, reversing significant gains achieved in 2025. This is largely driven by significantly lower ratings among residents living in the Ararat area (index score of 50, down from 56), those aged 65 years and over (50, down from 58) and women (44, down from 51) relative to 2025.

Despite planning and building permits being Council's next lowest rated area (index score of 56), Council's performance is rated significantly higher than both the Small Rural group and Overall averages.

- Positively, results have significantly improved in the last 12 months (up five index points), marking the first improvement in perceptions of this service area since 2021.



Individual service area performance

2026 individual service area performance (index scores)

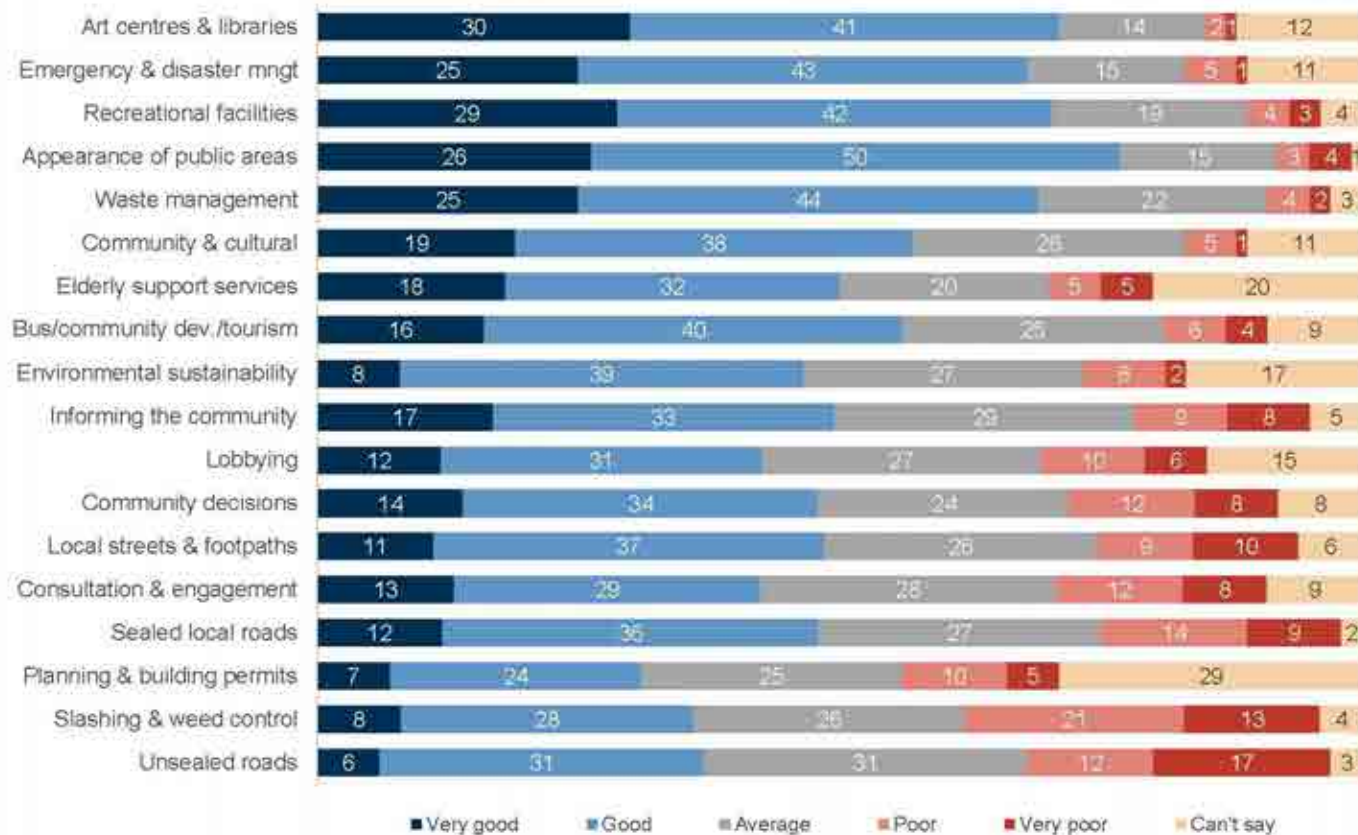
		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Art centres & libraries	77	75	78	75	75	74	78	76	70	70
Emergency & disaster mngt	74	75	76	72	74	75	74	73	70	72
Recreational facilities	74	72	73	71	75	74	71	68	64	65
Appearance of public areas	73	71	72	70	76	75	73	69	65	66
Waste management	72	73	74	66	67	61	60	60	64	64
Community & cultural	69	66	67	65	65	64	63	63	n/a	n/a
Elderly support services	67	67	68	65	71	72	68	65	64	67
Bus/community dev./tourism	66	63	66	65	69	65	61	61	57	60
Environmental sustainability	63	64	63	63	62	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Informing the community	61	61	61	60	64	63	58	49	44	50
Lobbying	60	60	60	61	64	63	56	50	44	53
Community decisions	60	59	61	60	65	63	57	46	33	50
Local streets & footpaths	58	59	57	55	63	62	62	55	53	55
Consultation & engagement	57	59	59	60	62	61	56	49	41	49
Sealed local roads	57	56	54	51	58	59	56	50	43	51
Planning & building permits	56	51	54	54	58	59	51	52	46	50
Slashing & weed control	49	53	48	52	53	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unsealed roads	49	48	45	42	47	50	44	39	33	38

Q2: How has Council performed on [RESPONSIBILITY AREA] over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.



Individual service area performance

2026 individual service area performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on [RESPONSIBILITY AREA] over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9



Individual service area importance

2026 individual service area importance (index scores)

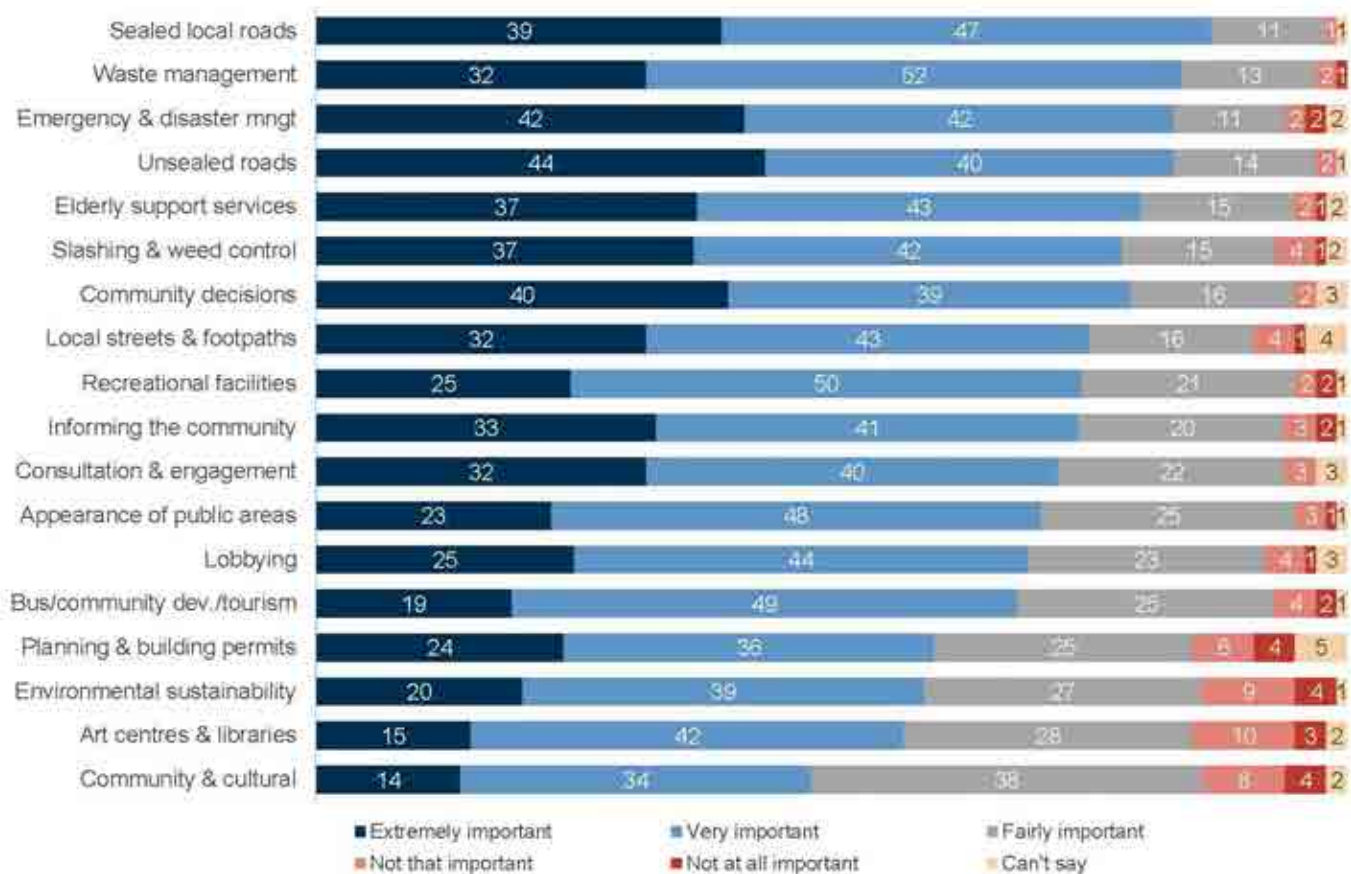
		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Unsealed roads	82	84	83	86	85	81	81	84	86	83
Sealed local roads	81	84	82	84	82	80	81	82	n/a	n/a
Emergency & disaster mgmt	81	83	85	81	80	79	82	81	80	83
Community decisions	80	80	81	83	80	78	83	82	n/a	n/a
Elderly support services	78	80	82	83	82	82	79	79	80	79
Slashing & weed control	78	79	79	80	80	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Waste management	78	78	82	80	81	80	80	79	79	76
Local streets & footpaths	77	80	78	80	79	77	76	77	77	77
Consultation & engagement	76	77	77	79	76	75	74	78	74	74
Informing the community	75	79	80	79	79	77	76	77	76	76
Recreational facilities	74	75	76	75	77	74	73	71	75	73
Appearance of public areas	73	76	75	76	76	74	74	72	74	74
Lobbying	73	73	74	75	74	71	71	69	70	70
Bus/community dev./tourism	70	72	74	73	73	72	72	68	72	71
Planning & building permits	69	72	70	73	71	69	68	65	68	66
Environmental sustainability	65	66	68	69	72	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Art centres & libraries	64	65	64	62	63	61	59	59	60	60
Community & cultural	62	62	61	64	64	62	60	60	n/a	n/a

Q1. Firstly, how important should [RESPONSIBILITY AREA] be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.



Individual service area importance

2026 individual service area importance (%)

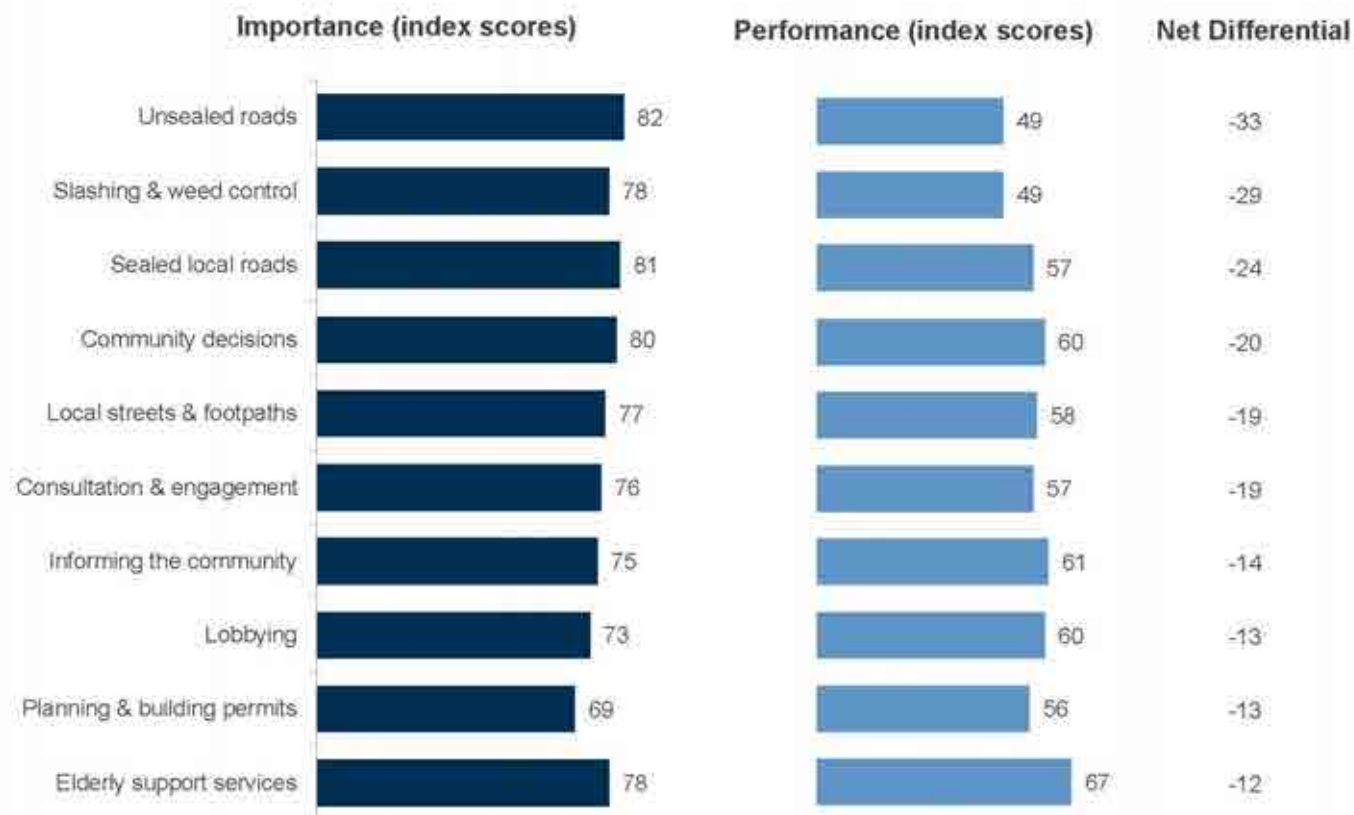


Q1. Firstly, how important should [RESPONSIBILITY AREA] be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 3



Individual service areas importance vs performance

Service areas where importance exceeds performance by 10 points or more, suggesting further investigation is necessary.



Note: Net differentials are calculated based on the un-rounded importance and performance scores, then rounded to the nearest whole number, which may result in differences of +/- 1% in the importance and performance scores and the net differential scores.



Influences on perceptions of overall performance

The individual service areas that have the strongest influence on the overall performance rating (based on regression analysis) are:

- Decisions made in the interest of the community
- Informing the community.

Good communication and transparency with residents around Council decision making and keeping residents well informed about key local issues and Council activities provide the greatest opportunities to drive up overall opinion of Council's performance.

Following on from that, other service areas with a more moderate influence on the overall performance rating are:

- The condition of sealed local roads
- The appearance of public areas.

Looking at these key service areas only, the appearance of public areas has a high performance index score (73).

Maintaining this positive result should remain a focus – but there is greater work to be done elsewhere.

Another key service area with a more moderate influence on overall perceptions, but where Council performs relatively less well, is the condition of sealed local roads (index score of 57).

It will also be important for Council to continue attending to the maintenance of its sealed roads to help shore up overall ratings of its performance.



Regression analysis explained

We use regression analysis to investigate which individual service areas such as community consultation and the condition of sealed local roads (the independent variables) are influencing respondent perceptions of Council's overall performance (the dependent variable).

In the charts that follow:

- The horizontal axis represents Council's performance index score for each individual service. Service areas appearing on the right side of the chart have a higher index score than those on the left.
- The vertical axis represents the Standardised Beta Coefficient from the multiple regression performed. This measures the contribution of each service area to the model. Service areas near the top of the chart have a greater positive effect on overall performance ratings than those located closer to the axis.

The regressions are shown on the following two charts.

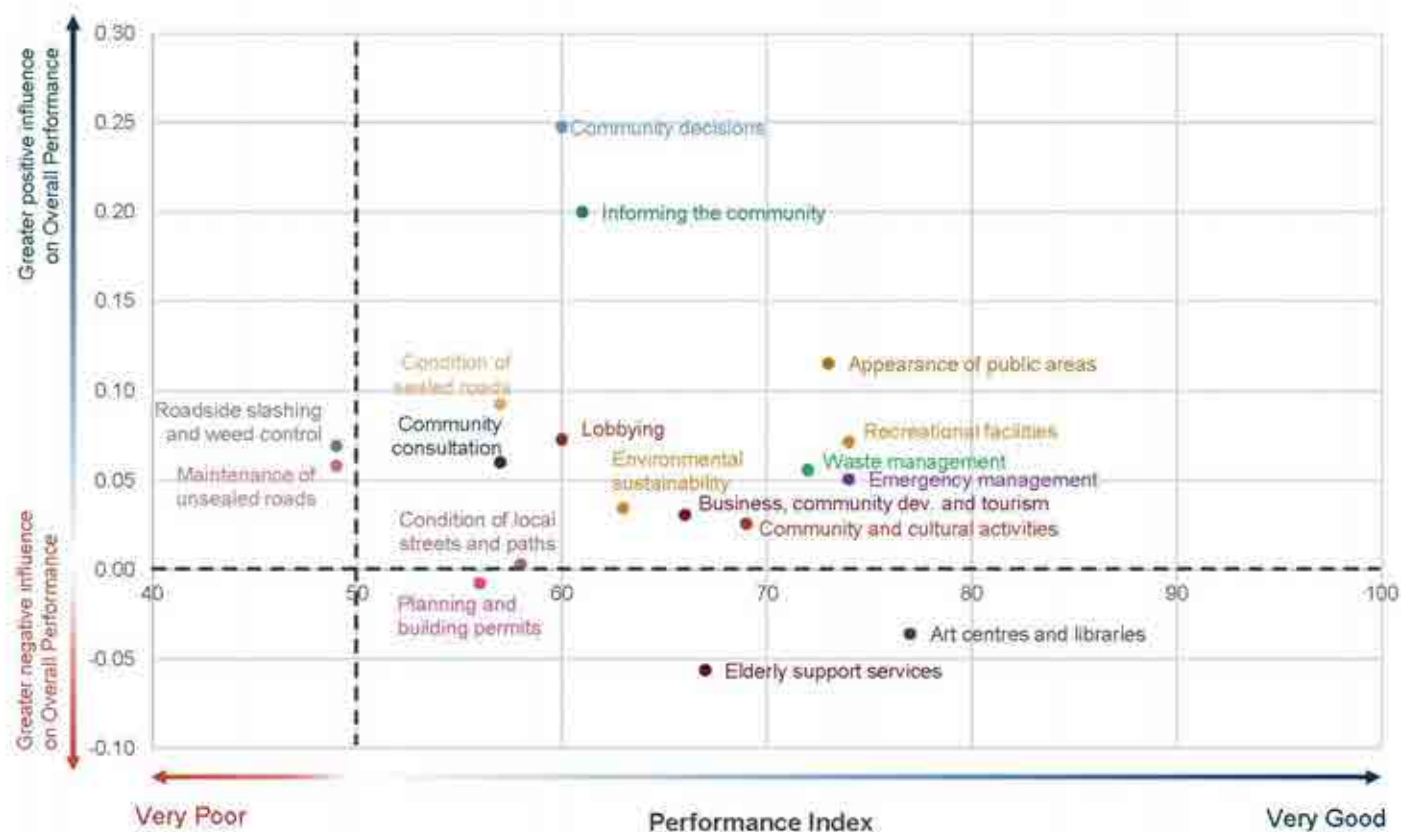
1. **The first chart** shows the results of a regression analysis of *all* individual service areas selected by Council.
2. **The second chart** shows the results of a regression performed on a smaller set of service areas, being those with a moderate-to-strong influence on overall performance. Service areas with a weaker influence on overall performance (i.e. a low Standardised Beta Coefficient) have been excluded from the analysis.

Key insights from this analysis are derived from the second chart.



Influence on overall performance: all services

2026 regression analysis (all services)

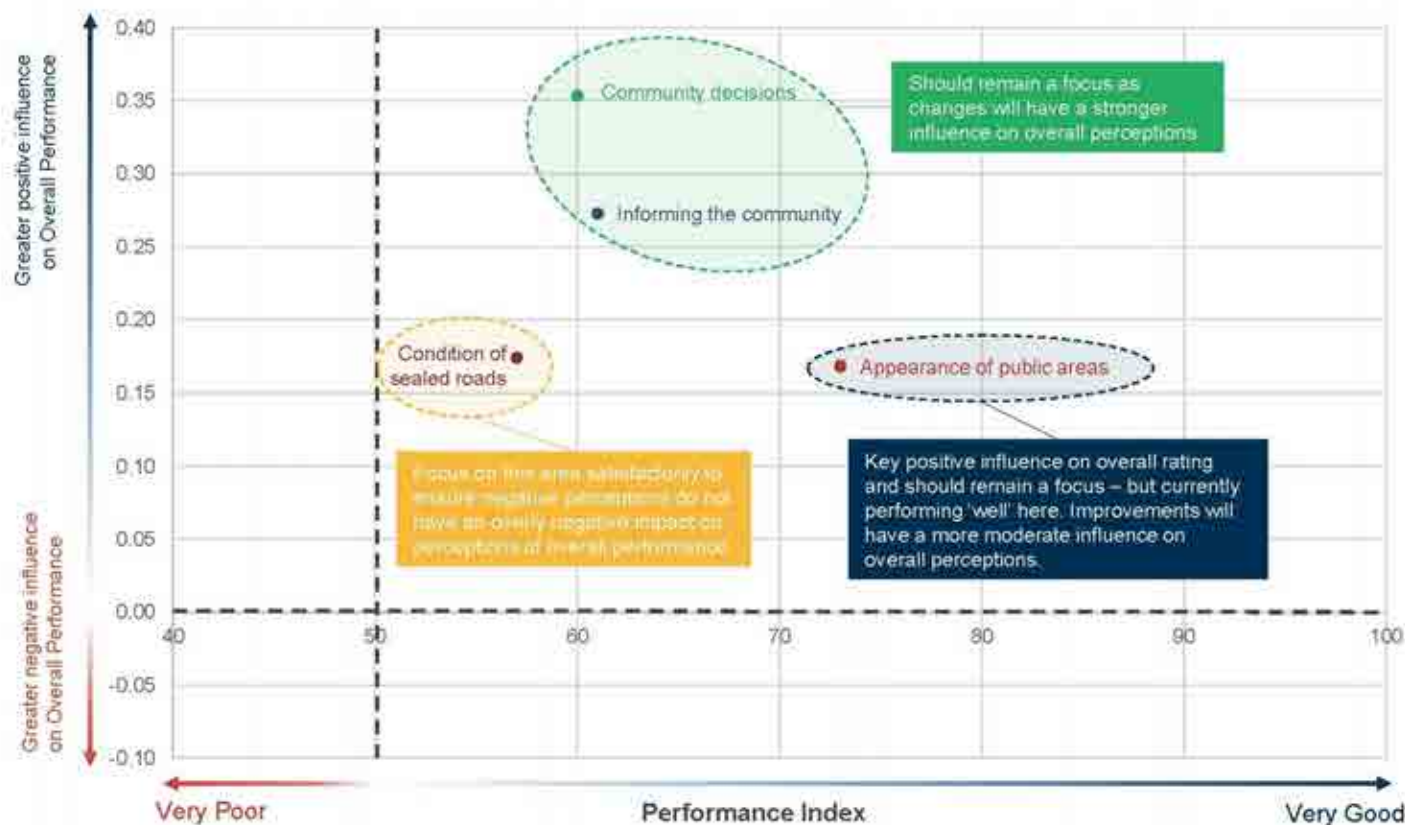


The multiple regression analysis model above (all service areas) has an R^2 value of 0.654 and adjusted R^2 value of 0.638, which means that 64% of the variance in community perceptions of overall performance can be predicted from these variables. The overall model effect was statistically significant at $p = 0.0001$, $F = 40.02$. This model should be interpreted with some caution as some data is not normally distributed and not all service areas have linear correlations.



Influence on overall performance: key services

2026 regression analysis (key services)

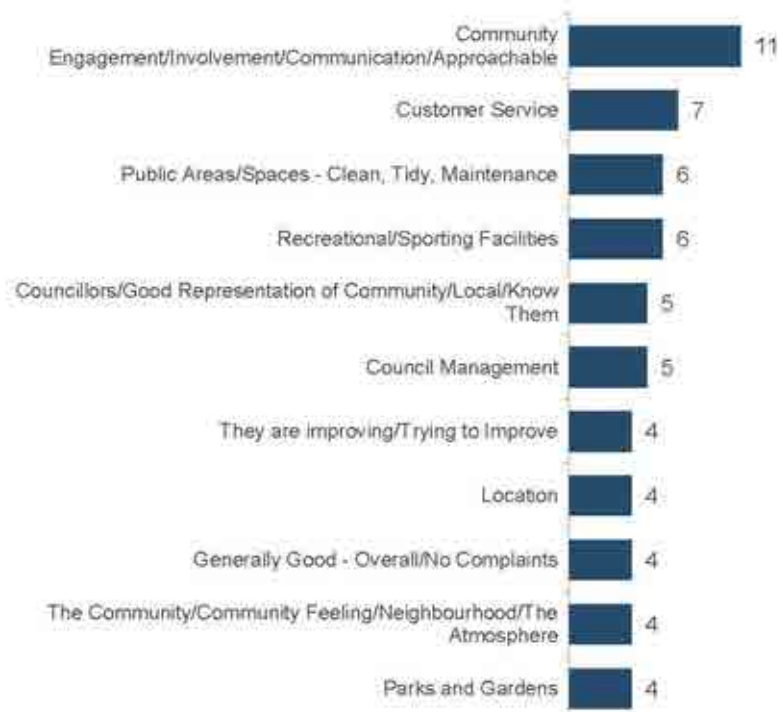


The multiple regression analysis model above (reduced set of service areas) has an R^2 value of 0.623 and adjusted R^2 value of 0.619, which means that 62% of the variance in community perceptions of overall performance can be predicted from these variables. The overall model effect was statistically significant at $p = 0.0001$, $F = 162.86$.

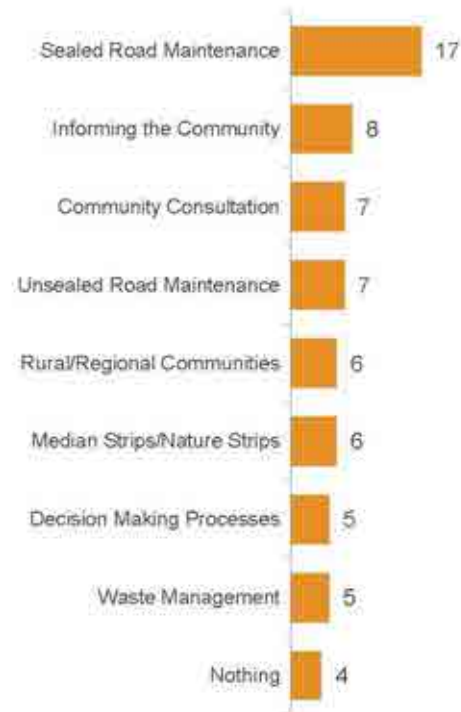


Best things about Council and areas for improvement

2026 best things about Council (%)
- Top mentions only -



2026 areas for improvement (%)
- Top mentions only -



Q16. Please tell me what is the ONE BEST thing about Ararat Rural City Council? It could be about any of the issues or services we have covered in this survey or it could be about something else altogether?

Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 9 Councils asked group: 4

Q17. What does Ararat Rural City Council MOST need to do to improve its performance?

Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 14 Councils asked group: 6

A verbatim listing of responses to these questions can be found in the accompanying dashboard.

Customer service



Contact with council and customer service

Contact with council

Around three in five Council residents (59%) report contact with Council in the last 12 months, a slight (not significant) three percentage point decrease on 2025.

- Rate of contact among residents aged 35 to 49 years decreased significantly in the last 12 months (64%, down from 78%).
- Residents aged 50 to 64 years have the highest rate of contact with Council (67%), while those aged 65 years and over have the lowest (54%).



Customer service

Council's customer service index of 72 is in line with last year's result and statistically similar to the Small Rural group and Overall averages (index scores of 70 and 69 respectively).

- While customer service ratings have not significantly changed in the last five years and have incrementally fluctuated from year to year, this year marks the first time ratings have experienced consecutive incremental (albeit non-significant) declines. Early attention here may be warranted to ensure results do not slip into an ongoing decline.

No significant differences in ratings were found among residents from different demographic or geographic cohorts compared to the Council average.

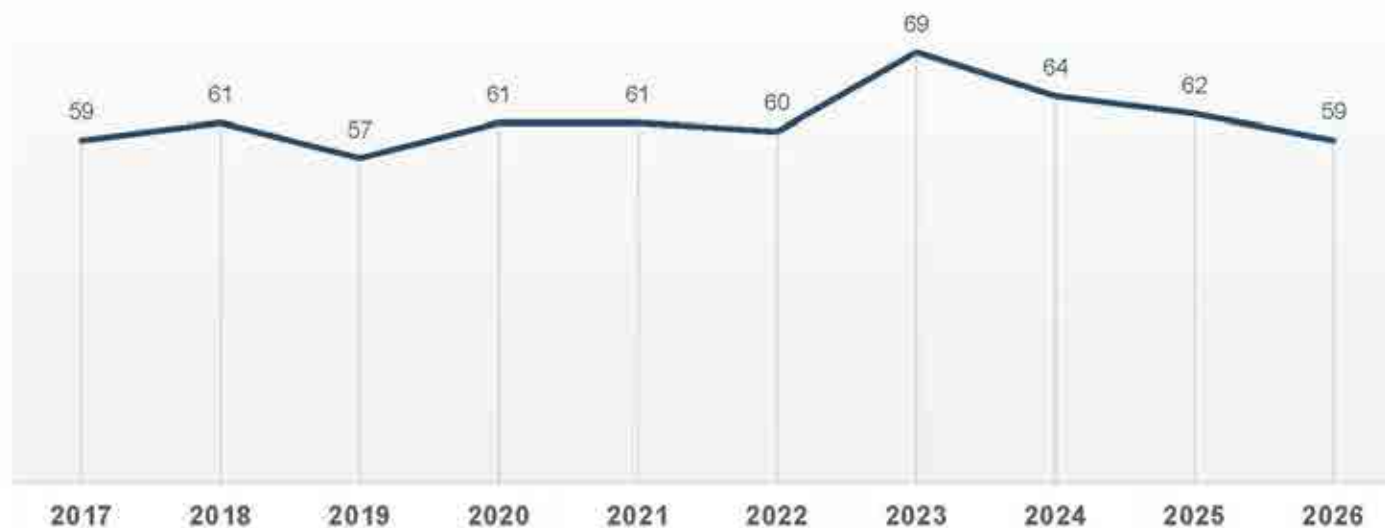
- Ratings are highest among residents aged 50 to 64 years (index score of 80) and lowest among residents aged 35 to 49 years (63).

Despite having had a high rate of contact with Council (64%), residents aged 35 to 49 years provide the lowest rating of customer service (63). Customer service ratings among this group are at their lowest level in six years. With this in mind, this cohort could be prioritised by Ararat Rural City Council for customer service improvement strategies.



