

Agenda

Ordinary Meeting of Council

10:30am, Wednesday 30 April 2025
Council Chamber, Corryong Council Office
76 Hanson Street, Corryong, Victoria

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

This information is available in alternative formats on request.

**Agenda for the Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held at
76 Hanson Street, Corryong, Victoria
on Wednesday 30 April 2025 commencing at 10:30am**

Commonly Used Acronyms

Abbreviation	Title
Council Officers	
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DIE	Director Infrastructure and Environment
DCP	Director Community and Planning
DCOD	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
MF	Manager Finance
SAE	Senior Asset Engineer
Government/Organisation	
CH	Corryong Health (formerly Upper Murray Health and Community Services)
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
GMW	Goulburn Murray Water
HRGLN	Hume Region Local Government Network
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
NECMA	North East Catchment Management Authority
NERPEN	North East Regional Procurement Excellence Network
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
WBNC	Walwa Bush Nursing Centre

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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

Councillor Attendance

Crs Whitehead, Anderson, Wortmann, Tolsher and Pitman

Officer Attendance:	Title:
Ms Phelps	Chief Executive Officer
Mr Heritage	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Mr Florence	Director Community and Planning
Ms Taylor	Director Corporate and Organisational Development

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

The minutes of the meetings listed below were circulated to Councillors following each respective meeting. Confirmation of the minutes is now sought.

- Ordinary Council Meeting held on 26 March 2025

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 26 March 2025 be confirmed.

6 Petitions and Joint Letters

Nil.

7 Public Question Time

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 CEO will advise of any Public Question Time submissions at the meeting.

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 Meeting of Councillors held on 12 March 2025, 19 March 2025 and 26 March 2025, are attached as follows:

1. Workshop Meeting Records 12 March 2025 (1) **[8.1.1 - 3 pages]**
2. Workshop Meeting Records 19 March 2025 (1) **[8.1.2 - 2 pages]**
3. Workshop Meeting Records 26 March 2025 (1) **[8.1.3 - 2 pages]**

Recommendation:

That the information be noted.

9 Organisational Improvement

9.1 Action Sheet Report (CEO-06/06/0010)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Justin Troy, Coordinator Governance and Compliance.

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:

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors of the status of the resolutions from the Ordinary Council meeting on 26 March 2025

Summary:

The attached report summarises the progress made in relation to the resolutions from the Ordinary Council meeting on 26 March 2025.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Action Sheet from Ordinary Council Meeting 26 March 2025 [9.1.1 - 3 pages]

Background/History:

Not applicable.

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

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:

Not applicable.

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

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

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable.

Officer's View:

It is the officer's view that good progress has been made by the responsible officers, noting the Easter Holiday break has delayed further progress from being made.

9.2 Changes to Council Meeting Locations - May and June 2025 (DCOD)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Justin Troy, Coordinator Governance and Compliance.

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:

The purpose of this report is to request a variation of the scheduled Council Meeting locations for May and June 2025.

Summary:

Each year, Council resolves on the location for the upcoming calendar year of Ordinary Council Meetings to promote transparency for both the community and Councillors.

A variation to the location for the 28 May Council meeting from Tallangatta to Corryong is being requested to assist in facilitating the Council Plan 2025-29 community sessions, with the Corryong Council Plan session scheduled to be held in Corryong on 28 May 2025 at the Memorial Hall. Councillors and Council staff will be better placed logistically to conduct the Corryong Council Plan session. Further to this, the Ordinary Council Meeting for 25 June is proposed to be moved from Corryong to Tallangatta.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The location for the Ordinary Council Meeting scheduled for 28 May 2025 be changed from Tallangatta to Corryong; and
2. The location for the Ordinary Council Meeting scheduled for 25 June 2025 be changed from Corryong to Tallangatta.

Attachment:

Nil

Background/History:

At the November 2024 Ordinary Council Meeting, the Council Meeting Arrangements schedule for the 2025 calendar year was resolved as follows:

Date	Location
29 January 2025	Tallangatta
26 February 2025	Corryong
26 March 2025	Tallangatta
30 April 2025	Corryong
28 May 2025	Tallangatta
25 June 2025	Corryong
23 July 2025	Tallangatta
27 August 2025	Corryong
24 September 2025	Tallangatta
22 October 2025	Corryong
26 November 2025	Tallangatta
17 December 2025	Corryong

It is being recommended that the location for the Ordinary Council Meeting scheduled for May 2025 be swapped with the location for the June 2025 meeting.

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

The scheduling of meetings are determined by the Governance Rules:

Part C – Notices of Meetings and Agenda

C1 Scheduling of Ordinary Council meetings

C1.1 The date, time and locations of Ordinary Council meetings will be fixed by Council from time to time.

C1.2 Notwithstanding sub-clause (C1.1) the date, time and location of a Council meeting may be altered by:

- a. Council resolution, or*
- b. the Chief Executive Officer may change the date, time and place of, or cancel, any Council meeting which has been fixed.*
- c. Public notice of any change of schedule must be made in accordance with sub-sections (C1.3) and (C1.4).*

C1.3 A schedule of Council meetings must be prepared and published on Council's website at least once a year, and with such frequency as the Chief Executive Officer determines.

C1.4 Public notice of upcoming Ordinary Council meetings must be given in accordance with Rule C3.

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

By swapping the locations for the May 2025 and June 2025 Ordinary Council Meetings, Council will be better able to facilitate the Corryong Council Plan 2025-29 community session.

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:

Council Plans:
Not applicable.

Council Policies:
Governance Rules

Part C of the Governance Rules '*Notices of Meetings and Agenda*' requires Council to provide public notice of any changes to the Council Meeting schedule, which are to be published to the Council website.

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

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

Risk Assessment:

There is minimal risk to Council or the community in varying the location of the May and June 2025 Ordinary Council Meetings.

Officer's View:

It is the officer's view that moving the May 2025 Ordinary Council Meeting location to Corryong will logistically support Councillors and Council staff to effectively run the Council Meeting, as well as conduct the Corryong Council Plan 2025-29 community session, providing better outcomes for the community in turn.

9.3 Risk and OHS Bi-Monthly report

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Loren Murray, Manager People and Safety.

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:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Council's Risk and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) strategy, performance, activities, and key initiatives for the reporting period.

Summary:

The Risk and OHS bi-monthly report provides a summary of the following:

- High level summary of incidents and injuries in the business and WorkCover claims,
- High potential incidents and near misses (HPIs), that have occurred during the reporting period and details of the identified causes, recommended controls, and the progress of developing and implementing these controls to date,
- An insurance report on notable public liability claims that occurred during the reporting period,
- Progress on close out of major hazards by site,
- A high-level summary of the major projects underway and progress on systems development and implementation.

Recommendation:

That the Risk and OHS Bi-Monthly report be noted.

Attachment:

Documents have been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Background/History:

The Risk and OHS report shows how Council is performing against its OHS strategic plan and accepted industry standards. Council's Risk and OHS management performance measures and indicators quantify the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of

a risk management system. They identify whether the risk management processes are implemented and working as intended; and if the risk management system is effective.

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

No relevant laws are applicable with any Council decisions or actions required from this report.

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)):

Innovations and improvements during this reporting period:

- The Injury Management Framework has been completed and reviewed by HR Legal. The next step is Senior Management Team (SMT) and employee consultation.
- The successful insurance renewal for council and community assets, which included community halls.

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

Not Applicable.

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

Budget requirements and availability have been confirmed, grant funding has been sought where possible, and all expenditure is being monitored and managed within agreed budget allocations.

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

Not Applicable.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:

This report supports the following Council Plan 2021-2025 priorities.

6. Organisational Improvement - Maintain a high performing customer-centred organisation that works with the community to develop and deliver priorities.

6.7 Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all Councillors and staff in a continually evolving environment

6.13 Continually improve the risk management and governance frameworks and practices

Council Policies:

Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

Risk Management Policy.

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

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

Risk Assessment:

Project activities are prioritised commensurate to the likelihood and impact of identified business and OHS risks. The appended report highlights the importance of the implementation of a Safety Information Management System to record, manage and track hazards, incidents, training competency, maintenance, inspections and actions, to reduce the risk for the organisation and Officers of the organisation.

Officer's View:

There has been a review of priorities with the combining of the HR and Safety functions. Developing the strategic priorities for the Council Plan has been a useful exercise in focusing the direction of both teams' activities. One of the most rewarding wins this reporting period, has been the positive team collaboration and strong working relationship between Infrastructure, OHS and the Finance teams.

9.4 Corporate and Organisational Development Report (DCOD-06/01/0011)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Narelle Taylor, 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:

The purpose of the report is to provide Councillors with an overview of activities conducted within the Corporate and Organisational Development team between October and December 2024.

Summary:

The attached report provides a summary of activities within the Corporate and Organisational Development team between October and December 2024.

Significant activities undertaken in this quarter included:

- Execution of actions required to reduce hazards to staff and the public, as well as in response to incidents that have occurred in the workplace;
- Planning the consultation and engagement activities to generate community engagement with the development of the Council Plan 2025/29; and
- Continued negotiation of a new Enterprise Agreement.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. DCOD quarterly update April 2025 [9.4.1 - 1 page]

Background/History:

The Corporate and Organisational Development Report is provided on a quarterly basis.

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

Corporate and Organisational Development activities and decisions have been made in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

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)):

The Communications and Engagement team continues to support numerous community engagement activities particularly the Council Plan 2025-29

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:

The activities of the Corporate and Organisational Development team during the quarter supported the *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities as outlined in the Report on Council Plan Priorities.

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

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in a Council

meeting that is open to the public.

Risk Assessment:

The February Audit and Risk Committee meeting was held during the quarter, and the unconfirmed minutes from this meeting were made available to Council in the March Council meeting.

Officer's View:

Considerable progress has been made with preparation of the Budget and Long-term financial planning for the next financial year; planning of consultation and engagement sessions for the Council Plan is underway. These are two strategically important pieces of work and will continue into the next quarter.

10 Community Wellbeing

10.1 Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Michael Stanton, Manager Community Wellbeing.

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:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to place the Draft Youth Strategy (2025 - 2029) on Public Exhibition for comment and feedback prior to finalisation.

Summary:

A draft Youth Strategy was developed in 2024 by an experienced consultant and included significant data review and various community engagement processes.

This Strategy focuses on the age range between 12 – 25 years old, sets the direction for Towong Shire Council's Youth portfolio from 2025 – 2029, and acknowledges that Towong Shire is a better place to live with a healthy and connected youth population

Council approval to place the Draft Strategy on Public Exhibition is being sought.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to place the Draft Youth Strategy 2025 – 2029 on public exhibition and submissions be invited, with submissions closing at 5pm on Sunday 25 May 2025; and
2. At the Council Meeting on 25 June 2025:
 - a. Any submissions in relation to the proposed Draft Youth Strategy 2025 - 2029 be considered;
 - b. Any person or their representative who wishes to speak in support of their submission be heard; and
 - c. The proposed Draft Youth Strategy 2025 - 2029 be considered for adoption.

Attachments:

1. Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 DRAFT [**10.1.1** - 34 pages]
2. Towong Youth Strategy Engagement Findings [**10.1.2** - 13 pages]

Background/History:

Towong Shire's last youth strategic document was the Youth Plan 2019 – 2023 which included the priority areas of community connectedness, health and wellbeing, recreation, educational pathways and collaborative partnerships.

There have been a number of strategies and actions that have been implemented from the above plan, however over this period there has also been an increase in youth activities, events and wellbeing programs as part of the recovery focus and initiatives from the Black Summer bushfires

The requirement for a new Youth Strategy and staffing changes and the implementations of a new structure of the Community and Planning Directorate led to consultant CL Consulting being engaged in 2024 to complete the Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025 – 2029.

This Draft Strategy was developed through a logical process, of literature review, evidence statistics, stakeholder engagement, evaluation of collected data to prepare the draft plan. This Draft Strategy sets the direction for the Shire's Youth portfolio and focuses on the age range between 12 – 25 years old.

There are a number of actions listed in the Draft Youth Strategy from 2025 – 2029, under the following Strategic Priorities:

1. Youth Voice and Participation
2. Youth Friendly Spaces and Facilities
3. Stronger Partnerships and Local Solutions
4. Advocacy for Accessible Health and Wellbeing Supports
5. Leadership, Advocacy and Celebration
6. Future Prepared Youth

It's important to note that Towong Shire Council's role is not in direct service provision for young people, but in mobilising support from specialist services, networks and funding bodies to partner on programs and ensure young people feel a sense of belonging and security wherever they live in Towong. The actions listed in this draft document are reflective of this.

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

The Local Government Act 2020.

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

The Draft Youth Strategy works towards achieving the following vision for young people:

“Young people are valued and connected to their Towong communities; they will thrive through participating in decision making programs and initiatives in their towns”.

The action plan in the Draft Strategy contains detailed deliverables across 6 strategic priorities to address some of the issues raised by young people

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

Social:

Partnering to achieve improved offerings for young people will be a central priority of this strategy, and ensures their needs are effectively addressed with a number of social outcomes as a result.

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

The Draft Strategy was developed with the direct input from young people, their parents, carers, guardians and from stakeholders who work with young people or deliver programs and services for young people.

The community engagement techniques used in the development of this Strategy included service mapping, three separate surveys, communication and meetings with forty (40) stakeholder groups and face to face meetings at schools.

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

The development of this Draft Youth Strategy sets the direction for Towong Shire Council's Youth portfolio from 2024-2029 and ensures appropriate support, programming, advocacy and services for young people remains a priority for the Council.

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

The development of the Draft Youth Strategy involved collaboration and consultation

with a number of stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders are listed as partners for the delivery of the Actions listed in the document to maximise the outcomes of the Actions under the various strategic objectives.

