Agenda
Ordinary Meeting of Council

10:30 am, Wednesday 25 June 2025
Council Chamber, Tallangatta Council Office
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta, 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 32 Towong Street, Tallangatta, Victoria on Wednesday 25 June 2025 commencing at 10:30 am

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.

- Special Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025
- Ordinary Council Meeting held on 28 May 2025

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 and the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 28 May 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.

7.1 Submitter: Ms Debbie Monteny

Ms Monteny provided a Public Question Time submission to Council to be addressed at the meeting. The submission was refused under section G4.8 of Council's Governance Rules, which states:

A question may be disallowed by the Chairperson if the Chairperson determines that it:

- is not related to an item on the agenda;
- relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
- is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance
- deals with a subject matter already answered;
- is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
- relates to confidential information as defined in s3 of the Act;
- relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person

As the submission is not related to an item on the agenda, and deals with a subject matter already answered, the submission is being disallowed by the Chairperson and the matter has been responded to prior to 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 14 May 2025 and 28 May 2025 are attached as follows:

1. Workshop Meeting Records 14 May 2025 [**8.1.1** - 4 pages]
2. Workshop Meeting Records 28 May 2025 [**8.1.2** - 3 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 Special Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 and the Ordinary Council meeting held on 28 May 2025.

Summary:

The attached report summarises the progress made in relation to the resolutions from the Special Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 and the Ordinary Council meeting held on 28 May 2025.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Action Sheet from Special Council Meeting 14 May 2025 [**9.1.1** - 2 pages]
2. Action Sheet from Ordinary Council Meeting 28 May 2025 [**9.1.2** - 5 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.

9.2 Council Plan Priorities (DCOD)

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 this report is to provide information.

Summary:

In accordance with section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must prepare and adopt a Council Plan for a period of at least the next four financial years after a general election in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices. This report provides a quarterly update on the progress of the priorities in our *2021-2025 Council Plan*.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Council Plan Priorities - Q 3 - Jan to Mar 2025 [**9.2.1** - 29 pages]

Background/History:

Each quarter Council officers provide an update to Council on the progress of the priorities listed in the Council Plan.

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)):

The Council Plan priorities included in the appendix are addressed in individual reports to Council, where sustainability information relevant for Councillor consideration is provided.

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

Community Engagement activities are included in the Council Plan Priorities. Progress against each priority is noted in the appendix to this report.

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

Innovation and continuous improvement are built into the Council Plan Priorities, and we continue to progress this as noted in the appendix to this report.

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

Collaboration and pursuing shared service opportunities are included in the Council Plan Priorities. Progress against this priority is noted in the appendix to this report.

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:

This is a quarterly report to provide an update on the progress of the Council Plan 2021-2025 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:

Not applicable.

Officer's View:

It is the Officer's view that despite the many challenges faced by the organisation since the adoption of the Council Plan, significant progress has been made since the adoption of the Council Plan in 2021, with many priorities having been delivered or substantially progressed.

9.3 Domestic Animal Management Plan 2024/25 Review (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 provide an update on the implementation of the *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25*.

Summary:

Council is required to establish and maintain a *Domestic Animal Management Plan* (DAMP) for its respective municipality and review its implementation annually. The DAMP is a statutory strategic document that summarises each Victorian Councils commitment towards domestic animal control services and the initiatives identified to promote responsible pet ownership and mitigate the risks associated with domestic animals. This report notes the progress and results of the DAMP for the 2024-25 financial year.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. DAMP Performance and Results [**9.3.1** - 4 pages]
2. domestic-animal-management-plan-2021-2025 [**9.3.2** - 13 pages]

Background/History:

The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25 was adopted by Council in November 2021 as required by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. The Act requires each Victorian Council to prepare a domestic animal management plan on 4 December 2021 and report to Council annually on the following topics it covers:

- Methods for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the

Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations,

- Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district,

- Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district:
  - to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats
  - to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation
  - to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
  - to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
  - to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
  - to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
  - to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations

- Provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable,

- Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary, and

- Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan

Councils are required to prepare and adopt its DAMP every four (4) years from the day the Plan was adopted; the Plan is scheduled to be revised and adopted prior to or at the November 2025 Council Meeting. Councils must also publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

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

Domestic Animals Act 1994
Section 68A "*Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans*"

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 revised DAMP will be available for community consultation through the public exhibition process later in the calendar year. This will provide an opportunity for the community to submit any feedback or queries prior to the adoption of the revised Plan.

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

Not Applicable.

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

Council continues to maintain effective relationships with local vet clinics, animal shelters and State/Federal agencies to achieve the mutual goals of promoting responsible pet ownership and identifying contemporary practises to mitigate the risks associated with domestic animal ownership.

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. It is noted that Domestic Animal Management activities are not fully funded by animal registration fees, however providing these services is a statutory requirement.

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

Not Applicable.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:
Not applicable.

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:

Council Rangers continue to address community concerns relating to domestic animals in the Shire within the agreed service level timeframes. There are two (2) part-time Rangers available, who also have responsibilities as Local Laws Officers and Municipal Fire Protection Officers, and are managing their Ranger duties in an effective and responsive manner. Further initiatives could be applied to proactively address the DAMP Action Plan, however limited resourcing restricts the capability to achieve this as well as we can.

Officer's View:

It is the Officer's view that Council is implementing the DAMP effectively, noting the resourcing challenges presented. The revision of the DAMP towards the end of the calendar year will enable Council an opportunity to revisit its appetite for domestic animal management and the initiatives it will commit to, in ensuring the community can enjoy its amenities whilst considering responsible pet ownership obligations.

9.4 Final Budget Report 2025/26 (DCOD)

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 present the *Budget 2025/26* for adoption.

Summary:

At the Special Council Meeting on 14 May 2025 the Chief Executive Officer was authorised to make the *Draft Budget 2025/26* available for public exhibition and invite public submissions. At the time of completing this report, five submissions had been received. These have been considered and addressed in the Background/History of this report.

Work has been undertaken to secure substantial grant funding to support a wide range of capital works for the benefit of our communities. We have submitted grant applications for both new and renewal infrastructure projects across the shire, most notably the Bethanga Recreation Reserve Pavilion. We have not included this in the Budget 2025-2026 as the outcome of our grant applications will not be known until after the budget is adopted. A significant amount of road renewal works has been budgeted for, with disaster recovery funding being approved in the current financial year to renew our road network following the 2022 floods.

An increase to total rates raised of 3% is recommended in accordance with the rate cap set by the State Government under the Fair Go Rates system. The current pressures on our rate payers caused by the increased cost of living was a key consideration when preparing the budget and the associated 3% increase to rate revenue. The user charges for kerbside collection remain unchanged from the 2024/25 charges.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The Budget 2025/26 be adopted;

2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to give public notice of the adoption of the *Budget 2025/26*;

3. Pursuant to section 158 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the amounts to be raised by general rates, municipal charges, service rates and service charges for the 2025/26 financial year are as follows:
    a. General rates – $7,362,000;
    b. Municipal charge – $1,390,000;
    c. Kerbside collection charges – $1,493,000;
    d. Waste facilities management charge – $416,000;

4. Pursuant to section 159 of the Local Government Act 1989, a municipal charge of $347 per rateable property be declared for the 2025/26 financial year;

5. Pursuant to section 159 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the following annual service charges be declared for the 2025/26 financial year:
    a. Waste facilities management – $104;
    b. Garbage and recycling standard service – 140L/240L bins – $340;
    c. Garbage and recycling – 240L/240L bins – $380;
    d. Garbage and recycling – 80L/240L bins – $310;
    e. Garbage, Recycling and FOGO - 80L/240L/240L bins - $470;
    f. Garbage, Recycling and FOGO - 140L/240L/240L bins - $495;
    g. Garbage, Recycling and FOGO - 240L/240L/240L bins - $530;
    h. Additional garbage – 140L bin – $380;
    i. Additional garbage – 240L bin – $495;
    j. Additional garbage – 80L bin – $325;
    k. Additional FOGO 240L Bin - $155;
    l. Additional recycling – 240L bin – $180; and
    m. Garbage and recycling service extension (per km) - $0.20;

6. Pursuant to section 161 of the Local Government Act 1989, general rates are raised by the application of differential rates to rateable properties and that the following rates in the dollar are applied for each type of rate to be levied for the 2025/26 financial year, with the definition of each type or class of land contained within the Budget 2025/26:
    a. Residential properties – 0.2367 cents in the dollar of capital improved value;

b. Rural residential properties – 0.2367 cents in the dollar of capital improved value;
c. Rural properties – 0.1894 cents in the dollar of capital improved value;
d. Business properties – 0.2130 cents in the dollar of capital improved value; and
e. Undeveloped residential properties – 0.7574 cents in the dollar of capital improved value;

7. In exercise of the power conferred by section 169 of the Local Government Act 1989, rebates are granted to each owner (or where applicable, occupier) of rateable land of the declared municipal charge and waste facilities management charge in respect of the financial year, if:
    a. The rateable land is farm land within the meaning of section 2(1) of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960* or would be farm land if it were 2 hectares or more in area;
    b. The rateable land forms part of a single farm enterprise;
    c. A rebate is not granted in respect of at least one other rateable property which forms part of the single farm enterprise; and
    d. In the case of a single farm enterprise, which is occupied by more than one person, a rebate is not granted in respect of more than one principle place of residence;

8. It is Council's position that rebates assist in the proper development of the municipal district by encouraging the retention of farms and reducing the rates and charges burden on owners (and, where applicable, occupiers) of single farm enterprises;

9. In exercise of the power conferred by section 169 of the *Local Government Act 1989,* the following concessions be granted:
    a. 50% of the rates levied on the four elderly person units located at 24 Willong Street, Tallangatta, as per the existing agreement dated in 1994 between the Ministry of Housing and Council;
    b. 50% of the rates, municipal charge and waste management charges levied on the property at 25 Wheeler Street, Corryong, as per the Council Minutes dated 1 May 2000; and

10. In accordance with section 167 of the Local Government Act 1989, rates and charges are to be paid in four instalments on or before 30 September 2025, 30 November 2025, 28 February 2026 and 31 May 2026.

Attachment:

1. Towong Shire Model Budget 2025-26 ADOPTED [**9.4.1** - 63 pages]

Background/History:

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires that a Council must prepare and adopt a Budget for each financial year and the subsequent three financial years by 30 June each year. The budget must give effect to the Council Plan and contain the financial statements, services and initiatives to be funded, the prescribed indicators and measures of service performance, the total amount to be raised by rates and charges, descriptions of the rates to be applied, and any other information prescribed by the regulations. The Budget must be developed in accordance with the financial management principles outlined by the *Local Government Act 2020* as well as its *Community Engagement Policy*.

A proposed *Budget 2025/26* was prepared for consideration by Council at the 14 May 2025 Special Council Meeting and the Chief Executive Officer was authorised to release it for public exhibition and submissions. The document was subsequently released with submissions closing on 11 June 2025. Five submissions have been received as follows:

No.	Submission Summary	Officer Comments and Recommendation
1	Request for upgrades to Flagstaff road to improve safety for road users.	This will be included in the Future Capital Works register for evaluation and budgeting within the Roads budget in line with the priority of requested works.
2	Request for consideration to the timing and quantity of childcare fee increases, that this increase be implemented in a staged approach to allow families to budget for this; and raised concerns at the lack of engagement with families on what is affordable.	The recommendation is that the fees remain unchanged, however scenario analysis for different options have been provided to Councillors for consideration to inform their decision; Councillors sought broad input to the delivery of Early Years Services during recent Council Plan community consultation sessions by initiating conversations regarding Early years' service provision, and it was also considered that there was grounds for limited engagement due to the confidential & commercial information that has influenced this decision. We have initiated the standard engagement

		process for consideration of the Draft Budget in line with legislative requirements.
3	Request for a roof to be erected over the table and chairs that were recently installed at the Granya Hall.	This will be included in the Future Capital Works register for evaluation and budgeting within the Parks and Open Spaces budget in line with the priority of requested works.
4	Recommendation to Council provided: 11. Delay or phase in the fee increase to give families time to adjust; 12. Undertake meaningful community engagement before finalising the budget — including forums, surveys, or listening sessions with families; 13. Publicly outline the financial modelling and funding options considered prior to selecting a fee increase; 14. Reassess the rigid cost recovery model, and consider partial subsidisation, especially during periods of cost-of-living stress; 15. Benchmark fees against other comparable rural councils to ensure Towong's approach remains regionally competitive.	Response: 1. The recommendation is that the fees are increased to $120/day, however scenario analysis for different options have been provided to Councillors for consideration to inform their decision; 2. Broad input regarding Early Years Service provision was sought during recent Council Plan community consultation sessions by initiating conversations regarding Early years service provision. It was considered that there are grounds for limited engagement due to the confidential & commercial information that has influenced this decision. We have initiated the standard engagement process for consideration of the Draft Budget in line with legislative requirements. 3. As above. Noting that alternate funding sources have also been investigated and had success in attaining this. 4. Council have taken the position of a cost recovery model for **direct** costs only. There are significant indirect costs that are **not** recovered under the current funding model. This is in recognition of the value of providing these services to our communities, particularly in the absence of a market. It is also noted that in times

		of economic difficulty, there are many residents that are facing challenges, for example, pensioners, whose rates are increasing and have limits on the increase in the pension payment that they rely on. It is not considered reasonable for ratepayers to be subsidising these costs any further. 5. Council have undertaken this exercise, noting that of the 6 regional Councils researched, none offer a Long Day Care Service. We have benchmarked against a neighbouring service at Alpine Children's Services and note that their long day care fee is $146/day.
5	Request for upgrades to the Community rooms in Tallangatta.	This will be included in the Long term capital works plan for evaluation and budgeting within the Buildings - Minor works budget.

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

The *Budget 2025/26* has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1989,* the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.*

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

Council could choose to vary revenue and expenditure levels from proposed levels. Revenue levels have been proposed to balance the community's capacity to pay for rates and services with Council's ability to cover its costs as inflation increases the cost of doing business. Expenditure is comprised of spending on projects which are grant funded, and spending on business-as-usual facilities and services, which are to be maintained at current levels.

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

The parameters of the proposed *Budget 2025/26* have been set to balance community needs with ongoing financial sustainability. Council's financial sustainability over the preceding years has been quite strong following receipt of

significant funding for capital projects, Bushfire Recovery and Flood Recovery activities. Longer-term sustainability remains a challenge in the light of the costs of renewing the Shire's aging civil infrastructure.

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

The development of the proposed Budget 2025/26 has considered feedback received through ongoing community engagement and particularly the consultation regarding the *Council Plan 2021-2025*. The proposed document has been released for exhibition and submissions and two submissions were received.

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

The proposed *Budget 2025/26* includes a major capital works program which invests in our civil infrastructure to support the Shire in its future growth and vibrancy.

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

Not applicable.

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

The proposed *Budget 2025/26* signals our ongoing reliance on external funding sources to meet community expectations for the services we deliver.

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

Many of our capital works renewal budget contained in the *Budget 2025/26* are funded by State and Federal grant programs, in alignment to associated State and Federal plans and strategies.

Council Plans and Policies:

The activities funded by the *Budget 2025/26* are in alignment with the strategies outlined in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*. The 2024/25 financial year is the last year of the *Council Plan 2021-2025,* we note that there are outstanding priorities that have heavily influenced inclusion in the *Budget 2025/26,* while the *Council Plan 2025/29* is being developed and finalised.

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 *Budget 2025/26* represents a consistent risk profile to previous budgets.

A surplus is forecast; this is predominantly a result of successful application for funding to complete disaster recovery works, that are Capital in nature. Our current financial position is quite strong. Long-term financial sustainability will be dependent on our ability to manage competing demands on our resources. Prioritisation of asset renewals is critical to ensuring we remain financially sustainable, and ensuring we are investment ready to pursue funding opportunities for new, upgraded or replacement of assets is needed, in order that ratepayer fund contributions are minimised to undertake these works. The *Budget 2025/26* and long term financial plan currently shows a good balance in this regard.

Officer's View:

The *Budget 2025/26* has been developed in accordance with legislative requirements and is based on ongoing community engagement. Council has worked hard to secure substantial grant funding, particularly disaster recovery funding to support major works in 2025/26 and the proposed financial position is sound.

It is the officer's view that the *Budget 2025/26* is financially responsible and consistent with community needs.

9.5 Final Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/26 (DCOD)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr 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:

This report provides an overview of the *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* for adoption.

Summary:

Development of a Revenue and Rating Plan is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2020 and establishes the revenue raising framework within which Council funds its operations. Revenue sources include rates and charges, statutory fees, user fees, grants and other income such as interest on funds held in bank accounts. The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* was placed on public exhibition following the Special Council Meeting 14 May 2025, with submissions closing 11 June 2025.

Recommendation:

That the *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29* be adopted.

Attachment:

1. Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 [**9.5.1** - 19 pages]

Background/History:

The Local Government Act 2020 requires that a Council must prepare and adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan to cover a minimum period of four years following each Council election. The Revenue and Rating Plan establishes the revenue raising framework within which Council funds its operations, including the principles and considerations underlying the distribution of rates, charges and fees to property owners and users of Council services.

A *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been drafted in alignment with Council's

current revenue and rating strategies. The actual quantum of revenue to be raised is then determined in the Council Budget.

The two most significant sources of funding for Council are grants and rates, which comprise 48% and 33% of annual income within Council's *Budget 2025/2026* respectively. Rates provide a reliable foundation of funding from which Council can support the delivery of services and infrastructure, while grants can fluctuate considerably from year to year.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and also complies with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1989, which still retains provisions in relation to how Councils may raise and apply rates and charges.

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

Council could choose to vary its funding mechanisms. Funding mechanisms have been proposed to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates, charges and fees across ratepayer, residents and other users of Council services and facilities.

While the *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* covers the period 2025-2029, it is noted that the Council may choose to vary the Plan by resolution at any time if considered necessary.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* strategies are designed to balance community needs with Council's ongoing financial sustainability.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* was released for the community to provide feedback. No direct submissions have been received. We have considered feedback received during the Council Plan consultation process and through Budget submissions.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* expands on the information currently available to the community to explain how Council funds its operations, providing further transparency and understanding as well as opportunity for input.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is based on the Model Revenue and Rating Plan provided by Local Government Victoria, which was developed through collaboration with Councils across the state.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is a key instrument outlining how Council funds its operations, and provides the framework underpinning the income sources outlined in Council's Budget and Long Term Financial Plan. It is noted that grants are a major component of Council's funding and may fluctuate considerably from year to year.

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

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* outlines the importance of grants, from the State and Federal governments, in funding the operations of Council, which in turn may be determined by relevant State and Federal plans and policies.

Council Plans and Policies:

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is a key element of Council's integrated planning framework and provides the basis for funding Council's Budget and the Council Plan.

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 *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* highlights the importance of grant funding in supporting Council's operations, and notes that grants may fluctuate considerably from year to year.

Officer's View:

The *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been developed in accordance with legislative requirements and Council's current revenue and rating strategies. It is the Officer's view that the Plan be released for public exhibition.

9.6 Quarterly Performance Reporting Graphs (07/05/0022 - DCOD)

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 information.

Summary:

The performance reporting graphs are provided to Council on a quarterly basis to provide a high-level picture of the key areas of Council operations.

A graph is provided for each of the following areas:

- Council Plan Priorities
- Top 5 Service Request Types
- Service Requests Closed and Open
- Corryong Visitor Information Centre Visitation
- Capital Expenditure
- Cash Position
- Rates Debtors
- Incident Reports
- Building Permits Issued
- Planning Applications Lodged
- Council Resolutions
- Technical Service Inspections

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Monthly Council Reporting Graphs - 2024-25 [**9.6.1** - 1 page]

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)):

In accordance with our *Community Engagement policy* this matter did not require community engagement.

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

This report provides information relevant to our progress in performance and continuous improvement against key areas of Council's operations.

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

Not applicable.

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

Cash balances indicate that the Council is currently in a strong liquid position; the capital forecast also indicates that the cash reserves are committed, and that beyond the forecast budget for 12 months the financial position is less secure.

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

This report does not relate to Regional, State and National Plans and Policies.

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:

The Performance Reporting Graphs provide a snapshot of how Council is tracking against its key operational objectives, helping to provide a high-level guide as to any emerging risks.

Officer's View:

The Performance Reporting Graphs are provided to illustrate key aspects of Council's performance and results. This data indicates Council officers' efforts to achieve strong outcomes for the community are coming to fruition.

9.7 Chief Executive Officer - Employment and Remuneration Committee (10/01/0004-DCOD)

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 this report is to recommend that tenure for the Chairperson of the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee (the "Committee") be extended.

Summary:

The *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020) requires that councils put in place a Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee which acts as an advisory committee to Council and comprises an Independent Chairperson and at least three councillors, one of whom must the Mayor. The incumbent Independent Chairperson is Ms Leisa Clarke and Ms Clarke has applied to Council to continue in the role.

Recommendation:

That Leisa Clarke be re-appointed as the Independent Chairperson of the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee for a further term of four years.

Attachment:

Nil

Background/History:

The Employment and Remuneration Committee provides for the appointment of an Independent Chairperson to the Committee. The Independent Chairperson is to have human resources (or related) qualifications, demonstrated management skills, senior business experience, demonstrated ability in relation to executive level performance appraisal, professional development and remuneration, and significant experience

working with executives and board members in a similar advisory role. Experience and knowledge of the Local Government sector is desirable.

Leisa Clarke was appointed in April 2022 for a three year term. Given Ms Clarke's contribution to this role and committee, her proven experience and performance, it is recommended that Ms Clarke is re-appointed to this role for a further four-year term. The maximum term is eight years, and this re-appointment will not exceed this.

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

Section 45 of the *Local Government Act 2020*

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

The Committee provides for the selection and employment of the Chief Executive Officer of the Council based on merit, transparency and equal opportunity, in the interest of providing for the best service delivery outcomes to the community.

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

The role of the Committee is to ensure that the selection and employment of the Chief Executive Officer provides for the effective, efficient and sustainable operation of the Council, for which the Chief Executive Officer is responsible.

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

Not applicable.

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

The Committee based approach brings formality and independence to the selection and employment of the Chief Executive Officer, providing for consistency and transparency of these practices.

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

Not applicable.

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

The Independent Chairperson's remuneration is accounted for within Council's Budget.

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

Not applicable

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:
Not applicable.

Council Policies:
Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee

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 appointment of an Independent Chairperson of the Committee provides for appropriate oversight of the employment Chief Executive Officer, to ensure that the best candidate for the role is selected, that an appropriate level of remuneration is provided, that any performance issues are identified and addressed, and that ongoing performance feedback can be provided in a constructive manner to support the delivery of excellent service delivery.

Officer's View:

The recommended candidate has the appropriate experience and skill to fulfill the responsibilities of the Independent Chairperson.

10 Community Wellbeing

10.1 Early Years and Maternal Child Health Report - December 2024 - May 2025 (DCP- 04/03/0071)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):
This report was prepared by Miss Maisie Pilli, Early Years Quality and Governance Administrator.

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.

Summary:

Council's Early Years and Family Services continue to provide a range of programs and core services to children and families.

Throughout the reporting period, the following successful activities and events were delivered:

- Progressive implementation of changes to the management structure of the Early Years services.

- Maternal Child Health Nurse (MCHN) team continue to support and engage with community members requiring extra support including vulnerable families located across the shire.

- Maternal Child Health Christmas parties across all service areas were successful with each of the children receiving a book as a gift from the service.

- New centre for Walwa Early Years Learning Centre has opened under a temporary license at the Walwa Primary School, with a goal to move to a permanent license within the next 12 months.

- New three-year-old Kindergarten enrolments accepted during January and numbers are strong across all centres. The enrolments at Corryong are particularly high compared to previous years.

- Corryong is modelling a mixed kinder program to manage license capacity, demand, and staffing. This means the 3-year-old and 4-year-olds are mixed across two groups.

- Fortnightly Library visits for Storytime for Corryong and Tallangatta Kinders.
- Australia Day – Artwork with the children including Indigenous and Australian flag designs in Tallangatta and Bellbridge.

- St Patricks Day celebrated at Walwa through creative play.

- Pancake Day at Corryong, children cooked and ate their pancakes.

- The Bellbridge EYLC is holding excursions fortnightly to the park next door, to participate in the "Blue Earth" Program which promotes exercise and fitness.

- Mother's Day celebrations held across the four centres where children showcased their learning achievements.

- Children from Corryong and Walwa have had visits from Halve Waste.

- Continued facilitation of fun and engaging playgroup sessions, with strong attendance particularly at Corryong Playgroup – up to 15 families in some weeks.

- The Maternal Child Health Team put together a Corryong Giving Tree for Christmas in the MCHN building for vulnerable families within the shire.

- Worked with Food Bank in Wodonga to become a voucher distributor for vulnerable families within the shire.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Nil

Background/History:

This report is presented at regular 6-month intervals across the year to provide an update on the activities of the Early Years (Kinder and Child Care) services, Maternal and Child Health Nurse services, and the delivery of Playgroup sessions.

Council provides MCH services, with 50% funding by the State Government; the childcare and Kinder are funded partially through State and Commonwealth funding, and fees from families. There is a growing demand for these services, with the availability of appropriate facilities being the biggest challenge Council faces in meeting this demand.

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)):

The Early Years and MCH units provide services to improve educational and wellbeing outcomes for young children and families and carers.

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

No economic, social, or environmental sustainability factors for the municipal district is required to be promoted through this report.

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

Key engagements/networking with the community over the past 6 months include:

- Upper Murray Family Care
- Child Protection Services (DFFH)
- Gateway Health
- Corryong Health
- Corryong P-12 College
- Corryong Kindergarten staff
- Victoria Police
- Foodshare
- Acres and Acres Food provision
- St Kilda Mums
- Orange Door
- Tallangatta Hospital
- Tallangatta CFA

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

The Maternal Child Health, Early Years and Family Support Services continue to refine

processes, policies, and communication channels to:

- improve the identification of known or potentially at-risk children and families.
- achieve compliance with the Child Safe Standards.
- adequately identify and respond to risks within our services.

The early intervention practices can have important effects on family care, and child development.

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

The teams continued to undertake important collaborations, including:

- Delivery of professional development for educators and teachers across the municipality with the Department of Education (through School Readiness Funding).
- December- Annual First Aid and CPR training.
- January- Focused on leadership, communication and creating a collaborative environment.
- May- How to create engaging spaces, dealing with difficult conversations, and Body Safety.
- Delivery of Early Years projects and parenting programs with the Australian Childhood Foundation, Tallangatta Health, Gateway Health and the Department of Education and Training; and
- Attendance and collaboration at key stakeholder meetings, such as Wodonga Alpine Indigo Towong (WAIT) meeting and Early Years Management Meetings.

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)):

Early Years and MCH activities have been conducted in accordance with relevant state and national plans, including:

- The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's National Quality Framework;
- The Victorian State Government's Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework;
- The Victorian State Government's Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan;

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.

2.7 Expand and improve early years services across the Shire to support young families

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:

The Early Years services continue to deliver appropriate and well-managed services which meet the needs of children, families, and carers. With minimal private sector operators offering these services in the municipality, the community is in critical need of these services.

10.2 Recreation Update (DCP-04/01/0006)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Miranda Mouat, Senior Community Development Officer – Recreation.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officers 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 an update on the activities in the Recreation portfolio throughout the period December 2024 to May 2025.

Summary:

The Recreation activities that were a focus during the reporting period included:

- Official opening of the Corryong Skatepark.
- Completion of the Transforming Tintaldra Equine Arena project.
- Submission of a funding application to the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* for the Sports Pavilion at Bethanga Recreation Reserve.
- Ongoing project management activities across sports infrastructure projects including the Rowen Park Sports Oval Lighting project, Cudgewa Football Oval Lighting Project, Bullioh Football Netball Club Female Friendly Facilities project, and Tallandoon Tennis Courts Redevelopment project.
- Management of Belgravia Leisure contract for operation of Council swimming pools to ensure successful delivery of 2024/25 swimming pool operating season (subject of an individual report to Council meeting also in June).
- Management of maintenance and facility improvement works at Council swimming pool sites, including compliance with Occupational Health and Safety and Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations.
- Training for relevant Council staff in Aquatic Technical Operator course, to ensure all staff with onsite pool operations responsibilities, such as water management, are suitably trained and qualified.
- Implementation of aspects of the Community Sport Fair Access Action Plan.
- Collaboration with external Recreation partners to support the development of sport and active recreation in Towong Shire.

Further details of the activities can be found in the attached Appendix.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Appendix Recreation June 2025 [**10.2.1** - 3 pages]

Background/History:

This report is provided every six months to inform Council and the community of progress and activity in the Recreation portfolio.

Recreation activities are critical elements of supporting community health and wellbeing. The activities are typically diverse in nature, ranging from:

- infrastructure development at sporting clubs;
- operation of the swimming pools;
- development of programs and projects to support various community organisations;
- working with sporting organisations, health service providers and schools;
- linking and collaborating with government agencies in the delivery of targeted funded programs.

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)):

All of the activities undertaken were focussed on achieving the best outcomes for the community.

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

Not applicable.

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

Actions and activities undertaken in the Recreation space involve considerable engagement with the broader Towong Shire community.

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

Not Applicable.

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

There has been notable collaboration in the development of new sporting infrastructure projects, with community groups actively engaged in the execution of these projects.

Broad community collaboration has occurred in the development of designs and funding submission for the new Sports Pavilion at the Bethanga Recreation Reserve.

Ongoing liaison with Belgravia Leisure has produced improvements in processes and outcomes that will benefit the 2025-26 pool season.

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

All activities were undertaken within 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:

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

This report aligns with the objectives of the

- *Towong Shire Recreation Strategy 2022-2033*
- *Community Sport Fair Access Policy and Action Plan 2024-2028*
- *Towong Shire Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025*

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

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

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable

Officer's View:

It is the officers' view that good progress is being made against the priorities detailed in both the Towong Shire's Council Plan 2021-2025 and Recreation Strategy 2022-2033.

10.3 Emergency Management Update (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Sven Erickson, Emergency Management Co-ordinator.

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 the activities of the Emergency Management team.

Summary:

The attached report provides an overview of the current key activities within the Emergency Management functions of Council.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Emergency Management Report June 2025 [**10.3.1** - 3 pages]

Background/History:

The emergency management report provides an update on the Emergency Management activities conducted by Council. Council's roles in municipal emergency management include:

- Working with emergency service agencies to provide support to the community to prepare for emergencies.
- Contributing to fire prevention planning and preparation activities through Councils' municipal fire prevention inspection program.
- Contributing to Municipal Emergency Management Planning as a member of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC).
- Providing support to relief and response arrangements during an emergency; and
- Providing leadership and support during recovery from an emergency.

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

Country Fire Authority Act 1958.
Emergency Management Act 2013
Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018.

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

Emergency management activities aid communities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies, supporting their economic and social well-being.

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

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

Emergency management planning further prepares Council and communities to prepare for the increase in both the likelihood and consequence of emergencies due to the impacts of climate change.

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

The current areas of focus of community engagement in Emergency Management over the last period has been through:

- Completion of flood recovery work.
- The emergence of drought support and drought advocacy.
- Supporting communities with the development and maintenance of community owned Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMP).
- Working with community facility committees on the implementation of the Resilient Community Facilities Project.
- Continuing the work of the Rebuild Support Service program for residents rebuilding after the 2019/2020 bushfires.

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

As part of the North East Hume Emergency Management Collaboration (NEHEMC), Towong, Indigo and Alpine Shire Councils are in collaboration to improve their joint ability to respond to emergencies through sharing limited resources.

To improve the capacity to respond under Council relief obligations in emergencies, Council has in place two emergency relief trailers to supply resources to relief centres as a primary purpose and to be used for community engagement as a secondary

purpose. The trailers are positioned in specific areas around the shire based on the current risk profile of relevant hazards.

To support the resilience of more isolated communities within the Shire, Council is delivering its Resilient Buildings Project to enhance additional infrastructure in identified community buildings. The objective is to make these structures more resilient, allowing communities to utilise them after a significant emergency when it is safe to return to their community.

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

Emergency management requires constant collaboration with other agencies and officers who work directly with the members of the Municipal Emergency Managment Planning Commitee (MEMPC), the Hume Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMPC), the Hume Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT), the Hume Regional Recovery Committee and the North East Hume Emergency Management Collaboration on joint initiatives. Council leads the Towong Shire Local Recovery Agency Network. There is also an ongoing collaboration with Emergency Management Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria, Community Recovery Committees, and other community organisations.

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

The Resilient Buildings Project, Flood Recovery Services and Rebuild Support Services are grant funded by Emergency Recovery Victoria. This funding has been invaluable in providing our Shire with improved resilience and recovery capacity. Day to day functions have been budgeted for and delivered within budget. Council's ability to deliver further capacity building programs will be contingent on future grant funding after the completion of the current grant funded programs.

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

Emergency Management activities are undertaken in accordance with:

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

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.

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

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

Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025:

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

Council Policies:

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:

The weather situation of a dry summer and autumn has led to drought conditions in the municipality. This has led to an extended Fire Danger Period only just finishing May 30. This has presented resource challenges for fire control agencies to not have summer crews or summer aerial assets available. At this stage, the fire risk for the 2025/2026 season will be higher than the previous season if significant rain is not received.

Officer's View:

The emergency management team is continuing to make progress on implementing the priorities in the Council Plan 2021-2025.

10.4 Bullioh Recreation Reserve - Female Friendly Facility (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 provide information on the tender and subsequent processes that have taken place into the development of the female friendly facilities at Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve.

This report also seeks Council approval to allocate additional funding towards this project and to appoint the recommended contractor.

Summary:

This report demonstrates the tender process followed for the procurement of a suitable contractor to undertake the construction of the female friendly facility at the Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve.

Recommendation:

That:

1. Contract 2024/25 - 023 for the Female Friendly Facilities at Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve not be awarded to any tenderer;
2. An additional $300,000 be allocated towards the project from savings and reallocations in the ERV Recovery and Resilience fund;
3. A negotiated contract 2024/25-061for $614,796 be awarded to Barton Street Developments Pty Ltd for the revised scope project;
4. The use of the Common Seal in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties be authorised for the purpose of signing the contract documents; and
5. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated budget.

Attachment:

Nil

Background/History:

There are currently limited facilities for netballers at the Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve and these are located some distance away from the two netball courts, this leads to issues such as there being an inadequate amount of time during breaks in matches for players, umpires and officials to use the amenities, meaning delays in start times and overall scheduling disruption.

There is currently no storage at the netball courts for equipment, and there is little shelter for 100 plus supporters who attend matches at the recreation reserve.

The female friendly facility project at the Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve is aimed to deliver a new pavilion strategically positioned between the football oval and two netball courts benefitting all user groups.

The pavilion will include accessible player changerooms, umpires change rooms, accessible amenity, a small admin/multi-purpose space and storage all designed to align with Netball Victoria guidelines which incorporates female friendly design principles.

The new pavilion also includes a verandah along the eastern and western sides of the building creating undercover spectator areas for both the netball courts and football oval.

This project was developed through strong partnerships between Council, the Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, the Bullioh Football Netball Club (BFNC), Sport and Recreation Victoria and Netball Victoria.

Grant funding of $250,000 was secured for this project in 2023 through Sport and Recreation Victoria's 2022/23 Country Football and Netball Program. $225,000 of this grant has already been paid to Council with the remaining $25,000 to be paid upon the completion of the project.

A tender was issued in December 2024 for Contract No 2024/25 - 051, in line with Council's Procurement Policy with advertising through www.tenders.net, in local newspapers and Council's Facebook page. Four submissions were received which were all well above the budget figure for the project of $395,000 (excluding GST).

Under the "Conditions of Tendering" Towong Shire Council reserves the right to accept a Tender in part or in whole or to negotiate. Based on this provision and the allocated budget, negotiations with the lowest priced tenderer (Barton Street Developments

Pty Ltd) has taken place including reducing the scope and overall costs of the project.

The key objective and requirement for this project is to provide female friendly player and umpire change rooms and amenities close to the netball courts. The revised scope has not changed these changeroom and amenities components, but we have removed the canteen and social space based on:

- Further discussion and agreement with the Bullioh FNC
- Canteen and social facilities are included in the existing football pavilion and accessible for netball purposes.

A multi-purpose space and storage area are still included and designed to Netball Victoria Guidelines whilst the veranda remains, albeit slightly smaller due to the reduction in the width of the building. There are some other agreed modifications and reductions introduced in the revised scope to reduce the price further.

The revised scope has been communicated with, and approved by Sport and Recreation Victoria, with a variation to the funding agreement to be finalised and Netball Victoria is supportive of the reduced scope of the project as the revised design still meets its facility guidelines.

The total project cost based on the revised is over $685,000 inclusive of $614,796 for the proposed building contract, separate plumbing and electrical works and completed re-design costs. Approximately $395,000 is currently budgeted with Council committing $25,000. A further $290,416 plus a small contingency is required for this project to proceed and there are no other feasible funding options aside from Council significantly increasing its contribution towards the project.

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

The *Local Government Act 2020*

"A Council must comply with it's Procurement Policy before entering into a contract for the purchase of goods or services or the carrying out of works"

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

In terms of achieving the best outcome for the municipal community, including future generations, three options are proposed for considerations:

Option 1 – Approve the negotiated contract price of $614,796 Excluding GST to Barton Street Developments Pty Ltd for the construction of the female friendly facility at Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation Reserve. This is the preferred option.

Option 2 – Retender the works. This will impact project timelines and jeopardise the State Government funding allocated to the project and accordingly is not recommended as not providing the best outcome for the Community.

Option 3 – Not proceed with this project and return the State Government funding. This option is not recommended as providing the best outcome for the Community.

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

Economic
The project will use local contractors providing a positive impact on the local economy.

Social
The successful completion of this project will significantly improve opportunities for sporting and recreation activities and provide much needed inclusive facilities for female participants at Bullioh / Whyeeboo Recreation Reserve.

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

This project was developed through strong partnerships between Council, the Bullioh / Wyeeboo Recreation reserve Committee of Management, the Bullioh FNC, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Netball Victoria.

The final project design and delivery will meet the needs of the community and value add to the Recreation Reserve and all participants who use the facility. Council will maintain contact and engagement with the Committee of Management throughout the construction phase of this project.

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

This project will deliver facilities that are in-line with current guidelines for female participants and other facilities within the Upper Murray Football Netball League.

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

This project has demonstrated excellent collaboration between Council, state Government via Sport and Recreation Victoria, the local community and contractors to achieve a positive outcome.

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

The current budget for the project is $395,000, with $250,000 from Sport and Recreation Victoria, just under $120,000 from the Bullioh FNC and $25,000 from Towong Shire Council.

To ensure that the project proceeds and meets the community aspirations, and recognising the relatively small financial contribution from Council in the original budget, and that no further funds are available from Sport and Recreation Victoria or the BFNC, the option for Council to increase its allocation had to be considered.

The Recovery and Resilence fund established through Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) following the 2019/2020 Bushfire event has supported a range of community based projects and programs. There are some underspends in some of these projects, and when combined with some reallocations, Council's contribution to the Bullioh project can be increased from $25,000 to $325,000.

This increase is beneficial as no ratepayer funds are required. The additional $300,000 is sourced from the ERV grant funding.

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

The designs for this project meet Netball Victoria's strategic facility guidelines.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans:
This report supports the following *Council Plan 2021-2025 priorities*.
1. Asset Management - Maintain and improve our Shire's infrastructure to meet the levels of service established in consultation with our communities.
1.1 Deliver 100% of the annual capital works program and bushfire recovery projects
1.2 Deliver infrastructure projects that arise from place-based master planning

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

Council Policies:

Towong Shire Procurement Policy (August 2024)
The procurement process followed for this tender and the subsequent follow up processes have been undertaken in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy

adopted in August 2024.

Community Sport Fair Access Policy (June 2024)
The outcomes of this proposed project align with several of the principles of Council's Community Sport Fair access Policy which was adopted by Council in June 2024.

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:

A risk for this project is the time frame available to spend the allocated grant funding. This risk will be mitigated through active management of project implementation and supervision of the contractor.

The appointment of a contractor with experience in similar type projects and strong referrals will facilitate the project being as low risk as possible.

Officer's View:

It is the officer's view that the awarding of this contract to Barton Street Developments Pty Ltd for the value of $614,796 will result in successful project delivery and an excellent outcome for Council and the community. The references provided by Barton Street Developments demonstrate that they will deliver good value and are a low risk to Council for this project.

10.5 Tallandoon Tennis Courts Redevelopment - Tender Evaluation - Contract No 2024/25 - 001 (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 provide information to support the assessment of tender submissions for the Tallandoon Tennis Courts Redevelopment and seek Council approval to appoint the recommended contractor.

Summary:

This report demonstrates the tender process followed for the procurement of a suitable contractor to undertake the Tallandoon Tennis Courts Redevelopment.

The key elements of the Tallandoon tennis project includes civil, electrical and construction works to design for the renewal of the two concrete tennis courts (surfacing works, drainage, surrounds and infrastructure), installation of club competition standard lighting, new fencing, water tap and concrete path in accordance with Technical Specifications and Construction Drawings as prepared by 2MH Consulting.

Tenders for this project (Contract No 2024/25 – 001A) were advertised from April 2 and closed on May 6. In all, six (6) compliant tenders were received. This report provides a recommendation for the most suitable contractor to undertake the above works. A comparative tender evaluation for Contract No 2024/25-001A has been circulated to Councillors prior to this meeting. This evaluation provides all financial information and non-price scoring criteria and weightings.

Recommendation:
That:

1. Contract 2024/2025 - 001A Tallandoon Tennis Courts Redevelopment be awarded to Global Turf Projects Pty Ltd for the lump sum of $510,180.42 Excluding GST;
2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign and seal Contract No 2024/25 - 001A 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 value of the total allocated project budget.

Attachment:

A comparative tender evaluation for Contract 2024/25 - 001A has been provided to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Background/History:

The Tallandoon Tennis Courts (two courts) are located on the Tallandoon Recreation Reserve and is the only operating tennis club in the Mitta Valley. The reserve and tennis courts play a vital role in providing the Tallandoon and wider Mitta Valley community with opportunities for organised sporting activities, active recreation, and social interaction. The club has continuously played competitive tennis for 50 years with its catchment of players from Tallandoon, Eskdale, Mitta and Dartmouth.

The concrete tennis courts and associated infrastructure are in serious disrepair and urgent need of renewal with its most recent court having been built in 1963. The 2022 flooding event in the area led to further cracking of the courts making them dangerous and unplayable in many areas.

The current state of the tennis courts at Tallandoon is impacting on participation rates and limiting opportunities for both locals and visitors to engage in competition and informal tennis activity.

Council was awarded grant funding of $456,771 in 2024 through Sport and Recreation Victoria's Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Funding program, whilst the remaining budget is made up of Council ($34,000) and community ($28,000) contributions.

The successful contractor will redevelop two high quality tennis courts with club competition standard lighting for the Tallandoon and wider Mitta Valley communities.

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

The *Local Government Act 2020*

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

In terms of achieving the best outcome for the municipal community, including future generations, two options are proposed for consideration:

Option 1 – Approve the tender as presented and award Contract No 2024/25 - 001A

to Global Turf Projects Pty Ltd.

Option 2 – Retender the works. This will impact project timelines and potentially milestones associated with the funding agreement that has been established with Sport and Recreation Victoria. This option is not recommended.

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

Economic
This project will include the use of some local contractors and suppliers providing a positive impact to the local economy.

Social
The successful completion of this project will significantly improve opportunities for sporting and recreation activities, and community events for the local community.

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

The Tallandoon Tennis Courts redevelopment project has been developed through relationship and coordination with both the Tallandoon Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, and the Tallandoon Tennis Club.

The Tallandoon Tennis Club has been actively involved in the development of this project to date and is providing the in-kind labour for the demolition of the existing courts, associated items and fences. Council will maintain contact and engagement with the Committee of Management and Tennis Club throughout the construction phase of this project.

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

This project will deliver vastly improved tennis court surface and lighting infrastructure at the Tallandoon Recreation Reserve for the benefit of the Tallandoon, Mitta Valley and wider community. The new lighting infrastructure will incorporate the use of energy saving LED technology and achieve competition standard lighting.

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

The Tallandoon Tennis Courts redevelopment project has been developed through strong partnerships between Council, the Tallandoon Recreation Reserve Committee, of Management, the Tallandoon Tennis Club, Sport and Recreation Victoria, and Tennis Victoria.

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

Budget requirements and availability have been confirmed, grant funding has been secured for this project and all expenditure is being monitored and managed within agreed budget allocations.

In addition, the newly constructed asset will be the responsibility of the Committee of Management for the Tallandoon Recreation Reserve, meaning ongoing costs will not be borne by Council.

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

All detailed design aspects of this project have been developed in accordance with Tennis Victoria guidelines.

Council Plans and Policies:

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

1. Asset Management - Maintain and improve our Shire's infrastructure to meet the levels of service established in consultation with our communities.
1.2 Deliver infrastructure projects that arise from place-based master planning

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

Council Policies:

Towong Shire Procurement Policy (August 2024)

The procurement process followed for this tender and the subsequent follow up processes have been undertaken in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy adopted in August 2024.

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 project design and development and the tender process has included strong risk management assessment. The due diligence exercised through the evaluation process has served to mitigate any significant risks associated with project construction.

A risk for this project is the time frame available to spend the allocated grant funding. This risk will be mitigated through active management of project implementation and supervision of the contractor.

The appointment of an experienced contractor in similar type projects with strong referrals will facilitate the project being as low risk as possible.

Officer's View:

The references provided by Global Turf Projects Pty Ltd in its tender submission combined with its experience in recreation related projects demonstrate that it will deliver good value and is a low risk to Council for this project. It is the officer's recommendation that Global Turf Projects Pty Ltd be awarded Contract No 2024/25 - 001A for the lump sum of $510,180.42 excluding GST.

10.6 Draft Youth Strategy Adoption (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):
This report was prepared by Danielle Brooke, Senior Community Development Officer, Culture and Inclusion.

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 for Council to consider and adopt the Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029.

Summary:

The Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 was prepared by an experienced consultant during 2024 from existing published data and evidence in conjunction with community consultation engagement.

The Draft Strategy focuses on the young people aged 12-25 and sets the direction for Towong Shire Youth portfolio from 2025-2029, acknowledging Towong Shire is a better place to live with a healthy and connected youth population.

