



Ararat Rural City

MINUTES

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 30 June 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, Phuong Au – Acting Chief Executive Officer, Chandra Willmott – Chief Operating Officer, Rebecca Rodger – Major Projects Lead, Thomas Duncan – Theatre Technical Officer

SECTION 1 - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 LIVE STREAMING

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

1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE

Traditional acknowledgement - CR KAUR

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 JOYCE

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 PRESTON

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 26 May 2026 be confirmed.

MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR KAUR

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26 May 2026 be confirmed.

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5366/26**

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.

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.

SECTION 3 - REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION

3.1 COUNCIL PLAN 2025-29: ANNUAL PLAN 2026/2027

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29671

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

Each financial year Council produces an Annual Plan which provides a series of actions aimed at operationalising the Council's strategic intent. The Annual Plan 2026/2027 covers the second year of the Council Plan 2025-29, and references other Council plans and strategies where the action contributes to or aligns with other strategic documents.

DISCUSSION

Section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that Council adopts a Council Plan that outlines its strategic direction, objectives, and measures of performance for at least the following four years. In addition to adopting the Council Plan 2025-2029, each year Council produces an Annual Plan for the financial year which outlines the actions to be taken each year to implement Council's strategy. It is essentially the plan to operationalise Council's strategic direction.

The Annual Plan 2026/2027 represents the second year of delivering the strategic intent of the Council Plan 2025-2029. It is focused on delivering lasting value, underpinned by a clear commitment to innovation, sustainability, and growth. This Plan sets out 54 targeted actions aligned to the objectives under each of the six strategic directions of the Council Plan. These are provided below:

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

Other key strategic Council documents are referenced in this Annual Plan where those actions align or contribute to those plans and strategies. These include the Asset Plan 2025-34, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29, Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2024-34, and the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36: Action Plan.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Annual Plan 2026/27 aligns with all strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29

Budget Implications

Adoption of the Annual Plan 2026/27 does not have any additional budget implications. All actions in the Annual Plan have been budgeted in the 2026/27 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

The Council Plan 2025-2029 was adopted following deliberative engagement in line with the Council's community engagement policy. There are also a significant number of actions in the Annual Plan 2026/27 that will involve community and stakeholder engagement during delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council adopt the Annual Plan 2026/27

MOVED CR R ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR WATERSTON

That:

1. Council adopt the Annual Plan 2026/27

Cr R Armstrong, Cr Waterston and Cr Joyce spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5367/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Annual Plan 2026/27 is provided as Attachment 3.1

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

Annual Plan

2026/2027



1. Growing Our Place		
1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth.	1.1.1 Champion coordinated planning between housing development and major project delivery to support a well-timed, market-responsive supply pipeline.	30/06/2027
	1.1.2 Position the municipality to attract investment in sustainable industries, including agribusiness, circular economy and tourism, to grow the local economy over the long term.	30/06/2027
	1.1.3 Advance policy and strategic planning work to promote well-planned, thoughtful infill and townhouse-style housing that makes efficient use of existing infrastructure.	30/06/2027
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 Advocate for investment in enabling infrastructure to unlock development-ready land and support housing and employment growth.	30/06/2027
	1.2.2 Encourage and support the activation and adaptive reuse of underutilised land and buildings to deliver additional housing supply.	30/06/2027
	1.2.3 Foster partnerships between developers and community organisations to deliver diverse, community-responsive housing solutions (MPHWP 4.3).	30/06/2027
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 Elevate Ararat as the leading destination for lifestyle and work-from-home movers by showcasing the Ararat Digital Hub & Co-Working Space to visitors and tourists	30/06/2027
	1.3.2 Improve family liveability, local workforce participation and early childhood education outcomes in Lake Bolac by delivering a new childcare centre	Ongoing
	1.3.3 Strengthen partnerships across local community, health, education, and State and Federal Governments to attract, expand and sustain migrant settlement capacity in Ararat Rural City	30/06/2027

2. Building Robust Local Economies

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 Partner with Federation University, industry and government to develop and progress a strategic roadmap to expand the Precinct as a regional innovation hub.	30/06/2027
	2.1.2 Activate the Precinct as a knowledge hub through delivery of a series of public research talks and events.	30/06/2027
	2.1.3 Drive the expansion of TAFE course delivery at the Precinct to meet emerging regional skills needs and support local industry growth.	Ongoing
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 Engage with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and private sector partners to develop plans for the ARCC Circular Economy Precinct.	Ongoing
	2.2.2 Support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat which uses straw as the major input.	Ongoing
	2.2.3 Accelerate the evolution of the Ararat Renewable Energy Park into a regional hub for renewable and circular economy industries through targeted investment attraction and strategic partnerships.	Ongoing
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 Collaborate with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to curate, package and promote Ararat Rural City's unique visitor experiences to increase visitation, length of stay and visitor spend.	30/06/2027
	2.3.2 Identify and implement targeted initiatives that increase visitation and visitor yield by analysing spending trends and market data.	30/06/2027
	2.3.3 Enhance the attractiveness, accessibility and activation of town centres to improve visitor experiences, increase dwell time, and encourage local spending.	30/06/2027

3. Preserving Our Environment

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 Assess the feasibility and strategic value of becoming a sub-regional leader in the processing and management of recyclable materials.	30/06/2027
	3.1.2 Explore opportunities to recover additional reusable and recyclable materials from the general waste stream to increase diversion from landfill.	30/06/2027
	3.1.3 Pursue funding opportunities to install solar and battery systems across community facilities to strengthen disaster resilience and enhance sustainability.	30/06/2027
3.2 Develop innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste.	3.2.1 Investigate options to use municipal FOGO waste to generate energy for council facilities and reduce operating costs (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4).	30/06/2027
	3.2.2 Identify and quantify high-volume waste streams that may be suitable for waste-to-energy solutions to attract commercial development opportunities (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 3.3, 3.4).	30/06/2027
	3.2.3 Advocate for greater policy confidence and support for renewable gas generation.	Ongoing
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 Review emergency management processes, policies and procedures with vulnerable community members to support adaptation and mitigation to climate change risks (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 1.3 and Priority 2 of the Disability Action Plan Discussion Paper).	30/06/2027
	3.3.2 Work with Ararat Landcare Group and other groups to increase canopy cover in urban streets (Environmental Strategy 1.3, 2.3).	30/06/2027
	3.3.3 Investigate opportunities to embed the use of recycled and reused materials in the construction and maintenance of council assets (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 3.3).	30/06/2027

4. Developing and Maintaining Key Enabling Infrastructure

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 Upgrade the pool surface at the Lake Bolac and Willaura swimming pools (Sport & Active Recreation Strategy: Action Plan, 1.3).	30/11/2026
	4.1.2 Upgrade public amenities and increase the number of accessible facilities	30/06/2027
	4.1.3 Deliver the Local Roads Data Reconciliation Project	30/06/2027
4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.	4.2.1 Partner with Grampians Community Health to progress plans and advocate for the A&J McDonald Community Centre Redevelopment (MPHWP, 3.3, Advocacy Priorities 2026).	Ongoing
	4.2.2 Advocate for the delivery of priority projects identified in the Alexandra Sports Precinct Masterplan, including a new indoor sports facility and Olympic pool upgrade (Sport & Active Recreation Strategy: Action Plan, 1.2, 1.4, Advocacy Priorities 2026).	Ongoing
	4.2.3 Reconvene the Rural Roads Group to identify strategically critical freight routes for future major upgrades (Asset Plan 25-34, 1.2)	31/12/2026
4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability.	4.3.1 Deliver safety treatments and hazard removal on high-risk rural corridors (Road Safety Strategy, Goals 1 and 2).	30/06/2027
	4.3.2 Improve safety at high-risk intersections and protect vulnerable road users in townships (Road Safety Strategy, Goals 3 and 4).	30/06/2027
	4.3.3 Deliver the 2026/27 Capital Works Program	30/06/2027

5. Enhancing Community Life

5.1 Open up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making.	5.1.1 Enhance and expand education outreach activities at Ararat Gallery TAMA to increase engagement, visitation and participation.	30/06/2027
	5.1.2 Engage with community organisations and groups to identify opportunities to activate underutilised community spaces, such as the Gum San Great Hall.	30/06/2027
	5.1.3 Strengthen regional promotion of major Ararat Town Hall events and Art Gallery TAMA exhibitions through Visit Grampians to maximise attendance and drive increased tourism and visitation.	30/06/2027
5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.	5.2.1 Empower young people to shape their own futures and contribute to the future of the municipality through programs such as the YEAH Crew and through the Crazy Ideas College.	Ongoing
	5.2.2 Strengthen social connection and inclusion by promoting and improving access to volunteering opportunities (MPHWP, Objective 1).	30/06/2027
	5.2.3 Celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of volunteers to show our appreciation, foster community pride, and encourage greater participation in volunteering.	30/06/2027
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 Partner with Traditional Owner organisations to support the development of First Nations-led enterprises, contributing to economic self-determination, shared regional prosperity, and advancing meaningful	Ongoing
	5.3.2 Advocate for a Changing Places facility in Ararat (Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper, immediate priority 1).	Ongoing
	5.3.3 Deliver and support multicultural events and initiatives that strengthen inclusion, cross-cultural understanding, and stronger community connection.	30/06/2027

6. Strong and Effective Governance

6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.	6.1.1 Improve data accuracy and actionability through data cleansing to support cost-effective asset management and decision-making on future upgrades (Asset Plan, 2.1).	31/12/2026
	6.1.2 Develop and implement a Smart Cities Strategy that delivers optimised services and cost efficiencies.	31/03/2027
	6.1.3 Develop a ten-year plan for development and redevelopment of key community assets, including funding models and strategic approaches to advocacy (Asset Plan, 4.1).	30/06/2027
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 Strengthen cyber security as a core strategic risk priority to support organisation resilience, data protection and business continuity.	30/06/2027
	6.2.2 Assess priority Councils assets for climate change readiness, and identify adaptation actions to improve resilience safety and service continuity.	30/06/2027
	6.2.3 Drive a strategic, risk-based approach to internal controls and planning, with a clear focus on high-risk areas to support robust oversight, accountability and long term organisation resilience.	30/06/2027
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 Develop digital and permit applications forms to provide more options for community to interact with Council at times and in ways that suit them.	30/11/2026
	6.3.2 Convene a community asset forum to support evidence-based budget planning and align investment with community-identified needs and priorities (Asset Plan, 1.1).	31/12/2026
	6.3.3 Explore innovative approaches to community engagement in planning new and upgraded public spaces to ensure user insight and everyday use are captured in the design.	30/06/2027

3.2 DISABILITY ACTION PLAN: DISCUSSION PAPER

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29672

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 established a Disability Action Plan Working Group in January 2026 to ensure the development of a new Disability Action Plan is designed and informed by people with lived experience of disability.

This report provides a brief progress update on the development of the Disability Action Plan, an overview of the upcoming community listening workshops and targeted engagement sessions and presents the Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper to Council.

DISCUSSION

The Disability Action Plan Working Group was formed following an Expression of Interest process in late 2025. Its members consist of representatives from Council, community representatives with lived experience as a person with disability or carer, and representatives from the disability support workforce and from organisations with expertise in inclusive practices for people with disabilities. The members of the Working Group are very committed to delivering improvements to the lives of people living with disability, as well as all others who would benefit from improved access, clearer communication and greater self-agency.

Over five meetings, the Disability Action Plan Working Group have:

- Developed a comprehensive communication and engagement plan that considers the diversity of disability and ways to reduce barriers to participation in the engagement process.
- Provided feedback to the Ararat CBD Parking Review
- Identified immediate priorities and actions, which include a Changing Places facility in Ararat and a review of emergencies and natural disasters from a disability perspective.
- Prepared a Discussion Paper to help guide the public discourse towards meaningful and productive conversations on what actions Council could deliver within its remit to improve accessibility and inclusion outcomes.

The planned process for developing the Disability Action Plan has been significantly improved by the involvement of the Working Group and their contributions, guidance and feedback, including the preparation of the Discussion Paper and the approach to the upcoming community engagement.

From approx. late August to mid-September, a series of face-to-face community listening workshops will be held. Exact dates will be promoted once venue bookings are confirmed. There will be a mix of general sessions and targeted sessions, to help ensure Council captures a diverse range of views and perspectives. There will be sessions held in Ararat and in towns across the municipality to understand experiences in rural areas. One-on-one and phone/online sessions will also be available, as well as a survey that can be completed online via Engage Ararat or on paper.

Promotion of the community listening workshops will be via online and print media, radio advertisements, and through promotional fliers and posters shared through service organisations and groups.

Council wishes to sincerely thank the members of the Disability Action Plan Working Group for their contributions and efforts thus far, and acknowledge their generosity of time and the valuable insights they bring to shaping this important work.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

This initiative is aligned to the Council Plan 2025-29 Objectives:

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

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

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

Budget Implications

The development of the Disability Action Plan is expected to be undertaken with existing Council resources and is therefore not expected to have budget implications.

Policy/Relevant Law

Disability Act 2006

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Sustainability Implications

There are no sustainability implications in relation to the item

Risk Assessment

The development of the Disability Action Plan ensures Council complies with the Disability Act 2006 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). The involvement of Disability Action Plan Working Group helps to ensure that the Plan contributes to the elimination of discrimination of people with disability.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This report outlines how Council will undertake stakeholder collaboration and community engagement in the development of the Disability Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council receives the progress report and the Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper; and*
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to release the Discussion Paper and commence community engagement for the development of the Disability Action Plan*

MOVED CR PRESTON SECONDED CR KAUR

That:

- 1. Council receives the progress report and the Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper; and**
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to release the Discussion Paper and commence community engagement for the development of the Disability Action Plan**

Cr Preston and Cr Kaur spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5368/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper and the Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper – Plain Language Summary are provided as Attachment 3.2



Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper

Plain Language Summary

June 2026

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper Plain Language Summary



What is this about?

Ararat Rural City Council wants to make the community:

- More welcoming
- Easier to use
- Fair for everyone

This includes people with disability.

So, we are making a **Disability Action Plan**.

This plan will say:

- What needs to improve
- What we will do
- When we will do it

Important information

This project is **NOT about the NDIS**.

Council does not control:

- NDIS funding
- NDIS services

If you need help with the NDIS, we have a list of people to call, the list is on page 7

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper Plain Language Summary



Why accessibility is important

Accessibility means things are easy to use.

This helps everyone, including:

- People with disability
- Older people
- Parents with prams
- People with injuries

When places are accessible:

- People can get around easier
- People can join activities
- People can work and volunteer

This makes the whole community stronger.

What is a Disability Action Plan?

A Disability Action Plan is a simple plan that says:

- What we want to improve
- What actions we will take
- Who will do the work
- When it will happen

It helps Council:

- Plan ahead
- Improve services
- Listen to people with disability

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper Plain Language Summary



Why we wrote this discussion paper

This paper helps:

- Start conversations
- Share ideas
- Ask for feedback

Your feedback will help shape the final plan.

About our community

In Ararat Rural City:

- Many people have disability
- Many people are older (70+)

This means accessibility is very important now and in the future.

What Council can and can't do

Council CAN control:

- Council buildings (like libraries)
- Parks, public spaces and local roads
- Council services
- Local laws
- Information and communication

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper Plain Language Summary



Council CANNOT control:

- NDIS services
- Buildings owned by others

We want your ideas

We want to hear from you.

You can share your thoughts on:

Public spaces

- What places are hard to use?
- What needs fixing first?

Jobs and services

- Are Council services easy to use?
- Are there barriers to working at Council?

Events and programs

- Are Council events accessible?

Information

- Is Council information easy to read?

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper Plain Language Summary



How to share your ideas

You can contact Council in different ways:

- In person (community meetings)
- Online or paper survey
- Email: council@ararat.vic.gov.au
- Phone: (03) 5355 0200
- Mail

Support is available if you need help to take part.

Summary

Council is making a plan to improve accessibility

The plan will:

- Remove barriers
- Improve access
- Include everyone

We need your ideas to get it right

The final plan will be ready by **June 2027**

Thank you

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and helping make Ararat more inclusive.

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper Plain Language Summary



NDIS & Disability Support

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
Central Highlands Local Area Coordinator (LAC) – Latrobe Community Health Service	Helps people access the NDIS, apply, understand plans, connect with services, and build capacity	1800 242 696 https://www.lchs.com.au/
NDIS (National Disability Insurance Agency)	Access requests, plan approvals, funding, participant enquiries	1800 800 110 www.ndis.gov.au
NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission	Complaints about providers, report restrictive practices, safeguarding participants	1800 035 544 www.ndiscommission.gov.au
Grampians Disability Advocacy (GDA)	Advocacy support for people with disability (rights, complaints, service issues), NDIS Appeals	(03) 5329 1300 www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	To represent the united voice of our members and people with disability in national initiatives and policy debate.	1800 219 969 office@afdo.org.au



Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper

June 2026

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



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Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Introduction

Ararat Rural City Council (ARCC) is committed to fostering a more inclusive, welcoming and diverse community, and to equal employment opportunities for all employees and potential employees. Universal accessibility is also incorporated into its capital works and services.

The Disability Act 2006 requires public authorities such as local governments to prepare a Disability Action Plan. The Plan will describe how ARCC will address access and inclusion barriers for people with disability, as both service users and employees.

This Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper is the beginning of a longer-term journey of identifying what needs to be done now and into the future to help improve access and inclusion in Ararat Rural City.

Note: This document and the associated engagement activities is **not** about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS services and any related funding decisions are not within the scope of this ARCC Disability Action Plan initiative. If you require assistance with NDIS, please contact the organisations listed in Appendix 1.

Everyone Benefits

Improving accessibility and inclusion benefits everyone.

At its core, accessibility is about designing environments, services, and systems that can be used by as many people as possible, regardless of age, ability, or circumstance. This includes individuals with temporary injuries, older people experiencing gradual changes in mobility or vision, parents with prams, or people navigating unfamiliar environments.

Inclusive design also drives innovation and better outcomes. When services are built with a wide range of users in mind from the outset, they tend to be more intuitive, efficient, and user-friendly. Features such as clear signage, simple language, step-free access, and adaptable technologies benefit everyone, not just those with specific needs.

There are significant social and economic advantages to improving accessibility and inclusion. Removing barriers enables more people to participate in education, employment, and community life, contributing their skills, perspectives, and talents. In the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census - Working Population Profile for Ararat Rural City, out of the people who reported having a profound or severe core activity limitation and needed help with daily activities, 85 were employed, with 31 working full time. Out of the 5,211 people who were employed at the 2021 Census, over 1,600 (Approx 31%) reported that they had one or more long term health conditions.

Many people who volunteer also have a disability. In the ABS General Social Survey (2025), nearly a quarter (24.5%) of people who had volunteered through an organisation in the 12 months prior to the Survey had a disability. In the people who had undertaken informal volunteering in the 4 weeks prior, the proportion of people with disability was 29.%. Close to half (46%) of people who provided unpaid work/support to non-household members in the 4 weeks prior to the Survey also had a disability.

Ultimately, accessibility and inclusion are not just legal or ethical obligations, they are key drivers of sustainable growth and community wellbeing.

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



What is a Disability Action Plan?

A Disability Action Plan (DAP) is a strategic document that sets out how a council will identify, reduce, and remove barriers faced by people with disability, both as community members and as employees. Its purpose is to make local government services, facilities, employment practices, and public spaces more accessible, inclusive and equitable.

ARCC is here for its community. We manage many assets such as libraries, parks, roads, events, community centres, planning processes, and critical local social services. The development and implementation of the DAP will help ARCC to:

- Plan proactively rather than reactively
- Embed accessibility into everyday operations
- Align with state and national strategies, such as the National Disability Strategy and state disability plans
- Engage with people with disability in shaping local priorities
- Demonstrate compliance with disability legislation

Action plans are clear, structured documents that set out exactly how a goal will be achieved. It turns broad intentions into concrete, trackable steps so that a team, organisation, or project knows who will do what, by when, and how success will be measured.

What an action plan includes:

- Goals or objectives — the outcomes you want to achieve
- Actions or tasks — the specific steps required
- Responsibility — who is accountable for each action
- Timeframes — start and end dates, milestones, deadlines
- Resources — funding, staff, tools, or support needed
- Measures of success — indicators or KPIs to track progress
- Monitoring and reporting — how progress will be reviewed

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Where the Disability Action Plan fits within Council's strategic framework

The DAP is one of the key Other Strategic Plans of Council, identified in red below. Progress on the actions identified in the DAP are reported in Council's Annual Report.

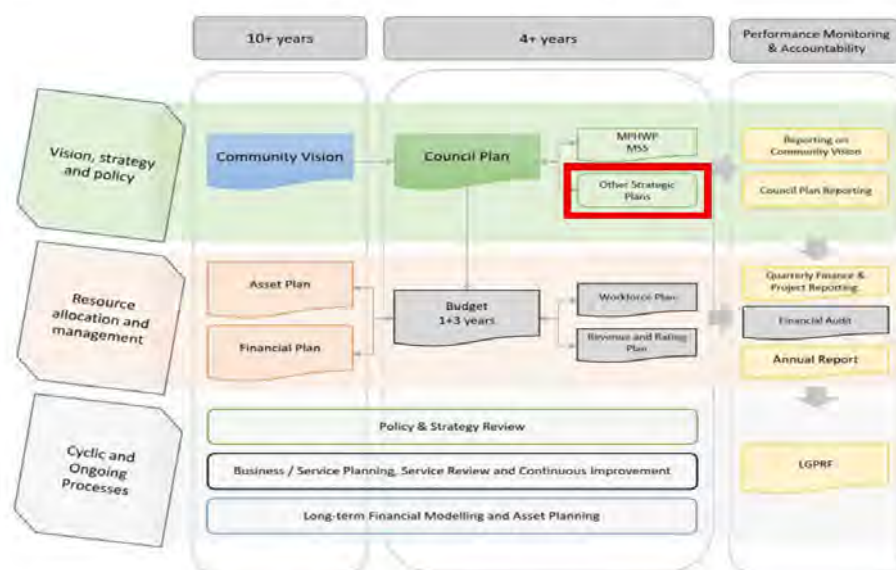


Image source: Department of Government Services

Disability Action Plan Working Group

ARCC has established a Disability Action Plan Working Group to ensure that the lived experience of people with disability will guide the development and implementation of the DAP. The Working Group was established in early 2026.

The DAP Working Group is not an established Committee of Council but works in an advisory capacity to the CEO on the development of the Council's new DAP.

The DAP Working Group consists of members shown in the table below and consists of:

- Ararat Rural City Council Chief Executive Officer or Nominee
- Ararat Rural City Council project officer
- Community representatives with lived experience as a person with disability or carer
- Representatives of the disability support workforce
- Representatives from organisations with expertise in inclusive practices for people with disabilities.

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Table 1. ARCC Disability Action Plan Working Group (2026)

Name	Background
Phuong Au	Deputy CEO, Nominee of the CEO, Ararat Rural City Council
Tim Grech	Project Officer, Ararat Rural City Council
Kathryn Clayton	Chief Executive Officer, Pinnacle Inc
Peter Harrison	Executive Officer, Grampians disAbility Advocacy
Ruby Klemm	Acting Program Leader Healthy Communities / Healthy Ageing Hubs Navigator, Grampians Community Health
Leone Hauser	Owner, Hauser Disability Support Services
Karen Armstrong	Owner, KMA Health and Physio
John Wilkinson	Person with lived experience
Molly McGrath	Person with lived experience
Erin Mahmud	Person with lived experience. Works with people with disabilities and their supports across various different roles
Toni Hobson	Person with lived experience. Support worker
Ronda Preston	Person with lived experience. Support worker
Jessica Batchelor	Support worker
Lauren Walker	Works with people with disabilities and their supports. A counsellor and emerging Behaviour Support Practitioner.

Why a Discussion Paper?

A discussion paper is a critical, evidence-based exploration of an issue. They are designed to spark thoughtful, fruitful and respectful conversations. They help to blend analysis, interpretation, and debate to help stakeholders and wider audiences understand a topic or issues from multiple perspectives.

In the case of Council's DAP, this discussion paper is a designed to kick start ideas, collaboration, and most importantly, the development of a plan that best suits the inclusion and accessibility needs of Ararat and our surrounding communities.

It is an important initial step in Council developing a DAP that embeds inclusion and accessibility into everything we do and will be designed in conjunction with those living with disability in our own community. This document will grow and evolve into the final DAP over the coming months.

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Immediate Actions

This Discussion Paper outlines actions the Working Group identified as immediate priorities for implementation over the next 12 months until the final Disability Action Plan is developed, which is anticipated by the end of June 2027.

The table on the next page lists the immediate priority actions, as identified and endorsed by the DAP Working Group in June 2026.

Table 2. Immediate priority actions, as identified and endorsed by the DAP Working Group.

#	Action	Details	Timeframe
1	Deliver a Changing Places* facility in Ararat	- The DAP Working Group have identified their preferred location for this facility as Elizabeth Park, 15 Collings Street, Ararat - The DAP Working Group will review design options and exact locations in collaboration with Council - Advocate/apply for funding for a Changing Places facility in Ararat	Ongoing until delivered
2	Review emergencies and natural disasters from a disability perspective	- Invite Council's Emergency Management (EM) team to a forum/group meeting to discuss existing EM processes, policies and procedures - Identify areas of improvement and collaboration for Council and disability support services	By 30 Sept 2026
3	Develop the Disability Action Plan 20XX-XX (Duration of Plan to be confirmed)	- Create a communications and engagement plan that ensures access for a variety of different perspectives, e.g. opportunities for CALD people who may need interpreters. - Undertake broad community consultation & engagement on future actions - Undertake review and engagement with Council staff on employment opportunities and practices - Compile feedback, identify priorities and develop action plan.	By 30 June 2027

* A Changing Place (often referred to as Changing Places) is a specialized, fully accessible public toilet and change facility designed for people with profound or severe disabilities, as well as those with high support needs.

Unlike standard accessible toilets, Changing Places provide extra space and specific equipment, such as height-adjustable adult-sized change tables and ceiling track hoists, allowing individuals and their carers to attend to personal hygiene with dignity and safety.

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Summary of demographics of Ararat Rural City

In the second quarter of the 2025/2026 financial year, Ararat Rural City had 424 active NDIS participants (NDIA data). Based on a total population of 11,880 across the entire local government area at the 2021 Census, this indicates that 3.57% of the population is an active NDIS participant, compared to the average of 3.0% across the wider Australian population.

Another important consideration of accessibility and inclusion is that the Ararat LGA has 17.4% of its population aged 70 and above. At the 2021 ABS Census, this compares to the 11.9% average for Victoria and 12.1% average for the wider Australian population. This is relevant because older people are more likely to experience mobility and access limitations as they get older, and would better benefit from universal accessibility.

Of particular interest is that, of those receiving support under the NDIS in the Ararat local government area, the two largest age cohorts are those aged 54-65 and those over the age of 65, suggesting that aging, disability and accessibility have a very strong point of intersection in Ararat Rural City, and that accessibility is only going to become more critical into the future.

The relationship between age and accessibility is a key feature of the Victorian Government's *Ageing Well in Victoria: An Action Plan for Strengthening Wellbeing for Senior Victorians 2022–2026*. This highlights:

- The demographic shift toward a larger population of older Victorians
- The need for age-friendly, accessible environments
- Barriers older people face in transport, public spaces, digital access, and community participation
- Government commitments to improve accessibility as part of ageing policy

The disability support sector also many people, mostly women. At the 2021 ABS Census, there were a total of 337 people in 'Carers and Aides' occupations, or approx. 6.5% of the people employed in Ararat Rural City. Of these, 271 or 80%, were women.

Council & Disability Inclusion

Ararat Rural City Council can support disability inclusion and access in several ways, but there are also areas that are outside of Council's control or influence. These different areas are listed below.

Outside of Council's Scope:

- NDIS services and funding decisions
- Infrastructure and assets owned or managed by others

Within Direct Control of Council

- Accessibility of council-owned buildings, facilities, infrastructure and public spaces, e.g. public toilets, crossings, library facilities.
- Council policies, employment practices and service delivery
- Local laws and planning

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



- Council's community programs and engagement processes
- Public information and communication accessibility

Areas of Influence:

- Facilitate collaboration and partnerships between services, organisations and groups to support better outcomes
- Encouraging and supporting businesses and organisations to be more accessible through grants, programs and engagement
- Advocating to State and Federal Governments

If you are unsure who owns or manages a facility or asset, one option is to use the Snap Send Solve app (www.snapsendsolve.com), which can help identify the correct authority for you.

A comprehensive list of resources, service providers and useful information is attached as an Appendix to this Discussion Paper. It will also be part of the finalised Disability Action Plan.

Seeking Your Input

We are seeking your input preferably on the areas that are within Council's direct control.

Below are discussion questions to help prompt reflection, identify gaps, and invite practical ideas. Not all of these questions need to be answered, they are purely to generate discussion.

1. Council-Owned Buildings, Facilities, Infrastructure and Public Spaces

- Which council-owned buildings, facilities, infrastructure or public spaces are **difficult to access or use** for people with disability and why?
- Are there particular locations or assets that should be **prioritised** for accessibility upgrades?
- What practical changes would most improve **independent, safe and dignified access** in council-managed public spaces?

2. Council Policies, Employment Practices and Service Delivery

- Which council policies or procedures do not adequately support disability inclusion, and how could they be improved?
- What **specific challenges** do people with disability face when applying for jobs or working at council?
- Are there council services that are **hard to access or navigate**, and what changes would make them more inclusive?

3. Local Laws and Planning

- Are there particular local laws, regulations or planning processes that create **barriers** for people with disability?
- Are there examples of developments or public spaces where accessibility has worked well, or where it has not?

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



4. Council's Community Programs and Engagement Processes

- Which council programs, events or activities are **not accessible or inclusive**, and why?
- How could council improve its consultation and engagement processes to ensure **people with disability can participate meaningfully**?

5. Public Information and Communication Accessibility

- Which council information sources (e.g. website, forms, signage, social media, publications) are **difficult to access or understand**?
- Are there specific formats or communication methods that need improvement (e.g. Easy Read, captions, screen-reader compatibility)?
- How effectively does council respond to requests for **alternative formats or communication support**?
- What specific improvements would make council information more **clear, accessible and inclusive**?

How to Provide Input

Opportunities to provide your input will be promoted on Council's social media accounts, in print newspaper advertisements, on Council's website, as well as through posters and email networks. Input can be provided in many ways, including:

- A series of face-to-face community forums
- Online and paper community survey
- Via email to council@ararat.vic.gov.au
- By letter to 59 Vincent St, Ararat VIC 3377, or
- Phone call to the Council Office on (03) 5355 0200

Dates and times for the face to face engagement sessions, and access to surveys will be available via the Engage Ararat (engage.ararat.vic.gov.au) website. One on one meetings with the project team can also be arranged by contacting Council.

If you require support to participate in this process, such as interpreters or other adjustments, please let us know.

The face-to-face community forums will have several general, open forums for discussion, while others may have specific themes and topics, such as early years, seniors, women and girls, culturally and linguistically diverse, as well as support sector workers and carers forums.

