

Agenda

Ordinary Meeting of Council

Corryong Council Chamber

Wednesday 25 May 2022

This information is available in alternative formats on request

<p>AGENDA FOR THE ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT TOWONG SHIRE COUNCIL CORRYONG OFFICE ON WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2022 COMMENCING AT 10.30 AM.</p>
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Commonly Used Acronyms:

ABBREVIATION	TITLE
Council Officers	
SAE	Senior Asset Engineer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DIE	Director Infrastructure and Environment
DCP	Director Community and Planning
DCOD	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
COCEO	Co-ordinator, Office of the CEO
MF	Manager Finance
TLCS	Team Leader Customer Service
MRR	Manager Relief and Recovery
Government/Organisation	
ACSUM	Alliance of Councils and Shires of the Upper Murray
CHS	Corryong Health Service (formerly Upper Murray Health and Community Services)
DJPR	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
DOT	Department of Transport
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
GMW	Goulburn Murray Water
HRGLN	Hume Region Local Government Network
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
NECMA	North East Catchment Management Authority
NEW	North East Water
NEWRRG	North East Waste and Resource Recovery Group
RCV	Rural Councils Victoria
RDA	Regional Development Australia
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
THS	Tallangatta Health Service
VGC	Victorian Grants Commission

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1 Opening Prayer

"Almighty God, we ask that you be present at this meeting to assist us in our service to the Community through Local Government.

We pray that our decisions will be wise and taken with goodwill and clear conscience.

Amen."

2 Councillor and Officer Presence at the Meeting

3 Apologies and Granting of Leave of Absence

4 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

Section 130 of the *Act* requires that a 'Relevant person' (which means a person who is a Councillor, a member of a delegated committee who is not a Councillor or a member of Council staff) disclose any conflict of interest in the manner required by Council's *Governance Rules* and exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to the matter including any discussion or vote on the matter at any Council meeting.

Council's Governance Rules state as follows:

A2 Obligations with regards to conflict of interest

Councillors, members of delegated committee, and Council staff are required to:

- a. Avoid all situations which may give rise to conflicts of interest;*
- b. Identify any conflicts of interest; and*
- c. Disclose or declare all conflicts of interest.*

A3 Disclosure of a conflict of interest at a Council meeting

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

A3.1 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

A3.2 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:

A3.2.1 advising of the conflict of interest;

A3.2.2 explaining the nature of the conflict of interest; and

A3.2.3 detailing, if the nature of the conflict of interest involves a Councillor's relationship with or a gift from another person, the:

- a. name of the other person;*
- b. nature of the relationship with that other person or the date of receipt, value and type of gift received from the other person; and*
- c. 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.

5 Confirmation of Minutes

Ordinary Council Meeting 27 April 2022

Special Council Meeting 11 May 2022

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 APRIL 2022, AND THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 2022, AS CIRCULATED BE CONFIRMED.

6 Petitions and Joint Letters

7 Public Question Time

Public Question Time has now replaced the Open Forum section of the Council meeting.

In accordance with Council's *Governance Rules*, all questions must be submitted to Council in writing by 2.00pm on the day prior to the Council meeting.

An online form is available on Council's website, and a hard copy of the form is available at both the Tallangatta and Corryong Council offices.

Public Notice of Public Question Time was included in the advertisement for the Council meeting.

The Chief Executive Officer will advise the meeting of the receipt of any questions.

8 Informal Meetings of Councillors

In accordance with Council's *Governance Rules*, a written summary of the matters discussed at each informal meeting of Councillors is to be tabled at the next convenient Council meeting and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

The Meeting Records from the Informal Meetings of Councillors held on 18 and 23 March 2022, and 6, 13 and 27 April 2022 are attached at [Appendix 1](#).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE INFORMATION BE NOTED.

9 Organisational Improvement

9.1 Quarterly Budget Report (06/02/0021-DCOD)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Chris Smith, Manager Finance.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

To present the Quarterly Budget Report in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Summary:

At the end of the third quarter Council is \$16.1 million dollars ahead of budget, primarily due to \$7.3 million in grant income being carried forward from 2020/21 due to multi-year projects and COVID-19 related delays to capital works projects, and the receipt of an additional \$1.8 million in Bushfire Recovery funding.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 2 – Quarterly Budget Report as at 31 March 2022.

Background/History:

This report provides a quarterly update to Council on the financial performance of the organisation.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

Section 97 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires the following:

- (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.*

This report meets the requirements of the Act.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Not applicable.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

The Budget Report reflects a year-to-date position which is significantly ahead of budget due to the carry forward of selected one-off grant funds from the prior financial year as well as the receipt of unanticipated grants. It is expected that these funds will be expended as the capital works program is progressed. Longer term financial sustainability is dependent on the ongoing receipt of grants to fund renewal of Council's aging infrastructure.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Not applicable, noting that projects identified within the report may have involved consultation on an individual basis.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

The Budget Report reflects a significant amount of one-off grant funding which is being spent on improvements in services and infrastructure for the benefit of the community.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Not applicable.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

Council has achieved a net budget position that is higher than anticipated for quarter three primarily due to the carry forward of selected grant funds from 2020/21 and the receipt of unanticipated grants.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Not applicable.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council has prioritised grant applications and expenditure against the objectives outlined in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)) :

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

A substantial amount of grant funding has been secured to support various projects across the municipality, some of which has been carried forward from the prior year due to COVID-19 related delays. Additional resources have been recruited to ensure that these projects can be delivered.

Officer's view:

Council is in a strong financial position given the amount of one-off competitive grant funding secured to support project delivery over the next 12 months. Council remains dependent on the receipt of one-off grant funding to support renewal of its aging infrastructure into the future.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council Meeting.

9.2 Datascape Action Sheet Report (06/06/0010-CEO)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Emma Woolaston, Director Corporate and Organisational Development.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report is provided monthly to update Council on the progress of the action items from the previous Council meeting.

Summary:

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022, several resolutions were passed requiring action by Council officers. This report is provided to Council as an update on the progress of these actions.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 3 – Datascape Action Report from the Ordinary Council meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022.

Background/History:

Not applicable.

Relevant Law:

Not applicable.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Not applicable.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

Not applicable.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Not applicable.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

Not applicable.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Not applicable.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

Not applicable.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Not applicable.

Council Plans and Policies/Related Council Decisions:

Not applicable.

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

Action sheet reporting is a key control to ensure that officer actions stemming from Council resolutions are completed.

Officer's View:

The status of all actions arising from the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022 are provided in [Appendix 3](#). It is the Officer's view that progress has been made in relation to the actions required.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the meeting.

10 Bushfire Relief and Recovery

10.1 Bushfire Relief and Recovery Update (02/02/0013-MRR)

The Bushfire Relief and Recovery update is presented quarterly. The next report will be provided to Council in July 2022.

11 Community Wellbeing

11.1 Community Services Report (04/07/0055-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms. Ebony Ablett-Johnstone, Co-ordinator Early Years.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a quarterly update on the activities of the Community Services area throughout the Shire.

Summary:

The attached report provides an update on the activities of the Community Services team for 1 January to 31 March 2022. Notably, we continued to experience growth across our early years centres and we hired several additional staff to meet demand. We continued to partner with local and state based organisations to expand offerings, and secured nine grants in support of the continuous improvement of our early years services. We facilitated numerous successful events including:

- School holiday activities;
- The Resilience Project;
- The Push All-Ages Tour;
- The Tallangatta Community Breakfast; and
- Fire Safe Kids workshops.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 4 – Community Services Report January to March 2022.

Background/History:

The Community Services Report is provided every quarter.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

Community Services activities are conducted in accordance with relevant legislation including the *Children's Services Act 1996* and the *Children's Services Regulations 2020*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

The Community Services area provides services aimed at improving wellbeing outcomes for community members across all ages and stages.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

Council provides services that support the ongoing social sustainability of our municipal communities.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Community engagement was undertaken to support a review of Tallangatta Neighbourhood House programming, the development of senior and youth-focused community activities, and a review of Maternal and Child Health Nurse presence across the municipality.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

During the quarter, the early years' team reviewed the level of maternal child health support provided across and our growing municipality. As a result of this review, a restructuring of resources will see a more consistent service officer across the Shire and an increased opportunity for families to engage in family programs.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

The majority of activities in the Community Services area are delivered in collaboration with other agencies. Collaborations include:

- Participation in Family Violence networks in Corryong and Tallangatta; and
- Delivery of youth projects with Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVIC) and the local schools; and
- Delivery of professional development for Educators and Teachers across municipality with Seemann and Slattery and Mental Health First Aid Australia; and
- Delivery of Early Years projects with the Australian Childhood Foundation, Tallangatta Health, Gateway Health and the Department of Education and Training.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

All activities have been delivered within allocated budgets.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Community services activities have been conducted in accordance with relevant state and national plans including:

- The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's *National Quality Framework*;
- The Victorian State Government's *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*;
- The Victorian State Government's *Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan*;
- and
- The Victorian State Government's *Building stronger youth engagement in Victoria*.

Council Plans and Policies:

Community Services activities progressed the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities:

- 2.5 *Review opportunities for communities to access library resources and connect through libraries;*
- 2.7 *Expand and improve early years services across the Shire to support young families;*
- 2.11 *Support communities to ensure the Shire places are welcoming to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and LGBTIQ+ communities and are inclusive and connected;*
- 2.13 *Participate in key networks to support communities and key stakeholders on solutions to address family violence, suicide and mental health;*
- 5.14 *Invest in community education programs and a waste services survey to improve waste and recycling separation;*
- 6.1 *Continue to improve awareness, engagement and involvement of the community in relation to matters that affect them;*
- 6.7 *Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all councillors and staff in a continually evolving environment;*
- 6.8 *Continue to seek opportunities to improve service delivery and achieve best value including further investigation of shared services;*

- 6.9 *Continue to advocate for increased government funding support to ensure long term sustainability;*
- 6.10 *Investigate alternative revenue streams; and*
- 6.13 *Continually improve risk management and governance frameworks and practices.*

Activities were also in alignment with the Municipal Recovery Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 goals:

- 1.1 *Supported eating well and being physically active;*
- 1.2 *Safe and free from violence;*
- 2.1 *Embrace diversity;*
- 2.3 *Have their mental health and wellbeing well supported; and*
- 3.2 *Effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, including COVID-19 and the Black Summer Bushfires.*

Activities also aligned to the themes of the *Youth Plan 2019-2023*:

- 1 *Community Connectedness;*
- 2 *Health and Wellbeing;*
- 3 *Recreation;*
- 4 *Educational Pathways; and*
- 5 *Collaborative Pathways.*

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

Community Services activities help to mitigate the risk of social isolation and other poor social outcomes for community members across the municipality.

Officer's view:

Officers continue to provide valuable community services to families and young people across the Shire.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council Meeting.

11.2 Recreation Arts and Culture Report (04/01/0006-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Joe Calvert, Co-ordinator Recreation, Arts and Culture.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a quarterly update to Councillors on the key activities of the Recreation, Arts and Culture area.

Summary:

The attached report provides an overview of key Recreation, Arts and Culture activities from 1 January to 31 March 2022. Notably, the lifeguards were brought in-house during the pool season due to issues experienced with their contract agency, and generally the pool season was quite successful with good utilisation and a number of events held. We were successful in obtaining a \$20,000 grant to support Australia Day events across the Shire, which were all able to go ahead despite the challenging COVID-19 environment. The Davis Cottage Arts Space was well utilised and supported a successful exhibition by Kirilly Anderson.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 5 – Recreation, Arts and Culture Report January to March 2022.

Background/History:

This report is provided quarterly.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

Activities in the Recreation, Arts and Culture area are conducted in accordance with relevant legislation including the *Sport and Recreation Act 1972*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Recreation, Arts and Culture activities support community wellbeing by promoting connectedness and engagement.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

The *Recreation Strategy* supports the effective prioritisation of ongoing developments across the Shire's recreation facilities, to ensure the ongoing sustainability of their operations.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Extensive community engagement has been conducted during the development of the *Recreation Strategy*, including surveys, 'listening posts' in both Tallangatta and Corryong and meetings with recreation reserve committees. The community has also been engaged during Australia Day events.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

Officers have worked with several recreation groups to ensure they are supported to submit grant applications for upgrades and improvements to their facilities.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Officers continue to work with key community groups to ensure swimming pool services and attendance are well supported.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

The cost of the swim season was somewhat higher than the average for the past two years due to the need to bring the lifeguards in-house in the second half of the season. A detailed analysis of the cost implications for this approach is currently being undertaken and will be presented to Council in July.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Activities have been conducted in accordance with relevant state and national plans including:

- The Victorian State Government's *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*;
- The Victorian State Government's *A strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria 2017-2021*;
- The Victorian State Government's *Creative State 2016-2020*.

Council Plans and Policies:

Recreation, Arts and Culture activities progressed the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities:

- 2.4 *Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages; and*
- 2.6 *Develop a strategy for arts and cultural offerings across the Shire.*

Activities were also in alignment with the objectives of the *Municipal Recovery Plan* and the *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025*.

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officers' view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

The transition of pool lifeguards in-house during the pool season reduced the risk of rostering and remuneration errors and mitigated the loss of these valuable staff.

Officer's View:

Officers continue to provide valuable support to the community to advance the offerings of Recreation, Arts and Culture across the municipality.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council Meeting.

11.3 Emergency Management Report (02/02/0009-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr. Sven Erikson, Strategic Emergency Management Coordinator.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a quarterly update on the activities of the Emergency Management area.

Summary:

The attached report provides an overview of key activities within the Emergency Management area from 1 January to 31 March 2022. Notably officers responded to storm events which resulted in significant damage to infrastructure and assets across the Shire, particularly on the Berringa Peninsula. Officers worked alongside other agencies to clear debris, restore public access to roads and other assets, and support a displaced household. We also successfully applied for to be eligible for Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) funding to remediate the damage to Council assets.

Other notable activities included the development of a *Relief Centre Arrangements* manual supporting an Emergency Relief Centre Model across Towong, Alpine and Indigo Shire Councils; progress on the development of the draft Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMPC); and creation of a new team position, funded by Bushfire Recovery Victoria, to support community engagement and preparedness, to provide capacity for response and relief, and to integrate recovery efforts.

The Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) put out an expression of interest process for community members to join the committee. It is expected the committee will review the applications and make a determination on the community members at their meeting in June 2022.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 6 – Emergency Services Report January to March 2022.

Background/History:

The emergency services report is provided quarterly. Council's role in emergency management includes:

- Providing support to relief arrangements during an emergency;
- Providing leadership and support during recovery from an emergency;
- Contributing to Municipal Emergency Management Planning as a member of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC); and
- Contributing to fire prevention planning and preparation activities.

We have an emergency management team which is further supported by other teams within the organisation when emergency response, relief and recovery activities are required. We provide secretariat support to the MEMPC and currently provide the Committee Chair.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

Council operates under the *Emergency Management Legislation Act 2013* (the *EM Act*) which was recently amended by the *Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018*. The amendment was passed to provide for new integrated arrangements for emergency management planning across Victoria at the state, regional and municipal levels. Under the amendment, the MEMPC is no longer a committee of the Council, but rather a cross-agency peak planning body for emergency management within the municipality. Despite the changes, the MEMPC still involves Council representation in collaboration with other government and non-government agencies and is chaired by Council's Chief Executive Officer.

Council also conducts municipal fire prevention activities in accordance with the requirements of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Emergency management activities aid communities in responding to and recovering from emergencies in support of their economic and social wellbeing.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

Emergency management planning provides for the ongoing resilience of the community in response to and recovery from emergencies.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Throughout the fire and flood season, community information regarding the seasonal outlook was distributed through several different channels as part of the emergency management community engagement plan.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

As part of the North East emergency management collaboration, Towong, Indigo and Alpine Shire Councils are collaborating to better position their joint ability to respond to emergencies by sharing limited resources. Additional support is also being provided by the Rural City of Wangaratta and the City of Wodonga.

Internally, Council continues to develop its emergency response capacity through emergency management awareness and training presentations. This aids in expanding the standby list of Council staff in a position to support a Council response during an emergency.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Emergency management requires constant collaboration with other agencies. Officers work directly with members of the MEMPC, the North East Emergency Management Collaboration and cross-border municipalities. There is also ongoing collaboration with Emergency Management Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria, local Community Recovery Committees and other community organisations.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

Budget requirements and availability have been confirmed in the development of all activity plans and grant funding has been sought where relevant.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Emergency Management activities are undertaken in accordance with:

- *Towong Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP);*
- *Hume Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP);*
- *State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP);* and
- Relevant sub-plans and complementary plans are associated with each of these three management plans.

Council Plans and Policies:

The activities of the Emergency Management area support the delivery of the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priority:

- 2.14 *Support our communities to drive their recovery from bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic and improve their mitigation of and resilience to future adverse events.*

They also support the delivery of the following *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025* objective:

- 3.2 *Our community is adaptable and resilient, when people effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, including COVID-19 and the Black Summer Bushfires.*

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

Emergency Management is a critical function in the mitigation of emergencies and their short, medium and long-term impacts on the Shire's communities and environment.

Officer's View:

It has been a busy period of activity with Towong shires communities being impacted by storm events over the quarter. We have continued to commit resources to the recovery works associated with the events. Collaboration with neighbouring councils, cross-border councils, agencies and community groups has continued to strengthen the response to current and future emergencies. In particular, progress has been made on the development of a new Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMPC) and the reformation of the Fire Management Planning Committee – a subcommittee of the MEMPC.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council meeting.

12 Asset Management

12.1 Asset Management Report (02/02/0001-DIE)

The Asset Management Report is presented bi-monthly. The next report will be provided to Council in June 2022.

13 Land-use Planning

13.1 Land Use Planning Report (03/02/0003-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Amanda Pagan, Director Community and Planning.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

To provide a summary of planning permit activities for April 2022.

Summary:

In April 2022, Council received 13 applications for planning, four related to bushfire. Council received 66 customer enquiries. Planning determinations were made on seven applications. There are currently 41 active permits.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 7 – Planning Permit Activity: April 2022.

Background/History:

Not applicable.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

All planning permit activity is undertaken in line with the requirements of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Not applicable.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

Planning permit applications are considered within the context of the *Towong Shire Planning Scheme* which gives effect to the long-term sustainability of land in use across the Shire.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Not applicable.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

Council staff have been working towards improving the customer service experience for planning permit applicants through shared service arrangements with Indigo Shire Council.

The team includes two consultant planners, one of which is dedicated to rebuilding services, a part time customer service and planning liaison officer, and a planning administration officer.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Council staff continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders including Indigo Shire Council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria. Officers are also participating in the regional Sustainable Sub-division program.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

All planning resources and expenses have been factored into the budget.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

All land use planning decisions align to the *Victorian Planning Provisions*.

Council Plans and Policies:

All land use planning decisions are aligned to the *Towong Shire Planning Scheme*. Current department activities also support the delivery of the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities:

4.1 *Support the rebuild process for fire impacted properties;*

4.11 *Review statutory service processes to ensure an excellent customer experience.*

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable.

Officer's View:

It is the officer's view that the improvements that have been implemented in the Planning department will result in an improved customer experience.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council meeting.

14 Environmental Sustainability

14.1 Environmental Sustainability Report

The Environmental Sustainability Report is presented quarterly. The next report will be provided to Council in June 2022.

15 Economic and Tourism Development

15.1 Economic Development and Tourism Report (05/01/0164-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms. Kerissa Heritage, Economic Development Officer - Tourism.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a quarterly update on the activities of the Economic and Tourism Development area.

Summary:

The attached report provides an update on the activities of the Economic and Tourism Development area from 1 January to 31 March 2022. Notably a second successful Upper Murray Tourism and Business Expo was hosted in March, and the Activating Lake Hume project commenced. New brand marks (symbols that help people immediately identify a certain place) and brand narratives were developed for the Upper Murray, Mitta Valley and Lake Hume, and funding applications were submitted to deliver planning projects associated with Mount Elliot, Lake Banimboola and leveraging on Tallangatta's Notable Town status.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Appendix 8 – Economic and Tourism Development Report.

Background/History:

The Economic and Tourism Development Report is provided to Council quarterly.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

All economic and tourism development activities are undertaken in accordance with the service performance principles outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Economic and tourism development activities are aimed at supporting the economic the prosperity of the community.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

Economic and tourism development activities help to provide for the ongoing economic sustainability of the Shire.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Community and stakeholder engagement activities during the quarter included:

- Community engagement associated with delivering the Mitta Mountain Bike Park in partnership with Mitta Valley Inc.;
- Extensive engagement with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) regarding the Mitta Mountain Bike Park, and the potential development of Mount Elliot as a mountain bike and hang-gliding destination;
- Inviting community members and stakeholders to join a project steering group for the delivery of the *Activating Lake Hume* project;
- Engaging the Upper Murray Community Recovery Committees and the Berringa Peninsula Community Network to assist with the interpretive signage and artwork elements of the Great River Road;
- Engaging community and business members from the three destination regions across the Shire to provide feedback and direction on the brand development project; and
- One-on-one engagement took place with many small business owners across the Shire to determine where and how support can be provided.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

The development of strategic plans for the activation of Lake Hume will provide direction and guidance for Council staff regarding future development on and around Lake Hume.

Innovative marketing opportunities are being pursued to promote the Great River Road. A brief to innovatively redevelop the destination websites has been prepared. Brand identities, visuals and a brand narrative across the Shire were developed.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Officers worked with Tourism North East to develop the content of a proposed marketing upskilling workshop. A steering group was formed to collaborate with stakeholders and the community in the delivery of the Activating Lake Hume project. Officers are also collaborating with community groups in producing content for the Great River Road interpretive signage.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

Budget requirements and availability have been confirmed in the development of all activity plans and grant funding has been sought where relevant.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Activities are undertaken in accordance with the following:

- *Tourism North East: Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2013-2023*
- *North East Victoria Cycling Optimisation Plan*
- *The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2010-20*
- *Hume Regional Growth Plan*
- *Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2013-23*
- *Visit Victoria Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20*
- *Lake Hume Land and On-Water Management Plan*
- *Goulburn Murray Water Corporate Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24*
- *Regional Development Victoria: Ovens Murray Regional Partnership roadmap.*

Council Plans and Policies:

Economic and tourism development activities are undertaken in accordance with Objective 3, *Economic and Tourism Development*, of the *Council Plan 2021-2025* and may also support other *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities.

In particular the following priorities were progressed during the first quarter of 2022:

- 1.2 *Deliver infrastructure projects that arise from place-based master planning;*
- 1.3 *Complete Stage 2 of the Great River Road;*
- 2.1 *Undertake place-based master planning for the Peninsula including the investigation of options for early years and community facilities;*
- 2.4 *Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages;*
- 2.14 *Support our communities to drive their recovery from bushfires and the COVID-10 pandemic and improve their mitigation of and resilience to future adverse events;*
- 3.2 *Run a series of business expos to support local businesses;*
- 3.5 *Support businesses to expand adventure tourism offerings across the shire;*
- 3.7 *Advocate for the development of adventure tourism opportunities at Mount Elliot;*
- 3.9 *Support Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park;*
- 3.14 *Seek funding to develop and expand the tourism opportunities at Dartmouth Dam;*
- 3.17 *Deliver improved visitor information and experience across the Shire; and*
- 3.18 *Expand the reach of tourism marketing and promotional materials.*

Activities are also undertaken in accordance with the following Council plans and policies:

- *Procurement Policy*
- *Municipal Recovery Plan*
- *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy*
- *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan*
- *Towong Shire Mountain Biking Strategy.*

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

The activities of the Economic and Tourism Development area help to support the resilience of the local economy to external impacts.

Officer's View:

The Economic and Tourism Development area is making good progress on the objectives outlined in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council meeting.

15.2 Economic Development and Agriculture Report (05/01/0161-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Cate Kirk-Dufty, Agriculture Officer.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report provides a quarterly update on the activities of the Economic Development – Agriculture area.

Summary:

The attached report provides an update on the activities of the Economic Development - Agriculture area from 1 January to 31 March 2022. Officers worked throughout the quarter to finalise the draft *Towong Shire Mobile and Internet Communications Strategy* and the *Agriculture Strategy* so that they can be made available for final community consultation.

Officers worked to engage the agricultural community through promotion at local field days and producer-led workshops and worked to support creation of a producer network.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachments:

Appendix 9 – Economic Development - Agriculture Report

Background/History:

The Economic Development – Agriculture Report is provided to Council every quarter.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

All economic and tourism development activities are undertaken in accordance with the service performance principles outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

The activities of the Economic Development – Agriculture area are aimed at supporting the economic prosperity of the community.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

The activities of the Economic Development - Agriculture area help to provide for the ongoing economic sustainability of the Shire.

Specific activities have also been underway to support environmental sustainability, including discussions with local Landcare groups regarding potential collaborations.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

The Towong Shire community and associated stakeholders were engaged through development of the draft *Agriculture Strategy* and the *Towong Shire Mobile and Internet Communications Strategy*. Officers continue to engage with individuals and small groups across the Shire to identify support needs.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

The draft *Agriculture Strategy* specifies advocacy for improved water trading rights as a priority action. Officers performed a literary review on water trading within the boundaries of Towong Shire to provide the foundation for water advocacy for Towong Shire producers.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Collaborations with other stakeholders included:

- Developing the *Towong Shire Mobile and Internet Communications Strategy* as a shared project with Alpine Shire Council;
- Working with Red Cross and Gateway Health to deliver "*Lets Talk*" Working Dog Schools as part of the mental health delivery to the fire-affected communities of the Upper Murray;
- Preparing and planning joint promotions with Agriculture Victoria and Landcare at the Upper Murray Agricultural Field Days; and
- Continued work with Alpine Valleys Dairy, Murray Dairy and NECMA.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

Budget requirements and availability have been confirmed in the development of all activity plans and grant funding has been sought where relevant.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

- *Towong Shire Council, Upper Murray 2030 Masterplan (2016)*
- *Towong Shire Council, Upper Murray 2030 Agriculture statement (2016)*
- *Hume Regional Growth Plan (2014)*
- *Goulburn Murray Water, Corporate Plan (2021 – 22 to 2025 - 26)*
- *Regional Development Victoria Ovens, Murray Regional Partnership (2019 – 20)*
- *Victoria State Government, Victoria's Climate Change Strategy (2021)*

Council Plans and Policies:

All Agriculture Economic Development activities are undertaken under the following Towong Shire Council plans and policies:

- Procurement Policy
- Council Plan (2021 – 2025)
- Municipal Recovery Plan
- Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy (draft)
- Towong Shire Agriculture Strategy (draft)
- Towong Shire Mobile and Internet Communications Strategy (draft)
- Towong Shire Municipal Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Within the *Council Plan 2021-2025*, the team worked to deliver the following priorities:

- 2.14 *Support our communities to drive their recovery from bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic and improve their mitigation of and resilience to future adverse events;*
- 3.19 *Seek to support the growth of and value-add product and/or diversifications opportunities for the agriculture industry;*
- 3.23 *Work with Upper Murray Inc to deliver outcomes from the UM2030 Plan; and*
- 3.24 *Attract investment to address key weaknesses (connectivity and reliability) in critical infrastructure (mobile telecommunications, internet and power).*

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable.

Officer's View:

The Economic Development - Agriculture area is making good progress on the priorities of the *Council Plan 2021 – 25*.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council meeting.

15.3 Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 and Destination Management Plan 2022-2026 (05/01/0164-DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by the Economic Development Officer Tourism, Ms Kerissa Heritage.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

This report presents the *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* for consideration for adoption.

Summary:

Following extensive community and stakeholder engagement, final versions of the *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* have been prepared.

The *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* is the key strategic document to help plan for and drive the economic growth within the Shire over the next five years.

The *Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* provides a framework to deliver on the vision of being the leading High Country destination to escape to and immerse in nature and the outdoors. Nature experiences are to be complemented by quality food, drink and accommodation experiences.

Recommendation:

That the *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* be adopted as presented.

Attachments:

Appendix 10 - *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026*

Appendix 11 - *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026*

Background/History:

In 2021, bushfire recovery funding provided Council the opportunity to develop two strategic documents that would map a pathway for economic prosperity:

- *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026*
An innovative game-changing strategy that provides strategic direction for future development, investment attraction, and sustainable growth of the Shire's economy.

- *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026*
A tourism-specific strategy that leverages the region's assets to boost tourism numbers and extend visitor length of stay.

Following a comprehensive community engagement process and extensive research, the two documents were completed and placed on display for public review. Feedback from the community and stakeholders has been received and considered in the final plans.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

All Economic and Tourism Development activities are undertaken in accordance with the service performance principles outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

The *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* are designed to provide a roadmap for driving the economic prosperity of the community.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

The *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* are key documents that set the direction for the economic sustainability of the Shire.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

Substantial community engagement was conducted in developing the plans including dedicated workshops, online and paper surveys, and the invitation for submissions. Meetings were held with key community organisations including community recovery committees, tourism associations and business organisations. One-on-one engagement was conducted with key stakeholders including Goulburn Murray Water, Tourism North East, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning, Regional Development Victoria, and Parks Victoria.

Upon the final draft being completed, the documents were placed on public exhibition. Recommendations from the resulting submissions were considered in the refinement of the two documents.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

The *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* will provide clear direction, priority and scope for future economic and tourism activities delivered by Council.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

Numerous government and statutory bodies contributed to the documents' development including:

- The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning;
- Parks Victoria;
- Regional Development Victoria – with particular attention to the Ovens Murray regional partnership priorities;
- Murray Goulburn Water; and
- Tourism North East – ensured alignment with various regional tourism strategies including the Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2013-23.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

The development of these documents was supported by bushfire recovery funding.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

The *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* align with numerous regional and state policies and strategies including:

- Ovens and Murray Regional Partnership
- The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2010-20
- Hume Regional Growth Plan
- North East Victoria Cycling Optimisation Plan
- Upper Murray 2030 Vision Plan
- Tourism North East Three Year Strategy 2020-22
- Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2013-23
- Visit Victoria Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20
- Visitor Recovery and Reform Plan.

Council Plans and Policies:

The *Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* support the:

- *Towong Shire Council Plan 2021-25*
- *Towong Shire Mountain Biking Strategy 2021 - 25*
- *Towong Healthy Communities Plan 2018-21*

- *Towong Shire Youth Plan 2019 – 2023.*

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)):

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in an open meeting.

Risk Assessment:

The *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Destination Management Plan 2022-2026* provide for the ongoing resilience of the Shire's economy to adverse impacts.

Officer's View:

Extensive community and stakeholder engagement has informed the *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* and *Destination Management Plan 2022-2026*. The documents provide strategic direction for future economic activity and will support project scope development and funding applications.

Council Resolution:

To be resolved at the Council meeting.

16 Councillor Reports

No Councillor reports had been received at the time of agenda preparation.

17 Urgent Business

18 Committee Minutes

18.1 Audit and Risk Committee (07/07/0010-DCOD)

The unconfirmed minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on Thursday 17 March 2022 are attached at **Appendix 12** for information.

Recommendations from the meeting include:

Audit and Risk Committee Self-Assessment Results:

MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT

THAT THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE PAPERS BE PROVIDED EARLIER TO PROVIDE FOR MORE REVIEW, PROBING AND CHALLENGING.

CARRIED

Meeting Schedule:

MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT

THAT THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETINGS BE SCHEDULED IN MAY AND JUNE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE *LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020* AND COMPLETE THE ANNUAL WORK PLAN.

CARRIED

Internal Audit Plan:

MS CAMPBELL
CR WHITEHEAD

THAT THE PAYROLL AUDIT BE RESCHEDULED TO FY22/23 AND REPLACED WITH AN IT SECURITY AUDIT DURING FY21/22.

CARRIED

Procurement Update:

MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT

THAT A PROBITY AUDIT OF RECENT PROCUREMENT COMPLIANCE BREACHES IS NOT REQUIRED HOWEVER A FRAUD AUDIT IS TO BE INCLUDED IN NEXT YEAR'S INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN.

CARRIED

Policies:

MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL

THAT FURTHER CLARIFICATION IS PROVIDED WITHIN THE COMPLAINTS POLICY REGARDING APPROPRIATE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR AND THE APPROACH TO SERIAL COMPLAINANTS.

CARRIED

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT:

- 1. THE UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2022 BE NOTED; AND**
- 2. THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2022 BE CONSIDERED.**

19 Occupational Health and Safety

19.1 OHS Committee (06/04/0212-CEO)

The unconfirmed minutes of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee meeting held on Tuesday 10 May 2022 have been provided to Councillors prior to the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE UNCONFIRMED OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES BE NOTED.

20 Council Policies (10/01/0007-CEO)

20.1 Policies for Review and Adoption

The following policies are tabled for review at **Appendix 13**. Comments should be provided to the nominated Council officer by 22 June 2022:

- Access to Waste Disposal and Recycling Outlets (Outside Normal Operating Hours);
- Healthy Eating;
- Tree Policy; and
- Young Person Award.

21 Sealing of Documents

21.1 Section 173 Agreement – Towong Shire Council, Brian Joseph McFarland (Landowner) and AusNet Electricity Services Pty Ltd

Planning Permit 2021/018 issued on 27 August 2021 allowed for development of the land for the purpose of a three (3) lot subdivision. The subject land for the permit is described as 3 Kurrajong Gap Road, Bethanga (Lots 3, 3, 3A and 3C Volume 08591 Folio 742, Subdivision Plan PS905516T).

Condition 2 of the permit requires:

“The owner of the land must enter into agreements with the relevant authorities for the provision of water supply, drainage, sewerage facilities, electricity and gas services to each lot shown on the endorsed plan in accordance with the authority’s requirements and relevant legislation at the time.”

The Parties acknowledge and agree that this Agreement has been entered into for the following reasons:

- (a) AusNet Services would not have consented to the issue of Statement of Compliance without requiring this Agreement; and
- (b) the Landowner has elected to enter into this Agreement in order to take the benefit of the Permit.

This agreement may be ended wholly or in part or as to any part of the land by the Responsible Authority and all persons who are bound by any covenant in the agreement. The agreement must run with the land so that all successors in title are bound by the agreement. This agreement will be prepared to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority and must be registered on title in accordance with Section 181 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

The Agreement has been prepared accordingly and requires sealing.

RECOMMENDATION:

THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL BE AUTHORISED IN ACCORDANCE WITH LOCAL LAW 1 – COMMON SEAL AND MISCELLANEOUS PENALTIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF SIGNING THE SECTION 173 AGREEMENT, RELATING TO THE LAND DESCRIBED AS 3 KURRAJONG GAP ROAD, (LOTS 3, 3A AND 3C VOLUME 08591 FOLIO 742, SUBDIVISION PLAN PS905516T) THAT HAS BEEN DRAFTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF PLANNING PERMIT 2021/018.

22 Confidential

Section 66 of the *Local Government Act 2020* declares that meetings are to be open to the public unless the following specified circumstances apply:

- (1) *A Council or delegated committee must keep a meeting open to the public unless the Council or delegated committee considers it necessary to close the meeting to the public because a circumstance specified in subsection (2) applies.*
- (2) *The circumstances are –*
 - (a) *the meeting is to consider confidential information; or*
 - (b) *security reasons; or*
 - (c) *it is necessary to do so to enable the meeting to proceed in an orderly manner.*
- (3) *If the circumstance specified in subsection (2)(b) or (2)(c) applies, the meeting can only be closed to the public if the Council or delegated committee has made arrangements to enable the proceedings of the meeting to be viewed by members of the public as the meeting is being held.*
- (4) *For the purposes of subsection (3), the arrangements may include provision to view the proceedings on the Internet or on closed circuit television.*
- (5) *If a Council or delegated committee determines that a meeting is to be closed to the public to consider confidential information, the Council or delegated committee must record in the minutes of the meeting that are available for public inspection –*
 - (a) *the ground or grounds for determining to close the meeting to the public by reference to the grounds specified in the definition of confidential information in section 3(1); and*
 - (b) *an explanation of why the specified ground or grounds applied.*

As defined in section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* "confidential information" means the following information –

- (a) *Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released;*
- (b) *Security information, being information that if released is likely to endanger the security of Council property or the safety of any person;*
- (c) *Land use planning information, being information that if prematurely released is likely to encourage speculation in land values;*

- (d) *Law enforcement information, being information which if released would be reasonably likely to prejudice the investigation in an alleged breach of the law or the fair trial or hearing of any person;*
- (e) *Legal privileged information, being information to which legal professional privilege or client legal privilege applies;*
- (f) *Personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs;*
- (g) *Private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that –*
 - (i) *relates to trade secrets; or*
 - (ii) *if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage;*
- (h) *Confidential meeting information, being the records of meetings closed to the public under section 66(2)(a);*
- (i) *Internal arbitration information, being information specified in section 145;*
- (j) *Councillor Conduct Panel confidential information, being information specified in section 169;*
- (k) *Information prescribed by the regulations to be confidential information for the purposes of this definition; and*
- (l) *Information that was confidential information for the purposes of section 77 of the Local Government Act 1989.*

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Friday 18 March 2022 - Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Whitehead, Wortmann, Anderson, Dikschei, and Scales
Juliana Phelps (CEO) and officers as listed below

Apologies: Nil

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am Councillor Workshop Commences

Cr Whitehead

Audit Committee meeting update – OHS Audit result
- Feedback on suggestion of a probity audit

10.00am Director Corporate and Organisational Development (*Emma Woolaston*)

Budget 2022/23

An overview of the emerging draft budget figures and the timeline for further briefings was provided.

Communications forward plan

Feedback was sought on communications and engagement reporting provided to the Councillors.

11.50am Break

12.00pm Probity Training – Collaborative Procurement Working Group
(*Crs Wortmann, Anderson and Scales*)

12.30pm Lunch

1.15pm Director Community and Planning (*Amanda Pagan*)

Fee waivers

Guidance was provided on fee waivers for planning permits. All permits must be paid before fee waivers are considered.

Planning services

An update was provided on the progress of transitioning to a shared services arrangement for land use planning with Indigo Shire Council.

1.45pm Acting Director Infrastructure and Environment (*Monique Tinoco*)

Towong Street East curb project

An update on the design changes for the Towong Street East project was provided for feedback.

2.30pm Chief Executive Officer (*Juliana Phelps*)

Election candidate meetings

The CEO discussed with Councillors the need to meet with the Federal election candidates for Indi.

Ratepayer correspondence for consideration

Councillors were briefed on correspondence received and the proposed response.

Special Council Meeting - 6 April 2022

The CEO advised that a special meeting of Council on 6 April 2022 may be required.

Colac Colac Caravan Park

Councillors were advised that the Colac Colac Caravan Park lessee had advised that the park was on the market.

Apprentices

The CEO discussed with Councillors the benefits of appointing apprentices in certain areas of our operations to assist with maintaining

an appropriately resourced and skilled workforce and to assist with succession planning.

3.00pm **Close**

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 23 March 2022 - Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Whitehead, Wortmann, Anderson, Dikschei and Scales
Juliana Phelps (CEO) and officers as listed below

Apologies: Nil

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am **Update on Previously Raised Issues** (*Senior Management Team*)

Councillor Request Spreadsheet Items (*Outstanding from prior Workshops*)

10.00am **Councillor feedback/issues/questions for today's meeting:**
(*New items since last Workshop*)

Cr Scales

18 Mar Barking Dog issue Eskdale

Cr Dikschei

21 Mar Residential development - unsewered areas, 4000 sq m

21 Mar Information regarding long standing service requests

Cr Wortmann

22 Mar Request for details of planned community consultation - Mitta streetscape project

22 Mar Tallangatta Valley sub division and EOI

22 Mar Difficulty in finding Transfer Station opening times on website

22 Mar Parking issues in Tallangatta

Cr Anderson

Cr Whitehead

23 Mar MFSRBF request for assistance with grounds clean up and removal of bins.
23 Mar Rev Allen – demolition of Scout Hall building

10.30am Council Meeting

12.30pm Lunch and Councillor Only Time

1.30pm Acting Director Infrastructure and Environment (*Monique Tinoco*)

Roy Williams Park

The Acting Director sought feedback about the approach to the upcoming works planned for Roy Williams Park.

Fish Playground

The Acting Director discussed the works to be undertaken to repair the storm damage in the fish playground.

10 Murray Place, Bellbridge

Councillors were briefed on the matter by Brett Barter.

2.00pm Director Corporate and Organisational Development (*Emma Woolaston*)

Mayor and Councillor Allowances

An updated was provided regarding upcoming changes to Mayor and Councillor allowances as determined by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

Amenity Issue – Matonga Street, Tallangatta

An update was provided regarding the approach to a community amenity issue.

Freedom of Information request

An update regarding the next steps for a freedom of information request was provided.

(2.20pm - Mayor left for the Tallangatta Primary School – Year 3 and 4 Presentation)

2.30pm Director Community and Planning (*Amanda Pagan*)

Flood support – 24 & 26 Craig Drive, Bellbridge

Detail was provided regarding the flood response through the emergency management team. The Director confirmed that the State Government has not made any financial support for private landholders available for flood-impacted properties.

RAP

The Director provided an update on the process for developing the Reconciliation Action Plan within Towong Shire Council. The CEO also briefed the Councillors on the proposed Joint Reconciliation Statement with Corryong Health, Tallangatta Health, Walwa Bush Nursing Centre, Alpine Shire Council and Alpine Health.

3.00pm Chief Executive Officer (*Juliana Phelps*)

Sick leave balances

The CEO discussed the current arrangement when staff with significant sick leave balances exit from the organisation.

3.30pm Staff Recognition afternoon tea

25 Years – Wendie Coulston, Records Officer
 15 Years/10 Years – Renee Carkeek, Youth Services Officer
 10 Years – Natalie Butler, Technical Officer

Apologies: 10 Years – Elizabeth Kennett, Finance Officer
 10 Years – Jason Brock, Tallangatta Plant Operator

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 6 April 2022 - Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Whitehead, Wortmann, Anderson, Dikschei and Scales
Juliana Phelps (CEO) and officers as listed below

Apologies: Nil

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am Councillor feedback/issues/questions for today's meeting:
(New items since last Workshop)

Cr Wortmann

Sustainability report – query re: Note 2
Walwa toilet block refurbishment
Sutherland family requesting additional photo to go on sign at
Thologolong
Approval process for naming of roads
Stock grid – Norm Sharp

Cr Anderson

Bellbridge walking track

Cr Dikschei

Removal of rubbish bin in front of Tallangatta library/senior citizens
building

Cr Scales

Giltraps Lane

This item was postponed to the next workshop.

3.30pm Chief Executive Officer (*Juliana Phelps*)

CEO Performance review

The CEO advised that the CEO Performance review was due in June 2022 and recommended that Council give consideration to how the review would be conducted and the appointment of a consultation to facilitate the review.

RCV Regional Councillor representative nominations

The CEO sought confirmation from the Councillors that Cr Scales was the only Councillor interested be considered for the regional role.

4.00pm Director Infrastructure and Environment (*Rachael Gadd*)

Triangles Toilet Block

Draft concepts for the revitalisation of the Triangles toilet block and information centre were presented to Councillors for feedback prior to being released for community consultation.

Environmental Sustainability

Details on the variance presented under Note 2 in the Environment Sustainability Report from the 23 February 2022 Council Meeting were provided to Councillors.

Tip Truck

Changes to the Tip Truck report presented at the January 2022 Council meeting were discussed.

Retaining Wall Bellbridge

An update on damage to a residential retaining wall in Bellbridge was provided to Councillors.

Yamba Street Footpath – connection to Rail Trail

Correspondence received from a Yamba Street resident requesting a progress update on the footpath connection to the Rail Trail was discussed.

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 13 April 2022 - Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Whitehead, Wortmann, Anderson, Dikschei, and Scales
Juliana Phelps (CEO) and officers as listed below

Apologies: Nil

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am **Update on Previously Raised Issues** (*Senior Management Team*)
(*Outstanding from prior Workshops*)

10.00am **Councillor feedback/issues/questions:**
(*New items on spreadsheet since last Workshop*)

11.00am **Director Community and Planning** (*Amanda Pagan*)

Permit application for dwelling in RAZ

The Director discussed a proposed dwelling application in the rural activity zone, including the bushfire risk and conflicts with the planning scheme.

Planning fees

The Director presented the proposed planning fee changes for the budget 2022-23.

Neighbourhood House opportunities

The Director discussed the background to the Tallangatta neighbourhood house and potential future opportunities for other houses to be established.

12.00pm **Manager Relief and Recovery (*Jenelle Williamson*)**

Corryong Primary School Site – consultation overview

Council was provided with a summary of the Community Consultation Report undertaken on the former Corryong Primary School site. A full copy of the report was also provided to Councillors for further reading and consideration with a Council report with recommendations scheduled for the April 2022 Council meeting.

\$3.4m Recovery Funding – approach and funding allocation

An opportunity for future recovery funding has been identified. A presentation was provided to Councillors on the possible approach and options for the implementation of this funding. Further discussions will be held at a future council meeting in line with confirmation of funding being available.

12.30pm **Lunch**

1.00pm **Waste (*Anthony Dufty, Co-ordinator Environment*)**

Kerbside Collection/Waste Management Fee

Presentation stating the necessity for a review on Council’s Kerbside Collection/Waste Management Fee in order to accommodate the increased costs to provide the services, material processing costs and to meet legislative requirements.

1.30pm **Director Corporate and Organisational Development (*Emma Woolaston*)**

Budget update

An overview of the proposed Budget 22/23 outcomes was provided.

2.00pm Communications update

General (*Emma will present as Georgina Curtis is on leave*)

Feedback was sought as to how Councillors would like to receive information about community engagement activities.

Specific projects/issues (infrastructure team)

- **Corryong CBD**
- **Mitta Streetscape**
- **Peninsula flood damage**

Updates were provided on the outcomes and next steps of selected community engagement activities currently underway.

2.45pm Acting Director Infrastructure and Environment (*Monique Tinoco*)

Talgarno Tennis project

Discussion about the project progress and next steps to be undertaken to redevelop the four existing courts at Talgarno Tennis Court facility. Councillors were briefed on a meeting held with representatives from the Talgarno Tennis club and Recreation Reserve Committee.

3.00pm Chief Executive Officer (*Juliana Phelps*)

Facilitation of CEO Performance review

The CEO advised Councillors that the CEO Performance Review was due to be conducted in June and that the Mayor had circulated a Request for Proposal to a number of consultants qualified to facilitate the review.

Funding Colac Colac Caravan Park infrastructure

The CEO discussed with Councillors the possible funding options for works at the park.

Hardship request

The CEO spoke with Councillors about a rate waiver request that had been received following the flood event at Bethanga.

Sandy the War Horse

Councillors were advised of the request from the fund raising committee for the \$80,000 of grant funds. The CEO sought confirmation that Council's funding commitment was inclusive of the cost of the plinth for the statue to be mounted on.

VLGA Membership

The CEO sought confirmation that the Council did not wish to take up membership with the VLGA.

4.00pm Close

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 27 April 2022 - Corryong

Attendees: Crs Whitehead, Wortmann, Anderson, Dikschei, and Scales
Amanda Pagan (Acting CEO) and officers as listed below

Apologies:

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest:

9.00am Budget final questions session

Capital Works Program

Building Fees

Planning Fees

An overview of proposed changes to building and planning fees was provided, and a question and answer session was held regarding the proposed Budget 2022/23.

10.30am Council Meeting

11.30am Update on Previously Raised Issues (*Senior Management Team*)

12.30pm Working Lunch with Mr Bill Tilley, MP – Member for Benambra

Council met with Bill Tilley to discuss issues that could be raised with state and federal governments.

1.45pm Towong Community Recovery Committee

Emergency Access Road, Towong

This item was deferred

2.00pm Manager Relief and Recovery (*Jenelle Williamson*)

Recovery staff letter

Council received a letter acknowledging the positive work of the recovery staff and questioning the future resources of Council in the 2022/23 financial year. Details were provided to Councillors on the proposed recovery staffing approach subject to available State funding.

Future BRV funding approach

Item deferred until further clarification and outcomes of state funding for 2022/23 is provided.

Corryong Show fireworks funding

A proposal was presented from the Corryong Show requesting \$10,000 funding to support fireworks for the Corryong Show in 2022. Council supported the fireworks in 2021 as a recovery effort in bringing people together. The proposal of a sponsorship arrangement was not supported to proceed to further discussions.

2.20pm Director Infrastructure and Environment (*Rachael Gadd*)

Retaining wall enforcement matter

An update on the progress of a dispute between neighbours regarding the construction of a retaining wall was provided.

Corryong streetscape community consultation

The community engagement approach and progress with consultation was discussed.

Mitta town hall meeting

The planned approach for a multi agency stakeholder meeting with the Mitta Mitta community was presented.

Bellbridge walking track

A progress update on the approach and timing of the Bellbridge Walking track was provided.

Walwa toilet block

A render of the upgrades to the Walwa toilet block was discussed

3.00pm Recreation Strategy – Wendy Holland via Zoom

Joe Calvert, Coordinator Recreation Arts and Culture was also in attendance.

Wendy Holland from CommunityVibe presented the draft recreation strategy.

3.30 pm Acting Director Community and Planning (*Sven Erikson*)

Recreation Strategy Community Feedback Process

Agriculture Strategy Community Feedback Process

Updates were given to the Councillors on the feedback process for both strategies.

4.00pm Acting Chief Executive Officer (*Amanda Pagan*)

Planning shared services

Acting CEO provided an update on the progress of the planning shared services arrangement with Indigo Shire Council.

Ross Lyman visit – 4 May

Acting CEO discussed potential agenda items and timings for a meeting with Ross Lyman, Liberal candidate for Indi.

Appendix 2

Quarterly Budget Report as at 31 March 2022

OPERATING RESULT

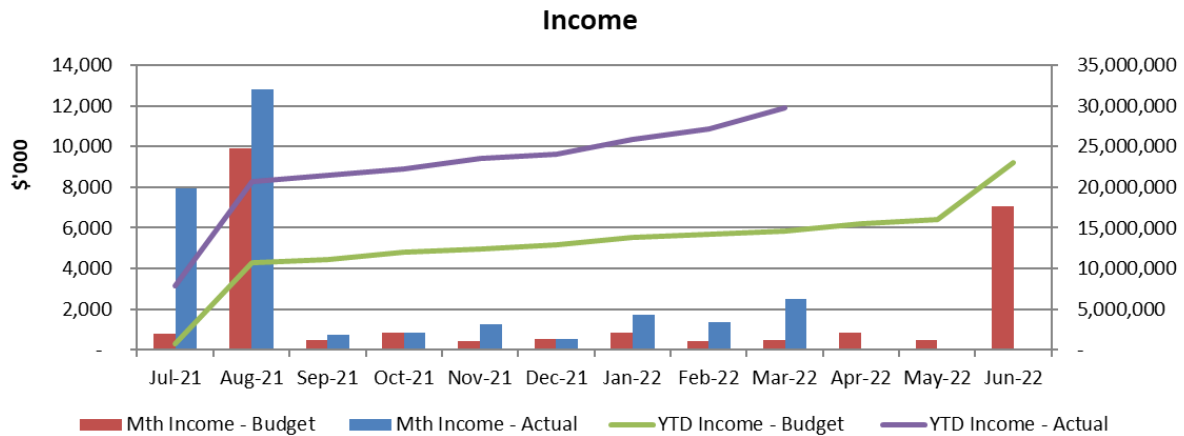
	Note	Mar-22	Mar-22	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD	2021/22	2021/22
		(Actual)	(Budget)	(Actual)	(Budget)	(Variance)	(Variance)	(Budget)	(Achieved)
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	\$'000	%
Income	1	2,506	453	29,698	14,651	15,047	103%	23,053	129%
Expenditure	2	1,508	1,378	11,968	12,975	1,007	8%	21,863	55%
Surplus/ (Deficit)		998	(925)	17,730	1,676	16,054	958%	1,190	1,490%

Table 1: Operating Result

Note 1:

Council's YTD income for the quarter ending 31 March 2022 was \$29.698 million against a budget of \$14.651 million. The major items contributing to the \$15.047 million favourable variance included:

- \$7.345 million grant income deferred from 2020/21 due to COVID-19 related delays in completing grant-funded capital works (as new accounting standards require that grant income is not recognised until the specific performance obligations of the grant are met);
- Additional grant income that was not anticipated at the time of the budget, including:
 - \$1.760 million for Bushfire Support;
 - \$256,000 for Bushfire Recovery - Rebuild Support Services;
 - \$250,000 for the Primary Health Network Resilience Project;
 - \$250,000 for Playles Hill place development;
 - \$244,884 for the Beat the Heat Tree Project;
 - \$200,000 for Covid Safe Outdoor Activation;
 - \$200,000 for Tallangatta Holiday Park – Growing Tourism;
 - \$188,000 for the Tallangatta Memorial Hall Upgrade;
 - \$180,000 for Corryong and Bellbridge Structure Plans; and
 - \$128,867 for the Corryong Pre School.



Note 2:

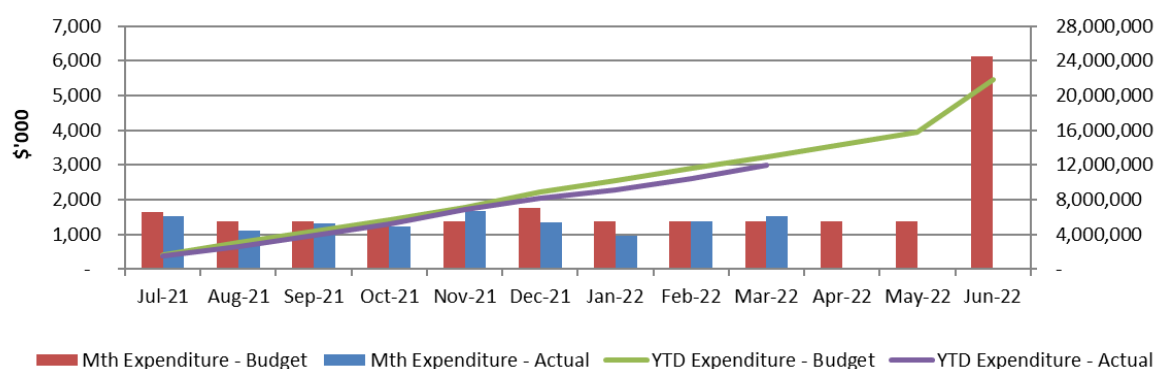
Council's YTD expenditure for the quarter ending 31 March 2022 was \$11.968 million against a budget of \$12.975 million. The major item contributing to the \$1.007 million favourable variance was \$0.733 million in wages due to unfilled positions.

Council was operating with 115 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff at 31 March 2022 against an annual budget of 110.5 FTE. This included 7.6 additional early years roles which are fully funded through fees and government grants and subsidies, and 3.5 seasonal lifeguards previously outsourced to a labour hire company and brought in-house following a review of the lifeguard staffing model. Employment of these lifeguards ceased at the end of the pool season in April 2022. The lifeguard staffing model will be further reviewed prior to the 2022/23 pool season.

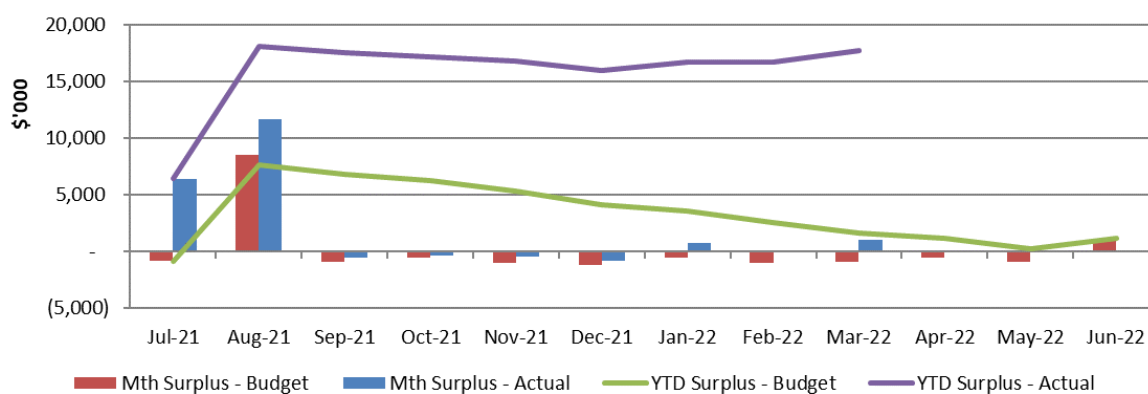
The vacant positions at 31 March 2022 included:

- Accountant
- Coordinator People and Culture
- Senior Communications and Engagement Officer
- Coordinator Works
- Parks and Gardens Operator
- Technical Officer Environment
- Teacher

Expenditure



Operating Surplus



Grant Income

	Note	Mar-22 (Actual) \$'000	YTD (Actual) \$'000	YTD (Budget) \$'000	YTD (Variance) \$'000	YTD (Variance) %	2021/22 (Budget) \$'000	2021/22 (Achieved) %
Recurrent	1	75	2,550	2,658	(108)	(0)	4,461	57%
Non-Recurrent	2	2,166	15,210	1,350	13,860	5	7,526	202%
Total		2,241	17,760	4,008	13,752	343%	11,987	148%

Table 2: Grant Income

Note 1:

Council's recurrent grant income for the quarter ending 31 March 2022 was \$2.550 million against a budget of \$2.658 million with no major variances to report.