Contact with council

2026 contact with council (%)
Have had contact



Q5. Over the last 12 months, have you or any member of your household had any contact with Ararat Rural City Council?
This may have been in person, in writing, by telephone conversation, by text message, by email or via their website or
social media such as Facebook or X (formerly known as Twitter)?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 14 Councils asked group: 7



Contact with council

2026 contact with council (%)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
50-64	67	74	75	78	68	68	66	61	67	59
35-49	64	78	74	74	56	67	67	64	74	67
Men	63	63	64	68	58	61	62	57	63	60
Ararat	59	62	64	69	60	61	61	57	61	59
Ararat	59	61	63	64	57	61	61	57	59	58
Elmhurst	58*	62	64	90	80	64	69	51	31	18
Lake Bolac	57*	46	77	94	74	69	100	72	69	71
18-34	57	53	57	57	63	57	59	49	49	54
Overall	56	61	62	62	60	61	63	61	61	61
Women	55	61	64	70	63	62	60	56	58	57
Small Rural	54	63	65	66	63	63	66	63	64	65
65+	54	54	59	69	57	56	56	54	53	56

Q5. Over the last 12 months, have you or any member of your household had any contact with Ararat Rural City Council?
This may have been in person, in writing, by telephone conversation, by text message, by email or via their website or social media such as Facebook or X (formerly known as Twitter)?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 14 Councils asked group: 7
Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Customer service rating

2026 customer service rating (index scores)

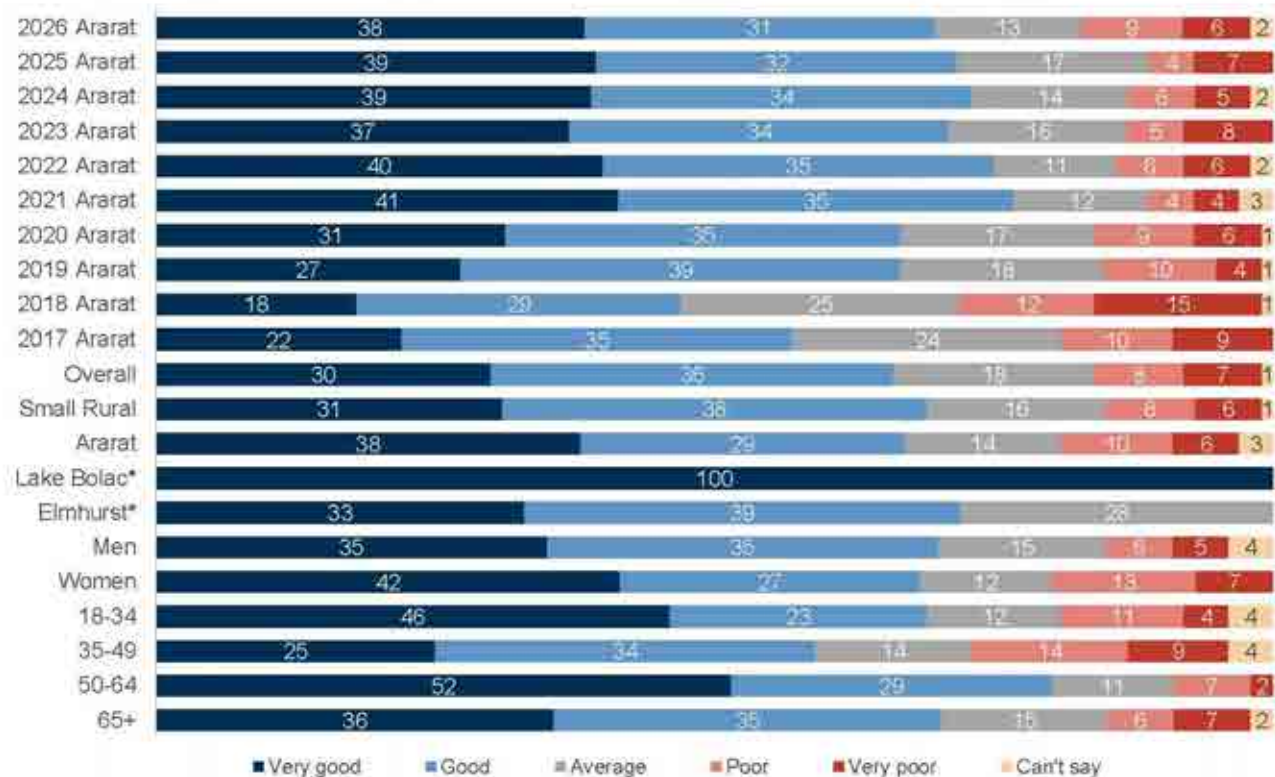
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	100*	82	83	72	75	78	32	56	38	61
50-64	80	74	78	73	69	73	67	69	63	67
Elmhurst	76*	57	76	73	73	88	55	77	12	100
18-34	75	74	75	70	76	69	78	71	63	68
Men	73	71	72	72	73	74	71	69	51	61
Ararat	72	73	75	72	75	77	70	69	56	62
65+	72	74	77	73	76	85	73	74	56	64
Ararat	71	74	73	71	75	76	71	70	59	63
Women	71	77	77	72	77	80	68	70	61	64
Small Rural	70	65	66	65	67	69	70	70	69	69
Overall	69	66	67	67	68	70	70	71	70	69
35-49	63	72	69	70	77	77	61	63	44	53

Q5c. Thinking of the most recent contact, how would you rate Ararat Rural City Council for customer service?
Please keep in mind we do not mean the actual outcome but rather the actual service that was received.
Base: All respondents who have had contact with Council in the last 12 months.
Councils asked: 22 Councils asked group: 9
Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Customer service rating

2026 customer service rating (%)



Q5c. Thinking of the most recent contact, how would you rate Ararat Rural City Council for customer service?
Please keep in mind we do not mean the actual outcome but rather the actual service that was received.
Base: All respondents who have had contact with Council in the last 12 months.
Councils asked: 22 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Communication



Communication

A council newsletter via email (21%, down from 27%) or mail (21%, up from 19%) are the most preferred forms of communication from Council about news and information and upcoming events.

The next most preferred channels are social media (18%, up from 16%) and advertising in local newspapers (14%, down from 17%). Appetite for social media communications has remained steady for several years now after experiencing an uptick in 2024. In contrast, desire for advertising in a local newspaper has declined for two consecutive years and is now surpassed by social media preference.

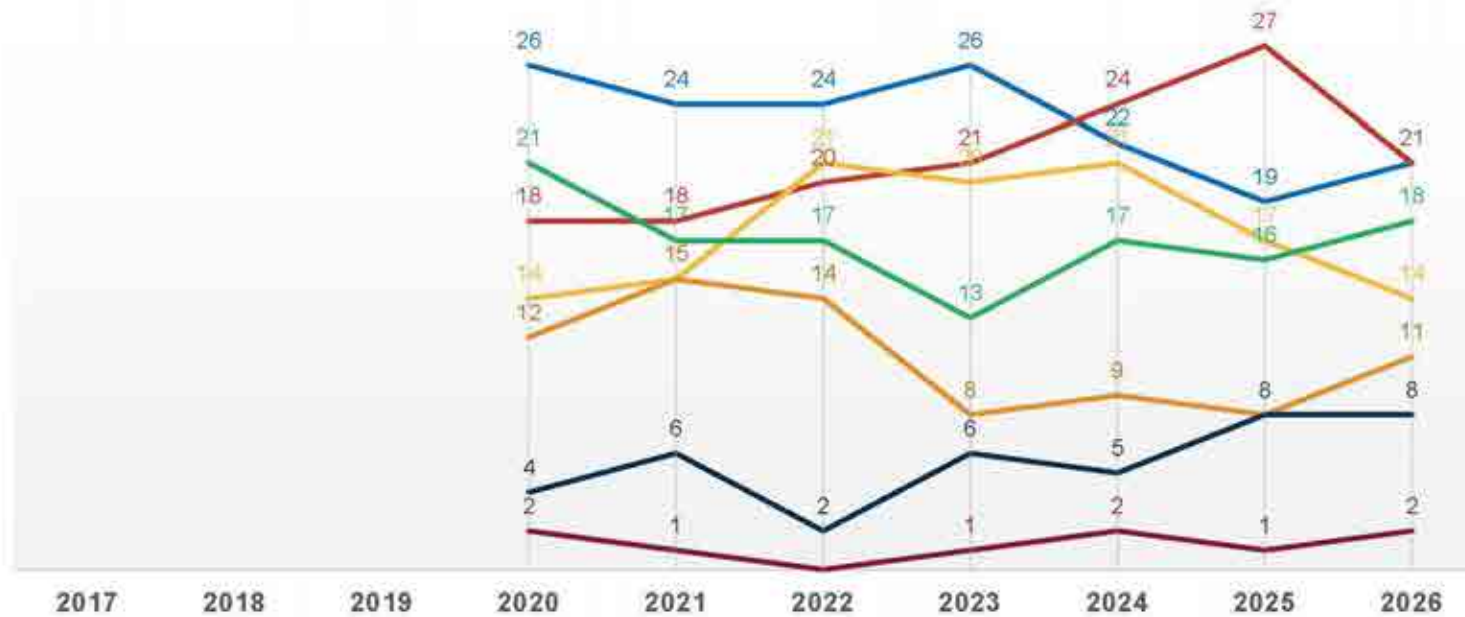
- Social media is the most preferred form of communication among residents under 50 years of age (31%, up from 23% in 2025). This is followed by council newsletters via email (19%, down from 27%) and mailed newsletters (18%, down from 19%).
- Among residents aged 50 years and older, council newsletters via mail (23%, up from 19%) have increased in popularity in the last 12 months, and now overtake preference for emailed newsletters (22%, down from 26%) and advertising in local newspapers (19%, down from 22%).





Best form of communication

2026 best form of communication (%)

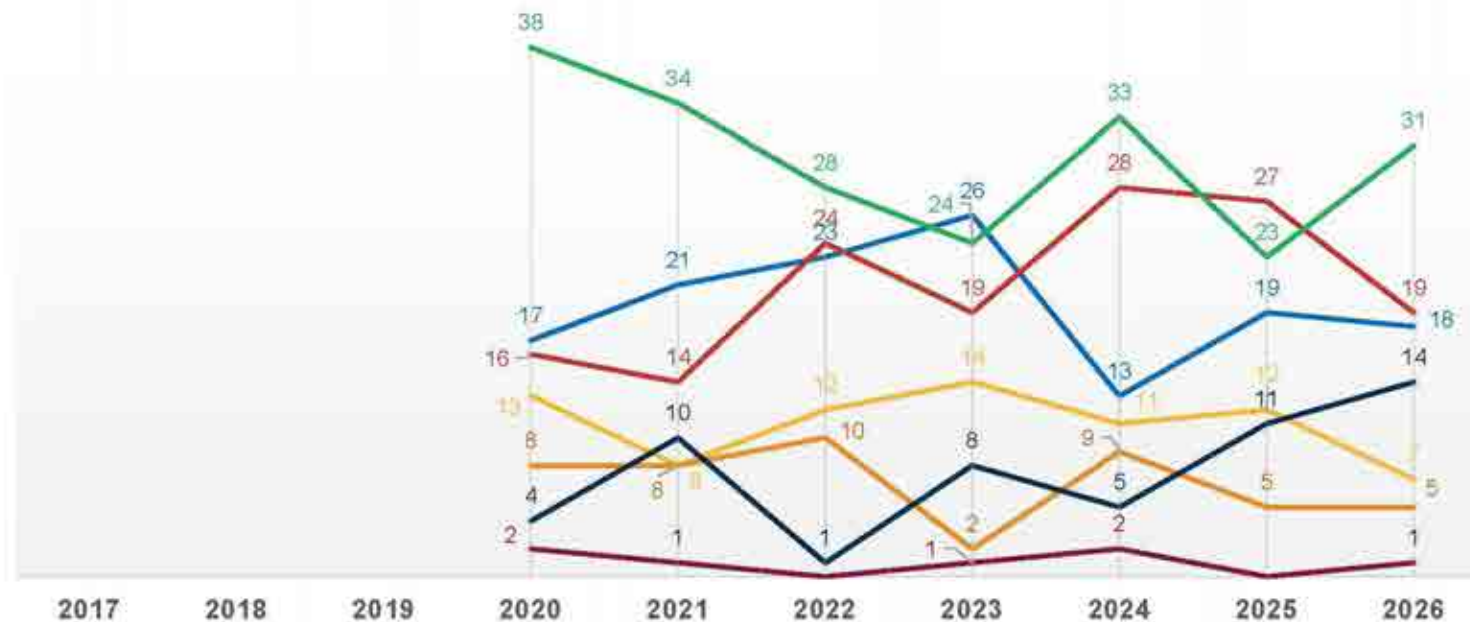


Q13: If Ararat Rural City Council was going to get in touch with you to inform you about Council news and information and upcoming events, which ONE of the following is the BEST way to communicate with you?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 6



Best form of communication: under 50s

2026 under 50s best form of communication (%)

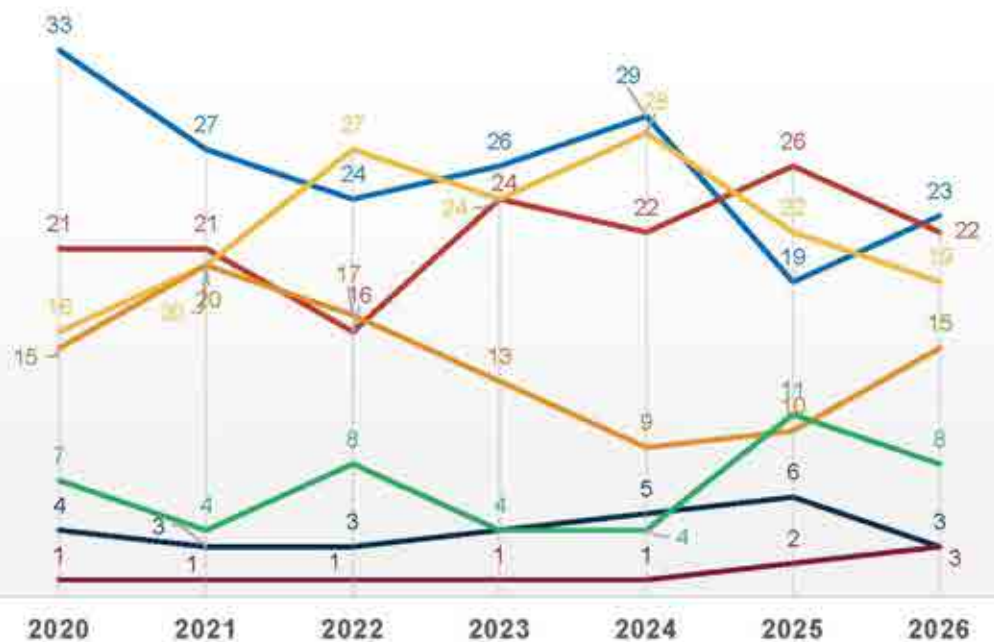


Q13: If Ararat Rural City Council was going to get in touch with you to inform you about Council news and information and upcoming events, which ONE of the following is the BEST way to communicate with you?
Base: All respondents aged under 50. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 6



Best form of communication: 50+ years

2026 50+ years best form of communication (%)



Q13. If Ararat Rural City Council was going to get in touch with you to inform you about Council news and information and upcoming events, which ONE of the following is the BEST way to communicate with you?
Base: All respondents aged 50+ years. Councils asked: 11. Councils asked group: 6



Council direction



Council direction

Ararat Rural City Council's overall direction index score of 52 is not statistically significantly different to last year's result (index score of 55). However, the three-point decline represents the continuation of a downward trend that emerged in 2023. It also means that Council has not been able to recover any ground lost after two years of successive significant declines in 2023 and 2024.

Despite this, Council is rated in line with the Small Rural average (52) and significantly higher than the Overall council average (48) for overall direction.

Six in 10 residents (63%) believe the direction of Council's overall performance has stayed the same over the last 12 months. While 19% of residents believe that overall direction has improved (down from 22% in 2025), 14% believe it has deteriorated (up from 13%).

- As was the case last year, residents aged 18 to 34 years (index score of 46) are the least satisfied with Council's overall direction and rate Council significantly lower than average on this metric.

Perceptions of the extent to which there is room for improvement in Ararat Rural City Council's overall performance have softened over the years and the majority (68%) say Council is generally heading in the right direction.





Overall council direction last 12 months

2026 overall council direction (index scores)

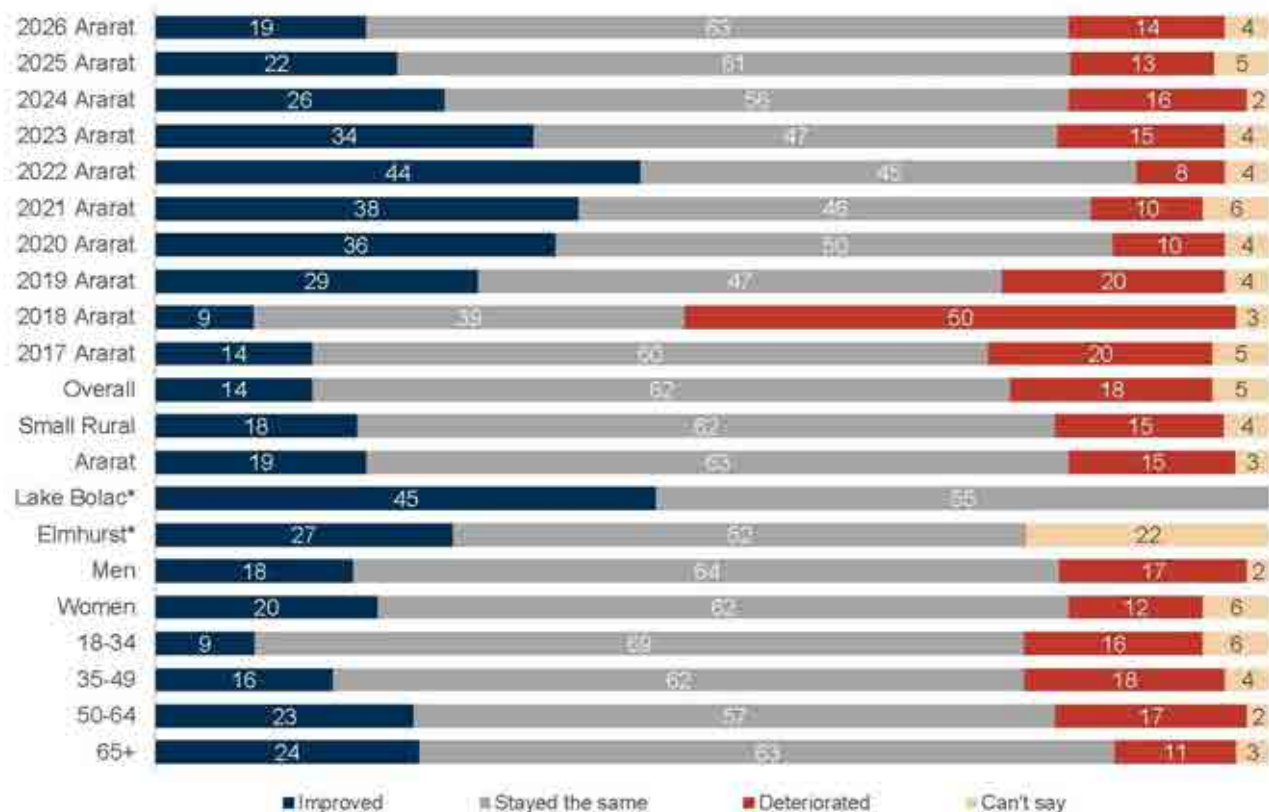
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	72*	48	71	70	69	81	82	47	26	57
Elmhurst	67*	51	52	55	71	91	60	41	32	50
65+	57	59	60	66	73	75	66	60	32	45
Women	54	54	54	58	70	65	64	55	34	49
50-64	53	54	50	58	64	61	65	55	29	45
Ararat	52	55	55	60	69	65	63	55	29	47
Ararat	52	54	54	59	68	63	63	57	30	45
Small Rural	52	46	44	47	51	53	50	53	50	52
Men	51	56	56	61	68	65	63	55	24	44
35-49	49	57	58	50	64	60	60	38	19	47
Overall	46	46	45	46	50	53	51	53	52	53
18-34	46	47	49	58	70	58	61	65	36	50

Q6. Over the last 12 months, what is your view of the direction of Ararat Rural City Council's overall performance?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 22 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



Overall council direction last 12 months

2026 overall council direction (%)

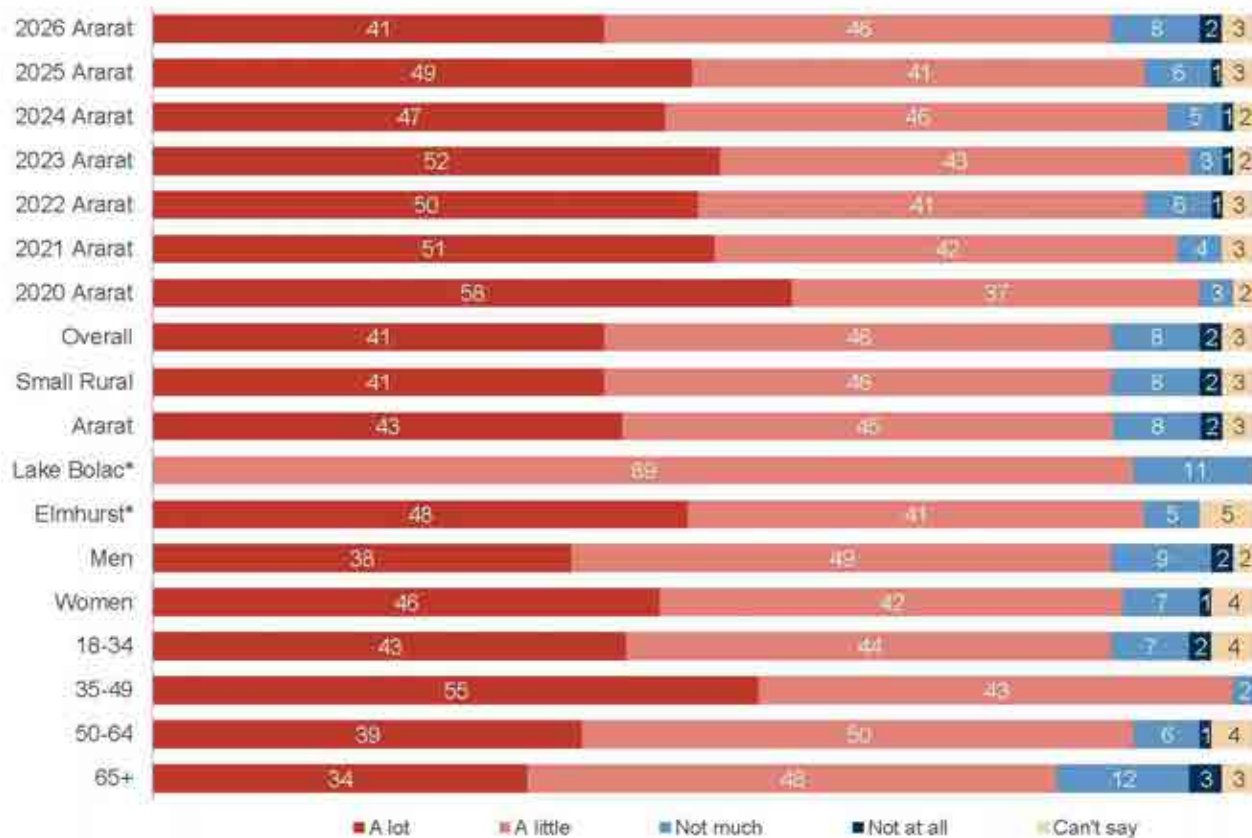


Q6. Over the last 12 months, what is your view of the direction of Ararat Rural City Council's overall performance?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 22 Councils asked group: 9
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Room for improvement in services

2026 room for improvement in services (%)



Q7. Thinking about the next 12 months, how much room for improvement do you think there is in Ararat Rural City Council's overall performance?

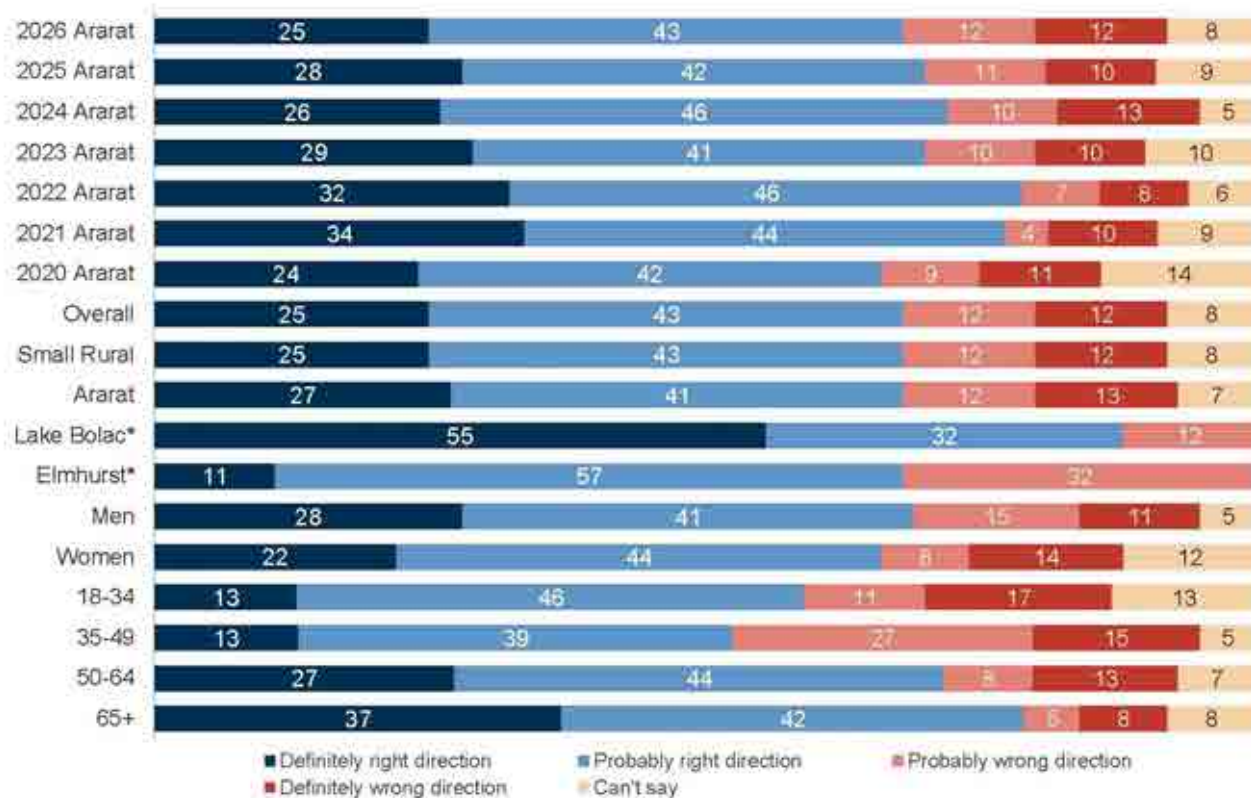
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 1 Councils asked group: 1.

*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Right / wrong direction

2026 right / wrong direction (%)



Q8. Would you say your local Council is generally heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 1. Councils asked group: 1.

Individual service areas



Community consultation and engagement importance



2026 consultation and engagement importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Elmhurst	83*	81	79	87	87	80	77	93	62	81
50-64	80	79	79	81	81	78	80	82	77	78
Women	80 [▲]	79	78	82	78	79	77	79	77	78
35-49	78	81	77	83	80	74	74	80	79	78
Ararat	77	77	78	80	78	75	74	78	74	76
Small Rural	77	77	77	78	77	76	78	74	75	
Ararat	76	77	77	79	76	75	74	78	74	74
Overall	76	76	76	76	75	74	74	74	74	74
18-34	75	74	79	79	70	73	67	74	66	67
65+	74	76	75	77	75	74	75	77	72	73
Men	73	76	76	77	75	71	71	78	71	71
Lake Bolac	66*	79	67	76	71	70	84	66	78	66

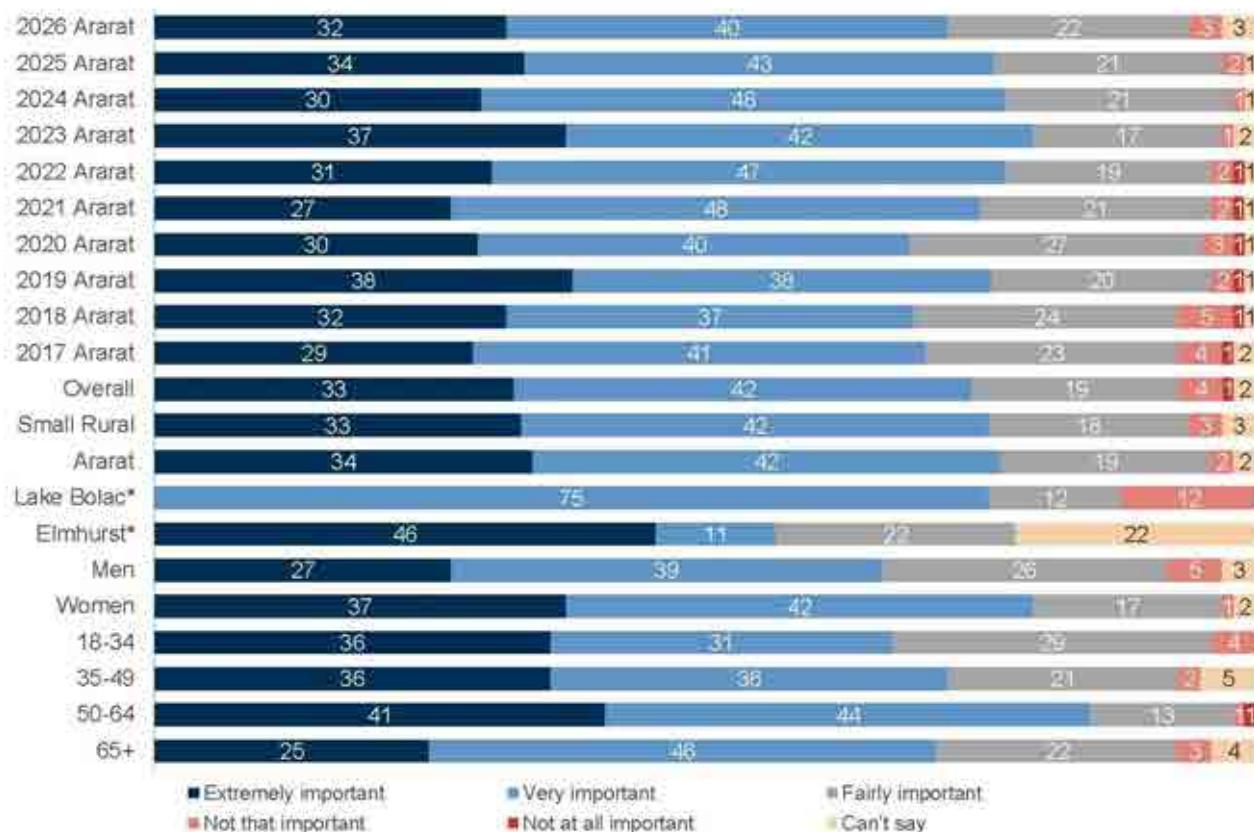
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Community consultation and engagement' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



Community consultation and engagement importance



2026 consultation and engagement importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Community consultation and engagement' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Community consultation and engagement performance



2026 consultation and engagement performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	81*▲	60	58	75	67	77	16	47	22	51
Elmhurst	66*	56	52	61	48	81	55	48	53	51
65+	62	62	66	66	67	56	55	46	49	
50-64	59	57	54	59	57	56	56	48	42	49
Men	58	59	59	63	63	62	57	49	39	46
Ararat	57	59	59	60	62	61	56	49	41	49
Women	57	60	58	57	61	60	56	50	43	52
Small Rural	57	51	51	53	54	56	54	56	54	55
Ararat	57	59	58	58	61	60	58	51	45	49
18-34	56	57	60	59	67	52	58	49	42	52
Overall	53▼	50	51	52	54	56	55	56	55	55
35-49	50	57	54	50	54	65	56	44	32	45