Appendix 1. Accessing Services Outside Ararat Rural City Council Scope

NDIS & Disability Support

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
Central Highlands Local Area Coordinator (LAC) – Latrobe Community Health Service	Helps people access the NDIS, apply, understand plans, connect with services, and build capacity	1800 242 696 https://www.lchs.com.au/
NDIS (National Disability Insurance Agency)	Access requests, plan approvals, funding, participant enquiries	1800 800 110 www.ndis.gov.au
NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission	Complaints about providers, report restrictive practices, safeguarding participants	1800 035 544 www.ndiscommission.gov.au
Grampians Disability Advocacy (GDA)	Advocacy support for people with disability (rights, complaints, service issues), NDIS Appeals	(03) 5329 1300 www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	To represent the united voice of our members and people with disability in national initiatives and policy debate.	1800 219 969 office@afdo.org.au

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
DFFH Housing (Public & Community Housing)	Housing applications, bond loans, rent support, housing transfers	1800 825 955
Housing Maintenance (DFFH)	Repairs and maintenance for public housing properties	13 11 72
Child Protection	Responds to concerns about child safety and wellbeing	13 12 78 (24/7)

Housing & Homelessness Support

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
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Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Uniting (Ballarat / Western Region)	Housing support, homelessness services, case management, financial support	(03) 5330 1100
Grampians Community Health – Housing Support	Homelessness support, crisis accommodation referrals, case support	(03) 5358 7400
Tenants Victoria	Advice on rental rights, eviction, bonds, disputes	1800 068 860
Victorian Public Tenants Association (VPTA)	Advocacy for public housing tenants	(03) 9416 2577
Tenancy Advocacy CAFS	Advocacy for private rental tenants	(03) 5337 3333

Family Violence

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
The Orange Door (Western Region)	Intake and coordination for family violence and child wellbeing services	1800 271 157
Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre	24/7 crisis support, safety planning, refuge access	1800 015 188 (24/7)
1800RESPECT	National counselling and support for domestic, family and sexual violence	1800 737 732
Grampians Community Health – Family Violence Services	Local case management, support, safety planning	(03) 5358 7400

Health Services (Ararat Region)

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
East Grampians Health Service (EGHS)	Hospital, urgent care, mental health, allied health, maternity services	(03) 5352 9322
Ararat Medical Centre	GP services, general health care	(03) 5352 1021
Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative	Culturally safe health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	(03) 5352 4311
Grampians Community Health	Allied health, mental health, AOD, family services	(03) 5358 7400

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



NURSE-ON-CALL	24/7 health advice from registered nurses	1300 60 60 24
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Advocacy Services

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
Grampians Disability Advocacy	Disability Advocacy, NDIS Appeals support, Disability rights support	(03) 5329 1300 www.grampiansadvocacy.org.au
Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC)	Disability advocacy, rights support, NDIS issues	(03) 5222 5499
VALID (Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability)	Advocacy, self-advocacy training, rights education	(03) 9416 4003
Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service	Legal advocacy for people with disability	(03) 5229 3099
ADEC (Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities)	Advocacy for culturally diverse communities with disability	(03) 9480 7000
Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV)	Advocacy and support for women with disabilities	(03) 9286 7800
Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)	Advocacy for young people with disability	1800 222 660
Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)	Advocacy for people who are blind or vision impaired	1800 033 660
Disability Justice Advocacy (DJA)	Support navigating the justice system	(03) 9481 2345

Carer Support

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
Grampians Community Health	Carer support programs, respite coordination, counselling	(03) 5358 7400
Carer Gateway	National service for carers – counselling, respite, coaching	1800 422 737
Lifeline	Crisis support for carers experiencing distress	13 11 14

Legal Support

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)	Free legal advice, family law, criminal law, housing issues	1300 792 387
Women's Legal Service Victoria	Legal support for women (family violence, family law)	1800 133 302
Youth Law Australia	Free legal advice for young people	1800 950 570
Consumer Affairs Victoria	Consumer rights, disputes, renting issues	1300 55 81 81

Mental Health Support

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
Grampians Area Mental Health Service (GAMHS)	Acute mental health support, crisis response, community mental health services	1300 247 647 (24/7 triage)
Lifeline	24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention	13 11 14
Suicide Call Back Service	Ongoing phone counselling after crisis or suicidal distress	1300 659 467
Head to Health	Mental health intake, navigation and referral support	1800 595 212

Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD)

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



<u>Organisation</u>	<u>What they do / support with</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Grampians Community Health (AOD Services)	Assessment, counselling, withdrawal support and referrals	(03) 5358 7400
DirectLine	24/7 AOD counselling and referral service	1800 888 236

Emergency & Crisis Support

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>What they do / support with</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Emergency Services	Police, Ambulance or Fire in an emergency	000
Victoria Police (Ararat)	Non-urgent police assistance	(03) 5355 1500

Financial Support

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>What they do / support with</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Services Australia (Centrelink)	Income support, disability payments, crisis payments	132 717
National Debt Helpline	Free financial counselling and debt advice	1800 007 007
CAFS (Financial Counselling)	Local financial counselling and hardship support	(03) 5337 3333

Food Relief & Material Aid

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>What they do / support with</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Ararat Neighbourhood House	Local food relief, community support and emergency assistance	(03) 5352 1551
Salvation Army	Emergency relief, food, vouchers and material aid	13 72 58
St Vincent de Paul (Vinnies)	Emergency relief, food and financial assistance	13 18 12

Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper



Transport

Organisation	What they do / support with	Contact details
V/Line	Regional public transport services	1800 800 007
Grampians Community Health (Community Transport)	Transport support for appointments and community access	(03) 5358 7400

Note: These services are available to residents of Ararat Rural City either locally or via phone/online support. Availability may vary based on eligibility and service capacity.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census Community Profiles: Ararat. Working Population Profile. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA20260>

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2026) General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia. Reference Period: 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release>

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). Explore Data. <https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>

3.3 EASTERN TOWN ENTRANCE ENGAGEMENT REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO's OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29673

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 March 2026 Council meeting, an upgrade of the eastern entry signage to Ararat was discussed, with approval given to undertake community engagement to seek community input for signage ideas. It was acknowledged that such entrance signage has a range of benefits, for both residents and visitors, establishing a sense of pride and place. Community input and ideas for new designs were encouraged through Engage Ararat, supported by local media and online promotion. The engagement occurred between May 6 and June 4, and the feedback and suggestions from community members has been received and collated for Council review.

DISCUSSION

There was a very positive response from the community, with 37 submissions received and several visual designs also provided as possible examples of new entrance treatments.

Key suggested themes for new signage:

- Indigenous heritage
- Chinese heritage and the gold rush
- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Natural environment

Key suggested design considerations:

- Use of natural materials
- Use of regional materials, such as bluestone
- Rusted metals, native plantings

Some residents suggested the Pyrenees Shire's approaches, at towns such as Beaufort and Waubra were very effective - with a use of stone, metal and plants.

Students in Grade 3-4 at St Mary's Primary School took the time to make numerous suggestions, some of which are in the attached consultation report. Suggestions from residents are also included in this attachment.

Of the 37 responses submitted, 4 suggested that the existing sign is fine if it is 'just maintained' or could have some 'basic repairs.' For example, the existing sign has lights embedded in it, which do not work anymore and displays visible damage to existing Colourbond sheeting.

The question was asked by 3 respondents that if the existing east entrance signage is upgraded, what will Council do about the entrance signs on the other main roads into town, as the existing entrance sign is duplicated on some of these entrances.

Other submissions noted that the location of the existing sign opens out onto some poorly maintained private properties, so a 'nice sign' will only be partly successful in setting a scene. One respondent also suggested that the main roundabout approaching town also needed to be considered, as it is very poor.

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

Any response to an eastern entry signage upgrade or replacement will have budget implications. If the existing signage is refreshed, which would require the replacement of damaged Colourbond sheeting, electrical repairs, some painting and possibly some planting, this cost would be minimal. Design and construction of a new entrance sign could entail a range of trades and processes. This could end up costing in the range of \$35,000 - \$45,000 based on Southern Grampians Shire Council's recent Hamilton Gateway Entrance signage project, or even more depending on the scale and complexity of the signage.

The ongoing care and maintenance of any entrance signage is as critical as what is installed, so staff or contractor time, over a period of years, should be factored into a final decision.

Policy/Relevant Law

Not applicable.

Sustainability Implications

Depending on the design and implementation of the project, sustainability implications are low. Recycling and reuse of raw materials, which is supported by the engagement outcomes, such as suggested use of bluestone, rusty metals, native plants, have some potential to improve the project's sustainability outcomes. A refurbishment of the existing signage has better sustainability outcomes through extended use of the existing asset.

Risk Assessment

While no heavily negative sentiment was expressed during the community consultation period, a number of significant factors was identified that will require further consideration. These include:

- A refresh of the existing signage combined with landscaping improvements to the eastern entrance area will minimise financial risks and maintain consistency across the other town entrances, but will this achieve the desired uplift in the arrival experience into Ararat?
- The development of a new entrance sign design comes at a cost, so carries financial risks. If a small, capped budget is allowed, the new design may be underwhelming, while an unrestricted new design is likely to be very costly.
- The speed limit at the signage location is 100km/hour. At this speed, overly intricate messaging on signage (as some of the community designs suggest) may not be able to be fully appreciated by passing motorists and could become distracting for drivers travelling at 100km/hour. Town entrance signs at Beaufort, for example, are viewed at a 60km/h speed limit.
- The installation of a new entrance sign without improving the appearance of the surrounding area may result in a negligible improvement to the arrival experience.
- The Western Highway is managed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), so any changes to this area may require engagement and endorsement from DTP.

General landscaping improvements to the eastern entrance area may be able to be achieved in the short term, while the factors above and entrance signage design options are considered further.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Community engagement occurred using Engage Ararat, from May 6 – June 4, inclusive, supported by active social media and print media support. St Mary's Primary School, Grades 3 and 4, also submitted

numerous designs to Council, as part of the consultation process. No real negative sentiment was expressed, with most of the suggestions being positive and accompanied by design or photographic suggestions.

Council wishes to thank the community for their strong interest, ideas and submissions.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Engages with the Department of Transport and Planning and other stakeholders, as appropriate, on general landscaping improvements at the eastern entrance of Ararat; and*
- 2. Continues to review and consider the submissions received from community regarding the eastern entrance, with a further report to be presented at a future meeting.*

MOVED CR JOYCE SECONDED CR PRESTON

That Council:

- 1. Engages with the Department of Transport and Planning and other stakeholders, as appropriate, on general landscaping improvements at the eastern entrance of Ararat; and**
- 2. Continues to review and consider the submissions received from community regarding the eastern entrance, with a further report to be presented at a future meeting.**

Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5369/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Eastern Entrance Signage Engagement Summary Report is provided as Attachment 3.3



EASTERN ENTRANCE SIGNAGE REPORT



Ararat Rural City

6 May – 4 June 2026



Engage Ararat Campaign Snapshot

- The **30-day consultation** on Council's Engage Ararat platform called on residents to share ideas for a town gateway that best captures Ararat's local identity, welcomes travellers, and inspires visitors to stop and explore the region.
- Council received a total of **37 submissions**, with the feedback highlighting a strong desire to reflect Ararat's unique character.
- Key themes focused on **agriculture, manufacturing, and local history**, with a strong emphasis on the **natural environment** and acknowledgment of the **Grampians region**.
- Submissions also highlighted the vital importance of honouring the region's rich **Indigenous heritage** and **Chinese gold rush past**.
- Many practical design suggestions also emerged with residents expressing strong support for **utilising regional materials**, particularly **local bluestone**.
- Residents drew inspiration from neighbouring town entry signs, such as those in Beaufort and Stawell, with many suggesting the final concepts should prominently and **proudly feature the Ararat name**.

Key Statistics



1 (5.3%)
Member contributors



18 (94.7%)
Anonymous contributors

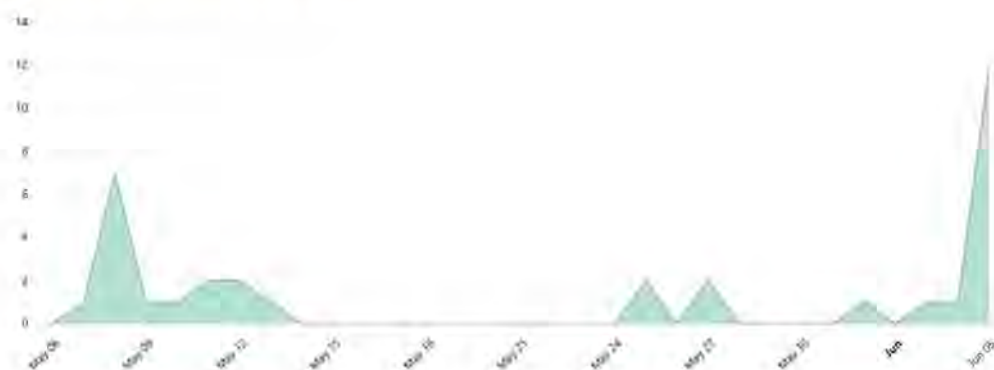


1 (2.6%)
Member contributions



37 (97.4%)
Anonymous contributions

Contribution Activity



01



Community Contributions Snapshot

"Garden edge from the bluestone blocks waiting for repurposing at J Ward. Welding in tone with our local Gasons"



"I would love to see the old J Ward bluestone currently in a pile in the community garden reused to edge a garden bed around the sign in a similar fashion to Beauforts town entry signals.

I would like to see native plants around the signals. I think welded rust look Ararat lettering would be in keeping with the town."



Community Contributions Snapshot

"I would like to suggest that we keep the key features of our district front of mind when considering the design of our town entrance. Ararat sits within a large and productive farming region, and agriculture contributes significantly to our local economy.

This contribution comes directly through our farmers and local businesses such as Gason's, which manufactures farming equipment and supports jobs in our community."



"You want to embrace the history of Ararat with the Chinese gold rush, farming, and wine

A good stone like sandstone and some laser cut steel to make a silhouette to represent the different aspects of what makes up our town."

03



Community Contributions Snapshot

"I believe less words may be better from doing a couple drafts, to mainly spark interest they can stop and find out more if they choose. I come up with, "Created by Bunjil, Settled by Chinese" maybe a third line, "On the hunt for gold and prosperity" or "Welcoming to All" or something that greets people. I didn't add an image with a third line."

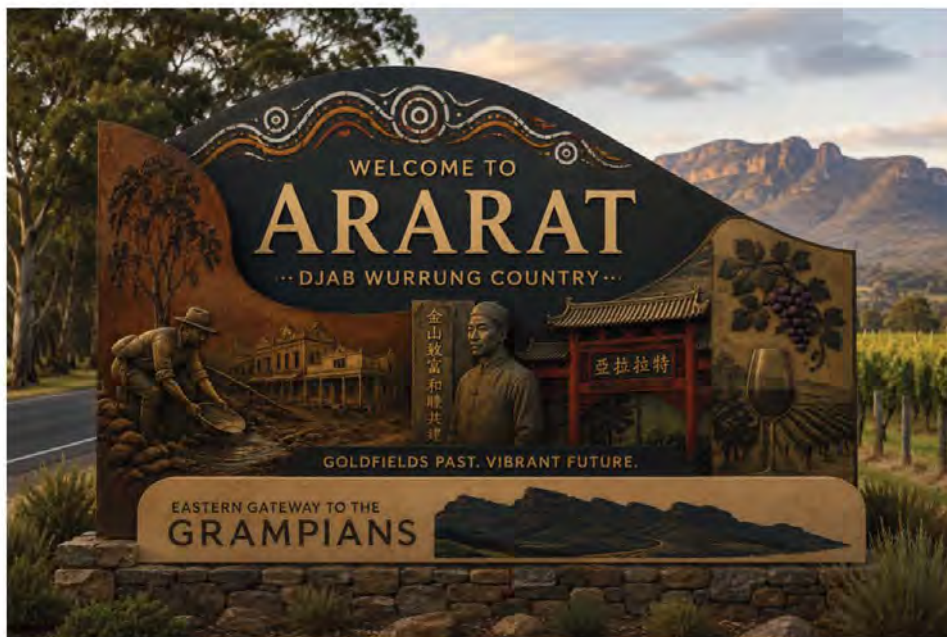


"Ararat is a town with a story unlike any other in Australia — shaped by ancient Djab Wurrung Country, the Chinese gold rush, the rise of a regional centre for farming and produce, and the dramatic landscape of Gariwerd — the entry to Gariwerd."



Community Contributions Snapshot

"Above all, the sign should clearly announce to travellers they are entering Ararat so the city name should dominate. The sign should be durable and constructed using blue stone to reflect the local stone used to construct some of our most iconic buildings. The photos below of entrance signs for Beaufort and Stawell are examples of this approach. Ararat was founded by Chinese miners, and the sign should reference that."

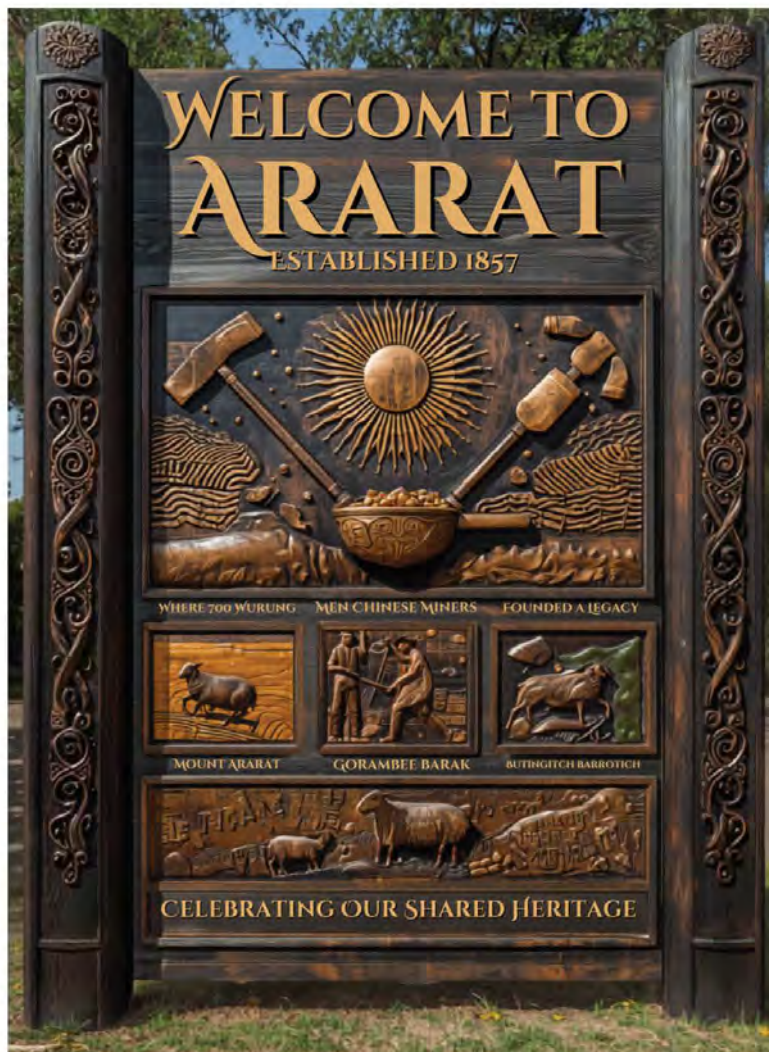


"It was built with the wealth generated by gold mining then agriculture (wheat and sheep). Ararat sits at the junction of two major rail lines, and the railway played a major part in the city's development. The city is home to major manufacturers AME Systems and Gasons. I suggest the sign should be similar to Beaufort's but with a pillar either end."



Community Contributions Snapshot

"This sign design is built around a dark timber frame with carved structural posts, giving it a strong, grounded presence that reflects Ararat's rural character and long-standing craftsmanship traditions. The deep timber tones create a natural backdrop that allows the carved details and gold accents to stand out with warmth and dignity."





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students



08



Community Contributions Snapshot

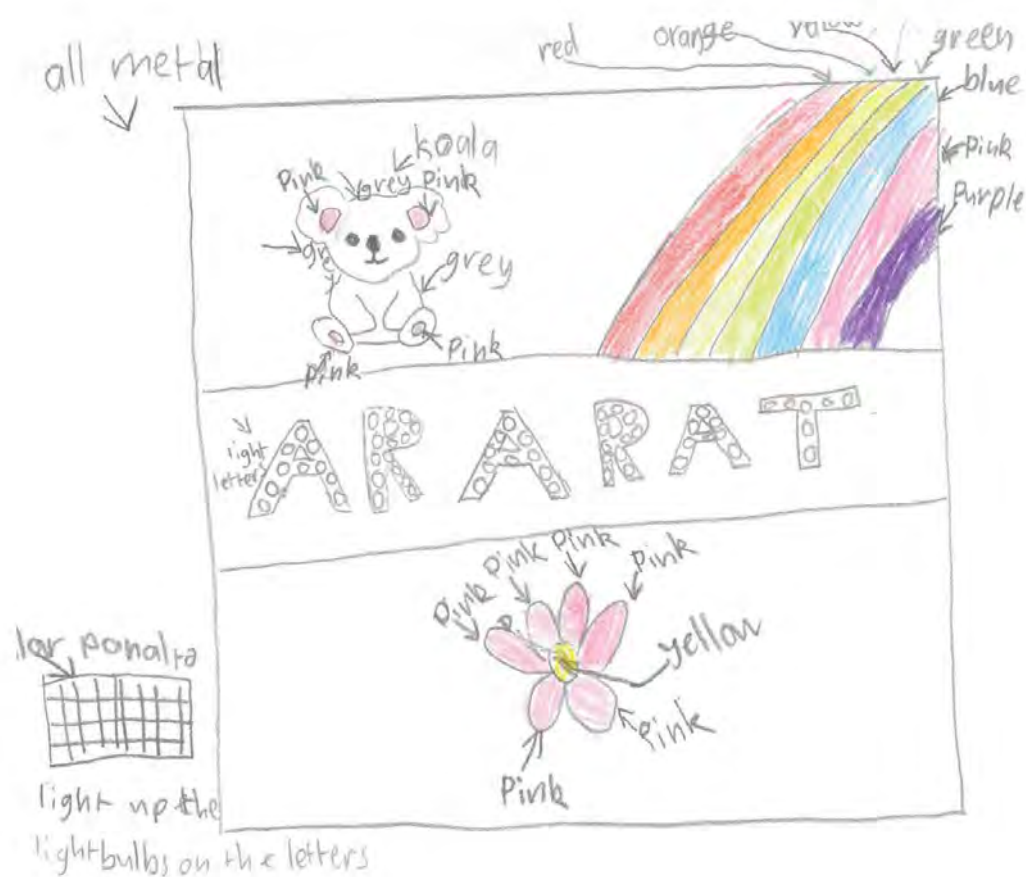
St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

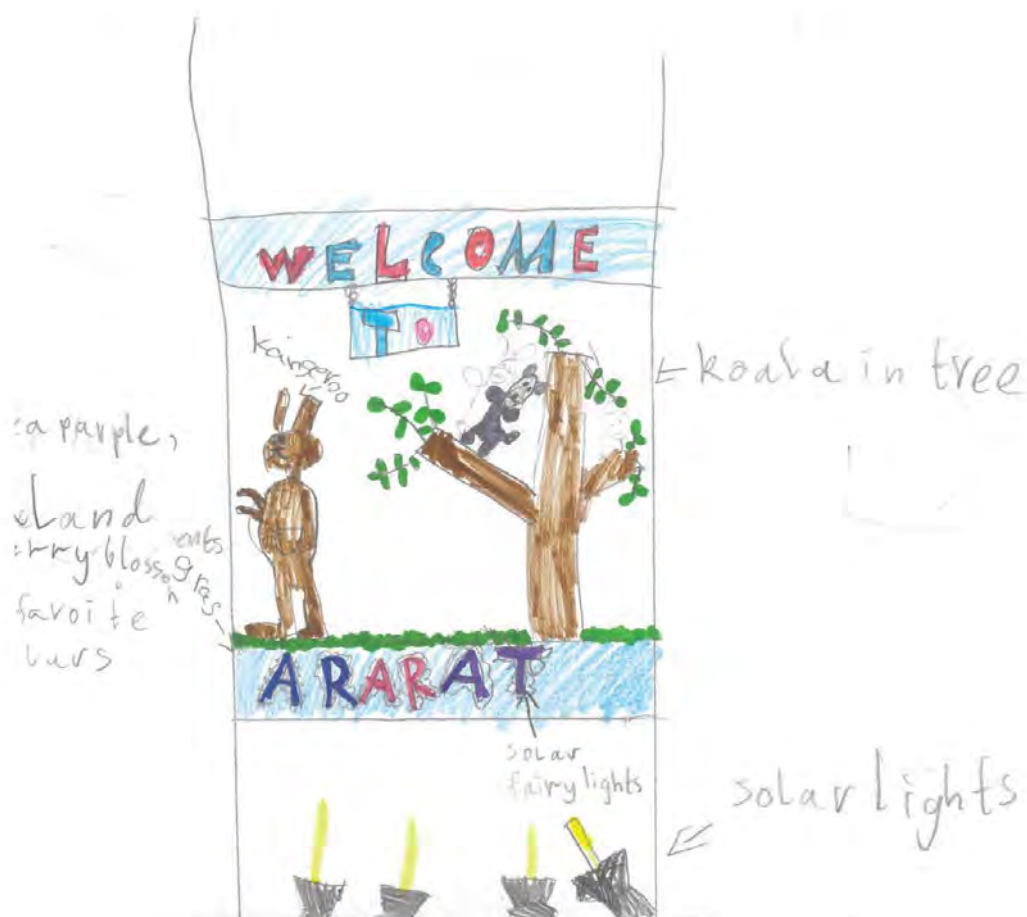
St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Community Contributions Snapshot

St Mary's Primary School, Ararat – Grades 3 & 4 Students





Social Media Campaign Snapshot

Ararat Rural City Council
Published by Hootsuite • May 8 •

Help us reimagine Ararat's eastern welcome. We're refreshing the town's eastern entrance on the Western Highway and want your ideas for an arrival experience that tells our story, sparks curiosity and encourages people to stop, stay and explore.

Over the next 30 days, you can jump onto Engage Ararat and share your concepts – from design sketches, artwork ideas and potential artists, through to examples of town entrances you've seen elsewhere and loved. We're especially interested in ideas that reflect Djab Wurrung country, our gold rush and Chinese heritage, nearby wine regions and our role as the eastern gateway to the Grampians.

Whether you're an artist, designer, maker, local business owner or you just have a great idea for how Ararat should say "welcome" to people arriving from Melbourne and Ballarat, we want to hear from you. Visit Engage Ararat to read more and upload your ideas:
engage.ararat.vic.gov.au/eastern-entrance-signage. See less



Views

13,109



51.4% Non-followers 48.6% Followers

Viewers

6,612

Who viewed your content

Age and gender

Top countries

Women Men Unknown



Interactions

89



Reactions 45

Comments 38

Shares 2

Saves 4

38 38 2

Most relevant

- Stephen Martin**
Use local stone and town name, Stawell and Beaufort both have the right idea. Local bluestone sitting behind J ward. Nice Wrought iron lettering.
- Isabel Nancarrow** replied • 5 Replies
- Rob McKinnis**
Maybe make it a competition, like they did years ago, like for the naming of Aradale. Or get something similar to Stawell entrance and Beaufort Entrance. Maybe have the "Home of Shane Kelly" sign as well. He was a world Champion cyclist. Geelong still has references and at Kardinia park - a giant big lovely tribute to Simone McKinnis (Australian etball player & successful netball coach) and Sir Hubert Opperman, another Champion Cyclist. And some nice Wrought iron lettering would be fantastic.



Local Media Coverage Snapshot

9 May, 2026

Help reimagine Ararat's eastern entrance

HAVE YOU Ever wanted to design a town's welcome sign? Ararat Rural City Council is asking the community to help shape a new look for the town's eastern entrance, creating an arrival experience that reflects Ararat's unique story and encourages travellers to stop, stay, and explore.



Mayor Bob Sanders is encouraging local residents to play a part in the look of Ararat's new town entrance signs. Photo by Craig Wilson.

25 May, 2026

Community ideas shaping a fresh look for Ararat's eastern entrance

ARARAT Rural City Council say it has received a strong response to its call for ideas to reimagine the town's eastern entrance, with early submissions highlighting Ararat's layered story and a strong appetite to improve the arrival experience for locals and visitors.

By Craig Wilson



Mayor Bob Sanders is delighted with the response to council's plan to rejuvenate the eastern entrance sign to Ararat. Photo by Craig Wilson.

3.4 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND FRAMEWORK

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29674

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 Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Framework have been reviewed as part of Council's ongoing commitment to maintaining a contemporary and effective approach to risk management across the organisation. The updated documents strengthen Council's risk management practices and align with AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines, the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's governance responsibilities.

The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the updated documents and supported a recommendation that Council consider consolidating the Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Framework into a single integrated document which is being presented to Council.

The revised documents clarify risk management roles and responsibilities, strengthen governance arrangements, update risk appetite statements, improve reporting and monitoring requirements, and reinforce the integration of risk management into Council planning, service delivery and decision-making processes.

DISCUSSION

Council operates in an increasingly complex environment requiring the effective identification, assessment, treatment, monitoring and reporting of risks that may impact service delivery, strategic objectives, financial sustainability, governance obligations and community outcomes. The reviewed Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Framework provide the foundation for Council's risk management system and establish a consistent approach to managing risk across the organisation.

The Risk Management Policy establishes Council's commitment to embedding risk management into organisational culture and decision-making processes. It outlines Council's risk appetite, strategic and operational risk management arrangements and the responsibilities of Council, the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chief Executive Officer, management and staff.

The Risk Management Framework provides practical guidance for implementing the Policy. It establishes the methodology for identifying, assessing, evaluating, treating and monitoring risks across strategic, operational and project activities. The Framework also details reporting requirements, risk registers, performance measures, training requirements and responsibilities across the organisation.

Key updates include:

- Reinforcement of Council's alignment with AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines.
- Updated risk appetite statements across the categories of finance, governance, service delivery, environment, reputation and occupational health and safety.
- Enhanced reporting and oversight arrangements for strategic and operational risks.
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities across Council, management, employees, volunteers, contractors and Community Asset Committees.
- Strengthened integration of risk management into planning, project management, emergency management, procurement, business continuity and service delivery processes.
- Improved guidance regarding risk assessment, risk treatment, risk appetite and monitoring activities.

During consideration of the documents, the Audit and Risk Committee suggested that Council consider combining the Policy and Framework into a single document to improve accessibility, reduce duplication and strengthen the relationship between Council's risk management principles and operational practices. Officers support this approach and hence have produced this combines Risk Policy and Framework.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no direct budget implications resulting from the adoption of the updated Risk Management Policy and acknowledgement of the Risk Management Framework.

Implementation of risk treatment actions, training requirements and system improvements will continue to be managed through existing operational budgets and future budget processes where required.

Policy/Relevant Law

Relevant legislation, standards and documents include:

- Local Government Act 2020.
- AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines.
- Council Plan 2025-2029.
- Fraud and Corruption Policy.
- Business Continuity Plan.
- Disaster Recovery Plan.

Sustainability Implications

The Risk Management Policy and Framework contribute to:

- **Social sustainability** through the protection of community safety, wellbeing and service continuity.
- **Economic sustainability** through the management of financial, operational and strategic risks that may impact Council's long-term viability.
- **Environmental sustainability** through the identification and management of environmental risks and support for sustainable decision-making.

Risk Assessment

Failure to maintain a contemporary risk management framework may result in:

- Increased exposure to strategic and operational risks.
- Reduced organisational resilience and preparedness.
- Legislative or regulatory non-compliance.
- Financial, reputational and governance impacts.
- Reduced ability to achieve Council Plan objectives.

The updated Policy and Framework support a systematic and proactive approach to managing risks and ensuring appropriate governance oversight.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The review of the Risk Management Policy and Framework included engagement with Councillors, the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Operating Officer and Council officers. The review process supports continual improvement of Council's governance and risk management practices.

The Audit and Risk Committee has provided valuable input into the review process, including the recommendation that Council consider a future consolidated Risk Management Policy and Framework document.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *Council adopts the Risk Management Policy and Framework June 2026.*

**MOVED CR R ARMSTRONG
SECONDED CR JOYCE**

That:

1. **Council adopts the Risk Management Policy and Framework June 2026.**

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

**CARRIED 7/0
5370/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Risk Management Policy and Framework is provided as Attachment 3.4



Risk Management Policy and Framework

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Category Type: Policy/Framework
Type: Administrative
Responsible Officer: Chief Operating Officer

Last Review Date: 30 April 2024
Date Approved: xx June 2026
Next Review Date: June 2028

Revision No: 3

Stakeholder Engagement:
Councillors

Risk Management Policy and Framework



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Risk Management Policy and Framework



1. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Ararat Rural City Council provides a wide range of services and facilities and operates in an environment that is often complex and challenging.

Council is committed to sound risk management practices by identifying, assessing, treating and monitoring risks, and by embedding an effective and integrated approach to risk management in all activities and business processes.

This Risk Management Policy and Framework establishes Council's commitment to managing risk and outlines the practical arrangements used to embed risk management across Council's governance, planning, operations, decision making and reporting processes.

The Policy component sets Council's expectations and governance position for managing risk, while the Framework component describes how risks are identified, assessed, treated, monitored and reported in practice. Together, they support Council's strategic objective to ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Ararat Rural City Council is committed to the effective management of risk as an integral component of good governance, decision making and service delivery. Council recognises that risk management supports the achievement of strategic objectives, protects community assets and resources, strengthens organisational resilience and enhances community confidence.

Council will apply a consistent and systematic approach to risk management across all activities, services, projects, programs and decision-making processes. Risk management will be embedded into Council's planning, operational and governance frameworks and aligned with the principles of AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines.

Council is committed to ensuring that effective risk management provides:

- Protection for the organisation, Council assets and Councillors, employees, contractors, stakeholders and community against reasonably foreseeable risks;
- Promotion and support of risk management practices, which encourage and empower staff in managing risk;
- Monitoring of risk management practices to ensure a more effective allocation and use of resources;
- Improved incident management, reduced loss and lower risk-related costs, including commercial insurance premiums;
- Improved stakeholder confidence and trust; and
- Improved compliance with relevant legislative requirements.

Risk Management Policy and Framework



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Council acknowledges that risk is inherent in delivering services and achieving outcomes for the community. While some risks may be accepted within Council's approved risk appetite, risks that may result in serious harm, fraud, corruption or significant breaches of legislative obligations will not be tolerated and will be actively managed.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing this Policy and ensuring an effective Risk Management Framework is maintained across the organisation. All Councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers and committees acting on behalf of Council are responsible for supporting and applying the principles of this Policy.