Note 2:

Council's non-recurrent grant income for the quarter ending 31 March 2022 was \$15.210 million against a budget of \$1.350 million. The major items contributing to the \$10.272 million favourable variance included:

- \$7.345 million grant income deferred from 2020/21 due to COVID-19 related delays in completing grant-funded capital works (as new accounting standards require that grant income is not recognised until the specific performance obligations of the grant are met);
- Additional grant income that was not anticipated at the time of the budget, including:
 - \$1.760 million for Bushfire Support;
 - \$256,000 for Bushfire Recovery - Rebuild Support Services;
 - \$250,000 for the Primary Health Network Resilience Project;
 - \$250,000 for Playles Hill place development;
 - \$244,884 for the Beat the Heat Tree Project;
 - \$200,000 for Covid Safe Outdoor Activation;
 - \$200,000 for Tallangatta Holiday Park – Growing Tourism;
 - \$188,000 for the Tallangatta Memorial Hall Upgrade;
 - \$180,000 for Corryong and Bellbridge Structure Plans; and
 - \$128,867 for the Corryong Pre School.

Grants received Year-to-Date, including grants deferred from 2021/22, are as below:

Recurrent Grants	\$'000
Financial Assistance Grants	1,145
Financial Assistance Grants - Local Roads Funding	725
Maternal and Child Health	215
Library	118
Kindergarten - Tallangatta	98
Kindergarten - Corryong	81
Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program	73
Kindergarten - Bellbridge	53
Kindergarten Cluster	23
School Crossing Supervisor	12
Premier's Reading Challenge	6
Total Recurrent Grants	2,550

Table 3: Recurrent Grant Income received

Non-Recurrent Grants	\$'000
Great River Road (Stage 2)	3,175
Bushfire Support	1,760
Fixing Country Roads Program - Hanson Street Redevelopment	1,441
Corryong CBD Revitalisation	1,340
Bushfire Recovery (Phase 2) - Bridges	1,299
Agrilinks - Georges Creek Road	805
Corryong Circuit Trail	770
Agrilinks - Weighbridge and Truckwash (Corryong)	763
Kindergarten Three Year Old	296
Agrilinks - Wises Creek Road	275
PHN The Resilience Project	272
Rebuild Support Service Bushfire Recovery	256
Hope and Resilience Payles Place Development	250
Beat the Heat - Tree Project	245
Colac Colac Caravan Park	223
Tallangatta Holiday Park (Growing a Tourism Economy)	200
COVID Safe Outdoor Activation Fund 2021 (CSOAF)	200
BRV Grant - Upgrade Tallangatta Memorial Hall	188
Streamlining for Growth Corryong and Bellbridge Structure Plans	180
Growing Talgarnos Recreational Heart (Talgarno Tennis Courts)	167
Corryong Pre School Capital Grants	129
Tintalra Boat Ramp	100
Enabling Inclusive Outdoor Participation - Tallangatta Early Years	96
Community Child Care Fund (Sustainability Support - Walwa)	75
Neighbourhood House - Tallangatta	67
Community Child Care Fund (Special circumstances - Bellbridge)	65
Bushfire Primary Prevention Violence Against Women	65
Working for Victoria (Acquitted)	64
Regional Airports Program	52
Supported Parent and Playgroup	45
Kindergarten Sessional Kindergarten	41
Kindergarten Support - COVID-19	37
Weed Project	37
Local Government Business Concierge and Hospitality Support Program	30
Kindergarten Support - Bushfire	29
Rural Councils ICT Infrastructure Program	23
Scoreboard for the Eskdale Recreation Reserve	23
Bushfire Financial Support (Commonwealth)	19
Youth Week	15
Walwa Walking Trails	15
Strategic Planning - Tallangatta	15
Kindergarten School Readiness	12

Non-Recurrent Grants	\$'000
Bushfire Support Kindergarten	11
Health Admin (Vulnerable persons - HACC)	9
Kindergarten Inclusion	7
Sleep and Settling Initiative	6
FReeZA	6
Kindergarten Cluster	5
Seniors Week	3
Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park (Pick My Project)	2
Workforce Support	1
Waste Not, Want Not	1
Total Non-Recurrent Grants	15,210

Table 4: Non-recurrent grants

Unexpended Grants

Where Council has received grants that are required to be expended in a specified manner, but the funds have not yet been expended, the grant is recognised as an unexpended grant. These funds are not available for other Council priorities. The following table provides a listing of current unexpended grants.

Unexpended Grants	\$'000
Bushfire Support	1,760
Bushfire Recovery Victoria - Recovery Hub	1,650
Fixing Country Roads Program - Hanson Street Redevelopment	1,419
Corryong CBD Revitalisation	1,326
Bushfire Recovery (Phase 2) - Bridges	1,262
Great River Road (Stage 2)	1,179
Roads to Recovery (R2R)	1,166
LRCI - Local Roads Community Infrastructure (1) 4 Projects	846
Corryong Circuit trail	731
Agrilinks - Weighbridge and Truckwash (Corryong)	714
Bushfire Financial Support (Commonwealth)	650
Kindergarten Three Year Old	386
Rebuild Support Service Bushfire Recovery	325
PHN The Resilience Project	272
Tallangatta Holiday Park (Growing a Tourism Economy)	267

Unexpended Grants	\$'000
Hope and Resilience Playles Place Development	250
Beat the Heat - Tree Project	249
Agrilinks - Wises Creek Road	248
BRV Grant - Upgrade Tallangatta Memorial Hall	188
Community Events Fund	180
Streamlining for Growth Corryong and Bellbridge Structure Plans	180
Neighbourhood House - Tallangatta	154
Kindergarten Sessional Kindergarten	148
Growing Talgarnos Recreational Heart (Talgarno Tennis Courts)	142
Walwa Walking Trails	135
Improved Connections Hanson Street project	134
Access and Inclusion	131
Enabling Inclusive Outdoor Participation - Tallangatta Early Years	108
Strengthening Community Partnerships for Bushfire Management	102
Supported Parent and Playgroup	101
Kindergarten Enrolment	95
Local Government Business Concierge and Hospitality Support Program	90
Corryong Pre School Capital Grants	75
Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy	55
Tintaldra Boat Ramp	54
Regional Airports Program	52
Bushfire Primary Prevention Violence Against Women	49
Strategic Planning - Tallangatta	42
Kindergarten Local Planning and change management	35
Kindergarten School Readiness	33
FReeZA	33
Local Government Business Collaboration	32
Recreation Strategy	27
Rural Councils ICT Infrastructure Program	23
Scoreboard for the Eskdale Recreation Reserve	23
Weed Project	20
Sleep and Settling Initiative	20
Youth Week	19
Kindergarten Early Start Program	19

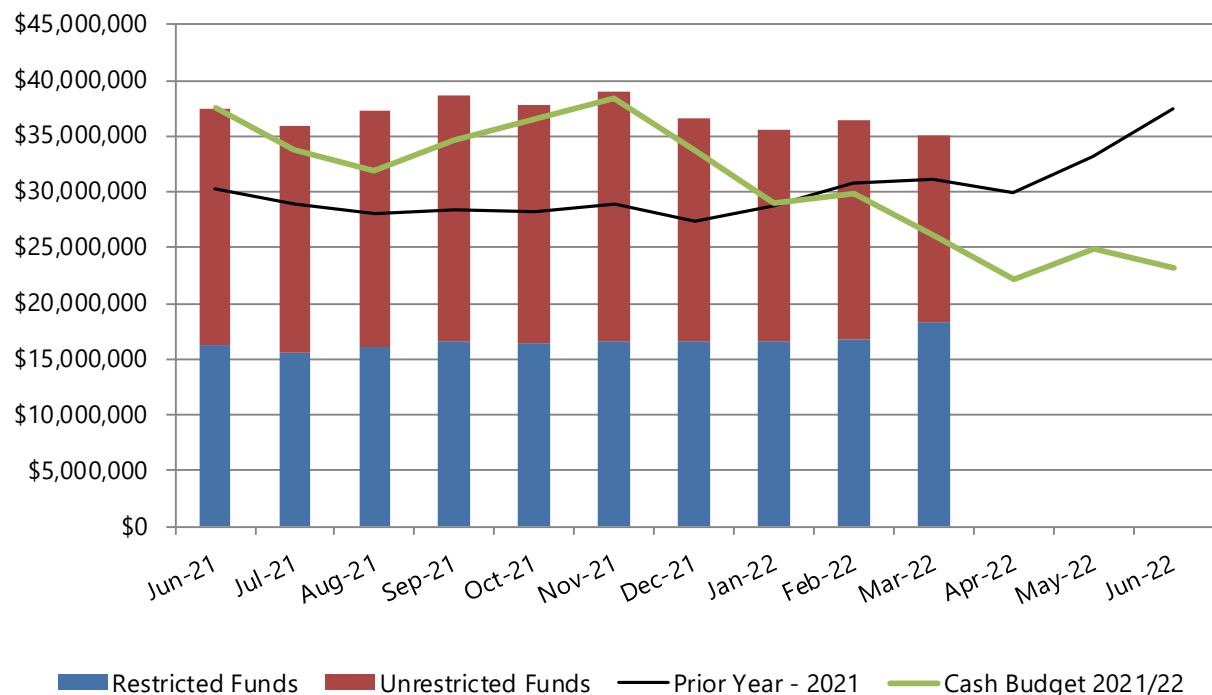
Unexpended Grants	\$'000
Rate and Fee Relief - Bushfire Recovery Victoria	18
Master Plan for Active Sportng Future	18
Kindergarten Early Childhood Teacher Supplement	17
Building economic development capacity in Hume local government	16
COVID Relief Program	15
Bushfire Management Overlay	13
Think-Start-Grow	11
Health Promotions (Walk to School)	11
Bushfire Support Kindergarten	11
Kindergarten Inclusion	10
Improving Liveability of Older People	10
Business Victoria Local Events	10
Community Funding Initiatives	10
Household Recycling Reform Program	10
Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal	8
Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program	8
Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park (Pick My Project)	7
Mitta Valley Gravel Grinder (Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery)	5
Upper Murray Victorian Open Road Series Stage	5
Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grant	5
Kindergarten Cluster	5
Maternal and Child Health Enhancement	4
Kindergarten EBA Teacher Backpay	4
High Country Rail Trail (Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery)	4
Immunisation Services - School and Adult	3
Drug Prevention Services - Ice	3
Kindergarten Free - Integrated Long Day Care	2
Community Development and Assistance	2
Respectful Relationships - Kinder	2
Workforce Support	1
16 Days Activism Campaign	1
Corryong Recharge Event - Shearing Shed Show	1
Family Violence Support	1
Community Systems Mapping for Violence Free Living	1
Total Unexpended Grants	17,451

Table 5: Unexpended grants

CASH POSITION

The cash position moved during the month as detailed below:

	Current Quarter Mar-22 \$	Previous Quarter Dec-21 \$	Variance	
			\$	%
Committed funds				
Unexpended Grants	17,450,368	15,742,827	1,707,541	10.8%
Other Provisions and Reserves	858,964	858,964	-	0.0%
Provision for Employee Entitlements	1,797,536	1,785,947	11,589	0.6%
Other Committed Funds	1,911,045	3,630,175	(1,719,130)	(47.4%)
Total committed funds	22,017,913	22,017,913	-	0.0%
Other funds	12,982,074	14,617,386	(1,635,312)	(11.2%)
Total funds	34,999,987	36,635,299	(1,635,312)	(4.5%)
Cash holdings				
Committee Funds	134,536	187,491	(52,955)	(28.2%)
Investments/term deposits	34,745,874	36,340,339	(1,594,465)	(4.4%)
Cash At Bank and On Hand	119,577	107,469	12,108	11.3%
Total Cash holdings	34,999,987	36,635,299	(1,635,312)	(4.5%)
Average Interest Rate	0.57%	0.42%		



Investments

Investments were made up of the following at 31 March 2022:

Date	Product	Institution	Principal	Yield	Term	Rating	Maturity
10/06/2021	Term Deposit	Westpac	1,000,000	0.30%	305 Days	A1+	11/04/2022
21/07/2021	Term Deposit	ME Bank	1,000,000	0.45%	272 Days	A2	19/04/2022
23/09/2021	Term Deposit	ME Bank	1,000,000	0.35%	210 Days	A2	21/04/2022
6/05/2021	Term Deposit	WAW Credit Union	500,000	0.75%	365 Days		6/05/2022
15/11/2021	Term Deposit	Bank of Queensland	1,000,000	0.45%	182 Days	A2	16/05/2022
18/08/2021	Term Deposit	Bank of Queensland	1,000,000	0.45%	273 Days	A2	18/05/2022
18/11/2021	Term Deposit	Bank of Queensland	1,000,000	0.45%	181 Days	A2	18/05/2022
13/09/2021	Term Deposit	AMP	1,000,000	0.40%	273 Days	A2	13/06/2022
16/09/2021	Term Deposit	Macquarie Bank Limited	1,000,000	0.30%	271 Days	A1	14/06/2022
13/12/2021	Term Deposit	AMP	1,000,000	1.00%	183 Days	A2	14/06/2022
15/11/2021	Term Deposit	ME Bank	1,000,000	0.45%	212 Days	A2	15/06/2022
19/07/2021	Term Deposit	AMP	1,000,000	0.75%	336 Days	A2	19/06/2022
23/09/2021	Term Deposit	National Australia Bank	1,000,000	0.26%	270 Days	A1+	20/06/2022
1/10/2021	Term Deposit	AMP	1,000,000	0.75%	270 Days	A2	28/06/2022
11/01/2022	Term Deposit	ME Bank	1,000,000	0.55%	181 Days	A2	11/07/2022
21/10/2021	Term Deposit	Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd	1,000,000	0.30%	270 Days	A2	18/07/2022
22/11/2021	Term Deposit	National Australia Bank	1,000,000	0.37%	240 Days	A1	20/07/2022
6/09/2021	Term Deposit	National Australia Bank	1,000,000	0.28%	330 Days	A1+	2/08/2022
28/09/2021	Term Deposit	Westpac	1,000,000	0.30%	335 Days	A1+	29/08/2022
6/12/2021	Term Deposit	AMP	1,032,439	0.90%	270 Days	A2	2/09/2022
11/10/2021	Term Deposit	National Australia Bank	1,000,000	0.30%	330 Days	A1+	6/09/2022
19/10/2021	Term Deposit	Westpac	1,000,000	0.40%	335 Days	A1+	19/09/2022
21/01/2022	Term Deposit	ME Bank	1,000,000	0.60%	243 Days	A2	21/09/2022
10/03/2022	Term Deposit	Westpac	1,000,000	0.64%	215 Days	A1+	11/10/2022
1/01/2022	Term Deposit	Macquarie Bank Limited	1,000,000	0.35%	272 Days	A1	18/10/2022
28/03/2022	Term Deposit	Bank of Queensland	1,000,000	1.00%	214 Days	A2	28/10/2022
7/02/2022	Term Deposit	Bank of Queensland	1,000,000	0.70%	273 Days	A2	8/11/2022
11/02/2022	Term Deposit	AMP	1,000,000	1.00%	270 Days	A2	8/11/2022
21/02/2022	Term Deposit	Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd	1,000,000	0.65%	273 Days	A2	21/11/2022
10/03/2022	Term Deposit	Westpac	1,000,000	0.78%	277 Days	A1+	12/12/2022
21/07/2021	Term Deposit	ME Bank	1,000,000	0.91%	276 Days	A2	19/12/2022
15/03/2022	Term Deposit	Macquarie Bank Limited	1,000,000	1.15%	365 Days	A1	15/03/2023
N/A	Cash Management	Westpac	3,213,435	0.55%	On Call	A1+	N/A
N/A	Committees	Various	149,731	1.60%	N/A		N/A
Total Investments			34,895,605				

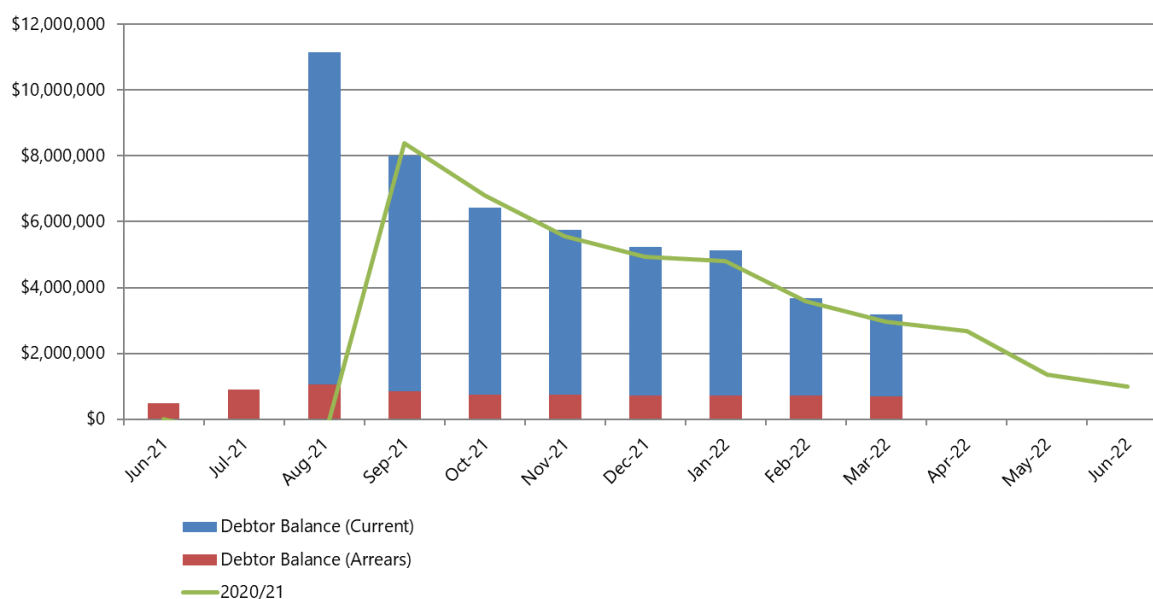
Table 6: Investments at month end

RECEIVABLES

Rates, Municipal Charge, Waste Management Charge and Waste Collection Charge

The breakdown of rates received for the month and YTD for the quarter ending 31 March 2022, as well as the rates debtors balance outstanding and a comparison to last financial year, is shown below:

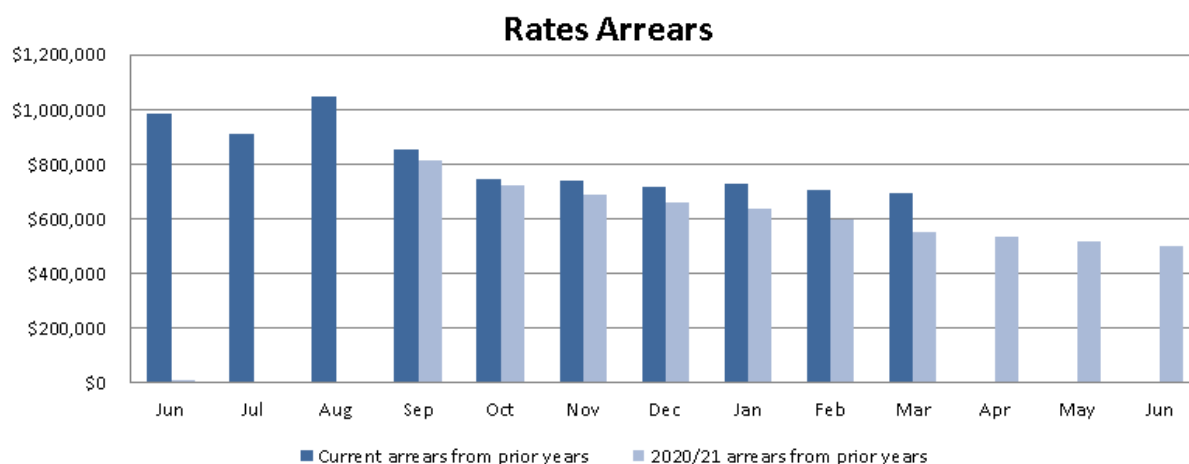
	Amount	Received	% Collected	Received	Collected	Balance
	\$	Mar-22	Mar-22	YTD	YTD	Outstanding
	\$	\$	%	\$	\$	\$
Rates and charges levied 2021/22	9,235,570	431,407	4.7%	7,024,585	76.1%	2,210,986
Rates and charges arrears prior to 2021/22	437,253	14,923	3.4%	(174,272)	-39.9%	611,525
FSPL levied 2021/22	1,122,961	38,593	3.4%	838,192	74.6%	284,769
FSPL arrears prior to 2021/22	60,723	986	1.6%	(20,018)	-33.0%	80,741
Total rates & charges incl. FSPL levied 2020/21	10,358,531	470,000	4.5%	7,862,776	75.9%	2,495,755
Total rates & charges incl. FSPL arrears prior to 2020/21	497,976	15,909	3.2%	(194,290)	-39.0%	692,266
Total rates & charges incl. FSPL and arrears		485,909		7,668,487		3,188,021



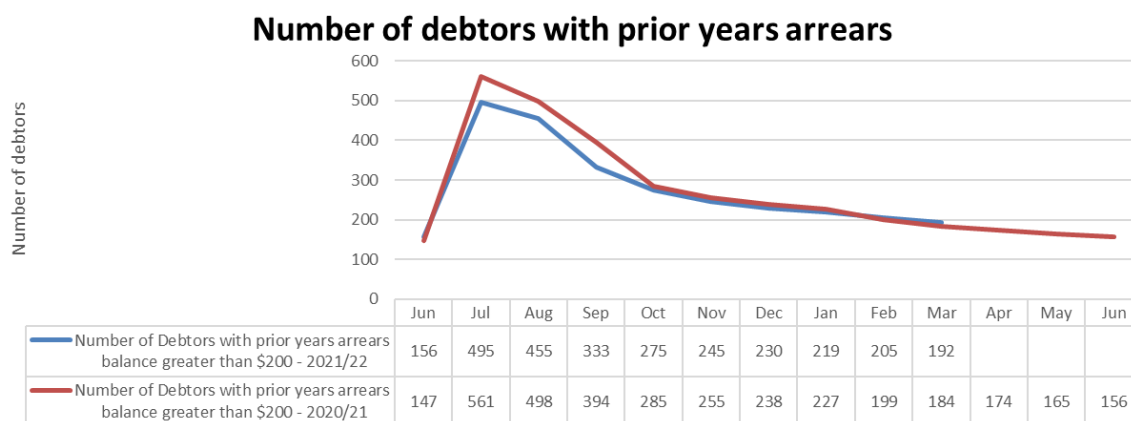
Rates and charges for 2021/22 were levied in August 2021. Quarterly instalments are due at the end of September, November, February and May.

Debt Collection

The graph below compares the arrears balances as at the end of each month for the current financial year (2021/22) and the arrears balances at the equivalent time in the previous financial year (2020/21). The figures shown only capture arrears outstanding from the previous financial years, for example 2021/22 arrears only include rates that are still unpaid that were due in 2020/21 or earlier, and not rates that are unpaid that were due earlier in 2021/22.



The following graph displays the number of debtors with an arrears balance greater than \$200 for the current year compared to the previous financial year.

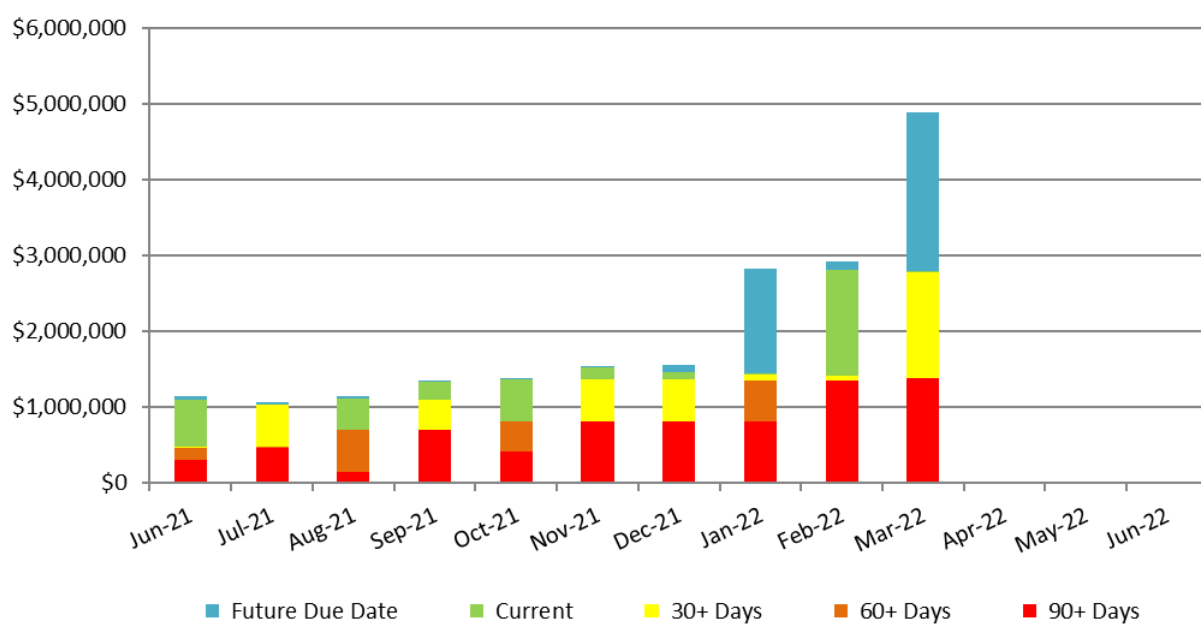


At 31 March 2022 there were 192 rates debtors with an outstanding balance greater than \$200.

Sundry Debtors

The Sundry Debtors outstanding at month end and the movement from the prior month is shown below:

Sundry Debtors	Future Due Date	Current	30 Days	60 Days	90+ Days	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
March 2022	2,099,848	21,111	1,391,147	-	1,379,198	4,891,303
February 2022	103,998	1,396,538	60,566	-	1,352,318	2,913,420
Movement	1,995,850	(1,375,427)	1,330,581	-	26,880	1,977,883



Significant debtors (>\$1,000) with aging of greater than 90 days are as follows:

Debtor	Amount	Description	RO	Notes
21504	\$132,407	Contribution to road remediation works	DIE	Investigation is still being undertaken to determine if this invoice is recoverable.
17641	\$265,904	Grant funding	DIE	Funds are expected to be received.
22413	\$275,000	Grant funding	DIE	Funds are expected to be received.
22413	\$1,839,884	Grant Funding Progress milestone claims	DIE	Funds are expected to be received.

Table 7: Significant debtors > 90 days

CAPITAL WORKS

The table below reports capital expenditure incurred for all capital projects with a project budget greater than \$100,000 for the 2021/22 financial year.

Capital Works - 2021/22	YTD Actual	2021/22 Budget	Variance
Great River Road (Stage 2)	\$ 1,996,791	\$ 4,250,000	\$ 2,253,209
Fixing Country Roads (Hanson Street Development)	\$ 22,599	\$ 3,430,000	\$ 3,407,401
Stock route		\$ 2,520,992	\$ 2,520,992
Colac Colac Caravan Park (Amenities block upgrade)	\$ 1,088,950	\$ 1,640,000	\$ 551,050
Corryong CBD streetscape	\$ 14,165	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,485,835
Georges Creek Road (Stage 6) - Sections 1 and 2	\$ 814,889	\$ 1,019,592	\$ 204,703
Towong Street East	\$ 9,320	\$ 872,493	\$ 863,173
Plant replacement	\$ 761,578	\$ 797,000	\$ 35,422
Tallangatta Holiday Park (Stage 2)	\$ 478,572	\$ 660,000	\$ 181,428
Georges Creek Road (Stage 6) - Section 3	\$ 24,022	\$ 550,000	\$ 525,978
Corryong Airport	\$ 6,807	\$ 530,500	\$ 523,693
Weighbridge Corryong	\$ 44,931	\$ 450,000	\$ 405,069
Sealing (Lake Road)	\$ 18,000	\$ 446,232	\$ 428,232
Mitta Streetscape	\$ 4,950	\$ 425,000	\$ 420,050
Upper Murray Road upgrade		\$ 380,000	\$ 380,000
Yabba Road upgrade	\$ 10,120	\$ 330,000	\$ 319,880
Tallangatta swimming pool	\$ 265,961	\$ 325,000	\$ 59,039
Bridge replacement - Burrowye Koetong Road North		\$ 325,000	\$ 325,000
Bridge replacement - Burrowye Koetong Road South	\$ 9,120	\$ 325,000	\$ 315,880
Bridge replacement - Smythes Road	\$ 14,258	\$ 325,000	\$ 310,742
Bridge replacement - Little Snowy Creek Road	\$ 14,258	\$ 325,000	\$ 310,742
Infrastructure project (NEBFCN)		\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Town entrances (2015/16)		\$ 293,000	\$ 293,000
Digouts/major patching	\$ 106,832	\$ 250,000	\$ 143,169
Circuit Trail - Corryong	\$ 46,248	\$ 250,000	\$ 203,752
Retaining wall (Tallangatta Transfer Station)	\$ 900	\$ 250,000	\$ 249,100
Blackspot Program (Lake Road and Murray Valley Highway - Old Tallangatta)		\$ 239,000	\$ 239,000
Tallangatta office	\$ 92,130	\$ 200,000	\$ 107,870
Colac Colac Caravan Park (Kiosk)	\$ 4,900	\$ 185,000	\$ 180,100
Pavement construction - Wises Creek Road (Talgarno)	\$ 27,397	\$ 180,000	\$ 152,603
Finance System		\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000
Great River Road (Western End)		\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000
Upper Murray 2030 projects (2016/17)		\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
Fleet replacement	\$ 83,189	\$ 133,000	\$ 49,811
Triangles rejuvenation		\$ 125,000	\$ 125,000
Triangles toilet block	\$ 6,400	\$ 125,000	\$ 118,600
Pavement renewal		\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Dartmouth Streetscape		\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
	\$ 5,967,287	\$ 24,626,809	\$ 18,659,522

Table 8: Capital Works YTD 30 December 2021

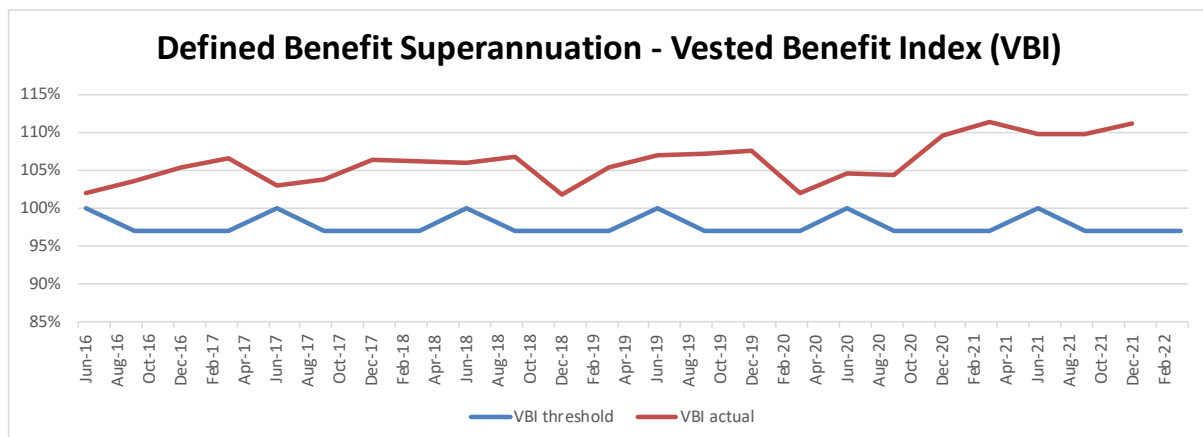
OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Defined benefit superannuation

Council has obligations under a defined benefit superannuation scheme that may result in the need to make additional contributions to the scheme to ensure that the liabilities of the fund are covered by the assets of the fund.

In summary, the Vested Benefits Index (VBI) is the measure which is used to determine whether there is an unfunded liability.

A VBI must generally be kept above a fund's nominated shortfall threshold. The estimated VBI released by Vision Super for September 2020 is 104.5%. The graph below shows Vision Super's VBI performance against the fund's nominated VBI threshold.



Recently VBI levels have been increasing and are more than 10% higher than minimum required levels.

If the actual VBI falls below the above VBI thresholds, an interim investigation is required to be carried out by the Fund Actuary and the Fund's Trustee is required under the superannuation prudential standards (SPS 160) to formulate a restoration plan to restore the VBI to 100% within three years. This may lead to a funding call being initiated which will mean Council will have to provide additional funding to the Defined Benefit fund to ensure that the liabilities of the fund can be met.

Appendix 3

Datascape Action Report

Council Meeting 27 April 2022

Complete

Service Request Number	Item	Resolution	Outcome
14960	5 – Confirmation of Minutes	Special Council Meeting 6 April 2022 – correct the Conflict of Interest Declarations from the Mayor and Cr Anderson to read “general Conflict of Interest” rather than “direct Conflict of Interest.”	Action complete 5 May 2022 Complete
14973	20.1 – Policies for Review	The policies tabled for review at the Council meeting were circulated to all staff for comment.	Actions complete 4 May 2022 Complete
14974	20.1 – Policies for Adoption	The policies adopted at the Council meeting were finalised and circulated to all staff and Councillors.	Actions complete 10 May 2022 Complete

Datascape Action Report

Council Meeting 27 April 2022

In Progress

Service Request Number	Item	Resolution	Outcome
14962	9.3 – Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee	Council resolved the following: That Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leisa Clarke be appointed as the Independent Chairperson of the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee for a term of 3 years; and 2. Remuneration be set in line with the Victorian State Government <i>Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines</i> plus travel costs in accordance with ATO allowances. 	Leisa Clarke has been appointed and remuneration arrangements are being finalised.
14967	9.4 Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor Allowances	Council resolved the following: That Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor allowances be set at the levels specified by the determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal as follows, with adjustments to be made to provide for annual indexation as and when advised by the tribunal: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. MAYOR: 	The Finance team have updated the allowances for April and arranged backpay to the 18 December 2021 in accordance with the determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

		time	amount		
		18 December 2021 – 17 December 2022	\$74,706		
		18 December 2022 – 17 December 2023	\$76,781		
		18 December 2023 – 17 December 2024	\$78,857		
		18 December 2024 – 17 December 2025	\$80,932		
		18 December 2025 onwards	\$83,007		
b. DEPUTY MAYOR:					
		TIME	AMOUNT		
		18 December 2021 – 17 December 2022	\$37,353		
		18 December 2022 – 17 December 2023	\$38,391		
		18 December 2023 – 17 December 2024	\$39,428		

		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>18 December 2024 – 17 December 2025</td> <td>\$40,466</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 December 2025 onwards</td> <td>\$41,503</td> </tr> </table>	18 December 2024 – 17 December 2025	\$40,466	18 December 2025 onwards	\$41,503						
18 December 2024 – 17 December 2025	\$40,466											
18 December 2025 onwards	\$41,503											
		<p>c. COUNCILLORS</p>										
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>time</th> <th>amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>18 December 2021 – 17 December 2022</td> <td>\$24,080</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 December 2022 – 17 December 2023</td> <td>\$24,775</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 December 2023 onwards</td> <td>\$25,469</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	time	amount	18 December 2021 – 17 December 2022	\$24,080	18 December 2022 – 17 December 2023	\$24,775	18 December 2023 onwards	\$25,469		
time	amount											
18 December 2021 – 17 December 2022	\$24,080											
18 December 2022 – 17 December 2023	\$24,775											
18 December 2023 onwards	\$25,469											
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. That the remote area travel allowance be set at \$44 as specified by the determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal, with adjustments to be made to provide for annual indexation as and when advised by the Tribunal; 3. That The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors individually advise the Chief Executive Officer if they elect to receive a partial allowance, or no allowance; and 4. That backdated allowance payments are made to reflect that the determination took effect from 18 December 2021. 										

14968	9.5 – Proposed Budget 2022-23	<p>Council resolved the following: That Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It be noted that the <i>Proposed Budget 2022/23</i> includes an estimated capital works program which does not currently project any carry forward capital works. This position will continue to evolve as the 2021/2022 capital works program progresses and the results of grant applications becomes known. The Budget will be further reviewed to update these estimates prior to adoption targeted in June; 2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the <i>Proposed Budget 2022/23</i> available for public inspection and invite public submissions, with submissions closing on Sunday 29 May 2022; 3. At the Council Meeting on 22 June 2022: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consider any submissions in relation to the <i>Proposed Budget 2022/23</i>; b. Hear any person or their representative in support of their submission; and c. Consider the adoption of the <i>Proposed Budget 2022/23</i>. 	<p>The proposed budget 2022/23 has been released for public exhibition and submissions.</p>
14975	22.1 – Confidential WorkCover Investigation – Progress Report	<p>That the report be noted and a further update regarding the recommended actions stemming from the WorkCover claims process review be tabled at the June Council Meeting.</p>	<p>An update has been scheduled for the June 2022 Council Meeting.</p>

Datascape Action Report

Council Meeting 27 April 2022

Current

14969	10.2 – Former Corryong Primary School Site – Community Consultation	<p>Council resolved the following: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A tenancy lease be secured for the former Corryong Primary School site until 30 June 2025; 2. A detailed condition assessment of the former Corryong Primary School building be undertaken; 3. A masterplan and business case for the former Corryong Primary School site be developed based on the outcomes of the <i>Community Consultation Report</i>; and 4. The <i>Community Consultation Report</i> and recommended next steps be tabled with the department of education and training. 	
14970	11.2 – Regional Reconciliation Australia Process (RAP) Commitment Letter	That Council endorses the content of the letter and authorises the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer to sign.	
14971	12.2 – Corryong Weighbridge and Truck Wash – Delivery of Electrical Services (2021/2022-074)	<p>Council resolved the following: That Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contract No. 2021/2022-074 for the supply and installation of electrical upgrade works for the Corryong saleyard redevelopment be awarded to D&N Bishop Electrical for the lump sum of \$66,330 excl. GST; 	Contract in draft stage.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The use of the Common Seal be authorised in accordance with <i>Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties</i> for the purpose of signing the contract document; and 3. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated project budget. 	
14972	12.3 – Purchase of Tip Truck Tender VP268417	<p>Council resolved the following: That Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Award the contract for the supply of Kenworth T610 SAR with the Cummins engine and CBB body - Tender VP268417 be awarded to Twin City Truck for the lump sum of \$302,000 excluding GST; and 2. The use of the Common Seal be authorised in accordance with <i>Local Law 1 – Common Seal And Miscellaneous Penalties</i> for the purpose of signing the contract document; and 3. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated project budget. 	

Appendix 4

Quarterly Community Services Report January-March 2022

Maternal Child Health Service (MCH)

The MCH service operated across the municipality throughout the quarter after the Christmas break, offering core services including sleep and settling training, early trauma and grief services and neonatal resuscitation training. Other varied support included the provision of cots, car seats, linen, books, clothing and food for families requiring assistance. Council officers are extremely thankful to the St Kilda Mum's group and Foodbank for donating many of these supplies.

A staffing restructure of the MCH team was completed following a review of resourcing levels and community needs across the regions that we serve. Growth in the municipality has led to an increased need for availability of MCH services, and resourcing has been provided to enable the Mitta and Bellbridge clinics to be open every week.

First-time Parents Groups and the Mothergoose program continued to meet regularly and two new groups are expected to start in the Mitta Valley and Bellbridge next quarter, to be facilitated in the MCH clinics and local businesses.

We have partnered with Tallangatta Health to commence implementation of the INFANT program, currently being run by numerous local government councils, including neighbouring councils. The program supports family engagement between the ages of 3 months and 12 months, filling the current gap between first time parent groups and playgroups. A pilot trial will be held in the coming quarter and funding has been secured to support delivery.

Work has commenced to support a Welcome Baby Ceremony in the Upper Murray, in partnership with the Australian Childhood Foundation, the Family Violence committee and local committees and resources in the region. We plan to host a second event during the 16 days of activism in November on the Peninsula, and then to host these events biannually across the Shire in rotating locations.

Our Family Support Officer supported the Bringing Up Great Kids program in the Upper Murray as facilitated by the Department of Education and Training. Gateway Health has expressed its intention to run these types of events and is eager to work with our team to support ongoing community engagement. Two programs are committed in the next quarter, and there is an intention to run one workshop a quarter on a variety of parenting and child development topics.

Bluey came to visit, in both Corryong and Tallangatta. All families were invited to celebrate the beloved characters from this popular Australian children television series. Our MCH Services advertised and encouraged families to attend.

Playgroup continued in Corryong with the support of the Australian Childhood Foundation, and we are currently supporting the training of a playgroup facilitator in Tallangatta. We expect the Tallangatta program to commence within the next quarter.

Child Care

Childcare services were offered in Tallangatta, Bellbridge and Walwa throughout the quarter with significant growth at all centres. This continues to put pressure on staffing in hard-to-fill roles, however, all sites continued to remain open with minimal closures or disruptions as we adapted to meet evolving pandemic orders.

We continued to provide safe and healthy workplaces, adhering to MAV, DHHS and Victorian Government requirements, ensuring a safe and successful start to the 2022 childcare service offerings for our families.

We successfully placed three new educators and three new trainees in the quarter. Notably we partnered with local schools and the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to bring on two new school-based trainees from Corryong College and Tallangatta Secondary College. We continue to work with local schools to provide career paths for students while supporting our recruitment needs in what is often a hard-to-staff industry.

Offerings to children this quarter included visits from:

- Bunnings to plant a herb and flower garden.
- Halve Waste to teach us about recycling and composting, and
- Music and Rhythm with a music therapist to support children's development and educators' knowledge.

Involvement in community events included:

- Tallangatta Show art displays;
- Community garden collaborations across the municipality; and
- The Blue Earth program, in partnership with Bethanga and Talgarno Primary Schools.

Incursions and excursions continue to be a focus. As COVID-19 restrictions have eased, we are now able to incorporate more visits across all of our centres.

Kindergarten

Three and four-year-old kindergarten is offered in Corryong, Tallangatta, Bellbridge and Walwa. This quarter we welcomed families back, with three-year-old kindergarten seeing significant growth from last year. Centres are utilising extra financial support from the Early Childhood Bushfire Recovery Grant, allowing Kindergarten Teachers and Managers to access a variety of incursions and excursions for our kindergarten children and their families.

This quarter Kindergartens have been able to visit local art galleries and community gardens. Educational incursions have included:

- Halve Waste visiting to teach us about recycling and composting;
- Cool Capoeira, a Brazilian interactive dance incursion; and
- Bunnings visiting us to plant a herb and flower garden.

School Readiness funding has supported the kindergartens to access allied health professionals for our municipality. We continue to partner with these services to help support the educational development of our children, to better prepare them for their transition to school at the end of the year.

Our centres held successful Easter festivities, including hat parades, easter egg hunts and arts and crafts projects to celebrate the holidays, with families being able to attend interactive events and children able to take home easter baskets, treats and projects.

Professional Development

All leadership staff completed Mental Health First Aid and Compliance and Leadership training this quarter, and we thank Mental Health First Aid Australia and Seemann and Slattery for facilitating the delivery of these programs.

Injury Management Training and Complaints Policy and Process training was delivered to all staff during team meetings, to better support educators' development and skills.

Further professional development opportunities are being confirmed for topics including the new child safety standards which come into effect in July 2022, environmental health, and resilience and development in children.

Grant Applications for Early Years

Officers submitted ten applications for early years funding.

Two grants through the 2022 Woolworths Junior Landcare Grant

These successful applications will help to support our focus on sustainability and teaching children the whole process of growing fresh food at Tallangatta Early Years Learning Centre and Corryong Preschool.

One grant through MCH Workforce Grants 2022

This successful grant application supports the development of maternal child health nurses in our municipality.

One grant through Deakin University

This successful grant application will be used to facilitate the implementation of the INFANT program across Towong Shire.

One grant through Victorian School Building Authority

This grant, if successful, will see a yard upgrade and refurbishment at the Bellbridge Early Years Learning Centre. This grant would see to the significant upgrade of the current outdoor spaces at this centre and ensure we have an inclusive and contemporary outdoor educational learning playground for all children.

Four grants through the Department of Education (Ventilation)

Further funding has been obtained for the purpose of improving ventilation in response to COVID-19, and to support equipment upgrades and yard and room development, both to improve learning experiences and to support bushfire recovery efforts.

One Grant through the Department of Education (Administration)

The purpose of this administration grant is to support us to centralise and streamline kindergarten registration and enrolment across the municipality, providing an easier and more coherent experience for families and centres.

Early Years Developments

Work continues on the development of shade sails at Bellbridge, Corryong and Tallangatta. These sails will enable our centres to use the entire facility for a greater proportion of the time and run more inclusive outdoor programs for childcare and kindergarten.

The School Committee at Walwa Primary School has confirmed that they are happy with the Walwa Early Years Learning Centre migrating across to the school. We are currently working with the Department of Education on this transition to ensure a more consistent service offering for the Walwa community and to provide us with the ability to grow the service from the current two days to four days.

Corryong College has announced that Council has been selected as the approved provider to run the Outside of School Hours Care program for the Upper Murray. We will work with Corryong College and the Department of Education to start this service offering and are aiming to have the service running within the next quarter.

The Early Years Co-ordinator, Team Leader Customer Service and Librarians have begun designing a storytime offering for both Corryong and Tallangatta Kindergartens. With current COVID-19 restrictions, we are working to create a consistent offering at both sites every week that will be accessible to all families in our municipality as restrictions begin to ease. The Australian Childhood Foundation has offered to support this program in the Upper Murray, and we expect storytime to be included in our term three Kindergarten offerings for Corryong.

Youth

The Towong Shire Council Youth Plan 2019-2023 provides direction and programming to enable positive outcomes for young people. The plan was developed based on current youth data as well as consultation with key stakeholders and young people. The plan outlines how organisations and individuals will work together to better support young people who live, work, study or play in the Shire.

The following five key themes have been identified as priority areas for delivery:

- Community Connectedness
- Health and Wellbeing
- Recreation
- Educational Pathways
- Collaborative Partnerships

Our youth services programs are prioritised based on youth needs and interests in each area. We continue to facilitate the delivery of youth programs and services to empower and encourage young people to feel supported and connected.

School Holiday Program January 2022

Officers provide regular school holiday activities. Recent activities included:

Paddle Boarding

A series of workshops were held to offer an introduction to paddleboarding.

20 young people participated.

Scooter workshops

Young people had the opportunity to learn new skills and tricks with Al's Skate and Co at scooter workshops held in Corryong and Tallangatta.

Ten young people participated.

Night Light Art Sculpture

Kylie from Art Starts Here worked with young people to make night light sculptures.

Eight young people participated.

Dance Workshops

Young people had the opportunity to fine tune their dance skills at Upper Murray Dance School.

41 young people participated.

NGV Kids - Activity packs

As part of the NGV Kids program, free art packs were provided to the community from the Corryong and Tallangatta Libraries. The packs included a range of art activities designed by the National Gallery of Victoria in collaboration with artists.

30 activity packs were collected from local libraries.

The Resilience Project

The Resilience Project (TRP) proves evidence-based positive mental health programs to build resilience and happiness. The program focuses on a whole school approach: partnering with teachers to build their capacity for wellbeing, educating parents and embedding behavioural change in students through a year-level specific curriculum.

Teacher wellbeing workshop, 14 February 2022

This workshop was designed for teachers to explore practical ways to build their wellbeing, so that they are healthy and able to further support their school community. This was followed up with a ten part guided program focusing on building habits and changing behaviours. Topics covered included Gratitude, Empathy, Mindfulness, Emotional Literacy, Devices, Social Connection, Living with Purpose Health Eating, Sleeping and Exercise.

Approx. 80+ staff from across the Shire participated.

Student Session, 15-18 February 2022

Young people participated in engaging presentations to launch the concepts of gratitude, empathy, mindfulness, and emotional literacy, building capacity to assist with curriculum implementation and to maximise engagement.

This will be followed up with online sessions and activities delivered in the classroom to refresh the concepts of Gratitude, Empathy, Mindfulness and Emotional Literacy through storytelling and animations.

13 schools across the Shire and neighbouring Shires participated.

Parent/ Community Presentation, 21 February 2022

This was an engaging presentation to launch the concepts of gratitude, empathy, mindfulness and emotional literacy as well as practical tools and tip to use at home.

Approximately 46 parents and community members participated.

Feedback:

It was amazing. We have all thoroughly enjoyed the sessions. Jayden Kotzur Talgarno

So, engaging, practical and motivating. We are looking forward to utilising the resources at Bethanga Primary School.

On behalf of Sacred Heart School, Corryong I wanted to thank you all for your recent visit to us. The kids loved the experience, as did the staff.

Feedback from Student: That was fabulous, such great strategies and skills to use every day.

All-Ages Tour Wodonga, 27 March 2022

The Push All-Ages Tour connects young regional audiences with contemporary live music experiences, and supports young people in regional areas to access industry-based training opportunities through staging large-scale live music events.

Wodonga hosted the tour on 27 March 2022, and we worked with Wodonga City and the Corryong Neighbourhood Centre to facilitate transport and free access to this event.

Six young people participated.

Neighbourhood House

The objective of the Neighbourhood House is to support and engage the community of Tallangatta and its surrounds through a broad range of social, learning and recreational opportunities to support mental health and wellbeing, build resilience and foster a sense of connectedness within the community. An Advisory Group made up of community members supports the Neighbourhood House and ensures the current needs of the community are factored in when planning activities.

Throughout the quarter, Neighbourhood House has undertaken the following activities to establish and build connections and to raise the profile of the House within the community:

- A total of 13 activities were delivered in the quarter with a total attendance of 771;
- Meetings were held with the Tallangatta Health Service, Wodonga TAFE Skills & Jobs Centre and Good Shepherd Australia to identify partnering opportunities;
- Upcoming activities and outcomes were promoted on the Neighbourhood House Facebook page with the page following increasing by 53% to 733 since reactivation in August 2021 (seven month period);
- An Advisory Group meeting was held to finalise the Emergency Recovery Position Statement to identify the role of the House in community recovery following an emergency;
- Regular email communications were provided, promoting upcoming House and community activities to 367 individuals in the community;
- Tallangatta Family Violence Prevention Committee meetings were attended;
- Upper Murray Regional Neighbourhood House Network meetings were attended.

Neighbourhood House also worked collaboratively with organisations and community to deliver the following key projects:

Behind the Scenes Grant

Gambling Prevention funding of \$4,500 was received from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to run activities to reduce social isolation and provide an opportunity for connection. An acquittal for this grant has been submitted with the following activities delivered:

- Twilight Tunes at Pelican Park – a free community gathering with live music by local performers, a sausage sizzle catered by Tallangatta Rotary Club, giant games, and an Outdoor Adventure Challenge pack for the children.

Attendance: 104

- Barefoot Bowling at Tallangatta Bowling Club – a relaxed social evening of come and try bowling, drinks and nibbles providing a great opportunity for making new connections as participants were mixed up into teams. As a result, the Bowling Club decided to recommence running their own Friday social bowls evenings.

Attendance: 26

- Resin Cheeseboard Workshop - led by local art business, Art Starts Here. A creative and relaxed evening with the ladies in attendance allowed us to connect whilst learning a new skill.

Attendance: 13 (Sold out)

- Gaze & Graze at Tallangatta & District Astronomy Club – participants viewed the night sky with powerful telescopes whilst learning about astronomy. There was also an opportunity to connect whilst enjoying nibbles.

Attendance: 30

Enabling Communities

Bushfire Recovery Victoria funding of \$22,000 has been received to run activities to support community mental health & wellbeing. Completed activities for the quarter included:

- Stand-up Paddle Boarding for adults at the Tallangatta foreshore.

Attendance: 15

- Chutney, Relish & Sauce Cooking workshop led by community member, Mary Grant.

Attendance: 6

- Delivery of Fire Safe Kids workshops to two local Primary Schools by the CFA.

Student attendance: 131

- Support of Bluey's performance in Tallangatta by a contribution of \$5,000 funding and assistance with the sourcing of volunteers to help on the day.

This event was coordinated by Upper Murray Recovery Hub and a total of 549 adults & children attended across two shows.

- Silk Scarf Marbling workshop led by local art business, Art Starts Here.

Attendance: 12 (sold out)

- Series of woodworking sessions to build an Adirondack chair at Tallangatta Men's Shed.

Attendance: 6 (sold out)

- Author Talk at the Library presented by local author Ian Trevaskis.

Attendance: 18

- Emergency Services Pop-up session. Representatives from SES, CFA and Red Cross manned tables outside Tallangatta IGA to answer questions from the community about emergency preparedness. Free giveaway items were also made available to the community including an Emergency Kit Bag and Hand Crank Emergency Radio. Service representatives were very pleased with the response and interest from the community.

Estimated attendance: 60

- Community Breakfast – a free event for the whole community including breakfast, live entertainment, children's activities and 18 community groups and services information stands.

Attendance: 350

Further planned activities include:

- Lifeline Accidental Counsellor Training for community members, providing skills to support someone experiencing a crisis;
- A free family movie screening at the Tallangatta Triangles with food and refreshments. This was to be held in early April however was cancelled due to extreme weather conditions;
- A second Tallangatta Men's Shed woodworking session;
- Short Story Writing with local author Ian Trevaskis;
- Boat Licence Course;
- Cheesemaking;
- First Aid;
- Women's health and wellbeing workshops; and
- Digital Literacy Program.

Appendix 5

Quarterly Recreation, Arts and Culture Report January-March 2022

Recreation Strategy and Master Planning

Work has continued on the *Towong Recreation Strategy and Master Planning* project. The first draft of the *Recreation Strategy* has been developed and is comprised of several practical components, including a Township Recreational Framework and a Project Assessment Tool, providing for consistency and equity in how Council supports active recreation for our communities. Council will be presented with the findings of the strategy in April.

The first draft of several master plans has been produced this quarter. The development of this master plan has been invaluable in shaping and testing the broader *Recreation Strategy* with real-life situations. Council will be presented with the findings in August.

While all of the Recreation Masterplans have different requirements, recurring themes include improved female-friendly facilities, improved lighting, and facilities which engage children and young adults. A review has been undertaken of the many successful Black Summer Bushfire grants across the Shire, to ensure that all new relevant works are absorbed into the recreation masterplans.

Several sporting committees have reformed since the initial engagement of this project and efforts have been made to revisit the relevant sites and user groups, to ensure that everyone has been adequately consulted and has had their aspirations for improvements heard and incorporated.

COVID-19 disruption has impacted the original timeline for this project and has led to an informal extension being agreed upon with Sports Recreation Victoria (SRV). Fortnightly meetings have continued to be conducted during the quarter between SRV, Towong Shire Council, and the consultant.

Swimming Pools

A separate report about pool operations and the 2021/2022 swim season will be provided at the July 2021 meeting.

Australia Day Events

We were successful in obtaining an extra \$20,000 to support Australia Day events across the Shire to make the day particularly memorable and were also successful in obtaining the presence of three Australia Day Ambassadors through an application to the National Australia Day Council.

Extra activities made possible by the Australia Day Council grant money varied from one event to the other, but included live music by local musicians, complimentary coffee and refreshments, children's face-painting and balloons, and Australia-themed show bags. Feedback was that this year's Australia Day events were far more successful in attracting the participation of young families.

We supported the development of nomination documents for the Australia Day awards in conjunction with the five organising groups across the Shire and provided advice to the groups regarding the evolving COVID-19 pandemic orders. The Bellbridge organising group initially decided not to go ahead due to the vulnerable age demographic of its members, however we were able to secure the support of the Hume Boat Club to ensure that the event was able to go ahead. Feedback from the Bellbridge community was that the new location was more visible and convenient to the community than the Community Centre, and that the views and the green spaces around the facility were very family friendly.

Women in Art

A grant application was submitted to create a sculpture in commemoration of local author Elyne Mitchell, creator of the Silver Brumby books. In consultation with the community, a plan for a life-sized bronze figure reading to a child, was costed and applied for through the 'Victorian Women's Public Art Program' by Regional Arts Victoria.