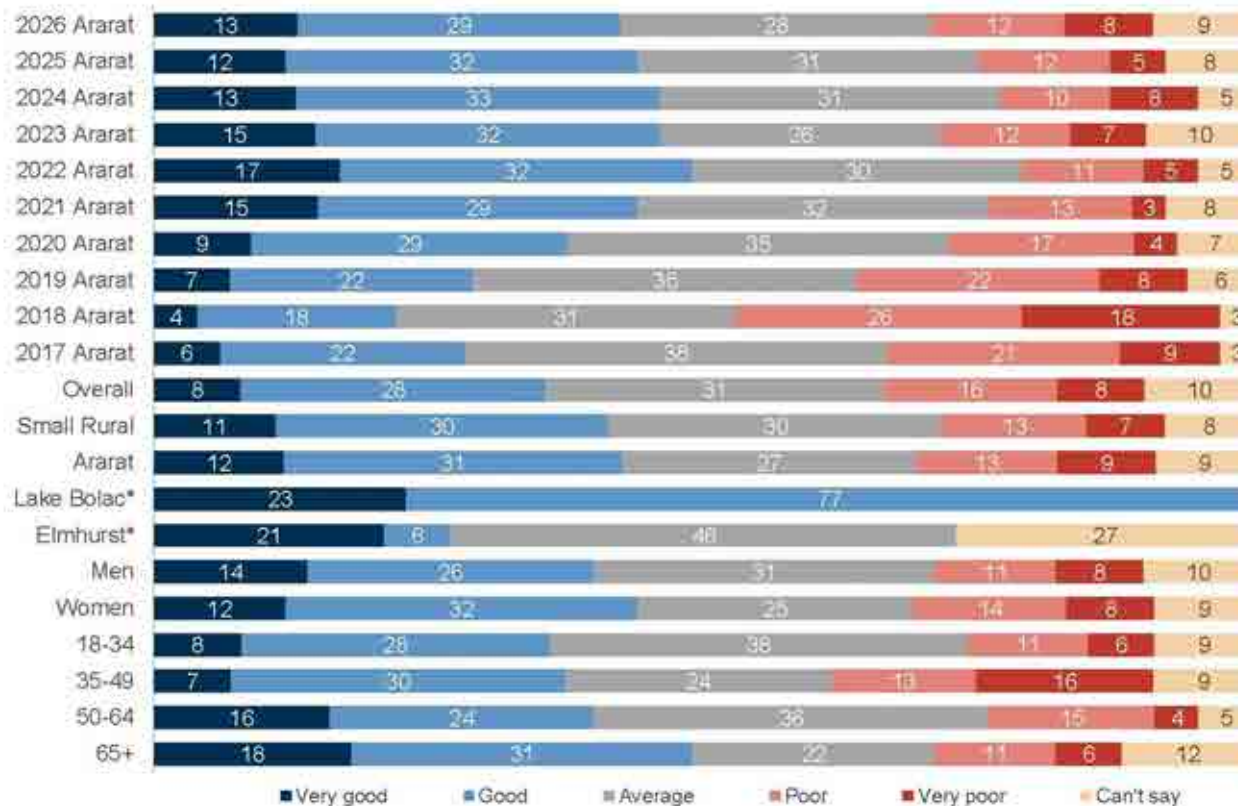
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Community consultation and engagement' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Community consultation and engagement performance



2026 consultation and engagement performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Community consultation and engagement' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Lobbying on behalf of the community importance



2026 lobbying importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Elmhurst	86*▲	82	77	71	76	68	77	76	56	70
35-49	78▲	79	76	78	78	69	72	72	72	73
50-64	74	73	72	78	78	74	77	73	71	71
Women	74	76	76	78	74	75	74	72	73	74
Small Rural	73	73	72	73	74	71	73	70	70	70
18-34	73	71	82	75	71	68	70	70	71	69
Ararat	73	73	74	75	75	71	72	70	71	72
Ararat	73	73	74	75	74	71	71	69	70	70
Men	72	72	72	74	74	66	69	67	68	67
Overall	70▼	70	68	68	71	69	68	67	68	69
65+	69	72	69	73	71	71	69	65	68	69
Lake Bolac	63*	66	64	83	60	65	34	60	69	63

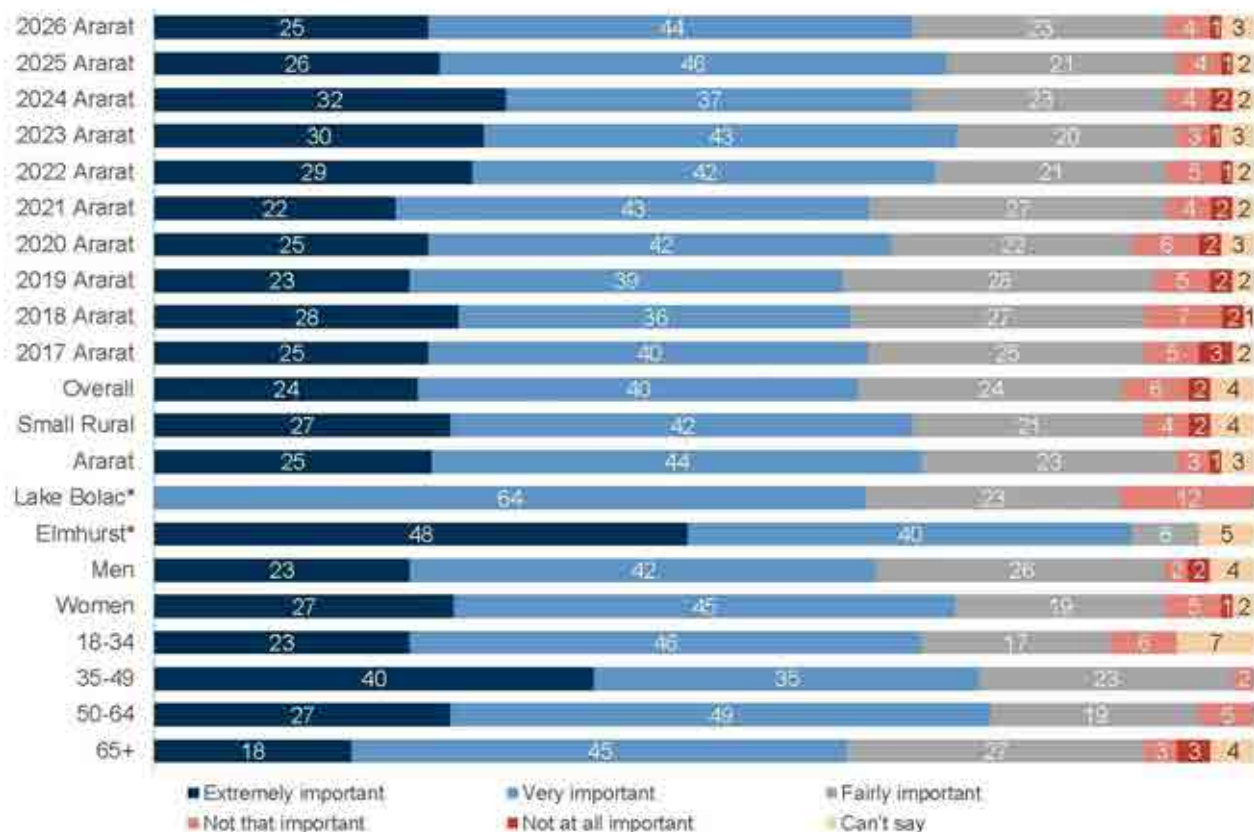
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Lobbying on behalf of the community' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 7 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Lobbying on behalf of the community importance



2026 lobbying importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Lobbying on behalf of the community' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 7 Councils asked group: 2
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Lobbying on behalf of the community performance



2026 lobbying performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	75*	64	67	60	70	64	n/a	42	24	46
65+	68 [▲]	68	64	67	66	70	57	51	52	54
50-64	62	60	60	61	60	62	54	53	45	53
Men	61	61	62	63	65	65	58	50	42	52
Ararat	60	60	60	61	64	63	56	50	44	53
Ararat	58	60	60	61	64	63	56	52	48	54
Women	58	60	58	58	63	61	56	51	47	53
Elmhurst	57*	54	44	56	56	75	58	48	40	51
Small Rural	57 [▼]	51	50	52	54	55	52	55	53	55
Overall	54 [▼]	49	50	51	53	55	53	54	54	54
35-49	53 [▼]	54	52	45	58	61	54	44	34	49
18-34	51 [▼]	54	62	62	68	54	56	53	46	54

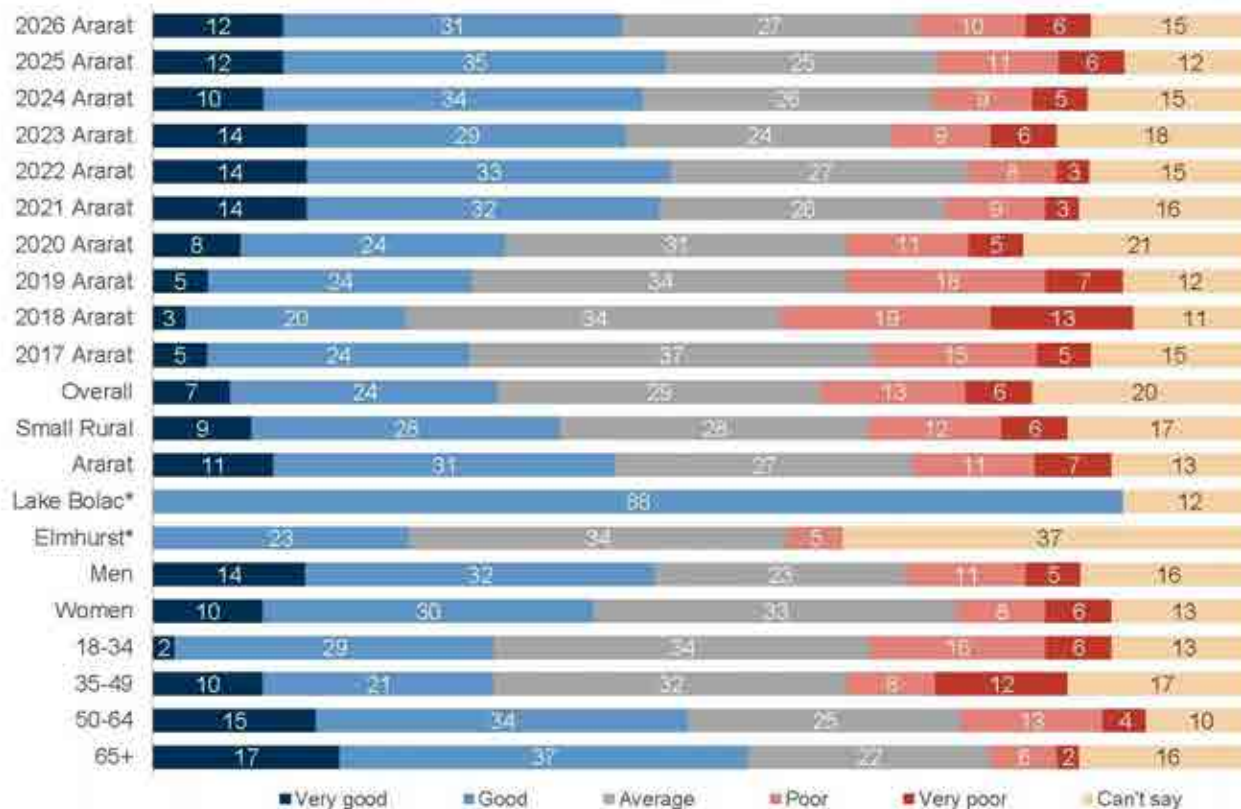
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Lobbying on behalf of the community' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 17 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



Lobbying on behalf of the community performance



2026 lobbying performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'Lobbying on behalf of the community' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 17 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

Decisions made in the interest of the community importance



2026 community decisions made importance (index scores)

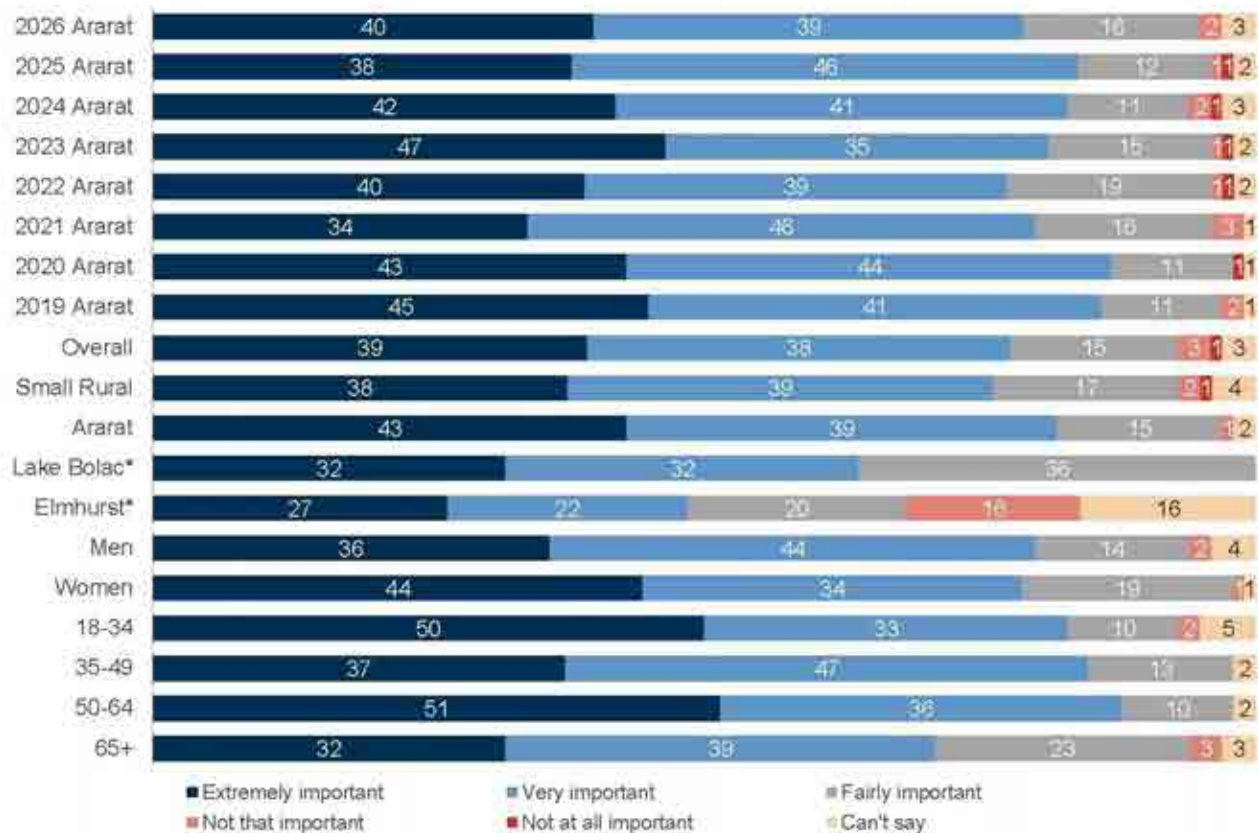
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
50-64	86▲	83	80	82	86	82	84	86	n/a
18-34	84	77	82	84	76	73	84	85	n/a
Ararat	81	81	81	82	80	78	82	83	n/a
35-49	81	81	84	88	85	80	84	80	n/a
Women	80	84	84	84	80	81	84	84	n/a
Ararat	80	80	81	83	80	78	83	82	n/a
Men	80	78	79	81	79	76	81	81	n/a
Overall	79	80	80	80	81	81	80	80	80
Small Rural	79	79	80	82	82	80	82	81	77
65+	75▼	82	80	78	75	78	80	80	n/a
Lake Bolac	74*	78	87	89	66	73	84	77	n/a
Elmhurst	68*	84	80	92	75	84	85	88	n/a

Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Decisions made in the interest of the community' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30

Decisions made in the interest of the community importance



2026 community decisions made importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Decisions made in the interest of the community' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2.
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

Decisions made in the interest of the community performance



2026 community decisions made performance (index scores)

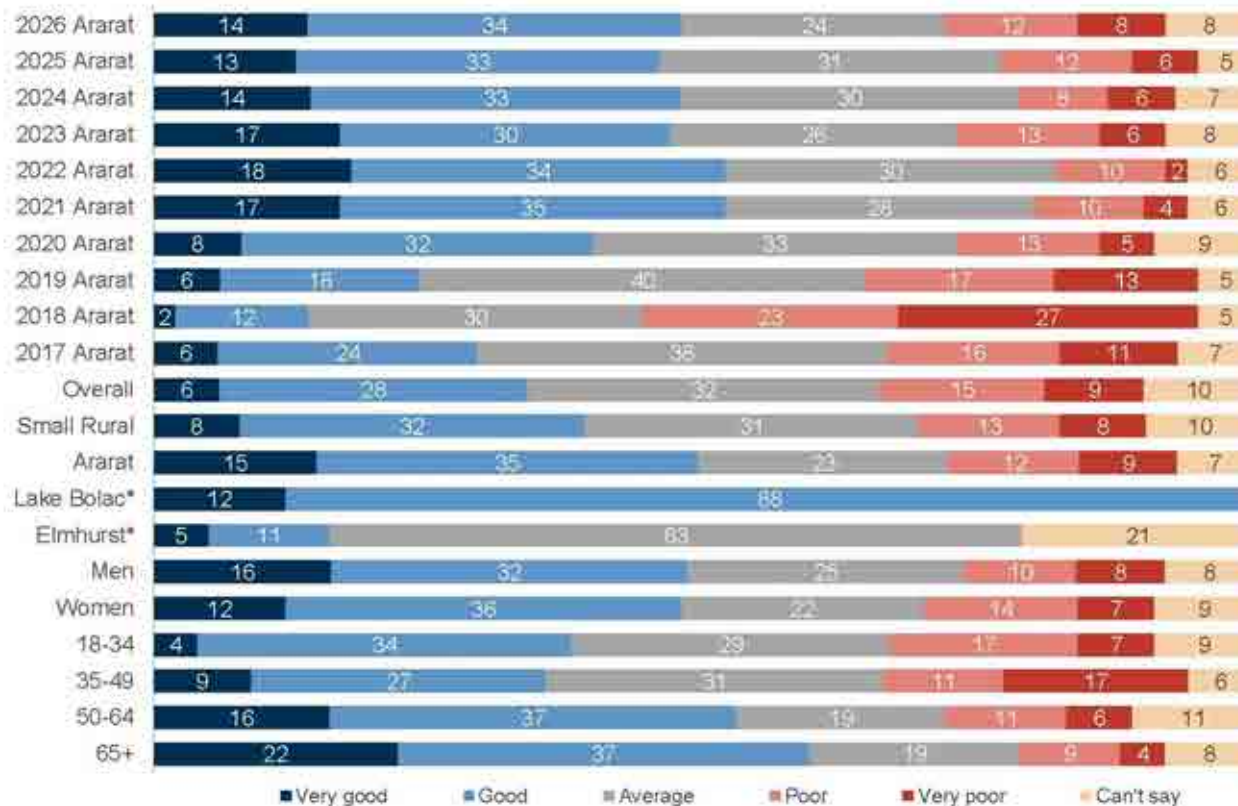
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	78 ^{▲▲}	69	70	71	68	79	32	21	17	48
65+	67 [▲]	65	66	68	69	71	59	50	38	52
50-64	63	58	58	60	59	60	58	47	39	48
Men	60	60	61	61	66	64	56	45	28	48
Ararat	60	59	61	60	65	63	57	46	33	50
Women	59	58	61	60	65	63	58	48	39	51
Ararat	59	59	61	60	67	62	57	48	36	50
Elmhurst	57 [*]	52	49	44	42	75	52	59	36	50
Small Rural	56 [▼]	50	50	52	54	56	53	55	52	55
18-34	53 [▼]	54	62	58	72	56	57	47	33	50
Overall	52 [▼]	49	50	51	54	56	53	55	54	54
35-49	50 [▼]	55	54	48	57	62	52	41	22	48

Q2: How has Council performed on 'Decisions made in the interest of the community' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30

Decisions made in the interest of the community performance



2026 community decisions made performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Decisions made in the interest of the community' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

The condition of sealed local roads in your area importance



2026 sealed local roads importance (index scores)

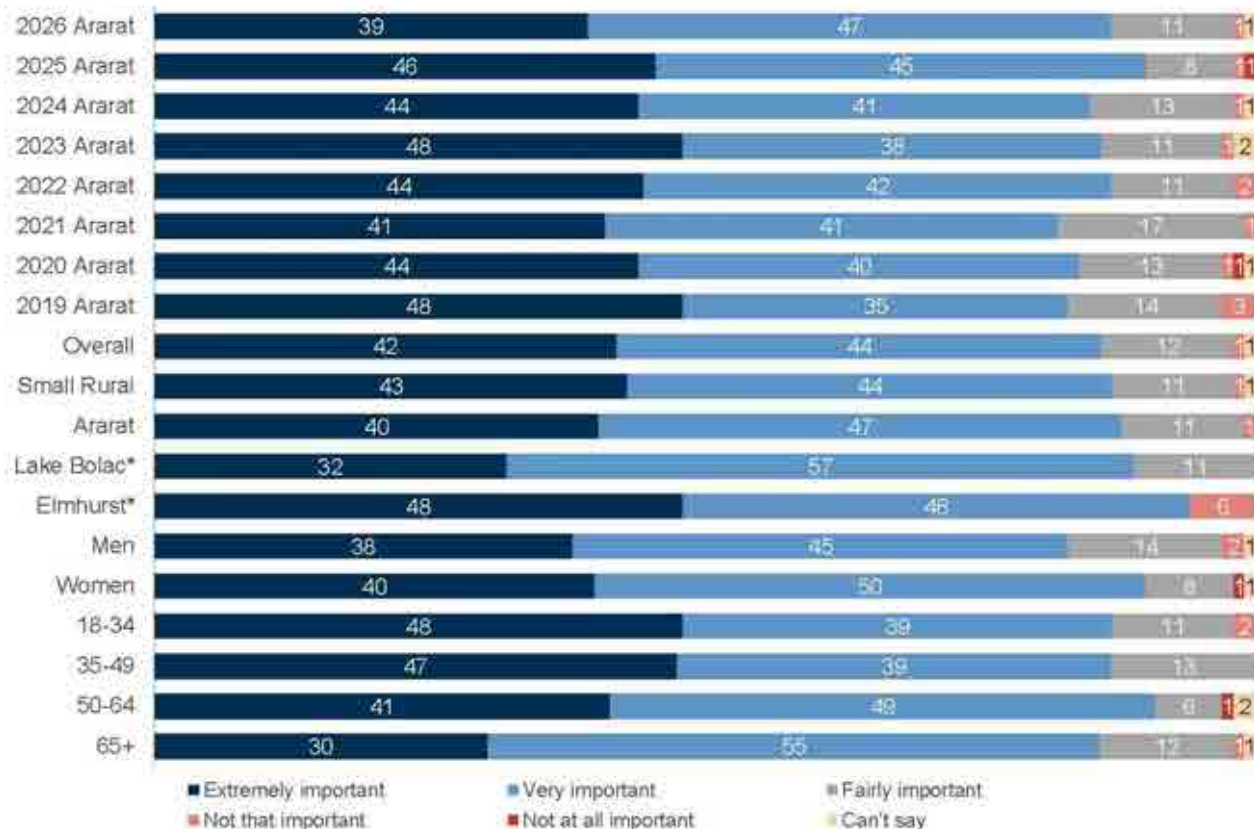
		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Elmhurst	84*	88	83	87	74	80	84	81	n/a	n/a
35-49	84	86	82	88	86	84	82	85	n/a	n/a
18-34	83	84	82	85	80	77	81	76	n/a	n/a
50-64	83	84	85	82	84	76	87	86	n/a	n/a
Women	83	86	83	85	83	80	83	84	n/a	n/a
Small Rural	82	84	85	84	82	81	83	82	84	81
Overall	82	83	83	82	81	79	79	79	80	78
Ararat	82	82	82	83	83	80	80	81	n/a	n/a
Ararat	81	84	82	84	82	80	81	82	n/a	n/a
Lake Bolac	80*	90	77	88	78	80	75	94	n/a	n/a
Men	80	81	82	83	82	81	80	81	n/a	n/a
65+	78	82	82	81	81	82	79	82	n/a	n/a

Q1. Firstly, how important should 'The condition of sealed local roads in your area' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30

The condition of sealed local roads in your area importance



2026 sealed local roads importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'The condition of sealed local roads in your area' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 2.
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.

The condition of sealed local roads in your area performance



2026 sealed local roads performance (index scores)

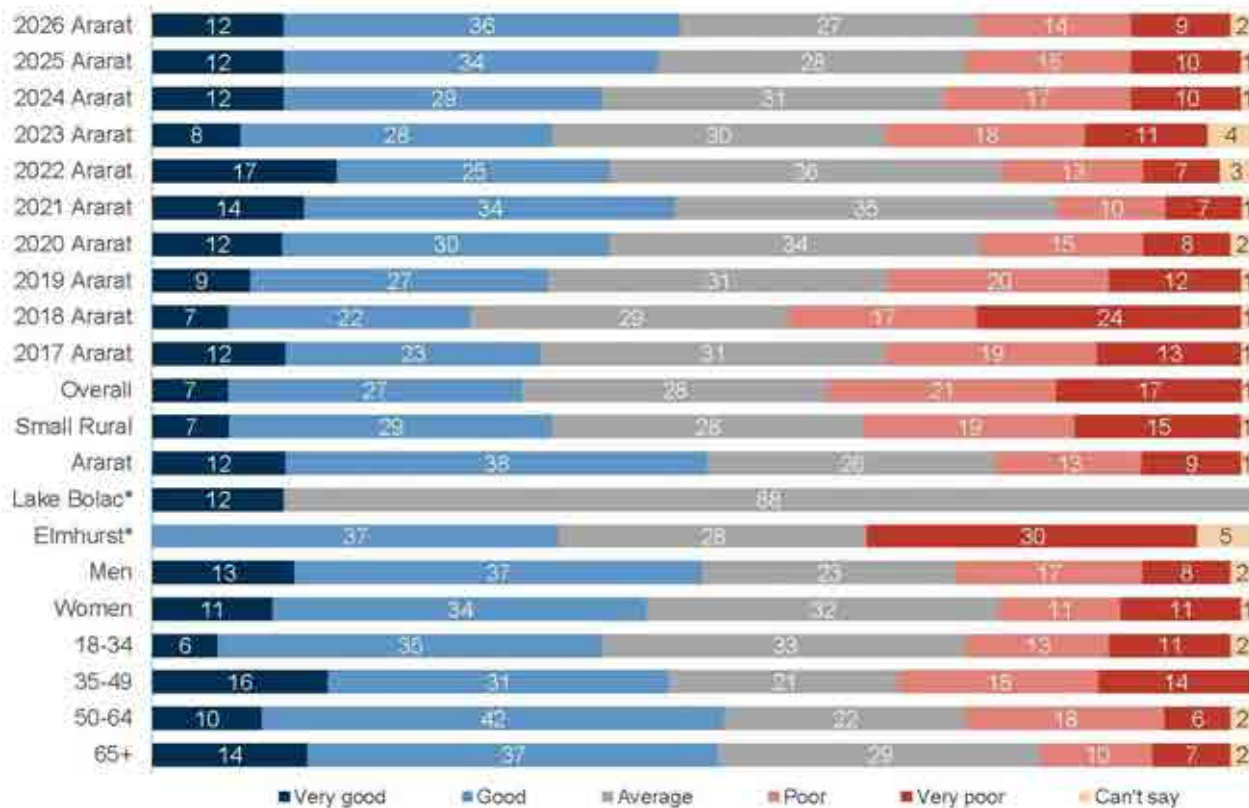
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
65+	61	62	58	54	63	63	61	55	49	55
50-64	59	64	53	52	60	60	54	51	44	47
Men	58	55	53	53	57	59	55	50	40	51
Ararat	58	57	55	53	62	60	59	53	48	56
Ararat	57	56	54	51	58	59	56	50	43	51
Lake Bolac	56*	48	55	39	54	59	32	29	20	27
Women	56	56	56	48	59	60	57	51	46	51
35-49	54	49	52	45	47	60	52	45	34	47
18-34	53	46	51	49	59	52	53	48	44	53
Small Rural	48▼	44	41	44	50	53	51	53	49	50
Overall	46▼	45	45	48	53	57	54	56	53	53
Elmhurst	44*	52	52	41	39	67	54	53	50	55

Q2. How has Council performed on 'The condition of sealed local roads in your area' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30

The condition of sealed local roads in your area performance



2026 sealed local roads performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'The condition of sealed local roads in your area' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Informing the community importance



2026 informing community importance (index scores)

		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Women	78	81	83	82	82	80	80	79	82	80
50-64	78	79	80	78	83	83	82	81	76	79
Ararat	77	79	81	79	80	79	77	79	78	78
35-49	76	79	81	83	85	77	74	79	80	75
Ararat	75	79	80	79	79	77	76	77	76	76
65+	75	79	77	76	77	76	76	77	74	74
Small Rural	74	77	78	77	79	77	77	76	75	76
18-34	74	78	85	80	74	75	73	72	73	74
Overall	74	76	76	76	77	77	75	75	75	74
Men	73	77	77	76	77	75	73	76	71	72
Elmhurst	68*	85	85	88	85	82	70	83	60	81
Lake Bolac	61*▼	68	72	66	72	68	84	62	70	62

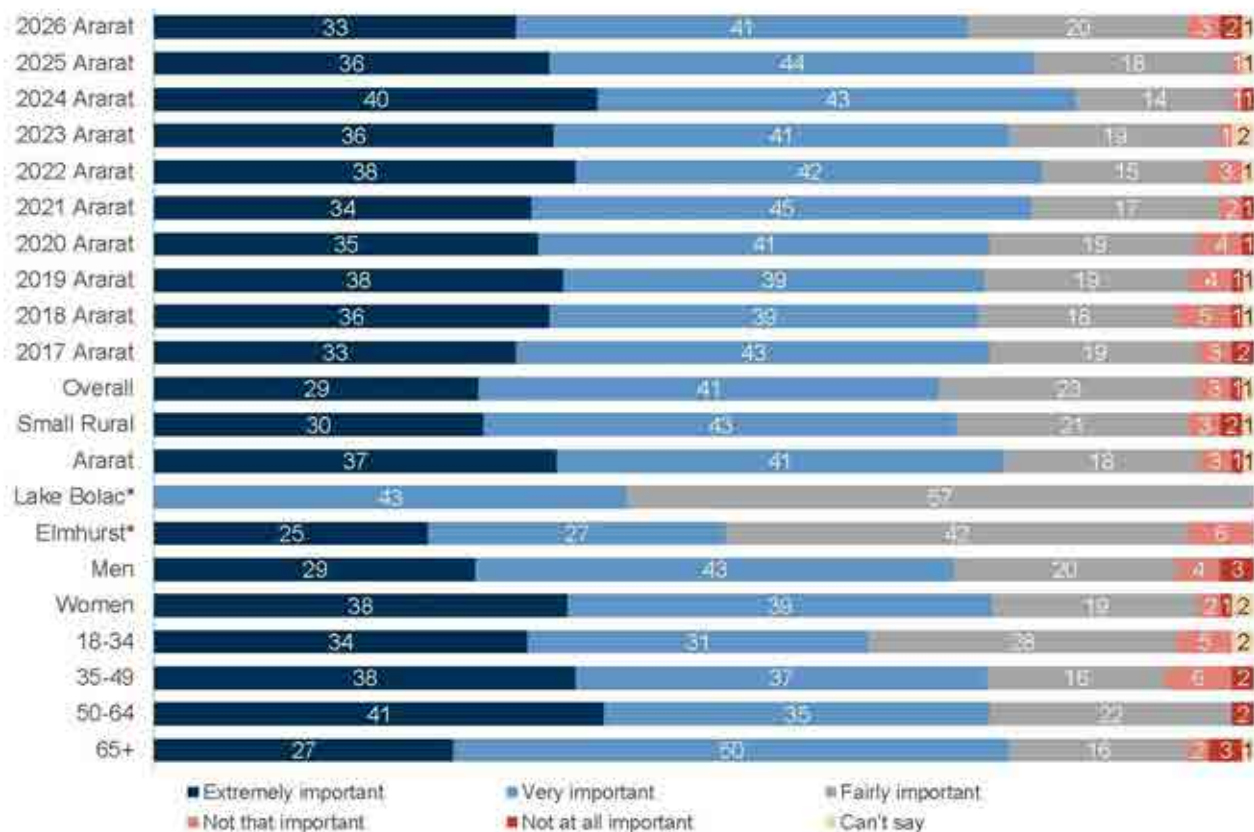
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'informing the community' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Informing the community importance



2026 informing community importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'informing the community' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Informing the community performance



2026 informing community performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	73*	67	66	75	69	75	16	38	40	56
65+	65	65	66	67	68	69	60	49	48	51
Elmhurst	64*	54	55	50	45	81	49	57	53	56
50-64	64	57	56	61	58	56	59	52	42	50
Small Rural	62	57	56	58	59	61	58	58	56	58
Men	62	60	61	61	66	63	57	49	42	50
Ararat	61	61	61	60	64	63	58	49	44	50
Ararat	60	61	60	59	64	63	58	50	45	49
Women	60	61	60	59	62	63	59	50	46	51
Overall	60	56	56	57	59	60	59	60	59	59
18-34	58	60	59	59	69	62	61	52	48	49
35-49	54*	57	57	49	57	62	52	45	37	50