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

Budget requirements and availability have been confirmed, grant funding has been sought where possible and will continue to be sought for specific actions within the Draft Strategy. All expenditure is being monitored and managed within agreed budget allocations.

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

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023 – 2027.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:

This report supports the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities.

2. Community Wellbeing - Encourage and support all people in our Shire to be healthy, happy, connected and resilient.
- 2.4 Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages
- 2.8 Renew the Youth Plan to embed the 'youth voice' in all aspects of service delivery

Council Policies:

Not applicable.

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

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

Risk Assessment:

Placing the Draft Strategy on Public Exhibition may inadvertently convey to the community that Council is positioned to financially support all actions within the document.

Towong Shire Council's role is not in direct service provision for young people, but in mobilising support from specialist services, networks and funding bodies to partner

on programs. The emphasis on a partnership approach and seeking funding for specific actions within the Strategy will be communicated as part of the public exhibition process.

Officer's View:

The Draft Youth Strategy has been informed by data, community consultation and developed by an experienced consultant in this area.

The development of an updated Youth Strategy was required given the timeframes of the most recent Strategy was 2019 – 2023 and it's important that we are able to have an overarching youth document providing direction and actions which we can work through and deliver with the identified partners in the Strategy.

It is the officer's recommendation that the Draft Strategy be placed on Public Exhibition.

11 Asset Management

11.1 Tender evaluation - Truck, Tipper and Water Tank - Contract No. 2024/25-037 (DIE)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Greg Karlson, Co-ordinator Circular Economy and Environment.

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:

The purpose of this report is to provide information to support the assessment of tender submissions for the supply of a new Tipper Truck with capacity to carry a 10,000L slip on/off water spray tank, as part of Council's plant asset replacement program for Tallangatta Depot. The report also seeks approval to appoint the recommended supplier.

Summary:

This report details the tender process undertaken and provides a recommendation for the preferred supplier to procure a new Tipper Truck equipped with a slip-on/off water cart feature. This truck will replace an aging MACK Granite Tipper Truck and will complement Tallangatta's existing heavy vehicle fleet, enhancing Council's capabilities for road maintenance and haulage operations.

Recommendation:

That

1. Contract No. 2024/25-037 for a Tipper Truck with Water Cart be awarded to CMV Bus & Truck Albury/Wodonga for the sum of \$355,220 excluding GST net of trade in;
2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign and seal Contract No. 2024/25-037 in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties; and
3. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated budget.

Attachment:

A copy of quotations from the supplier and the Evaluation tool have been provided to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Background/History:

A tender was issued in February 2025 in line with the Procurement Policy.

The tenders were evaluated based on price and future asset values, service backup and familiarity with the vehicle and weighting scale applied.

The decision to replace the current MACK Granite Truck was made as the equipment is reaching its useful lifespan. First acquired in November 2010, it has required ongoing maintenance work.

The unit was identified as a priority for replacement against other major equipment assets, with depot crew ratifying a preference for a similar heavy equipment vehicle to the current unit, which has historically been fit for purpose.

Tender request included provision of a specified tipper body type which has historically been made by fabricator CBB Chris's Body to accommodate a quick release slip on/off water tank removal that enables greater flexibility and usage of truck for other haulage activities.

For the tank system Council has approached a reputable and leading industry player Australian owned -Trans Tank International "TTI" which operates both locally and overseas. A quote was also received on the water cart from a Sydney based firm Allquip Water Trucks however cost was some \$8K higher. Council has acquired various TTI spray unit types for its fleet in the past with most recent addition being a similar 10,000L unit utilised by our Corryong Depot.

The business also works closely with CBB truck body fabricator with partnership deemed most beneficial for our custom requirements.

The following are the summary responses from the suppliers:

Suppliers	Quoted Plant type	Remarks
CMV Truck & Body Albury/Wodonga	MACK EURO 6 Anthem 6x4 Rigid MP8 Air, CBB Chris Body Tipper Body & TTI 10,000L Water	Preferred Plant

	Tank with pressurised dribble Bar	
DAF - Twin City Truck Centre	Kenworth T410, CBB Chris Body Tipper Body & TTI 10,000L Water Tank with pressurised dribble Bar	Not Preferred -

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

Section 109 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states:

"A Council must comply with its Procurement Policy before entering a contract for the purchase of goods or services or the carrying out of works."

The procurement process followed for this tender and the subsequent assessment and recommendation have been undertaken in accordance with Council's *Procurement Policy*.

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

Option 1

Award the contract for the new truck as per the recommendation.

Option 2

Award the contract to an alternative supplier.

Option 3

Re-tender the contract.

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

Economic

This tender used approved suppliers as part of Vendor Panels accepted supplier network with the primary dealers working closely with local dealerships under their network. This has a positive impact on the local economy through the purchase of local materials and services over the life of the asset.

Environmental/Climate Change

This capital spend will have a minimal contribution either positive or negative to carbon emission levels due to the slow advancement of alternate fuel types for heavy vehicle equipment.

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)):

The recommended tender value is within the allocated budget spend for current financial year.

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

Not Applicable.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:

This report supports the following *Council Plan 2021-2025 priorities*.

- 1.1 Deliver 100% of the annual capital works program and bushfire recovery projects

Council Policies:

Procurement Policy

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

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

Risk Assessment:

Business Operational Risk:

The acquisition involves minimal risk despite extended supplier lead times for fabrication works. Current machinery and equipment is well-resourced to handle

capital works projects and Council asset maintenance programs. Active management and adherence to scheduled maintenance will minimise any downtime of machinery /equipment assets.

Serviceability Risk

Notwithstanding, the cost of the MACK truck is slightly dearer by \$1,635 the model has far greater features. Depot crew were instrumental as per of the decision making process and highlighted key differences between both brand types which are outlined hereunder.

Kenworth T410

PROS

- 18 speed automatic / manual transmission
- Manual gear shift paddle on steering column
- 6 external truck surround camera optional extra availability for low visibility areas

CONS

- Hydraulic PTO quick shift unit mounted on transmission which eliminates any gear selection above 4th limiting the ability of spreading gravel
- Drum Brakes requires longer maintenance & servicing duration period with more demanding & strenuous effort involved
- Brake mechanisms between cabin & rear of truck require frequent maintenance e.g lubrication
- 510 HP Paccar engine.- Has reported ongoing unreliability issues

Mack Euro 6 Anthem 6 x 4 Rigid MP8 Air

PROS

- Hydraulic PTO quick shift mounted on engine which allows any gear selection while spreading gravel
- Disk Brakes are considered more responsive with improved braking with extended maintenance periods
- Brake mechanism between cabin & rear of truck requires no lubrication affording an extended maintenance period
- 535 HP Mack Engine deemed more reliable
- 8 bag air bag suspension system which provides excellent truck to ground traction on uneven surfaces
- Sloped front engine bonnet which offers excellent road vision while driving

CONS

- N/A

Additionally, parts and service availability in Wodonga/Albury is advantageous.

Officer's View:

There is nominal difference in price point between both supplier offers, however the following factors are important considerations.

- Mack truck is deemed a quality truck vehicle and is well regarded in the civil earthworks industry;
- Engine specs and safety feature are far superior and afford greater safety, flexibility and functionality for everyday tasks;
- The delivery lead time on the Mack vehicle closely correlates with the production run and supply of the tipper body by third party supplier;
- Our depot mechanics are well-versed in servicing the Mack brand as most of the existing truck fleet is MACK orientated affords more efficiency when performing mechanical maintenance & servicing related tasks;
- The international backing of a reputable industry player demonstrates the ability to provide a quality end product along with a dedicated aftercare service offering delivering good value and low risk to Council.

It is the officer's view that CMV Bus & Truck Albury/Wodonga be awarded tender for the sum of \$355,220, excluding GST. The MACK truck is considered fit for purpose and will assist the depot with increasing work productivity, efficiencies and reduce running costs whilst also meeting safety requirements going forward.

12 Land Use Planning

12.1 Land Use Planning Report (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mrs Margaret Fox, Contract Planner.

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:

The purpose of this report is to report on the activities of the Planning Team.

Summary:

This report summarises permit and development activity up to 28 February 2025.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. April 2025 Council Report Stats [**12.1.1** - 4 pages]

Background/History:

This report provides an overview of the number, location and nature of customer enquires resolved by the Planning department, as well as the number, nature and location of all planning permit applications received and issued for the financial year to date as of 28 February 2025, and the percentage of applications decided within the statutory timeframe.

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

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 give 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)):

Staff have been working towards improving the customer service experience for planning permit applications through the Greenlight project (an on-line platform for building and planning permit approval management). The system went live in August 2024 and has been effective. Further work is proposed to be undertaken to document all processes and procedures to firstly identify any potential improvements and secondly to ensure the longevity of the system.

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

Staff continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders, including Indigo Shire Council, Alpine Shire Council and E-Vis (the Greenlight provider) to share processes and procedures to identify best practice.

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 with the *Victorian Planning Provisions*.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:

This report supports the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities.

4. Land Use - Ensure that Council's planning, building and environmental health services support all aspects of liveability and sustainable population growth.

4.1 Support the rebuild process for fire impacted properties

4.11 Review statutory service processes to ensure an excellent customer experience

Council Policies:
Not applicable.

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

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

Risk Assessment:

Not Applicable.

Officer's View:

It is the officer's view the improvements that have been implemented in the Planning Department continue to provide an improved customer experience.

13 Environmental Sustainability

There are no Environmental Sustainability reports to present this meeting.

14 Economic and Tourism Development

There are no Economic and Tourism Development reports to present this meeting.

15 Councillor Reports

15.1 New Hospital New Site Advocacy Meetings - Cr Anderson

Meeting/event attended:	New Site New Hospital Advocacy Meetings
Date of Meeting/Event:	7 March 2025, 3 April 2025 and 17 April 2025
Key information presented/discussed at meeting:	Meetings were arranged with the Ministers for Health in NSW and VIC. The Meetings were with the Mayors from Albury and Wodonga. A request for regional Mayors to attend was rejected. These meetings did not provide any clear outcomes. A rally was organised and held at Vic Parliament on 5/3 with over 200 local residents, patients, nurses, doctors, councillors attending. The Rally was well supported, with media reporting. Many residents were unable to do the trip to Melbourne, so another Rally was organised for Albury 29/3. This was a very well attended Rally, with a sea of white shirts in QE11 Square. The speakers, Doctors, representatives for Nurses and Ambulance, had many examples of what is happening and why. One being our Mayor, who's story was heart breaking. Better Border Health had the numbers and the facts! Together we all showed our unity. The Federal Election has since been called. Letter writing and contact with relevant Government Departments continues. The Corowa community has organised a Rally for 27/4.
Action Required:	Nil – meetings to continue
Additional Information Available:	Our local communities have been keen to be involved by supporting the advocacy work Council has been doing. Petitions have been distributed in Tallangatta. They will also be taken to Corryong and to other parts of the shire over the next weeks.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

16 Urgent Business

In accordance with Council's Governance Rules, matters of urgent business can only be considered if:

- a) It relates to or arises out of a matter which has arisen since distribution of the agenda; and
- b) It cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next Council meeting; and
- c) The Council resolves to admit an item considered to be urgent business.

17 Committee Minutes

There are no Committee Meeting minutes for review or confirmation this meeting.

18 Council Policies

18.1 Policies for Review

The following policies are tabled for review in accordance with Council's agreed review cycle. Feedback should be provided to the nominated officer by 28 May 2025 to ensure any input can be considered prior to tabling the policies for adoption:

- Councillor Correspondence Policy
- Councillor Gift Policy

Attachment:

1. Councillor Correspondence - Adopt 27 April 22 [**18.1.1** - 3 pages]
2. Councillor Gift Policy - Adopt 27 April 22 [**18.1.2** - 3 pages]

Recommendation:

That the policies tabled for review be noted.

19 Sealing of Documents

Nil.

20 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*

Information that was confidential information for the purposes of section 77 of the Local Government Act 1989.

Nil.

21 Closure of Meeting

Council Meeting - 30 April 2025 Attachments

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Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 12 March 2025 – Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Wortmann, Whitehead, Anderson, Pitman and Tolsher
and officers as listed below.

Apologies: Ms Juliana Phelps, Chief Executive Officer

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am Cultural Awareness Training (Narelle Urquhart)

Ms Narelle Urquhart provided Cultural Awareness training for Councillors.

10.30am Director Corporate and Organisational Development (Narelle Taylor)

Ms Narelle Taylor provided information in relation to the following:

[Briefing re: March Council Meeting reports](#)

Performance Reporting Graphs
Colac Colac Caravan Park
8 Boundary Road, Corryong

[Updates:](#)

Wheeler Street, Corryong

11.30am Director Infrastructure and Environment (Jamie Heritage)

Mr Jamie Heritage provided information in relation to the following:

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities
with quality facilities and services.



Briefing re: March Council Meeting reports

Updates:

Council Plan Priorities
Budgets Capital 2025/26 – 1st Draft
Flood Works
Grader Report
Town Maintenance

12.30pm Lunch

1.00pm Presentation North East Water (Strategy 2040)

A presentation was provided by North East Water representatives Ms Jo Murdoch - Managing Director, Mr John Day - General Manager Environment, Systems & Operations, Mr Guy Wilson-Brown – General Manager Planning & Infrastructure, and Mr Morgan Courtney, Manager Assets & Infrastructure Planning

2.00pm Director Community and Planning (Mark Florence)

Mr Mark Florence provided information in relation to the following:

Council Plan Priorities

2.45pm Councillor feedback/issues/questions (spreadsheet)

The following matters were raised by Councillors:

Cr Wortmann

MAV motion support

Cr Whitehead

Cr Anderson

Update on Hospital Alliance Rally in Melbourne

Cr Pitman

Cr Tolsher

innovation : technology : sustainability

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.



3.30pm Councillor time

4.00pm Meeting close

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 19 March 2025 – Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Wortmann, Whitehead, Anderson, Pitman and Tolsher
and officers as listed below.