Transition to the Risk Management Framework

The Framework gives effect to the Policy by setting out the systems, processes and accountabilities Council uses to identify, assess, treat, monitor and report risk. It provides accessible, user-friendly and comprehensive guidance to enable Council to:

- Respond to the strategic objectives of the Council Plan;
- Embed into the organisation a commitment to the Risk Management Framework;
- Document the accountability for the management and reporting of risks; and
- Support a consistent risk management practice aligned to the Standard.

Together, the Policy and Framework establish a consistent approach to risk management that supports Council's strategic objectives, strengthens decision making and embeds risk management into day-to-day operations.

Set out below is a diagram illustrating how the Risk Management Framework interacts with other key organisational documents.



Risk Management Policy and Framework



3. RISK MANGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Risk Management Framework establishes the governance arrangements, processes, responsibilities and systems used by Ararat Rural City Council to manage risk across the organisation. The Framework provides a structured approach to identifying, assessing, treating, monitoring and reporting risk and supports the achievement of Council's strategic objectives

The Framework is aligned with the principles and guidelines contained within AS ISO 31000:2018 and is designed to integrate risk management into Council's governance, planning, operational and decision-making processes.

The relationship between the Risk Management Framework and the Risk Management Process is illustrated below.

Risk Management Policy and Framework

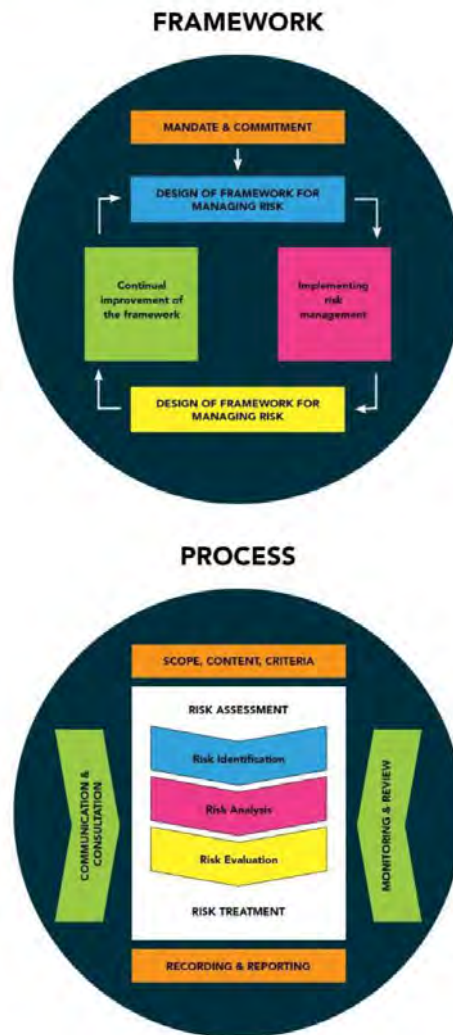


Figure 1 - Risk Management Framework and Process

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Ararat Rural City

Strategic Risk Management

Council will maintain a strategic risk register including the key risks in the external and internal operating environment that could materially impact the delivery of Council services and its strategic objectives.

- A summary of strategic risks, controls and improvement actions will, at a minimum:
- Be considered by Council at the commencement of the annual planning process;
- Be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee as part of the development of the Internal Audit and Compliance Plan; and
- Be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer on a quarterly basis.

Operational Risk Management

Council will maintain an operational risk register that includes the key risks faced by each area of Council in the internal operating environment.

While risk management is continuous, a full operational risk review will be conducted twice each year. Officers are accountable for the management of operational risks within their respective areas.

Risk Appetite and Tolerance

Council acknowledges that some level of risk is necessary to achieve strategic objectives and deliver services to the community. Risk appetite provides guidance on the level and type of risk Council is prepared to accept in pursuit of its objectives. Council's risk appetite statements and risk tolerance requirements are outlined in Section 6 of this Framework.

Performance and Monitoring

The effectiveness of Council's risk management practices will be monitored through risk reporting, performance measures, internal and external audit activities, policy reviews and ongoing assessment of emerging risks. Key Performance Indicators are outlined in Section 8 of this Framework.

The Risk Management Framework incorporates the risk management process described in AS ISO 31000:2018, including:

- Undertake risk assessments for key operations, projects and strategies on a regular basis;
- Ensuring that risk management system and strategic risks report are presented to the Council, the Audit and Risk Committee and Chief Executive Officer on a regular basis;
- Effectively responding to internal and external audit recommendations;
- Development and monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs) as outlined in the Risk Management Framework;
- Review of Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Framework every two years or as required.
- Review of the Fraud and Corruption policy every two years or as required; and

Risk Management Policy and Framework



- Monitor issues, topics and subjects that may impact on future operations to identify emerging risks.

Risk management is a continual process that supports effective governance, informed decision making and the achievement of Council's strategic objectives. Risks and controls will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and effective in a changing operating environment.

4. INTEGRATION WITH COUNCIL OPERATIONS

The Risk Management Framework provides the methods and processes Council uses to manage risks and identify opportunities in every part of the organisation. Governance guides the direction of the organisation and provides the rules, processes and practices necessary for Council to achieve its strategic objectives.

Risk management is not just about the risk assessment process nor is it a standalone discipline. In order to maximise the risk management benefits and opportunities, it requires integration through Council's entire operations, as follows:

4.1 Decision Making

Risk implications must be considered as part of Council's decision-making processes. Risk assessments and associated mitigation strategies will be incorporated into Council, Committee and Executive reports to support informed decision making

4.2 Council Policies and Procedures

Council policies and procedures support effective risk management by providing clear direction, establishing consistent practices and supporting compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. They assist Council to minimise uncertainty, promote accountability and support informed decision making.

4.3 Council Planning

Risk management is incorporated into Council's strategic, financial and operational planning processes. Risks and opportunities are considered when developing the Council Plan, annual budgets, business plans, capital works programs and asset management strategies to support the achievement of Council objectives

4.4 Audit and Risk Committee

Risk management reporting supports the oversight responsibilities of the Audit and Risk Committee. Strategic risks, emerging risks, control effectiveness and risk treatment progress are reported to the Committee to assist it in fulfilling its governance and assurance responsibilities.

4.5 Strategic and Operational Risks

5. Strategic risks arise from internal and external factors that may impact the achievement of Council's strategic objectives. Operational risks arise from the day-to-day delivery of Council services, projects and activities. Strategic and operational risks are recorded in Council's Risk

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Register and monitored through Council's risk management processes.

5.1 Emergency Management

Council plans for and undertakes prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities to support its community in the event of emergencies and natural disasters and emergencies. This process includes alignment and cooperation with lead agencies and other Councils in the region as well as providing information and training for employees to protect them from harm whilst responding to emergencies and natural disasters. The Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) includes a Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) process conducted by the members of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) with input from other various agency experts.

5.2 Business Continuity Plan / Disaster Recovery Plan

Business continuity and disaster recovery planning assists Council to maintain critical functions during and following significant disruptions. These plans consider reasonably foreseeable risks and support the continuity of essential services and organisational recovery.

5.3 Asset Management

Risk management is integrated into asset management activities, including asset inspection, maintenance, renewal and replacement programs. Asset condition and defect assessments assist Council to prioritise investment and manage risk across the asset lifecycle.

5.4 Event Planning

Risk management forms an integral part of event planning and delivery to support public safety, legislative compliance and successful event outcomes.

5.5 Project Management

Risk management is an integral part of project management. It is imperative that risks are identified at the project development stage so that designs and processes can be adjusted to minimise or eliminate exposure to risk. Risk assessments should be undertaken throughout the project lifecycle, including planning, delivery and review stages

5.6 Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational Health and Safety is a critical component of Council's risk management system. Council maintains policies, procedures and processes to identify and manage health and safety risks and to support the wellbeing of employees, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

5.7 Community Engagement

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Ararat Rural City

Effective community engagement assists Council to understand community expectations, identify emerging issues and manage reputational risks. Community engagement activities are undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

5.8 Procurement

Risk assessments are undertaken for significant procurement activities and contracts to ensure risks associated with suppliers, contractors, equipment and services are identified and appropriately managed throughout the procurement lifecycle.

5.9 Fraud and Corruption

Council has a zero tolerance for fraud and corruption. Fraud and corruption can erode confidence in the Council, deprive the public of resources, reduce the effectiveness of Council assets and equipment, harm customers, employees or the public and damage employee morale. By utilising the relevant policies and procedures Council can assess and measure its vulnerability to fraud and implement robust controls for its prevention. Refer to Council's Fraud and Corruption Policy, which is reviewed every two years.

5.10 Insurance and Risk Advisory Services

Council's insurers and external advisors may provide risk management support through audits, inspections, training, benchmarking, policy development and specialist advice. These services complement Council's internal risk management activities and support continuous improvement.

5.11 External Influences

Auditor-General's Office Reviews

The Auditor-General is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament, appointed to examine the management of resources within the public sector on behalf of Parliament and Victorians. The Victorian Auditor General's Office conducts both financial and performance audits of government departments and councils.

Ombudsman Victoria Reviews

The Ombudsman is an officer of the Victorian Parliament and has the power to investigate decisions, actions and conduct of Victorian government departments and statutory bodies and employees of local government (councils). The Ombudsman investigates complaints about administrative actions and decisions taken by government authorities and about the conduct or behaviour of their staff.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

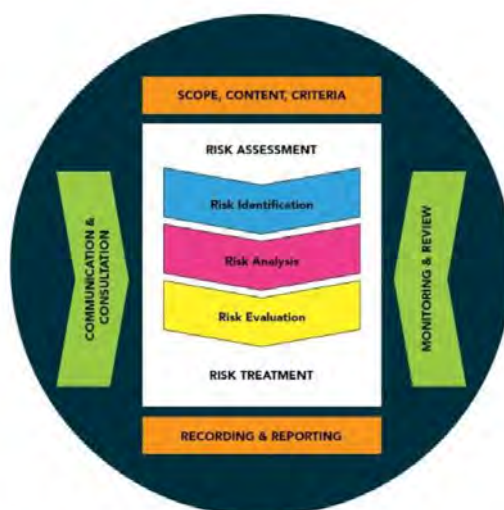
The Risk Management Process provides a structured approach to identifying, assessing, treating, monitoring and reporting risks. The process is based on AS ISO 31000:2018 and is applied across Council's strategic, operational, project and service delivery activities.

Risk management is an ongoing process that supports informed decision making, promotes

Risk Management Policy and Framework



accountability and enables Council to achieve its strategic objectives. Throughout the process, communication and consultation with stakeholders are undertaken to ensure risks are appropriately understood and managed.



6.1 Communication and Consultation

Effective communication and consultation are essential to successful risk management. Consultation with internal and external stakeholders assists Council to understand risks, obtain relevant information, consider diverse perspectives and support informed decision making.

Council will engage with stakeholders throughout the risk management process to:

- Correctly identify risks and understand context.
- Gain a better understanding of the views and interests of stakeholders and how their expectations may be managed.
- Capitalise on the diversity of knowledge, opinions and experience to enhance identification and management of risks and opportunities.
- Build a sense of inclusiveness and ownership amongst stakeholders.

6.2 Scope, Context and Criteria

The establishment of the context is specific to each individual risk. The key stakeholders will vary from one risk to another and should include individuals from a range of levels who are involved in the delivery of the service or identified activity.

Defining Scope

As the risk management process is applied at different levels throughout the organisation, it is important to define the scope and the alignment with Council's strategic objectives; this should include consideration of:

- Goals and objectives of risk management activities;
- Proposed outcomes and timing;

Risk Management Policy and Framework



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- Responsibilities and accountabilities for the risk management process;
- Risk management methodologies;
- Processes, activities and projects and how they may interact with other processes, activities and projects of Council;
- How effectiveness and/or value will be measured and monitored; and
- Availability of resources to manage risk.

Defining context

Defining the context is important because:

- Risk management takes place in the context of Council's strategic objectives and activities; and
- Organisational factors can be a source of risk; and
- The context should reflect the specific environment of the activity to which the risk management process is to be applied.

Defining risk criteria

Risk criteria are used to evaluate the significance of risk and are reflective of Council's values, strategic objectives and resources and the views of Council's stakeholders. Council's risk criteria are documented throughout the Risk Management Framework. It should be noted that, whilst risk criteria are established at the beginning of the risk management process, they are dynamic and should be continually reviewed and amended, if necessary.

6.3 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment involves identifying risks, analysing their likelihood and consequences, evaluating existing controls and determining the level of risk. Risk assessment assists Council to prioritise resources and focus on risks that have the greatest potential impact on achieving objectives.

Identifying Risk

This step identifies the risks associated with a program or project. It is important that this be fully performed to ensure that all major risks are identified. The outcome of this step is a list of events, which might affect programs or projects being analysed.

Where could risks come from?

Risk can come from many areas and each of the generic risk sources below have many components. Together with people above and below your position in the organisation, identify potential risks. The following list can be used as a checklist to identify risks.

- Commercial and legal relationships
- Economic circumstances
- Human behaviour
- Natural events
- Political circumstances
- Technology and technical issues
- Management activities and controls
- Individual activities

Risk Analysis

Risk analysis is about assessing the importance of each of the identified risks. After the risk identification phase you will have a long list of risks. It would not be possible, or even necessary, to attend to all of these risks.

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Ararat Rural City

The following process will assist you to find the risks that threaten your business or project outcomes the most. You can then focus your attention on managing the most important risks.

The analysis of risks has three steps:

1. Determine the likelihood of the risk.
2. Determine the consequence of the risk.
3. Review existing controls.

The Risk Management Framework is built upon the understanding that some risks, no matter how many controls are in place, involve potentially very serious consequences. Council provides various services and activities that have a high-risk rating irrespective of controls in place.

Inherent and Residual Risks

A risk rating can be determined by combining the effect (consequence rating) and cause (likelihood rating). The risks are to be assessed against all consequence categories and the highest consequence rating will be used.

Inherent risk represents the level of risk before controls are considered. Residual risk represents the level of risk remaining after existing and planned controls have been applied.

Likelihood

Determine Likelihood

The next step in evaluating risk is to assess the likelihood of an event occurring. Like the assessment of consequence, the assessment of likelihood is performed knowing the existing controls exist.

Likelihood is categorised into the following descriptions:

- Almost Certain;
- Likely;
- Possible
- Unlikely; and
- Rare

Guidance for assessing the likelihood is detailed in the following table. When considering how likely is it that the business will be exposed to a specific risk, considering factors such as:

- Anticipated frequency;
- The external environment;
- The procedures, tools, skills currently in place;
- Staff commitment, morale, attitude;
- History of previous events.

Likelihood Rating	
Name	Description
Almost certain	The event is expected to occur in most circumstances or at least twice a year.
Likely	Expect this event at least annually.
Possible	The event might occur at some time over an extended period.
Unlikely	The event could occur at some time but is not usually experienced.
Rare	The event may occur only in exceptional circumstances.

Consequence

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Determine Consequence

What will be the impact of an event occurring? Any event can have a range of impacts. Council's risk management process makes formal assessment of the potential impact of the event by giving it a consequence category of Insignificant, Minor, Moderate, Major or Catastrophic.

To provide guidance to staff and to ensure there is consistency in the evaluation of risk across the organisation a consequence table is included below.

CONSEQUENCE RATING	CONSEQUENCE					
	Environmental Responsibility	Finance	Governance	Occupational Health and Safety	Reputation	Service Delivery
Catastrophic	Uncontained damage with major impact/major fine/public reaction	Cannot be managed within Council budget (<\$1,000,000)	Widespread policy/legislative/compliance non-compliance / failure	Loss of life probable and serious injury inevitable	Public media outrage, official public investigation, public criticism of Council and its operations	Critical operational service failure or loss of delivery (>5 days)
Major	Major breach or impact/fines	Major rework of Council budget (\$250,000 - \$1,000,000)	Systematic policy/legislative non-compliance	Loss of life possible and serious injury probable	Loss of community confidence in Council and/or intense local media concern/national media coverage or formal inquiry	Major operational service failure or loss of service delivery (>1 day)
Moderate	Moderate breach, impact or complaint	Significant departmental rework of budget or minor rework of Council budget (\$50,000 - \$250,000)	Frequent policy/legislative non-compliance	Loss of life unlikely, but serious injury possible	Concerns raised by community and/or broad adverse media coverage	Moderate operational service failure or loss of service delivery (>3 hours)
Minor	Minor breach, impact or complaint	Some rework of budget required (\$2,000 - \$50,000)	Isolated policy/legislative non-compliance	Serious injury unlikely, but minor injury possible	Minor or isolated concerns raised by community, customers or suppliers and/or	Loss of operational service delivery (>1 hour)

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					adverse local media	
Insignificant	Negligible breach, impact or complaint	Financial impact easily managed within budget (<\$2,000)	No policy/legislative non-compliance	Would cause minor injuries that are able to be treated	No inconvenience to the community or organisation	No loss of operational service delivery

CONSEQUENCES					
LIKELIHOOD	1: Insignificant	2: Minor	3: Moderate	4: Major	5: Catastrophic
Almost Certain: The event is expected to occur in most circumstances or at least twice a year	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Likely: Expect this event at least annually	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
Possible: The event might occur at some time over an extended period	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
Unlikely: The event could occur at some time but is not usually experienced	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
Rare: The event may occur in exceptional circumstances	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High

Existing Controls

Council has a wide range of controls, which assist staff to achieve quality outcomes. Often these controls are unrecognised. The process of identifying existing controls assists in the evaluation of risk in an appropriate context.

The following list of controls are used in commonly in Local Government.

Audits	Electronic diaries	Organisational structure
Benchmarking	Evaluations	Performance Reviews
Budgets	Formal reporting	Partnerships
Checklists	Information management	Procedures and policies

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Codes of Conduct	Legal opinions	Professional advice
Computer systems	Legislation	Quality control
Contracts	Library membership agreements	Safe operating procedures
Corporate and business plans	Local Government Act	Staff education and training
Corporate culture and values	Meetings	Staff recruitment practices
Delegations	Minutes and agendas	Standard operating procedures
Division of responsibility	OH&S action plans	

The status of the risk is to be monitored by responsible team members reporting to their managers, coordinators, supervisors or team leaders.

6.4 Risk Treatment

Risk Treatment (Controls)

At the completion of the risk assessment process, you must consider each risk and decide if the level of the risk is acceptable in the context of the business objectives.

The object is not to eliminate all risk but rather to ensure that risk is maintained at an acceptable level in a cost-effective manner.

Risk treatment can be conducted using a variety of methods. When looking at risks, treatments are aimed at reducing or removing the potential for consequences occurring. However, when looking at opportunities, treatments look at ensuring that consequences are realised.

Risk treatment involves selecting one or more options for modifying risks, and implementing those options. Once implemented, treatments provide or modify the controls. An action should be implemented to treat certain risks.

Justification for risk treatment is broader than solely economic considerations and should consider all of Council's obligations, voluntary commitments and stakeholder views. Appropriate risk treatment options should have regard to Council's strategic objectives, risk criteria and available resources. Agreed controls will be recorded in the Risk Assessment/Treatment Template (Appendix A) and the date for completion should also be agreed and recorded.

Risk Treatment Options

Risk treatment options are not necessarily mutually exclusive or appropriate in all circumstances. Some of the options available for treating risks may include:

Risk Treatment Options	
Eliminate	Remove the asset or service completely so as to eliminate the risk altogether
Share	Allocate risk to a third party, such as through appropriate contactor management
Mitigate	Implement a type of treatment control to reduce or remove the risk. This may include but is not limited to options such as substitution (swapping), isolation (barricade), engineering (modify by design) or administration (policy/process)
Accept	Risk can be accepted for a number of reasons including: • no extra treatments being available; • meets the stated target for the type of risk; • informed decision has been made about that risk; and • risk treatment is worth more than the risk exposure

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If you don't accept the risk, develop an action plan to reduce the likelihood or consequence of the risk.

If significant costs are involved in the risk reduction, it may be necessary to do a cost benefit analysis to decide how much resource is worth spending on risk reduction. Approval will need to be obtained from the CEO prior to committing resources.

Reduce Likelihood

Risk can be reduced by making the chance of its occurrence less likely. Preventative maintenance on vehicles is an example of an activity which reduces the likelihood of an accident occurring. Likelihood reduction treatments tend to assist the activity to occur with increased supervision, planning or skill. These treatments have an emphasis on improving preparation and improving controls.

The types of actions which can reduce or control likelihood include:

- Audit and compliance programs;
- Contract conditions;
- Formal review of requirements, specifications, design, engineering and operations;
- Inspection and process controls;
- Investment and portfolio management;
- Project management;
- Preventative maintenance;
- Quality Assurance, management and standards;
- Research and development, technological development;
- Structured training and other programs;
- Supervision;
- Testing;
- Organisational arrangements; and
- Technical controls.

Reduce Consequences

Once an event has occurred it will have consequences or outcomes. There are a range of actions that can be undertaken to reduce the unpleasant consequences of the event. The installation of air bags in vehicles is an example of a treatment which reduces the consequences of an accident.

The types of actions which can reduce or control consequence include:

- Contingency planning;
- Contractual arrangements;
- Contract conditions;
- Design features;
- Disaster recovery plans;
- Engineering and structural barriers;
- Fraud control planning;
- Minimising exposure to source of risks;
- Portfolio planning;
- Separation or relocation of an activity and resources;
- Public relations.

Transfer the risk

There are a limited number of opportunities where it may be possible to transfer the risk to other parties. Insurance is an example of sharing a risk.

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Care needs to be taken when assessing transferred risk to ensure that Council effectively transfers risk. Council may contract out the work but unless it is careful it may retain residual risk (e.g. if a contractor does not maintain their Public Liability Council may have some residual liability).

Avoid Risk

You avoid risk by deciding not to proceed with the activity likely to cause the risk. For Local Government this is not always possible as it often has a statutory responsibility to carry out certain activities. Sometimes this strategy can be carried out where risks are not fully understood or examined.

Inappropriate risk avoidance can sometimes inadvertently increase the significance of other risks. For instance, banning drinking in an area may cause the activity to occur somewhere else.

Control Characteristics

Risk treatments need to be designed in a manner to ensure they are sufficient to mitigate that risk, and have some of the following characteristics if they are to become an adequate control:

- Documented (e.g. Policies, procedures, task lists, checklists);
- Systems-oriented (e.g. integrated and/or automated);
- Preventative (e.g. system controls) or detective;
- Consistent and regular (including during staff absence);
- Performed by competent and trained individuals;
- Clear responsibility and accountability;
- Create value (i.e. benefits outweigh costs);
- Achievable for the organisation (based on available resources);
- Evidenced;
- Confirmed independently.

Tips for developing risk treatments

- Review the cause of the risk and attempt to tackle the cause of the risk, not just its symptoms
- Take ownership of the risk. Do not put in risk strategies that become someone else's responsibility. Follow the issue through to ensure that risk is effectively mitigated.
- Be creative and positive in your response. Don't limit yourself to reactive responses.
- Look for opportunities when treating risk. The purpose of risk management is to achieve improved outcomes. Make sure that you use the opportunity that reviewing risk provides to identify any opportunities you have for improving your service or the way you provide your service.
- Engage your stakeholders positively to gain their support in putting your risk plans into effective actions. Your stakeholders will be often be the solution to your issue.
- Use teams to review and manage risks. Groups of people can add valuable perspective to issues.

Preparing and implementing risk treatment plans

Risk treatment plans specify how the risk treatment options will be implemented, so that those involved understand what arrangements are in place and to allow progress against the plan to be monitored. Risk treatment plans may be integrated into Council's existing processes, (e.g. project management plans, risk registers,) and provide the following information:

- Rationale for selection of treatment options;
- Responsibilities and accountability for approving and implementing the plan;
- Proposed actions and timeframes;
- Resourcing requirements;
- Constraints and contingencies; and
- Required reporting and monitoring.

Seek Expert Advice

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Management may decide that expert advice is required to validate their assessments and / or assist in reviewing the options available to manage specific risks. The Chief Operating Officer should be consulted, as they may be more familiar with best practice in a particular area. This can also benchmark data that can be used measure performance against.

Review the Risks

After completing the treatment actions, re-check the likelihood and consequences – then decide if the risk rating is now acceptable; once accepted, schedule a review date (refer to Section 6.5).

6.5 Monitor and Review

Review of risks and controls

Monitoring and review must be a formal part of the risk management process and involves regular checking of the effectiveness and efficiency of the risk management processes implemented.

A monitoring and review process will:

- Ensure that implemented controls are effective and adequate;
- Provide further information to improve risk assessment and treatment plans;
- Allow for the identification of emerging risks;
- Identify any (new) activities that may influence established strategies to mitigate risks.

It is essential to monitor all activities and processes in order to capture any new or emerging risks arising from the changing environment, (both internal and external) and the activities undertaken by Council.

Internal audit

The audit process plays an important role in evaluating the internal controls (and risk management processes) currently employed by Council. The internal audit program should be 'risk based' and provides assurance that we are managing our risks appropriately.

In developing the Internal Audit Plan consideration is given to the extreme, high and moderate risks identified by the risk assessment process.

Internal audits assess the adequacy of selected controls identified. The internal audit process will measure risk by:

- Measuring compliance – has Council met its Policy objectives;
- Measuring maturity – measuring against best practice and Council benchmarking; and
- Measuring value add – has the framework and risk culture added to the achievement of Councils strategic objectives.

Information is shared between the risk management and internal audit functions. Changes in our risk profile are reflected in our Internal Audit Plan. Similarly, control issues identified through internal audit will inform our Risk Management Framework. The internal audits are conducted to provide assurance that key risks have been identified and the controls in place are adequate.

6.6 Recording and Reporting

The risk management process and its outcomes should be documented and reported, in order to:

- Communicate risk management activities and outcomes;
- Provide information for decision making;
- Continuous improvement;
- Assist interaction with stakeholders, including those with responsibility and accountability for risk management activities.

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Risk Register

Councils Risk Register is maintained within Council's approved risk management system.

The register will be accessible across the network to allow broad access to enter data and manage action plans designed to reduce the level of risk.

The register is used to:

- Record identified risks and establish a risk register
- Identify the staff member responsible for each risk
- Determine the risk rating
- Develop treatment plans to reduce the risk
- Manage the risk treatment action plans
- Track actions taken by individuals and monitor progress of planned actions
- Provide written risk management reports
- Record incidents against risks.

The register will support the audit function within Council and provide a measure of progress for the overall Risk Management Framework.

A review of the Risk Register will involve revisiting each of the identified risks and considering the following points.

- Have the descriptors changed or are they still current?
- Has the level of risk changed?
- Has the nature of the Controls or mitigating factors shifted?
- Are there any new risks that should be considered for the risk register?

Strategic Risks

Council will identify and record Strategic Risks on Council's Risk Register. Strategic level risks are identified by Management and the Council, as part of a biannual review. Any risks identified at the Strategic level may be reflected in other documents, for example: Strategic Plan, Annual Business Plan, Asset Management Plans and mitigated through action details in these documents, however these should be collated in the Risk Register for ease of monitoring and review.

Recording and reporting of Strategic level risks is the responsibility of the Governance Risk Lead via the Chief Executive Officer and Audit Committee.

Operational Risks

Council will record and maintain Operational Risks on Council's Risk Register and reviewed biannually. The Risk Register will incorporate unit area risks and proposed mitigation techniques, as determined by the evaluation process. Recording operational level risks in the register and reporting of implementation and effectiveness of controls is the responsibility of all employees.

Risk Treatment and Management

Actions to manage unacceptable risks will be evident in annual business planning documents. If there are any indications that some new or prompt treatment is required, "Control" will be updated and reviewed in consideration of the identified risks.

All relevant information will be recorded in the live risk register (PowerApps) following this process by relevant responsible officers.

7. RISK APPETITE AND TOLERANCE

Purpose

Risk Management Policy and Framework



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Risk appetite defines the level of, and type of risk Council is willing to accept in achieving its strategic objectives. It supports consistent decision-making across the organization by clarifying when risks can be accepted, when they must be managed and when they require escalation.

Council generally adopts a low appetite for risk, particularly in areas that may impact community safety, financial sustainability, governance and reputation.

Council has no tolerance for risks that could result in loss of life or serious harm, and very low tolerance for fraud, corruption or deliberate non-compliance with legislation.

At the same time, Council recognizes that risk is a necessary part of delivering services and achieving outcomes for the community. Calculated risks may be accepted where there is a clear benefit and where those risks are well understood and effectively managed.

Risk appetite is not fixed and may change over time in response to Council's financial positions, external environment or legislative obligations.

Risk Appetite by Risk Level

Council's approach to risk varies depending on the level of risk identified through the risk assessment process.

- **Low risks** are considered acceptable and are managed through routine operational processes. These risks do not typically require additional controls beyond those already in place and are monitored by responsible officers as part of normal business activities.
- **Moderate risks** may also be accepted, provided that effective controls are in place. These risks should be actively monitored, and additional treatments implemented where it is practical and cost-effective to do so. Managers are responsible for ensuring these risks remain within acceptable levels over time.
- **High risks** are not considered acceptable without active management. These risks require documented treatment plans to reduce either the likelihood or consequence, and clear accountability for implementation. High risks must be escalated to the Executive Leadership Team and are subject to regular monitoring and reporting.
- **Extreme risks** are not acceptable under any circumstances without immediate action. These risks must be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer as soon as they are identified, with urgent treatment measures implemented. Extreme risks are also reported to the Audit and Risk Committee to ensure appropriate oversight.

Risk Rating	Action Required
Extreme	Management is to be involved in developing a detailed plan for understanding, managing and reducing the risk. Management will monitor the status of these risks.
High	Management oversight is needed and responsibility given to operational management to apply specific procedures to research the risk, implement specific procedures and/or monitor the risk.
Moderate	Operational management to apply specific procedures to monitor the risk and to implement specific response procedures.

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Low	Managed by routine procedures and is unlikely to need specific application of resources. Status is to be monitored by responsible team members reporting to their managers.
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Risk Appetite by Consequence Area

Council's tolerance for risk also varies depending on the type of impact.

Environmental risks are generally acceptable at low levels and may be accepted at moderate levels where impacts are contained and well managed. However, higher-level environmental risks must be actively reduced, particularly where there may be regulatory, ecological, or community impacts.

Financial risks are accepted at low levels, but Council has a low tolerance for financial exposure beyond this. Moderate and higher-level financial risks must be carefully managed and reduced, with high risks escalated to the Executive to ensure financial sustainability is protected.

Governance risks, including compliance and legal obligations, are accepted at low levels and may be tolerated at moderate levels where controls are effective. However, Council has limited tolerance for higher-level governance risks, and these must be actively reduced and escalated.

Risks relating to **occupational health and safety** are treated conservatively. While minor risks are accepted, Council has a very low tolerance for risks that could result in injury. Higher-level safety risks must be reduced and escalated as a priority.

Reputational risks are similarly treated with caution. While low-level risks may be accepted, any risk with the potential to damage community trust or confidence must be actively managed and reduced.

Service delivery risks are accepted where impacts are minor and manageable. However, as risks increase, Council's tolerance decreases, particularly where there is potential for disruption to critical services. These risks must be actively managed and escalated where necessary.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors are responsible for ensuring that risk is identified, assessed, adequately managed and reported. The key responsibilities for the management of risk across all levels of Council are listed below:

8.1 Councillors

- Set strategic direction and policy in relation to strategic risk management.
- Approve the Risk Management Policy and note the Risk Management Framework.
- Appoint the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Consider risk as an important element of Council's strategic planning and decision-making processes.
- Receive reports from the Audit and Risk Committee.

8.2 Audit and Risk Committee (as per Audit and Risk Committee Charter)

- Monitor Council's Risk Management System by receiving risk management updates.

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- Receive presentations from management/service delivery owners on strategic risk applicable to their areas of Council twice a year to ensure material strategic business risks are adequately managed.
- Review Council's risk and fraud policies every two years.

8.3 Chief Executive Officer

- Responsible for the management of risk across Council.
- Endorse the Risk Management Policy for approval by Council, approve the Risk Management Framework, and monitor implementation.
- Manage and monitor strategic, operational and project risk and advocate risk management within Council.
- Ensure that risks are considered and integrated into Council planning and organisational processes.
- Manage process for reviewing recommendations from VAGO and Internal Audits and identifying appropriate actions as required.
- Immediately report any fraud and corruption incidents.
- Commitment to monitoring employees progress on their assigned risk management activities.
- Fosters and promotes a strong risk management culture.
- Ensure that employees are adequately trained in the identification, assessment and procedures available for the minimisation of risk.

8.4 Officers

- Develop and foster working relationships with other agencies with whom Council has a shared risk.
- Responsible and accountable for management of risks that are directly related to their areas.
- Acknowledge that the management of risk is an integral part of service delivery.
- Arrange for advice and assistance to be provided to the Chief Operating Officer regarding information in relation to insurance claim or risk management issues, in a timely manner.
- Responsible for raising awareness and leading the culture of managing risk responsibilities across the organisation by assisting with the implementation of risk management policies, procedures, standards.