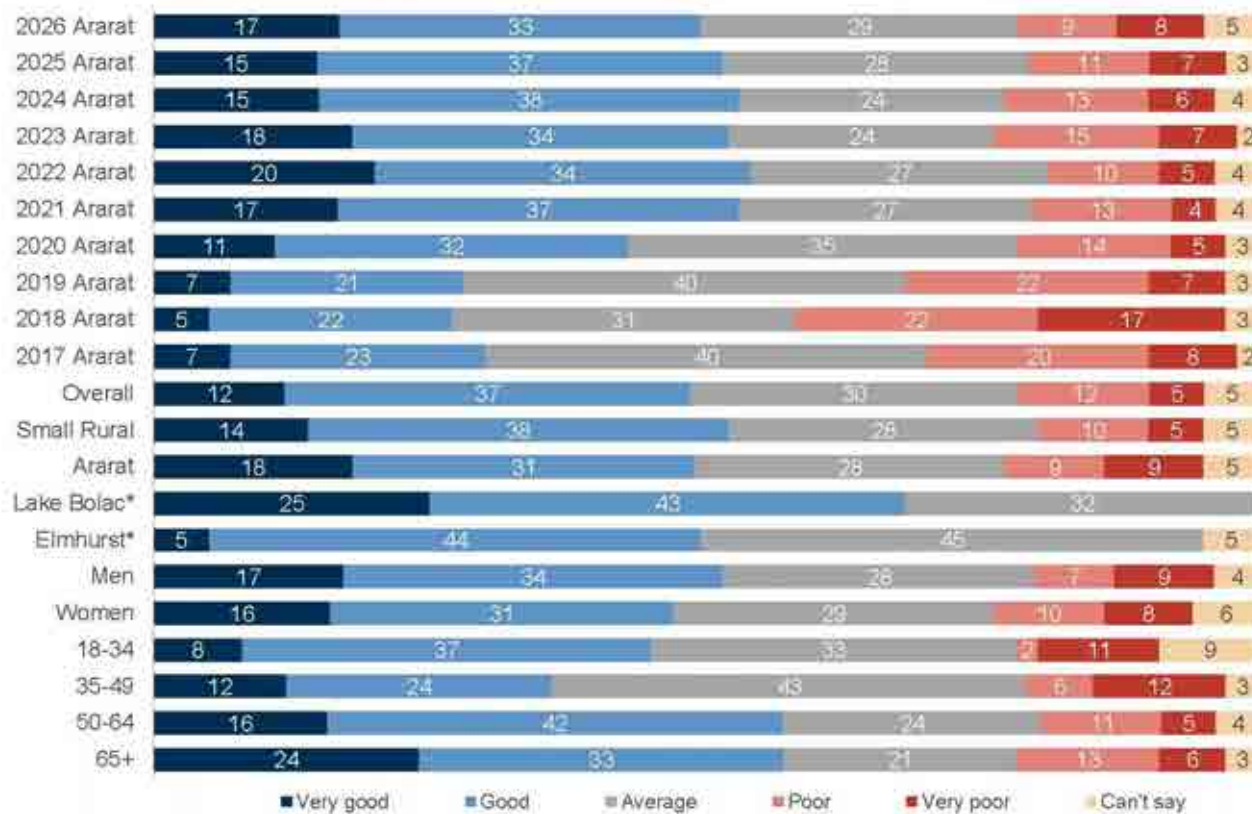
Q2: How has Council performed on 'informing the community' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 12 Councils asked group: 5
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Informing the community performance



2026 informing community performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'informing the community' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 12 Councils asked group: 5
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area importance



2026 streets and footpaths importance (index scores)

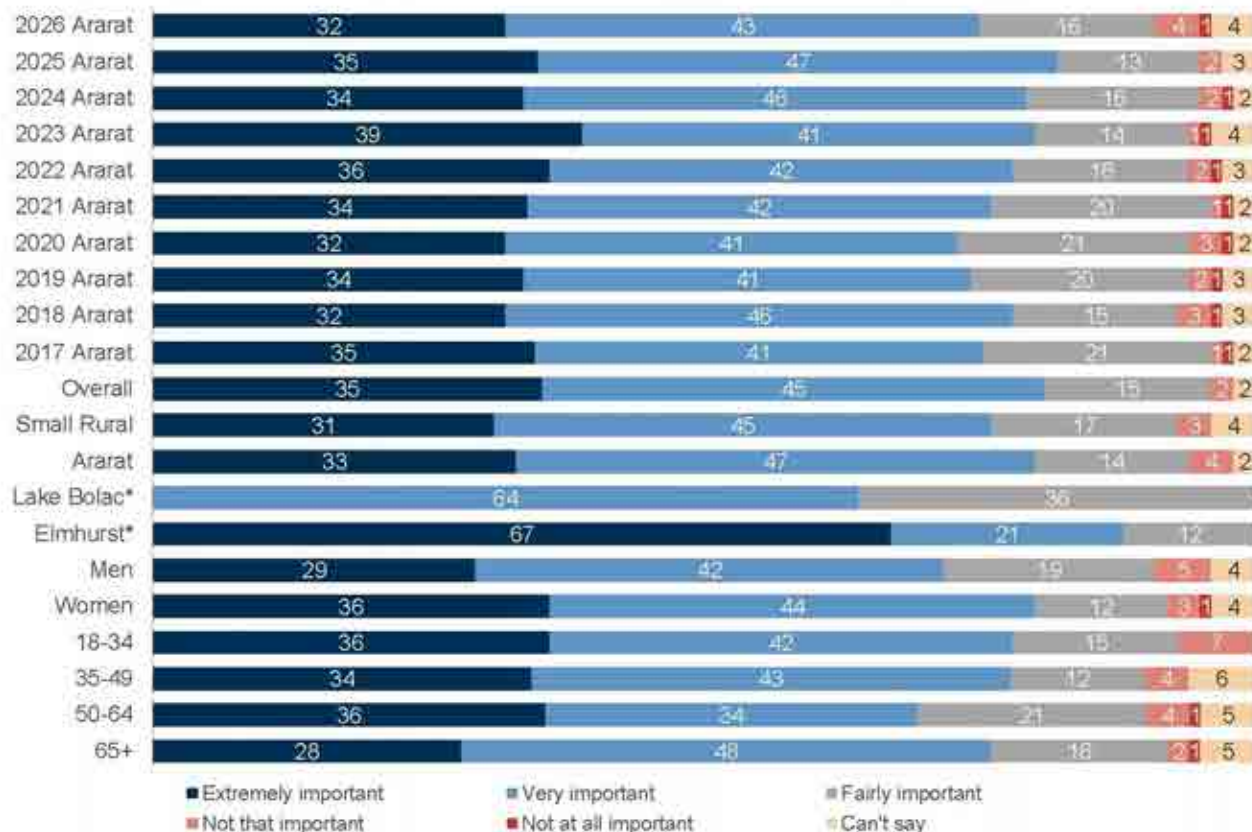
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Elmhurst	69*▲	81	74	75	73	73	70	78	53	84
Women	79	81	80	84	82	81	79	78	80	80
Overall	79	79	80	81	79	78	77	78	77	77
35-49	79	80	74	80	83	77	78	79	78	77
Ararat	78	80	79	81	80	78	77	77	79	78
Ararat	77	80	78	80	79	77	76	77	77	77
18-34	77	84	84	82	74	79	68	74	74	76
Small Rural	77	79	80	80	80	77	77	77	76	76
65+	76	78	77	79	78	78	75	76	77	76
50-64	76	76	77	78	81	77	82	78	79	80
Men	75	78	77	77	76	75	73	75	75	75
Lake Bolac	66*▼	83	73	83	75	65	84	77	68	77

Q1. Firstly, how important should 'The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.

The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area importance



2026 streets and footpaths importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2.
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area performance



2026 streets and footpaths performance (index scores)

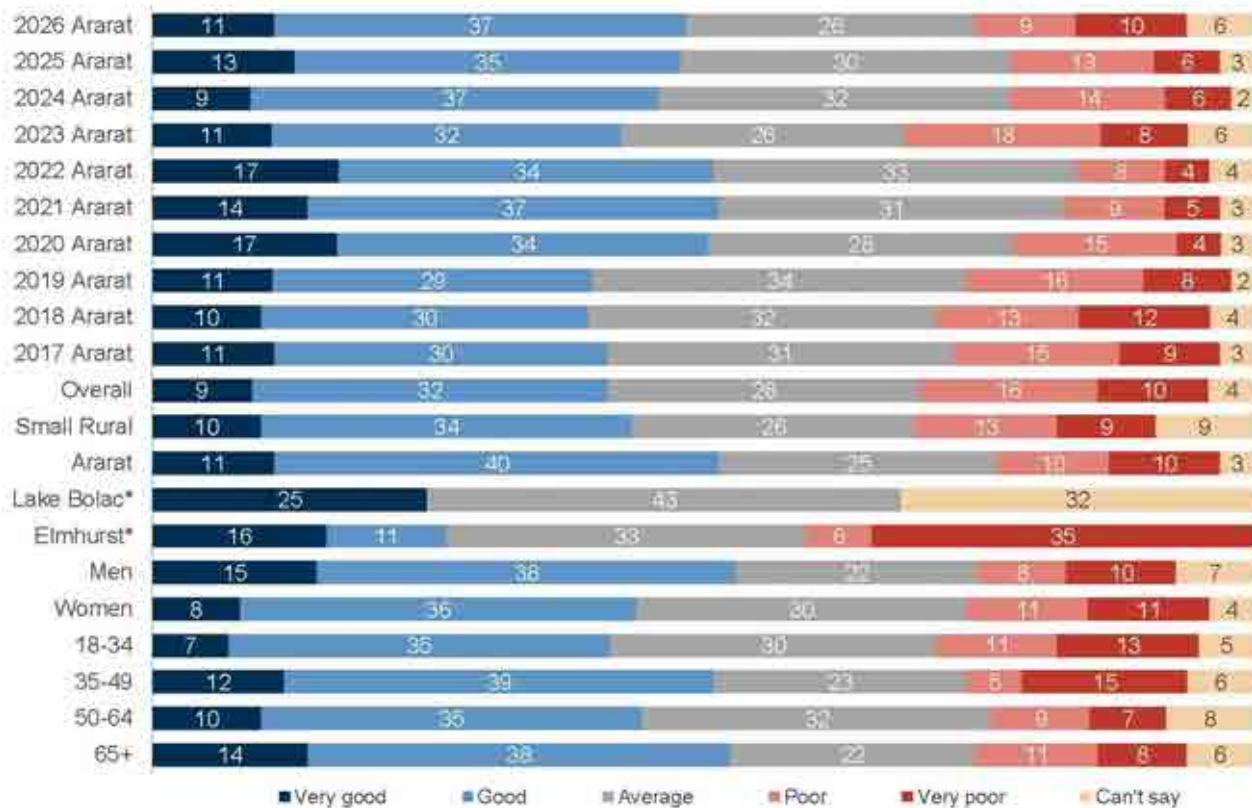
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	68*	66	65	52	62	51	48	47	42	45
Men	61	59	57	59	65	66	62	55	51	55
65+	61	64	60	59	65	64	61	56	57	58
Ararat	59	59	57	57	65	62	62	55	56	57
50-64	58	64	58	57	63	62	62	54	57	55
Ararat	58	59	57	55	63	62	62	55	53	55
35-49	58	57	53	44	55	60	60	50	50	53
Small Rural	56	53	51	52	55	58	57	57	57	57
Women	55	59	57	51	62	57	61	54	56	55
Overall	54*	52	52	52	57	59	58	59	58	57
18-34	53	50	55	57	69	60	64	57	49	53
Elmhurst	41*	54	54	41	50	63	50	56	34	36

Q2: How has Council performed on 'The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 4
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.

The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area performance



2026 streets and footpaths performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 4
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Elderly support services importance



2026 elderly support importance (index scores)

		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Lake Bolac	85*	81	70	77	70	83	59	66	74	77
Women	82▲	83	86	86	84	87	85	83	84	85
18-34	82	81	87	85	82	82	76	76	78	74
50-64	80	77	81	81	83	84	82	87	82	85
Ararat	79	81	83	83	83	82	80	80	81	80
Ararat	78	80	82	83	82	82	79	79	80	79
Small Rural	78	80	82	82	82	83	81	80	80	79
65+	78	81	80	81	81	82	81	80	79	78
Overall	77	79	80	80	82	82	80	80	79	78
Men	75	78	78	80	79	78	75	76	76	74
Elmhurst	75*	80	80	85	86	90	80	78	52	85
35-49	74	81	80	85	82	80	78	74	80	79

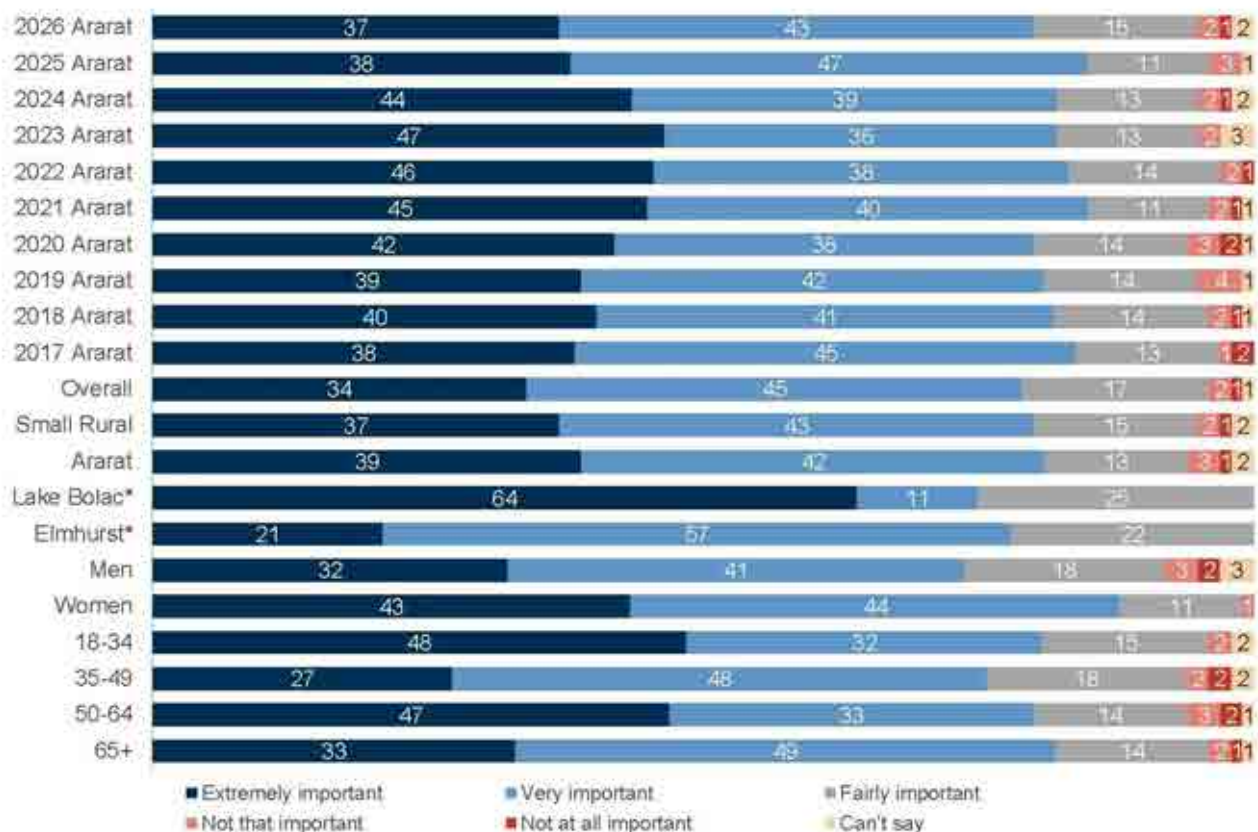
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Elderly support services' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 3 Councils asked group: 1
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Elderly support services importance



2026 elderly support importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Elderly support services' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 3 Councils asked group: 1
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Elderly support services performance



2026 elderly support performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	81*▲	72	63	63	80	74	n/a	65	51	62
65+	70	71	72	71	74	78	73	67	69	72
Men	67	69	69	70	72	72	71	65	62	66
Small Rural	67	66	65	66	70	72	71	69	71	
50-64	67	69	64	65	66	70	70	67	65	66
Ararat	67	68	68	67	73	72	69	66	65	68
Ararat	67	67	68	66	71	72	68	65	64	67
Women	66	66	65	62	71	72	65	66	67	68
18-34	65	60	65	69	77	66	62	64	62	64
Overall	62▼	63	63	63	67	69	68	68	68	68
Elmhurst	61*	59	62	58	70	81	67	63	62	57
35-49	59▼	68	64	54	65	68	63	61	61	62

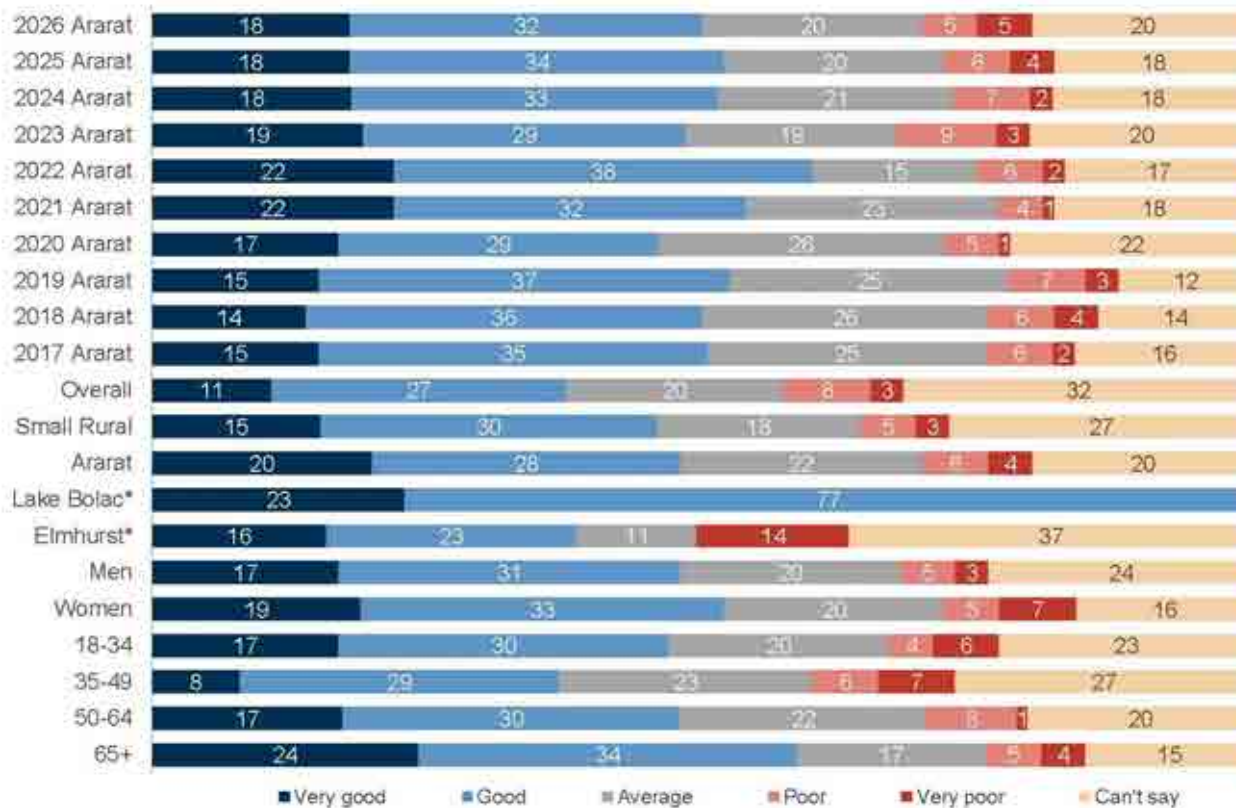
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Elderly support services' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Elderly support services performance



2026 elderly support performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'Elderly support services' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Recreational facilities importance



2026 Recreational facilities importance (index scores)

		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
50-64	78	74	77	77	76	74	78	73	76	75
Women	77	76	79	76	77	76	74	72	77	75
Lake Bolac	77*	73	85	68	65	78	68	68	68	73
18-34	76	77	81	76	81	68	67	71	81	69
Ararat	74	75	77	76	78	75	73	71	77	73
Ararat	74	75	76	75	77	74	73	71	75	73
Small Rural	73	73	73	73	74	73	73	72	72	71
Overall	73	73	73	73	74	74	72	72	73	72
Elmhurst	73*	76	68	63	69	72	64	61	68	70
35-49	73	78	77	77	78	81	74	72	76	77
65+	72	73	72	71	73	73	72	69	70	72
Men	71	74	74	73	76	73	72	70	74	72

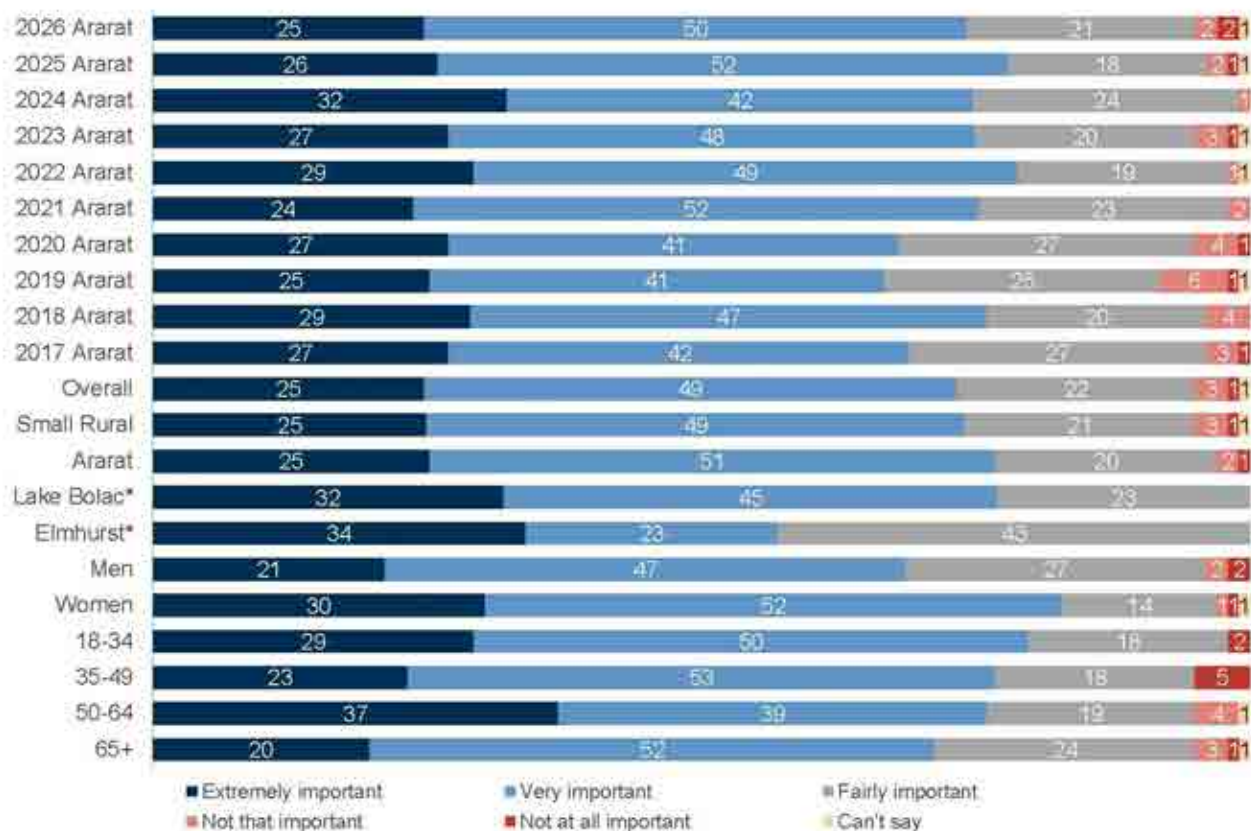
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Recreational facilities' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Recreational facilities importance



2026 Recreational facilities importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Recreational facilities' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Recreational facilities performance



2026 Recreational facilities performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	81*	62	69	86	80	70	41	58	61	62
65+	79▲	77	79	78	78	81	78	72	73	71
50-64	77	78	69	65	74	74	71	72	64	65
Ararat	74	73	74	71	75	74	72	69	65	65
Women	74	71	73	70	75	75	70	67	66	64
Ararat	74	72	73	71	75	74	71	68	64	65
Men	73	72	73	72	75	74	72	69	63	65
35-49	71	69	65	63	65	73	67	63	55	56
Overall	71▼	67	68	68	69	71	70	70	69	70
Small Rural	69▼	66	67	67	69	69	68	68	69	69
18-34	64▼	63	72	72	82	66	64	65	64	63
Elmhurst	52*▼	57	56	62	59	69	46	66	53	61

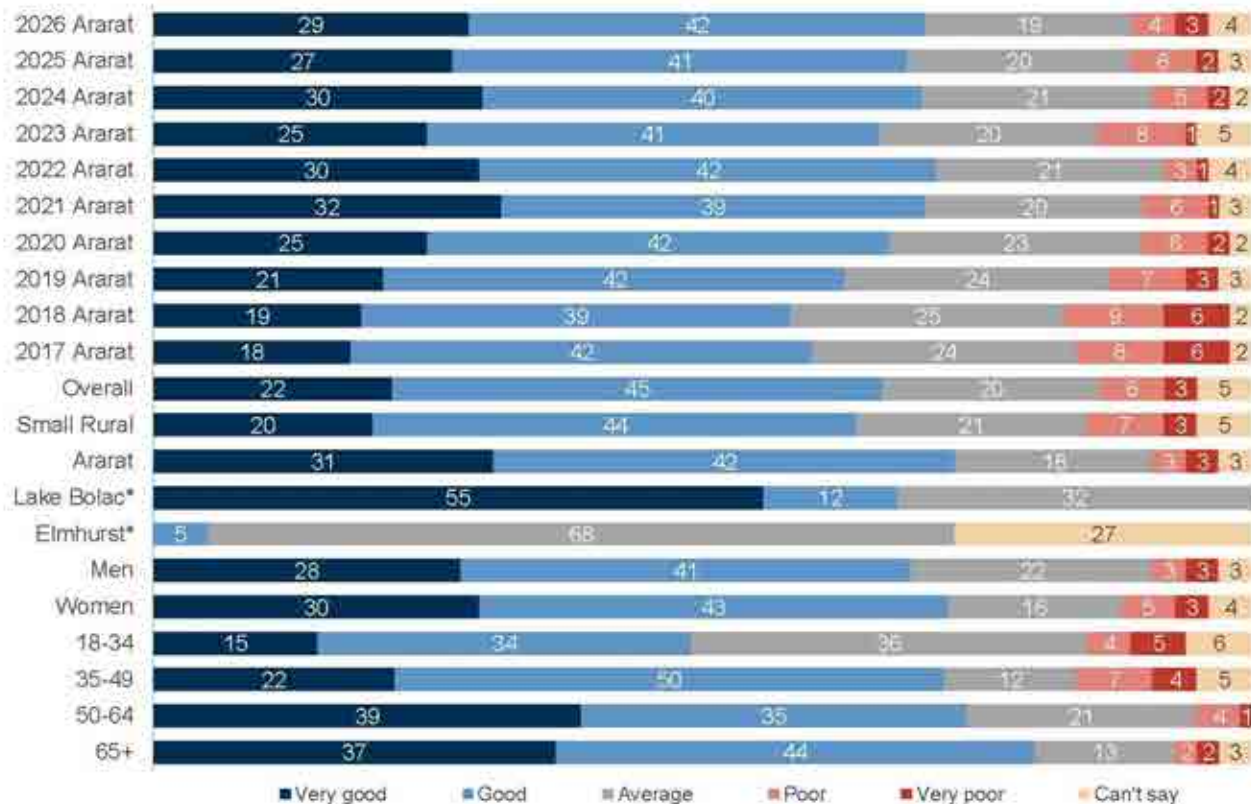
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Recreational facilities' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 16 Councils asked group: 8
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Recreational facilities performance



2026 Recreational facilities performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Recreational facilities' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 18 Councils asked group: 8
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



The appearance of public areas importance



2026 public areas importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Elmhurst	77*	76	68	75	84	75	63	59	49	81
50-64	76	74	76	77	78	73	77	74	73	76
Women	75	79	78	77	78	79	75	76	78	76
65+	74	77	74	73	77	75	74	71	74	74
Overall	73	74	74	74	75	75	74	73	74	74
Ararat	73	76	76	77	79	75	75	74	75	77
Ararat	73	76	75	76	76	74	74	72	74	74
Small Rural	72	75	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74
35-49	72	74	75	79	77	78	73	73	73	77
Men	71	73	73	76	75	70	73	69	70	72
18-34	69	76	75	79	73	70	72	71	74	68
Lake Bolac	58*	78	65	66	69	62	59	59	72	67

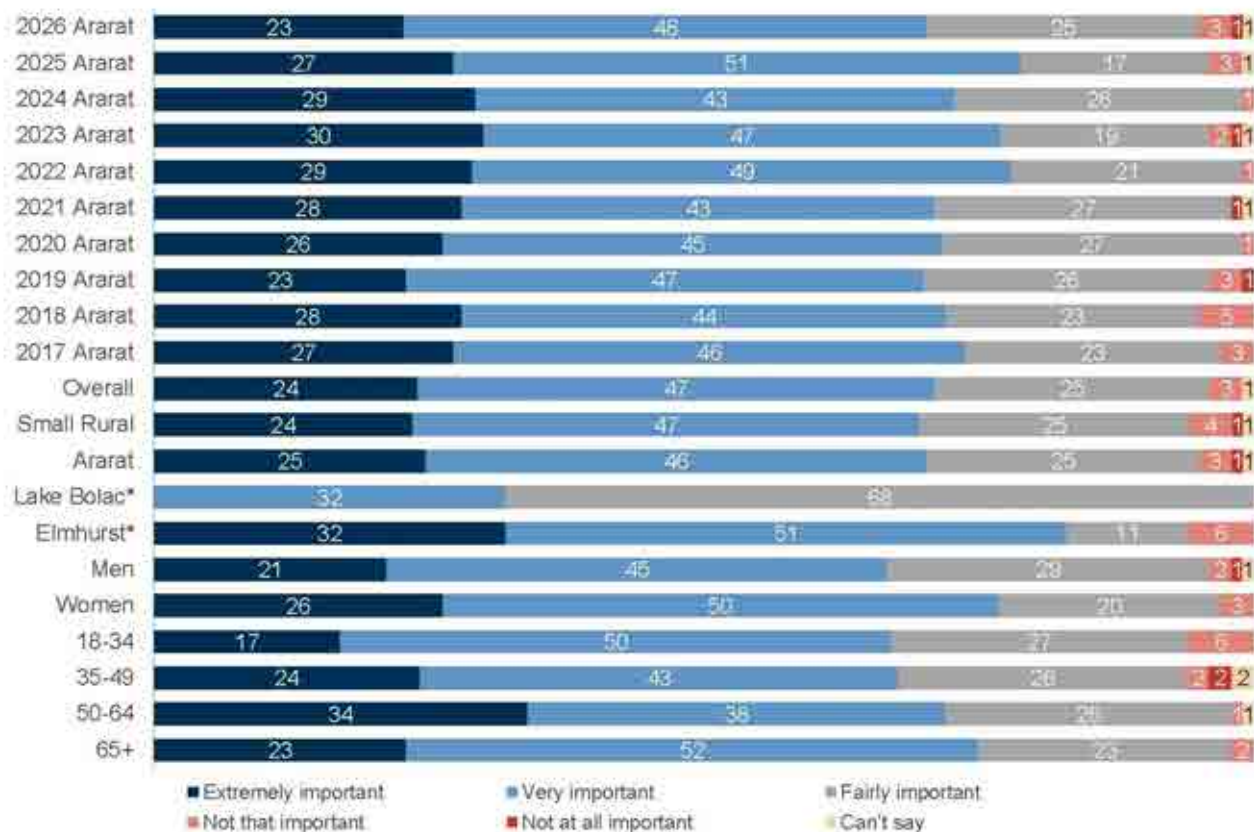
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'The appearance of public areas' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



The appearance of public areas importance



2026 public areas importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'The appearance of public areas' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