Apologies: Ms Juliana Phelps Chief Executive Officer

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

10.00am Tallangatta Creek Footbridge Opening

Councillors attended the official opening of the Tallangatta Creek Footbridge with the Tallangatta Rail Trail Advisory Group and Parklands Albury Wodonga.

12.30pm Lunch

Director Community and Planning (Mark Florence)

Mr Mark Florence provided information in relation to the following:

[Briefing re: March Council Meeting reports](#)

[Updates:](#)

Eskdale Pool – Funding submission
Council Plan Priorities

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.



Director Corporate and Organisational Development (*Dylan Howard*)

Mr Dylan Howard provided information in relation to the following:

Briefing re: February Council Meeting reports

Updates:

2025/26 Budget Update

Director Infrastructure and Environment (*Jamie Heritage*)

Mr Jamie Heritage provided information in relation to the following:

Briefing re: February Council Meeting reports

Updates:

Nil

Councillor feedback/issues/questions (spreadsheet)

The following matters were raised by Councillors:

Cr Wortmann

Cr Whitehead

Cr Anderson

Cr Pitman

Cr Tolsher

Chief Executive Officer (*Narelle Taylor*)

Ms Narelle Taylor provided information in relation to the following:

Updates:

Council Meeting 28 May – Change of venue Corryong

Meeting close

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

Meeting Record

Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 26 March 2025 – Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Wortmann, Whitehead, Anderson, Pitman and Tolsher
and officers as listed below.

Apologies: Ms Juliana Phelps Chief Executive Officer

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am Councillors question time

10.30am Council Meeting

11.30pm Director Infrastructure and Environment (Jamie Heritage)

Mr Jamie Heritage provided information in relation to the following:

[Updates:](#)

Capital Works Budget

12.00pm Director Community and Planning (Mark Florence)

Mr Mark Florence provided information in relation to the following:

[Updates:](#)

Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan

12.30pm Lunch

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities
with quality facilities and services.



1.00pm Director Corporate and Organisational Development *(Dylan Howard)*

Mr Dylan Howard provided information in relation to the following:

[Updates:](#)

Long Term Financial Plan

2.30pm Chief Executive Officer *(Narelle Taylor)*

Ms Narelle Taylor provided information in relation to the following:

[Updates:](#)

Council Plan

3.30pm Councillor feedback/issues/questions (spreadsheet)

The following matters were raised by Councillors:

Cr Wortmann

Cr Whitehead

Cr Anderson

Tallangatta Valley Noticeboard

Cr Pitman

Cr Tolsher

3.45pm Councillor time

4.00pm Meeting close

innovation : technology : sustainability

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: Welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

**ACTION SHEET
FROM 26 MARCH 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	PROGRESS/ COMPLETE
5	<u>Confirmation of Minutes</u> That the minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 12 February 2025 and the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 26 February 2025 be confirmed.	Coordinator Governance and Compliance	Confirmed Minutes added to Council's website. Complete
9.3	<u>ALGA 2025 Federal Election Campaign Report</u> That Council: 1. Supports the national federal election funding priorities identified by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA); 2. Supports and participates in the Put Our Communities First federal election campaign; and 3. Writes to the local federal member(s) of Parliament, all known election candidates in local federal electorates and the President of the Australian Local Government Association expressing support for ALGA's federal election funding priorities.	Chief Executive Officer	Relevant correspondence is being drafted by the CEO's office. In progress
11.1	<u>Tender Evaluation – 140T Grader Contract No.2024/25-38</u> That: 1. Contract No. 2024/25-038 for a replacement Grader be awarded to William Adams Pty Ltd for the sum of \$344,400 excluding GST net of trade in;	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Contract is being prepared for signing and sealing. In progress

**ACTION SHEET
FROM 26 MARCH 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

	2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign and seal Contract No. 2024/25-038 in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties; and 3. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated budget.		
11.2	<u>Toilet Blocks Tender Evaluation – Corryong, Talgarno, Bellbridge</u> That: 1. Contract No. 2024/25 – 030 for the construction of three toilet blocks be awarded to EnviroDome Pty Ltd for an estimated contract value of \$503,000 (excluding GST) which includes \$30,000 of provisional items to implement design changes; 2. 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 contract document; and 3. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated budget	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Contract is being prepared for signing and sealing. In progress

ACTION SHEET
FROM 26 MARCH 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

11.3	<u>Flood Damage Recovery Works</u> That 1. The contracts for Flood Damage repair be awarded to the preferred tenderer as listed below: 2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign and seal Contract No. 2023/24-040, 2024/25-032, 2024/25-031 and Contract No. 2023/24-041 in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties; and 3. The Chief Executive Officer be approved to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated budget.	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Contract is being prepared for signing and sealing. In progress
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Corporate & Organisational Development Quarterly update

The following key activities were the focus of the Corporate and Organisational Development team for the quarter January – March 2025.

2025/26 Budget and Long-term financial planning: The Finance team continued the preparation of the 2025/26 Budget (this commenced in November 2024). The consolidation of individual cost centre budgets and the Capital Works Budget forms the basis of the full budget and the long term financial plan for the 2025/26 financial year.

Risk Management & Safety: Managing hazards and responding to high-risk incidents has consumed a significant portion of time and energy in the Risk and Safety space. As mentioned in the previous quarterly update, personnel changes have affected this team and recruitment of a staff member for a training and development role is still in train. Filling this role will provide a significant boost to the progress of the workload for the team.

Records Management: The migration of records to the new, PROS-compliant, in-place records management solution, commenced in March 2025; this is a significant step forward, as this allows us to start training staff and utilising the end-product, obtaining feedback, and to continue rolling out across the organisation.

Information management: Work commenced on an IT strategy in regard to the future management of Council IT infrastructure. This has been prioritised in response to the hardware currently utilised being at the end-of-life stage, and a decision is required regarding replacement of existing or pursuing other options. A recommended solution will be provided to SMT in the next quarter.

Communications and Engagement: Planning and development of an engagement strategy for the preparation of the Council Plan commenced. This is a significant piece of work, and the engagement strategy has a focus on conducting meaningful engagement sessions to provide residents with the opportunity to provide Councillors with the feedback regarding the biggest priorities for the next four-year Council term.

People & Culture: Negotiating a new Enterprise Agreement continued, planning commenced for the All-staff day to be held 8 May 2025, alongside a significant BAU workload.

Staffing: We have been successful in filling several vacancies, and pleased at the quality of candidates we have secured, we are confident they will make strong contributions to the team and organisation. There are still two positions remaining vacant at the end of the quarter.



Towong Shire Youth Strategy

—

2025 - 2029



towong.vic.gov.au

DRAFT

Front Cover Image:

Towong Shire youth resident Chaise Heinjus demonstrates his skateboard skills at the Official Opening of the Corryong Skatepark in March, 2025.

Council successfully secured \$882,000 in funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Agency's Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program in 2022 for this project.

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1 Executive Summary

This strategy sets the direction for Towong Shire Council's Youth portfolio from 2025-2029, acknowledging that even with a relatively small youth population, young people are vital to the health, strength, and future of our communities. This strategy focuses on the age range between 12–25-years old.¹

Young people in Towong Shire deserve equitable access to opportunities, supports, and spaces regardless of where they live. While Council does not deliver youth services directly, it plays a critical role in advocating for better access to health, wellbeing, transport, and engagement programs, particularly across our geographically dispersed communities where services reach is often inconsistent.

The strategy highlights the importance of place-based, youth-informed initiatives and focuses on areas where Council can have the greatest impact: building partnerships, influencing system change, supporting local activation, and strengthening youth voice in local decision-making.

The development of this strategy involved a review of relevant literature and data at local, state, and national levels, alongside consultation with over 70 young people, families, and stakeholders across Towong. Young people identified key challenges including mental health access, cost-of-living stress, school and peer pressures, limited program options, body image concerns and making decisions about their future. Key protective factors in Towong communities for young people are place based sporting clubs and community groups who contribute to safeguarding youth health and wellbeing. Young people also spoke of the importance of feeling safe, seen, and connected to their towns.

In response, this strategy presents six key priority areas that guide Council's focus:

- Youth Voice and Participation
- Youth-Friendly Spaces and Facilities
- Stronger Partnerships and Local Solutions
- Advocacy for Accessible Health and Wellbeing Supports
- Leadership, Advocacy and Celebration
- Future Prepared Youth

¹ Not all census and other demographic data is available in the 12-25 age range; some additional age groups are included in some data categories.

Together, these priorities support the strategy's long-term vision:

Young people in Towong Shire are valued, connected and empowered. They thrive in communities where their voices are heard, their needs are understood, and they have equitable access to opportunities, supports, and spaces regardless of where they live.

The action plan contains detailed deliverables across 6 strategic priorities to address some of the issues raised by young people including:

Strategic Priority 1: Youth Voice and Participation

Towong Shire Council will embed meaningful youth engagement in its planning and decision-making processes. By intentionally including young people in service reviews, facility design, and community planning, Council will amplify their voices and ensure their perspectives shape the future of their towns.

Strategic Priority 2: Youth-Friendly Spaces and Facilities

Council will work with young people to improve access to inclusive, safe, and engaging community spaces. Through youth led consultation and advocacy for funding, Council will help create facilities that reflect young people's needs and support stronger social connection across the Shire.

Strategic Priority 3: Stronger Partnerships and Local Solutions

Towong Shire Council will strengthen partnerships with youth-focused services, schools, and local organisations to deliver more coordinated and locally relevant supports. By bringing partners together and advocating for investment in Towong, Council will help ensure services are better connected, better targeted, and more accessible to young people in remote and rural areas.

Strategic Priority 4: Advocacy for Accessible Health and Wellbeing Supports

Council will advocate for equitable and consistent access to health and wellbeing services for all young people in Towong. Many state and regional services do not regularly reach smaller communities in the Shire. Council will advocate for outreach models and local delivery of mental health, sexual health, and wellbeing supports to ensure young people aren't left behind due to geography.

Strategic Priority 5: Leadership, Advocacy and Celebration

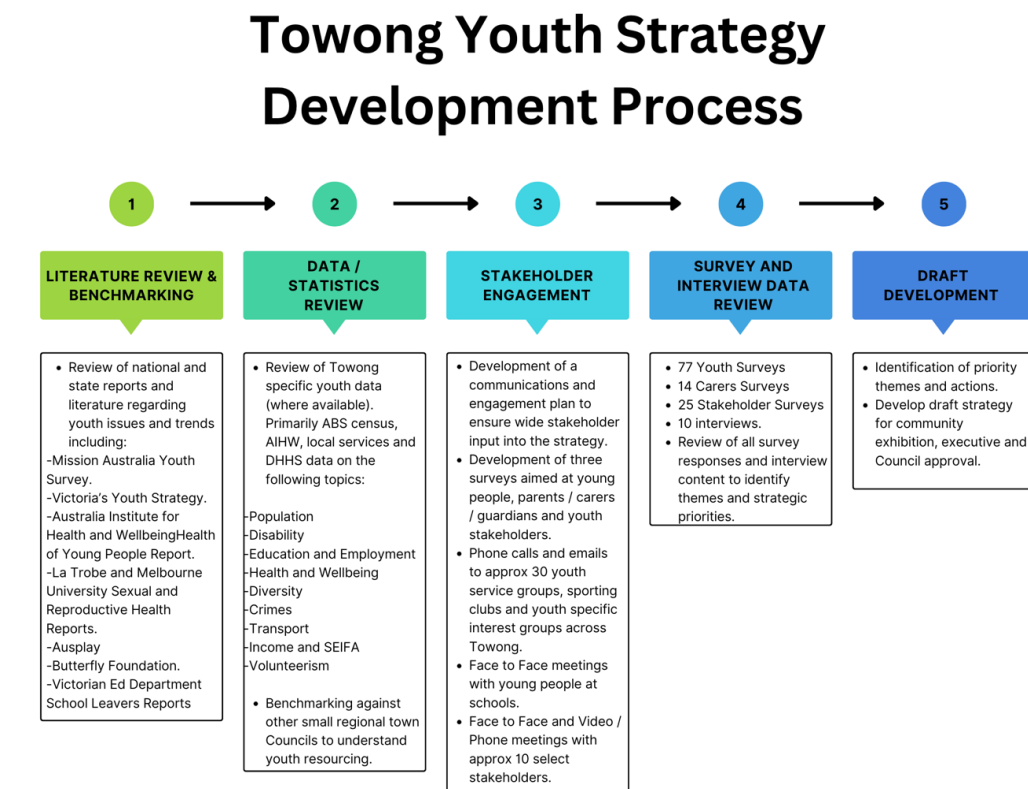
Towong Shire Council will take a visible leadership role in speaking up on youth issues, including inclusion, transport, mental health, and access to opportunity. Council will also support young people to be their own advocates and celebrate their achievements through campaigns, events and recognition platforms that foster pride and belonging.

Strategic Priority 6: Future Prepared Youth

Council will partner with schools, employers, and community organisations to support young people as they prepare for life after school. Initiatives will focus on practical skills such as employment readiness, budgeting, communication, and understanding diverse workplaces, ensuring young people are confident and future-ready, regardless of where they live in Towong.

2 Strategy Development Process

The strategy was developed with the direct input from young people, their parents / carers / guardians and from stakeholders who work with young people or deliver programs and services for young people. The following diagram outlines how the strategy was developed:



3 Towong young people

The below data provides a snapshot of Towong's young people. A full data report can be found at Appendix 11.6 to this strategy and includes references to sources.

Population and Age Distribution	• 860 10–24-year old's live in Towong (2021) • 51% Males • 49% Females
--	--

The youth population in Towong is comparable to Buloke Shire Council, Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack.