8.5 Chief Operating Officer

- Responsible for providing platforms to record strategic risks and operational risks.
- Ensuring that risk management platforms are functional and provide advice and guidance to users.
- Ensure that the Strategic and Organisational Risk Registers are properly maintained.
- Report on high and extreme risks with existing control measures and recommendation for further mitigation.
- Ensure the Key Performance Indicators set out in the Risk Management Framework are achieved and reviewed on an annual basis.
- Oversee the review and implementation of the Risk Management Framework, including training and awareness across the organisation.
- Assist in the planning, monitoring and review of risk assessments for Council assets and activities.
- Provide regular reporting to the Chief Executive Officer on risk management issues, statistics and strategies including insurance claim management.
- Provide advice and assistance to all employees in relation to the identification, assessment and treatment of risks.

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- Manage Council's insurance portfolio, ensuring that adequate insurance coverage exists for all classes of insurable risk.
- Review the Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recover Plan every two years.

The Chief Operating Officer provides guidance and advice on risk exposure issues as required by all Council areas. The risk owners are responsible for managing the risks of their areas and should seek assistance from the Chief Operating Officer as soon as an exposure or an emerging risk becomes known or suspected.

8.6 All Employees and Volunteers

- Reporting any risk, potential risk or incident immediately when it is brought to their attention.
- Ensuring that they conduct their daily duties in a manner that does not expose Council to loss or risk, and that these duties are conducted in accordance with relevant policies, procedures and legislative requirements.
- Assist in the investigation of any incident that may have occurred and for which they were involved or have knowledge of, as a result of a risk or hazard.
- Acknowledge that all employees have a part to play in managing risk, as outlined in the Employee Position Description (PDP).
- Ensure compliance with Council's Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Framework.

The involvement and commitment of all employees is fundamental to a successful Risk Management program.

8.7 Contractors

- Ensure that contractual and legal obligations are met in accordance with Council's Risk Management Policy, Risk Management Framework, Occupational Health and Safety systems and policies.
- Respond immediately to the investigation of any report of a hazard or incident received from an employee, resident or visitor.
- Maintain appropriate and adequate insurances as required under their contract.
- Ensure compliance with all lawful directions issued by Council's nominated contract/project manager.

8.8 Community Asset Committees

- Community Asset Committees are committees created under Section 65 of the Local Government Act 2020. They exist to undertake functions, duties or powers on behalf of Council. Community Asset Committees are provided with an Instrument of Delegation which documents their functions, duties, or powers that they undertake on behalf of Council. Committees are advised that they must operate within their delegation to be afforded public liability protection by Council.

For those committees undertaking any functions or hiring of facilities, the delegation clearly states their responsibility to ensure third parties have the appropriate public liability insurances. Council officers are available to meet with committees on request to provide information and support.

8.9 External Stakeholders

- The involvement and commitment of external stakeholders is critical to a successful Risk Management program.

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- External stakeholders will be given the opportunity to identify risks and prioritise them in accordance with Council's Risk Management Framework.
- Risks of an operational nature will be managed and addressed by Council's operational procedures. Defects and actions taken to rectify defects in Council assets, reported by external stakeholders, will be recorded in the Customer Request Management System.
- Other types of risks, such as strategic risks, will be identified by corporate liability risk audits, internal and self-audit reviews conducted in accordance with approved plans. The risks identified by these processes may be recorded in Council's Strategic Risk Register.

9. PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING

9.1 Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators have been developed for the risk management program and measures against these are used to focus on necessary improvements and/or to recognise good performance and progress.

Indicators have been considered from various resources, which included the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework, Victorian Auditor-General's Office and AFS and Associates Pty Ltd (internal auditor's) recommendations.

Risk Management Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)		
Activity	Performance Indicator	Target
Review Fraud and Corruption Policy	Fraud and Corruption Policy reviewed every two years	100%
Roles and responsibilities for risk management are clearly defined at all levels of the organisation.	Process in place to respond to incidents, near misses, incidents, hazards and complaints.	80% to 100%
Develop and embed a risk management culture within Council.	Risk management included in position description and relevant documentation	100%
Liquidity ratio	Defined as current assets as a percentage of current liabilities	100% to 400%
Unrestricted cash to current liabilities ratio.	Defined as unrestricted cash as a percentage of current liabilities	10% to 300%
Asset renewal compared to depreciation.	Defined as asset renewal expense as a percentage of depreciation	60% to 130%
Loans and borrowings compared to rates income.	Defined as interest bearing loans and borrowings as a percentage of rate revenue	0% to 70%
Loans and borrowings repayments compared to rates income.	Defined as interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings as a percentage of rate revenue	0% to 20%
Indebtedness (non-current liabilities to own sourced revenue)	Defined as non-current liabilities as a percentage of own source revenue	2% to 70%
Adjusted underlying result (adjusted result/adjusted revenue)	Defined as the underlying surplus (or deficit) as a percentage of adjusted underlying revenue	-20% to 20%

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Significant Rate Debtors overdue	Reduce the level of outstanding rates at 30 June each year	Reduce the amount of outstanding rates from the previous year
Excessive Annual Leave	Reduce annual leave liability	Reduce the amount of annual leave liability from the previous year
Capital program schedule assessment	Complete the budgeted capital works	80% to 100%
Satisfaction in Council decisions	Defined as the community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed in making decisions in the interest of the community	40% to 100%
Satisfaction with Sealed Local Roads	Defined as the community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads	50% to 100%
Satisfaction with Community Consultation and Engagement	Defined as the community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of the council. This includes consulting and engaging directly with the community on key local issues requiring decisions by council	40% to 100%

10. TRAINING AND RESOURCES

10.1 Employees

Risk management is resourced to provide effective and stable processes to increase awareness, responsibility and ownership across the organisation.

The successful engagement of employees is essential for the success of the Risk Management Framework. The Risk Management Framework and supporting policy, procedures and forms are made available to all employees. Information and awareness sessions are provided to employees to improve transparency and increase Council's risk management culture.

Training is designed to increase the knowledge and awareness of employees in several risk management topics including general risk management, liability, fraud awareness and procedures.

In addition to formal training, the Chief Operating Officer acts as a specialist advisor to employees. This includes assistance in identifying and assessing risk exposures and the steps in developing, implementing and monitoring of sustainable control measures.

10.2 Councillors

Councillors are key strategic decision makers and it is therefore imperative that they have an understanding of Council's Risk Management Policy and Framework and their role in informed decision making based on sound risk management principles.

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10.3 Audit and Risk Committee

Audit and Risk Committee members should understand their roles and responsibilities as outlined in Council's Risk Management Policy and Framework, including the monitoring and review of risk management reports and outcomes from management and external auditors.

10.4 Performance Management

Risk management is a corporate priority and as such, all employees are required to actively participate in the risk management process, as outlined in their position descriptions. The Performance Development Process gives way to any risk management related indicators being reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Actions arising from treatment action plans for specific risks may be used as performance measures for individual or business unit performance plans.

11. DEFINITION

Consequence	The outcome of an event affecting objectives.
Control	The measure that maintains or modifies a risk.
Contractor	An independent entity that agrees to furnish a certain number of quantity of goods, material, equipment, personnel, and or services that meet or exceed stated requirements or specifications, at a mutually agreed upon price and within a specified timeframe.
Employees	Includes all permanent and temporary employees of Council.
Environment	Risks arising relating to the environmental consequences of progressing Council's strategic objectives (energy efficiency, pollution, recycling, waste management, landfill, emissions). Those relating to pollution, environmental noise, energy, efficiency and ongoing service operation.
Financial	Risks arising from financial planning, budgetary control and the adequacy of insurance cover. Include issues that affect the ability of Council to meet its financial commitments.
Frequency	A measure of the number of occurrences
Hazard	A source of potential harm or a situation with a potential to cause injury, damage
Likelihood	The level of possibility that the Ararat Rural City Council could be exposed to risk.
Monitor	To check, supervise, observe critically or measure the progress of an activity, action or system on a regular basis to identify performance levels.
Operational Risks	Operational risks are take into consideration risks which will prevent units from delivery services to the community.

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Reputation / Brand Image / Political	Risks arising from community expectations change of government, implementation of laws / regulations that apply to local government and how it conducts its business, governmental services, and activities. May include failure to deliver either local or State Government policy, or meet State Government requirements. Failure to meet current and changing community needs. Includes the threat to the reputation of Council due to conduct of staff or elected members.
Residual Risk	The remaining level of risk after risk treatment measures have been taken
Risk	Anything that could prevent the Council from achieving its objectives. Risk may arise from an event, an action, or from a lack of action. It is measured in terms of consequences and likelihood.
Risk Analysis	A systematic process to determine the level of risk after consideration of sources, consequences and likelihood.
Risk Appetite	The amount and type of risk that an organisation is willing to take in order to meet its strategic objectives. Risk Appetite is best described as an organisation's pursuit of risk or its willingness to take risks as opposed to avoiding them.
Risk Assessment	The overall process of risk analysis and risk evaluation.
Risk Category	Source or risk used to assess consequence
Risk Criteria	Measures / standards by which the significance of risk can be assessed.
Risk Control	That part of risk treatment which involves the implementation of policies, standards, procedures and physical changes to a thing, work process or system of work to eliminate or minimise the impact of the risk.
Risk Evaluation	The process used to determine risk management priorities by comparing the level of risk against predetermined standards, target risk levels or other criteria.
Risk Identification	Process of determining what, where, when, Why and how something could happen
Risk Management	The culture, processes and structures directed towards the effective management of potential opportunities and adverse effects.
Risk Management Framework	Set of elements and the Council's management system concerned with managing risk.
Risk Management Policy	The statement of overall intention and direction of an organisation related to risk management
Risk Management Process	The systematic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the tasks of communicating, establishing the context, identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and reviewing risk.
Risk Owner	The person or entity with the accountability and authority to manage a risk.
Risk Profile	The description of any set of risks.
Risk Rating	Risk priority based on consequence and likelihood assessments.

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Risk Reduction	Actions taken to lessen the likelihood, negative consequence, or both, associated with a risk.
Risk Reduction	Acceptance of the potential for loss, or benefit of gain from a particular risk.
Risk Transfer	Shifting the responsibility or burden for loss to another party through legislation, contract, insurance or other mean. Risk transfer can also refer to shifting a physical risk or part thereof elsewhere.
Risk Treatment	The selection and implementation of appropriate options for dealing with risk.
Service Delivery	Risks arising from Council's ability to provide services to the community, dependence on outside suppliers, goods, services, utilities. May include risks associated with changes in demographic, residential or social economic trends and Councils ability to deliver its objectives. May include risks arising from community health issues, transport strikes or other event impacting Council ability to deliver services.
Stakeholder	A person or organisation that can affect, be affected by or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activity.
Strategic Risks	Strategic risks are the risks that have the potential to influence the achievement of strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan

12. ADMINSTRATVEI UPDATES

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

13. REFERENCES

AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Guidelines
Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004
Local Government Act 2020
Risk Register
Fraud and Corruption Incident Register and Form
Business Continuity Plan
Disaster Recovery Plan
Fraud and Corruption Policy
Council Plan 2025-2029
Council Vision 2035

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Risk Review Record
Appendix 2 – Risk Treatment Plan

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Risk Assessment/Treatment Template							
Unit:		Location:					
Activity/Process:		Date of Assessment:					
Assessed by (Name):							
Risk Analysis			Risk Treatment (Controls)				
Identified Risks	Risk Analysis (refer Table 2)		Risk Level (refer Table 2)	Description of Risk Treatment (How will the identified risks be controlled?)	Responsible Officer (Name)	Due Date*	Completed Date**
	Likelihood	Consequence					
1			Low - Extreme				
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

Signed by Assessor:	Position (Name):	
Signed by Manager:	Name of Manager:	Date Controls to be reviewed:
Comments/Notes:		

Governance and Administration Coordinator:	Date of Review:
Include in Risk Register: Yes ☐ No ☐ Risk Register ID No:	

**Enter a date when the control measure was actually implemented.

*Enter a date when the control measures are expected to be implemented.

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Ararat Rural City

Risk Assessment/Treatment Template
TABLE A
Likelihood / Consequences / Level

LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCES				
	1: Insignificant	2: Minor	3: Moderate	4: Major	5: Catastrophic
Almost Certain: The event is expected to occur in most circumstances or at least twice a year	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Likely: Expect this event at least annually	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
Possible: The event might occur at some time over an extended period	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
Unlikely: The event could occur at some time but is not usually experienced	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
Rare: The event may occur in exceptional circumstances	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High

Risk Management Policy and Framework



Risk Treatment Plan	
Unit:	
Risk Treatment Description: (As per Risk Assessment/Treatment Form)	
Treatment Goal: (example: reduce risk rating from extreme to high by reducing likelihood and/or consequence)	
Current Risk Rating:	
Responsible Officer: (As listed in the risk register)	
Treatment Action:	
Activity (what & how):	
Treatment Action Responsible Officer:	
Resources Required:	
Reporting & Monitoring Required	Date:
Completed By:	
Revised Risk Rating (After actions have been implemented)	
Revised Consequence Rating:	Revised Likelihood Rating:
	Revised Risk Rating:

3.5 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29675

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 Procurement Strategy 2026–2031 for Council consideration. The Strategy has been developed in response to an internal audit into procurement, which identified the need for Council to establish a clearer strategic framework to guide procurement planning, decision-making, contract management, reporting and continuous improvement.

The Strategy sets out how Council will use procurement to deliver value for money, strengthen governance and probity, support local economic participation, embed social and environmental outcomes, and improve oversight across the procurement lifecycle. It aligns with Council's legislative obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, Council's Procurement Policy and broader strategic priorities including the Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025–2029.

DISCUSSION

An internal audit into procurement recommended that Council develop a procurement strategy to provide a clear and coordinated direction for procurement activity. While Council's Procurement Policy establishes the mandatory requirements, thresholds, delegations and procedural controls for procurement, the Strategy provides the longer-term strategic framework for how procurement can better support community outcomes, financial sustainability, risk management and organisational accountability.

The Procurement Strategy 2026–2031 is structured around three strategic themes: social and economic prosperity; environmental leadership and circularity; and governance, innovation and value. These themes are supported by objectives, measures of success, implementation actions, a risk management framework, roles and responsibilities, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The Strategy will assist Council to move procurement from a largely transactional function to a more strategic and risk-based function. It will support stronger planning, more consistent contract management, improved procurement data, greater use of local and regional suppliers where appropriate, and clearer reporting on the social, environmental and financial value delivered through Council expenditure.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no immediate budget implications arising from adoption of the Procurement Strategy.

Policy/Relevant Law

The Strategy supports Council's obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, including requirements for Council to prepare, adopt and comply with a Procurement Policy that promotes open and fair competition and provides value for money. The Strategy should be read in conjunction with Council's Procurement Policy, Fraud and Corruption Control Policy, Public Interest Disclosure Policy, Risk Management Framework and other relevant governance instruments.

Sustainability Implications

The Strategy has positive economic, social and environmental implications. It seeks to increase local supplier participation, strengthen ethical and transparent supply chains, support social value through community infrastructure, reduce emissions through fleet and plant transition, increase use of recycled and recovered materials, and embed whole-of-life value in procurement decisions.

Risk Assessment

Adoption of the Strategy will reduce procurement-related risk by providing a clearer framework for governance, probity, supplier management, contract oversight, modern slavery risk, environmental and social risk, cybersecurity considerations and supply continuity

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The Strategy has been developed following an internal audit recommendation and has been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee. Implementation will require a whole-of-organisation approach, with key internal stakeholders including the Executive Leadership Team, procurement function, managers and budget owners, delegates and approvers, contract managers and staff involved in procurement. Community engagement is not required for adoption of the Strategy; however, implementation will include ongoing engagement with local suppliers, regional procurement networks and relevant community stakeholders where actions relate to local participation, social procurement or community infrastructure outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council notes that the Procurement Strategy 2026-2031 has been developed in response to an internal audit recommendation to establish a strategic procurement framework.*
- 2. Council adopts the Procurement Strategy 2026-2031.*
- 3. Council notes that implementation of the Strategy will be monitored through internal governance processes and reported as appropriate through future procurement reporting.*

MOVED CR JOYCE

SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG

That:

- 1. Council notes that the Procurement Strategy 2026-2031 has been developed in response to an internal audit recommendation to establish a strategic procurement framework.**
- 2. Council adopts the Procurement Strategy 2026-2031.**
- 3. Council notes that implementation of the Strategy will be monitored through internal governance processes and reported as appropriate through future procurement reporting.**

Cr Joyce and Cr R Armstrong spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5371/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Procurement Strategy 2026-2031 is provided as Attachment 3.5



Ararat Rural City

Ararat Rural City Council's Procurement Strategy 2026-2031



DOCUMENT CONTROL

Category Type: Strategy

Type: Council

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive
Officer

Last Review Date: 23 February 2021

Date Approved: 27 January 2026

Next Review Date: January 2030

Revision No: 1

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Councillors
- Chief Executive Officer
- Audit and Risk Committee

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

Date of publication: June 2026



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Introduction

This Procurement Strategy 2026-2031 sets out how we will manage procurement in a way that aligns with the Community Vision 2035 and the goals outlined in the Council Plan 2025-2029. To do this, the Strategy uses social procurement and environmentally sustainable procurement as key pillars. This reinforces actions already taken by Council to support and develop the local economy, including contributions to the circular economy in the Ararat municipality and the electrification of Council fleet and plant equipment.

Council adopts the following procurement principles:

- Value for Money;
- Sustainability (social, economic and environmental);
- Open and fair competition;
- Accountability;
- Risk management; and
- Probity and transparency.





Purpose

The purpose of this Procurement Strategy 2026-2031 is to set a clear strategic direction for how Council will use procurement to deliver value for money, support local economic development, strengthen ethical and sustainable supply chains, and improve governance across the procurement lifecycle. The Strategy provides a whole-of-Council framework that aligns procurement decisions with Council's strategic priorities, legislative obligations, and commitment to responsible public spending.

Scope & Application

This Strategy applies to the procurement of goods, services and works undertaken by Council, including strategic sourcing, quotation and tender processes, contract management, and supplier relationship management. It applies to all Council staff, delegates, and contractors involved in procurement planning, purchasing, evaluation, approval, contract administration, and reporting. This Strategy should be read in conjunction with Council's Procurement Policy and related governance documents. It does not replace detailed procedural requirements, financial delegations, or legislative obligations, but provides the strategic framework that guides how those requirements are applied.





Legislative & Policy Context

This Strategy supports Council's obligations under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic), including the requirement for Council to adopt and comply with a Procurement Policy that promotes open and fair competition and provides value for money. It also aligns with Council's Procurement Policy, financial delegations, risk management framework, and other relevant governance instruments. In implementing this Strategy, Council will have regard to Victorian local government best practice procurement guidance, social procurement principles, environmentally sustainable procurement approaches, and ethical sourcing expectations, including actions that reduce the risk of modern slavery and other exploitative practices in supply chains.





Procurement Definitions

Local supplier	Local supplier means a supplier based within the Ararat Rural City municipality, or where appropriate, within the broader region as defined by Council policy or procedure.
Value for money	Value for money means the best available outcome over the full procurement lifecycle, having regard to cost, quality, fitness for purpose, risk, sustainability, and social benefit.
Whole-of-life cost	Whole-of-life cost means the total cost of a good, service or works package over its useful life, including acquisition, operation, maintenance, renewal and disposal.
Social procurement	Social procurement means using procurement to generate positive social outcomes in addition to the delivery of goods, services or works.
Environmentally sustainable procurement	Environmentally sustainable procurement means procurement that considers environmental impacts across the lifecycle of purchased goods, services and works, including waste, emissions, resource use and circularity.
Modern slavery	Modern slavery refers to serious forms of exploitation, including forced labour, debt bondage, deceptive recruiting, trafficking and child labour, that may occur in domestic or international supply chains.



Acknowledgment of Country

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land where we live, and pays its respects to their Elders, past and present. We recognise the Eastern Maar, Wadawurrung, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples' continuing, deep, spiritual connection to the land and their rights to their Country.



1. Social & Economic Prosperity

To be a catalyst for local growth by leveraging Council's purchasing power to create a diverse, inclusive, and prosperous economy for all members of the Ararat community.

Council believes in the power of having a 'local first' approach to procurement and ensuring that every dollar spent works harder for the residents of the municipality. By prioritising local suppliers, social enterprises, ethical supply chains and social infrastructure, we aim to build a more resilient and robust economy that creates inclusive employment and social participation. In a regional community like Ararat, procurement is not just a transaction; it is a mechanism for building stronger community ties, ensuring gender equity, and guaranteeing that our regional business sector thrives through innovation and increased capacity.





Local First

The Ararat community has a strong tradition of integrity, hard work and pragmatic problem-solving. Council will continue to seek these strengths by prioritising the use of local suppliers of goods and services for their procurement.

To further leverage this approach, Council will seek to disaggregate large-scale projects into smaller work packages where possible, allowing smaller local businesses to compete with larger external businesses on these projects.

Ethical and Transparent Supply Chains

Council is committed to ensuring that no goods purchased by Ararat are produced using modern slavery or exploitative labour practices. Council will develop a supplier code of conduct to ensure our partners align with our ethical standards.

Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure is made up of the facilities, spaces, networks and services that support individual and community health and wellbeing, promote a cohesive society and support economic prosperity. Council will continue to prioritise developing and maintaining high value and adaptable community infrastructure that supports the diverse needs of our growing and changing community.



Objectives

- 1.1. Local suppliers are prioritised and supported to increase their participation in Council procurement.
- 1.2. All suppliers of goods and services to Council operate ethically and transparently.
- 1.3. A vibrant circular economy is established, where local producers and makers are prioritised for the supply of upcycled or ethically recovered materials and products.
- 1.4. Social value is embedded in all community infrastructure projects, ensuring facilities are adaptable and serve multi-purpose social needs.

Measures of Success

- Achieve a 10% annual increase in the total dollar value of spend with local businesses.
 - Actions:
 - Create a database that tracks whether a contract is from a local, State, Australian or International supplier to measure dollar % spend with each.
- Creation of a Modern Slavery Statement and inclusion of a Modern Slavery clause in all supplier contracts.
 - Actions:
 - Create a Modern Slavery Statement.
 - Add a Modern Slavery clause into all contracts.
- 100% of Council suppliers have signed the Modern Slavery clause.
 - Actions:
 - Create a supplier database that includes a whether the supplier has signed the Modern Slavery clause with a saved copy of the signed clause.
- All community facilities serve at least one purpose that is secondary to their primary purpose. (for example prayer space in the library or a cool space in a neighbourhood house for hot days)
 - Actions:
 - Meet with community members and organisations to see what secondary services may be required, and where they will have the most impact.
 - Create database of all community facilities with a summary of existing primary and secondary purposes.
 - Map out community facilities to ensure different services are spread throughout the community.
 - Support community facilities in pursuing grants to upgrade their services to include secondary purposes.
 - Assist with informing the community of the new services provided.



2. Environmental Leadership & Circularity

To lead the region in sustainable procurement practices that reduce waste, champion renewable energy, and ensure a healthy environment for future generations.

Council is committed to leading by example in the transition to net-zero emissions and the circular economy, where waste is minimised and resources are recovered and reused. Environmental sustainability is critical in our procurement; we focus on the entire lifecycle of goods to ensure we maximise the value of the materials and inputs used. Through our procurement choices we seek to protect our unique natural environment, while tackling global challenges like climate change, through pragmatic, local action.





Transition to Low Emissions Future

Council plays an active role in enabling the transition to a low emissions future through our contractors, partnerships and investments. We will prioritise the electrification of our fleet and plant equipment in all renewal cycles, ensuring that, where possible, our vehicles and machinery are powered by clean energy. We will support and drive initiatives and projects that seek to create clean energy such as wind power, biomass, and biogas, to power Council facilities and services.

Circular Materials and Infrastructure

We recognise that the materials used in our civil works have a significant environmental impact. Where feasible, Council will mandate the inclusion of recycled and recovered materials, such as glass and plastic, in road construction and infrastructure projects and the procurement of public furniture and bins. By leveraging our local expertise in biomass and waste-to-energy, we ensure that infrastructure projects support a system where materials are kept in use for as long as possible and are disposed of in a way that maximises their value.

Sustainable Supply Chains and Lifecycle Value

To avoid waste generation, we must change how we evaluate the goods we buy. Council will prioritise products designed for durability and repairability, ensuring we achieve value for money on a whole-of-life basis. We will work with our suppliers to reduce supply chain waste and seek partners with initiatives that support this principle, such as sustainable packaging or mandatory take-back schemes for high-volume items, ensuring resources are recovered at the end of their useful life.



Objectives

- 1.1. Transition Council's fleet and plant equipment to zero or low-emission technologies to support net-zero targets.
- 1.2. Council facilities are powered by clean energy sources.
- 1.3. Embed circularity by mandating the use of recycled or recovered materials in infrastructure and community assets.
- 1.4. Community furniture, play and exercise equipment and bins are made in part or completely from recycled, reclaimed or recovered materials.
- 1.5. Optimise Value for Money by prioritising products designed for durability, repairability, and minimal environmental impact.

Measures of Success

- 100% of renewals of Council's light vehicle fleet to be hybrid (refer to Council's Electrification Policy).
- 100% of Council's small plant and equipment renewals to be electric.
 - Actions:
 - Research appropriate electric options for all of Council's small plant and equipment.
- All of Council's large plant and equipment to be assessed for electric options and feasibility prior to the end of their lifecycle.
 - Actions:
 - Create a long-term renewal plan that evaluates emerging hydrogen, electric, or biogas options for heavy machinery.
- 100% of Council facilities are powered by clean energy sources.
 - Actions:
 - Increase rooftop solar installations on Council facilities.
 - Complete the biomass energy facility.
 - Ensure data is available to distinguish the energy sources used to power facilities.
- 100% of infrastructure project plans include a feasibility assessment for recycled material use.
 - Actions:
 - Include the feasibility of using recycled and recovered materials in the planning phase of all infrastructure projects.
 - Create mandatory reporting on which recycled and recovered materials are included in each project, or if not included, why they could not be used.
- All new installations of community furniture, play and exercise equipment, and bins are to be made in part or completely from recycled, reclaimed, or recovered materials.
 - Actions:
 - Research suppliers of these items that meet these requirements.
- 100% of procured products to be assessed for durability and repairability.
- 100% of office stationery and supplies to be packaged in 100% recyclable packaging by the end of 2026.
 - Actions:
 - Research supplies that support this approach.
 - Encourage local suppliers to meet this demand.



3. Governance, Innovation & Value

To deliver excellence in public spending through innovative, transparent, and high-integrity procurement processes that provide maximum value to the community.

Effective procurement requires a foundation of transparency, accountability, and the pursuit of the best value for money for our community. Council strives to use modern and efficient processes and systems that provide a fair and open playing field for all potential suppliers. By fostering innovation and embracing digital transformation, we will continue to support our community's needs without compromising financial sustainability or the integrity of our decision-making.





Strategic Sourcing and Financial Value

Council identifies procurement not merely as an administrative task, but as a strategic tool essential for achieving value for money at the point of purchase and across the lifecycle of the goods or services procured. By leveraging collaborative procurement and regional partnerships, we can aggregate purchasing power to secure better pricing and service outcomes. Council will use whole-of-life cost assessments to ensure that initial savings do not result in higher long-term maintenance, operational, or disposal costs.

Ethical Governance and Compliance

Council goes beyond its legislated requirements to ensure it is ethical and responsible in all procurement activities. We build our procurement activities on a foundation of probity and transparency, maintaining accountability for our actions and a commitment to continuous improvement. By fostering a culture of integrity and impartial decision-making, Council protects the organisation from risk and ensures that open and fair competition is a genuine reality for every business seeking to partner with Ararat.

Procurement Technology and Contract Oversight

We are dedicated to modernising our internal tools by implementing digital procurement processes and systems that streamline approvals and improve data accuracy. We will implement and monitor targeted key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure suppliers are adhering to the social and environmental commitments made in contracts. By ensuring value for money is delivered throughout the contract lifecycle, we can confirm that Council's strategic objectives are met with accountability.



Objectives

- 1.1. Maximise economies of scale through active participation in collaborative regional and sector-wide procurement clusters.
- 1.2. Embed whole-of-life cost assessments into the planning phase of all major procurements to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- 1.3. Implement a rigorous internal auditing program to guarantee competition fairness, legislative compliance, and the correct application of local prioritisation benefits.
- 1.4. Deploy digital procurement tools to modernise workflows, streamline internal approvals, and improve the accuracy of data reporting.
- 1.5. Ensure all contracts include targeted KPIs that are actively monitored to guarantee the delivery of agreed social, environmental, and financial value.

Measures of Success

- 100% of high-value procurements (>\$50k) include a formal whole-of-life cost analysis in the evaluation report by 2028.
- 25% annual savings through integration and collaboration with regional and sector wide procurement clusters.
- Create and publish an annual "Procurement Impact Report" on the Council website by 2027.
- Implement bi-annual contract auditing by 2027.
- Reduce administrative lead time from scoping to contract award by 15% through digital workflows by 2030.
- 100% of active contracts over \$50k have assigned Contract Managers and quarterly performance reviews.
- 100% of Council staff with financial delegation to complete mandatory sustainable and ethical procurement training by 2028.
 - Actions:
 - Research appropriate training opportunities that cover the Local Government Act 2020 and ESG frameworks.
 - Budget for training in the annual financial plan.
 - List all staff with financial delegation and track completion rates.



Risk Management Framework

Council will apply a risk-based approach to procurement planning, sourcing, evaluation and contract management to protect public value and support sound decision-making. Procurement risk will be assessed having regard to the value, complexity, criticality and market characteristics of each procurement, with higher-risk activities requiring stronger planning, documentation, review and oversight. In addition to financial and operational risks, Council will consider probity, supplier conduct, modern slavery, information security, safety, environmental impact and service continuity risks across the full procurement lifecycle.





- **Probity and conflict of interest risk** will be managed through clear governance, role separation, documented evaluation processes, conflict of interest declarations, and transparent recordkeeping.
- **Supplier and market risk** will be considered through market analysis, due diligence, financial viability checks where appropriate, and contingency planning for constrained or concentrated markets.
- **Contract and performance risk** will be managed through fit-for-purpose specifications, appropriate contract terms, assigned contract managers, performance monitoring, and escalation pathways for non-performance.
- **Modern slavery and ethical sourcing risk** will be addressed through supplier declarations, contractual obligations, risk screening for high-risk categories, and ongoing engagement with suppliers on labour and human rights expectations.
- **Cybersecurity and information management risk** will be considered in procurements involving digital systems, data handling, connected devices or critical operational technology, with controls proportionate to the sensitivity of the procurement.
- **Environmental and social risk** will be managed by considering lifecycle impacts, waste, emissions, workplace safety, accessibility, and broader community outcomes in procurement planning and evaluation.
- **Supply continuity and emergency risk** will be managed by identifying critical goods and services, maintaining appropriate contractual and operational contingencies, and applying clear governance to emergency procurement decisions.



Roles & Responsibilities

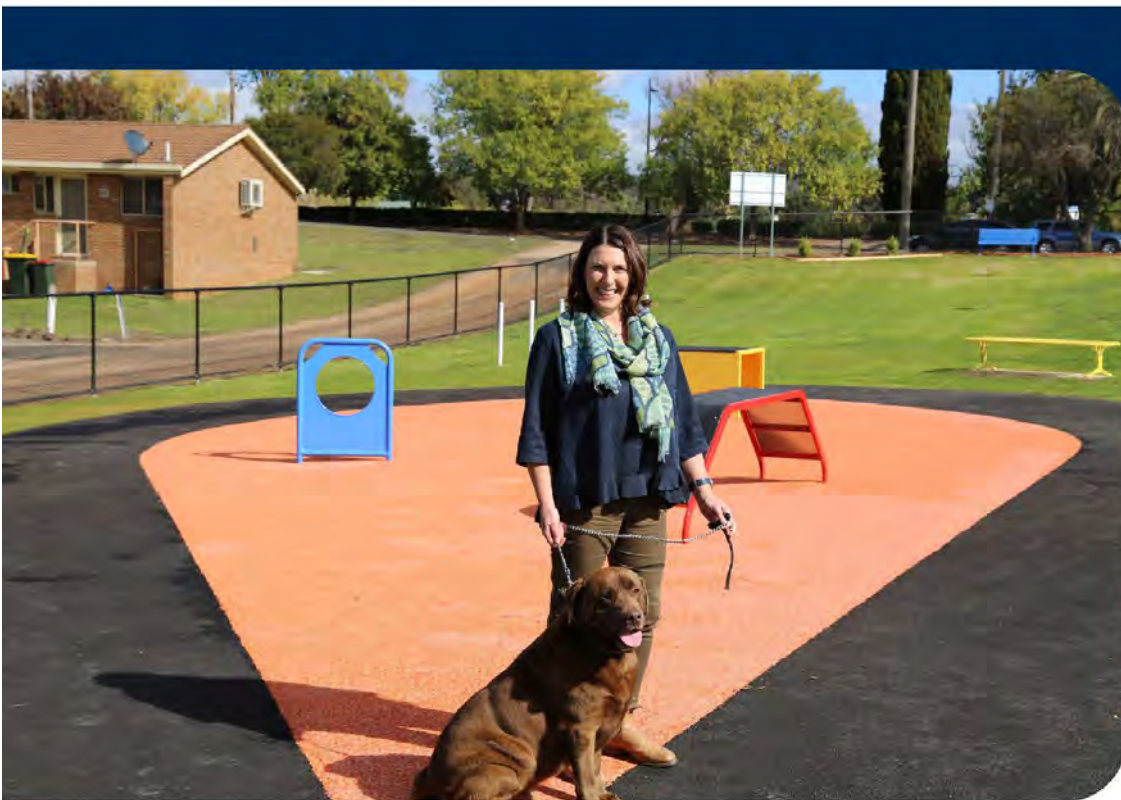
Clear roles and responsibilities are essential to ensure procurement decisions are lawful, transparent, efficient and aligned with Council's strategic priorities. Responsibility for implementation of this Strategy is shared across the organisation, with accountability applied according to governance, delegation, procurement, contract management and reporting functions.