The appearance of public areas performance



2026 public areas performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	81*	79	68	85	77	82	48	68	61	71
Elmhurst	78*	70	57	54	71	74	75	79	59	65
Women	76	73	71	67	75	75	71	70	68	69
50-64	75	75	72	67	74	75	73	69	64	64
65+	75	73	76	75	77	79	73	71	69	70
Ararat	73	71	72	69	76	75	73	69	66	65
Ararat	73	71	72	70	76	75	73	69	65	66
Small Rural	73	70	71	71	73	75	72	73	72	74
Overall	71	68	68	67	71	73	72	72	71	71
Men	71	70	72	72	77	76	74	69	63	64
18-34	70	66	69	67	79	74	70	71	66	60
35-49	70	70	67	64	72	73	73	66	60	69

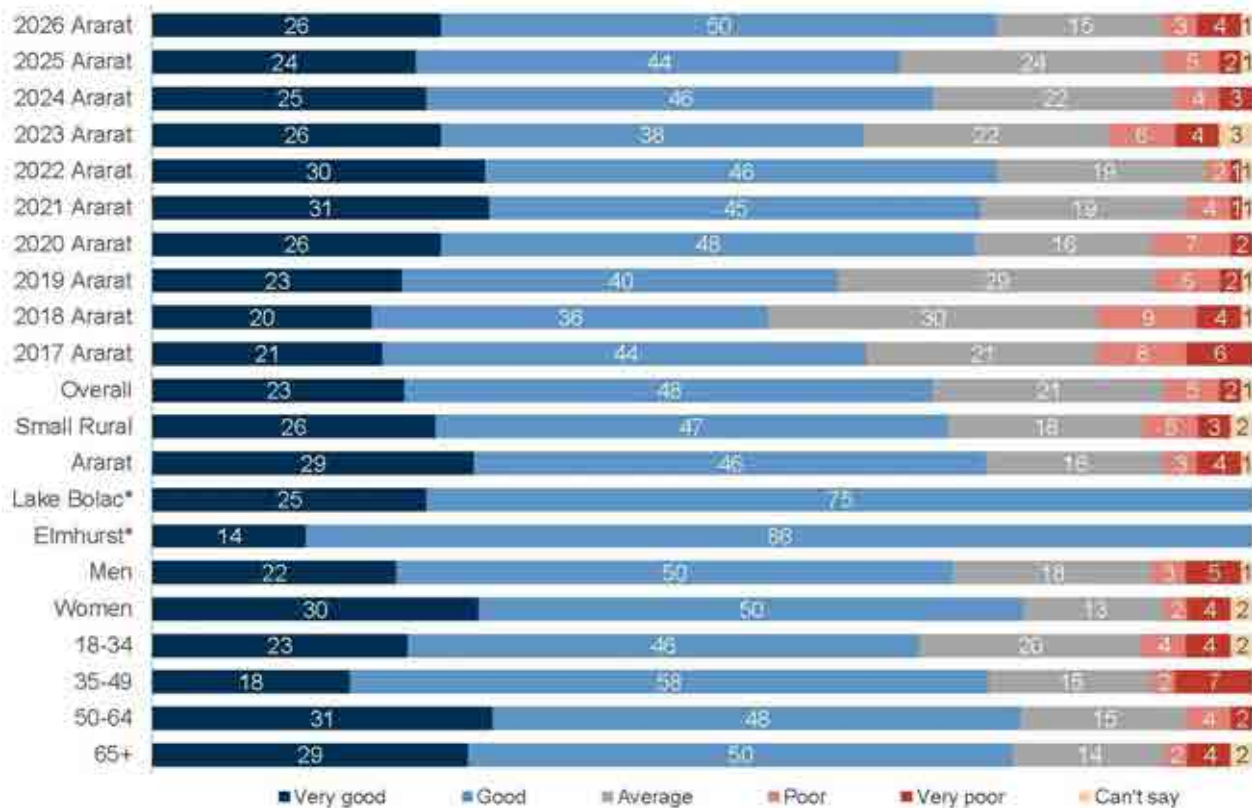
Q2: How has Council performed on 'The appearance of public areas' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 15 Councils asked group: 7
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



The appearance of public areas performance



2026 public areas performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'The appearance of public areas' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 15 Councils asked group: 7
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Art centres and libraries importance



2026 art centres and libraries importance (index scores)

		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Women	70▲	71	67	67	70	65	64	65	67	67
65+	67	67	63	63	66	63	63	58	62	60
Small Rural	65	64	61	60	63	63	60	63	61	61
Ararat	65	67	65	64	64	62	59	60	61	62
Overall	65	63	64	65	67	67	65	65	65	64
Elmhurst	64*	61	58	47	72	70	60	65	50	55
50-64	64	61	64	61	64	62	65	62	61	60
Ararat	64	65	64	62	63	61	59	59	60	60
18-34	63	66	65	61	63	58	50	60	57	56
35-49	60	63	65	61	59	62	57	56	58	64
Lake Bolac	60*	60	60	47	53	60	75	39	53	53
Men	59▼	60	61	57	58	58	55	53	53	54

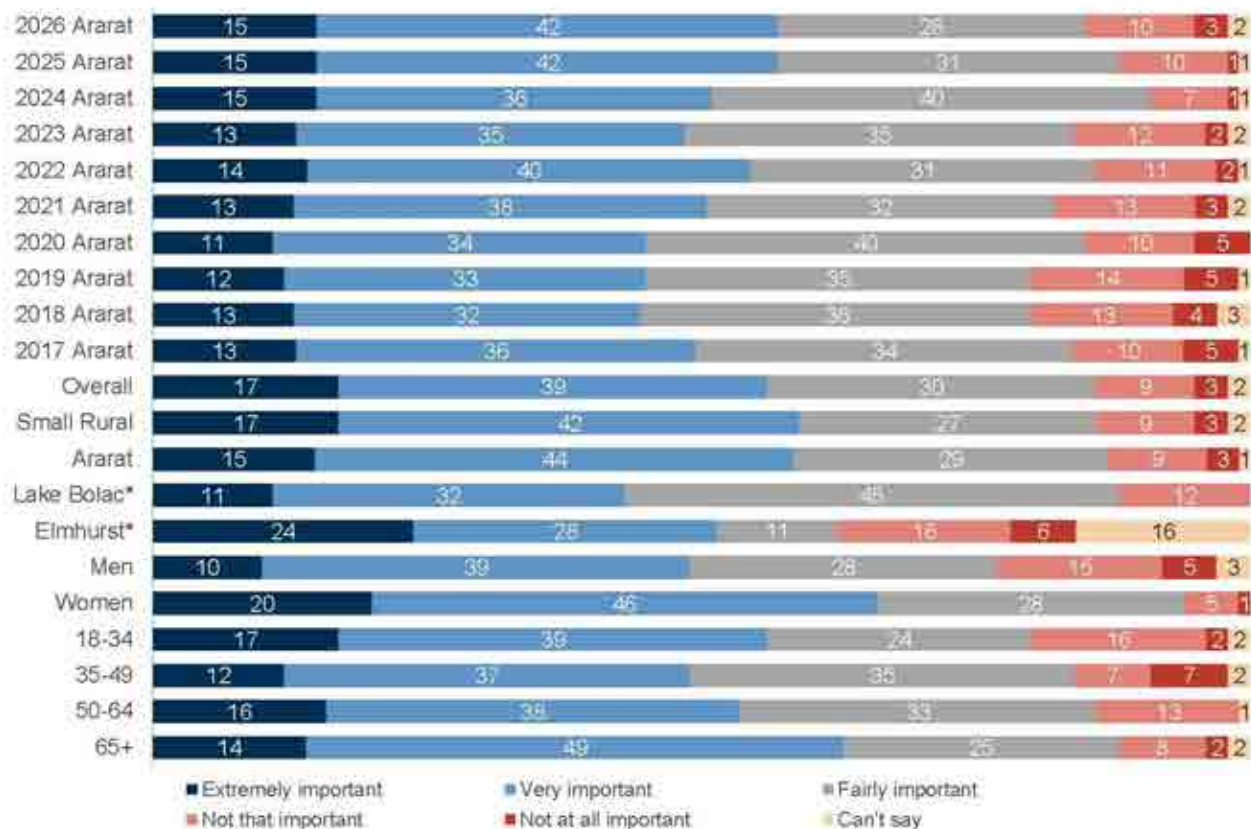
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Art centres and libraries' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 1
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Art centres and libraries importance



2026 art centres and libraries importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Art centres and libraries' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 1
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Art centres and libraries performance



2026 art centres and libraries performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	94 ^{▲▲}	74	80	75	76	83	41	70	63	68
Elmhurst	87 ^{▲▲}	74	66	72	70	86	57	88	70	88
Women	79	78	81	76	78	77	79	77	74	71
18-34	79	68	79	77	78	67	71	77	69	66
Ararat	78	75	79	75	76	73	78	76	70	70
50-64	78	78	78	75	75	76	80	77	71	67
65+	78	78	79	76	78	78	78	77	73	76
Ararat	77	75	78	75	75	74	78	76	70	70
Small Rural	77	72	73	73	71	72	74	74	73	72
Overall	76	73	73	73	73	73	74	74	74	73
Men	75	73	76	73	73	73	76	74	66	69
35-49	75	75	76	71	69	75	81	72	65	69

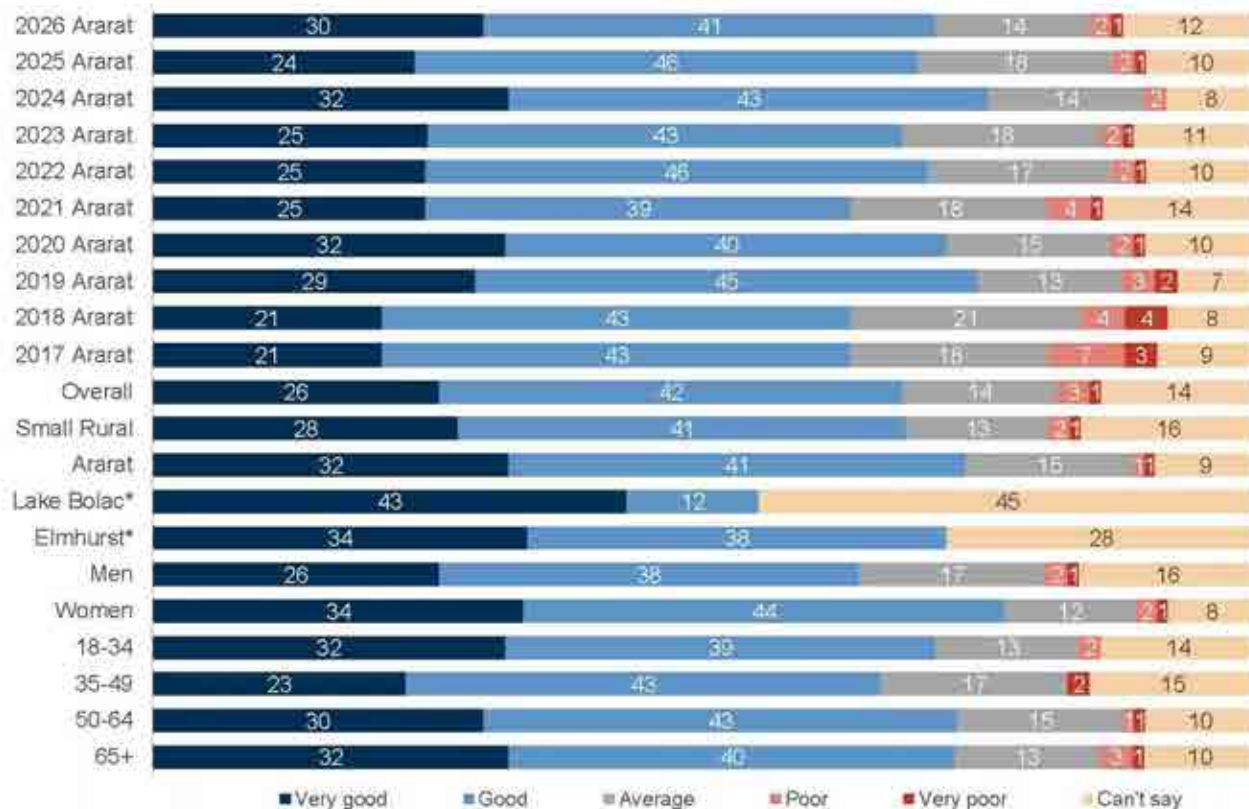
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Art centres and libraries' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 4
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Art centres and libraries performance



2026 art centres and libraries performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on 'Art centres and libraries' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 4
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Community and cultural activities importance



2026 community and cultural activities importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Women	67 [▲]	63	63	67	65	65	65	64	n/a	n/a
50-64	65	60	58	63	65	63	67	64	n/a	n/a
Ararat	64	62	63	65	65	63	61	61	n/a	n/a
18-34	63	59	68	67	66	57	57	64	n/a	n/a
65+	63	63	59	63	62	63	60	57	n/a	n/a
Ararat	62	62	61	64	64	62	60	60	n/a	n/a
Small Rural	62	62	61	64	64	62	60	62	60	62
Lake Bolac	60 [*]	66	45	52	59	59	59	40	n/a	n/a
Overall	59 [▼]	59	60	62	64	64	62	61	61	61
35-49	58	62	62	65	64	63	60	55	n/a	n/a
Men	57 [▼]	60	60	62	63	59	57	56	n/a	n/a
Elmhurst	47 [*]	57	63	62	65	65	54	57	n/a	n/a

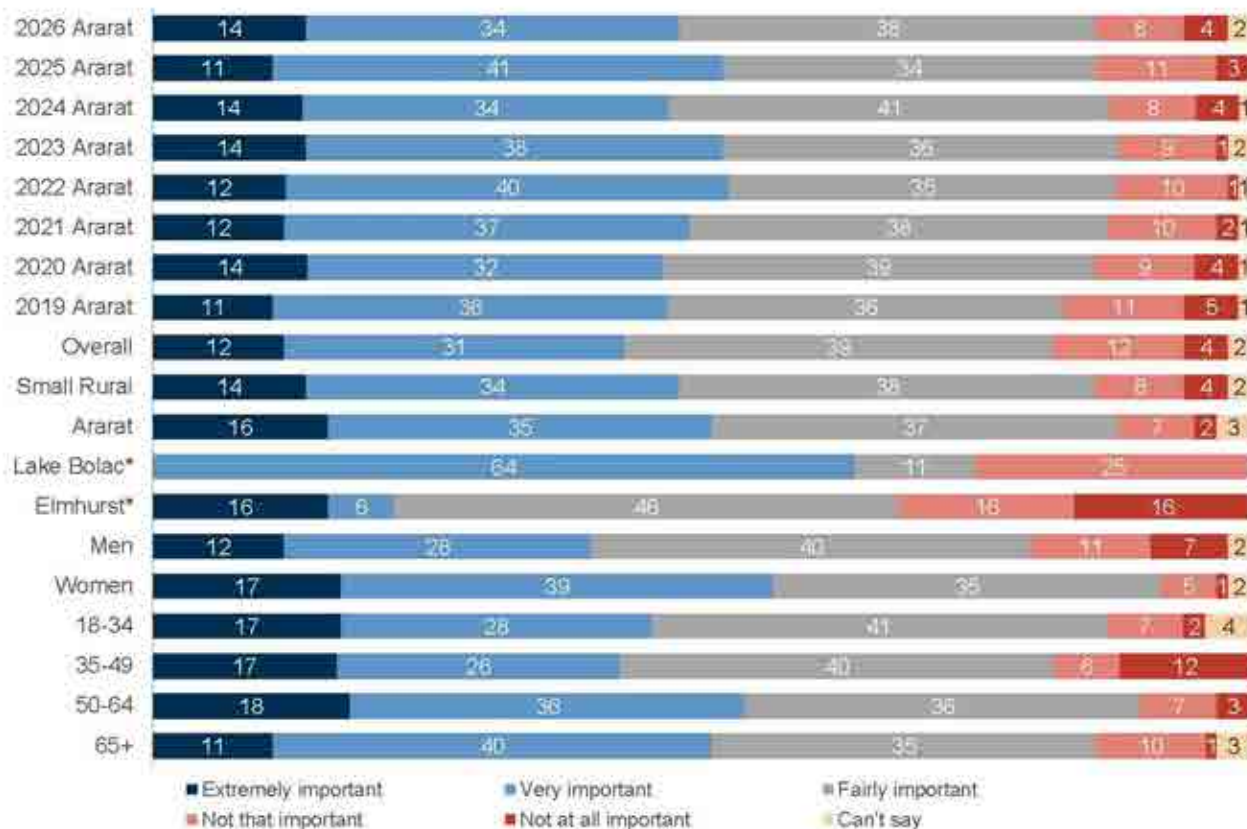
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Community and cultural activities' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 1
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Community and cultural activities importance



2026 community and cultural activities importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Community and cultural activities' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 1
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Community and cultural activities performance



2026 community and cultural activities performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	84*▲	68	60	69	75	75	32	58	n/a	n/a
65+	73	72	71	70	68	68	67	66	n/a	n/a
Elmhurst	73*	62	52	61	54	71	70	84	n/a	n/a
Women	70	66	65	65	66	63	66	64	n/a	n/a
Small Rural	70	68	69	70	68	67	68	66	69	69
Ararat	69	66	67	65	65	64	63	63	n/a	n/a
Ararat	69	66	68	65	65	63	63	63	n/a	n/a
50-64	69	65	61	63	63	64	63	65	n/a	n/a
Men	68	66	68	64	64	65	60	62	n/a	n/a
Overall	67	65	66	66	65	65	68	69	69	69
35-49	66	64	61	57	60	67	61	59	n/a	n/a
18-34	65	58	68	63	66	55	58	60	n/a	n/a

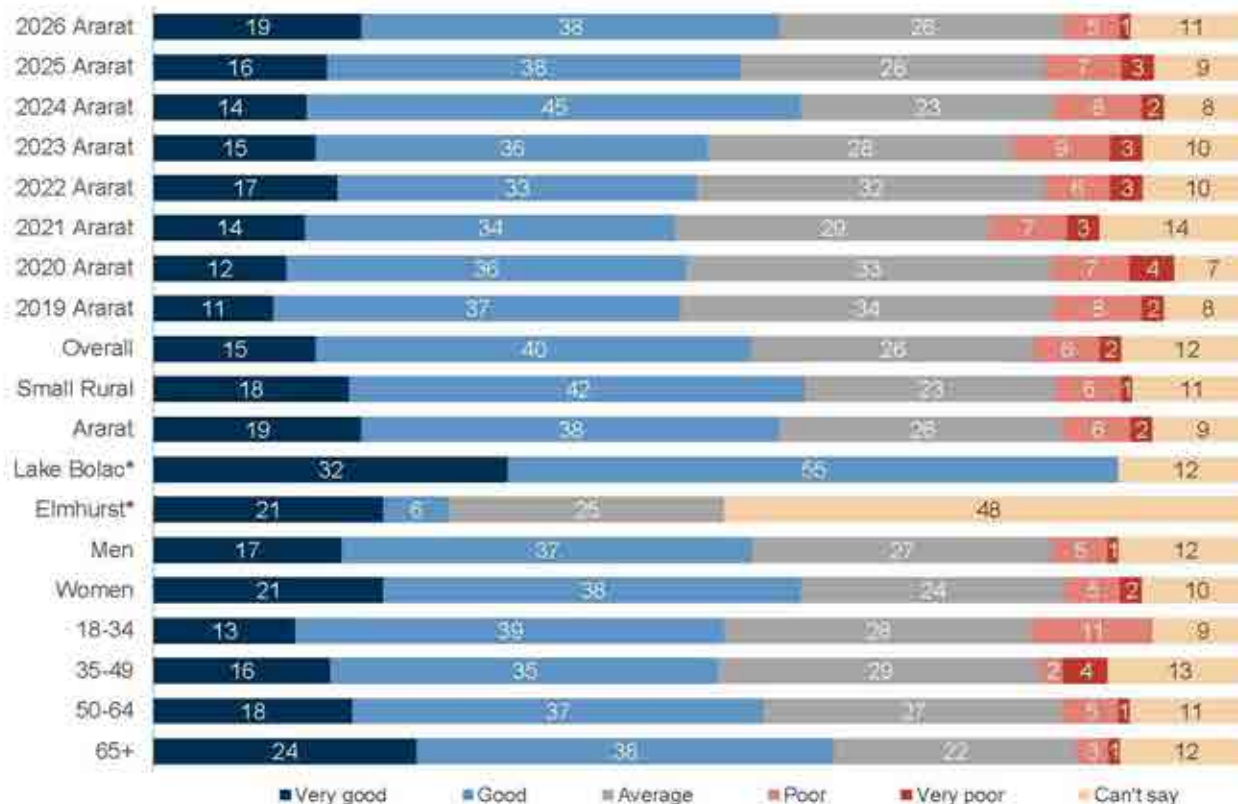
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Community and cultural activities' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 9 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Community and cultural activities performance



2026 community and cultural activities performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Community and cultural activities' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 9 Councils asked group: 2
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Waste management importance



2026 waste management importance (index scores)

		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Elmhurst	85*	81	80	78	82	80	82	78	60	81
18-34	80	80	88	84	82	80	80	76	78	74
Women	80	81	82	81	84	84	85	80	85	78
Lake Bolac	80*	80	81	74	78	83	100	74	70	74
50-64	79	75	81	79	79	81	81	80	81	77
Overall	79	79	81	81	82	82	82	81	81	79
Ararat	78	79	82	81	81	81	81	80	81	76
Ararat	78	78	82	80	81	80	80	79	79	76
Small Rural	78	78	79	78	80	80	79	79	78	76
65+	78	79	80	77	79	80	79	79	79	75
Men	75	76	81	79	78	78	76	79	75	73
35-49	75	78	79	82	84	82	81	81	79	76

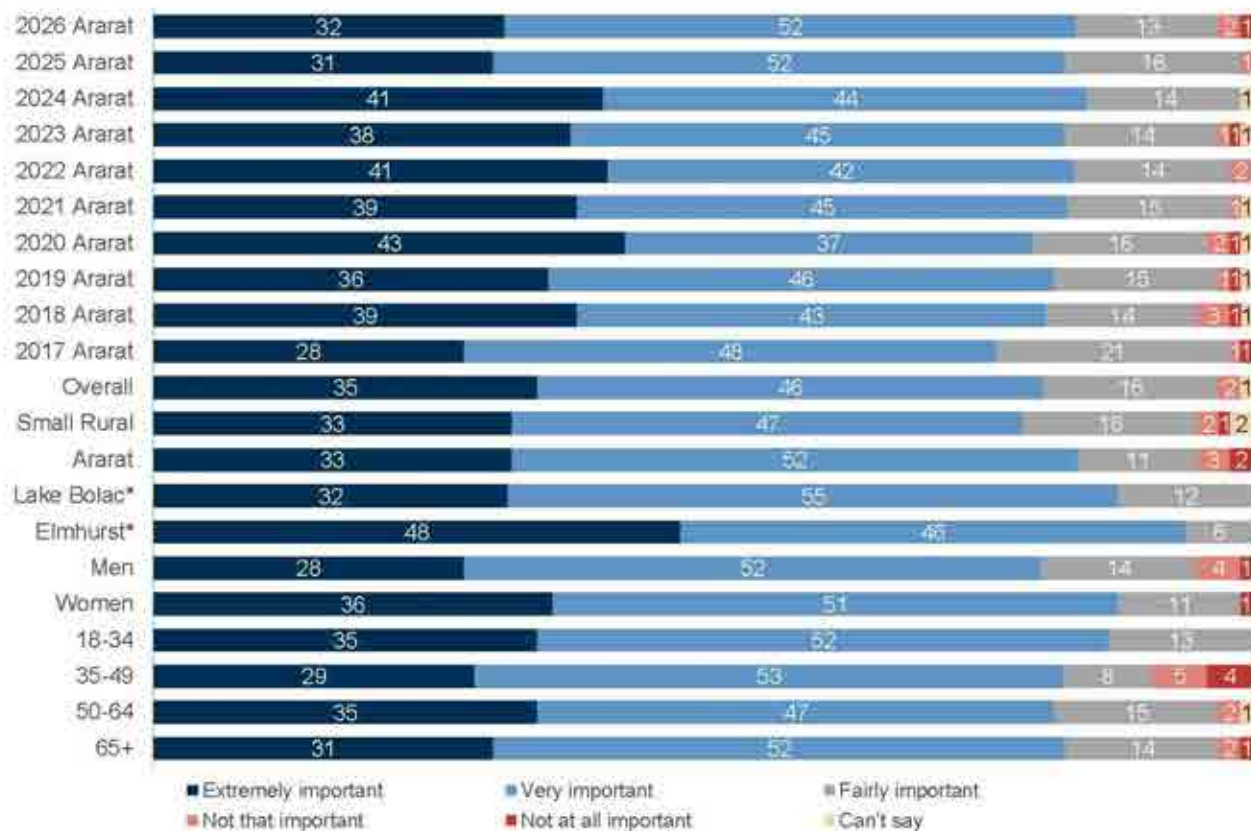
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Waste management' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



Waste management importance



2026 waste management importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Waste management' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Waste management performance



2026 waste management performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	86*▲	79	78	90	64	65	16	49	49	55
50-64	76	76	75	64	63	57	59	58	61	61
65+	76	78	78	73	70	71	65	63	69	69
Men	74	73	74	69	67	62	60	61	66	63
Ararat	73	72	74	66	69	61	61	63	66	65
Ararat	72	73	74	66	67	61	60	60	64	64
Women	71	73	74	63	68	61	60	59	61	64
Small Rural	71	66	67	66	68	68	64	66	69	70
35-49	70	66	73	60	58	56	56	55	69	60
Overall	69▼	65	67	66	68	69	65	68	70	71
18-34	66▼	69	67	61	75	55	57	65	65	62
Elmhurst	61*	64	72	67	62	68	35	62	64	39

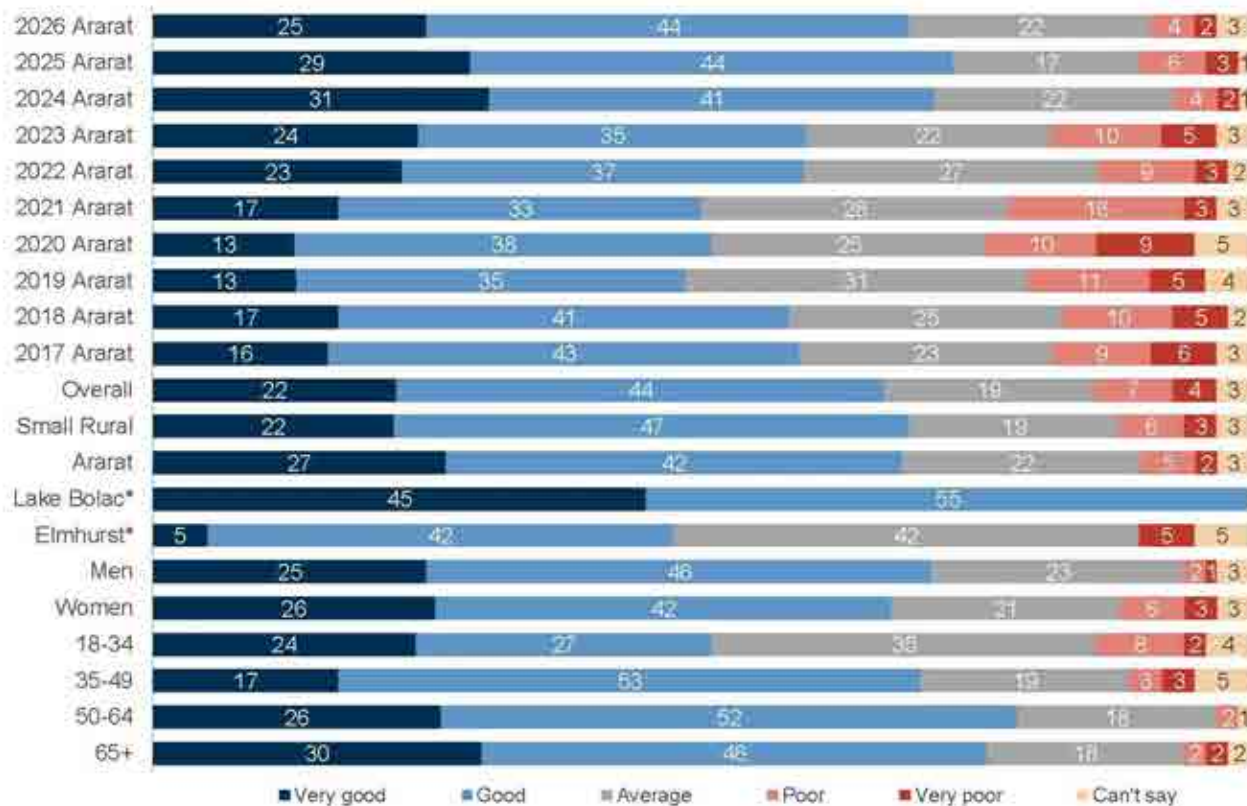
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Waste management' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 22 Councils asked group: 9
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Waste management performance



2026 waste management performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Waste management' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 22 Councils asked group: 9
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.

Business and community development and tourism importance



2026 business/development/tourism importance (index scores)

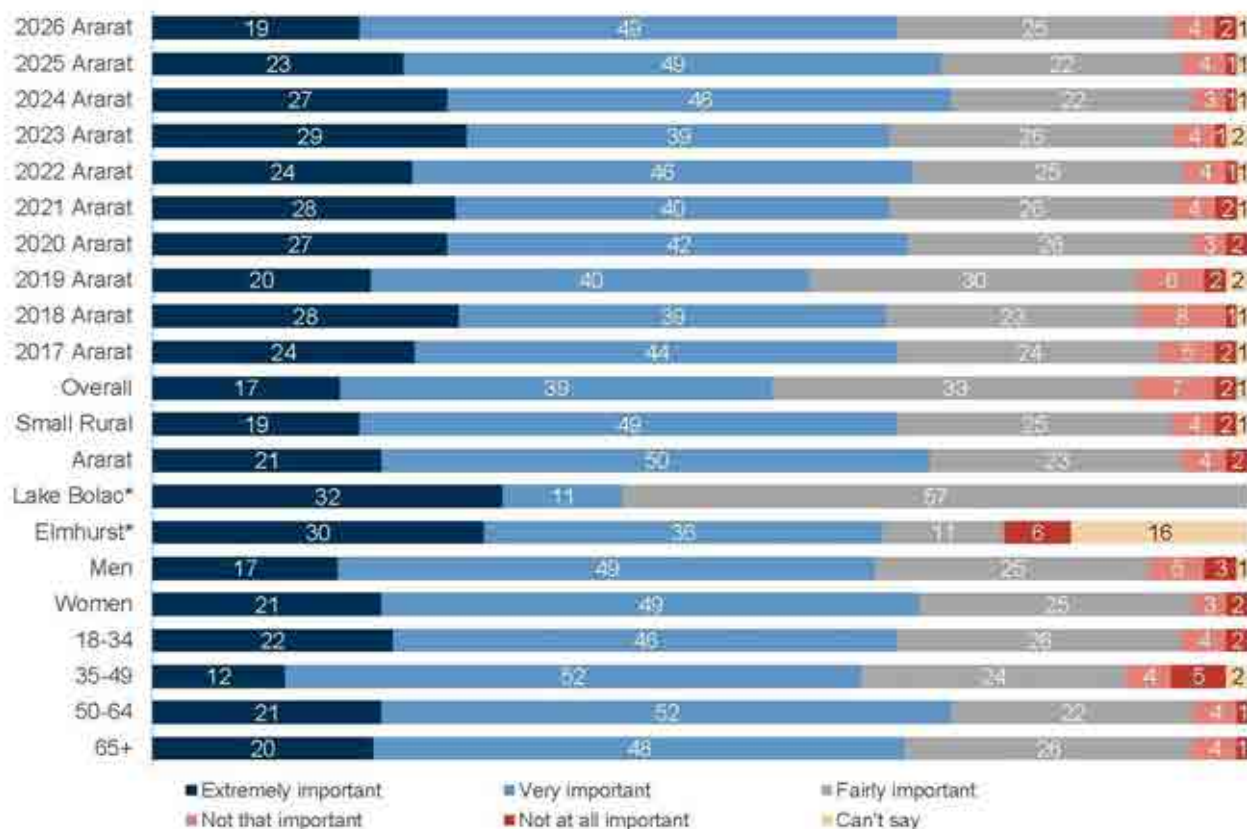
		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Elmhurst	75*	80	69	70	64	70	56	79	61	85
50-64	72	72	71	69	74	74	78	73	76	72
Women	71	74	75	73	73	75	74	70	77	75
Ararat	71	73	75	75	75	73	74	70	74	74
65+	71	72	71	70	72	71	71	65	69	69
18-34	70	72	80	75	72	73	67	65	71	70
Ararat	70	72	74	73	73	72	72	68	72	71
Small Rural	70	71	70	71	72	74	74	71	71	72
Lake Bolac	69*	66	80	71	59	68	66	45	61	57
Men	69	72	73	73	72	70	72	66	67	68
35-49	66	74	74	78	74	72	75	69	71	74
Overall	66▼	69	67	67	69	70	67	65	66	67

Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Business and community development and tourism' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 1
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.