There has been a 5.6 % decrease in the youth population of Towong since the 2017 census, compared with a 2.2% overall population increase during this time. The population increase in Towong is primarily in the 55 years and over age cohort.

Young people 15-24 make up 7.9% of the population in Towong, compared to the Victorian rate of 11.9%.

The future population projections for Towong indicate a reduction in population for the 10-24 age group in Towong to 800 in both 2026 and 2031. This is then projected to slightly increase to 860 by 2036. Overall population growth is anticipated at 2.4% from 2021 to 2036 across Towong, compared to the state population growth future projected growth of 28% for this period.

Looking Australia wide, young people aged 15-24 proportion relative to the Australian population has been steadily declining (from 17% in 1971 to 12% in 2021) due to sustained low fertility and increased life expectancy or 'population ageing'.

Disability	• 44 people aged 5-24 needed assistance in their day to day lives in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care mobility and communication.
-------------------	--

The overall rates of disability are .4% higher in Towong than the rest of Victoria and the rates of unpaid assistance to a person with a disability were 4% higher in Towong than the Victorian average. Young people in Towong with a disability are likely to experiences additional service access issues because of living with mobility constraints in small regional towns.

Education and Employment	17% of Towong's 15–24-year old's engaged in either part time or full time tertiary or higher education (2021) 9.6% youth disengagement rate 20–24-year-old (% those not in paid employment / formal education) (2021) 15.6% of 20–24-year old's had not completed year 12.
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There has been a 5% increase in tertiary / higher education engagement for 20–24-year old's in Towong over 5 years. Towong still has a higher than state average year 12 non-completion rate.

Health and Wellbeing	- Headspace data indicates a slight increase in the number of 12–18-year old's accessing services from Towong Shire postcodes between 22/23 and 23/24. - The Infant Child Youth Mental Health Service (ICYMHS) also indicated an increase in episodes of care for Towong young people under 25 from 22/23 to 23/24.
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Population wide, 10.1% of Towong residents in 2021 reported a mental health condition including depression or anxiety compared to the state average of 8.8%.

The Australian Early Development Census indicates that in 2021, 14.3% of school age children surveyed in Towong were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains (i.e., physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), communication skills and general knowledge). This indicates a 6% increase in developmental vulnerability in school aged children since 2015 in Towong. Falling behind early in education has significant implications for young people's high school performance and year 12 completion rates in Towong.

Population wide, both smoking rates and alcohol related harm were higher in Towong than state averages. Obesity rates across Towong were higher than the state average with 24.2% of the population in 2020 obese compared to the state average of 20.9%. 61.3% of Towong's population in 2021 had a long-term health condition compared to 48.4% of the Victorian population.

Diversity	3.3% of Towong residents aged 5-24 years of age identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 1.7% of the overall population).
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Higher First Nations youth rates have implications for the way services and programs should be tailored to be culturally safe and engaging for this cohort.

Towong has very low rates of overseas born residents compared to the state average however residents rated more positive responses regarding how much multiculturalism makes life in their area better than the state average.

Crimes	• 0–24-year-old victims have increased from 29 to 35 since 2020. • 10–24-year-old offenders remain steady since 2020 at 20. • 171% increase from 21/22 to 22/23 in police recorded family violence incidents; A child was either the victim or witness in 37.9% of these incidents. • A young person was the victim in nearly 10% of family violence incidents in 2022/23 and was the perpetrator in 7% of these incidents
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Population wide, there has been a 52% increase in criminal incidents from December 2022 to December 2023. Although for general crimes, youth involvement rates have remained low, youth involvement rates for family violence are concerningly high.

Transport	• Driving mentor program delivered by Corryong Neighbourhood Centre for young people 16 years and over. • Albury-Corryong via Walwa Bus: 3-hour trip with 9 stops. Once a day per direction. • Albury-Tallangatta via Bonegilla: Fridays only 45-minute trip. Once a week Fridays per direction. • The mail bus is used frequently by residents as a form of public transport. • 80% of 2021 census respondents travelled to work by car with only 10% walking or riding a bike.
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A primary factor in youth service and program access is transportation for Towong young people. The Shire is geographically very dispersed with some towns very isolated from services. There are limited public transport options available per above and for those over the age 18 with a licence the distance from Corryong to Albury is far and the roads can be dangerous in winter and the evenings. Transport options are often provided by community groups, services and local government to encourage youth attendance to events and programs.

Income	• 34% of Towong residents have income under \$500 per week in 2021, less than the national average. • Median total income per person in Towong in 2021 was \$42 687, \$9651 less than the national average.
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	Walwa, Corryong and Tallangatta all score below the regional Victorian average on the SEIDA index of relative disadvantage.
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Youth income is limited to part time employment and youth participation in paid activities is likely limited where families are financial constrained.

4 Policy context and social trends impacting young people

The following youth trends and issues have been summarised from a range of national and state literature. Full reference to these sources can be found at Appendix 11.6.

Mental Health	Young people are experiencing all time higher levels of mental distress. Social media use, the impacts of Covid, cost of living pressures, housing difficulties and the increase in worries about social issues are contributing to young peoples decreased mental wellbeing. School challenges including workload, academic pressure, difficulties with teachers and learning difficulties also contributed to young people's stress. A 2023 study of nearly 20,000 15–19-year old's indicated that 32% were either personally extremely or very concerned about mental health. Young people have a personal wellbeing index of 65.7, which is 12 points lower than the adult range. 24% of young people indicated stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, diagnosed disorders or self-harm were themes of concern to them in their lives currently. 38% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress, 38% reported their mental health as fair or poor, 25% had high psychological distress and 21% felt lonely all or most of the time. A 2020-22 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing indicated that 26% of 16-24 experienced high or very high psychological distress, with young women reporting higher rates than young men.
Equity and Discrimination	31% of young people in 2023 identified this as one of the most important issues, with 27% indicating they were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year due to physical appearance, race / cultural background or gender. The gender diverse cohort raised this as the highest concern.
The Environment	44% of young people in 2023 indicated that the environment was the most important issue for them. Young people are particularly engaged with the impacts of climate change and the need to take action to reduce the rates of climate related disaster in their

	communities. This is particularly apparent in regional towns where the impacts of flood and fire are felt in distinct ways by young people.
Self-harm	In 2021/22, Australians aged 13 to 18 were 3.4 times more likely than adults to be hospitalised for injuries caused by intentional self-harm, AIHW data shows. Girls accounted for more than four in five of these hospitalisations. From 2008 to 2022, rates of self-harm nearly doubled for girls aged 15 to 19 and tripled for girls aged 14 and under. For LGBTQIA+ young people, a recent study indicated 78.1% of respondents aged between 14-17 had experienced suicidal thoughts in their lifetime compared to 79% of 18–21-year olds. 62.3% of 14–17-year olds and 61.8% of 18-21 had self-harmed in their lifetime. The impacts of youth suicide are magnified in small regional communities and this strategy acknowledges the recent loss of life as a result of youth suicide across Towong communities.
Substance use	Traditional tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption has fallen nationally in recent years with fewer young people than ever before reporting daily smoking. Conversely, the rates of e-cigarette and vape usage increased from 1.8% to 9.7% between 2019-2023 in the 14–17-year-old age group nationally and from 5.3% to 21% in the 18–24-year-old cohort. Vaping is a national issue; Commonwealth government recently passed legislation to prohibit the sale in any other venue but pharmacies to only those with a prescription from July 1, 2024. From 1 October 2024, pharmacies will then be permitted to sell vapes to anyone over 18 because of a downgrading in poisons standards for vapes.
Sexual and Reproductive Health	Data reviewed from both the National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health and the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health has indicated that there are barriers to contraceptive information, sexually transmitted infection information and testing in regional Victoria. Despite sexual activity levels for young people remaining high, condom usage remains at 49% of young people aged 14-18. The most recent survey of young people indicated the relationship and sexuality education received in a school setting was not relevant to them.

	Information seeking behaviour indicates young people discuss sex and sexual health with friends in the first instance, but that GP sources remained the most trusted.
Education and Employment	Year 12 completion remains high across Victoria with only 7.8% of 20–24-year old's not completing Year 12. The majority of recent year 12 students indicated they wanted to go to university after high school as their first preference with the second preference being to get a job or travel. Significantly higher numbers of young males indicated they wanted to start their own business after school. With an increase in costs for tertiary education and the additional housing costs for young regional students, higher education may be less attainable for this generation of young people. The annual HECS student contributions for an arts degree in 2023 is \$15,142 compared to \$5868 in 2013. This is increasingly prohibitive for lower income regional young people even with the educational and housing subsidies and scholarships available to select students.
Physical Activity	Young adults aged 15-19 participated less in sport and physical activity in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22; 78% participated in sport or physical activity 1+ per week in 22/23 representing a 3% decline in participation. The frequency of participation for young people in sport or physical activity has also seen a steady decline; Since 2021-22, 5+ per week participation has declined among 15–19-year-old Australians. There is also a trend away from group-based activities and formal regular membership-based participation in sport to individualised and infrequent physical activity, particularly for young people. Regionally, there remains the prevalence of traditional sports participation such as football and netball which can be exclusionary for non-mainstream young people.
Social media	A recent report indicated that teens in Australia experience the second highest level of online bullying among developing countries. 17 % of students reported that "other students made fun of me". The study found teen girls were reporting anxiety, fear and panic at twice the rate of boys as a result of the online bullying and that boys appeared more resilient to stress than girls. A 2024 report indicated the concerning connection between body dissatisfaction and social media use. Almost two thirds (61.7%) of

	young Australians aged 12-18 said social media made them feel dissatisfied with their body – up by 12% since 2022. 8 in 10 young Australians aged 12-18 thought that social media platforms need to do more to help young people have a more positive body image. 6 in 10 (59%) Australians say diet and fitness content on social media impacts their body image – yet two thirds (68%) aren't adjusting their social media behaviour in response to this. Unhealthy social media has recently become a concerning issue in schools with the increase in deepfake images; images of female school students from social media being inappropriately manipulated and distributed online. This is predicted to become another method of abuse and violence towards young women and many school settings are responding with improved policies.
Housing	Both home ownership and rental accommodation are reaching critical levels of unaffordability in Australia. Vacancy rates in the rental market are now at 1%. Property prices have risen every month since January 2023 to now, even with an increase in interest rates. This has been combined with population growth and a downturn in construction resulting in higher demand and less available houses for purchase. The median house price in Tallangatta is \$480,000 in May 2024, which represents a 14.3% increase in the past 12 months. The median rental price (all bedrooms) is \$400 per week as at December 2023, indicating a \$50 per week increase in 12 months. The median house price in Corryong is \$325,000 representing a 5% decrease in the last 12 months however the median rental price of \$360 per week represents a 20% increase in the last 12 months. The housing affordability issue has repercussions for young people with increased family financial pressures to repay rising mortgages combined with the increased below cost of living pressures.
Cost of living	In March 2023, 46% of Australians have reported feeling increased pressure as the cost of living continues to rise – an increase of 5% from the previous quarter. With the cost of groceries, energy bills and fuel increasing dramatically over the past year, more than 40 per cent of Aussie households have struggled to afford household basics in the last three months, and over half of Australians say they will struggle to pay an essential bill over the next three months. In the last 12 months, dairy and related products have increased by 15%, bread and cereal by 11.8% and fruit and vegetables by 4.9%.

	These financial pressures result in families experiencing stress particularly in regional towns where access to bulk purchasing from larger supermarkets is limited and distances to supermarkets is further.
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The following Council documents have been reviewed for reference to Towong young people:

Council Plan 2021-2025	2.8 Renew the Youth Plan to embed the youth voice in all aspects of service delivery.
Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025	- Acknowledgement of the increase rates of youth suicide. - References the need to increase recreation opportunities for young people (Dartmouth in particular)
Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026	- Recognition that 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 products. This impacts on population growth and reduces workforce supply to support industry growth. - Identifies the need to increase public transport options through action 1.1.11 Transport Infrastructure Audit.
Recreation Strategy 2022-2023	- References the 60-minute minimum physical activity recommendation for 5–17-year old's. - Cites participation trends for 12–17-year old's in particular the halving of physical activity during adolescence. - Cites the reduction in anxiety and depression for physically active children and the increase in school performance for these young people engaged in physical activity.

In 2022, thousands of young Victorians help develop a 5-year youth strategy for state government. The Victorian Government Youth Strategy is important for Towong's youth services as it sets the framework for program support and funding from Victoria.

Strategic Priority 1: *Young people are healthy and well.* This priority focuses on maintaining and improving youth wellbeing. It recognises the youth mental health trends, the need for relationship and sexuality education, and the importance of active living for young people. Service access is a focus of this priority.

Strategic Priority 2: *Young people are safe and secure.* This priority recognises the youth impacts of family violence, the current housing crisis impacts for young people and the need to protect young people from discrimination, neglect and abuse.

Strategic Priority 3: *Young people achieve their goals through education, training and employment.* This priority recognises the need to support young people to complete education, to build life skills, access job opportunities and prepare them for financial independence. There is a focus on successful transitions to meaningful post school futures, whether this is employment or additional education.

Strategic Priority 4: *Young people are respected and involved in decisions in their communities.* Inviting young people to contribute their lived experiences, increasing positive youth representation in the media and supporting place-based engagement with young people to genuinely influence decisions that matter for them.

Strategic Priority 5: *Young people are confident and strong in their identity and culture and are supported in their communities.* This priority focuses on young people celebrating their diverse identities and feeling accepted and valued. This includes increased support for disabled, multicultural and LGBTIQ+ young people/

Strategy Priority 6: *Services are coordinated, responsive and accessible.* Improving service collaboration, prevention and early intervention to respond to young people's service access needs.

5 Towong Shire Council's Role in Youth Services

Historically, Towong Shire Council allocated a part-time youth officer (2–3 days per week) to support youth-focused initiatives. This role previously included coordinating youth events, delivering activities, supporting community-based programs, and assisting young people and local groups to connect with services and access funding opportunities.