Davis Cottage Arts Space

The writer's group in Davis Cottage continues to meet regularly each week and has commenced preparations for a visit by Dianne Wolfer, an author due to come to the region from WA to launch her new book, 'the Last Light Horse' which tells the story of Sandy the War Horse.

The Co-ordinator Arts and Recreation called a meeting with the Fine Artists of the Upper Murray (FAOTUM) committee in February, to review their position at Davis Cottage this quarter. It was agreed to allocate the group 2 days a week to use the facility, allowing for other users to have access on other days. A plan for the rest of the year is now being devised by the group, so that Davis Cottage can feature more frequent exhibitions and so that the public can access the space more readily.

An exhibition of art by Kirilly Anderson, titled, *'Tomorrow when the Beauty Returns'* was held in March at Davis Cottage. The exhibition featured a launch evening, an artist's talk and a series of drawing workshops. The event was attended by 198 people over 9 days and was organised in collaboration with the Man From Snowy River Tourism Association. Many commented that the bushfire aspect of this exhibition was timed appropriately and sensitively.

Lake Hume Cycle Challenge

The Lake Hume Cycle Challenge (LHCC) incorporated more areas of the Shire than in previous years. A new route from Tallangatta to Bethanga via Lake Road was created, which the organisers named the 'Bethanga Beast'. In response to a resident's report of litter and waste being previously strewn along Lake Road, staff contacted the Lake Hume Cycle Challenge organisers to request that the toilet facilities at the tennis courts at Old Tallangatta could be opened to provide adequate facilities. The LHCC committee was very helpful in this regard and created a great event.

Other Projects

Due to the need to divert resource towards the smooth operation of the pools, some projects were put on hold during the quarter and are expected to recommence in the next quarter:

Reconciliation Australia Plan (RAP)

The Reconciliation Action Plan is prioritised for development in April and May.

Tallangatta Library History Panels

This project is close to completion and the text for the history panels will be internally proofed by the end of May.

Launch of the Sounds Like Us (a project from Working for Victoria)

A launch of the completed audio interviews will feature on the new Council website and an exhibition at Davis Cottage Arts Centre will occur in early April to coincide with the Man From Snowy River Bush Festival.

Appendix 6

Quarterly Emergency Services Report January – March 2022

Emergency Events Update

Storm Events Berringa Peninsula January – February 2022

Over the summer months the Hume region of Victoria, including Towong Shire, was impacted by acute and intense flood and storm events brought on by afternoon and early evening thunderstorms. Storm activity levels were unusually high due to the La Nina weather pattern over the summer period.

The storms resulted in significant damage to infrastructure and assets across the Shire. One of the areas hardest hit was the Berringa Peninsula with damage to Sirls Road, Lake Road and Springdale Road; various parks and gardens including the fish play area on the Bellbridge foreshore, the Bethanga playground and the Bellbridge walking track; bridges/culverts on Beardmore Street, Lake Road and Springdale Road; and there was significant stream bed erosion, debris and the loss of many trees.

Response

The SES was the primary control agency for the storm events being supported by other agencies including VicPol, CFA, DEWLP and Council.

In response to the storm events, officers inspected and assessed Council assets to ensure public safety immediately after the event, and worked alongside other agencies to remove debris and ensure access to roads and assets.

Relief

To support relief arrangements, Council provided relief-based emergency management officers on standby in the case we were called upon to support Towong Shire communities or neighboring Councils. We also supported a displaced household who lost access to their rental property, by working with the Department of Family Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to secure financial relief support, providing emergency relief accommodation and food relief to the displaced family, and working with local housing services to assist them in finding medium-term accommodation.

Recovery

Immediately following the storms, officers conducted a series of inspections and risk assessments to identify and prioritise remediation works. To assist in this process, we engaged a consultant with experience in disaster remediation works to manage the

claims process with state government agencies via the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The DRFA is a cost-sharing funding arrangement between the State and the Commonwealth Governments made available to local Councils. Council was deemed eligible and we are now beginning the remediation process for the associated damage that occurred.

Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)

Council is a participating member of the joint agency Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee. The MEMPC continues its development of the new Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) to be tabled to the Hume Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMPC) in the first half of 2022 for feedback before final review and endorsement.

Over the January to March quarter the MEMPC met and:

- Reviewed progress on the draft Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP);
- Reviewed copies of the Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) for the communities of Corryong, Towong, Tintalra, Thowgla, Cudgewa, Biggara, Lucyvale/Berringama and Nariel Valley. MEMPC members agreed for CEMPS to be considered as complementary plans in the new MEMP;
- Received an update from the Municipal Fire Planning Committee (a sub-committee of the MEMPC) after the subcommittee's first meeting of the year. The subcommittee has commenced the development of a new Fire Management Plan which is being developed as a sub-plan of the MEMP;
- Commenced a renewed cross-border collaboration with Snowy Valleys Council's emergency management committee with representatives of that committee presenting to the Towong MEMPC at the March meeting.

North East Emergency Management Collaboration

Council was successful in securing funding from the Victorian Government's *Safer Together* program to better position Towong, Alpine and Indigo Shire Councils to respond to emergencies. A collaboration has been formed between the three councils to deliver the project, with additional support provided by the Rural City of Wangaratta and the City of Wodonga.

A major focus of the project is to produce an Emergency Relief Centre Model across the three municipalities. A new standardised *Relief Centre Arrangements* manual has been developed by the participating councils with the support of the consultancy EllisKent. Key elements of the model and supporting arrangements are being prepared to be put into practice at a multi-agency training exercise hosted by the Collaboration on Thursday, May 19 2022 at Tangambalanga. The final development of Emergency

Relief Centre facility plans for all of the primary sites across the collaboration is progressing in line with the development of new MEMPs across the collaboration.

Municipal Fire Prevention

The Fire Danger Period (FDP) for District 24, which encompasses the Towong local government area ceased on March 21, 2022. This is unusually early due to the current La Nina weather pattern.

Fire prevention activities over the fire season included:

- 13 inspection days encompassing 521 individual property inspections;
- Continuing communications to holders of vacant land to encourage and prompt engagement in fire prevention activities;
- Ten Inspections of the designated Places of Last Resort;
- Ongoing work with fire agencies and local brigades regarding identified fire prevention work;
- Community engagement throughout the fire season in conjunction with the CFA and DELWP. Our approach is generally to share and support the messaging of the primary agencies.

COVID-19 Response and Relief

Officers have continued to support local health services, the Local Public Health Unit and the community in the ongoing response and relief to COVID-19. Activities have included:

- Ongoing readiness for the set-up of drive-through testing in collaboration with Corryong Health, the Tallangatta Health Service and community facility committees in case it is required by the Public Health Unit;
- Working with Local Food share networks to support and provide food relief for community members experiencing food insecurity due to isolation as a Potential Close Contact (PCC) or as a person with COVID-19 - the system is meeting current demand well; and
- Sharing of public messaging from local Health Services;
- Representing Council and providing community advocacy on the following committees/Teams:
 - Albury/Wodonga Area of Operations Control Team – Covid
 - Hume Regional Relief Team – Covid.

Staffing Developments

A new position has been created to support community engagement and preparedness, to provide capacity for response and relief, and to integrate recovery efforts. The position is funded by Bushfire Recovery Victoria. Responsibilities of the position include:

- Maintaining working relationships with all Communities and Community Recovery Committees in place across Towong Shire;
- Supporting the development of local community capacity, cohesion and resilience for future bushfire events;
- Supporting fire-affected community members through rebuilding requirements and processes;
- Delivering the improvement and implementation of relief arrangements and processes;
- Ensuring the training and upskilling of emergency management personnel with the support of Co-ordinator Strategic Emergency Management.

This role is part of the recovery transition process as recovery functions are gradually transitioning to the Directorate of Community and Planning.

Planning Permit Activity – April 2022

During April 2022 Council received 66 customer enquiries. These related to:

Sub Type	
Planning Application - New	15
Planning Application - Existing	17
Planning Application - General	33
Planning Application – Subdivision	0
Planning Application – Further Information	1
Planning Application – Permit Extension	0
Total	66

During the month 13 new applications were received, of which 4 related to bushfire. In addition 7 permit applications were decided for a total value of \$172,609. A summary of permit status is provided below:

Month's Activity	Number
Number of active applications at the start of the month	35
Number of New Applications Received	13
Total	48
Number of Applications Completed	7
Total	41
Permit status	
New	13
Further Information Requests	10
Referrals	10
Referral & Public Notice	4
Processing	3
Withdrawal	0
VCAT	1
Total	41

An analysis of average referral response times for referral agencies is provided below:

Planning Referrals: Days at Referral Authority for Permits received in the range 01/04/2021 to 30/04/2022

Referral agency	Average of Referral Days
Ausnet Services	10
Country Fire Authority	29
Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources	49
Department of Environment Land Water and Planning	25
Environmental Health Officer	16
Goulburn Murray Water	30
Heritage Victoria	10
North East Catchment Management Authority	16
North East Region Water Authority	24
VICPOL	88
Regional Roads Victoria	32
Towong Shire Council Infrastructure team	44
Towong Shire Council Local Laws	1
Towong Shire Council Municipal Building Surveyor	88

In addition to statutory planning, the bushfire rebuild service provides support to families who lost dwellings or other structures during the bushfires.

Below is a summary of current activity:

Activity to date	Number
Number of planning permit applications received for rebuilding dwellings*	20
Number of other permit applications received	88
Total	108
Number of planning permits approved for dwelling rebuild	19
Number of building permits approved for dwellings	16
Number of buildings passed final inspection	4
Number expected to not rebuild	2

*note some applications were determined to not need a planning permit

Enforcement

Planning currently has six case investigations underway and three cases before the magistrates court for breaches of the Planning and Environment Act 1987. The majority of the cases relate to illegal removal of native vegetation.

Appendix 8

Economic and Tourism Development Report

October – December 2021

Key visitation information

During the first quarter of 2022, the Corryong Visitor Information Centre assisted 2,954 visitors, down 65% on the pre-COVID average. Visitors to the Centre were predominantly in the region for 4WD driving, camping, events, and travel en route to Kosciuszko National Park. Of note was a three-week period where the Centre saw an influx of paragliders and hang gliders for the respective championships.

The majority of January – February visitors were from Victoria, followed by NSW. NSW visitors generally accessed the region via the Alpine Way and to a lesser extent, the Snowy Valleys Way and Great River Road. A high proportion of visitors were travelling to or from Thredbo (Mountain biking), or Bright and Beechworth (touring).

Visitor enquiries included where to eat/get coffee, where they could mountain bike locally, accommodation for the MFSRBF, Mount Elliot access, and public shower options. Caravan club members sought information on opportunities for future club meets. Activities visitors intended to participate in whilst in the region included visiting the Great River Road, the new murals, Playles Hill and walking/hiking paths through the various Parklands.

Economic Development Strategy and Destination Management Plan

The Towong Shire *Municipal Recovery Plan* identified the need to undertake a detailed economic development strategic planning process to support ongoing economic development in the municipality. In 2021, Council officers prepared a comprehensive brief to select an appropriate firm to assist with this process.

Following a tender process and evaluation of submissions, the firm Urban Enterprise was selected. Following an extensive community engagement process and industry sector analysis, officers worked alongside Urban Enterprise to finalise an *Economic Development Strategy* and a *Destination Management Plan*.

The *Economic Development Strategy* will become a key strategic document to help plan for and drive the economic growth within the Shire over the next five years. The *Destination Management Plan* provides a framework to deliver on the vision of being the leading High-Country destination to escape to and immerse in nature and the outdoors. Nature-based experiences are to be complemented by quality food, drink and accommodation experiences.

It was proposed the final documents were to be adopted at the March Council meeting, however, officers identified further content was required to support desired community projects. Additionally, feedback was received from Regional Development Victoria regarding the plans' strategic alignment with the Ovens Murray regional partnership priorities.

Amendments to both plans were completed in preparation for adoption at a future Council meeting.

Small Business Support

The economic ramifications of COVID-19 continue to affect the Shire's small businesses. Officers engaged with various small businesses across the Shire to refer businesses to appropriate support services and agencies accordingly.

Council officers continue to work with businesses in Tallangatta and Corryong to formalise Chamber of Commerce organisations in each respective township.

Business Events

Following on from the success of the Tourism and Business Expo held in 2021, officers hosted a similar event on Thursday 3 March 2022. The event and guest speakers were well received by Upper Murray businesses. The four guest speakers were:

- Matthew Gledhill from Mountain Bee Honey;
- Ian Cesa, a local Hipcamp host;
- Robbie Ladbrook from Ladbroken Distillery Co; and
- Dezley Hughes from Forage Merchant Occasions.

Attention is now turning to the upcoming *Marketing and social media for tourism businesses - made simple!* workshops. Officers have developed a brief for Tourism North East to deliver the business events scheduled to take place at:

- Corryong Council Chambers - 5.00 pm – 8.00 pm - Wednesday 11 May 2022
- Mitta Mitta Magorra Park Community Space - 10.00 am – 1.00 pm - Thursday 12 May 2022.

Upper Murray Brand Project

Upper Murray stakeholders identified the desire to upgrade the visituppermurray.com website and Tourism North East (TNE) was engaged to work on improving the website.

As an extension of that work, consultancy firm Us & Us was commissioned to develop strong brand messaging for the Upper Murray. The project was further extended to review branding for the wider municipality with consideration to the *Destination Management Plan* completed by Urban Enterprise. Three distinct 'brand' regions were identified: the Upper Murray, Mitta Valley and Lake Hume.

During the quarter, the consultation process concluded and new brand marks (symbols that help people immediately identify a certain place) were created for the Lake Hume and Mitta Valley regions to work cohesively alongside the existing Upper Murray brandmark. An overarching brand narrative and tone was also developed. The harmonious suite of brands may be used together or independently. Consultants Us and Us are now developing style guides that will illustrate how the brands should work when used.

The project has been well received and supported by the Towong communities.

Destination Website

As the branding project nears completion, work has commenced on reviewing the format and operations of the destination websites and officers have prepared a brief for Tourism North East. As part of our annual subscription with the organisation, Tourism North East is assisting us to procure a suitable business to undertake the review and to make the subsequent changes to the destination websites.

In preparation, the domain visitlakehume.com.au has been purchased (visituppermurray.com.au and visitmittavalley.com.au are existing assets of the Council).

Bellbridge Boathouse

The Lake Hume Boathouse at Bellbridge is listed as one of five transformative projects within the draft *Destination Management Plan*. Previously, the project also formed a key component of the *Our Bellbridge Masterplan*.

In order to progress this project Council resolved to prioritise the Bellbridge Boathouse for an application to the Victorian State Government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund. Officers engaged with the landowner Goulburn Murray Water to obtain support for the project, as well as the Hume Boat Club and the Committee of Management of the proposed construction site to develop the project scope.

The application was submitted in January and funded projects are expected to be announced in May 2022.

Most recently, the new Minister for Regional Development Victoria, The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas met with our CEO in Bellbridge to announce the State funding received for the development of a Lake Hume Masterplan. This provided an opportunity to provide an overview of the Bellbridge Boathouse proposal to the Minister.

A communications plan is currently being delivered to ensure residents are informed of the proposed development, and that feedback is received should the application be successful.

High Country Rail Trail

The draft High Country Rail Trail (HCRT) was completed and presented to the Project Steering Group and Council in February 2022.

Additionally, a branding style guide and interpretive signage style guide for the HCRT was completed.

Feedback is currently being incorporated into the Masterplan before being placed on public exhibition in May.

Officers advocated for Creative Victoria to fund the *Connecting Cudgewa to Corryong Sculpture Trail*. The proposed project would see the development of a walking/cycling trail that loops back to Cudgewa via the Murray Valley Highway and then continues to Colac Colac. The development would include the creation of an interpretive centre at the Cudgewa Railway Station and artwork en-route to celebrate the community's heritage and resilience.

Trestle Trolls Trail

In November 2021, Officers prepared an application for the State Government's *Creative Activation Fund* to deliver the *Trestle Trolls Trail* project.

The project would see a 1.6km walking trail, incorporating the High-Country Rail Trail, developed in Koetong. The Trail would feature three large-scale 'troll sculptures' made from natural materials, along with interpretive/interactive signage which celebrates the history of the Cudgewa Railway line and historic trestle bridges.

Whilst the Trail will add value to the High-Country Rail Trail, it will be a product in its own right that attracts visitation, particularly from the family market. Importantly, the trail will also provide a family orientated product for residents to enjoy.

The announcement of successfully funded projects has been delayed.

Enabling Tourism Fund

In response to the State Government announcing the Enabling Tourism Fund, officers prepared and submitted three applications:

1. The *Mount Elliot Adventure Park* project will deliver plans for the feasible development of a gravity mountain bike park and hang-gliding facilities at Mount Elliot;
2. The *Lake Banimboola Masterplan* project will result in strategic plans for the future development of infrastructure and activity on and around Lake Banimboola, near Dartmouth; and
3. *Notable Town Notable Tourists* will involve a comprehensive engagement process to explore opportunities to promote Tallangatta's unique heritage. Three to four ideas will be prioritised and developed into costed plans.

The final outcome of the grant is expected in May.

Mitta Mountain Bike Park

In 2018, the Mitta Valley community received funding to produce a *Mitta Mountain Bike Park Masterplan*, including the delivery of a multi-purpose recreation carpark that would double as a Mountain Bike Park Trailhead. The project was successfully delivered.

Mitta Valley Inc. was also successful in securing \$1.5 million to develop the first stage of the Trail Network of the Mitta Mountain Bike Park through the *Local Economic Recovery Fund – Round 2*. Officers assisted with preparing the grant application and assisted in forming a Project Steering Group (PSG) to oversee project delivery.

Officers continue to assist the PSG with secretarial duties including procurement and permit preparation requirements.

Great River Road

At the close of 2020, Council successfully secured \$5 million from the State Government's *Local Economic Recovery Program* to deliver Stage Two of the *Great River Road Project*. Council will be receiving a separate report on the status of the *Great River Road Project* at a future meeting.

Activating Lake Hume

In August 2021, officers submitted a funding application through the State Government's *Investment Fast Track Fund* for the development of a *Lake Hume Masterplan*. The application was successful.

The plan will provide direction for the future development on and around the Lake, with the objective of improving its economic performance as a key recreation and tourism asset.

Officers have negotiated a funding agreement with the Department and procured consultants Urban Enterprise to deliver the plan. Officers have held an inception meeting with the consultants and provided background information.

An expression of interest process ran to establish a Project Steering Group (PSG) to oversee the development of the plan. Additionally, Council officers from the four other LGAs surrounding the lake have been informed of the project. Separate meetings with the PSG and LGA representatives have been scheduled for early April.

Corryong Visitor Information Centre

A change in the staffing structure at the Corryong Visitor Information Centre has resulted in a review of the Centre's operations. Several changes to service delivery are currently underway for the betterment of internal and external staff. These changes include:

- Improving the internal process for event notification, support and permits;
- Auditing the destination websites and adding new ATDW product listings;
- Planning for the future of the Tallangatta and Mitta Valley visitor information services; and
- Working with *Victoria Walks* to promote the region's walk product.

Road and Gravel Cycling Maps

The first draft of the Towong Shire Road and Gravel cycling maps has been completed. Officers are currently populating the maps with facilities and amenities en route before they are finalised.

Hard copies of the maps will be printed and promoted through the Corryong and Albury Wodonga Visitor Information Centres, as well as regional bicycle stores. In addition, the maps will be downloadable from the Ride High Country website.

Appendix 9

Quarterly Economic Development – Agriculture Report January – March 2022

Agriculture Strategy

The Shire's agriculture, forestry and fishing sector supports an estimated 667 jobs and is the largest employer within the Shire. In recognition of the important ongoing contribution of agriculture, an *Agriculture Strategy* document has been under development, with objectives to:

- enhance existing industries;
- grow the local economy;
- create jobs; and
- catalyse community resilience.

Drs Karenza Menzies and Sara Healey were contracted in 2020 to develop an *Agriculture Strategy*. The strategy includes three key priorities encompassing 14 projects:

- Empowering people in agriculture: current, next and new generations (community);
- Maximising the water and natural resource potential to grow existing and new markets (natural assets); and
- A Connected Shire (infrastructure and human factor).

Following the development of the strategy, in consultation with industry representatives and community members, a community-facing *Draft Agriculture Strategic Plan* has been completed and released for public review and feedback. Formal opportunities for community engagement will occur at the following events:

Date	Event	Time
April 6 - 7	Upper Murray Agriculture Field Days (Corryong) Towong Shire stand, Agriculture Victoria Marquee	8.00 am – 4.00 pm
April 21	Tallangatta Expo (Tallangatta) Towong Shire Stand	8.00 am – 4.00 pm
May 9	Producer meet up - Tallangatta Valley Hall	10.00 am – 11.00 am
May 9	Producer meet up - Tallangatta TIC	6.30 – 7.30 pm
May 10	Producer meet up - Berringa Peninsula Bethanga Memorial Hall	6.30 – 7.30 pm
May 17	Producer meet up - Upper Murray	6.30 – 7.30 pm

Date	Event	Time
	Corryong Youth Club	
May 19	Producer meet up - Mitta Valley Eskdale Recreation Reserve	6.30 – 7.30 pm

In addition feedback has been received from Business Development Victoria (BDV) regarding the strategy. All feedback will be presented to Council alongside an updated strategy document in June 2022.

The final strategic plan will support the strengthening of existing industries while encouraging diversification and new entrants into the Shire’s agriculture sector. It will also encourage community diversity and resilience, stimulate local employment opportunities, and provide a toolkit to address the key barriers to local producers adopting innovative agriculture practices.

Officers are conducting a review of water rights/usage within Towong Shire to support future water advocacy action. Water advocacy is identified as a key strategic priority program within the draft *Agriculture Strategic Plan*. The preliminary review has revealed that there are 4,143 ML of unallocated water available for use within Towong Shire.

Telecommunications Review

Digital connectivity underpins every aspect of the modern economy and it is recognised that Towong Shire communities must have access to effective digital infrastructure to operate effectively in the 21st century. Connectivity issues impact a wide range of sectors and businesses, communities and visitors, particularly during emergency situations.

Gravel Road Pty Ltd has been engaged to develop a *Mobile and Internet Communications Strategy* and the final draft of this document will be released to the community shortly for review. The *Mobile and Internet Communications Strategy* identifies short term, medium and long term projects and guides us to be future focused, to recognise appropriate funding opportunities, and to map the Shire’s future connectivity landscape. The projects proposed for immediate focus include:

- Upgrades to all service centres (ie Tallangatta, Corryong, Bethanga, Bellbridge, Walwa) served by NBN business fibre and NBN Fibre to the premise (FTTP);
- Upgrades to all service centres (ie Tallangatta, Corryong, Bethanga, Bellbridge) served by 5G from each of the three Mobile network operators (MNO);
- Upgrade of the region’s mobile connectivity footprint from 3G to 4G by each of the three MNO’s by potential using Shared Radio Access Network;

- New or improved 4G mobile network coverage and capacity for:
 - Old Tallangatta (Telstra, Optus and Vodaphone)
 - Eskdale (Telstra, Optus and Vodaphone)
 - Mitta Mitta (Telstra, Optus and Vodaphone)
 - Tintaldra (Telstra, Optus and Vodaphone); and
- Upgrades to internet communications:
 - The Shire's NBN from Fixed Wireless and satellite to Fibre to the premise
 - Tintaldra's NBN from Satellite to Fibre to the Premise
 - Mitta Mitta's NBN from Satellite to Fibre to the Premise
 - Eskdale's NBN from Satellite to Fibre to the Premise.

The draft *Strategy* and prioritisation plan has been conveyed to the Indi Telecommunications Advisory Group (ITAG), who continue to lobby for better telecommunications access across the electorate. Notably ITAG contributed to the Regional Telecommunications Review Report, which is now publicly available and open for comment; and ITAG jointly announced with Hon. H Haynes on January 31, 2022 that Indi had secured funding under the Federal Mobile Blackspot Program (MBSP). Indi was the most successful electorate in Victoria, and the fourth most successful Australia-wide.

During the period officers also worked to write submissions to the Connecting Victoria (CV) program for upgrades to townships to be connected to FTTP. Only the areas of Bellbridge and Bethanga were considered eligible to be connected to FTTP and unfortunately the submission for these townships was unsuccessful.

Energy Review

The need for Shire communities to be well equipped to manage risk during and in the aftermath of extreme events is recognised. Communities with little or no access to power are not resilient nor able to cope with emergencies.

The Black Summer fires exposed Shire communities to energy loss. As a result, two energy projects have begun in Corryong to improve and enhance the energy and communications resilience of Corryong as follows.

Upper Murray Energy Resilience and Recovery Project (UMERR)

The UMERR project consists of several components with progress on each as outlined below.

UMERR - Energy nodes

Progress continues across 21 of the original 27 sites. These sites are currently being

assessed for planning and heritage approval. This component of the project is on-time and on budget.

UMERR – PV/battery installations

Community scale PV and battery systems are being developed at three significant sites across the Upper Murray – Corryong Health, Corryong Recreation Reserve, and the Walwa Bush Nursing Hospital. Site inspections and Engineering requests have been completed for all three sites. This component of the project is on-time and on-budget.

UMERR - Heat pumps

This project component aims to install 100 hot water heat pump systems across the Upper Murray. To date five heat pumps are installed with 19 deposits paid. This component of the project has been affected by supply issues, and is behind schedule and on-budget.

UMERR is also investigating communications options including Ausnet in the Nariel and Thowgla Valleys and the Low Orbit satellite service Starlink. Conversations are underway with Community Business Connect to investigate options in at-risk areas beyond Nariel Valley.

DELWP Community Microgrid Program

The DELWP Community Microgrid program is supporting the UMERR project to create the Corryong Community microgrid and is investigating a whole township battery option.

Other Updates

As COVID restrictions ease, producers are becoming more active and engaged. Officers have planned events and activities for the April to June quarter, and expect to see further active engagement from the agricultural community.

Support of Alpine Valleys Dairy (AVD)

Officers continue to provide AVD with meeting support and maintenance of the AVD Facebook page. The Corryong Dare to Dairy Dinner was well supported by 104 registered diners. The guest speaker, Barry Irwin was unable to attend this event. The next event planned is a Wisdom Dinner.

AVD has asked for support to extend its social media platform. Officers provided basic advice on social media options and target audiences.

Let's Talk Working Dog Schools

Officers worked with Bushfire Recovery Victoria, Red Cross and Gateway Health to develop and promote the mental health program *Let's talk* working dog schools for the Upper Murray fire-affected communities. Red Cross NSW has run this *Let's talk* program in fire and flood-affected communities to signpost mental health services. Red Cross Victoria is trialing the program with the view to delivering across the North East.

Seasonal Conditions

Shire producers continue to be supported by very high beef prices and have had a good season while experiencing huge summer rainfall. High volume, high concentration rain events caused gully erosion as well as considerable damage to private assets, and most damaged areas are still to be repaired. Bureau of Meteorology climate modeling indicates a return to neutral El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) for the late southern hemisphere autumn or early winter. As such it is likely that the area will experience a return to less rainfall in late Autumn.

TOWONG SHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2022-26

Urban Enterprise
For Towong Shire Council

April 2022

The Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy was prepared by Urban Enterprise in collaboration with Towong Shire Council.

Authors of this report are:

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ACRONYMS

AAGR	Average Annual Growth Rate
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
DMP	Destination Management Plan
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
IVS	International Visitor Survey
LGA	Local Government Area
PA	Per Annum
NVS	National Visitor Survey
TNE	Tourism North East
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Index for Areas
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Gross Regional Product	The total value of final goods and services produced in the region over the period of one year.
Output	Represents the gross revenue generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. This term is also referred to as total sales or total income.
Employment	Employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Employment data presented in this report is destination of work data. That is, no inference is made as to where people in a defined region reside.
Regional Exports	Represents the value (\$) of goods and services exported outside of the defined region that have been generated by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors within the region.
Daytrip Visitor	Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.
International Visitor	A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia for less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.
Overnight Visitor	People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the NVS.
SEIFA	Developed by the ABS, this measures the relative level of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage for a defined area. The index score is based on a weighted combination of census variables that reflect disadvantage (e.g. income, education, employment, etc.), which is then standardised around the national average score of 1,000. A higher score on the index reflects a lower level of disadvantage. Therefore, a score above 1,000 indicates a lower level of disadvantage relative to the national average, while a score below 1,000 indicates a higher level of disadvantage relative to the national average.
High Country	The High Country is a defined tourism region in Victoria's north-east, which includes seven shires – Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Towong and Wangaratta – and the three major alpine resorts of Falls Creek, Mt Buller and Mt Hotham. The region is represented by a regional tourism board (Tourism North East).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 (EDS or Strategy) is a key strategic document for Towong Shire Council (Council) to help plan for future economic growth over the next five years.

Prepared in collaboration with Urban Enterprise, the Strategy is designed to provide strategic direction for **business development, investment attraction, resident attraction** and **sustainable growth** in the Shire. This includes clear objectives and an action plan for Council to help implement the Strategy and grow the Towong economy, focusing on the economic opportunities for the townships and sub-regions within the municipality.

The information in this Strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses, Council and Government stakeholders.

This report has been developed concurrently with the Towong Shire Destination Management Plan (DMP). Key directions from the Destination Management Plan have been included in the Economic Development Strategy, however the DMP provides greater depth on strategies and projects which will grow Towong's visitor economy.

TOWONG SHIRE

Towong Shire is a rural municipality located in the Hume Region in Victoria's north-east, bordering NSW to the north and east and Albury-Wodonga to the west. It is the largest municipality in the Hume Region (6,675 square kilometres), as well as the least populated (6,102 residents), making it one of the least densely populated areas in Victoria. This presents numerous challenges for Council, including service delivery, asset management and community engagement.

The area is primarily known for agriculture, with a vast amount of productive farmland that comprises around 30% of total land in the Shire. This is the primary driver of Towong's economy, employment as well as its community identity.

The Shire also offers unique water-based assets, including Lake Hume, the Murray River, Mitta Mitta River, Dartmouth Dam, as well as nature-based attractions such as Burrowa Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park. These products contribute to Towong's amenity and rural lifestyle offer for residents and visitors.

There are many communities dispersed across the Shire, which providing support services to residents, industry and visitors. Key townships include Tallangatta (administrative centre) to the west and Corryong (service centre) to the east, with other significant towns including Mitta Mitta and Eskdale in the south-west, as well as Bellbridge and Bethanga in the north-west.



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Key indicators and trends relating to the Shire's population were examined, which helped inform the following implications for future economic growth.



6,102

Population



50 years

Median Age



3,204

Private Dwellings

Low Rates of Population Growth

Contributing to the relatively small population base has been historically low levels of population growth, which increased by 184 residents (0.3% p.a.) between 2011 and 2020.

Growing the population base is critical for economic development, as this increases the supply of local labour, generates local consumer spend to support business growth, and stimulates economic activity. Therefore, the development of population attraction and retention strategies is an important priority for Council.

An Ageing Population

With a median age of 50 years (compared to the Regional Victoria median of 41 years) Towong Shire has one of the oldest age profiles in Victoria. The population is forecast to continue to age, with growth expected in the number of 'senior' and 'elderly' residents over 70 years.

An ageing population is difficult to sustain, given the impact on demand for health care and aged care services and diminishing supply of younger working age residents. Therefore, population attraction strategies should be targeted at younger age profiles to provide a more sustainable population base and support workforce growth to meet industry needs.

Housing and Dwelling Supply

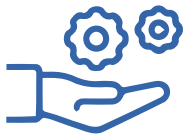
The number of private dwellings is also projected to increase (0.5% p.a.) at a rate considerably lower than the Regional Victoria average (1.4% p.a.) between 2021 and 2036. Whilst this is in response to the low rates of population growth, it is important that the Shire provides sufficient housing to meet demand.

Although housing prices have increased state-wide, the housing market in Towong is comparatively affordable, with median prices approximately \$150,000 less than the Regional Victorian average. This provides an opportunity for the Shire to leverage housing affordability as an incentive to attract new, and retain existing, residents.

Increased residential land supply in Tallangatta and Bellbridge will support housing and population growth within commuting distance of Albury-Wodonga.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

The Shire's economy is relatively small, particularly in the context of the Hume Region, which is attributed (in part) to the low population base. Key economic indicators for 2020 includes:



\$560 M

Total Output



\$168 M

Regional Export Value



2,003

Local Jobs



920

Registered Businesses

Economic Drivers and Specialisations

Primary Industries and Trade

Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing is the main contributor to the economy and employment in the Shire, generating 38% of total output (\$214 million), 69% of regional export value (\$115 million) and supporting 35% (or 697) local jobs. This is primarily driven by the beef and dairy farming industry, as well as some forestry activities.

Supporting and growing agriculture will help maintain Towong's economy into the future. Agricultural output provides a significant opportunity to add value to other industries, particularly the manufacturing sector (via downstream processing) and transport (delivery and distribution of primary production).

Population-Driven Services

Population attraction provides flow-on economic benefits to key industries that support residential development, including the construction and property sectors, which generates total output of \$132 million (or 23%) and supports 166 (or 8%) local jobs.

In addition, key services such as retail trade and hospitality, such as accommodation and food services, provide amenity to residents, account for most town centre trading and support visitation to the Shire.

Public and Service Sector Industries

The provision of social services, including health and education, as well as public administration services, supports a large proportion of local jobs (556 jobs or 28%), with these industries directly impacted by the rate of population growth and age profile of residents. As such, maintaining access to these services – in line with future demand – will enhance liveability, support resident attraction and drive workforce growth in the Shire.



Employment and Workforce

Towong Shire has a relatively low unemployment rate of 2.6% (March 2021), which has decreased over time and is lower than the Regional Victoria average of 4.7%. Whilst low unemployment rates are seen as a positive outcome for communities, at 2.6% it represents an issue for businesses seeking to attract labour and may impact on business growth.

Resident and workforce attraction will be critical to supporting a healthy economy in Towong in the future.

Towong has a relatively low job containment rate of 64% - representing the proportion of residents that both live and work within the Shire – which is attributed to high rates of 'job leakage' (26%) that escapes to Albury-Wodonga.

This presents issues with staff recruitment for some local businesses that compete with Albury-Wodonga for labour. However, it also provides opportunities to attract commuting employees in strategic locations, such as Bellbridge and Tallangatta.

Business Base

Almost all businesses in the Shire are either 'non-employing' (73%) or small businesses that employ less than 20 people (26%), which is driven by the high proportion of agricultural businesses in the Shire (55%), most of which are small-scale family businesses or are not labour intensive.

Therefore, the EDS needs to consider industry growth and diversification initiatives, in order to create local job opportunities and expand the jobs base. Supporting small business should also be a key focus of economic development in Towong Shire.

Other knowledge-based industries, including 'white-collar' professional and financial services, are underrepresented in the Shire, due to a small population base and competition for services in nearby Albury-Wodonga. Promoting growth in these industries – through remote/flexible working opportunities – will help diversify the jobs base and support business investment in Towong.



The Visitor Economy

Towong has the smallest visitor economy in the High Country region – relative to the other LGAs – which indicates that tourism is a developing industry for the Shire. This is reflected by low levels of visitation (195,000 visitors in 2019) and visitor spend (\$29.3 million in 2019), as well as relatively low levels of yield generated per visitor.

Supporting a successful visitor economy is important for sustainable economic development in the Shire, as it diversifies the industry base, creates local jobs and generates direct expenditure. Council should focus on growing both the value and volume of tourism, as well as implementing strategies that helps develop Towong into a desirable visitor destination.

COVID-19 Recovery

Given the economy’s reliance on agriculture, which is less labour intensive and non-consumer facing, Towong’s economy – which experienced a small decrease in output and employment in mid-2020 – has grown above pre COVID levels.

Whilst the industry make-up has facilitated economic recovery and growth at an aggregate level, ongoing targeted support will likely be required for businesses that rely on travel and population movements – particularly retail, hospitality (i.e. food and accommodation) and personal services.

Therefore, Council should provide recovery assistance to specific businesses that are more severely impacted by restrictions and encourage long-term resilience, which will promote business and workforce growth across a more diverse range of industries.

Sub-Regional Approach

Due to the Shire’s large and varied geography, diverse townships and dispersed population/business base, the EDS provides analysis and strategic direction at a sub-regional level:

- Tallangatta
- Upper Murray
- Mitta Valley
- Peninsula

The table on the following page summarises the economic strengths, barriers to growth and potential economic opportunities for each sub-region.

	Strengths	Challenges	Economic Opportunities
Tallangatta Sub-Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Proximity to Albury-Wodonga · Tallangatta's role as a regional service centre · Nature-based assets (e.g. Lake Hume) and recreation (e.g. High Country Rail Trail) · Development infrastructure (water and sewerage) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supply of zoned residential and employment land · Lack of industry representation · Town centre vacancies · Supply of skilled workers · Limited access to Lake Hume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tallangatta town centre activation and enhanced role as a regional service centre · Attract population-driven businesses (retail, personal services, service-industrial) · Commuter destination and hub for remote workers · Support growth in the visitor economy · Downstream processing of agricultural output
Upper Murray Sub-Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Corryong's role as a regional service centre (servicing towns across the Victorian and NSW border) · Strong industry representation · Country University Campus · Corryong Airport · Tourism assets and experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Residential and employment land supply in Corryong · Lack of services in smaller townships (e.g. health, education, retail) · Remote and isolated townships · Youth retention · Poor transport infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Corryong town centre activation and enhanced role as a regional service centre · Value-add opportunities for agriculture (e.g. downstream processing) · Corryong Airport activation and commercialisation · Agricultural training and education pathways · Corryong as a visitor hub and events destination
Mitta Valley Sub-Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Water-based assets (Mitta Mitta River and Dartmouth Dam) · Strong industry representation · Agribusiness branding (Mitta Valley Beef) · Mitta Mitta's role as a visitor destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small population base · Lack of services in the region · Lack of development infrastructure · Remote and isolated townships · Residential and employment land supply in Eskdale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Downstream processing of agricultural output · Mitta Mitta activation as a 'visitor-ready' destination · Enhance Eskdale's role as a community and service hub · Activation of Dartmouth Dam and township · Rural industry jobs growth
Peninsula Sub-Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Proximity to Albury-Wodonga · Lake Hume access · Development infrastructure in Bellbridge · Trail infrastructure (e.g. Great River Road) · Strong industry representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small population base · Lack of services in the region · Lack of commercial town centre · Lack of development infrastructure · Supply of zoned residential and employment land · Poor transport infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Commercialisation and activation of Bellbridge · Bellbridge's role as a tourist destination and commuter town (inc. hub for remote workers) · Bethanga's role as a commuter town and hub for remote workers · Residential development in Bethanga · Lake Hume activation

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

VISION

“**Towong Shire will strengthen its economy through population attraction, a high-value and innovative rural industry and tourism industry growth.**”

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1.

Increase the rate of population growth and retention.

2.

Support skilled workforce growth to service industry and residents.

3.

Promote Towong Shire as a destination of choice for residents and visitors.

4.

Improve liveability outcomes for residents.

5.

Support the development of a more efficient and productive agricultural sector.

6.

Advocate for investment in strategic infrastructure to meet community and industry needs.

7.

Develop a more diverse business base, inc. rural industry, population service industries and tourism industry.

8.

Support visitor economy growth through development of high-quality tourism product, infrastructure and experiences.

9.

Support local businesses to stimulate investment, growth and promote resilience.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THEMES AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

The economic development framework includes four key themes, with defined outcomes, which supports the strategic direction for economic development in the Shire. This is used to identify potential transformative projects as well as other project opportunities for Towong, which are explored later in this Strategy.



Theme 1. Population Driven Economy

Overview

Promote economic development through population attraction and retention, facilitating growth in population-based services and industries.

Outcomes

- 1.1** Increase in population growth and retention rates
- 1.2** Diversify the industry mix and expand the jobs base

Transformative Projects

- Housing and Settlement Strategy
- Masterplanning and Activation Strategies for key water-based assets (Lake Hume, Dartmouth Dam, Mitta Mitta River), as well as Townships (Bellbridge Village and Mitta Mitta)
- Domestic Wastewater Management Plan and Integrated Water Management Plan
- Township Enhancement Program
- Tallangatta Showgrounds Precinct Activation Strategy
- Employment Land Strategy
- Industry Attraction Strategy



Theme 2. A Thriving and Sustainable Rural Industry

Leverage rural industries of competitive advantage, including agriculture, forestry and energy production, to generate economic growth.

- 2.1** Increase agricultural value and output
- 2.2** Increase jobs in rural industry
- 2.3** Infrastructure investment to support rural industry growth

- Upper Muray Agribusiness Branding
- Agriculture Strategic Plan (in progress)
- Country University Campus (Corryong)
- Abattoir / Protein Recovery Plant (Mitta Valley)
- Energy Resilience and Reliability Project (Upper Murray)



Theme 3. Visitor Economy Growth²

Overview Grow the visitor economy by increasing the number of visitors to the Shire, extending the length of stay and increasing visitor spend.

- Outcomes**
- 3.1 Accommodation
 - 3.2 Food, Beverage and Farmgate
 - 3.3 Nature and Water
 - 3.4 Ride
 - 3.5 Infrastructure, Amenity and Activation
 - 3.6 Branding, Marketing and Awareness
 - 3.7 Industry Development and Collaboration

- Transformative Projects**
- Small Scale Accommodation Interventions
 - Cudgewa Valley Wilderness Retreat
 - Holiday Park Reinvestment Program
 - Bellbridge Boathouse
 - Corryong Distillery
 - Old Tallangatta Butter Factory Revitalisation
 - Visitor Experience Enhancement Plan at Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park
 - Corryong Golf Course Redevelopment
 - Murray River Multi-Day Canoe Trail
 - Lake Hume Masterplan (refer Theme 1)
 - Mitta Mitta Destination Mountain Bike Park
 - High Country Rail Trail Improvement and Extension
 - Mt Elliot Gravity and Adventure Park
 - Tallangatta Gravity Mountain Bike Park
 - Township Enhancement Program (refer Theme 1)
 - Mitta Mitta Activation Plan (refer Theme 1)
 - Bellbridge Village Masterplan (refer Theme 1)
 - Tallangatta Foreshore Stage 1 - Destination Playground, Cafe and Trail
 - Content and Imagery Database
 - Branding and Digital Strategy
 - Touring Itineraries
 - Business Attraction and Investment Facilitation Strategy
 - Half Yearly Tourism Industry Information and Networking Forums



Theme 4. Business Development and Support

Provide ongoing business support to create a thriving business community and promote long-term business and workforce growth.

- 4.1 Adopt best-practice approaches to economic development
- 4.2 Create a connected and capable business base
- 4.3 Build business resilience

- Business Engagement Project
- Towong Entrepreneurs Program

²Note: The information included in Theme 3 aligns with the recommendations of the DMP. Further information on the outcomes, transformative projects and other project opportunities can be found in the DMP document.

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 (EDS or Strategy) is a key strategic document for Towong Shire Council (Council) to help plan for future economic growth over the next five years.

Prepared in collaboration with Urban Enterprise, the Strategy is designed to provide strategic direction for **business development, investment attraction, resident attraction** and **sustainable growth** in the Shire. This includes clear objectives and an action plan for Council to help implement the Strategy and grow the Towong economy, focusing on the economic opportunities for the townships and sub-regions within the municipality.

The information in this Strategy is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses, Council and Government stakeholders³.

This report has been developed concurrently with the Towong Shire Destination Management Plan (DMP)⁴. As tourism is a subset of the economy, the information included in the DMP is also relevant to future economic growth in the Shire, which has resulted in some overlap in the recommendations of both documents. More detailed information relating to the visitor economy, including objectives and growth opportunities, can be found in the DMP document.

³The list of consultees is detailed in Appendix A.

⁴Prepared by Urban Enterprise in 2021 for Towong Shire Council.



REPORT STRUCTURE

The report includes the following chapters to clearly demonstrate the research undertaken, evidence obtained and the recommended directions for the economy:

Strategic Context

An overview of the key influences on Towong's economy, including its regional context, supporting government policies and macroeconomic trends.

Demographic Profile

A profile of Towong's population and key socio-economic indicators, including key indicators and trends that will impact the local economy.

Sub-Regional Profile

A profile of Towong's population and key socio-economic indicators, including key indicators and trends that will impact the local economy.

Economic Profile

A profile of the Shire's economy, including industry contributions to the economy and employment, an assessment of the local business base and the role of tourism.

Economic Development Framework

Details the strategic directions and themes to support economic growth in the Shire. This includes the areas of focus and opportunities for Council to achieve the agreed vision and objectives for economic development.

Action Plan

A guide for Council and relevant stakeholders to implement the projects and opportunities identified in the Strategy, supported by recommended actions and timeframes (*note: this will be completed as part of the final EDS report*).



STRATEGIC CONTEXT



ABOUT TOWONG SHIRE

Towong Shire is a rural municipality located in the Hume Region in Victoria's north-east, bordering NSW to the north and east and Albury-Wodonga to the west.

The Shire is located approximately 200km north-east from Melbourne (at its nearest point), while the closest regional city – Albury-Wodonga – is approximately 15km from the western-most point of the Shire.

It is the largest municipality in the Hume Region (6,675 square kilometres), as well as the least populated (6,102 residents), making it one of the least densely populated areas in Victoria⁵. This presents numerous challenges for Council, including service delivery, asset management and community engagement, with these issues to be explored throughout the EDS.

The area is well-known for agriculture, with a vast amount of productive farmland that comprises around 30% of total land in the Shire. This is the primary driver of Towong's economy, employment as well as its community identity.

The Shire also offers unique water-based assets, including Lake Hume, the Murray River, Mitta Mitta River, Dartmouth Dam, as well as nature-based attractions such as Burrowa Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park. These products contribute to Towong's amenity and rural lifestyle offer for residents and visitors.

There are various communities dispersed across the Shire, which provide support services to residents, industry and visitors. Key townships include Tallangatta (administrative centre) to the west and Corryong (service centre) to the east, with other significant towns including Mitta Mitta and Eskdale in the south-west, as well as Bellbridge and Bethanga in the north-west.

⁵Population density is around 1.1 persons per square kilometre.



SUB-REGIONAL APPROACH

The geography of Towong is large and varied, with diverse townships as well as a dispersed population and business base with different needs and priorities.

As such, it is necessary that the EDS provides analysis and strategic direction at a **sub-regional** level to reflect the unique issues and opportunities (where relevant) of the four sub regions that make up Towong Shire, depicted in the above map.

This includes.

- Tallangatta
- Upper Murray
- Mitta Valley
- Peninsula

This map highlights the key townships within each sub-region and estimated resident populations.

POLICY CONTEXT

The following documents were examined to inform the development of this Strategy, including local and regional government strategies that has implications for economic development in Towong.

Regional Documents

- Tourism North East, Three Year Strategy 2019
- Hume Regional Growth Plan 2014
- The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2010-2020

Shire-Wide Documents

- Towong Shire Economic Recovery Action Plan 2020
- Towong Municipal Recovery Plan 2020
- Towong Healthy Communities Plan 2018-2021
- Towong Shire Council Plan 2017-2021
- Towong Shire Council Youth Plan 2019-2023

Local Documents

- Upper Murray 2030 Vision Plan
- Our Bellbridge Strategy 2015
- Our Valley Our Future (Mitta Valley) Strategic Plan 2013-2016
- 'Tallangatta Tomorrow' Masterplan
- Walwa And District (CRC) Strategic Plan

At a local level, the *Council Plan* outlines Council's strategy to create a healthy, vibrant and prosperous region, including a focus on community wellbeing, asset management and economic and tourism development. Whilst recent documents prepared by Council focus on achieving economic and business recovery, via the *Economic Recovery Action Plan* and *Municipal Recovery Plan*, to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 and the 2020 bushfires. This indicates that key priorities for the Shire includes sustainable economic development, which balances community and environmental outcomes, with emphasis on recovery assistance to help the region grow.

There have also been several localised plans delivered by key townships and sub-regions across the Shire, each of which provides a list of key investments and activities designed to support community and economic development. These are tailored to meet the specific needs of local communities and should inform and support economic development at a holistic level.

At a regional level, several strategies relevant to the Hume Region have important implications for the Shire. The *Hume Regional Growth Plan* looks to create a thriving and dynamic economy by capitalising on the unique competitive advantages in the region. This specifically includes Towong leveraging its relatively large catchment along the NSW border and proximity to Albury-Wodonga, as well as managing growth whilst maintaining its key natural assets.

It is important that the Economic Development Strategy aligns with other local and regional documents to help garner the support of key stakeholders and encourage collaboration to help deliver, as well as advocate for, key projects and initiatives.

In addition, the visitor economy is supported by Tourism North East strategies, which focus on key product pillars to drive tourism growth in the region and develop Victoria's High Country into a leading visitor destination. Whilst this provides direction at a regional level, there is a lack of strategic focus at a local level for the Towong visitor economy. **This provides opportunity for Council to pursue activities that meet the needs of the local tourism industry, whilst also aligning its objectives to the regional priorities.**



LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Local Government plays an important role in facilitating economic growth within their municipalities. Typically, Council's role in economic development includes business engagement and support, business and investment attraction, promoting liveability outcomes and undertaking advocacy efforts.

In terms of investment attraction, it is important for local Governments to provide and encourage an economic environment that is conducive to attracting private investment. Council can assist private investment by providing leadership, creating a consistent and streamlined regulatory environment, conducting market and industry research, and business case development.

Common objectives adopted for economic development across Local Government include:

- **Supporting the existing business base** - promoting growth within the existing business base.
- **Attracting new businesses and jobs** - promoting growth by attracting new investment and businesses.
- **Growing the visitor economy** - economic development units often support the local tourism industry.
- **Promoting liveability and sustainable communities** - with an increasing focus on environmental sustainability.
- **Undertaking advocacy efforts to attract infrastructure funding.**

To help achieve these objectives, Councils often work in partnership with local industry and community representatives, such as chambers of commerce, to meet the needs of residents as well as the business community.

Economic Development in Towong Shire

Council currently provides 1.4 FTE – spread across three employees – dedicated to economic development activities (as well as a full-time Agricultural Officer - 1 FTE). The role of the economic development team includes business engagement and support, workforce development, advocating for public and private infrastructure investment and ensuring the community has access to key social and community services.

However, Council's efforts are supported by a range of national, state, regional and local organisations that support economic development activities within Towong. These organisations – summarised in Appendix B – undertake key supporting activities as follows:

- **State-level.** Includes government agencies that provide funding to support economic growth initiatives, as well as service providers that manage key assets (e.g. land, energy, water) to facilitate community and economic outcomes.
- **Regional-level.** Key government and private partnerships that support community and businesses across neighbouring municipalities – and advocate on behalf of the region – to achieve common economic development goals.
- **Local-level.** Localised organisations that represent specific communities or destinations within Towong Shire, to help meet the specific needs of the community and businesses (through engagement initiatives, strategy development and funding advocacy). Many of these organisations were developed in response to the recent bushfires and COVID-19, to assist with economic and community recovery efforts.

MACROECONOMIC INFLUENCES

The following external economic influences, which impact the national and state economies, will have implications for economic growth in Towong Shire.

COVID-19 Impacts on the Economy

Business Recovery

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the national economy, as restrictions on trading and travel impact communities and businesses. As Victoria continues to adapt its COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, it is likely that the pandemic will have an ongoing impact on the state and local economy.

Some industries, particularly those that rely on population movements, such as retail and hospitality, have been affected to a larger extent and require more intensive and ongoing business support. Conversely, many rural municipalities, such as Towong have been less affected by COVID-19 restrictions, as these economies are typically driven by primary industries that are less labour intensive and non-consumer facing.

Council should focus on providing targeted support for businesses that have been more severely impacted by ongoing restrictions, to promote industry diversity and support local jobs.

Rise of remote and flexible working arrangements

An outcome of COVID-19 has been the rise of remote working, particularly for traditional 'office-based' industries, such as professional and financial services, which has adapted its operations to allow employees to work from home on a regular basis.

This provides significant opportunities for regional and rural areas to attract residents from metropolitan and regional centres, due to the increased prevalence of remote working which provides more flexibility in choosing a place of residence, along with the health and lifestyle advantages associated with living in a more sparsely regional environment.

This may lead to the attraction of new residents in rural municipalities across Victoria, including Towong.

Growth in domestic travel

The decline in international tourism – due to travel restrictions and uncertainty on the global pandemic situation – is likely to have a positive impact on domestic travel, including inter and intra-state movements. A significant uplift in domestic tourism was experienced at the end of 2020, and this is expected to continue once Victorian and NSW restrictions ease towards the end of 2021.

This will see more Victorians and NSW residents holidaying domestically, which provides opportunity for many rural destinations – including Towong Shire and may lead to an uplift in the visitor economy.



Agricultural Trends

According to Agriculture Victoria, the industry is experiencing change, with agricultural businesses facing new challenges and opportunities. This will have implications for the Towong economy, which is largely driven by agriculture:

- **Infrastructure:** Addressing supply chain inefficiencies including improving road and rail freight flows, using ports more efficiently and maintaining airfreight capacity.
- **International demand for food:** A growing international middle class – particularly from fast-growing Asian markets – is demanding more food and increasing pressure on food and fibre production within Australia. This includes a shift in demand to meet changing consumer preferences for organic and specific dietary products.

- **Climate change:** This remains an ongoing challenge across the industry, as volatile weather conditions create uncertainty for farmers and agricultural land/produce becomes more susceptible to extreme weather events such as floods, rainstorms and drought.
- **Innovation:** Opportunities exist in new and emerging technologies to increase productivity and remain competitive in a global environment. This includes the increased use of robotics, biotechnology and digital and wireless technologies for data measurement, weather monitoring, animal monitoring, geospatial monitoring and water management and chemicals.

Energy

The energy sector is experiencing change both nationally and globally as new technologies emerge, combined with government commitments to sustainable practices. As a result, there is increased demand for investment in new, clean energy technologies and products to increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions.

Economic Transition

The Victorian economy is transitioning away from industrial and primary industries to a knowledge and service-based economy. Recent analysis identifies that the sectors forecast to drive future economic growth in Victoria are population-driven industries and professional services, including health care, education, professional and financial services, agribusiness and tourism.

Victoria is well-placed to capitalise on this transition, by leveraging its educated labour force, access to sophisticated technologies and innovative products.

This economic shift provides an opportunity for Towong to diversify its industry base and increase local job opportunities, particularly for key emerging and growth sectors.

Importance of Small to Medium Enterprises

Small to medium enterprise (SME) – which can be defined by businesses that employ less than 20 people – plays a crucial role to the health of the national economy. SMEs make up around 98% of all businesses in Australia, contribute to 32% of Australia's GDP and supports 41% of the workforce (4.7 million employees).

This is particularly relevant for Towong, as almost all businesses are SMEs (99%), driven by the agricultural sector. Therefore, providing supporting infrastructure and services to existing and new SMEs is critical for business growth in the Shire and will help create economic and employment outcomes.





Growing Demand for Health Care

The population of Victoria is ageing, with the number of people aged over 65 years expected to triple by 2056. Additionally, the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to quadruple. This is attributed to an increase in life expectancy and advancements in health care.

Whilst this will increase employment and promote growth in health care, it will also increase demand for services, placing pressure on resources and infrastructure and contributing to increases in government health care spending.

This is particularly relevant for Towong, which has one of the oldest age profiles in Victoria (median age of 50). As a result, demand for health care services and residential aged care will significantly increase over the medium to long term. This will influence future infrastructure requirements and investment priorities in the Shire, particularly to maintain the health and wellbeing of elderly residents.

Environmental Sustainability

In 2016, the Victorian Government committed to legislating a long-term target for Victoria of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Victoria's Climate Change Act (2017) aims to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions and a climate-resilient community and economy.

In response, the promotion and adoption of environmentally sustainable practices is playing an increasing role within economic development and influencing how local governments operate.

Many rural areas, particularly those that rely on primary industries, are exploring green economy opportunities to promote environmental sustainability. This includes reducing agricultural waste through resource recovery activities, as well as promoting circular economy practices for existing businesses. In addition, there is growing demand for investment in renewable energies, such as solar and wind farms, to provide a more localised and reliable source of energy for businesses and residents.

Towong is well placed to capitalise on this demand via its agricultural business base, which can strategically use existing farmland for renewable energy projects, particularly as agricultural businesses seek to diversify income through 'off-farm' income streams.

This focus on sustainability will inform future decision making and investment priorities within the Shire.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This section provides a demographic profile of Towong Shire, including key population, housing and socio-economic indicators that has implications for future economic growth opportunities.



TOWONG SHIRE DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

POPULATION

6,102

Current Population 2021

6,246

Projected Population 2036



+121 (+0.2% p.a.)