Following Council's resolution at its April 2025 meeting, the Draft Strategy was placed on public exhibition for a period of three weeks from 5 – 26 May 2025.

During this period two community submissions and one stakeholder submission were received in addition to internal feedback. These submissions and feedback have been considered and summarised in a table in Appendix 1 resulting in minor additions to the Draft Strategy which has been updated, and also attached to this report.

Recommendation:

That:
1. The Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 as presented, be adopted; and
2. The Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 Action Plan be endorsed and noted as a tool by which the Strategy will be implemented.

Attachment:

1. Appendix 1 Summary of Submissions to Youth Strategy - June 25 [**10.6.1** - 1 page]
2. Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 FINAL - June 25 [**10.6.2** - 34 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 CL Consulting being engaged in 2024 to complete the Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025–2029.

The Draft Strategy was developed through a methodology of literature review, evidence statistics, stakeholder engagement and evaluation of collected data to prepare the draft plan. The Draft Youth 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 Strategy, 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 Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 works towards achieving the following vision for 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".

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)):

Economic
To ensure young people contribute meaningfully to local decision making and awareness raising on issues of importance to them including training and education pathways, recreation and transport initiatives.

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.

Environmental/Climate Change
To ensure young people are engaged with the impacts of climate change and the need to take action to reduce the rates of climate related disaster in their communities.

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.

The Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 was available for public exhibition from May 5 2025, to May 26 2025 which was communicated through the following channels:

- Council Website link
- Social media post on Facebook
- Council newsletter
- Emailed to local secondary schools
- Emailed to stakeholders
- Discussed in stakeholder network meetings

During this period two community submissions and one stakeholder submission were received in addition to internal feedback. These submissions and feedback have been considered and summarised in a table in Appendix 1 resulting in minor additions to the Draft Strategy.

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

The development of the Draft Strategy sets the direction for Towong Shire Council's Youth portfolio from 2025-2029 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 Strategy 2025-2029 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 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.
2.5 Review opportunities for communities to access library resources and connect through libraries
2.8 Renew the Youth Plan to embed the 'youth voice' in all aspects of service delivery
2.11 Support our communities to ensure that Shire places are welcoming to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and LGBTIQA+ communities and are inclusive and connected
2.13 Participate in key networks to support communities and key stakeholders on solutions to address family violence, suicide and mental health

Council Policies:
Community Engagement 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:

The Draft Strategy 2025-2029 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 continue to be communicated through any Youth actions.

Officer's View:

The Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 has been informed by data, community consultation and developed by an experienced consultant in this area.

The development of the Draft Strategy was required given the timeframes of the most recent Youth Strategy was 2019 – 2023 and it's important that we can have a current overarching youth document providing direction and actions which council can implement and deliver with the identified partners in the Strategy.

It is the officer's recommendation that the Draft Towong Shire Youth Strategy 2025-2029 be adopted.

10.7 Swimming Pools Report Season 2024/25 (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Miranda Mouat, Senior Community Development Officer - Recreation.

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

Purpose of Report:

This report summarises the outcomes of the 2024/25 swimming pool season and makes recommendations for operational management, ongoing compliance obligations, and accessibility.

Summary:

The 2024/25 swimming pool season saw continued involvement of external contractor Belgravia Leisure in the partial management of Council swimming pools. The pool season was successfully delivered for the community, including:

- Consistent staffing and supervision at both pools;
- Extended opening hours at both pools during hot weather/heat health alert periods in January and February.
- No closures of pools due to operational issues, and limited closures of pools due to inclement weather. Both pools opened every day with seven incidents of closing early or temporarily during the regular opening hours for safety reasons due to storm activity.
- Achievement of increased visitation at both pools.
- Delivery of the season within budget.
- Management and implementation of maintenance, hazard reduction, and compliance activities at both swimming pool sites, in cooperation with Council OH&S staff and outdoor works teams.
- Provision of the VicSwim program at both Tallangatta and Corryong pools in January school holidays.
- Provision of Aquatic Technical Operator Training for Council staff involved in pool management.
- Engagement of Creo Structures to undertake an infrastructure assessment of Corryong and Tallangatta swimming pools, to enable Council to prepare long term works and asset replacement programs.

Further details on swimming pool activities can be found in the attached Pool Report

2024/25.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The 2024/2025 Swimming Pool Season Report be accepted as a summary of the positive outcomes achieved during the season, including increased participation, reduced operating costs, and improved cost per visit result;

2. The opening of Corryong and Tallangatta swimming pools on the last weekend of November 2025 be approved, with opening hours to remain the same as the 2024/25 season; and

3. Access for community user groups to both the Corryong and Tallangatta swimming pools outside public opening times from at least two weeks prior to public opening of the pools in season 2025/26 be approved.

Attachment:

1. Appendix - Pools report 2024/25 [**10.7.1** - 7 pages]
2. Belgravia FY25 TOWONG FINANCIALS [**10.7.2** - 1 page]
3. Towong End of Season Report 2024-25 [**10.7.3** - 10 pages]

Background/History:

Council currently operates seasonal pools in Tallangatta and Corryong that open annually between November and March. Public swimming is available seven days a week at both pools. The 2024/25 season saw the second year of partial management of the swimming pools by external contractor, Belgravia Leisure. Belgravia was primarily responsible for operating the pools during public opening hours, with a major function being the employment of the lifeguard staff.

Council retained responsibility for the operation of the pools outside public opening hours, including management of water and pool grounds, and liaison with all user groups such as schools, swimming clubs, morning swimming groups and health services.

During the 2024/25 pool season, both Tallangatta and Corryong pools opened as scheduled each day. There were partial closures required at each pool (4 days in Corryong and 3 days in Tallangatta) due to unsuitable weather, which in all cases involved storm activity. There were no opening days lost due to any operational issues

such as water quality, plant and equipment failure, or staffing shortages.

Council also provides some funding to the Eskdale Primary School to support operation of the swimming pool, which is situated on the Eskdale Primary School site, to enable continued operation of the pool for the local community.

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

This report addresses the Local Government Act 2020, Part 5 Service Performance Principles. The proposed recommendations consider the value for money of the pool operations to ensure pool service provision can continue equitably and affordably.

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

Continuing to invest Council resources into operating pools in Tallangatta and Corryong, and contributions for the Eskdale pool represents the best outcome for the community.

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

Economic
The operating costs of the swimming pools in 2024/25 represent a decrease compared to the previous season, and the engagement of Belgravia Leisure in pool operations has also resulted in savings not captured in financial terms. This relates primarily to the significant savings of Council resources in the areas of recruitment, employment and supervision of pool lifeguard staff.

Social
The swimming pools are vital facilities for social cohesion. Local schools, sports clubs, early morning swim groups, local health services, community events and sporting occasions use the pools. The facilities encourage healthy lifestyles through exercise, which is appealing and accessible to young and old alike, of varied abilities. The pools also provide a valuable space for children to learn to swim – a skill vital in a shire abundant with rivers and lakes.

Environmental
The swimming pools provide a safe, calm and cool environment for the community to use. The hot months can present a major health hazard, and the pools play a major role in allowing the public to stay cool and safe, in the company of people with medical and first aid training. With increasingly extreme weather patterns, the pools are increasingly becoming a resource in emergencies (as evidenced during the black summer bushfires), as well as a place for recreation, reflection and healthy exercise.

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

Extensive public engagement was conducted during 2021/22 as part of the Recreation Strategy for Towong Shire 2022-31, in addition to a Swimming Pool Review in 2018. Some pool user groups, including schools, early morning swim clubs and lifeguards, have also been engaged in the preparation of this report.

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

The proposals outlined in this report identify several actions that will improve the facilities and advance the visitor experience for inclusion and equity in our community.

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

Council collaborates with and supports the early morning swimming groups that utilise the Towong Shire swimming pools. It also works closely with the swim clubs, local schools and health services to ensure all have access to the facilities practically and affordably.

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)):

The swimming pools are operated in accordance with the requirements of the Safer Public Pools Code of Practice (SPPCoP) which sets out the various legislation, standards and guidelines governing their safe management, including the:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*,
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017*,
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009*,
- *Dangerous Goods Act 1985*,
- *Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1994*,
- *Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment Act 2014*,
- *Emergency Management Act 2013*,
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*,
- *Victoria's Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

Council Plans and Policies:

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

This report also aligns with the objectives of the:

- *Towong Shire Council Council Plan 2021-2025*

4. *Municipal Health and Wellbeing Strategy*
5. *Recreation Strategy for Towong Shire 2022-2031.*
6. *Community Sport Fair Access Policy and Action Plan 2024-2028*

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:

As with season 2024/25, delaying the opening of public swimming until the last weekend of November in 2025 will attract negative feedback from community members who will see this as a reduction in service provision. This risk can be managed through community engagement and provision of information to promote understanding of the relatively low use and associated high costs of opening the pools during November. It can also be managed by providing pre-arranged user group access to the pools two to three weeks prior to public opening.

Officer's View:

The Towong Shire swimming pools are vital recreational assets, providing a safe and inclusive space for community members while promoting physical well-being and social cohesion.

To best meet the needs of the community and to maximise visitation, the recommendations are that the commencement of public opening hours occurs on the last weekend in November 2025, with Council continuing to work collaboratively with all user groups to enable pool access outside public opening hours from mid-November.

11 Asset Management

11.1 Plant Replacement Program – Tender Evaluation Backhoe Corryong Depot (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 supply of replacement backhoe for Corryong depot and to seek Council approval to appoint the recommended supplier.

Summary:

This report outlines the tender process followed for the procurement of a new backhoe loader to assist with infrastructure works such as compacting bulk bins at Corryong landfill, drain repairs, culverts, road maintenance and general roadside cleanup activities predominantly within the Corryong district. This report also provides a recommendation of the most suitable supplier to supply the best value for money and preferred equipment type to undertake the above works.

Recommendation:

That:

1. Contract No. 2024/25 – 049 for the supply of a CAT 432 model backhoe be awarded to William Adams for the lump sum of $212,500 excluding GST.

2. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign Contract No. 2024/25 – 049 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 comparative Tender Evaluation Report for Contract No. 2024/25 – 049 and supplier tender documentation has been provided to councillors prior to meeting.

Background/History:

This report provides information of the tender process undertaken for the purchase of a backhoe as part of plant replacement/upgrade program. As part of tender includes trade-in of ageing CAT 432D 2004 backhoe (Plant No. 419) located at Tallangatta depot. Corryong's other backhoe CAT 432E (Plant no. 4004) acquired in 2010 is to transfer to Tallangatta depot as part of its replacement program.

Both backhoes presently situated at Tallangatta are both ageing with costly maintenance costs incurred over recent times with their renewal being deferred since 2017. Both current backhoes have been earmarked for upgrades which will be met in part through inter depot transfer exchange and proposed future backhoe acquisition set down for the 25/26 fiscal year as part of Council's Capital program.

Tenders were released through the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV's) Procurement Vendor Panel on 1 April 2025 and closed on 16 May 2025. The contract reference number is: 2024/25-049 VP reference number VP458916. Five (5) different suppliers submitted tenders, the details of which are included for review.

The tenders were evaluated on the basis of price, suitability, service backup, machine quality and historical reliability. A copy of the Contractor evaluation Tool assessment is attached for reference. The recommended supplier is within the budget amount.

All prices within this report are exclusive of GST and stamp duty.

Evaluation

The Coordinator of Circular Economy and Environment and Manager Infrastructure Asset and Environment assessed each offer based on the criteria of price and suitability for scope of infrastructure work types performed by outdoor work crews. They also considered service backup, machine quality, and historical reliability. Council's mechanics and plant operators also had input into the discussions having field tested both CAT 432 and New Holland unit based out of Moira council depot in Yarrawonga.

A review has been undertaken of all the tenders which called for front end quick couplers for broom and other hydraulic attachments as well as backhoe rear end hydraulic side shift. Although there are diverse price ranges across all suppliers the CAT 432 backhoe comes out as the more suitable machine for Towong Shire Council. Moreover, the CAT 432 is within budget and there will be no additional requirements for extra buckets and other attachments as these are held by depot currently.

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* adopted in June 2023.

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

Based on the specialised nature of these high value ticket items the proposals as presented be accepted for our consideration.

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

Economic

This tender used preferred 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.

Climate change/Environmental

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:

The tender has been conducted in accordance with the *Procurement Policy* and supports the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priority:

4. *Deliver 100% of the annual plant replacement program.*

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:

Minimal risk is associated with this acquisition despite prolonged lead times on supply with current machinery equipment in use being adequately resourced to deliver capital works projects and/or Council asset maintenance programs. These risks will be mitigated by active management and continued servicing of machinery equipment in accordance with scheduled maintenance programs with little downtime expected.

Officer's View:

After a thorough assessment of all submissions and consultation with Council plant operators and mechanics, the assessment panel recommends engaging William Adams, the distributor of CAT heavy equipment, to supply the backhoe.

- CAT is a major industry player in the heavy vehicle earthmoving market whose brand is most reputable 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 CAT 432 backhoe is largely compatible with the Council's existing backhoe fleet and is familiar to depot operators;
- Our depot mechanics are well-versed in servicing the CAT brand as most of the existing heavy equipment fleet is CAT orientated affording greater efficiency gains when performing mechanical maintenance & servicing related tasks;
- The international backing of a reputable industry player demonstrates the ability to provide a quality product along with a dedicated aftercare service offering delivering good value and low risk to Council. After-sales support from the supplier is readily available, and the unit comes with a 36-month warranty.

11.2 Asset Management Report (DIE)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Bivek Regmi, Manager Assets 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 an overview of Asset Management activities throughout Shire for the period up to 31 Mar 2025.

Summary:

This report presents the overall status of the Council's asset management program up to 31 March 2025, including:

- Asset Lifecycle activities
- Integrated Strategic Performance Reporting Framework
- Flood Works (AGRN - 1037)
- Scoping and researching Asset Management Systems

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

Nil

Background/History:

This report is produced quarterly by the Infrastructure and Environment department, to provide a progress overview of asset management activities and key deliverables of the Council Plan 2021-2025.

Asset inspections are well progressed, with the majority of activities completed. Remaining tasks, such as finalising road condition reports and inspecting park furniture in Tallangatta, are currently underway. Maintenance programs are progressing as planned, with approximately 70% of the budget already expended. Key service contracts are in place and operational, and flood recovery works are actively being

carried out across the region.

Parameter	Description	Status - % Completion to 31 mar 2025	Remarks
Asset Inspection	Road Condition Assessment	95%	Awaiting finalised reports.
	Road Management Plan – Compliance Inspection	On going	Works identified for maintenance are transferred for completion via datascape service request
	Bridge Condition Assessment	100%	Yellow boots were engaged to undertake level 2 inspections.
	Playground Inspection	100%	Defects were identified and handed over to the council with assigned priority.
	Parks furniture inspections	90%	Park furniture in Tallangatta is currently pending inspection
	Building compliance inspections	Ongoing	Asbestos, electrical tagging, HVAC inspections, etc.
Maintenance	Road, Bridge, Footpath & Drainage Maintenance	67 %	67% of the allocated asset maintenance budget is spent on the council's infrastructure assets.
	Building Maintenance, Cleaning	Ongoing	Facilities cleaning contracts are in place, and quality is being monitored.
	Beautification and Town Maintenance (Open Space)	Ongoing	Town maintenance contracts are in place, and quality is being monitored.

	Playground Maintenance	100%	Contractors were engaged to complete the soft fall installation and rectify high priority defect works in Council owned playgrounds.
	Flood works – ARGN 1037	Western – 85%	Western works are being undertaken by TCM and is in the verge of completion
		Eastern – Awaiting site mobilisation	Eastern works are now awarded to Country Wide Asphalt Pty Ltd and currently awaiting contract finalisation
Asset Renewals	Road Reseals	100%	Annual road reseals, pavement, bridge renewals, and drainage renewals have been completed for this financial year. Next year renewal works are currently being planned.
	Road – Heavy Patching		
	Road – Guardrail replacement		
	Road - Bridges		
	Road Stabilisations		
	Drainage Renewals		
	Building Renewals	In Progress	The council received a cost estimation for Mitta Toilet block rehabilitation. The next step is to finalise the project scope in consultation with the community prior to commencing the planned rehabilitation works
		In Progress	Corryong Cemetery gatehouse RFQ is currently advertised.
Asset Management System (AMS)		Initiated	Currently exploring options and obtaining quotes from suppliers. The Assets team organised demo sessions from the AMS solution providers.

Current Asset Management Strategic document overview

A tabular summary has been developed to illustrate the status of key asset management documents across three categories: Integrated Strategic Performance Reporting Framework, Asset Management Framework, and Asset Services Management Plans. The diagram outlines each document's development or review status and associated timelines, supporting transparent progress tracking and alignment with strategic planning requirements. This overview assists in identifying priorities and ensuring timely delivery of foundational asset management documents.

Parameter	Description	Remarks	Timeline to Complete
Integrated Strategic Performance Reporting Frameworks (Asset Management)	Asset Plan	Currently in Draft and needs to be adopted	Jun 2026
Asset Management Framework	Asset Management Policy	Currently being reviewed and needs to be updated	Oct 2025
	Asset Management Strategy	Currently being reviewed and needs to be updated.	TBD
	Asset Management Plans (individual Asset Classes)	Needs to be developed	TBD
	Asset Systems Plan (Asset Register and GIS, any other corporate integration)	Needs to be developed	TBD
Asset Services Management Plan	Road Management Plan (Sept 2021)	In Place; Currently being reviewed;	Oct 2025 (next revision)
	Open Space and Playground Strategy	To be developed	TBD

Renewals, inspections and maintenance on critical infrastructures assets such as roads, bridges, open space and playgrounds, buildings have been conducted during this period and have issued several permits (including development application), including those related to legal points of discharge and activities within the road reserve.

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

The *Local Government Act 2020*

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

Not Applicable.

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

Economic

Works within the asset management program provide local economic stimulus through the employment of local contractors.

Social

Projects within the asset management program are prioritised in line with the *Council Plan 2021-2025* to improve social amenity and economic outcomes across the Shire including road patching and resheeting of gravel roads.

Environmental/Climate Change

Drier weather conditions have seen some improvement in the condition of sealed and unsealed roads.

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

Asset officers consistently provide assistance to residents and the community through the CRM system whenever requested.

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

Council is currently exploring the procurement of an advanced asset management system to enhance operational efficiency and service delivery. This system is expected to streamline inspection processes, reducing the time required and enabling faster communication and work allocation to the maintenance team. It will support data-driven renewal planning, improving the prioritisation and timing of asset renewals.

Additionally, the system will provide more accurate and comprehensive infrastructure financial reporting, ensuring better transparency and accountability. Enhanced asset condition reporting capabilities will further assist in proactive maintenance and long-term asset management strategies, contributing to continuous improvement across council infrastructure operations.

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

Not Applicable.

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

The snapshot of the maintenance budget is presented below.

Asset Class	Actuals at 31 Mar 2025	FY2025 Budget	% Expended	Forecast (30 Jun 2025)
Road, Footpath, Bridge and Drainage	$ 321,324.40	$ 625,394.74	51%	(90-95) %
Facility and Building	$ 278,837.84	$ 345,226.15	81%	95%
Open Space	$ 451,214.66	$ 588,000.00	77%	100%
Playground	$ 15,450.00	$ 100,000.00	15%	100%
Utilities	$ 157,595.85	$ 167,252.88	94%	100%
Grand Total	**$ 1,224,422.75**	**$ 1,825,873.77**	**67%**	**90%**

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*.

Asset Management Plan - Maintain and improve our Shire's infrastructure to meet the levels of service established in consultation with our communities.

Council Policies:
This report supports the following Council Policies.
Asset Management Policy
Stock Grid Policy
Asset Valuation Policy
Community Engagement Policy
Road Construction 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:

The ongoing demand for qualified road maintenance contractors continues to affect their immediate availability to Council, particularly in regional and rural areas where the pool of suitable providers is limited. These delays in securing contractors are resulting in extended timeframes for delivering programmed works, which leads to further deterioration of road surfaces and an increase in the scale of required repairs. Consequently, this is escalating overall project costs and placing additional strain on Council's budgets.

Furthermore, the timing of contractor availability often does not align with optimal seasonal windows for road works, further compounding delivery challenges. Alternative procurement approaches have been investigated and adjust work programs where possible to mitigate risks and ensure the community's road infrastructure remains safe and serviceable.

Officer's View:

The council's current asset management practices have laid a foundation for delivering essential maintenance and renewal programs. These practices provide a strong operational base from which the Council can now build greater strategic capability.

To meet growing community expectations, evolving legislative requirements, and ensure the long-term sustainability of assets, there is now an opportunity to shift from primarily operational asset management towards a more integrated, data-driven and future-focused approach. This includes enhancing asset data quality, aligning service levels with community needs, and embedding lifecycle planning into decision-making processes.

A key step forward in this journey is the implementation of a fit-for-purpose Asset Management System (AMS). This will streamline inspections, optimise maintenance workflows, improve asset condition tracking, and support timely and prioritised renewal planning. Complementing this, the development of core asset management documents such as the Asset Management Strategy, Plans, and the overarching Asset Plan will provide the strategic framework required to strengthen governance, improve performance, and increase overall asset management maturity.

It is the officer's view that Council is well positioned to evolve its asset management practices. By investing in the right systems and frameworks, Council can deliver smarter infrastructure outcomes, better manage long-term risk, and continue to meet the service expectations of its community in a sustainable manner.

11.3 Capital Works Report (DIE)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Matthew Fleet, Manager Capital and 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 this report is to provide information. The report gives an overview of the 2024/25 Capital Works Program to 31 March 2025.

Summary:

This report presents the overall status of the capital works program to the end of March 2025 and includes updates on project status, progress, expenditure and completion risk.

Recommendation:

That the following be noted:

1. Reallocation of $395,000 from the 2024/2025 Georges Creek Road/River Road Intersection capital budget to the Georges Creek Road Widening Works budget;
2. Reallocation of $250,000 from the 2024/2025 Bellbridge Walking Track and Seal capital budget to the Lake Road Upgrade budget; and
3. Reallocation of $75,000 from the 2024/2025 Building Demolitions capital budget to the Early Years Capital Projects budget.

Attachment:

The Capital Works Program Budget has been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Background/History:

Council's 2024–2025 Capital Works Program includes a total budget of $25.4 million, comprising 82 projects made up of both new initiatives and carry-over works from previous years. The 14 largest projects account for approximately 44% of the total capital works budget. Of these, six are currently in progress, two are under

construction, four have been completed, and two are in the tender phase. The remaining projects are on track to be completed by the end of the 2024–2025 financial year or as programmed.

The Hanson Street upgrade is currently in the concept design phase, with community consultation planned soon. This project is expected to be delivered over coming years via staged works.

Annual programs for resealing, guardrail replacement, gravel re-sheeting, and footpath renewal are also underway or completed, with all works scheduled to be finalised within the current financial year.

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

The *Local Government Act 2020*

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

Not Applicable.

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

Economic
Works within the Capital program provide local economic stimulus through the employment of local contractors.

Social
Projects within the Capital program are prioritised in line with the Council Plan 2021-2025 to improve social amenity and economic outcomes across the Shire.

Environmental/Climate Change
The current dry weather conditions are favourable for project construction activities.

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

Community engagement activities have continued and is proposed across several capital projects, most notably there will be a significant amount of community engagement regarding the Hanson Street (Western End works.

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

The Capital Works Program provides a structured framework for the ongoing strategic enhancement and renewal of assets across the Shire.

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

Not Applicable.

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

As at 31 March 2025	$	%
Total Budget	$ 25,425.568.39	100
Year to Date spend (31 March 2025)	$ 11,960.712.14	47

Detailed budget and job closure analysis is included in the appendix to this report.

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. Asset Management - Maintain and improve our Shire's infrastructure to meet the levels of service established in consultation with our communities.

1.1 Deliver 100% of the annual capital works program and bushfire recovery projects
1.3 Complete Stage 2 Great River Road
1.4 Continue the upgrade of Georges Creek Road
1.5 Complete upgrades of Hanson Street from Sugarloaf Road to Kiel Street
1.6 Complete the upgrade of the Stock Route in Corryong
1.7 Progressively deliver the upgrade of the unsealed sections of Lake Road
1.8 Investigate upgrade options for Wises Creek Road
1.10 Seek funding to deliver upgrades of key transport routes and hazardous road alignments to improve efficiency and safety
1.12 Continue to deliver the upgrade of unsealed streets in urban areas program
1.13 Complete the upgrade of the Corryong CBD
1.14.1 Complete streetscape upgrades in Dartmouth
1.14.2 Complete streetscape upgrades in Mitta Mitta
1.15.2 Investigate and plan for upgrades at Towong
1.15.3 Investigate and plan for upgrades at Cudgewa
1.17 Address long vehicle and overflow parking issues in CBD areas

1.19 Seek funding to deliver upgrades to town entrances and wayfinding signage across the shire
1.21 Increase the recreation opportunities for young families in Dartmouth
1.22 Review and deliver the strategic parks and playgrounds upgrade program to completion
1.25 Deliver the Corryong aerodrome 24-hour fuel project
1.27 Deliver annual asset inspection and renewal programs per asset management and road management plan requirements
1.28 Implement the maintenance program for Council's buildings

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:

Limited contractor availability has impacted timelines for some road construction projects, largely due to high demand for qualified contractors across the state. Council will continue actively engaging with local and regional contractors to encourage tender submissions and competitive quotations.

The recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced project managers remains a priority for the final quarter of 2024/25. While recent recruitment has proven challenging, efforts are ongoing. Any associated delays to the commencement of new capital works projects will be carefully managed to minimise impact.

Officer's View:

The team has made solid progress in delivering the capital works program through to the end of the third quarter. According to the financial report as of 31 March 2025, year-to-date (YTD) expenditure totals $11.96 million, representing approximately 47% of the total capital budget.

Several major projects are currently under construction and are scheduled for completion by June 2025. It is anticipated that progress claims for these projects will result in a higher proportion of expenditure being recorded in the fourth quarter of the financial year.

12 Land Use Planning

12.1 2024/032 290A Talgarno Gap Road Bethanga (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mrs Margaret Fox Contract Planning Officer.

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

Purpose of Report:

A decision is required in relation to an application for the use and development of the land for a dwelling with a recommendation that the application be refused.

Council received four objections to the proposal, and it is considered appropriate that the application be presented to Council for consideration and decision.

Summary:

Council has received an application for the use and development of the land for a dwelling. The land is formally known as Lot 5 on Plan of Subdivision 641162W. The land is within the Rural Activity Zone and not subject to any overlays.

The application has been assessed and several key considerations associated with the proposal which includes:

- The topography of the land
- The visual impact of the proposal
- The extent of the proposed site cut and fill
- Erosion and landslip potential
- Stormwater Management and overland flows
- The use of the land for agriculture

Recommendation:

That:

1. The application for the use and development of the land at 290A Talgarno Gap Road be denied on the following grounds:
    a. The proposal is not consistent with clause 02.03-2 - the siting of the dwelling will detract from the natural and aesthetic value of the landscape.

b. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 02.03-3 - the proposal does not avoid development of steep land.

c. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 12.03-1S - the proposal does not minimise the visual intrusion of the development on the natural landscape views. Further it does not ensure the development is visually subordinate to the local landscape setting.

d. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 12.05-2S - the proposal detracts from the natural qualities of the landscape.

e. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 13.04-2S and 13.04-2L - it proposes to site the dwelling on the top of steep slopes and does not minimise earthworks on steep slopes.

f. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 14.01-1L-01 - the proposal does not avoid land containing an environmental hazard ie erosion.

g. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 14.02-1S - the proposal does not demonstrate that measures can be undertaken to minimise the quantity and retard the flow of stormwater.

h. The proposal is not consistent with Clause 15.01-6S - it is proposed to locate the dwelling on a ridgeline and will be prominent on the landscape.

Attachment:

1. 2024-032 290 A Talgarno Gap Road Bethanga Plans [**12.1.1** - 5 pages]
2. 2024-032 290 A Talgarno Gap Road Bethanga Photo Montage [**12.1.2** - 6 pages]
3. 2024-032 290 A Talgarno Gap Road Bethanga Geotechnical Report [**12.1.3** - 16 pages]
4. Summary of Objections [**12.1.4** - 8 pages]
5. 2024-032 290 A Talgarno Gap Road Bethanga - Applicant Response to Submissions [**12.1.5** - 5 pages]

Background/History:

The subject site is located on the southern side of Talgarno Gap Road, to the east of Bethanga township. The subject land does not have direct frontage to Talgarno Gap Road but is accessed via a shared accessway. The subject land is an irregular shaped

allotment of approximately 23.05ha.

The land slopes up from the access entrance to the apex of a hill and falls gradually along a ridgeline that runs to the east and north of the land. The land on either side of the ridgeline falls steeply with up to 45-degree slopes.

The land is extensively cleared land with some scattered remnant native vegetation. The land also contains a long, gravel driveway and two sheds near the entry. The surrounding land is defined by other similar allotments of various sizes.

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

The *Planning & Environment Act 1987* provides the standard process for assessing a planning permit application.

The Towong Planning Scheme sets out the planning permit triggers that require a planning permit application.

A planning permit is triggered under the Rural Activity Zone.

Clause 35.08-1 identifies the use of the land as a Section 2 Use and a planning permit

is required for a dwelling and that the requirements of Clause 35.08-2 must be met.

Clause 35.08-2 States "A *lot used for a dwelling or small second dwelling must meet the following requirements:*

- *Access to the dwelling or small second dwelling must be provided via an all-weather road with dimensions adequate to accommodate emergency vehicles.*
- *Each dwelling or small second dwelling must be connected to reticulated sewerage, if available. If reticulated sewerage is not available, all wastewater from each dwelling must be treated and retained within the lot in in accordance with the requirements of the Environment Protection Regulations under the Environment Protection Act 2017 for an on-site wastewater management system.*
- *The dwelling or small second dwelling must be connected to a reticulated potable water supply or have an alternative potable water supply with adequate storage for domestic use as well as for firefighting purposes.*
- *The dwelling or small second dwelling must be connected to a reticulated electricity supply or have an alternative energy source."*

Clause 35.08-4 states: "*A permit is required to construct or carry out any of the following:*

- *A building or works associated with a use in Section 2 of Clause 35.08-1"*

Clause 35.08-5 requires consideration of the following decision guidelines:

General

- *The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *Any Regional Catchment Strategy and associated plan applying to the land.*
- *The capability of the land to accommodate the proposed use or development, including the disposal of effluent.*
- *How the use or development relates to sustainable land management.*
- *Whether the site is suitable for the use and development and whether the proposal is compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses.*

Response

The proposal on balance is not consistent with the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework as discussed further below.

The application was referred to Goulburn Murray Water as the relevant catchment management authority which consented to the issue of a planning permit. The North East Catchment Management Authority considered the treatment and disposal of wastewater and determined that all wastewaters could be disposed of on site.

The applicant provided a Land Management Plan that states that the applicant intends to graze cattle and plant olive and fruit trees on the land. It is intended to control weeds and feral rabbits on the land. Further it is proposed to plant trees in areas of erosion and landslip that has occurred on the site.

The geotechnical report submitted with the application directs that all stormwaters should be directed away from the area of cut and fill. The applicant has not addressed how this will be achieved.

The adjoining land consists of mostly vacant land used for grazing with some smaller rural lifestyle allotments to the north of the site.

Agricultural issues

- *Whether the use or development will support and enhance agricultural production.*
- *The potential for the use or development to limit the operation and expansion of adjoining and nearby agricultural uses.*
- *The capacity of the site to sustain the agricultural use.*
- *The agricultural qualities of the land, such as soil quality, access to water and access to rural infrastructure.*
- *Any integrated land management plan prepared for the site.*

Response

The land is currently vacant and not used for agricultural purposes. The applicant has provided a Land Management Plan that states that the land will be used for cattle grazing. It is also proposed to plant a small-scale orchard and olive grove. The plan proposes to undertake weed management and rabbit control.

It is not anticipated that the proposal will limit the operation and expansion of the adjoining and nearby agricultural uses. The proposed dwelling will be setback from boundaries on the ridgeline and will have no impact.

The site is a small allotment of approximately 23ha. The land is subject to steep slopes and is of moderate to low agricultural potential. The land management plan proposes a mixed farming enterprise.

The soil is described in the Geotechnical Report is 'SM sand, silty trace gravel and clay to 500mm, extremely weathered granite, excavating sand gravel to 1m. The land management plan identifies areas of erosion on the site.

Accommodation issues

- *Whether the dwelling will result in the loss or fragmentation of productive agricultural land.*
- *Whether the dwelling will be adversely affected by agricultural activities on adjacent and nearby land due to dust, noise, odour, use of chemicals and farm machinery, traffic and hours of operation.*
- *Whether the dwelling will adversely affect the operation and expansion of adjoining and nearby agricultural uses.*

Response

The land is of low to moderate agricultural potential. The proposed location of the dwelling will result in some fragmentation. The entrance to the property leads to two existing sheds. The proposal will result in a driveway being extended down the ridgeline to an area of cut and fill. The area adjacent to the driveway and the cut and fill area around the dwelling is estimated to remove approximately 1.5ha.

The proposed dwelling will not be adversely affect agricultural activities on adjoining properties; the proposed dwelling is setback from all boundaries.

The Geotechnical Report recommends that all stormwaters be directed away from the proposed dwelling, however the applicant has not provided any stormwater management system to show that the overland flows will not be impacted by the proposal and that the adjoining landowners will not be affected.

Environmental issues

- *The impact of the proposal on the natural physical features and resources of the area, in particular on soil and water quality.*
- *The impact of the use or development on the flora, fauna and landscape features of the locality.*
- *The need to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area, including the retention of vegetation and faunal habitat and the need to revegetate land including riparian buffers along waterways, gullies, ridgelines, property boundaries and saline discharge and recharge area.*
- *The location of on-site effluent disposal areas to minimise the impact of nutrient loads on waterways and native vegetation.*

Response

The Geotechnical Report has identified that site drainage is crucial and that horizontal surfaces must be drained to reduce the risk of erosion. Stormwater management has not been addressed by the applicant. If a planning permit were to be issued for the proposal the permit will contain a condition requiring the submission of a detailed stormwater management plan.

No native vegetation is proposed to be removed as part of the development and no impact is anticipated on the biodiversity of the site.

A land capability assessment was provided as part of the application which was referred to Council's Environmental Health Team which did not object to the issue of a planning permit subject to conditions. All wastewaters can be disposed of on site.

Design and siting issues

- *The impact of the siting, design, height, bulk, colours and materials to be used, on the natural environment, major roads, vistas and water features and the measures to be undertaken to minimise any adverse impacts.*
- *The impact on the character and appearance of the area or features of architectural, historic or scientific significance or of natural scenic beauty or importance.*
- *The location and design of existing and proposed infrastructure including roads, gas, water, drainage, telecommunications and sewerage facilities.*
- *Whether the use or development will require traffic management measures.*

Response

It is proposed to construct the dwelling on a ridgeline that will be visible from Talgarno Gap Road to the north and to a lesser extent from Retallicks Road. It is also proposed to undertake a significant site cut more than 2m deep and to fill the land to make a level surface to construct the dwelling. It is anticipated that this site cut will have an impact on vistas from both roads. The applicant has proposed the planting of trees south of the house to screen the dwelling from Retallicks Road however no planned landscaping is proposed on the northern side.

The Geotechnical report recommends that any exposed face of weathered rock that has any fractures should be covered in steel wire mesh with an application of shotcrete over the wire mesh. This will limit the options for landscaping to soften the area of cut and fill and the dwelling.

As previously discussed, the management of stormwater and the changes in overland flows have not been addressed.

The proposed dwelling will be visible from Talgarno Gap Road and beyond and will detract from the natural scenic beauty.

The land is accessed via an existing driveway and no additional traffic management is required.

Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

Clause 02.01 (Municipal Planning Strategy) the land is within a 40 minute commute to Albury-Wodonga and the scheme recognises Council's aspirations to encourage population growth in the 'peri urban area' within a 40-minute commute of Albury-Wodonga.

Clause 02.03-2 aims to protect and enhance areas of identified landscape and environmental value. Further it aims to ensure that the siting and design of development does not detract from the natural and aesthetic value of significant landscapes. The proposal will be in a prominent location on the land and is not consistent with the objectives of this policy.

Clause 02.03-3 identifies that climate change and greater climate variability present a real and present challenge to the community. This policy identifies that erosion and landslip potential is a moderate-high risk across those parts of the Shire that contain steep land. It directs that development on steep land that does not respond to site characteristics and environmental conditions are to be avoided. The proposal will be in a prominent position on the top of a ridgeline with steep slopes of up to 45 degrees on either side of the ridgeline. It also directs that development is to be avoided in areas prone to erosion or landslip. The applicant has identified, in the Land Management Plan that erosion is occurring on the site. The proposal is not consistent with this policy.

Clause 02.03-4 aims to protect high quality agricultural land from development and directs land use diversity and rural residential development to areas of low to moderate agricultural quality, including peri-urban land to the northwest of the Shire. The land is contained within this area. The proposal is supported by this policy.

This policy also directs that the use and development of land that is detrimental to water quality is to be avoided. The application has provided a Land Capability Assessment that demonstrates that all wastewaters can be disposed of on the land. The Geotechnical Report submitted with the application has identified that stormwater must be directed away from all horizontal surfaces and that pooling is to be avoided. The applicant has not demonstrated that the stormwater can be disposed on the land or how the stormwaters can be managed so that there is no change in overland flows.

Clause 02.03-6 identifies that rural living is the dominant land use in lakeside areas to the south of Bellbridge, near Tallangatta and in the Bethanga Creek catchment. The policy encourages additional residential and rural living on the periphery of existing townships and settlements. The proposal is consistent with this policy.

Clause 11 (Settlement) of the Towong Planning Scheme provides the context of how planning sits within the Shire and must anticipate and respond to the needs of both existing and future communities. Clause 11.01-1R (Settlement Hume) identifies the need to support growth and developments within regional cities, such as Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga, and Benalla. Clause 11.01-1L-04 (Smaller settlements) identifies the need to support rural living development in the Bethanga Creek catchment based on the capability of the land and only if it is sited and designed to protect the water quality of the Bethanga Creek and Lake Hume.

The proposal has demonstrated that all effluent can be disposed of on-site however stormwater management has not been addressed.

Clause 12 of the Towong Planning Scheme provides the policy basis concerning 'Environmental and Landscape Values'. The policy contained in Clause 12.01 (Biodiversity) focuses on protecting Victoria's biodiversity, particularly from the unnecessary removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. Clause 12.03-1S (River and riparian corridors, waterways, lakes, wetlands, and billabongs) seeks to ensure that water bodies are not detrimentally impacted by land development, which can alter water flow and quality. It aims to limit earthworks in proximity to waterway systems to minimise alterations to geomorphology, natural drainage, natural flows and water quality. The policy aims to enhance a sense of place and landscape identity by protecting existing topographic features and maintaining a sense of naturalness through sensitive design and siting. Clase 12.03-1S also aims to ensure that design and siting of development maintains and enhances the natural environment by minimising the visual intrusion of development on the natural landscape views from major roads, bridge crossings, public open space recreation trails and within waterway systems themselves and ensuring development is visually subordinate to the local landscape settings, including through the use of vegetation to filter views of development. Clause 12.05-2S (Landscapes) recognizes the importance of protecting and enhancing significant landscapes and open spaces.

The subject site is located on the outskirts of Bethanga and features only a few scattered trees. The land is elevated from Talgarno Gap Road and contains a ridgeline that runs from the southwest of the land sloping down to the northeast. The land falls steeply on each side of the ridgeline with up to 45-degree slope. The proposed development will be located on the crest of a ridgeline. Significant earthworks that include more than 2m of cut and fill with battered walls are also proposed. The proposal is not consistent with these strategies.

Clause 13 (Environmental Risk and Amenity) highlights the importance of planning for all potential environmental hazards. In areas more prone to environmental risks, planning should strengthen the resilience and safety of communities by adopting a best practice environmental and risk management approach.

Clause 13.02 (Bushfire) aims to prioritize protecting human life over all other policy considerations and aims at reducing the vulnerability of communities to bushfire through the consideration of bushfire risk in decision making at all stages of the planning process. Clause 13.02-1L aims to provide rural dwelling with adequate access and water for firefighting.

Any permit issued for the development will require the access to be upgraded to ensure there is an all-weather access suitable for access by emergency services vehicles. A further condition will require that a minimum water holding capacity of 45,000 litres with a minimum reserve of 20,000 litres is set aside for firefighting.

Clause 13.04-2S (Erosion and landslip) aims to protect areas prone to erosion, landslip or other land degradation processes by preventing in appropriate development in unstable areas or areas prone to erosion. Clause 13.04-2L (erosion and landslip) applies to land in the Rural Activity Zone where the slope of land is greater than 20 percent. It aims to discourage development on steep slopes; avoid the construction of buildings on land that is subject to subsidence or landslip; minimise earthworks on steep slopes and site and design buildings and works not to increase the possibility of landslip and erosion and minimise any adverse impacts on the environment.

The proposal is not consistent with these objectives in that the proposal will be located on top of the ridgeline with steep slopes on each side. Further the earthworks proposed are significant and will result in the excavation of the side of the slope. The applicant has identified in their Land Management Plan that erosion exists on the land.

Clause 14.01 (Agriculture) and Clause 14.01-1L-01 aims to protect high quality agricultural land and aims to ensure that dwelling on rural lots are compatible with the agricultural and environmental characteristic of the area. The policy states that the dwellings should be sited to avoid, wherever possible, land containing environmental hazards (such as flooding, inundation, erosion or fire).

The proposal is not consistent with this policy given that the land has been identified as being subject to erosion.

In a similar context to the policies contained in Clause 12.03, Clause 14.02-1S (Catchment planning and management) seeks to promote the protection of catchment, waterways, and water bodies. The strategies provided within the policy

focus on encouraging sensitive approaches to the management and treatment of runoff from construction sites and development areas.

No stormwater management has been provided with the application. The Geotechnical Report emphasizes the need to ensure that water does not pool on horizontal surfaces to avoid seepage and should be directed away from the area of cut and fill. Due to the rural nature of the land there is no legal point of discharge, and all stormwaters must be disposed of on-site so as not to increase the rate of overland flow. In the absence of any stormwater plan the proposal is not considered to be consistent with these policies.

Clause 15 outlines policies about "Built Environment and Heritage". Clause 15.01-6S (Design for rural areas) aims to ensure that the siting, scale and appearance of development protects and enhances rural character; protects the visual amenity of valued rural landscapes and character areas along township approaches and sensitive tourist routes by ensuring new development is sympathetically located. Further it aims to site and design development to minimise visual impacts on surrounding natural scenery and landscape features including ridgelines, hilltops, waterways, lakes and wetlands.

The proposal is not consistent with this policy, the proposed dwelling will be located on a ridgeline, the site cut and fill together with the dwelling will be visually intrusive and not in keeping with the character along the township approach to Bethanga.

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

The proposal is located within the area identified and Peri-Urban Towong and within a 40-minute commute to Albury-Wodonga. The applicant has demonstrated that all wastewaters can be disposed of on site. The land, however, is the subject of steep slopes, it is proposed to site the dwelling on a ridge line and undertake a site cut of greater than 2m and fill the land requiring retaining walls and batters. The Geotechnical Report has recommended that any exposed weathered rock with fractures will need to be stabilised through a mesh covering with a shotcrete seal. The report has also identified the risks of pooling and seepage on horizontal surfaces and recommended all surface water and stormwater to be directed away from the house and cut and fill area. The report also identified the presence of rock at 1300mm and that blasting may be required achieve the required site cut. The applicant has identified that the land has been subject to some erosion.

On balance, it is the officers view that the proposal is not consistent with the Municipal Planning Strategy or the Planning Policy Framework.

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

The proposal does not meet the sustainability policies of the Planning Policy Framework; there is no evidence that stormwater from the site can be effectively managed so as not to increase the overland flows to neighbouring properties. The proposal increases the risk of erosion and landslip and is contrary to the landscape policies in that it will be prominent on the landscape.

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

Notice was undertaken to all adjoining and nearby landowners and occupiers pursuant to Section 52 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Four objections were received. A redacted copy of the objections together with the applicant's response is attached.

It is noted that objections based on a fall in property values is not a planning consideration.

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)):

As with all planning matters, there is a risk that this matter may be appealed pursuant to Section 78 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987 t*o the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). It is the officer's view that proceeding to VCAT would have a budgetary impact. It is not possible to quantify this now.

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

The proposal is not consistent with the Planning Policy Framework as discussed above.

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.

Council Policies:
The proposal is not consistent with the Municipal Strategic Statement as discussed above

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 relevant law section outlines many of the sensitive considerations associated with the proposed use and development of the land for a dwelling. Upon assessment, it is considered that the proposal is not consistent with the policy relating to steep slopes and construction adjacent to steep slopes. The proposal will be a feature on the landscape and will be prominent when viewed from Talgarno Gap Road.

The proposal includes significant excavation and there are inconsistencies between the plans submitted, the geotechnical report and the land management plan submitted in relation to the present of landslip and erosion.

Officer's View:

The site is located within the Peri-Urban area of Towong Shire (Clause 02.04 Strategic framework plan) and the development of the land for a dwelling is supported by this and the policies at Clause 02.03-4 (Natural resource management – Agriculture, Clause 02.03-6 (Housing – Rural residential development). However, the following policies do not support the approval of a planning permit as follows:

- Clause 02.03-2 Environmental and landscape values – Landscapes
- Clause 02.03-3 Environmental risks and amenity – Erosion and Landslip
- Clause 12.03-1S Water Bodies and Wetlands – River and riparian corridors, waterways, lakes, wetland and billabongs
- Clause 12.05-2S Significant Environments and Landscapes – Landscapes
- Clause 13.04-2S Erosion and landslip
- Clause 13.04-2L Erosion and landslip
- Clause 14.01-1L-01 Dwellings in rural areas
- Clause 14.02-1S Catchment planning and management
- Clause 15.01-6S Design for rural areas

It is considered that, while the issues around stormwater, water supply for bushfire preparedness and landscaping could be mitigated via planning permit conditions the risk associated with the significant earthworks, potential erosion and landslip and the visual impact cannot be mitigated.