Role	Primary Responsibility
Council and Executive Leadership Team	Provide strategic oversight, endorse procurement direction, ensure alignment with Council priorities, and support a culture of accountability, probity and value for money.
Procurement function or responsible officer	Lead implementation of the Strategy, maintain procurement guidance and templates, support sourcing processes, build organisational capability, and coordinate procurement reporting and continuous improvement.
Managers and budget owners	Plan procurement needs, confirm scope and budget, support market engagement, ensure procurement decisions reflect service needs, and oversee contract performance within their area of responsibility.
Delegates and approvers	Exercise financial and procurement delegations in accordance with policy, ensure decisions are documented and defensible, and confirm that risk, probity and value for money have been appropriately considered.
Contract managers	Manage supplier performance, monitor delivery against contract requirements and KPIs, maintain records, manage extensions or variations appropriately, and escalate issues where contractual performance or risk requires intervention.
Project officers and staff involved in procurement	Comply with procurement requirements, maintain accurate records, identify and manage risks, declare conflicts of interest, and contribute to fair, transparent and efficient procurement processes.



Implementation & Governance

Council will implement this Strategy through phased action over the 2026-31 period, with responsibilities shared across the organisation. The Executive Leadership Team will provide strategic oversight and ensure procurement supports broader Council priorities. The responsible procurement function will lead implementation, develop supporting tools and templates, and coordinate reporting and capability uplift. Managers and contract managers will be responsible for applying the Strategy in procurement planning, evaluation, contract management and supplier performance monitoring. Implementation priorities will include strengthening procurement data, improving staff capability, embedding social and environmental criteria into sourcing processes, and ensuring that contract management practices are consistent, risk-based and outcome-focused.





Monitoring, Reporting & Review

Council will monitor implementation of this Strategy through the objectives, measures of success and actions outlined in each strategic theme. Progress will be reported through internal governance processes and, where appropriate, through public reporting on procurement outcomes and impacts. Measures may be refined over time as Council's data maturity improves and as legislative, market or organisational conditions change. This Strategy should be reviewed during its term if there are material changes to Council priorities, legislative obligations or procurement operating conditions, and otherwise will inform the next review and refresh of Council's longer-term procurement direction.



Contact Us

Ararat Rural City Council

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Ararat, Victoria, Australia 3377

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Email: council@ararat.vic.gov.au



3.6 MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026-2029

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29676

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 Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) 2026-2029 has been prepared by the Ararat Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) in accordance with the requirements of the Emergency Management Act 2013. The Plan outlines the arrangements for prevention, preparedness, response, relief and recovery from emergencies within Ararat Rural City.

The MEMP is a strategic document developed collaboratively with emergency management agencies and stakeholders and is intended to support a coordinated and integrated approach to emergency management across the municipality. The Plan identifies key municipal risks, emergency management responsibilities, governance arrangements and supporting sub-plans and complementary plans.

While Council is not required to formally approve the MEMP, Councillor endorsement demonstrates Council's support for the collaborative emergency management arrangement developed through the MEMPC and acknowledges the importance of emergency management planning to the safety and resilience of the Ararat community. The Plan has been endorsed by the MEMPC as well as the Grampians Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMPC).

DISCUSSION

The Emergency Management Act 2013 requires every municipal district in Victoria to maintain as Municipal Emergency Management Plan prepared through the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC). The MEMPC is responsible for the preparation, review and maintenance of the MEMP and ensuring alignment with both the State Emergency Management Plan and the Grampians Regional Emergency Management Plan.

The revised MEMP replaces the previous 2020-2023 Municipal Emergency Management Plan and has been updated to reflect current legislation, governance arrangements, municipal risk assessments, agency responsibilities and emergency management practices.

The Plan provides a comprehensive framework covering:

- Municipal emergency management governance and planning arrangements.
- Community emergency risk assessment outcomes and priority hazards.
- Mitigation and resilience-building activities.
- Response arrangements and emergency coordination structures.
- Relief and recovery arrangements.
- Roles and responsibilities of Council and partner agencies.
- Supporting sub-plans and complementary emergency management plans.

The Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) identifies several high-priority risks for the municipality, including bushfire/grassfire, flood, extreme temperatures, transport incidents, human disease (pandemic), aircraft incidents and hazardous materials incidents.

The Plan has been developed through consultation and collaboration with core and non-core MEMPC members including Victoria Police, CFA, VICSES, Ambulance Victoria, Australian Red Cross,

Department of Health, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, East Grampians Health Service and other relevant agencies.

Councillor endorsement is sought to acknowledge Council's commitment to supporting emergency management planning and community resilience within Ararat Rural City.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no direct budget implications arising from endorsement of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

Implementation of actions and emergency response activities will be managed through existing operational budgets and any future budget considerations will be addressed through Council's annual budget process.

Policy/Relevant Law

Relevant legislation includes:

- Emergency Management Act 2013.
- Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018.
- Local Government Act 2020.
- State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP).
- Grampians Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP).

Sustainability Implications

The Municipal Emergency Management Plan contributes to:

- **Social sustainability** by strengthening community resilience and preparedness for emergencies.
- **Economic sustainability** by supporting coordinated recovery arrangements following emergency events.
- **Environmental sustainability** through mitigation planning and consideration of environmental impacts within emergency management arrangements.

Risk Assessment

Failure to maintain a contemporary Municipal Emergency Management Plan may result in:

- Non-compliance with legislative obligations.
- Reduced emergency preparedness across the municipality.
- Increased risk to community safety and wellbeing.
- Reduced effectiveness of response, relief and recovery arrangements during emergencies.

Endorsement of the MEMP demonstrates Council's commitment to effective emergency management governance and continuous improvement.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The MEMP has been developed through the Ararat Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee, which comprises Council, emergency services, government agencies, health services and community representatives. The collaborative planning process ensures that a broad range of expertise and local knowledge informs emergency management arrangements.

The Plan will be publicly available following approval and publication, supporting community awareness of local emergency management arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Endorse the Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2026-2029 prepared by the Ararat Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.*

**MOVED CR WATERSTON
SECONDED CR J ARMSTRONG**

That Council:

- 1. Endorse the Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2026-2029 prepared by the Ararat Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.**

Cr Waterston and Cr J Armstrong spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5372/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2026-2029 is provided as Attachment 3.6



Ararat Rural City

Municipal Emergency Management Plan

2026-2029

Version: 4.0
Responsible Officer: Governance and Risk Lead
Issue Date: XX XXX XXXX
Review Date: January 2029

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VERSION CONTROLTABLE

Version	Date of Issue	Authors	Desc. Of Changes
V1.0	15/07/2015	Risk, Emergency Management and Local Laws Coordinator	
V1.1	08/2015	Risk, Emergency Management and Local Laws Coordinator	
V2.0	21/06/2017	David Todd (MERO)	
V2.1	05/10/2017	David Todd (MERO)	Changes made resulting from SES Audit
V2.2	10/02/2020	Bob Barks (EMC)	Admin/Contacts change from Annual Review Jan. 2020
V3.0	14/07/2020	Joel Farrow (EMC)	Draft MEMP submitted for adoption by MEMPC/Council
V3.1	22/11/2020	Joel Farrow (EMC)	Minor updated to adopted MEMP from recommendations from MEMP Audit
V4		Chandra Willmott (EMC)	

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026 - 2029

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 How to use this document

The Ararat Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) is a strategic document outlining the emergency management context in the Ararat Rural City, the arrangements in place for emergency planning, mitigation, response, relief, and recovery, and how various agencies with emergency management responsibilities within the Council will work together before, during and after emergencies.

This plan is intended for use by agencies with emergency management responsibilities to understand the emergency management context in the Council, and for members of the public to understand what emergency management arrangements are in place at a local level.

The MEMP identifies several sub-plans and complementary plans which together form the municipal emergency management arrangements. Whilst the MEMP is not intended for active reference during an emergency due to its strategic nature, the sub-plans and complementary plans contain a greater level of operational detail intended to support emergency management activities across the Council.

This plan is always active, and the provisions described herein are available for any incident or emergency across the municipality when required and determined by appropriate agency or person.

1.2 Authority

In 2020, the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018 amended the Emergency Management Act 2013 (EM Act 2013) to provide a new integrated arrangements at the state, regional and municipal levels for emergency management planning in Victoria. This legislation created the requirement for Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees (MEMPCs) to be established in each of the municipal districts of Victoria.

Each MEMPC is a collaborative, multi-agency group comprising members with organizational, industry and personal expertise relevant to emergency planning for the municipality. This MEMP has been prepared by the MEMPC in accordance with and complies with the requirements of the Act including having regard to the guidelines issued under section 77, *Guidelines for Preparing State Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Plans*.

1.3 Assurance and Approval

A Statement of Assurance (including checklist and certificate) has been submitted to the Grampians Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMP) pursuant to the EM Act 2013 (s60AG).

This Plan has been endorsed by the Ararat MEMPC and approved by the Grampians REMPC. This plan comes into effect when it is published and remains in effect until it is superseded by an approved and published update or withdrawn. This Plan supersedes the Ararat Municipal Management Plan 2020-2023.

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026 - 2029

1.4 Review

To ensure ongoing currency and relevance of this Plan, it is required to be reviewed at least every three years.

An urgent update of the Plan is permitted should there be a significant risk to life or property that may manifest if the Plan is not updated (EM Act 2013 s60AM). Urgent updates come into effect when published on the Council Website and remain in force for a maximum period of three months.

This plan will be reviewed no later than January 2029

1.5. Glossary and Acronyms

Definitions of words and phrases used throughout the MEMP have the same meaning as those prescribed in the relevant legislation, plans and standards, including

- Emergency Management Act 1986 and 2013
- State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)
- Local Government Act 202
- Risk Management Standards ISO:31000 2018

1.6. Planning Context

This Plan provides for an integrated, coordinated, and comprehensive approach to emergency management at the municipal level. The EM Act 2013 requires the MEMP to contain provisions for the mitigation of, response to, and relief and recovery from emergencies, and to specify the roles and responsibilities of agencies in relation to emergency management (where not outlined elsewhere).

It is recommended that the MEMP be read in conjunction with the Victorian State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP), the Grampians Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP), the Sub-plans and Complementary plans of the MEMP, and the Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) currently in place.

1.7. Vision, Goals, Objective, and Strategies

To Support a safe and resilient community.

1.7.1. Goals

- Implement measures to mitigate the effects of emergencies
- Support communities to be resilient and prepare for emergencies
- Support multi-agency cooperation before, during and after emergencies
- Streamline the provision of assistance to affected communities during and after emergencies.

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1.7.2. Objections

- Identify hazards and evaluate risks with the potential to impact upon the municipality
- Implement measures to prevent or reduce the likelihood and consequences of emergencies.
- Develop and administer programs that reduce community vulnerability and increase capacity for resilience and self-reliance.
- Manage support that may be provided to or from other municipalities.
- Assist in meeting the essential needs of individuals, families, and communities during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.
- Assist communities impacted by emergencies to recover.
- Complement other local, regional, and state emergency planning arrangements.

1.7.3. Strategies

- Appoint a Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)
- Conduct the Municipal Emergency Management Planning (MEMPC) planning process, including for Sub-plans and Complementary plans as required.
- Undertake a Community Emergency Risk Management (CERA) assessment on a three-yearly basis or as risks become apparent.
- Support emergency mitigation and public awareness programs within the municipality.
- Identify and plan for shared resources (e.g., municipal resources and other stakeholders) to be used in emergency response and recovery.

1.8. Training and Exercising

Exercises are a valuable tool to test the arrangements set out in the MEMP and give staff experience in activating the Plan. The arrangements in the SEMP require the MEMP to be exercised at least once per year.

The MEMPC will plan and undertake an annual exercise in either a desktop or practical format, based on a hypothetical emergency event. Any improvements identified during the planning, conduct, or debrief of these exercises will form part of the MEMP review. Alternatively, the MEMPC may decide the MEMP required amendment immediately.

Exercises are structured to provide the following benefits:

- Provide the opportunity for members and stakeholders to test their procedures and skills in simulated emergency situations.
- Provide an opportunity for the local emergency management community to work together to build shared capacity and capability.
- Test the MEMP and identify areas for continuous improvement.
- Use observations and outcomes to improve the MEMP.

A list of previous MEMP exercises is in Appendix E. Exercises

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1.9. Lesson management

Lessons management involves identifying and learning lessons captured through assurance and learning activities, such as debriefs, monitoring, and reviews. These may be conducted before, during, and after emergencies. Exercises, periodic reviews, and information gleaned from the experience of others are all valuable sources of lessons management information.

The Victorian Emergency Management Sector supports a culture of continuous improvement through the EM-LEARN Lessons Management Framework (emv.vic.gov.au). It encourages the sector to share lessons (both positive actions and areas for improvement), encourages learning from assurance activities and good practice, and focuses on systems of work rather than individual performance.

Observations can be made from any participant in a relevant activity and are used to inform the lessons management process. Debriefs, monitoring and reviews are also used to identify observations. Observations can be used to form insights, which in turn support the "learning of lessons". A lesson can only be considered "learned" once changes have been made and embedded that result in a change of practice.

Reports on observations, insights, and lessons learned should be submitted to the MEMPC for inclusion in Appendix E. Exercises, which includes a section for recording lessons identified from the exercise or event.

2. MUNICIPAL PROFILE

2.1. Ararat Rural City overview

Ararat Rural City is the gateway to the Grampians region in south-west Victoria. The land has a wealth of natural attractions that set the region apart, such as Mount Langi Ghiran, Mount Cole, and the Ararat Hills National Park, which frames our townships with scenic views and unique landscapes.

Ararat municipality is located in Western Victoria covering approximately 4,211 square kilometres with a diverse economy which is underpinned by advanced manufacturing, premium agriculture, nature-based tourism, healthcare, and renewable energy. The Melbourne- Adelaide railway and the Western Highway bisect the municipality and converge at Ararat. The location of the municipality in respect to major regional, interstate, and intrastate transport links gives it a strategic advantage in accessing major markets.

Offering a fantastic regional lifestyle with a diverse economy underpinned by full employment, the recent shift in population to the regions has delivered an uplift in local investment and confidence.

Ararat Rural City Council includes the city of Ararat and the townships of Elmhurst, Moyston, Willaura, Pomonal, Narrapumpelap South, Lake Bolac, Rossbridge, Wickliffe, Maroona, Tatyoon, Buangor, Mininera, Westmere, Streatham, Warrak, Mt Cole, Nerrin, Pura and Armstrong.

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2.2. Community Profile and Growth Forecasts

Ararat municipality has an estimated population of 11,880 (ABS, 2021) with women comprising of approximately 47% of the population and men accounting for the approximately 53%. Planning for emergencies requires the inclusion of a broad spectrum of contributing factors relating to the population, including ability, cultural sensitivities, religious considerations, and other factors. Growth forecasts are steady to slight increase.

Ararat Rural City has a broad age range throughout the municipality, with a median age of 46 years present in the population. Based on the potentially higher needs for assistance for those in the more vulnerable age groups (less than 18 years of age and older than 65 years) these age groups account for approximately 45% of the population and as such are a key consideration when undertaking municipal emergency management planning.

34% of Ararat population suffer from one or more health conditions, with arthritis, mental health conditions and asthma being the most common ailments.

2.3. Cultural Diversity

Addressing the need for cultural sensitivity and consideration during emergency management planning. In 2021, 18% of Ararat Rural City residents were born overseas, with most migrants hailing from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, India, and the Philippines. Approximately 6% of people speak a language other than English at home.

Ararat Rural City acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land the Djabwuring and Eastern Maar peoples. In 2021, 225 Ararat Rural City residents, representing approximately 2% of the population, identified as Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The municipality has a diverse presence of religions movements and organisations, with the largest representation present being Catholicism (15.7%), Anglican (8.5%) and Uniting Church (6.8%). Ararat Rural City hosts and supports a wide range of religions, including Buddhism, Islam, and other movements.

2.4. Topography

Ararat rests at an average of 333m above sea level, with its highest elevation at 607m and lowest elevation at 278m. The surrounding area of the municipality is a combination of flat plains, hills and mountains, rivers, creeks, and waterways with pockets of population scattered throughout the area. The township of Ararat is situated 200 km Northwest of Melbourne and on the major road and rail centre to Adelaide and has direct rail links with Geelong, Portland, Western, North-western and Central Victoria. Ararat is located on the Melbourne-Adelaide Railway via Geelong (National Rail Grid) and on the connection from Portland to areas to the north.

The township of Ararat is the first major stopping point for travellers from Melbourne since the construction of the Ballarat bypass. Ararat is a very important service centre for the surrounding agricultural area. It has a full range of regional shopping, educational and recreational facilities. Ararat is situated near the Hopkins River, which runs from its northern point to the North-East of

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Ararat to its ocean mouth near Warrnambool. Nearby Lake Bolac, located in the southern area of the municipality, is situated in the fertile western district plains, and is a popular location for camping, fishing, and boating.

The townships of Moyston and Pomonal to the west of Ararat are located at the foothills of the Grampians National Park and offer opportunities for a rural residential lifestyle. The township of Elmhurst attracts people seeking a rural lifestyle given the affordable prices, some services and commuting distance from Ararat.

Willaura and Streatham are located within highly productive and versatile soils which support a wide range of agricultural products.

Key Topographical Features of the Municipality

- Western boundary - Grampians Mountain Range including eastern scarp of the Serra Range and Mt William.
- North and Central - Mt Ararat Range and Black Range together with undulating foothills.
- North-East - Pyrenees Mountain Range including Mt Langi Ghiran, Mt Buangor, Mt Cole.
- Ararat to North - Undulating hills for sheep and wine growing.
- Ararat to South - Undulating open grazing and cropping in broad areas with relatively few connecting roads.
- Lake Bolac, Green Hill Lake (near Ararat), Lake Buninjon (north of Willaura) and many other minor wetlands.

2.5. Climate and Rainfall

Ararat Rural City is in a Temperate zone of south-eastern Australia. During summer, average temperatures range from a low of 10.7° to a high of 26°. In winter, average temperatures range from lows of 3.7° to highs of 12.5° with occasional winter snow on the high peaks above 800m. Historically, January is the warmest month with an average maximum temperature of 27.2°, whilst July is the coolest month, with average minimum temperature of 3.4° and maximum of 11.9°.

Ararat usually experiences 92 rain days per year, delivering an average of 585mm of rain. The wettest months are July and August (averaging 61.9mm and 67.7mm per year respectively), with March being the driest month (with average rainfall of 30.2mm)

2.6. Critical infrastructure

2.6.1. Road

The Ararat Rural City is serviced by an extensive road network jointly maintained by Council and Regional Roads Victoria.

The most significant single item of road infrastructure is the Western Highway (M8), which bisects the municipal in an east-west direction, providing a high speed (110km) dual lane connection to Ballarat to the east and (100km) single lane connection to Horsham to the west.

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The M8 is the main road connection between Melbourne and Adelaide, running via Ballarat and Horsham.

The Western Freeway and other declared freeways and arterial roads are managed by Regional Roads Victoria. Ararat Rural City Council is responsible for the maintenance of all roads and related assets listed on its Register of Public Roads, as well as Council owned assets on roads managed by other authorities. Council is also responsible for footpaths, service lanes and median strips adjacent to arterial roads.

Roads for which Regional Roads Victoria is the Responsible Road Authority

The roads for which Regional Roads Victoria is the Responsible Road Authority (pursuant to the Road Management Act 2004) are outlined on the VicRoads website, on the VicRoads Register of Public Roads and is available as an online interactive map.

Within the Ararat Rural City, these roads are:

- Western Highway through Ararat
- Glenelg Highway through Streatham, Westmere, Lake Bolac, Wickliffe
- Mortlake – Ararat Road from South of Lake Bolac to Ararat
- Rossbridge – Streatham Road
- Ararat – Pomonal Road
- Maroona-Glen Thompson Road
- Ararat-St Arnaud Road
- Pyrenees Highway from, Ararat to Elmhurst
- Pomonal Road to the north and north-east of Pomonal

2.6.2. Rail

Ararat Rural City is served by the Melbourne to Ararat rail link. This link offers 62 weekly passenger rail services on the V/Line network, and interstate passenger rail services via the Overland.

The municipal is serviced by four different lines with a mix of freight and passenger. These are:

- Interstate standard gauge from Pura through Ararat towards Stawell.
- Ararat Portland Standard gauge from Maroona to Glen Thompson.
- Ararat Ballarat broad gauge line east of Ararat.
- Pyrenees line standard gauge from Ararat to Elmhurst

2.6.3. Airport

The Ararat Airport is owned managed by the Ararat Rural City Council. The Ararat Aerodrome is licensed and is used by gliding clubs and recreational aviators. The aerodrome has two runways (04/22 and 12/30). The longest runway (12/30) is 1240m long whilst the other runway (04/22) is 660m.

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The associated infrastructure includes four hangers, a terminal building, fuel store and amenities, all which is located on the eastern edge of town, adjacent to the Western Highway.

Other unlicensed private aerodromes or aircraft landing strips may also exist within the municipality with regional airports located Horsham, Stawell, Hamilton, and Ballarat. Main interstate and international flight paths also pass over the municipality.

The Ararat Aerodrome Emergency Response Plan, developed by the Ararat Rural City Council in consultation with the MEMPC, is a complementary plan to this MEMP, and outlines emergency preparedness, response, and recovery procedures in the event of an aviation incident on or near the aerodrome.

2.6.4. Information and telecommunications

The quality and resilience of telecommunications infrastructure across the municipality is highly variable. The populated areas in and around Ararat and Lake Bolac generally have excellent access to mobile and fixed telecommunications services, whilst more isolated communities such as Maroona, Mafeking and Wickliffe have more limited services.

The telecommunications infrastructure in the Ararat Rural City includes"

- TV broadcast sites:
- Radio broadcast sites:
- Radio communication sites: Buangor
- Telephone exchanges: Streatham, Lake Bolac, Wickliffe, Ararat, Maroona, Moyston, Pomonal, Elmhurst, Tatyoon, and Pura Pura

2.6.5. Electricity

Currently, most of Victoria's electricity is generated by brown coal generators in the La Trobe Valley and transmitted via high voltage power lines to terminal substations, where it is reduced in voltage for further transmission and distribution. Powercor is the distribution business servicing the municipality.

The electricity infrastructure in the Ararat Rural City includes:

- Major transmission lines: Roughly North-West from Middle Creek to Armstrong (66V)
- Terminal substations: Ararat Wind farm, 75 turbines (East of Ararat, Chalicum Hills Wind Farm, 35 turbines, Southeast of Ararat, and Maroona Wind Farm, 2 turbines, South of Ararat; Crowland Wind Farm 39 turbines (25km north-east of Ararat)

2.6.6. Gas

The Gas Pipelines Victoria operates the Carisbrook to Horsham Pipeline. The pipeline provides high-pressure natural gas to distributors who supply end use customers in Ararat. The line travels from Carisbrook to Horsham and has a take-off to Ararat west of Crowlands and enters in along the Pyrenees Highway to Ararat.

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2.6.7. Water

The municipal water come from Grampians Headworks Storages. The “headworks” is the area in and around the Grampians ranges and Wimmera River. It includes 11 reservoirs and diversion weirs and the streams and channels connecting them. Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water maintain the infrastructure of the headworks, while the independent Storage Manager manages the water resources.

2.7. Industry

The Ararat economy supports an estimated 5358 jobs over various industries with Health Care and Social Assistance industry sector being the regionals largest employer and Manufacturing industry sector making the greatest contribution to economic output in the region.

The following industries have been identified across the municipality:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Agriculture, Forestry, and fishing
- Manufacturing
- Public Administration and Safety
- Retail
- Education and Training
- Hospitality
- Construction
- Wholesale trade
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing

3. PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1. Victorian Emergency Management Planning Framework

This plan supports holistic and coordinated emergency management arrangements within the region. It is consistent with and contextualises the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP) for the Grampians Region. The Grampians REMP is subordinate to the SEMP and the Ararat Rural City MEMP is subordinate to the REMP.

To the extent possible, this Plan does not conflict with or duplicate other in-force emergency management plans.

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Figure 2 outlines the hierarchy of Victoria's Emergency Management Planning Framework and situates this Plan in the Framework. This Plan should be read in conjunction with the Grampians REMP and the SEMP.



3.2. Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)

The Ararat Rural City Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee has been established pursuant to the Emergency Management Legislation Reform Act 2018 (EMLR Act) and the Emergency Management Act 2013 (the Act) section 59D(b).

The MEMPC is one component of a broader structure that enables appropriate planning, response and recovery activities and arrangements at local and regional levels. The Ararat Rural City MEMPC reports to the Grampians Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMP).

The MEMPC membership consists of core and non-core members. Core members have voting rights and are those specific in section 59A of the EM Act and invited subject matter experts.

Non-core members, who do not have voting rights, consist of MEMPC members not reflected in the core membership according to the EM Act, and agency representative attending in a support or observer role.

In accordance with section 59D of the EM Act, the functions of the MEMPC are to:

- Be responsible for the preparation and review of the MEMP.
- Ensure the MEMP is consistent with the REMP and SEMP.
- Provide reports of recommendations to the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMP) in relation to any matter that affects, or may affect, emergency management planning in the municipality.
- Share information with the REMPC and other MEMPCs to assist effective emergency management planning.
- Collaborate with any other MEMPC that the MEMPC considers appropriate in relation to emergency management planning, including the preparation of MEMPs.
- Perform any other function conferred on the MEMPC by the EM Act, or any other Act.

Sub-committees and working groups may be appointed by the MEMPC to take on the responsibility of planning for emergencies, including for the provision of relief and recovery.

The MEMPC meets four times per year. These are ordinarily in February, May, August, and November. The MEMPC Chair may call additional meetings as required. The Terms of Reference of the MEMPC are available from the Secretariat

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026 - 2029

3.3. MEMPC membership

This section provides a list of the member agencies on the MEMPC. Agencies nominate their representative and any proxies. A comprehensive and updated list of individual MEMPC representatives is available in Appendix A with the terms of reference for the MEMPC

3.3.1. MEMPC functional roles

As outlined in the MEMPC Terms of Reference, the MEMPC functional roles are:

- Chair – Section 59A of the EM Act specifies the MEMPC Chairperson as the municipal council CEO or delegated council employee. The Ararat Rural City Council CEO is Chairperson for this MEMPC
- Deputy Chair – a MEMPC member elected by the MEMPC
- Secretariat – an officer of Ararat Rural City Council unless otherwise determined by the MEMPC.

Refer to the MEMPC Terms of Reference for further detail on the MEMPC functional roles and their responsibilities.

3.3.2. Core (voting members)

The standing membership of the MEMPC is comprised of the following members:

- Ararat Rural City Council – Chief Executive Officer
- Ararat Rural City Council – Emergency Management Coordinator (Secretariat)
- Victoria Police (VicPol) – Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC)
- Country Fire Authority – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, District 16
- Ambulance Victoria
- Victoria State Emergency Services
- Australia Red Cross
- Department of Family Fairness and Housing
- Department of Health
- Community representative
- Vic Roads
- Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA) / Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV)
- East Grampians Health Service

3.3.3. Non-core (non-voting) members

In addition to this standing membership, the Committee welcomes attending of the following organisations and agencies at meetings. Their contributions and attendance are of particular relevance when each Emergency Risk (CERA) relevant to the agency/organisation is reviewed. At other times it is recognised that Reports are submitted for each meeting.

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- Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
- GWM Water
- Hopkins Correctional Centre
- PowerCor
- VicTrack
- Others as required

3.4. Sub-plans and Complementary Plans

The Victorian Emergency Management Planning Framework contains provisions for sub plans and complimentary plans to an emergency management plan. Further detail on these types of plans is available in Emergency Management Planning Reform Fact Sheet 7. (emv.vic.gov.au)

A sub-plan is a plan prepared pursuant to Part 6A of the EM Act, which provides more specific arrangements that either vary from or contextualise the emergency management plan under which it was prepared. A sub-plan forms part of the emergency management plan under which it is prepared and carries the same authority and obligation to comply. Sub-plans are multi-agency plans – a single agency does not have the authority under the EM Act to prepare a sub-plan. Sub-plans carry the same requirements for consultation, approval, publication, review, and assurance, as any other plan prepared under Part 6A of the EM Act.

The complementary plan is an emergency management plan prepared outside Part 6A of the EM Act. They are usually prepared by a relevant agency to service a specific purpose, for example to meet operational and statutory requirements other than those imposed by the EM Act. Agencies preparing complementary plans are encouraged to develop them in a way that complements emergency management plans prepared under the EM Act., to support an integrated approach to planning. These plans are not subject to the consultation, approval, publication, review, and assurance requirements prescribed by the EM Act. Emergency Management plans prepared under Part 6A of the EM Act may refer to complementary plans as required.

A list of sub-plans and complementary plans to the MEMP is provided at Appendix C. List of MEMP Sub-plans and Complementary Plans.

3.5. Restricted operational information

Section 60AI(2) of the EM Act allows the MEMPC to exclude information from published plans that is related to critical infrastructure, personal information, or information that is of a commercial sensitive nature.

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A summary of restricted information is included in Table 2, including who the contact point is should the user of this plan require access to the information.

Summary of restricted information	Reason for restriction	Agencies holding this information in full	Contact point
Section 5.3, Page 21; Municipal Emergency Operation Centre	Detailed location of mission-critical emergency coordination centres	MEMPC member agencies	Emergency Management Coordinator
MEMPC Contact List	Agency representative contact details		Ararat Rural City Council (03) 5355 0200
Contact Directory	Agency representative contact details		

Table 2: Summary of restricted operational information.

4. MITIGATION

4.1. The Risk Assessment process

The Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) process, facilitated by VICSES, provides the MEMPC with a framework for identifying hazards and improving community safety and resilience. The CERA approach promotes understanding of the likely impacts of a variety of emergency scenarios upon community assets, values, and functions. Accordingly, CERA provides an opportunity to explore multiple community impacts and consequences to be considered in collaborative risk treatment and emergency management planning processes.

CERA combines hazard information and intelligence from multiple sources to gain a clear understanding of the risks applicable to a specific area. These intelligence sources include the Victorian Fire Risk Register (VFRR), Integrated Fire Management Plans (IFMPs), and flood studies, as well as community profile information and local knowledge from subject matter experts and community representatives.

CERA Online tool facilitates the entry of intelligence data and provision of hazard risk data to support emergency management planning and mitigation activities. CERA online tool is available at <https://cera.ses.vic.gov.au>

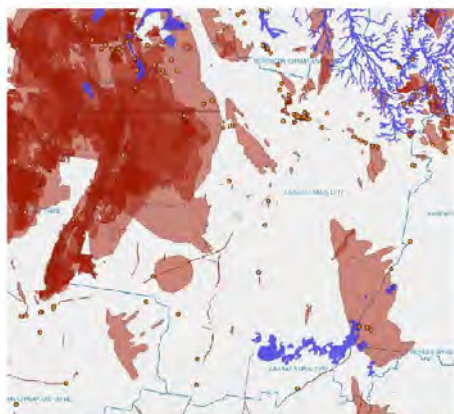


Figure 3: Fire history (red), 1 in 100-year flood extent (blue), and road crash history (dots)

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4.2. Key risks for Ararat Rural City

Table 3 outlines the key risks (defined as those “high” and “medium” risk in the CERA facing Ararat Rural City.