Population Change 2021 - 2036

AGE PROFILE



50

Median Age 2016

Service Age Group	2016	2036	Change (no.)	Change (%)
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	277 (5%)	240 (4%)	-37	-13%
School-aged and youth (5 to 24)	1,224 (20%)	1,025 (16%)	-199	-16%
Young workforce (25 to 34)	456 (8%)	469 (8%)	+13	+3%
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	965 (16%)	1,220 (20%)	+255	+26%
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	1,020 (17%)	667 (11%)	-353	-35%
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	1,009 (17%)	864 (14%)	-145	-14%
Seniors (70 to 84)	844 (14%)	1,375 (22%)	+531	+63%
Elderly aged (85 and over)	193 (3%)	386 (6%)	+193	+100%

Service age groups divide the population into age categories that reflect typical life-stages. They indicate the level of demand for services that target people at different stages in life and how that demand is changing.

DWELLING AND HOUSING PROFILE



2.3 Average Household Size 2016



95% Dwelling Type Separate House



Household Composition 2016

1. Adult Couples 37%
2. Families 31%
3. Lone Person 30%

3,204

Current Dwellings 2021

+229 (+0.5% p.a.)

Dwelling Growth

2021 - 2036

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

974 SEIFA Score

39th most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria (out of 79)

2.6%

Unemployment Rate

March 2021

64%

Job Containment Rate

2016

PROPERTY MARKET INDICATORS 2019



66 Property Sales (houses) 10-year average: 70

\$230K Median Property Prices (houses) 10-year growth: +90k (+64%)

Note: The data included in this section has been compiled by Urban Enterprise from a combination of sources, including: REMPLAN, ABS Census data, Victoria in Future and the Victorian Valuer-General.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Note: The demographic projections for Towong were prepared prior to the onset of COVID-19 and the ongoing effects of the pandemic, which has already had a significant impact on population movements. The short-term evidence shows that intrastate migration from metropolitan centres to regional Victoria increased by 62% between March 2020 and March 2021⁶, which has offset any reductions in overseas/interstate migration. These intrastate migratory patterns can (anecdotally) be attributed to a variety of factors such as the increased prevalence of remote work, fewer restrictions in-region and the health and lifestyle benefits associated with living in a sparsely populated regional environment.

As such, it is likely that the current forecasts are conservative for Towong (as well as for Regional Victoria) and population growth rates are expected to increase in the short to medium term.

Population Growth

Towong Shire has the smallest population base in the Hume Region, with an estimated resident population of 6,102 (2021). The Shire has historically experienced low levels of population growth, increasing by +184 residents (or 0.3% p.a.) between 2011 and 2020.

Current forecasts predict continued low rates of growth, with the population expected to increase to 6,246 residents (+121 or 0.2% p.a.) by 2036. These forecasts are considerably lower than the Regional Victoria average, which is expected to increase by 1.3% p.a. over the same period⁷.

Significant population growth is expected across Regional Victoria, over and above current projections, as intrastate migration rates increase from metropolitan areas to regional locations in response to COVID-19 (i.e. rural health and lifestyle benefits, flexible working arrangements, etc.). This presents an opportunity for Towong Shire to capture some of these migrating residents, through targeted population attraction strategies and strategic investments, and compete with surrounding regional destinations.

Age Profile

Towong Shire's population has a median age of 50, which is substantially older than the median age of 41 for Regional Victoria. As such, over half the population is aged over 50 years, while around one-quarter of residents are aged over 65 years.

The population is expected to age over time, with the number of 'senior' and 'elderly' residents over 70 years projected to increase by 724 (70%) by 2036. Conversely, the number of young, school-aged residents aged under 24 years is projected to decrease by -236 (-81%).

This is reflected in the recent changes in government school enrolments within the Shire, which has seen enrolments *reduce* by 134 (or 13%) between 2015 and 2020 – whilst the State has experienced a 13% growth in enrolments over the same period.

An ageing population – with an increased number of retired elderly residents – will have implications for economic growth, as this will diminish the supply of local labour and increase demand for, and costs of, health care and aged care services. Therefore, an area of focus should be on attracting younger working age residents to help sustain the economy.

⁶<https://www.realestateview.com.au/news/national/record-people-leaving-capital/>

⁷Population projections across Australia are likely to change in the short to medium term once the impacts of COVID-19 on migration patterns are known.



Housing and Dwelling Profile

Consistent with the older age profile in the Shire, the largest proportion of household type are adult couples with no children (37%) – i.e. retirees – while the proportion of family households (31%) is significantly lower than the Victorian average of 40%.

Attracting more families is critical to supporting economic growth, as this will increase the local labour force, increase local expenditure and support community engagement.

In addition, the housing stock is predominantly low-density separate houses (95%), which is consistent with many rural municipalities and provides an opportunity to attract families and retirees seeking a change from high-density metropolitan housing.

Consistent with the low rates of population growth, private dwellings are forecast to increase by +229 (or 0.5% p.a.) between 2021 and 2036, which is considerably lower than the Regional Victoria growth rate of 1.4% p.a.

The provision of suitable housing in key townships is critical for the Shire to be able to attract more residents, particularly as demand for housing in Regional Victoria has significantly increased in line with recent intrastate migratory patterns.

The property market has also been impacted by historically low demand for housing, with housing sales averaging 70 p.a. between 2010 and 2019. As such, median housing prices in the Shire (\$230,000 in 2019) have remained comparatively low compared to Regional Victoria (\$382,500). Having relatively affordable housing is a key attractor for new residents, particularly those squeezed out by high property prices in metropolitan areas and regional centres.

Although the recent demand for housing has increased property prices across the State, maintaining relatively affordable housing is critical to resident and workforce attraction and should remain a focus for Council.

Socio-Economic Profile

The socio-economic profile of residents is typically measured by The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), which is based on key variables that reflect disadvantage, notably income, education and employment. The Towong Shire's SEIFA score of 974 – which is below the national average of 1,000 – indicates a relatively higher level of disadvantage in the municipality. This ranks Towong as the 39th most disadvantaged in the state (out of 79 Victorian LGAs). However, this places Towong as the third most advantaged LGA in the Hume Region.

Whilst improvements can be made to increase the socio-economic status of residents, the Shire performs relatively well against neighbouring municipalities, driven by low rates of unemployment (to be explored in the Economic Profile section).

This provides a good foundation in which Council can undertake community development activities to increase Towong's score closer to the national average.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

The following details key economic, employment and industry drivers for Towong Shire, which provides critical information to inform future economic development opportunities. This includes an overview of COVID-19 impacts over time and ongoing recovery.

Where possible, results are benchmarked against Regional Victoria to provide context and indicate areas of competitive advantage.



TOWONG SHIRE ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

KEY INDICATORS 2020



\$560 M

Total Output



\$168 M

Regional Export Value



2,003

Local Jobs



920

Registered Businesses

ECONOMIC PROFILE 2020

TOP INDUSTRIES BY OUTPUT



38% Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (\$214 M)

2. Construction (13% or \$74 M)
3. Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services (10% or \$58 M)
4. Health Care & Social Assistance (7% or \$37 M)
5. Manufacturing (6% or \$33 M)

TOP INDUSTRIES BY EXPORT



69% Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (\$115 M)

2. Manufacturing (10% or \$17 M)
3. Accommodation & Food Services (6% or \$10 M)

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE 2020

TOP INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT



35% Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (697 jobs)

2. Health Care & Social Assistance (14% or 277 jobs)
3. Education & Training (9% or 176 jobs)
4. Construction (8% or 160 jobs)
5. Retail Trade (6% or 129 jobs)

TOP OCCUPATIONS 2016



34% Managers

2. Professionals (14%)
3. Labourers (14%)

BUSINESS PROFILE

TOP INDUSTRIES BY BUSINESS COUNT 2016



55% Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (507 businesses)

2. Construction (10% or 94)
3. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate (6% or 57)

73% Non-Employing Businesses

26% Small to Medium Businesses (1-19 employees)

VISITATION 2019



195,000
visitors

61% Domestic Daytrip Visitors

39% Domestic Overnight Visitors



Purpose of Visit

1. Holiday and Leisure 48%
2. Visiting Friends and Family 31%
3. Business 12%



3 nights Average length of stay per visitor

VISITOR SPEND 2019



\$29.3 M
Total Visitor Spend

\$62 Average Spend per Domestic Daytrip Visitor

\$287 Average Spend per Domestic Overnight Visitor

ECONOMIC PROFILE

The following details key economic, employment and industry drivers for Towong Shire, which provides critical information to inform future economic development opportunities. This includes an overview of COVID-19 impacts over time and ongoing recovery.

Primary Industries and Trade

Towong Shire is a developing rural economy that generates \$569 million in annual output, has an export value of \$168 million and supports 2,003 local jobs.

The Shire's economy is primarily driven by agricultural activities, with key economic drivers and specialisations categorised as follows:

- **Primary industries and trade** - key sectors include Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, Manufacturing and Transport.
- **Population-driven services** - key sectors include Construction, Rental, Hiring & Real Estate, Retail and Accommodation & Food Services.
- **Knowledge and public sector industries** - key sectors include Health Care & Social Assistance, Education & Training and Public Administration & Safety.

Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing is the main contributor to the economy and employment in the Shire, generating 38% of total output (\$214 million), 69% of regional export value (\$115 million) and supporting 35% (or 697) local jobs. This Shire is well-placed to support agricultural growth going forward, given its historical attachment to farming and large tracts of agricultural land, which comprises 30% of total land in Towong.

This industry is predominantly driven by **Sheep, Cattle and Dairy Farming**⁸ (mostly beef and dairy farms), followed by some **Forestry & Logging**⁹ activity. To support the sustainable growth of these sectors and ensure it remains competitive, Council and businesses should focus on ways to grow jobs in agriculture, add value to the industry and increase the level of production.

The role of agriculture is critical to the Shire, particularly as it supports industries within the supply-chain network for downstream processing, transport and distribution of raw materials.

This has created a **manufacturing** sector that is inherently linked to production of raw materials in the Shire, driven by meat processing. The sector is important to the Shire as it generates 10% of exports value (\$17 million) 6% of output (\$32 million) and supports 4% (74) local jobs. Therefore, there are clear opportunities to leverage agricultural output produced in the Shire and grow manufacturing, particularly downstream processing, which can support business investment and generate positive economic and employment outcomes.

As these industries grow, there will be further opportunities for the **transport** sector to add value to regional exports by facilitating the delivery and distribution of both raw and processed materials.

⁸Generates output of \$177 million, export value of \$102 million and supports 629 local jobs.

⁹Generates output of \$19 million, export value of \$8 million and supports 26 local jobs.

Population Driven Services

This includes key industries that are directly impacted by the level of resident (and visitor) demand, including demand for services and infrastructure.

Through residential growth and property development, the population drives the **construction** and **property** (i.e. Rental, Hiring & Real Estate) sectors, which, when combined, generates total output of \$132 million (or 23%) and supports 166 (or 8%) local jobs. These industries, particularly residential construction are supported by population growth, which also promotes local employment opportunities.

In addition, resident and visitor demand for goods and services are key drivers of **retail trade** and **hospitality**, such as accommodation and food services, which accounts for 244 (12%) local jobs and \$37 million (7%) in output. These sectors provide important amenity to residents, account for most town centre trading and support visitation to the Shire. As such, these are critical services that can promote economic diversification (and sustainable growth) in the Shire and support local employment in key townships.

Knowledge and Public Sector Industries

These industries include public services – such as **health** and **education** – as well as government-related services, such as **public administration**, which are key services that support community health, wellbeing and engagement. They are relatively high employing sectors (supporting a total of 556 or 28% local jobs) that are directly impacted by the rate of population growth.

In particular, the ageing population will generate increased demand for health and aged care services. This will likely generate employment and training opportunities in these sectors to service demand, as well as influence future investment priorities in the Shire. Whilst Council must also ensure new and existing residents have access to quality support services to support population attraction and retention.

The current industry make-up of the Shire also demonstrates a lack of representation in ‘white-collar’ industries, such as professional and financial services. This is attributed to a small population base and competition for services in nearby Albury-Wodonga. Promoting growth in these industries – through remote/flexible working opportunities – will help diversify the jobs base and support business investment in Towong.





EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

Unemployment

Towong Shire has a relatively low unemployment rate of 2.6% (March 2021), which has decreased over the last few years and is lower than the Regional Victoria average of 4.7%. While this typically indicates positive economic growth, declining unemployment could also be the result of a small local labour force and/or a decrease in local job opportunities.

This has implications for economic development, as worker attraction is a key driver of business growth and investment. As such, Council's focus should be to grow the local workforce, which can facilitate business growth and help create local job opportunities.

Job Containment

Job containment indicates the proportion of residents that both live and work within the Shire, compared to residents that travel outside the LGA for employment. This is a key indicator for employment, as high rates of job containment can indicate that there are sufficient and suitable jobs available locally to support the local skills and qualifications of the labour force.

Towong has a relatively low job containment rate of 64%¹⁰, with majority of 'job leakage' (26%) escaping to the nearby Albury-Wodonga regional centres.

Whilst this demonstrates the need to grow local jobs and support the resident workforce, it also presents opportunities to attract residents that can commute to Albury-Wodonga and leverage the rise of remote/flexible working.

¹⁰Compared to neighbouring rural municipalities including Alpine Shire (job containment of 74%) and East Gippsland Shire (job containment of 89%).

Employment by Industry

Employment by industry is often a key indicator of industry strength within a municipality, with the top employing industries being:

- **Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing** - 697 jobs (35%), majority of which are attributed to the Sheep, Cattle and Dairy Farming sub-sector (629 jobs or 31%).
- **Health Care and Social Assistance** - 277 jobs (14%), mostly attributed to hospital and health services.
- **Education and Training** - 176 jobs (9%), mostly attributed to pre-school and school education.
- **Construction** - 160 jobs (8%), mostly attributed to residential construction services.
- **Retail Trade** - 129 jobs (6%)

This reinforces the strength of agriculture in the Shire, as well as key sectors that service and support the population, such as Health, Education, Construction, that should remain a key focus for Council.

The graph below examines the proportion of industry jobs in Towong against the Hume Region, which highlights areas of strength for the Shire.

Towong has a significant comparative advantage in **Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing**, which supports 35% of local jobs compared to 9% across the Hume Region. Supporting this industry will, therefore, maximise economic and employment outcomes for the Shire.

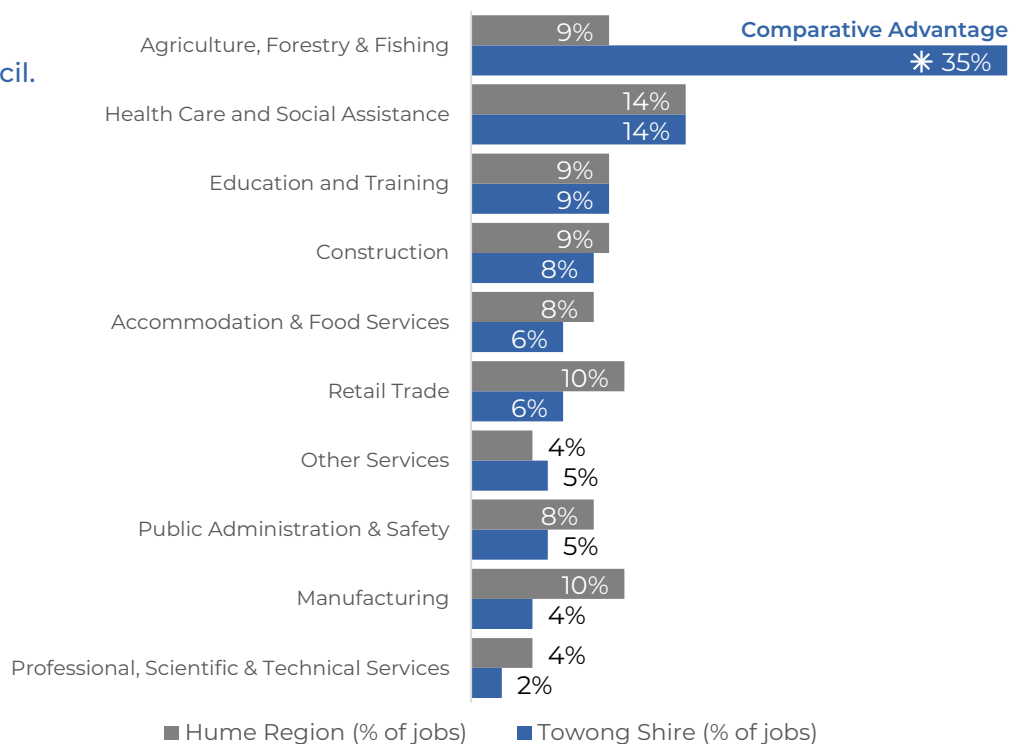
However, other industries where Towong has a lower proportion of jobs can indicate potential areas of growth and future areas of focus. This includes key population and visitor services such as Retail, as well as Accommodation and Food Services, which is stronger in the Hume Region due to the size of the population and tourism industry.

Therefore, achieving resident and visitor attraction in Towong will present the opportunity to grow the employment base in these sectors.

Manufacturing is also relatively small in Towong (4% of jobs compared to 10% across the Hume Region) yet has enormous potential to grow through leveraging the strength of agricultural production in the area. **Professional Services** is relatively small given the rurality of the Shire and distance to significant urban centres, yet has opportunity to grow through the rise of remote and flexible working.

Identifying and focusing on these areas of strength and potential growth, to expand the jobs base, is critical for economic development in Towong.

Industries of Employment (2020)





BUSINESS PROFILE

As of 2020 there are 920 businesses registered in Towong, almost all of which are 'non-employing' (73%) or small businesses¹¹ (26%). In contrast, only 1% of businesses employ more than 20 people, which can be attributed to the relatively low density nature of the Shire's business base.

This is attributed to the large proportion of agricultural businesses in the Shire (55% of total), most of which are small-scale family businesses or are not labour intensive.

Supporting agricultural businesses is crucial to help sustain the economy. However, consideration should also be given to attracting employing businesses in a diverse range of industries to promote business investment and create local job opportunities.

¹¹Employ less than 20 people.

VISITOR ECONOMY PROFILE

In 2019¹², Towong Shire attracted **195,000 visitors** (6% of High Country visitation) and generated direct visitor spend of **\$29.3 million** (4% of spend in the High Country). Based on this data, Towong has the smallest visitor economy in the High Country region – relative to the other LGAs – which indicates that tourism is a developing industry for the Shire.

A profile of the visitor market found that visitation is driven by domestic daytrip (61% of total) and domestic overnight (39% of total) visitors. The Shire does not attract international markets, with the industry protected from the COVID-19 related decline of international tourism. Almost half of these visitors are 'holiday/leisure' visitors (48%), followed by visiting friends and relatives (31%).

In addition, the activities undertaken by visitors reflect the Shire's strengths in nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation experiences, with over 85% of visitor activities involving sightseeing, visiting national parks, bushwalking, water activities and cycling.

The visitor economy is typically an important driver of economic output, via visitor spend. However, visitors to the Shire generate a relatively low level of visitor yield for both daytrip (\$62 per visitor, compared to an average of \$91 for the High Country) and domestic overnight markets (\$287 per visitor, compared to an average of \$473 for the High Country). This is attributed to several factors, including (note: these issues are explored in greater detail in the Towong Shire DMP):

- A lack of commercial accommodation, which reduces the proportion of high-yielding overnight visitors.
- A high proportion of overnight visitors (54%) that stay in non-commercial (i.e. free) accommodation.
- A lack of commissionable product, with the main attractions being inactivated nature-based product that does not promote visitor spend.
- A lack of supporting visitor amenity, such as food, retail, entertainment, to attract visitor spend.

Supporting a successful visitor economy is important for sustainable economic development in the Shire, as it diversifies the industry base, creates local jobs and generates direct expenditure. Council should focus on growing both the value and volume of tourism, as well as implementing strategies that helps develop Towong into a desirable visitor destination.

¹²Prior to the impacts of the 2020 bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions.



COVID-19 IMPACTS AND RECOVERY

Analysing the short-term and ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on businesses and the economy is important to identify focus areas for recovery assistance and ensure the economy returns to growth.

In terms of economic output, the economy experienced monthly decreases between April and December 2020. This ranged from a peak loss of \$2 million (-4.3%) in May 2020 to a relatively small decrease of \$0.1 million (0.2%) in December 2020¹³. However, from January 2021 monthly output returned to growth above pre-COVID levels, increasing by \$0.5 million (1.1%) in June 2021¹⁴.

In terms of employment, the Shire experienced monthly job losses between April 2020 and January 2021, with the peak impact again occurring in May 2020, which saw a decrease in 45 jobs (-2.2%). However, from February 2021 the level of monthly employment marginally increased above pre-COVID levels, with an additional 9 jobs created (0.4%) in June 2021.

The short-term impact of COVID-19 was somewhat lessened by the economy's reliance on agriculture, which is less affected by the restrictions in population movements. This has enabled the economy to grow in recent months beyond pre-COVID levels.

However, many businesses reliant on the visitor economy – including retail and hospitality – continue to be affected by ongoing travel restrictions and are likely to require recovery support. Visitor data for 2020 shows that total domestic visitation decreased by 5% (12,000 visitors), which led to a 10% decrease (\$2.2 million) in visitor spend¹⁵. While there was a slight increase in domestic daytrip visitation, which is attributed to the easing of restrictions over the 2020-21 summer season, the high-yielding overnight market significant decreased by 18% (in terms of visitation and spend).

With the expectation that restrictions will ease toward the end of 2021, Council and industry should prepare for a substantial rise in domestic tourism and identify strategies that leverages both interstate and intrastate travel.

In addition, businesses that service the visitor economy will require some form of recovery assistance to help continue trading as well as adapt to a 'COVID-normal' operating environment.

¹³Figures are compared against the pre-COVID-19 monthly output for March 2020.

¹⁴June 2021 reflects the latest data published to-date. However, this is expected to be revised following the ongoing lockdowns in Victoria and NSW.

¹⁵Compared to 2019 visitor data.

SUB-REGIONAL PROFILES

The following examines Towong at a sub-regional level, including a profile of key townships¹⁶ – which provide important services and amenity – as well as agricultural land use, which is the primary industry driver for the Shire.

This approach helps identify variations across the municipality with regards to economic strengths, barriers to growth and potential economic opportunities. This will ensure Council actions for economic development is tailored to meet the specific needs and requirements of communities and industry.

The information included in this section is based on a combination of desktop research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry and community representatives.

¹⁶Townships were included based on the provision of residential-zoned land (exc. rural living or farming zone)





TALLANGATTA

SUB-REGION PROFILE



Overview

Tallangatta township is the key population centre in this region. It was originally located in the Murray River Valley but moved in the 1950s when the Hume Weir was built, and flooding was imminent. The town was transferred eight kilometres to the west, where it now currently lies on the banks of Lake Hume.

Tallangatta is the second most populated township in the Shire – with just over 1,000 residents – and has a relatively large commercial centre (73 businesses).

The township has basic water and sewerage infrastructure to support both residential and commercial developments. However, there is limited existing supply of residential and employment land.

There is also a high level of amenity in the town – in terms of retail, food and community facilities – which helps support residents and visitors. Additionally, there is also good access to quality services such as education, health and aged care, which are key drivers of population attraction.

Tallangatta	
Population (2020)*	1,082
Proximity to Albury-Wodonga	35 min
Commercial Properties	73
Planning	
Residential Land Supply**	✗
Employment Land Supply**	✗
Infrastructure	
Development Infrastructure	✓
Reticulated Sewerage	✓
Amenity	
Supermarket/General Store	✓
Petrol Station	✓
Food Services	✓
Community Facilities	✓
Services	
Education	✓
Health	✓
Aged Care	✓

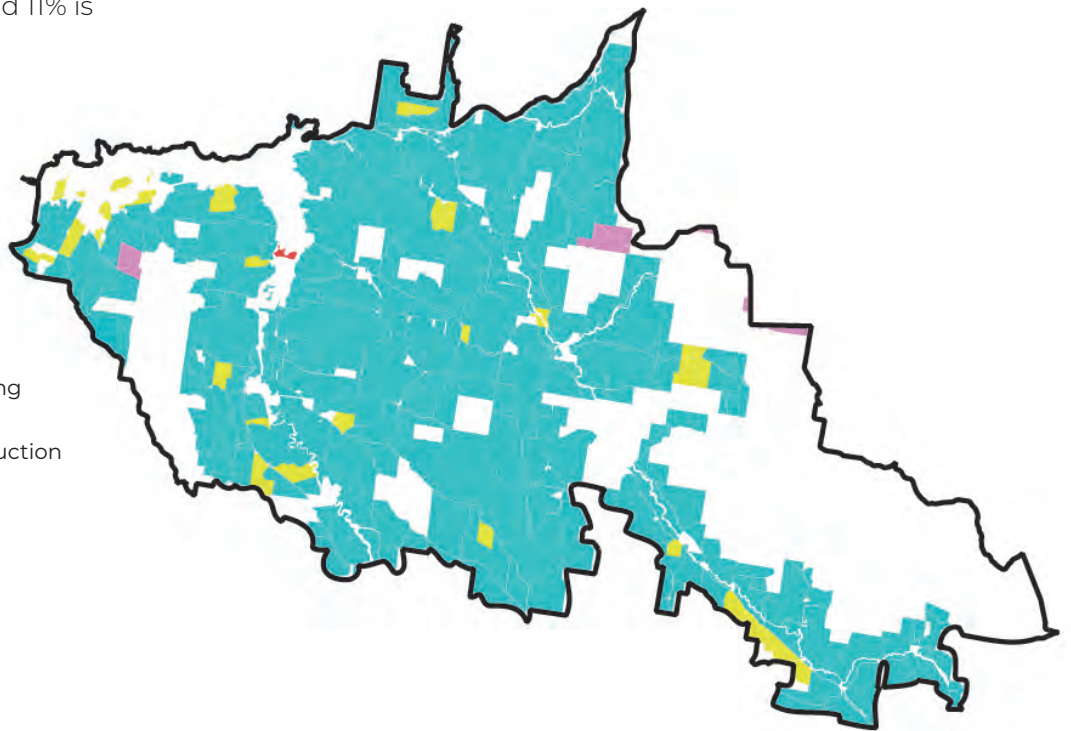
Note: *The 2020 population applies VIF growth rates to the 2016 Census data
 ** Includes TZ and MUZ land which can be used for residential or employment uses

Agricultural Land Use

Most of the land within the Tallangatta sub-region is agricultural land (58%), of which 85% is for livestock grazing, such as cattle farming and 11% is timber production.

LAND USE TYPE

- Native Vegetation
22 ha (0.1%)
- Livestock Grazing
40,699 ha (85%)
- Mixed Farming and Grazing
2,104 ha (4%)
- Commercial Timber Production
5,167 ha (11%)
- Sub-Region Boundary



Strengths

Proximity to Albury-Wodonga

Tallangatta township is a 35 minute drive to Albury-Wodonga, making it an ideal destination for commuters that work in the regional city, whilst also providing access to the large visitor base.

Regional Service Centre

The provision of key services (health, education, community facilities) and high-level of amenity (retail, food) helps establish the town as a key service centre for surrounding residents, as well as for visitors.

Assets and Recreation

With Lake Hume frontage and key recreation product including the High Country Rail Trail, the sub-region offers quality outdoor leisure activities for residents and visitors.

Development Infrastructure

With Tallangatta serviced by reticulated water and sewerage, there is growth potential for both residential and business development.

Challenges

Land Supply

There is a lack of suitably zoned residential and employment land (based on existing supply) to facilitate significant growth in population or industry.

Industry Support

There is a low level of business networking, collaboration and industry engagement, which can be attributed to the lack of industry representation or peak industry body.

Town Centre Vacancies

The town centre has unutilised retail spaces and a lack of diversity to meet the needs of residents or visitors.

Workforce Supply

There is a lack of local skilled workers to meet demand for existing businesses, which limits business growth. This is exacerbated by limited opportunities for education or training pathways in the area.

Lake Hume Access

Despite lake frontage, there is limited access to Lake Hume which constrains utilisation of this key natural asset.



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Tallangatta town centre activation and enhanced role as a regional service centre.

Attract population-driven businesses (retail, personal services, service-industrial).

Commuter destination and hub for remote workers.

Support growth in the visitor economy.

Downstream processing of agricultural output.



UPPER MURRAY SUB-REGION PROFILE

Overview

The Upper Murray sub-region, which encompasses the eastern half of the Shire, includes the key townships of Corryong, Towong, Walwa and Cudgewa. The area stretches to the southern NSW border, encompassing border towns within the Snowy Valleys municipality, including Khancoban and Tooma. Although the EDS focuses on the Towong portion of the Upper Murray, the shared boundary with NSW provides opportunities for cross-border collaboration for mutual benefit.

This area is the furthest from Melbourne and other Regional Centres in Victoria and, as such, is a relatively self-contained economy. Corryong serves as the regional service centre for the Upper Murray, including the border towns in southern NSW. As such, it provides key services and amenity to residents, workers and visitors across the sub-region, which are supported by the relatively large business base (over 100 commercial properties). In particular, the town services and houses employees for the Snowy Hydro Scheme (Khancoban power station), which is a critical project that contributes to local economic activity and employment across the sub-region.

Corryong also supports visitation to the sub-region, as it is home to the only visitor information centre in the Shire and also supports significant events such as the annual Man from Snowy River Bush Festival. In contrast, the other key townships within the Towong portion of the Upper Murray (Walwa, Towong and Cudgewa) are more rural and generally support surrounding rural industry and farming.

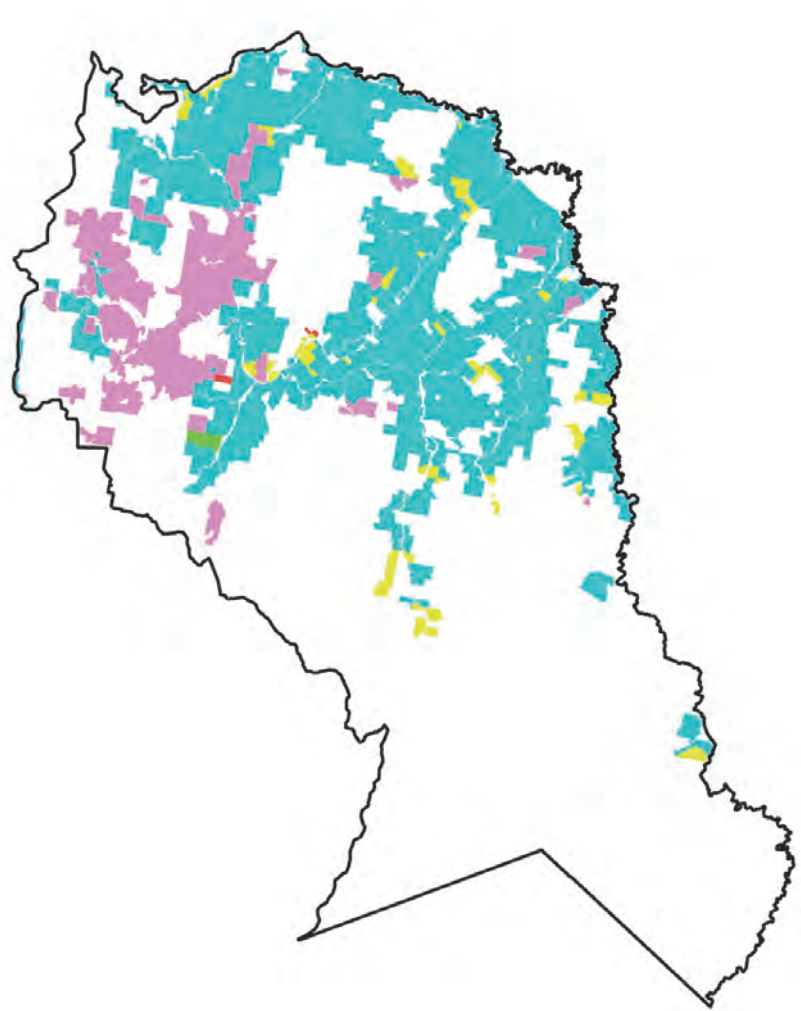
	Corryong	Walwa	Towong	Cudgewa
Population (2020)*	1,348	177	132	261
Proximity to Albury-Wodonga	1 hr 30 min	1 hr 30 min	1 hr 30 min	1 hr 30 min
Commercial Properties	112	13	5	4
Planning				
Residential Land Supply**	✗	✓	✓	✗
Employment Land Supply**	✗	✓	✓	✗
Infrastructure				
Development Infrastructure	✓	✓	✗	✓
Reticulated Sewerage	✓	✓	✗	✗
Amenity				
Supermarket/General Store	✓	✓	✗	✗
Petrol Station	✓	✓	✗	✗
Food Services	✓	✓	✗	✗
Community Facilities	✓	✓	✗	✓
Services				
Education	✓	✓	✗	✗
Health	✓	✓	✗	✗
Aged Care	✓	✗	✗	✗

Note: * The 2020 population applies VIF growth rates to the 2016 Census data
 ** Includes TZ and MUZ land which can be used for residential or employment uses

Agricultural Land Use

Around one-third of land in the Upper Murray is used for agricultural purposes, including livestock grazing (78% of agricultural land) and timber production (16%).

This is mostly confined to the northern parts of the sub-region, bordering with NSW and Tallangatta.



LAND USE TYPE

- Native Vegetation
151 ha (0.2%)
- Livestock Grazing
79,894 ha (78%)
- Mixed Farming and Grazing
5,435 ha (6%)
- Livestock - Special Purpose
420 ha (0.4%)
- Commercial Timber Production
15,465 ha (16%)
- Sub-Region Boundary



Strengths

Corryong Regional Service Centre

Corryong support residents, workers and visitors to the Upper Murray, as well as smaller NSW border towns, with access to key services and amenity. This includes basic water and sewerage infrastructure to support residential development.

Industry Support

The Upper Murray supports industry and local businesses through well-represented organisations, such as Upper Murray Inc.

Country University Campus (Corryong)

Corryong has a newly developed satellite site for the Ovens Murray Regional University Campus, which is a remote learning facility to promote education and training pathways.

Corryong Airport

This is a Council owned asset that could be better utilised to improve accessibility to the region and support residents, industry and visitors.

Tourism Assets and Experiences

The Upper Murray has a well-developed visitor economy, driven by its connections to The Man from Snowy River (which supports cultural product and events) as well as nature-based attractions (e.g. Murray River, Pine Mountain, trail infrastructure).

Challenges

Land Supply in Corryong

There is limited housing stock in Corryong and supply of residential land to support population growth. In addition, more employment land (industrial and commercial) is needed to support business growth.

Lack of Service in Smaller Townships

Although Corryong is a key service centre for the region, the smaller townships (Towong, Walwa and Cudgewa) offer limited amenity, infrastructure and services to support residents or visitors. As such, most economic and employment activity is driven by Corryong.

Remoteness

The remoteness of the Upper Murray is a key barrier to economic development, with all townships approx. 1.5 hours' drive from Albury-Wodonga. This impacts liveability outcomes, as access to large-scale urban centres (and provision of quality services, retail and entertainment) is limited.

Youth Retention

The retention of youth has been a key challenge for the Upper Murray, particularly due to a combination of remoteness, training pathways as well as a lack of diverse recreation product. This impacts on population growth and reduces workforce supply to support industry growth.

Transport Infrastructure

Poor road (and public) transport, both to and within the Upper Murray, contributes to the remoteness of the area and constrains access to key regional/urban centres.



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Corryong town centre activation and enhanced role as a regional service centre (servicing towns across the Victorian and NSW border).

Value-add opportunities for agriculture (e.g. agri-business branding and downstream processing).

Corryong Airport activation and commercialisation.

Agricultural training and education pathways.

Corryong as a visitor hub and events destination.



MITTA VALLEY SUB-REGION PROFILE

Overview

The Mitta Valley covers the region between Lake Hume and the Dartmouth Dam, connected by the Mitta Mitta River. It includes the key townships of Mitta Mitta, Dartmouth and Eskdale.

Eskdale and Mitta Mitta were developed in the mining era during the 1800s. However after the mining industry declined, cattle farming expanded in the region, leading to agriculture being the primary form of industry in the Mitta Valley.

Dartmouth was set up in the 1970s to house and facilitate the construction of the Dartmouth Dam, which is the largest dam in Victoria and used for irrigation as well as recreation, such as fishing and boating.

The key townships play specific economic roles within the sub-region as follows:

- Mitta Mitta is the key tourist destination, with visitors attracted to its destination pub (Mitta Pub) and nature-based assets along the Mitta Mitta River.
- Eskdale, which has the largest population in the sub-region, operates as the community and service hub for residents.
- Dartmouth has the Dartmouth Dam as a key attractor for water-based recreation (for residents and visitors). However, with a small population and limited amenity it is often viewed as a secondary destination in the valley.

	Mitta Mitta	Eskdale	Dartmouth
Population (2020)*	171	242	104
Proximity to Albury-Wodonga	1 hr 5 min	1 hr	1 hr 15 min
Commercial Properties	6	9	6
Planning			
Residential Land Supply**	✓	✗	✓
Employment Land Supply**	✓	✗	✓
Infrastructure			
Development Infrastructure	✗	✓	✓
Reticulated Sewerage	✗	✗	✓
Amenity			
Supermarket/General Store	✓	✓	✗
Petrol Station	✓	✓	✗
Food Services	✓	✓	✓
Community Facilities	✓	✓	✗
Services			
Education	✓	✓	✗
Health	✗	✗	✗
Aged Care	✗	✗	✗

Note:






* The 2020 population applies VIF growth rates to the 2016 Census data

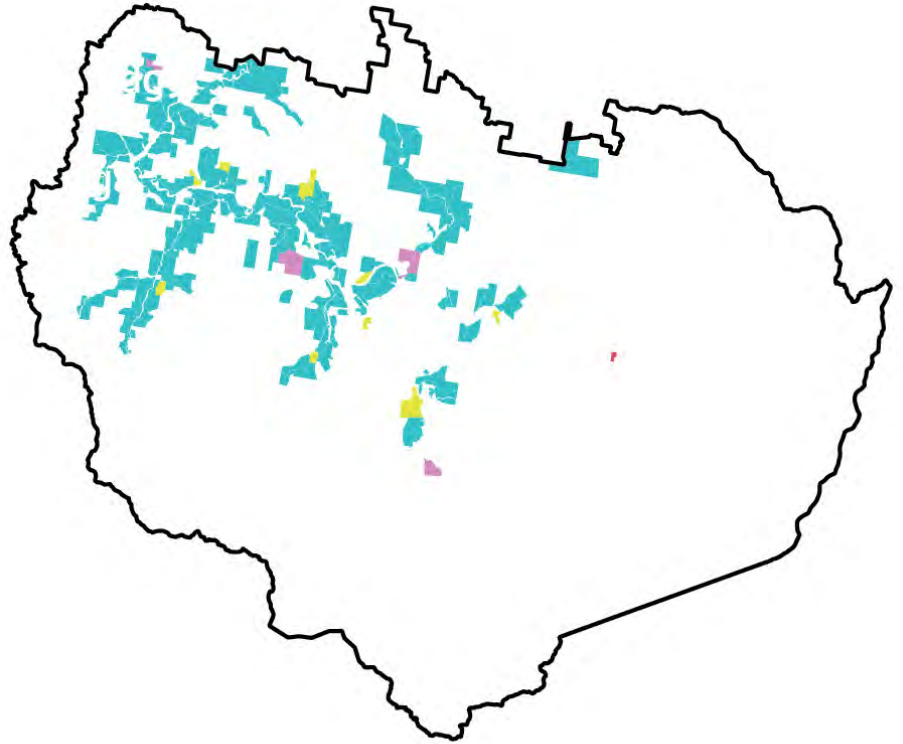
** Includes TZ and MUZ land which can be used for residential or employment uses

Agricultural Land Use

The Mitta Valley has the lowest proportion of agricultural land in the Shire (9%), with almost all of this land used for livestock grazing – specifically cattle and dairy farming.

LAND USE TYPE

-  Native Vegetation
18 ha (0.1%)
-  Livestock Grazing
16,013 ha (93%)
-  Mixed Farming and Grazing
661 ha (4%)
-  Commercial Timber Production
560 ha (3%)
-  Sub-Region Boundary





Strengths

Water-Based Assets

The Mitta Valley comprises significant water-based assets – including Mitta Mitta River and Dartmouth Dam – that provide quality recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

Industry Support

The local industry is well-supported by industry bodies, including Mitta Valley Inc and local Community Recovery Committees. This promotes business collaboration and advocacy efforts to support industry growth.

Agribusiness Branding

The Mitta Valley has a well-recognised branding for its beef production – Mitta Valley Beef – which provides benefits for producers (including increasing market appeal and realising new market opportunities).

Mitta Mitta's Role as a Visitor Destination

Mitta Mitta is a key tourism asset for the sub-region, with natural attractions and visitor amenity, that could be leveraged to support visitor growth.



Challenges

Small Population Base

The small population base has implications for economic growth, as it constrains commercial activity and limits job opportunities in the region.

Lack of Development Infrastructure

The lack of reticulated water and sewerage in Mitta Mitta – and lack of reticulated water in Eskdale – is a key barrier to residential development and population attraction.

Remoteness

With key townships at least a one hour drive from Albury-Wodonga (the nearest urban centre), Mitta Valley is relatively remote. This impacts access to key services and amenity, which are critical for population and visitor attraction.

Access to Key Services

There is a lack of key social services in the region, particularly education, health and aged care, with residents forced to travel to Tallangatta for access. This has significant implications for liveability outcomes in the Mitta Valley.

Land Supply in Eskdale

Although Eskdale is the key population centre for the Mitta Valley, there is a lack of suitably zoned residential and employment land, which impacts population growth and business investment.



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Downstream processing of agricultural output.

Mitta Mitta activation as a 'visitor-ready' destination.

Enhance Eskdale's role as a community and service hub.

Activation of Dartmouth Dam and township.

Rural industry jobs growth.

A photograph of a steel truss bridge spanning a body of water. The bridge's structure is composed of dark grey steel beams forming a series of triangles. The water below is calm with some ripples. In the background, there are rolling hills with sparse vegetation under a cloudy sky. A white, rounded rectangular text box is superimposed on the left side of the bridge structure.

PENINSULA
SUB-REGION PROFILE



Overview

The Peninsula sub-region, which is surrounded by Lake Hume and the Murray River, includes the townships of Bellbridge, Bethanga, Talgarno and Granya.

It is accessible to Albury-Wodonga via the Bethanga Bridge that crosses Lake Hume, with the sub-region known for its rural lifestyle and nature-based attractions.

Most of the sub-region lacks key services, amenity and infrastructure to support population and business growth, or attract visitors.

Although given its proximity to Albury-Wodonga, there is potential to shape the role of key townships – particularly Bellbridge and Bethanga – to promote economic development.





	Bellbridge	Bethanga	Granya	Talgarno
Population (2020)*	370	199	99	219
Proximity to Albury-Wodonga	30 min	30 min	40 min	35 min
Commercial Properties	1	4	1	1
Planning				
Residential Land Supply**	✗	✓	✓	✗
Employment Land Supply**	✗	✓	✗	✗
Infrastructure				
Development Infrastructure	✓	✗	✗	✗
Reticulated Sewerage	✓	✗	✗	✗
Amenity				
Supermarket/General Store	✗	✗	✗	✗
Petrol Station	✗	✗	✗	✗
Food Services	✗	✓	✓	✗
Community Facilities	✗	✓	✗	✓
Services				
Education	✓	✗	✗	✓
Health	✗	✗	✗	✗
Aged Care	✗	✗	✗	✗

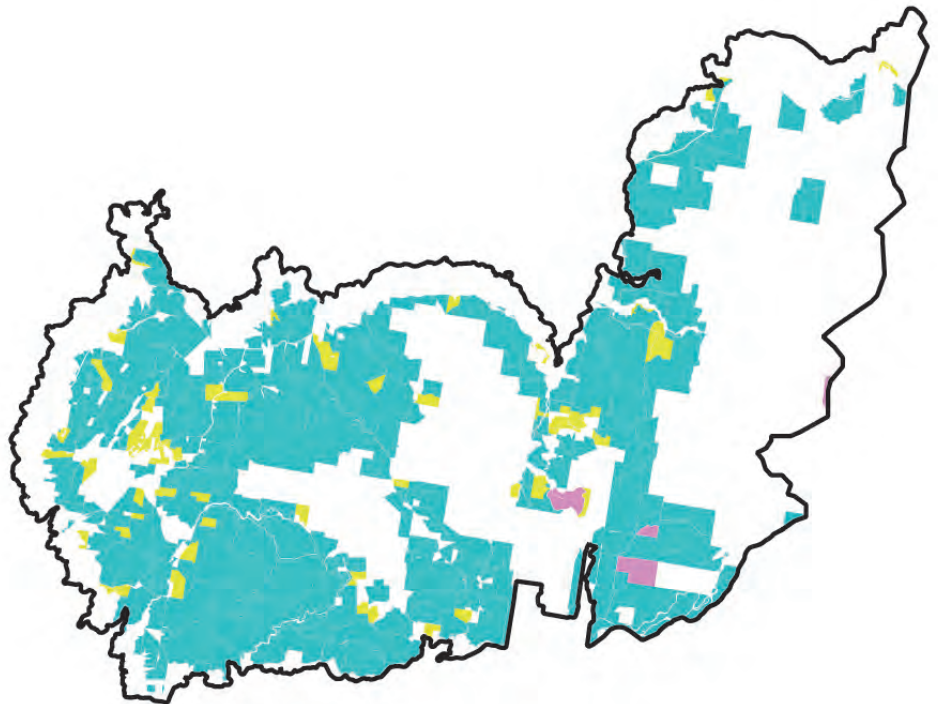
Note: * The 2020 population applies VIF growth rates to the 2016 Census data
 ** Includes TZ and MUZ land which can be used for residential or employment uses

Agricultural Land Use

There is significant coverage of agricultural land across the sub-region, which comprises 45% of all land. This is predominantly livestock grazing, such as cattle farming.

LAND USE TYPE

-  Livestock Grazing
31,626 ha (92%)
-  Mixed Farming and Grazing
2,343 ha (7%)
-  Commercial Timber Production
378 ha (1%)
-  Sub-Region Boundary





Strengths

Proximity to Albury-Wodonga

Bellbridge and Bethanga are around a 30 minute drive to Albury-Wodonga, providing residents with access to services and the potential for residents to commute to the regional city for employment. This also provides key townships with access to the Albury-Wodonga visitor base, allowing them to support and attract visitors.

Lake Hume Access

Bellbridge provides the best access to Lake Hume in the Shire, in an area that has the most reliable water supply. This promotes the asset and increases lake utilisation for water-based recreation, which supports resident liveability and visitor attraction.

Development Infrastructure (Bellbridge)

Bellbridge is serviced by reticulated water and sewerage, providing opportunity for residential, tourist and business development.

Trail Infrastructure

The Great River Road passes through the Peninsula townships, which is one of the Shire's premier touring assets and a key driver for tourism.

Industry Support

The community and industry is supported by the Berringa Peninsula Community Network, which includes representatives from the Talgarno, Bellbridge, Bethanga and Granya communities. This committee supports economic and social activities across the Peninsula and is in the process of developing a local Chamber of Commerce.



Challenges

Small Population Base

With a small population base, combined with low rates of growth, there is limited commercial activity, business investment and local job opportunities for residents.

Lack of Town Centre

There is no significant town centre in Peninsula, which limits the level of amenity for residents and visitors. This is a key constraint for population growth and visitor attraction (as well as jobs growth).

Lack of Development Infrastructure

There is a lack of development infrastructure (water and sewerage) in Bethanga, Talgarno and Granya, which is a constraint to residential development and population growth.

Land Supply

Most townships (excluding Bethanga) have limited supply of zoned residential and employment land, which limits the potential of the region to undertake any significant population growth or business investment.

Access to Key Services

Residents do not have access to quality health and aged care within the region (and limited access to education). This impacts liveability outcomes and is a key barrier to resident attraction.

Transport Infrastructure

The road infrastructure across the region is poor, which affects connectivity to/from Albury-Wodonga for both residents (seeking access to services) and visitors.



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Commercialisation and activation of Bellbridge.

Bellbridge's role as a tourist destination and commuter town (inc. hub for remote workers).

Bethanga's role as a commuter town and hub for remote workers.

Residential development in Bethanga.

Lake Hume activation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

VISION

“ Towong Shire will strengthen its economy through population attraction, a high-value and innovative rural industry and tourism industry growth. ”

The vision for economic development in Towong is informed by Council's vision and mission for the community, as articulated in the Council Plan (2017-21):



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1.

Increase the rate of **population growth** and **retention**.

2.

Support **skilled workforce growth** to service industry and residents.

3.

Promote Towong Shire as a **destination of choice** for residents and visitors.

4.

Improve **liveability outcomes** for residents.

5.

Support the development of a more **efficient** and **productive agricultural sector**.

6.

Advocate for **investment in strategic infrastructure** to meet community and industry needs.

7.

Develop a more **diverse business base**, inc. rural industry, population service industries and tourism industry.

8.

Support **visitor economy growth** through development of high-quality tourism product, infrastructure and experiences.

9.

Support local businesses to stimulate investment, growth and promote resilience.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THEMES

The economic development framework includes four key themes with defined outcomes, which support the strategic direction for economic development in the Shire. This is used to identify projects and opportunities to achieve economic growth.

These themes and outcomes are summarised below.

The following pages detail the strategic context for each theme, the potential transformative projects (which are determined by alignment to the economic development objectives), as well as other project opportunities to be considered by Council, to help achieve the identified outcomes.

Council's role in delivery and implementation of the proposed projects can range from lead, support, to advocate (with the key tasks and responsibilities to be detailed in the Action Plan).



Theme 1. Population Driven Economy

Promote economic development through population attraction and retention, facilitating growth in population-based services and industries.

- 1.1 Increase in population growth and retention rates
- 1.2 Diversify the industry mix and expand the jobs base



Theme 2. A Thriving and Sustainable Rural Industry

Leverage rural industries of competitive advantage, including agriculture, forestry and energy production, to generate economic growth.

- 2.1 Increase agricultural value and output
- 2.2 Increase jobs in rural industry
- 2.3 Infrastructure investment to support rural industry growth



Theme 3. Visitor Economy Growth

Grow the visitor economy by increasing the number of visitors to the Shire, extending the length of stay and increasing visitor spend.

- 3.1 Accommodation
- 3.2 Food, Beverage and Farmgate
- 3.3 Nature and Water
- 3.4 Ride
- 3.5 Infrastructure, Amenity and Activation
- 3.6 Branding, Marketing and Awareness
- 3.7 Industry Development and Collaboration



Theme 4. Business Development and Support

Provide ongoing business support to create a thriving business community and promote long-term business and workforce growth.

- 4.1 Adopt best-practice approaches to economic development
- 4.2 Create a connected and capable business base
- 4.3 Build business resilience



THEME 1 POPULATION DRIVEN ECONOMY

Promote economic development through population attraction and retention, facilitating growth in population-based services and industries.

Towong Shire has the smallest population base in the Hume Region, with 6,102 residents, and is also forecast to experience the lowest rate of growth (+121 residents or 0.2% p.a.) over the next 15 years.

Population growth is critical to economic development as it:

- Promotes business growth and investment in a more diverse mix of industries that support residents, ranging from retail, entertainment and personal services to construction and service-industrial businesses.
- Improves the quality of social and community services, including health, education and aged care.
- Supports increases in local spend, which facilitates businesses growth and activation of town centres.
- Increases workforce supply and local job opportunities.
- Facilitates investment in strategic infrastructure.

Achieving economic development through population attraction (and subsequent growth of population-driven industries) is particularly important for Towong Shire as it will help increase the level of economic activity whilst also contributing to industry diversification – leading to more sustainable economic growth.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- ↗ **Population growth above historic and current projected rates.**
- ↗ **Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to residential development.**
- ↗ **Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits for commercial and industrial properties.**
- ↗ **Increases in the number of local businesses.**
- ↗ **Increases in the number of local jobs.**
- ↗ **Increase in the proportion of residents attaining tertiary education qualifications.**
- ↗ **Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial properties in town centres.**

OUTCOME 1.1

INCREASE IN POPULATION GROWTH AND RETENTION

Population growth and retention is a significant issue for Council. Given the size of the Shire and low population density – with residents dispersed across four sub-regions – there are challenges in providing consistent and high-quality services to enhance liveability and attract residents.

In particular, this growth should be targeted towards younger cohorts and families, to help grow the labour force and stimulate local spend, which will provide for a more sustainable community and economy.

Given the recent economic trends and migratory shifts towards Regional Victoria, it is important key townships have the capacity to accommodate residential growth. While at the same time, the provision of accessible and quality services (i.e. education, training, healthcare, etc.) and key infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, energy, etc.) is critical to support resident attraction and incentivise relocation to the Shire.

In addition, the key assets across the Shire – including nature-based attractions – need to be enhanced and activated in order to provide quality recreation product that strengthens the Shire's appeal to existing and prospective residents.

Therefore, Council should focus on activities and investments that support population growth and retention across the Shire.

Transformative Project: Housing and Settlement Strategy

Prepare an overarching Housing and Settlement Strategy for Towong Shire to support population growth across the municipality (particularly in the key service centres of Tallangatta and Corryong).

This Strategy will ensure there is adequate land supply and housing in residential areas in key townships, which will help to drive residential development and attract residents.

This project will influence future planning for Towong to ensure the needs of current and future residents are met, focusing on:

- Current capacity and availability of townships to accommodate residential growth.
- Maintain the unique character and identity of townships.
- Identify the future housing needs and land requirements to support growth.
- Ensure that future growth is supported by relevant infrastructure and services.

Transformative Project: Masterplanning and Activation Strategies

Water-Based Masterplans

Prepare masterplans to activate and enhance utilisation of the significant water-based assets in Towong. These assets are vital to the unique identity of the Shire, promotes liveability outcomes for residents and attracts visitors. The following masterplans were identified as priorities:

- Lake Hume Masterplan
- Dartmouth Masterplan (including the Dam, township and Lake Banimboola)
- Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct Masterplan

These strategies will identify infrastructure requirements, improve accessibility and promote recreation at these key locations.

Township Masterplans

In addition, the masterplanning and activation of strategic destinations was identified as a priority to help commercialise, attract businesses and enhance resident and visitor amenity. This includes the following key projects:

- Bellbridge Village Masterplan
- Mitta Mitta Activation Plan

These projects are also included in the Towong Shire DMP and listed under Theme 3 of this document.



Transformative Project: Domestic Wastewater Management Plan and Integrated Water Management Plan

A key barrier to residential development is the availability of basic development infrastructure in key townships, including reticulated water and reticulated sewerage (which is provided by North East Water). The provision of this infrastructure will help support residential development and future population growth.

The preparation of an up-to-date Domestic Wastewater Management Plan and Integrated Water Management Plan will outline the water and infrastructure needs for the Shire, determine cost requirements and identify potential funding sources.

The key recommendations from these Plans will be considered by North East Water and other key stakeholders with the aim to develop the necessary infrastructure to facilitate residential growth.

Transformative Project: Township Enhancement Program

Identify opportunities to enhance and activate the town centres of community and service hubs in Towong. This will help support population attraction by improving amenity for residents (and visitors), focusing on:

- Streetscaping improvements and general beautification activities.
- Public art installations.
- Open spaces and plantings.
- Pedestrianising key precincts.

This program should consider the key townships in each sub-region, including Bellbridge, Corryong, Mitta Mitta, Eskdale and Tallangatta.

These projects are also included in the Towong Shire DMP and listed under Theme 3 of this document.

Transformative Project: Equine Trails Enhancement

Work with DELWP to undertake an assessment of existing parks to identify opportunities for new and enhanced bush riding horse trails.

Review existing trails (e.g. HCRT) to ensure they are equine friendly where appropriate, and ensure promotion of these trails.

Transformative Project: Tallangatta Showgrounds Precinct Activation Strategy

Tallangatta Showgrounds includes camping ground and open space to the west of the town centre and adjacent to Lake Hume. Prepare a strategy that will identify infrastructure and amenity upgrades required to promote activation of the site, improve amenity and increase utilisation of the precinct. This should consider the needs of the equine industry through engagement with the sector.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Undertake a Service Provision Audit to identify gaps in population-driven services (e.g. health, education, community facilities, service industries) and opportunities for improvements, including business/industry attraction.
- Investigate the opportunity to establish a remote higher education facility in Tallangatta that leverages the proximity to tertiary institutions in Albury-Wodonga and facilitates remote learning.
- Deliver and implement the Digital Infrastructure Strategy (in progress), to ensure residents have sufficient mobile and internet connectivity.
- Deliver and implement the Recreation Strategy (in progress), to improve the recreation options for residents (and visitors) to promote liveability outcomes.
- Investigate potential to develop recycling/resource recovery facilities at the Tallangatta and Corryong landfills to improve the sustainable use of waste, provide more efficient services and accommodate for residential growth.
- Prepare a transport infrastructure audit that identifies improvements (and funding) required for road transport, public transport and shared pathways, to ensure communities are connected and have access to safe and sustainable transport options. *Note: several transport projects are also included in the Towong Shire DMP and listed under Theme 3 of this document.*

OUTCOME 1.2

DIVERSIFY THE INDUSTRY MIX AND EXPAND THE JOBS BASE

The Towong Shire economy is currently constrained through a lack of industry diversity and reliance on agriculture, which comprises 55% of the business base. This has resulted in a lack of local employment opportunities and low workforce growth – as the agricultural sector is typically low-employing.