On this basis the application for the use and development of the land for a dwelling is not an appropriate outcome for the site. It is recommended that Council resolves to refuse the application on the following grounds:

The proposal is not consistent with clause 02.03-2 - the siting will detract from the natural and aesthetic value of the landscape.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 02.03-3 - the proposal does not avoid development of steep land.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 12.03-1S - the proposal does not minimise the visual intrusion of the development on the natural landscape views. Further it does not ensure the development is visually subordinate to the local landscape setting.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 12.05-2S - the proposal detracts from the natural qualities of the landscape.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 13.04-2S and 13.04-2L - it proposes to site the dwelling on the top of steep slopes and does not minimise earthworks on steep slopes.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 14.01-1L-01 - the proposal does not avoid land containing an environmental hazard being erosion.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 14.02-1S - the proposal does not demonstrate that measures can be undertaken to minimise the quantity and retard the flow of stormwater.

The proposal is not consistent with Clause 15.01-6S - it is proposed to locate the dwelling on a ridgeline and will be prominent on the landscape.

12.2 PA240059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta - Mitta Mountain Bike Trail (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mrs Margaret Fox, Contract Planning Officer.

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

Purpose of Report:

A decision is required in relation to an application for the construction of a mountain bike trail and the removal of native vegetation with a recommendation that the application be approved.

Council received seven objections to the proposal, and it is considered appropriate that the application be presented to Council for consideration and decision.

Summary:

Council has received an application for the construction of a mountain bike trail and the removal of native vegetation on Crown Land on the outskirts of the township of Mitta Mitta. The proposed track will be contained within the Mitta MItta State Forest and utilize the northern slopes of Mt Welcome. There are two privately owned parcels within the the State Forest. While the applicant initially understood they had the landowner's permission to use the land for the trail, no written permission has been provided and accordingly these areas will be excluded from the proposal.

The land is within the Public Conservation and Resource Zone and is subject to the Bushire Management Overlay. Pursuant to Clause 36.03-3 of the Towong Planning Scheme the consent of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action for the construction of the trail is required and has been obtained. A planning permit is also required for the removal of native vegetation pursuant to Clause 52.17 of the Towong Planning Scheme.

The consent requires Towong Shire Council to be appointed as the Committee of Management. The applicant can then enter into a Memorandum of Understanding that transfers the construction and maintenance of the trail to Mitta Valley Inc.

The application was advertised widely to all owners and occupiers of adjoining land and the wider township of Mitta Mitta. Seven objections and 45 letters of support were received. Of the seven objections six were from residents of Mitta Mitta while

the 45 letters of support were predominantly from people within 100km of Mitta Mitta.

The application has been assessed against the relevant provisions of the Towong Planning Scheme. It is considered that the concerns raised by the objectors can be mitigated through conditions on a planning permit.

Recommendation:

That the application be approved subject to the following conditions:

Instrument of Agreement

1. Works must not commence until a suitable tenure and management type, and formal Instrument of Agreement has been agreed by both DEECA and Towong Shire Council.
2. This Agreement will articulate all governance and regulatory matters to effect appropriate management of the defined land area to be the responsibility of Towong Shire, and the activities of the proposal.
3. If appointment of Towong Shire Council as Committee of Management is the agreed tenure type, all costs associated with the appointment of Towong Shire Council as CoM (survey and plan preparation) must be borne by Towong Shire Council.
4. In the event that an Agreement cannot be reached between DEECA and Towong Shire Council, this permit cannot be executed.

Compliance with documents approved under this permit

5. At all times what the permit allows must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of any document approved under this permit to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

Commencement of permit

6. This permit will operate from the issued date of this permit.

Approved and Endorsed Plans

7. Before the use commences, a Multi-Agency Emergency Response Plan must be approved and endorsed by the responsible authority. The plans must:
    a. Be prepared to the satisfaction of the responsible authority
    b. Be drawn to scale with dimensions
    c. Be submitted in electronic form
    d. Show the following details:
        i. Details of the agencies engaged in the preparation of the plan
        ii. Preparedness arrangements including but not limited to
        iii. Communication planning
        iv. Access arrangements – Omeo Highway and Ottos Road

v. Response arrangements
vi. Control, Command & Coordination
vii. Incident Command Post
viii. Safety & Risk Assessment
ix. Activation of Response
x. Injured persons
xi. Media Communications
xii. Staging Areas
xiii. Aircraft management
xiv. Responder Information
xv. Briefings, debriefings and review
xvi. Contact lists
xvii. Maps of Emergency access

Buffer around private land

8. No tracks or trails are to be constructed with 20m of the land described as CA A8 Parish of Dorchap and CA A7 Parish of Dorchap (also known as Ottos Road Mitta Mitta). A 20m buffer must be maintained at all times.

Runoff Control

9. Polluted and/or sediment laden run-off must not be discharged directly or indirectly into any waterways or drainage lines.

Ongoing soil erosion control

10. All works must be undertaken in a manner that minimises soil erosion to greatest extent practicable, and any exposed areas of soil must be stabilised to prevent soil erosion, to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

Environmental weeds

11. No environmental weeds referred to in the Advisory List of Environmental Weeds in Victoria M. White, D. Cheal G.W. Carr et al. April 2018 may be planted on or allowed to invade the site.

Review of Traffic & Carparking Demand

12. Within 6 months of the commencement of the use of the land a traffic and carparking assessment must be undertaken. The assessment must include the following:
    a. Carparking demand assessment
    b. Traffic movement assessment
    c. Incident report including all traffic related incidents within 100m of the entrance to The Mill campground and Ottos Road.

Bushfire protection measures

13. The bushfire protection measures forming part of this permit or shown on the endorsed plans, including those relating to construction standards, defendable

space, water supply and access, must be maintained to the satisfaction of the responsible authority on a continuing basis. This condition continues to have force and effect after the development authorised by this permit has been completed.

Goulburn Murray Water – Construction activities

14. All construction activities must be in accordance with the EPA Publication 1834.1 Civil Construction, Building and Demolition Guide (September 2023) and there must be no transport of sediment or other materials to waterways either during or following construction.

Goulburn Murray Water Works within waterways

15. Proposed works must be undertaken in accordance with the relevant Works on a Waterway Permit as issued by the North East Catchment Management Authority.

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) - Native Vegetation

Native vegetation permitted to be removed, destroyed or lopped

16. The native vegetation identified in Native Vegetation Removal Report ID: RGE_2024_003 and permitted to be removed, destroyed or lopped under this permit is 3.055 hectares of native vegetation, which is comprised of:
    a. 3.055 hectares of native vegetation, including zero (0) large trees.

Native vegetation offsets

17. To offset the removal of 3.055 hectares of native vegetation, the permit holder must secure a native vegetation offset in accordance with Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP 2017). The permit holder must secure the following offsets:
18. A general offset of 1.431 general habitat units located within the North East Catchment Management boundary or Towong Shire municipal area, with a minimum strategic biodiversity value of at least 0.582.
19. Within six (6) months of the completion of the works, a follow up assessment of the actual impacts from the construction works on native vegetation, including retained trees and associated Tree Protection Zones (TPZ), must be conducted by an appropriately qualified and experienced arborist, to identify any discrepancies from the current Native Vegetation Removal Report associated with this permit (NVR Report ID No. RGE_2024_003). The arborist's assessment report must be provided to the responsible authority and DEECA.
20. Within six (6) months of the completion of the project, the offset requirements can be reconciled with the written agreement of the responsible authority and DEECA.

Offset evidence

21. Before any native vegetation is removed, evidence that the offset required by this permit has been secured, must be provided to the satisfaction of the responsible authority. The offset must be in the form of a credit extract(s) allocated to the permit from the Native Vegetation Credit Register.
22. A copy of the offset evidence will be endorsed by the responsible authority and form part of this permit.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

23. Before any works start, including removal of native vegetation, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) must be prepared to the satisfaction of the responsible authority and submitted to and approved by the responsible authority in consultation with DEECA. When approved, the CEMP will form part of this permit. The CEMP must include (but not necessarily be limited to) details regarding the following:
24. Measures to be implemented to protect the native vegetation and other biodiversity values to be retained on the work/impact site and on land directly adjoining the work/impact site, during and post construction works. These measures must include the erection of native vegetation protection fencing around all native vegetation to be retained on site, including the tree protection zones of all native trees to be retained in accordance with AS 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites.
25. Details for the implementation of recommendations and mitigation measures from the Native Vegetation Report: Detailed Assessment (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting 23 February 2024) to mitigate impacts on biodiversity.
26. Details for the implementation of the recommendations, methods and techniques in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan (High Country Arborist Reports, 29 January 2025) to avoid and minimise impacts of construction works on retained trees, including works within Structural Root Zones (SRZs) and Tree Protection Zones (TPZs).
27. Identification of all stockpiles, storage, parking and vehicle/machinery storage locations and appropriate management requirements for these – all to be located within the identified facility development and impact areas.
28. Details of management measures to be implemented before, during and after the construction phase, including weed control, sediment control, erosion and drainage management, rehabilitation and stabilisation of the site and impacted areas, vehicle/plant hygiene requirements.
29. Measures to protect aquatic habitats and vegetation outside of the construction footprint from the impacts of sediment run-off, erosion, work-related debris, and construction activities, with appropriate control measures in accordance with all relevant EPA Victoria guidelines (EPA Publications 175, 275, 480, 960, and 1834). All erosion and sediment control measures should be

established prior to the commencement of works and be monitored regularly throughout the entire duration of construction, particularly after heavy rain events.

30. Details regarding the retention of habitat features such as coarse woody debris and rocks etc, and relocation (if necessary) into adjoining areas of native vegetation.
31. The CEMP should also include details and requirements regarding fauna management.
32. Pre-clearance surveys must be undertaken by a qualified ecologist and within an appropriate timeframe, before impacts occur, e.g. 2 weeks or less, in accordance with the recommendations of the Detailed Assessment (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting 23 February 2024).
33. Native fauna salvage, handling or relocation to be conducted by an appropriated qualified, experienced and licenced handler.
34. Details pertaining to timing of works to avoid impacts during key times such as breeding and nesting periods.
35. Monitoring and reporting requirements for all aspects and actions identified in the endorsed CEMP.
36. Identification of persons responsible for all aspects and actions identified in the endorsed CEMP.
37. All persons undertaking works on site must be fully briefed on all aspects and requirements of the endorsed CEMP. All works constructed or carried out must be in accordance with the endorsed CEMP, to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

Protection of native vegetation to be retained

38. Before works start, native vegetation protection fencing must be erected around or along native vegetation to be retained on and in the direct vicinity of the work site/footprint. This fencing must be erected in accordance with the AS 4970-2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites. The fence must be constructed of highly visible, durable materials to the satisfaction of the responsible authority. The protective fence must remain in place until all works are completed to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
39. Except with the written consent of the responsible authority within the area of native vegetation to be retained and any tree or vegetation protection zone associated with the permitted use and/or development, the following is prohibited:
    a. vehicular or machinery access
    b. trenching or soil excavation
    c. storage or dumping of any soils, materials, equipment, vehicles, machinery or waste products

d. entry and exit pits for the provision of underground services e. any other actions or activities that may result in adverse impacts to retained native vegetation.

Other conditions

40. Before any works start, including native vegetation removal, an Operational and Trail Management Plan must be prepared to the satisfaction of the responsible authority and submitted to and approved by the responsible authority in consultation with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Hume Region. When approved, the Trail Management Plan will form part of this permit. The Trail Management Plan may be generally in accordance with the Trail Management Plan (Mitta Valley Inc) and must include (but is not necessarily limited to) details regarding the following:
    a. Trail and surrounding area management and responsibilities
    b. Maintenance requirements, including schedule of works
    c. Site environmental values
    d. Ongoing biodiversity matters; vegetation management, sediment control, management of pest plants and animals,
    e. Regular monitoring and reporting, identifying any potential hazards and compliance requirements
    f. Event management
    g. Transport arrangements to and from the site for patrons, to ensure that impacts on road traffic are minimised on event days.
    h. Car parking locations
    i. Contingency provisions in the event of traffic accidents, breakdowns and illegal parking on road reserves on event days.
    j. Appropriate signage and traffic measures between the site and car parking areas
    k. How patron numbers will be controlled and monitored
    l. Staffing and other measures which are designed to ensure the orderly arrival and departure of patrons.
    m. The location for emergency vehicle access and width of emergency vehicle assess and location of an emergency assembly area.
    n. Road signage on event days
    o. Management structure, roles, responsibilities, powers and procedures
    p. A compliant hotline for the duration of the event in relation to patron and security issues.
    q. Post closure rehabilitation standards
41. If the trail and associated infrastructure is no longer required or closed, the subject site must be rehabilitated to the satisfaction of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Hume Region.

Bushfire and emergency management

42. Prior to commencement of use of the Mountain Bike Park, an Operational Emergency Management Plan (OEMP) must be prepared to the satisfaction of the responsible authority and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. The EMP must include (but not limited to):
    a. Access controls
    b. Bushfire and user safety
    c. Evacuation procedures
    d. Any other matters raised in consultation with DEECA relating to the protection of human life on the site.

Expiry – Development and use

43. This permit will expire if one of the following circumstances applies:
    a. The development is not started within 2 years of the issued date of this permit
    b. The development is not completed within 4 years of the issued date of this permit.
    c. The use does not start within 2 years of completion of the development
44. In accordance with Section 69 of the Planning & Environment Act 1987, an application may be submitted to the Responsible Authority for an extension of the periods referred to in this condition.

<u>Permit Notes</u>

Goulburn Murray Water

45. The subject property is located within an area of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity. Should the activity associate with proposed development require a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP), planning permits, licences and work authorities cannot be issued unless a CHMP has been approved for the activity.

North East Catchment Management Authority

46. In the vicinity of the proposed bike trails, Deep Gully (along the western side of the site) and a tributary, along with an unnamed waterway draining north toward the Mitta River, are gazetted by the Authority to be designated waterways under the *Water Act 1989*.
47. A Works on Waterways permit must be obtained from the Authority in accordance with By-Law No 2024/01 Waterways Protection prior to commencing any works in, on or over designated waterways (such as landscaping, access crossings, stormwater outlets, etc.).

Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action

PUBLIC LAND

48. Before any works on public land start, if any flora species listed as protected under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act 1988* are to be removed, a

permit to take protected flora will be required. To obtain a permit to take protected flora or for further information, please contact, Hume Natural Environment Program - Hume_NEP@deeca.vic.gov.au.

49. The granting of this permit does not exempt the holder of a permit from the requirements of other Commonwealth and State legislation or policy.

Attachment:

1. P A 240059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta - Cultural Heritage Management Plan [**12.2.1** - 71 pages]
2. P A 240059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta - Environmental Management Plan [**12.2.2** - 30 pages]
3. P A 250059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta - Trail Management Plan [**12.2.3** - 48 pages]
4. P A 240059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta - Trail Map [**12.2.4** - 18 pages]
5. PA240059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta Summary of Objections [**12.2.5** - 13 pages]
6. P A 240059 Omeo Highway Mitta Mitta - Objections Response [**12.2.6** - 24 pages]

Background/History:

The subject site is located to the south and west of the township of Mitta Mitta. The land is Crown Land. A trail head has already been established on the opposite side of the Omeo Highway at The Mill Campground that contains public carparking and toilet facilities. The site contains walking trails that lead to Mt Welcome.

The land contains two privately owned parcels that are not able to be developed. The land consists of forest with steep slopes. The land is currently managed by DEECA The plan for the Mountain Bike Park has been funded through a State Government grant. Funding has also been secured through the Victorian State Government's Local Economic Recovery program for the completion of the first stage of the development.

The proposal will provide additional cycling options within the North East Region that has become Victoria's premier cycling destination. It is anticipated that the trail will provide an additional tourism offering for Mitta Mitta.

It is intended that Towong Shire Council will be appointed as the Committee of Management with a Memorandum of Understanding with Mitta Valley Inc to construct and maintain the trails in accordance with the requirements of any planning permit issued and the Memorandum of Understanding.

Figure 1: Trails Overview Map

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

The *Planning & Environment Act 1987* provides the overarching standard process for assessing a planning permit application.

The Towong Planning Scheme sets out the planning permit triggers that require a planning permit application.

A planning permit is triggered under the Public Conservation and Resource Zone and the Bushfire Management Overlay.
Clause 36.03-1 identifies the use of the land for Informal Outdoor Recreation as a section 1 use where the use is being conducted by or on behalf of a public land manager. The applicant is not the public land manager and therefore a planning permit is required.

Clause 36.03-2 identifies that a planning permit is required to carry out works associated with the use of the land for Informal Outdoor Recreation that are not carried out by or on behalf of the public land manager.

Clause 36.03-6 Requires consideration of the following decision guidelines:

- *The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *The comments of any public land manager or other relevant land manager having responsibility for the care or management of the land or adjacent land.*
- *Whether the development is appropriately located and designed, including in accordance with any relevant use, design or siting guidelines.*

Response

The proposal is consistent with the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework as discussed below.

The public land manager is the Department of Energy Environment & Climate Action (DEECA) which has consented to the issue of a planning permit subject to conditions. The approval is conditional upon Towong Shire Council being appointed as the Committee of Management for the trail.

The trail will meander through the forest and only trees and understorey that is necessary to be removed for the safe operation of the trail will be removed. The tracks are proposed to be narrow. The track will intersect the existing walking track but will no utilise any of the existing tracks to avoid any conflict in land use. The trail head will be located at the The Mill campground. This is located on the opposite side of the Omeo Highway. Any permit issued for the proposal will require the applicant to prepare traffic and car parking assessments after the first 12 months of operation. Further an incident report will be required in relation to any traffic incidents that have occurred within 100m of the The Mill Campground and the entrance to Ottos Road.

A planning permit is triggered under the Bushfire Management Overlay. Clause 44.06-2 identifies a planning permit is required for works associated with the use of the land for Leisure and recreation.

Response

The application was referred to DEECA as the relevant authority. DEECA proposes to include a condition requiring the preparation of an Operational Emergency Management Plan before the use can commence.

Clause 52.17 identifies that a planning permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. Clause 52.17-1 states "*A permit is required to remvoe, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation*"

Clause 52.17-4 requires consideration of the decision guidelines associated with a basic, intermediate or detailed pathway. The proposed vegetation removal falls

within the Detailed Pathway. An application for the removal of native vegetation in a Detailed Pathway must be referred to DEECA.

Response

DEECA have reviewed the application material and ecological assessment and has consented to the issue of a planning permit subject to extensive conditions as outlined above.

Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

Clause 02.03 sets out the strategic direction for Towong Shire to achieve its aspirations. Clause 02.03-1 identifies Mitta Mitta as a compact settlement with a quaint character and scenic setting that attracts many visitors. It is described as a popular stop along the Omeo Highway. The strategic direction aims to facilitate development that contributes to a network of settlements that support each other in their service base and offer a variety and choice of lifestyle opportunities. It is anticipated that the mountain bike trail will strengthen the existing tourism for the town. It will also provide an additional recreational activity for the wider Mitta Mitta Valley Community.

Clause 02.03-2 (Environmental and landscape values - Biodiversity) aims to protect and enhance areas of identified landscape and environmental value.and aisst the protection and conservation of biodiversity, particularly remnant vegetation. While native vegetation will be removed for the construction of the trail, the trail has been designed to avoid and minimise the loss of native vegetation.

Clause 02.03-3 (Environmental risks and amenity) requires consideration of the impact of climate change. Further consideration of the impact of bushfire and erosion and landslip. Any permit issued for the proposal will require the preparation of an Operational Emergency Management Plan to ensure the trail is managed to protect visitors in the event of bushfire. The trail has also been designed to minimise the risk of erosion and landslip.

Clause 02.03-7 (Economic development – Tourism) aims to encourage land use and development that results in tourism investment and support opportunities for eco-tourism and cultural tourism. The trail will provide an additional offering for the Mitta Mitta Valley and wider Towong Shire. With the opening of the Omeo Mountain Bike Trail the Mitta trail will provide an additional offering on the way to Omeo.

Clause 12 of the Towong Planning Scheme provides the policy basis concerning 'Environmental and Landscape Values'. The policy contained in Clause 12.01 (Biodiversity) focuses on protecting Victoria's biodiversity, particularly from unnecessary removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation and the

fragmentation of habitat and the spread of pest plants, animals and pathogens into natural ecosystems. The applicant has provided a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan outlining how the environment will be protected during the construction phase. As discussed above the native vegetation proposed to be removed is to the minimum extent possible to ensure the safe operation of the trail. Clause 12.01-2S aims to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity. The proposed vegetation removal will be offset, and the applicant has already provided a quotation to secure these offsets.

Clause 12.03-1S (Water bodies and wetlands) aims to protect and enhance waterway systems and limit earthworks in the proximity of waterways. Any permit issued for the proposal will require that all waterways be protected from any construction activities. A further condition will require the control of any environmental weed species that may invade the site.

Clause 12.05-2S aims to ensure significant landscape areas such as forests are protected and to ensure development does not detract from the natural qualities of significant landscape areas. While some native vegetation will be removed to make way for the trail the ongoing maintenance requirements will ensure weeds are controlled and the remaining vegetation is protected.

Clause 13 operates in much the same way as Clause 02.03-3 and requires consideration of the impact of climate change, bushfire risk and soil degradation. As previously discussed, the trail will be constructed to ensure there is no soil degradation or impact on any waterways. Permit conditions have been included to protect riders from the risk of bushfire.

Clause 17.04-1S (Tourism – facilitating tourism) aims to encourage tourism development to maximise the economic, social and cultural benefits of developing the State. Clause 17.04-1L aims to encourage the development of tourist trails based on the cultural heritage and significant landscape features of the Shire. The proposal is supported by this policy.

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

The proposal will provide additional recreational facilities for the Mitta Mitta Valley and wider Towong Shire. It will contribute to the wider tourism objectives of the Hume region and link the network of mountain bike trails and parks throughout the northeast with the newly opened mountain bike park at Omeo.

The creation of trails within the State Forest will result in some loss of biodiversity and could lead to the introduction of weed species to the site. The proposal has

considered these factors and aims to minimise the impact of the trail on the environment.

It is considered that the objectors concerns can be mitigated through conditions on any permit issued for the proposal and, on balance, it is the officers view that the proposal is consistent with the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.

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

Economic
It is anticipated that the proposed trail will attract tourism to the Mitta Mitta Valley and contribute to the economic sustainability of the small township of Mitta Mitta.

Social
The construction of a mountain bike trail will provide an additional recreational facility for the community of the Mitta Mitta Valley and the wider Towong Shire community.

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

The application was advertised, and seven objections were received. There were 45 letters of support received. It is the officers view that the concerns of the objectors relating to traffic management, rider safety and threats to biodiversity can be address through conditions.

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)):

As with all planning matters, there is a risk that this matter may be appealed pursuant to Section 82 of the Planning and Environment Act 19987 to the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). It is the officer's view that proceeding to VCAT would have a budgetary impact. It is not possible to quantify this now.

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

The proposal is consistent with the Planning Policy Framework as discussed above.

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.

Council Policies:
The proposal is consistent with the Municipal Strategic Statement as discussed above.

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 relevant law section outlines many of the sensitive considerations associated with the proposed construction of a Mountain Bike Trail. Upon assessment it is considered the proposal is generally consistent with the policies and can be supported.

The risk factors considered relate to the risk to:

- The environment through the removal of native vegetation and the potential impact on biodiversity.
- The increase in traffic, car parking and speed limits
- The increased bushfire threat
- The response to rider incidents and injuries

Any permit issued for the development contains conditions that aim to mitigate these risks.

Officer's View:

It is the officers view that the proposal is consistent with the requirements of the Towong Planning Scheme and that it is appropriate for a Notice of Decision to Grant be issued subject to conditions.

13 Environmental Sustainability

There are no Environmental Sustainability reports to present this meeting.

14 Economic and Tourism Development

14.1 Economic Development and Tourism Update - October 2024 - May 2025 (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

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

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

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide information.

Summary:

This report outlines the key activities undertaken by the Economic Development team between 1 October 2024 and 31 May 2025. During this period, the team focused on a range of strategic initiatives across the tourism and agriculture sectors, aimed at enhancing regional development, community engagement, and economic resilience.

Tourism

- Progressed the High Country Rail Trail project towards investment-ready status;
- Finalised the installation of interpretive signage and public artworks along the Great River Road;
- Initiated the Bellbridge Container Café project;
- Commenced the Hanson Street Mural Project;
- Completed the new destination website and launched the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) campaign;
- Delivered the 'December on Hanson' promotional campaign;
- Revitalised the Tallangatta and Corryong Visitor Information Centres, and secured funding for upgrades to the Eskdale Visitor Information Centre;

- Delivered the inaugural Run Upper Murray Trail event and commenced planning for the 2025 Pub to Pelican marathon;
- Hosted the Upper Murray Business and Tourism Expo;
- Upgraded Council's digital media management system to improve the storage, accessibility, and use of photography and videography assets.

Agriculture

- Participated in the Tallangatta Farming Expo;
- Delivered two Upper Murray Landcare drop-in information sessions;
- Hosted a Succession Planning Workshop in Talgarno;
- Engaged with stakeholders on strategies for managing dry seasonal conditions;
- Represented Council at key industry meetings, including the Alpine Valleys Dairy and the Upper Murray Inc. (UMI) Agricultural Innovation Working Group.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Attachment:

1. Towong Shire Riverine Plains Agriculture Officer November May 2025 Report [**14.1.1** - 2 pages]
2. Economic Development and Tourism Report - October 2024 - May 2025 Attachment [**14.1.2** - 10 pages]

Background/History:

This report is typically provided bi-annually, however this report covers an eight-month period.

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)):

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

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

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

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

During the reporting period, the Economic Development team undertook a range of engagement activities to support the planning and delivery of key tourism and agriculture initiatives:

- Managed the community-led creation of interpretive signage along the Great River Road and other key sites across the Shire;
- Presented the Great River Road marketing investment proposal to Upper Murray Inc for feedback;
- Engaged with key stakeholders regarding the Bellbridge Container Café project;
- Conducted landowner engagement on the proposed route for the Run Upper Murray event;
- Consulted with the project steering group during the development of the destination website;
- Undertook landowner consultation in relation to environmental reporting for the High Country Rail Trail;
- Established a Community Project Steering Group to oversee the Hanson Street Murals project;
- Engaged with street traders, Men's Sheds, and the broader community in the delivery of the 'December on Hanson' campaign;
- Maintained visitor engagement through the Corryong Visitor Information Centre;
- Collaborated with the Tallangatta Heritage Group on matters relating to the Tallangatta Visitor Information Centre;
- Engaged all residents and landowners impacted by the Run Upper Murray event, and coordinated with emergency services to support event planning and safety;
- Informed Tallangatta residents affected by the Pub to Pelican event and engaged with all relevant emergency service providers;
- Maintained ongoing engagement with Towong farming residents through various channels.

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

The Economic Development team's activities from October 2024 to May 2025 reflect Towong Shire Council's strong commitment to innovation and continuous improvement across both tourism and agriculture sectors.

Tourism
Council has embraced innovation through the delivery of creative, community-driven projects and the adoption of digital tools to enhance regional promotion and visitor engagement. The progression of the High Country Rail Trail to investment-ready status and the completion of interpretive signage and public artworks along the Great River Road demonstrate a strategic approach to place-making and cultural storytelling. Initiatives such as the Bellbridge Container Café and Hanson Street Mural Project showcase Council's support for activation of public spaces.

The launch of the new destination website and Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) campaign represent a significant digital transformation, improving the region's online presence and accessibility to potential visitors. Campaigns like 'December on Hanson' and events such as Run Upper Murray, reflect Council's commitment to innovative event development that drives tourism and community pride.

The revitalisation of Visitor Information Centres and the upgrade of Council's digital media management system further demonstrate a focus on modernising service delivery, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing the visitor experience.

Agriculture
In the agricultural sector, Council has continued to support innovation through knowledge-sharing and industry collaboration. Participation in the Tallangatta Farming Expo, delivery of Landcare information sessions, and hosting of a Succession Planning Workshop have provided valuable opportunities for local producers to access information and build resilience.

Engagement on dry season management strategies and representation at key industry forums, including the Alpine Valleys Dairy and the UMI Agricultural Innovation Working Group, highlight Council's proactive role in supporting sustainable agricultural practices and fostering innovation through regional partnerships.

Together, the economic development activities delivered over the last reporting period reflect a forward-thinking approach that aligns with Council's strategic goals, ensuring that Towong Shire remains adaptive, resilient, and positioned for future growth.

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

During the reporting period, the Economic Development team actively collaborated with a range of community groups, businesses, and regional organisations to support

the delivery of key projects and initiatives. Key collaborations included:

- Sandy the War Horse Committee – Supported the development of interpretive signage and videography at the Tallangatta Visitor Information Centre;
- Eskdale Progress Association – Partnered in identifying upgrade requirements for the Eskdale Visitor Information Centre and co-developed a funding application to support the works;
- Mat Dore Coaching – Collaborated with Council to deliver the inaugural Run Upper Murray Trail event and to commence planning for the 2025 Pub to Pelican marathon;
- The Man from Snowy River Tourism Association and Upper Murray Inc. – Provided input into the planning and agenda for the Upper Murray Business and Tourism Expo.

In the agricultural sector, Riverina Plains worked in partnership with several organisations to deliver workshops and provide valuable information to the Towong farming community. These partners included:

- Alpine Valleys Dairy;
- Upper Murray Landcare;
- Mitta to Murray Landcare Network;
- Mitta Valley Landcare Group;
- Agmate Rural Services;
- Yenda Producers Co-operative;
- Costello Rural Corryong;
- Ag Warehouse Corryong.

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)):

- Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2023-2033
- North East Victoria Cycling Optimisation Plan
- The Hume Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2010-20
- Hume Regional Growth Plan • Visit Victoria Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20
- Lake Hume Land and On-Water Management Plan
- Goulburn Murray Water Corporate Plan 2019-20 to 2023-24
- Regional Development Victoria: Ovens Murray Regional Partnership roadmap Ordinary Council Meeting Agenda - 27 November 2024 61 of 69

- Hume Regional Growth Plan 2014 • Goulburn Murray Water, Corporate Plan 2021–22 to 2025-26
- Regional Development Victoria Ovens, Murray Regional Partnership 2019–20
- Victoria State Government, Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2021

Council Plans and Policies:

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

3. Economic and Tourism Development - Expand economic and employment opportunities across our Shire in a sustainable way.

3.1 Connect businesses to learning, development and networking opportunities to increase capacity
3.2 Run a series of business expos to support local businesses
3.4 Support businesses to adapt to and recover from the impact of bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic
3.5 Support businesses to expand adventure tourism offerings across the shire
3.9 Support Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley mountain bike park
3.10 Seek funding to complete the High Country Rail Trail
3.15 Capitalise on Tallangatta's status as a Notable Town
3.17 Deliver improved visitor information and experience across the Shire
3.18 Expand the reach of tourism marketing and promotional materials
3.19 Seek to support the growth of value-add product and/or diversification opportunities for the agriculture industry

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

6.3 Continually improve processes to support improved 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:

Not applicable.

Officer's View:

The Economic Development team continues to deliver strongly on the Council Plan 2021-2025 objectives.

15 Councillor Reports

An opportunity is provided for Councillors to table or present a Delegate's report.

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 Adoption (DCOD)

The following policies were tabled for review at the 30 April 2025 Council Meeting:

- Councillor Correspondence
- Councillor Gift Policy

Attachment:

1. Councillor Correspondence - May 2025 Review [**18.1.1** - 5 pages]
2. Councillor Gift Policy - May 2025 Review [**18.1.2** - 6 pages]

Please note the recommended changes are shown in colored text.

Recommendation:

That the following policies as amended and presented be adopted, with the Chief Executive Officer authorised to make minor administrative changes where necessary:

- Councillor Correspondence
- Councillor Gift Policy

18.2 Policies for Review (DCOD)

The following policies are tabled for review in accordance with Council's agreed review cycle. Feedback should be provided to the nominated officer by 24 July 2025 to ensure any input can be considered prior to tabling the policies for adoption:

- External Grants Application Policy
- Procurement Policy

Attachment:

1. External Grant Application Policy - Adopted December 2020 [**18.2.1** - 2 pages]
2. Procurement Policy - Adopted August 2024 [**18.2.2** - 13 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.

Recommendation:

That the meeting be closed to the press and public to consider information considered confidential under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 being:

21 Closure of Meeting

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Meeting Records
Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 14 May 2025 - Tallangatta

Attendees: Crs Tolsher, Anderson, Wortmann and Pitman
Juliana Phelps, CEO and officers as listed below

Apologies: Cr Whitehead

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am **Councillor feedback/issues/questions:**

The following maters were raised by Councillors:

Cr Wortmann:
Budget query – Other Income

Cr Anderson:
Community consultation – Letter Drop
Distribution – Green Caddy Bags

Cr Tolsher:

Cr Pitman:

Cr Whitehead:

10.00am **Special Council Meeting**

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10.30am **Hume Regional Development Australia (RDA) Government Engagement Presentation** (1 hour)

Councillors met with representatives from Hume Regional Development Australia (RDA) for a Government Engagement Presentation, being Mr Charlie Bird – Regional Director Hume, Ms Kate McRae – Regional Coordination Hume, and Ms Claire Connolly – Regional Development Australia Coordinator.

11.30am **Director Community and Planning** *(Mark Florence)*

Mr Mark Florence provided information in relation to the following:

Updates:

Bullioh Female Friendly Project
Tallandoon Tennis Courts
Drought Assistance
Mitta Mountain Bike Park
Modular Housing

12.30pm **Lunch**

1.00pm **NBN presentation** (45 minutes)

Councillors met with representatives from NBN for a presentation, being Ms Michelle Cob - Regional Development and Engagement Manager, and Ms Charlene Donovan – Community Engagement Specialist NBN Local.

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1.45pm **Infrastructure and Environment Update** *(Natalie Butler)*

Ms Natalie Butler - Technical Officer, provided information in relation to the following:

Updates:

Town Maintenance Contract Evaluation
Cleaning of Municipal Amenities

2.30pm **Director Corporate and Organisational Development** *(Narelle Taylor)*

Ms Narelle Taylor provided information in relation to the following:

Updates:

Councillor Retreat
Colac Colac Caravan Park

2.45pm **Travel to Mitta Mitta Magora Park**

4.00pm **Mitta Mountain Bike Park**

Councillors met with residents to consult on the objections and applications for the Mitta Mountain Bike Path proposal.

4.15pm **Councillor time Mitta Mountain Bike Park**

4.30pm **Chief Executive Officer** *(Juliana Phelps)*

Ms Juliana Phelps provided information in relation to the following:

Updates:

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AusNet – Bellbridge/Bethanga/Talgarno response
City of Greater Bendigo – Food Security Motion

5.00pm **Councillor Time**

5.30pm **Refreshment**

6.30pm **Community Consultations**

Councillors attended the Mitta Mitta Community Consultation Session to consult on the 2025-29 Council Plan.

8.30pm **Close**

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Meeting Records
Councillor Workshop

Wednesday 28 May 2025 - Corryong

Attendees: Crs Whitehead, Tolsher, Anderson, Wortmann, and Pitman
Juliana Phelps, CEO and officers as listed below

Apologies: Nil

Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest: Nil

9.30am **Director Infrastructure and Environment** *(Jamie Heritage)*

Mr Jamie Heritage provided information in relation to the following:

Flood remediation works

10.00am **Council Meeting**

11.00am **Councillor feedback/issues/questions:**

The following maters were raised by Councillors:

Cr Wortmann:

Rate payment data
Kindergartens on school sites
Corryong CBD project review
CFA Shed Walwa
Resilient Buildings
Planning Scheme amendment
Hindleton Road
Granya Recreation Masterplan

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Cr Tolsher:
Rowen Park - Car park line marking
- Tree maintenance

Cr Anderson:
Green caddy liners
In-kind support for community groups

Cr Pitman:

Cr Whitehead:
Upper Murray Road re-sheeting/grading

12.00pm **Chief Executive Officer** *(Juliana Phelps)*

Ms Juliana Phelps provided information in relation to the following:

Advocacy issues
- Albury Hospital development (Cr Anderson)
- ESVF Levy
- Drought

12.30pm **Lunch**

1.00pm **Director Infrastructure and Environment** *(Jamie Heritage)*

Mr Jamie Heritage provided information in relation to the following:

Lake Road culvert
Granya water tank remediation (rabbits)
Corryong streetscape update
Corryong CBD parking
Walwa CFA shed
Works update

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1.30pm **Corryong Cemeteries Trust Meeting**

2.00pm **Director Corporate and Organisational Development** *(Narelle Taylor)*

Ms Narelle Taylor provided information in relation to the following:

Councillor Correspondence policy
Councillor Gift policy
Budget submissions
Council Plan – are any additional community meetings required?
- Councillor sessions (20 June and 9 July)

Budget variations and reallocations

3.00pm **Director Community and Planning** *(Mark Florence)*

Mr Mark Florence provided information in relation to the following:

Masterplan Junior campus Corryong
Planning scheme amendment
IDAHOBIT Day
Reconciliation week

4.00pm **Councillor Time**

4.30pm **Meeting with Upper Murray Incorporated**

5.30pm **Supper at Corryong Memorial Hall**

6.30pm **Council Plan Community Consultations**

Councillors attended the Corryong Community Consultation Session to consult on the 2025-29 Council Plan.

8.30pm **Close**

innovation : technology : sustainability

ACTION SHEET
FROM 14 MAY 2025 SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	PROGRESS/ COMPLETE
5.1	**Draft Budget 2025/2026** That: 1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the *Draft Budget 2025/26* available for public inspection and invite public submissions, with submissions closing Wednesday 11 June 2025; and 2. At the Council meeting on 25 June 2025: a. Consider any submissions in relation to the *Draft Budget 2025/26;* b. Consider the adoption of the *Draft Budget 2025/26.*	Director Corporate and Organisational Development	The document was made available for public inspection, with submissions being accepted and received. Complete
5.2	**Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/2029** That: 1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29 available for public inspection and invite public submissions, with submissions closing Wednesday 11 June 2025; and 2. At the Council meeting on 25 June 2025: a. Consider any submissions in relation to the Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29; and b. Consider the adoption of the	Director Corporate and Organisational Development	The document was made available for public inspection, with submissions being accepted and received. Complete

ACTION SHEET
FROM 14 MAY 2025 SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

	Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29.		

ACTION SHEET
FROM 28 MAY 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	PROGRESS/ COMPLETE
5	**Confirmation of Minutes** That the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 30 April 2025 be confirmed.	Coordinator Governance and Compliance	Confirmed Minutes added to Council's website. Complete
7.2	**Submitter: Ms Kane** Ms Taylor advised that no record of the correspondence had been found, notwithstanding that, an updated list of people buried at the cemetery will be displayed at the gatehouse. Ms Taylor also advised that in regard to the sign to Jack Riley's grave, it is something that can be addressed and will also be considered as part of the broader masterplan for the Corryong Cemetery that is being developed.	Director Corporate and Organisational Development	The updated list has been actioned. Complete
7.3	**Submitter: Mr Auchinleck** Ms Phelps acknowledged that Mr Auchinleck had not been provided with a response to his 19 March 2025 email. Ms Phelps advised that there are a number of requests that are ahead of Mr Auchinleck in the queue and staff have been working on other priorities. Ms Phelps committed to providing a response in due course.	Chief Executive Officer	The submitter will be provided a response in due course. In progress
7.4	**Submitter: Ms Fraser** That: Mr Heritage confirmed that there is a bridge on Honeysuckle Road that where there are ongoing_maintenance issues at	Chief Executive Officer	Council continues to work on addressing Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy concerns.

ACTION SHEET
FROM 28 MAY 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

	the lead on and lead off approaches. Mr Heritage advised it is in our capital works program over the next two to three years. The Mayor advised that Council has taken on board the questions and is working with other councils to look at strategies to push back on the State Government's Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy. Council is very much opposed to the way it has been brought about without any community consultation. The State seems to have two standards between what they expect councils to do and how they want them to run, and how they run themselves. It's time they have a look at their own backyard and the way they are running things.		In progress
11.1	**<u>RFT Cleaning of Municipal Buildings 2024/25</u>** That: 1. Contract No. 2024/25-053 for the Cleaning of Municipal Amenities (public toilets and barbeques) be split into parts 'a' and 'b'; 2. The contracts include an annual CPI adjustment and options for two additional one-year extensions with CPI adjustments; 3. JNC Tallangatta be awarded Contract No. 2024/25-053 (a) for the lump sum of $139,317.50 ex GST; 4. Border Grasshopper be awarded Contract No. 2024/25-053 (b) for the lump sum of $49,280 ex GST; 5. The use of the Common Seal be authorised in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties for the	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Contract is expected to be signed and sealed by the completion of June 2025. Completed

ACTION SHEET
FROM 28 MAY 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

	purpose of signing the contract documents; and 6. The Director Infrastructure and Environment be authorised to approve contract variations up to the value of the allocated budget.		
11.2	**<u>RFT Towong Maintenance 2024/25</u>** That: 1. The contracts for delivery of Town Maintenance Services include an annual CPI adjustment and options for two additional one-year extensions with CPI adjustments; 2. Total Garden Solutions be awarded Contract 2024/25 - 039 – Upper Murray for Town Maintenance Services for the lump sum of $285,750 ex GST; 3. Total Garden Solutions be awarded Contract 2024/25 - 040 – Peninsula for Town Maintenance Services for the lump sum of $390,510 ex GST; 4. Mitta Swimming Pool Committee of Management be awarded Contract 2024/25 - 041 – Mitta Mitta for the delivery of Town Maintenance Services for the lump sum of $76,005 ex GST; 5. Dartmouth Progress Association be awarded Contract 2024/25 - 042 – Dartmouth for the delivery of Town Maintenance Services for the lump sum of $118,959 ex GST; 6. Eskdale Progress Association be awarded Contract 2024/25 - 043 – Eskdale for the delivery of Town Maintenance Services for the lump sum of $124, 944 ex GST; 7. The use of the Common Seal be	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Contract is expected to be signed and sealed by the completion of June 2025. Completed

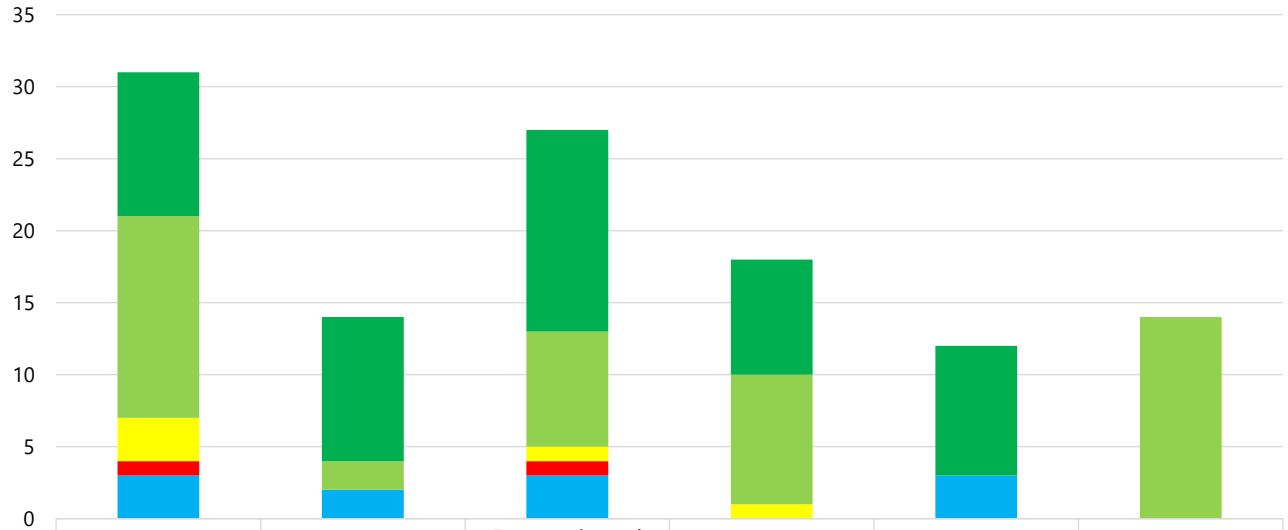
ACTION SHEET
FROM 28 MAY 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

	authorised in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties for the purpose of signing the contract documents; and 8. The Director Infrastructure and Environment be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of the allocated budget.		
11.3	**<u>Flood Damage Recovery Works</u>** That: 1. Contract 2023/24-040 for Flood Damage Repair Works (Towong Shire Eastern Section – Priority 1 Works) be awarded to Country Wide Asphalt Pty Ltd for a lump sum of $31,996 ex. GST; 2. Contract 2023/24-040 for Flood Damage Repair Works (Towong Shire Eastern Section – Priority 2 Works) be awarded to Country Wide Asphalt Pty Ltd for a lump sum of $348,884 ex. GST; 3. The Director Infrastructure and Environment be authorised to approve additional works due to asset deterioration that has occurred between the event and remediation works approval, up to the total value of the approved DRFA flood grant; 4. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to sign and seal the contract documents in accordance with Local Law 1 – Common Seal and Miscellaneous Penalties; and 5. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve contract variations up to the total value of	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Contract is expected to be signed and sealed by the completion of June 2025. Completed

ACTION SHEET
FROM 28 MAY 2025 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

	the allocated DRFA flood grant.		
16	**<u>Urgent Business</u>** Given the detrimental impact that the new levy will have on our ratepayers and our residents, we make every effort to oppose the introduction of the new levy and seek advice on not collecting the new levy.	Chief Executive Officer	Council continues to work on addressing Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy concerns In progress.

Council Plan Priorities - Progress Report (1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025)



	Asset management	Community wellbeing	Economic and tourism development	Environmental sustainability	Land-use planning	Organisational improvement
Complete	10	10	14	8	9	0
Low	14	2	8	9	0	14
Medium	3	0	1	1	0	0
High	1	0	1	0	0	0
Future Start Date	3	2	3	0	3	0

Future start date	High	Medium	Low	Complete
Priority is not due for commencement	Milestones are not being met. There is high risk that the project will not be completed within advised timeframes or to satisfaction.	Strategy milestones are not being met. There is medium risk that the strategy will not be completed within advised timeframes.	Milestones are being met. There is low risk that the project will not be completed within advised timeframes.	The project has been completed.