Recently, youth responsibilities have been brought together with arts, culture and inclusion within the Senior Community Development Officer – Culture and Inclusion (0.8 FTE) position. Strategic oversight is now provided by the Manager – Community Wellbeing, whose portfolio includes Health and Wellbeing, Inclusion and Diversity, and Youth.

Council does not take on a primary service delivery role for youth in the Shire, however, contributes to local delivery through partnerships, facilitation, and occasional direct programming—particularly in areas like events, arts, and community-led initiatives. Where appropriate, Council may contract external providers or support community groups to lead delivery, ensuring programs are responsive to local needs and contexts.

Council continues to advocate for improved service access in areas that are currently under-resourced or not consistently reaching Towong communities—such as **mental health, transport, recreation, and arts and culture**.

To support this, Council will actively pursue external funding through programs such as VicHealth, Creative Victoria, and the Department of Transport and Planning. Council will also continue to support local community groups and partners to access these and other relevant funding streams. In addition, Council may explore partnership-based applications for programs such as Engage! and Freeza to help deliver more targeted youth initiatives.

The Youth Action Plan reflects this collaborative and strategic approach. The coordinator role is intended to work alongside partners to deliver the plan's initiatives by:

- Facilitating local partnerships
- Supporting funding access and program development
- Advocating on youth issues
- Enhancing place-based initiatives through Council resources

A benchmarking review (Appendix 11.2) indicates that most comparable rural councils support their youth portfolio with either part-time roles or by embedding youth responsibilities within broader community development functions. Some councils also partner with external agencies—such as Neighbourhood Houses or Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs)—to deliver services on the ground.

Securing additional funding and forming strong partnerships will be key to Council's ability to deliver on the actions outlined in this strategy and to remain responsive to the evolving needs of young people across Towong Shire.

6 Youth services provided in Towong – Service Mapping

The below mapping has been undertaken to identify the availability of each service in each town. Overall, there are limited specialist youth health and wellbeing services available in the larger towns of Tallangatta and Corryong almost no outreach availability in the remaining smaller towns.

SERVICE DESCRIPTION	TOWN AVAILABILITY		DETAIL
Mental Health Services	Corryong	Yes	General Practice: No local referral sources available and no free mental health service, most referrals are to telehealth psychological services but fee paying. Corryong College have a Clinical Counsellor, Youth Worker, Wellbeing and Engagement Leading Teacher and a Department of Education Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead.
	Tallangatta	Yes	Available via the General Practice. Tallangatta Secondary College, School Mental Health Practitioner.
	Bethanga	Limited	Limited to online services and telehealth.
	Bellbridge		
	Cudgewa		
	Eskdale		
	Walwa		
Sexual Health Services	Corryong	Yes	Limited to General Practice.
	Tallangatta	Yes	Limited to General Practice.
	Bethanga	Limited	Online / Telehealth.
	Bellbridge		
	Cudgewa		
	Eskdale		
	Walwa		
General Practice Services (Pharmacist and GP)	Corryong	Yes	Drs at Corryong Health and Pharmacist.
	Tallangatta	Yes	Drs at Tallangatta Health Service Medical Centre and Pharmacist.
	Bethanga	No	Limited to locum drs / online
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	
	Walwa	No	
Financial and material aid	Corryong	Yes	Food share delivered via local religious groups.
	Tallangatta	Yes	Food share delivered via local religious groups.
	Bethanga	No	No local service.
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	
	Walwa	No	
	Corryong	Yes	Support offered via local religious groups.

Accommodation and Homelessness Services	Tallangatta	No	No local service.
	Bethanga	No	
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	
	Walwa	No	
Employment, Training and Centrelink	Corryong	Yes	Corryong Neighbourhood Centre
	Tallangatta	Yes	Tallangatta Neighbourhood Centre
	Bethanga	No	No local service.
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	
	Walwa	No	
Legal Services	Corryong	Yes	Visiting service from Hume Riverina Community Legal Service via the hospital, service is at capacity.
	Tallangatta	Yes	Visiting service from Hume Riverina Community Legal Service via the hospital, service is at capacity.
	Bethanga	No	No local service.
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	
	Walwa	No	
LGBTQIA+ Support Services	Corryong	No	There are no direct LGBTQIA+ services in Corryong. Gateway Health have secured funding to deliver specific outreach support services to LGBTQIA+ young people in the Northeast, with a focus on smaller shires such as Towong Shire Council. This program will be facilitated during the 2025-2028 Engage! Funding period. CAMP exists in Towong - Corryong Allied Movement for Pride – which is an incorporated social community group which supports this community.
	Tallangatta	No	Gateway Health have secured Engage! Funding for outreach support for young people and Upper Murray Family Care have Towong Shire Council in the catchment to provide outreach and services, but they don't currently facilitate any youth specific programs.
	Bethanga	No	
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	
	Walwa	No	
	Corryong	No	No local community-based services. Gateway Health provide an outreach service.
	Tallangatta	No	
	Bethanga	No	
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	

	Walwa	No	
General Counselling Services	Corryong	Yes	Corryong Health have an adult/all ages counselling service at Corryong health which is currently at capacity.
	Tallangatta	Limited	Outreach services are provided to Towong via Gateway Health community initiatives funding which doesn't cover clinicians but group programs.
	Bethanga		
	Bellbridge		
	Cudgewa		
	Eskdale		
	Walwa		

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7 Strategic Vision

The following vision has been developed as an aspirational statement for Council to work towards and captures the sentiments expressed by Towong's young people:

Young people in Towong Shire are valued, connected and empowered. They thrive in communities where their voices are heard, their needs are understood, and they have equitable access to opportunities, supports, and spaces regardless of where they live.

8 Strategic Priorities

Following the above review of the youth trends, local statistics and survey feedback the following themes emerged as priorities for Towong Shire Council to address in the youth strategy.

Towong is a geographically dispersed shire which presents challenges for youth access to programs. Money to access programs is also a barrier. The engagement demonstrated that many stakeholders believe there are good youth programs happening locally by community groups which should be supported, enhanced and promoted by Council.

The 6 strategic priorities have been identified directly in response to the survey data and literature review.

1. Youth Voice and Participation	Towong Shire Council will embed meaningful youth engagement in its planning and decision-making processes. By intentionally including young people in service reviews, facility design, and community planning, Council will amplify their voices and ensure their perspectives shape the future of their towns.
2. Youth-Friendly Spaces and Facilities	Council will work with young people to improve access to inclusive, safe, and engaging community spaces. Through youth led consultation and advocacy for funding, Council will help create facilities that reflect young people's needs and support stronger social connection across the Shire.
3. Stronger Partnerships and Local Solutions	Towong Shire Council will strengthen partnerships with youth-focused services, schools, and local organisations to deliver more coordinated and locally relevant supports. By bringing partners together and advocating for investment in Towong, Council will help ensure services are better connected, better targeted, and more accessible to young people in remote and rural areas.

4. Advocacy for Accessible Health and Wellbeing Supports	Council will advocate for equitable and consistent access to health and wellbeing services for all young people in Towong. Many state and regional services do not regularly reach smaller communities in the Shire. Council will advocate for outreach models and local delivery of mental health, sexual health, and wellbeing supports to ensure young people aren't left behind due to geography.
5. Leadership, Advocacy and Celebration	Towong Shire Council will take a visible leadership role in speaking up on youth issues, including inclusion, transport, mental health, and access to opportunity. Council will also support young people to be their own advocates and celebrate their achievements through campaigns, events and recognition platforms that foster pride and belonging.
6. Future Prepared Youth	Council will partner with schools, employers, and community organisations to support young people as they prepare for life after school. Initiatives will focus on practical skills such as employment readiness, budgeting, communication, and understanding diverse workplaces, ensuring young people are confident and future-ready, regardless of where they live in Towong.

9 Towong Shire Youth Action Plan

The below action plan identifies specific youth initiatives directly in response to the above stakeholder and youth input, the data which identified particular issues or gaps in services and the current policy and social trends identified in the literature review.

It is envisaged that the Senior Community Development Officer - Culture and Inclusion with support from the Manager - Community Wellbeing with Health and Wellbeing, Youth and Inclusion responsibilities will oversee the implementation of the below action plan. The actions are intended to be delivered over a 5-year period.

Council does not have primarily responsibility for all actions in consideration of the limited staffing resources available and the improved effectiveness resulting from collaboration. The action plan and associated timelines may be updated in the event of additional funding allocated to the youth portfolio.

Council's role associated with each action varies and includes the following:

Advocate – provide written or verbal public support for an initiative.

Facilitate – be involved in or recommend a particular course of action, make the connections for an initiative to be delivered.

Lead – take full responsibility for the implementation of action.

Partner – work directly with other organisations or Council areas to deliver a specific initiative collaboratively.

High priority actions indicate a 1–2-year timeframe for completion, medium is 2-3 years, low is 3-5 years.

Strategic Priority 1: Youth Voice and Participation

Strategic Objective: To ensure young people contribute meaningfully to local decision making and awareness raising on issues of importance to them.				
Action	Partners	Council Role	Funding / Resources	Priority
1.1 Prioritise youth engagement in all Council engagement plans where the topic is relevant to young people.	Council Communications Team	Lead	Existing resources	High
1.2 Promote State and Federal Government opportunities for youth engagement.	State / Federal Government Council Communications Team	Lead	Existing resources	High
1.3 Identify and promote leadership programs for young people regionally to enhance youth confidence in local decision making.	Local leadership programs i.e., Mandala Program, Alpine Valleys Leadership.	Lead	Existing resources to promote, may need external funding to subsidise program attendance.	High
1.4 Promote or conduct youth leadership, sense of belonging and inclusion by encouraging youth participation in awareness raising campaigns such as IDAHOBIT, NAIDOC, 16 Days of Activism, This Girl Can etc.	Council Community Development and Communications Teams	Lead	Existing resources and external funding to subsidise program attendance.	High
1.5 Ensure young people and parents /carers are involved in any Transport Infrastructure Audit conducted	Council Economic Development Team	Partner	Existing resources	Medium

identified in the Economic Development activities.				
1.6 Ensure a youth voice is included in all Council services during service review and service design processes.	Towong Shire Council	Lead	Existing resources	Medium

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Strategic Priority 2: Youth-Friendly Spaces and Facilities

Strategic Objective: To provide safe, inclusive open parks, recreation and community facilities with young people's design needs prioritised.				
Action	Partners	Council Role	Funding / Resources	Priority
2.1 Ensure youth involvement in Council's next play space strategy to ensure 12–25-year-old needs and all ability needs are met.	Council's, Early Years, Community Development and Assets Teams	Lead	Existing resources	High
2.2 Ensure youth involvement in the development of new programs at sports facilities per Council's Recreation Strategy.	Community Development Team	Partner	Existing resources and external funding.	Medium
2.3 Celebrate new Corryong Skate Park by engaging young people to coordinate park activity program.	Council's Community Development Team and CNC Youth Program.	Partner	Existing resources may need external funding to deliver programs and opening event.	Medium
2.4 Investigate how to improve spaces for young people to hang out locally i.e. Library and Corryong Youth Hub.	Corryong Neighbourhood Centre Community Development Team	Partner	External funding may be required for facilities improvements	Medium
2.5 In partnership with the Infrastructure and Capital Works team identify upcoming facility improvements where young people can provide input into designs.	Towong Shire Council	Partner	Existing resources	Medium

Strategic Priority 3: Stronger Partnerships and Local Solutions

Strategic Objective: To combine resources and ideas to deliver tailored initiatives locally for young people.				
Action	Partners	Council Role	Funding / Resources	Priority
3.1 Investigate the establishment of a Towong Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Network.	Corryong and Tallangatta Secondary College Gateway Health Junction Support Services Corryong and Tallangatta Neighbourhood Centres Police	Lead	Existing resources	High
3.2 Maintain an up-to-date Towong youth stakeholder list with services and community organisations prioritised for regular check-ins to better understand services offered.	N/A	Lead	Existing resources	High
3.3 Investigate the establishment of a Towong Shire Community & Cultural grants program which would incorporate funding for local placed based youth programs (with and initiatives suggested by young people, alongside community culture and arts programs and initiatives. Ensure youth voice in the	Towong Shire	Lead	Allocation TBD as part of future Budget considerations	High

proposed establishment and decision making.				
3.4 Continue to deliver any Freeza funding in collaboration with local service providers and contractors to ensure youth access to fun, place-based music events.	State Government Victoria Event delivery contractors Gateway Health Local musicians	Facilitate	Existing resources (apply for subsequent 3-year funding when grant round opens in 2027)	High
3.5 Collaborate with the library to offer youth-only after school and / or after-hours programming. (with a focus on games, creative workshops and youth literary genres)	Community Development Team	Facilitate	Existing resources, some external funding may be required to fund workshop facilitation.	Medium
3.6 Ensure L2P program funding is secured and delivered across the shire in both Corryong and Tallangatta. Council to confirm partnerships are sustainable via Junction Support Services, or another appropriate provider.	Youth program delivery agencies.	Partner	Existing resources, ensure quick grant budgets include transport provision.	High
3.7 Continue to support local clubs and sporting groups in their work with young people through promoting grant opportunities, removing Council red tape, improving access to council facilities and providing training to members / volunteers.	Community Development and Recreation Teams	Facilitate	Existing resources	Medium

3.8 Investigate a partnership approach to Engage funding for the next funding round (2027).	Corryong Neighbourhood Centre Other interested youth partners	Partner	Existing resources may be a contribution required for grant funding.	Medium
3.9 Support Gateway Health and Headspace in the delivery of their Engage!-funded LGBTQIA+ youth support program, ensuring outreach programming occurs in both Corryong and Tallangatta, and that the program is accessible, inclusive, and reaches young people across the shire.	Youth program delivery agencies	Partner	Existing resources may be a contribution required for grant funding.	High