Achieving industry diversification and jobs growth is both an outcome of population growth and can support future resident attraction. More specifically, population growth will create business opportunities for population-driven industries to support residents, including retail, personal services, construction and service-industrial businesses.

Business investment in these industries is an effective way to enhance resident amenity, support liveability outcomes and increase future population growth rates. Another indirect outcome of business growth will be an increase in visitor amenity/services to ensure that the Shire is 'visitor ready' to support tourism. This will have flow-on economic benefits including increases in consumer spend at local businesses and creation of local employment opportunities, which will also attract more workers to the Shire.

As the business and jobs base becomes more diversified – and the economy is less reliant on agriculture – the Towong economy will become more sustainable and resilient, which is key to achieving long-term growth.

Council should, therefore, prioritise business growth and investment in population-driven industries to support residents, diversify industry and achieve key economic and employment outcomes.

This should include opportunities for key townships across the Shire to expand its business base to meet the needs of residents.

Transformative Project: Employment Land Strategy

Sufficient industrial and commercial land supply is needed in the Shire to support industry growth and business investment, which is needed to better service residents and growing the employment base.

The Shire's service centres, particularly in Tallangatta and Corryong have limited industrial and commercial land. Therefore, the preparation of an Employment Land Strategy will help ensure Towong has a sufficient supply of land to facilitate economic growth, diversify the industry base and create employment opportunities.

This Strategy will identify barriers and opportunities to provide sufficient employment land to meet the needs of existing and attract new businesses in strategic locations. This could include:

- Identifying current capacity and projecting future demand.
- Classifying the role of employment land in strategic areas.
- Recommending future supply requirements and provision of additional land (and supporting infrastructure).
- Considering alternative uses for unused land.

Transformative Project: Industry Attraction Strategy

Develop an Industry Attraction Strategy which identifies relevant population-driven industries (e.g. retail, personal services, service-industrial) to help meet the needs of current and future residents, workers and visitors. This should include business attraction and activation activities, which promotes the Shire's advantages and incentivises for business relocation.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Implement structure planning already underway in key townships (Tallangatta/Corryong/Bellbridge), to promote urban renewal and accommodate for housing and employment growth.
- Prepare a Skilled Workforce Attraction Strategy – in collaboration with industry – to identify and address labour shortages as well as programs to upskill the labour force to meet industry needs (and increase local employment).
- Undertake a retail audit to identify gaps in retail provision in key population centres and opportunities to support existing/attract new retail businesses to service residents (and visitors). This could include training to help the industry adapt to shifts in the retail industry (e.g. increases in online retailing).
- Investigate the potential to develop co-working facilities and supporting infrastructure in commuter towns (e.g. Tallangatta/Bellbridge) to benefit from the increased prevalence of remote and flexible working. This could help attract employees from professional and finance industries, small businesses looking to relocate, as well as start-ups.





THEME 2



A THRIVING AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL INDUSTRY

Leverage rural industries of competitive advantage, including agriculture, forestry and energy production, to generate economic growth.

The Towong economy is driven by the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (Agriculture) industry, which generates over one-third of total output (\$214 million or 38%), one-third of total employment (697 jobs or 35%) and over two-thirds of regional exports (\$115 million or 69%). This industry also contributes over half of the Shire's business base (55% or 507 businesses) in the Shire.

Agriculture is dominated by traditional cattle and dairy farming (contributing \$177 million in output and 629 jobs), which is typically land intensive and has a low employment density. While the secondary driver of agriculture is forestry and logging, which generates \$19 million in output. This impacts land use within the Shire, with 83% of all agricultural land used for Livestock Grazing and 11% for Commercial Timber Production.

Agriculture provides significant flow-on benefits to the economy, particularly through downstream processing of raw materials produced in the Shire. In terms of contribution to annual output, this benefits the Manufacturing sector, specifically the Meat Product Manufacturing (\$24 million) and Sawmill Product Manufacturing (\$6 million) sub-sectors.

Therefore, Agriculture is a key competitive advantage for the Shire and Council should focus on leveraging the strength of this industry to achieve economic and employment growth.

This should consider the specific issues relevant to Towong as well as the key macro trends and challenges facing the industry, including:

- Adopting sustainable practices in response to climate change and extreme weather events.
- Adapting production to meet the contemporary needs of consumers.
- Ensuring efficient and effective supply chains to meet domestic and international market opportunities.
- Identifying value-add opportunities to strengthen Agriculture and supporting businesses.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES



Growth in the agricultural sector (inc. output volume and value).



Increases in agricultural-related employment and business counts.



Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to agriculture and forestry.



Increase the receipt of infrastructure funding from the public and private sector.

OUTCOME 2.1

INCREASE AGRICULTURAL VALUE AND OUTPUT

To maintain the competitiveness of Agriculture in Towong, which is critical to long-term industry growth, it is important that the volume and value of production increases. This can be achieved through investigating the following issues relating to Agriculture and realising industry opportunities:

- Improve supply chain efficiencies.
- Expanding export market opportunities, including domestic and global markets, and aligning produce according to market demand and consumer preferences.
- Harnessing innovative techniques and utilising new technologies to improve production efficacy and meet demand for raw materials.
- Identifying business diversification practices, including agritourism initiatives, food processing, etc.

To support agricultural output and grow its value, the industry also needs to adopt future-proofing measures to protect against the increasing threat of climate change and extreme weather events (which creates uncertainty for farmers). Therefore, businesses and Council should identify and advocate for sustainable land-use practices to ensure agriculture remains productive and contributes to economic development across the Shire.

This includes investment in new 'green' initiatives that promotes environmentally sustainable practices, which is critical to protect agricultural land, maintain output and support efficient industry operations.

Transformative Project: Upper Murray Agribusiness Branding

Investigate opportunities, in collaboration with industry, to establish an agribusiness brand for the Upper Murray. This would leverage the highly productive land, the volume of agricultural output and existing branding for the Upper Murray (which is already a well-established promotional tool for the sub-region).

This could provide substantial benefits to businesses in the region, including:

- Consolidate promotional activities.
- Enhance the market appeal of output.
- Increase the reach of output to broader domestic and international markets.

Transformative Project: Agriculture Strategic Plan (in progress)

Finalise and deliver the recommendations outlined in the Agriculture Strategic Plan to strengthen the sector and ensure it remains a key driver of economic and employment growth for Towong, focusing on:

- Human capital.
- Enhancing production and adding value to output.
- Ensuring food security and sustainability.
- Meeting the changing demands of consumers.
- Identifying global export opportunities.



OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Explore the potential to diversify agricultural income opportunities (e.g. agritourism, renewable energy investment, small scale solar/wind farms, etc.).
- Develop an Agricultural Investment Prospectus to attract new agricultural businesses and promote business investment, which could increase industry output and create employment opportunities.
- Review and adopt optimal land use practices to safeguard against climate change and the threat of bushfires, to ensure agricultural land remains productive and output is maintained.
- Investigate opportunities to leverage Corryong Airport to support rural industry, including supply chain efficiencies, improving storage and distribution and expanding the export market potential.
- Prepare an investment strategy to support downstream value-adding of agricultural production, focusing on food processing (for beef and dairy production) and timber manufacturing (for forestry production).
- Investigate circular economy opportunities for rural industry to increase efficiencies in production, including the following existing activities identified in Regional Victoria:
 - The Advisory Stream for Process Innovation and Resource Exchange (ASPIRE) – an online marketplace for businesses to exchange their waste as a resource.
 - Business Development Program – Council and industry build capacity businesses to identify and implement circular economy activities.

OUTCOME 2.2

INCREASE JOBS IN RURAL INDUSTRY

Although Agriculture is the largest employing industry in the Shire, there are issues with workforce growth and attracting skilled employees.

The primary reason for this is the nature of the industry – particularly cattle farming – which is traditionally low-employing. As such, over three-quarters of agricultural businesses in Towong are ‘non-employing’. Other reasons for a lack of job growth (based on discussions with stakeholders) include:

- Lack of effective succession planning for new businesses and young farmers to take over existing agricultural land, particularly in circumstances where the farms are unused/ dormant due to absentee landowners, retiring farmers, etc.
- Limited education and training pathways into agriculture (which is also highly variable across the Shire depending on location). This impacts the rate of younger cohorts – particularly school leavers – entering the agricultural workforce.
- Lack of appropriate accommodation or housing for potential employees.
- Tightly held agricultural land, making land acquisition difficult for new businesses to enter the market.
- The prevalence of small-scale, family owned and operated farms, which typically do not outsource employment.

Despite these challenges, the agricultural sector in Towong has the potential to support jobs growth through strategic and targeted interventions (with the assistance of Council and industry). This will help grow local agricultural businesses and generate positive economic outcomes for the Shire.

Transformative Project: Country University Campus (Corryong)

Promote and support the Country University Campus to increase enrolments and facilitate training and employment pathways to meet the industry needs of agriculture. This could include a long-term vision to utilise this campus as a regional hub for agricultural education and training – in collaboration with industry and employment providers.

This will help agricultural businesses that have issues recruiting skilled labour and will support employment growth in this industry.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Promote succession planning to attract and retain young farmers in the Shire.
- Undertake a targeted employment attraction strategy for the agricultural sector, focusing on the specific needs of businesses.



OUTCOME 2.3

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT RURAL INDUSTRY GROWTH

Consultation with industry and government stakeholders identified the need for strategic investment in infrastructure to support the development of rural industry. More specifically, this includes infrastructure that will help overcome key challenges for the agricultural sector and generate positive economic and employment growth.

Council and industry should identify and advocate for infrastructure projects that supports business investment, improves the operation of agricultural businesses and increases the value of output. In doing so, this is likely to generate additional income opportunities for the industry, which will drive business growth and create local job opportunities in the Shire.

Transformative Project: Abattoir / Protein Recovery Plant (Mitta Valley)

The consultation found that the beef produced in the Mitta Valley is exported outside the sub-region for processing due to a lack of infrastructure. Given the strength of the cattle farming, in combination with the Mitta Valley Beef branding, Council, in collaboration with the agricultural community, should explore the feasible options to build an abattoir (inc. mobile or permanent facility) and/or a protein recovery plant in the Mitta Valley.

This could provide significant value to the beef producers – by opening up export opportunities – and generate increases in industry output and employment in the sub-region.

Transformative Project: Energy Resilience and Reliability Project (Upper Murray)

Support the implementation of the Energy Resilience and Reliability Project – in collaboration with Upper Murray Inc. – to provide reliable and efficient local energy production in the Upper Murray.

The Upper Murray has an unreliable power supply, with power outages common in the region, particularly during periods of adverse weather. This is a significant problem for rural industry (and communities), which affects business operations and leads to a decline in agricultural output and business turnover.

The first two phases of this project involve the installation of energy nodes (solar system, batteries and generators) to improve the reliability of energy supply, with a future third phase (outside this Project) to establish micro-grids in Corryong and other towns.

Ensuring a reliable and effective supply of energy will help business growth and investment for rural industry, as well as improve amenity for Upper Murray communities.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Deliver and implement the Digital Infrastructure Strategy, to ensure agricultural businesses have sufficient mobile and internet connectivity to improve operations and output.
- Prioritise strategic infrastructure requirements and advocate for funding to support rural industry growth, such as energy production, transport infrastructure.





THEME 3



VISITOR ECONOMY GROWTH

Grow the visitor economy by increasing the number of visitors to the Shire, extending the length of stay and increasing visitor spend.

Supporting growth in the visitor economy, through increases in visitation and spend, will help achieve positive economic outcomes for the Shire. Although tourism in the Shire is a developing industry (and provides a small contribution to the High Country visitor economy), there are substantial opportunities to establish Towong as a successful visitor destination, particularly through:

- Leveraging the region's natural and water-based assets, such as national parks, Lake Hume, Mitta Mitta River, Murray River, Dartmouth Dam.
- Providing supporting product and infrastructure to enhance visitor amenity and generate yield (e.g. quality accommodation, food and beverage, retail, etc.).
- Establishing 'must-do' experiences and events, including 'hero' activities that are of regional significance, to incentivise visitation to the region.

Growing the tourism industry is critical for economic development, as it stimulates business investment, promotes commercial activity and supports new local jobs. In addition, it will allow the Shire's economy to become less reliant on agriculture, which will promote economic diversification and sustainability.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES



Double visitation to Towong Shire from 195,000 to 400,000 by 2026.



Grow daytrip yield per visitor from \$62 to \$91 by 2026, in line with Tourism North East's visitor profile.



Grow overnight yield per visitor by \$100 per trip, from \$287 per night to \$387.

Note: The information included in Theme 3 aligns with the recommendations of the DMP. Further information on the outcomes, transformative projects and other project opportunities can be found in the DMP document.

The following outcomes align with the DMP themes.

OUTCOME 3.1 ACCOMMODATION

Delivery of quality, contemporary and diverse accommodation stock to attract target markets and increase overnight stays and visitor yield.

Transformative Project: Small Scale Accommodation Interventions

Identify potential locations that provide a strategic opportunity for investment considering vantage points, secluded wilderness locations but reasonable proximity to nearest towns.

Promote and undertake an information session for land owners and businesses wishing to consider on farm or visitor eco accommodation.

Provide information relating to planning regulations and processes, case studies, costs and potential demand using data from TNE (Accommodation market research).

Consider sites that can be incorporated in the Lake Hume Activation Plan.

Transformative Project: Cudgewa Valley Wilderness Retreat

There is opportunity to develop an iconic wilderness retreat in the Cudgewa Valley, located in the picturesque valley between Mount Mittamatite and Burrowa-Pine National Park.

Transformative Project: Holiday Park Reinvestment Program

Reinvestment in holiday parks across strategic locations, including Tallangatta, Mitta Mitta, Walwa, Colac Colac and Dartmouth, is needed to elevate the parks to the quality standards expected by the contemporary visitor market.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Tallangatta Eco-cabins
- Jervis Creek Eco-cabins
- Upper Murray Wilderness Fishing Lodge
- Murray River Glamping
- Lake Hume Lakeside Resort
- Corryong Hotel Motel Revitalisation

OUTCOME 3.2 FOOD, BEVERAGE AND FARMGATE

Investment in motivational and contemporary food and drink experiences to meet visitor expectations and leverage the region's high quality agricultural produce.

Transformative Project: Corryong Distillery

Delivery of a high quality distillery in Corryong would provide a destination food experience that leverages the natural aspect and attracts touring visitors. This may be colocated with the Corryong golf course.

Transformative Project: Bellbridge Boathouse

The delivery of a high quality bistro restaurant on the banks of Lake Hume provides an opportunity for lakeside activation and delivery of a destination food experience.

Transformative Project: Old Tallangatta Butter Factory Revitalisation

Reinvigorate the Old Tallangatta Butter Factory with a series of short and long-term food, arts, culture and event activations.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Shipping Container Investment
- Peak-period Mobile Food Van
- Farmgate Prospectus



OUTCOME 3.3 NATURE AND WATER

Activate, harness and showcase key natural and waterway assets through investment and improved utilisation.

Transformative Project: Corryong Golf Course Redevelopment

Redevelopment of the Golf Course into a leading golf destination in Victoria through accommodation, a hub building and potential incorporation of a distillery to attract visitation.

Transformative Project: Murray River Multi-Day Canoe Trail

Delivery of a multi-day canoe trail experience will deliver a unique experience of Australia's longest river, stopping at key townships to encourage private sector activation.

Transformative Project: Lake Hume Masterplan

Prepare a masterplan to enhance and activate Lake Hume, includes investigation of infrastructure needs at key locations to improve access and activation, and private sector activation opportunities. This will take into consideration water levels, regulations, and infrastructure requirements and constraints.

Transformative Project: Visitor Experience Enhancement Plan for Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park

These parks have the opportunity to develop as hero nature-based assets for the Shire, due to the quality and amenity of their natural environments as well as the proximity to neighbouring towns, which provides opportunity to leverage yield from visitors.

Investment should prioritise trail, lookout and signage infrastructure to deliver a Summit Trail, Falls Lookout and elevated Summit Lookout. These investments will provide a photo-worthy opportunity, promoting the sharing of user-generated content and increasing brand awareness.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park Hub
- Fishing Product Development Action Plan
- Mount Mitta Mitta Summit Walking Trail
- Mount Lawson Activation
- Parks Victoria Information Upgrade
- Lake Banimboola Masterplan
- Murray River Activation Project
- Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct Masterplan
- Equine Trails Enhancement

OUTCOME 3.4

RIDE

Invest in a range of trails infrastructure and formalise existing trails to position Towong as one of High Country's hero cycling destinations.

Transformative Project: Mitta Mitta Destination Mountain Bike Park

Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park already has funding for stage 1 which will deliver 29km of trail. A further stage which will double the trails to 60km will establish Mitta Mitta as a key mountain bike destination in the High Country.

Transformative Project: High Country Rail Trail Improvement and Extension

Delivery of the High Country Rail Trail extension from Shelley to Corryong will provide an important connection between Tallangatta and Corryong, and will deliver an iconic asset for the Shire.

Transformative Project: Mt Elliot Gravity and Adventure Park

The establishment of a gravity park at Mt Elliot would complement and support the hang-gliding launch site. The site will become suitable for shuttle buses to support both hang gliders and mountain bikers.

Transformative Project: Tallangatta Gravity Mountain Bike Park

Tallangatta has opportunity to establish both a private gravity mountain bike park, targeted at downhill, slopestyle and jumps market, as well as cross-country trails may be established in the DELWP Forest adjoining the site, which would be suited to a broader market.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Support Development of Cycling Events
- Gravel and Cycle Loops
- Mountain Bike Trail Investment



OUTCOME 3.5

INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITY AND ACTIVATION

Deliver high quality visitor infrastructure, services and amenity to improve the visitor experience and perception of Towong as a tourism destination.

Transformative Project: Township Enhancement Program

Refer Theme 1.

Transformative Project: Mitta Mitta Activation Plan

Delivery of an Activation Plan that supports the growth of Mitta Mitta is essential to meeting future demand. This should include:

- Commercial precinct planning
- Business attraction
- Investment in a sewer mine solution
- Accommodation investment
- Magorra Caravan Park redevelopment

This project is also referenced in Theme 1.

Transformative Project: Bellbridge Village Masterplan

Undertake a Bellbridge Village Masterplan to commercialise and activate the township, leveraging its potential dual role as a commuter town and visitor destination.

This project should focus on the establishment of a commercial foreshore precinct, attracting business investment and providing amenity and services.

This project is also referenced in Theme 1.

Transformative Project: Tallangatta Foreshore Stage 1 Destination Playground, Cafe and Trail

Towong Shire Council has embarked on a masterplan for the Tallangatta Foreshore overlooking Lake Hume. The precinct already has a tourist park, parkland and boat launching facilities, however there is potential to activate this part of town further.

The masterplan identifies the opportunity for the following:

- Destination playground
- Café overlooking Lake Hume
- Expansion of the existing splash park
- Trail network

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Digital Infrastructure Strategy
- Seal the Lake Road
- Corryong Airport Commercialisation
- Benambra-Corryong Road Sealing Feasibility Study
- Tintalra Foreshore Masterplan
- Strategic Infrastructure Advocacy
- Tallangatta Showgrounds Precinct Activation Strategy
- Man From Snowy River Australian Music Festival
- Concept Plan and Feasibility Study for Tallangatta's Notable Town Status
- Dartmouth Masterplan

OUTCOME 3.6

BRANDING, MARKETING AND AWARENESS

Delivery of a cohesive and consistent brand through marketing, collateral and events to promote increased awareness.

Transformative Project: Content and Imagery Database

Delivery of a high quality imagery, video and content database is required to improve digital promotion and marketing activities.

Transformative Project: Branding and Digital Strategy

Build on the brand framework project currently being delivered by Tourism North East to deliver a consistent branding approach aligned to market understanding of the Shire, as well as a digital strategy to guide digital marketing.

Transformative Project: Touring Itineraries

Following the development of a high quality website(s), develop a range of interactive touring itineraries to promote exploration of the Shire and dispersal across the broader region.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Man From Snowy River Australian Music Festival
- Pick Your Own Produce Event
- Physical Collateral Review and Refresh
- Signage Strategy
- Omeo Highway Masterplan
- Upper Murray Cross-Border Tourism Plan

OUTCOME 3.7

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

Support continued development and enhancement of industry in Towong's sub regions and strengthen collaboration across industry.

Transformative Project: Business Attraction and Investment Facilitation Strategy

Develop a Business Attraction Strategy which identifies relevant tourism investment opportunities to grow visitor demand and elevate the Shire's product offering.

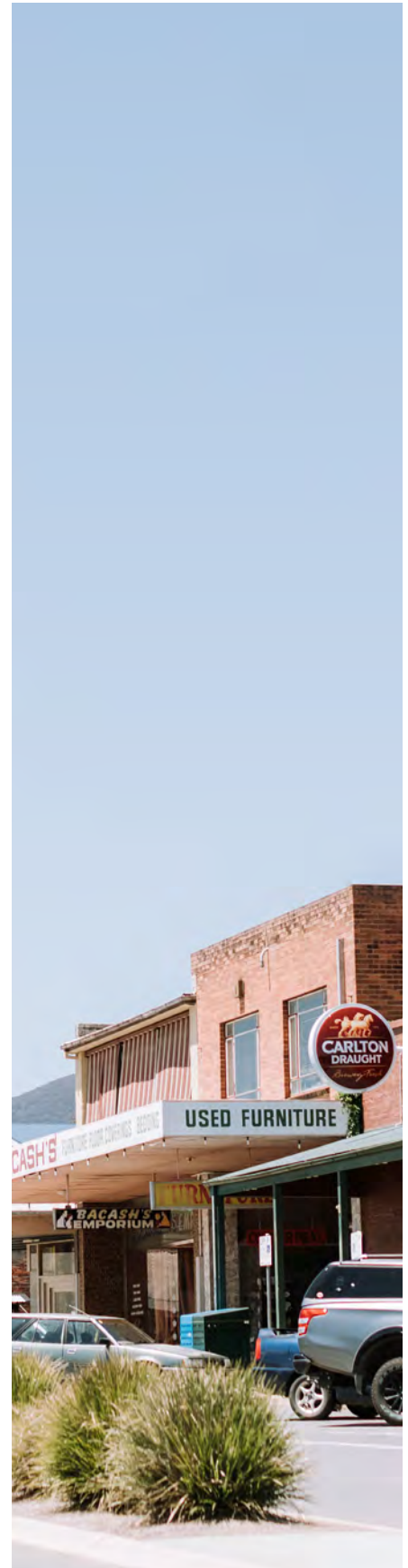
Transformative Project: Half Yearly Tourism Industry Information and Networking Forums

There is opportunity for a half-yearly information and networking event that connects businesses, provides them an update on Council activities, and allows industry to share their activities. The delivery of this forum across the three sub-regions will provide opportunities for local networking, and partnership and collaboration between private operators, as well as private operators and Council.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Encourage sign up to Tourism North East's Industry Development Program
- Better Approvals Process (in progress)
- Product and Experience Packaging
- Workforce Attraction Strategy





THEME 4



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Provide ongoing business support to create a thriving business community and promote long-term business and workforce growth.

A key function of Council's Economic Development Unit is to:





- Support businesses development
- Facilitate business growth and investment
- Promote business attraction

Each of these activities are designed to achieve economic and employment outcomes for the Shire.

Providing business support and encouraging business development is particularly important in response to the impacts of COVID-19, which have severely restricted trading and operations of key sectors. Ensuring businesses have the tools to adapt, recover and grow in the long-term is critical to sustaining a prosperous business base.

In addition, the Shire's business base, of which 98% is considered 'non-employing' or 'small', lacks the resources and capabilities to capitalise on growth opportunities. Therefore, many of these businesses require support and/or training from Council and relevant industry bodies to achieve growth outcomes.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 
Develop and maintain an up-to-date business database.
- 
Increase the business attendees at training, mentorship and networking events (run by Council).
- 
Record the number and frequency of business engagements.
- 
Reduce the average time taken to provide a planning permit decision.
- 
Return all industries to pre-COVID levels of output and employment.

OUTCOME 4.1

ADOPT BEST-PRACTICE APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Council faces significant challenges to achieving economic development outcomes, including:

- Limited resources, with 1.4 FTE dedicated to economic development (and tourism) split across two employees, as well as a full-time Agricultural Officer (1 FTE).
- The geography of the Shire, with the business base dispersed across several townships, many of which are relatively isolated from Council offices.

This creates inefficiencies in economic development practices, with resources spread thinly across a large area, making it difficult to engage with and support many businesses. This subsequently limits the activities and projects that Council can undertake or support.

An Economic Development Australia (EDA) survey conducted in 2021, which benchmarked economic development staffing resources for local councils across Australia, found that rural councils employ an average of 1.3 FTE dedicated to economic development.

Whilst Towong Shire staffing for economic development is slightly above this average, having a small number of staffing resources limits the capacity of Council to achieve desired outcomes. Therefore, expanding the level of staff solely dedicated to economic development can improve efficiencies and increase productivity in economic development.

In addition, it is important that Council clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the economic development unit, and identifies its priorities, to ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively to support business growth and investment.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

- Prepare an Economic Development Business Plan that clearly documents and defines the roles and responsibilities of the economic development team, including the resources to achieve identified objectives.
- Progress the 'Better Approvals' process undertaken by Council, in collaboration with government and industry, to streamline planning permit applications, help businesses overcome regulatory barriers and support business investment.



OUTCOME 4.2

CREATE A CONNECTED AND CAPABLE BUSINESS BASE

Building a connected and engaged business base helps facilitate industry collaboration, information sharing and creates B2B opportunities. This is vital to a thriving business community and ensures businesses have the skills and relevant support system to grow, particularly as most businesses are small and require additional resources to encourage growth.

This could be achieved through a range of training, professional development and networking activities, provided on an ongoing basis and targeted to meet the specific needs of industry. A local business survey, conducted in 2021, identified the following priority topics to enhance business capability and support business development in the Shire:

- Marketing
- Social media and online tools
- Financial management
- Accounting advice
- IT training

This should be achieved through Council and industry partnerships, to help identify the varying requirements of businesses and target those businesses in need of professional development.

Transformative Project: Business Engagement Project

Develop an engagement plan that guides Council's interactions and partnerships with Government and industry, focusing on:

- Information sharing and collaboration.
- Identify shared priorities across industry for advocacy purposes.
- Increase opportunities for funding to deliver priority projects/infrastructure.

This could be supported through the development of an up-to-date Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software that allows ongoing communication with local businesses.

Transformative Project: Towong Entrepreneurs Program

Establish a program that attracts and supports Towong entrepreneurs, including innovative SMEs and start-ups. This may include grants, business support activities and mentoring, designed to promote business growth, increase business investment and establish a more diverse employment base.

Note: This program could be complemented by the delivery of co-working facilities and supporting infrastructure, which was identified in Outcome 1.2.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide ongoing workshops, mentoring and training for businesses, in collaboration with industry, focusing on development opportunities to build capability and support business growth.
- Promote business to business connections and networking, including local businesses, industry representatives and regional organisations, to facilitate information sharing and provide business support.
- Regular communication and promotion of external private and public support programs and resources available to businesses, including through traditional communication channels, such as newsletters and contemporary communication channels, such as social media.



OUTCOME 4.3

BUILD BUSINESS RESILIENCE

Council's efforts have been increasingly focused on business and economic recovery, particularly in response to the 2020 bushfires and ongoing impacts of COVID-19. This includes a range of recovery activities designed to minimise losses in business revenue, create job opportunities and support growth back to pre-COVID levels.

Whilst the economy has begun to recover from the peak impacts of COVID-19 (in mid-2020), there will be specific industries that require targeted support, particularly those that have been impacted by the ongoing restrictions in NSW and Victoria.

In particular this includes providing support businesses that rely on tourism and population movements, including retail, hospitality and personal services, focusing on:

- Increasing revenue
- Minimising job loss
- Supporting the transition to a COVID-normal operating environment, such as social distancing, density limits, etc.

The type of support provided should not only assist with short-term recovery, but also provide businesses with the tools and capabilities to overcome future external shocks.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- Deliver the Municipal Recovery Plan and Economic Recovery Action Plan (currently in progress).
- Provide disaster recovery assistance, such as promoting access to grants, financial/business planning, to help businesses combat the effects of COVID-19 and respond to future external shocks.
- Targeted assistance to help businesses alter operations and comply with COVID-19 restrictions, including supporting online presence/e-commerce opportunities, providing outdoor dining permits, printing QR codes, etc.

ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan provides a guide for the delivery of the project opportunities identified in the Economic Development Strategy over the next five years. It includes relevant actions, responsible stakeholders, and indicative timeframes categorised as follows:

- Short term (1 year);
- Medium term (2-3 years);
- Long term (3-5+ years); and
- Ongoing.

The Action Plan also details the relevant location for each project, which can range from a sub-regional to a Shire wide opportunity.

The EDS will be implemented over time in partnership between Council (led by the Economic Development and Tourism team within the Community and Planning directorate), as well as government agencies, local business and industry representatives, private investors and the community.

The EDS will be reviewed every five years to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community and is aligned to Council priorities. In addition, implementation of the Strategy will be monitored on an ongoing basis using the key performance measures (identified in the Economic Development Framework) and monitoring tools outlined below.





Outcome 1.1: Increase in Population Growth and Retention

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
1.1.1. Housing and Settlement Strategy	Shire wide	<p>Prepare a Housing and Settlement Strategy for the Shire to support population growth across the municipality. The Strategy should influence future planning and focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current capacity and availability of townships to accommodate residential growth; • Maintaining the unique character and identity of townships; • Identify the future housing needs and land requirements to support growth; and • Ensure that future growth is supported by relevant infrastructure and services. 	<p>Lead Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Partner Land Use Planning</p>	Short term
1.1.2. Masterplanning and Activation Strategies	Shire wide	<p>Prepare masterplans to activate and enhance utilisation of significant water-based assets and strategic townships, to enhance residents and visitor amenity and attract investment. This includes the following key projects for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-based assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Hume Masterplan; • Dartmouth Masterplan (including the Dam, township and Lake Banimboola); and • Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct Masterplan. • Townships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bellbridge Village Masterplan; and • Mitta Mitta Activation Plan. 	<p>Lead Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Partner Land Use Planning</p>	Medium term
1.1.3. Domestic Wastewater Management Plan and Integrated Water Management Plan	Shire wide	<p>A Domestic Wastewater Management Plan and Integrated Water Management Plan will outline the water and infrastructure needs for the Shire, determine cost requirements and identify potential funding sources. This will focus on developing necessary infrastructure to facilitate residential growth.</p>	<p>Lead Infrastructure and Environment</p> <p>Partner Land Use Planning</p> <p>North East Water</p>	Short term
1.1.4. Township Enhancement Program	Shire wide	<p>Identify opportunities to enhance and activate the town centres of community and service hubs in Towong (including Bellbridge, Corryong, Mitta Mitta, Eskdale and Tallangatta). This will help support population attraction by focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscaping improvements and general beautification activities; • Public art installations; • Open spaces and plantings; and • Pedestrianising key precincts. 	<p>Lead Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Land Use Planning</p> <p>Partner Infrastructure and Environment</p>	Ongoing



Outcome 1.1: Increase in Population Growth and Retention (cont.)

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
1.1.5. Tallangatta Showgrounds Precinct Activation Strategy	Tallangatta	Prepare a strategy that will identify infrastructure and amenity upgrades required to promote activation of the site, improve amenity and increase utilisation of the precinct. This should consider the needs of the equine industry through engagement with the sector.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Land Use Planning Partner Infrastructure and Environment	Short term
1.1.6. Recreation Strategy (in progress)	Shire wide	Deliver and implement the Recreation Strategy, to improve the recreation options for residents (and visitors) to promote liveability outcomes.	Lead Community	Short term
1.1.7. Recycling/ Resource Recovery Facilities	Tallangatta Upper Murray	Investigate the potential (i.e. feasibility) to develop recycling/ resource recovery facilities at the Tallangatta and/or Corryong landfills to improve the sustainable use of waste and provide more efficient services. If feasible, explore opportunities for funding and development of a facility.	Lead Environment Partner Assets	Medium term
1.1.8. Remote Higher Education Facility	Tallangatta	Investigate the opportunity to establish a remote higher education facility in Tallangatta that leverages the proximity to tertiary institutions in Albury-Wodonga and facilitates remote learning.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Regional higher education institutions (i.e. Charles Sturt, La Trobe, etc.)	Short term
1.1.9. Digital Infrastructure Strategy (in progress)	Shire wide	Deliver and implement the Digital Infrastructure Strategy, to ensure residents have sufficient mobile and internet connectivity.	Lead Assets Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Short term
1.1.10. Service Provision Audit	Shire wide	Undertake a Service Provision Audit to identify gaps in population-driven services.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Short term
1.1.11. Transport Infrastructure Audit	Shire wide	Prepare a transport infrastructure audit that identifies improvements (and funding) required for road transport, public transport and shared pathways, to ensure communities are connected and have access to safe and sustainable transport options. Prioritise transport infrastructure projects and advocate for funding to support population growth and retention.	Lead Infrastructure and Environment Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Medium term



Outcome 1.2: Diversify the Industry Mix and Expand the Jobs Base

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
1.2.1. Employment Land Strategy	Shire-wide	<p>The preparation of an Employment Land Strategy will identify barriers and opportunities to provide sufficient employment land to facilitate business investment in strategic locations. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying current capacity and projecting future demand; Classifying the role of employment land in strategic areas; Recommending future supply requirements and provision of additional land (and supporting infrastructure); and Considering alternative uses for unused land. 	<p>Lead Land Use Planning</p> <p>Partner Infrastructure and Environment</p>	Short term
1.2.2. Industry Attraction Strategy	Shire-wide	Develop an Industry Attraction Strategy which identifies relevant population-driven industries to help meet the needs of current and future residents (and visitors). This should include business attraction and activation activities, promote the Shire's advantages and incentivise business relocation.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Medium term
1.2.3. Township Structure Plans (in progress)	Tallangatta Upper Murray Peninsula	Implement structure planning already underway in key townships (Tallangatta/Corryong/Bellbridge), to promote urban renewal and accommodate for housing and employment growth.	Lead Land Use Planning	Short term
1.2.4. Skilled Workforce Attraction Strategy	Shire wide	Prepare a Skilled Workforce Attraction Strategy – in collaboration with industry – to identify and address labour shortages as well as programs to upskill the labour force to meet industry needs (and increase local employment).	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Medium term
1.2.5. Retail Audit	Shire wide	Undertake a retail audit to identify gaps in retail provision in key population centres and opportunities to support existing/attract new retail businesses to service residents (and visitors).	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Short term
1.2.6. Co-working Facilities	Tallangatta Peninsula	Investigate the potential (i.e. feasibility) to develop co-working facilities and supporting infrastructure in commuter towns (e.g. Tallangatta/ Bellbridge) to benefit from the increased prevalence of remote and flexible working. This should be designed to attract employees from professional and finance industries, small businesses looking to relocate, as well as start-ups.	<p>Lead Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Partner Infrastructure and Environment</p> <p>Tallangatta CRC</p> <p>Peninsula Network</p>	Short term



KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MONITORING TOOLS

Measure	Monitor
Population growth above historic and current projected rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via ABS data 'Population Estimates by Local Government Area'. • Annually, via 'Victoria in Future' reports.
Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to residential development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via publicly accessible REMPLAN data (building approvals). • Annually, using Council databases.
Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits for commercial and industrial properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, using Council databases (and recording the investment enquiries by business type and industry).
Increases in the number of local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via ABS data '<i>Counts of Australian Businesses (by Local Government Area)</i>'.
Increases in the number of local jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via publicly accessible REMPLAN data. • Every four years, via the ABS census.
Increase in the proportion of residents attaining tertiary education qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via publicly accessible REMPLAN data. • Every four years, via the ABS census.
Decrease in vacancy rates for commercial properties in town centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, using Council's Property Rates Database.



Outcome 2.1: Increase Agriculture Value and Output

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
2.1.1. Upper Murray Agribusiness Branding	Upper Murray	Investigate opportunities, in collaboration with industry, to establish an agribusiness brand for the Upper Murray, promoting the highly productive land, the volume of agricultural output and enhancing existing branding. This should help consolidate promotional activities, enhance the market appeal, attract business investment and expand export opportunities to increase its value to the economy.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Upper Murray Inc Industry representatives (e.g. Alpine Valleys Dairy)	Medium term
2.1.2. Agriculture Strategic Plan (in progress)	Shire wide	Finalise and deliver the recommendations outlined in the Agriculture Strategic Plan to strengthen the sector and ensure it remains a key driver of economic and employment growth for Towong.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Short term and ongoing
2.1.3. Agricultural Diversification Opportunities	Shire wide	Explore the potential to diversify agricultural income opportunities through strategic investments, in collaboration with industry (e.g. agritourism, renewable energy investment, small scale solar/wind farms, etc.).	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Industry representatives Tourism North East Community groups and recovery committees	Ongoing
2.1.4. Agricultural Investment Prospectus	Shire wide	Develop an Agricultural Investment Prospectus to attract new agricultural businesses and promote business investment, which could increase industry output and create employment opportunities.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Medium term
2.1.5. Land Use Management	Shire wide	Review and adopt optimal land use practices to safeguard against climate change and the threat of bushfires, to ensure agricultural land remains productive and output is maintained.	Lead Land Use Planning Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Short term



Outcome 2.1: Increase Agriculture Value and Output (cont.)

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
2.1.6. Corryong Airport Opportunities	Upper Murray	Investigate opportunities to leverage Corryong Airport to support rural industry, including supply chain efficiencies, improving storage and distribution and expanding the export market potential.	Lead Infrastructure and Environment Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Short term
2.1.7. Downstream Value-Add Investment Strategy	Shire wide	Prepare an investment strategy to support downstream value-adding of agricultural production, focusing on food processing (for beef and dairy production) and timber manufacturing (for forestry production).	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Industry representatives	Medium term
2.1.8. Circular Economy Opportunities	Shire wide	Investigate circular economy opportunities for rural industry to increase efficiencies in production, including the following existing activities/programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Advisory Stream for Process Innovation and Resource Exchange (ASPIRE) – an online marketplace for businesses to exchange their waste as a resource; and • Business Development Program – Council and industry build capacity businesses to identify and implement circular economy activities. 	Lead Infrastructure and Environment Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Short term

Outcome 2.2: Increase Jobs in Rural Industry

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
2.2.1. Country University Campus	Upper Murray	Promote and support the Country University Campus to increase enrolments and facilitate training and employment pathways to meet the industry needs of agriculture. This could include a long-term vision to utilise this campus as a regional hub for agricultural education and training – in collaboration with industry and employment providers.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Industry representatives Upper Murray Inc	Short term
2.2.2. Succession Planning	Shire wide	Promote succession planning to attract and retain young farmers in the Shire.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Industry representatives	Ongoing



Outcome 2.2: Increase Jobs in Rural Industry (cont.)

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
2.2.3. Employment Attraction Strategy	Shire wide	Undertake a targeted employment attraction strategy for the agricultural sector, focusing on the specific needs of businesses. This will involve collaboration with industry to understand labour gaps/needs, as well as opportunities to attract rural labour to the Shire.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Industry representatives	Medium term

Outcome 2.3: Infrastructure Investment to Support Rural Industry Growth

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
2.3.1. Abattoir/Protein Recovery Facility	Mitta Valley	Explore the feasibility to build an abattoir/protein recovery plant in the Mitta Valley, leveraging the strength of the cattle farming industry. This could provide significant value to beef producers by focusing on increasing export opportunities, as well as growing agricultural output and employment in the sub-region.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Land Use Planning Partner Mitta Valley Inc	Long term
2.3.2. Energy Resilience and Reliability Project	Upper Murray	Support the implementation of the Energy Resilience and Reliability Project – in collaboration with Upper Murray Inc. – to provide reliable and efficient local energy production in the Upper Murray. This project includes the following phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 and 2: The installation of energy nodes (solar system, batteries and generators) to improve the reliability of energy supply; and Phase 3 (a future third phase outside this Project) – Establish micro-grids in Corryong and other towns in the Upper Murray. 	Lead Mitta Valley Inc Infrastructure and Environment	Medium term
2.3.3. Digital Infrastructure Strategy (in progress)	Shire-wide	<i>Refer action 1.1.9 under Outcome 1.1</i>		
2.3.4. Infrastructure Advocacy	Shire-wide	Identify and prioritise strategic infrastructure requirements to support rural industry growth (e.g. energy production, transport infrastructure, etc.) and advocate for funding from relevant government agencies/private investors.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Victorian/Federal Government	Medium term



KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MONITORING TOOLS

Measure	Monitor
Growth in the agricultural sector (inc. output volume and value)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via publicly accessible REMPLAN data. • Every four years, via the ABS census.
Increases in agricultural-related employment and business counts	Business count: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via ABS data 'Counts of Australian Businesses (by Local Government Area)'. Employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, via publicly accessible REMPLAN data. • Every four years, via the ABS census.
Increase in investment enquiries, planning and building permits relating to agriculture and forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, using Council databases.
Increase the receipt of infrastructure funding from the public and private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually, using Council databases.



The actions to support delivery of the project opportunities identified in this theme are detailed in the Towong Shire Destination Management Plan.



Outcome 4.1: Adopt Best Practice Approaches to Economic Development

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
4.1.1. Economic Development Business Plan	Shire wide	<p>Prepare an internal Economic Development Business Plan that clearly documents and defines the roles and responsibilities of the Economic Development and Tourism team. This should be reviewed on an annual basis and include (at a minimum):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core activities/programs to be undertaken; • Objectives and outcomes to be achieved; • Resources required for delivery and implementation; and • Key actions, progress measures and reporting obligations. <p>Progress of this plan should be monitored using an internal performance reporting framework.</p>	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Short term and ongoing
4.1.2. Better Approvals Process (in progress)	Shire wide	<p>Progress the 'Better Approvals' process undertaken by Council, in collaboration with government and industry, to streamline planning permit applications, help businesses overcome regulatory barriers and support business investment.</p>	Lead Land Use Planning	Short term and ongoing

Outcome 4.2: Create a Connected and Capable Business Base

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
4.2.1. Business Engagement Project	Shire wide	<p>Develop an engagement plan that guides Council's interactions and partnerships with Government and industry, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing and collaboration; • Identify shared priorities across industry for advocacy purposes; and • Increase opportunities for funding to deliver priority projects/infrastructure. <p>This could be supported through the development of an up-to-date Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software that allows ongoing communication with local businesses.</p>	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Short term and ongoing
4.2.2. Towong Entrepreneurs Program	Shire wide	<p>Establish a program that attracts and supports Towong entrepreneurs, including innovative SMEs and start-ups. This may include grants, business support activities and mentoring, designed to promote business growth, increase business investment and establish a more diverse employment base.</p>	Lead Economic Development and Tourism	Short term and ongoing
4.2.3. Business Training and Mentoring Programs	Shire wide	<p>Provide ongoing workshops, mentoring and training for businesses, in collaboration with industry, focusing on development opportunities to build capacity and support business growth.</p>	<p>Lead Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Partner Community groups and recovery committees</p> <p>Local businesses</p>	Short term and ongoing



Outcome 4.2: Create a Connected and Capable Business Base (cont.)

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
4.2.4. B2B Connections	Shire wide	Promote business to business connections and networking, including local businesses, industry representatives and regional organisations, to facilitate information sharing and provide business support.	Lead Economic Development and Tourism Partner Community groups and recovery committees Local businesses	Short term and ongoing
4.2.5. Business Communication	Shire wide	Promote traditional and contemporary communication channels to the business community and provide access to information, opportunities and support programs (private and public) that encourages business growth and development.	Lead Communications and Media	Short term and ongoing

Outcome 4.3: Build Business Resilience

Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
4.3.1. Municipal Recovery Plan and Economic Recovery Action Plan (in progress)	Shire wide	Deliver the Municipal Recovery Plan and Economic Recovery Action Plan.	Lead Relief and Recovery*	Short term
4.3.2. Disaster Recovery Assistance	Shire wide	Provide disaster recovery assistance, such as promoting access to grants, financial/business planning, to help businesses combat the effects of COVID-19 and respond to future external shocks.	Lead Relief and Recovery* Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Short term and ongoing
4.3.3. COVID-19 Business Assistance	Shire wide	Targeted assistance to help businesses alter operations and comply with COVID-19 restrictions, including providing outdoor dining permits, printing QR codes, etc.	Lead Relief and Recovery* Partner Economic Development and Tourism	Short term

*Note: *Relief and Recovery* is a temporary directorate established with funding from Bushfire Recovery Victoria in the immediate aftermath of the 2019-20 bushfires to coordinate relief and recovery services.



KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MONITORING TOOLS

Measure	Monitor
Develop and maintain an up-to-date business database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update annually, using the Australian Business Register (ABR) database or Council-operated CRM.
Increase the business attendees at training, mentorship and networking events (run by Council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, with Council recording attendees.
Increase the number and frequency of business engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, with Council tracking and recording attendees the number of businesses contacted, purpose of engagement and outcome (either manually or through a Council-operated CRM).
Reduce the average time taken to provide a planning permit decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, using data provided by 'Know Your Council' website.
Return all industries to pre-COVID levels of output and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly, via publicly accessible REMPLAN data (COVID-19 Tools).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A **CONSULTATION SCHEDULE**

Community and Industry

Industry and Community Workshops in Corryong, Tallangatta, Mitta Mitta and Bethanga

Community and Industry Survey

Community Groups and Recovery Committees

Upper Murray Inc.

Upper Murray Community Recovery Committee

Tallangatta Community Recovery Committee

Peninsula Network

Berringa Peninsula Community Network

Government Agencies

DELWP

North East Water

Goulburn Murray Water

Parks Victoria

Agriculture Victoria

Industry

Corryong Health

Alpine Valleys Dairy

**APPENDIX B GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE
(ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT)**

Key Stakeholders	Infrastructure Investment	Funding Support	Business Support	Community Support	Resources	Overview
National Organisation						
Regional Development Australia	✓	✓	✓			Regional Development Australia works to improve economic development across regional Australia, as well as attract investment and create jobs.
State Organisation						
Regional Development Victoria	✓	✓	✓	✓		Regional Development Victoria supports the economic development of rural and regional areas within Victoria. Regional Development Victoria works with regional businesses and communities and all levels of government.
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)	✓	✓				DELWP manages a number of public forest reserves that include important nature-based tourism products.
Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW)	✓	✓				GMW manages the water in Lake Hume, Lake Dartmouth and the Murray River and also owns and operates a number of infrastructure assets.
North East Water	✓	✓				North East Water provides water and sewerage services to the North-East region of Victoria. They operate a number of water treatment facilities and waste water treatment plants with operations overseen by DELWP.
Agriculture Victoria	✓	✓	✓			Agriculture Victoria supports the growth and protection of farms in rural and regional communities across Victoria.
Regional Organisations						
Ovens Murray Regional Partnership		✓	✓	✓	✓	The Ovens Murray Regional Partnership provides the local community with the opportunity to have a greater say in their ensures the region has a strong position to advocate for local communities.
Alpine Valley Dairy Inc.			✓	✓		Supports and advocates for the dairy industry and the farmers throughout North East Victoria. The Alpine Valley Dairy Inc helps to educate and collaborate those across the industry.

Key Stakeholders	Infrastructure Investment	Funding Support	Business Support	Community Support	Resources	Overview
Local Organisations						
Towong Shire Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Towong Shire Council aims to provide business and economic support individuals in the Shire.
Upper Murray Inc			✓	✓		Upper Murray Inc works to promote and market the Upper Murray region, as outlined in the Upper Murray 2030 Plan. Additionally, the organisation is responsible for developing the assets in the region to increase visitation, marketing and producing collateral.
Mitta Valley Inc.			✓	✓		Mitta Valley Inc is a membership based organisation that offers access to a range of support services to individuals, organisation and businesses in the Mitta Valley. The organisation offers workshops, grant funding support, networking and branding and digital marketing to enhance economic and community development.
Berringa Peninsula Community Network			✓	✓		The Committee identifies and progresses activities, projects, and services to support the social, economic, environmental, natural, and built environmental goals of the Peninsula communities.
Tallangatta Rail Trail Advisory Group (TAG)	✓				✓	TAG is one of three community groups working with Parklands Albury-Wodonga to develop the High Country Rail Trail. TAG is responsible for the development and management of the Sandy Creek to Old Tallangatta section of the Rail Trail.
Tallangatta Neighbourhood House				✓		Tallangatta Neighbourhood House is a community group working to support and strengthen the local community social and recreational activities.
Upper Murray Community Recovery Committee			✓	✓	✓	The Upper Murray CRC is responsible for advocating for the needs of the community, assisting with proposals to attract funding and resources and contributing to the evaluation process to improve future disaster recovery efforts. The Upper Murray CRC is made up of smaller community CRCs, including Berringama/Lucyvale, Biggara, Corryong, Cudgewa, Nariel Valley, Thowgla, Tintalra, Walwa and Towong. The Upper Murray CRC represents and advocates for the smaller CRCs as well as representing the Upper Murray as a whole.

TOWONG SHIRE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

2022-26



Urban Enterprise
For Towong Shire Council

April 2022



The Towong Shire Destination Management Plan was prepared by Urban Enterprise in collaboration with Towong Shire Council.

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ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
DMP	Destination Management Plan
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
IVS	International Visitor Survey
LGA	Local Government Area
PA	Per Annum
NVS	National Visitor Survey
TNE	Tourism North East
TRA	Tourism Research Australia

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Daytrip Visitor	Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.
International Visitor	A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia for less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.
Overnight Visitor	People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the NVS.
High Country	The High Country is a defined tourism region in Victoria's north-east, which includes seven shires – Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Towong and Wangaratta – and the three major alpine resorts of Falls Creek, Mt Buller and Mt Hotham. The region is represented by a regional tourism board (Tourism North East).



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Towong Shire has untapped potential as a High Country visitor destination. The visitor economy has opportunity to become a key economic driver that supports a prosperous local tourism industry.

The Towong Shire Destination Management Plan 2022-2026 (DMP or Plan) is a key strategic document for Towong Shire Council (Council) to guide development and growth of the visitor economy over the next five years.

Prepared in collaboration with Urban Enterprise, the Plan is designed to provide strategic direction for **growth of the visitor economy by increasing the number of visitors to the Shire, extending the length of stay and increasing visitor spend**. This includes clear objectives and an action plan for Council to help implement the Plan, focusing on the visitor economy opportunities for key destinations and assets across the municipality.

This Plan is informed by independent research and analysis, as well as consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses, Council and Government stakeholders.

TOWONG SHIRE

Towong Shire is a rural municipality located in Victoria's north-east, bordering NSW to the north and east and Albury-Wodonga to the west.

It is the largest municipality in the Hume Region (6,675 square kilometres), as well as the least populated (6,102 residents), making it one of the least densely populated areas in Victoria. This presents numerous challenges for Council, including service delivery, asset management and community and industry engagement.

The area is primarily known for agriculture, with a vast amount of productive farmland that comprises around 30% of total land in the Shire. This is the primary driver of Towong's economy and employment, as well as its community identity.

The Shire offers unique nature and water-based assets, which contribute to Towong's rural amenity and lifestyle offer for visitors. The immersive landscape of Towong Shire including its mountainous terrain and nature-based assets are a key strength that can be harnessed.

There are various visitor destinations and communities dispersed across the Shire. Key townships include Tallangatta (administrative centre) to the west and Corryong (service centre) to the east, with other significant towns including Mitta Mitta and Eskdale in the south-west, as well as Bellbridge and Bethanga in the north-west.

REGIONAL CONTEXT AND LEVERAGING THE HIGH COUNTRY BRAND

Towong is located on the border of Victoria and New South Wales, in Victoria's High Country tourism region. The High Country is a strong regional tourism brand, well-known for nature, the outdoors, snow and local produce.

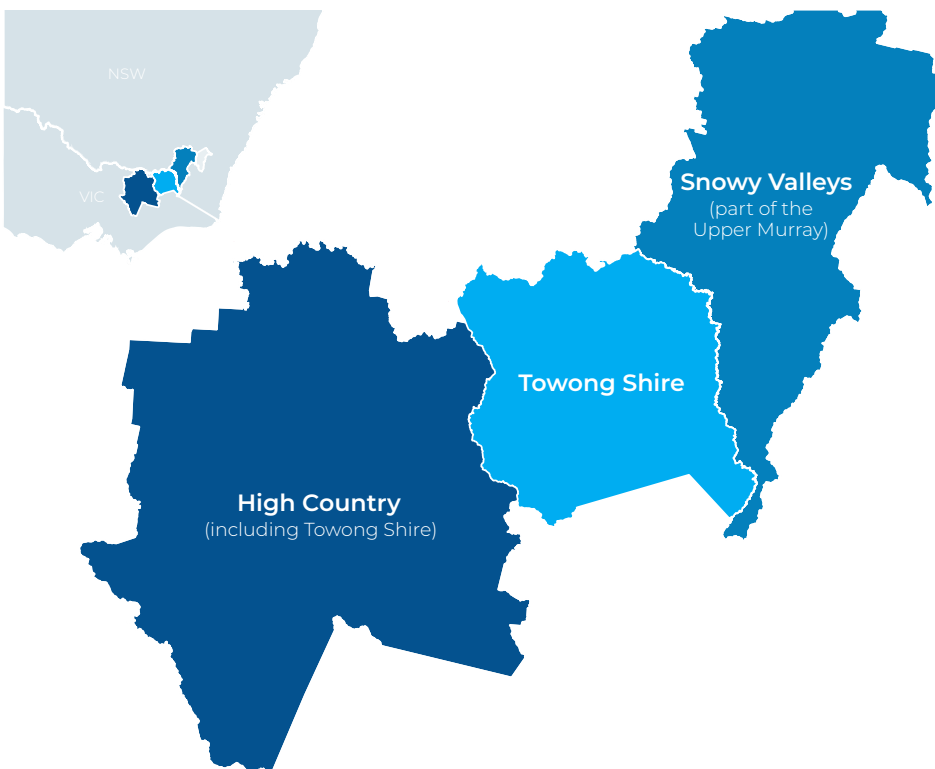
Tourism North East is the regional tourism board responsible for promoting the High Country region, which includes seven local government areas across the State's north-east alpine region. Towong Shire is a paid member of Tourism North East.

The High Country promotes a range of product pillars, including Cycle Tourism, Snow, Food and Drinks, Nature-based experiences and Arts and Cultural Heritage. Towong Shire is well-aligned to the High Country product offering, particularly in terms of the Shire's emerging potential for high quality nature-based and cycle tourism experiences.

There is opportunity to strengthen the Shire's alignment to the High Country through activation of nature-based assets, investment in cycling, and increased investment in contemporary and high quality food and drink, and arts and cultural heritage experiences.

Developing products, experiences and infrastructure that are well-aligned to the High Country brand, and meet quality expectations of the existing High Country visitor, will be key to growing awareness of Towong Shire through High Country promotion. Enhanced involvement in the regional tourism board structure will provide a range of benefits to Council and local industry can benefit through general marketing activities, targeted marketing campaigns and inclusion in touring itineraries.

In addition to leveraging Tourism North East activities, it's critical that Towong Shire leverages the existing regional visitor market travelling to the surrounding region and surrounding population base. This accounts for over 9 million regional visitors and 260,000 residents in surrounding regional cities of Albury-Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Shepparton and Wangaratta





VISITOR ECONOMY OVERVIEW

The Towong Shire's visitor economy is in its infancy, attracting 195,000 visitors annually who spend \$23.9 million. This accounts for 6% of High Country visitation and 4% of visitor spend.

Visitors predominately travel to visit friends and relatives, or for holiday purposes. The majority of holiday visitors can be considered to be habitual visitors, who tend to visit Towong Shire consistently and tend to camp or caravan, preferring to self-cater and spending minimally in the local economy.

As a border municipality, the Shire receives a large proportion of visitation from NSW (37%) as well as Victoria (54%).

PRODUCT STRENGTHS AND GAPS

Towong Shire is characterised by its rolling hills and mountains, and a feeling of immersion in nature. The Shire's natural assets and amenity, and the activities they support, are Towong's key strength.