Hazard	Risk Rating	Control Agency
Bushfire / Grassfire	High	Country Fire Authority (CFA) / Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
Extreme Temperatures (heat / cold)	High	Emergency Management Commissioner
Flood	High	State Emergency Service (VICSES)
Transport incident – Road	High	Victoria Police
Human Disease (pandemic)	High	Department of Health
Transport accident – Aircraft	High	Victoria Police
Storm	Medium	State Emergency Service (VICSES)
Fire – Commercial / Industrial / High-rise (commercial)	Medium	Country Fire Authority
HAZMAT Incidents*	High	Country Fire Authority

Table 3: Hazards with “High” or “Medium” risk rating in the CERA for Ararat Rural City

* Future addition to CERA requiring MEMPC vote.

4.3. Risk mitigation activities, roles, and responsibilities

Table 8 of the SEMP identifies the relevant mitigation activities and participating agencies for each of the 15 emergency risks assessed as significant for the State. Specific mitigation activities relevant to “high” risks in the Ararat Rural City are describe or referenced below.

All agencies with mitigation responsibilities outlined in the SEMP have a shared responsibility to plan and undertake prevention and mitigation activities aimed at reducing the risk, or minimizing the effect, of emergencies that may occur within the municipality. The MEMPC plays a role in this area by identifying potential hazard areas, overseeing collaborative planning measures, and providing assurance that agreed activities are being undertaken.

4.3.1. Bushfire / grassfire

Refer to the Ararat Rural City Municipal Fire Management Plan (MFMP), which is a sub-plan of this MEMPC

4.3.2. Extreme Temperatures (heat / cold)

Refer to the Ararat Rural City Council Heatwave Mitigation Plan

4.3.3. Flood

Refer to the Grampians Region Emergency Response Plan – Flood Sub-plan
Refer also to the Ararat Rural City Council Flood Response Plan

4.3.4. Transport incident – road

Refer to the control agency – Victoria Police

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4.3.5. Human Disease (pandemic)

Refer to the Ararat Rural City Council Pandemic Plan

4.3.6. Transport accident – Aircraft

Refer to the Ararat Rural City Council Aerodrome Emergency Response Plan

4.4. Resilience

Resilient communities are socially connected and facilitate collaboration, communication, learning and the provision of support to individuals and families. Resilient communities promote individual and community wellbeing, the use of available resources, and cohesiveness to strengthen their communities for every day, as well as extreme challenges.

The ability of a community to respond to an emergency and subsequently recover will depend on the community's resilience. A key role of the MEMPC is to help create more resilient communities.

4.4.1. Share responsibility in Emergency Management

The MEMPC recognizes that all Victorians, not just the Emergency Management sector, have a shared responsibility to build safer and more resilient communities. No single person or agency can be responsible for all aspects of emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Individuals, communities, business, government, and the not-for-profit sector all have a role to play and have a responsibility to take certain actions and make certain decisions.

Through shared responsibility, resilient communities recover more quickly and can better respond to and recover from subsequent emergencies.

The MEMPC and its member agencies are encouraged to seek genuine participation from the community, empowering them to achieve share responsibility. Supporting the creation of Community Emergency Management Plans (discussed at 3.5 above) is one way the Ararat Rural City MEMPC is working towards this goal.

4.4.2. Building resilient communities

Emergency service organization, agencies and stakeholders have specific programs to build community resilience through awareness and education. These programs include:

- Land use planning and fire prevention through Local Laws
- General community development activities
- Promoting community-led recovery when emergencies occur
- Provide community level emergency response through volunteer emergency services
- Undertake community education (see 4.4.3 below)

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- Including communities in emergency management exercises where relevant (e.g., community evacuation exercises)
- Understanding and planning for vulnerability by identifying vulnerable people and facilities in the community.

4.4.3. Community education

Community education is vital to ensure community members understand the risks that apply to them and take action to prepare for an emergency. The development and delivery of relevant and effective community education resources and activities empower communities and enhance resilience by allowing individuals, families, and groups to be emotionally and physically equipped for an emergency.

The MEMPC members and other emergency services and agencies collaborate to engage the community through:

- Targeted community education programs
- Online community education resources
- Media releases
- Flyers, brochures, and information kits.
- Attendance at community events and meetings
- Newspaper and radio advertisements
- Social media promotions.

Community information during emergencies is addressed at 5.7 below.

5. RESPONSE

5.1. Response management arrangements

The SEMP defines Emergency Response as the actions taken immediately before, during and in the initial period after an emergency to reduce the effects and consequences of the emergency on people, their livelihoods, wellbeing, and property; on the environment; and to meet basic human needs.

5.1.1. Operational tiers

In Victoria, the response to emergencies operates at three tiers.

- Incident
- Regional
- State

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Emergencies are managed at the appropriate operational tier; usually the incidents commence with incident-level management and are escalated as the situation requires (either as the incident develops or the scale of the incident is recognised). Conversely, as incidents are concluded, management de-escalate to a lower operational tier as required.

5.1.2. Classes of emergency

Between the EM Act 2013 and the SEMP, three “classes” of emergency have been defined. These broadly relate to the type of emergency, and the control agency assigned to manage them.

The classes of emergency are:

- Class 1 – a major fire or any other major emergency for which Fire Rescue Victoria, the Country Fire Authority, or the Victoria Emergency Services is the control agency under the SEMP.
- Class 2 – a major emergency which is not a Class 1 or Class 3 emergency.
- Class 3 – a warlike act or act of terrorism; a hijack, siege; or riot.

5.1.3. Command, control, and coordination

Emergency Management in Victoria is based on the functions of command, control, and coordination.

In broad terms.

- Command is the internal direction of personnel and resources; it operates “vertically” within an agency
- Control is the overall direction of response activities in an emergency; it operates “horizontally” across all agencies.
- Coordination is the bringing together of agencies and resource to ensure effective response to, and recovery from, emergencies.

These functions are enacted by Commanders, Controllers, respectively. For example, an Agency Commander directs the activities of their agencies; an Incident / Regional / State Controller provides overall direction of multi-agency response activities in an emergency; and an Emergency Response Coordinator provides overall coordination of agencies and resources to ensure the response and recovery is handled effectively.

5.1.4. Classification of emergencies

The scale of emergencies can be described using a three-level classification system, as described below.

Isolated emergency

- A single incident or small-scale impact emergency
- Can be resolved using local resources
- Significant consequences to the wider community are not anticipated.
- E.g., single dwelling damaged or destroyed by house fire, localised flood, storm, or vandalism,

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Level One emergency

- A small-scale emergency that can be resolved through local or initial response resources.
- Less than 24 hours duration
- The response is limited to the incident area only
- There is little to no potential for escalation.

Level Two emergency

- Medium scale emergency requiring resources beyond the initial response.
- Response duration is over 24 hours
- There are one or more incident areas
- Multiple hazards are involved
- There is potential for escalation of the emergency.

Level Three emergency

- All large-scale emergency with high complexity
- Response duration is multiple days
- There are multiple incident areas
- The incident is, or is likely to become, one of State or Commonwealth significance.

5.2. Municipal Emergency Management Group (MEMG)

To support coordination of an imminent or ongoing major emergency, the Ararat Rural City Emergency Management Team (MEMT) may form at the discretion of the MEMO or MERC. This group consist of the following:

- Municipal Emergency Management Co-ordinator
- Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO)
- Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM)
- Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO)
- Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC)
- Chief Executive Officer, Ararat Rural City Council, or delegate
- Control agency representative
- Other agency as required

The role of the MEMG is to provide multi-agency coordination of response and recovery activities, where the scale of the emergency dictates the formation of the group is required to ensure an efficient and integrated response. Members of the group will liaise to determine what level of activation is required, and how activation shall take place.

Where appropriate, the functions of the MEMG will be carried out in close consultation with the MERC and the control agency.

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5.3. Municipal Operations Coordination Centre (MOCC)

The Municipal Operations Coordination Centre (MOCC) is a multi-agency team established to maintain situational awareness of emergencies within the municipal and coordinate the provision of human and material resources deployed in response to the emergency. The MOCC may also be established during significant support operations to a neighbouring municipality.

Administrative support to the MOCC will be drawn from Council staff. Council is responsible for ensuring a surge workforce is identified, trained, and exercised to maintain an appropriate level of readiness for MOCC operations.

The Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator, MEMO, or MERC may direct the establishment of the MOCC.

The primary location MOCC location for Ararat Rural City Council is:
Ararat Municipal Office
Mayors Room
59 Vicent Street
Ararat, VIC 3377

If a contingency MOCC location is required due to an emergency of a scale sufficient to render Ararat site unsuitable, consider seeking assistance from Northern Grampians Shire and/or Pyrenees Shire to house the MOCC at a site in their municipalities for remote operations (see 5.5.3 below).

Detailed MOCC operational procedures are provided in the Ararat Rural City Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre Operational Plan, a complementary plan to this MEMP.

5.4. Roles and Responsibilities

5.4.1. Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO)

The Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO) is a Council officer appointed pursuant to section 59G of the EM Act 2013. The MEMO and their deputies are appointed by the Council CEO via the Ararat Rural City Council Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation. This role is ordinary combined with the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator, but the MEMO responsibilities are outlined in the Act and SEMP.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the MEMO during the response to an emergency are:

- Coordinate municipal resources in emergency response
- Provide Council resources when requested by emergency services or police during response activities.
- Maintain effective liaison with emergency agencies within or servicing the municipal district.
- Maintain an effective contact base so municipal resources can be accessed on the 24-hour basis.
- Keep the MOCC prepared to ensure prompt activation if required.

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- Liaise with the Emergency Management coordination and MRM on the best use of municipal resources.
- Organise a response debrief if requested by the MERC
- Ensure procedures and systems are in place to monitor and record expenditure by Council in relation to emergencies.
- Perform other duties as required.

Municipal authority

The MEMO is responsible to the coordination of municipal resources in responding to emergencies and has a full delegated powers to deploy and manage Council's resources during emergencies.

5.4.2. Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM)

The Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM) is a Council officer appointed pursuant to section 59H of the EM Act 2013. The MRM and their deputies are appointed by the Council CEO via the Ararat Rural City Council Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation.

Responsibilities

- Coordinate municipal and community resources for recovery
- Immediately following an emergency, assist with collating and evaluating information gathered in the Secondary Impact Assessment.
- Establish priorities for the restoration of community services and needs
- Liaise with the Emergency Management Coordinator and MEMO on the best use of municipal resources.
- Establish an information and coordination centre at an appropriate location/s.
- Liaise, consult, and negotiate with recovery agencies and Council on behalf of the affected area and community recovery committees.
- Liaise with the Regional Recovery Committee and Emergency Recovery Victoria.
- Engage with the Incident Controller in the transition from response to recovery
- Undertake other specific recovery activities as required.

The MRM may delegate duties to provide for effective management of recovery functions.

5.4.3. Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO)

The *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* and *Fire Rescue Victoria 1958* require each Municipal Council to appoint a fire prevention officer (generally known as a Municipal Fire Prevention Officer [MFPO]) and any number of assistant fire prevention officers. The MFPO and their deputies are appointed by the Council CEO via the Ararat Rural City Council Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation.

Responsibilities

- Work with the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMP) (a subcommittee of the MEMPC, if and as established by that body
- Advise and assist the MFMP and the MEMO on fire prevention and related matters.

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- Report to Council on fire prevention and related matters
- Carry out statutory tasks related to fire prevention notices and infringement notices.
- Investigate and act on complaints regarding potential fire hazards
- Advise, assist, and make recommendations to the public on fire prevention and related matters.
- Issue permits to burn (unders38 of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*)

5.5. Resource sharing arrangements

5.5.1. Procedures for requesting additional support

Where an agency requires additional support or resources outside their own capabilities, requests should be made through the Incident Commander to the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC), in accordance with the SEMP. Unfulfilled requests are escalated to the Regional Emergency Response Coordinator (RERC) who will seek resourcing within the region. The RERC may then escalate to the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC) via the Senior Police Liaison Officer (SPLO) any remaining unfulfilled requests, for resources from across the state, interstate or internationally.

Control agencies may request the use of contracted or Council-managed resources to supplement emergency responses within the municipality if such resources cannot be reasonably sourced by other means.

Generally, the order in which resources are drawn on is:

- Agency and local resources
- Support resources; within local area, then within regions, then within the state
- Interstate or Commonwealth resources
- International resources

5.5.2. Ararat Rural City Council emergency response resources

Ararat Rural City Council will provide resources to support an emergency response as outlined in this section, subject to the following:

- All resource allocations must be approved by the CEO or MEMO prior to deployment.
- All resource allocations are subject to availability, risk assessment, and consideration for safety of staff and associated OH&S implications
- In considering a request for resources, Council management must consider the resources likely to be required for recovery immediately post-event and how this may be impacted.
- Per Council's EBA, the maximum shift duration for Council staff is 12 hours, followed by a minimum 10 hour reset break between shifts.

Any requests for Council resources should be made via the MEMO.

Within the Ararat Rural City Council boundaries

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Subject to the availability of plant and operators, and following an appropriate risk assessment, Council may supply

- Up to two graders and operators (with additional support vehicle and staff as required)
- Up to two water tankers and operators (for water supply only, not active firefighting.)
- Sand, sandbags and two staff at specific flooding locations.

5.5.3. Inter-Council Emergency Management Resource Sharing

The Protocol for Inter-Council Emergency Management Resource Sharing (the Protocol) is a voluntary protocol overseen by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to support the efficient sharing of resources between Councils. It establishes an agreed position between signatory Councils for the provision of assistance for response, relief, and recovery activities during an emergency and provides clear protocols and processes for initiating and completing request for support, and the management of associated operational and administrative requirements.

Ararat Rural City Council is a signatory to the Protocol, with activation of the Protocol delegated from the Council CEO to the Emergency Management Coordinator. Councils are required to re-commit to the Protocol every four years; Council last re-committed to the Protocol in December 2024 and will be due to re-commit by December 2028

Where Council has requested support from other municipalities during an emergency, it is the responsibility of Council to ensure assisting staff have the appropriate training, skills, and delegations to authorise assisting staff (e.g., Authorised Officers under s47 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, or other regulatory instruments that may apply) before those staff may exercise powers on behalf of Council.

Where Council determines activation of the Resource Sharing Protocol is necessary, a Coordinator of the Resource Sharing shall be appointed to manage the process, with a supporting team if required. The Coordinator of Resource Sharing will oversee:

- The resource sharing request and relevant delegate approvals
- Logistics associated with receiving staff from other councils (travel, accommodation, food, and welfare arrangements)
- Ensuring necessary equipment and access is available (e.g., vehicles, IT equipment and access)
- Ensuring necessary delegations and approvals are in place for specialist and statutory roles.
- Induction and briefing of support staff from other councils.
- Financial arrangements (payments and recording of expenses associated with the deployment of support staff from other councils)

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5.6. Evacuation

Evacuation is the planned relocation of persons for dangerous or potentially dangerous areas to safer areas, and their eventual return. Evacuation may be undertaken by individuals or households of their own volition, or on recommendation of the control agency (via community messaging). Part 5 of the EM Act 1986 allows, where the Premier has declared a state of disaster, the relevant Minister to compel, evacuations from a disaster area (except where a person claims a pecuniary interest in the land, buildings, goods, or valuables therein).

The safest time to evacuate is well ahead of the anticipated impact of the emergency. A late, hasty, or poorly planned evacuation carries significant risk. The decision to recommend an evacuation, shelter in place or other action rests with the control agency in conjunction with Police, with consideration of any available expert advice.

Victoria Police are responsible for evacuation. Consideration must be given to the area of evacuation, the route to be followed, the means of transport, and the location evacuees will be asked to attend. Protection of evacuation routes and the presence of vulnerable persons requiring assistance to evacuate must also be considered.

Through the MEMO, Council should be engaged to assist in the implementation of the evacuation. Council will provide advice on the most suitable Emergency Relief Centre (ERC), including standing up an ERC if required, and the coordination of relief agencies, and the provision of immediate relief requirements.

Support to evacuate may be provided by the following:

- VICSES
- Regional Roads Victoria
- Local bus / public transport companies
- Ambulance Victoria
- Ararat Rural City Council

5.7. Community information and warnings

During an emergency, it is important to ensure warnings and public information are maintained at an optimum level. This ensures the community is informed and aware of the emergency, and where community action is necessary to protect lives, property, and the environment, maximises the likelihood of community members acting as expected.

5.7.1. Community information

During an emergency, individuals and communities should not expect an individual warning (e.g., a "knock on the door" from emergency services). Emergency services are usually committed to combating the emergency to provide individual warnings; whilst this may occur on some occasions these are exceptional circumstances. There are several steps individuals should take to be informed of emergencies in their area, some of which include:

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- Use of VicEmergency website (www.emergency.vic.gov.au) or app to be alerted to any incident or warnings in the local area.
- Call the VicEmergency hotline 1800226226
 - TTY users' phone 1800 555 677, then ask for 1800 226 226
 - Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for 1800 226 266
 - People who do not speak English call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 for translated information for the VicEmergency Hotline.
- Know how to tune in to ABC Radio in your area
 - FM107.9 – ABC Ballarat
 - FM 94.3 – News Radio Ballarat
 - ABC Listen app
- Monitor fire danger ratings on the CFA website (www.cfa.vic.gov.au) and severe weather warnings on the Bureau of Meteorology website (www.bom.gov.au)
- Stay connected with neighbours and other community members
- Monitor weather conditions and be alert for signs that may indicate an emergency is nearby.

5.7.2. Emergency warnings

Emergency agencies in Victoria use the standardised Australian Warning System which provides three levels depending on the risks posed by an emergency, and the actions required by community members nearby. These warning levels are:

- Advice : An incident is occurring or has occurred in the area. Access information and monitor conditions. Is also used as a notification that activity in the area has subsided and is no longer a danger to you.
- Watch and Act: An emergency is developing nearby. You need to act now to protect yourself and others.
- Emergency Warning: An Emergency Warning is the highest level of warning. You are in imminent danger and need to act now. You will be impacted.

Warnings issued will include a call-to-action statement, clearly describing the required actions to take. These may look like "Advice: Stay informed", "Watch and Act: Prepare to leave", or "Emergency Warning: Leave Now".

Additionally, evacuation orders are aligned within the above three levels of warning. Two levels of evacuation warning exist – Prepare to Evacuate and Evacuate immediately.

5.8. Vulnerable Persons Register (VPR)

The Vulnerable Person Register (VPR) is a statewide online database designed to assist individuals who may need additional support during emergencies. VPR is considered as a last resort option, once all other existing processes and mechanisms to support people at risk in emergencies have been exhausted, to identify people in the local community that need support to be evacuated in emergency situations.

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The VPR is accessible to authorised Victoria Police representatives, for consideration in planning and exercising, and for responding to emergencies. The VPR records the location of the vulnerable person as well as any special requirements to support Victoria Police facilitating the safe evacuation of that person. Records are revalidated twice a year in April and October.

The Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy and guidance documents provide further information on planning for the needs of vulnerable people and the eligibility criteria. A copy of the policy and guidance documents are available at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing website: [Emergency management - DFFH Service Providers](#)

5.9 At Risk Facility List

Councils are required to maintain an At-Risk Facility List which is a list of local facilities where people most at risk may be located, for example, aged care facilities, hospitals, disability group homes, schools, and childcare centres. This list is updated annually by Council and is designed to support local emergency management planning.

6. RELIEF

6.1. Relief arrangements

Emergency relief is the provision of essential needs to individuals, families, and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. The provision of relief is considered part of the response phase of an emergency.

The exact type of relief required will depend on the type, location, and extent of an incident and its impact on communities. A needs assessment is necessary to determine the type and location of relief required. Relief may be provided in a physical centre, or through other mechanisms such as virtual or outreach programs as required. Support provided may include (but not limited to) community information, emergency shelter, psychosocial support, material aid, food relief, first aid, financial assistance, animal welfare, and legal support. Relief can be provided at dedicated Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs), other places of community gathering, incident scenes, memorials, or other locations as required. A key function of relief centres is the triage impacted individuals for emergency accommodation if necessary.

Council is responsible for municipal relief coordination, whilst ERV has the responsibility for relief coordination at the regional and state tiers. The level and type of relief required will be determined in conjunction with the Control Agency / Incident Controller, IERC / MERC, MEMO, and MRM. ERV should also be included should escalation of the incident and associated relief need appear likely.

Further details on all aspects of relief may be found in the Ararat Rural City Relief and Recovery Sub-Plan

6.2. Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs)

The Ararat Rural City Council Relief Centre Operations Plan is a complementary plan to this MEMP and outlines in detail where and how ERC's may be established across the municipality. Suitable

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facilities have been identified across the municipality, with two primary and 4 secondary ERC locations nominated. This list is not restrictive; an ERC may still be established in another location if required.

Council will establish and manage relief centres as required and provision of emergency shelter. Where in place, the Incident Controller will issue a public information on the location of ERCs as they open and close. It is critical that Incident Controllers and Incident Control Centre Public Information Units keep relief centre information up to date, to ensure detail provided to VicEmergency are accurate.

Council will share relief information on social media and on its website once details have been published on Vic Emergency. Council's Customer Service team will be notified in case residents call requesting information on ERCs (this will be limited to ERC locations and opening hours only; further queries will be directed to the VicEmergency hotline or MOCC as appropriate). Council will coordinate the provision of council resources as required and assist Victoria Police with management of traffic flow including provision of information regarding road availability, capacity and safety.

6.3. Register.Find.Reunite

The Register.Find.Reunite service plays a critical role in reconnecting affected people during and following an emergency. Victoria Police are responsible for the activation of the Register.Find.Reunite service and will activate the Australian Red Cross to operate the service on their behalf. The Register.Find.Reunite website is at <https://register.redcross.org.au>

6.4. Animal management in emergencies

Relief arrangements must include provision for animals (including companion animals and livestock). Whilst animals remain the responsibility of the person in charge of the animal, support to provide food and clean drinking water, as well as containment facilities, is often required during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.

The Ararat Rural City Emergency Animal Welfare Management Plan is a complementary plan to this MEMP and contains detailed information on the arrangements that may be implemented to provide relief and recovery services for animals in emergencies. This plan outlines locations within the municipality assessed as being suitable to house companion animals and livestock.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is the relief coordinating agency for animal welfare, including domestic animals. In the case of companion animals and livestock this coordination is exerted through Agriculture Victoria. DEECA / Agriculture Victoria should be engaged as required as soon as animal welfare issues become apparent.

6.5. Prevention of family violence in relief

Evidence has shown that family violence increases in emergency-affected communities, even in families that have not previously experienced family violence. As a result, access to support services

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in an emergency can be challenging, particularly for women and people with diverse gender identities, and those with additional factors such as age, culture, and disability.

Family violence can increase vulnerability to the risks arising from an emergency; victim survivors subjected to violence aimed at controlling their behaviour may be impeded from making and implementing their own emergency preparedness arrangements. Further, they may feel they are reliant on an abusive partner to house themselves and their children, potentially exposing them to further violence.

Relief centres can also pose significant challenges for victim survivors of domestic violence. The public space and shared emergency accommodation common at ERCs may expose them to an abusive ex-partner. Intervention orders may also be difficult to enforce during emergencies, including at relief centres.

The Ararat Rural City Council Relief and Recovery Sub-plan contains detailed information and strategies to aid in preventing family violence in relief. Refer also to 7.4.4 below for information on preventing family violence in recovery.

7. RECOVERY

7.1. Recovery arrangements

Recovery refers to the process of assisting persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a suitable and effective level of functioning. Recovery for each individual and community is different, making it impossible to measure recovery by a time period or strict definition. Is it impossible to return to a pre-disaster state, and some people may never fully recover from an emergency.

Recovery planning and programs refer to the Victorian Government's recovery outcomes, which are:

- Victorians are safe, resilient, and healthy
- Victorians are connected to people, places, and culture
- Government responses and services are people-centred, adaptable, and sustainable.
- Victoria has thriving regions and a healthy environment.

Further detail on all aspects of recovery may be found in the Ararat Rural City Council relief and Recovery Plan.

7.2. Transition to recovery

As the response to an emergency de-escalates, planning for an orderly transition to recovery should commence. The Controller at the relevant tier (Incident, Regional or State) should lead the transition, working with the Relief and Recovery Coordinator at the same tier to hand over coordination. It is critical to include the MRM or MEMO early in the process to ensure a smooth transition to recovery.

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In most incidents, the response does not trigger significant recovery concerns or programs. Therefore, the response phase transitions, or deescalates, to business as usual for the municipality without the requirement for a formal event-specific response to recovery transition document. Formal transition from response to recovery is not required when there are no substantial regional or state coordination requirements in multiple recovery pillar coordination environments.

A formal transition or coordination from response to recovery may be required, this is between the Incident Controller and the MEMO/MRM and may only occur when:

- The threat of the incident has subsided
- The extent of community relief needs has been validated, and
- The resources required for recovery have been mapped to support the municipality to develop early recovery planning, focussing on operational recovery activities.

Effective transition from response to recovery needs to be considered early with a focus from the Incident Controller on gaining Impact Assessment data and situation updates. This will ensure Council has a clear understanding of the situation, impact, and indicators of need to continue with the early recovery support.

7.3. Impact assessments

Impact assessments are critical, they aid in understanding the extent, location, nature, and type of impact caused by the emergency. This supports relief and recovery planning, prioritization of relief and impacts caused by the emergency. This supports relief and recovery planning, prioritization of relief and recovery operations, and reporting to each level of government. This in turn allows recovery funding and other supports to be targeted according to need. See 7.4.4 below for more information on recovery funding arrangements.

7.3.1. Initial Impact Assessment (IIA)

The initial Impact Assessment (IIA) is a primary assessment by visual inspection and collection of quantifiable early data, undertaken by response agencies. These often comprise collection of data such as the number of dwellings destroyed or damaged and impacts on people remaining in affected areas.

The IIA is critical information for Council to understand the immediate relief and early recovery activities and permits the prioritization of subsequent assessment activities. It also indicates if further assessment and assistance is required. The outputs of the IIA process form a key component of the transition to recovery process. The IIA is undertaken 24-48 hours after safe access to the impact area has been attained

7.3.2. Secondary Impact Assessment (SIA)

The Secondary Impact Assessment (SIA) is a more detailed and holistic assessment of the impact of the event on the community, and takes place following the IIA, and ideally within two weeks of gaining access to the impact area but no more than four weeks. Whilst the IIA provides a general

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overview of the impact on communities, the SIA process is systematic, adds more detail, and considers built cultural, natural, economic, and social impacts.

Coordination of SIA is the responsibility of the Emergency Management Coordinator and the MRM. Council SIA teams conduct assessments using the Crisisworks system. Teams consist of multiple disciplines dictated by the nature of the emergency and its impacts. Teams may include a combination of Emergency Management staff, building inspectors / surveyors, environmental health officers, and planning staff. Refer to the Ararat Rural City Relief and Recovery Plan for further information.

7.3.3. Post Emergency Needs Assessment (PENA)

The Post Emergency Needs Assessment (PENA) is a longer-term, thorough assessment of the impacts and consequences of the emergency of the health and wellbeing of the community, its infrastructure and built environment, the economy, and the environment. This includes the longer-term impacts of destroyed assets, displaced residents, interruption in business, industry and tourism, and psychosocial impacts. This assessment informs the medium to long term recovery process. The period considered by the PENA is widely variable based on the scale of the emergency but can extend to 12 months or more.

Coordination of the PENA is the responsibility of the Recovery Coordinator (i.e., the agency to which control was handed during the transition to recovery (see 7.2 above). At the local tier, this will be Council. Refer to the Ararat Rural City Recovery Plan for further information.

7.4. Recovering from emergencies

7.4.1. Lines of recovery

Five overarching priorities provide guidance to ensure recovery planning is holistic and coordinated across different areas of government (Lines of Recovery – Victorian Government www.vic.gov.au). These are described below:

People and wellbeing

- Led at state level by DFFH
- Works to ensure impacted community members are safe, healthy and connected with their community

Aboriginal culture and healing

- Led at state level by ERV
- Works to ensure the voice of Aboriginal Victorians affected by disaster is represented in government decision-making and aims to ensure overall recovery efforts consider and safeguard a culturally appropriate and safe recovery for Aboriginal Victorians.

Business and economy

- Led at state level by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Works to support impacted business and industry sectors to recover and strengthen while ensuring employment opportunities are accessible and resilience is increased.

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Environment and biodiversity

- Led at state level by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Works to coordinate and support recovery efforts for biodiversity and environment with a focus on biodiversity, water and catchments and sustainability.

Building and Infrastructure

- Led at state level by the Department of Transport and Planning, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, the Department of Education and Training, and Regional Development Victoria.
- Works to coordinate efforts to restore essential community and state-wide infrastructure safely and quickly, including rebuilding or repair of residential, commercial, and agricultural properties and community facilities.

7.4.2. Local recovery coordination

In emergencies where the requirement for formal recovery is defined, the Ararat Rural City Municipal Emergency Management Committee may establish an incident-specific recovery committee. The initial responsibilities of the of Recovery Committee will include formalising the governance structure, overseeing the transition from response to recovery, the establishment of working groups as required, and the development of a formal Recovery Plan. Recovery Plans will be developed to encompass the pillars of People & Well-being, Social, Economic, Built, Natural and Aboriginal Culture and Healing.

The Recovery Committee is responsible for ensuring affected communities are adequately consulted and represented in the recovery planning process, which may be through the support and engagement of Community Recovery Committees.

Detailed information on local recovery coordination arrangements including the establishment and terms of reference of incident-specific recovery committees and development of Recovery Plans, is available in the Ararat Rural City Relief and Recovery Plan.

7.4.3. Community engagement

Community engagement is fundamental to overall recovery. In the early stages on an emergency, engagement can be largely limited to information sharing and short-term recovery activities, however as the process of recovery commences, it is critical to ensure impacted communities and individuals are consulted and supported to make decisions about their own recovery.

Effective engagement can restore a sense of being in control for communities impacted by emergencies. It can also build the knowledge, experience and skills that assist the community to be more resourceful and resilient in the future.

A comprehensive engagement plan should be developed as part of a Municipal Recovery Plan to outline how communities will be informed, consulted, involved and empowered. Further information on community engagement in recovery is available in the Ararat Rural City Relief and Recovery Plan, and in the EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government.

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7.4.4. Recovery funding arrangements

Recovery funding streams are available from various sources following an emergency. These include ERV, NEMA and recovery sector lead agencies. The availability and amount of funding available is determined through reporting of initial and secondary impact assessment, allowing funding bodies to target funding to the required areas.

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement (DRFA) are predictable funding arrangements to assist Council on funding expenditure for recovery after significant disasters. Council must submit an intent to claim within 5 days of impact from the event. A successful DRFA claim requires detailed information on Council infrastructure and assets, including its condition prior to the emergency, and works undertaken to make the infrastructure or asset safe, and to recover the infrastructure or asset to its pre-emergency state. To facilitate this, Council Operations crews and contractors engaged in make-safe and recovery operations must maintain contemporaneous records of work undertaken (including geo and time stamped photographic evidence) as per the DRFA Guidelines. DRFA also has funding reimbursement for the operations of Emergency Relief Centres and phyco-social community support and session support for Council teams after a disaster. In Victoria, DRFA is streamlined through ERV. The DPT Assessor is the main point of contact for DRFA claims.

7.4.5. Prevention of family violence in recovery

Family violence in the recovery stages of an emergency, similarly to the relief stage (discussed at 6.5 above) has been shown to be a significant problem requiring consideration and mitigation throughout the recovery process. The Family Violence Framework for Emergency Management contains guidance on steps that should be taken through the recovery process to provide support for users and victims of family violence.

DFFH Family Violence Principal Strategic Advisors are available for including in recovery committees to provide specific advice on steps that may be taken to prevent family violence. Recovery plans must contain family violence referral pathways and services based on local needs, ensure public meetings and forums provide information of family violence in emergencies and ensure support agencies (including Victoria Police and other local services where practicable) are present.

It is important that all stakeholders understand the challenges to families, communities and their recovery posed by family violence, and consider how family violence can be addressed before, during and after an emergency.

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8. APPENDICES

A: MEMPC Terms of Reference

B: Acronyms and abbreviations

C: List of MEMP Sub-Plans and Complementary Plans

D: Neighbourhood Safer Places

E: Exercises

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APPENDIX A: MEMPC TERMS OF REFERENCE

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE (MEMPC) TERMS OF REFERENCE	Document No:	NA
	Review Date:	March 2023
	Last Reviewed:	December 2020
	Next Review Due:	March 2024
	Revision No:	3
Responsible Officer:	Emergency Management Coordinator	
Approved By:	MEMPC	
Related Documents:	Municipal Emergency Management Plan	

PURPOSE

The Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) is a multi-agency committee for the municipal district. It is the intent of its emergency planning process to develop a coherent plan that is known and understood by all agencies, MEMPC members, senior Council officers and all who have emergency management responsibilities.

SUMMARY

This Committee is formed pursuant to Section 59F of the Emergency Management Act 2013 (EM Act 2013) and Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018 (EMLA 2018).