Strategic Priority 4: Advocacy for Accessible Health and Wellbeing Supports

Strategic Objective: To ensure young people have local access to consistent, confidential and time critical mental health and wellbeing services.				
Action	Partners	Council Role	Funding / Resources	Priority
4.1 In partnership with the Corryong and Tallangatta Health Services and Schools, and local schools, develop a comprehensive youth mental health support model and Youth Mental Health Action Plan tailored to Towong's needs.	Tallangatta Secondary College Corryong College Headspace / Gateway Health Junction Support Services Tallangatta Health Service Corryong Health Service ICYMHS Sacred Heart Primary School St Michael's Primary School Tallangatta Primary School	Partner	Existing resources	High
4.2 Deliver youth mental health first aid (or similar) in partnership with local community organisations / clubs / sporting groups to ensure friends, parents and other community members are appropriately skilled in referring and supporting young people.	Interested community organisations / clubs / sporting groups working with young people.	Facilitate	Existing resources may need external funding for workshop facilitation.	High

4.3 In partnership with schools, Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) and local health services, investigate improved sexual health information to be provided to young people.	CERSH Tallangatta Health Service Corryong Health Service Tallangatta Secondary College Corryong College	Partner	Existing resources	Medium
4.4 Explore the provision of regular, consistent outreach services by Headspace, ICYMHS and Junction Support Services from Council and community settings (depending on the model developed in 4.1).	Headspace / Gateway Health ICYMHS and Junction Support Services	Partner	Existing resources	High
4.5 In partnership with local services, develop place based mental health referral information in a range of mediums and promote effectively to young people to improve services awareness.	Council Community Development and Communications Teams	Partner	Existing resources, may need external funding depending on the information medium.	Medium
4.6 Promote youth service agencies and community organisations programs and activities to young people via Council communication channels regularly.	Council Community Development Council Communications Teams	Lead	Existing resources	High

4.7 Collaborate with specialist facilitators to develop an engaging school-based program addressing key issues affecting young people, including body image, social media use, and healthy peer relationships.	Specialist subject matter facilitators	Partner	Existing resources may need external funding depending on facilitation fees.	Medium
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Strategic Priority 5: Leadership, Advocacy and Celebration

Strategic Objective: To use Council's leadership position to raise awareness on youth issues and celebrate youth achievements across Towong.				
Action	Partners	Council Role	Funding / Resources	Priority
5.1 Advocate to State Government / Public Transport Victoria to improve public transport connections from Towong towns Albury / Wodonga including the frequency and duration of the trip.	Public Transport Victoria	Advocate	Existing resources	Medium
5.2 In partnership with schools, develop a communication campaign showcasing the achievements of local young people in monthly Council communications.	Tallangatta Secondary College Corryong College Council Community Development and Communications Teams	Lead	Existing resources	High
5.3 Support inclusion and diversity campaigns by messaging public support at Council meetings, Council social media and by Councillors and Executive.	Council Community Development and Communications Teams	Advocate	Existing resources	High
5.4 Advocate for increased mental health support for young people in Towong.	Local mental health service providers	Advocate	Existing resources	High

Strategic Priority 6: Future Prepared Youth

Strategic Objective: To ensure young people have a head start on life after school and are prepared for future challenges and opportunities.				
Action	Partners	Council Role	Funding / Resources	Priority
		Lead	Existing resources	High
6.1 Partner with financial counselling services to deliver budgeting and money management workshops in schools and libraries.	Local financial counselling services Tallangatta Secondary College Corryong College	Partner	Existing resources	High
6.2 Partner with local employers and employment agencies to deliver communication in the workplace sessions and other work ready programs for young people.	Local employers i.e., Acres for Acres. Employment agencies Corryong and Tallangatta Neighbourhood Centres Tallangatta Secondary College Corryong College NELLEN	Partner	Existing resources	Medium

10 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the young people across Towong who have completed the survey or spoke to us in person to provide input into this strategy.

Significant parent input has also been provided via the completion of the surveys; we are grateful for the time spent in completing this amongst busy family lives.

Finally, to schools, service providers and community groups / organisations who spoke to us during the engagement process, your expertise and insight has been invaluable. A full list of stakeholders engaged is provided as Appendix 11.6 to this strategy.

Council staff have also provided communication support for the promotion of the engagement and input into the strategy; thank you.

11 Attachments:

1. Towong Youth Strategy Engagement Findings

Towong Youth Strategy

Appendix 1

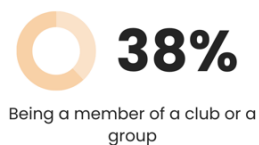
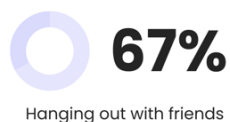
1. ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

The consultation process resulted in 77 youth surveys, 14 carer / parent / guardian surveys and 25 stakeholder surveys. Additionally, phone, video conversations and face to face discussions took place with approximately 10 service providers and youth stakeholders to understand youth trends, issues and service gaps across Towong. The below summarises the data results specific to each stakeholder category.

1.1 What young people told us

The below analyses the survey data received from 77 young people. There were 16 questions on the survey and a mix of multiple choice and ranking questions asked.

What helps you stay connected and feel less isolated in your community?



HIGHLIGHTS

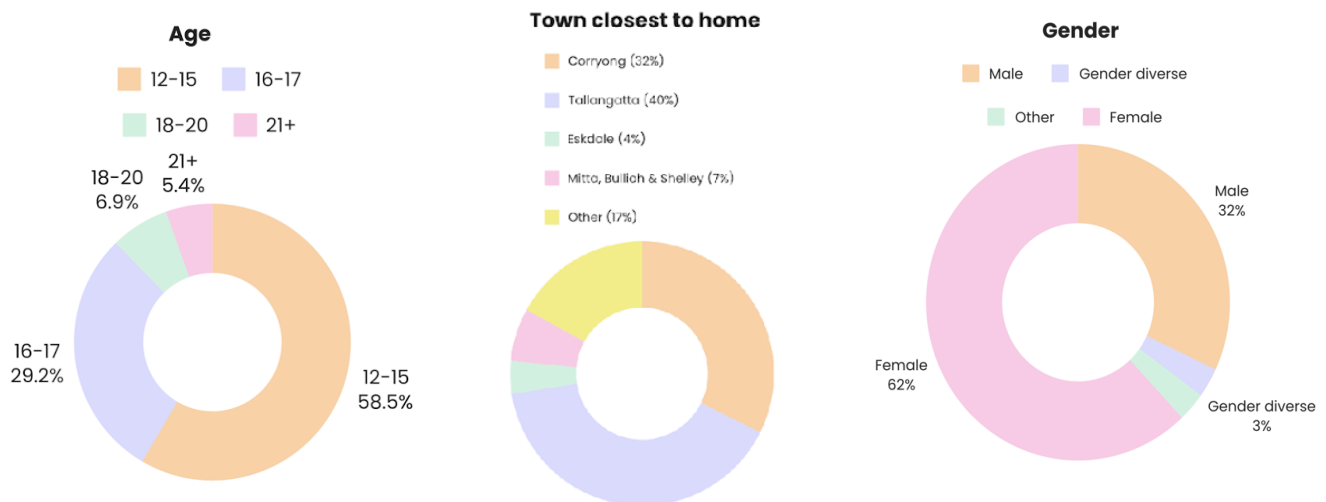
- 48% either strongly agree or agree with the statement 'I feel valued and connected in my community'.
- 54% either strongly agree or agree with the statement 'I am positive about the future'.
- 51% either strongly agree or agree with the statement 'I feel safe to express my identity and beliefs'.
- 58% of respondents indicated yes definitely or yes, it's nice to the question 'Do you like living in Towong'
- The environment was a key aspect of the community enjoyed by Towong young people.
- Young people stay healthy and connected to one another through friends, clubs and groups.
- Young people have lots of ideas about programs and activities they would like to access but can't.

ROOM FOR BETTER

- 25% either strongly disagree or disagree with the statement 'my voice is heard for decisions affecting me'
- 34% either strongly disagree or disagree with the statement 'I can see myself living in Towong as an adult'.
- Gaps in programs and services related to non-traditional sports and creative opportunities.
- Some service access barriers exist for learning difficulties and sexual health information.
- Young people worry about money, problems with school, their future after school and appearances.
- Transport is a key barrier for program, events, sports and activities access.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of the 77 responses received were from young people between the ages of 12-17 (88%), 62% of these were female, 32% male and 3% gender diverse and 3% other. Most responded that their closest place to home was Corryong or Tallangatta. 28% of respondents identified as neurodiverse, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or LGBTQIA+.

**LIFE IN TOWONG**

Only 16% of respondents indicated 'not at all' or 'sort of' to the question 'Do you like living in Towong' with the majority responding positively. 70% enjoyed the environment, 41% enjoyed the people and 23% indicated the community facilities were the things they enjoyed the most about living in Towong. There were a range of other responses received beyond the multiple-choice responses; these included being involved in change, horses and work. Many mentioned their intention of returning to Towong once they have finished studying or travelling.

68% of respondents did not want to stay in Towong when they finish school. The reasons for wanting to leave were primarily due to university /study, to obtain a different perspective on the world, for work opportunities and other life experiences / opportunities that they cannot access in Towong, to access more affordable accommodation, to meet new people and engage in hobbies they can't access in Towong. 40% of respondents indicated agree or strongly agree to 'I can see myself living in Towong as an adult'.

STAYING CONNECTED

Respondents had 6 options to choose from and could choose multiple options for this question. The top 3 things that help Towong young people stay connected and feel less isolated were hanging out with friends, being a member of a group or club and community facilities.

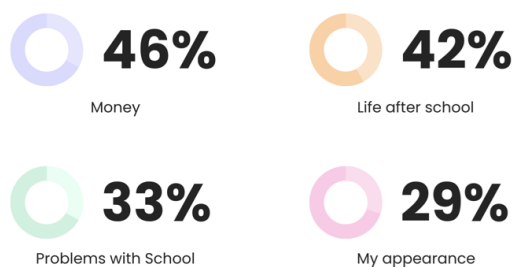
Most respondents played sport (66%), met up with friends (39%), did paid work (35%) or read (32%) at least once a month. Gaming also received a high response rate with 20% indicating they did this activity once a month.

WORRIES

Respondents had the option to choose any of 15 options in response to the question 'What worries you the most?'. Young people were most worried about money, life after school, problems with school and their appearance.

Protective factors to keep young people healthy and happy were talking to friends and family they can trust, doing sport, learning about things they are interested in and being amongst nature.

What things worry you the most?

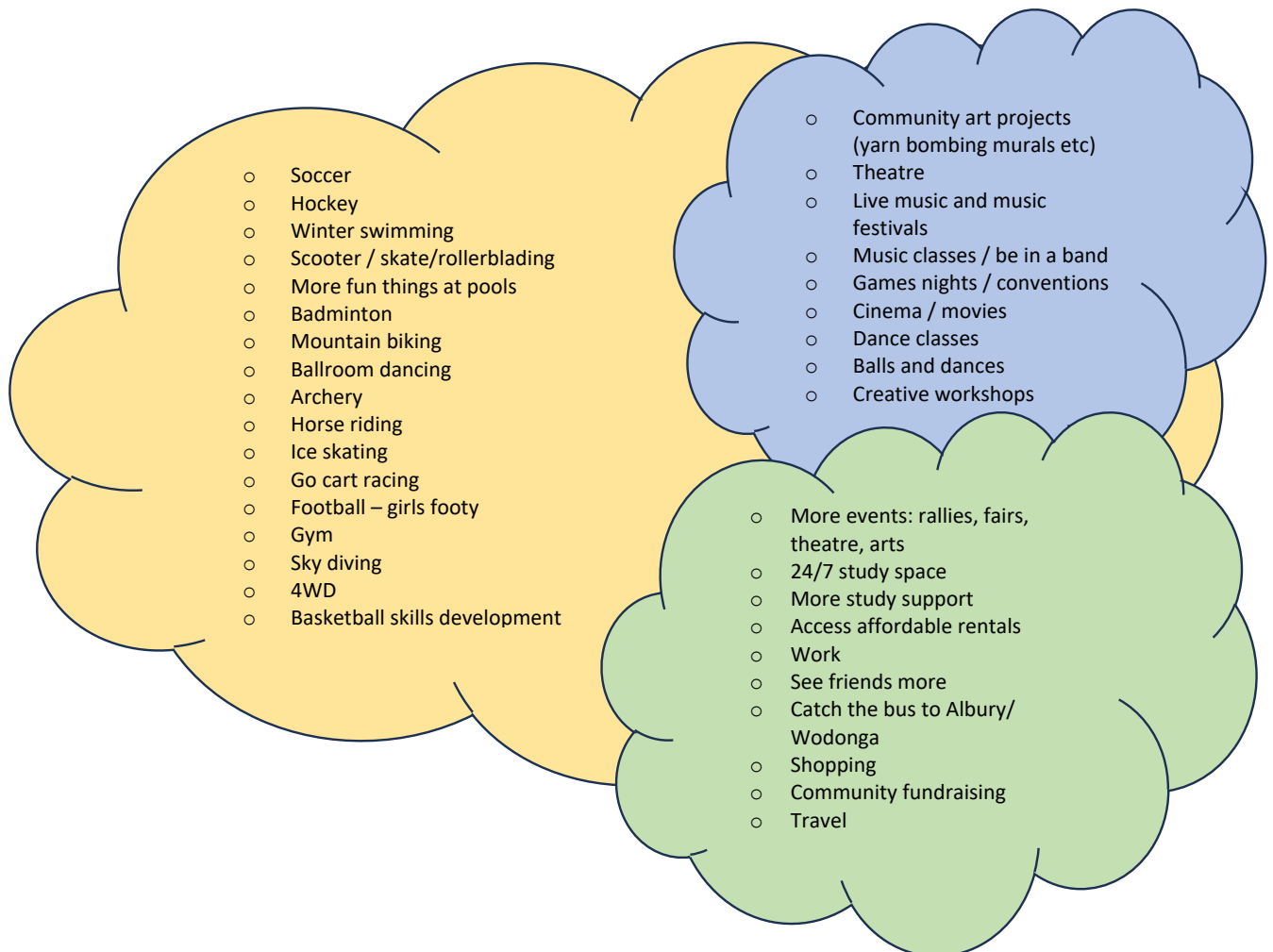


SERVICE ACCESS

Most respondents thought access to services was adequate; the standout responses were that extra help with school was readily available, and that sexual health advice was least available. 26% thought support for learning difficulties was difficult or impossible to get and 26% thought employment was difficult or impossible to get across Towong. 40% thought mental health support was very easy or easy to get; it's important to note that there is a spectrum of mental health support available to young people. It is difficult to know from this data if young people are referring to school interventions or more ongoing counselling support for mental health.