National Parks and water-based assets have been identified as primary strengths for the Shire. Hero nature-based assets include the Alpine National Park, Burrowa-Pine National Park, Mount Granya State Park, Mt Lawson State Park and Mount Mittamatite Regional Park. Hero water-based assets include Lake Hume, Lake Dartmouth, the Mitta Mitta River and Murray River.

The Shire has secondary and emerging strengths in cycling, touring and sports and recreation. These experiences require further investment and activation to become hero experiences, however are well-aligned to the Shire and High Country's primary strength of nature-based tourism.

There are a range of product and experience gaps and opportunities, including accommodation, food, ferments and farmgate, events, and arts culture and heritage experiences. Targeted and ongoing investment is required to meet the standards of the contemporary visitor market and attract target markets.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

A number of key considerations for the Towong Shire visitor economy have emerged through the Destination Management Planning process.

These have been summarised below.



Product and Experience

- Hero product to drive awareness
- Investment in supporting tourism experiences, including accommodation and food and beverage
- Investment in cycling and in particular mountain biking
- Activating and leveraging natural assets



Markets

- Reduced access to source markets due to location
- Opportunity to grow the family market



Marketing and Branding

- Lack of clear and cohesive brands
- Leveraging the High Country brand
- Lack of cohesive governance and strong leadership
- Lack of quality and motivational digital content and information
- Enhancing business digital presence
- Need for improved signage



Infrastructure and Amenity

- Town amenity and activation
- Lack of water and sewerage to support investment
- Need for digital infrastructure improvements
- Limited land for development
- Investment in events infrastructure to improve utilisation
- Leveraging the Corryong Airport
- Improved transport infrastructure



Resourcing and Collaboration

- Fragmented tourism governance
- Constrained Council resourcing and implementation
- Leveraging Tourism North East resources and capacity
- Industry collaboration and communication
- Attracting skilled and unskilled labour force
- Investment attraction and facilitation

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

VISION



Towong Shire is the leading High Country destination to escape to and immerse in nature and the outdoors. The nature-based experiences are complemented by quality food, drink and accommodation experiences.



OBJECTIVES

Establishes hero products and experiences to drive visitation and increase awareness.

Encourages visitor dispersal across the Shire to tourism nodes.

Create critical product mass through focused investment at key visitor nodes.

Strengthen alignment to High Country brand pillars.

Support investment in contemporary visitor products and experiences.

Establish a clear and cohesive brand identity that resonates with the market.

Improve the visitor journey by creating clear touring routes and quality visitor infrastructure, supported by clear visitor information.

Support growth of a diverse and visitor-ready tourism industry.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Key performance targets have been identified for Towong Shire to track performance of the visitor economy over the life of this Plan.

1. Double visitation to Towong Shire from 195,000 to 400,000 by 2026.

2. Grow daytrip yield per visitor from \$62 to \$91 by 2026, in line with Tourism North East's visitor profile. This is a growth of approximately 47%.

3. Grow overnight yield per visitor by \$100 per trip, from \$287 per night to \$387. This is a growth of approximately 30%.



STRATEGIC INVESTMENT THEMES AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

Key themes to guide future investment have been identified, in response to strategic considerations and the Shire's objectives for tourism development.

Transformative Projects aligned to each theme have been shown below. These are projects that will deliver the greatest economic benefit for the Shire, and will support the positioning of the Shire as a leading High Country destination to immerse in and experience nature.

Additional project opportunities have been identified in Section 8 Strategic Framework.



THEME 1. ACCOMMODATION

Delivery of quality, contemporary and diverse accommodation stock to attract target markets and increase overnight stays and visitor yield.



THEME 2. FOOD, BEVERAGE AND FARMGATE

Investment in motivational and contemporary food and drink experiences to meet visitor expectations and leverage the region's high quality agricultural produce.



THEME 3. NATURE AND WATER

Activate, harness and showcase key natural and waterway assets through investment and improved utilisation.



THEME 4. RIDE

Invest in a range of trails infrastructure and formalise existing trails to position Towong as one of High Country's hero cycling destinations.

TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

- **Holiday Park Reinvestment Program**
- **Cudgewa Valley Wilderness Retreat**
- **Small Scale Accommodation Interventions**
- **Old Tallangatta Butter Factory Revitalisation**
- **Bellbridge Boathouse**
- **Corryong Distillery**
- **Visitor Experience Enhancement Plan for Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park**
- **Murray River Multi-Day Canoe Trail**
- **Corryong Golf Course Redevelopment**
- **Lake Hume Masterplan**
- **Mitta Mitta Destination Mountain Bike Park**
- **High Country Rail Trail Improvement and Extension**
- **Mt Elliot Gravity and Adventure Park**
- **Tallangatta Gravity Mountain Bike Park**



**THEME 5.
INFRASTRUCTURE,
AMENITY AND
ACTIVATION**

Deliver high quality visitor infrastructure, services and amenity to improve the visitor experience and perception of Towong as a tourism destination.



**THEME 6.
BRANDING,
MARKETING AND
AWARENESS**

Delivery of a cohesive and consistent brand through marketing, collateral and events to promote increased awareness.



**THEME 7.
INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT AND
COLLABORATION**

Support continued development and enhancement of industry in Towong's sub regions and strengthen collaboration across industry.

TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

- Township Enhancement Program
- Bellbridge Village Masterplan
- Mitta Mitta Activation Plan
- Tallangatta Foreshore Stage 1 Destination Playground, Cafe and Trail
- Branding and Digital Strategy
- Content and Imagery Database
- Touring Itineraries
- Half Yearly Tourism Industry Information and Networking Forums
- Business Attraction and Investment Facilitation Strategy



INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Towong Shire Council has untapped potential as a tourism destination, with a wealth of nature-based assets, including rivers, lakes, mountains and valleys, and picturesque towns.

Located in Victoria's north-east, the municipality comprises an area of approximately 6,600 square kilometres and about 6,000 residents.

Towong's economy is led by a rich agricultural sector, tourism and timber production and processing. Approximately two-thirds of businesses located in the Shire are in the agriculture and forestry industries. This industry was significantly impacted by the Black Summer bushfires in 2019/20.

Towong Shire Council has engaged Urban Enterprise to develop a Destination Management Plan (DMP) to guide future tourism development. This Plan has been delivered concurrently with Council's Economic Development Strategy, to ensure there is a shared vision for development of the Shire's visitor economy and broader economy.

The DMP will leverage the region's assets to boost tourism numbers and extend the length of stay. The Plan will:

- Identify key tourism themes.
- Identify tourism industry product gaps and opportunities.
- Identify and provide direction for key priority projects.
- Be informed by economic research and analysis.
- Identify current tourism trends.
- Provide strategic direction for the delivery of key event opportunities for the region.
- Provide visitor market data related to visitor length of stay, market demographics, motivators, and visitor economic impacts.
- Provide economic impact (including value add) of visitors to the Shire.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Destination Management Planning is based on the holistic consideration of a region's tourism industry, and the tourism industry's position in the regional economy. Destination Management Plans reflect the attributes of each destination, providing a blueprint for future investment in tourism including new experiences and attractions, and infrastructure requirements to support visitor growth.

The DMP for Towong Shire will follow the Guide to Best Practice in Destination Management, as developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN).

COVID-19 Impacts

Whilst COVID-19 has resulted in decreased visitation (-5%) and expenditure (-10%) within Towong Shire, tourism is in its infancy and as such the impacts have been limited.

Daytrip visitation (+2%) and expenditure (+2%) saw an increase, due to cross-border travel restrictions likely stimulating increased regional travel.

PROCESS

The following process was undertaken to inform the development of the Destination Management Plan.



Research, Discovery and Assessment

- Reviewed 20+ documents
- Research into target markets (TRA, Tourism North East)
- Site visits to key towns and attractions
- Product audits inventorying top attractions, supporting products, events and infrastructure



Engagement

- Industry and community workshops (x4)
- Industry and community survey
- Council workshops (X3)
- Consultation with state government agencies and private operators



Issues and Opportunities

- Identification of issues and opportunities based on assessment, engagement, site visits and product audits



Strategy

- Development of strategic framework, including vision, objectives and identification of priority projects



TOWONG SHIRE

Towong Shire is a rural municipality located in north-east Victoria, on the border of New South Wales.

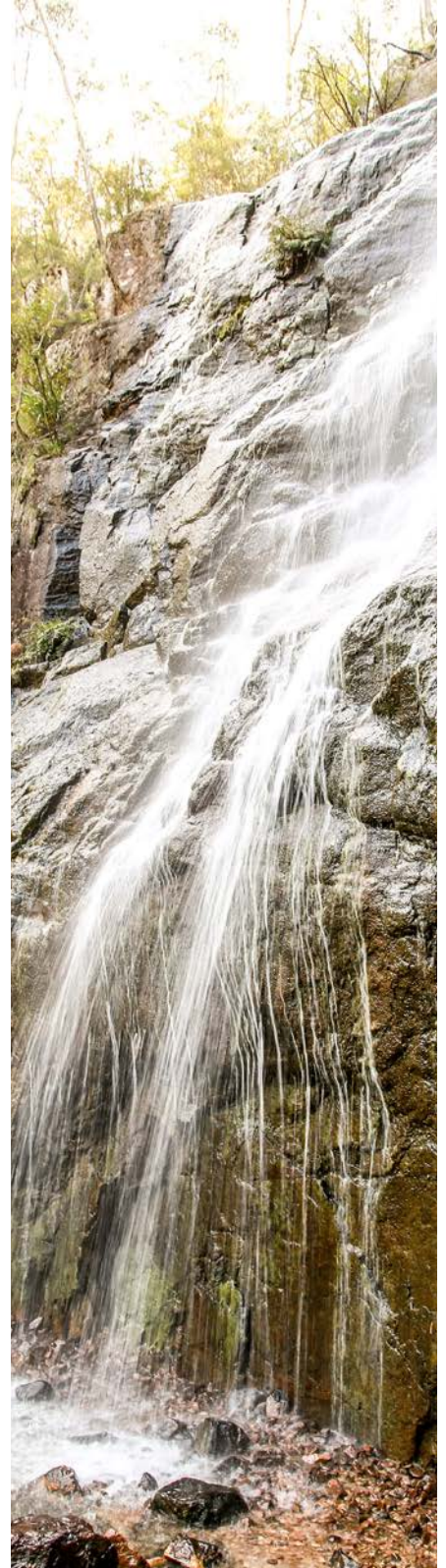
The Shire borders NSW to the north and east and Albury-Wodonga to the west. The Shire is located approximately 200 km north-east from Melbourne (at its nearest point), while the closest regional city – Albury-Wodonga – is approximately 15 km from the western-most point of the Shire.

It is the largest municipality in the Hume Region (6,675 square kilometres), as well as the least populated (6,102 residents), making it one of the least densely populated areas in Victoria.

The area is primarily known for agriculture, with a vast amount of productive farmland that comprises around 30% of total land in the Shire. This is the primary driver of Towong's economy, employment as well as its community identity.

The Shire also offers unique water-based assets, including Lake Hume, the Murray River, Mitta Mitta River, Dartmouth Dam, as well as nature-based attractions such as Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park. These products contribute to Towong's amenity and rural lifestyle offer for visitors and residents.

Towong Shire is located within Victoria's High Country, one of Victoria's leading tourism regions. The High Country is promoted by Tourism North East, the state recognised and funded regional tourism board responsible for promoting the region and driving visitor economy growth.



INFORMING THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A range of documents across all levels of Government and local industry have been reviewed to inform the strategic direction of this Destination Management Plan.

The table below provides an overview of the documents reviewed.

State Government Documents

- Victorian Government Visitor Economy Reform Plan
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy 2016
- Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy

Regional Documents

- Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2013-2023
- Ride High Country Annual Marketing Plan 2020-21
- Tourism North East, Three Year Strategy
- Hume Regional Growth Plan
- The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2010-2020

Shire-Wide Documents

- Towong Shire Economic Recovery Action Plan
- Towong Municipal Recovery Plan 2019 – 2020
- Towong Healthy Communities Plan 2018 – 2021

Local Documents

- Upper Murray 2030 Vision Plan
- Our Bellbridge Strategy
- Our Valley Our Future (Mitta Valley) 2013-2016
- 'Tallangatta Tomorrow' Masterplan
- Walwa And District (CRC) Strategic Plan

Key Strategic Planning and Policy Direction

A range of key themes emerged through the analysis of strategic documents.

State Government strategic directions include:

- Leveraging the market opportunity provided by nature-based tourism.
- Delivering high quality supply of tourism products, experiences and infrastructure that meet market expectations.
- Building visitation demand through marketing and events to build awareness.
- Industry strengthening, including building available workforce and capacity.

Tourism North East provide strategic direction at the regional level, to drive tourism growth in the region and develop Victoria's High Country into a leading visitor destination. Tourism North East aims to guide development of the visitor economy through a unified focus on investment and promotion of the region's product pillars.

Whilst Tourism North East provides direction at a regional level, there is a lack of strategic focus at a local level for the Towong visitor economy. The Shire has lacked an overarching strategic tourism plan to provide a holistic and unified approach to tourism development.

The Destination Management Plan will establish a clear direction and focus for Council investment and resourcing, whilst ensuring alignment with regional opportunities and priorities, as well as the needs of the local tourism industry.

Key local themes and directions include:

- Leveraging visitation from NSW border catchment and a growing Albury-Wodonga.
- Diversifying the agricultural sector to support tourism growth through farmgate experiences.
- Encouraging touring to leverage regional visitation and grow Towong Shire awareness.
- Improve infrastructure and amenity in townships.
- Recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 and bushfires, and building industry and community resilience for future shocks.

GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCING

The following table outlines the current tourism structures responsible for delivering tourism in relation to Towong Shire.

There are a number of local and regional tourism organisations that support the visitor economy. This has implications for the delivery of a strong and cohesive tourism industry and the need for strong communication and clear roles and responsibilities.

Council Role and Resources

Towong Shire Council has limited resources for tourism development, due to the Shire's small operating budget.

There are 3.2 FTE staff roles spread across tourism and economic development within Towong Shire Council. Of these, 1 FTE is dedicated to an Agriculture Officer, 1 FTE to a Visitor Information Centre (VIC) officer, and 1.4 FTE is dedicated to tourism and economic development.

The roles and responsibilities of the 1.4 FTE staff include:

- Grant application and funding
- Business development and engagement
- Events facilitation and in-kind support
- Visitor servicing
- Collaboration with regional tourism organisations for promotion
- Investment attraction and facilitation
- Project management

Additionally, the VIC officer is responsible for visitor services, including digital and physical visitor information services within visitor information centres.

State-Level	
	Primary tourism and events company for the State Government, involved in research, advocacy and domestic and international marketing.
Visit Victoria	Visit Victoria is a key partner in promotion and strategic planning for the tourism sector. Council should maintain a strong relationship to ensure alignment with Visit Victoria marketing initiatives.
Regional Development Victoria	Continue to work with RDV to access potential funding opportunities. This strategy will be an important reference for strategic alignment with state government.
DELWP	DELWP manages a number of public forest reserves that include important nature-based tourism products.
Parks Victoria	Parks Victoria manages a number of key state parks and reserves and a strong relationship is important for development and promotion of nature-based tourism.
Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW)	GMW manages the water in Lake Hume, Lake Dartmouth and the Murray River and also owns and operates a number of infrastructure assets.
Regional-Level	
Tourism North East (TNE)	Tourism North East is a State Government recognised and funded Regional Tourism Board. TNE collaborates with government and industry partners to undertake planning, marketing, product development, industry development, infrastructure and advocacy.
Local-Level	
Towong Shire Council	Towong Shire provides a range of tourism services including overseeing aspects of visitor information services, digital media and communication, emergency management, marketing, industry development and investment.
Upper Murray Inc	A membership based organisation that works to promote and encourage tourism in the Upper Murray region. Established through the Upper Murray 2030 Plan, the group aims to increase visitation through investment and marketing, and producing collateral.
Mitta Valley Inc.	A membership based organisation offering workshops, grant funding support, networking and branding and digital marketing to enhance economic and community development.
Peninsular Network	n.p.
Parklands Albury Wodonga	Committee of Management responsible for management of the High Country Rail Trail.
Tallangatta Rail Trail Advisory Group (TAG)	One of three community groups working with Parklands Albury-Wodonga to develop the High Country Rail Trail. TAG is responsible for the development and management of the Sandy Creek to Old Tallangatta section of the Rail Trail.
Community Recovery Committees (CRCS)	Following the impacts of the 2019/20 bushfires, 11 Community Recovery Committees were formed with assistance from Council. Each CRC focuses on supporting and facilitating the recovery process for the towns within Towong Shire.

A REGIONAL APPROACH

Leveraging the High Country Brand

Towong is located on the border of Victoria and New South Wales, in Victoria's High Country region. The High Country is a strong regional tourism brand, well-known for nature, the outdoors, snow and local produce.

Tourism North East is the regional tourism board responsible for promoting the High Country region, which includes seven local government areas across the States north east alpine region. Towong Shire is a paid member Council of Tourism North East.

Involvement in the regional tourism board structure provides a number of benefits for member councils, including marketing, industry capacity building, and funding advocacy. Further to this, local industry can benefit through general marketing activities, targeted marketing campaigns and inclusion in touring itineraries.

The High Country promotes regional tourism under the five pillars depicted to the right.

Towong Shire is well-aligned to the High Country product offering, particularly in terms of their emerging potential for high quality nature-based and cycle tourism experiences. There is opportunity to strengthen the Shire's alignment to the High Country through increased investment in contemporary and high quality food and drink and arts and cultural heritage experiences.

Developing products, experiences and infrastructure that are well-aligned to the High Country brand, and meet quality expectations of the existing High Country visitor, will be key to growing awareness of Towong Shire through High Country promotion.

Towong Shire current alignment with High Country Brand Pillars



Leveraging Existing Regional Visitors

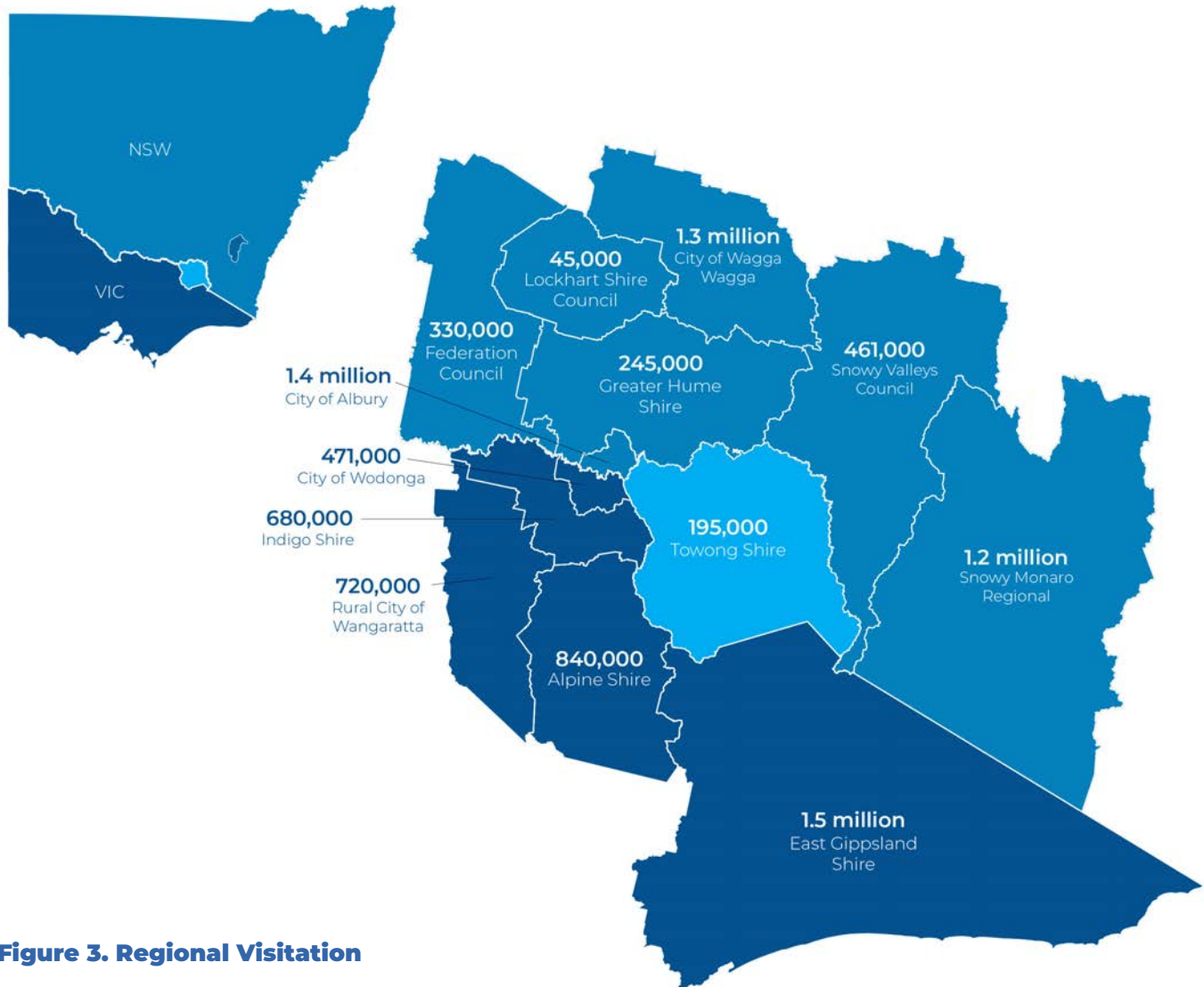


Figure 3. Regional Visitation

Key to growing the visitor economy for Towong will be to leverage the regional visitor markets that are already travelling to surrounding municipalities. This accounts for over 9 million visitors.

Competing in the metropolitan Melbourne market is challenging for Towong, as there are a range of intervening opportunities for similar product closer to Melbourne such as Murrindindi Shire, Mansfield Shire and Baw Baw Shire. These destinations have access to rivers, lakes, boating, fishing, camping and walking.

With ongoing interstate and international travel restrictions, there is major opportunity for Towong Shire to leverage its potential as a High Country destination and attract growth in domestic visitation.

As surrounding High Country destinations such as Bright, Beechworth and Mount Beauty become increasingly busy, there is opportunity for Towong to position itself as a new and undiscovered nature-based destination.

Additionally, there are approximately 260,000 residents in surrounding regional cities that provide a visitor base for the Shire. This includes Albury-Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Shepparton and Wangaratta.

Attracting residents from surrounding population centres will also be crucial to attracting visitation, and provide an important market for the Shire.

THE REGION

Understanding the geography of Towong Shire and how the visitor experience's Towong, is critical to understanding the unique opportunities and challenges for each local area.

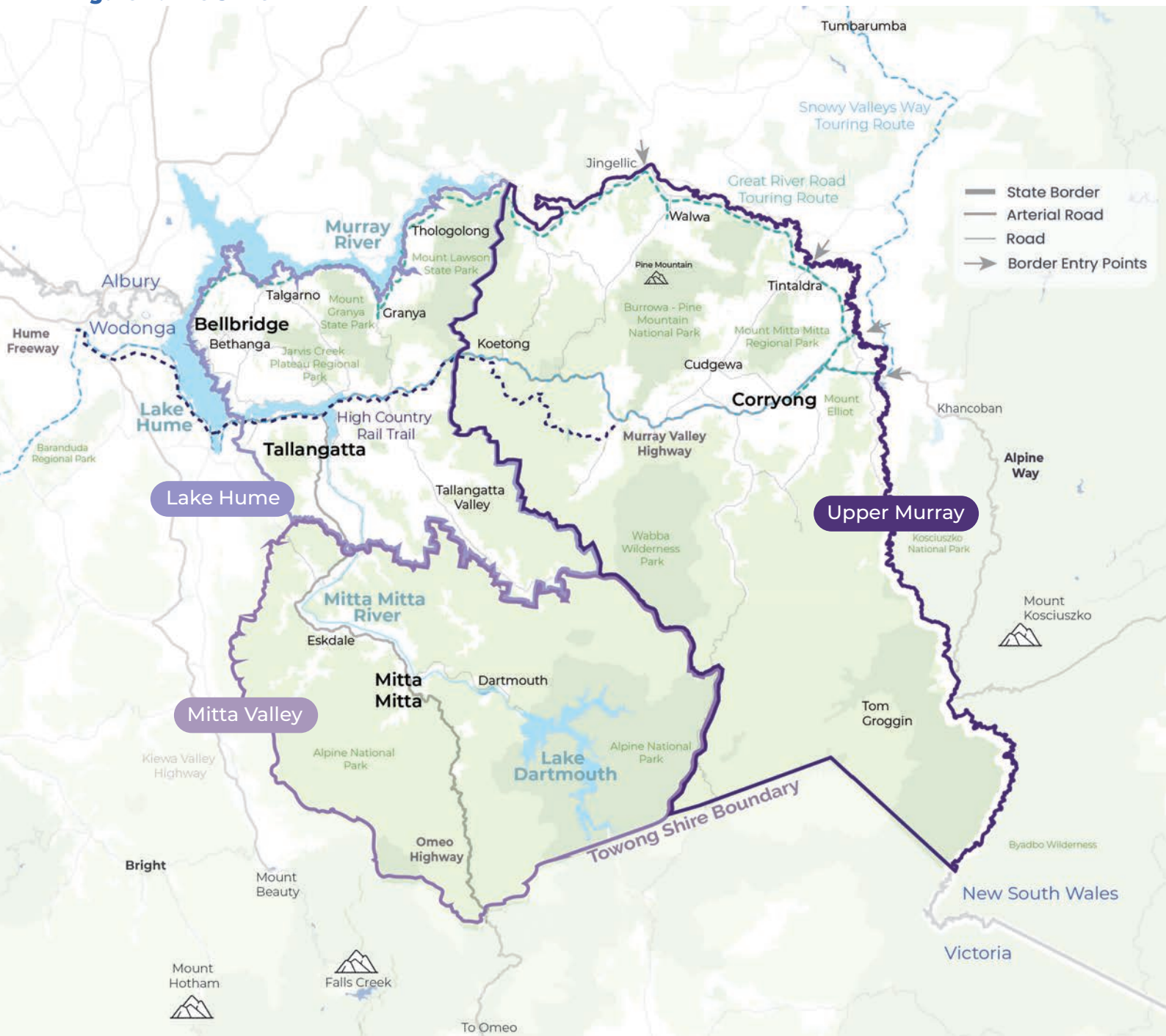
As such, three distinct sub-regions have been developed for the Shire to inform the strategic direction of the Destination Management Plan. These are aligned to existing regions (Upper Murray and Mitta Valley) and reinforce the existing visitor nodes and travel patterns (Tallangatta and Bellbridge/Bethanga, unified by Lake Hume).

The Shire is referred to via the following sub regions, including:

- Lake Hume region (Key townships of Tallangatta, Bellbridge, Bethanga and Granya).
- Mitta Valley (Key townships of Eskdale, Mitta Mitta and Dartmouth).
- Upper Murray (Key townships of Corryong, Walwa and Tintaldra).

These sub-regions, as well as key townships and assets, are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The Shire



LOCAL INSIGHTS

Significant stakeholder, industry and community engagement was undertaken to inform the development of the Destination Management Plan.

This included in-region workshops and a survey to community and industry.

Community/Industry

- Workshops in Corryong, Bethanga, Tallangatta and Mitta Mitta
- Community/Industry Survey

Community Groups/Recovery Committees

- Upper Murray Inc
- Upper Murray CRC
- Mitta Valley Inc.
- Beringama Peninsula Community Network
- Tallangatta Community Recovery Committee

Government Agencies

- DELWP
- North East Water
- Goulburn Murray Water
- Tourism North East

Industry

- Dallas Hurst (Old Tallangatta Butter Factory)
- Leigh Hollands (Mitta Mountain Bike Park and HCRT Masterplan)
- Man from Snowy River Bush Festival and Tourist Association
- Us&Us (Upper Murray Brand Strategy)

Key findings and insights from local stakeholder engagement are summarised below.

Product and Experience Considerations

- Need for cycling investment
- Need for delivery of hero products, including High Country Rail Trail, Great River Road, Mitta Mountain Bike Park, Mt Elliot, which will support private sector in complementary products
- Lack of access to local produce and farmgate, and challenge to encourage local use of local produce
- Limited attractions to grow awareness and visitation
- Need for activation of nature-based and recreation assets
- Lack of quality accommodation and food and dining

Infrastructure and Amenity Considerations

- Poor internet connectivity – need for reliable internet and improved internet speeds
- Need for township activation and amenity improvements
- Need for improved access to waterways
- Water and sewerage for key towns, particularly Mitta Mitta and Bethanga
- Lack of housing stock and reduction in affordable housing options

Soft Issues

- Need to support growth in new businesses and attract new businesses
- Poor youth engagement – lack of uptake for apprenticeship and program opportunities
- Bushfires impact building in next 12-18 months due to insurance costs
- Lack of childcare and maternal health impacts available workforce
- Lack of skilled staff – chefs, front of house
- Labour force shortages – difficulty attracting skilled and unskilled staff due to lack of available and affordable accommodation, transport etc.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL DESTINATION?



Asset

Base assets - natural assets, towns, connections [road/trail]



Product

Activation of the asset - food and beverage experiences, accommodation, walks etc.



Experience

Guided tours, itineraries, iconic/hero products, digital experience.

KEYS TO DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Successful destination management is a holistic process that ensures tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of our communities. It is achieved through strong leadership with consideration of:

- **Place** – defining the destination in the eye of the visitor and communities of interest and understanding the visitor journey to and within the region.
- **People** – cohesive governance and strong leadership, engaged industry and qualified and experienced labour force.
- **Product** – motivating products, quality infrastructure and experiences on offer that draw visitors and provide to visitor needs.

The Towong Shire Destination Management Plan has been prepared with best practice destination management planning. The following is a discussion relating to the attributes of successful destination management and how this relates to Towong Shire.

PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE

To be considered a destination, a region requires a strong foundation of products and experiences that will attract visitors.

The destination development framework has been presented below, which includes developing base assets into products, and enhancing products to become experiences. This project will focus on building products and experiences.

At present, tourism is in its infancy in Towong Shire. The Shire currently has the base assets which provide the supporting infrastructure, but requires the products that will help to activate the assets.

Experiences are how you take a product to the next level, including tours, itineraries, brands and digital experiences. When products are 'visitor ready', this is when they become an experience.

Importantly, the framework highlights that towns are a base asset and rarely motivate visitation. Visitors don't normally choose a destination for a town unless it has a mix of all the compelling experiences, infrastructure and amenity (ie Bright), or the nearby products and experiences are so compelling that they visit the town. This highlights the importance of developing and marketing hero attractions.

However people will choose not to visit a destination if a town doesn't provide base amenity, quality food and beverage experiences, and infrastructure.

UNDERSTANDING THE VISITOR JOURNEY

Key to creating a successful visitor destination is understanding the contemporary visitor journey and how this impacts on product and experience development and marketing.

Below are the steps that form the visitor journey.

What is important? **How information is received/ shared?**

1. Dreaming Seed is Planted

Captivating Imagery	Travel blogs
Advertising and marketing	Ads – TV, Radio Facebook, Instagram
	Friends/relatives

2. Planning Pre-booking Research

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	Travel blogs for information
Optimise listings on Google Maps	Destination websites
	Friends/relatives

3. Booking Call to Action

Easy to navigate website,	Booking sites
Links to booking sites	Accommodation (e.g. Airbnb, Booking.com, Stayz)
SEO	Experiences (e.g. Red Balloon)

4. Experiencing During Visit

Products and experiences to meet visitor needs	Google Maps
Accommodation	Visitor Guides
Visitor infrastructure and amenity	Regional Maps
In-region visitor information	Businesses
	Locals
	Brochures
	Social Media
	VICs

5. Sharing During/Post Visit

Telecomms for visitors to share photos / experiences	Social media – Facebook and Instagram
	Word of Mouth to friends and relatives
	Travel blogs

1. Visitors are motivated to visit a destination when the seed is planted through marketing, inspiring imagery or word of mouth. Research indicates that 1 in 3 leisure travellers do not have a specific destination in mind when they first think about going on a trip. This provides an opportunity to inspire visitors to Towong Shire.
2. The majority of research in the pre-booking phase occurs through online media and information, requiring high quality, engaging, informative and easy to navigate websites. Towong Shire requires a clear and cohesive online presence to translate interest to visitation.
3. If the visitor is satisfied with their pre-booking research, they are called to action to book. The conversion to a booking requires enough information available remotely to influence the visitor's desire to book.
4. During the experiencing stage, it is critical that the region delivers a first class experience aligned to contemporary visitor expectations. This includes high quality nature-based experiences, quality accommodation, contemporary dining and produce with a high level of service, and modern and well-maintained visitor infrastructure and amenity. This will ensure visitors are satisfied with their experience and encourages positive word of mouth marketing and repeat visitation. In this stage, it is also important to have information that supports the visitors understanding of the region, by reinforcing products and experiences through signage, gateway treatments to demarcate the region, and visitor guides and maps.
5. Sharing of experiences occurs in the final stage, through social media and online reviews and recommendations. Visitors are more likely to share photos online if the experiences and infrastructure are impressive.

LEVERAGING HERO PRODUCTS

Case studies of other remote Australian destinations have been assessed to understand how they have succeeded to increase visitation. This includes the Wimmera Mallee and Wentworth Shire. These are examples of remote destinations with limited products and experiences that were able to capitalise on their hero attractions.

Key findings from these case studies include:

- Large investment into product development to create high quality and contemporary visitor experiences.
- Focus marketing activities on hero attractions rather than the towns or shires.

- Utilise hero products as the main marketing tools for the whole region, including the neighbouring shires.
- Photo-worthy products create social media sharing and influence.
- Marketing on popular lifestyle and travel platforms, such as The Urban List.

These findings highlight the importance of continual product development and enhancement, as well as importance of regional collaboration to cross-promote hero attractions and build a regional experience for visitors.

Wentworth Shire - Mungo National Park

Hero Imagery and Posts on Popular Sites e.g. The Urban List



Wimmera Mallee - Silo Art Trail

Contemporary Brand/Website and AR App as a Marketing Tool & Visitor Experience



VISITOR MARKET

TOWONG SHIRE DOMESTIC VISITOR ECONOMY

The Towong Shire visitor economy is in its infancy, with the Shire seeing 195,000 annual visitors who spend \$29.3 million.

Visitation to Towong Shire accounts for 6% of visitation to the High Country and only 4% of the overall spend within the High Country.

The majority of visitors are day trippers (61%).

Visitor spend is predominately driven by overnight visitors (75%).

Average visitor spend in Towong Shire is significantly lower than High Country. Daytrip visitors to Towong Shire spend \$62, compared to High Country day trip visitors (\$91). Overnight visitors are higher yielding (\$287), however spend almost half the amount of High Country overnight visitors (\$473).

Visitor spend patterns can be attributed to a low supply of compelling paid products and experiences to drive visitor spend in the Shire, and accommodation to drive yield and length of stay.

Spend on petrol accounts for the majority of visitor expenditure in Towong Shire for both daytrip (53%) and overnight visitors (24%). Dining makes up a small portion of daytrip (18%) and overnight (18%) visitor expenditure, reflecting the lack of quality dining supply.



195,000
Visitors



\$29.3 M
Spend

119,100

Daytrip
(61%)

76,000

Overnight
(39%)

\$7.4 M

Daytrip
(25%)

\$21.9 M

Overnight
(75%)

AVERAGE SPEND PER VISITOR



Daytrip

\$62

Towong Shire

\$91

High Country



Overnight

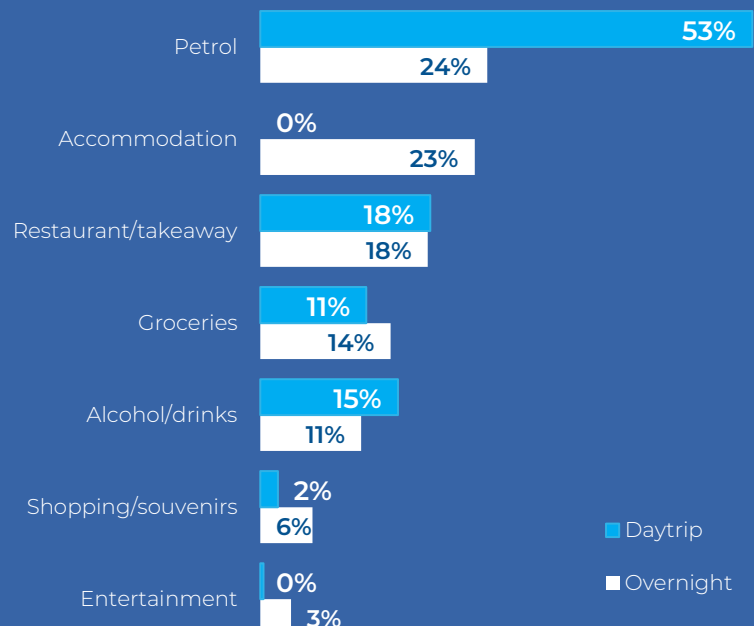
\$287

Towong Shire

\$473

High Country

AVERAGE SPEND BY CATEGORY



TOWONG SHIRE DOMESTIC VISITOR PROFILE

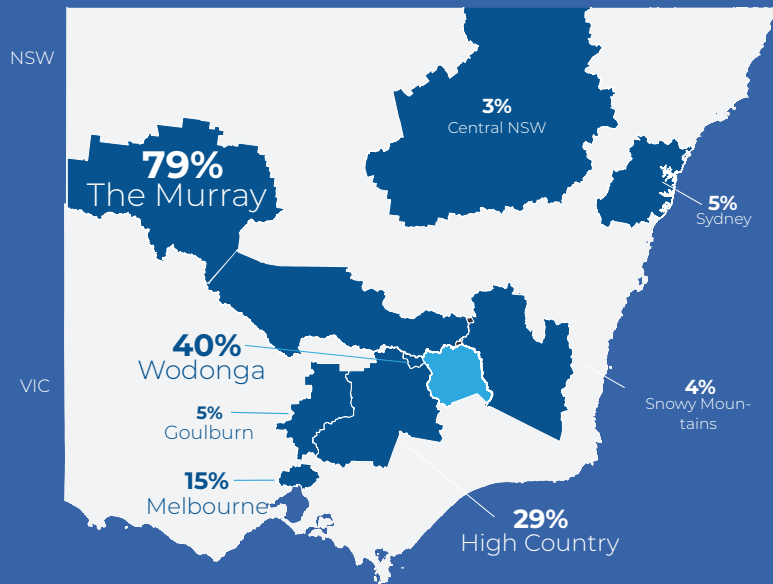
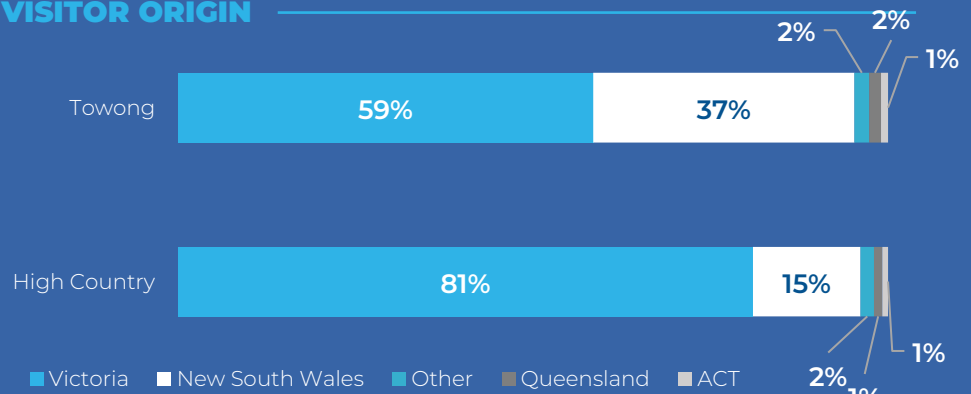
The majority of visitors to Towong Shire are from Victoria (58%), followed by New South Wales (37%).

Visitor origins from across Victoria and New South Wales are predominately from regional areas, particularly regions bordering the Shire such as Wodonga, the High Country and The Murray (including Albury). This reinforces the need to focus marketing on regional markets, as well as the continued need to collaborate with cross-border Councils and tourism agencies to drive visitation.

The main motivation for visitors to travel to Towong Shire is for holidays (48%) and visiting friends and family (31%). This provides an opportunity to grow yield from these markets.

Towong Shire experiences similar visitor seasonality patterns to the High Country, however winter visitation to the High Country (29%) is higher than Towong Shire (22%). This reflects the strong visitation that the snow season attracts to Alpine Resorts and High Country towns and villages. There is opportunity to explore how Towong can leverage this regional strength.

VISITOR ORIGIN



MAIN MOTIVATION FOR VISIT



48%
Holiday

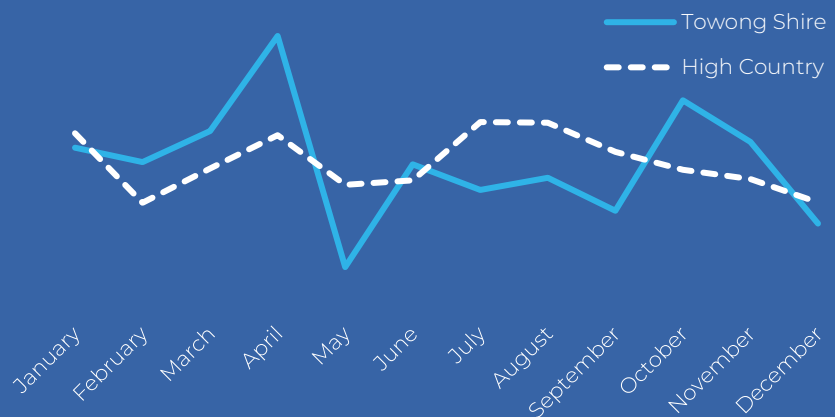


31%
Visiting Friends
and Family



12%
Business

SEASONALITY



Towong Shire has an older age profile compared to the High Country, with the majority of visitors aged 55 years and over (44%). Improved branding and digital presence, as well as investment in products and experiences, will assist in attracting younger demographics.

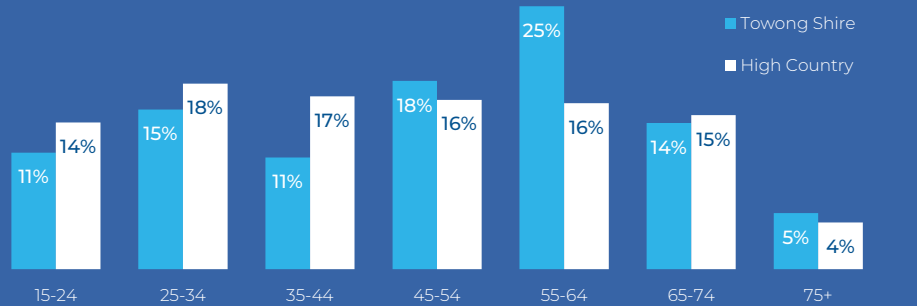
Visitors travel as a couple (32%), friend or family group (24%) or alone (18%). The low visitation by family or friend groups highlights the need to deliver compelling products and experiences to attract the family market.

A small proportion of visitors stay in commercial accommodation (15%) demonstrates the limited supply of compelling commercial accommodation offerings. Camping is a key experience in Towong Shire, with 24% of visitors staying at commercial (24%) and non commercial campgrounds (24%).

Low engagement in activities reinforces a lack of compelling products and experiences available to the visitor market. Dining out in Towong Shire is more than 20% lower than the High Country average, which demonstrates the need for investment in food experiences.

The visitor activity profile highlights the importance of nature-based assets, with activities undertaken including sightseeing (25%), bushwalking (18%) and visiting national parks/state parks (12%). High engagement in fishing (14%) in comparison to High Country (4%) highlights the strength of fishing in the Shire.

AGE PROFILE



OVERNIGHT VISITOR TRAVEL GROUP



32%
Couple



24%
Friends and Family



18%
Alone

ACCOMMODATION



30%

Friends/Relatives Property



24%

Caravan/Camping (non commercial)



24%

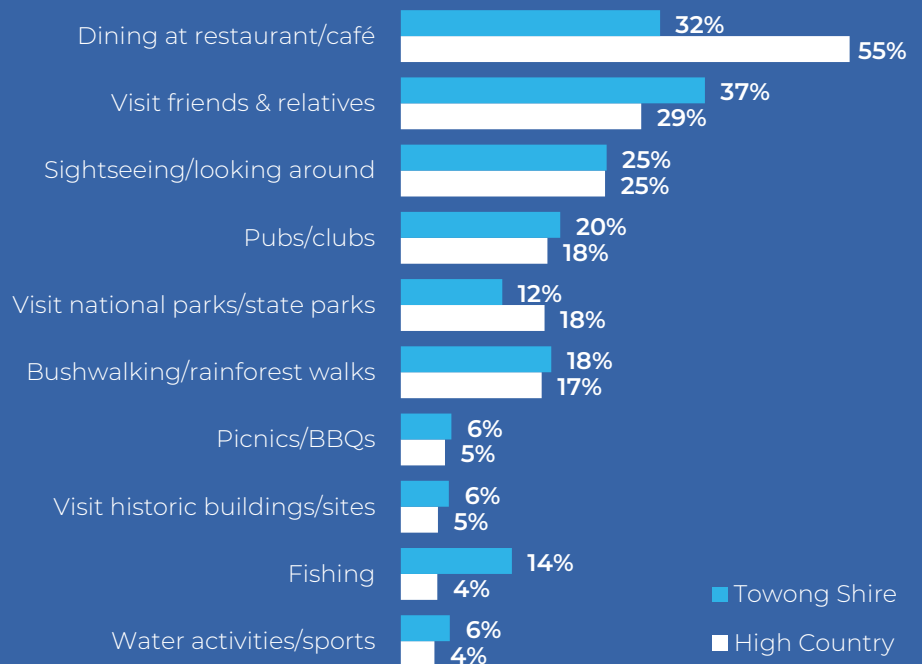
Caravan Park/ Commercial Campground



15%

Hotel/Motel/Motor Inn

ACTIVITIES











TARGET MARKETS

A range of research has been reviewed to determine the target visitor markets for Towong Shire. This includes Tourism Research Australia visitor origin data, Tourism North East market segmentation research, Tourism North East target markets and Visit Victoria target market [Lifestyle Leader].

Understanding psychographic market segments allows the Shire to deliver products and experiences aligned to contemporary visitor expectations.

A major market opportunity for the Shire is delivering cycle and walk experiences that meet demand from target segments. The terrain, natural amenity and nature-based assets of the Shire provide the base assets to attract these markets, with investment in infrastructure, experiences and promotion needed to further attract the market.

Understanding geographic markets helps to direct and prioritise marketing efforts to deliver targeted campaigns. The surrounding region, including Albury-Wodonga, the Riverina Murray and the High Country regions, are considered to be the primary geographic market for the Shire to target, based on current visitor origin profiles and distance from metropolitan areas.

Market	Segment	Overview
Psychographic Markets		
	Habitual [existing]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed travel patterns and difficult to influence Low yield, like to self cater Tend to caravan / camp Limited engagement with paid experiences
	Lifestyle Leader [target]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher discretionary income Progressive, open to trying new things High yield visitors
Geographic Markets		
	Primary Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albury-Wodonga Riverina Murray High Country
	Secondary Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melbourne Sydney Canberra
Product-Based Markets		
	Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road Cycling Mountain Biking Rail Trail Cycling Gravel Cycling <p>High levels of market cross-over across cycle market segments.</p> <p>Significant interest in a variety of other outdoor activities, such as walking, hiking, canoeing, swimming.</p>
	Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destination Explorers Committed Hikers <p>Like to explore new destinations but want a controlled experience – well-formed paths, directional signage, short 1-3 hour walks etc.</p> <p>Seek immersion in nature and getting away from crowds. Inclined to visit less well-known destinations.</p>
	Dining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible Foodie Occasional Indulgence Vegemite and Toast <p>Tend to plan days around activities whilst factoring in food, and prefer to dine out for all meals of the day.</p> <p>Content with casual bakery and pub meals. Will seek out one ‘fancier’ meal such as restaurant or winery.</p> <p>Like to self cater and won’t spend on food. Food is not important to their travel experience or satisfaction. Lower yielding visitor.</p>
	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptable Adventurer <p>Flexible with accommodation but need quality expectations to be met. Seek accommodation in nature-based locations within proximity to towns. Will pay between \$200-300 a night.</p>

PRODUCT, EXPERIENCE AND EVENTS

This section draws on a range of research and information sources. This includes existing inventories and desktop research of products, events and experiences, physical visitor information, site visits, and consultation findings.



PRODUCT PROFILE OVERVIEW

Primary Strength

Water-Based



Nature-Based



Emerging Strength

Cycling



Sports and Recreation



Touring



Cap/Opportunity

Accommodation



Food, Ferments and Farmgate



Arts, Culture and Heritage



Events



Towong Shire is characterised by its rolling hills and mountains, and a feeling of immersion in nature. The Shire's natural assets and amenity, and the activities they allow, are Towong's key strength.

National Parks are a key strength within the region, with hero assets including the Alpine National Park, Burrowa-Pine National Park, Mount Granya State Park, Mt Lawson State Park and Mount Mittamatite Regional Park.

Water-based products were also identified as primary strengths for the region, these products include Lake Hume, Lake Dartmouth, the Mitta Mitta River and Murray River.

The Shire has secondary and emerging strengths in cycling, touring and sports and recreation. These experiences require further investment and activation to become hero experiences, however are well-aligned to the Shire and High Country's primary strength of natural assets.

There are a range of product and experience gaps and opportunities, including accommodation, food, ferments and farmgate, events, and arts culture and heritage experiences. Targeted and ongoing investment is required to meet the standards of the contemporary visitor market and attract target markets.

PRODUCT AUDIT

Nature-Based

A key primary strength of the Towong Shire is its natural environment, with a number of national, state and regional parks located within the shire.

These parks and reserves support a wide range of outdoor activities, such as sightseeing, bushwalking, hiking, cycling, four-wheel drive touring, camping, swimming and fishing. Additionally, native flora and fauna are abundant across the Shire and attract visitation.

Other popular nature based destinations including Mt Lawson State Park, Mt Mittamatite and Mt Elliott.

Nature-based assets are a hero experience of the Shire and provide an opportunity to grow awareness of Towong Shire, increase visitation and build a brand.

Improved activation of nature-based assets is required, through trail and signage infrastructure, architecturally designed lookouts and amenity improvements.

Leveraging these nature-based assets through marketing, promotion and improved visitor information is required.

Key assets include:

Alpine National Park, a popular destination located on the southern and eastern peripheries of the Shire. The park is popular for camping, four wheel driving and hiking, however has poor access from the Shire's townships.

Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park, offering a diverse range of flora and fauna, with peaks of Pine Mountain and Mount Burrowa (1,300 m). Key walks include the Bluff Creek Nature trail, a four kilometre return trail, and The Lookouts walking trail, a six kilometre return trail.

Mount Granya State Park, reaching a summit of 950 metres, provides impressive views of the surrounding valleys and natural assets and a number of walking trails, including to the Summit and Granya Falls.



Water-Based

Major water based assets within the Towong Shire include Lake Hume, Lake Dartmouth, Mitta Mitta River and the Murray River.

These water-bodies provide a range of experiences such as boating, water sports, fishing and camping on the foreshore. In particular, the Upper Murray lakes and rivers are popular destinations for trout fishing.

There is an opportunity to improve access to and activation of Lake Hume, through development of additional boat ramps at high water locations, piers and jetties, and provision of equipment for visitors.

KEY ASSETS

Lake Hume, a popular recreation asset, is accessible via boat ramps at the Berringa Reserve (Bethanga), Bellbird Reserve (Bellbridge) and Talangatta Foreshore Reserve, however access is limited at low water storage levels. Lake Hume is stocked annually with a variety of fish.

Lake Dartmouth, popular for boating, water sports, fishing and bird watching, is accessible by one boat ramp located south of the Dam wall. Houseboating and water skiing are not permitted, with all boats and recreational crafts required to keep at least 700 metres from the Dam wall.

Murray River, a hub for water-based activities such as house boating, fishing, water-skiing, wake boarding and other recreational water-based activities. Additionally, the foreshore of the Murray River is a popular destination for campers.

Mitta Mitta River, a popular fishing destination attracting kayaking and white water rafting in the summer months, where high water releases from the Dartmouth Dam generate a fast flowing river, ideal for white water rafting.

The **Nariel River** is also a popular destination for fishing and camping.



Cycling

The varying terrain within Towong Shire provides a range of opportunities for development of road cycling, gravel cycling, and mountain bike riding.

Cycling is a key product pillar of the High Country, with Tourism North East delivering “Ride High Country”, one of the most successful regional tourism campaigns. This provides a major opportunity for Council to invest in cycling and leverage regional marketing, investment and collaboration opportunities.

Council has also identified creating and delivering new cycling product, where feasible, as a priority within the Towong Council Plan 2017-2021.

A mountain biking strategy has been developed concurrently, which aims to prioritise investment in mountain biking across the region and position the Shire as a new, premium destination.

KEY ASSETS

High Country Rail Trail, one of the Shire’s premier attractions, extends from Wodonga to Shelley, taking in views of Lake Hume along the way. Extension of the rail trail to Corryong is a priority, which will provide a highly scenic rail trail experience, connect Tallangatta and Corryong, and facilitate activation and investment along the trail length.

Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park is scoped to be the Shire’s premier mountain biking destination for the Shire. Funding has been secured for stage 1 of the investment, which will deliver 29kms of trail.

Mount Elliot is also a popular destination for downhill mountain biking, which has developed informally over time. There is strong community support for development of a formal mountain bike park.

The Shire has a range of informal but well-regarded **road cycling** loops which have opportunity to be further promoted.

Additionally, the Shire features a range of informal **gravel cycling** loops, including the Jervis Creek Plateau gravel loop, Lake Hume Views gravel ride, and the Eskdale to Dartmouth Dam gravel ride.



Touring

The diverse terrain of the Towong Shire has become an attractive destination for touring visitors. The National and State Parks within the region create a range of trail types for four-wheel drivers to explore.

Additionally, the highways and roads throughout Towong provide scenic touring routes for travellers to explore the region.

The promotion and activation of touring routes, through development of touring routes and investment attraction along the routes, will assist to leverage regional visitation and drive yield.

KEY ASSETS

The Great River Road, a premier asset of the Upper Murray, follows the Murray River across the 155km between the Snowy Mountains and Lake Hume. Lookouts along the way showcase the vast region with views of Murray River, Pine Mountain and the surrounding national parks.

Snowy Valleys Way. From Gundagai to Beechworth, the Snowy Valleys Way touring route links Tallangatta and Corryong to the surrounding region via the **Murray Valley Highway**.

Sports and Recreation

There are a range of community sports and recreation clubs and facilities located within Towong Shire, including golf, horse riding, netball, tennis, cricket, bowls, paragliding and hang gliding.

The equine sector is culturally significant for the Shire, with a strong High Country cattleman history. The Shire continues to attract visitors for recreational horse riding.

Focus should be prioritised towards better utilising existing sports and recreation facilities, and targeted investment in facility upgrades that will allow the Shire to attract state, national or international standard events.

KEY ASSETS

The Shire has a range of **racecourses and showgrounds** which are well utilised by the equine sector as well as for events. Key facilities include The Historic Towong Racecourse, the set location for the 1983 film *Phar Lap*, and the Tallangatta and Corryong showgrounds.

Mt Elliot, a DELWP owned site which is used for **hang-gliding** and **paragliding**. The site provides some of the highest quality flying, and is regularly the location of the Corryong Cup and Victorian open.

The Shire is home to a range of community **golf courses**, including Corryong Golf Club, Walwa-Jingellic Golf Club and Tallangatta Valley Golf Club.



Foods, Fermets and Farmgates

The current food and dining offerings across the region are limited, with only a small selection of high quality dining establishments.

There is a lack of diversity in food experiences across the Shire. Current operators of note all provide a similar pub/hotel style offering, with a small number of country bakeries, cafes and takeaway restaurants.

Key gaps include:

- Wineries, breweries and distilleries
- Quality restaurants
- Quality cafes
- Artisanal bakeries
- Farmgate, paddock to plate, provedore and 'pick your own' experiences

Investment in high quality food, drink and dining experiences will assist in attracting the Lifestyle Leader market and to extracting greater yield from visitors.

Arts, Culture and Heritage

There are a limited range of arts, culture and heritage products and experiences. There is opportunity to build this offering to attract a diverse range of markets, add depth and richness to the visitor experience, and activate towns.

KEY ASSETS

The Man From Snowy River.