Council Plan Priorities - Progress Report (1 January - 31 March 2025)

Responsible Officer	Position	Person
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	Juliana Phelps
CED	Co-ordinator Economic Development	Kerissa Heritage
CFS	Manager Early Years and Family Services	Jason Pearson
CLO	Customer Liaison Officer	Sandra Dower
CRAC	Co-ordinator Youth, Arts and Culture	Vacant
DCP	Acting Director Community and Planning	Mark Florence
DIE	Director Infrastructure and Environment	Vacant
DCOD	Director Corporate and Organisational Development	Narelle Taylor
EPM	Engineer/ Projects Manager	Various Staff
EMC	Emergency Management Coordinator	Sven Erikson
ITO	IT Officer	Chris Rootsey
MF	Manager Finance	Dylan Howard
MIA	Manager Infrastructure Assessment	Vacant
NHC	Neighbourhood House Coordinator	Katherine Lanigan
MRS	Manager Risk and Safety	Loren Murray
OHS	OHS and Risk Officer	Wayne Carter
TLCS	Team Leader Customer Service	Celeste Pridmore
SMT	Senior Management Team	CEO and Directors

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
	Asset management Maintain and improve our Shire's infrastructure to meet agreed levels of service.						
Asset management	1.1	Deliver 100% of the annual capital works program and bushfire recovery projects	DIE	2023/24	Medium	Of the 64 projects in the 2023/24 year, 30 are now complete, 20 under construction, 7 in tendering phase and 7 in the engage/design phase. No further update due to resource constraints in the Infrastructure team.	Of 82 projects, new initiatives and carry-over works. The 14 largest projects, six are currently in progress, two are under construction, four have been completed, and two are in the tender phase. The remaining projects are on track to be completed by the end of the 2024–2025 financial year or as programmed.
Asset management	1.2	Deliver infrastructure projects that arise from place-based master planning	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Major projects from place plans for Tallangatta, Corryong, Bellbridge, Bethanga, Mitta, Towong, Tintaldra and Cudgewa are to be considered by the new Council when developing the next Council Plan.	Tintaldra, Cudgewa and Towong plans development complete, implementation of works expected in the 25-29 Council Plan
Asset management	1.3	Complete Stage 2 Great River Road	DIE	2023/24	Complete	Design for the sculpture footings have been finalised, and the Project Manager is coordinating with the artist and contractor for the installation of the sculpture.	**Complete**
Asset management	1.4	Continue the upgrade of Georges Creek Road	DIE	2022	Complete	Complete	
Asset management	1.5	Complete upgrades of Hanson Street from Sugarloaf Road to Kiell Street	DIE	2023/24	High	Functional designs have been prepared. Road safety audit of the functional designs has been commissioned. Road safety audit to also include current state of Thomas Lane intersection. Community consultation will be undertaken in relation to sections of Hanson Street either side of the Parish Lane intersection.	A staged approach is to be implemented. Hanson Street Stage 1, between Keil and McKay St, design has been completed, concept Artist impressions are being prepared with Community Consultation due to commence in July 2025.
Asset management	1.6	Complete the upgrade of the Stock Route in Corryong	DIE	2023/24	Complete	Complete	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Asset management	1.7	Progressively deliver the upgrade of the unsealed sections of Lake Road	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Construction drawings are under development. Native vegetation and land acqusition surveys in progress.	Construction drawings and land surveys are complete, negotiation contact on 2 landowners completed with a receptive response to the porposals, Stage 1 due to commence in early 25-26 year
Asset management	1.8	Investigate upgrade options for Wises Creek Road	DIE	2023/24	Complete	In addition to the drainage works, a floodway concept design has been commissioned to enable costing to be obtained and works to be undertaken as a variation to the Wises Creek Road Stage 3 contract works.	**Complete**
Asset management	1.9	Advocate for the upgrade of the Benambra Corryong Road from Stacey's Bridge 40km South	SMT	2022 -2025	Low	Ongoing.	Recent discussions with DTP has raised the issue of maintenance and upgrade works.
Asset management	1.10	Seek funding to deliver upgrades of key transport routes and hazardous road alignments to improve efficiency and safety	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Parish Lane and Hanson Street Corryong: A functional design has been prepared and a Road Safety Audit of the functional design has been commissioned. A Road Safety audit of the current state of Thomas Lane intersection has also been commissioned. Once the Road Safety audits are complete, DoT will be consulted for approval to proceed with intersection works to improve accessand egress for trucks using the stock route	Works have been issued to the contractor for completion of the minor works at both intersections. Major works to be completed at Parish Lane and Hanson Street within the Hanson Street staged construction approach.
Asset management	1.11	Seek funding to deliver upgrades of load limited bridges on strategic transport routes	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Request for Tender for the Design and Construction of the Springdale Road bridge is currently open and tenders will be assessed on 1 November with a recommendation to Council anticipated on 27 November 2024	Springdale Road bridge construction 95% complete Lake Road Culverts complete
Asset management	1.12	Continue to deliver the upgrade of unsealed streets in urban areas program	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Resourcing constraints have hindered progress on the design work for sealing of these streets.	Sparrow Legge Street, Granya complete Design process underway for Evans Street, Corryong

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Asset management	1.13	Complete the upgrade of the Corryong CBD	DIE	2023/24	Low	Ongoing. The Corryong Memorial Hall Fire compliance issues are expected to be resolved in early November allowing the finalisation of the watermain works. We are also awaiting advice from Telstra's accredited contractor regarding timing of replacement of Telstra pits.	Corryong CBD works 95% complete minor works remaining.
Asset management	1.14.1	Complete streetscape upgrades in Dartmouth	DIE	2023/24	Complete	The playground was relocated in preparation for the installation of the splashpad, construction of the splashpad is expected to commence in the next month. The pumptrack construction is complete with safety signs to be installed on Tuesday.	Splashpad and Pumptrack completed
Asset management	1.14.2	Complete streetscape upgrades in Mitta Mitta	DIE	2023/24	Complete	Stage 1 **COMPLETE;** Stage 2 has progressed with the installation of footpaths from Little Snowy Creek bridge to Magorra Park.	
Asset management	1.15.1	Investigate and plan for upgrades at Tintaldra	DIE	2023/24	Complete	**Complete**	
Asset management	1.15.2	Investigate and plan for upgrades at Towong	DIE	2023/24	Complete	**COMPLETE:** Streetscape masterplan completed and adopted. The Stage 1 walking path and access ramp has been constructed. Barrier/bollards are outstanding (due to difficulties finding a suitable style of barrier). Footing design for sculpture has been prepared (sculptor has been consulted). Artwork installation is to be completed in November 2024.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Asset management	1.15.3	Investigate and plan for upgrades at Cudgewa	DIE	2023/24	Complete	**Investigation and plans are COMPLETE.** Construction of town entry signs us underway. Completion anticipated in November 2024.	
Asset management	1.16	Continue to deliver the strategic footpath network improvement program in urban areas	DIE	2022 -2025	Complete	Footpath extension in Mitta Mitta has progressed this quarter as part of Stage 2 streetscape upgrade. Investigation into replacement of the footpath along the Hanson Street side of the old Corryong Junior School site is underway, School Crossing point assessed and VicRoads implementing a count to check pedestrian and vehicle movements.	
Asset management	1.17	Address long vehicle and overflow parking issues in CBD areas	DIE	2022 -2025	Low		Donaldson St parking in completed, signage for long vehicle parking ordered for Donaldson Street and Wheeler St. Investigating rear of CBD parking options.
Asset management	1.18	Seek funding to deliver improved public toilets across the shire	DIE	2022 -2025	Complete	**Complete.**	
Asset management	1.19	Seek funding to deliver upgrades to town entrances and wayfinding signage across the shire	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	New locality signage, featuring the destination branding, has been installed at along the MV Highway for localities between Tallangatta and Corryong.	Further progress is dependant on funding.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Asset management	1.20	Seek funding to deliver an upgraded Corryong Integrated Community Centre	DIE	2024	High	Future start date.	
Asset management	1.21	Increase the recreation opportunities for young families in Dartmouth	DIE	2022/23	Ongoing	The playground was relocated in preparation for the installation of the splashpad, construction of the splashpad is expected to commence in the next month. The pumptrack construction is complete with safety signs to be installed on Tuesday.	Splashpad and Pumptrack completed
Asset management	1.22	Review and deliver the strategic parks and playgrounds upgrade program to completion	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Walwa Playground is currently being constructed offsite, to be transported to site for installation in late 2024.	Walwa Playground installation completed; improvements to parks and gardens at Walwa are also in progress.
Asset management	1.23	Undertake upgrades at the Colac Colac Caravan Park to ensure long term viability of the park	DIE	2022/23	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Asset management	1.24	Investigate options for additional boat ramps	DIE	2022 -2025	High	Future start date.	
Asset management	1.25	Deliver the Corryong aerodrome 24 hour fuel project	DIE	2021/22	Complete	**COMPLETE**	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Asset management	1.26	Deliver a rolling program for the maintenance of strategic limited access roads for improved emergency access	DIE	2022 -2025	Future	No further action in this quarter	
Asset management	1.27	Deliver annual asset inspection and renewal programs per asset management and road management plan requirements	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	The road stabilisation contract has been awarded, and works have been scheduled based on inspection and condition assessments; the roads with the worst condition assessment will be prioritised and Council will also reseal the roads following stabilisation works to gain maximum longevity and improvement in road condition.	Internal inspections on going with high completion rates. External 4-5year inspection has been completed and indicated as an overall improvement of the road net work over the last 20 years
Asset management	1.28	Implement the maintenance program for Council's buildings	DIE	2022 -2025	Low	Painting of Corryong Kinder and MCH buildings has been completed; other building maintenance activities have occurred as required. Essential services maintenance programs are under contract and delivered throughtout the quarter.	Corryong Cemetry gate house building currently out for quotations. Mitta toilet block currently out for quotations Walwa early learning is currently out for quotations

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
	Community wellbeing Assist all residents to attain a High level of health and safety, resilience and connectedness to their communities.						
Community wellbeing	2.1	Undertake place-based master planning for the Peninsula including the investigation of options for early years and community facilities	DCP	2023	Complete	**Complete.**	
Community wellbeing	2.2	Undertake place-based master planning for the Mitta Valley, Corryong and Tallangatta	DCP	2023	Complete	**Complete.**	
Community wellbeing	2.3	Maintain a contemporary Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan which reflects our community priorities	DCP	2021	Complete	**Complete.**	
Community wellbeing	2.4	Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Tallangatta Rowen Park tender contract has been awarded and works will commence in November 2024. Cudgewa Rec Reserve lighting project scoping works are being undertaken and tender will be issued before Christmas. Bullioh Netball facility tender has been revised and will be issued in early November 2024. Swimming Pool shells at Corryong and Tallangatta will be painted in November 2024. General maintenance and upgrades are proceeding in readiness for opening of the new season.	Rowen Park lighting project contiues with an expected completion of late May. The Cudgewa lighting project tender has been delayed due to final assessment and action by Ausnet. The Bullioh netball project has been delayed due to considerations in managing the funding shortfall. The swimming pool season has been completed successfully with increased participation across both pools. High Country Rail Trail 'investment ready activities' (CHMP, NVA and Bridge designs) are currently underway.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Community wellbeing	2.5	Review opportunities for communities to access library resources and connect through libraries	DCP	2023	Complete	Experienced new Casual officer has been engaged to provide greater coverage and certainty of staffing for our libraries. New Public Library Funding Agreement signed and executed. Program initiatives continue to be implemented.	
Community wellbeing	2.6	Develop a strategy for arts and cultural offerings across the Shire	DCP	2023	Future		Collaborated with Murray Arts through membership and networking. Connecting with local artists, and supporting creative offerings. Ongoing work
Community wellbeing	2.7	Expand and improve early years services across the Shire to support young families	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Early Years Workforce Plan has been completed and submitted to the state government. Review of key policies and procedures is being implemented.	The Walwa Early Years Service has successfully relocated to the Walwa Primary School, and facility upgrades are being planned. Discussions continue with the Department of Education to assess facility needs associated with demand and child care waiting lists.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Community wellbeing	2.8	Renew the Youth Plan to embed the 'youth voice' in all aspects of service delivery	DCP	2022 -2025	Low	New Strategy will be presented to the new Council in November or December 2024. Not achieved Culture and Inclusion officer now onboard. The new strategy can now be presented to Council at February or March meeting	The draft Youth Strategy was completed and presented to the April Council meeting. Community comments and feedback are being sought on the Strategy with the aim of having the plan endorsed by Council in June.
Community wellbeing	2.9	Advocate for the development of a variety of housing options to match community needs, particularly for older people	DCP	2022 -2025	Ongoing	The work in this area is ongoing as opportunities arise (eg. future rounds of the Key Worker Housing program, ensuring developers have a variety of housing options when planning new estates, etc).	Work in this space in ongoing.
Community wellbeing	2.10	Encourage the establishment of innovative, sustainable transport solutions for remote communities	DCP	2022 -2025	Future	During the period the CEO sought assistance/advice from the Department of Transport, Director Regional Operations - Planning, Loddon Mallee Hume, regarding possible transport solutions for abattoir staff walking between the abattoir and Tallangatta (MV Highway). Awating a response. Contact made and a meeting being scheduled and a funding program identified	Work in this space in ongoing including actions in the Draft Youth Strategy, and discussions in Council Plan 2025-29 consultation.
Community wellbeing	2.11	Support our communities to ensure that Shire places are welcoming to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and LGBTIQA+ communities and are inclusive and connected	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	A service plan review is being undertaken to establish a resource within Council to support this work. Culture and Inclusion Officer now commenced to support this work.	Inclusion report presented to council last year, work has commenced in establishing a reference work group for LGBTQIA+ as recommended in the report. IDAHOBIT event supported again this year.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Community wellbeing	2.12	Build relationships and develop understanding of aboriginal people and consider the commitment to an ongoing reconciliation action plan process	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Council is still waiting on a response from Reconciliation Australia. The position of First Nations Cultural Awareness and Reconciliation Officer was established and the position was filled with the officer commencing with Council in late November 2024.	A number of signs have been produced across the Shire that explore the region's First Nations heritage. The majority of staff completed cultural awareness training from March to May 2025. The 2nd draft of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAp) has been finalised and sent to Reconciliation Australia.
Community wellbeing	2.13	Participate in key networks to support communities and key stakeholders on solutions to address family violence, suicide and mental health	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Ongoing activity.	Ongoing activity with the matter included in new Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan considerations
Community wellbeing	2.14	Support our communities to drive their recovery from bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic and improve their mitigation of and resilience to future adverse events	DCP	2022 -2025	Low	Our primary focus is to ensure all remaining projects funded by Emergency Recovery Victoria or Federal Government are completed by June 30 2025, and all project reports and acquittals are completed.	Ongoing event and project support has been provided to community groups (e.g. Bethanga Festival of Small Halls, Sandy the Warhorse).

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
	Economic and tourism development Expand employment and economic opportunities whilst continuing to maintain and promote our natural environment and the lifestyle our municipality offers.						
Economic and tourism	3.1	Connect businesses to learning, development and networking opportunities to increase capacity	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Officers have engaged with numerous exsiting and or new businesses to provide support and give direction on opportunties - including funding opportunities, business planning and professional advancement workshops. Tourism North East has delivered a number of workshops that have been promoted to, and attended by residents.	Officers continue to engage with numerous existing and new businesses to provide support where needed and give direction on opportunities where needed.
Economic and tourism	3.2	Run a series of business expos to support local businesses	DCP	2021-2022	Complete	Officers have been negotiating with Small Business Victoria on the delivery of two business events for the region.	The Upper Murray Tourism and Business Expo hosted in February was well attended and received by the Upper Murray business community. The Small Business Bus has been oganised to attend Tallangatta during May. Tourism North East continue to host workshops that upskill small businesses.
Economic and tourism	3.3	Develop a business assistance service for new businesses including accommodation providers in the shared economy	DCP	2022	Complete	The Visitor Information Centre continue to support businesses promoted through the ATDW. The new destination website, which will feature all tourism businesses in the Shire, is nearing completion and due to launch Monday 21 October. The Planning and Economic Development staff continue to collaborate in supporting new business, and Tourism North East have assisted startups and run workshops.	The new destination website was launched early 2025. Council is supporting businesses create ATDW listings on the site; one-on-one assistance is being offered. Officers sucessfully sourced funding for the revitalisation of the Eskdale Visitor Information Centre. The Planning and Economic Development staff continue to collaborate in supporting new business, and Tourism North East have assisted startups and run workshops.
Economic and tourism	3.4	Support businesses to adapt to and recover from the impact of bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic	DCP	2022	Complete	This last quarter has seen a great deal of focus on delivering Run Upper Murray - an inaugral trail running event in the Upper Murray. Run Upper Murray will occur annually and drive visitation to the region. GRR signage now implemented	Officers continue to support the two running events initiated in 2024; Run Upper Murray (RUM) and Pub to Pelican (P2P). The events drive new visitation to the area. The Upper Murray Tourism and Business Expo was well attended and provided upskilling opportunities for small businesses. Council Officers continue to support the Upper Murray Tourism Innovation Working Group initiatives. Officers have engaged with stakeholder and developed an artist brief

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Economic and tourism	3.5	Support businesses to expand adventure tourism offerings across the shire	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	The Mount Elliot Masterplan was released for public exhibition. Now adopted Funding was sought for construction of the High Country Rail Trail from Cudgewa to Corryong, however unfortuantely the application was not successful. Significant works have gone in to preparing for Run Upper Murray, a new trail running event to be held in the Upper Murray.	Council has adopted the Mount Elliot Masterplan. Significant in-kind support has gone in to preparing for the 2025 Pub to Pelican. The event has sold out 3 weeks in advance and is set to attract 500 participants and support crew. With demand for entries still strong, there is signficant opportunity to futher support controlled growth of the event. Officers have procured contractors to deliver a Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Native Vegetation Assessment, bridge designs and an Arborists' assessment on the High Country Rail Trail. These documents will result in the project being investment ready, and eligible for infrastructure funding. Officers have advocated to the State Government (Great Outdoors Taskforce and local Regional Development Victoria Office) for the activation of the Mount Elliot Adventure Park, Pine Mountain Masterplanning, Shelley Wilderness Trail, HCRT and Mitta Mountain
Economic and tourism	3.6	Advocate for the development and broadening of the Pine Mountain experience	DCP	2022	Complete	Extensive signage, bespoke seating, a viewing machine, and an interactive animal artwork has been completed at the Pine Mountain site. Still to be completed on this site is the installation of an interpretive rock and corresponding sign, and landscaping. The great River Road marketing has commenced and will also feature the Pine Mountain experience. Now completed	The Pine Mountain Information Stop in now complete and features intepretive signage, large-scale artworks, a telescope, seating, a shelter and landscaping. Officers have prepared a one-pager document to support advocacy for progressing the project. Regional Development Victoria has been engaged about the project.
Economic and tourism	3.7	Advocate for the development of adventure tourism opportunities at Mount Elliot	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete		Officers have prepared a one-pager document to support advocacy for progressing the project. Regional Development Victoria and the Great Outdoors Taskforce have been engaged regarding the project.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Economic and tourism	3.8	Develop and implement a masterplan for cycling across the Shire	DCP	2022	Complete	**Complete.**	
Economic and tourism	3.9	Support Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley mountain bike park	DCP	2022/23	Future	Officers continue to assist Mitta Valley Inc., and the contractor awarded the construction contract, with delivery of the project. This quarter, DEECA provided a letter to support the application proceeding to the Planning Permit application stage. The contractor is currently preparing the Site Construction Environmental Management Plan.	More planning work has been concluded including presentations to Council by the proponent and objectors. It is expected that the planning report will be presented to Council for decision in July.
Economic and tourism	3.10	Seek funding to complete the High Country Rail Trail	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	An application to construct the Cudgewa to Corryong section of the HCRT was prepared for the State Government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund. Unfortunately the application was not succesful. A planning permit is required to produce stronger future funding applications. Officers are now exploring opportunities to have Cultural Heritage Managmeent Plans, Vegetation Assessments, and other works completed to successfully obtain a Planning Permit in	Planning works are underway to position the High Country Rail Trail as 'investment ready'; a Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Native Vegetation Assessment, bridge designs and an Arborist assessment are currently being conducted. This planning work will ensure Council meets the requirements
Economic and tourism	3.11.1	Establish new annual cycling events in the Mitta Valley	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	A review of the Gravel Unravel has determined it is not a sustainable event for the contractor, therefore the event will not be delivered in 2024. With the opening of the Mitta Valley Mountain bike Park expected in 2025, prelimary discussion have commenced on the format it may take.	
Economic and tourism	3.11.2	Establish new annual cycling events in the Upper Murray	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	The Upper Murray Gravel Event is proceeding. This quarter, the Race Director visited the region and engaged with numerous community stakeholders. Event preparations are underway to deliver the event in Autumn 2025.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Economic and tourism	3.12.1	Seek funding to develop key touring routes as premier touring destinations, including the Great River Road	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	The Great River Road Marketing Plan activities have commenced, this has predominantly been associated with website creation and developing marketing assets.	
Economic and tourism	3.12.2	Seek funding to develop key touring routes as premier touring destinations, including the Omeo Highway	DCP	2023 -2025	Future	No further action this quarter.	This matter is under consideration for the 2025-2029 Council Plan
Economic and tourism	3.12.3	Seek funding to develop key touring routes as premier touring destinations, including the Benambra Corryong Road	DCP	2022 -2025	Future	No further action this quarter.	This matter is under consideration for the 2025-2029 Council Plan
Economic and tourism	3.13	Seek funding to develop a master plan for Lake Hume as a tourism destination including houseboats and the Narrows project	DCP	2022	Complete	Complete.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Economic and tourism	3.14	Seek funding to develop and expand the tourism opportunities at Dartmouth Dam	DCP	2023 -2025	Low	No further action this quarter.	This matter is under consideration for the 2025-2029 Council Plan
Economic and tourism	3.15	Capitalise on Tallangatta's status as a Notable Town	DCP	2023	Low	Work on developing the Tallangatta Static Visitor Information Centre continues. The Centre will feature facts and stories associated with Tallangatta unique heritage and encouraging tourists to visit the Old Town. In addition, the VIC will feature information on the new town (and Lake Hume region), High Country Rail Trail, First Nations, and Sandy the Warhorse. The Centre will feature the new destination branding.	The Tallangatta Visitor Information Centre upgrades are near completion with final modifications required before the facility can reopen in late May
Economic and tourism	3.16	Secure control of the Tallangatta Caravan Park and seek funding to implement the adopted recommendations from Tallangatta Holiday Park Planning Study	DCP	2022 -2025	Future	No further action this quarter.	This matter is under consideration for the 2025-2029 Council Plan
Economic and tourism	3.17	Deliver improved visitor information and experience across the Shire	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	The Tallangatta VIC works continue and will be a significant asset to visitor services upon completion. Development of collateral with the new destination brand at the Corryong VIC continues. The Great River Road signage has been designed in preparation for fabrication.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Economic and tourism	3.18	Expand the reach of tourism marketing and promotional materials	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	New gateway signage, featuring the destination branding, has been installed at all townships between Tallangatta and Corryong. Officers have invested a great deal of work in developing the new destination website which features built and natural attraction within the Shire. The website is due to launch 21 October 2024	
Economic and tourism	3.19	Seek to support the growth of value-add product and/or diversification opportunities for the agriculture industry	DCP	2022 -2025	Medium	No further action this quarter.	Riverine Plains collaboration has delivered a range of activities and workshops.
Economic and tourism	3.20	Facilitate the creation of a centre of excellence for innovation in agriculture	DCP	2022 -2025	High	No further action this quarter.	No further action this quarter and will need to be considered in the development of the new Council Plan.
Economic and tourism	3.21	Seek funding to support efforts to attract and sustain new industries	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Officers supported numerous start-up businesses. Officers have been supporting the Local Development Strategy program to identify prospective new industries in partnership with government and UMI.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Economic and tourism	3.22	Explore opportunities to activate the Corryong Aerodrome	DCP	2022 -2025	Low	No further action this quarter.	No further action this quarter and will need to be considered in the development of the new Council Plan.
Economic and tourism	3.23	Work with Upper Murray Inc to deliver outcomes from the UM2030 Plan	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Officers have continued to work with UMI to deliver the destination website, Local Development Strategy, and GRR artwork, signage and marketing. Officers have, and will continue to support UMI at their 'Connected Upper Murray tourism ecosystem' workshops. Support to achieve UM2030 outcomes has been ongoing through the Council Term.	
Economic and tourism	3.24	Attract investment to address key weaknesses (connectivity and reliability) in critical infrastructure (mobile telecommunications, internet and power)	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Opportunities regularly assessed with stakeholders and projects identified where possible.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
	Land-use planning						
	Implement a strategic and sustainable long-term land-use direction for the Shire based on an integrated approach to the natural and built environment.						
Land-use planning	4.1	Support the rebuild process for fire impacted properties	DCP	2022 -2025	Low	The rebuild services continue to be provided with progress being made with many properties. Challenges with some properties relating to various permits continue to be assessed and actioned in accordance with regulatory requirements.	Ongoing work
Land-use planning	4.2	Establish a Developer Contributions Policy and a Minimum Social Infrastructure Requirements Policy	DCP	2022/23	Future	No further action in this quarter	No further action this quarter and will need to be considered in the development of the new Council Plan.
Land-use planning	4.3	Develop structure plans for Corryong, Tallangatta and Bellbridge and incorporate into the planning scheme	DCP	2022/23	High	Preparations for the Planning Scheme Amendment and submission to the state government are proceeding and are expected to be lodged before Christmas 2024.	Significant delays have occurred in this project due to CFA interventions requiring more assessment and investigative work.
Land-use planning	4.4	Review the Residential Settlement Strategy	DCP	2022-2024	Complete	There have been delays on progressing this task due to staff movements. More work is expected in early to mid 2025.	A Settlement Strategy will now be prepared as part of the Planning Scheme Amendment process which is scheduled for the second half of 2025 at the earliest.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Land-use planning	4.5	Support population growth outside of key townships through appropriate amendments to the planning scheme	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Preparations for the Planning Scheme Amendment and submission to the state government are proceeding and are expected to be lodged before Christmas 2024.	Time frames pushed out due to more work on Bushfire Assessment
Land-use planning	4.6	Review the Rural Land Use Study	DCP	2022/23	Complete		
Land-use planning	4.7	Review the Schedule to the Rural Activity Zone	DCP	2022/23	Complete		
Land-use planning	4.8	Advocate for changes to the farming zone to allow for a second residence to enable succession planning	DCP	2022/23	Complete	Part of Planning Scheme Amendment processes.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Land-use planning	4.9	Seek funding to extend the Heritage Study	DCP	2022/23	Future	No further progress this quarter. Heritage Study work will be part of a suite of strategic planning work and subject to funding support.	Time frames pushed out due to more work on Bushfire Assessment
Land-use planning	4.10.1	Update planning scheme overlays including: Bushfire Management	DCP	2022-2024	Complete	Complete	
Land-use planning	4.10.2	Update planning scheme overlays including: Heritage	DCP	2022-2024	Future	Discussions being held with the Department of Transport and Planning on Landslide and Erosion Overlay project.	Significant work done of the Landslide and Erosion Overlay. Incorporated documents completed.
Land-use planning	4.11	Review statutory service processes to ensure an excellent customer experience	DCP	2022 -2025	Complete	Council's planning unit has maintained a consistent level of performance within the target applicable to the service.	Council's planning unit has maintained a consistent level of performance within the target applicable to the service.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
	Environmental sustainability Integrate sustainable environmental management practices into all of our activities.						
Environmental sustain	5.1	Continue to investigate options for domestic waste water management in High risk towns including Eskdale, Mitta Mitta and Bethanga	DIE	2023-2025	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.2	Consider the options available for reticulated potable water in Bethanga and Mitta Mitta	DIE	2022-2025	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.3	Continue to seek funding for integrated water management projects to maximise the use of recycled and raw water sources for public amenity and climate change mitigation	DIE	2022-2025	Low	Scope variation for Corryong Reclaimed Water project denied. Funding to be returned to DEECA.	
Environmental sustain	5.4	Explore options for the establishment of a recycling industry	DIE	2022-2024	Low	No further action this quarter.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Environmental sustai	5.5	Improve the use of recycled materials in infrastructure projects e.g. crushed concrete, glass and rubber	DIE	2022-2025	Low	This is ongoing throughout delivery of our capital works program. Our reseal program has incorporate the use of crumb rubber (recycled tires); Ecodeck timbers and recycled bollards used in street furniture. Crushed concrete has been used in multiple projects. With introduction of FOGO service and Council's partnership with Cleanaway we are supporting them as they actively seek commercial opportunities to market these materials and their end products derviced from biosolids, effluent, and liquid organic by-products. Annually, they process over 75,000 tonnes of organic solids and more than 90,000 tonnes of organic liquids, primarily for land application on behalf of government water authorities and major national food manufacturers. Their solutions include: •Composting: Wet organic material is transformed into nutrient-rich compost to enhance soil fertility, with the resulting water being reused within the plant. •Liquid Fertilizers: Nutrient-rich liquid fertilizers are directly injected into agricultural land. •Renewable Energy: Biogas is extracted to generate renewable energy.	No further action this quarter
Environmental sustai	5.6	Investigate and implement options for the management of roadside vegetation for fire mitigation	DIE	2023-2025	Low	A final report on findings of bushfire mitigation problemshas been developed and to be presented to Council in Q2 of the 2024/25 year.	
Environmental sustai	5.7	Advocate for the establishment of roadside clearances on arterial roads for emergencies	DIE	2022-2025	Low	Awaiting feedback from DoT.	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Environmental sustain	5.8	Continue to implement noxious weed control and monitoring along roadsides within available funding	DIE	2022-2025	Complete	**Program for 2024 COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.9	Continue to implement the tree planting strategy to achieve 40% canopy coverage in urban streets by 2025	DIE	2022-2025	Low	Planting plan for Corryong CBD complete and tree planting is progressing.	Moving toward target aerial canopy survey will be required to achieve results.
Environmental sustain	5.10	Explore the diversification of options for the establishment of native vegetation offset sites	DIE	2024	Medium	No further progress, budget proposal submitted for 24/25 budget.	
Environmental sustain	5.11	Seek funding to establish a network of electric car charging stations	DIE	2022-2025	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.12	Develop a climate change action plan (including actions to reduce carbon emissions, electric vehicle charging, etc)	DIE	2023	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.13	Transition waste and recycling services operations as per Victorian Government Circular Economy Strategy to deliver a four bin system for waste and recycling collection including separation of glass, green waste and organics	DIE	2023-2025	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.14	Invest in community education programs and a waste services survey to improve waste and recycling separation	DIE	2022-2025	Complete	**COMPLETE**	

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Environmental sustain	5.15	Investigate options for hard waste, green waste and agricultural waste management e.g. silage wrap	DIE	2022-2025	Complete	**COMPLETE**	
Environmental sustain	5.16	Replace the retaining wall at the Tallangatta Transfer Station	DIE	2023/24	Low	No further advancement proposed this quarter.	Design prepared installation and implementation by October 2025
Environmental sustain	5.17	Investigate options for the future of the Corryong Landfill	DIE	2022/23	Low	Tender evaluation underway with appointment of suitable contractor. Tenders received indicate that the cost to provide a landfill cell cap have more than doubled in five years.	Construction underway with 75% complete, recent wet weather currently delaying progress.
Environmental sustain	5.18	Implement required measures to ensure management of closed landfills is compliant with EPA requirements	DIE	2022-2025	Low	Care and maintenance is ongoing with regular bore monitoring undertaken.	Care and maintenance is ongoing with regular bore monitoring undertaken.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
	Organisational improvement Embed organisational excellence into our governance and management processes in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents and ratepayers.						
Organisational improv	6.1	Continue to improve awareness, engagement and involvement of the community in relation to matters that affect them	SMT	2022-2025	Low	Election activities have been facilitated during this quarter in the lead-up to the October election; promoting all relevant information for residents in regards to voting, and candidates to stand and engage in the election process is a critical engagement opportunity for community members.	Preparation for the Council Plan consultation sessions began in the first quarter of 2025, with community engagement sessions held through April, May & June. There have been valuable contributions made by the community throught these sessions and through the Survey. This engagement process wil culminate in the draft Council Plan being presented to Council for approval for public exhibition.
Organisational improv	6.2	Continually improve customer service experience across the organisation	SMT	2022-2025	Low	Greenlight software went 'live' during the quarter, with the next step in the process improvement phase to make the online application process available to all residents. Due to staffing constraints, we made the decision to temporarily relocate our customer service desk in Tallangatta to be at the library, and the community has responded in a very positive manner. Council will investigate the benefits and challenges of this being an ongoing arrangement in response to the positive	The Tallangatta Customer service desk has been reopened with increased staffing to enable this to happen. Work has commenced to provide resources in the planning team to increase our customer service in all planning and building services, with a 'concierge' function being introduced. Recruitment for this role has commenced.
Organisational improv	6.3	Continually improve processes to support improved service delivery	SMT	2022-2025	Low	The IT & Records management project continued; development of the policy management policy and the creation of a template for doumenting standard operating procedures has yielded efficiencies in the ongoing creation of SOP documents. This improves our efficiency and resilience in our ability to deliver our key	Business cases haave been prepared for the introduction of a safety and incident management software and a human resources information system. Work has commenced on creating safe operating procedures to improve efficiency in delivering training for plant operaters in our depot teams.
Organisational improv	6.4	Deliver improved business technology - finance, rates, human resources	DCOD	2022-2025	Low	Greenlight software implementation progressed further this quarter as has the records management project to update our processes and systems. Further investigation into suitable software to manage our Long Term Financial Planning (LTFP) has continued; a suitable affordable option has been identified with work to commence in Oct-Dec quarter to implement this, prepare and present to Councillors.	As above.
Organisational improv	6.5	Update the technology strategy to support the ongoing delivery excellent customer service	DCOD	2022/23	Low	The IT & Records management project continued, with the transition from our old servers and document storage location to Sharepoint ready to commence. This will be a staged process over a period of time; with all teams transitioned within the next six months.	This has made significant progress with the delivery of an IT hardwaree strategy. This provides direction to manage the transition to cloud-based IT infrastructure from our existing on-premise server.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Organisational improv	6.6	Develop and implement a People Plan to support the ongoing development of a High performing, adaptable, resilient, engaged and cohesive organisation	DCOD	2022-2025	Low	No further action this quarter.	The People Plan has been re-drafted following feedback and is due to be presented to the CEO for review in June 2025, followed by distribution to, and consultation with staff.
Organisational improv	6.7	Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all Councillors and staff in a continually evolving environment	DCOD	2022-2025	Low	Further site audits were completed during the quarter, with critical risks being the highest priority issues to act upon. Development of a template for a Safe Operating Procedure was completed, ready for implementation and use to coincide with the delivery of the new excavator in October. This entails a practical assessment and a knowledge assessment, and will provide staff with appropriate training to utilise the equipment safely and responsibly; ensure Council is meeting its responsibilities under the OHS 2004 Act; and reduce the cost of the training having to be provided externally. Having these	As previously referenced, progress is being made in regards to safety software and safe operating procedures. Hazards identified during site audits continue to be closed out, with significant progress amde on the saleyards
Organisational improv	6.8	Continue to seek opportunities to improve service delivery and achieve best value including further investigation of shared services	SMT	2022-2025	Low	No further action this quarter.	A review of the rates shared service agreement has been undertaken, with productive outcomes for both Councils.

Objective	Ref	Priority	RO	When	Status	Progress - Previous Period	Progress - Current Period
Organisational improv	6.9	Continue to advocate for increased government funding support to ensure long term sustainability	CEO	2022-2025	Low	No further action this quarter.	
Organisational improv	6.10	Investigate alternative revenue streams	SMT	2022-2025	Low	No further action this quarter.	No further action this quarter.
Organisational improv	6.11	Review the Revenue and Rating strategy	DCOD	2022-2025	Completed	We continue to look for opportunities to increase income, in particular through the leasing of Council assets, and cost recovery for use of Council assets.	
Organisational improv	6.12	Consider options for the realisation of surplus Council assets	SMT	2022-2025	Low	As vehicle and plant assets are upgraded and replaced, Council seeks to gain a return on the surplus vehicles and machinery through sale via auction sites.	Ongoing. Prefer to tighten up re how we measure
Organisational improv	6.13	Continually improve the risk management and governance frameworks and practices	DCOD	2022-2025	Low	We commenced the development of the risk management framework during the quarter - this document will provide a framework to guide us in identifying risks, prioritise them appropriately, eliminate risks or where this is not possible, implement control measures, and then review and manage these risks on an ongoing basis	No further action this quarter
Organisational improv	6.14	Provide ongoing support and development of Councillors in fulfilling their roles	CEO	2022-2025	Low	Preparation is underway for the induction of Councillors in the new Council term, designed to ensure we meet our legislative obligations, as well as provide our Councillors with the relevant information and knowledge required to carry out their roles.	The induction program for Councillors has been completed. FInancial sustainability presentation scheduled to be delivered in June 2025.

Plan Performance and Results

Council has conducted various initiatives in accordance with the DAMP and have numerous achievements to note over the 2024-25 financial year. These outcomes have been recorded against each of the programs and services categories as noted in the Plan:

Officer Training -

Council Rangers have continued to receive training to further their professional development and ability to provide high-quality services for the community. Training has included:

- Dog Behaviour Management Training
- Dog Bite Safety Training
- Canine Anatomy and Identification

Training will continue to be considered as it is made available. The team is specifically seeking opportunities to be upskilled in matters such as evidence handling and prosecution, working in remote areas and off-road driving, and application and interpretation of legislation.

Registration and Identification -

Dog and cat registration assists in the return of lost animals to their owner and helps to avoid the need for the animal to be impounded. Registration of both dogs and cats is a requirement of the Act and a portion of each registration fee is paid to the Victorian State Government to fund the activities of Animal Welfare Victoria. Fees also help to fund Council's animal control services.

The table below presents the number of dogs and cats renewed for registration for each registration period. It is important to note that even though it appears registered dogs and cats have decreased, this is due to the following factors:

- Failure to Renew Infringement volumes doubling in the current registration period; and
- Delisting of animals no longer in the shire tripled in volume over the 2024 year (approx 100 delisting's in the 2023 period compared to approx 350 delisting's in the 2024 period), which has decreased the registered pet volumes for the 2025 year. This was due to Local Laws officers increasing community involvement over the period to remove pets from our database no longer located within our shire.

With the above factors considered, the registration numbers for the 11 April 2025 period are a more accurate reflection of domestic animals in the shire and have likely increased.

Period Commencing	**Dogs Registered**	**Cats Registered**
11 April 2024	1047 (approx. 800 post-delisting's)	187 (approx. 120 post-delisting's)
11 April 2025	921	172

*excludes new registration, only renewals

Local Laws Officers are also focusing on ensuring compliance within the community is being upheld, with infringement activities indicating an increase of infringements for resident failing to renew registration of their pets in the current registration period. Extensive engagement and awareness activities are conducted by Council to ensure community members have sufficient time to either renew their pet's registration or inform Council that their pet requires delisting from our database. All community members can engage Council Ranger services, meaning that infringements are an essential deterrent for residents expecting Ranger services without paying their registration.

Period Commencing	**Fail to Renew Registration Infringements issued**
11 April 2024	51
11 April 2025	109

Animal Nuisance Complaints -

All nuisance animal complaints are investigated in a timely manner to minimise the potential for further disruption to the community. Local Laws officers aim to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of both parties through early engagement and education, as well as enforcement measures if necessary. Many animal nuisance complaints relate to barking dogs or stray cats.

Nuisance animal complaints have remained similar in volume between the current and previous financial years. A more intensive approach towards education has been taken by Council upon receiving an initial nuisance complaint, as these instances can usually be resolved through increased awareness and understanding on what the complainant is experiencing and how to most easily address it.

Period	**Reported barking dog complaints**	**Reported stay cat complaints**
2023/24 FY	41	8
2024/25 FY	30	8

Dog Attacks -

Dog attacks can have devastating impacts on our communities and are attended to with the highest priority by our officers. Local Laws officers continue to work diligently to educate the community on identifying potentially dangerous dog behaviour within their own communities. Early reporting to Council enables the opportunity to proactively work with dog owners in addressing behaviour and preventing attacks from occurring on both people and other animals. Once a dog has been involved in a serious attack, it is declared as dangerous and is not permitted to reside in our Shire.

Dog attack reports have decreased by over 50% in the current financial year, which is a great result from the work Local Laws officers have been conducting over the year. Although less dog attacks is a great tangible outcome, we continue to encourage community members to report any potentially dangerous behaviour they may observe or experience.

Period	Reported Dog Attacks
2023/24 FY	15
2024/25 FY	7

Council has also been more proactive in declaring potentially dangerous dog behaviour and utilising menacing dog provisions as enabled under legislation. By Local Laws officers declaring a dog as 'menacing' who may be showing potentially dangerous behaviour (such as rushing at people, aggressive observations, etc) specific restrictions must be followed by the owner to mitigate the opportunity for a dog attack.

Within the current financial year, Local Laws officers have declared 2 (two) dogs as menacing, which was prompted through community members reporting concerning behaviours. This is an effective early opportunity to mitigate the risk of dog attacks and community members are encouraged to continue reporting potentially dangerous dog behaviours.

Period	Menacing Dogs Declared
2024/25 FY	2

Over-population and Euthanasia -

Council has an agreement with the Albury Animal Management Facility to re-house suitable dogs and cats that have been impounded, and also promotes Wodonga Dog Rescue for community members to adopt dogs that need new homes.

As seen in the below table, impoundments for both dogs and cats have decreased over financial year periods by approx. 50% respectively. This outcome indicates that Local Laws officers are receiving less reports of animals at large and receiving less animal surrenders from pet owners. Local Laws officers have been increasing their community engagement around responsible pet ownership responsibilities, with the decrease in animal impoundments being a direct result in owners effectively containing and caring for their pets.

Period Commencing	Dogs impounded	Cats impounded
2023/24FY	22	9
2024/25FY	10	5

As all impounded animals are held primarily with the Albury Animal Management Facility, we are unable to source exact statistics of rehoming and euthanasia rates. Council is aware that many impounded animals are rehomed to caring environments and Council appreciates the great outcomes achieved by the Albury Animal Management Facility.

In August 2024, Council was successful in securing grant funding from Animal Welfare Victoria to deliver the Cat Management Program. This program was designed by Council to assist our community to received subsidised services to promote early desexing and registration of cats. Early desexing

activities assist in control the over-population of cats in the shire, which subsequently mitigate the risks presented to our native flora and fauna, as well as decrease Ranger activity in responding the wondering and feral cat referrals.

The Cat Management Program as at May 2025 has achieved the following results:

Location	**Cats registered and desexed**
Tallangatta	17
Corryong	11
Walwa	4
Total	32
Approx. Spots remaining	8

This program has financially assisted multiple residents in our Shire in becoming responsible pet owners who may not have otherwise been able to register or desex their new and existing cats, which often results in overpopulation of unwanted cats and increased Ranger intervention in impounding and euthanasia. The grant funding has also facilitated the purchase of two (2) new cat cages for residents to hire in controlling wandering and feral cat activity in their communities.

Domestic Animal Businesses -

Domestic Animal Businesses include facilities or operations that require specific inspection to ensure the welfare of animals are meeting specific compliance requirements. These types of businesses include:

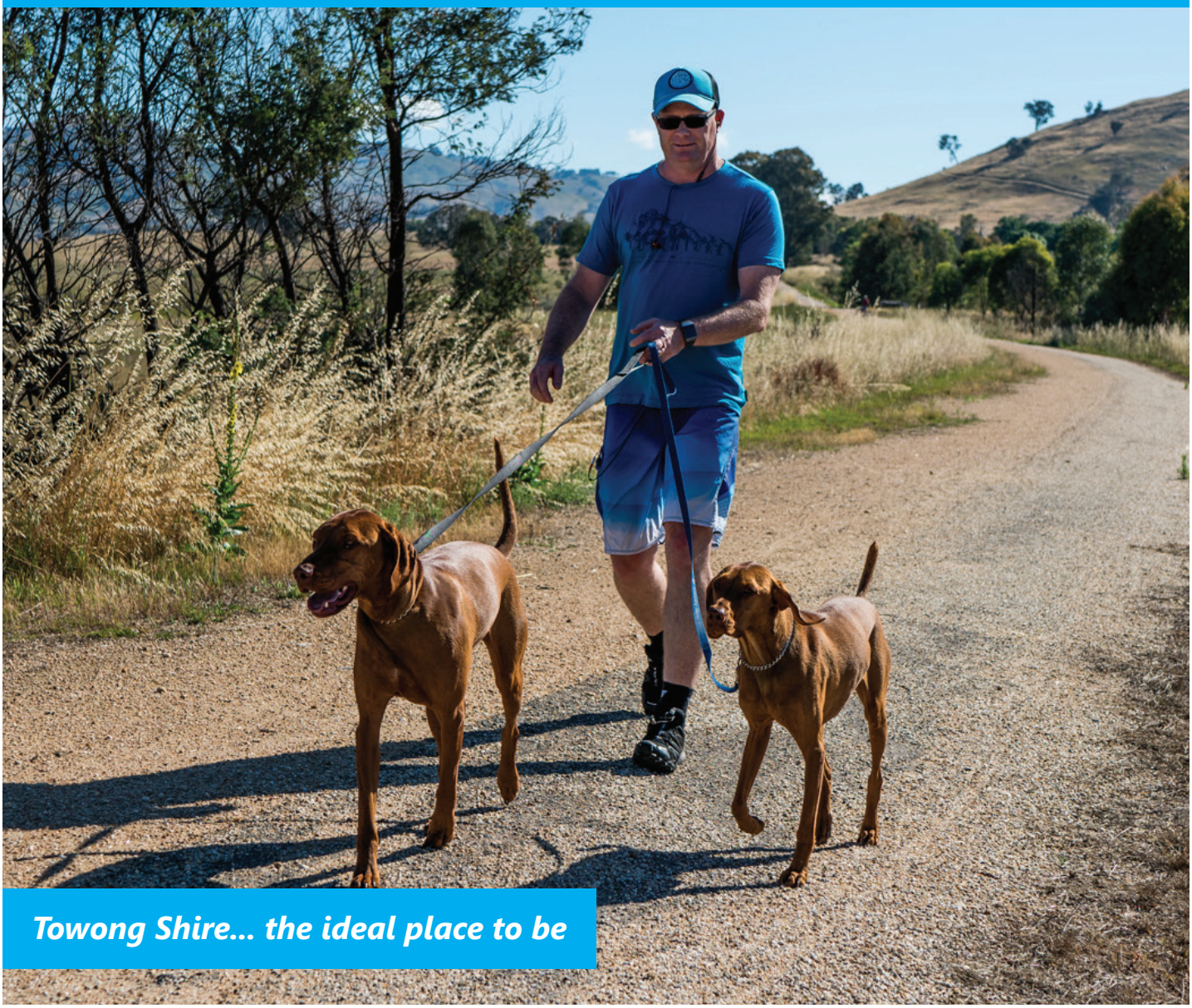
- Boarding establishments
- Breeding businesses
- Dog training establishments
- Pet shops
- Shelters and pounds

There are currently no Domestic Animal Businesses within Towong Shire. In the instance of such a business being present, they will be registered and inspected annually in relation to their compliance with relevant legislation and codes of practise.