Business and community development and tourism importance



2026 business/development/tourism importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Business and community development and tourism' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 1
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

Business and community development and tourism performance



2026 business/development/tourism performance (index scores)

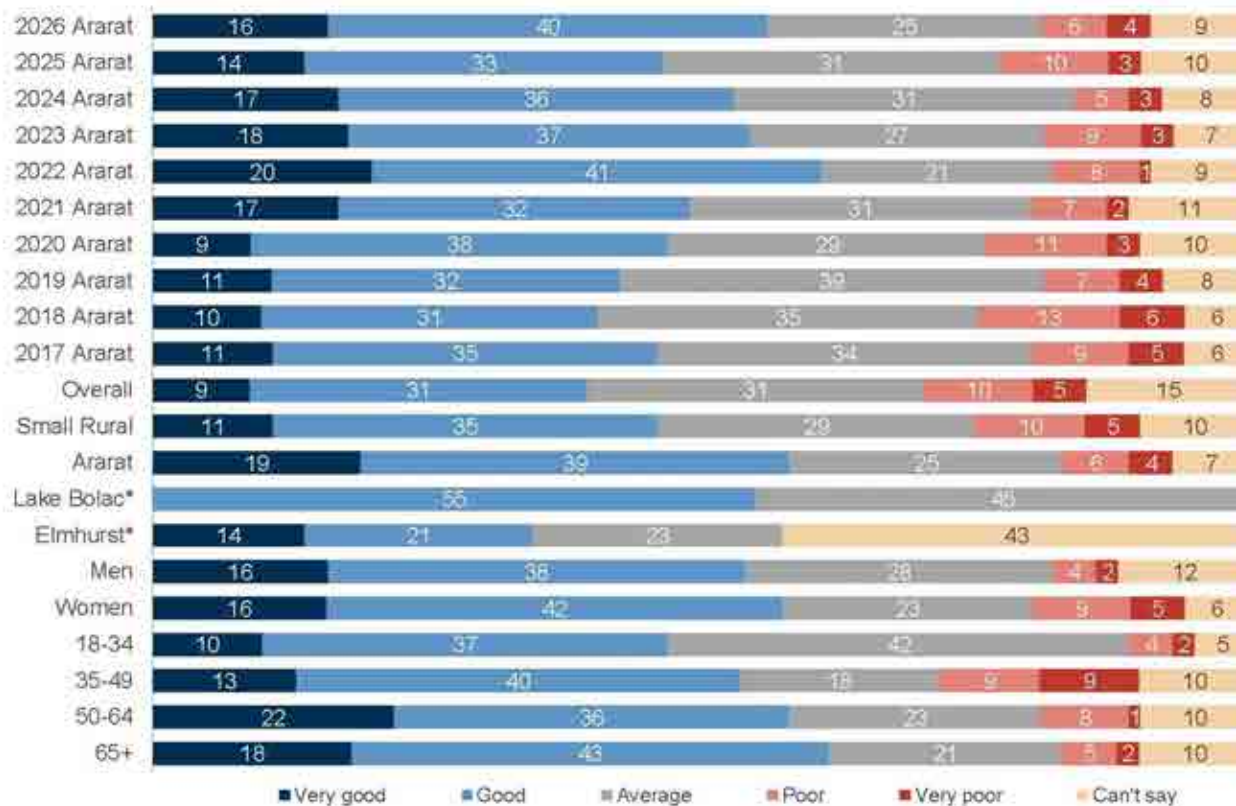
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Elmhurst	71*	63	47	53	65	71	43	60	61	65
65+	70	67	70	70	72	71	64	63	69	64
50-64	69	62	64	63	65	64	62	60	56	59
Men	68	62	65	65	69	66	62	60	53	58
Ararat	67	63	67	66	70	65	61	62	58	61
Ararat	66	63	66	65	69	65	61	61	57	60
Women	65	63	67	66	70	65	59	62	61	62
Lake Bolac	64*	64	62	65	70	63	32	44	49	60
18-34	63	56	65	63	71	60	62	63	61	58
35-49	61	63	63	61	67	63	55	56	51	57
Small Rural	60▼	57	59	61	63	62	58	59	59	64
Overall	59▼	56	57	59	60	61	59	61	60	61

Q2: How has Council performed on 'Business and community development and tourism' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 10 Councils asked group: 4
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.

Business and community development and tourism performance



2026 business/development/tourism performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Business and community development and tourism' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 10 Councils asked group: 4
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Planning and building permits importance



2026 planning and building permits importance (index scores)

		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Women	74 [▲]	72	70	73	75	72	67	70	73	70
65+	73	74	73	72	73	69	68	67	72	68
50-64	72	71	73	68	76	74	74	69	72	66
Ararat	71	71	72	75	73	70	69	68	69	68
Overall	70	71	72	72	73	73	71	71	71	72
Small Rural	69	70	70	71	73	71	68	70	68	68
Ararat	69	72	70	73	71	69	68	65	68	66
18-34	67	67	68	75	64	63	61	61	64	61
Men	65	72	70	72	68	66	68	62	64	63
35-49	63	74	64	74	71	71	67	64	64	70
Elmhurst	53 [*]	83	67	68	74	81	57	56	62	64
Lake Bolac	53 [*]	68	71	48	65	66	66	52	71	59

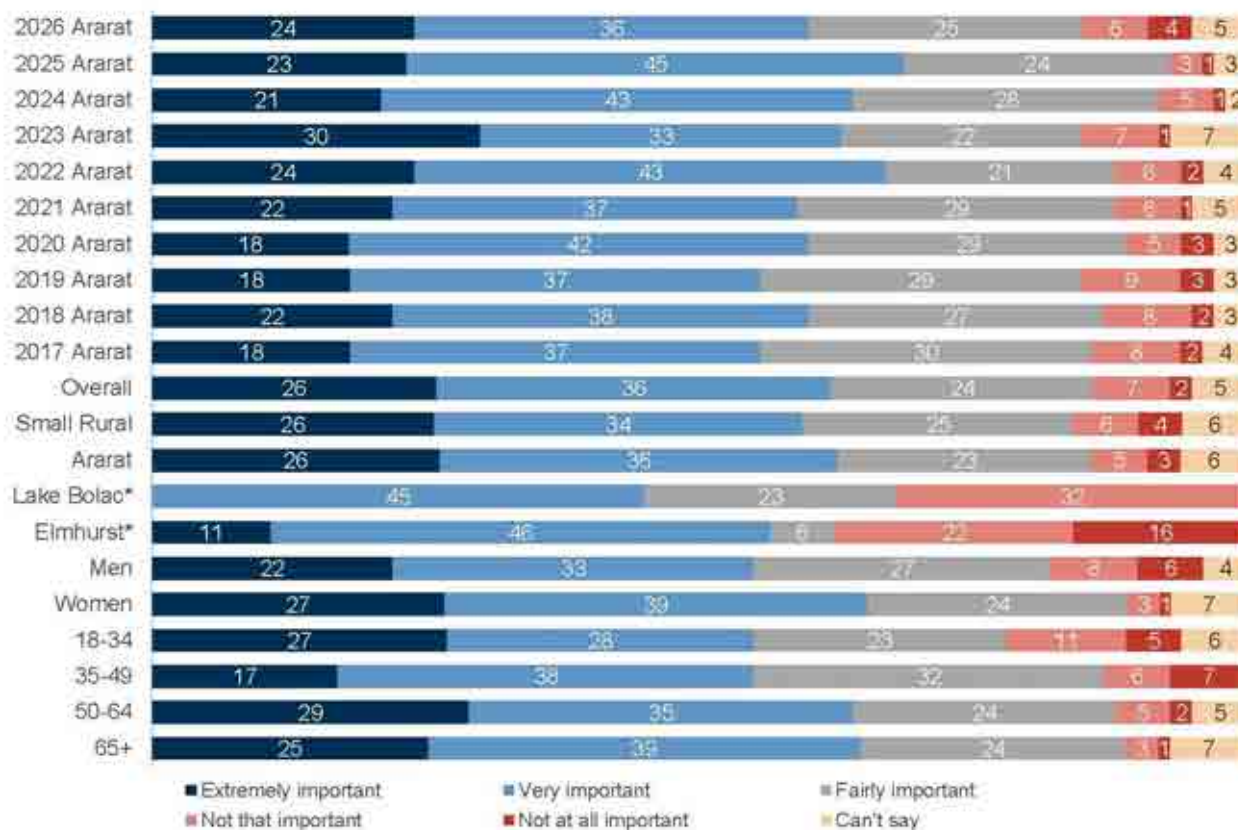
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Planning and building permits' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Planning and building permits importance



2026 planning and building permits importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Planning and building permits' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Planning and building permits performance



2026 planning and building permits performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	64*	48	49	65	65	56	n/a	29	43	44
Elmhurst	63*	42	52	46	60	57	63	67	48	77
65+	59	54	58	62	63	63	54	54	47	51
Men	58	52	52	54	58	59	50	51	43	46
50-64	57	46	49	48	52	56	52	48	43	54
Ararat	56	51	54	54	58	59	51	52	46	50
Ararat	55	53	54	53	59	59	52	53	46	51
Women	55	50	56	54	59	58	53	53	60	55
18-34	54	48	53	53	64	57	56	56	54	47
35-49	53	52	50	45	49	57	42	48	41	48
Small Rural	47▼	43	43	45	48	49	46	48	51	51
Overall	46▼	43	45	47	50	51	51	52	62	51

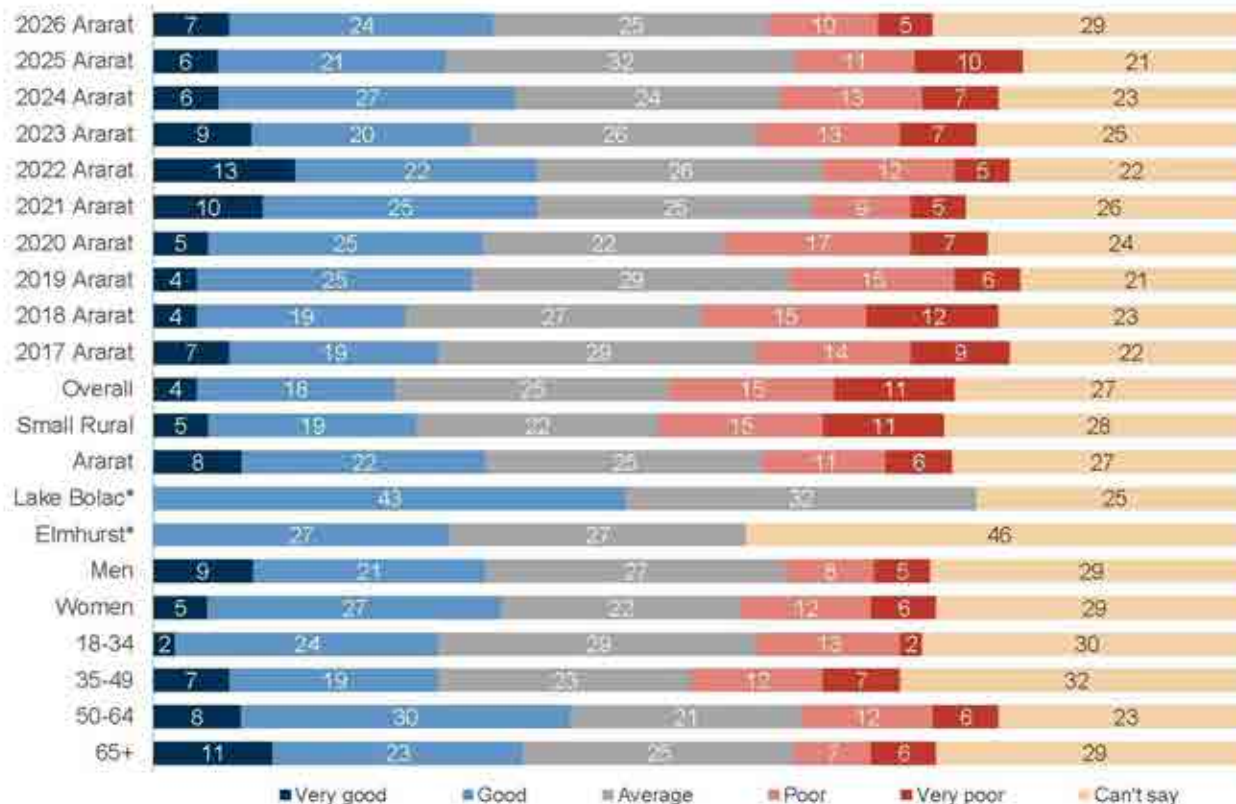
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Planning and building permits' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 5
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Planning and building permits performance



2026 planning and building permits performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Planning and building permits' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 11 Councils asked group: 5
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Environmental sustainability importance



2026 environmental sustainability importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Women	72 [▲]	72	73	75	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
18-34	71 [▲]	65	69	77	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Elmhurst	70*	68	68	75	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	67	67	69	73	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lake Bolac	66*	68	63	57	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
65+	66	69	64	72	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	65	66	68	72	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall	65	65	70	73	74	74	74	73	72
Small Rural	65	63	66	70	71	70	72	70	70
50-64	63	64	68	73	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
35-49	62	64	64	71	66	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Men	60 [▼]	61	65	69	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

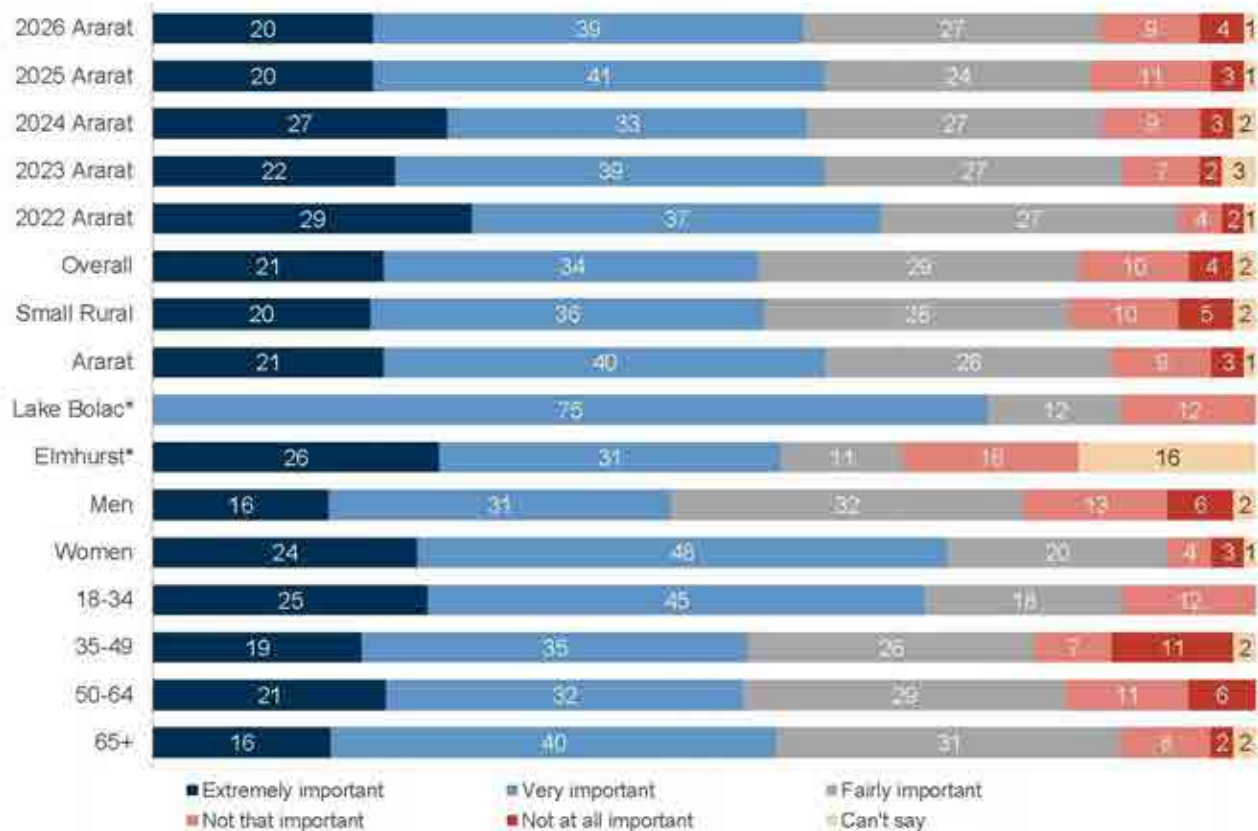
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Environmental sustainability' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Environmental sustainability importance



2026 environmental sustainability importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Environmental sustainability' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 3.
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Environmental sustainability performance



2026 environmental sustainability performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Lake Bolac	75*	67	69	65	57	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
50-64	65	66	62	63	58	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
65+	65	64	67	66	64	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Men	63	63	61	64	62	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	63	64	63	63	62	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	63	64	63	62	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Women	62	64	65	61	62	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
35-49	61	61	56	53	58	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall	60▼	59	60	60	61	62	60	62	63
Small Rural	60▼	58	59	59	59	61	57	59	62
18-34	59	63	63	65	64	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Elmhurst	57*	69	54	65	52	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

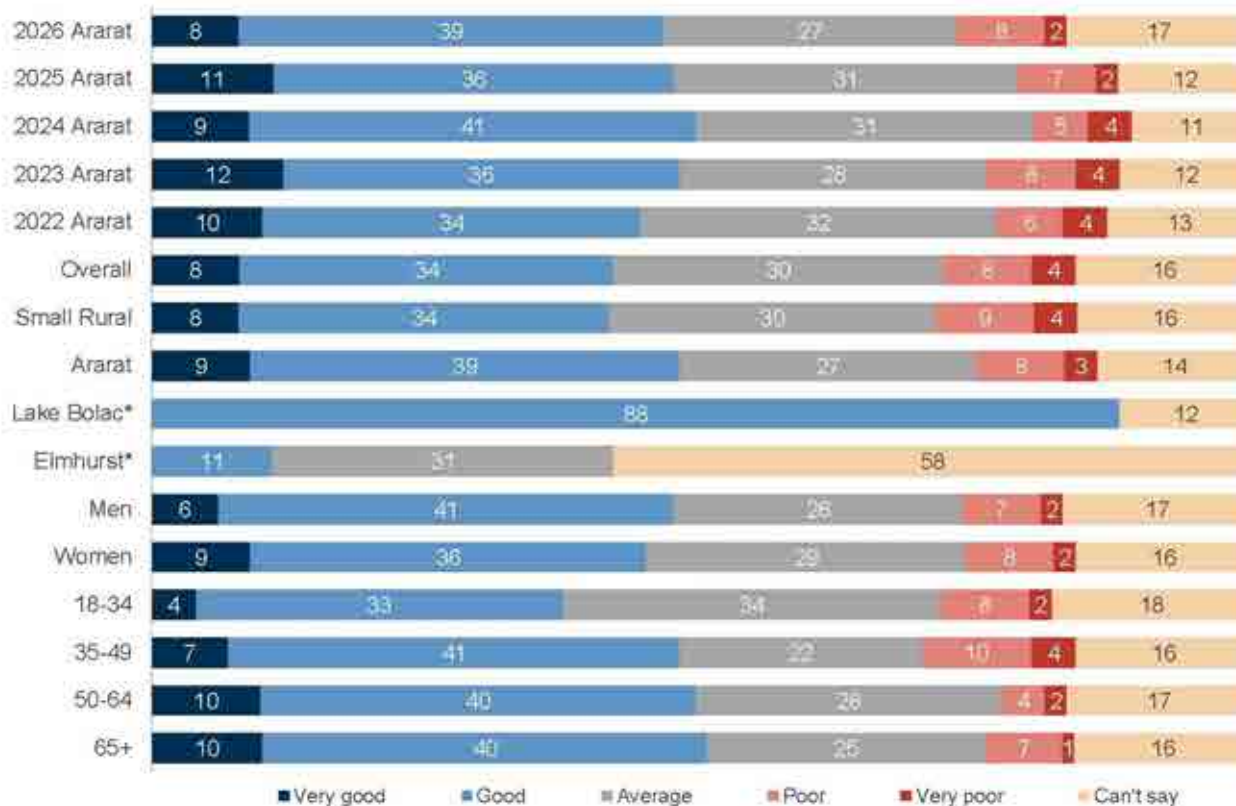
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Environmental sustainability' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 12 Councils asked group: 5
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30



Environmental sustainability performance



2026 environmental sustainability performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Environmental sustainability' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 12 Councils asked group: 5
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Emergency and disaster management importance



2026 emergency and disaster management importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Elmhurst	93*▲	89	81	96	92	92	82	84	66	94
18-34	84	85	93	81	79	75	81	82	78	85
Lake Bolac	83*	73	75	78	79	83	84	75	79	84
Women	82	86	89	85	83	85	86	85	84	87
35-49	81	83	83	80	75	76	80	77	80	85
Ararat	81	83	85	81	80	79	82	81	80	83
Ararat	81	84	86	80	79	79	82	82	81	83
50-64	81	82	81	84	83	82	84	86	82	83
Overall	80	79	80	80	81	81	80	81	81	80
Men	80	80	82	77	76	74	78	78	77	79
Small Rural	80	80	82	80	81	82	82	81	80	81
65+	79	82	84	80	81	81	82	79	80	81

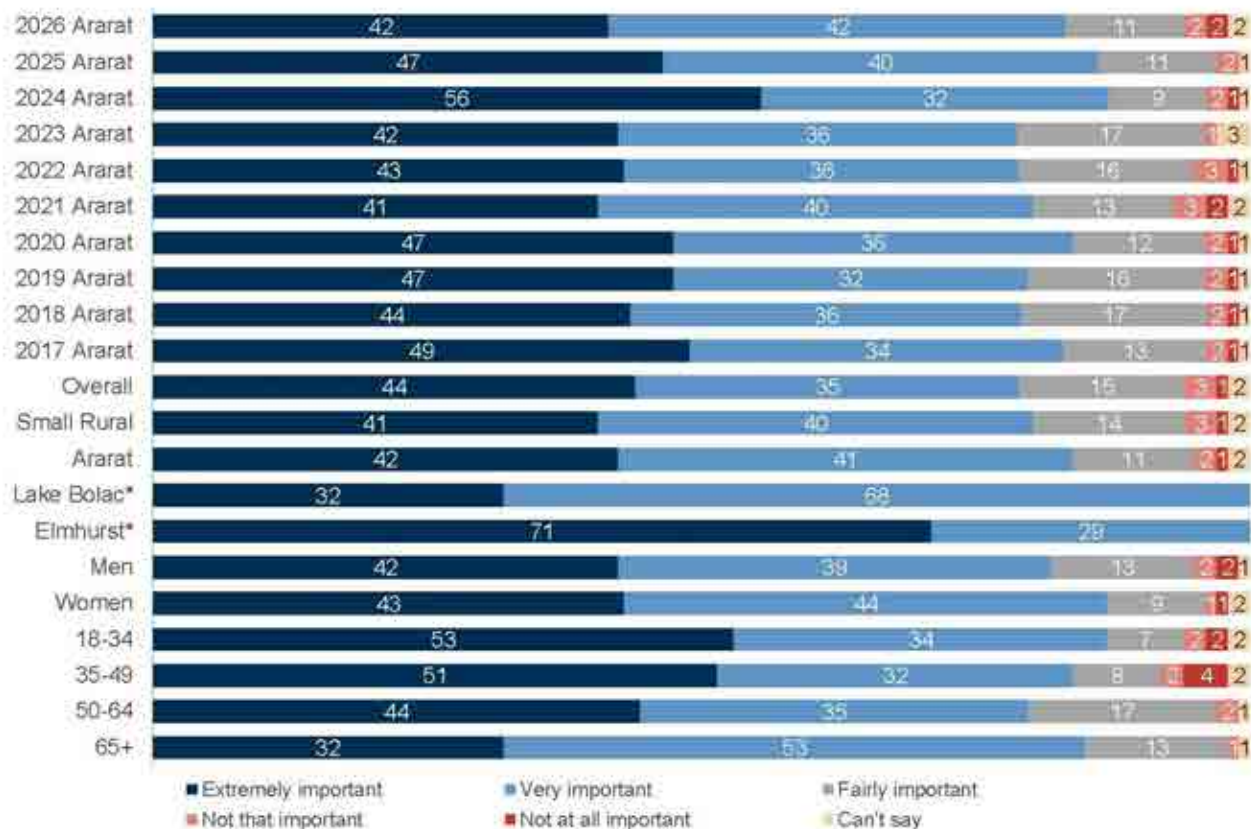
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Emergency and disaster management' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Emergency and disaster management importance



2026 emergency and disaster management importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Emergency and disaster management' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 2
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Emergency and disaster management performance



2026 Emergency and disaster management performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	78*	81	67	74	72	73	48	66	64	64
65+	77	81	77	76	79	79	76	73	72	76
50-64	77	76	75	74	70	76	75	78	74	71
Women	74	77	78	71	74	75	75	74	70	74
Ararat	74	75	76	72	74	75	74	73	70	72
Men	74	74	73	74	74	75	73	72	70	70
Ararat	74	75	77	74	75	75	75	73	72	74
35-49	73	67	71	65	67	72	69	69	63	68
Elmhurst	71*	65	57	58	70	89	68	75	63	82
Small Rural	70▼	66	66	66	68	72	70	72	72	72
Overall	68▼	65	65	65	66	71	68	72	71	70
18-34	68▼	71	79	72	77	72	76	72	70	72

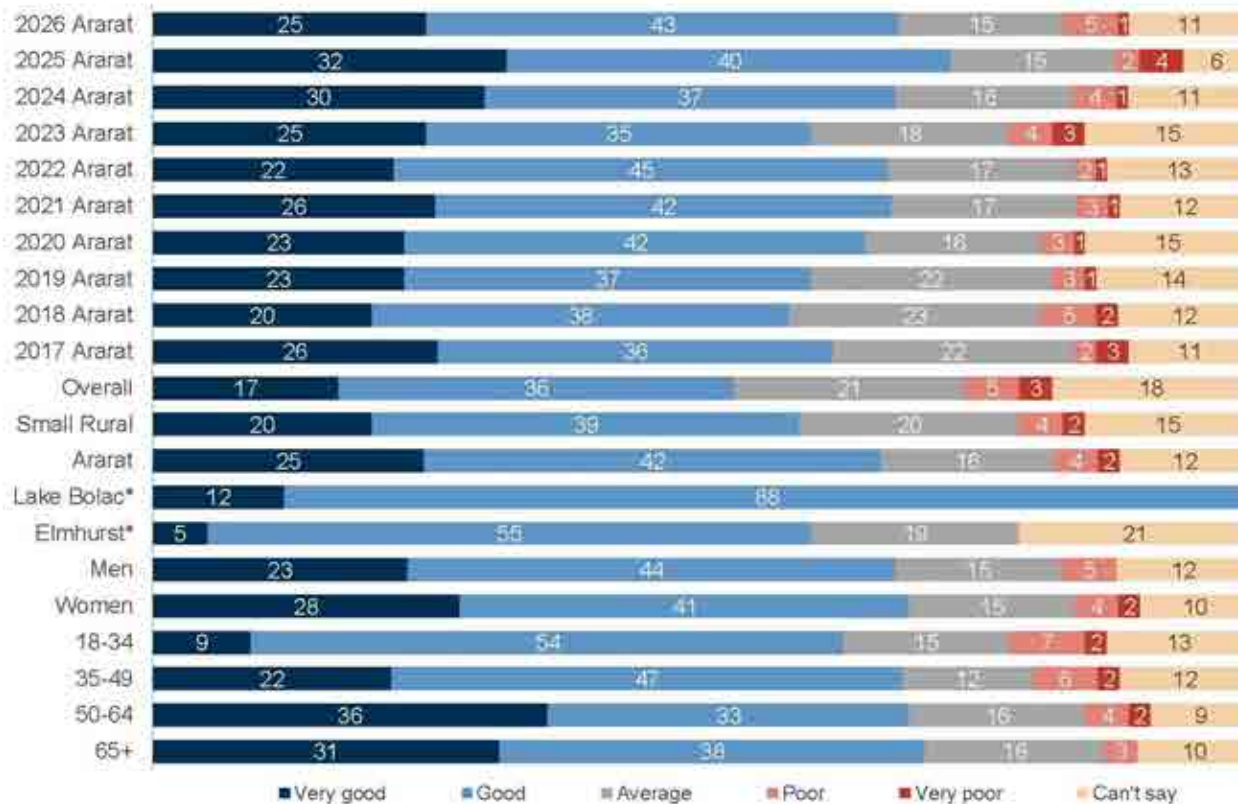
Q2. How has Council performed on 'Emergency and disaster management' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 4
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Emergency and disaster management performance



2026 emergency and disaster management performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Emergency and disaster management' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 8 Councils asked group: 4
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Roadside slashing and weed control importance



2026 roadside slashing and weed control importance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Elmhurst	93*▲	88	87	94	93	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
50-64	86▲	77	81	82	80	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lake Bolac	80*	92	66	92	89	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Women	79	82	80	82	82	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall	79	79	80	79	79	78	74	73	74
Small Rural	79	80	80	81	81	82	80	76	76
Ararat	78	79	79	80	80	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
18-34	78	80	81	83	76	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	77	77	78	79	78	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Men	77	76	79	78	79	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
65+	77	78	78	77	79	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
35-49	75	82	80	80	86	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

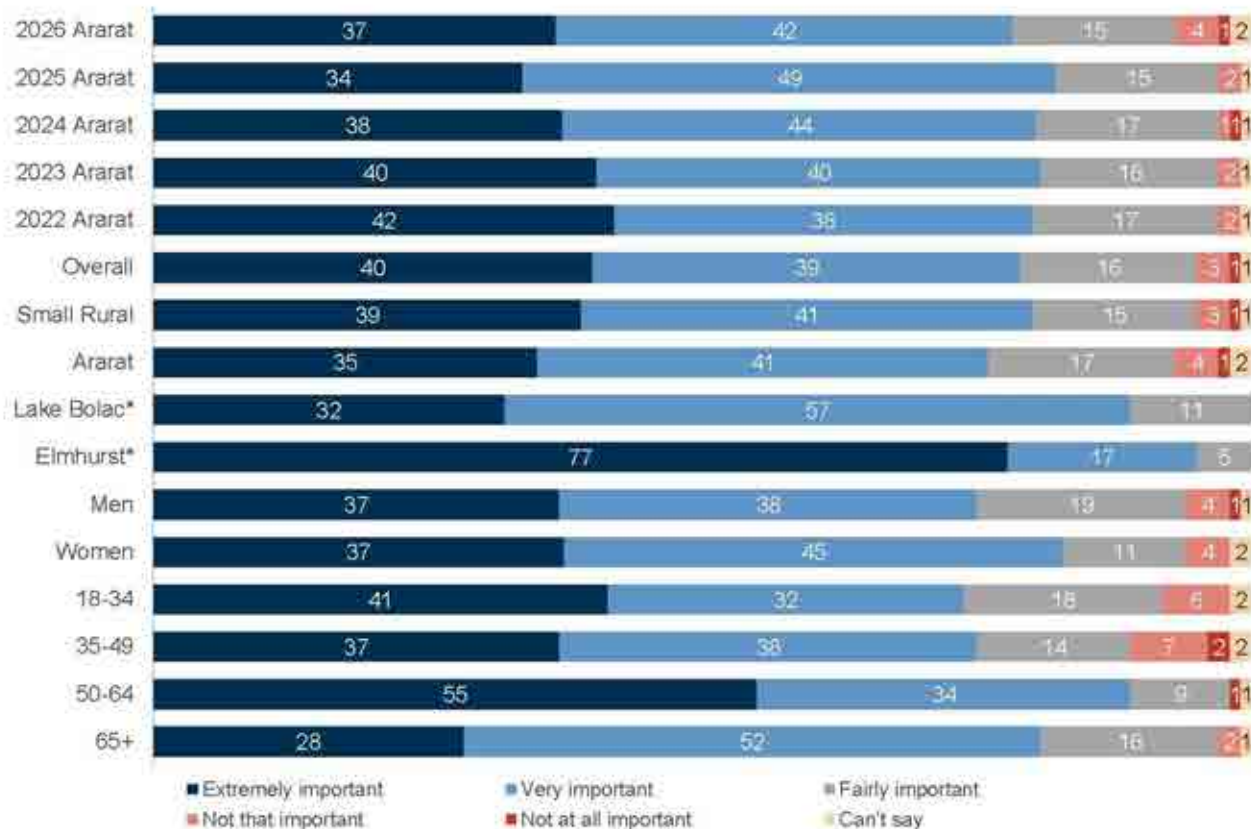
Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Roadside slashing and weed control' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 4 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Roadside slashing and weed control importance