The Museum and the Man From Snowy River Bush Festival are key assets that build on The Man from Snowy River theme, an iconic Australian poem, and later film. The Man from Snowy River was a stockman who lived in a hut near Tom Groggin, and is a key heritage attraction of the Upper Murray.

Indigenous Culture. There are a range of significant Aboriginal sites across the Shire. Whilst there is no formal Traditional Owner groups in the Shire, Council should continue to explore connections with Traditional Owners.

Davis Cottage. A historic cottage located in Corryong, with a gallery space for local artists to hire and display their work.

Other heritage attractions, such as The Spirit of Wymah, a cable ferry used to cross the Murray River built in 1946, Lord's Hut and a range of historic trestle bridges.





KEY PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES



There are a range of product development opportunities for Towong Shire, which will assist in driving visitation growth from target markets, increasing visitor expenditure and meeting the needs of the visitor market.

Key opportunities include:

- Activate natural assets through walking trail infrastructure, iconic lookouts, wayfinding signage, campsite upgrades and enhanced promotion.
- Lake Hume activation through commercial investment, improved waterway access, and lakeside infrastructure and amenity.
- Activation of rivers with vibrant waterfront precincts that include boating and fishing infrastructure, amenities, swimming access, and potential commercial operators.
- Extend the High Country Rail Trail to Corryong to provide an iconic trail and connect Tallangatta and Corryong.
- Formalise and promote a range of gravel and road cycling loops.
- Invest in mountain biking through continued investment in the Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park, and other key mountain biking opportunities.
- Promote touring routes and attract investment along the routes.
- Improve utilisation of sports and recreation facilities, and deliver targeted upgrades to attract new spectator events.
- Develop public art programs to activate town centres and showcase local creators and markers.
- High quality food and beverage experiences, including quality restaurants, cafes, bakeries.
- Utilisation and promotion of local produce through farmgate, paddock to plate, provedore and 'pick your own' experiences.

Accommodation

Towong Shire has a small accommodation stock of 75 properties. Table 7 provides a summary of the Shire's accommodation profile.

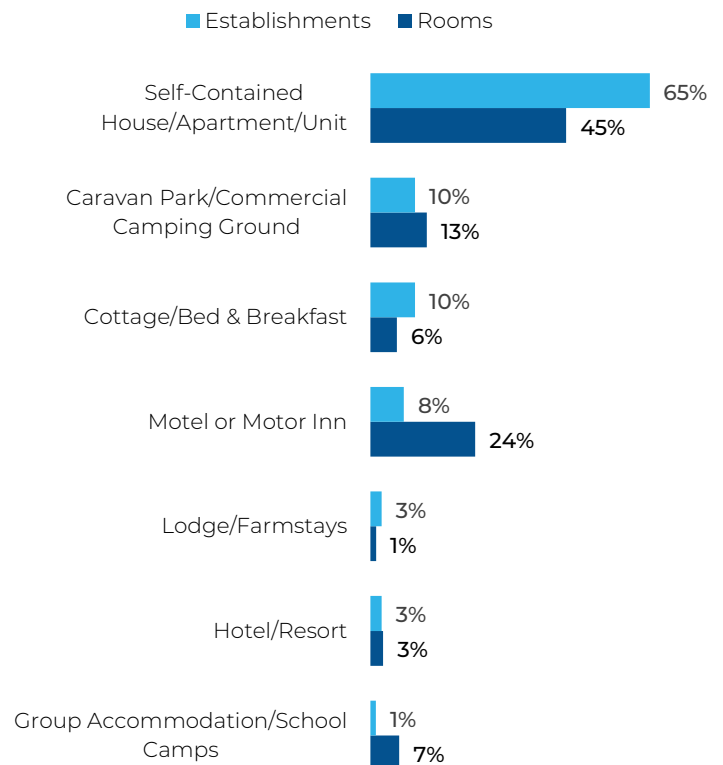
Self-contained houses, apartments or units account for the majority of establishments (65%) and rooms (45%) in the Shire.

Caravan parks/commercial camping grounds account for 13% of rooms, with a large proportion of rooms also provided by motels and motor inns (24%). The majority of these accommodation types are outdated and do not meet contemporary visitor expectations or preferences.

In addition, there is an abundance of free camping and caravan sites in the numerous National, State and Regional Parks across the Shire, as well as along the banks of the Murray River and Lake Hume.

An assessment of Trip Advisor and Google accommodation ratings and reviews indicates the Shire's accommodation stock is of low to moderate quality, with few upscale or luxury offerings. The average room rate is between \$100 and \$200 a night, including for self-contained houses, which reinforces the outdated and midscale accommodation profile.

Accommodation Supply



KEY ACCOMMODATION OPPORTUNITIES



High quality accommodation helps to brand the region, attract visitation from new markets, convert daytrip visitors to overnight, and extend length of stay and yield from existing markets.

Accommodation that leverages, integrates with and showcases the nature-based assets and strengths of the region should be explored.

Key accommodation opportunities include:

- Experiential accommodation, such as eco-cabins, tiny homes and glamping.
- Nature and wellness retreats.
- Small-scale boutique hotels and resorts.
- Investment in high quality tourist park accommodation.
- Reinvestment in existing accommodation stock, particularly caravan parks, motels and motor inns, and outdated self-contained accommodation establishments.
- High quality farmstay accommodation.

Events

Towong Shire has a small annual tourism events profile, demonstrated in the table below.

The events profile is dominated by small-scale events attracting low visitor numbers, largely volunteer and community run. This limits the ability of these events to be scaled-up to attract visitors, as they rely heavily on volunteers and sponsorships.

Tourism events were assigned to the following categories to gain an understanding of the spread of events across the typologies:

- **Markets** – Community markets and farmers markets.
- **Lifestyle** – Events for families and local residents.
- **Arts, Music and Cultural** - Art and cultural festivals, music festivals and concerts and exhibitions.
- **Sport and Recreation** – Participatory and spectator events.
- **Gardens and Agriculture** – Open gardens and agricultural shows.

The largest proportion of events are sport and recreation events, including participatory and spectator events, such as rodeos, boat races and fishing.

Type	Number	%
Sport and Recreation	16	59%
Lifestyle and Family	4	15%
Markets	3	11%
Arts, Music and Culture	2	7%
Gardens and Agriculture	2	7%
Total Events in Towong Shire	27	

KEY TOURISM EVENTS

- Sports and Recreation Events:
 - Hang Gliding and Paragliding, including the Flow Corryong Paragliding Open and The Corryong Cup Hang Gliding Competition.
 - Fishing competitions are popular and attract competitors from across Australia. This includes Dartmouth Cup Fishing Classic, Dartmouth Women’s Fishing Classic; Cudgewa Fishing Classic and the Dart Dam Trout Trolling Tournament.
- Lifestyle and Family Events, such as The Man From Snow River Bush Festival and Tallangatta Show n Shine n Swap Meet.
- Markets, including Peninsula Seasonal Market and Upper Murray Farmers Market.
- Arts, Music and Culture events such as Bush Poetry and Acoustic Music and The Nariel Creek Folk Festival.
- Gardens and Agriculture events such as Tallangatta Expo and Garden Get About.

There is limited diversity in the Shire’s events profile.

There is a major gap in events that can attract the Lifestyle Leader and are aligned to contemporary visitor interests and expectations.

There is a need for development of new events such as arts and culture events, major music events and food and farmgate produce events. These are events that that can grow brand awareness and visitor yield, and can reposition Towong Shire within the High Country.



Proposed Events

Two potentially major events for the Towong Shire have received funding from the Federal Government, including:

- Upper Murray Victorian Open Road Series Stage, regional road cycling event that will run over two days.
- Mitta Valley Gravel Grinder a recurring event, with an estimated 400 participants. A cycling events company has been contracted to deliver the event for the first three years.

Venues

Upper Murray Events Centre, located in Corryong, is the Shire's key event venue. The Centre is well-suited to sporting events and mid-scale community and business events, however is not well suited to some types of indoor tourism events such as larger theatre or performance based events.

The Shire has a range of small events and function facilities, particularly for private social events. Many of these are outdated and require reinvestment to meet market expectations.

There is an opportunity to increase the wedding and social events markets through investment in new venues and reinvestment in existing venues.

Important to attracting social events will be delivering experiential events facilities that leverage natural views and amenity and provide a unique, high quality experience that will attract markets to the Shire. An example of this is the Wool Press Granya, a converted shearing shed provides a rustic backdrop for events.

Critical to growing the events sector will be to increase the supply of accommodation to support increased visitation.

EVENTS GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES



- Music events, particularly outdoor events that can embrace the natural outlook.
- Events that showcase artisanal local produce.
- Arts and culture events showcasing local creators and makers.
- Open garden events and 'pick your own' events.
- Indoor events venues.
- High quality wedding and social event venues capitalising on the natural assets.

BRANDING AND MARKETING





BRANDING

Towong Shire has a fragmented brand, with a range of brands and brandmarks utilised in parts of the Shire. These create confusion in the market and can impact consumer awareness of the Shire.

There are four brands utilised across the Shire in various locations, which have a range of applications detailed in the table adjacent.

The use of multiple brands is ineffective in creating cut through in the market place, and results in the already limited community and Council resources being inefficiently utilised.

A streamlined approach to branding across the Shire is required to deliver a unified approach for tourism development. Tourism North East is currently undertaking a project to develop a brand framework for the Shire and its destinations, which will address the existing fragmented brand.

Mitta Valley	Valleys, Lakes and Vistas	Towong Tourism	Upper Murray
			
Towns Promoted			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dartmouth Eskdale Mitta Mitta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bellbridge Bethanga Dartmouth Eskdale Granya Mitta Mitta Tallangatta Old Tallangatta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shire-wide, used on tourism signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bellbridge Bethanga Corryong Colac Colac Cudgewa Granya Jingellic Koetong Khancoban Nariel Valley Shelley Tintaldra Tooma Towong Walwa
Physical Collateral			
✗	✗	✓	✓
Website			
✓	✓	✗	✓
Signage			
✓	✗	✓	✓

MARKETING

There are a range of associations that participate in the marketing of Towong Shire. Each of these deliver marketing activities to varying degrees of consistency and quality.

Visit Victoria

Corryong is the only township from the Towong Shire that is promoted on the Visit Victoria website.

Corryong is promoted being an “adventure lover’s paradise”, with the township being a popular destination for rock climbing, rafting, horse riding, bushwalks, four wheeled driving, cycling and fishing.

Other key assets across the Shire currently listed on the Visit Victoria website include:

- Indi Bridge Reserve, Towong Upper
- The Potted Cumquat, Tallangatta
- Riverview Lodge, Towong
- Tallangatta Triangles Park, Tallangatta

Development of unique hero products and experiences will be critical to Towong Shire leveraging Visit Victoria’s marketing reach.

Tourism North East (TNE)

Tourism North East promotes the region through the High Country brand.

Towong Shire has limited representation through High Country marketing promotions, due to the lack of hero tourism product aligned to the regions, as well as poor provision of tourism infrastructure.

There is opportunity to further leverage Tourism North East through investment in experiences that can be promoted through their highly successful, region-wide marketing campaigns, each of which align with their product pillars:

- **Ride High Country** – promoting cycling tourism
- **Feast High Country** – promoting food, wine and craft beer tourism
- **Walk High Country** – promoting walking and nature-based tourism

Corryong and Tallangatta are the key towns advertised on the High Country website.

Key assets in Tallangatta that are promoted on the website include Lake Hume, High Country Rail Trail and The Tallangatta Triangles.

Key assets in Corryong that are promoted on the website include the Corryong Show and the Great River Road. As well as these, accommodation and cycling routes are also listed for Tallangatta, Corryong and some other towns in Towong Shire.

TNE is currently promoting “Upper Murray in Motion”, a five day journey across the Upper Murray region. The website provides a detailed itinerary which lists 22 activities and stops, which includes places to stay, activities and where to eat. The locations listed on the itinerary extend across the Upper Murray and are not limited to Tallangatta and Corryong. The promotion of the Upper Murray through this journey is helpful in promoting the region and its key assets.

Towong Shire Council

Towong Shire Council has some involvement in marketing activities to promote the Shire. Council lacks an Instagram account or destination website to promote the whole Shire. Council operates and manages both the Upper Murray and Valleys, Lakes and Vistas websites.

Digital Visitor Information Services

Towong Shire Council operates the two destination websites that promote regions within Towong Shire; Valleys, Lakes and Vistas and Upper Murray websites.

The Valleys, Lakes and Vistas website is outdated and low quality, with static content and a lack of motivational content. Furthermore, the brand has no social media presence, such as a Facebook or Instagram account.

Council also supports the Visit Upper Murray website. This website is of a higher quality and has more connection to the region when compared to the Valleys, Lakes and Vistas website. The multiple websites are confusing for the consumers. The two websites appear to be misaligned and are not complimentary in the promotion of the region.

The streamlining of these websites, and the development of clear promotion will enhance the consumers experience when planning their journey through Towong Shire.

Physical Collateral and Signage

Towong Shire Council engages in the production of some collateral, including brochures and maps. Council also supports other associations in the production of collateral.

Whilst Council collaborated with the Upper Murray community to deliver an Upper Murray regional guide, Towong Shire lacks an official visitor guide and regional touring maps that promote destinations across the entire Shire.

In addition, Council provides signage at key visitor destinations, and infrastructure locations such as lookouts. Signage at these locations is of varying qualities, and in some instances signage is outdated and obsolete.

Valleys, Lakes and Vistas Collateral



Source: Towong Tourism, 2021.

Towong Tourism Signage



Source: Visit Victoria, 2021.

Visitor Information Centres

There is currently one staffed visitor information centre (VIC), the Corryong Visitor Information Centre, as well as two satellite centres.

The two satellite VICs are located in Eskdale and Tallangatta. These centres are not staffed, however they contain brochures and maps pertaining to the surrounding region.

The visitor information centres in Towong Shire have seen a decrease in visitors in recent years, due to the increasing preference for digital information sources. This highlights the need for Towong Shire to strengthen its digital presence.

Corryong Visitor Information Centre



Source: Visit Upper Murray, 2021.

Local Tourism Activities

Mitta Valley Marketing

- Mitta Valley logo/brand
- Instagram
- Local website for Mitta Valley

Mitta Valley Inc. owns and operates the Mitta Valley website. There are also a number of social media accounts that promote and market the sub region, which are run by the community..

The website promotes the key townships of Eskdale, Mitta Mitta and Dartmouth. Activities, events, accommodation and dining are also promoted on the website.

The Instagram account is predominately focused towards community events and updates.

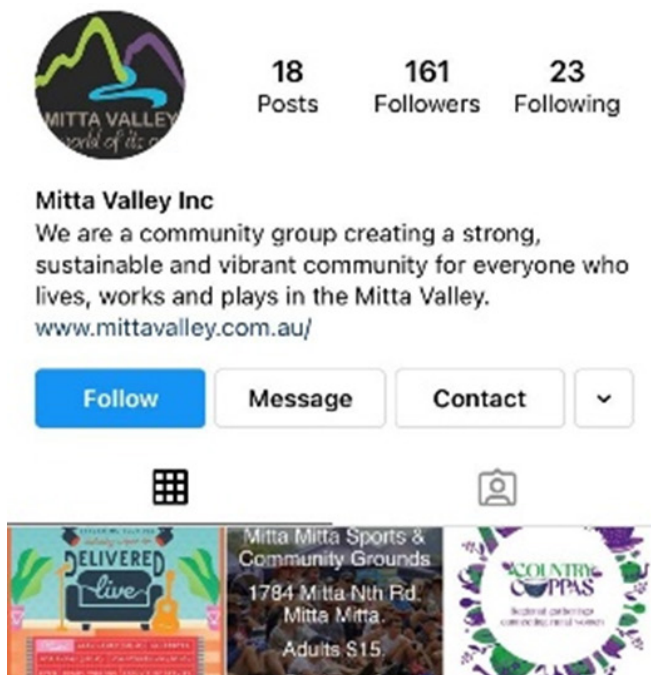
Upper Murray Marketing

- Brochures etc.
- Branding
- Instagram
- Website

Whilst Council operate the Upper Murray website, they have an agreement with Upper Murray Inc. the website meets their needs and showcases businesses that buy into their programs.

The website and Instagram account are of a high quality and are regularly updated. There is opportunity to improve the hierarchy of content on the website and deliver more motivational hero imagery to attract further visitation.

Mitta Valley Inc. Instagram



Upper Murray Website



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCE

Hero Product to Drive Awareness

Towong Shire lacks hero products to drive visitor demand and consumer awareness.

Hero products are required for promotion through Tourism North East and to gain cut through in the market when competing with a number of more developed destinations across Victoria and New South Wales.

Key existing assets with potential to be elevated to hero product status include nature-based assets, lakes and waterways, and cycling routes and products.

Investment in Supporting Tourism Experiences

There is low supply, diversity and quality of accommodation and food and beverage establishments to meet basic visitor expectations.

This limits the type of visitors Towong Shire can target, and impacts on visitor yield.

Mountain Biking Investment

Towong Shire has a natural competitive advantage in supporting mountain biking.

Key attributes include:

- An abundance of public land held within State forests.
- Quality nature based values and emerging tourism industry.
- Significant change in elevation within forest reserves and on private land which can support gravity trails.
- Part of the High Country Region with Cycling as a key pillar and opportunity to leverage off marketing and existing mountain bike product.

There are some barriers to supporting mountain biking development within Towong Shire. These include:

- Lack of resources to support trail maintenance
- Small population to draw on to support mountain biking
- Distance from market

Activating and Leveraging Natural Assets

Towong Shire has a wealth of nature-based assets that have been untapped.

These assets lack easy or clear access, have low activation, limited amenity and infrastructure, and poor promotion.

Key assets with potential to be activated include Lakes Hume, Dartmouth and Banimboola, the Murray and Mitta Mitta Rivers, Burrowa-Pina National Park, Mount Granya and Mount Lawson State Parks and Jervis Creek and Mount Mitta Mitta Regional Parks.

Barriers to activating natural assets include limited resources and financial capacity of land managers (Parks Victoria, Goulburn-Murray Water and Council) to invest in and maintain infrastructure.

Therefore it is necessary to prioritise investment to destinations that provide the most unique experiences and are in closest proximity to townships that will leverage economic benefit.

Importantly, ensuring investment is followed by high quality imagery, videos and promotion to maximise the economic benefit to the local community.

MARKETS

Access to Source Markets

Isolation from population centres and surrounding visitor destinations impacts the Shire's access to visitor markets.

This is particularly a barrier for remote locations such as Corryong and other Upper Murray towns, which are at least an hour and a half drive from major centres.

COVID-19 travel restrictions and border closures has seen significant impacts for the Shire due to historically receiving a large proportion of visitation from NSW.

Growing the Family Market

The family market has significant growth potential for Towong Shire. Attracting the family market has been instrumental in the growth of visitor destinations such as Bright.

The Shire has the right base assets to attract families, including a range of outdoor activities, access to waterways for boating, swimming, fishing and water sports, cycling and a range of caravan parks.

Further activation of these assets, as well as investment in food and drink and accommodation to meet visitor expectations, will be important to driving this market.



BRANDING AND MARKETING

Lack of Clear and Cohesive Brands

There is a lack of clarity regarding the Towong Shire brand both across the Shire and for the consumer.

The Shire's brand is fragmented, with the Upper Murray brand created through the Upper Murray Masterplan process, and the Valleys Lakes and Vistas brand established as a result of lack of promotion for the remaining townships.

These brand identities are disconnected from place and the visitor struggles to understand the destination.

Cohesive Governance and Strong Leadership

A cohesive tourism governance structure, with clear roles and responsibilities for product development and marketing, will ensure a destination prospers.

The region has a complex assortment of Local Tourism Organisations (LTA's) that each operate independently and lack a unified approach.

This creates confusion for the visitor, with a range of websites with varied branding and communications.

There is a need for improved tourism governance within the region, which will translate to a clearer brand and message to the consumer.

Leveraging the High Country Brand

Given that townships within Towong Shire have a strong alignment with the High Country, working with this organisation will strengthen the shires presence in the marketplace.

Lack of Quality Digital Content and Information

Multiple tourism websites managed and supported by an under-resourced Council has an impact on content quality, consistency and relevance.

There is limited pre-planning information available online for visitors, nor is there highly motivational imagery, touring itineraries or calls to action that will inspire visitors to book a trip.

Products and experiences showcased on both websites have lengthy, descriptive copy that is overwhelming and not aligned to how the 21st century consumer preference to consume information; that is, in small, bite-sized pieces.

The Shire needs image and video creation for key tourism assets, development of touring itineraries, improved copy and enhanced hierarchy of content displayed online.

Business Digital Presence

The majority of tourism business operators have a poor business digital presence, with a lack of information online or poor quality and unsophisticated digital information.

This includes many operators who are not online, information online is not informative or inspiring, or does not create a call to action (i.e. lead to a booking site).

This is a result of time-poor small business operators, operators who do not see tourism as their core business, or a lack of digital skills and capability. Upskilling programs and support for digital presence enhancement is required.

Signage

The Shire's directional and tourism signage is outdated. There is a range of obsolete signage, dated, confusing, as well as poor directional signage.

There is a need for a signage strategy and implementation to support a clear visitor experience.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMENITY

Land for Development

All townships (excluding Bethanga) have limited supply of zoned residential and employment land, which limits the potential of the region to undertake any significant population growth or business investment.

Investment in Infrastructure to Improve Utilisation

There is opportunity to reinvest in public assets and infrastructure to support increased utilisation for a variety of events.

This includes Tallangatta and Corryong showgrounds, and the Upper Murray Events Centre. Investigation of industry needs for these sites will be important to activating them.

Leveraging the Corryong Airport

The Corryong Airport has opportunity for further utilisation.

There may be opportunity for fly-in events, luxury chartered flights, and guided private tour experiences.

Transport Infrastructure

The road infrastructure across the region is poor, which affects connectivity to/from Albury-Wodonga for visitors and tourism workforce. Enhancement is required to improve visitor access.

Town Amenity and Activation

There is a lack of township amenity and streetscaping to create activated, vibrant, attractive and engaging towns for visitors.

There is also a lack of diversity in town centre businesses, particularly in the retail and dining offerings for visitors.

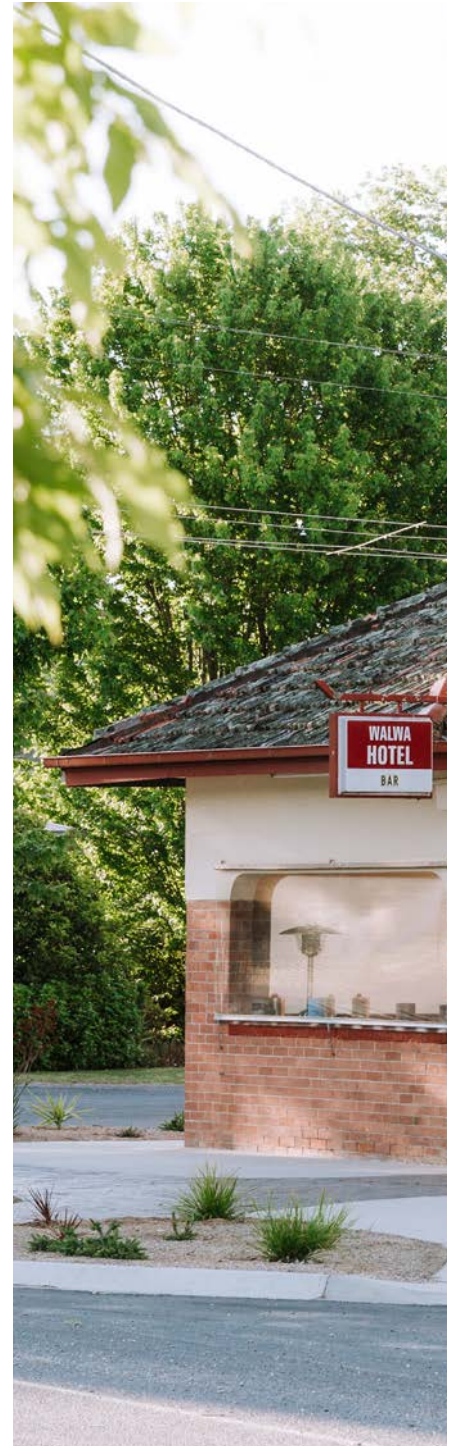
Lack of Water and Sewerage to Support Investment

There is a lack of development infrastructure (water and sewerage) in Bethanga, Talgarno, Granya and Mitta Mitta, which is a constraint to commercial tourism development.

Whilst this is addressed in further detail in the Towong Shire Economic Development Strategy, it is a major barrier to commercial tourism investment.

Enhanced Digital Infrastructure

There is a need for improved telecommunications infrastructure. There are a significant number of black spots across the Shire, which impact the visitor experience, access to visitor information, and impact business operations and investment.





RESOURCING AND COLLABORATION

Fragmented Tourism Governance

The Towong Shire has a fragmented approach to governance of tourism. The fragmentation is in part due to the overlap of local and regional tourism structures, which leads to a lack of clarity in defining the Towong brand.

It is critical that the tourism governance is simplified and streamlined to improve the quality and consistency of the approach. This will enhance clarity and increase the visitor markets understanding of the region.

Council Resourcing and Implementation

Council faces significant challenges to achieving economic development outcomes, including:

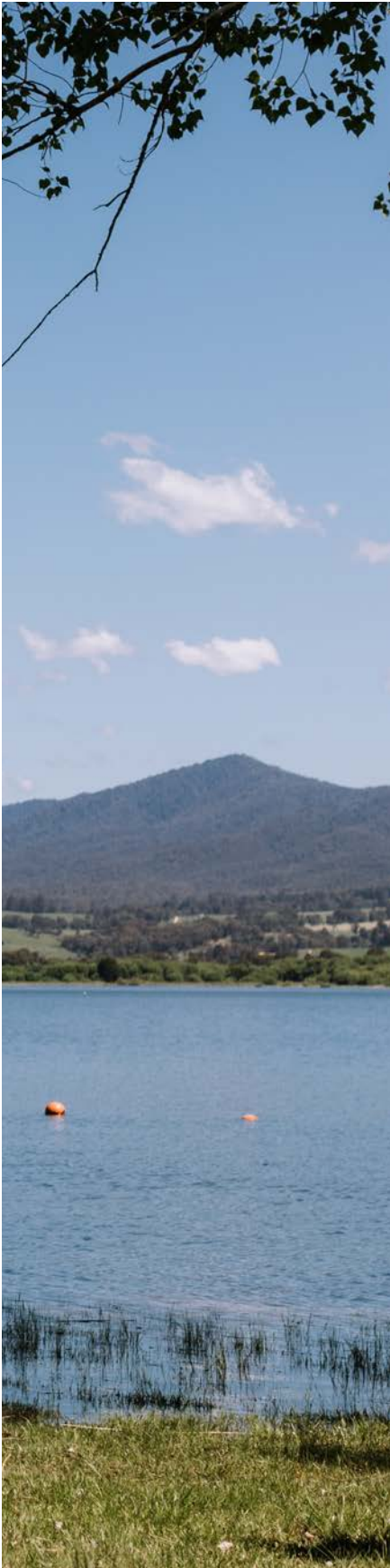
- Limited resources, with 1.4 FTE dedicated to economic development and tourism, and 1 FTE dedicated to the VIC.
- The geography of the Shire, with the business base dispersed across several townships, many of which are relatively isolated from Council offices.

This creates inefficiencies in tourism development and investment facilitation, with resources spread thinly across a large area, making it difficult to engage with and support many businesses. This subsequently limits the activities and projects that Council can undertake or support.

Leveraging Tourism North East Resources

As Towong Shire Council has limited resources for tourism delivery, Council should continue to utilise and buy-into Tourism North East's training resources, industry support services, usual marketing activities, and marketing campaigns.

This includes utilisation of Tourism North East's Industry Development Program to assist in business development and upskilling.



Cross-Border Collaboration

New South Wales is an important source visitor market for the Upper Murray sub-region.

In addition, the New South Wales side of the border, some of which is included in the Upper Murray Local Tourism Association's region, provides a significant amount of the product and experience offering for visitors.

As such, it is integral that the Upper Murray sub-region continues to work closely with local industry, Council and State Government in New South Wales to develop product and undertake marketing and promotion.

Industry Collaboration and Communication

The Shire's disperse geography results in disconnected communities and industries lacking overarching guidance and direction. This is exacerbated by communities having unique interests and challenges, and working independently rather than collaboratively.

There is a lack of formal local industry representation, which impacts collaboration, support and networking across the business community and with Council.

Improved and formalised opportunities for business networking and Council communication should be explored to address these needs.

Attracting Skilled and Unskilled Labour

Towong Shire businesses have difficulty attracting both a skilled and unskilled tourism workforce due to lack of available and affordable housing, as well as distance from Albury-Wodonga.

Similar to many parts of regional Victoria, the Shire struggles to attract skilled staff, in particular chefs and front of house staff. This is a barrier to growing the visitor economy.

Investment Attraction

The small population and business base means there is difficult attracting substantial tourism investment from the local community.

Limited entrepreneurship or appreciation for the benefits of tourism to the local community can result in difficulties advancing tourism opportunities or attracting funding applications when grants are available through Council.

There is a need for Council to explore opportunities to attract external capital, particularly from regional High Country or Albury-Wodonga investors.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the strategic framework to guide development of the Towong Shire visitor economy.

This includes a vision for tourism in the Shire, strategic objectives, and seven key themes to guide public and private sector investment.



DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

VISION



Towong Shire is the leading High Country destination to escape to and immerse in nature and the outdoors. The nature-based experiences are complemented by quality food, drink and accommodation experiences.



OBJECTIVES

Establishes hero products and experiences to drive visitation and increase awareness.

Encourages visitor dispersal across the Shire to tourism nodes.

Create critical product mass through focused investment at key visitor nodes.

Strengthen alignment to High Country brand pillars.

Support investment in contemporary visitor products and experiences.

Establish a clear and cohesive brand identity that resonates with the market.

Improve the visitor journey by creating clear touring routes and quality visitor infrastructure, supported by clear visitor information.

Support growth of a diverse and visitor-ready tourism industry.

PROJECT PRIORITISATION AND PROCESS

The DMP objectives have been used to assess and prioritise project ideas that have emerged throughout the course of the project.

Transformative Projects

Projects that meet the greatest number of objectives have been classed as Transformative projects.

Transformative projects must be hero products that align to High Country brand to maximise Tourism North East marketing activities and broad reach.

Other Project Opportunities

These are smaller projects that align well to objectives and may have both regional and local impacts. These are projects may also have major constraints that impact on the short term deliverability.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Key performance targets have been identified for Towong Shire to track performance of the visitor economy over the life of this Plan.

- 1. Double visitation to Towong Shire from 195,000 to 400,000 by 2026.**
- 2. Grow daytrip yield per visitor from \$62 to \$91 by 2026, in line with Tourism North East's visitor profile. This is a growth of approximately 47%.**
- 3. Grow overnight yield per visitor by \$100 per trip, from \$287 per night to \$387. This will be a growth of approximately 30%.**



STRATEGIC THEMES

A range of strategic themes for tourism investment have emerged through development of the Plan. These provide direction for tourism investment and prioritise key visitor economy needs.



THEME 1. ACCOMMODATION

Delivery of quality, contemporary and diverse accommodation stock to attract target markets and increase overnight stays and visitor yield.



THEME 2. FOOD, BEVERAGE AND FARMGATE

Investment in motivational and contemporary food and drink experiences to meet visitor expectations and leverage the region's high quality agricultural produce.



THEME 3. NATURE AND WATER

Activate, harness and showcase key natural and waterway assets through investment and improved utilisation.



THEME 4. RIDE

Invest in a range of trails infrastructure and formalise existing trails to position Towong as one of High Country's hero cycling destinations.



THEME 5. INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITY AND ACTIVATION

Deliver high quality visitor infrastructure, services and amenity to improve the visitor experience and perception of Towong as a tourism destination.



THEME 6. BRANDING, MARKETING AND AWARENESS

Delivery of a cohesive and consistent brand through marketing, collateral and events to promote increased awareness.



THEME 7. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

Support continued development and enhancement of industry in Towong's sub regions and strengthen collaboration across industry.



THEME 1

ACCOMMODATION

Delivery of quality, contemporary and diverse accommodation stock to attract target markets and increase overnight stays and visitor yield.

Rationale

- Low quality, outdated accommodation stock.
- Lack of commercial accommodation including hotel and resort accommodation, branded accommodation, experiential accommodation.
- Need for reinvestment in caravan parks to meet market expectations.
- Need for an increase in guest rooms across accommodation typologies to meet future demand and grow the visitor economy.

AREAS OF FOCUS



Leverages remote location and endless views.



Retreat, wellness style accommodation that attracts Lifestyle Leader market.



Glamping and eco-cabins.



Improved holiday-rental offerings.



Reinvestment in caravan parks.



Waterfront accommodation developments.

**Transformative Project:
Holiday Park Reinvestment Program**

**Location: Tallangatta, Mitta Mitta, Walwa,
Colac Colac, Dartmouth**

Reinvestment in holiday parks across Towong Shire is needed to elevate the parks to the quality standards expected by the contemporary visitor market.

Delivery of integrated holiday parks with quality facilities and a range of accommodation options, including quality cabins, will be critical to attracting and growing the family market.

Whilst these caravan parks are a mixture of private and public assets, there is potential to undertake a collaborative approach with support from Council.

Precedent: RACV Cobram



**Transformative Project:
Cudgewa Valley Wilderness Retreat**

Location: Cudgewa

There is opportunity to develop an iconic wilderness retreat in the Cudgewa Valley, located in the picturesque valley between Mount Mittamatite and Burrowa-Pine National Park.

An accommodation facility in this location should consider siting principles that leverage natural views and provide a remote and isolated setting. An example of this is Paperbark Camp in NSW.

Delivery of high quality, nature-based accommodation in this location would support visitation to and expenditure in Corryong and surrounding Upper Murray towns.

**Transformative Project:
Small Scale Accommodation Interventions**

Location: Shire-wide, Tallangatta, Jervis Creek

There is opportunity to deliver a range of small scale accommodation interventions that will provide new high quality, contemporary accommodation offerings. Investments should consider leveraging natural assets and vantage points to deliver unique accommodation experiences, whilst also in proximity to nearby towns to ensure economic benefit can be maximised.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Tallangatta Eco-cabins.** Investment in eco-cabins above Tallangatta, on the southside of Tallangatta overlooking Lake Hume. This could be delivered alongside the Tallangatta Gravity Mountain Bike Park.
- **Jervis Creek Eco-cabins.** Development of luxury cabins on the isolated hills of Jervis Creek, behind Old Tallangatta, leveraging views of Lake Hume.
- **Upper Murray Wilderness Fishing Lodge.** Deliver the Upper Murray Wilderness Fishing Lodge at Tom Groggin, identified in the Upper Murray Masterplan 2030.
- **Murray River Glamping.** Deliver glamping experiences along the Murray River, nearby to key towns of Granya and Walwa.
- **Lake Hume Lakeside Resort.** There is potential to develop a Lakeside Resort at Bellbridge. There is potential for this to be located north of Bellbridge along the banks of Lake Hume, isolated from the residential areas however in proximity to the new foreshore commercial precinct.
- **Corryong Hotel Motel Revitalisation.** This business provides a strategic opportunity for upgrade due to its location and impressive aspect overlooking the mountain range. There is opportunity to reinvest in the offering to provide high quality hotel accommodation that will attract new markets.





THEME 2 **FOOD, DRINK AND FARMGATE**

Investment in motivational and contemporary food and drink experiences to meet visitor expectations and leverage the region's high quality agricultural produce.

Rationale

- Low supply of food and beverage product and contemporary food and drink offer.
- Lack of diversity in food and beverage offering.
- Potential for farmgate and agri-tourism offering.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- 🎯 **Farmgate and provedore experiences.**
- 🎯 **Showcasing local produce within existing businesses.**
- 🎯 **Creating destination food experiences.**

**Transformative Project:
Bellbridge Boathouse**

Location: Bellbridge

The delivery of a high quality bistro restaurant on the banks of Lake Hume provides an opportunity for lakeside activation and delivery of a destination food experience.

This establishment would attract daytrip visitors from Albury-Wodonga, the surrounding region and locals alike. This would be a unique experience for the region.

Precedent: The Boathouse, Daylesford



**Transformative Project:
Corryong Distillery**

Location: Corryong

Delivery of a high quality distillery in Corryong would provide a destination food experience that leverages the natural aspect and attracts touring visitors.

There is opportunity for this to be colocated with the Corryong golf course, particularly if redeveloped. This would also support social events.

Precedent: Wild Brumby Thredbo Valley Distillery



**Transformative Project:
Old Tallangatta Butter Factory Revitalisation**

Location: Old Tallangatta

Reinvigorate the Old Tallangatta Butter Factory with a series of short and long-term activations.

In the short term, use of the site for bump-in, pop-up events, including galleries, music events, markets, food events and private social events such as weddings, will create private sector intrigue around the site and its potential future uses.

In the long-term, attraction of a private business to undertake the headlease or attraction of a consortium of businesses, will allow the site to be used as a unique and iconic food venue. There is opportunity to utilise local dairy to develop an ice creamery or cheese factory, showcasing local produce and playing on the history of the site as a butter factory.

Precedent: Milawa Cheese Factory



OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Shipping Container Investment.** Council to fund investment in shipping containers to support new food and beverage operators in the interim. This could be utilised for destinations such as Bethanga and Mitta Mitta which are currently hindered by a lack of sewerage to allow commercial investment. Wodonga Station Precinct provides a good example of what could be achieved.
- **Peak-period Mobile Food Van.** There is opportunity for investment in mobile food vans to service events and peak periods, including servicing visitors at campgrounds.
- **Farmgate Prospectus.** There is a need to facilitate and encourage investment from local farmers and producers in farmgate experiences. There is an opportunity to develop a high level prospectus that will showcase the benefits of diversification through delivery of a farmgate experience, including improved access to and awareness of local produce, and increased visitor spend by providing additional visitor experiences that are aligned to consumer preferences and demand.








THEME 3 **NATURE AND WATER**

Activate, harness and showcase key natural and waterway assets through investment and improved utilisation.

Rationale

- Nature-based assets have the potential to become the key drivers for visitation.
- Nature-based assets in the Shire strongly align to the High Country brand and can leverage TNE's brand and marketing efforts.
- Water is a major driver of visitation, particularly in summer, for destinations across Victoria.
- Investment in nature-based assets will become the hero products of the Shire.

AREAS OF FOCUS

-  **Activating nature-based assets through investment in infrastructure and improved access.**
-  **Boost awareness through marketing and development of iconic lookouts that promote user generated content.**
-  **Activating and utilising waterways through increased waterfront development, improved boating and fishing access, and equipment hire.**

**Transformative Project:
Corryong Golf Course Redevelopment**

Location: Corryong

The Corryong Golf Course has an impressive aspect and has potential to be a high quality asset.

Redevelopment of the Golf Course into a leading golf destination in Victoria through accommodation, a hub building and potential incorporation of a distillery to attract visitation.

Precedent: Murray Downs



**Transformative Project:
Murray River Multi-Day Canoe Trail**

Location: Towong to Bellbridge

Delivery of a multi-day canoe trail experience will deliver a unique experience of Australia's longest river. The trail will stop at key townships to encourage private operators to deliver accommodation and dining experiences that will encourage visitor spend.

This will provide opportunities for private tour operators, as well as shuttle services.

Precedent: Glenelg River Canoe Trail



**Transformative Project:
Lake Hume Masterplan**

Location: Lake Hume

Prepare a masterplan to enhance and activate Lake Hume. This includes investigation of infrastructure needs at key locations to improve access and activation, such as boat ramps, piers, floating pontoons, swimming holes, and private sector activation opportunities such as on-water dining, accommodation, and floating water parks.

This will take into consideration water levels, regulations, and infrastructure requirements and constraints.

Precedent: Lake Eildon Masterplan



**Transformative Project:
Visitor Experience Enhancement Plan for
Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and
Mount Granya State Park**

Location: Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park

These parks have the opportunity to develop as hero nature-based assets for the Shire, due to the quality and amenity of their natural environments as well as the proximity to neighbouring towns, which provides opportunity to leverage yield from visitors.

Investment should prioritise trail, lookout and signage infrastructure to deliver a Summit Trail, Falls Lookout and elevated Summit Lookout. These investments will provide a photo-worthy opportunity, promoting the sharing of user-generated content and increasing brand awareness.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park Hub.** Support the Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park through development of an Equipment Hire, Café and Social Enterprise Hub.
- **Fishing Product Development Action Plan.** Develop a plan that seeks to promote the opportunities for increased fishing, considering infrastructure, access points, jetties, moorings, fishing events, trout and salmon farm opportunities.
- **Mount Mitta Mitta Summit Walking Trail.**
- **Mount Lawson Activation.** Formalise and promote trails at Mount Lawson, and promote indigenous heritage sites.
- **Parks Victoria Information Upgrade.** Parks Victoria to upgrade the digital information available for Towong Shire parks to enable improved visitor awareness and access to the parks.
- **Lake Banimboola Masterplan.** Develop a precinct masterplan to establish the Lake as a visitor destination, including consideration of new public infrastructure, access, trails, and water-based activities.
- **Murray River Activation Project.** Identify and prioritise investment opportunities across the Murray River to improve utilisation of the Shire's iconic asset.
- **Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct Masterplan.** Development of a masterplan for the Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct to address peak period capacity issues and disperse visitors through additional river access points.
- **Equine Trails Enhancement.** Work with DELWP to develop bush riding horse trails where suited, and ensure existing trails (e.g. HCRT) are equine friendly where appropriate.










THEME 4 **RIDE**

Invest in a range of trails infrastructure and formalise existing trails to position Towong as one of High Country's hero cycling destinations.

Rationale

- Lack of formalised mountain bike trails
- Nature based assets well aligned to support mountain biking and gravel cycling
- Opportunity to align with Ride High Country campaign
- Opportunity to leverage from the High Country Rail Trail as a key asset
- Opportunity to formalise road and gravel cycling loops with limited investment

AREAS OF FOCUS

-  **Destination mountain biking.**
-  **Regional mountain biking.**
-  **Gravel cycling.**
-  **Rail trail extension and business activation.**
-  **Events that boost awareness of the Shire.**

Transformative Project:
Mitta Mitta Destination Mountain Bike Park

Location: Mitta Mitta

Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park already has funding for stage 1 which will deliver 29kms of trail. A further stage, which will double the trails to 60kms, will establish Mitta Mitta as a key mountain bike destination in the High Country. There is further opportunity to explore trail links to Dartmouth, leading to a network of mtn bike trails that reinforces Mitta Mitta-Dartmouth as a leading destination in Towong.

Transformative Project:
High Country Rail Trail Improvement and Extension

Location: Shelley to Corryong

Delivery of the High Country Rail Trail extension from Shelley to Corryong will provide an important connection between Tallangatta and Corryong, and will deliver an iconic asset for the Shire.

Transformative Project:
Mt Elliot Gravity and Adventure Park

Location: Corryong

Mt Elliot is suited to gravity fed flow trails with impressive and steep vertical of 550 metres. The establishment of a gravity park at Mt Elliot would complement and support the hang-gliding launch site. The site will become suitable for shuttle buses to support both hang gliders and mountain bikers.

Transformative Project:
Tallangatta Gravity Mountain Bike Park

Location: Tallangatta, site adjacent to Tallangatta Lookout

Tallangatta has opportunity to establish both a private gravity mountain bike park, targeted at downhill, slopestyle and jumps market. This would position this mountain bike park separately from Mitta Mitta and Mt Elliot. The location is suited to downhill events and has an open amphitheatre geography that makes it unique. Further cross-country trails may be established in the DELWP Forrest adjoining the site, which would be suited to a broader market.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Support Development of Cycling Events.** Support delivery and promotion of the inaugural Upper Murray Road Race Victorian Road Cycling Series and Mitta Valley Gravel Unravel events. Consider opportunities for unique activations and food, beverage and event business operator engagement to deliver pre, during and post event experiences to enhance visitor satisfaction.
- **Gravel and Cycle Loops.** Formalisation of a range of gravel and road cycle loops, with development of digital itineraries, signage and promotion.
- **Mountain Bike Trail Investment.** Investment in a range of mountain bike trails, including Shelly to Beetomba single track cross country section of the High Country Rail Trail, Mt Granya, Tallangatta to Mitta Mitta Epic Trail (75+kms), Mitta Mitta to Omeo Multi Day Wilderness Trail (150+kms), and Mt Lawson South side trail development.





THEME 5



INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITY AND ACTIVATION

Deliver high quality visitor infrastructure, services and amenity to improve the visitor experience and perception of Towong as a tourism destination.

Rationale

- Poor visitor amenity and attractiveness of key towns.
- Difficulty for visitors to understand how to 'experience' Towong.
- Need for strategic planning and masterplanning to support future investment in the Shire.

AREAS OF FOCUS



Attractive towns and villages.



Base infrastructure to support a satisfactory visitor experience.



Improved access and connectivity.

**Transformative Project:
Township Enhancement Program**

Location: Bellbridge, Corryong, Mitta Mitta, Eskdale, Tallangatta

Identify opportunities to enhance and activate the town centres of community and service hubs in Towong. This will help support population attraction by improving amenity for visitors and residents, focusing on:

- Streetscaping improvements and general beautification activities
- Public art installations
- Open spaces and plantings
- Pedestrianising key precincts

This program should consider the key townships in each sub-region, including Bellbridge, Corryong, Mitta Mitta, Eskdale and Tallangatta.

Note: This project is also included in the Towong Shire EDS (refer Theme 1)

**Transformative Project:
Bellbridge Village Masterplan**

Location: Bellbridge

Masterplanning for Bellbridge was identified as a key priority to help commercialise and activate the township, leveraging its potential dual role to become a commuter town and visitor destination.

This includes the establishment of a commercial foreshore precinct, delivering a gateway intervention to signify entry into Towong Shire, attracting new businesses and creating amenity for residents and visitors.

Note: This project is also included in the Towong Shire EDS (refer Theme 1)

**Transformative Project:
Mitta Mitta Activation Plan**

Location: Mitta Mitta

Investment in the Mitta Mitta destination mountain bike park will provide flow on business opportunities and create demand for products and experiences to service visitor needs.

Delivery of an Activation Plan that supports the growth of Mitta Mitta is essential to meeting future demand. This should include:

- Commercial precinct planning
- Business attraction
- Investment in a sewer mine solution
- Accommodation investment
- Magorra Caravan Park redevelopment

**Transformative Project:
Tallangatta Foreshore Stage 1
Destination Playground, Cafe and Trail**

Location: Tallangatta

Towong Shire Council has embarked on a masterplan for the Tallangatta Foreshore overlooking Lake Hume. The precinct already has a tourist park, parkland and boat launching facilities, however there is potential to activate this part of town further.

The masterplan identifies the opportunity for the following:

- Destination playground
- Café overlooking Lake Hume
- Expansion of the existing splash park
- Trail network



OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Digital Infrastructure Strategy.** Deliver and implement the Digital Infrastructure Strategy, to ensure residents have sufficient mobile and internet connectivity.
- **Seal the Lake Road.** This will create a Lake Road Touring Loop and encourage visitor dispersal between Bellbridge and Tallangatta.
- **Corryong Airport Commercialisation.** Explore commercialisation of the Corryong Airport to attract new tourism experiences from high yield visitors.
- **Benambra-Corryong Road Sealing Feasibility Study.** Investigate the feasibility of sealing the Benambra-Corryong Road to encourage touring from Gippsland to the Upper Murray.
- **Tintaldra Foreshore Masterplan.** Develop a foreshore masterplan to enhance Tintaldra foreshore and town centre, including swimming holes, boat ramp, and riverfront infrastructure.
- **Strategic Infrastructure Advocacy.** Prioritise strategic infrastructure requirements and advocate for funding to support rural industry growth (e.g. energy production, transport infrastructure).
- **Tallangatta Showgrounds Precinct Activation Strategy.** Prepare a strategy that will identify infrastructure and amenity upgrades required to promote activation of the site, improve amenity and increase utilisation of the precinct. This should consider the needs of the equine industry through engagement with the sector.
- **Man From Snowy River Australian Music Festival.** There is opportunity to use the strength of the existing Man From Snowy River brand to develop a new Australian Music Festival. Council should aim to attract a private events operator to deliver the event in Corryong, considering the potential to broaden market appeal with a contemporary artist line up.
- **Pick Your Own Produce Event.** Develop a 'Pick your own' produce event, which allows visitors to experience Towong Shire's smaller scale farms and pick local produce. This could be a horticulture event.
- **Physical Collateral Review and Refresh.** Review and update the existing physical collateral in the marketplace to align to the newly developed brand strategy and to provide high quality visitor information.
- **Signage Strategy.** Develop and deliver a signage strategy that considers new signage with a cohesive brand approach, clear connection to place, improved hierarchy of signage, and removal of outdated and obsolete signage.
- **Omeo Highway Masterplan.** Prepare a masterplan for development of the Omeo Highway as a touring route linking Towong Shire with East Gippsland. The touring route should feature lookouts, large-scale artwork, tourists' facilities, interpretive signage, and be supported by a comprehensive marketing and promotional campaign.
- **Upper Murray Cross-Border Tourism Plan.** In conjunction with Snowy Valleys Council and local industry, develop a tourism plan for the development of the Upper Murray, with consideration to product development, marketing, and product packaging.
- **Concept Plan and Feasibility Study for Tallangatta's Notable Town Status.** Undertake a feasibility study and concept plan for the establishment of a cultural/museum complex and additional activations in Tallangatta, showcasing the history of the town that moved.
- **Dartmouth Masterplan.** Delivery of a Masterplan for revitalisation and activation of Dartmouth, including a splash park and play space, commercial activation of Dartmouth township and opportunities for further utilisation and activation of the Dartmouth Dam.



THEME 6








BRANDING, MARKETING AND AWARENESS

Support continued development and enhancement of industry in Towong's sub regions and strengthen collaboration across industry.

Rationale

- Lack of unified brand.
- Inability to leverage Tourism North East marketing with unclear positioning.
- Unclear brand to the consumer and lack of brand connection to place.

AREAS OF FOCUS

-  **Clarify brand(s) in the eye of the consumer.**
-  **Create engaging and motivating content.**
-  **Leverage Tourism North East marketing activities.**
-  **Promote touring loops to leverage regional visitation.**
-  **Deliver events aligned to Towong's unique positioning.**

Transformative Project: Branding and Digital Strategy

Location: Shire-wide

Build on the brand framework project currently being delivered by Tourism North East to deliver a consistent branding approach aligned to market understanding of the Shire.

A digital strategy is required to review the range of websites, social media accounts and physical collateral produced by the range of players. A Council-wide approach to digital and physical collateral should be undertaken to ensure consistency in quality.

Transformative Project: Content and Imagery Database

Location: Shire-wide

Delivery of a high quality imagery, video and content database is required to improve digital promotion and marketing activities.

The database should include nature-based assets, townships, public assets, and private businesses.

High quality imagery and content will encourage greater promotion from Tourism North East and allow the Shire to have greater promotion in marketing campaigns.

Transformative Project: Touring Itineraries

Location: Shire-wide

Following the development of a high quality website(s), develop a range of interactive touring itineraries to promote exploration of the Shire and dispersal across the broader region. These should include activities, attractions and dining along the route to allow visitors to plan their trip and encourage greater spend.

Key routes for promotion include the Snowy Valleys Way, Great River Road, and Melbourne-Kosciusko, as well as the new Lake touring route (to be formed following road sealing).

These should be able to be downloaded in PDF format for use in-region.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Man From Snowy River Australian Music Festival.** There is opportunity to use the strength of the existing Man From Snowy River brand to develop a new Australian Music Festival. Council should aim to attract a private events operator to deliver the event in Corryong, considering the potential to broaden market appeal with a contemporary artist line up.
- **Pick Your Own Produce Event.** Develop a 'Pick your own' produce event, which allows visitors to experience Towong Shire's smaller scale farms and pick local produce. This could be a horticulture event.
- **Physical Collateral Review and Refresh.** Review and update the existing physical collateral in the marketplace to align to the newly developed brand strategy and to provide high quality visitor information.
- **Signage Strategy.** Develop and deliver a signage strategy that considers new signage with a cohesive brand approach, clear connection to place, improved hierarchy of signage, and removal of outdated and obsolete signage.
- **Omeo Highway Masterplan.** Prepare a masterplan for development of the Omeo Highway as a touring route linking Towong Shire with East Gippsland. The touring route should feature lookouts, large-scale artwork, tourists' facilities, interpretive signage, and be supported by a comprehensive marketing and promotional campaign.
- **Upper Murray Cross-Border Tourism Plan.** In conjunction with Snowy Valleys Council and local industry, develop a tourism plan for the development of the Upper Murray, with consideration to product development, marketing, and product packaging.



THEME 7



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

Support continued development and enhancement of industry in Towong's sub regions and strengthen collaboration across industry.

Rationale

- Towong needs healthy businesses to drive tourism in the region.
- Disjointed community groups each working towards own agenda.
- Poor communication amongst operators in other parts of the Shire.
- Inability to share knowledge, experiences and keep up to date with Council and industry activities.

AREAS OF FOCUS



Engage industry and enhance collaboration.



Demonstrate the value and potential value of tourism to the local economy.



Encourage and support entrepreneurship.

**Transformative Project:
Half Yearly Tourism Industry Information and
Networking Forums**

**Location: Lake Hume, Mitta Valley and Upper
Murray sub-regions**

There is opportunity for a half-yearly information and networking event that connects businesses, provides them an update on Council activities, and allows industry to share their activities.

The delivery of this forum across the three sub-regions will provide a networking opportunity for locals, allow them to connect with other operators and enhance local relationships, and identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration between private operators, as well as private operators and Council. This will also assist in familiarising local tourism operators with other offerings across the Shire and enable them to become local advocates.

Ideally, the forums should include at least one representative from each local tourism association or community group to ensure all views are represented and all activities are reported on. There is opportunity for this to be held as an online forum to facilitate access from remote communities.

**Transformative Project:
Business Attraction and Investment
Facilitation Strategy**

Location: Shire-wide

Develop a Business Attraction Strategy which identifies relevant tourism investment opportunities to grow visitor demand and elevate the Shire's product offering.

This should include high quality accommodation and food and beverage operators, particularly operators that can deliver unique experiences that can be leveraged as hero assets. Council should consider the opportunity to identify specific sites that can be de-risked to encourage private sector investment.

This should include business attraction and activation activities, which promotes the Shire's advantages and incentivises business investment.

OTHER PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES



- **Encourage sign up to Tourism North East's Industry Development Program.** Council should consider identifying specific businesses to utilise the program to build tourism operator capacity and capabilities.
- **Better Approvals Process (in progress).** Progress the 'Better Approvals' process undertaken by Council, in collaboration with government and industry, to streamline planning permit applications, help businesses overcome regulatory barriers and support business. *Note: This project is also included in the Towong Shire EDS (refer Theme 4).*
- **Product and Experience Packaging.** Investigate product and experience packaging opportunities and engage with key businesses to deliver.
- **Workforce Attraction Strategy.** Prepare a Workforce Attraction Strategy – in collaboration with industry – to identify and address labour shortages as well as programs to upskill the labour force to meet industry needs (and increase local employment). *Note: This project is also included in the Towong Shire EDS (refer Theme 1).*



PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECTS

Five transformative projects have been identified as short-term priorities for development of the Shire's visitor economy.

These have been determined based on their alignment to target markets and potential to facilitate destination growth.

PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECT BELLBRIDGE BOATHOUSE

Bellbridge is a residential settlement on Lake Hume, only 18 minutes' drive from Albury. The village of Bellbridge has potential for growth, leveraging from its proximity to Albury Wodonga and being located on the deepest part of Lake Hume, it has water views all year round.

There is opportunity for Bellbridge to attract a boathouse/waterfront commercial food premises on the Lake Hume foreshore. A commercial food premises with moorings for visitors arriving by boat would create a destination that would service the boating market and also residents from Albury Wodonga.

A range of concept options could be suited to the location, including a café, restaurant or brewery. A site can be leased by Goulburn Murray Water for commercial use, leaving it to an expression of interest process to allow the private sector to develop concepts for consideration.

Project Cost \$3 Million (Private and Public Sector Investment)

Actions

1. Identify appropriate site/s on the Bellbridge Lakefront with Goulburn Murray Water that can support a commercial food/beverage destination.
2. Identify any public sector infrastructure that is required to enable the project.
3. Develop objectives in conjunction with Goulburn Murray Water for the establishment of a food/beverage destination.
4. Goulburn Murray Water to release an Expression of Interest for sites agreed.
5. Council and Tourism North East to assist the expression of interest process by promoting the opportunity to prospective investors.
6. Review and appoint a preferred EOI for the site.
7. Undertake a facilitative planning process to support the applicant.
8. Seek funding for any public sector infrastructure that will enable the project, such as moorings, parking, access, services.