TOWONG SHIRE COUNCIL

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

2021 - 2025



Towong Shire... the ideal place to be

towongshire

Front cover image: High Country Rail Trail, Towong Shire.

From Wodonga to Tallangatta and onto Shelley in Towong Shire, the High Country Rail Trail meanders along the foreshore of Lake Hume, through pine plantations and State forests, past old timber trestle bridges and Shelley Station, one of the highest railway stations in the country.

The original railway line was built in 1887 and was used to transport material for the Snowy Mountain Scheme. The last train headed out along the track in 1978.

No two days, or two seasons are the same. The diverse birdlife of the Kiewa River woodlands contrasts with the crystal clear reflections from Lake Hume.

There are regular parking and rest areas along the trail so you can explore sections at your leisure. The architecturally designed, stunning Sandy Creek makes for a spectacular traverse across the Sandy Creek inlet to Lake Hume.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Within Victoria, councils are responsible for domestic animal management. Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the *Act*) requires all councils to prepare a domestic animal management plan every four years and to report on the plan's implementation in their annual report.

Council acknowledges the role it plays in promoting responsible pet ownership and enforcing legislation, and is committed to balancing the needs of pet owners and the benefits of pet ownership with safety and amenity considerations for the municipal community. The purpose of this *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025* (the "*Plan*") is to outline the programs, services and strategies in place to manage companion animals across Shire, namely dogs and cats. The *Plan* specifically addresses the following areas, as required by the *Act*:

- Training of authorised animal management officers;
- Promotion of responsible pet ownership, registration and identification;
- Minimisation of the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance;
- Minimisation of the risk of dog attacks on people and animals;
- Identification of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
- Mitigation of over population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
- Review of Council orders and local laws that relate to dogs and cats; and
- Evaluation of animal control services in giving effect to the requirements of the *Act*.

1.2 Development of this Plan

The development of the *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025* has been based on a review of the Council's *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021*, the current overarching strategy of the Council, contemporary animal management issues and controls, and community feedback regarding Council's animal management practices. The draft *Plan* is being released for public inspection and submissions prior to any appropriate amendments and adoption.

1.3 Alignment to Council Strategy

The *Plan* is guided by overarching Council strategy including the following:

<u>Community Vision</u>

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

<u>Council Mission</u>

To provide strong leadership and to work with our communities to enhance their social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

<u>Council Plan Objective: Community Wellbeing</u>

Encourage and support all people in our Shire to be healthy, happy, connected and resilient.

Council Plan Objective: Environmental Sustainability

Integrate sustainable environmental management practices into all of our activities.

1.4 Guiding Principles

The *Plan* is guided by the following principles:

- The belief that pets contribute to quality of life;
- A requirement to balance the needs of those who own pets and those who do not;
- Valuing responsible pet ownership;
- Proactive animal management and education within the community;
- Protection of the environment from any negative impacts of dogs and cats;
- Working in partnership with others to achieve positive outcomes for the community;
- Local Government plays a leadership role in animal management.

2. Domestic Animals and Towong Shire

2.1 About Towong Shire

Towong Shire, in far North East Victoria, enjoys some of Australia's most pristine environments. Our unique wilderness areas, lakes, rivers and streams create diverse landscapes that are enjoyed by around 6,046 residents (2016 census) and many more visitors across an area of 6,635 square kilometres.

Our municipality includes many diverse townships and localities including Bellbridge, Bullioh, Berringama, Bethanga, Biggara, Burrowye Corryong, Cudgewa, Dartmouth, Eskdale, Granya, Guys Forest, Koetong, Lucyvale, Mitta Mitta, Mt Alfred, Nariel, Old Tallangatta, Shelley, Talgarno, Tallandoon, Tallangatta, Tallangatta Valley, Thologolong, Tintaldra, Towong and Walwa.

The economy of the region revolves around a rich agricultural sector, tourism and timber production and processing. Approximately two-thirds of businesses located in the Shire are in the agriculture and forestry industries.

1.6 Pets in the community

Pets make a valuable contribution to the vibrancy and liveability of the Shire. Domestic pets may be a valued companion and family member and are often also an integral part of a wider community. Research demonstrates that pets contribute to building a strong sense of community and developing active social capital. Pet ownership is positively associated with social interactions, community involvement and increased feelings of neighbourhood friendliness and sense of community.

These benefits, when aggregated across the whole community, are of significant interest to Council and others concerned with building healthier, happier neighbourhoods. In addition, these benefits create a ripple effect that extends beyond pet owners into the broader community, with pets helping to smooth the way for social interaction and general 'out and aboutness'.

Both anecdote and research suggest that pets are well recognised icebreakers. Dogs, for example, can stimulate conversation and contact between strangers and trigger positive social interaction. Studies undertaken by the School of Population Health at the University of Western Australia showed that half of all dog owners surveyed indicated that they had come to know locals in their suburb as a result of their dog.

Residents chatting to each other as a result of a pet is not just a social nicety. Such community-based interactions between people have the very real potential to break down the barriers and stereotypes that separate us from 'others' while playing an important role in building trust and a deep sense of community at the neighbourhood level.

Pets provide increased opportunities for families to be more active; companionship to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely; and assist people with a disability or illness to maintain independence and participate more fully in community life.

1.7 Domestic animal statistics

The following table provides an overview of domestic animals and associated statistics.

Statistic	Date(s)	Number
Registered dogs	Oct 21	994
Registered cats	Oct 21	183
Dangerous, menacing or restricted dogs	Oct 21	0
Registered domestic animal businesses	Oct 21	0
Total domestic animal management requests	Mar 21-Aug 21	82
Barking dog complaints	Mar 21-Aug 21	24
Wandering dog reports	Mar 21-Aug 21	21
Dog attack reports	Mar 21-Aug 21	11
General animal complaints	Mar 21-Aug 21	10
Unregistered animal reports	Mar 21-Aug 21	7
Lost dog reports	Mar 21-Aug 21	7
Lost cat reports	Mar 21-Aug 21	1
Surrendered domestic animals	Mar 21-Aug 21	1

3. Programs and Services

3.1 Overview

Council employs two part-time Ranger and Local Laws Officers totalling 1 FTE, and administers and provides a broad range of services to ensure that Council meets its legislative responsibilities relating to the management of domestic animals. These include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a domestic animal register;
- Undertaking registration door knocks;
- Educating residents and promoting responsible pet ownership;
- Providing advice on domestic animal matters;
- Dealing with and investigating animal complaints;
- Impounding of wandering, unwanted/surrendered and/or feral dogs and cats;

- Investigating dog attacks;
- Administering control of Dangerous and Restricted Breed dogs;
- Inspecting and registering domestic animal businesses; and
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with veterinarians.

An after hours emergency service is also available through the services of a third party contractor.

3.2 Officer training

Council is committed to providing appropriate learning pathways for its Ranger and Local Laws Officers through a combination of formal education, on-the-job experience, and exposure to peers at neighbouring councils. The objective is to support the officers to have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work. Professional development needs and opportunities are reviewed quarterly as part of the staff workplan process.

Key knowledge and skill requirements include:

- Customer service;
- Animal complaint investigation;
- Animal handling;
- Identification of dangerous dogs;
- Community education;
- Application of domestic animal legislation;
- Dealing with aggressive customers;
- Working in remote areas.

3.3 Registration and identification

Dog and cat registration assists in the return of lost animals to their owner and helps to avoid the need for the animal to be impounded. Registration of both dogs and cats is a requirement of the *Act* and a portion of each registration fee is paid to the Victorian State Government to fund the activities of Animal Welfare Victoria. Fees also help to fund Council's animal control services.

Registration forms are available from Council offices and on Council's website. Council mails out registration renewal notices prior to 10 April each year and reminders are provided in newspapers and on Council's Facebook page. Targeted door knocks are conducted to remind community members of their animal registration requirements. Registrations are tracked through a computerised database.

Renewal notices which are not paid by the due date are followed up with a reminder and infringement notices may be issued for failure to register where appropriate. Reports of unregistered animals are investigated in a timely manner.

Registration mailouts are often used as an opportunity to include educational pamphlets regarding responsible pet ownership.

3.4 Animal nuisance complaints

All animal complaints are investigated in a timely manner to minimise the potential for escalation. Every effort is made to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of both parties. Many animal nuisance complaints relate to barking dogs or stray cats.

Barking dogs

Barking dog complaints can cause considerable frustration and distress for both parties. Officers are committed to balancing the interests and rights of both the dog owner and the complainant.

Dog owners can become desensitised to the sound of their own dog barking and may be unaware it is a nuisance to neighbours. An effective resolution is often achieved by alerting the dog owner to the fact their dogs barking is becoming a nuisance. Neighbours who are unable, or find it difficult, to speak to their neighbours regarding this matter should contact Council for assistance.

The officer will first work with the dog owner to support them in identifying the cause of the barking and discuss possible solutions. The majority of cases involve dogs that are bored or responding to visual stimulation. Both causes are often easily resolved with training, toys, blocking a view or exercising the dog more frequently.

Complainants may be asked to keep noise logs (records of dates, times and duration of barking) should the matter continue and further intervention be required. Noise logs form part of the Barking Dog Complaint Form and are available from Council offices.

Stray cats

Council offers residents cat cages to assist in safely containing offending animals trespassing on their property or wandering during the curfew period. Officers will then attend during normal business hours and impound any contained cats. These cages are available on payment of a fully refundable deposit.

Compliance and education activities

All nuisance complaints are recorded and animals found at large are impounded or returned to their owners, and infringements may be issued. Officers may attend properties unannounced to conduct on-the-spot inspections where there have been ongoing or serious complaints.

Educational pamphlets are provided at Council offices and libraries and on Council's website. Periodic education is also provided via other channels such as social media and newspaper as relevant to contemporary animal nuisance issues.

3.5 Dog attacks

All reported dog attacks are attended to with the highest priority and an officer is dispatched as soon as possible to investigate and action as appropriate. An after-hours emergency service is available where needed. Dogs are easier to capture if they can be contained at the site until the officer arrives.

Compliance and education activities

All dog attack complaints are thoroughly investigated with findings and evidence accurately recorded and maintained. Dogs involved in serious attacks will be seized where possible. Council

does not allow dangerous dogs to remain within the boundaries of Towong Shire and officers are proactive in declaring dogs as dangerous or menacing. Unclaimed dogs at the pound are temperament tested to determine whether they are suitable for re-housing.

Educational pamphlets are provided at Council offices and libraries and on Council's website, promoting correct pet selection and the benefits of dog training, socialisation and frequent exercise. Periodic education is also provided via other channels such as social media and newspaper as relevant to contemporary dog attack issues.

Officers promote the need for dogs to be effectively controlled at all times, including the need to ensure that dogs are effectively contained or fenced on their own property to ensure that they cannot escape.

Registration discounts are provided for desexed dogs, and desexing is promoted to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering at large.

3.6 Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

All complaints regarding dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are attended to with priority. Officers use the gazetted standard for restricted breed dogs to identify restricted breeds. Dangerous and restricted breed dogs are not permitted to remain within the boundaries of Towong Shire.

Reports of suspected undeclared restricted breed dogs are rare within the Shire.

Compliance and education activities

Any declared dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are registered with the Victorian Declared Dog registry. Officers may attend properties unannounced to conduct on-the-spot inspections where there are relevant complaints and suspected restricted breed dogs may be seized. All dog attack cases are reviewed to determine if it is appropriate to declare the dog dangerous or menacing.

Periodic education may be released through social media and / or local newspapers as relevant, and educational pamphlets are available at Council offices and libraries.

3.7 Over-population and euthanasia

Council has an agreement with the Albury Animal Management Facility to re-house suitable dogs and cats that have been impounded, and also promotes Wodonga Dog Rescue for community members to adopt dogs that need new homes.

Compliance and education activities

Complaints of excessive animals are investigated and officers work with owners to reduce animals to permitted numbers. Unauthorised 'backyard breeders' may be investigated to determine whether they should be registered as domestic animal businesses. Cat trapping programs may be facilitated where appropriate and cat cages are generally provided to residents for containing trespassing cats as required.

Responsible pet ownership is promoted through Council offices, libraries and social media. A registration discount is available for desexed animals.

3.8 Domestic animal businesses

There are currently no Domestic Animal Businesses within Towong Shire. In the instance of such a business being present, they will be registered and inspected annually in relation to their compliance with relevant legislation and codes of practise.

Compliance and education activities

Periodic online searches may be conducted to ascertain whether there are any unregistered domestic animal businesses within the municipality. In the case that any are identified they will be required to register and on-the-spot inspections may be conducted to determine compliance with relevant legislation and codes of practise. Registration may be suspended or cancelled in the case of serious non-compliance.

A Domestic Animal Business kit may be offered to community members who wish to set up such a business.

3.9 Service Levels

The following service levels are provided in relation to animal management services:

Program or Service	Service Level
Door knock campaigns	Annually
Domestic animal complaint	Response according to urgency within 2 days. Dangerous dog and attack complaints are attended to as soon as possible and may be directed to the after hours emergency response service where relevant.
Routine street patrols	Daily
After hours emergency response	24 hours a day, 365 days a year
Domestic animal businesses	Annual inspection and registration

Services and service levels are continually adapted to contemporary animal management issues and community feedback. Customer service surveys may be issued to pet owners and / or the general public to help to inform and priorities the focus of officer work.

4. Council Orders and Local Laws

Council has the following orders in place to assist in the effective management of dogs, cats and livestock:

- Compulsory micro chipping of all new dogs and cats registered.
- Cat curfew 9pm to 6am, seven days a week.
- Dogs declared dangerous must not reside within Towong Shire's boundaries.

The *Amenity Local Law 2021* was adopted in August 2021 and was based on a comprehensive review of the prior *Local Law No. 2 Community Amenity and Municipal Places.* Part 4 deals with animals, and relevant clauses include:

Clause 43 – Keeping animals

This clause addresses potential overpopulation and animal related nuisances by limiting the number of animals which may be kept on a property without a permit, depending on the size of the property.

Clause 44 – Animal housing

This clause promotes responsible pet ownership by requiring that animal housing is clean, inoffensive and sanitary, and is maintained so as not to cause any nuisance.

Clause 45 – Noise and smell

This clause addresses potential animal related nuisances by requiring any person in charge of an animal not to allow any noise or smell to emanate from the land on which the animal is kept which unreasonably interferes with the comfort or convenience of another person.

Clause 46 – Removal of animal excrement

This clause addresses potential animal related nuisances by requiring pet owners not to allow their animal's excrement to remain on land outside where it is normally kept, and to ensure that it is appropriately disposed of.

Clause 47 – Wandering animals

This clause addresses potential animal related nuisances by requiring animal owners not to allow their animal(s) to wander from the land where it is normally kept, and to ensure that the land is properly fenced to prevent the animal from escaping.

5. Four Year Action Plan

The following plan sets out the actions that will be undertaken to continually improve the effectiveness of animal management outcomes across the Shire.

No.	Area	**Action**	Measure	Outcome	Frequency
1	Officer training	Review professional development against required skills and knowledge as part of regular work planning and in consultation with officers	Work plans completed	Skilled and knowledgeable officers, confident and clear as to how to handle animal management issues	Quarterly
2	Officer training	Maintain a training register	Register developed and maintained	Clear management oversight of officer skills and knowledge	As training is completed
3	Animal registration	Cross-check microchip registries to identify animals within Towong Shire that are not registered	No. animals registered	Improved compliance to animal registration requirements	Annually

4	Animal registration	Issue registration reminder notices to pet owners who fail to register by 10 April	No. reminder notices issued	Improved compliance to animal registration requirements	Annually
5	Animal registration	Ensure that seized and impounded animals are registered prior to release to their owner	No. animals registered	Improved compliance to animal registration requirements	Ongoing
6	Animal registration	Undertake targeted registration door-knocks and calling campaigns	No. animals registered	Improved compliance to animal registration requirements	Annually
7	Animal nuisance complaints	Provide educational material to pet owners	Reach of educational material, no. of animal complaints	More responsible pet ownership, less animal complaints	Ongoing
8	Animal nuisance complaints	Maintain cat cages for hire to meet community demand	Waiting period for cat cages	Reduction in feral cat population and complaints	Ongoing
9	Animal nuisance complaints	Maintain dedicated animal management page including how to make a complaint	No. of animal complaints	More responsible pet ownership, less animal complaints, clarity of access to Council services	Bi-annually
10	Animal nuisance complaints	Update and distribute dog barking information packs to assist in timely resolution of complaints	Timeliness of barking dog complaint resolution	More responsible pet ownership, more timely resolution of barking dog complaints	As required
11	Dog attacks	Investigate dog attacks and provide an appropriate compliance response	Reduction in repeat dog attacks	Responsible pet ownership, reduction in repeat dog attacks	As required
12	Dog attacks	Maintain accurate information on Council's webpage about how to report a dog attack	Reduction in repeat dog attacks	More responsible pet ownership, reduction in repeat dog attacks	Bi-annually
13	Dog attacks	Provide education regarding the consequences for dogs and their owners should the dog rush at or attack a person or animal	Reduction in dog attacks	More responsible pet ownership, reduction in dog attacks	Ongoing
14	Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs	Provide education regarding dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and how to report them	No dangerous, or restricted breed dogs in the Shire	Rapid identification and appropriate response to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs	Ongoing
15	Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs	Enter all declared dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs into the Victorian Declared Dog Registry within seven days of registration	All dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs identified in	Compliance with registration requirements for declared dogs	Ongoing

			the Shire are registered		

6. Evaluation

The *Plan* will be reviewed annually and amended if appropriate. An evaluation of the implementation of the *Plan* including an assessment of service levels and desired outcomes will be published in Council's Annual Report.

Any questions or feedback relating to this *Plan* should be directed to the Ranger and Local Laws Officer by phone on (02) 6071 5100, by email to info@towong.vic.gov.au, or by mail to Towong Shire Council, PO Box 55, Tallangatta VIC 3700.

towongshire

Towong Shire Council Budget

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2025/26

towong.vic.gov.au

Front Cover Image: Front Cover Image: Mt Elliott

Mt Elliott, situated roughly 29 km from Corryong, stands at nearly 1,000 meters above sea level. A favourite spot among paragliders and hikers alike, it offers sweeping vistas of the Upper Murray region.

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1.1 Mayor's Introduction

On behalf of Council, I am pleased to present the Budget 2025-2026. Front of mind for Council in preparing this budget has been the ongoing cost-of-living pressures and the broader economic challenges facing our community. This budget has been developed with financial sustainability at its core, and a commitment to ensuring that the rate income we receive is used responsibly and in ways that meet the needs and expectations of our ratepayers and residents.

A key focus of this budget is to complete outstanding priorities from the Council Plan 2021–2025, in particular, the continued maintenance of our roads and road assets in line with our Road Management Plan. The completion of capital works projects carried forward from the previous financial year is also a key element of this budget with major projects carried forward and scheduled for completion in 2025–2026 including:

- Corryong CBD carparking
- Upgrades to female facilities at Bullioh Recreation Reserve
- Redevelopment of the Tallandoon Tennis Courts
- Establishment and operation of the Container Café at Bellbridge
- Upgrades to Hanson Street, Corryong, between Kiell Street and Sugarloaf Road
- Completion of streetscape improvements in Mitta Mitta
- Improvements to Lake Road on the Berringa Peninsula
- Georges Creek Road widening on Parks hill.

In establishing our infrastructure and service delivery priorities, our efforts will be directed to the things that matter most to our residents and ratepayers. Our Capital Works program is focused on the maintenance and improvement of our road network, and includes the following major works:

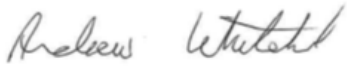
- Sealing Evans Street in Corryong
- Sealing 350 metres of Towong Hill Road (Towong Bridge end)
- Digouts, major patching & resealing of sealed roads, determined by the annual renewal program.

Following the successful rollout of our FOGO (Food Organics and Garden Organics) kerbside waste management program and transitioning our kerbside collection to Cleanaway, we are pleased to confirm that waste service fees will remain unchanged.

Council plays a key role in the delivery of Early Years services to our residents due to the very small number of private services in our shire. The demand for Early Years services has grown considerably over the past five years, with significant wait lists in our Long Day Care and Kindergarten programs. Given the financial pressures our residents have faced, particularly over the past five years following the bushfires and COVID impacted years, we have worked hard to keep fee increases for Long Day Care and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services to a minimum. However, with rising operational costs and growing demand for Early Years services, to ensure we can continue to deliver high-quality care and Kindergarten programs to more local children, we are increasing the Long Day Care fees by $20 per day.

This decision has not been taken lightly. Careful consideration has been given to the impact on families alongside the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) available through the Australian Government. We remain committed to running our Early Years services under a cost recovery model, ensuring that the direct costs are covered by the service and not subsidised by the broader ratepayer base.

Council believes this budget achieves the right balance to ensure we support the delivery of essential services while meeting the needs of our community.



Cr Andrew Whitehead
Mayor

1.2 Executive Summary

The Budget 2025-2026 has been developed with a strong focus on maintaining long-term financial sustainability while continuing to deliver quality facilities and services to our community. To achieve this, we have prioritised the renewal and maintenance of existing assets, ensuring our roads, bridges, parks and community facilities remain safe, functional and fit for purpose. By investing in asset upkeep now, we are supporting the liveability of our towns and rural areas and avoiding higher costs to replace assets further down the track.

The Capital Works included in the budget include upgrades to ageing infrastructure, improvements to public spaces, and projects that align with community needs and long-term strategic planning.

The budget includes a 3% increase to rate income raised by Council in accordance with the rate cap set by the State Government. For a number of years we have been experiencing cost increases due to external forces and these have been in excess of the State Government's rate cap. The challenge continues to be the delivery of services and infrastructure maintenance at the level that our residents and ratepayers expect. This budget has been developed with maintenance of services levels as a key underlying principle.

In response to growing demand for Early Years services the budget includes an increase in user charges to support the expansion of our services.

We have worked very hard to secure substantial grant funding to support a wide range of capital works for the benefit of our communities. The work to secure grants has included Councillors and Council officers advocating for the needs of our ratepayers and residents to be met, and many grant applications to both the State and Federal Governments. We have submitted grant applications for key infrastructure projects across the shire, most notably the Bethanga Recreation Reserve Pavilion. We have not included these in the Budget 2025-2026 as the outcome of our grant applications will not be known until after the budget is adopted.

Council maintains a conservative stance regarding borrowing, and generally only borrows:

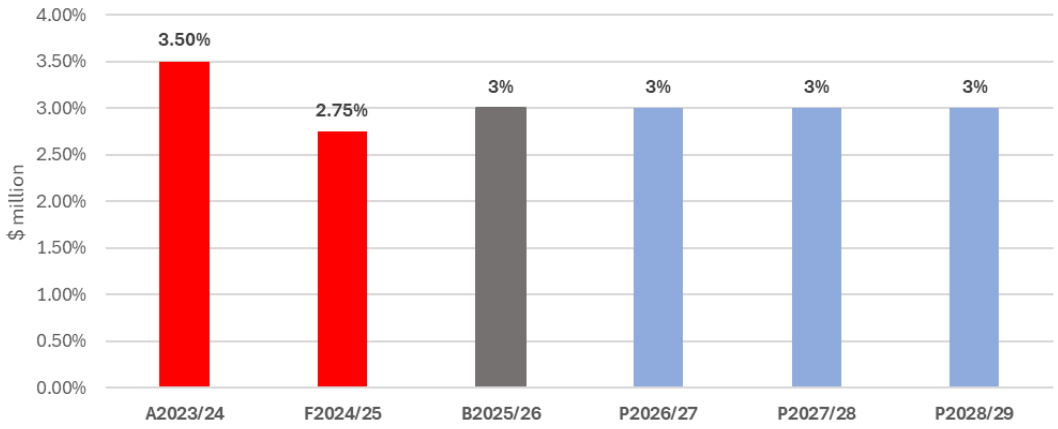
a) where there is an identified recurrent revenue source, directly tied to the reason for borrowing, which will enable the debt to be repaid, or
b) the reason for borrowing is to contribute to a multigenerational strategic project.

There are no borrowings included in the Budget 2025-2026.

Delivering on the needs of our communities in a financially sustainable way continues to be Council's priority. Council continues to lobby the State and Federal Governments for greater and more reliable financial support in order to deliver services and maintain and renew infrastructure.

1. Budget Indicators

Rate increase

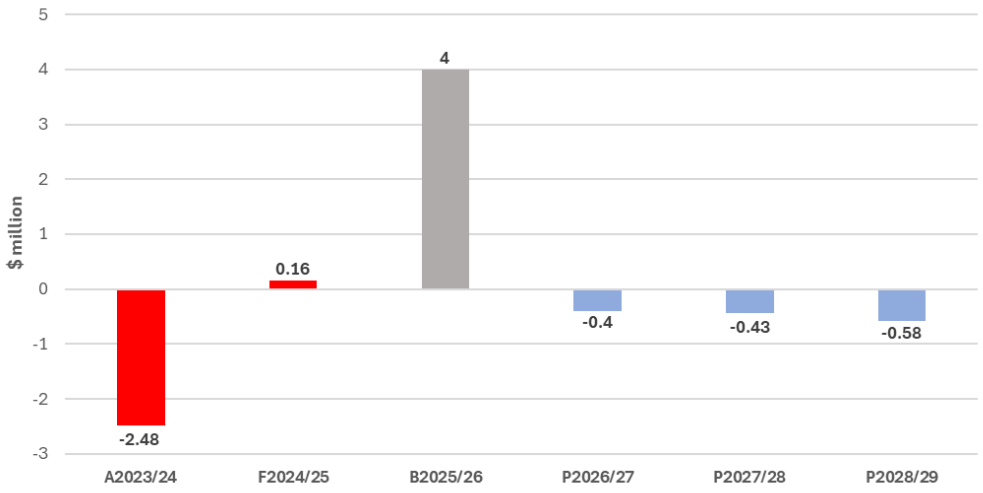


A = Actual F = Forecast B = Budget P = Projected

The average rate increase in 2025/26 is in line with the State Government's rate cap of 3.00% and Council has forecast the average rate increase over the following three years at 3%. It should be noted that at this level of rate increase Council may not be financially sustainable into the longer-term future given increasing infrastructure renewal needs across the Shire, without relying on one-off grant funding opportunities which may fluctuate and may not always match our communities' needs.

Total rates and charges are forecast to reach $10.98 million during 2025/26 which covers general rates, kerbside collection, waste management charges and revenue in lieu of rates.

Operating result

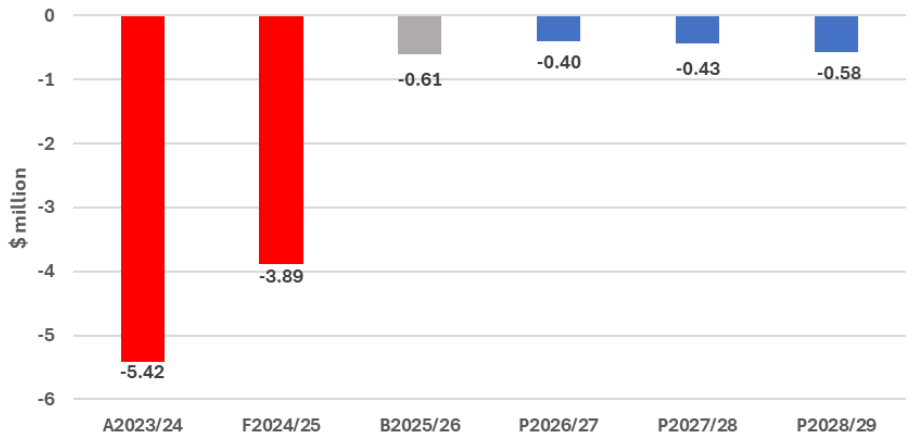


A = Actual F = Forecast B = Budget P = Projected

The operating result recognises all revenue received by Council (including capital grants) and all operating expenditure. The expected operating result for the 2025/26 year is a surplus of $4 million.

Council only raises revenue to provide services and infrastructure and not to make a profit. Any surplus or deficit in the operating result should be considered in the context of the adjusted underlying result as per below.

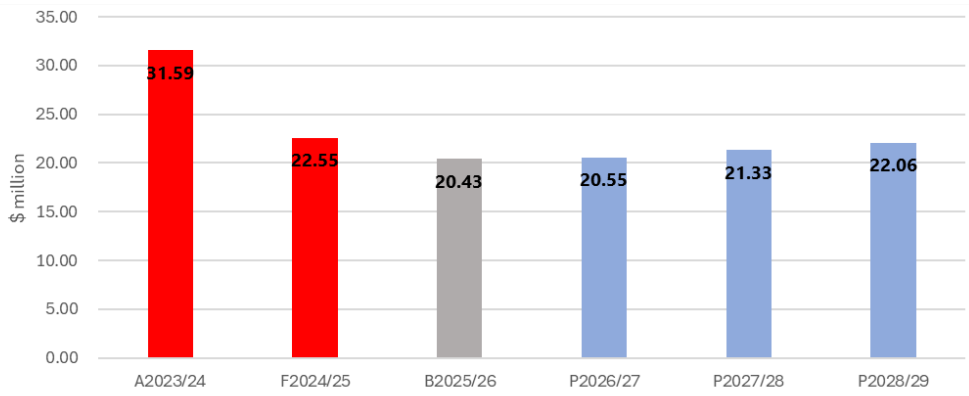
Adjusted underlying result



A = Actual F = Forecast B = Budget

The adjusted underlying result excludes capital grants which are generally non-recurring. The 2025/26 budget reflects an underlying deficit of $.61 million. The recurring underlying deficits projected into the years ahead reflects that a significant portion of Council's expenditure is funded by capital grants primarily relating to one-off projects. A substantial proportion of these projects relate to renewing Council's ageing infrastructure.

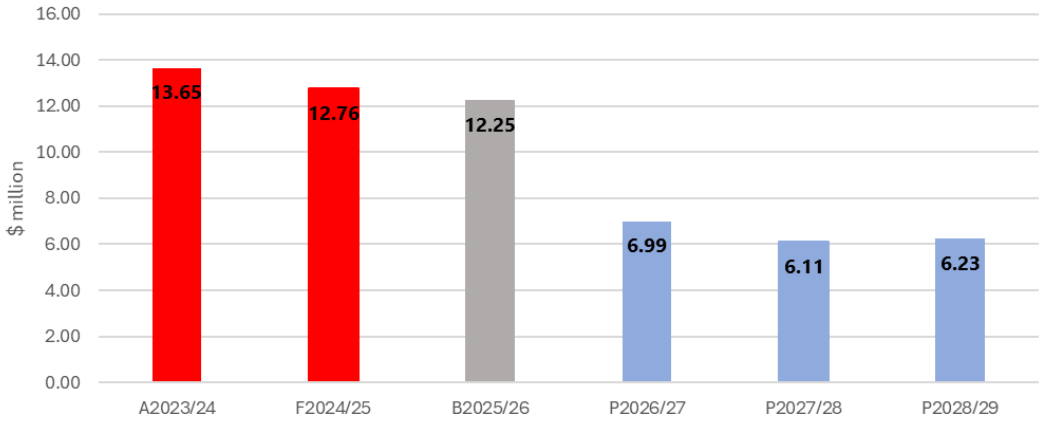
Cash and investments



A = Actual F = Forecast B = Budget P = Projected

Cash and investments are expected to decrease from $31.59 million at end of 2023/24 financial year to $22.55 million and then remain constant for the next few financial years.
We have had considerably high cash balances in recent years due to the inflow of bushfire response and recovery funding as well as significant one-off project grants. These cash levels are now projected to decline as funding is expended on the capital works program. Maintaining stable cash balances allows us to consider strategic expenditure works as well as ensuring financial sustainability into the future years.

Capital works



A = Actual F = Forecast B = Budget P = Projected

Capital works expenditure for the 2025/26 year is budgeted at $12.25 million. The capital works program comprises of a number of significant projects as outlined later in the budget and include:

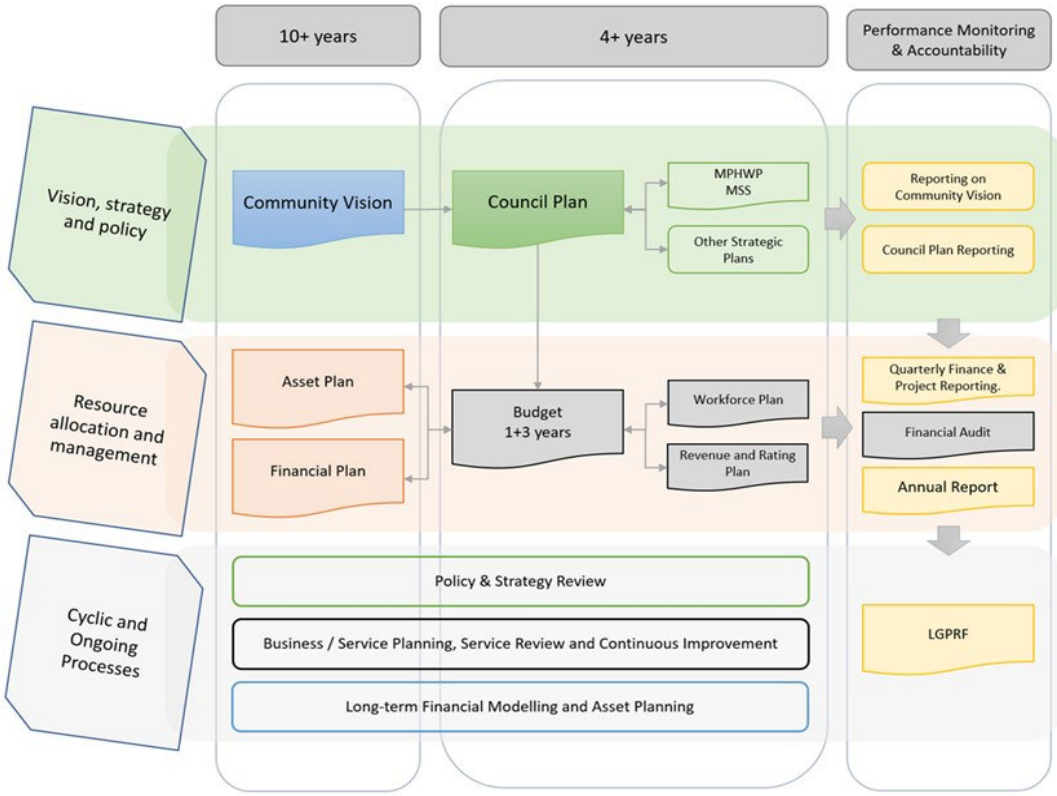
- Corryong Hanson Street Upgrade
- Corryong CBD Carparks
- Stage 2 of the Mitta Streetscapes
- Bridges Renewals Program
- Colac Colac Caravan Park
- Thomas Lane Intersection
- Lake Road Upgrade
- Roadworks on Georges Creek Road

2. Links to the Council Plan

This section describes how the Budget links to the achievement of the Community Vision and Council Plan within an overall integrated planning and reporting framework. This framework guides the Council in identifying community needs and aspirations over the long term (Community Vision and Financial Plan), medium term (Council Plan, Workforce Plan and Revenue and Rating Plan) and short term (Budget) and then holding itself accountable (Annual Report).

2.1. Legislative Planning and accountability framework

The Budget is a rolling four-year plan that outlines the financial and non-financial resources that Council requires to achieve the strategic objectives described in the Council Plan. The diagram below depicts the integrated planning and accountability framework that applies to local government in Victoria. At each stage of the integrated planning and reporting framework there are opportunities for community and stakeholder input. This is important to ensure transparency and accountability to both residents and ratepayers.



Source: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

In addition to the above, Council's vision for its communities is captured in several long-term master plans for townships, recreation reserves and public halls. These include but are not limited to *Tallangatta Tomorrow, Our Valley Our Future, Our Bellbridge and Upper Murray 2030 Vision Plan;* and the *Walwa, Corryong, Towong, Wyeeboo, Bethanga* and *Talgarno* recreation reserves and *Towong, Talgarno* and *Corryong Memorial* halls.

The timing of each component of the integrated planning and reporting framework is critical to the successful achievement of the planned outcomes.

Service level planning

Although councils have a legal obligation to provide some services— such as animal management, local roads, food safety and statutory planning—most council services are not legally mandated, including some services closely associated with councils, such as libraries, building permits and sporting facilities. Further, over time, the needs and expectations of communities can change.

Council reviews its services on an ongoing basis in consultation with the community to ensure that all services continue to provide value for money and the best mix of services is provided to align to community expectations and needs. Community consultation is undertaken in line with Council's adopted Community Engagement Policy and Public Transparency Policy.

2.2. Our purpose

Community Vision 2031
Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

Our mission
To provide strong leadership and to work with our communities to enhance their social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Our values

- **Respect** - We will listen and consider other perspectives and treat each other with courtesy
- **Integrity** - We will be honest with strong moral principles
- **Pride** - We will always take care in what we do
- **Teamwork** - We will help others to achieve by being positive, enthusiastic and confident

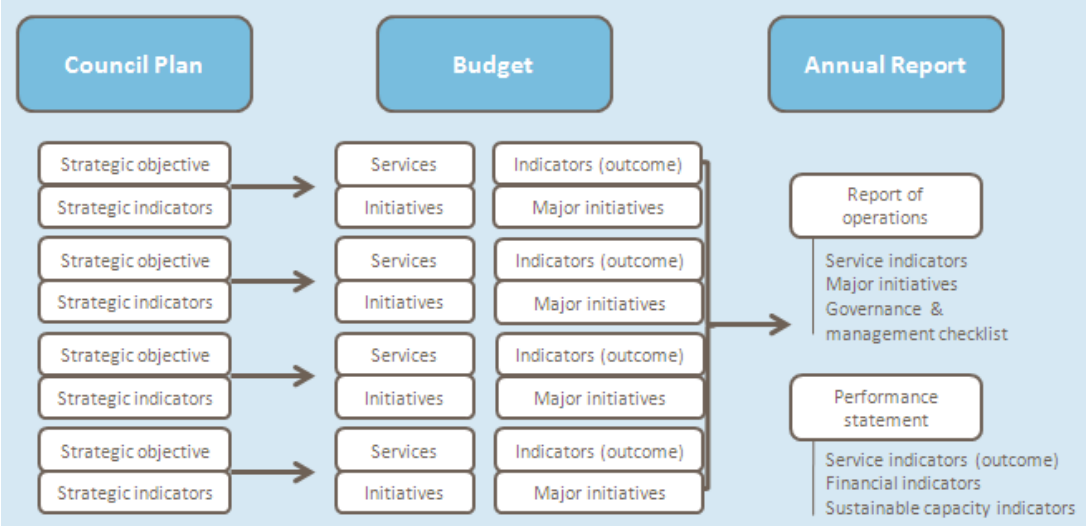
2.3. Strategic objectives

Council delivers services and initiatives contributing to the achievement of the six Strategic Objectives as set out in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*:

Strategic Objective	Description
1. Asset management	Maintain and improve our Shire's infrastructure to meet the levels of service established in consultation with our communities.
2. Community wellbeing	Encourage and support all people in our Shire to be happy, healthy, connected and resilient.
3. Economic and tourism development	Expand employment and economic opportunities across our Shire in a sustainable way.
4. Land-Use	Ensure that Council's planning, building and environmental health services support all aspects of liveability and sustainable population growth.
5. Environmental sustainability	Integrate sustainable environmental management practices into all of our activities.
6. Organisational Improvement	Maintain a high performing customer-centred organisation that works with the community to develop and deliver priorities.

3. Services and service performance indicators

This section provides a description of the services and initiatives to be funded in the Budget for the 2025/26 year and how these will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives outlined in the *Council Plan*. It also describes a number of major initiatives and service performance outcome indicators for key areas of Council's operations. Council is required by legislation to identify major initiatives and service performance outcome indicators in the Budget and report against them in their Annual Report to support transparency and accountability. The relationship between these accountability requirements in the Council Plan, the Budget and the Annual Report is shown below.



Source: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

In addition the following performance indicators are now mandated to be used by all Victorian Councils.

Service Measures	Financial Measures
G2 Governance – Consultation and engagement **Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement** (Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of council)	**E2 – Financial efficiency – Expenditure** **Expenses per property assessment** (total expenses per property assessment).
SP2 Statutory planning – Service Standard **Planning applications decided within the relevant required time** (percentage of planning application decisions made within the relevant required time)	**S1 – Financial Stability – Rates Concentration** **Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue** (rates revenue as a percentage of adjusted underlying revenue).
R2 – Roads – Condition **Sealed local roads below the intervention level** (percentage of sealed local roads that are below the renewal intervention level set by Council and not requiring renewal).	**L1 – Financial Liquidity – Working Capital** **Current assets compared to current liabilities** (current assets as a percentage of current liabilities).

WC5 – Waste management – waste diversion **Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill** (percentage of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins that is diverted from landfill).	**O5 – Financial obligations – Asset renewal** **Asset renewal compared to depreciation** (asset renewal and upgrade expenses as a percentage of depreciation).

Community feedback is sought on the targets and this informs future programs to deliver improved performance as required.

3.1. Strategic Objective 1: Asset management

To achieve our Asset management objective, we will deliver key projects to support economic, tourism and social development in the Shire, and continue to develop services and facilities to support long term population growth. We will implement key safety improvements across our road and footpath networks. The services, initiatives and service performance indicators for each business area are described below.

Services

Service area	Description of services provided
Capital Works Services	This service undertakes design, tendering, contract management and supervision of various works within Council's capital works program. These include: -roads, bridges, footpaths -buildings -drainage -recreation and open spaces.
Asset and Maintenance Services	This service conducts asset renewal and maintenance planning for Council's main infrastructure assets in an integrated and prioritised manner to optimise their strategic value and service potential. It also maintains Council infrastructure, vehicles, plant and equipment to meet functional and safety needs.

	Actual 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Revenue	5,548	2,103	2,426
Expenditure	14,225	12,326	13,240
Surplus/(Deficit)	**(8,677)**	**(10,223)**	**(10,814)**

Key Council Plan Initiatives and Priorities

1.1 Deliver 100% of the annual capital works program and bushfire recovery projects
1.2 Deliver infrastructure projects that arise from place-based master planning
1.3 Complete Stage 2 Great River Road
1.4 Continue the upgrade of Georges Creek Road
1.5 Complete upgrades of Hanson Street from Sugarloaf Road to Kiel Street
1.6 Complete the upgrade of the Heavy Vehicle Bypass upgrade in Corryong
1.7 Progressively deliver the upgrade of Lake Road
1.8 Investigate upgrade options for Wises Creek Road
1.9 Advocate for the upgrade of the Benambra Corryong Road from Staceys Bridge 40km South
1.10 Seek funding to deliver upgrades of key transport routes and hazardous road alignments to improve efficiency and safety
1.11 Seek funding to deliver upgrades of load limited bridges on strategic transport routes
1.12 Continue to deliver the upgrade of unsealed streets in urban areas program
1.13 Complete the upgrade of the Corryong CBD
1.14 Complete streetscape upgrades in Dartmouth and Mitta Mitta
1.15 Conduct planning for streetscape upgrades in Towong, Tintaldra and Cudgewa
1.16 Continue to deliver the strategic footpath network improvement program in urban areas
1.17 Address long vehicle and overflow parking issues in CBD areas
1.18 Seek funding to deliver improved public toilets across the shire
1.19 Seek funding to deliver upgrades to town entrances and wayfinding signage across the shire
1.20 Seek funding to deliver an upgraded Corryong Integrated Community Centre
1.21 Increase the recreation opportunities for young families in Dartmouth
1.22 Review and deliver the strategic parks and playgrounds upgrade program to completion
1.23 Undertake upgrades at the Colac Colac Caravan Park to ensure long term viability of the park
1.24 Investigate options for additional boat ramps
1.25 Deliver the Corryong aerodrome 24-hour fuel project
1.26 Seek funding to deliver a rolling program for the maintenance of strategic limited access roads for improved emergency services access
1.27 Deliver annual asset inspection and renewal programs per asset management and road management plan requirements
1.28 Implement the maintenance program for Council's buildings

3.2. Strategic Objective 2: Community wellbeing

To achieve our community wellbeing objective, we will encourage active lifestyles and facilitate access to activities that have meaning to our community members. We will support our communities to be inclusive, warm and welcoming, and advocate for every person to have access to adequate housing, transport, education and care. We will support our communities to be more resilient and safe against future adverse events, and to understand and mitigate climate change risk. The services, initiatives and service performance indicators for each business area are described below.

Services

Service area	Description of services provided
Community Services	This service provides family oriented support services including kindergartens, maternal and child health, immunisations and youth services. It also supports Council's commitment to improved access for all residents, delivers an annual Seniors event and support arts and culture throughout the Shire.
Library Services	This service provides public library services at two locations and provides a customer focused service that caters for the cultural, educational and recreational needs of residents and provides a focal point for the community where they can meet, relax and enjoy the facilities and services offered.
Swimming Pools	This service provides Council's two seasonally operated swimming pools at Corryong and Tallangatta. These pools operate from November to March each year. It also provides a financial contribution to the community operated Eskdale pool.
Community Facilities	This service identifies opportunities for Council or community groups to access funding to better meet community needs and delivers on key Council funding applications.