FUNCTIONS

The MEMPC is the peak planning body for the municipal district and operates as a forum for government and non-government agencies to develop policies, procedures, strategies and frameworks to support coordinated emergency management planning for the municipality.

In line with Section 59D of the EM Act 2013, the function of the MEMPC is to:

- Be responsible for the preparation and review of its MEMP
- Ensure that its MEMP is consistent with the State Emergency Management Plan and its relevant REMP
- Provide reports of recommendation to its REMP in relation to any matter that affects, or may affect, emergency management planning in the municipality
- Share information with the REMP and other MEMPCs to assist effective emergency management planning
- Collaborate (having regards to the Guidelines) with any other MEMPC that the MEMPC considers appropriate in relation to emergency management planning, including preparing MEMPs
- Perform any other function conferred on the MEMPC by the EM Act 2013, or any other act.

MEMBERSHIP

Selection Process

Section 59A of the EM Act 2013 specifies the minimum membership requirements of the MEMPC. The Committee may invite additional people with key skills or knowledge to join the MEMPC as necessary.

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Membership

The following agencies/organisations comprise the core membership of the MEMPC:

- Municipal Council (Ararat Rural City Council)
- Victoria Police
- Country Fire Authority
- Ambulance Victoria
- Victoria State Emergency Service
- Australian Red Cross
- Department of Health and Human Services

Member Responsibilities

The following are the responsibilities of all representatives of core member agencies/organisations of the MEMPC:

- Prepare for, prioritise and attend scheduled meetings
- Proactively contribute to the work of the MEMPC
- Provide meeting papers to the Chair at least 7 days prior to a scheduled meeting
- Respect confidential and privileged information
- Represent all areas of their agencies and associated entities
- Report on relevant agency activity relating to emergency management mitigation, response or recovery activities with a focus on emerging risks or opportunities

Proxies

Representatives of core member agencies/organisations who are unable to be present at MEMPC meetings must nominate a suitably skilled and authorised representative from their agency/organisation a minimum of 24 hours to the MEMPC Chair, in writing, before the meeting is scheduled to occur. This proxy is considered to have the same voting rights as the substantive MEMPC member, unless the MEMPC Chair is advised otherwise.

Additional Members of the MEMPC

The MEMPC may invite additional agencies/organisations for the purposes of skill/knowledge specialisation, specific hazard knowledge and transparency with partner agencies that operate within the municipal district. These members will not have right to propose or vote on motions requiring a decision by the MEMPC, but are welcomed to contribute knowledge, information and insight on behalf of their organisation to the MEMPC.

Observers

Observers to MEMPC meetings may attend at the discretion of the MEMPC Chair, and must be nominated in writing a minimum of 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting to the MEMPC Chair. Observers must respect all confidentiality and operating protocols of the MEMPC, and must not:

- Propose or vote on motions
- Intrude on the procedures of the MEMPC
- Take part in the meeting proceedings without the invitation of the MEMPC Chair

Meeting Frequency

The MEMPC is required to meet a minimum of four (4) times per year. The specific dates and times of MEMPC meetings are to be determined on a yearly basis for the following calendar year at the discretion of and agreement by the MEMPC.

Quorum

A quorum is greater than 50% (50% + 1) attendance of the current voting members and includes the MEMPC Chair or Deputy Chair (if applicable)

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The MEMPC may meet in the absence of a quorum being present, however no decision-making processes, such as motions, may be actioned until a quorum is present.

Secretariat

The administration of the MEMPC will be determined by discussion and agreement of the MEMPC.

Duties include:

- Scheduling meetings
- Providing Committee members with the meeting agenda
- Record agreed actions in the MEMPC Actions Register

The nominated Secretariat of the Ararat MEMPC is Chandra Willmott EMC, ARCC

Voting Rights

The representatives of the core member agencies/organisations of the MEMPC are allocated one (1) vote for the purposes of decision making within the MEMPC.

Additional member agencies/organisations and observers do not have voting rights for the purpose of decision making within the MEMPC.

Reporting Requirements

Representatives of core member agencies/organisations are required to submit a written report a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the scheduled occurrence of the MEMPC meeting. Written reports are to be also presented verbally to the MEMPC during the scheduled meetings, and will be recorded within the minutes of the meeting.

Representatives of additional member agencies/organisations may submit a written report to the MEMPC Chair if the issue/topic is considered of importance to the MEMPC, otherwise a verbal report may be submitted at the MEMPC and will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Minutes of MEMPC meetings will be forwarded to all representative members of the MEMPC (including Additional Members, excluding Observers) and to the Regional Emergency Response Coordinator (RERC).

The collection, collation and distribution of documentation relating to the MEMPC is the responsibility of the Secretariat of the MEMPC. The proceedings, information and documentation of the MEMPC is considered confidential unless determined by the MEMPC, however these records remain discoverable under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Expected/Definite Life of the MEMPC

The life of the MEMPC is considered to be ongoing. Representatives of core member agencies/organisations are required to notify the MEMPC Chair (in writing) of any material/substantive changes to the representation of their agency/organisation if it affects the operation of the MEMPC as soon as practicable.

Sub-Committees & Working Groups

Sub-Committees and Working Groups may be established at the discretion and agreement of the MEMPC to address specific hazards or areas of interest in relation to emergency management within the municipal district. The membership, Terms of Reference and scope of the sub-committee/working group is required to be adopted by the MEMPC.

The Chair of each Sub-Committee/Working Group is required to report to the MEMPC at each scheduled meeting on the proceedings of their Sub-Committee/Working Group and raise any issues/areas of concern to the MEMPC for consideration.

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Reporting to the REMPC

Any issues that require escalation to the REMPC will be completed by the MEMPC Chair, and will be conveyed at the REMPC meetings by the nominated REMPC representative for the Ararat MEMPC.

The nominated Ararat MEMPC representative to the REMPC is: Chandra Willmott, EMC, ARCC

REFERENCES

Emergency Management Act 2013

Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018

Emergency Management Victoria – Emergency Management Planning Reform Guidelines

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APPENDIX B: ACRONYMES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Explanation
ARC	Australian Red Cross
AV	Ambulance Victoria
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
CA	Control Agency
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DH	Department of Health
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning (including Head, Transport for Victoria)
EM	Emergency Management
EMLO	Emergency Management Liaison Officer
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
EPA	Environment Protection Authority

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Acronym	Explanation
ERV	Emergency Recovery Victoria
FFMV	Forest Fire Management Victoria
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
ICA	Insurance Council of Australia Ltd
ICC	Incident Control Centre
IMT	Incident Management Team
MEMP	Municipal Emergency Management Plan
MEMPC	Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
PV	Parks Victoria
R.F.R	Register.Find.Reunite
RCC	Regional Control Centre
REMP	Regional Emergency Management Plan
REMPC	Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee
RSA	Response Support Agency

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Acronym	Explanation
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Salvation Army	Salvation Army – Victorian Emergency Services
SCC	State Control Centre
SEMP	State Emergency Management Plan
SERC	State Emergency Relief Coordinator
SRC	State Response Controller
VCC EM	Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry
VFA	Victorian Fisheries Authority
VicPol	Victoria Police
VICSES	Victoria State Emergency Service

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APPENDIX C: LIST OF MEMP SUB-PLANS AND COMPLEMENTARY PLAN

Plan Name	Type		Owner
	S	C	
ARCC Municipal Emergency Management Plan	●		MEMPC
ARCC Municipal Fire Management Plan	●		MFMC
ARCC Flood Response Plan		●	Council
Grampians Regional Emergency Response Plan Flood Sub-plan	●		REMP
ARCC Animal Emergency Management Welfare Plan	●		MEMPC
ARCC Relief and Recovery Sub-Plan		●	Council
Relief Centre Operations Plan		●	Council
Donations and Appeals Plan		●	Council
ARCC Heatwave Plan		●	Council
ARCC Pandemic Plan		●	Council
ARCC Emergency Coordination Centre Operation Plan		●	Council
Ararat Airport Emergency Plan		●	Council
ARCC Children and Young People Emergency Plan		●	Council

Other specific plans have been developed to address the risks identified by the MEMPC
Details of the responsible authority and holder of the plans are as follows:

Additional Emergency Plan	Responsible Agency
Ararat Hopkins Correctional Centre	Ararat Prison
Wind Turbine Rescue Plan	Victoria Police
Blue-Green Algae Plan	GWM Water
Ararat Hospital Plan	EGHS
Western Highway Diversion Plan	VicRoads
School Bus Route Plan	Dept. Education
School Evacuation Plan	Dept. Education

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APPENDIX D: NEIGHBOURHOOD

This appendix provides a summary of the Neighbourhood Safer Places and Community Fire Refuge present in the Ararat Rural City Council. Refer to the Ararat Fire Management Sub-Plan for more details.

Bushfires Places of Last Resort (BPLR)

BPLAs are locations that may provide some protection from direct flame and heat from a fire, but do not guarantee safety. They are intended as a place of last resort if all other fire plans have failed.

Emergency services may not be present at an BPLR, no support services are provided, and shelter from the elements may not be provided. Travelling to the BPLR may expose people to significant danger.

CFA advises that BPLRs are places of absolute last resort. The safest place to be in out of a high-risk bushfire area.

More detailed information on BPLRs is available on the CFA website.

Six BPLRs are maintained in the Ararat Rural City municipal. They are located at:

Locality	Street Address	Location name / type
Ararat	Waratah Avenue	Alexandra Oval
Willaura	Main Street (Opposite Commercial Street)	Willaura Memorial Hall
Streatham	Campbell Street (Glenelg Highway)	Streatham Memorial Hall
Elmhurst	High Street (Pyrenees Hwy) between Elmhurst-Glenpatrick Road and Degraes Street	Elmhurst Mechanics Hall
Lake Bolac	Glenelg Highway (near corner Mortlake-Ararat Road)	Lake Bolac Information Centre
Moyston	Crrn Moyston-Great Western Road and Ararat-Halls Gap Road	Moyston Recreation Reserve

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APPENDIX E: EXERCISES

Title	Date/s	Agencies Involved	Nature of Event	Number of Attendees	Location	Activity objectives
Ballyrogan	14 th May 2012	Victoria Police Ararat Rural City Council Ambulance Victoria CFA SES	Challicum Wind Farm	11	Challicum Hill's Wind Farm, 20 km East of Ararat	The exercise was to test the effectiveness of plans in response to an incident, at height and within a wind turbine generator structure (the nacelle).
ERC Exercise	28 November 2013	Ararat Rural City Council Department of Human Services Grampians Community Health Victoria Police	Fire has broken out in McDonald Park. Fire is heading towards Chalambar Golf Course		Desktop	Document the multi-agency relief support available for a medium sized emergency.
Moyston Fire	2 January 2015	Multi agency	Incident			
Jalukar Fire	22 April 2015	Multi agency	Incident			
Ballyrogan Fire	25 November 2015	Multi agency	Incident			
Exercise Vincent	21 June 2016	Ararat Rural City Council SES Dept JTR DHHS AV Red Cross	Two truck collision at Crn Vincent Street and High street. One truck is carry livestock and one is LPG tanker	21	Desktop	Test internal and external communications in and between agencies. Assess the knowledge of local Emergency Services in relation to actions required in the event of a

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		CFA Victoria Police				major incident in the town To check the currency of contacts as listed in the MEMP
Hopkin River Flood	15 September 2016	Multi agency	Incident			
COVID Pandemic	25 January 2020	Multi agency	Incident			
2022 October Flood	October 2022	Multi agency	Incident			
Pomonal Fires	13 February 2024	Multi Agency	Incident			
Bayindeen Fires	22 February 2024	Multi Agency	Incident			
Yarram Gap Fires	17 December 2025	Multi agency	Incident			

3.7 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29677

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 31 May 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 \$34.236 million in revenue and \$33.878 million in expenses to 31 May 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$0.358 million for the eleven months ended 31 May 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 \$18.471 million has been recognised as income for the eleven months ended 31 May 2026.

User fees account for 4.74% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$1.604 million has been received to 31 May 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$4.956 million to 31 May 2026, including \$2.506 million from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission for general purpose grants and \$1.626 million for the local roads grants.

Non-recurrent Operating Grants total \$2.216 million to 31 May 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	64	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	36	-
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	129	129	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	61	58
Natural Disaster Relief	-	158	-
Council Support Fund - Streatham Fires	-	400	-
Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings	55	55	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	100	68	7
Queen Street Housing Program	-	715	4,982
Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct	-	-	400
Early Career Educators	-	91	12
Ararat Active Bike Network	266	22	-
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility	-	192	312
Primary Producer Support Payment	-	125	-
Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund	-	50	-
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	50	-
	617	2,216	8,310

Non-recurrent Capital Grants total \$3.897 million to 31 May 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	-	218	463
Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade	-	372	-
Mount William Road Reconstruction	-	2,000	-
Footpath-Ararat Retirement Village & Sports Precinct	-	12	23
Barkly St Raised Crossing	-	189	123
Moyston Multi-Use Court Upgrade	-	-	203
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	3	26
	1,490	3,897	2,652

Note

It is important to note the following:

1. The Grants Operating (recurrent) figure in the Original Budget was \$8.909 million and in the Current Budget is recorded as \$4.721 million, as \$4.188 million was paid to Council in 2024/25

by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC) for the 2025/26 financial year. Council has still received the expected VLGGC income, to be spent in 2025/26, however it will be reported over two financial years.

2. Unearned revenue received in prior years has been adjusted between the Original Budget and Current Budget with an additional \$6.659 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent), \$0.386 million for Grants Capital (recurrent) and \$2.282 million for Grants Capital (non-recurrent) included in the Current Budget on the assumption that each of the grant projects will be completed during the 2025/26 financial year.
3. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$2.050 million to a surplus of \$3.028 million for 2025/26. The year-end variance is a surplus of \$0.037 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 eleven months ended 31 May 2026 Council has incurred \$11.421 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 \$0.826 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 eleven months ended 31 May 2026, Council has incurred \$11.398 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2024/25 that are expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.

Note

It is important to note the following:

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

Balance Sheet (Attachment 2)

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

Council's current assets have increased by \$0.563 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$18.541 million as at 31 May 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have decreased by \$0.098 million from \$14.841 million to \$14.743 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$0.627 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$3.693 million as at 31 May 2026.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$17.945 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have increased by \$0.025 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$0.307 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$1.716 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 \$0.098 million to \$14.743 million as at 31 May 2026.

Net cash of \$12.532 million was provided by operating activities, \$11.973 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.657 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	31/05/2026
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	122%	114%
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	0.86%	0.00%
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	7.83%	8.09%
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	49.39%	60.95%
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	\$4,936	\$4,514

Indicator	30/6/2025	31/05/2026
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	\$2,002	\$2,032
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 31 May 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$2.976 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$0.051 million. In percentage terms 85.6% of the rates raised have been collected at 31 May 2026 compared to 84.8% up to 31 May 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.	87.8%	85.6%
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.	100.75%	99.55%

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 31 May 2026 be received and adopted.*

MOVED CR KAUR

SECONDED CR PRESTON

That:

1. **The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 31 May 2026 be received and adopted.**

Cr Kaur and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

CARRIED 7/0

5373/26

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 eleven months ended 31 May 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	18,417	18,471	54	0%
Statutory fees and fines	277	277	254	232	(22)	-9%
User fees	1,631	1,641	1,527	1,604	77	5%
Contributions - cash capital	-	-	-	34	34	0%
Contributions - cash operating	93	93	93	200	107	115%
Grants - operating (recurrent)	8,909	4,721	4,687	4,956	269	6%
Grants - operating (non-recurrent)	617	7,276	2,066	2,216	150	7%
Grants - capital (recurrent)	2,338	2,724	1,886	1,965	79	4%
Grants - capital (non-recurrent)	1,490	3,772	3,474	3,897	423	12%
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, plant and equipment	20	20	-	(5)	(5)	0%
Other income	630	630	578	666	88	15%
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	32,982	34,236	1,254	
Expenses						
Employee costs	11,961	11,961	11,093	11,421	328	3%
Materials and services	9,186	13,357	11,271	11,398	127	1%
Bad and doubtful debts	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Depreciation	10,469	10,469	9,597	10,188	591	6%
Amortisation - right of use assets	308	308	282	421	139	49%
Borrowing costs	2	2	2	3	1	50%
Finance costs - leases	60	60	55	109	54	98%
Other expenses	394	394	361	338	(23)	-6%
Total expenses	32,380	36,551	32,661	33,878	1,217	4%
Surplus for the year	2,050	3,028	321	358	37	12%
Other comprehensive income						
Net asset revaluation increment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive result	2,050	3,028	321	358	37	

Attachment 2
Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2026

	31/05/2026 \$'000	30/06/2025 \$'000
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	14,743	14,841
Trade and other receivables	3,693	3,066
Financial assets	-	-
Inventories	105	71
Prepayments	-	-
Total current assets	18,541	17,978
Non-current assets		
Trade and other receivables	3	4
Investments in joint venture	2,027	1,527
Property, plant and equipment, infrastructure	640,995	639,714
Right of use assets	1,363	1,784
Investment property	2,615	2,615
Total non-current assets	647,003	645,644
Total assets	665,544	663,622
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	2,382	2,357
Trust funds and deposits	622	315
Unearned Income	11,053	9,337
Provisions	2,154	2,175
Interest-bearing loans and borrowings	-	156
Lease liabilities	37	426
Total current liabilities	16,248	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	17,945	16,464
Net Assets	647,599	647,158
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	295,859	295,501
Reserves	351,739	351,657
Total Equity	647,598	647,158

Printed 17/06/2026

Attachment 3

Statement of Cash Flows for the eleven months ended 31 May 2026

	Eleven months to 31/05/2026	Forecast Year End to 30/06/2026
	Inflows/ (Outflows) \$'000	Inflows/ (Outflows) \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities		
Rates and charges	18,414	18,545
Statutory fees and fines	242	277
User fees	2,023	2,094
Grants - operating	9,148	8,363
Grants - capital	6,033	5,261
Contributions - monetary	288	328
Interest received	577	500
Trust funds and deposits taken	379	-
Other receipts	123	253
Net GST refund/payment	1,029	783
Employee costs	(11,706)	(12,160)
Materials and services	(12,799)	(17,827)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(816)	-
Other payments	(403)	(394)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) operating activities	12,532	6,023
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for property, plant and equipment, infrastructure	(11,627)	(12,999)
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment, infrastructure	154	1,050
Proceeds from investments	-	-
Payments for investments	(500)	(500)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities	(11,973)	(12,449)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Finance costs	(3)	(3)
Repayment of borrowings	(156)	(156)
Proceeds from borrowings	-	-
Interest paid - lease liability	(109)	(118)
Repayment of lease liabilities	(389)	(426)
Net cash provided by/ (used in) financing activities	(657)	(703)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(98)	(7,129)
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	14,743	7,712

Printed 17/06/2026

Attachment 4

Financial Performance Indicators for the eleven months ended 31 May 2026

Result

Material Variations

LIQUIDITY

Dimension - Operating position

Indicator - Adjusted underlying result

Measure - Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)

-11.79%

[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

114% No material variation

[Current assets / Current liabilities] x100

Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting

100% to 400%

Framework

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

Indicator - Unrestricted cash

Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities

17.73% 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 borrowings compared to rates

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

Loans and borrowings repayments compared to rates

0.86% 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 eleven months ended 31 May 2026 **Result** **Material Variations**

Indicator - Indebtedness

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

8.09% 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

98.55% 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

60.95% 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 values
[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]

\$4,514.06 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]

\$2,031.85

Outside Expected Range The average rate per property assessment is slightly above the expected range.

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

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

3.8 YEAR 2026 GENERAL VALUATION

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29678

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

On 20 May 2026, Council received notification from the Valuer-General certifying the 2026 General Valuation to be generally true and correct.

The Valuer-General has reported to the Minister for Planning that the 2026 General Valuation is generally true and correct with respect to each of the bases of value.

Once the Minister has made a declaration that the valuation is suitable to be adopted and used, Council will be able to raise rates for the 2026/27 financial year.

DISCUSSION

The Valuer-General Victoria is the valuation authority responsible for revaluing all properties in the municipality each year.

The Valuer-General Victoria appointed Wigg and Partners as the valuer. Mr Peter Wigg has delivered valuations for rateable and non-rateable leviable properties to Council. The non-rateable leviable valuations are returned to enable Council to calculate the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund for these properties. The Valuer-General has audited the valuations to ensure they are generally true and correct. The Minister for Planning will make a declaration under the provisions of the Valuation of Land Act 1960 that allows the returned valuations to be used to raise rates for 2026/27.

	2026 Rateable Valuations	2026 Non Rateable Leviable Valuations	Total
Site Value	\$5,161,117,000	\$57,728,000	\$5,218,845,000
Capital Improved Value	\$6,651,898,000	\$427,170,000	\$7,079,068,000
Net Annual Value	\$337,562,850	\$31,638,400	\$369,201,250

The following table illustrates the change in Capital Improved Valuations (CIV) between each category of property as a result of the revaluation. The categories included in this table are based on Valuation Best Practice Guidelines which are not consistent with the classifications used for rating purposes. For example, the rural category includes urban farm land that may not necessarily be defined as farmland for rating purposes. There are several properties that are rated at the general rate but are classed as rural for the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.

Category	2025 CIV\$	2026 CIV\$	% Change
Residential	\$1,849,175,000	\$1,918,708,000	3.76%
Commercial	\$177,520,000	\$184,285,000	3.81%
Industrial	\$64,267,000	\$67,258,000	4.65%
Rural (including Urban Farm Land)	\$4,494,606,300	\$4,481,647,000	-0.29%
Non Rateable Leviable (including Wind Farms)	\$450,865,000	\$427,170,000	-5.26%
Totals	\$7,036,433,300	\$7,079,068,000	0.61%

Residential properties

In comparison to 2025 valuations, residential property valuations have increased by 3.76%.

Commercial and Industrial properties

In comparison to 2025 valuations, commercial property valuations have increased by 3.81%.
Industrial property valuations have increased by 4.65%.

Rural properties

In comparison to 2025 valuations, rural valuations have decreased by 0.29%.

Non rateable leviable properties

In comparison to 2025 valuations, non-rateable leviable property valuations have decreased by 5.26%.

Whilst these properties are non-rateable for municipal rates, they are charged the *Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund*. Land in this category includes properties such as Council owned properties and churches.

The table below outlines the movement in valuations over previous years:

	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Residential	3.76%	-2.12%	1.76%	12.18%	33.85%	14.73%	3.07%	4.32%	3.45%
Commercial	3.81%	1.98%	3.94%	12.65%	8.97%	1.17%	0.29%	1.43%	8.69%
Industrial	4.65%	0.11%	-15.38%	12.69%	-88.83%	0.36%	3.83%	0.09%	0.75%
Rural	-0.29%	-3.58%	-1.74%	7.33%	50.23%	39.00%	21.79%	2.72%	24.48%
Non Rateable	-5.26%	-5.34%	376.60%	8.50%	0.18%	5.67%	37.49%	3.06%	1.15%

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

The Valuer-General Victoria is now responsible for the cost of the annual general revaluation. Council is required to pay for the costs of supplementary valuations during the year, and these costs are included in the budget each year.

Policy/Relevant Law

The Valuer-General Victoria is required to revalue all properties annually in accordance with the Valuation of Land Act 1960.

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

Low.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The valuation process is undertaken by the Valuer-General Victoria and is widely promoted to ratepayers through a range of sources, including the websites of the Department of Transport and Planning, the State Revenue Office, and Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

Subject to Ministerial approval, Council adopts the General Valuation for 2026 conducted by Mr Peter Wigg for:

1. Total Site Value of \$5,218,845,000 (rateable Site Value of \$5,161,117,000 and non-rateable leviable Site Value of \$57,728,000);
2. Total Capital Improved Value of \$7,079,068,000 (rateable Capital Improved Value of \$6,651,898,000 and non-rateable leviable Capital Improved Value of \$427,170,000); and
3. Total Net Annual Value of \$369,201,250 (rateable Net Annual Value of \$337,562,850 and non-rateable leviable Net Annual Value of \$31,638,400).

MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG

That:

Subject to Ministerial approval, Council adopts the General Valuation for 2026 conducted by Mr Peter Wigg for:

1. Total Site Value of \$5,218,845,000 (rateable Site Value of \$5,161,117,000 and non-rateable leviable Site Value of \$57,728,000);
2. Total Capital Improved Value of \$7,079,068,000 (rateable Capital Improved Value of \$6,651,898,000 and non-rateable leviable Capital Improved Value of \$427,170,000); and
3. Total Net Annual Value of \$369,201,250 (rateable Net Annual Value of \$337,562,850 and non-rateable leviable Net Annual Value of \$31,638,400).

Cr J Armstrong, Cr R Armstrong and Cr Sanders spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5374/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

3.9 ROAD NAMING - MCADIE LANE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29679

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 its meeting held on 31 March 2026, Council resolved to advertise its intention to name the unnamed laneway located between Elizabeth and McGibbony Streets, running parallel to Vincent and Palmer Streets, Ararat, as McAdie Lane.

DISCUSSION

As part of the consultation process for the proposed name McAdie Lane, adjoining ratepayers were consulted and the proposal was presented to the broader community for feedback. Submissions were invited in a Yes/No format via the Engage Ararat platform, by post, or by email between 14 April 2026 and 7 May 2026.

A total of 27 submissions were received during the consultation period, with all respondents voting in support of the proposal. No objections were received.

Council is now asked to consider the feedback received and determine whether to proceed with formally adopting the name McAdie Lane.

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



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising from this report.

Policy/Relevant Law

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

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

Low.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Council's intention to name the road was published on Engage Ararat. Abutting landowners and relevant stakeholders were also consulted as part of the process.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Consider submissions received during the consultation period;*
2. *Adopt the name McAdie Lane; and*
3. *Submit McAdie Lane to the Registrar of Geographic Names.*

MOVED CR KAUR

SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG

That Council:

- 1. Consider submissions received during the consultation period;**
- 2. Adopt the name McAdie Lane; and**
- 3. Submit McAdie Lane to the Registrar of Geographic Names.**

Cr Kaur and Cr R Armstrong spoke for the motion.

CARRIED 7/0

5375/26

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

3.10 ROAD NAMING PROPOSAL - OAK LANE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29680

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

Due to recent developments within the laneway, the need has arisen to formally name the unnamed laneway located between George Road and Banfield Street, running parallel to Dawson and High Streets, Ararat.

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

DISCUSSION

As part of the initial processes associated with the developments, several naming suggestions were put forward as suitable options. The community have put forward the proposed name *Oak Lane* in recognition of the mature oak trees that were historically located on an adjoining property prior to subdivision.

The proposed name commemorates the old oak trees, which were considered by local residents to be a notable feature of the site. While residents acknowledged the removal of the trees as part of the approved subdivision, the proposed name provides an opportunity to retain a connection to this aspect of the site's history.

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



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising from this report.

Policy/Relevant Law

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

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

Low.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

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

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Advertise its intention to name the unnamed laneway located between George Road and Banfield Street, running parallel to Dawson and High Streets, Ararat, as Oak Lane; and*
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.*

MOVED CR JOYCE

SECONDED CR PRESTON

That Council:

- 1. Advertise its intention to name the unnamed laneway located between George Road and Banfield Street, running parallel to Dawson and High Streets, Ararat, as Oak Lane; and**
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.**

Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5376/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM 25-26 - MAY 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29681

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.

All of the concerns, feedback and suggestions received at the March 2026 round of engagement session had been actioned or referred by the May 2026 Council Meeting.

The next community engagement sessions will occur between 29 June to 02 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.

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 Community Engagement Program 2025/26 included 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 May 2026 report*

**MOVED CR PRESTON
SECONDED CR KAUR**

That:

1. **Council receives the Community Engagement Program May 2026 report**

Cr Preston and Cr Kaur spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5377/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

4.2 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - MAY 2026 UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29682

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

Crushing for Reuse

The crushing of material that has been cleared of asbestos contamination by the certified hygienist at the offsite processing location has been hampered by rain. Crushing will be undertaken in batches as cleared material becomes available and subject to suitable weather. 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, and a new building permit for the demolition has been issued.

Demolition works at the Queen Street site have also been hampered by the wet weather. While we welcome the rain for the region, it creates safety risks on this site. Demolition works will recommence as soon as possible, subject to weather and ground conditions.

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:

1. *Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - May 2026 Update*

MOVED CR WATERSTON SECONDED CR JOYCE

That:

- 1. Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - May 2026 Update**

Cr Waterston, Cr Joyce and Cr Sanders spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5378/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (MAY 2026)

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29683

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. 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.

Status	Number of Actions
Completed	33 (+5)
In progress 51-99%	7 (-1)
In progress 0-50%	4 (-4)
Not Started	0
Ongoing	9

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

Council Plan Objectives	Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth.	1.1.1 Complete a review of Council's Planning Scheme as required under Section 12B of the Planning Environment Act 1987	In progress 51-99% (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 51-99% (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 East' Structure Plan project	Complete	This project has assessed the physical capacity of the Ararat North East area and the utility services that would be

			needed if the subject site were to be developed in the future.
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	This action was completed at the May 2026 Council Meeting.
	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 broader CALD Outreach 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	This action was completed at the May 2026 Council Meeting.

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.	Complete	Council staff and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism have identified that supporting the growth and development of an existing food and wine event in Ararat Rural City is likely to leverage a greater outcome with fewer resources than a new event. Work to identify and support the development of a suitable existing event will occur in the 2026/27 year.
	2.3.3 Work with operators and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to deliver 4 star and above accommodation	Complete	This action was completed at the May 2026 Council Meeting.
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	Complete	The installation of the new battery was completed on 17 June 2026
	3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program	Complete	The Roadside Weeds and Pest Program for 2025/26 is now complete
	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	The Federal and State Governments announced on 15 May 2026 that construction on the Western Highway Upgrade between Buangor and Ararat will begin before the end of the year, following additional investment
	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 51-99%	Basketball Victoria released new facility guidelines in May 2026. The concept designs are being reviewed against the latest guidelines. The concepts for the outdoor pool upgrade is also being reviewed in light of recent community feedback received through the Budget and the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy engagement processes.
	4.2.2 Deliver the Community Road Safety Strategy	Complete	This action was completed at the May 2026 Council Meeting.
	4.2.3 Deliver the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	Complete	This action was completed at the May 2026 Council Meeting.
4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are	4.3.1 Deliver the 2025/26 Capital Works Program	Complete	Refer to the Capital Works report. As of 31 May 2026, 102% of the capital works

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.			budget is expended, so this action is marked complete.
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 finalised a 'Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper' and this is presented at this Council Meeting. 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	This action was completed at the May 2026 Council Meeting.
	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 - May 2026 report*

MOVED CR JOYCE

SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG

That:

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

Cr Joyce and Cr R Armstrong spoke for the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5379/26**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.4 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - MAY 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29684

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 31 May 2026, 102% of the budget is expended with committed works expected to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Mt William Road is progressing well with the works completed and requiring sealing, line marking and armco which will occur in early spring. Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge strengthening works on the bridge over Billy Billy Creek progressing well with completion slightly delayed due to the wet weather, this looks to be complete by the end of June. The Pony Club arena construction is nearing completion with lighting and drainage works to be finalised in the coming months. Road construction works have commenced on the first stage of Buangor Ben Nevis Road at the Warrak end of the project.