2026 roadside slashing and weed control importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Roadside slashing and weed control' be as a responsibility for Council?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 4 Councils asked group: 2
*Caution: small sample size < n=30



Roadside slashing and weed control performance



2026 roadside slashing and weed control performance (index scores)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Lake Bolac	35	43	39	58	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Men	54	49	54	53	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
18-34	50	43	56	59	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
50-64	56	46	53	51	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	56	48	54	55	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
65+	58	53	51	55	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ararat	53	48	52	53	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Small Rural	49	46	47	50	49	48	55	54	51
Elmhurst	52	42	49	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall	47	45	46	49	51	49	56	55	53
Women	51	47	51	53	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
35-49	45	46	50	44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

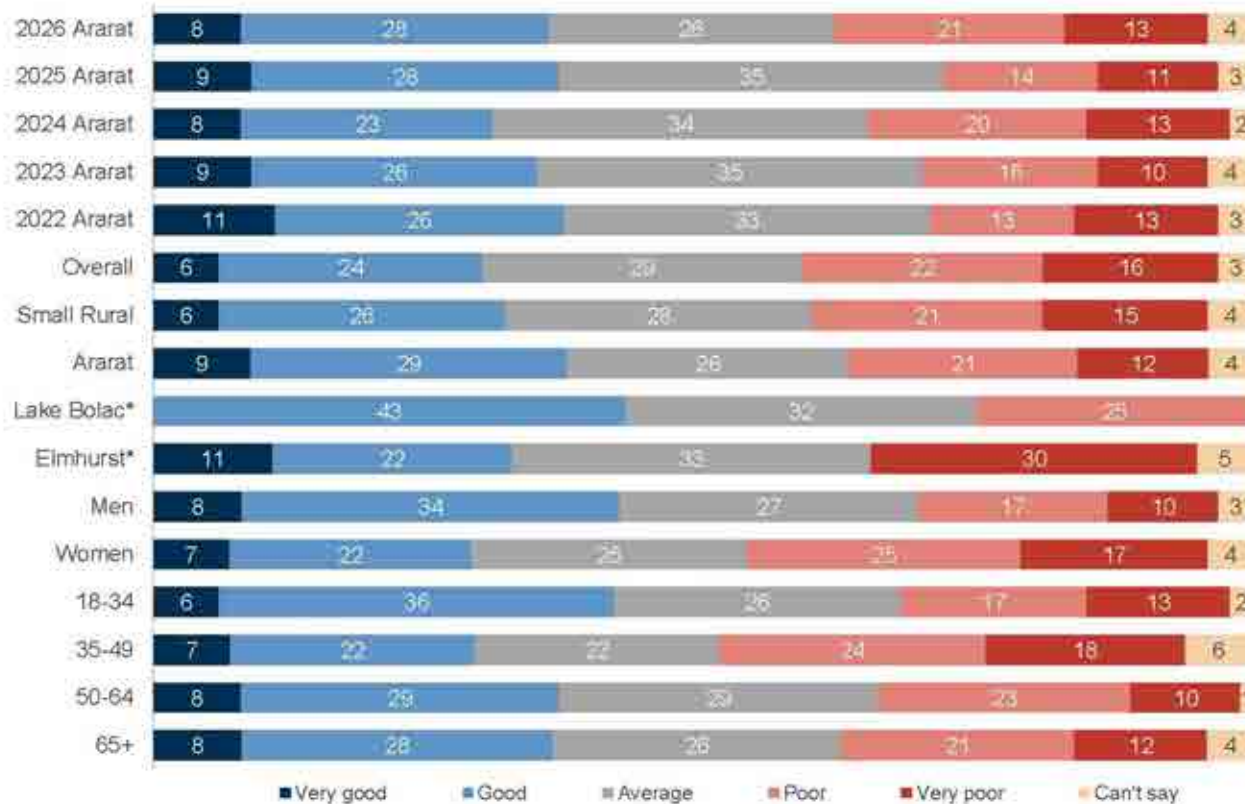
Q2. How has Council performed on 'Roadside slashing and weed control' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 3
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Roadside slashing and weed control performance



2026 roadside slashing and weed control performance (%)



Q2: How has Council performed on 'Roadside slashing and weed control' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 5 Councils asked group: 3
*Caution: small sample size < n=30

Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area importance



2026 unsealed roads importance (index scores)

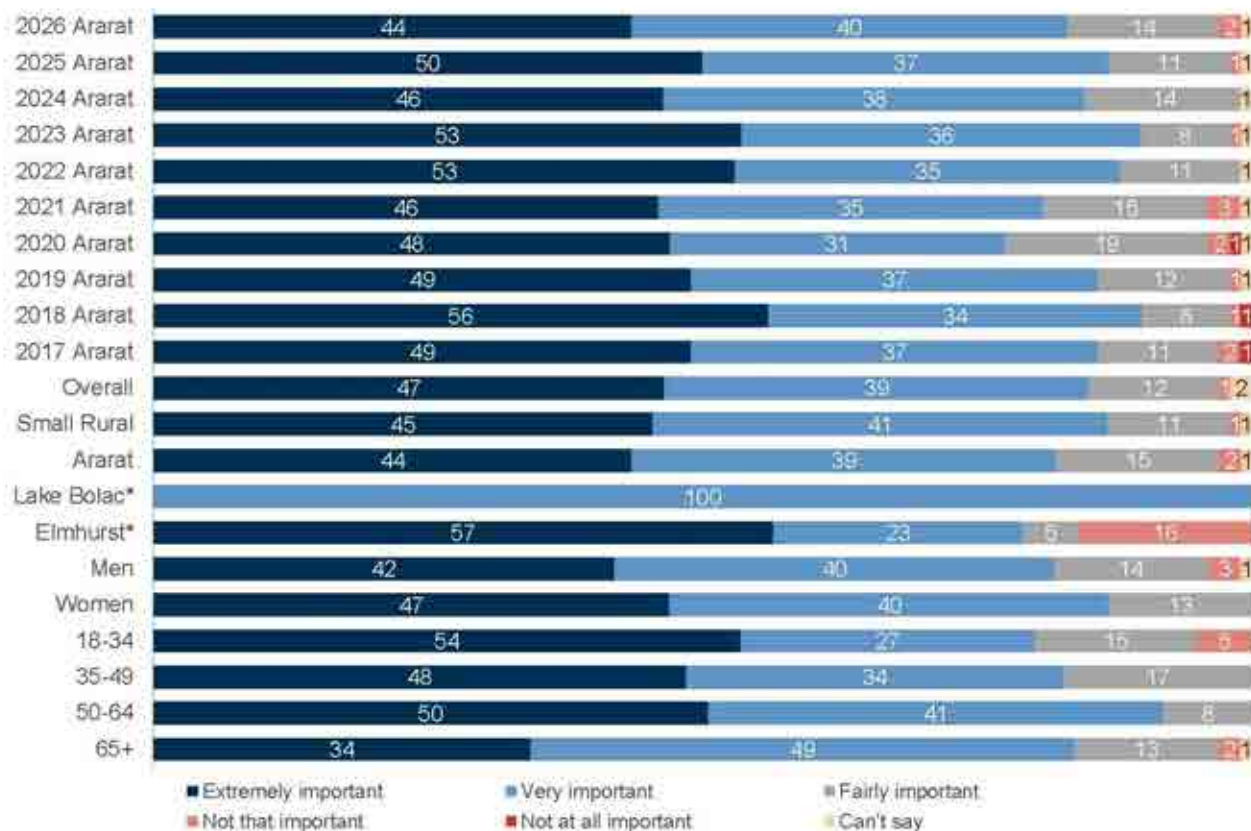
		2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
50-64	86	82	89	87	85	81	86	87	86	83
Women	83	86	84	88	87	80	81	85	88	85
Small Rural	83	85	85	85	85	84	83	82	84	81
Overall	83	83	84	83	83	81	80	80	80	79
35-49	83	86	78	85	91	86	86	86	86	87
18-34	83	88	84	90	82	78	76	80	90	79
Ararat	82	84	83	86	85	81	81	84	86	83
Ararat	81	82	81	84	85	80	80	82	85	80
Men	80	82	82	83	84	83	81	83	85	81
Elmhurst	80*	91	90	89	95	89	87	89	89	90
65+	79	82	82	83	84	81	79	83	84	82
Lake Bolac	75*	94	92	93	87	98	100	88	94	92

Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.

Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area importance



2026 unsealed roads importance (%)



Q1. Firstly, how important should 'Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area' be as a responsibility for Council?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 6 Councils asked group: 2
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30

Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area performance



2026 unsealed roads performance (index scores)

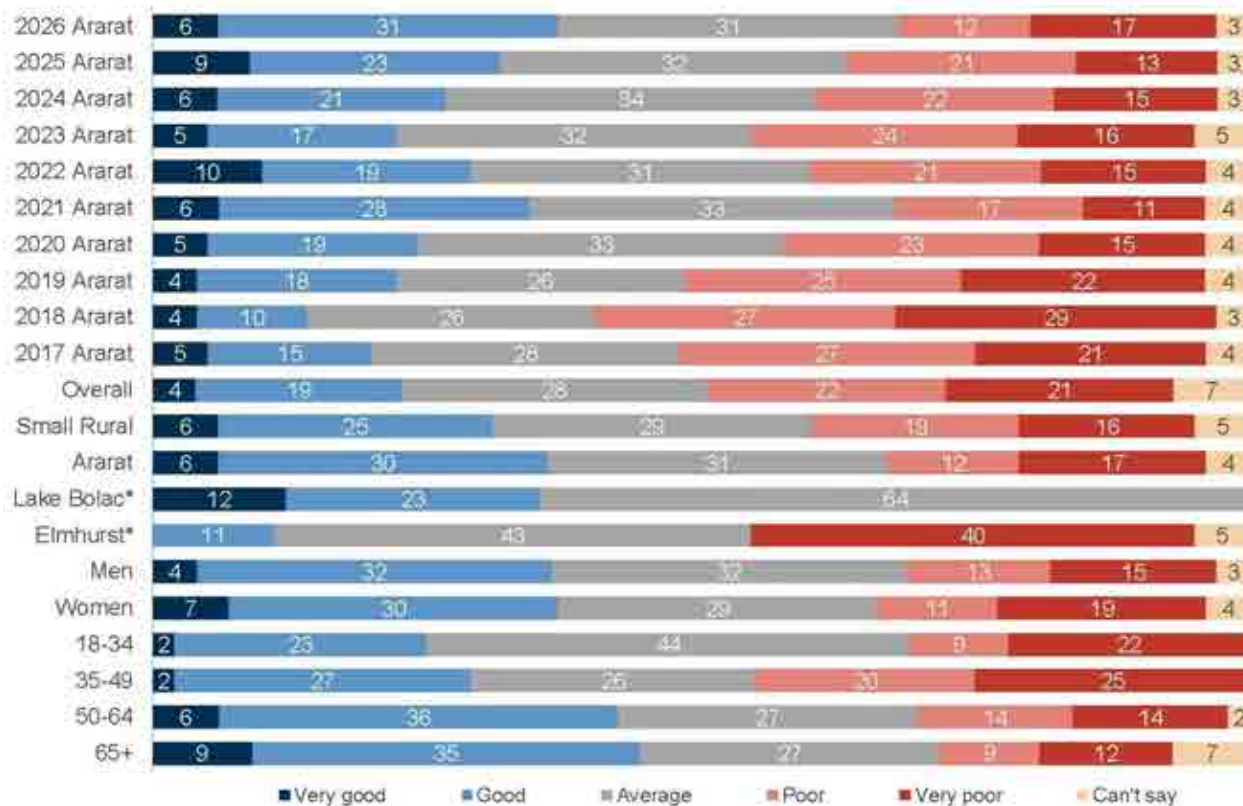
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	
Lake Bolac	62*	49	56	34	52	46	16	14	19	24
65+	56▲	54	47	48	52	54	46	41	37	39
50-64	52	50	41	43	48	48	45	39	35	36
Men	49	50	44	44	45	51	46	41	29	36
Ararat	49	48	45	42	47	50	44	39	33	38
Ararat	49	49	46	45	50	50	45	42	36	42
Women	49	47	45	41	50	49	41	36	37	40
Small Rural	46	40	35	38	42	44	43	43	40	43
18-34	44	43	40	39	54	46	46	40	32	43
35-49	40▼	44	48	34	32	50	37	34	25	36
Overall	40▼	38	36	37	41	45	44	44	43	44
Elmhurst	32*▼	44	34	24	26	51	34	39	21	25

Q2: How has Council performed on 'Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area' over the last 12 months?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 10 Councils asked group: 4
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.
 *Caution: small sample size < n=30.

Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area performance



2026 unsealed roads performance (%)



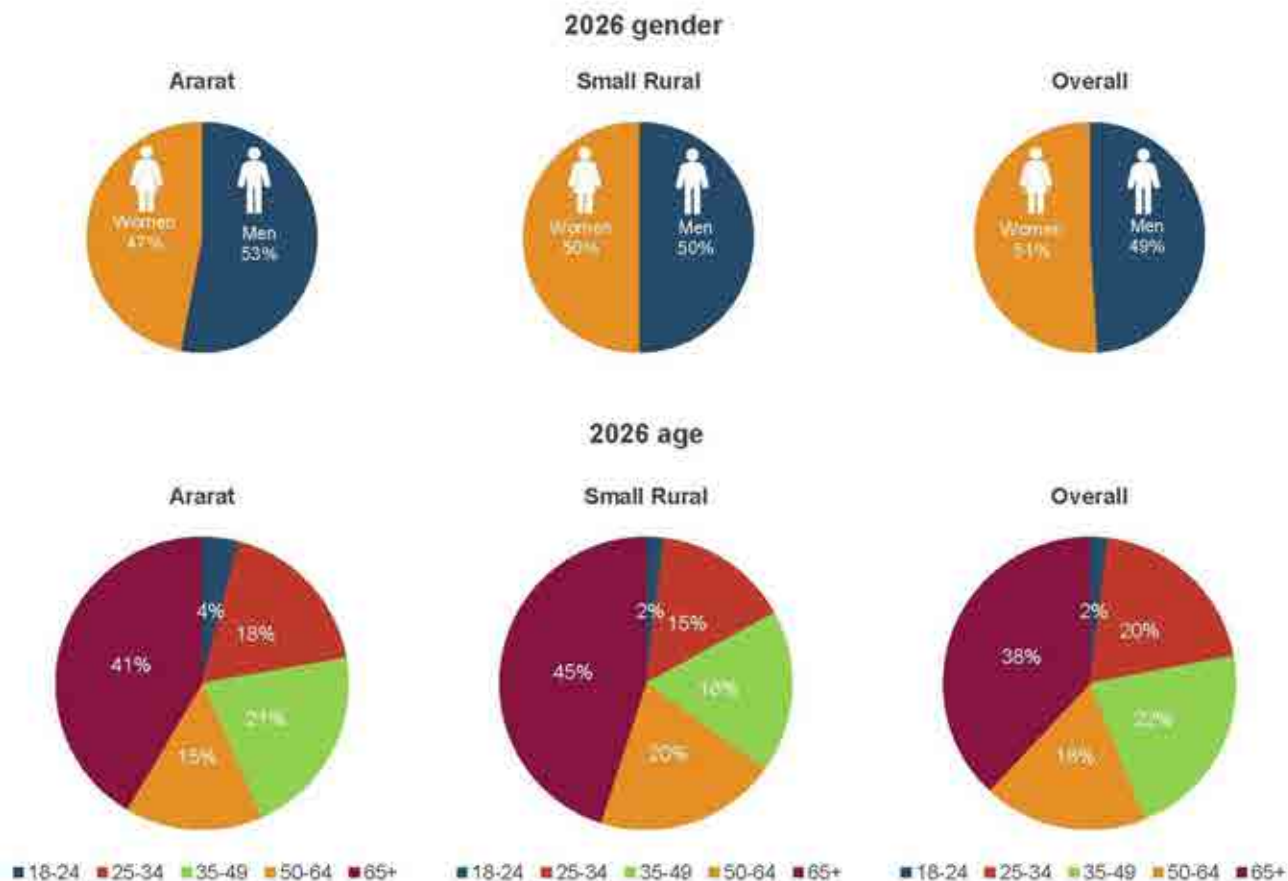
Q2: How has Council performed on 'Maintenance of unsealed roads in your area' over the last 12 months?
Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 10 Councils asked group: 4
*Caution: small sample size < n=30.



Detailed demographics



Gender and age profile



S3. How would you describe your gender? / S4. To which of the following age groups do you belong?
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked: 23 Councils asked group: 9
 An "Other" option has been included for gender, hence the results may not add to 100%.
 Please note that for the reason of simplifying reporting, interlocking age and gender reporting has not been included in this report. Interlocking age and gender analysis is still available in the dashboard and data tables provided alongside this report.



**Appendix A:
Index scores,
margins of error
and significant
differences**

Appendix A: Index Scores



Index Scores

Many questions ask respondents to rate council performance on a five-point scale, for example, from 'very good' to 'very poor', with 'can't say' also a possible response category. To facilitate ease of reporting and comparison of results over time, starting from the 2012 survey and measured against the state-wide result and the council group, an 'Index Score' has been calculated for such measures.

The Index Score is calculated and represented as a score out of 100 (on a 0 to 100 scale), with 'can't say' responses excluded from the analysis. The '% RESULT' for each scale category is multiplied by the 'INDEX FACTOR'. This produces an 'INDEX VALUE' for each category, which are then summed to produce the 'INDEX SCORE', equating to '60' in the following example.

Similarly, an Index Score has been calculated for the Core question 'Performance direction in the last 12 months', based on the following scale for each performance measure category, with 'Can't say' responses excluded from the calculation.

SCALE CATEGORIES	% RESULT	INDEX FACTOR	INDEX VALUE
Very good	9%	100	9
Good	40%	75	30
Average	37%	50	19
Poor	9%	25	2
Very poor	4%	0	0
Can't say	1%	–	INDEX SCORE 60

SCALE CATEGORIES	% RESULT	INDEX FACTOR	INDEX VALUE
Improved	36%	100	36
Stayed the same	40%	50	20
Deteriorated	23%	0	0
Can't say	1%	–	INDEX SCORE 56

Please note that the horizontal (x) axis of the index score bar charts in this report is displayed on a scale from 20 to 100.

Appendix A: Margins of error



The sample size for the 2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey for Ararat Rural City Council was n=400. Unless otherwise noted, this is the total sample base for all reported charts and tables.

The maximum margin of error on a sample of approximately n=400 interviews is +/-4.8% at the 95% confidence level for results around 50%. Margins of error will be larger for any sub-samples. As an example, a result of 50% can be read confidently as falling midway in the range 45.2% - 54.8%.

Maximum margins of error are listed in the table below, based on a population of 9,600 people aged 18 years or over for Ararat Rural City Council, according to ABS estimates.

Demographic	Actual survey sample size	Weighted base	Maximum margin of error at 95% confidence interval
Ararat Rural City Council	400	400	+/-4.8
Men	191	210	+/-7.0
Women	207	188	+/-6.8
Ararat	322	323	+/-5.4
Lake Bolac	5	6	+/-49.0
Elmhurst	11	13	+/-31.0
18-34 years	46	88	+/-14.6
35-49 years	49	86	+/-14.1
50-64 years	83	61	+/-10.8
65+ years	222	165	+/-6.5

Appendix A: Index score significant difference calculation



The test applied to the Indexes was an Independent Mean Test, as follows:

$$Z \text{ Score} = (\$1 - \$2) / \text{Sqrt} ((\$5^2 / \$3) + (\$6^2 / \$4))$$

Where:

- \$1 = Index Score 1
- \$2 = Index Score 2
- \$3 = unweighted sample count 1
- \$4 = unweighted sample count 2
- \$5 = standard deviation 1
- \$6 = standard deviation 2

All figures can be sourced from the detailed cross-tabulations.

The test was applied at the 95% confidence interval, so if the Z Score was greater than +/- 1.954 the scores are significantly different.

Appendix B: Further project information

Appendix B: Further information



Further information about the report can be found in this section including:

- Survey methodology and sampling
- Analysis and reporting
- Glossary of terms

Detailed survey tabulations

Detailed survey tabulations are available in supplied Excel file.

Contacts

For further queries about the conduct and reporting of the 2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey, please contact JWS Research on

(03) 8685 8555 or via email:
admin@jwsresearch.com

Appendix B: Survey methodology and sampling



The 2026 results are compared with previous years, as detailed below:

- 2025, n=400 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 28th January – 16th March.
- 2024, n=400 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 29th January – 18th March.
- 2023, n=400 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 27th January – 19th March.
- 2022, n=400 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 27th January – 24th March.
- 2021, n=401 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 28th January – 18th March.
- 2020, n=401 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 30th January – 22nd March.
- 2019, n=408 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 1st February – 30th March.
- 2018, n=400 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 1st February – 30th March.
- 2017, n=400 completed interviews, conducted in the period of 1st February – 30th March.

Minimum quotas of gender within age groups were applied during the fieldwork phase. Post-survey weighting was then conducted to ensure accurate representation of the age and gender profile of the Ararat Rural City Council area.

Any variation of +/-1% between individual results and net scores in this report or the detailed survey tabulations is due to rounding. In reporting, '—' denotes not mentioned and '0%' denotes mentioned by less than 1% of respondents. 'Net' scores refer to two or more response categories being combined into one category for simplicity of reporting.

This survey was conducted by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) as a representative random probability survey of residents aged 18+ years in Ararat Rural City Council.

Survey sample matched to the demographic profile of Ararat Rural City Council as determined by the most recent ABS population estimates was purchased from an accredited supplier of publicly available phone records, including up to 59% mobile phone numbers to cater to the diversity of residents within Ararat Rural City Council, particularly younger people.

A total of n=400 completed interviews were achieved in Ararat Rural City Council. Survey fieldwork was conducted in the period of February 2nd - March 15th, 2026.

Appendix B: Analysis and reporting



In 2026, 23 Councils throughout Victoria participated in this survey. For consistency of analysis and reporting, JWS Research has aligned its presentation of data to use standard council groupings. Accordingly, the council reports for the community satisfaction survey provide analysis using these standard council groupings. Please note that councils participating across 2012-2026 vary.

Council Groups

Ararat Rural City Council is classified as a Small Rural council according to the following classification list:

- Metropolitan, Interface, Regional Centres, Large Rural & Small Rural.

Councils participating in the Small Rural group are:

- Ararat, Benalla, Gannawarra, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Loddon, Mansfield, Queenscliffe and Yarriambiack.

Wherever appropriate, results for Ararat Rural City Council have been compared against those in the Small Rural group, as well as against all other participating councils ("Overall").

Appendix B: Core, optional and tailored questions



Core, optional and tailored questions

Over and above necessary geographic and demographic questions required to ensure sample representativeness, a base set of questions for the 2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey was designated as 'Core' and therefore compulsory inclusions for all participating Councils.

These core questions comprised:

- Overall performance last 12 months (Overall performance)
- Value for money in services and infrastructure (Value for money)
- Contact in last 12 months (Contact)
- Rating of contact (Customer service)
- Overall council direction last 12 months (Council direction)
- Community consultation and engagement (Consultation)
- Decisions made in the interest of the community (Making community decisions)
- Condition of sealed local roads (Sealed local roads)
- Waste management

Reporting of results for these core questions can always be compared against other participating councils in the council group and against all participating councils. Alternatively, some questions in the 2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey were optional. Councils also had the ability to ask tailored questions specific only to their council.

Every council that participated in the 2026 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey receives a customised report. Tailored questions commissioned by individual councils are reported only to the commissioning council and not otherwise shared unless by express written approval of the commissioning council.

Appendix B: Glossary of terms



Core questions: Compulsory inclusion questions for all councils participating in the CSS.

CSS: 2026 Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey.

Council group: One of five classified groups, comprising: Metropolitan, Interface, Regional Centres, Large Rural and Small Rural.

Council group average: The average result for all participating councils in the council group.

Highest / lowest: The result described is the highest or lowest result across a particular demographic sub-group e.g. men, for the specific question being reported. Reference to the result for a demographic sub-group being the highest or lowest does not imply that it is significantly higher or lower, unless this is specifically mentioned.

Index score: A score calculated and represented as a score out of 100 (on a 0 to 100 scale). This score is sometimes reported as a figure in brackets next to the category being described, e.g. men 50+ (60).

Optional questions: Questions which councils had an option to include or not.

Overall average: The average result for all participating councils.

Percentages: Also referred to as 'detailed results', meaning the proportion of responses, expressed as a percentage.

Sample: The number of completed interviews, e.g. for a council or within a demographic sub-group.

Significantly higher / lower: The result described is significantly higher or lower than the comparison result based on a statistical significance test at the 95% confidence limit. If the result referenced is statistically higher or lower then this will be specifically mentioned, however not all significantly higher or lower results are referenced in summary reporting.

Tailored questions: Individual questions tailored by and only reported to the commissioning council.

Weighting: Weighting factors are applied to the sample for each council based on available age and gender proportions from ABS census information to ensure reported results are proportionate to the actual population of the council, rather than the achieved survey sample.

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Katrina Cox
Director of Client Services
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4.2 ARARAT FITNESS CENTRE - INDOOR POOL OPERATIONS, TEMPERATURE MANAGEMENT AND UTILITY COST MONITORING

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28973

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

This report provides an overview of the operational management of the indoor aquatic facilities at the Ararat Rural City Council's Ararat Fitness Centre, including pool temperature management, pool hall heating practices, patron usage considerations, and recent measures introduced to improve operational efficiency and reduce utility costs.

DISCUSSION

The Ararat Fitness Centre indoor aquatic facility includes:

- A 25-metre heated indoor pool;
- A spa pool; and
- A toddler pool.

The 25-metre indoor pool is a shared, multi-purpose facility that accommodates a broad range of users and activities simultaneously, including:

- Learn-to-swim programs
- Lap swimming
- Aqua aerobics classes; and
- Hydrotherapy activities.

As the pool services multiple user groups with differing requirements, water temperatures are maintained within a balanced operating range of 29-30°C.

Pool Temperature Management

Aquatic industry guidelines generally recommend that shared indoor pools used for both learn-to-swim activities and lap swimming operate within a temperature range of 28-30°C. This range provides an appropriate balance between comfort for learn-to-swim participants and safe operating conditions for patrons undertaking continuous exercise such as lap swimming.

Dedicated hydrotherapy or specialist learn-to-swim pools are often maintained at warmer temperatures, generally between 31-33°C. However, these facilities are typically purpose-built program pools and not shared 25-metre community pools such as the facility operated at the Ararat Fitness Centre.

It is important to note that the Ararat Fitness Centre is a community aquatic and recreation facility and not a dedicated medical or hydrotherapy facility. While the Centre welcomes and supports patrons undertaking hydrotherapy activities, operational decisions must ensure the facility remains suitable and accessible for the broader community.

Pool Temperature Monitoring

Pool temperatures are monitored regularly throughout each day to ensure they remain within the target operating range.

Temperature records indicate:

- Since February 2026, the indoor pool temperature has consistently remained between 29-30°C, with daily averages ranging from 29.3°C to 29.9°C.
- Data recordings from April 2025 to February 2026 show daily average temperatures ranging from 29.0°C to 30.4°C.

The adjustment toward maintaining temperatures more consistently within the 29-30°C range was implemented to better balance the needs of all facility users.

Feedback received previously from regular lap swimmers indicated that the pool temperature was often too warm for sustained exercise. Industry guidance suggests that ideal lap swimming temperatures are generally between 24-27°C; however, patrons acknowledged the need for compromise given the shared nature of the facility.

The Centre currently records an average of nine lap swimmers each weekday morning from 6:00 am, with additional lap swimming participation occurring consistently throughout the day.

Pool Hall Heating Management

In addition to water temperature management, the Centre also monitors the temperature of the indoor pool hall environment.

The target operating range for the pool hall is generally maintained between 24-26°C, particularly during Learn-to-swim sessions and Aqua aerobics classes. This range aims to provide a comfortable environment for all pool users, spectators and employees, particularly lifeguards.

Council has a duty of care to provide a safe working environment for employees. Excessive pool hall temperatures can increase the risk of heat-related illness and fatigue for lifeguards. Should a lifeguard become unwell while on duty, aquatic operations would be disrupted, with patrons asked to exit the pool until replacement staff can be secured.

Operational Changes Implemented

Several minor operational adjustments have recently been introduced to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary utility consumption.

Prior to January 2026, it is understood that the pool hall heater was commonly left operating continuously, including overnight periods when the facility was closed. While this practice ensured warmer conditions for 6:00 am patrons, it also resulted in extended heating periods when no patrons or staff were present.

Current operational practices now include:

- Turning off the pool hall heater when the facility closes; and
- Having the opening lifeguard activate the heater at approximately 5:30 am prior to opening.

This approach allows the overnight chill to be removed before patrons arrive, while also reducing unnecessary overnight energy consumption.

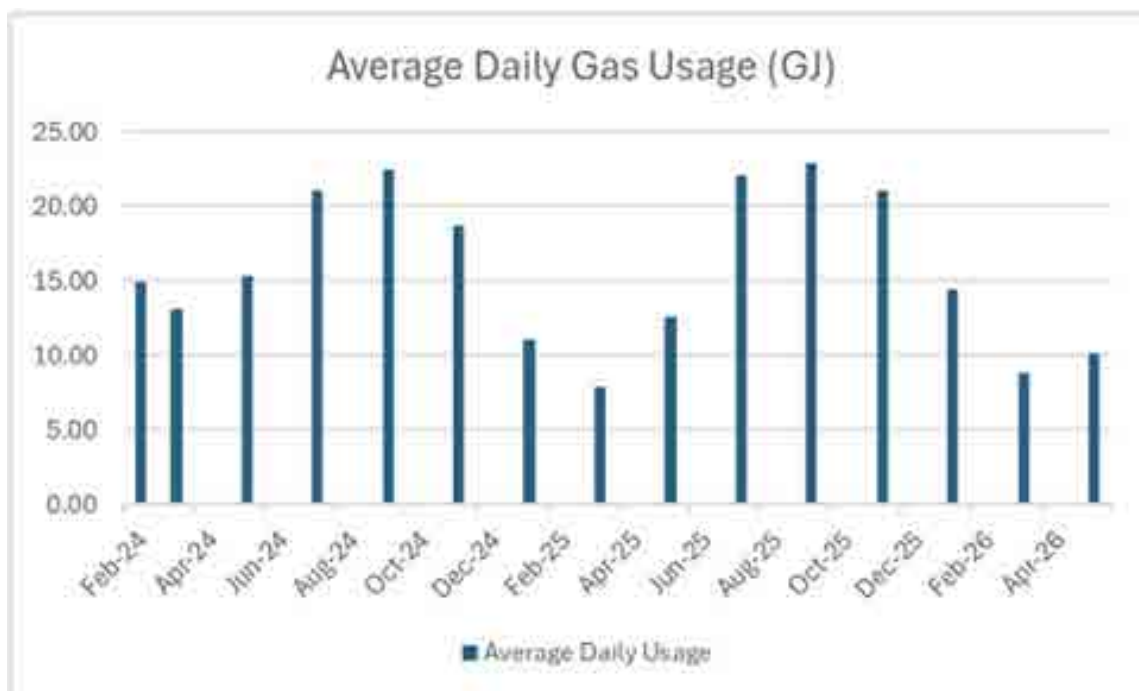
Utility Cost Management

The operational changes introduced form part of broader efforts to better manage the Fitness Centre operating budget.

For the current financial year, the utility budget for the Ararat Fitness Centre was set at \$180,000. As at the beginning of January 2026, gas utility expenditure had already reached \$115,105. While relatively small changes to pool and air temperature management may appear minor operationally, early indications suggest they are contributing to measurable reductions in gas consumption.