	Actual 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Revenue	3,748	6,780	4,743
Expenditure	5,289	8,814	6,442
Surplus/(Deficit)	(1,541)	(2,035)	(1,699)

Key Council Plan Initiatives and Priorities

2.1 *Undertake place-based master planning for the Peninsula including the investigation of options for early years and community facilities*
2.2 Undertake place-based master planning for the Mitta Valley, Corryong and Tallangatta
2.3 Maintain a contemporary Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan which reflects our community priorities
2.4 Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages
2.5 Review opportunities for communities to access library resources and connect through libraries
2.6 Develop a strategy for arts and cultural offerings across the Shire
2.7 Expand and improve early years services across the Shire to support young families
2.8 Renew the Youth Plan to embed the 'youth voice' in all aspects of service delivery
2.9 Advocate for the development of a variety of housing options to match community needs, particularly for older people
2.10 Encourage the establishment of innovative, sustainable transport solutions for remote communities
2.11 Support our communities to ensure that Shire places are welcoming to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and inclusive and connected
2.12 Build relationships and develop understanding of aboriginal people and consider the commitment to an ongoing reconciliation action plan process
2.13 Participate in key networks to support communities and key stakeholders on solutions to address family violence, suicide and mental health
2.14 Support our communities to drive their recovery from bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic and improve their mitigation of and resilience to future adverse events

Service Performance Indicators

Service	Indicator	Performance Measure	Computation
Maternal and Child Health (MCH)	Participation	Participation in the MCH service (Percentage of children enrolled who participate in the MCH service)	[Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100
		Participation in MCH service by Aboriginal children (Percentage of Aboriginal children enrolled who participate in the MCH service)	[Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100
Libraries	Participation	Active library members (Percentage of the municipal population that are active library members)	[Number of active library members / municipal population] x100

Service	Indicator	Performance Measure	Computation
Aquatic Facilities	Utilisation	Utilisation of aquatic facilities (Number of visits to aquatic facilities per head of municipal population)	Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population

3.3. Strategic Objective 3: Economic and tourism development

To achieve our Economic and tourism development objective, we will strengthen the capacity of new and existing businesses to thrive, and expand tourism offerings, promotion and experiences across the Shire. We will support the agriculture to increase resilience and grow to meet future challenges, while supporting the diversification of the Shire's economy. We will advocate for improvements to critical infrastructure: mobile connectivity, internet and power. The services, initiatives and service performance indicators for each business area are described below.

Services

Service areas	Description of services provided
Economic Development	The economic development service assists the organisation to facilitate an environment that is conducive to a sustainable and growing local business sector and provides opportunities for local residents to improve their skill levels and access employment. It also provides for the operation of the Corryong Saleyards, Corryong Airport and the Innovation Space.
Tourism	This service includes the provision of a Visitor Information Centre in Corryong, support for visitor information services in Tallangatta and development of tourism websites to provide advice to visitors to the region. It also provides oversight of the Colac Colac Caravan Park.

	Actual 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Revenue	152	-	-
Expenditure	1,019	858	513
Surplus/(Deficit)	(867)	(858)	(513)

Key Council Plan Initiatives and Priorities

3.1 Connect businesses to learning, development and networking opportunities to increase capacity
3.2 Run a series of business expos to support local businesses
3.3 Develop a business assistance service for new businesses including accommodation providers in the shared economy
3.4 Support businesses to adapt to and recover from the impact of bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic
3.5 Support businesses to expand adventure tourism offerings across the shire
3.6 Advocate for the development and broadening of the Pine Mountain experience
3.7 Advocate for the development of adventure tourism opportunities at Mount Elliot
3.8 Develop and implement a masterplan for cycling across the Shire
3.9 Support Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley Mountain bike park
3.10 Seek funding to complete the High-Country Rail Trail
3.11 Establish new annual cycling events in the Mitta Valley and Upper Murray
3.12 Seek funding to develop key touring route's as premier touring destinations, including the Great River Road, Omeo Highway, and the Benambra Corryong Road
3.13 Seek funding to develop a master plan for Lake Hume as a tourism destination including houseboats and the Narrows project
3.14 Seek funding to develop and expand the tourism opportunities at Dartmouth Dam
3.15 Capitalise on Tallangatta's status as a Notable Town
3.16 Secure control of the Tallangatta Caravan Park and seek funding to implement the adopted recommendations from Tallangatta Holiday Park Planning Study
3.17 Deliver improved visitor information and experience across the Shire
3.18 Expand the reach of tourism marketing and promotional materials
3.19 Seek to support the growth of value-add product and/or diversification opportunities for the agriculture industry
3.20 Facilitate the creation of a centre of excellence for innovation in agriculture
3.21 Seek funding to support efforts to attract and sustain new industries
3.22 Explore opportunities to activate the Corryong Aerodrome
3.23 Work with Upper Murray Inc to deliver outcomes from the UM2030 Plan
3.24 Attract investment to address key weaknesses (connectivity and reliability) in critical infrastructure (mobile telecommunications, internet and power)

Service Performance Indicators

Service	Indicator	Performance Measure	Computation
Economic Development	Economic activity	Change in number of businesses (Percentage change in the number of businesses with an ABN in the municipality)	[Number of businesses with an ABN in the municipality at the end of the financial year less the number of businesses at the start of the financial year / Number of businesses with an ABN in the municipality at the start of the financial year] x 100

3.4. Strategic Objective 4: Land-use planning

To achieve our Land-use planning objective, we will deliver integrated statutory services to support community wellbeing, population growth, economic development and the protection of the environment. We will maintain a contemporary planning scheme and support all users of Council's statutory services to have an excellent customer service experience. The services, initiatives and service performance indicators for each business area are described below.

Services

Service areas	Description of services provided
Planning	The planning service processes all planning applications, provides advice and makes decisions about development proposals which require a planning permit, as well as representing Council at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal where necessary. It administers the Towong Planning Scheme as well as preparing major policy documents shaping the future of the Shire. It also prepares amendments to the Towong Planning Scheme and carries out research on demographic, urban development, economic and social issues affecting Council.
Building Services	This service provides statutory building services to the Council community including processing of building permits, fire safety inspections, audits of swimming pool barriers and investigations of complaints and illegal works.

Service areas	Description of services provided
Environmental Health	This service protects the community's health and well-being by coordinating food safety support programs, Tobacco Act activities and smoke free dining and gaming venue issues. The service also works to rectify any public health concerns relating to unreasonable noise emissions, housing standards and pest controls.

	Actual 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Revenue	258	360	332
Expenditure	1,025	1,022	737
Surplus/(Deficit)	(767)	(662)	(405)

Key Council Plan Initiatives and Priorities

4.1 Support the rebuild process for fire impacted properties
4.2 Establish a Developer Contributions Policy and a Minimum Social Infrastructure Requirements Policy
4.3 Develop structure plans for Corryong, Tallangatta and Bellbridge and incorporate into the planning scheme
4.4 Review the Residential Settlement Strategy
4.5 Support population growth outside of key townships through appropriate amendments to the planning scheme
4.6 Review the Rural Land Use Study
4.7 Review the Schedule to the Rural Activity Zone
4.8 Advocate for changes to the farming zone to allow for a second residence to enable succession planning
4.9 Seek funding to extend the Heritage Study
4.10 Update planning scheme overlays including:
4.10a - Bushfire Management
4.10b - Heritage
4.11 Review statutory service processes to ensure an excellent customer experience

Service Performance Indicators

Service	Indicator	Performance Measure	Computation
Statutory planning	Decision making	Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT (Percentage of planning application decisions subject to review by VCAT and that were not set aside)	[Number of VCAT decisions that did not set aside Council's decision in relation to a planning application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning applications] x100

3.5. Strategic Objective 5: Environmental sustainability

To achieve our Environmental sustainability objective, we will embed improvements to support sustainability and climate change mitigation across Council's operations. We will support the community to improve environmental sustainability and encourage actions that mitigate the effects of climate change across the Shire. We will facilitate improved waste management and recycling practises. The services, initiatives and service performance indicators for each business area are described below.

Services

Service areas	Description of services provided
Waste Services	This service provides waste collection including kerbside collections of rubbish and recycling from households and commercial properties, special hard waste, green waste collections, transfer station and land fill management.
Emergency Management	This service provides Council's emergency management planning function.
Animal Control	This service provides animal management services including a cat trapping program, dog / cat collection service, lost and found notification service, pound service, registration / administration service and an after-hours emergency service. It also provides education, regulation and enforcement of the Local Law and relevant State legislation.

	Actual 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Revenue	3,096	2,385	4,123
Expenditure	2,504	4,324	3,674
Surplus/(Deficit)	591	(1,939)	449

Key Council Plan Initiatives and Priorities

5.1 Continue to investigate options for domestic waste water management in high-risk towns including Eskdale, Mitta Mitta and Bethanga
5.2 Advocate for reticulated potable water in Bethanga and Mitta Mitta
5.3 Continue to seek funding for integrated water management projects to maximise the use of recycled and raw water sources for public amenity and climate change mitigation
5.4 Seek funding to explore options for the establishment of a recycling industry
5.5 Improve the use of recycled materials in infrastructure projects eg crushed concrete, glass and rubber
5.6 Investigate and implement options for the management of roadside vegetation for fire mitigation
5.7 Advocate for the establishment of roadside clearances on arterial roads for emergencies
5.8 Continue to implement noxious weed control and monitoring along roadsides within available funding
5.9 Continue to implement the tree planting strategy to achieve 40% canopy coverage in urban streets by 2025
5.10 Explore the diversification of options for the establishment of native vegetation offset sites
5.11 Seek funding to establish a network of electric car charging stations
5.12 Develop a climate change action plan (including actions to reduce carbon emissions, electric vehicle charging, etc)
5.13 Transition waste and recycling services operations as per Victorian Government Circular Economy Strategy to deliver a four bin system for waste and recycling collection including separation of glass, green waste and organics
5.14 Invest in community education programs and a waste services survey to improve waste and recycling separation
5.15 Investigate options for hardwaste, greenwaste and agricultural waste management eg silage wrap
5.16 Replace the retaining wall at the Tallangatta Transfer Station
5.17 Investigate options for the future of the Corryong Landfill
5.18 Implement required measures to ensure management of closed landfills is compliant with EPA requirements

Service Performance Indicators

Service	Indicator	Performance Measure	Computation
Waste Collection	Waste diversion	Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill (Percentage of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins that is diverted from landfill)	[Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100
Animal Management	Health and safety	Animal management prosecutions (Number of successful animal management prosecutions)	Number of successful animal management prosecutions

3.6. Strategic Objective 6: Organisational Improvement

To achieve our Organisational improvement objective, we will engage with our communities to ensure that decision making is informed by community needs and promote Council activities that affect the community. We will advocate and collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders to progress priorities and activities and strive to consistently deliver an excellent customer service. We will provide a great place to work that supports a high performing organisation and provide good governance while actively managing evolving risks. We will continually review revenue sources and cost saving opportunities while striving to provide best value. The services, initiatives and service performance indicators for each business area are described below.

Services

Service area	Description of services provided
Councillors, Chief Executive and associated support	This area of governance includes the Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and associated support which cannot be easily attributed to the direct service provision areas.
Customer Service	This service provides Council with operational organisational support to Council, CEO and the Senior Management Group and acts as the main customer interface with the community. The service also assists with delivering on the communication and governance needs of the Council.
Corporate Services	This service provides financial and corporate based services to internal and external customers, including the management of Council's finances, payment of salaries and wages to employees, human resources, procurement and contracting of services, raising and collection of rates and charges, managing Council's records and delivering on Council's occupational health and safety responsibilities. This service also maintains reliable and cost-effective communications and computing systems, facilities and infrastructure to support Council staff.

	Actual 2023/24	Forecast 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Revenue	12,944	5,634	6,169
Expenditure	4,154	4,226	4,738
Surplus/(Deficit)	8,789	1,408	1,431

Key Council Plan Initiatives and Priorities

6.1 Continue to improve awareness, engagement and involvement of the community in relation to matters that affect them
6.2 Continually improve customer service experience across the organisation
6.3 Continually improve processes to support improved service delivery
6.4 Deliver improved business technology - finance, rates, human resources
6.5 Update the technology strategy to support the ongoing delivery excellent customer service
6.6 Develop and implement a People Plan to support the ongoing development of a high performing, adaptable, resilient, engaged and cohesive organisation
6.7 Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all Councillors and staff in a continually evolving environment
6.8 Continue to seek opportunities to improve service delivery and achieve best value including further investigation of shared services
6.9 Continue to advocate for increased government funding support to ensure long term sustainability
6.10 Investigate alternative revenue streams
6.11 Review the Revenue and Rating strategy
6.12 Consider options for the realisation of surplus Council assets
6.13 Continually improve the risk management and governance frameworks and practices
6.14 Provide ongoing support and development of Councillors in fulfilling their roles

Service Performance Indicators

Service	Indicator	Performance Measure	Computation
Governance	Satisfaction	Satisfaction with Council's consultation and engagement processes	Community rating out of 10 of satisfaction with Council's consultation and engagement processes.

3.7. Performance Statement

The service performance indicators detailed in the preceding pages will be reported on in the Performance Statement which is prepared at the end of the year as required by Section 98 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and included in the *Annual Report 2024/25*. The Performance Statement will also include reporting on prescribed indicators of financial performance and sustainable capacity, which are not included in this budget report. The prescribed performance indicators contained in the Performance Statement are audited each year by the Victorian Auditor General who issues an audit opinion on the Performance Statement. The initiatives detailed in the preceding pages will also be reported in the *Annual Report 2024/25* in the form of a statement of progress in the Report of Operations.

3.8. Reconciliation with budgeted operating result

	Net Cost ($,000)	Expenditure ($,000)	Revenue ($,000)
Asset Management	10,814	13,240	(2,426)
Community Wellbeing	1,699	6,442	(4,743)
Economic and Tourism Development	513	513	-
Environmental Sustainability	(449)	3,674	(4,123)
Land Use	405	737	(332)
Organisational Improvement	(1,431)	4,738	(6,169)
Total Services Deficit	**11,551**	**29,345**	**(17,794)**
Funding Sources			
Rates	(9,072)		
Capital Grants	(6,488)		
Total Funding Sources	**(15,560)**		
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	**4,005**		

4. Forecast Financial Statements

This section presents information regarding the Forecast Financial Statements and Statement of Human Resources. The Budget information for 2025/26 has been supplemented with long term financial plan projections to 2034/35.

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

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

In addition Note 4.1.1 to the financial statements provides the indicative impact of rate increases.

Comprehensive Income Statement

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	NOTES	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Projections 2026/27 $'000	2027/28 $'000	2028/29 $'000
Income / Revenue						
Rates and charges	5.1.1	10,702	**10,977**	11,278	11,588	11,936
Statutory fees and fines	5.1.2	241	**377**	386	396	406
User fees	5.1.3	1,248	**1,607**	1,655	1,705	1,756
Grants - operating (recurrent)	5.1.4	11,919	**9,491**	9,775	10,069	10,371
Grants - capital	5.1.4	5,581	**6,488**	2,216	2,332	2,332
Contributions - monetary	5.1.5	92	**-**	-	-	-
Contributions - non-monetary		-	**-**	-	-	-
Net gain (or loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(253)	**-**	-	-	-
Fair value adjustments for investment property		-	**-**	-	-	-
Share of net profits (or loss) of associates and joint ventures		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other income	5.1.6	2,177	**4,409**	4,528	4,649	4,774
Total income / revenue		31,707	**33,349**	29,838	30,739	31,575
Expenses						
Employee costs	5.1.7	10,812	**12,229**	12,565	12,911	13,298
Materials and services	5.1.8	13,417	**9,722**	10,268	10,630	11,006
Depreciation	5.1.9	6,904	**6,904**	7,111	7,324	7,544
Amortisation - intangible assets		-	**-**	-	-	-
Depreciation - right of use assets		-	**-**	-	-	-
Allowance for impairment losses		-	**-**	-	-	-
Borrowing costs		16	**16**	16	16	16
Finance costs - leases		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other expenses	5.1.10	392	**473**	285	294	303
Total expenses		31,541	**29,344**	30,245	31,175	32,167
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		166	**4,005**	(407)	(436)	(592)
Other comprehensive income						
Items that will not be reclassified to surplus or deficit in future periods						
Net asset revaluation gain /(loss)		-	**-**	-	-	-
Share of other comprehensive income of associates and joint ventures		-	**-**	-	-	-
Items that may be reclassified to surplus or deficit in future periods (detail as appropriate)		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total other comprehensive income		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total comprehensive result		166	4,005	(407)	(436)	(592)

Balance Sheet

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	NOTES	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Projections 2026/27 $'000	2027/28 $'000	2028/29 $'000
Assets						
Current assets						
Cash and cash equivalents		2,668	**20,574**	20,644	21,419	22,142
Trade and other receivables		2,722	**2,643**	2,352	2,416	2,488
Other financial assets		19,882	**-**	-	-	-
Inventories		464	**464**	464	464	464
Prepayments		66	**66**	66	66	66
Non-current assets classified as held for sale		62	**62**	62	62	62
Contract assets		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other assets		1,223	**1,223**	1,223	1,223	1,223
Total current assets	5.2.1	27,087	**25,032**	24,811	25,650	26,445
Non-current assets						
Trade and other receivables		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other financial assets		-	**-**	-	-	-
Investments in associates, joint arrangement and subsidiaries		43	**43**	43	43	43
Property, infrastructure, plant & equipment		283,991	**289,339**	289,213	287,995	286,680
Right-of-use assets		-	**-**	-	-	-
Investment property		1,275	**1,275**	1,275	1,275	1,275
Intangible assets		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total non-current assets	5.2.1	285,309	**290,657**	290,531	289,313	287,998
Total assets		312,396	**315,689**	315,342	314,963	314,443
Liabilities						
Current liabilities						
Trade and other payables		2,139	**1,928**	1,988	2,045	2,117
Trust funds and deposits		886	**886**	886	886	886
Unearned income/revenue		5,426	**5,426**	5,426	5,426	5,426
Provisions		1,668	**1,668**	1,668	1,668	1,668
Interest-bearing liabilities		-	**-**	-	-	-
Lease liabilities		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total current liabilities	5.2.2	10,119	**9,908**	9,968	10,025	10,097
Non-current liabilities						
Provisions		937	**437**	437	437	437
Interest-bearing liabilities		-	**-**	-	-	-
Lease liabilities		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	5.2.2	937	**437**	437	437	437
Total liabilities		11,056	**10,345**	10,405	10,462	10,534
Net assets		301,340	**305,344**	304,937	304,501	303,909
Equity						
Accumulated surplus		129,569	**133,574**	133,167	132,731	132,139
Reserves		171,771	**171,771**	171,771	171,771	171,771
Total equity		301,340	**305,344**	304,937	304,501	303,909

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	NOTES	Total	Accumulated Surplus	Revaluation Reserve	Other Reserves
		$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
2025 Forecast Actual					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		301,174	129,403	171,771	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		166	166	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		**301,340**	**129,569**	**171,771**	**-**
2026 Budget					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		**301,340**	**129,569**	**171,771**	**-**
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		**4,005**	**4,005**	**-**	**-**
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Transfers to other reserves		**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Transfers from other reserves		**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Balance at end of the financial year	5.3.2	**305,344**	**133,574**	**171,771**	**-**
2027					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		305,344	133,574	171,771	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(407)	(407)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		**304,935**	**133,167**	**171,771**	**-**
2028					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		304,935	133,167	171,771	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(436)	(436)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		**304,499**	**132,731**	**171,771**	**-**
2029					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		304,499	132,731	171,771	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(592)	(592)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	-	-	-
Balance at end of the financial year		**303,908**	**132,139**	**171,771**	**-**

Statement of Cash Flows

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	Notes	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Projections 2026/27 $'000	2027/28 $'000	2028/29 $'000
		Inflows (Outflows)	**Inflows (Outflows)**	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities						
Rates and charges		10,984	**10,934**	11,253	11,565	11,904
Statutory fees and fines		272	**413**	424	435	446
User fees		1,426	**1,761**	1,816	1,871	1,927
Grants - operating		12,234	**9,454**	9,752	10,047	10,344
Grants - capital		5,728	**6,462**	2,567	2,323	2,331
Contributions - monetary		-	**-**	-	-	-
Interest received		1,286	**1,661**	1,711	1,762	1,815
Dividends received		-	**-**	-	-	-
Trust funds and deposits taken		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other receipts		807	**3,011**	3,092	3,170	3,248
Net GST refund / payment		2,234	**1,828**	1,312	1,211	1,240
Employee costs		(10,793)	**(12,339)**	(12,538)	(12,885)	(13,263)
Materials and services		(14,833)	**(11,008)**	(11,264)	(11,663)	(12,070)
Short-term, low value and variable lease payments		-	**-**	-	-	-
Trust funds and deposits repaid		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other payments		(347)	**(825)**	(330)	(340)	(350)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	5.3.1	8,998	**11,352**	7,795	7,496	7,572
Cash flows from investing activities						
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(14,036)	**(13,477)**	(7,684)	(6,716)	(6,851)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		2,654	**-**	-	-	-
Payments for investments		-	**-**	-	-	-
Proceeds from sale of investments		-	**-**	-	-	-
Loans and advances made		-	**-**	-	-	-
Drawings from financial investments			**19,882**			
Payments of loans and advances		-	**-**	-	-	-
Net cash provided by/ (used in) investing activities	5.3.2	(11,382)	**6,405**	(7,684)	(6,716)	(6,851)
Cash flows from financing activities						
Finance costs		-	**-**	-	-	-
Proceeds from borrowings		-	**-**	-	-	-
Repayment of borrowings		-	**-**	-	-	-
Interest paid - lease liability		-	**-**	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities		-	**-**	-	-	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	5.3.3	-	**-**	-	-	-
Net increase/(decrease) in cash & cash equivalents		(2,384)	**17,757**	111	780	721
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		5,052	**2,668**	20,426	20,538	21,318
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year		2,668	**20,425**	20,537	21,319	22,039

Statement of Capital Works

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	NOTES	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Projections 2026/27 $'000	2027/28 $'000	2028/29 $'000
Property						
Land		-	**150**	-	-	-
Land improvements		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total land		-	**150**	-	-	-
Buildings		788	**578**	542	557	573
Heritage buildings		-	**-**	-	-	-
Building improvements		-	**-**	-	-	-
Leasehold improvements		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total buildings		788	**578**	542	557	573
Total property		788	**728**	542	557	573
Plant and equipment						
Heritage plant and equipment		-	**-**	-	-	-
Plant, machinery and equipment		200	**993**	1,023	662	679
Fixtures, fittings and furniture		99	**-**	-	-	-
Computers and telecommunications		1,379	**100**	-	-	-
Library books		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total plant and equipment		1,678	**1,093**	1,023	662	679
Infrastructure						
Roads		3,639	**7,647**	1,835	1,868	1,938
Bridges		1,248	**1,041**	506	691	710
Footpaths and cycleways		452	**160**	63	65	66
Drainage		126	**300**	54	55	-
Recreational, leisure and community facilities		1,233	**30**	-	-	-
Waste management		486	**210**	-	-	-
Parks, open space and streetscapes		2,894	**1,043**	-	-	-
Aerodromes		-	**-**	-	-	-
Off street car parks		-	**-**	-	-	-
Other infrastructure		216	**-**	2,962	2,208	2,263
Total infrastructure		10,294	**10,431**	5,420	4,887	4,977
Total capital works expenditure	5.5.1	12,760	**12,252**	6,985	6,106	6,229
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure		1,914	**146**	1,077	1,104	1,131
Asset renewal expenditure		5,742	**7,663**	4,832	3,898	3,966
Asset expansion expenditure		-	**-**	-	-	-
Asset upgrade expenditure		5,104	**4,443**	1,077	1,104	1,131
Total capital works expenditure	5.5.1	12,760	**12,252**	6,986	6,106	6,228
Funding sources represented by:						
Grants		10,730	**5,989**	-	-	-
Contributions		-	**-**	-	-	-
Council cash		2,030	**6,263**	-	-	-
Borrowings		-	**-**	-	-	-
Total capital works expenditure	5.5.1	12,760	**12,252**	-	-	-

Statement of Human Resources

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	Forecast Actual	Budget	Projections		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Staff expenditure					
Employee costs - operating	10,812	12,170	12,565	12,911	13,298
Employee costs - capital	-	-	-	-	-
Total staff expenditure	10,812	**12,170**	12,565	12,911	13,298
	FTE	**FTE**	FTE	FTE	FTE
Staff numbers					
Employees	112.0	**120.9**	121.0	122.0	123.0
Total staff numbers	112.0	**120.9**	121.0	122.0	123.0

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

Department	Budget	Comprises		
		Permanent		Casual & Temporary
	2025/26	Full Time	Part time	
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Asset Management	**4,336**	3,669	426	241
Community Wellbeing	**4,371**	1,243	2,858	270
Economic and Tourism Development	**222**	202	20	-
Environmental Sustainability	**307**	291	-	16
Land Use	**63**	-	63	-
Organisational Improvement	**2,871**	2,131	741	-
Total permanent staff expenditure	**12,170**	7,536	4,108	526
Other employee related expenditure	**59**			
Capitalised labour costs	**-**			
Total expenditure	**12,229**			

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

Department	Budget	Comprises		
		Permanent		Casual & Temporary
	2025/26	Full Time	Part time	
Asset Management	**45**	39	3	3
Community Wellbeing	**45**	13	30	3
Economic and Tourism Development	**2**	2	0	-
Environmental Sustainability	**3**	3	-	0
Land Use	**1**	-	1	-
Organisational Improvement	**25**	17	8	-
Total staff	**121**	74	42	6

5. Notes to the financial statements

5.1. Comprehensive Income Statement

5.1.1 Rates and charges

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the associated regulations, rates and charges are required to be disclosed in Council's *Budget*. The *Local Government Act 2020* additionally requires Council to have a Revenue and Rating Plan which is a four-year plan for how Council will generate income to deliver the Council Plan over a four-year period.

In developing the *Budget 2025-2026*, rates and charges are identified as an important source of revenue. Planning for future rate increases has therefore been an important component of the financial planning process. The State Government's *Fair Go Rates System (FGRS)* sets out the maximum amount councils may increase rates in a year. For 2025/26 the FGRS cap has been set at 3.00%. The cap applies to both general rates and municipal charges and is calculated on the basis of Council's average rates and charges.

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

To achieve these objectives while maintaining service levels and a strong capital expenditure program, the average general rate and the municipal charge will increase by 3.00% in line with the rate cap. The total kerbside collection charge will remain the same from prior year and there will be a small increase of $3.00 to the waste facilities management charge in 2025/26.

Quarterly instalments will continue with ratepayers offered the opportunity to pay annually or elect to enter into monthly and fortnightly payment plans. Interest will be charged for failing to pay rates and charges on time and the rate of interest will be up to a maximum of 10 percent under section two of the penalty interest rates Act 1983.

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

	2024/25 Forecast Actual $'000	2025/26 Budget $'000	Change $'000	%
General rates*	7,188	**7,362**	174	**2.42%**
Municipal charge*	1,350	**1,390**	40	**2.96%**
Waste management charge	409	**416**	7	**1.71%**
Kerbside collection	1,445	**1,493**	48	**3.32%**
Revenue in lieu of rates	310	**315**	5	**1.61%**
Total rates and charges	10,702	**10,977**	275	**2.57%**

*These items are subject to the rate cap established under the Fair Go Rates System

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

Type or class of land	2024/25 cents/$CIV*	2025/26 cents/$CIV*	Change
General rate for rateable residential properties	0.2315	**0.2367**	**2.25%**
General rate for rateable rural residential properties	0.2315	**0.2367**	**2.25%**
General rate for rateable rural properties	0.1852	**0.1894**	**2.27%**
General rate for rateable business properties	0.2084	**0.2130**	**2.21%**
General rate for rateable undeveloped residential	0.7408	**0.7574**	**2.24%**

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

Type or class of land	2024/25 $'000	2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	%
Residential	1,349	**1,530**	181	**13.42%**
Rural Residential	1,156	**1,199**	43	**3.72%**
Rural	4,387	**4,329**	- 58	**-1.32%**
Business	159	**181**	22	**13.84%**
Undeveloped Residential	137	**123**	- 14	**-10.22%**
Total amount to be raised by general rates	7,188	**7,362**	174	**2.42%**

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

Type or class of land	2024/25 Number	2025/26 Number	Change Number	%
Residential	1,706	**1,713**	7	**0.41%**
Rural Residential	915	**915**	-	**0.00%**
Rural	1,565	**1,565**	-	**0.00%**
Business	245	**244**	- 1	**-0.41%**
Undeveloped Residential	120	**117**	- 3	**-2.50%**
Total number of assessments	4,551	**4,554**	3	**0.07%**

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

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

Type or class of land	2024/25 $'000	2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	%
Residential	577,390	**646,588**	69,198	**11.98%**
Rural Residential	499,395	**506,277**	6,882	**1.38%**
Rural	2,368,866	**2,286,186**	- 82,680	**-3.49%**
Business	76,106	**84,892**	8,786	**11.54%**
Undeveloped Residential	18,532	**16,250**	- 2,282	**-12.31%**
Total value of land	3,540,289	**3,540,193**	- 96	**-0.003%**

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

Type of Charge	Per Rateable Property 2024/25 $	Per Rateable Property 2025/26 $	Change $	Change %
Municipal	337	**347**	10	**2.97%**

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

Type of Charge	2024/25 $	2025/26 $	Change $	Change %
Municipal	1,350	**1,390**	40	**2.96%**

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

Type of Charge	Per Rateable Property 2024/25 $	Per Rateable Property 2025/26 $	Change $	Change %
Kerbside Collection:				
Garbage / Recycling - 80/240L Bins	310	**310**	-	**0.00%**
Garbage / Recycling - 140/240L Bins	340	**340**	-	**0.00%**
Garbage / Recycling - 240/240L Bins	380	**380**	-	**0.00%**
Garbage / Recycling / FOGO - 80/240/240 Bins Standard Service	470	**470**	-	**0.00%**
Garbage / Recycling / FOGO - 140/240/240 Bins Standard Service	495	**495**	-	**0.00%**
Garbage / Recycling / FOGO - 240/240/240 Bins Standard Service	530	**530**	-	**0.00%**
Additional Garbage - 80L Bin	325	**325**	-	**0.00%**
Additional Garbage - 140L Bin	380	**380**	-	**0.00%**
Additional Garbage - 240L Bin	495	**495**	-	**0.00%**
Additional Recycling - 240L Bin	180	**180**	-	**0.00%**
Additional FOGO - 240L Bin	155	**155**	-	**0.00%**
Garbage/Recyle Service Extension - per km	0.20	**0.20**	-	**0.00%**
Waste Management	101	**104**	3	**2.97%**

Note: the kerbside collection and waste facilities management charges are a fee for service and calculated via a cost recovery model. The model used determines the fees to be charged, so that all costs associated with providing waste services are recovered from those properties that use or have access to the services.

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

Type of Charge	2024/25	2025/26	Change	
	$	$	$	%
Kerbside Collection	1,445	**1,493**	48	**3.32%**
Waste Management	409	**416**	7	**1.71%**
Total	1,854	**1,909**	55	**2.97%**

5.1.1(k) – Fair Go Rates System compliance

		2024/25		2025/26
Total Rates	$	7,188,000	$	7,362,081
Number of rateable properties		4,533.00		4,554.00
Base Average Rate	$	1,823.87	$	1,866.61
Maximum Rate Increase (set by the State Government)		**2.75%**		**3.00%**
Capped Average Rate	$	1,873.39	$	1,921.86
Maximum General Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	$	8,587,623	$	8,781,584
Budgeted General Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	$	8,525,000	$	8,752,163
Budgeted Supplementary Rates	$	-	$	-
Budgeted Total Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	$	8,525,000	$	8,752,163

5.1.1(l) - Any significant changes that may affect the estimated amounts to be raised by rates and charges.

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

- The making of supplementary valuations
- The variation of returned levels of value (e.g. valuation appeals)
- Changes in use of land such that rateable land becomes non-rateable land and vice versa
- Changes in use of land such that it changes rating category.

5.1.1(m) Differential rates

The rate and amount of rates payable in relation to land in each category of differential are:

- A general rate of 0.2367% (0.2367 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable residential properties
- A general rate of 0.2367% (0.2367 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable rural residential properties
- A general rate of 0.1894% (0.1894 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable rural properties
- A general rate of 0.2130% (0.2130 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable business properties
- A general rate of 0.7574% (0.7574 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable undeveloped residential properties.

Each differential rate will be determined by multiplying the Capital Improved Value of rateable land (categorised by the characteristics described below) by the relevant percentages indicated above.

Council considers that each differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of council functions. Details of the objectives of each differential rate, the types of classes of land, which are subject to each differential rate and the uses of each differential rate, are set out below.

The objective of each differential rate is to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including (but not limited to) the:

- Construction and maintenance of infrastructure assets
- Development and provision of health and community services
- Provision of general support services

The money raised by differential rates will be applied to the items of expenditure described in the Budget by Council. The level of the rate for each type of land is considered to provide for an appropriate contribution to Council's budgeted expenditure, having regard to the characteristics of the land.

Residential land

Residential land is any land, which is:

- Less than 0.4 ha in size, and
- Not classified as rural, business or undeveloped residential.

Rural residential land

Rural residential land is any land, which is:

- From 0.4 ha to 40 ha in size, and
- Not classified as rural, business or undeveloped residential.

Rural land

Rural land is any land, which is:

- Greater than 40 ha in size.

Business land

Business land is any land, which is:

- Occupied for the principal purpose of carrying out the manufacture or production of, or trade in goods or services, or;
- Unoccupied but zoned commercial or industrial under the Towong Planning Scheme.

Undeveloped residential land

Undeveloped residential land is any land, which is:

- Within a residential, low density residential, mixed use or township zone, and
- Within a sewered area, and
- Able to be developed as residential land within the planning scheme, and
- Land that has not been issued with an occupancy permit.

5.1.2 Statutory fees and fines

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Building Fees	50	**150**	100	**200.00%**
Tow n Planning Fees	85	**120**	35	**41.18%**
Animal Fees	50	**50**	-	**0.00%**
Health Registration Fees	41	**42**	1	**3.58%**
Land Information Certificates	10	**10**	-	**0.00%**
Infringements	5	**5**	-	**0.00%**
Total statutory fees and fines	241	**377**	136	**56.70%**

Statutory fees relate mainly to fees and fines levied in accordance with legislation and include animal registrations and *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* registrations. Increases in statutory fees and fines are made in accordance with legislative requirements.

5.1.3 User fees

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Childcare/children's programs	1,031	**1,393**	**362**	**35.07%**
Refuse disposals fees	53	**63**	**10**	**18.73%**
Aquatic facility fees	40	**40**	**-**	**0.00%**
Saleyard fees	15	**15**	**-**	**0.00%**
Septic tank fees	13	**13**	**-**	**0.00%**
Truck wash and weightbridge	5	**5**	**-**	**0.00%**
Other fees	91	**78**	**- 13**	**-13.88%**
Total user fees	1,248	**1,607**	359	**28.77%**

User fees relate mainly to the recovery of service delivery costs through the charging of fees to users of Council's services. These include use of swimming pools and other community facilities and the provision of community services such as kindergarten and childcare services. In setting the budget, the key principle for determining the level of user charges has been to ensure that where possible, increases recover the costs of providing the service.

5.1.4 Grants

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

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Grants were received in respect of the following:				
Summary of grants				
Commonwealth funded grants	10,262	11,762	1,500	15%
State funded grants	7,237	4,217	- 3,020	-42%
Total grants received	**17,499**	**15,979**	- 1,520	-9%
(a) Operating Grants				
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Victorian Grants Commission - General Purpose Funding	3,813	3,928	115	3%
Victorian Grants Commission - Local Roads Funding	2,340	2,410	70	3%
Recurrent - State Government				
Community	160	163	3	2%
Family and children	1,303	1,255	- 48	-4%
School crossing supervisors				
Libraries	138	120	- 18	-13%
Total recurrent grants	**7,754**	**7,876**	**122**	2%
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Family and children	422	464	42	10%
Non-recurrent - State Government				
Community	51	912	861	1688%
Environmental planning	50	56	6	12%
Family and children	181	184	3	2%
Recovery	3,296	-	- 3,296	-100%
Planning	165	-	- 165	-100%
Total non-recurrent grants	4,165	**1,616**	- 2,549	-61%
Total operating grants	**11,919**	**9,492**	- 2,427	-20%
(b) Capital Grants				
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Infrastructure	1,516	1,866	350	23%
Recurrent - State Government	-	-	-	0%
Total recurrent grants	**1,516**	**1,866**	350	23%
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Infrastructure	2,171	3,095	924	43%
Non-recurrent - State Government				
Community	315	-	- 315	-100%
Infrastructure	1,578	1,526	- 52	-3%
Total non-recurrent grants	**4,064**	**4,621**	557	14%
Total capital grants	**5,580**	**6,487**	907	16%
Total Grants	**17,499**	**15,979**	**- 1,520**	**-9%**

Operating grants include all monies received from State and Federal sources for the purposes of funding the delivery of Council's services to ratepayers.

Capital grants include all monies received from State and Federal sources for the purposes of funding the capital works program.

5.1.5 Total contributions

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Monetary	92	**196**	**104**	**112.77%**
Non-monetary	-	**-**	**-**	**-**
Total contributions	92	**196**	**104**	**112.77%**

5.1.6 Other income

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Interest	1,286	**1,661**	375	**29.17%**
Rent	99	**273**	175	**176.53%**
Shares service fees	150	**150**	-	-
Other	643	**2,129**	1,486	**231.25%**
Total other income	2,177	**4,212**	2,036	**93.50%**

Other income relates to a range of items such as rent, shared service cost recovery and other miscellaneous income items. It also includes interest revenue on investments and rates arrears.

5.1.7 Employee costs

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Wages and salaries	9,184	**10,350**	1,166	**12.69%**
WorkCover	260	**282**	22	**8.42%**
Annual leave and long service leave	262	**286**	24	**9.05%**
Superannuation	1,106	**1,312**	206	**18.60%**
Total employee costs	10,812	**12,229**	1,417	**13.11%**

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

5.1.8 Materials and services

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Materials and services	11,766	**7,911**	- 3,855	**-32.76%**
Maintenance	1,446	**1,614**	168	**11.60%**
Utilities	205	**197**	- 8	**-3.92%**
Total materials and services	13,417	**9,722**	- 3,695	**-27.54%**

Materials and services include purchases of consumables, payments to contractors for the provision of services, non-recurrent operating projects and utility costs.

5.1.9 Depreciation and amortisation

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Property	1,249	**1,249**	-	**0.00%**
Plant and equipment	749	**749**	-	**0.00%**
Infrastructure	4,906	**4,906**	-	**0.00%**
Total depreciation	6,904	**6,904**	-	**0.00%**

Depreciation is an accounting measure which attempts to allocate the value of an asset over its useful life for Council's property, plant and equipment including infrastructure assets such as roads and drains.

5.1.10 Other expenses

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	Change %
Auditor Remuneration	95	**51**	- 44	**-46.57%**
Councillor allowances	206	**226**	20	**9.71%**
Community Contributions	91	**196**	105	**115.38%**
Total other expenses	392	**473**	81	**20.52%**

Other expenses relate to a range of unclassified items including contributions to community groups or projects, councillor allowances, auditors' remuneration and other miscellaneous expenditure items. Councillor allowances are determined in line with the legislated ruling that governs these, being the Determination of the Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

5.2. Balance Sheet

5.2.1 Current assets and non-current assets

Cash and cash equivalents include cash and investments such as cash held in the bank and in petty cash and the value of investments in deposits or other highly liquid investments with short term maturities of three months or less. These balances are projected to decrease during the year as funding received for one-off projects is spent.

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

Other assets include items such as prepayments for expenses that Council has paid in advance of service delivery, inventories or stocks held for sale or consumption in Council's services and other revenues due to be received in the next 12 months.

Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment is the largest component of Council's worth and represents the value of all assets such as land, buildings, roads, vehicles and equipment which has been built up by Council over many years. The increase in this balance is attributable to the net result of the capital works program and depreciation of assets.

5.2.2 Current Liabilities and Non-Current Liabilities

Trade and other payables are those to whom Council owes money as at 30 June. These liabilities are budgeted to increase compared to 2024/25 levels due to increased employee provisions for increased budgeted staffing positions.

Provisions include accrued long service leave, annual leave and rostered days off owing to employees and rehabilitation costs for landfill sites.

5.2.3 Equity

Total equity always equals net assets and is made up of the following components:

- The asset revaluation reserve which represents the difference between the previously recorded value of assets and their current valuations;
- The accumulated surplus which is the value of all net assets less reserves that have accumulated over time. The decrease in accumulated surplus results directly from the budgeted operating deficit for the year.

Borrowings

The table below shows information on borrowings specifically required by the Regulations. As highlighted below, Council do not have any external borrowings.

	Forecast Actual	Budget	Projections		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	$	$	$	$	$
Amount borrow ed as at 30 June of the prior year	-	-	-	-	-
Amount proposed to be borrow ed	-	-	-	-	-
Amount projected to be redeemed	-	-	-	-	-
Amount of borrowings as at 30 June	-	-	-	-	-

5.3.Statement of Cash Flows

The Statement of Cash Flows is based on three main categories of cash flows:

5.3.1 Operating activities - Refers to the cash generated or used in the normal service delivery functions of Council. This includes rates and charges, statutory and user fees, grants income and payments to employees and suppliers.

Cash remaining after paying for the provision of services to the community may be available for investment in capital works (investing activities), or repayment of debt (financing activities).

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

5.3.3 Financing activities - Refers to cash generated or used in the financing of Council functions and include borrowings from financial institutions and advancing of repayable loans to other organisations. These activities also include repayment of the principal component of loan repayments for the year as well as finance lease payments.

5.3.4 Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year
Overall, total cash and investments are forecast to decrease as at 30 June 2026 as funds are expended on the 2025/26 capital works program and finalisation of one off grant activities.

5.4.Capital works program

This section presents a listing of the capital works projects that will be undertaken for the 2024/25 year, classified by asset expenditure type and funding source.

5.4.1 Summary

	Forecast Actual 2024/25 $'000	Budget 2025/26 $'000	Change $'000	%
Property	788	728	- 61	**-7.70%**
Plant and equipment	1,589	1,093	- 496	**-31.20%**
Infrastructure	10,383	10,432	49	**0.47%**
Total	**12,760**	**12,253**	- 507	**-3.98%**

	Project Cost	Asset expenditure types				Summary of Funding Sources			
		New	Renewal	Upgrade	Expansion	Grants	Contributions	Council cash	Borrowings
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Property	**728**	-	545	183	-	-	-	728	-
Plant and equipment	**1,093**	105	93	895	-	60	-	1,033	-
Infrastructure	**10,432**	825	3,852	5,756	-	5,929	-	4,503	-
Total	**12,253**	930	4,490	6,833	-	5,989	-	6,263	-

5.4.2 Current Budget

Capital Works Area	Project Cost	Asset expenditure types				Summary of Funding Sources			
		New	Renewal	Upgrade	Expansion	Grants	Contributions	Council cash	Borrowings
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
PROPERTY									
Buildings									
Building Renewals	**350**	-	350	-	-	-	-	350	-
Early Years Infrastructure Works	**33**	-	-	33	-	-	-	33	-
TOTAL PROPERTY	**383**	**-**	**350**	**33**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**383**	**-**
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT									
Plant, Machinery and Equipment									
Plant Replacements	**675**	-	-	675	-	-	-	675	-
Minor Tools	**30**	30	-	-	-	-	-	30	-
Major Tools	**15**	15	-	-	-	-	-	15	-
Vehicle Fleet Replacements	**120**	-	-	120	-	-	-	120	-
Computers and Telecommunications									
IT Equipment Replacements	**25**	-		25	-	-	-	25	-
IT Project	**75**	-	-	75	-	-	-	75	-
TOTAL PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	**940**	**45**	**-**	**895**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**940**	**-**

Capital Works Area	Project Cost	Asset expenditure types				Summary of Funding Sources			
		New	Renewal	Upgrade	Expansion	Grants	Contributions	Council cash	Borrowings
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
INFRASTRUCTURE									
Roads									
Digouts / Major Patching	**700**	-	700	-	-	600	-	100	-
Dust Strip Program	**60**	-	60	-	-	20	-	40	-
Guardrail Program	**-**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gravel resheeting	**251**	-	251	-	-	206	-	45	-
Resealing	**750**	-	750	-	-	550	-	200	-
Kerb Renewals	**50**	-	50	-	-	50	-	-	-
Linemarking	**100**	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	-
Seal Towong Hill Road	**200**	-		200	-	200	-	-	-
Evans Street Corryong	**250**	-		250	-	100	-	150	-
Footpaths and Cycleways									
Footpath Renewals	**60**	-	60	-	-	60	-		-
Drainage									
Annual Drainage Program	**50**	-	50	-	-	-	-	50	-
Drainage Repair	**100**	-	100	-	-	-	-	100	-
Drainage Works - Eskdale	**150**	150	-	-	-	-	-	150	-
Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes									
Retrofit Concrete Deck	**50**	-	50	-	-	-	-	50	-
Town Beautification	**75**	-	75	-	-	-	-	75	-
Playground Equipment	**125**	-	125	-	-	-	-	125	-
Colac Colac Caravan Park	**750**	375	375	-	-	-	-	750	-
Street Fixtures & Fittings	**45**	-	45	-	-	-	-	45	-
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE	**3,766**	525	2,791	450		**1,886**	**-**	**1,880**	-
TOTAL NEW CAPITAL WORKS	**5,088**	**570**	**3,141**	**1,378**	**-**	**1,886**	**-**	**3,203**	**-**

5.4.3 Works carried forward from the previous year

Capital Works Area	Project Cost	Asset expenditure types				Summary of Funding Sources			
		New	Renewal	Upgrade	Expansion	Grants	Contributions	Council cash	Borrowings
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
PROPERTY									
Leasehold Improvements									
Old Parks Depot	**150**	-	-	150	-	-	-	150	-
Buildings									
Tallangatta office renewal	**195**	-	195	-	-	-	-	195	-
TOTAL PROPERTY	**345**	**-**	**195**	**150**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**345**	**-**
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT									
Plant, Machinery and Equipment									
Vehicle Fleet Replacements	**93**	-	93	-	-	-	-	93	-
Trailers	**60**	60	-	-	-	60	-	-	-
TOTAL PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	**153**	60	93	-	-	**60**	-	**93**	-

Capital Works Area	Project Cost	Asset expenditure types				Summary of Funding Sources			
		New	Renewal	Upgrade	Expansion	Grants	Contributions	Council cash	Borrowings
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
INFRASTRUCTURE									
Roads									
Corryong CBD Carparks	**300**	300	-	-	-	-	-	300	-
Corryong Hanson Street	**3,659**	-	-	3,659	-	2,302	-	1,357	-
Thomas Lane Intersection	**450**	-	-	450	-	300	-	150	-
Georges Creek Road	**350**	-	-	350	-	350	-	-	-
Mitta Streetscape Stage 2	**500**	-	-	500	-	-	-	500	-
Magorra Park Entrance	**26**	-	-	26	-	-	-	26	-
Bridges								-	-
Lake Road - Bridge Upgrade	**200**	-	-	200	-	200	-	-	-
Bridge Renewals Program	**841**	-	841	-	-	841	-	-	-
Footpaths and Cycleways									
Walwa Streetscape	**100**	-	-	100	-	50	-	50	-
Recreational, Leisure & Community Facilities									
Corryong Swimming Pool	**20**	-	-	20	-	-	-	20	-
Tallangatta Swimming Pool	**10**	-	10	-	-	-	-	10	-
Waste Management									
Transfer Station Retaining Wall	**210**	-	210	-	-	-	-	210	-
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE	**6,666**	300	1,061	5,306	-	**4,043**	-	**2,623**	-
TOTAL CARRIED FORWARD CAPITAL WORKS 2025/26	**7,164**	**360**	**1,349**	**5,456**	-	**4,103**	-	**3,061**	-

Targeted performance indicators

The following tables highlight Council's current and projected performance across a selection of targeted service and financial performance indicators. These indicators provide a useful analysis of Council's intentions and performance and should be interpreted in the context of the organisation's objectives. The targeted performance indicators below are the prescribed performance indicators contained in Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. Results against these indicators and targets will be reported in Council's Performance Statement included in the Annual Report.