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							\$170,427	\$170,427		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 have been complete
Alexandra Oval - Hot Water Service Replacements							\$22,854	\$22,854		Works have been completed
Former Cobb & Co Staging Stables (Disaster Recovery Heritage Program)	\$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 (Play our Way Program)	\$1,490,000	\$1,490,000			\$14,270	\$75,035	\$1,236,129	\$1,325,434	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 (Open Space for Everyone Program)	\$112,000	\$100,000	\$12,000		\$1,172	\$50,122	\$68,279	\$119,573	107%	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		\$161,848	\$162,151	26%	Works have commenced on-site with demolition and electrical works complete, new slabs are being laid and internal framing has commenced.
Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment <i>(Building Blocks improvement grants program)</i>	\$745,000	\$745,000			\$26,000		\$618,716	\$644,716	86%	All internal works have been completed.
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	\$302,347	\$133,750	\$436,098	62%	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		\$37,882	\$37,882	88%	Synthetic carpet has been installed in February and concrete works have been completed, netting is nearing completion.
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	\$427,504	\$2,585,985	\$3,056,471		

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	\$183,659	\$113,000	114%	New reach mower
Fixtures, Fittings & Furniture	\$100,000		\$77,509	77%	Town Hall - New Speaker IT Capital - Core Switch and WiFi Replacement
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$40,000		\$41,268	103%	
TOTAL - PLANT & EQUIPMENT		\$183,659	\$440,172	97%	

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	\$347,110	\$1,157,589	\$1,504,699	100%	\$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	\$50,129	\$788,954	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 (Roads to Recovery 24/25 & 25/26)	\$3,143,000		\$2,143,000 (24/25) \$1,000,000 (25/26)	\$269,592		\$145,776	\$415,368		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					\$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 (SILRP Funding 25/26)	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000							Council contribution of \$1,250,000 required in 26/27 Budget
Mt William Road (HSVPP Funding 24/25)	\$6,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000	\$217,582		\$3,944,644	\$4,162,226	66%	The scope of works has been completed to adding the rock layer. There is one final section to seal and line marking and armco to install.
Webb Street Reconstruction (Roads to Recovery 24/25)	\$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 to Recovery (26/27) Stevens Crescent View Point Street (Banksia to Temple) View Point Street (High to Lambert)						\$13,406	\$13,406		Planning and design work

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 (Active Transport Fund)	\$399,000	\$266,000	\$133,000	\$13,525	\$117,302	\$108,698	\$239,525	60%	Shoulder Sealing works have been completed. Line Marking will be undertaken when weather permits.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge 7001.14 Design and Construct (Roads to Recovery - 25/26)	\$1,300,000		\$1,300,000	\$68,723		\$1,220,029	\$1,288,752	99%	Contract No. 731 - Awarded July 2025 \$1.109m - Road and Bridge Pty Ltd \$100,000 allowance for Permits and Vegetation offsets. Works have been completed
McCrows Road Bridge (Roads to Recovery - 24/25)	\$350,000		\$350,000	\$17,738		\$446,899	\$464,637		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			\$116,262	\$116,262	116%	
Bridges	\$0					\$1,710	\$1,710		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
Footpath Renewal Program	\$400,000		\$400,000			\$323,040	\$323,040		All projects complete for 25/26 Financial Year
Albert Street Footpath (Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program 25/26)	\$85,000	\$42,500	\$42,500 taken from Footpath Renewal Program above		\$13,977	\$41,207	\$55,184	65%	Improving Pedestrian Accessibility to the Ararat Retirement Village and Sports Precinct - New Grant received September 2025. This project is currently in construction.
Urban Drainage Works	\$350,000					\$37,545	\$37,545		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		\$64,000	\$145,750	\$209,750		Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage. Money from Building Reserve
Buangor Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade			\$201,000		\$59,000	\$145,750	\$204,750		Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage, commencing week of 23 February 2026. Money from Building Reserve
Kerb and Channel	\$0					\$109,351	\$109,351		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing Some planning work is being undertaken for the 26/27 Financial Year
Lake Bolac Kindergarten Carpark (YMCA received funding for work)	\$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 (Road Safety Program - School Safety Improvements 20-25)	\$19,009	\$19,009		\$8,244		\$4,369	\$12,613	66%	These works are complete.
Queen Street Housing Support Program (Housing Support Program - Community Enabling Infrastructure)	\$7,380,000	\$7,380,000		\$152,580	\$351,450	\$839,739	\$1,343,769	18%	Planning Permit application has been approved.

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		\$11,300	\$11,881	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		\$19,664	\$20,264	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	\$17,135	\$62,837	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		\$19,153	\$19,298	15%	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		\$23,700	\$25,231	4%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and the lighting design is being finalised.
George Road Raised Crossing (Ararat West)						\$5,409	\$5,409		New initiative for the SLRSP to include a permanent raised crossing at George Road.

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		\$189,076	\$319,311	102%	Both Projects have been completed.
High Street Raised Crossing						\$129,837			
TOTAL - ROADS CAPITAL	\$30,312,580	\$19,661,080	\$10,639,371	\$832,886	\$2,724,526	\$9,624,779	\$13,182,191		

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 (Funding of the same name)	\$74,135	\$74,135		NA	\$18,870	\$62,456	\$81,326	109%	This project has been awarded to Project Platypus, all funds are expected to be expended by mid May 2026.
Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (Local Sports Infrastructure Funding 23/24)	\$55,000	\$40,000	\$15,000	\$12,452		\$41,436	\$53,888	97%	CommunityVibe is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been undertaken, and the draft report is currently out for final consultation.
Community Road Safety Action Plan (TAC Local Govt Funding)	\$49,540	\$49,540		\$437		\$39,581	\$40,018	81%	DWB Engineering is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been completed and draft reporting is being compiled

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%	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.
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade - Participation Initiative. <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i>	\$50,000	\$50,000		NA				0%	This grant was received in July 2025 and will run in conjunction with the infrastructure project for Sports Lighting and accessibility upgrades.

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 - May 2026 report.*

MOVED CR JOYCE

SECONDED CR PRESTON

That:

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

Cr Joyce and Cr Preston spoke for the motion.

CARRIED 7/0

5380/26

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

SECTION 5 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

5.1 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING

AUTHOR'S TITLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29685

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 contains the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on the 2 June 2026.

DISCUSSION

The 2 June 2026 Audit and Risk Committee meeting focused on oversight of Council's financial performance, audit activities and risk management. The committee reviewed external audit progress, including a draft interim management letter with a small number of issues expected to be resolved, and considered sector-wide findings from VAGO, concluding Council has not experienced the capital underspend seen elsewhere due to strong delivery of its capital works program. Internal audit and governance matters were a key focus, with updates on the audit programs, and planned reviews, alongside enhancements to policies to strengthen controls and reduce fraud risk. The committee also reviewed the strategic risk register and ongoing risk program, confirmed policy review progress and noted actions to improve reporting.

Council Committees	Councillor representative	Current meeting (as presented)	Next scheduled meeting/s
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Bob Sanders	02 June 2026	15 September 2026
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Peter Joyce	02 June 2026	15 September 2026

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

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

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

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

Budget Implications

No budget impact for the receiving of minutes.

Policy/Legal/Statutory

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

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Consultation and Communication

Audit and Risk Committee members.

Councillor representation on Council Committees.

Chief Executive Officer and relevant Council officers.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. the Audit and Risk Committee Meetings minutes of 02 June 2026 be received*

**MOVED CR WATERSTON
SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG**

That:

- 1. the Audit and Risk Committee Meetings minutes of 02 June 2026 be received**

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5381/26**

ATTACHMENTS

The Audit and Risk Committee Minutes from 2 June 2026 are provided as Attachment 5.1



MINUTES

Audit and Risk Committee

Tuesday 2 June 2026

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

Commencing at 1:00 pm

Audit and Risk Committee:

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

In attendance:

Dr Tim Harrison
Ms Kate Scarce
Mr Ryan Schischka
Ms Karissa Hogan
Mrs Chandra Willmott

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SECTION 1 – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 APOLOGIES
No Apologies

1.2 DECLARATION OF DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Disclosure of Interests are to be made immediately prior to any relevant item being discussed.
Janet Dore disclosed that she is currently working with Buloke Shire and committee agreed there was no perceived conflict of interest.

1.3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Internal Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 03 March 2026 be received.

MOVED: GREG JAKOB
SECOND: JANET DORE

That the Minutes of the Internal Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 03 March 2026 be received.

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SECTION 2- EXTERNAL AUDIT

2.1 EXTERNAL AUDIT - DRAFT INTERIM MANAGEMENT LETTER FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2026

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.33 Quarterly review to ensure that managements responses to any external audit findings are acted upon in a timely manner.

BACKGROUND

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

DISCUSSION

Johnsons MME conducted the interim audit in April within the remote working environment. A draft interim management letter has been received. There are three new issues for the current period and three open issues from the prior period. It is anticipated that Council will have fully resolved all items prior to the issue of the final management letter.

VAGO has also included in the letter one recommendation that is specific to all councils, based on the findings in their report to parliament, *Results of 2024-25 audits – Local Government*. The following item 2.2 provides further information of VAGO's report, including an analysis of Council's capital works budgets to address the recommendation.

Mr Ryan Schischka of Johnsons MME will attend the meeting remotely to present the draft Interim Management Letter

RECOMMENDATION

That the draft Interim Management Letter Report for the financial year ending 30 June 2025 be noted.

NOTED

ATTACHMENTS

The draft Audit Strategy Memorandum is provided as Attachment 2.1

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2.2 EXTERNAL AUDIT – RESULTS OF AUDIT 2024-25: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.34 Quarterly review Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) reports to assess the impacts on Council.

BACKGROUND

The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) presented a report to parliament, *Results of 2024-25 Audits: Local Government* on 30 March 2026. The report discusses the observations and findings across all 79 councils as a result of their audit of the sector. The report includes two new recommendations, however only one of the recommendations is specific to all councils

DISCUSSION

This year VAGO have prepared a briefing report for Audit and Risk Committee members, which includes an overview and the key findings of the full report.

The report found that councils in Victoria continue to underspend their capital budgets. In 2024–25, sector capital expenditure totalled \$3.370 billion, which was 19.6 per cent (\$0.820 billion) below council budgets. In the previous year, the underspend was 17.1 per cent (\$0.720 billion).

In response to this finding VAGO recommends:

- That councils undertake a review of their capital expenditure budgeting process to understand why the underspend is occurring, whether key assumptions require enhancement and adjust future asset management plans accordingly.

In recent years, Council has maintained a strong and consistent focus on delivering its full capital works program.

A review of the past five years shows that Council budgeted \$64.945 million and delivered \$69.551 million in works. This is an increase of \$4.606 million, or 7 per cent above budget.

When works funded by capital grants are excluded, Council budgeted \$42.838 million in Council-funded works and delivered \$48.317 million. This is an increase of \$5.479 million, or 13 per cent above budget.

To compensate for delays in several major grant-funded projects in 2024-25, Council made a strategic decision to bring forward expenditure on resheeting works and alternative surface treatments, such as Otta seals. This ensured that a high level of capital project delivery was maintained. Additionally, Council increased reseal program expenditure to secure pricing under an expiring contract.

Preliminary analysis of capital expenditure against budget for 2025-26 indicates a corresponding decrease in works funded by Council, reflecting an adjustment for the apparent overspend in the previous year.

It is important to note that capital works delivery can vary considerably from the budget, due to factors that affect timing, including project planning, preliminary works, tender processes, construction schedules, and the timing of grant funding. However, after reviewing capital expenditure compared to budget Council is confident that no underlying underspend exists, particularly when assessed over the longer term.

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Results of 2024-25 Audits: Local Government be noted.

NOTED

ATTACHMENTS

The VAGO briefing report is provided as Attachment 2.2.1

The capital works budget analysis is provided as Attachment 2.2.2

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SECTION 3- FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

3.1 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – ENDING 30 APRIL 2026

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 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 5% 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 \$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	-

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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	1,029	-
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

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- (recurrent) and \$2.282 million for Grants Capital (non-recurrent) included in the Current Budget on the assumption that each of the grant projects will be completed during the 2025/26 financial year.
3. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$2.050 million to a surplus of \$3.028 million for 2025/26. The year-end variance is a 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 28% 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.

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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
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	122%	123%
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	0.86%	0.00%
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	7.83%	8.25%
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	49.39%	66.48%
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	\$4,936	\$4,094

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Indicator	30/6/2025	30/04/2026
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	\$2,002	\$2,032
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 2,653 assessments in 2024/25.	87.8%	80.4%
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.	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".

RECOMMENDATION

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

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 30 April 2026 are provided as Attachment 3.1.

The attachment also includes a table of Percentage of Rates Collected to 30 April 2026 by Rating Option

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SECTION 4 - CEO UPDATE

4.1 CEO UPDATE – **CONFIDENTIAL**

The CEOs report will be circulated prior to the meeting

RECOMMENDATION

That the CEO's report be received.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

CEO Confidential Report provided as Attachment 4.1

ACTION: Share budget document with the Audit and Risk Committee

ACTION: Capital works program to show actual % of works completed physically as well as % funds spent. Also to have an projected end date for projects

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SECTION 5 – INTERNAL CONTROLS

5.1 COUNCIL POLICY REVIEW UPDATE

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.7: Review the adequacy and effectiveness of key policies, systems and controls for providing a sound internal control environment, 5.12 view annually the effectiveness of Council's risk management framework and 5.13 review Council's risk appetite and the degree of alignment with Council's risk profile.

BACKGROUND

Council policies are reviewed on an ongoing and procedure review process.
This report outlines two Administrative and Council Policies which are currently being reviewed.

DISCUSSION

Council has committed to reviewing policies through review process to ensure that all Council policies meet legislative requirements and established internal processes.

All Council policies are accessible to Councillors, Audit and Risk Committee and staff through Microsoft Teams, hard copies in tearooms at the Depot and Municipal Offices and on Council website.

The below table outlines all policies that will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committees as they come up for review.

Council Policy	Due	Audit and Risk Committee
Asset Management Policy	Jan-15	Mar 26
Audit and Risk Committee Charter	Dec 26	Dec 26
Community Engagement Policy	Jan 30	Dec 29
Complaints Handling Policy	Jan 30	Dec 29
Compliance Framework and Policy	Jan 27	Dec 26
Council Expenses and Support Policy	Jul 28	Jun 28
Councillor Code of Conduct	Dec 28	Dec 28
Councillor Gifts Policy	Sept-29	Sept 29
Election Period 2020 Policy	Apr 28	Mar 28
Fraud and Corruption Policy	Dec 26	Dec 26
International and Interstate Travel Policy	Mar-28	Mar 28
Investment Policy	Feb-25	Mar 26
Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy	Sept-24	Mar 26
Privacy Policy (prev Privacy & Data Protection & Health Records Policy)	Jan 30	Dec 29
Procurement Policy	Jun- 28	Jun 28
Public Transparency Policy	Sept 29	Sept 29
Risk Management Policy	Dec 25	Mar 26
Social Media Policy	Feb 28	Dec 27
Valuation Policy - Major Asset Classes	May-26	Jun 26
Administration Policy		

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Accounts Payable Policy	New	Jun 26
Conflict of Interest Policy	Nov 28	Sept 28
Corporate Purchase Card Policy	Oct 27	Dec 27
Disposal and Sale of Items at Transfer Station Policy	Mar-26	Jun-26
Disposal and sale of minor assets policy	Mar 30	Mar 30
Equal Employment Opportunity Policy	Mar-26	Jun 26
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Nov 28	Sept 28
Essential Safety Measures Policy	Mar-24	Sept 25
Health and Wellbeing Policy	Aug 25	Sept 29
Injury Management Policy	Mar 30	Mar 30
Municipal Emergency Policy	Mar 30	Mar 30
Occupational Health and Safety Policy	Sept 26	Sep 26
OHS Workplace Emergency Evacuation Policy	Nov-25	Mar 26
Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace	Aug 25	Sept 28
Public Interest Disclosures Procedure	Oct 25	Mar 26
Risk Management Framework	Dec 25	Mar 26
Staff Code of Conduct	Jan 30	Dec 29
Staff Gift Policy	Jan 30	Dec 29
Staff Grievances Policy	Sept-27	Sep-27
Vehicle Policy	July 25	Mar 26
Workplace Anti-Discrimination & Harassment Policy	Jun 26	Jun 26

There are six policies / frameworks / Strategies being presented for review at this meeting which are:

- Risk Management Policy
- Risk Management Framework
- Audit and Risk Committee Charter
- Disposal and Sale of Items at Transfer Station Policy
- Accounts Payable Policy
- Procurement Strategy

The table below provides a list of the reviewed policies noting the main changes and a copy of the policies with track changes are attached.

Administrative / Council	Policy Title	Last review and adopted	Current Review Date ready for Adoption	Next Review
Council	Risk Management Policy	30 April 2024	June 2026	June 2028
Council	Risk Management Framework	30 April 2026	June 2026	June 2028
Council	Audit and Risk Committee Charter	27 January 2026	Current	December 2026
Administrative	Disposal and sale of items at Transfer Station Policy	1 March 2022	May 2026	May 2028
Administrative	Accounts Payable Policy	New	May 2026	May 2028

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The revised version of the Risk Management Policy includes the following substantive changes to improve clarity, consistency and alignment with current risk management terminology and Council references. Wording has been refined to improve consistency of review and reporting statements, whilst the Risk Appetite and Tolerance section and selected appetite statements have been updated to correct drafting issues and improved including in relation to finance, service delivery and reputation. Supporting references have been updated to reflect the current Council Plan reference should in the policy and the definition of risk has been revised to align with current AS ISO 31000:2018 terminology by defining risk as the effect of uncertainty on objectives. These revisions do not change the overall intent of the Policy.

This update to the Risk Management Framework strengthens councils approach to risk by clarifying risk appetite, improving usability and ensuring alignment with contemporary local government better practice and to international standards.

The revised framework introduces a clearer and more practical risk appetite statement to support consistent decision making and escalation, particularly for high and extreme risks. Changes have also been made to improve readability by reducing reliance on technical language, making the framework easier for staff to understand and apply in day to day operations.

The Audit and Risk Charter was presented at the December 2025 Audit and Risk Committee meeting and adopted at the January 2026 Council meeting. At the last Audit and Risk Committee meeting, a request was made to table it at this meeting for review. No changes have been made at this stage and any further amendments will be guided by the committees feedback.

The Disposal and sale of items at Resource Recovery Policy has been reviewed and updated to provide clarity, consistency and readability while retaining its original intent and operational approach. Several Transfer Stations have been removed from the policy that are no longer operational. Also the Sales Shed at the Ararat Resource Recovery Centre no longer operates due to having several second hand shops in Ararat however they are selling our compost from the Ararat site.

The Accounts Payable Policy have been developed in response to issues identified through the internal audit to strengthen Council's controls over the processing and payment of accounts. The policy provides a clear and consistent framework for the management of accounts payable activities, ensuring that payments are accurate, appropriately authorized, timely and supported by adequate documentation. Its objective is to reduce the risk of error, fraud and non-compliance with legislation and governance requirements, while promoting accountability, segregation of duties and sound financial management practices across the organization.

The Procurement Strategy has been developed in response to findings from an internal audit which identified the need for a more strategic and consistent approach to procurement across Council. The Strategy is intended to promote better value for money by improving planning, supplier engagement and purchasing practices, while also strengthening governance and oversight of procurement activities. It provides a framework to support informed decision-making, encourage efficient and ethical procurement, and reduce exposure to procurement-related risks such as non-compliance, poor contract management and ineffective use of Council resources.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council Policy Review Update be noted.

NOTED

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ATTACHMENTS

Draft review of Risk Management Policy as Attachment 5.1.1
Draft review of Risk Management Framework as Attachment 5.1.2
Draft review of Audit and Risk Charter as Attachment 5.1.3
Draft review of Disposal and sale of items at Resource Recovery Centre Policy as Attachment 5.1.4
Draft review of Accounts Payable Policy as Attachment 5.1.5
Draft Review of Procurement Strategy as Attachment 5.1.6

ACTIONS:

- Combined the Risk Management Policy and Framework into one document
- Describe difference between Council Officers and Council Employee in RMP
- Frameworks assess the KPIs and source of KPIs.
- Procurement strategy needs stronger links to Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Accounts Payable Policy needs to be linked to Fraud and Corruption Policy and Code and Conduct Policy

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SECTION 6 - RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER REVIEW AND RISK REGISTER PROGRAM UPDATE

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.14: Review Council's risk profile and the changes occurring in the profile from meeting to meeting and 5.15 Review Councils treatment plans for significant risks

BACKGROUND

Council's Strategic Risk Register is reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer on a regular basis and is presented to the Audit and Risk Committee.

DISCUSSION

The Chief Executive Officer ensures that strategic risks are identified and assessed, treatment options are prioritized and implemented, actions are assigned, and performance is monitored and reviewed.

The Chief Executive Officer has a yearly plan for viewing strategic risks with Ararat Rural City Council. The suggest program is outlined below which focuses on the highest risk areas earlier on in the program. Strategic risk reviews are up to date.

However, Council is committed to reviewing the Strategic Risks holistically to reflect the current risk environment. We will engage with an external provider such as our insurers JLT to facilitate a session with Councillors and key Council officers to address the strategic risks and current measures to reduce or mitigate those risks.

July 2025	Fraud and Corruption; Cyber Attack	January 2026	Legislative Compliance
August 2025	Asset Management	February 2026	Workforce Planning
September 2025	Business Continuity	March 2026	Procurement; and Emergency Management
October 2025	Financial Sustainability	April 2026	Waste Management; and Occupational Health and Safety
November 2025	IT Infrastructure	May 2026	Strategic Leadership and Advocacy
December 2025	Governance	June 2026	Climate Change; and Records Management

The Chief Operating Officer continues to work with service owners to review the operational risks and set ongoing review dates. The table below outlines the timeframe for each of these reviews to take place over the next 6 months and continuing training for key service providers in using the system. Reviews have been completed up to the end of November.

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Month	Service Area
February	Local Laws, Municipal Building Services, Planning, Environmental Health, Environmental Management and Sustainability
March	Risk Management, Governance, Emergency Management, Insurance Management
April	Design and Project Management, Information Technology, Asset Management, Records Management, Graphic Information Systems,
May	Maternal & Child Health, Occupational Health and Safety,
June	Sport and recreation, Tourism, Economic Development
July	Depot, Contracts and Procurement, Finance, Property Rates and Valuation,
August	Library Service, Events, Human Resource, Customer Services, Waste management
September	Art Gallery / TAMA, Town Hall, Media and Communications

RECOMMENDATION

That the Strategic Risk Review and Update Report be received.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

The Strategic Risk Register is provided as Attachment 6.1

ACTION: Prior to the September Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Council will undertake a comprehensive review and refresh of the Strategic Risk Register to ensure it reflects current and emerging risks, rather than simply adding new risks to the existing register.

Council will also present an update on the Incident and Risk Register.

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SECTION 7- FRAUD PREVENTION

No Report Table

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SECTION 8- INTERNAL AUDIT

8.1 INTERNAL AUDIT – STRATEGIC INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAM STATUS UPATE

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.23 Review progress of annual internal audit plan

BACKGROUND

Council appointed AFS & Associates from Bendigo as Council's Internal Auditors. This report outlines the audit program that was presented and accepted at the last Audit and Risk Committee meeting with the current status.

DISCUSSION

AFS & Associates have provided the internal Audit Program Review document which outlines the forward rolling four-year program for Council.

This Status Update includes:

- The current status of SIAP
- Proposed change to the 2026/27 Internal audit program
- Review of the 2026/27 – 2028/29 Internal audit program
- Extending the 4 year rolling program to 2029/2023

Topic	Current Timming	Proposed Timing
Grants Management	March 2027	24 August 26 – 8 September 2026
Economic Development	28 September – 6 October 2026	March 2027

RECOMMENDATION

The revised program has been reviewed and endorsed
The Strategic Audit Program Status Update be received

ENDORSED AND RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

The Strategic Internal Audit Program Status Update as Attachment 8.1

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8.2 INTERNAL AUDIT – PAST ISSUES REVIEW

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.25 Review reports on internal audit reviews, including recommendations for improvement arising from those review and aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.27 Monitor action by management on internal audit findings and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Council appointed AFS & Associates from Bendigo as Council's Internal Auditors. Council has reviewed the recommendations made by the Internal Auditor in relation to the internal audit reviews and these are presented as an attachment to this report.

DISCUSSION

An Audit Review Recommendation Action Plan was developed to capture the recommendations highlighted in the various internal audits conducted by AFS.

Each year, AFS, as the internal auditors, conducts a review of the actions taken by management and confirm that they have been addressed the risks raised by the internal auditors. A review was undertaken in May 2026 and confirmed the actioned taken to address agreed management actions in previously issued internal audit reports.

At the review there were 4 moderate findings management actions and 15 minor findings deemed completed since the previous review. Any agreed management actions rated as "Opportunities" are deemed not critical to addressing a specific risk and therefore not reviewed.

The Audit Recommendation Outcomes Action Plan, list the recommendations and subsequent outcomes and projected completion dates that are outstanding.

RECOMMENDATION

The Past Issue Review report be received

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

The Internal Audit Report – Past Issues Review is included as Attachment 8.2.1

The Audit Recommendation Outcomes Update Action Plan is included as Attachment 8.2.2

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8.3 INTERNAL AUDIT – DATA ANALYTICS - PAYROLL

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.25 Review reports of internal audit reviews, including recommendations for improvement arising from those reviews.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with Ararat Rural City Council Internal Audit Program, AFS has undertaken a detailed analysis of ARCC's payroll and Masterfile.

DISCUSSION

ARCC's payroll and Masterfile processes are governed by a framework comprised of policies, procedures and a Delegation of Authority to ensure controls are in place to mitigate the risk of fraud and non-bona fide use of the organisations financial resources.

The objectives of the review was to identify any significant adverse pay incidents or potential fraud within the payroll function through the use of data analytics.

The audit concluded there were 4 minor findings.

All recommendations suggested to management have been agreed to. An update on the progress of the agreed to action items will be provided at the September 2026 Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Data Analytics - Payroll report be received.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

The AFS & Associate Audit of the Data Analytics - Payroll report is provided as Attachment 8.3

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8.4 INTERNAL AUDIT – GRANT MANAGEMENT INCLUDING COMMUNITY GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.24 Review and approve proposed scopes for each review in the annual internal audit plan.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with Ararat Rural City Council's Internal Audit Program, an internal audit is to be undertaken to review the reliability and effectiveness of the internal controls over the management of grant funding.

DISCUSSION

The objective is to review the reliability and effectiveness of the internal controls over the management of grant funding and to confirm an appropriate framework exists and is applied to ensure grants to the community are issued fairly and responsibly.

The attached document, outlines the scope and the approach on how this audit will be delivered as well as what is excluded from the audit.

The timeframe for this audit is scheduled for 24 August 2026 for the field work to commence with documentation to be provided by the 30 July 2026 and the results are scheduled to be presented at the December 2026 audit and risk committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Internal audit planning document for the Grant Management including community grants management audit be received.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

The AFS & Associate Internal Audit Planning document for the Grant Management including community grants management is provided as Attachment 8.4

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8.5 INTERNAL AUDIT – LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

Aligns with Audit and Risk Committee Charter 5.24 Review and approve proposed scopes for each review in the annual internal audit plan.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with Ararat Rural City Council's Internal Audit Program, an internal audit is to be undertaken to assess the framework to promote long-term financial sustainability.

DISCUSSION

The objective is to assess the Council's Long-Term Financial Planning to ensure it contains reasonable assumptions, is based on adequate availability data, is sufficiently maintained and enables the promotion of long-term financial sustainability.

The attached document, outlines the scope and the approach on how this audit will be delivered as well as what is excluded from the audit.

The timeframe for this audit is scheduled for 6 October 2026 for the field work to commence with documentation to be provided by the 14 September 2026 and the results are scheduled to be presented at the December 2026 audit and risk committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Internal audit planning document for the Long-Term Financial Planning audit be received.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENTS

The AFS & Associate Internal Audit Planning document for the Long-Term Financial audit is provided as Attachment 8.5

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SECTION 9- GENERAL BUSINESS

9.1 INDUSTRY UPDATE- RECENT REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

BACKGROUND

AFS & Associates (AFS) are Council's Internal Auditors. AFS have provided an Industry Update report to be included in the agenda. The Industry Update report lists recent reports and publications that may be of interest to Ararat Rural City Council.

DISCUSSION

The Industry Update report lists 18 recent articles and reports, covering a range of different topics from sources such as: IBAC, IIA, and OVIC etc.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Industry Update report be noted.

NOTED

ATTACHMENTS

The industry Update report is provided as Attachment 9.1

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SECTION 10 – FUTURE MEETINGS

10.1 FUTURE MEETING DATES

Future meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee are scheduled as follows:

- Tuesday 15 September 2026 1pm
- Tuesday 1 December 2026 1pm
- Tuesday 2 March 2027 1pm
- Tuesday 1 June 2027 1pm

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SECTION 11- NEXT MEETING/CHARTER ITEMS

September 2026	
Ref. from Charter	
5.1	Review significant accounting and external reporting issues
5.2	Review changes to the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework
5.3	Review the annual financial report and annual performance statement
5.4	Review with management and the external auditors the results of the audit
5.5	Recommend the adoption of the annual financial report and annual performance statement to Council
5.16	Review the insurance program annually prior to renewal
5.17	Review the approach to business continuity planning arrangements.
5.19	Receive reports from management about actual or suspected instances of fraud or corruption (as required)
5.20	Review reports by management about the actions taken by Council to report such matters to the appropriate integrity bodies (as required)
5.24	Review and approve proposed scopes for each review in the annual internal audit plan (as required)
5.25	Review reports on internal audit reviews, including recommendations for improvement arising from those reviews.
5.27	Monitor action by management on internal audit findings and recommendations.
5.29	Ensure that the Committee is aware of and appropriately represented regarding any proposed changes to the appointment of the internal audit service provider. (as required)
5.30	Recommend to Council, if necessary, the termination of the internal audit contractor
5.32	Discuss with the external auditor any audit issues encountered in the normal course of audit work, including any restriction on scope of work or access to information.
5.33	Ensure that significant findings and recommendations made by the external auditor, and management's responses to them, are appropriate and are acted upon in a timely manner
5.34	Review the effectiveness of the external audit function and ensure that the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) is aware of the Committee's view
5.36	Meet with the external auditor at least annually in the absence of management

SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

AUTHOR'S TITLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 29686

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 23 June 2026

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee
- PILOR Report
- Risk Policy and Framework
- Procurement Strategy
- Insurance
- Ararat Women's Shed Lease
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Public Open Space Contributions
- Disability Action Plan - Discussion Paper
- Annual Plan
- Eastern Entrance Signage Engagement Report
- Planning Scheme Review
- 2026 General Valuation
- Road Naming - McAdie Lane
- Road Naming Proposal - Oak Lane
- Ararat Housing Enterprise
- Monthly Performance Report - May 2026
- Monthly Community Engagement Report

- Monthly Performance Report – Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update – May 2026
- Monthly Progress Report – Council Plan – Annual Plan
- Capital Work Program – May 2026
- Audit & Risk Committee Minutes
- 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 JOYCE

SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG

That:

1. the Informal Meetings of Councillors Report be received.

Cr Joyce and Cr R Armstrong spoke for the motion.

CARRIED 7/0

5382/26

ATTACHMENTS

The Summary of Council Briefings are provided as Attachment 6.1.

Councillor Briefing Agenda



Date: Tuesday 23 June 2026

Commencement: 5.00 pm

Location: Council Chamber, Shire Offices

Councillors:	Cr Jo Armstrong Cr Peter Joyce Cr Teli Kaur Cr Luke Preston Cr Bob Sanders Cr Bill Waterston
Officers:	CEO, Dr Tim Harrison Deputy CEO, Phuong Au Chief Operating Officer, Chandra Willmott Major Projects Lead, Rebecca Rodger
Apologies:	Cr Rob Armstrong

Disclosure of Conflict of Interests

Disclosure of Interests are to be made immediately prior to any relevant item being discussed (**Local Government Act 2020 - Section 131 and Chapter 5, Section 6 of the Governance Rules**).

1. CEO Transition - Greg Jakob

- 1.1 CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee update

2. Matters to be considered

- 2.1 Mayor's roundup
- 2.2 PILOR Report
- 2.3 Risk Policy and Framework
- 2.4 Procurement Strategy
- 2.5 Insurance
- 2.6 Ararat Women's Shed Lease
- 2.7 Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- 2.8 Public Open Space Contributions
- 2.9 Disability Action Plan - Discussion Paper
- 2.10 Annual Plan
- 2.11 Eastern Entrance Signage Engagement Report
- 2.12 Planning Scheme Review
- 2.13 2026 General Valuation
- 2.14 Road Naming - McAdie Lane
- 2.15 Road Naming Proposal - Oak Lane
- 2.16 Ararat Housing Enterprise
- 2.17 Monthly Performance Report - May 2026

Councillor Briefing Agenda



3. For noting

- 3.1 Monthly Community Engagement Report
- 3.2 Monthly Progress Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - May 2026
- 3.3 Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- 3.4 Capital Works Program - May 2026
- 3.5 Audit & Risk Committee Minutes
- 3.6 Building approvals
- 3.7 Planning approvals under delegation
- 3.8 VicGrid: Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines - documents provided - Local Government implications to be discussed at the July Briefing

Dr Tim Harrison

SECTION 7 - NOTICES OF MOTION

A *notice of motion* must be in writing signed by a Councillor and be lodged with or sent to the *Chief Executive Officer* no later than 12.00pm (noon) and at least six (6) days prior to the Council Meeting to allow sufficient time for the *Chief Executive Officer* to include the *notice of motion* in agenda papers for a *Council meeting*.

SECTION 8 - URGENT BUSINESS

Items cannot be admitted as urgent business other than by resolution of *Council* and only then if it:

- 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*.

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

6:43PM - 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 J ARMSTRONG
SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG**

That the meeting be closed to members of the public pursuant to section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 to consider confidential reports.

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5383/26**

6:47 PM - OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

**MOVED CR J ARMSTRONG
SECONDED CR R ARMSTRONG**

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

No Councillors spoke for or against the motion.

**CARRIED 7/0
5385/26**

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 PRESTON SECONDED CR KAUR

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
5386/26**

Meeting closed at 6:48pm

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT PAGES 13262 - 13514 INCLUDING PAGES 946 - 953 OF THE CLOSED SESSION ARE CONFIRMED AND ARE A TRUE AND CORRECT RECORD.

MAYOR - CR BOB SANDERS