Gas Usage and Cost Comparison

Bill Date	Usage Amount(GJ)	Days	Cost	Average Daily Usage	Average Daily Cost
Feb-24	1047.55782	70	\$ 31,283.50	14.97	\$ 446.91
Mar-24	797.58845	61	\$ 24,929.66	13.08	\$ 408.68
May-24	918.11748	60	\$ 28,696.96	15.30	\$ 478.28
Jul-24	1260.35718	60	\$ 39,394.10	21.01	\$ 656.57
Sep-24	1284.00017	57	\$ 40,133.09	22.53	\$ 704.09
Nov-24	1067.95646	57	\$ 33,380.37	18.74	\$ 585.62
Jan-25	829.75689	75	\$ 25,827.60	11.06	\$ 344.37
Mar-25	442.17397	56	\$ 13,206.76	7.90	\$ 235.84
May-25	791.31143	63	\$ 23,634.73	12.56	\$ 375.15
Jul-25	1279.3594	58	\$ 38,211.65	22.06	\$ 658.82
Sep-25	1259.51475	55	\$ 37,618.93	22.90	\$ 683.98
Nov-25	1303.37223	62	\$ 38,928.86	21.02	\$ 627.88
Jan-26	996.31491	69	\$ 27,601.38	14.44	\$ 400.02
Mar-26	504.67508	57	\$ 14,525.31	8.85	\$ 254.83
May-26	645.77877	64	\$ 18,586.90	10.09	\$ 290.42
Total	14427.83499	924	\$ 435,959.80		





Early Savings Indicators

As the operational changes were implemented in March 2026, only one comparable billing cycle is currently available for assessment.

Comparison between May 2025 and May 2026 billing periods indicates:

- A reduction in average daily gas usage of approximately 2.47 GJ per day; and
- A reduction in average daily gas costs of approximately \$84.73 per day.

Across the 64-day May 2026 billing cycle, this represents an estimated saving of approximately \$5047.83 when compared with the equivalent period in the previous year.

While additional data over a longer period will be required to fully assess annual savings, the early indicators are positive.

Ongoing Monitoring

The Fitness Centre will continue monitoring the impact of these operational adjustments on:

- Electricity consumption;
- Gas consumption; and
- Chlorine usage.

It is noted that higher pool water temperatures generally result in increased chlorine consumption, creating additional operational costs.

Conclusion

The Ararat Fitness Centre remains committed to providing a safe, accessible and enjoyable aquatic facility for the entire Ararat Rural City Council community.

The operational changes implemented to pool and pool hall temperature management have been undertaken to:

- Balance the needs of all user groups;
- Maintain safe operating conditions for both patrons and employees;
- Improve operational efficiency; and
- Reduce utility expenditure where possible.

We are committed to continue to monitor patron feedback, facility conditions and operational costs to ensure the aquatic facility remains sustainable and responsive to community needs.

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.

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.

Budget Implications

Early results show the recent operational changes are reducing gas consumption and delivering initial savings which supports improved management of the Ararat Fitness Centre's utility budget. Ongoing tracking of electricity, gas, and chlorine usage will confirm longer-term impacts.

Policy/Relevant Law

Aquatic Industry Guidelines
The Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO)

Sustainability Implications

The changes improve environmental sustainability by reducing heating energy use and emissions through tighter temperature control, while also lowering utility costs to support long-term financial viability. They maintain safe, comfortable conditions for staff and patrons, strengthening overall community access.

Risk Assessment

Key risks include temperature mismanagement, increased chemical demand, staff heat-stress, community dissatisfaction, and a financial risk that energy savings may not continue across seasons. These risks are mitigated through ongoing monitoring, daily temperature logging and responsive operational adjustments.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This report has been prompted by input from stakeholders and observations of an emerging trend in the consumers raising concerns around pool temperature.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council receive the Ararat Fitness Centre - Indoor Pool Operations, Temperature Management and Utility Cost Monitoring Report

**MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

That:

- 1. Council receive the Ararat Fitness Centre - Indoor Pool Operations, Temperature Management and Utility Cost Monitoring Report**

Cr J Armstrong and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5356/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

4.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM 25-26 - APRIL 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28974

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

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.

The March 2026 round of engagement sessions was delivered between 23 to 27 March 2026 in Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Tatyoon and Willaura, with a focus on the Draft Budget 2026/27. 27 people attended the engagement sessions and 42 non-budget issues were raised or discussed, and the progress of these are in the table below. The report for the Budget 2026/27 contains the budget related matters raised during the engagement session.

The next community engagement sessions will occur between 29 June to 3 July 2026 in the following towns, as indicated in the Community Engagement Program 2025/26 document adopted in November 2025: Ararat, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Streatham, Warrak, Wickliffe, Willaura.

Table 1. Non-budget issues raised and their progress to date.

#	Issues Raised	Progress as of 14 May 2026
	Ararat	
1	Query about what's happening with the glass house at Alexandra Gardens, Ararat	Rotary, in conjunction with Council, have completed the EOI process for the removal of the orchid glass house and are waiting for the remover to take the structure.
2	Asked if a native plant or two could be planted in the garden beds near the glass house mentioned above.	The Alexandra Gardens have a dedicated area for natives between the old fernery and Alexandra Oval.
3	Asked if the slope on the lake side of the cafe in Alexandra Gardens can be improved.	Suggestion has been reviewed. The existing path follows the existing fall of the land. Changing the slope would require a significant redesign of the area and considerable cost, making this financially unfeasible.
4	Query regarding whether Council has a building inspector for pools, and if not, whether we could get one.	Council currently does not have a building inspector for pools, but is open to having one in the future.
	Buangor	No issues raised
	Elmhurst	
5	There is a dip in the road at Hillarys Road, Elmhurst, near the intersection with	As this is in an area adjoining the Pyrenees Highway, Council will need to engage with VicRoads on any works and therefore is unable to

	Pyrenees Highway, can this be filled in and levelled?	be actioned immediately. This request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
6	Boundary Road, Elmhurst, between the intersections with Glenpatrick Road and Pyrenees Highway also needs some maintenance work	Same as above, this request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
7	Asked for clarity on what can and cannot be taken to the Elmhurst Transfer Station when it opens, and if this can be mailed to all of the residents.	Information has been provided on what can be disposed of at the Elmhurst Transfer Station via poster/fliers, social media, etc. Unfortunately this information cannot be sent by mail to all residents in Elmhurst due to the cost per letter. Public notification of the opening dates commenced on 15 April 2026.
8	Feedback was received that garbage truck drivers were doing u-turns in a couple of resident's driveways.	Feedback has been passed on to the waste team to not use driveways for u-turns.
9	The community wanted to say that the Council staff member who does the mowing in Elmhurst does a great job.	The positive feedback has been noted and passed on to the staff member.
10	Dust suppression on Boundary Lane and Darbyshires Road was requested, the latter is used by a lot of farm machinery and trucks	Dust suppression methods have a short lifespan. Other options, such as OTTA seals, will be considered based on traffic count and other data. This request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
11	Query was raised around whether signs can be installed onto heritage buildings.	Council has liaised directly with the member of the community on their query.
	Lake Bolac	
12	Positive feedback was received that Council were doing a great job.	Feedback noted with thanks.
13	Query was received on the status of the Lake Bolac Walking Track project.	A significant part of this project is in areas that Council does not own or manage. The sections that are in areas that Council has oversight have not been funded in the 2026/27 Budget, however will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting
	Moyston	
14	Request for bin surrounds at the Recreation Reserve	This request has had an initial investigation. There are a number of bins on site. The optimal location for a permanent bin surround structure needs to be determined. This request will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
15	Queries regarding the Fire Prevention Notices and how this process worked.	Queries were resolved at the engagement session, no further action required.
16	There was discussion around a future restoration works on the rotunda	For noting, no further action at this stage.
17	Queries regarding upgrades to the netball courts in Moyston and new change rooms	Funding from the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund was announced recently to upgrade the netball/tennis courts and begin planning for new changerooms close to the courts.
18	There was a general discussion around the rabbit pest problem and measures being trialled in the area.	For noting, no further action required.

Pomonal		
19	Request for walking/bike riding track from Pomonal Hall to Pomonal Estate	This will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting
20	There were queries regarding disposing of large volumes of greenwaste	These queries will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year.
21	Community asked for the opening times and dates for the rural skip bins in Moyston and for these to be communicated to the community.	The Moyston Transfer Station will be open on Saturday 16 th and 23 rd May from 10am to 1pm. Promotion of these dates began on 15 April.
22	Pomonal community requested to have their own rural skip bin.	This request will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year.
23	Request for clean-up of the burn scar on Tunnel Road, Pomonal	Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate
24	The tunnel track loop walking track is getting washed away when it rains	Maintenance schedule will be reviewed with consideration for increasing with rain frequency.
25	Wattles need cleaning up on the edge of bitumen on Waterhole Road, Pomonal	This request has been actioned
26	Dead wood along Springwood Hill Road intersection requires cleaning up	Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate
27	The Pomonal Newsletter asked to be notified of Council's media releases	The Pomonal Newsletter's email has been provided to the Council's media team.
28	Query about walking tracks on the roadside on Robins Road.	This will be considered as part of future capital works planning and decision making
29	There was interest in the Council's Environmental Working Group in the Pomonal community.	Sustainability Officer has visited Pomonal and met with interested community members on 25 March
30	Request for information to be received in a more timely manner	CFA will be notified directly on relevant information
31	Concerns around the speed limit on Waterhole Road was raised. This feedback was also submitted to the Road Safety Strategy consultation process.	This request will be reviewed as part of the Rural Road Strategy process.
32	Proposed idea for a school drop off point between the school and the CFA building. Letter of support may be requested	Noted, no further action until request for letter of support received.
33	Safety improvements were requested at the intersection of Tobacco Road and Ararat-Halls Gap Road. Road name sign missing.	Safety improvements to be submitted to VicRoads as the road authority for this intersection. The road name sign was replaced on 25 March 2026.
Tatyoon		
34	There was positive feedback about the Mount William Road and a query around upcoming road works for the purposes of planning school bus routes.	Query was resolved during the session, no further action.
35	Query about the Significant Landscape Overlay for the Grampians National Park	Details for this overlay can be found in clause 42.03, Schedule 1 of the Ararat Planning Scheme
36	The proposed wind farm project was raised.	Topic was discussed during the engagement session. Council is not the planning authority for this proposed project. No further action.
37	The Tatyoon Pavilion project was presented as a high priority and there was a strong	Council officers will continue to work with the Tatyoon Community Asset Committee towards achieving this project.

	request for Council's support to advocate for the project.	
38	Possible future community facilities at Maroona Recreation Reserve were flagged.	Future intentions were noted, Council will work with the Maroona Community Asset Committee as these plans take shape.
	Willaura	
39	Area around the Willaura Cenotaph is likely to need some maintenance work in the future.	Area was tidied before ANZAC Day. Future works will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
40	Footpath between the Willaura supermarket and Police Station needs attention	This request is unable to be accommodated in this financial year and will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
41	Request for a new ramp for wheelchair/scooter access from the road to the footpath outside the Willaura bank area.	This request is unable to be accommodated in this financial year and will be considered as part of future capital works planning and budgeting.
42	Could there be a pool committee to help manage the Willaura swimming pool?	A committee of Council would not normally be established for a facility that is currently managed by staff.

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 April 2026 report*

**MOVED CR JOYCE
SECONDED CR PRESTON**

That:

1. **Council receives the Community Engagement Program April 2026 report**

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

**CARRIED 7/0
5357/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.4 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - APRIL 2026 UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28975

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

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

Works resumed on this project on 27 April 2026 under strict environmental and safety regulations and in accordance with WorkSafe Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority requirements.

Decontamination of Removed Material

Decontamination, inspection and clearing of the building rubble material that was removed from the Queen St site by certified hygienists is complete. The remaining contaminated material will be transported by a licensed transporter to the lawful place of disposal at Stawell Landfill.

Safety measures during this phase included:

- Ongoing air quality monitoring
- Dust suppression with water
- Established site exclusion zones
- Use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Crushing for Reuse

Now that the material has been cleared of asbestos contamination by the certified hygienist, the concrete building waste will be crushed to create reusable construction material. Crushing will occur over approximately 6-8 weeks, undertaken in batches as cleared material becomes available. Activities are expected 1-2 days per week between 7:00am and 6:00pm. Water will be used for dust suppression, and noise will be carefully managed in accordance with permitted working hours. All crushed material will be tested and cleared before being reused or removed from site. A licensed and qualified contractor has been appointed to undertake these works.

Demolition Works at Queen Street

New fencing has been erected at the Queen Street site as part of the site controls in preparation for the resumption of demolition works. Demolition works at the Queen Street site are expected to recommence in early June 2026.

Construction of New Infrastructure

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

The estimated timeframe for the construction of new enabling infrastructure is expected to commence in the second half of 2026.

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:

- Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - April 2026 Update*

MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR PRESTON

That:

- Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - April 2026 Update**

Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5358/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.5 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (APRIL 2026)

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28976

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	28 (+7)
In progress 51-99%	8 (-2)
In progress 0-50%	8 (-4)
Not Started	0
Ongoing	9 (-1)

Further details on each action is provided in the table below. Six (6) actions are expected to be partially completed by the end of June 2026 and will be carried forward and completed in 2026/27.

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% (to be carried forward)	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% (to be carried forward)	This action is closely linked to action 1.1.1 and will occur concurrently.
	1.1.3 Complete the 'Unlocking Ararat North	In progress 51-99%	This project is expected to be completed in June 2026.

	East' Structure Plan project		
1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.	1.2.1 Deliver enabling infrastructure for well-located homes that address critical housing gaps in central Ararat, with support from the Housing Support Program: Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream.	In progress 0-50% (to be carried forward)	See 'Housing Support Program Project Update' report for further details.
	1.2.2 Continue to develop the Ararat Housing Enterprise P/L, delivering another four houses in Ararat during 2025/2026.	Complete	This action was completed at the April 2026 Council Meeting.
	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	This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.
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	Complete	Refurbishment works commenced in the April school holidays and are now complete. The Jack and Jill Kindergarten program returned to their upgraded facility on Monday 18 th May.
	1.3.2 Establish a new childcare centre in Lake Bolac	In progress 0-50% (to be carried forward)	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 supporting families to enrol into kindergarten for 2027. This action will be completed in June 2026 while the Initiative will continue until June 2027.
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	This action was completed at the October 2025 Council Meeting.
	2.1.3 Continue to support the delivery of TAFE courses at the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct	Complete	Supporting the delivery of the Cert 3 in Early Childhood Education and Care courses has now become embedded in Council's day to day operations at the Precinct, so this action is marked complete.

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 “behind the meter” power.	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 which uses straw as the major input.	Ongoing	Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L.
	2.2.3 Seek funding from the Victorian Government’s \$10 million fund to unlock industrial trunk infrastructure to accelerate new industrial developments	Complete	This action was completed at the March 2026 Council Meeting.
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 0-50% (to be carried forward)	Engagement with key stakeholders on the feasibility study 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 51-99%	Council staff are liaising with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to develop concepts and ideas for an annual fine wine and food event. This action is expected to be completed by June 2026.
	2.3.3 Work with operators and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to deliver 4 star and above accommodation	Complete	The quality of accommodation and tourism offerings in Ararat Rural City has significantly improved. Highlights include Mount William Station which won Gold at the 2025 Victorian Tourism Awards in the "5 Star Luxury Accommodation" category. More high quality accommodation options are in the pipeline. This action is marked complete.
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.	Complete	This action was completed at the April 2026 Council Meeting.
	3.1.2 Continue to support Plastoil to develop a plastics recycling facility in Ararat	Complete	This action was completed at the April 2026 Council Meeting.
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 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 sustainable management of Council assets.	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 0-50%	Installation of the new battery is expected to occur in June 2026.
	3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program	In progress 51-99%	The Roadside Weeds and Pest Program works are underway and expected to be completed in May 2026
	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	This action was completed at the November 2025 Council Meeting.
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 State and Federal Government announced on 15 May 2026 that construction is set to begin before the end of the year.
	4.1.3 Continue to advocate for a North South Heavy Vehicle Route	Ongoing	This issue has been identified as a priority in the 2026 Advocacy Priorities.
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 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	Complete	The final draft Strategy is presented to Council at the April Council Meeting for consideration.
	4.2.3 Deliver the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	Complete	The final Strategy and Action Plan is presented to Council at the April Council Meeting for consideration.
4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety.	4.3.1 Deliver the 2025/26 Capital Works Program	In progress 51-99%	Refer to the Capital Works report.

These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability.			
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.
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 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. This action will be completed in June 2026.
	5.2.2 Deliver young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College	In progress 51-99%	Crazy Ideas College have commenced delivery of their Term 2 program. This action will be completed in June 2026.
	5.2.3 Work with community groups to deliver an annual Volunteer Expo	Complete	Council have promoted and supported range of community events held by other groups and organisation to recognise and celebrate volunteers across the municipality.
	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 51-99% (to be carried forward)	The Disability Action Plan Working Group have drafted a 'Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper'. This contains 5 priority actions identified by the Working Group for immediate implementation, as well as discussion points to support genuine engagement and co-design of a Disability Action Plan. Public consultation and engagement on for the development of the Disability Action Plan will commence in early 2026/27.
	5.3.2 Develop the Municipal Public Health	Complete	The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 was adopted at the October 2025 Council Meeting.

	and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29		
	5.3.3 Hold quarterly meetings of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Working Group	Complete	The final quarterly meeting of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Working Group for 2025/26 was held on 20 May 2026.
	5.3.4 Deliver multicultural events	Complete	This action was completed at the March 2026 Council Meeting.
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	Complete	This action was completed at the April 2026 Council Meeting.
	6.2.2 Undertake the Strategic Internal Audit Program - 5 years.	Complete	This action was completed at the April 2026 Council Meeting.
	6.2.3 Develop the 2026-2030 Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)	Complete	This action was completed at the April 2026 Council Meeting.
	6.2.4 Ensure appropriate analysis of all inquiry and investigation reports relevant to Council operations are examined and recommendations implemented.	Ongoing	Each external enquiry and investigation undertaken in the local government sector is examined and 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 - April 2026 report*

MOVED CR PRESTON SECONDED CR KAUR

That:

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

Cr Preston and Cr Kaur spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5359/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.6 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - APRIL 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28977

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 has approved its 2025/2026 Capital Works Program as a fundamental component of the current budget. With a substantial capital works investment totaling \$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 continue 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 30 April 2026, 77% of the budget is expended with committed works expected to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Mt William Road is progressing well with the final stage commencing stabilizing, and other completed stages being sealed, line marking, guard rail installations are expected to commence soon.. Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge Reconstruction is completed with bridge strengthening works on the bridge over Billy Billy Creek progressing well with completion towards the end of May 2026. Jack and Jill Kindergarten redevelopment has been completed on time with the kinder moving furniture and equipment back in the week commencing 11 May 26. The Pony Club arena

construction is nearing completion with lighting and drainage works to be finalized in the coming months. The OTTA seal on Jacksons Creek Road is complete with prep works being undertaken on the other roads. Road construction works have commenced on the first stage of Buangor Ben Nevis Road at the Warrak end of the project.

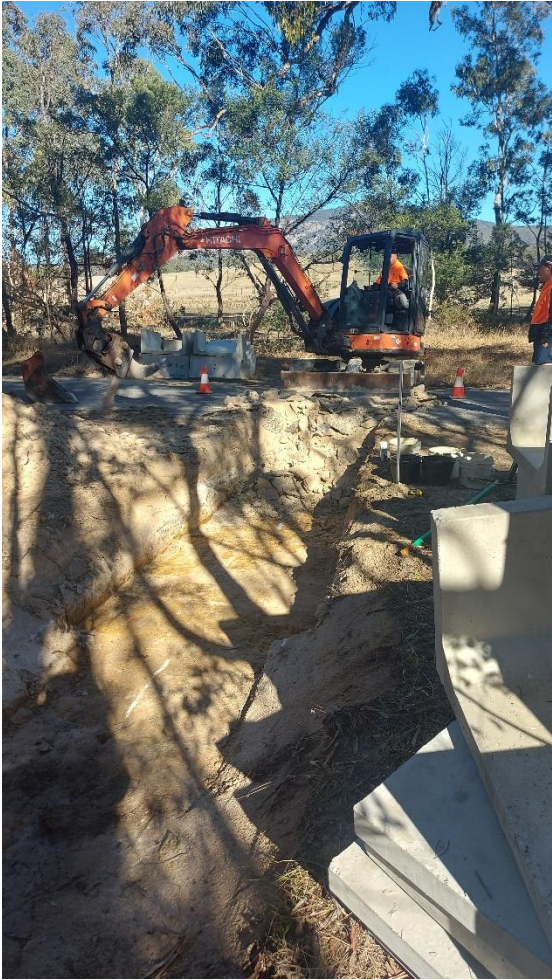
Mt William Road





Buangor Ben Nevis Road





Jack and Jill Kindergarten





Ararat Pony Club Arena



Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge - Over Mt Cole Creek



IP43 Construction - Raised Crossings



PROPERTY CAPITAL PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Community Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Property Capital General	\$166,000		\$166,000							
Mininera Recreation Reserve Toilet Upgrade							\$173,471	\$173,471		Toilets have been installed onsite and only require connection to the septic.
Tatyoan Oval Upgrade							\$11,393	\$11,393		Works are completed with some final issues to be rectified before final completion is issued
Video Cameras/Security - Ararat Skate Park							\$6,421	\$6,421		These have been installed.
Video Camera/Security - Ararat Fitness Centre							\$13,203	\$13,203		These have been installed.
Lake Bolac Club Rooms - Roof Upgrade						\$23,400		\$23,400		Works to be completed by 30 June 26
Alexandra Oval - Hot Water Service Replacements							\$22,854	\$22,854		Works have been completed
Former Cobb & Co Staging Stables <i>(Disaster Recovery Heritage Program)</i>	\$60,000	\$60,000			\$1,237		\$29,134	\$30,371	50%	Ararat Maintenance Plumbing has completed works on this project & and acquitted. A variation
Ararat Pony Club - Covered Sports Area <i>(Play our Way Program)</i>	\$1,490,000	\$1,490,000			\$14,270	\$108,360	\$1,216,682	\$1,339,313	89%	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.
Centenary Park - Dog Park <i>(Open Space for Everyone Program)</i>	\$112,000	\$100,000	\$12,000		\$1,172	\$50,122	\$24,770	\$76,064	68%	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
Buangor Sports Pavilion Redevelopment <i>(Tiny Towns Program)</i>	\$631,000	\$50,000	\$581,000 (\$220k Property Capital) (\$361k Property Reserve)		\$303		\$129,726	\$130,029	21%	Works have commenced on-site with demolition and electrical works complete, new slabs are being laid.
Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment <i>(Building Blocks improvement grants program)</i>	\$745,000	\$745,000			\$26,000	\$303,371	\$319,345	\$648,716	86%	Works for this project have been awarded to: Renovation Works - ISJ Building Painting Works - Grampians Painting and Decorating Flooring - Choices Ararat Switchboard Upgrade - CHS Electrical Works have commenced, and tracking well.
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i>	\$700,000	\$560,000	\$120,000 (\$20,000 from Tennis Australia)	\$20,000	NA	\$328,095	\$131,755	\$459,850	65%	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.
Gordon Street Cricket Nets Upgrade <i>(Australian Cricket Infrastructure Grant)</i>	\$39,985	\$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.
Pomonal Hall Battery Project <i>(Powering Resilience in the Regions Program)</i>	\$148,760	\$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.
Ararat Library Lighting and Exterior Upgrade. <i>(Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2024-25)</i>	\$51,026	\$51,026			NA		\$45,196	\$45,196	88%	External Painting and lighting have been completed.
TOTAL - PROPERTY CAPITAL	\$4,550,771	\$3,212,433	\$1,318,338	\$20,000	\$42,982	\$813,348	\$2,166,604	\$3,022,934		

PLANT & EQUIPMENT	Budget	Committed/ Contracted	Expended 25/26	%	Notes
Vehicle Purchases	\$240,000		\$208,395	80%	Replacement of 4 x Utilities and 2 x SUV
Major Plant Purchases	\$260,000		\$113,000		New reach mower
Fixtures, Fittings & Furniture	\$100,000	\$61,128	\$15,990		Town Hall - New Speaker IT Capital - Core Switch and WiFi Replacement
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$40,000		\$41,268	103%	
TOTAL - PLANT & EQUIPMENT		\$61,128	\$378,653	66%	

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Works By Others <i>Woorndoo Streatham Road - Completed by Moyne Shire</i>	\$683,000		\$683,000	NA	\$683,000		\$683,000	100%	Works for this road is being undertaken by Moyne Shire. The budget amount is Council's contribution
Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	\$1,500,000		\$1,500,000	NA	\$1,014,915	\$478,685	\$1,493,601	99%	\$1.5m budget reallocated from other line items. Additional OTTA Seal works include: - Tatyoon North Road - Logan Road - Jacksons Creek Road (complete)
Reseal Program				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
Urban Road - Gravel to Seal	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	NA	\$738,825	\$49,552	\$788,377	78%	Works Allocated for: - Alexandra Avenue (in conjunction with SLRSP Funding) - Coral & McNeil Street (Early June Commencement) - Maude Street (in conjunction with Pony Club Project)
ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM									
Buangor Ben Nevis Road <i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25 & 25/26)</i>	\$3,143,000		\$2,143,000 (24/25)	\$269,592		\$65,131	\$334,723		Stage One of Road works are expected to commence in the coming months inline with the bridge works, to be undertaken by internal crew
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge Strengthening			\$1,000,000 (25/26)		\$308,862	\$7,388	\$316,250		Bridge Strengthening has been awarded West Pacific Group and is to commence 20 April 2026
Buangor Ben Nevis Road <i>(SILRP Funding 25/26)</i>	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000							Council contribution of \$1,250,000 required in 26/27 Budget
Mt William Road <i>(HSVPP Funding 24/25)</i>	\$6,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000	\$217,582		\$2,955,976	\$3,173,558	51%	The first stages of road have been completed and are sealed with linemarking and guide posts to be completed. The final 800m of stabilizing will be complete mid May with final dressing of road to be completed.
Webb Street Reconstruction <i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25)</i>	\$400,000		\$400,000	\$13,822		\$152,093	\$165,915	100%	Works have been completed with sealing of the road expected in late January, early February.
Churchill Avenue Reconstruction			\$30,371			\$30,371	\$30,371		Final invoices for works completed in June 26.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Ararat Active Bike Network <i>(Active Transport Fund)</i>	\$399,000	\$266,000	\$133,000	\$13,525	\$175,202	\$17,275	\$206,002	52%	Tenders have been awarded for linemarking, and shoulder sealing under the CEO's delegation. Works to commence on shoulders 20 April 26.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge 7001.14 Design and Construct <i>(Roads to Recovery - 25/26)</i>	\$1,300,000		\$1,300,000	\$68,723	\$60,727.25	\$1,064,110	\$1,199,560	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.
McCrows Road Bridge <i>(Roads to Recovery - 24/25)</i>	\$350,000		\$350,000	\$17,738	\$79,756	\$319,219	\$416,714		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.
Major Patching	\$100,000		\$100,000			\$115,930	\$115,930	115%	
Bridges	\$0					\$1,114	\$1,114		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
Footpath Renewal Program	\$400,000		\$400,000			\$321,275	\$321,275		All projects complete for 25/26 Financial Year
Albert Street Footpath <i>(Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program 25/26)</i>	\$85,000	\$42,500	\$42,500 taken from Footpath Renewal Program above		\$48,621	\$11,810	\$60,431	71%	Improving Pedestrian Accessibility to the Ararat Retirement Village and Sports Precinct - New Grant received September 2025. This project is currently out to tender.
Urban Drainage Works	\$350,000					\$37,164	\$37,164		Savings from Gravel to Seal and Footpath Construction line items to pay for septic units at Buangor and Mininera

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Mininera Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade			\$206,000		\$89,000	\$125,460	\$214,460		Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage. Money from Building Reserve
Buangor Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade			\$201,000		\$84,000	\$121,450	\$205,450		Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage, commencing week of 23 February 2026. Money from Building Reserve
Kerb and Channel	\$0					\$105,923	\$105,923		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing Final payment for works on George Rd, carried over from 24/25.
Lake Bolac Kindergarten Carpark <i>(YMCA received funding for work)</i>	\$80,339	\$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.
Banfield Street - School Crossing <i>(Road Safety Program - School Safety Improvements 20-25)</i>	\$19,009	\$19,009		\$8,244		\$4,369	\$12,613	66%	<i>These works are complete.</i>
Queen Street Housing Support Program <i>(Housing Support Program - Community Enabling Infrastructure)</i>	\$7,380,000	\$7,380,000		\$152,580	\$442,700	\$518,217	\$1,113,498	15%	<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
SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM									
View Point, Tobin & Taylor St Intersections	\$224,000	\$224,000		\$581		\$11,281	\$11,862	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	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$600		\$19,584	\$20,184	12%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and procurement commencing in February 2026.
King Street - Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$4,702	\$41,000	\$14,825	\$60,527	54%	Tenders have been awarded to SHS Civil. Works to be undertaken outside of school term.
View Point & High St Intersection	\$117,000	\$117,000		\$1,526		\$99,451	\$100,977	68%	SHS Civil have completed these works..
Moore & Princes Street Intersection	\$131,000	\$131,000		\$145		\$13,584	\$13,729	9%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and procurement will commence in February 2026.
Vincent Street & Alexandra Avenue - Raised Crossing	\$321,000	\$321,000		\$239		\$21,926	\$22,165	6%	The detailed design for this project has been received; some alterations are being requested to make the works more amenable to the location.
Queen & Moore Street Roundabout	\$548,000	\$548,000		\$1,531		\$20,530	\$22,061	4%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and the lighting design is being finalised.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
SAFE SYSTEM PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (23/24)									
Barkly Street Raised Crossing	\$312,232	\$312,232		\$398		\$189,058	\$319,220	102%	<i>Both Projects have been completed.</i>
High Street Raised Crossing						\$129,764			
TOTAL - ROADS CAPITAL	\$30,312,580	\$19,661,080	\$10,639,371	\$832,886	\$3,766,608	\$7,068,898	\$11,668,392		

FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Roadside Weeds and Pest Program 25/26 <i>(Funding of the same name)</i>	\$74,135	\$74,135		NA	\$28,000	\$51,362	\$69,362	93%	<i>This project has been awarded to Project Platypus, all funds are expected to be expended by mid May 2026.</i>
Sport & Active Recreation Strategy <i>(Local Sports Infrastructure Funding 23/24)</i>	\$55,000	\$40,000	\$15,000	\$12,452		\$24,904	\$37,356	67%	<i>CommunityVibe is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been undertaken, and the draft report is currently out for final consultation.</i>
Community Road Safety Action Plan <i>(TAC Local Govt Funding)</i>	\$49,540	\$49,540		\$437		\$39,581	\$40,018	81%	<i>DWB Engineering is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been completed and draft reporting is being compiled</i>

FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Unlocking Ararat North East <i>(Streamlining for Growth 22/23)</i>	\$85,000	\$85,000		NA	\$20,335	\$38,750	\$59,085	70%	<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>
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade - Participation Initiative. <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i>	\$50,000	\$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 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 - April 2026 report.*

MOVED CR JOYCE

SECONDED CR J ARMSTRONG

That:

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

Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.

CARRIED 7/0

5360/25

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

SECTION 5 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

No Committee Minutes/Reports received

SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

AUTHOR'S TITLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 28978

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.

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 12 May 2026
Council Briefing held on 19 May 2026

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- Draft Budget 2026/27
- CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee
- Community Satisfaction Survey
- CBD Parking Plan
- Draft Road Safety Strategy
- Pomonal Planning issue
- Building Permits
- Sports Strategy
- Community Engagement dates
- Monthly Performance Report - April 2026
- Leisure Centre Swimming Pool
- Monthly Community Engagement Report
- Monthly Performance Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - April 2026
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- Capital Work Program - April 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 R ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR PRESTON

That:

1. **the Informal Meetings of Councillors Report be received.**

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5361/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Summary of Council Briefings are provided as Attachment 6.1.

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*.

There was 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

6:56PM - 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 JOYCE SECONDED CR KAUR

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 Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5362/26**

7:00PM - OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

MOVED CR R ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR PRESTON

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5364/26**

Gallery invited to return to Council Chamber.

LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *The confidentiality of the report and decision in relation to Confidential Agenda Item 9.1 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.*

MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR JOYCE

That:

1. **The confidentiality of the report and decision in relation to Confidential Agenda Item 9.1 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5365/26**

Meeting closed at 7:01pm

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT PAGES 12838 - 13261 INCLUDING PAGES 936 - 945 OF THE CLOSED SESSION ARE CONFIRMED AND ARE A TRUE AND CORRECT RECORD.

MAYOR - CR BOB SANDERS