Targeted performance indicators – Service

Indicator	Measure	Actual	Forecast	Target	Target Projections			Trend
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	+/o/-
Governance								
Consultation and engagement (Council decisions made and implemented with community input)	**Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement** Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council	46%	50%	52%	54%	56%	58%	+
Roads								
Condition (sealed local roads are maintained at the adopted condition standard)	**Sealed local roads below the intervention level** Number of kms of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / Kms of sealed local roads	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	o
Statutory planning								
Service standard (planning application processing and decisions are in accordance with legislative requirements)	**Planning applications decided within the relevant required time** Number of planning application decisions made within the relevant required time / Number of planning application decisions made	89%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	+
Waste management								
Waste diversion (amount of waste diverted from landfill is maximised)	**Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill** Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins	40%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	+

Targeted performance indicators – Financial

Indicator	Measure	Actual	Forecast	Target	Target Projections			Trend
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	+/o/-
Liquidity								
Working Capital (sufficient working capital is available to pay bills as and when they fall due)	**Current assets compared to current liabilities** Current assets / current liabilities	360.63%	268%	253%	249%	256%	262%	+
Obligations								
Asset renewal (assets are renewed as planned)	**Asset renewal compared to depreciation** Asset renewal and upgrade expense / Asset depreciation	0.00%	157.10%	175.35%	83.10%	68.30%	67.56%	o
Stability								
Rates concentration (revenue is generated from a range of sources)	**Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue** Rate revenue / adjusted underlying revenue	46.50%	50.95%	49.08%	60.79%	60.54%	60.80%	+
Efficiency								
Expenditure level (resources are used efficiently in the delivery of services)	**Expenses per property assessment** Total expenses / no. of property assessments	$6,207	$6,931	$6,444	$6,637	$6,837	$7,050	+

Financial performance indicators

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

Indicator	Measure	Actual	Forecast	Budget	Projections			Trend
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	+/o/-
Operating position								
Adjusted underlying result (an adjusted underlying surplus is generated in the ordinary course of business)	**Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)** Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / Adjusted underlying revenue	24.16%	-13.19%	-2.83%	-4.77%	-1.41%	-1.86%	+
Liquidity								
Unrestricted cash (sufficient cash that is free of restrictions is available to pay bills as and when they fall due)	**Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities** Unrestricted cash / current liabilities	112.19%	134%	130%	86%	34%	30%	o
Obligations								
Loans and borrowings (level of interest bearing loans and borrowings is appropriate to the size and nature of Council's activities)	**Loans and borrowings compared to rates** Interest bearing loans and borrowings / rate revenue	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	+
Loans and borrowings (level of interest bearing loans and borrowings is appropriate to the size and nature of Council's activities)	**Loans and borrowings repayments compared to rates** Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / rate revenue	0.22%	0.15%	0.15%	0.14%	0.14%	0.13%	+
Indebtedness (level of long term liabilities is appropriate to the size and nature of a Council's activities)	**Non-current liabilities compared to own-source revenue** Non-current liabilities / own source revenue	4.80%	6.64%	2.54%	2.40%	2.40%	2.30%	+
Stability								
Rates effort (rating level is set based on the community's capacity to pay)	**Rates compared to property values** Rate revenue / CIV of rateable properties in the municipal district	0.30%	0.30%	0.31%	0.30%	0.29%	0.28%	o
Efficiency								
Revenue level (resources are used efficiently in the delivery of services)	**Average rate per property assessment** General rates and municipal charges / no. of property assessments	$1,830	$1,876	$1,923	$1,972	$2,011	$2,052	+

Notes to indicators

1 Adjusted underlying result – An indicator of the sustainable operating result required to enable Council to continue to provide core services and meet its objectives. Continued losses mean reliance on Council reserves until they are exhausted.

2 Working Capital – The proportion of current liabilities represented by current assets. This is forecast to decline to unsustainable levels due to their being insufficient financial resources to support requirements.

3 Debt compared to rates - The trend indicates Council's reducing reliance on debt through redemption of debt.

4 Asset renewal - This percentage indicates the extent of Council's renewal of assets against its depreciation charge (an indication of the decline in value of its existing capital assets). A percentage greater than 100 indicates Council is maintaining its existing assets, while a percentage less than 100 means its assets are deteriorating faster than they are being renewed and future capital expenditure will be required to renew assets.

5 Rates concentration - Reflects extent of reliance on rate revenues to fund all of Council's ongoing services. The trend indicates Council will become more reliant on rate revenue compared to all other revenue sources.

End of Towong Shire Council Budget Report

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Towong Shire Council - Budget 2025/26
FEE SCHEDULE (Effective from 1 July 2025)

Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Waste Collection						
Garbage and Recycling - 80/240 Litre Bins	$310.00	$310.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Garbage and Recycling - 140/240 Litre Bins (Standard Size)	$340.00	$340.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Garbage and Recycling - 240/240 Litre Bins	$380.00	$380.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Garbage, Recycling & FOGO - 80/240/240 Litre Bins	$470.00	$470.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Garbage, Recycling & FOGO - 140/240/240 Litre Bins	$495.00	$495.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Garbage, Recycling & FOGO - 240/240/240 Litre Bins	$530.00	$530.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Additional - Garbage - 80 Litre Bin	$325.00	$325.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Additional - Garbage - 140 Litre Bin (Standard Size)	$380.00	$380.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Additional - Garbage - 240 Litre Bin	$495.00	$495.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Additional - Recycling - 240 Litre Bin	$180.00	$180.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Additional - FOGO - 240 Litre Bin	$155.00	$155.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Garbage/Recycle Service Extension - per km (by request and subject to Council approval)	$0.20	$0.20	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Waste Management Centres						
Municipal Waste						
Bag	$9.00	$10.00	11.1%	$1.00	Yes	No
Wheelie Bin	$10.00	$11.00	10.0%	$1.00	Yes	No
Level 4 x 6 trailer	$30.00	$32.00	6.7%	$2.00	Yes	No
Heaped 4 x 6 Trailer	$60.00	$62.00	3.3%	$2.00	Yes	No
Level Tandem Trailer	$70.00	$72.00	2.9%	$2.00	Yes	No
Heaped Tandem Trailer	$94.00	$96.00	2.1%	$2.00	Yes	No
Per cubic meter	$56.00	$58.00	3.6%	$2.00	Yes	No
Per Tonne	$185.00	$190.00	2.7%	$5.00	Yes	No
Demolition, Construction, Commercial, Industrial Waste						
Bag	$6.00	$9.00	50.0%	$3.00	Yes	No
Wheelie Bin	$12.00	$12.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Level 4 x 6 trailer	$35.00	$35.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Heaped 4 x 6 Trailer	$50.00	$55.00	10.0%	$5.00	Yes	No
Level Tandem Trailer	$80.00	$85.00	6.3%	$5.00	Yes	No
Heaped Tandem Trailer	$100.00	$105.00	5.0%	$5.00	Yes	No
Per cubic meter	$104.00	$110.00	5.8%	$6.00	Yes	No
Per Tonne	$210.00	$210.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Comingled Recycling (Unsorted)						
Bag	$1.00	$1.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Wheelie Bin	$2.00	$2.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Level 4 x 6 trailer	$10.00	$10.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Heaped 4 x 6 Trailer	$15.00	$18.00	20.0%	$3.00	Yes	No
Level Tandem Trailer	$20.00	$20.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Heaped Tandem Trailer	$30.00	$32.00	6.7%	$2.00	Yes	No
Per cubic meter	$25.00	$25.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Per Tonne	$140.00	$140.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Greenwaste						
Bag	$3.00	$4.50	50.0%	$1.50	Yes	No
Wheelie Bin	$5.00	$6.00	20.0%	$1.00	Yes	No
Level 4 x 6 trailer	$15.00	$15.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Heaped 4 x 6 Trailer	$25.00	$25.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Level Tandem Trailer	$35.00	$35.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Heaped Tandem Trailer	$45.00	$45.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Per cubic meter	$30.00	$30.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Per Tonne	$180.00	$180.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Mattresses or Bed Bases (each)	$37.00	$40.00	8.1%	$3.00	Yes	No
E-Waste - $ per kilo						

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Towong Shire Council - Budget 2025/26
FEE SCHEDULE (Effective from 1 July 2025)

Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Tyres						
Car / Motor Cycle	$9.50	$10.00	5.3%	$0.50	Yes	No
Car / Motor Cycle (with Rim)	$15.00	$15.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Light Truck	$15.00	$18.00	20.0%	$3.00	Yes	No
Light Truck (with Rim)	$25.00	$30.00	20.0%	$5.00	Yes	No
Tractor / Heavy Truck (small)	$110.00	$110.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Tractor / Heavy Truck (medium)	$210.00	$210.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Tractor / Heavy Truck (large)	$300.00	$300.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Earthmover / Tractor (extra large)	$1,670.00	$1,670.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Forklift	$50.00	$50.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Loader	$480.00	$480.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
LPG Cylinders						
Small (<9kg)	$15.00	$18.00	20.0%	$3.00	Yes	No
Large (>9kg)	$25.00	$35.00	40.0%	$10.00	Yes	No
Fridge or Air Conditioner	$20.00	$25.00	25.0%	$5.00	Yes	No
Clean Soil (per cubic metre)	$25.00	$25.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Concrete, Bricks and Rubble						
Cubic Meter	$24.00	$30.00	25.0%	$6.00	Yes	No
Small Trailer	$34.00	$40.00	17.6%	$6.00	Yes	No
Tandem Trailer	$44.00	$50.00	13.6%	$6.00	Yes	No
Wheelie Bin / Boot	$14.00	$24.00	71.4%	$10.00	Yes	No
Kindergarten and Child Care						
4 Year old and 3 Year Old Kinder per term (Where Child has already received full year free rebate)	$500.00	$500.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Additional hours - above 15 hours per week (per term)	$500.00	$500.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Child Care - per day fee (prior to Childcare Subsidy)						
Child care fees (Walwa Early Years Centre)	$80.00	$100.00	25.0%	$20.00	No	No
Child care fees (Bellbridge Early Years Centre)	$100.00	$120.00	20.0%	$20.00	No	No
Child care fees (Tallangatta Early Years Centre)	$100.00	$120.00	20.0%	$20.00	No	No
Child Care - Before School Care (prior to Childcare Subsidy)						
Before School Care (Bellbridge Early Years Center)	$10.00	$12.00	20.0%	$2.00	No	No
Before School Care (Tallangatta Early Years Center)	$20.00	$24.00	20.0%	$4.00	No	No
Child Care - After School Care (prior to Childcare Subsidy)						
After School Care (Bellbridge Early Years Center)	$20.00	$22.00	10.0%	$2.00	No	No
After School Care (Tallangatta Early Years Center)	$25.00	$30.00	20.0%	$5.00	No	No
Long Day Care fees (School age - Vacation care and school hours only)	N/A	$60.00				
Swimming Pools						
General Admission						
Adult Single Admission	$6.00	$6.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Adult Single Admission - Concession	$3.00	$3.50	16.7%	$0.50	Yes	No
Junior (<16 years) Single Admission	$3.00	$3.50	16.7%	$0.50	Yes	No
Supervising Adult Single Admission	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Event Spectator Single Admission	$3.00	$3.50	16.7%	$0.50	Yes	No
Memberships - Standard						
Family Season Ticket	$190.00	$200.00	5.3%	$10.00	Yes	No
Adult Season Ticket	$110.00	$116.00	5.5%	$6.00	Yes	No
Junior (<16 years) Season Ticket	$70.00	$74.00	5.7%	$4.00	Yes	No
Family Season Ticket - Concession	$140.00	$150.00	7.1%	$10.00	Yes	No
Adult Season Ticket - Concession	$90.00	$95.00	5.6%	$5.00	Yes	No
Memberships - Early Bird						

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Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Family Season Ticket	$140.00	$158.00	12.9%	$18.00	Yes	No
Adult Season Ticket	$90.00	$99.00	10.0%	$9.00	Yes	No
Junior (<16 years) Season Ticket	$60.00	$66.00	10.0%	$6.00	Yes	No
Family Season Ticket - Concession	$130.00	$142.00	9.2%	$12.00	Yes	No
Adult Season Ticket - Concession	$80.00	$87.00	8.8%	$7.00	Yes	No
Pool Hire						
Schools (outside of operating hours):						
- Single Session	$75.00	$78.75	5.0%	$3.75	Yes	No
- 5-15 Sessions	$370.00	$388.50	5.0%	$18.50	Yes	No
- 16-35 Sessions	$925.00	$971.25	5.0%	$46.25	Yes	No
- 36+ Sessions	$1,500.00	$1,575.00	5.0%	$75.00	Yes	No
- Lifeguard (per hour)	$70.00	$73.50	5.0%	$3.50	Yes	No
Individual Private Hire - outside operating hours (e.g parties)	Not Available					
Swimming Clubs - outside of operating hours	General Admission	General Admission			Yes	No
Other Sporting Clubs - outside of operating hours	General Admission	General Admission			Yes	No
Lane Hire:						
- Within operating hours, per lane per hour	$15.00	$15.75	5.0%	$0.75	Yes	No
Swimming Instructors or Commercial Operators						
- Outside of operating hours	General Admission	General Admission			Yes	No
- Within operating hours, per lane per hour	$15.00	$15.75	5.0%	$0.75	Yes	No
Kiosk Sales						
All Items	RRP	RRP			Yes	No
Animal Control						
Registration and Permit Fees						
Base Rate - Dog						
Base Rate - Cat						
Dog Registration - Maximum*	$119.00	$119.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Dog Registration - Maximum Pensioner*	$61.40	$61.40	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Dog Registration - Reduced*	$42.30	$42.30	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Dog Registration - Reduced Pensioner*	$23.20	$23.20	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Dog Registration - Working Dog*	$23.20	$23.20	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Cat Registration - Maximum*	$119.00	$119.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Cat Registration - Maximum Pensioner*	$61.40	$61.40	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Cat Registration - Reduced*	$42.30	$42.30	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Cat Registration - Reduced Pensioner*	$23.20	$23.20	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Registration - Animal Business*	$124.00	$124.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Transfer of Registration from Another Municipality	$11.00	$11.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Replacement Registration Tag	$11.00	$11.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Permit to Keep Multiple Animals	$58.00	$58.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially
Animals registered for the first time between 1 January and 28 February**	$15.10	$15.10	0.0%	$0.00	No	Partially

* Includes the Victorian State Government Levy of $3.50 per dog, $2.00 per cat or $10.00 per animal business

** To be charged Replacement Registration Tag fee + State Government Levy of $4.00 per animal

Impoundment Fees						
Release - per animal (Cats and Dogs). Per night	$60.00	At cost	-41.2%	-$42.00	Yes	No
Release - per animal (Cattle, Sheep, Horses and Other)	$48.00	At cost	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Sustenance - per animal per day (All Animals)	$22.50	At cost	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No

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Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Transport (Cattle, Sheep and Horses and other)	Cost + 50%	At cost			Yes	No
Cat Trap Hire						
Deposit	$50.00	$50.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Fee (per week)	$11.00	$11.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Building						
Class 1, 2 and 10 - (Dwellings and Outbuildings)						
New Dwellings (up to 4 inspections included)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $2,400)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $2,400)	-100.0%	$800.00	Yes	No
External Additions (up to 4 inspections included)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $1,800)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $1,800)			Yes	No
Internal Alterations (up to 2 inspections included)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $820)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $820)			Yes	No
Multi Unit Developments (up to 4 inspections per unit included)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $2,000)	Cost of Works x 0.005 (Minimum Fee $2,000)			Yes	No
Class 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (Commercial, Industrial and Other)						
< $30,000	$940.00	$940.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
$30,001 - $100,000	$490 + Cost of Works x 0.0125	$490 + Cost of Works x 0.0125			Yes	No
$100,001 - $500,000	$1,600 + Cost of Works x 0.003	$1,600 + Cost of Works x 0.003			Yes	No
$500,001+	$3,300 + Cost of Works x 0.0016	$3,300 + Cost of Works x 0.0016			Yes	No
Additional Inspections						
Inspection	$355.00	$355.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Private Building Serveyor Inspection Fees		$525.80			No	No
Private Building Serveyor Inspection Fees - Over 1 hour travel		$605.00			No	No
Minor Works						
Garages, Carports <$5,000 in value (1 inspection included)	$450.00	$450.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Garages, Carports $5,000<$10,000 in value (1 inspection included)	$580.00	$580.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Garages, Carports $10,000<$20,000 in value (1 inspection included)	$700.00	$700.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Garages, Carports >$20,000 (up to 2 inspections included)	$900.00	$900.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Swimming Pools (above ground)	$650.00	$650.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Swimming Pools (inground)	$850.00	$850.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Swimming Pool (Fence only)	$290.00	$290.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Building Removals, Verandas, Re-stumping, Fences, Heaters (up to 1 inspection included)	$580.00	$580.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Demolitions						
Demolitions (any height class 1 or 10)	$520.00	$520.00			Yes	No
Demolitions (any other building $ per storey)	$900.00	$900.00			Yes	No
Building Removals, Verandahs, Restrumping, Fences (1 inspection)	$520.00	$520.00			Yes	No
All Types (up to 2 inspections included)	$800.00	$800.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Lodgement Fee						
Domestic and Commercial (>$5,000)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Building Commission Levies						
Domestic (>$10,000 Cost of Works)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes

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Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Commercial (>$10,000 Cost of Works)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other Services						
Application for Extension of Time	$90.00	$90.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Records Retrieval (Non FOI)	$90 per hour ($50.00 minimum charge)	$90 per hour ($50.00 minimum charge)			Yes	No
Occupancy Permits (not in conjunction with Building Permit)	150% of the costs of works for Relevant Building Permit	150% of the costs of works for Relevant Building Permit			Yes	No
Owner-builder Certificate of Consent	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Building Certificates	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Consideration for report and consent under Section 29A of the Act (Building Permit Application for Demolition) - Regulation 312	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Consideration for report and consent under Part 4, 5, 8 or 604(4) of the regulations (Regulation 312)	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Consideration for report and consent under 610(2) of the regulations (Stormwater Discharge Points) - Regulation 312	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Building Compliance (Cost +50%) (minimum $600)	Cost + 50% (minimum $600)	Cost + 50% (minimum $600)			Yes	No
Planning						
Application for a Permit or to Amend a Planning Permit						
Class 1 – Change of use only	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
To develop land or to use and develop land for a single dwelling per lot or to undertake development ancillary to the use of the land for a single dwelling per lot if the estimated cost of development included in the application is:						
Class 2 - Dwellings $10,000 to $100,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 3 - Dwellings more than $100,001	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
To develop land (other than for a single dwelling per lot) if the estimated cost of development included in the application is:						
Class 4 - $10,000 or less	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 5 - $10,000 to $250,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 6 - $250,000 to $500,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 7 - $500,000 to $1,000,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 8 - $1,000,000 to $7,000,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 9 - $7,000,000 to $10,000,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 10 - $10,000,000 to $50,000,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 11 - Over $50,000,000	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 12 - Subdivide existing building	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 13 - Subdivide land into two lots	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 14 - To effect a realignment of a common boundary between lots or to consolidate two or more lots	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 15 - To subdivide land	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 16 - To remove a restriction (within the meaning of the Subdivision Act 1988) over land if the land has been used or developed for more than 2 years before the date of the applications in a manner which would have been lawful under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 but for the existence of the restriction	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 17 - To create, vary or remove a restriction within the meaning of the Subdivision Act 1988 or to create or remove a right of way	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Class 18 - To create, vary or remove an easement other than a right of way or to vary or remove a condition in the nature of an easement other than a right of way in a Crown grant	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Amend an Application (Regulation 8A)						

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Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Amend an application for a permit after notice has been given for every class of application (other than Class 4)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Amend an application for a permit after notice has been given for every class of application (other than Class 5)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Combined Permit Applications						
The fee for an application for any combination of the classes of application outlined above is the sum arrived at by adding the highest of the fees which would have applied if separate applications had been made plus 50% of each of the other fees which would have applied if separate applications had been made.						
Application to Amend the Planning Scheme						
Stage 1	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Stage 2	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Stage 3	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Stage 4	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other						
Certificate of Compliance	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Planning Certificate	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Satisfaction Matters - Determining a matter where a planning scheme specifies that the matter must be done to the satisfaction of a responsible authority or a referral authority	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Consideration of a Request for the Demolition of a Building	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Application for Extension of Time	$90.00	$90.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Records Retrieval (Non FOI)	$90 per hour ($50.00 minimum charge)	$90 per hour ($50.00 minimum charge)			Yes	No
Assessment of a Development Plan	$340.00	$340.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Public Notice of an Application	$121.00 for 1-20 letters $230.00 for 20+ letters	$121.00 for 1-20 letters $230.00 for 20+ letters			Yes	No
Admin Fee for Section 173 Agreements	$100.00	$100.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Request for Written Planning Information	$128.00	$128.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Secondary Consent	$265.00	$265.00				
Engineering						
Consent for Works in a Roadway						
Minor Works (within roadway or pathway)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Minor Works (not within roadway or pathway)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other Works (within road or pathway Speed 50 km/h or less)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other Works (within road or pathway Speed > 50 km/h)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other Works (not within road or pathway Speed 50 km/h or less)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other Works (not within road or pathway Speed > 50 km/h)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Local Laws						
Grazing Permit	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Stock Grid (0 - 250m)	$61.00	$61.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Stock Grid (250+m - 500m)	$122.00	$122.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Stock Grid (500+m - 1km)	$183.00	$183.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Stock Grid (Greater than 1km)	$244.00	$244.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Environmental Health						
Food Premises - Class 1 ready to eat potentially hazardous served to vulnerable groups, e.g. hospitals)	$585.00	$600.00	2.6%	$0.00	No	Partially
Food Premises - Class 2 (Fixed and Mobile)	$430.00	$440.00	2.3%	$0.00	No	Partially
Food Premises - Class 3 (Fixed and Mobile)	$285.00	$290.00	1.8%	$0.00	No	Partially

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Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Food Premises - Class 4 (Fixed, Mobile and Temprorary)	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	No	Partially
Temporary Food Premises - Class 2	$218.00	$223.00	2.3%	$0.00	No	Partially
Temporary Food Premises - Class 3	$137.00	$140.00	2.2%	$0.00	No	Partially
Temporary Food Premises - Class 4	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	No	Partially
Transfer Fee - All Others	50% of Applicable Fee	50% of Applicable Fee			No	No
Registration (New) - Assessment Fee		$188.00			No	Partially
Registration (New & Renewal) - Each additional EFT above 5.0 (Part Time and Casual employee equivalent to 0.5 EFT)		$33.00			No	No
Follow Up Inspection Fees		$188.00			No	No
Audit at request of of business, one off non compliance (per hour)		$94.00			No	No
Late Penalty Fee - Premises Registrations	50% of Applicable Fee	50% of Applicable Fee			No	No
Prescribed Accomodation						
Renewal Prescribed accommodation - 4-10 client capacity	$358.00	$358.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
New Registration Prescribed accommodation - 4-10 client capacity	$537.00	$537.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Renewal Prescribed accommodation - 11-20 client capacity	$435.00	$435.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
New Registration Prescribed accommodation - 11-20 client capacity	$649.00	$649.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Renewal Prescribed accommodation - 21-30 client capacity	$511.00	$511.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
New Registration Prescribed accommodation - 21-30 client capacity	$764.00	$764.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Renewal Prescribed accommodation - 31-40 client capacity	$579.00	$579.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
New Registration Prescribed accommodation - 31-40 client capacity	$863.00	$863.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Renewal Prescribed accommodation - 40+ client capacity	$676.00	$676.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
New Registration Prescribed accommodation - 40+ client capacity	$1,009.00	$1,009.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Prescribed Accommodation up to 9 beds	$200.00	$200.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Prescribed Accommodation 10 or more beds	$275.00	$275.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Public Health and Wellbeing Act Registration Fees						
Renewal - Medium Risk - Beauty, waxing, threading, facials, nails, eyelash extensions, tinting	$290.00	$290.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Registration - New Medium risk premises	$434.00	$434.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Renewal - High Risk - Skin Penetration, tattooing, colonic irrigation	$311.00	$311.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Registration- New High risk premises	$467.00	$467.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Ongoing registration of hairdressers	$415.00	$415.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Bulk flu immunisation	$27.00	$27.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Registration – New Application / Renewal Category 1 Aquatic facility	$383.00	$383.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Registration - each additional pool or spa on the premises	$164.00	$164.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Transfer of Health, Rooming House or Aquatic Facility registration (excluding one-off Hairdressers)	50% of renewal fee	50% of renewal fee			Yes	No
					Yes	No
Health Act Premises (e.g. hairdressing, skin penetration)	$162.00	$162.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Health Act Premises Schools, Church, and Other Community Groups	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Health Act Premises Inspection Request Fee	$173.00	$173.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Septic Tanks (Additional inspection or alterations)	$129.00	$129.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Permit to construct, install or alter a system	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Minor alteration permit	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Renew a permit	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Transfer a permit	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Amend a permit	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Exemption from a permit	As Regulated	As Regulated			Yes	Yes
Letter no report and consent required	$240.00	$240.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Report and consent/Consent to use	$612.00	$612.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Septic Tank Permit (New)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Partially
Septic Tank Permit (Alteration)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Partially
Septic Tank Permit (Re-inspection)	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Partially
Records Retrieval (Non FOI)	$90 per hour ($50.00	$90 per hour ($50.00			No	No
Residential Tenancies Act						
Caravan Park - Registration	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Caravan Park - Transfer	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Corryong Saleyards						
Yarding Fees						
Bobby Calves (per head)	$2.40	$2.40	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Bulls (per head)	$10.15	$10.15	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Cattle (per head)	$9.60	$9.60	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No

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Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Calves (per head)	$4.80	$4.80	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Cow and Calf (sold as a unit)	$10.75	$10.75	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Sheep (per head)	$1.25	$1.25	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Penning and Weigh Fee (per head)	$2.90	$2.90	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Scanning Charge (per head)	$2.95 per head	$2.95 per head			Yes	No
Selling Charges - Agent						
Agents Fee	$290.00	$290.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Selling Charges - Vendor						
NLIS Rescanning Fee	$2.95	$2.95	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
NLIS Device - Retagging/Tagging Fee - Cattle	$28.50	$28.50	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
NLIS Device - Retagging/Tagging Fee - Bull	$34.00	$34.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
NLIS Device - Non Reader Tagging Fee	$4.55	$4.55	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Lost Lifetime Traceability Beast Identification	$2.30	$2.30	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Transfer NLIS	$0.70	$0.70	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Passed in levy (cattle and calves)	Nil	Nil			Yes	No
Other Fees						
Unreported Stock movement	additional 25% on top				Yes	No
Truck wash (per minute, minimum of 10 minutes)	$2.00	$2.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Cleaning:				$0.00		
- Zone 1	$172.00	$172.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
- additional pens to Zone 1	$5.80	$5.80	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Weigh Bridge						
Single weigh	$35.00	$35.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Double weigh	$42.00	$42.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Property						
Land Information Certificate	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Valuation Certificate	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Freedom of Information						
Application Fee	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Charge for Search Time	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Charge for Supervision	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Charge for providing black and white photocopy	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Other Fees	As Regulated	As Regulated			No	Yes
Meeting Rooms and Facilities						
Indi, Mitta or Snowy - Meeting Room						
Not for Profit Community Group - Half Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Not for Profit Community Group - Full Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Half Day	$52.00	$52.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Full Day	$89.00	$89.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Tallangatta Integrated Community Centre - Activity Space						
Not for Profit Community Group - Half Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Not for Profit Community Group - Full Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Hourly rate	$43.00	$43.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Half Day	$162.00	$162.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Full Day	$265.00	$265.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Tallangatta Integrated Community Centre - Library Meeting Room						
Not for Profit Community Group - Half Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Not for Profit Community Group - Full Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Half Day	$65.00	$65.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Full Day	$110.00	$110.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Tallangatta Integrated Community Centre - Meeting Room						

Towong Shire Council - Budget 2025/26
FEE SCHEDULE (Effective from 1 July 2025)

Description	2024/25 includes GST if applicable)	2025/26 includes GST if applicable)	% Increase	$ Increase	GST	Regulated
Not for Profit Community Group - Half Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Not for Profit Community Group - Full Day	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Half Day	$64.00	$64.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Commercial/Other - Full Day	$108.00	$108.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Tallangatta Integrated Community Centre - Library						
Community Hire of Library Space	NA	$50 a term / $200 a year			Yes	No
Corporate						
Records Retrieval (Non FOI)	$90 per hour ($50.00 minimum charge)	$90 per hour ($50.00 minimum charge)			Yes	No
Voters Rolls - no longer available for sale	NA	NA			No	No
Council Minutes - Mail outs to Private Citizens	$350.00	$350.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Disabled Parking Permit	$9.50	$9.50	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Debt Collection						
Location/Search Fee	At Cost	At Cost			No	No
Property Title Search	At Cost	At Cost			No	No
Filing/Listing Fee	At Cost	At Cost			No	No
Caveat Fee	At Cost	At Cost			No	No
Beneficiary Search	At Cost	At Cost			No	No
Duplicate Rate Notice	$20.00	$20.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Library, Photocopying and Faxing						
Book Club Membership	NA	$30.00			Yes	No
A4 and A3 B and W Copies	$1.25	$1.25	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
A4 and A3 Colour Copies	$2.50	$2.50	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Approved Community Groups A4 and A3 B&W Copies	$0.00	$0.00		$0.00	Yes	No
Other Fees						
Standpipe Water Charge per Kilolitre	$4.40	$4.40	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Standpipe Key Deposit	$50.00	$50.00	0.0%	$0.00	No	No
Credit Card Surchage on rate payments	1.5%	1.5%			Yes	
Airport Fees						
Corryong Airport Hire - Half Day (Not for Profit Community Groups)	$60.00	$60.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Corryong Airport Hire - Full Day (Not for Profit Community Groups)	$115.00	$115.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Corryong Airport Hire - Half Day (Commercial)	$115.00	$115.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No
Corryong Airport Hire - Full Day (Commercial)	$230.00	$230.00	0.0%	$0.00	Yes	No

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Revenue and Rating Plan

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2025 - 2029

towong.vic.gov.au

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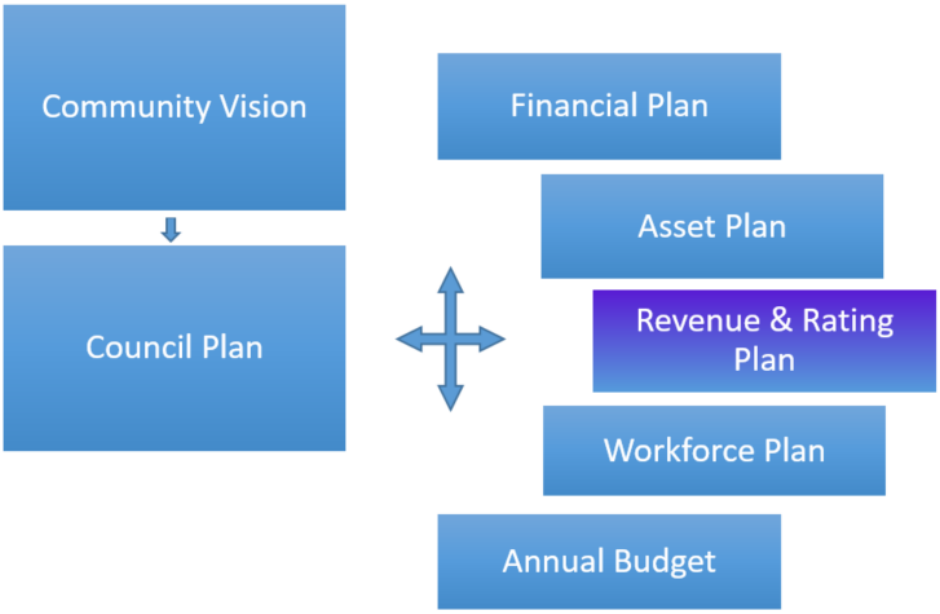
1. Purpose

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires each council to prepare a Revenue and Rating Plan to cover a minimum period of four years following each council election. The Revenue and Rating Plan establishes the revenue raising framework within which each council propose to work.

The purpose of the Towong Shire Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 ("the Revenue and Rating Plan") is to determine the most appropriate and affordable revenue and rating approach for Towong Shire Council ("Council") which in conjunction with other income sources will adequately finance the objectives in the Council Plan.

Strategies outlined in this plan align with the objectives contained in the Council Plan and will feed into our budgeting and long-term financial planning documents, as well as other strategic planning documents under our Council's strategic planning framework.



This plan explains how Council calculates the revenue needed to fund its activities, and how the funding burden will be apportioned between ratepayers and users of Council facilities and services.

In particular, this plan sets out decisions that Council has made in relation to rating options available to it under the *Local Government Act 2020* to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates across property owners. It also sets out principles that are used in decision making for other revenue sources such as fees and charges.

It is important to note that this plan does not set revenue targets for Council, rather it outlines the strategic framework and decisions that inform how Council will go about calculating and collecting its revenue.

2. Introduction

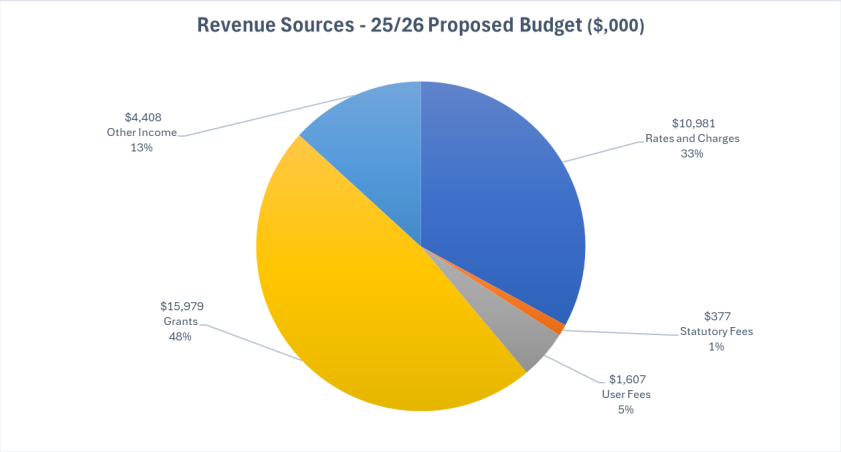
Council provides various services and facilities to the Towong Shire community, and in doing so, must collect revenue to cover the cost of providing these services and facilities.

Council's revenue sources include:

- Rates and charges
- Statutory fees and fines
- User fees
- Grants from federal, state and other governing bodies
- Other income such as interest from investments, rental lease income, community contributions and shared service fees

As below, within Council's Budget 2025/26, grants from other levels of Government are the most significant source of funding making up 48% of annual income. While some grants are recurrent, this percentage can fluctuate significantly from year to year depending on what non-recurrent grants are available and applicable to our communities' needs, and whether we are successful in our grant applications. It is therefore critical that we are clear as to our funding priorities, so that we can advocate for appropriate grant funding avenues and submit compelling applications as opportunities arise.

Grant applications also need to be considered carefully in the context of Council's long term financial plan, to ensure that Council's future funding sources are sufficient to cover the cost of renewing any new infrastructure that is built.



Rates is the second most significant source of funding making up 33% of annual income within Council's Budget 2025/26. Rates provide a reliable foundation of funding from which Council can support its priority facilities and services. The introduction of rate capping under the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System means that rate increases are generally limited to the projected inflation increase for the year ahead, unless an application is made to the Essential Services Commission for a variation.

Council provides a wide range of services to the community, often for a fee or charge. Fees in relation to statutory services are often regulated, and Council has no control over service pricing. Council generally has discretion to set its own fee or charge in relation to discretionary services and sets fees based on the principles outlined in this Revenue and Rating Plan.

3. Community Engagement

The Revenue and Rating Plan outlines Council's decision-making process as to how revenues are calculated and collected. Community engagement processes include:

- Briefing sessions with Councillors to inform them of the Council's current revenue and rating strategies and to gather input based on community considerations and feedback;
- Ongoing feedback on the communities' aspirations, challenges and objectives sought to inform Council's integrated strategic deliverables;
- Draft Revenue and Rating Plan prepared by officers and approved for public exhibition;
- Draft Revenue and Rating Plan will be placed on public exhibition with a call for public submissions;
- Council will advertise the Draft Revenue and Rating Plan through local news outlets and social media;
- Public submissions will be heard;
- Revenue and Rating Plan (with any revisions) will be presented to the June Council meeting for adoption.

4. Rates and Charges

Rates are property taxes that allow Council to raise revenue to fund essential public services to cater to its municipal community. Importantly, the rates system allows flexibility for Council to utilise different tools in its rating structure to accommodate issues of equity and fairness in rating for all ratepayers.

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

- **General Rates** – Based on property values (using the Capital Improved Valuation methodology), which are indicative of capacity to pay and form the central basis of rating under the *Local Government Act 2020*;
- **Service Charges** - A 'user pays' component for council services to reflect benefits provided by Council to ratepayers who benefit from a service; and
- **Municipal Charge** - A 'fixed rate' portion per property to cover some of the administrative costs of Council.

Striking a proper balance between these elements helps to improve equity in the distribution of the rate burden across residents.

Council makes a further distinction when applying general rates by applying rating differentials based on the purpose for which the property is used. That is, whether the property is used for residential, rural residential, rural, business or undeveloped residential purposes. This distinction is based on the concept that different property categories should pay a fair and equitable contribution, taking into account the benefits those properties derive from Council and contribute to the community, and taking into account capacity to pay of the associated ratepayer groups.

The Towong Shire Council rating structure comprises five differential rates. These rates are structured in accordance with the requirements of Section 161 'Differential Rates' of the *Local Government Act 1989*, and the Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating 2013.

The differential rates as set out in the 2025/26 Proposed Budget are currently set as follows:

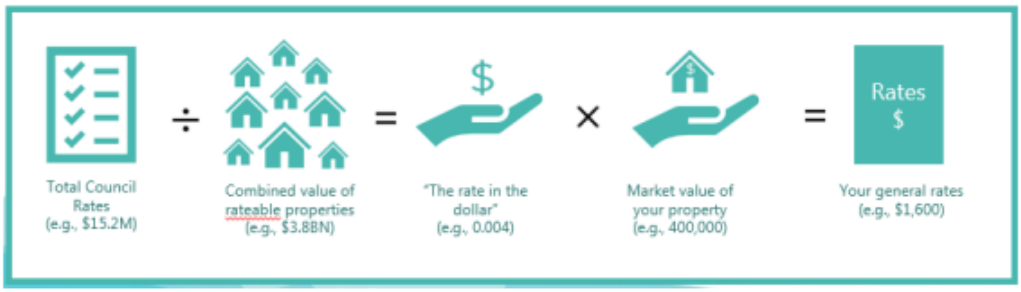
- Residential 100%
- Rural Residential 100%

- Rural 80%
- Business 90%
- Undeveloped residential 320%.

Council also levies a municipal charge. The municipal charge is a minimum rate per property and declared for the purpose of covering some of the administrative costs of Council. In applying the municipal charge, Council ensures that each ratable property in the municipality makes a contribution.

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

- Valuation (Capital Improved Value) x Rate in the Dollar (Differential Rate Type)



The rate in the dollar for each rating differential category is included in Council's annual budget.

Planning for future rate increases is an essential component of the long-term financial planning process in ensuring that Council can cover the costs of providing the facilities and services that meet community needs.

Council is aware of the balance between rate revenue (as an important income source) and community sensitivity to rate increases. With the introduction of the State Government's Fair Go Rates System, all rate increases are capped to a rate declared by the Minister for Local Government, which is announced in December for the following financial year.

Council currently utilises a service charge to fully recover the cost of Council's waste services and provide for future landfill rehabilitation costs. The garbage service charge is not capped under the Fair Go Rates System, and any surplus funds from this charge are allocated to the future provision of waste services, so that waste services are funded by the charge on a cost neutral basis over the longer term.

5. Rating Legislation

The legislative framework set out in the *Local Government Act 1989* determines Council's ability to develop a rating system. The framework provides flexibility for Council to tailor a system that suits its needs.

Section 155 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides that a Council may declare the following rates and charges on rateable land:

- General rates under Section 158
- Municipal charges under Section 159
- Service rates and charges under Section 162
- Special rates and charges under Section 163

The recommended strategy in relation to municipal charges, service rates and charges and special rates and charges are discussed later in this document.

In raising Council rates, Council is required to primarily use the valuation of the rateable property to levy rates. Section 157 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides Council with three choices in terms of which valuation base to utilise. They are: Site Valuation, Capital Improved Valuation (CIV) and Net Annual Value (NAV).

The advantages and disadvantages of the respective valuation basis are discussed further in this document. Whilst this document outlines Council's strategy regarding rates revenue, rates data will be contained in the Council's Annual Budget as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Section 94(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* states that Council must adopt a budget by 30 June each year (or at another time fixed by the Minister) to include:

a) *the total amount that the Council intends to raise by rates and charges;*
b) *a statement as to whether the rates will be raised by the application of a uniform rate or a differential rate:*
c) *a description of any fixed component of the rates, if applicable;*
d) *if the Council proposes to declare a uniform rate, the matters specified in section 160 of the Local Government Act 1989;*
e) *if the Council proposes to declare a differential rate for any land, the matters specified in section 161(2) of the Local Government Act 1989;*

Section 94(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* also states that Council must ensure that, if applicable, the budget also contains a statement –

a) *that the Council intends to apply for a special order to increase the Council's average rate cap for the financial year or any other financial year; or*
b) *that the Council has made an application to the ESC for a special order and is waiting for the outcome of the application; or*
c) *that a special Order has been made in respect of the Council and specifying the average rate cap that applies for the financial year or any other financial year.*

This plan outlines the principles and strategic framework that Council will utilise in calculating and distributing the rating burden to property owners, however, the quantum of rate revenue and rating differential amounts will be determined in the annual Towong Shire Council budget.

6. Rating Principles

When developing a rating strategy, in particular with reference to differential rates, Council gives consideration to the following good practice taxation principles:

- Wealth Tax
- Equity
- Efficiency
- Simplicity
- Benefit
- Capacity to Pay
- Diversity.

Wealth Tax

The "wealth tax" principle implies that the rates paid are dependent upon the value of a ratepayer's real property and have no correlation to the individual ratepayer's consumption of services or the perceived benefits derived by individual ratepayers from the expenditures funded from rates.

Equity
Horizontal equity – ratepayers in similar situations should pay similar amounts of rates (ensured mainly by accurate property valuations, undertaken in a consistent manner, their classification into homogenous property classes and the right of appeal against valuation).

Vertical equity – those who are better off should pay more rates than those worse off (the rationale applies for the use of progressive and proportional income taxation. It implies a "relativity" dimension to the fairness of the tax burden).

Efficiency
Economic efficiency is measured by the extent to which production and consumption decisions by people are affected by rates.

Simplicity
How easily a rates system can be understood by ratepayers and the practicality and ease of administration.

Benefit
The extent to which there is a nexus between consumption/benefit and the rate burden.

Capacity to Pay
The capacity of ratepayers or groups of ratepayers to pay rates.

Diversity
The capacity of ratepayers within a group to pay rates.

The rating challenge for Council is to determine the appropriate balancing of these competing considerations.

In addition property rates will:
- be reviewed annually;
- not change dramatically from one year to next; and
- be sufficient to fund current expenditure commitments and deliverables outlined in the Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

7. Determining Which Valuation Base to Use

Under the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council has three options as to the valuation base it elects to use. They are:

- **Capital Improved Value (CIV)** – Value of land and improvements upon the land.
- **Site Value (SV)** – Value of land only.
- **Net Annual Value (NAV)** – Rental valuation based on CIV.

For residential and farm properties, NAV is calculated at 5 per cent of the Capital Improved Value. For commercial and industrial properties, NAV is calculated as the greater of the estimated annual rental value or 5 per cent of the CIV.

Capital Improved Value (CIV)
Capital Improved Value is the most commonly used valuation base by local governments in Victoria. Based on the value of both land and all improvements on the land, it is generally easily understood by ratepayers as it equates to the market value of the property.