THINGS TO DO

The survey asked the question 'what things would you like to do that you can't currently?' Things young people would like to do that they can't currently have been grouped below into **sports**, **creative activities** and **other initiatives**:



The barriers to accessing the above or reasons why young people can't currently do these things included:

- The activity is not available locally.
- Community / council support is lacking.
- Can't find sufficient people to do it with.
- The facilities are lacking to allow the activity to occur.
- Don't have the skill or ability to do the activity.
- The activity is too far away.
- The activity was already full, or they didn't make the cut.

This was an open question and optional for respondent to add a reason why; the majority responses related to the availability of the activity locally or the distant to get to the activity.

1.2 What Parents/Carers told us

The below analyses the survey data received from 14 carers / parents / guardians. These questions were different to the youth survey and there were 15 questions in total including a mix of multiple choice and ranking questions.

HIGHLIGHTS

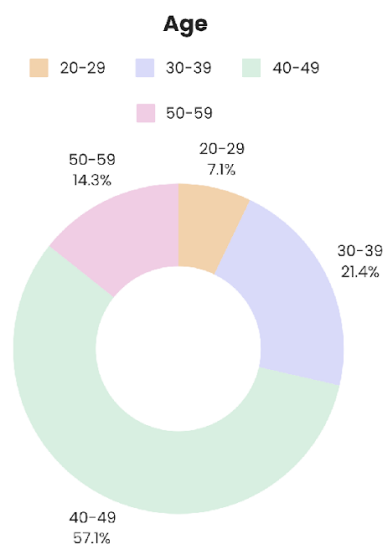
- 100% of respondents believe that building better facilities for young people is key a role Council can play to support young people.
- 50% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that Towong is a good place for young people to live.

ROOM FOR BETTER

- 81% of respondents indicated the young person in their life experiences anxiety.
- 78% of respondents either disagreed or responded neutrally regarding the availability of opportunities locally for young people to feel connected.
- Money remains a concern for parents as equally as young people.
- Non-traditional programs, events and activities remain a gap for Towong young people according to parents / carers.
- 64% of parents thought access to mental health support including counselling was either impossible or difficult

DEMOGRAPHICS

14 responses were received from 10 mothers, 1 father and 2 other family members. Only one respondent identified as male and 13 as female. The majority were in the 40-49 age range and lived primarily in Corryong and Tallangatta.



Several respondents identified as neurodiverse, living with a disability, LGBTQIA+ or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

WORRIES

Parents and carers were most worried about money, young person's problems with school, young person's problems with friends and young person's future after school. The main difference here with young people's responses is that while parents are concerned about relationships with friends, young people are more worried about their appearance. Young people's negative self-image ranked 6th important for parents but 4th important for young people. Social media use was a 5th ranked concern for parents but did not rate as a worry for young people.

Alcohol, drug and vape / cigarette use ranked equally low as a worry for parent and young people.

RANK	ITEM
1	Money
2	Young person's problem with school
3	Young person's problem with friends
4	Young person's future after school
5	Young person's social media use
6	Young person's negative self-image

SERVICE ACCESS

Interestingly, 64% of parents thought access to mental health support including counselling was either impossible or difficult compared to young people's response of 17%. 50% thought support for learning difficulties was either impossible or very difficult in Towong for young people. Young people also indicated that this was difficult based on their experience. The service access question results will be different for parents and young people as young people may be accessing services parents are unaware of or in need of services, such as sexual health information and advice, parents are unaware of. Parent's perspective on what services their young people may need and what they have tried to access on behalf of young people will also be different.

THINGS TO DO

Parents and carers told us that their young person: met up with friends (92%) read (64%) engaged in sport (42%) engaged in creative pursuits (35%) and engaged in dance (35%) once per month. This is similar to the youth response however young people said they did more sport than friend met ups monthly. Young people also indicated they worked more than parents indicated.

The things parents think young people would like to do that they can't which were different from the youth responses above included trips to the city and larger towns, group-based ski trips and mountain bike trips, outdoor education and evening entertainment.

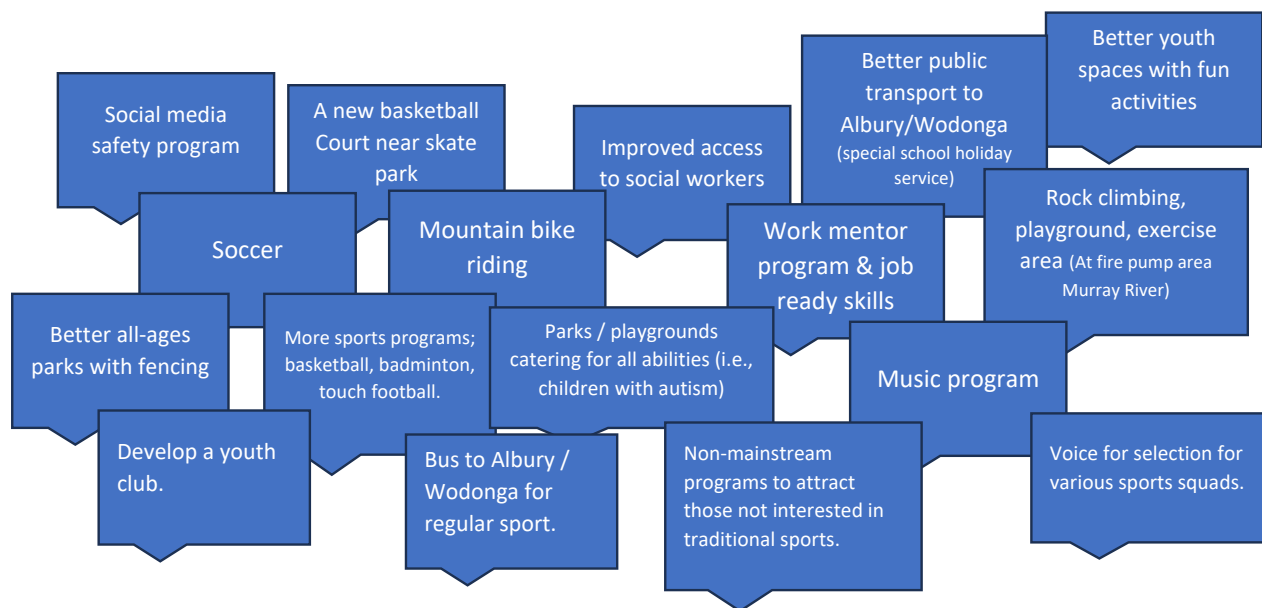
Parent's reinforced youth responses regarding girls' football, theatre, arts, horse riding, music and other alternative group-based activities being a gap currently for Towong young people.

Transportation was the overwhelming barrier to participation for young people according to parents and carers (71% of respondents), followed by money (64%).

IDEAS FOR COUNCIL

Of the 14 respondents, only 1 skipped the question 'If you were to pitch Council a great idea / program / initiative to support the wellbeing of young people in Towong what would it be?'. Non-traditional sports and other creative programs were popular and the need for Albury / Wodonga transport was raised multiple times. Improving playgrounds and public park areas was also supported.

The following summarises the ideas suggested:



COUNCIL'S YOUTH ROLE

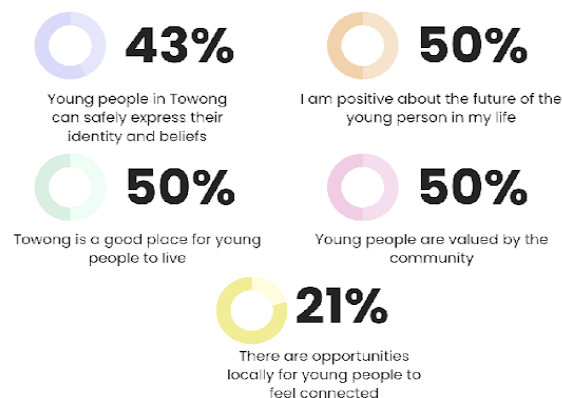
Respondents had 10 options to choose from regarding Council's youth role and multiple choices were permitted. Building better facilities for young people stood out for this stakeholder group as the most important role council has. Helping to improve service access locally and improving transport options were the second and third most responded to options regarding Council's role. Respondent also thought Council has a role in providing more activities and events for young people and helping young people be a part of decision making locally.

What role do you think Council has in supporting young people?

**STATEMENTS**

The survey presented 5 statements for respondents to rank 1 – 5 on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The follow presents the agree or strongly agree percentage combinations for each question.

Statements – Agree or strongly agree % responses



Opportunities for connection and young people being valued by the community registered the highest percentage responses for disagree or strongly disagree. 7% of respondents said they strongly disagreed that young people in Towong can safely express their identity and beliefs, this compares similarly with the youth response (10%).

1.3 What stakeholders told us

The below analyses the survey data received from 25 stakeholders in addition to information received from stakeholders during approximately 10 face to face, video and telephone interviews. The range of Towong stakeholders engaged during the consultation included the neighbourhood centres, school teaching staff and mental health support staff, mental health service providers, local not-for profit organisations and community members with a youth interest.¹

There were 8 stakeholder questions in total.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Stakeholders thought the most important role for Council was building better facilities for young people and advocating on behalf of young people.
- Stakeholders saw a positive role for Council is supporting existing local youth initiatives in a range of ways.
- 25% of respondents thought extra help with school was easy for students to access.

ROOM FOR BETTER

- 40% of respondents ranked mental health support access as the most important issue for young people in Towong.
- 44% thought sexual health advice was either very difficult or impossible to access for Towong youth.

DEMOGRAPHICS

72% of respondents identified as female, 20% as male 4% as gender diverse and 4% as prefer not to say. The majority of respondents were aged between 30-49.

The following represents the stakeholder groups of respondents:

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE
School	28%
Community Group	28%
Community Worker	28%
Other	16%
Sporting Club	8%
Health Service	8%
Social Work Service	8%

YOUTH ISSUES

Stakeholders were asked to identify the primary issues facing young people across Towong. The top three issues identified were 1) mental health support access, 2) bullying and 3) unhealthy social media use. These top 3 issues were closely followed by body image issues and inactivity. 40% of respondents ranked mental health support access as the number one issue for young people.

There is a strong correlation with parental opinions regarding the response that mental health support remains difficult to access for many Towong young people.

SERVICE ACCESS

The below summarises the percentage of respondent who thought service access was either difficult or impossible for Towong young people:

Support for learning difficulties	66% very hard or impossible
Sexual health advice	44% very hard or impossible
Mental health support including counselling	44% very hard or impossible

COLLABORATION WITH COUNCIL

Stakeholders responded that promotion of services and activities being organised and on offer to young people more often by Council was the most important way to improve collaboration with their organisation. This was also expressed in interviews by stakeholders who spoke about the need to promote initiatives in a range of ways to young people to ensure they were aware of opportunities already existing and provided by local groups. Stakeholders also spoke about the need for Council to bolster and add value to pre-existing programs which are working well to engage young people and to avoid duplicating activities.

Many spoke of ways this could be achieved by Council undertaking the following: taking responsibility for the communications / promotion, topping up resources with additional funding to a program, supporting grant writing to maintain a program or supporting some of the coordination logistics such as booking venues, coordinating a registration platform, booking facilitators etc. Additional ideas for collaboration included joint leadership statements on campaigns of social inclusion such as IDAHOBIT day, joint advocacy regarding service access issues and being present 'at the table' at important regional youth discussions to ensure Towong can take advantage of funding and resources.

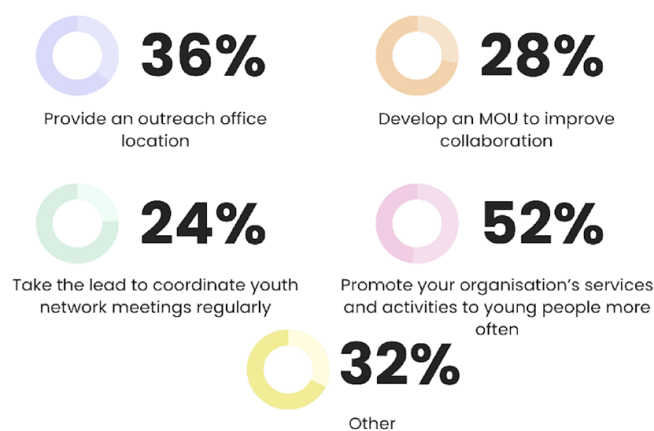
Maintaining relationships with stakeholders on a regular basis was considered important by many interviewees. Some indicated that regular 'network' meetings may not be achievable but prioritising stakeholder 'check ins' regularly by phone calls to schools and services to understand collaboration possibilities and trends was critical.

Local stakeholders spoke of the need to prioritise local initiatives and support local leaders in clubs and groups already delivering programs with strong youth interest.