Precedents

Nagambie Brewery



Spoons Swan Hill



Boardwalk Infrastructure and Moorings, Nagambie



PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECT MITTA MITTA ACTIVATION PLAN

Mitta Mitta is primed to be the next destination mountain bike mecca in Victoria's High Country. Stage 1 of the Mitta Mountain Bike Park is underway delivering around 35 kilometres of trails, with further stages to bring the total network to over 70 kilometres.

A beautiful village on the intersection of the Mitta Mitta River and Snowy Creek, the township of Mitta Mitta is a hidden gem with significant potential as a tourism village.

The mountain bike park will drive demand for services in town, including the need for shuttle services, accommodation, food, beverage, bike hire and tour guides. There is a need to undertake a plan which responds to the opportunity presented by the mountain bike park investment in order to capture economic benefit from future visitor markets.

The Mitta Mitta Activation Plan will include the following elements:

- Market assessment for visitor accommodation.
- Township plan to identify opportunities for future growth.
- Activation plan including consideration of future events to drive visitation and retail spaces.
- Township amenity improvements.
- Further trail activation.
- Private sector investment opportunities.
- Need for infrastructure to support investment (e.g: sewer, power water).
- Any future land use planning needed to support growth.
- Connection with Dartmouth.

Project Cost \$40,000 (Activation Plan)

Actions

1. Seek funding public sector funding to support the activation plan.
2. Undertake a tender process to appoint a consultant to prepare the plan in conjunction with Council and the community.

Precedent

Derby, Tasmania

Derby, a former tin mining town in Northern Tasmania has become a mecca for mountain biking. Over a ten-year period, the town has attracted millions of dollars in funding for trails to establish itself as one of the leading mountain bike destinations in Australia.

The town has attracted targeted investment in visitor accommodation, food and beverage vendors and bike related services. In order for Mitta Mitta to be successful as a mountain bike destination it needs the complementary products and experiences.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECT

MOUNT ELLIOT GRAVITY AND ADVENTURE PARK

The Corryong Mt Elliott Gravity Park has strong community support and was previously identified as an opportunity in the Upper Murray Vision 2030 Plan as an opportunity and is acknowledged in the Municipality Recovery Plan.

Mt Elliott is home to a hang-gliding launch pad and has a steep vertical drop of 600 metres also suited to gravity mountain biking, as well as development of an adventure playground.

Mt Elliott is well suited to the establishment of a shuttled gravity park. The shuttle services can support both hang gliding and mountain biking.

Principles for Mt Elliott Gravity and Adventure Park include:

- Support multiple gravity related recreation pursuits.
- Establish a range of gravity and flow trails for a variety of markets.
- Use the steep vertical of Mt Elliott to support downhill mountain biking.
- Create linkages with Corryong.
- Encourage youth engagement in mountain biking.
- Encourage active recreation in Corryong's township.

Project Cost \$4 million

Actions

1. Undertake a feasibility study and masterplan for establishment of the Mt Elliott Gravity Park. This should include consideration of other gravity related activities such as hang gliding.
2. Establish a community and stakeholder advisory group to oversee the project delivery. This includes linkage with the Upper Murray township and community, delivery, maintenance and management longer term.
3. Seek funding for delivery of the mountain bike park.
4. Undertake required planning studies to support the planning approval.

Precedent

Skyline Gravity Park, Rotorua



PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECT

CUDGEWA VALLEY WILDERNESS RETREAT

The Cudgewa Valley sits between two of the more impressive nature based reserves in Towong – Burrowa Pine National Park and Mitta Mitta State Park. The reserves rise 1000 metres above sea level and provide stunning views of the alpine region. The flora, fauna and geology of both parks are unique and inspiring rock formations create awe inspiring scenery.

There are walks in both parks that are underutilised and there is opportunity to increase the level of visitation to both parks.

The establishment of a wilderness retreat in the beautiful Cudgewa Valley would take in the views of Burrowa Pine National Park and Mitta Mitta National Park.

The wilderness retreat would be a private sector led opportunity, which would be delivered on private land or potentially a leasehold of Parks Victoria land if deemed appropriate.

Project Cost \$5-\$7 Million (Private Sector Investment)

Actions

1. Undertake a site assessment to identify potential locations suited to a wilderness retreat, either on private land or public land.
2. Undertake a market assessment and feasibility study to support the proposal.
3. Identify any public sector investment needed to support the investment, such as services and infrastructure.

Precedent

Paperbark Camp, NSW

Paperbark Camp, in Jervis Bay NSW, offers a safari style glamping experience within an integrated precinct. This accommodation leverages the natural environment to create isolated and luxurious accommodation experiences, whilst an onsite restaurants and hub building provides visitor amenity and services.

Incorporation of an onsite restaurant also allows Paperbark Camp to host private functions and small scale events.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECT

TALLANGATTA FORESHORE STAGE 1

DESTINATION PLAYGROUND, CAFE AND TRAIL

Towong Shire Council has embarked on a masterplan for the Tallangatta Foreshore overlooking Lake Hume. The precinct already has a tourist park, parkland and boat launching facilities, however there is potential to activate this part of town further.

The masterplan identifies the opportunity for a destination playground, which can be further supported by a café overlooking Lake Hume. There have been many examples of destination playgrounds creating new destinations in regional areas of Australia. The expansion of the existing splash park may also be considered to provide water-based play area for children and youth when the Lake has receded. A trail network should also be considered to complement the reserve and activate the space.



Project Cost \$5 Million (Public Sector Investment)

Actions

1. Prepare a business case for investment in the playground, café and trails as part of stage 1 delivery of the masterplan.
2. Seek funding for implementation of stage 1.
3. Undertake detailed design and planning for implementation.

Precedents

Rockhampton Foreshore Playground



Bright Splashpark



PRIORITY INVESTMENT PROJECT

MURRAY RIVER MULTI-DAY CANOE TRAIL

Delivery of a multi-day canoe trail experience will deliver a unique experience of Australia's longest river. The trail will stop at key townships to encourage private operators to deliver accommodation and dining experiences that will encourage visitor spend.

This will provide opportunities for private tour operators, as well as shuttle services.

The Glenelg River Canoe Trail is the only other experience in Victoria that offers a multi-day canoe experience.

Investment in launching areas, caravan and camping and signage is needed to support the development of the trail.

A feasibility study of the trail opportunity is needed. If well developed this could be established as a unique hero product of the Towong.

An example of the itinerary for the Upper Murray Canoe Trail is:

- Towong – Tintaldra
- Tintaldra – Neils Reserve
- Neils Reserve – Walwa/Jingellic
- Walwa/Jingellic -Burrowye Reserve
- Burrowye Reserve – Granya
- Granya – Bellbridge

Project Cost \$40,000 (Feasibility Study)

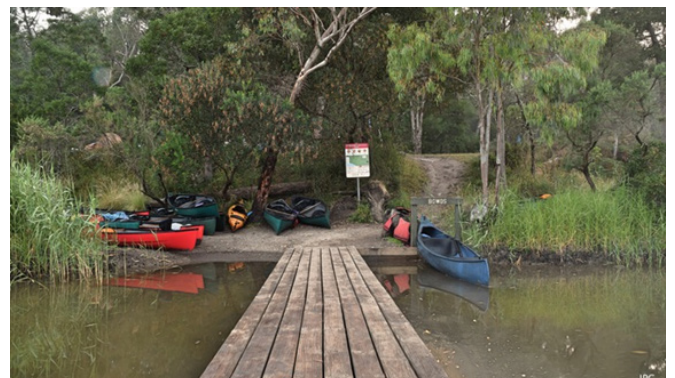
Actions

1. Seek Government funding support for a feasibility study.
2. Undertake a feasibility study to establish the nightly stopover points targeted to appropriate distances each day. This needs to consider the towns and villages along the length of the Murray River. The feasibility study will consider infrastructure and accommodation requirements to support the trail.

Precedent:

Glenelg River Canoe Trail

Stretching from Dartmoor to Nelson, the Glenelg River Canoe Trail meanders through the lower reaches of the Glenelg River. The trail is 75 kilometres in length and includes camp grounds along the length of the river. It is one of the very few established multi day canoe trails in Victoria.



ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan is required to support the implementation of the DMP, as it provides a pathway to deliver the projects and opportunities identified in the Strategic Framework.

The Action Plan highlights the actions to be undertaken by Council to advocate for and deliver public sector projects, as well as to facilitate private sector opportunities through planning and development.

The following Action Plan provides a guide for the delivery of the project opportunities identified in the Destination Management Plan over the next five years. It includes relevant actions, responsible stakeholders, and indicative timeframes categorised as follows:

- Short term (1 year);
- Medium term (2-3 years);
- Long term (3-5+ years); and
- Ongoing.

The Action Plan also details the relevant location for each project, which can range from a location-specific, sub-regional to a Shire wide opportunity.

The DMP will be implemented over time in partnership between Council (led by the Economic Development and Tourism team within the Community and Planning directorate), as well as government agencies, local business and industry representatives, private investors and the community.

The DMP will be reviewed every five years to ensure it continues to align to industry needs, market demand and opportunities, and is aligned to Council priorities.





Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame	
Holiday Park Reinvestment Program	Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a detailed assessment of the upgrades required to enhance the infrastructure, amenity and accommodation offerings at holiday parks across the Shire. 	Lead Council	Short term	
	Mitta Mitta				
	Walwa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop masterplans and feasibility studies for the Council-managed Holiday Parks. 	Partner Private Sector		
	Colac Colac				
	Dartmouth				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council to consider incentives that can be provided to the privately owned businesses to encourage upgrades.
Cudgewa Valley Wilderness Retreat	Cudgewa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a site assessment to identify potential locations suited to a wilderness retreat, either on private land or public land. 	Lead Private Sector	Medium term	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a market assessment and feasibility study to support the proposal. 	Partner Council		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any public sector investment needed to support the investment, such as services and infrastructure. 			
Small Scale Accommodation Interventions:	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential locations that provide a strategic opportunity for investment considering vantage points, secluded wilderness locations but reasonable proximity to nearest towns. 	Lead Private Sector	Short term	
	Tallangatta				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-grid Tiny Home Program Tallangatta Eco-cabins Jervis Creek Eco-cabins 	Jervis Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and undertake an information session for land owners and businesses wishing to consider on farm or visitor eco accommodation. Provide information relating to planning regulations and processes, case studies, costs and potential demand using data from TNE (Accommodation market research). Consider sites that can be incorporated in the Lake Hume Activation Plan. 		Partner Council
		Upper Murray Wilderness Fishing Lodge	Upper Murray Subregion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the land owner to prepare concept designs to promote the opportunities. Promote the concept images to potential private investors. Engage with RDV TNE to assist with promotion of the opportunity.



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Murray River Glamping	Upper Murray Subregion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an audit of Crown land or Council owned sites for potential development of glamping, taking into consideration zoning, flood overlays, access to services and wastewater considerations. Promote the sites to private investors, including those with interest in developing nature-based experiences such as the Murray River Multi-day Canoe Trail. 	<p>Lead Private Sector</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Short term
Lake Hume Lakeside Resort	Bellbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment of potential sites for development of a Resort at Bellbridge, considering views over Lake Hume, proximity to the new foreshore commercial precinct however seclusion from the residential population. Promote the sites to private investors and facilitate development. Incorporate this into the Lake Hume Activation Plan. 	<p>Lead Private Sector</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Long term
Corryong Hotel Motel Revitalisation	Corryong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the private sector to develop a feasibility study for reinvestment including developing an understanding of market demand and ROI. 	<p>Lead Private Sector</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Short term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Corryong Distillery	Corryong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key sites for development of a distillery in Corryong, including exploration of co-location with the Corryong golf course. The sites should be in proximity to town but leverage the natural aspect and provide immersion in the landscape. Prepare concept designs in collaboration with private operators Undertake a prospectus for the development of a high quality distillery in Corryong. Promote the opportunity to prospective investors. 	Lead Private Sector Partner Council	Medium term
Bellbridge Boathouse	Bellbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate site/s on the Bellbridge Lakefront with Goulburn Murray Water that can support a commercial food/beverage destination. Identify any public sector infrastructure that is required to enable the project. Develop objectives in conjunction with Goulburn Murray Water for the establishment of a food/beverage destination. Goulburn Murray Water to release an Expression of Interest for sites agreed. Council and Tourism North East to assist the expression of interest process by promoting the opportunity to prospective investors. Review and appoint a preferred EOI for the site. Undertake a facilitative planning process to support the applicant. Seek funding for any public sector infrastructure that will enable the project, such as moorings, parking, access, services. 	Lead Private Sector Partner Council	Short term
Old Tallangatta Butter Factory Revitalisation	Old Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment of the site to identify infrastructure requirements to support bump-in, pop-up events. Promote use of the site in the short-term to the private sector for bump-in, pop-up events, including galleries, music events, markets, food events and private social events such as weddings. Undertake a feasibility to determine the best options for the long-term use of the site. 	Lead Private Sector Partner Council	Short term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Shipping Container Investment	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with existing private operators and potential new investors to identify interest in establishing a food and beverage business in a location such as Bethanga and Mitta Mitta which are currently hindered by a lack of sewerage. Council to seek funding for investment in shipping containers to support new food and beverage operators in the interim. Deliver the shipping containers in key strategic locations with high visitor numbers, such as the Lake Hume foreshore. 	Lead Council Partner Council	Short term
Peak-period Mobile Food Van	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the opportunity to prospective food and beverage businesses. Identify potential locations for peak-period use, such as National Parks and lakes. 	Lead Private Sector Partner Council	Short term
Farmgate Prospectus	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a high level prospectus that will showcase the benefits of diversification through delivery of a farmgate experience. Promote the prospectus to key business operators. 	Lead Council Partner Council	Short term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Corryong Golf Course Redevelopment	Corryong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a masterplan for the Golf Course with consideration of the quality required to become a leading golf destination in Victoria, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation A central hub building High quality facilities Potential incorporation of a distillery or other unique dining or beverage experience Undertake an EOI process for redevelopment of the golf course. 	<p>Lead Private Sector</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Medium term
Murray River Multi-Day Canoe Trail	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek Government funding support for a feasibility study. Undertake a feasibility study to establish the nightly stopover points targeted to appropriate distances each day. This needs to consider the towns and villages along the length of the Murray River. The feasibility study will consider infrastructure and accommodation requirements to support the trail. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Private Operators</p>	Short term
Lake Hume Masterplan	<p>Lake Hume Subregion</p> <p>Tallangatta Subregion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a masterplan to enhance and activate Lake Hume, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure needs at key locations to improve access and activation, such as boat ramps, piers, floating pontoons, swimming holes Private sector activation opportunities such as on-water dining, accommodation, and floating water parks Regulatory constraints 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner GMW</p> <p>State Water</p> <p>MDBA</p> <p>Neighbouring LGAs</p>	Short term
Visitor Experience Enhancement Plan at Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park	<p>Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park</p> <p>Mount Granya State Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with Parks Victoria, develop visitor experience enhancement plans for the activation of Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park and Mount Granya State Park. The plans should include development of Summit Trail, Falls Lookout and a new elevated Summit Lookout. Consideration should be given to infrastructure required for the activation of the park, including trail, lookout and signage infrastructure. 	<p>Lead Parks Victoria</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Short term
Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park Hub	Mitta Mitta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake discussions with DELWP regarding use or potential purchase of the old Depot site in Mitta Mitta. Support the Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park through development of an Equipment Hire, Café and Social Enterprise Hub. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner DEWLP</p> <p>Industry</p>	Short term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Fishing Product Development Action Plan	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an audit and gap analysis of existing infrastructure for increased fishing, considering infrastructure, access points, jetties, moorings, fishing events, trout and salmon farm opportunities. Develop an action plan for prioritised investment in infrastructure at strategic locations. Ensure inclusion of fishing information on the destinations websites. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner DEWLP Parks Victoria GMW</p>	Medium term
Mount Mitta Mitta Summit Walking Trail	Mount Mitta Mitta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a feasibility study for the delivery of a summit walking trail to Mount Mitta Mitta. 	<p>Lead Parks Victoria</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Long term
Mount Lawson Activation	Mount Lawson State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Traditional Owners to identify Indigenous cultural heritage sites and potential interpretation and activation of the sites. Work with Parks Victoria to formalise and promote trails at Mount Lawson. 	<p>Lead Parks Victoria</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Medium term
Parks Victoria Information Upgrade	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Parks Victoria to upgrade the digital information available for Towong Shire parks to enable improved visitor awareness and access to the parks. 	<p>Lead Parks Victoria</p> <p>Partner Council</p>	Short term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Murray River Activation Project	Upper Murray Subregion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify investment opportunities along the Murray River, including infrastructure, product and experiences. Prioritise investment opportunities and promote to investors. 	Lead Council	Short term
	Lake Hume Subregion		Partner DEWLP Parks Victoria GMW	
Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct Masterplan	Mitta Mitta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a masterplan for the Mitta Mitta Riverfront Precinct which considers pedestrian and vehicle flows, river access sites and other planning considerations to address peak period capacity issues. 	Lead Council Partner Crown Land Managers	Short term
Equine Trails Enhancement	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with DELWP to undertake an assessment of existing parks to identify opportunities for new and enhanced bush riding horse trails. Review existing trails (e.g. HCRT) to ensure they are equine friendly where appropriate, and ensure promotion of these trails. 	Lead Council Partner DEWLP Upper Murray Horseman's Association	Medium term
Lake Banimboola Masterplan	Dartmouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a precinct masterplan to establish the Lake as a visitor destination, including consideration of new public infrastructure, access, trails, and water-based activities. Work with GMW and the local community to identify site needs. 	Lead Council Partner GMW Community	Short term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Mitta Mitta Destination Mountain Bike Park	Mitta Mitta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support delivery of Stage 1 of the Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park. Prepare a business case to advocate for funding for Stage 2 of the Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park. 	Lead Council Partner Mitta Valley Inc	Short term
High Country Rail Trail Improvement and Extension	Shelley to Corryong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding to deliver the High Country Rail Trail extension from Shelley to Corryong. Seek funding for upgrades to existing HCRT. 	Lead Council	Medium term
Mt Elliot Gravity and Adventure Park	Corryong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a feasibility study and masterplan for establishment of the Mt Elliot Gravity Park. This should include consideration of other gravity related activities such as hang gliding. Establish a community and stakeholder advisory group to oversee the project delivery. This includes linkage with the Upper Murray township and community, delivery, maintenance and management longer term. Seek funding for delivery of the mountain bike park. Undertake required planning studies to support the planning approval. 	Lead Council	Short term
Tallangatta Gravity Mountain Bike Park	Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a masterplan, in conjunction with the private land owner/operator, for the development of a gravity mountain bike park in Tallangatta. Work with DELWP to identify the opportunity for the establishment of cross-country trails in the DELWP State Forest adjoining the site. 	Lead Council Partner Private Sector DEWLP	Long term
Support Development of Cycling Events	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support delivery and promotion of the inaugural Upper Murray Road Race Victorian Road Cycling Series and Mitta Valley Gravel Unravel events. Engage with private operators Consider opportunities for unique activations and food, beverage and event business operator engagement to deliver pre, during and post event experiences to enhance visitor satisfaction. 	Lead Council	Short term
Gravel and Cycle Loops	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an audit of existing gravel and road cycle loops that could be formalised, including any infrastructure upgrades required. Develop a range of routes, including route names, and develop digital itineraries, signage and promotion. 	Lead Council	Short term
Mountain Bike Trail Investment	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver Council's mountain bike strategy. 	Lead Council	Ongoing

THEME 5 INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITY AND ACTIVATION



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Township Enhancement Program	Bellbridge Corryong Mitta Mitta Eskdale Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to enhance and activate the town centres of community and service hubs in Towong (including Bellbridge, Corryong, Mitta Mitta, Eskdale and Tallangatta). This will help support population attraction by focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streetscaping improvements and general beautification activities Public art installations Open spaces and plantings Pedestrianising key precincts 	Lead Council	Ongoing
Bellbridge Village Masterplan	Bellbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a masterplan for a new village centre in Bellbridge to allow for commercial activation of the town. 	Lead Council	Short term
Mitta Mitta Activation Plan	Mitta Mitta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding public sector funding to support the activation plan. Undertake a tender process to appoint a consultant to prepare the plan in conjunction with Council and the community. 	Lead Council Partner North East Water	Short term
Tallangatta Foreshore Stage 1 Destination Playground, Cafe and Trail	Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a business case for investment in the playground, café and trails as part of stage 1 delivery of the masterplan. Seek funding for implementation of stage 1. Undertake detailed design and planning for implementation. 	Lead Council	Short term
Digital Infrastructure Strategy (in progress)	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver and implement the Digital Infrastructure Strategy, to ensure residents and businesses to have sufficient mobile and internet connectivity. 	Lead Council	Short term
Seal the Lake Road	Tallangatta to Bellbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a scoping study to identify the length of road sealing and cost required to Seal the Lake Road. Undertake road sealing and seek funding where required. Promote the Lake Road Touring Loop to encourage visitor dispersal between Bellbridge and Tallangatta. Incorporate this project into the Activating Lake Hume Masterplan. 	Lead Council	Short term

THEME 5 INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITY AND ACTIVATION



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Benambra-Corryong Road Sealing Feasibility Study	Corryong to Benambra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a feasibility study to identify the need and demand for sealing of the sealing the Benambra-Corryong Road to facilitate touring from Gippsland to the Upper Murray. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Regional Roads Victoria</p>	Medium term
Tintaldra Foreshore Masterplan	Tintaldra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a foreshore masterplan to enhance Tintaldra foreshore and town centre, including swimming holes, boat ramp, and riverfront infrastructure. As required, work with State Government agencies to implement the masterplan. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner DELWP Parks Victoria GMW</p>	Medium term
Infrastructure Advocacy	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritise strategic infrastructure requirements to support rural industry growth (e.g. energy production, transport infrastructure, etc.) and advocate for funding from relevant government agencies/private investors. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Victorian/ Federal Government</p>	Medium term
Tallangatta Showgrounds Precinct Activation Strategy	Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake engagement with existing user groups of the site (including the equine industry) to ensure stakeholder needs and vision for the site are captured. Prepare a precinct activation strategy that will identify infrastructure and amenity upgrades required to promote activation of the site, improve amenity and increase utilisation of the precinct. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Equine Sector</p>	Short term
Concept Plan and Feasibility Study for Tallangatta's Notable Town Status	Tallangatta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a comprehensive community engagement process that will identify tourism product opportunities that align with celebrating Tallangatta's unique 1950s heritage. Undertake a feasibility study for the cultural / museum complex. Develop architectural concept plans for the proposed cultural/museum complex. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Tallangatta Heritage Group Community</p>	Short to medium term
Dartmouth Masterplan	Dartmouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of a Masterplan for revitalisation and activation of Dartmouth, including a splash park and play space, commercial activation of Dartmouth township and opportunities for further utilisation and activation of the Dartmouth Dam. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner DEWLP Parks Victoria GMW</p>	Medium term



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Branding and Digital Strategy	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and implement the findings of the brand framework project being undertaken. Employ a digital agency to undertake a detailed digital strategy that considers the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline and upgrade Council's websites Ensure greater promotion through Tourism North East 	Lead Council Partner Digital Agency	Short term
Content and Imagery Database	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a creative agency to create a high quality imagery, video and content database. Provide tourism operators with access to the database for use in marketing collateral. Undertake a digital content and imagery review and update annually. 	Lead Council Partner Creative Agency	Short term
Touring Itineraries	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ a creative agency to develop a range of interactive touring itineraries to promote exploration. 	Lead Council Partner Creative Agency	Short term
Man From Snowy River Australian Music Festival	Corryong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake discussions with potential private events operators to investigate the opportunity to deliver the event in Corryong. Work with a private events operator to develop the concept for the event. 	Lead Council Partner Private Event Operator	Long term
'Pick Your Own' Produce Event	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify producers, such as fruit, horticulture and other produce-based businesses, that could participate in an open farm or pick your own produce event. Explore opportunity to work with Surrounding LGA's or Tourism North East to develop the event. 	Lead Council Partner Industry	Short term
Physical Collateral Review and Refresh	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a database of 'visitor ready' products and experiences, nature-based assets and other visitor infrastructure. Engage a creative agency to review and update the existing physical collateral in the marketplace to align to the newly developed brand strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official Visitor Guide Regional touring maps Distribute the guide to VICs, key businesses and attractions. 	Lead Council	Short term

THEME 6 BRANDING, MARKETING AND AWARENESS



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Signage Strategy	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an audit of the existing signage to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dilapidated or incorrect signage to be removed and replaced Locations for additional brown tourist signage Removal of cluttered signage, particularly at town entry locations Locations for improved directional signage Need to deliver streamlined branded signage Implement the signage strategy. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Regional Roads Victoria</p>	Short term
Omeo Highway Masterplan	Upper Murray Subregion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a masterplan for development of the Omeo Highway as a touring route linking Towong Shire with East Gippsland, including consideration of feature lookouts, large-scale artwork, tourists' facilities, interpretive signage. Develop a digital touring route to be featured on the Shire's website to promote use of the route. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner East Gippsland Shire Council</p> <p>Regional Roads Victoria</p>	Medium term
Upper Murray Cross-Border Tourism Plan	Upper Murray Subregion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with Snowy Valleys Council and local industry, develop a tourism plan for the development of the Upper Murray, with consideration to product development, marketing, and product packaging. 	<p>Lead Council</p> <p>Partner Snowy Valleys Council</p>	Short term

THEME 7 INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Half Yearly Tourism Industry Information and Networking Forums	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to enhance and activate the town centres of community and service hubs in Towong (including Bellbridge, Corryong, Mitta Mitta, Eskdale and Tallangatta). This will help support population attraction by focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streetscaping improvements and general beautification activities Public art installations Open spaces and plantings Pedestrianising key precincts 	Lead Council Partner Local Tourism Associations	Ongoing
Business Attraction and Investment Facilitation Strategy	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Business Attraction Strategy which identifies relevant tourism investment opportunities to grow visitor demand and elevate the Shire's product offering. This should include the development of a high level document that demonstrates the private sector investment opportunities and showcases sites that have been de-risked to encourage private sector investment. 	Lead Council Partner Industry	Short term
Encourage sign up to Tourism North East's Industry Development Program	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify operators that should be targeted to sign up to the program, considering businesses which align strongly to Tourism North East's product pillars. 	Lead Council Partner Industry	Short term
Better Approvals Process (in progress)	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress the 'Better Approvals' process undertaken by Council, in collaboration with government and industry, to streamline planning permit applications, help businesses overcome regulatory barriers and support business investment. 	Lead Council	Short term and ongoing

THEME 7
**INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND
 COLLABORATION**



Project	Location	Action	Stakeholder/s	Time frame
Product and Experience Packaging	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Liaise with surrounding Councils to identify opportunities for product packaging. · Develop product packages and promote on newly formed website. 	Lead Council Partner Albury City Council Wodonga City Council Snowy Valleys Council Upper Murray Inc	Short term
Workforce Attraction Strategy	Shire-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Undertake a targeted employment attraction strategy for the tourism sector, focusing on the specific needs of businesses. This will involve collaboration with industry to understand labour gaps/needs, as well as opportunities to attract and service workers to the Shire. · This may be undertaken a regional or sub regional level with involvement from TNE and other industry bodies. 	Lead Council Partner Industry	Short term

Agenda

Audit and Risk Committee

Tallangatta Council Chamber and Microsoft Teams

Thursday 17 March 2022

This information is available in alternative formats on request

**AGENDA FOR THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE TO BE HELD AT THE
TALLANGATTA COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 17
MARCH 2022 COMMENCING AT 9AM.**

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Member and Officer presence at the meeting

COMMITTEE	Mr Spencer Rich (Chair) Ms Jessica Campbell Ms Kira Bryant Cr Andrew Whitehead (Mayor)
IN ATTENDANCE	Ms Juliana Phelps (Chief Executive Officer) Ms Emma Woolaston (Director Corporate and Organisational Development)

1 Apologies and granting of leave of absence

2 Declaration of pecuniary interest and/or conflict

For the purpose of this section, Councillors, officers and other Audit and Risk Committee members must disclose conflicts of interest in the manner required by the Council's Governance Rules in accordance with Part 6, Division 2 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

3 Confirmation of minutes

The previous meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee was held on 21 September 2021 and the minutes are attached at [Appendix 1](#) for review and confirmation.

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

**THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE 21 SEPTEMBER 2021 MEETING BE CONFIRMED.
CARRIED**

4 Actions arising from previous meetings

Meeting	Meeting ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status
26 March 2019	13.1	Develop an Action Plan re: VAGO Best Practice Report: Managing the Environmental Impacts of Domestic Wastewater (Sep18)	DIE	No recommendations were issued for local government entities (only for related agencies). Findings will be tabled at a future Audit and Risk Committee Meeting.
26 March 2019	15	Future agenda items: Action plans in relation to each of the following: -OHS Internal Audit -MEMP Audit -Delivering Local Government Services (VAGO Report) -Local Government Insurance Risks (VAGO Report)	CEO	An overview of the OHS internal audit results is provided at item 9.1. All other items were closed at prior meetings.
29 June 2021	5.2	Recruitment is to take place to fill the position currently filled by Mr Rob Lees	DCOD	The Position Description has been reviewed and is being finalised prior to re-advertising.

**MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT**

THAT THE UPDATES ON ACTIONS ARISING BE NOTED.

CARRIED

5 Audit and Risk Committee

5.1 Audit and Risk Committee Membership

The position description for an Audit and Risk Committee member has been under review to ensure compliance to the *Local Government Act 2020* and the currently vacant position will be advertised shortly.

The terms of other members of the Committee members are due to expire as follows:

Spencer Rich – 7 July 2023

Kira Bryant – 7 July 2023

Jessica Campbell – 8 September 2023.

CR WHITEHEAD

MS BRYANT

THAT THE UPDATE ON AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP BE NOTED.

CARRIED

5.2 Audit and Risk Committee Self-Assessment Results

Under the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Audit and Risk Committee is required to complete an annual assessment of its performance. A self-assessment template was provided to the Committee late last year and the results are attached at [Appendix 2](#).

Feedback was broadly positive and a ratings of 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' were limited to one such ranking for selected questions. These ratings identified the following opportunities for improvement put forward for Committee discussion and feedback:

- Greater clarity could be provided within the Committee Charter as to roles and responsibilities, and how Committee members have sufficient authority to discharge them
- Direction could be provided as to the avenues for Committee Members to access advice, training and knowledge to assist them in their roles
- The Committee could be more probing and challenging
- The Committee could be provided with further education as to Council's risk frameworks and internal controls
- The Committee could receive more information regarding financial reporting requirements, compliance and regulatory environments and emerging business risks
- The Committee Charter could be reviewed.

Free text comments indicated an appreciation of recent improvements including the internal audit update and annual workplan. There was a suggestion that the Committee could break into sub-groups to consider elements of the agenda which can be quite large, to enable them to probe further into the detail.

**MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT**

THAT THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE PAPERS BE PROVIDED EARLIER TO PROVIDE FOR MORE REVIEW, PROBING AND CHALLENGING.

CARRIED

5.3 Audit and Risk Committee Charter

The *Audit and Risk Committee Charter* was last adopted by the Council on 1 September 2020 in time to meet the new requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It is timely for a further review and a draft updated Charter is attached at [Appendix 3](#) for comparison to the current charter at [Appendix 4](#).

No material changes to the operation of the Audit and Risk Committee have been proposed however the Charter has been substantially updated in line with contemporary charters meeting the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Explicit references to requirements of the *Act* have been included and some areas have been simplified for clarity.

**CR WHITEHEAD
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE COMMITTEE PROVIDE FURTHER FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE CHARTER AT THE NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING.

CARRIED

5.4 Meeting Schedule

According to the Committee's Annual Work Plan, the Committee is to meet in September, November, February, April and June. Due to scheduling difficulties only one meeting has been held so far in FY21/22, which was in September 2021. The Work Plan agenda items for November and February have been combined into this March agenda. Some agenda items have been carried forward to balance the volume of items, as noted at the relevant agenda items within this agenda. It is noted that the Committee must meet at least four times a year and so an additional two meetings will be scheduled prior to the end of the financial year. It is recommended

that one meeting is to be held in May and another in June to review the results of VAGO's Interim Audit.

**MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT**

THAT AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETINGS BE SCHEDULED IN MAY AND JUNE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020 AND COMPLETE THE ANNUAL WORK PLAN.

CARRIED

6 Risk Management

6.1 Strategic Risk Register

As noted at the September Committee Meeting, strategic risks are those risks which by nature may have a direct impact upon the achievement of the overall objectives of Council rather than any discrete part of it, or which cut across operational boundaries. These may arise inherently from Council's mandate or from the changing operating environment. Strategic risks are assessed according to likelihood and consequence, and existing controls and future treatments are identified.

Council's last updated Strategic Risk Register is attached at [Appendix 5](#) for review and feedback and will also be reviewed by Councillor officers. An updated Strategic Risk Register will be prepared based on feedback and put back to the Audit and Risk Committee at the next meeting for recommendation to Council.

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE COMMITTEE PROVIDE FURTHER FEEDBACK ON THE STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AT THE NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING.

CARRIED

6.2 Significant Operational Changes

There have been no notable operational changes since the last Audit and Risk Committee Meeting.

Implementation of a new business system across Rating, Property, Receipting and Animal Management has commenced with the vendor Councilwise, who was selected following a robust procurement process. The vendor has a number of Victorian council clients including Alpine Shire Council who successfully implemented their solution in 2020/21. Implementation is anticipated to be completed by July 2022. The implementation is being undertaken in collaboration with Indigo Shire Council.

**MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT**

**THAT THE UPDATE ON SIGNIFICANT OPERATIONAL CHANGES BE NOTED.
CARRIED**

6.3 Risk Management Action Plan

An update will be provided at the next meeting.

6.4 Business Continuity Plan

The Business Continuity Plan was tested in August 2021. The test involved a shortage of drivers for our waste collection vehicles due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Recommended improvements to the Plan were agreed by the participants and the updated version of the Plan is under finalisation.

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

**THAT THE UPDATE ON THE BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN BE NOTED.
CARRIED**

6.5 Emergency Management

Officers have progressed work on shared relief centre agreements with Indigo and Alpine Shire Councils to expand emergency relief capacity. Officers continue to work with the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) to progress the *Municipal Emergency Management Plan*.

**MS BRYANT
CR WHITEHEAD**

THAT THE UPDATE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BE NOTED.

CARRIED

6.6 Fraud Controls

An update will be provided at the next Meeting.

6.7 Occupational Health and Safety

An update on Occupational Health and Safety matters is contained in the bi-monthly Occupational Health and Safety Report. This report is presented at the Council meeting. The latest Occupational Health and Safety bi-monthly report is attached at [Appendix 6](#).

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT BE NOTED.

CARRIED

7 Human resources

Action planning has been underway regarding a Workforce Survey conducted in 2021. Workshops have been held with staff and the Senior Management Team is finalising the Action Plan. Quick wins such as requested changes to team meetings have been put in place.

Key policy requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* have been completed including the development of a Recruitment Policy, a Workforce Plan and a CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy.

The Coordinator People and Culture role is currently vacant and has been advertised twice since becoming vacant; no suitable candidates have yet been identified. Anecdotally there are regional challenges in recruiting human resources staff and the role will be put on hold to allow the market to refresh. The Human Resources Officer has secured an internal progression opportunity and an interim Human Resources Officer has been in place while the permanent role has been recruited. The successful candidate for the permanent role commenced with Council on 15 March.

Initiatives such as the development of the People Plan, implementation of a Human Resources Information System and the introduction of Human Resources metrics have been on hold while staffing levels have been low. An external contractor may be sought to progress the development of the People Plan.

Staffing levels

Council operated with 104.1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff at 31 December 2021 against an annual budget of 110.5 FTE.

Council has a number of vacancies. The vacant positions at the end of 31 December 2021 included:

- Coordinator Asset Inspection
- Coordinator Works
- Coordinator People and Culture
- Technical Officer Maintenance
- Human Resources Officer
- Educator – Tallangatta.

Recruitment continues to address selected role vacancies.

MS CAMPBELL

MS BRYANT

THAT THE HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE BE NOTED.

CARRIED

8 Financial and Performance Reporting

8.1 Quarterly Budget Report

The Quarterly Budget Report as at 31 December 2021 is attached at [Appendix 7](#).

**MS BRYANT
CR WHITEHEAD**

**THAT THE QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT FOR 31 DECEMBER 2021 BE NOTED.
CARRIED**

9 Internal Audit

9.1 OHS Management System Audit

An Occupational Health and Safety Management System audit was conducted in 2021 by the external firm Centium and a full debrief will be provided to the Committee. The Audit results are provided at [Appendix 8](#).

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

**THAT THE UPDATE ON COUNCIL'S OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AUDIT BE NOTED.**

CARRIED

9.2 Internal Audit Plan

A high level audit of Records Management practices has been conducted and a briefing will be conducted at an upcoming committee meeting.

A payroll audit had also been planned for FY21/22; given recent changes in staffing in the Human Resources and Finance teams it is proposed that this is postponed to FY22/23. Given the heightened risks associated with cyber security it is proposed that an IT Security audit, previously under consideration for FY22/23, is brought forward into FY21/22.

**MS CAMPBELL
CR WHITEHEAD**

**THAT THE PAYROLL AUDIT BE RESCHEDULED TO FY22/23 AND REPLACED
WITH AN IT SECURITY AUDIT DURING FY21/22.**

CARRIED

9.3 Sector Reviews – Internal Responses

No sector reviews are tabled for this Meeting.

10 Compliance

10.1 Gender Equality Act 2020

The Gender Equality Act 2020 commenced on 31 March 2021 with the purpose of improving workplace gender equality in the Victoria public sector, universities and local councils. Requirements include:

- The conduct of a workplace gender audit;
- Development and implementation of a Gender Equality Action Plan every four years, with the first due by March 2021 (extended from December 2021);
- A public report on progress in relation to workplace gender equality, with the first due by 31 October 2023;
- The conduct of gender impact assessments for any policies, programs or services that are new or are up for review, that have a direct or significant impact on the public.

Council has now completed its workplace gender audit. There do not appear to be issues in gender representation at senior levels and there is not a systemic pay gap. Key themes included segregation of selected workforces into traditional gender roles (for example the outdoor crew was almost entirely male and early years staff were almost entirely female), and a predominance of females in casual and part time roles.

A Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025 has been drafted for adoption at the March Council Meeting with key themes including Awareness and Skills, Recruitment and Remuneration, Flexibility, Gender Impact Assessments, and Workforce Data.

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE UPDATE ON THE GENDER EQUALITY ACT 2020 BE NOTED.

CARRIED

10.2 Local Government Act 2020 Implementation

As previously tabled the new *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) has been coming into effect. Implementation is now almost complete with one outstanding deliverable, the Asset Plan, due by 30 June 2022.

Requirement	Due Date	Implementation Progress
<u>Governance Rules</u>	1 Sep 2020	Adopted
<u>Councillor Expenses Policy</u>	1 Sep 2020	Adopted
Delegated Committees and Asset Committees	1 Sep 2020	Implemented
Audit & Risk Committee	1 Sep 2020	Requirements met
<u>Public Transparency Policy</u>	1 Sep 2020	Adopted
Mandatory candidate training	17 Sep 2020	Completed
<u>Councillor Code of Conduct</u>	24 Feb 2021	Adopted
<u>Community Engagement Policy</u>	1 Mar 2021	Adopted
Gift Policy	30 Apr 2021	Adopted
Councillor Induction Training	17 Apr 2021	Completed
Annual Budget	30 Jun 2021	Completed
Revenue and Rating Plan	30 Jun 2021	Completed
Financial Plan	31 Oct 2021	Adopted
Council Plan	31 Oct 2021	Adopted
Community Vision	31 Oct 2021	Adopted
Annual Report	31 Oct 2021	Presented
CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy	31 Dec 2021	Adopted
Workforce Plan	31 Dec 2021	Adopted
Recruitment Policy	31 Dec 2021	Adopted
Staff Code of Conduct	31 Dec 2021	Adopted
Complaints Policy	31 Dec 2021	Adopted
Procurement Policy	31 Dec 2021	Adopted
Asset Plan	30 Jun 2022	In Progress

**CR WHITEHEAD
MS BRYANT**

THAT THE PROGRESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT IMPLEMENTATION BE NOTED.

CARRIED

10.3 Compliance Controls Review

An update will provided at the next meeting.

10.4 Procurement Update

In accordance with Council's Procurement Policy all approved procedural exemptions are reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. Two new exemptions have been approved since the last Committee Meeting as follows:

Supplier	Exemption Grounds	Date	Value	Reason
Select Music	Sole Supplier / Exceptionally Advantageous Time Limited Conditions	15/2/22	\$35,000+GST	Bushfire Recovery youth performance, preferred artist voted by community youth, 50% discount offered due to recovery purpose
Talent Oz Entertainment and Management	Sole Supplier / Insufficient Quotes	10/2/22	\$10,000+GST	Bushfire recovery adult performance, challenges in obtaining quotations from suitable performers, exacerbated by COVID

A further update is attached at [Appendix 9](#) regarding instances of non-compliance with Council's Procurement Policy undertaken by a former staff member. There is no evidence of fraudulent behaviour; issues included purchasing outside of delegation, purchasing without an appropriate contract in place, and appointing contractors without following an appropriate quotation or tender process.

Additional controls are being put in place including staff education, the inclusion of a Director on all Evaluation Panels for purchases over \$5,000, and the requirement for two signatures on all Purchase Orders.

Audit and Risk Committee feedback is sought as to whether a probity audit is appropriate to provide further independent scrutiny as to the process failings, mitigating controls and as to whether any fraudulent activity may have taken place.

**MS CAMPBELL
MS BRYANT**

THAT A PROBITY AUDIT OF RECENT PROCUREMENT COMPLIANCE BREACHES IS NOT REQUIRED HOWEVER A FRAUD AUDIT IS TO BE INCLUDED IN NEXT YEAR'S INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN.

CARRIED

10.5 Gifts Register

A summary of gifts reported by Councillors and staff is provided at [Appendix 10](#).

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE GIFTS REGISTER BE NOTED.

CARRIED

10.6 Councillor Expense Reimbursements

A summary of Councillor Expense Reimbursements is provided at [Appendix 11](#).

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE SUMMARY OF COUNCILLOR EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS BE NOTED.

CARRIED

10.7 CEO Credit Card

A summary of expenditure incurred between September 2021 and February 2022 on the Chief Executive Officer's credit card is attached at [Appendix 12](#).

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT THE SUMMARY OF CEO CREDIT CARD EXPENDITURE BE NOTED.

CARRIED

11 Policies

The Audit and Risk Committee Annual Workplan provides for a rolling review of Council Policies. The following Policies are highlighted to the Audit and Risk Committee for review at [Appendices 13-17](#) and may be discussed during the Meeting:

- Complaints
- Recruitment
- CEO Employment and Remuneration
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Procurement

**MS BRYANT
MS CAMPBELL**

THAT FURTHER CLARIFICATION IS PROVIDED WITHIN THE COMPLAINTS POLICY REGARDING APPROPRIATE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR AND THE APPROACH TO SERIAL COMPLAINANTS.

CARRIED

12 Future agenda items

The agenda is set according to the Annual Work Plan at [Appendix 18](#) and specific future reports will include:

- Council Shared Services Opportunities
- Council response to Fraud and Corruption Control (VAGO)
- Council response to Managing the Environmental Impacts of Domestic Wastewater (VAGO)
- Council response to Local Government Integrity Frameworks Review (IBAC) North-East Waste and Resource Recovery Group (NEWRRG) investigation into closed landfills
- Records Management internal audit.

13 Future meeting dates

Future meeting dates be scheduled for:

- 10am – Friday 13 May 2022

**MS BRYANT
CR WHITEHEAD**

THAT THE NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING INVITATION BE ISSUED FOR 10AM ON FRIDAY 13 MAY 2022.

CARRIED

14 Meeting close

Access to Waste Disposal and Recycling Outlets (outside normal operating hours)

Responsible officer:	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Key Result Area:	Environmental Sustainability
Document type:	Policy
Reference:	10/01/0004
Approved by:	Council
Date approved:	7 July 2020
Date of next review:	May 2021
Print Date:	7 July 2020

Scope

This policy provides the criteria to be applied when considering requests to access Towong Shire Council's landfill or transfer stations outside of normal operating hours.

Background

Towong Shire Council (Council) operates the Tallangatta Transfer Station, Corryong Transfer Station and Corryong Landfill.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To describe the process for applying for access to Council's landfill or transfer stations outside normal operating hours
- To describe the process for considering requests to access Council's landfill or transfer stations outside of normal operating hours
- To set fees to be charged for out of hours access
- To establish criteria under which out of hours access may be approved

Approach

Unless other approved arrangements are in place we aim to achieve the objectives of this policy by advising the applicant that:

- It is preferable that access is limited to normal opening hours, and that outside hours access is permitted only in an emergency or for reasons where no other practical alternative is available.
- All out of hours access must be supervised by a Council employee.
If the nominated Council employee is unable to attend to monitor use, access may be denied.

Approach cont...

- They must apply to Council in writing or via email to the Director Infrastructure and Environment, stating the reason for their request and the dates/times they require access.
- Subject to the approval of the Director Infrastructure and Environment (or delegated member of staff) arrangements may be made for access to the landfill or transfer station out of hours.
- In circumstances where access is granted a fee equivalent to the normal fee plus 50% or \$50 whichever is greater, shall apply for each out of hours entry
- The out of hour's access will be monitored by a nominated Council employee to ensure that safe access is available to the applicant, and to check on the suitability and volume of the waste being deposited

Deployment

Council's Infrastructure and Environment Directorate is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Application of the policy

This Policy is applicable to Towong Shire Council in all its functions that relate to the operation of the Corryong Landfill, Corryong Transfer Station and Tallangatta Transfer Station.

Relevant legislation

- EPA Acts and Regulations
- OHS Act 2004
- OHS Regulations 2007

Resources

The following resources are committed by Council to assist with the implementation of this policy:

- After landfill/transfer station hours contact service
- Staff attendance when available

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.



Authorised by:

Juliana Phelps
Chief Executive Officer

Healthy Eating

Responsible Officer	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
Key Result Area:	Governance and Decision Making
Document type:	Policy
Reference:	10/01/0004
Approved by:	Council
Date approved:	7 July 2020
Date of next review:	May 2021
Print date:	7 July 2020

Scope

Towong Shire Council (Council) is committed to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment for employees, Councillors, contractors, customers and visitors.

In relation to Council's workforce, this Policy:

- applies to food and drinks served at Council internal/external meetings, functions, community facilities and events such as Family Movie Nights at the Pool, Seniors Week, Youth Week etc;
- includes food and drinks provided to employees in staff rooms;
- does not formally apply to food brought in by employees (for birthdays, morning teas or personal fundraising), however, employees are encouraged to consider providing healthy options at these events and to avoid confectionery fundraisers in public places such as kitchens.

Background

The *Towong Healthy Communities Plan (the Plan) 2013 – 2017* has been developed by Council in collaboration with Towong Alliance partners, including Tallangatta Health Service (THS), Upper Murray Health & Community Services (UMHCS) and Walwa Bush Nursing Centre (WBNC), and was adopted by Council in June 2014.

The Plan was developed in accordance with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and identified the attainment of health through increased physical activity rates and healthy eating choices as key actions.

Council plays a key role in the implementation of the Plan and is well placed to show leadership in supporting healthy eating practices in relation to kindergartens, Council catering, events and staff wellbeing.

The Department of Health's *Population Health Profile (2013)* for Towong Shire states 44.9% of Towong Shire residents did not meet dietary requirements for fruit and vegetable intake and 56.7% are overweight or obese. Strong links have been established between nutrition and a range of diseases.

Workplaces are identified as an important setting for action to promote health in the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019*. Supporting the health and wellbeing of workers by offering relevant activities in areas like physical activity, healthy eating and quitting smoking, can contribute towards a happier, healthier business. An increase in chronic disease risks in Australia means it is critical that employers assist in minimising these to sustain a productive workforce. WorkSafe's [Healthy Workplace Kit](#) is a free online tool to help build and enhance health and wellbeing programs in the Workplace.

Given many workers consume at least half of their meals and snacks during work hours, the workplace is an ideal environment to influence healthy eating on a regular basis. Successful health and wellbeing programs have been shown to reduce sick leave absenteeism by up to 30% and increase productivity by up to 52%. Council has a staffing complement of approximately 100 people in full time, part-time and casual positions and interacts with many more people through meetings, events, community facilities and programs.

How does healthy eating affect safety?

- Eating a healthy, balanced diet provides nutrients to your body;
- Skipping meals or eating a poor diet can lead to lowered levels of alertness, low energy, poor concentration, poor sleep and fatigue;
- These can have a negative effect on your safety at work and increase your likelihood of having a work related incident; and
- Additionally, overweight and obese workers have a higher rate of injury within the workplace; and they are also more likely to be absent from work due to an injury or illness.

The Victorian Department of Health – Red, Amber, Green model is used in the *Healthy Choices: Healthy Eating Policy and Catering Guide for Workplaces (2016)* and this policy.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Create a healthy eating culture at Towong Shire Council;
- Increase and promote access to healthy food and drink choices for all employees and visitors;
- Decrease the availability of unhealthy food and drink available to employees and visitors;
- Increase employee knowledge and skills for healthy eating and lifestyles; and
- Support healthy eating initiatives and links within the community.

Approach

The following implementation actions have been identified:

- Healthy Eating information sessions will be provided to Councillors and all Council staff by health promotion officers from Tallangatta Health Service and Upper Murray Health and Community Services;
- Local health services (THS and UMHCS) will be encouraged to support healthy eating programs with Towong Shire Kindergartens;
- Food and drinks supplied for catered meetings and events will be in line with Healthy Eating Guidelines¹;
- No more than 20% of food provided will be from the 'unhealthy food' (RED) category;
- Water will be freely available;

¹ Department of Health (2013) Healthy Eating Policy and Catering Guide for Workplaces

- Management will encourage employees to take meal breaks; and
- Healthy eating information will be provided in tea rooms and kitchens.

Deployment

The Director Corporate and Organisational Development is responsible for implementing this Policy across Council.

All employees have a shared responsibility to support this Policy.

Managers have responsibility to:	Employees have a responsibility to:
Ensure that all employees, contractors and volunteers are made aware of this Policy	Read and understand this Policy
Create a workplace culture that is supportive of healthy eating	Observe this Policy whilst on work related duties
Oversee the implementation and review of this Policy and seek feedback from employees	Provide caterers and suppliers with a copy of this Policy
Provide opportunities for employees to develop healthy eating knowledge and skills	

Relevant legislation and policy context

- *Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022*
- *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019*
- Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise (VHEE)
- *WorkSafe Victoria – Healthy Workplace Kit*

Review

Annual review of this policy by the OHS Committee will:

- Assess implementation to date and determine if all objectives have been met;
- Provide employees with the opportunity to give feedback which will be considered when reviewing the policy; and
- Seek management endorsement of the updated policy and make copies available to employees.

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.



Authorised by:

Juliana Phelps
 Chief Executive Officer

Tree Policy

Responsible officer:	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Key Result Area:	Environmental Sustainability
Document type:	Policy
Reference:	10/01/0004
Approved by:	Council
Date approved:	7 July 2020
Date of next review:	May 2021
Print date:	7 July 2020

Scope

This policy provides for the effective management of trees in the Towong Shire. This policy covers the management of all trees in road reserves and parks in the areas of the shire under the control of the Council.

Tree issues arise on rural roadsides urban streets, parks, private property and Crown Land. This policy applies to trees on road reserves and parks under Council control.

Background

Roadside and park trees on Council controlled land require management to maintain amenity and manage risk. The policy sets the framework and approach for the management of these trees.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To recognise Council's responsibility in managing trees
- To enhance the amenity of the urban areas of the shire
- To ensure tree issues are addressed in a consistent manner across the Shire
- To provide for public safety
- To recognise the value of trees to the community

Approach

We aim to achieve the objectives of this policy in the following ways:

Existing Trees

1. A register of existing trees showing details and maintenance works for all urban street and park trees is to be prepared and maintained.
2. A register of trees of significance in Towong Shire is to be prepared and maintained.

Establishment of Trees

1. An indicative 10 year tree establishment program, to align with the new LG Act Asset requirements, is to be prepared to provide for:
 - Replacement of existing trees;
 - Enhancing existing landscapes; and
 - Developing landscapes.
2. Future plantings are to be aligned to budget constraints.

Maintenance of Trees

A 10 year maintenance program is to be prepared to identify:

- Works to ensure the ongoing health of trees;
- Works to protect adjacent assets;
- Works to protect the public; and
- Budget allocations necessary to support the program.

Significant trees within high value parks such as the Tallangatta Triangles and Attree Park, Corryong contribute greatly to the amenity of the town centres. Tree maintenance in these areas must be completed with consideration of visual impact and continued amenity of the park:

- Major pruning or crown reduction works must be staged with only 30% of trees completed within any one year; and
- Existing canopy height and balanced form must be maintained where possible.

Removal of Trees

1. That the Director Infrastructure and Environment (DIE) is permitted to approve the removal of trees that in the opinion of the DIE are:
 - a. Dead;
 - b. Considered to be so damaged or diseased that they are likely to die;
 - c. Considered to be posing a serious threat to either public or private property (eg: a tree that is likely to drop a limb on a house) (Priority given to link and collector roads);
 - d. Obstructing motorist's sight distance and there is no practical alternative except to remove it;
 - e. Damaging either public or private property (eg: kerb and channel, brick fence etc) and there is no other practical alternative; and
 - f. Obstructing access to a property and there is no alternative access.
2. Council is to be advised of proposals to remove trees that have been identified as significant prior to their removal.
3. The Director Infrastructure and Environment may approve the removal of trees for other reasons subject to the conditions that:
 - a. There are no objections from any owners of land in the immediate vicinity following appropriate consultation; and

- b. The person requesting the removal agrees to pay the full cost of the removal and the replacement with a suitable advanced tree, to the satisfaction of the Director Infrastructure and Environment.
4. All tree requests are to be assessed using the standard guidelines.
5. Prior to the removal of any tree the provisions of any Native Vegetation legislations are to be satisfied.

Appeal

Affected parties disputing the decision of the Director Infrastructure and Environment may appeal to the Chief Executive Officer.

Guidelines

- Guidelines for Tree Planting on Council Managed Lands
- Guidelines for Tree Maintenance on Council Managed Lands
- Guidelines for Removal of Trees on Council Managed Lands
- Crossover (driveway) Applications
- Annual Prioritised Work plan
- Annual Maintenance Budget
- Tree Management Plan

Deployment

Council's Infrastructure and Environment Directorate is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.



Authorised by:

Juliana Phelps
Chief Executive Officer

Young Person Award

Responsible Officer	Director Community and Planning
Key Result Area:	Governance and Decision Making
Document type:	Policy
Reference:	10/01/0004
Approved by:	Council
Date approved:	7 July 2020
Date of next review:	May 2021
Print date:	7 July 2020

Scope

Towong Shire Council wishes to recognise the efforts of Towong Shire students who attain selection in State and National sporting teams as well as achievements in other areas such as the arts and music.

Background

On occasion Council receives requests for financial assistance from Towong Shire students who have been selected to represent their State or Country. Council recognises that costs of participation can be prohibitive and this policy has been developed with a view to providing a small amount of financial assistance.

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to provide financial assistance to students who reside and attend school within the Towong Shire (including home-educated students) to aid in transportation, accommodation and costs associated with State and National team selection.

Approach

We aim to achieve the objectives of this policy by:

- Analysing applications received, substantiated by the relevant organisation they are associated with; and
- Where appropriate, awarding an amount of up to \$500 per applicant annually to primary, secondary and tertiary students once selection has been finalised.

Deployment

The Community and Planning Directorate is responsible for implementing this Policy including the receipt of applications, report preparation and presentation to the Council and response to the applicant.

Application of the Policy

The award is available to students who reside and attend school within Towong Shire. A student also granted the award in one financial year is not precluded from applying for the Award in subsequent years if they are successful in being selected for another State or National team.

Relevant legislation

Nil.

Resources

The following resources are committed by Council to assist with the implementation of this policy:

- Annual Budget allocation of \$500;
- Coordinator Office of the CEO to implement this Policy.

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.



Authorised by: _____

Juliana Phelps
Chief Executive Officer