Where stakeholders responded 'other' they provided written ideas summarised below:

- Provide more support for local initiatives and local services offering youth programming.
- Be more active in schools; organise school-based activities.
- Deliver more group-based activities to improve connection.
- More collaboration and communication to avoid duplication or delivering unwanted initiatives.
- Support local services delivering youth programming.
- Provide after school initiatives.

How could Towong Shire Council improve it's connection with you organisation?



IDEAS FOR COUNCIL

19 respondents provided a range of ideas for Council to support the wellbeing of young people in Towong. The themes covered in these responses included.

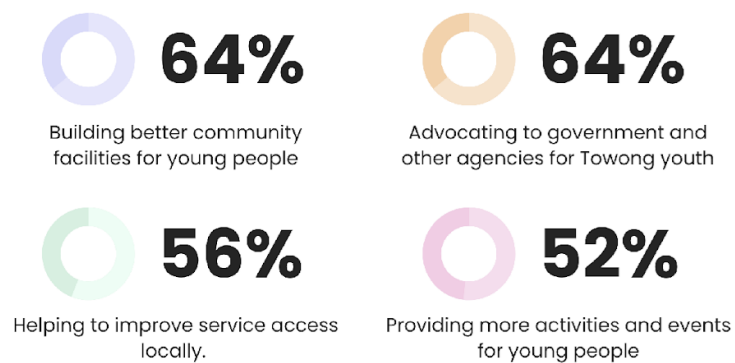
- Outdoor education
- Youth nights
- Youth voice in decision making
- Excursions out of Towong for diversity exposure.
- Collaboration with the school
- Work-ready training
- Youth specific space development
- Awareness raising campaigns on social issues of importance for youth
- Country / city mentoring program
- Music events
- More mental health, youth and family violence clinicians

COUNCIL'S YOUTH ROLE

Stakeholders' opinion regarding Council's role was similar to parents with the standout exception that they believed Council plays an important role in advocating to government and other agencies for Towong youth. Just following the below top 4 responses was

‘helping young people be a part of decision making locally’. The idea for supporting a youth voice also came up in the open ideas for Council below and in the youth responses.

What role do you think Council has in supporting young people?



CONSULTATION DOCUMENTATION

Five separate documents (listed below) were developed as part of the consultation phase for the Youth Strategy. The information derived from these documents was the base for the engagement findings:

1. Data and Literature Review and Benchmarking.
2. Survey Data – Young People
3. Survey Data – Carers/Parents
4. Survey Data – Stakeholders
5. Stakeholder Engagement List

Planning Permit Activity to 31 March 2025 (4 months Dec – March)

Active Permits

Currently there are 30 active permits across the municipality.

Permit Status	Total
New	5
Request Further Information	9
Referral	7
Notice	2
Delegate Report	5
Council Meeting	1
VCAT Appeal	1
Total	30
Proposed land Use	Total
Residence/Accommodation	11
Subdivision	7
Shed	6
Place of Assembly	1
Commercial Use	1
Development Plan	1
Extractive Industry	1
Recreation	2
Total	30
Current Application Types	Total
Bushfire Recovery Dwelling	3
Dwelling	8
Subdivision	7
Development Plan	1
Shed	6
Leisure & Recreation	2
Place of Assembly	1
Commercial Use	1
Extractive Industry	1
Total	30

Approved permits 2024/2025 Financial Year to 30 February 2025*Location of developments*

Area	Total developments
Corryong	7
Tallangatta	5
Bethanga	4
Tallangatta Valley	2
Talgarno	2
Eskdale	2
Jarvis Creek	2
Mount Alfred	2
Other	8
Total development	34

1. Bellbridge, Bullioh, Burrowye Cudgewa, Huon, Georges Creek, Mitta Mitta and Walwa

Type of Development

Type of Development	Total
Sheds	11
Residential Accommodation	8
Subdivision	6
Recreation	3
Licensed Premises	2
Other	5
Total development	32

2 Access to Transport 2 Zone & Alterations & addition to caravan park, food & drink premises, Development Plan, Use of the land for a Post Office

Statutory timelines - 12 month average and monthly average**December 2024 to March 2025**

Shortest Stat Days	7
Median Stat Days	33
Longest Stat. Days	308
Applications with over 60 Stat. Days	3

Financial year to Date 2024/25

Shortest Stat Days	2
Median Stat Days	132
Longest Stat. Days	366
Applications with over 60 Stat. Days	12

Last Financial year 2023/24

Shortest Stat Days	3
Median Stat Days	184
Longest Stat. Days	378
Applications with over 60 Stat. Days	9

Statutory Timelines as Percentage

Description	Quarter Ending 28 February 2025	Financial YTD 2024/2025	Financial Year 2023/2024
Applications Under Statutory Days	77.8%	66.8%	86.15%
Applications Over Statutory Days	22.22%	33.33%	13.85%

Datascape Customer Enquiries**2024/2025 Financial Year to Date**

Locality	Count
Bethanga	83
Corryong	78
Talgarno	73
Tallangatta	43
Jarvis Creek	41
Cudgewa	38
Tallangatta Valley	36
Mitta Mitta	36
Bellbridge	29
Walwa	27
Eskdale	27
Granya	15
External	43
Office	15
Other	139
Total	723

Locations with <15 requests: Bullioh, Towong, Nariel Valley, Georges Creek, Dartmouth, Tintaldra, Towong Upper, Huon, Thowgla Valley, Burrowye, Mount Alfred, Koetong, Tallandoon, Biggara, Shelley, Bungil, Colac Colac, Tallangatta South, Lucyvale, Old Tallangatta, Guys Forest
 External refers to locations outside Towong Shire

SR Type	Count	Median
Enquiry - General	521	0
Application - Existing	84	1
Application - New/Amendment	51	7
Application - Further Information	39	4
Compliance - General	14	5.5
Planning Referral	8	5.5
Pre-application Consultation	4	5.5
Application - Permit Extension Request	1	144
Meeting Request	1	8
Total	723	1

December - March

Locality	Count
Bethanga	27
Talgarno	27
Jarvis Creek	20
Tallangatta	16
Corryong	15
Mitta Mitta	14
Cudgewa	9
Tallangatta Valley	9
Walwa	7
Towong Upper	7
Bellbridge	6
External	19
Office	5
Other	40
Total	221

Locations with <5 requests: Towong, Tintaldra, Burrowye, Bullioh, Granya, Eskdale, Huon, Dartmouth, Mount Alfred, Colac Colac, Thowgla Valley, Tallandoon, Koetong, Old Tallangatta, Lucyvale, Georges Creek, Guys Forest

External refers to locations outside Towong Shire

SR Type	Count	Median
Enquiry - General	162	0
Application - Existing	32	0
Application - Further Information	13	4
Application - New/Amendment	6	0.5
Compliance - General	5	29
Planning Referral	2	1
Pre-application Consultation	1	0
Total	221	0

Councillor Correspondence

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:	27 April 2022
Date of next review:	April 2023

1. Purpose

The objective of this policy is to ensure that Councillor correspondence is managed appropriately in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the *Public Records Act 1973* and Council's information management systems.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillor correspondence including Australia Post mail, emails and mail delivered over the counter to reception at either the Tallangatta or Corryong Offices.

3. Policy Details

3.1 General Correspondence

All correspondence addressed to Councillors (including the Mayor), is forwarded unopened to the Coordinator, Office of the CEO. Mail which is identifiable as personal, private or confidential is left sealed and handled in accordance with the following section. All other mail will be opened and:

- If upon opening the mail it is found to be personal, private or confidential, the item will be resealed and handled in accordance with the guidelines for such mail as outlined in the following section. It shall be noted on the envelope that the item has been inadvertently opened.
- Mail addressed to the Mayor is forwarded to the CEO. The CEO will forward the correspondence (as appropriate) and discuss with the Mayor (with the exception of invitations to events which the Coordinator, Office of the CEO will discuss with the Mayor).
- A copy of mail addressed specifically to Councillors is referred to the Responsible Officer for a response to be prepared. Once finalised a copy of the response together with the original correspondence is provided to all Councillors (including the Mayor).
- The original correspondence is forwarded by the Coordinator, Office of the CEO for recording in Council's information management systems.

Correspondence that is not required to be recorded in Council's information management systems is to be circulated by the Coordinator, Office of the CEO to Councillors via their trays located at the Tallangatta office.

The Coordinator, Office of the CEO will dispose of any unsolicited advertising material ie. 'Junk' mail accordingly.

3.2 Personal, Private and Confidential Correspondence

Any personal, private or confidential correspondence addressed to Councillors (including the Mayor) is to be delivered to the Coordinator, Office of the CEO unopened **and the envelope date stamped**.

The Coordinator, Office of the CEO will contact the Councillor to whom the correspondence is addressed to advise that the correspondence has been received. The Councillor will arrange with the Coordinator, Office of the CEO a suitable time for visiting the office to open the correspondence.

The Coordinator, Office of the CEO will arrange for the envelope to be retained unopened in a secure confidential file until the Councillor is able to visit the office to open the correspondence.

Once the Councillor has opened and read the correspondence the Councillor will determine whether a copy of the correspondence is to be recorded in Council's information management systems. If the correspondence is to be recorded in Council's information management systems the Councillor is to advise the Coordinator, Office of the CEO who will arrange for this to take place.

The Coordinator, Office of the CEO will maintain a register which records the date the personal, private or confidential correspondence is received, the Councillor to whom it is addressed, any specific details that might identify the envelope (eg. Organisation name/sender), the date the Councillor was notified of the receipt of the correspondence, the date the Councillor opened the correspondence and the action taken upon opening the correspondence (for example Datascape reference number, details of response sent).

During periods when the Coordinator, Office of the CEO is not available the Coordinator, Office of the CEO's functions in relation to Councillor Correspondence will be carried out by the Director Corporate and Organisational Development.

4. Deployment

The Coordinator, Office of the CEO is responsible for ensuring this policy is deployed as written.

5. Human Rights Charter Compatibility

This policy has been assessed as being compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 [Vic]*.

6. Relevant Legislation

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant legislative requirements. Relevant legislation includes:

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Public Records Act 1973*

7. Results

The deployment of this policy and the results achieved will be reviewed annually.



Authorised by: _____
Amanda Pagan
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Councillor Gift Policy

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:	27 April 2022
Date of next review:	April 2023

1. Purpose

Council is committed to supporting its Councillors in maintaining the highest levels of integrity and public trust.

The purpose of this policy is to provide support to Councillors in regards to how to respond to offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality, so as to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and maintain clear public accountability. It is also designed to ensure compliance to the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

2. Scope

This policy applies to any gifts, benefits or hospitality offered to Councillors as a result of their role with the Council. A gift is anything of monetary or other value and includes free or discounted items or services. A benefit is preferential or privileged treatment, favours or another form of advantage. Hospitality is the friendly reception of guests and may involve, for example, refreshments, travel, entertainment and accommodation.

3. Policy Details

3.1 Prohibited Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

Councillors may not accept gifts, benefits or hospitality that could bring their integrity or that of the Council into disrepute. This includes gifts, benefits or hospitality that may create a conflict of interest whether real, potential or perceived. Examples include:

- Gifts which can be easily converted into money;
- Gifts from an individual or group involved in a Council permit application;
- Gifts from current or prospective suppliers.

Under no circumstances should Councillors accept a gift offer that they believe is an attempted bribe.



Councillors may not accept any gifts, benefits or hospitality exceeding \$50 where the name and address of the person making the gift are unknown to the Councillor. Any such gifts should be disposed of within 30 days of the gift being received. Any Councillor who is found guilty of a breach must pay to Council the amount or value of the gift.

Councillors must not solicit gifts for themselves or anyone else in any form. To do so may constitute misuse of position and potentially corruption and may lead to criminal prosecution.

Where prohibited gifts, benefits or hospitality are offered they are to be reported to the Director Corporate and Organisational Development so that their refusal can be appropriately recorded in the Councillor Gifts Register. Bribes will be reported to the Victoria Police or the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

3.2 Accepting and Declaring Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

Councillors may accept token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality. Councillors should consider the following questions in assessing whether to accept an offer:

- **Giver** - who is providing the offer and what is their relationship to me? Could they benefit from a decision I make?
- **Influence** – are they seeking to gain an advantage or influence my decisions or actions?
- **Favour** – Are they seeking a favour in return?
- **Trust** – Would accepting the offer diminish public trust?

All offers over \$50 whether accepted or declined must be declared and submitted to the Director Corporate and Organisational Development and included in the Gifts Register, to ensure that the cumulative total of offers from a single source does not exceed \$500, in which case the total offer must be disclosed in the Councillor's biannual personal interest return in line with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Offers are to be declared within 7 days of the offer being made. The declaration should provide a description of the gift, benefit or hospitality, its estimated value, the name and address of the gift giver, and what was done with the gift. The Gift Register will be monitored on a six-monthly basis to identify total offers exceeding \$500 or any systematic pattern of offers which may be of concern.

Reasonable hospitality provided when attending a function or event in an official Council capacity does not need to be declared. The hospitality must be of a standard and type that an independent observer would consider appropriate and not excessive, for example sandwiches and pastries over a lunchtime meeting, or a cup of coffee.

4. Deployment

The Director Corporate and Organisational Development is responsible for deployment of this policy.

5. Breaches

Breaches may result in heavy fines and / or disciplinary action as outlined by the *Local Government Act 2020*.



6. Human Rights Charter Compatibility

This policy has been assessed as being compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 [Vic]*.

7. Relevant Legislation and Council Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other relevant Council policies and procedures, as well as relevant legislative requirements.

Related Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2020*

Related Council Policies and Plans

- *Councillor Code of Conduct*
- *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy*

8. Results

The deployment of this policy and the results achieved will be reviewed annually.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Pagan", positioned above a horizontal line.

Authorised by:

Amanda Pagan
Acting Chief Executive Officer