Section 161 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides that a Council may raise any general rates by the application of a differential rate if –

a) It uses the capital improved value system of valuing land; and
b) It considers that a differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of its functions.

Where a council does not utilise CIV, it may only apply limited differential rates in relation to farm land, urban farm land or residential use land.

Advantages of using Capital Improved Value (CIV)

- CIV includes all property improvements, and hence is often supported on the basis that it more closely reflects "capacity to pay". The CIV rating method takes into account the full development value of the property, and hence better meets the equity criteria than Site Value and NAV.
- With the increased frequency of valuations (previously two year intervals, now annual intervals) the market values are more predictable and has reduced the level of objections resulting from valuations.
- The concept of the market value of property is more easily understood with CIV rather than NAV or SV.
- Most councils in Victoria have now adopted CIV which makes it easier to compare relative movements in rates and valuations across councils.
- The use of CIV allows Council to apply differential rates which greatly adds to Council's ability to equitably distribute the rating burden based on ability to afford council rates.

Disadvantages of using CIV

- The main disadvantage with CIV is the fact that rates are based on the total property value which may not necessarily reflect the income level of the property owner as with pensioners and low-income earners.

Site value (SV)
There are currently no Victorian councils that use this valuation base. With valuations based simply on the valuation of land and with only very limited ability to apply differential rates, the implementation of Site Value would hinder Council's objective of a fair and equitable rating system.

Advantages of Site Value

- There is a perception that under site value, a uniform rate would promote development of land, particularly commercial and industrial developments. There is, however, little evidence to prove that this is the case.
- Scope for possible concessions for urban farm-land and residential use land.

Disadvantages of using Site Value

- SV is a major burden on property owners that have large areas of land. Some of these owners may have much smaller/older dwellings compared to those who have smaller land areas but well developed dwellings - but will pay more in rates.
- The use of SV can place pressure on Council to give concessions to categories of landowners on whom the rating burden is seen to fall disproportionately. Large landowners, such as farmers for example, are disadvantaged by the use of site value.
- SV will reduce Council's rating flexibility and options to deal with any rating inequities due to the removal of the ability to levy differential rates.
- The community may have greater difficulty in understanding the SV valuation on their rate notices.

Net annual value (NAV)

NAV, in concept, represents the annual rental value of a property. However, in practice, NAV is loosely linked to capital improved value for residential and farm properties. Valuers derive the NAV directly as 5 per cent of CIV.

In contrast to the treatment of residential and farm properties, NAV for commercial and industrial properties are assessed with regard to actual market rental. This differing treatment of commercial versus residential and farm properties has led to some suggestions that all properties should be valued on a rental basis.

Overall, the use of NAV is not largely supported. For residential and farm ratepayers, actual rental values pose some problems. The artificial rental estimate used may not represent actual market value, and means the base is the same as CIV but is harder to understand.

Recommended valuation base

Towong Shire Council applies Capital Improved Value (CIV) to all properties within the municipality to take into account the fully developed value of the property. This basis of valuation takes into account the total market value of the land plus buildings and other improvements.

Differential rating, allowed for under the CIV method, enables Council to shift part of the rate burden from some groups of ratepayers to others, through different "rates in the dollar" for each class of property.

Property Valuations

The *Valuation of Land Act 1960* is the principle legislation in determining property valuations. Under the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, the Victorian Valuer-General conducts property valuations on an annual basis. Victorian City Council applies a Capital Improved Value (CIV) to all properties within the municipality to take into account the full development value of the property. This basis of valuation takes into account the total market value of the land including buildings and other improvements. The value of land is always derived by the principal of valuing land for its highest and best use at the relevant time of valuation.

Council needs to be mindful of the impacts of revaluations on the various property types in implementing the differential rating strategy outlined in the previous section to ensure that rises and falls in Council rates remain affordable and that rating 'shocks' are mitigated to some degree.

Supplementary Valuations
Supplementary valuations are carried out for a variety of reasons including rezoning, subdivisions, amalgamations, renovations, new constructions, extensions, occupancy changes and corrections. The Victorian Valuer-General is tasked with undertaking supplementary valuations and advises Council on a monthly basis of valuation and Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) changes. Supplementary valuations bring the value of the affected property into line with the general valuation of other properties within the municipality. Objections to supplementary valuations can be lodged in accordance with Part 3 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*. Any objections must be lodged with Council within two months of the issue of the supplementary rate notice.

Objections to property valuations
Part 3 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960* provides that a property owner may lodge an objection against the valuation of a property or the Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) within two months of the issue of the original or amended (supplementary) Rates and Valuation Charges Notice (Rates Notice), or within four months if the notice was not originally issued to the occupier of the land.

A property owner must lodge their objection to the valuation or the AVPCC in writing to Towong Shire Council. Property owners also have the ability to object to the site valuations on receipt of their Land Tax Assessment. Property owners can appeal their land valuation within two months of receipt of their Council Rate Notice (via Council) or within two months of receipt of their Land Tax Assessment (via the State Revenue Office).

8. Rating Differentials

Council believes each differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of council functions. Details of the objectives of each differential rate, the classes of land which are subject to each differential rate and the uses of each differential rate are set out below.

Residential Rate (General Rate)

Definition:
The Residential Rate (also known as the General Rate) is applicable to any land which is:

- Less than 0.4 hectares in size, and
- Not classified as rural, business or undeveloped residential.

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

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

Level of Rate:
The Residential Rate is the reference rate against which other differential levels are expressed. As such the level of the Rate is 100% for comparative purposes.

Rural Residential Rate
Definition:
The Rural Residential Rate is applicable to any land which is:

- From 0.4 hectares to 40 hectares in size, and
- Not classified as rural, business or undeveloped residential.

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

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

Level of Rate:
100% of the General Rate.

Rural Rate
Definition:
The Rural Rate is applicable to any land which is greater than 40 hectares in size.

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

Consideration is given to the maintenance of agriculture as a major industry in the municipal district, and to avoid providing incentive for farmers to seek to subdivide parcels for residential subdivision.

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

Level of Rate:
80% of the General Rate.

Business Rate

Definition:
The Business Rate is applicable to any land which is:

- Occupied for the principal purpose of carrying out the manufacture or production of, or trade in goods or services, or
- Unoccupied but zoned commercial or industrial under the Towong Planning Scheme.

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

Consideration is given to encouraging development of the economy and associated employment opportunities across the Shire.

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

Level of Rate:
90% of the General Rate.

Undeveloped Residential Rate

Definition:
The Undeveloped Residential Rate is applicable to any land which is:

- Within a residential, low density residential, mixed use or township zone, and
- Within a sewered area, and
- Able to be developed as residential land within the planning scheme, and
- Land that has not been issued with an occupancy permit.

Objectives:
To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations.

Consideration is given to encouraging residential development on undeveloped land to provide housing opportunities across the Shire.

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

Level of Rate:
320% of the General Rate.

Advantages of a differential rating system
Council has taken into account the following advantages of utilising a differential rating system:

- There is greater flexibility to distribute the rate burden between all classes of property, and therefore link rates with the ability to pay.
- There is greater ability to reflect the unique circumstances of some rating categories where the application of a uniform rate may create an inequitable outcome (eg. farming enterprises).
- There is greater discretion in the imposition of rates to facilitate and encourage appropriate development of the municipal district in the best interest of the community.

Disadvantages of a differential rating system
Council has also considered the following disadvantages of utilising a differential rating system:

- The justification of differential rates can at times be difficult for various ratepayers to understand and accept giving rise to queries and complaints.
- Differential rating involves a degree of administrative complexity and potential for error as properties shift from one type to another, requiring Council to update its records. Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of Council data is critical.
- Council may not achieve the desired objectives of differential rating, or may find it difficult to measure success; for example, it may be difficult to prove whether the undeveloped residential rate achieves the objective of encouraging residential development.

9. Municipal Charge

Council applies a municipal charge to offset some of its administrative costs. Under Section 159 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council may declare a municipal charge to cover some of the administrative costs of the Council. The legislation is not definitive on what comprises administrative costs and does not require Council to specify what is covered by the charge. A council's total revenue from a municipal charge in a financial year must not exceed 20 per cent of the combined sum total of the Council's total revenue from the municipal charge and the revenue from general rates (total rates).

The application of a municipal charge represents a choice to raise a portion of the rates by a flat fee for all properties, rather than sole use of the CIV valuation method. The municipal charge applies equally to all properties and is based upon the recovery of a fixed cost of providing administrative services irrespective of valuation. The same contribution amount per assessment to cover a portion of councils administrative costs can be seen as an equitable method of recovering these costs.

10. Service Rates and Charges

Section 162 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides Council with the opportunity to raise service rates and charges for any of the following services:

a. The provision of a water supply;
b. The collection and disposal of refuse;
c. The provision of sewage services;
d. Any other prescribed service.

Council currently applies service charges for the collection and disposal of refuse from properties and for the provision of waste services for the municipality. Council retains the objective of setting the service charges for waste at levels that fully recovers the cost of the waste services, including providing for the cost of rehabilitation of the council's landfill once it reaches the end of its useful life.

Should Council elect not to have a waste service charge, this same amount would be required to be raised by way of an increased general rate – meaning that residents in higher valued properties would substantially pay for the waste service of lower valued properties.

Whilst this same principle applies for rates in general, the mix of having a single fixed charge combined with valuation driven rates for the remainder of the rate invoice provides a balanced and equitable outcome.

11. Collection and Administration of Rates and Charges

The purpose of this section is to outline the rate payment options, processes, and the support provided to ratepayers facing financial hardship.

Payment options
In accordance with section 167(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* ratepayers have the option of paying rates and charges by way of four instalments. Payments are due on the prescribed dates below:

- 1st Instalment: 30 September
- 2nd Instalment: 30 November
- 3rd Instalment: 28 February
- 4th Instalment: 31 May

Council offers a range of payment options including:

- In person at Council offices (cheque, cash or EFTPOS; Visa and Mastercard may be available but may attract a service charge),
- BPAY,
- Australia Post (over the counter, over the phone via credit card and on the internet),
- By mail (cheques only).

Interest on arrears and overdue rates
Interest is charged on all overdue rates in accordance with Section 172 of the *Local Government Act 1989*. The interest rate applied is fixed under Section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983*, which is determined by the Minister and published by notice in the Government Gazette.

Pensioner rebates
Holders of a Centrelink or Veteran Affairs Pension Concession card or a Veteran Affairs Gold card which stipulates TPI or War Widow may claim a rebate on their sole or principal place of residence. Upon initial application, ongoing eligibility is maintained, unless rejected by Centrelink or the Department of Veteran Affairs during the annual verification procedure. Upon confirmation of an eligible pensioner concession status, the pensioner rebate is deducted from the rate account before payment is required by the ratepayer.

With regards to new applicants, after being granted a Pensioner Concession Card (PCC), pensioners can then apply for the rebate at any time throughout the rating year. Retrospective claims up to a maximum of one previous financial year can be approved by Council on verification of eligibility criteria, for periods prior to this claims may be approved by the relevant government department.

Deferred payments
Under Section 170 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council may defer the payment of any rate or charge for an eligible ratepayer whose property is their sole place of residency, allowing ratepayers an extended period of time to make payments or alternatively to forestall payments on an indefinite

basis until the ratepayer ceases to own or occupy the land in respect of which rates and charges are to be levied.

Where Council approves an application for deferral of rates or charges, interest will continue to be levied on the outstanding balance of rates and charges.

Rates assistance
It is acknowledged at the outset that various ratepayers may experience financial hardship for a whole range of issues and that meeting rate obligations constitutes just one element of a number of difficulties that may be faced. Council will provide options for ratepayers facing such situations to deal with the situation positively and reduce the strain imposed by financial hardship. Ratepayers may elect to either negotiate a rate payment plan or apply for a rate deferral.

Debt recovery
Council makes every effort to contact ratepayers at their correct address but it is the ratepayers' responsibility to properly advise Council of their contact details. The *Local Government Act 1989* Section 230 and 231 requires both the vendor and buyer of property, or their agents (e.g. solicitors and or conveyancers), to notify Council by way of notice of disposition or acquisition of an interest in land.

In the event that an account becomes overdue, Council will issue an overdue reminder notice which will include accrued penalty interest. In the event that the account remains unpaid, Council may take legal action without further notice to recover the overdue amount. All fees and court costs incurred will be recoverable from the ratepayer.

If an amount payable by way of rates in respect to land has been in arrears for three years or more, Council may take action to sell the property in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989* Section 181.

Fire Services Property Levy
In 2016 the Victorian State Government passed legislation requiring the Fire Services Property Levy to be collected from ratepayers. Previously this was collected through building and property insurance premiums. The Fire Services Property Levy helps fund the services provided by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and Country Fire Authority (CFA), and all levies collected by Council are passed through to the State Government.

The Fire Services Property Levy is based on two components, a fixed charge, and a variable charge which is linked to the Capital Improved Value of the property. This levy is not included in the rate cap and increases in the levy are at the discretion of the State Government.

12. Other Revenue Items

User Fees and Charges
User fees and charges are those that Council will charge for the delivery of services and use of community facilities.

Examples of user fees and charges include:
- Kindergarten and childcare fees
- Swimming pool visitation and membership fees
- Waste management fees
- Facility hire fees

In providing facilities and services, Council must consider a range of 'Best Value' principles including service cost and quality standards, value-for-money, and community expectations and values. Council must also balance the affordability and accessibility of facilities and services with its financial capacity and in the interests of long-term financial sustainability.

Councils must also comply with the government's Competitive Neutrality Policy for significant business activities they provide and adjust their service prices to neutralise any competitive advantages when competing with the private sector.

In providing services to the community, Council must determine the extent of cost recovery for particular services consistent with the level of both individual and collective benefit that the services provide and in line with the community's expectations.

Services are provided on the basis of one of the following pricing methods:

a. *Market Price*
b. *Full Cost Recovery Price*
c. *Subsidised Price*

Market pricing is where Council sets prices based on the benchmarked competitive prices of alternate suppliers. In general market price represents full cost recovery plus an allowance for profit. Market prices will be used when other providers exist in the given market, and Council needs to meet its obligations under the government's Competitive Neutrality Policy.

It should be noted that if a market price is lower than Council's full cost price, then the market price would represent Council subsidising that service. If this situation exists, and there are other suppliers existing in the market at the same price, this may mean that Council is not the most efficient supplier in the marketplace. In this situation, Council will consider whether there is a community service obligation and whether Council should be providing this service at all.

Full cost recovery pricing aims to recover all direct and indirect costs incurred by Council. This pricing should be used in particular where a service provided by Council benefits individual customers specifically, rather than the community as a whole. In principle, fees and charges should be set at a level that recovers the full cost of providing the services unless there is an overriding policy or imperative in favour of subsidisation.

Subsidised pricing is where Council subsidises a service by not passing the full cost of that service onto the customer. Subsidies may range from full subsidies (ie council provides the service free of charge) to partial subsidies, where Council provides the service to the user with a discount. The subsidy can be funded from Council's rate revenue or other sources such as State and Federal funding programs. Full Council subsidy pricing and partial cost pricing should always be based on knowledge of the full cost of providing a service.

Council develops a table of fees and charges as part of its annual budget each year. Proposed pricing changes will be included in this table and will be communicated to stakeholders before the budget is adopted, giving them the chance to review and provide valuable feedback before the fees are locked in.

Statutory Fees and Fines

Statutory fees and fines are those which Council collects under the direction of legislation or other government directives. The rates used for statutory fees and fines are generally advised by the state

government department responsible for the corresponding services or legislation, and generally Councils will have limited discretion in applying these fees.

Examples of statutory fees and fines include:
- Planning and subdivision fees
- Building and Inspection fees
- Infringements and fines
- Land Information Certificate fees.

Penalty and fee units and the corresponding amounts are as described by Victoria's Acts and Regulations.

Penalty units
Penalty units are used to define the amount payable for fines for many offences. For example, the fine for selling a tobacco product to a person aged under 18 is four penalty units.

The rate for penalty units is indexed each financial year so that it is raised in line with inflation. Any change to the value of a penalty unit will happen on 1 July each year.

Fee units
Fee units are used to calculate the cost of a certificate, registration or licence that is set out in an Act or Regulation. For example, the cost of depositing a Will with the supreme court registrar of probates is 1.6 fee units.

The value of fee units may increase at the beginning of a financial year, at the same time as penalty units.

The cost of fees and penalties is calculated by multiplying the number of units by the current value of the fee or unit. The exact cost may be rounded up or down.

Grant Revenue
Grant revenue represents income usually received from other levels of government. Some grants are singular and attached to the delivery of specific projects, whilst others can be of a recurrent nature and may or may not be linked to the delivery of projects.

Council will pro-actively advocate to other levels of government for grant funding support to deliver important infrastructure and service outcomes for the community. Council may use its own funds to leverage higher grant funding and maximise external funding opportunities.

When preparing its financial plan, Council considers its project proposal pipeline, advocacy priorities, upcoming grant program opportunities, and co-funding options to determine what grants to apply for. Council will only apply for and accept external funding if it is consistent with the Community Vision and does not lead to the distortion of Council Plan priorities.

Confirmed grants are detailed in Council's Budget. No project that is reliant on grant funding will proceed until a signed funding agreement is in place.

Contributions
Contributions represent funds received by Council, usually from non-government sources, and are usually linked to projects.

Contributions can be made to Council in the form of either cash payments or asset hand-overs.

Examples of contributions include:

- Monies collected from developers under planning and development agreements
- Monies collected under developer contribution plans and infrastructure contribution plans
- Contributions from user groups towards upgrade of facilities
- Assets handed over to council from developers at the completion of a subdivision, such as roads, drainage, and streetlights.

Contributions should always be linked to a planning or funding agreement. Council will not undertake any work on a contribution-funded project until a signed agreement outlining the contribution details is in place.

Contributions linked to developments can be received well before any Council expenditure occurs. In this situation, the funds will be identified and held separately for the specific works identified in the agreements.

Interest on Investments

Council receives interest on funds managed as part of its investment portfolio, where funds are held in advance of expenditure, or for special purposes. The investment portfolio is managed per Council's investment policy, which seeks to earn the best return on funds, whilst minimising risk.

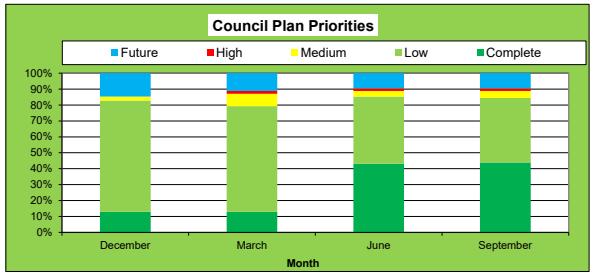
Borrowings

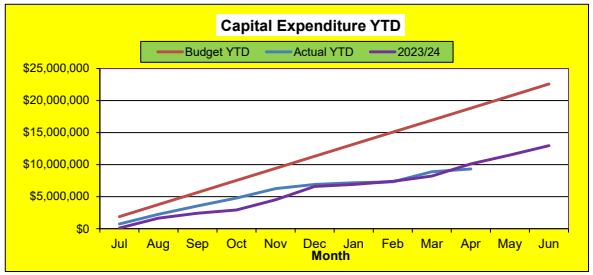
Whilst not a source of income, borrowings can be an important cash management tool in appropriate circumstances. Loans can only be approved by council resolution.

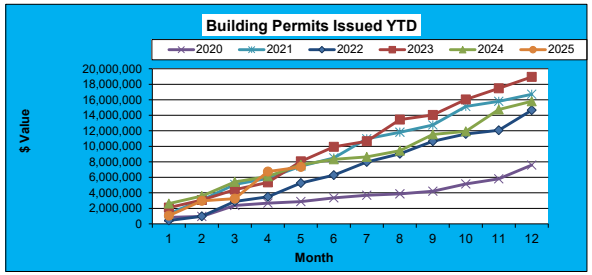
Borrowings may be appropriate when used to fund new infrastructure or services which will independently generate sufficient revenue to fund the associated debt repayments; or where there are large capital works with intergenerational benefits, which will support the repayment of the debt over the longer term.

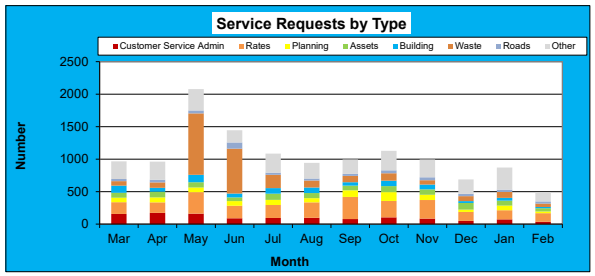
Borrowings must be at a level which are sustainable in the context of Council's Long Term Financial Plan.

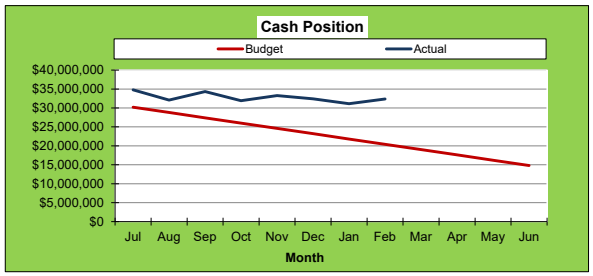
Quarterly Performance Graphs

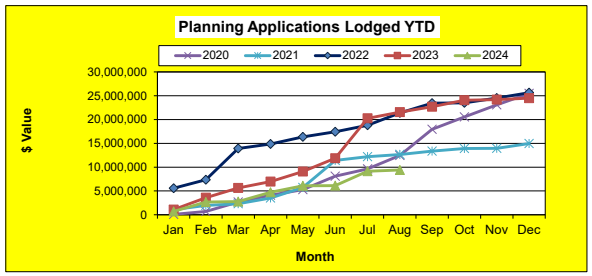


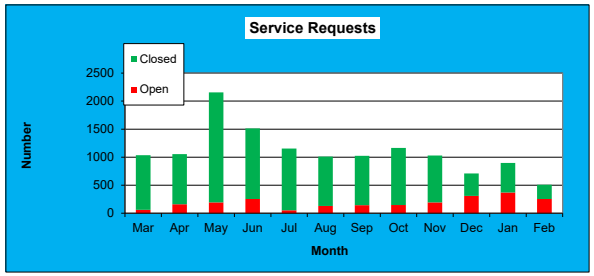


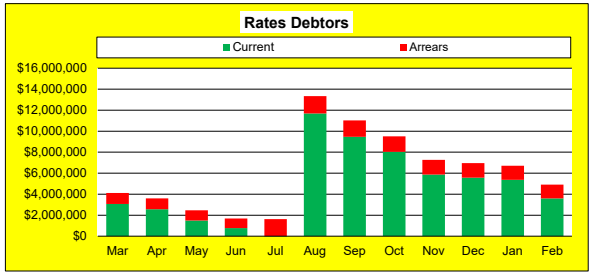


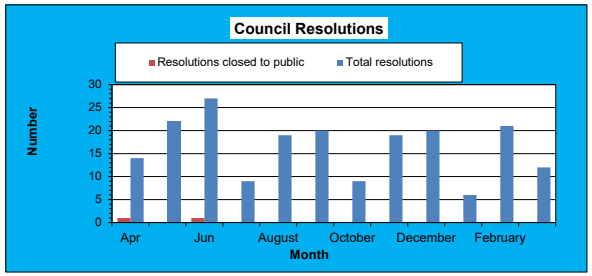


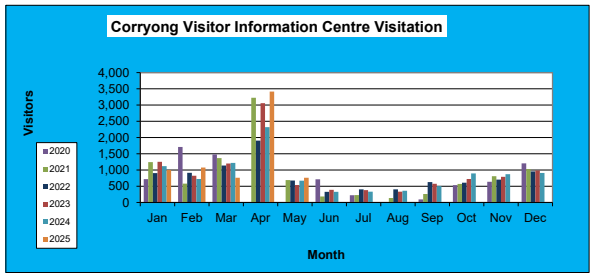


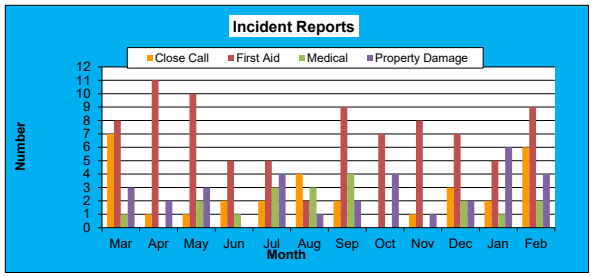


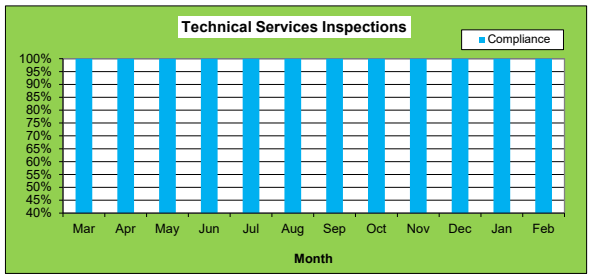












Recreation Report (December 2024 to May 2025)

The activities in the Recreation area included:

- Official opening of the Corryong Skatepark on 22 March, 2025. This event was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by the local community, marking the delivery of an incredible asset for the community.

- Completion and acquittal of the Transforming Tintaldra Equine Arena. A successful opening event was held by the Corryong Cow Horse Club on 15 and 16 March. This project was achieved with a Sport and Recreation Victoria grant of $45,000 and a Council contribution of $15,000. The Tintaldra Recreation Reserve Committee of Management contributed funds of nearly $19,000 and around 400 hours of voluntary labour to achieve an outstanding result for the community.

- Submission of a $1million funding application to the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* for the Sports Pavilion at Bethanga Recreation Reserve. This followed a detailed community consultation process for pavilion design development with a cost estimate of $3million, and a Council commitment to contribute funding of $2million if grant funding is secured. Successful funding announcements are expected in July 2025.

- Ongoing project management activities across Sport and Recreation Victoria funded sports infrastructure projects to achieve the following:

  - Construction of the Rowen Park Sports Oval Lighting project, which resulted in the lights being utilised for the first time at training night on 15 May. All works are due for completion in June. An official opening is currently being organised in conjunction with Sport and Recreation Victoria representatives, to be held in late July 2025.

  - Preparation of tender documentation and liaison with Ausnet regarding power upgrade for Cudgewa Football Oval Lighting Project. Tender is expected to be advertised in June 2025.

  - Continued work on Bullioh Female Friendly Facilities project to achieve a construction ready design and costing, following the tender process in early 2025. Report and recommendations for award of contract will be considered at the Council meeting in June 2025.

  - Preparation of documentation and implementation of tender process for Tallandoon Tennis Courts Redevelopment project, with a report to be considered at the Council meeting in June 2025 for award of tender.

- Management of Belgravia Leisure contract for operation of Council swimming pools to

ensure successful delivery of 2024/25 swimming pool operating season. Ongoing coordination with Belgravia Leisure staff (management, lifeguards, finance team) and regular communication with Council outdoor works teams to ensure effective operation of pools and continuity of service for the community.

- Coordination of community use of the Towong Shire Swimming Pools to maximise access by various sectors of the community, including swimming clubs, health and fitness groups, and schools.

- Management of the maintenance and facility improvement works at Council swimming pool sites, including compliance with Occupational Health and Safety and Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations. This work is undertaken in cooperation with outdoor works teams and Council OH&S staff, with input from Belgravia Leisure.

- Training for Council staff through Life Saving Victoria in the Aquatic Technical Operator course to ensure all staff with onsite pool operations responsibilities, such as water management, are suitably trained and qualified.

- Implementation of the Community Sport Fair Access Action Plan relating to several of the Fair Access Principles, including:

  Principle 1: Community Sports Infrastructure and environments are genuinely welcoming, safe and inclusive:
  - Bethanga Sports Pavilion has been designed with gender equitable principles and features to create an accessible sports facility that will cater for a broad range of sport and active recreation activities and users.
  - Development of the Bullioh Football Netball Club Female Friendly Facilities to provide accessible amenities specifically for women and girls.
  - Commencement of audits of bathroom and change facilities at swimming pools, to inform the provision of gender equitable access to amenities.

  Principle 3: Women and girls have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure.
  - All pool user groups were consulted prior to commencement of 2024/25 pool season to understand needs and preferred usage times. This ensured fair allocation of facility use to support existing and new participation opportunities at Council swimming pools.

- Collaboration with external Recreation partners to support the development of sport and active recreation in Towong Shire, including Sport and Recreation Victoria, State Sporting Associations (Tennis Victoria, AFL North East Border, Cricket Albury/Wodonga, Cricket Victoria, Netball Victoria), Sport North East, and Local Government colleagues in Hume Region.

Activities include:

- Presentation to Tennis Victoria regional staff team in March, regarding tennis infrastructure projects throughout Towong Shire and potential opportunities for future collaborations.
- Involvement in Communities of Practice quarterly meetings hosted by Sport North East, and attended by Recreation staff from Wodonga, Wangaratta, Alpine and Indigo Councils.
- Liaison with relevant State Sporting Associations, at local and state level, in development of Bethanga Sports Pavilion designs and funding application.

Emergency Management Report – June 2025

Municipal Fire Prevention

Council has completed its second season of delivering its municipal fire inspection program via the Crisisworks management system. The application allows for inspections, photos, workflow charts and record keeping to all be co-located and easily accessible via computer, mobile devices or tablets. The program is delivered under the training and guidance of the CFA's Fire Risk, Research & Community Preparedness Team.

The inspection program is delivered in collaboration with the Council ranger team, with the rangers completing the on-ground inspections with support and oversight from the emergency management team.

This season's Fire Danger Period (FDP) commenced on the 18th of November 2024. The FDP ceased on the 30th of May 2025, this being the latest FDP finish for the Towong Shire in 25 years. The current drought has been the leading factor in this late fire season.

Over the season over 280 properties were inspected with 36 Fire Prevention Notices (FPNs) issued. No FPNs were needed to be escalated to enforcement due to risk mitigation works being completed as outlined in the FPNs.

Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)

Council is an active participant in the multi-agency Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC).

The MEMPC has formed a working group to develop the new Municipal Emergency Management Plan with is due for assurance in the second half of 2026. The working group is being led by Council and includes members from Emergency Recovery Victoria and MEMPC community representatives.

The MEMPC is working through its rolling Community Emergency Risk Assessments (CERA) where the Commitee reviews and assesses each risk to determine the level of mitigation and planning. The risk of heat is being considered at the June meeting with the risk of pandemic being considered at the September meeting.

The MEMPC chooses to meet in multiple locations around the Shire. This gives committee members the opportunity to better understand the local landscape and context. The June meeting was held at the newly renovated Towong Hall. This gave the committee the opportunity to inspect the work completed to make the facility more resilient before, during, and after an emergency. This work includes the installation of communications equipment, generator, solar, battery and whitegoods.

Agriculture Victoria briefed the committee on the current impacts of the drought and how the MEMPC, via the emergency management sector, can best advocate for the community and highlight the challenges facing the farming sector.

Flood Recovery – October 2022 Floods

The outreach service that Council's flood recovery program has been providing to flood impacted famers has continued to see the benefit of having a Gateway Health support worker attending and engaging with our flood impacted families.

Over May and June staff have been conducting check in visits to flood impacted residents and are holding a series of small events throughout the municipality to bring local community together to provide updated information and discuss emerging issues. The impacts of drought are now another challenge for our flood impacted community members.

Council has continued to deliver trauma awareness workshops for community organisations. The development of this program has been led by the Gateway Health support worker. The workshops are delivered by the Gateway Health support worker with support from Council recovery staff.

The successful collaboration of Gateway Health and Council continues to give Council the ability to tackle some complex social and environmental issues as well as provide support to community. The unique expertise of the Gateway Health support worker along with the Council recovery officer with an agricultural background continues to bring better community outcomes than either organisation could carry out alone.

Staff Training

Training of staff is an ongoing process. Over the last 6 months Council invested in staff to participate in Emergency Management Liaison Officer (EMLO) training as well as information sessions, webinar's and in house training.

The North East Hume Emergency Management Collaboration has been working closely together on an updated training framework across the collaboration including a range of new training products both for in person and online. This brings consistency to training delivered across Towong, Indigo and Alpine Council staff.

The Inspector General of Emergency Management (IGEM) invited Council to participate in a review of emergency management training for local government. This has involved a one-on-one interview between the Inspector General and Council's CEO, detail survey responses and further feedback sessions. Towong Shire Council is in a unique position, due to the large number of emergency events impacting the municipality, to provide a lot of feedback around the challenges that are faced by small rural councils.

Resilient Building Project

With the support of Emergency Recovery Victoria, Council is undertaking its Resilient Buildings Project. This project improves community resilience across isolated townships via infrastructure improvements being implemented across the Shire's community facilities. This project improves community recovery outcomes following an emergency event by upgrading/installing:

- solar power systems
- batteries,
- water tanks
- communications systems
- electrical capacity improvements

It includes the purchase of seven mobile trailer generators to be deployed within the community in times of need. Also, it provides financial support for community facility committees to purchase whitegoods such as fridges and washing machines.

Indigo Power Ltd has been awarded the head contract to deliver the installation of solar, battery, tanks, electrical and communications. 28 site visits have been conducted to finalise scope and works will commence in the second half of the year. Council will take delivery of 7 generator trailers in July ready for deployment for the coming high-risk season.

Community Emergency Management Planning Support

The Relief and Recovery Development Officer supports the update of Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) owned by communities and facilitates the development of new CEMPs in various regions of the shire. The Municipality has 17 CEMPS in place. Council has been supporting the rolling reviews of these plans.

Rebuild Support Services

Council continues to support residents impacted by the 2019/2020 bushfires through our Rebuild Support Service. This service supports our community members who are rebuilding navigate the associated services of Council, links them with support from relevant state government agencies, supports relevant grant applications and work with local supporting health services. Currently we have 61 residents who have completed the program with 24 still in progress.

Submission / Feedback Responses to Draft Youth Strategy 2025-2029

Submission	Date Received	Details	Response	Actions
Community Feedback	13 May 2025	Housing/land affordability availability.	Written response, asked to provide this feedback via the Council Plan Have Your Say process.	Link provided to Council Plan Have Your Say process
Community Feedback	19 May 2025	Run Art Classes/Workshops for young people.	Written response, will work towards activating within budget.	Will work towards activation, no change to Draft Youth Strategy.
Stakeholder/partner	15 May 2025	Advocate for the continued promotion and support of the Country Universities Centre (CUC) Ovens Murray – Corryong study hub within the Youth Strategy.	Written response outlining the addition of Action 6.3 under Strategic Priority Future Prepared Youth to the Draft Youth Strategy	Addition of Action 6.3 to the Draft Youth Strategy.
Internal Feedback	April/May 2025	Should a Youth Council be considered to assist with actions aligned to youth voice and leadership which are listed in the Draft Strategy.	The potential establishment of a Towong Shire Youth Council to be detailed and reported to Council for their consideration.	Addition of Action 1.7 to the Draft Youth Strategy.

Towong Shire Youth Strategy

2025-2029

DRAFT

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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.

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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.

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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

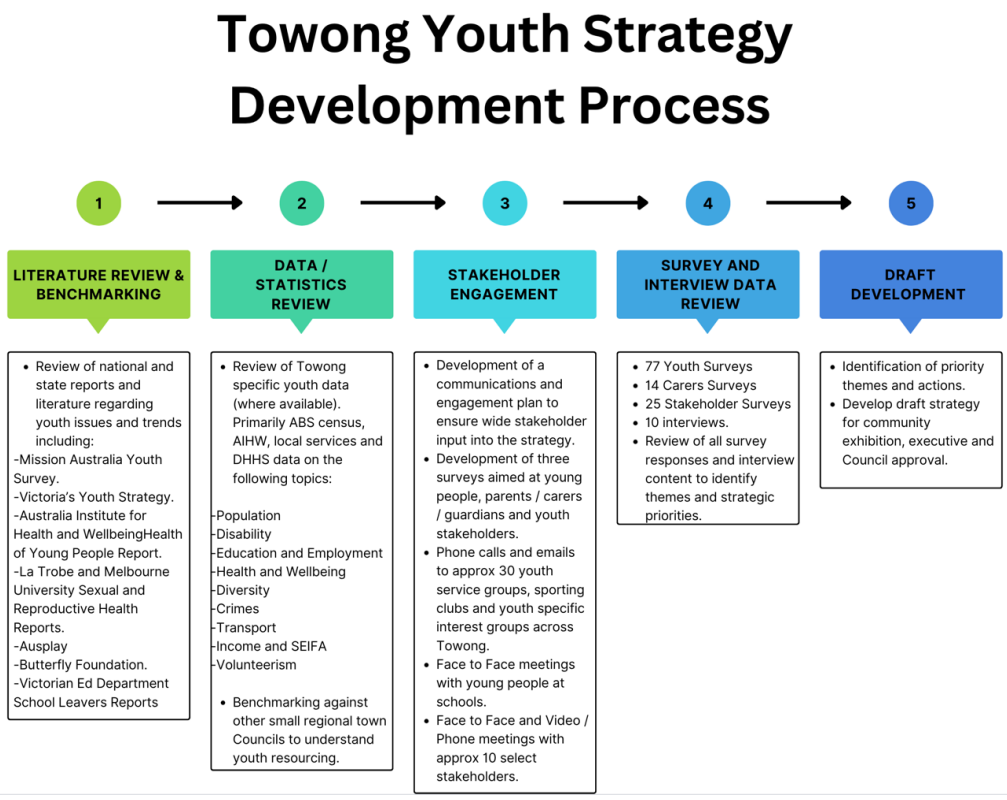
Towong Shire Council will take a visible leadership role in speaking up on youth issues, including inclusion, transport, mental health, and access to opportunity. Council will also support young people to be their own advocates and celebrate their achievements through campaigns, events and recognition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

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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.

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 23/34.

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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).

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

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.

	• Walwa, Corryong and Tallangatta all score below the regional Victorian average on the SEIDA index of relative disadvantage.

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

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	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 to18 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 old's. 62.3% of 14–17-year old's 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.

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	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

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	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, diary and related products have increased by 15%, bread and cereal by 11.8% and fruit and vegetables by 4.9%.

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	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.

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.

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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 LGBTIQA+ 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.

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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

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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.

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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	
Drug and Alcohol Services	Corryong	No	No local community-based services. Gateway Health provide an outreach service.
	Tallangatta	No	
	Bethanga	No	
	Bellbridge	No	
	Cudgewa	No	
	Eskdale	No	

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	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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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
1.7 The potential establishment of a Towong Shire Youth Council to be detailed and reported to Council for their consideration.	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

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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	Towong Shire	Lead	Allocation TBD as part of future Budget considerations	High

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people, alongside community culture and arts programs and initiatives. Ensure youth voice in the 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	Community Development and Recreation Teams	Facilitate	Existing resources	Medium

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and providing training to members / volunteers.				
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

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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

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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

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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

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5.4 Advocate for increased mental health support for young people in Towong.	Local mental health service providers	Advocate	Existing resources	High

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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
6.3 Investigate and support partnership opportunities for further education and training.	Universities Centre Ovens Murray Local TAFE providers Local Apprenticeship providers	Partner	Existing resources	Medium

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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.

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11 Attachments:

1. **Towong Youth Strategy Engagement Findings**

Analysis of Pool Season 2024/25

Pool Management

The 2024/25 swimming pool season was the second year that Council has engaged aquatic contractor, Belgravia Leisure, to support the management of the pools in a shared model of operation. Under this arrangement, Belgravia was primarily responsible for operating the pools during public opening hours, with the major function being the employment of the lifeguard staff and ensuring safe provision of pool services to the public. Council retained responsibility for the operation of the pools outside public opening hours, including primary management of water and pool grounds, and liaison with all user groups such as schools, swimming clubs, morning swimming groups and health services. Responsibility for issues such as plant and equipment, maintenance remains with Council.

Responsibility for meeting all legislative requirements of pool operations such as policies and procedures, Occupational Health and Safety, hazard reduction, and legislative compliance is shared between Council and Belgravia Leisure, and as such requires clear communication for successful and safe delivery of swimming pool services. The 2024/25 season saw significant progress made to improve efficiencies with this model of operation. The off-season is providing an opportunity to undertake required maintenance and occupational health and safety improvements at both pools.

Public Opening Times

Following an internal review of extended opening hours in the previous season, the 2024/25 pool season saw a return to standard operating hours at both Corryong and Tallangatta pools as follows:

- Season opened: Saturday 30th November 2024
- Season closed: Monday 10 March 2025 (Labour Day weekend)

Regular Hours
- Weekdays: 3.30pm - 7pm
- Weekends: 2pm - 7pm

School Holiday Hours
- Weekdays: 2pm - 7pm
- Weekends: 2pm – 7pm

Public Holidays: 2pm – 7pm

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In season 2024/25 the decision was made to open the pools every day except Christmas Day, whereas in past seasons the pools had also closed on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. This provided the community with two additional days of pool access during peak season. The extended opening hours trialled in season 2023/24 (9am-12noon from December 20 to January 7) were not repeated in season 2024/25 due to the relatively low visitation and high cost of this additional service provision.

During the 2024/25 pool season, both Tallangatta and Corryong pools opened as scheduled each day. There were partial closures required at each pool (4 days in Corryong and 3 days in Tallangatta) due to unsuitable weather, which in all cases involved storm activity. There were no opening days lost due to any operational issues such as water quality, plant and equipment failure, or staffing shortages. This is a credit to the dedication and professionalism of both the Belgravia Leisure lifeguard team and Council's outdoor works teams.

Hot weather/heat health alert periods

During the 2024/25 pool season, the Towong Shire experienced significantly higher average temperatures every month of pool operation, compared to the previous season. Extended opening hours were implemented at both pools during hot weather/heat health alert periods in January and February. Over the January long weekend pools opened from 12-8pm on Sunday 25 and Monday 26 January. During the heatwave in early February, pools remained open until 8pm from 4-7 February, and 12-8pm over the weekend of 8 and 9 February. These additional opening hours were well received by the community, with the Tallangatta pool being particularly well patronised during the extended hours. The ability to action these extended hours at short notice is evidence of the teamwork and cooperation between Council and Belgravia Leisure, with the willingness of the outdoor teams and lifeguard staff to enable this to occur.

Pool visitation

Towong Shire swimming pools are utilised by visitors in two ways. Firstly, visitors attend the pools during public opening hours, with either a season pass or by paying a casual visitation fee. Secondly, the pools are utilised by user groups outside regular opening hours via pre-arranged bookings. These groups include schools, swimming club, Icebreakers (early morning swimming), health services, and sporting clubs.

Public opening hours visitation data for each Pool is summarised in the table below.

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ALL VENUES	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	2024/25 TOTAL	2023/24 TOTAL	Variance
Casual Swim	3	1696	2131	795	306	**4931**	**4886**	**45**
Members	32	2501	1959	1503	580	**6575**	**5917**	**658**
TOTAL	**35**	**4197**	**4090**	**2298**	**886**	**11506**	**10803**	**703**

Corryong	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	2024/25 TOTAL	2023/24 TOTAL	Variance
Casual Swim	0	764	1013	252	88	**2117**	**2067**	**50**
Members	2	1496	844	699	240	**3281**	**3059**	**222**
TOTAL	**2**	**2260**	**1857**	**951**	**328**	**5398**	**5126**	**272**

Tallangatta	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	2024/25 TOTAL	2023/24 TOTAL	Variance
Casual Swim	3	932	1118	543	218	**2814**	**2819**	**-5**
Members	30	1005	1115	804	340	**3294**	**2858**	**436**
TOTAL	**33**	**1937**	**2333**	**1347**	**558**	**6108**	**5677**	**431**

*All user groups fell outside of BL operations and were organised through Council.

This data details an overall increase in visitation of 431 in Tallangatta and 272 in Corryong compared to the 2023/24 season.

While the overall season increases at each pool are modest, there was a considerable increase noted in public hours visitation during the period from opening on 30 November until end of January of 1053 visits. This was pleasing to see especially given the decision by Council to open the pools two weeks later than in the previous season. Visitation was lower at Corryong pool in February and March than it was in season 2023/24, resulting in the overall season increase of 703 visits.

The visitation numbers at the pools by user groups outside public opening hours is significant. In season 2024/25 the pools were utilised outside public opening hours by Corryong and Tallangatta swimming clubs, Icebreakers early morning swimming group, Corryong Health Service, and all schools in Towong Shire. With the delay of public opening to the end of November 2024, Council provided access to organised user groups from 18 November, with both swimming clubs and Tallangatta Secondary College taking advantage of this opportunity to access the pool.

Visitation numbers reported to Council by these user groups indicates that approximately 4,440 visits to the pools occurred via those user groups, outside of public opening hours. This was a significant increase on this type of visitation compared to the previous season. Of note was the vastly increased usage of Tallangatta pool by the Tallangatta Secondary College, which reported visitations of approximately 1440 through pool use almost every day of Term 1.

Pool Financials

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Under the terms of the contract with Belgravia Leisure, all income from pool visitations is retained by Belgravia Leisure which also pays all expenses. Council receives regular invoices from Belgravia for the nett position ie. income minus expenditure.

This table details the financial performance of each pool during the 2024/25 season.

TALLANGATTA		
INCOME	$	21,224.00
EXPENDITURE	$	112,171.00
MANAGEMENT & CORP OVERHEAD FEES	$	27,810.00
NET RESULT	-$	118,757.00
CORRYONG		
INCOME	$	21,830.00
EXPENDITURE	$	105,688.00
MANAGEMENT & CORP OVERHEAD FEES	$	27,810.00
NET RESULT	-$	111,668.00

- Total income collected was **$43,054.00** through season passes, casual visitation fees and kiosk revenue. This was an increase of **$4,106.00** on the income from the previous season.
- Total operating expenditure totalled **$217,859.00**, including salaries, equipment utilities, supplies. This was a decrease in operating expenditure of **$13,485.00** from the previous season.
- Contract Management and Corporate Fees paid to Belgravia Leisure were **$56,620**, an increase of $**1,620.00** on the previous season.
- The nett cost to Council (NCTC) for pools operations in season 2024/25 was **$230,425.00**, representing a decrease of **$15,971.00** compared to season 2023/24.
- The overall cost to Council per visit was **$20.03**, a decrease of **$1.73** per visit from the previous season. This figure is calculated on the number of visits recorded during public opening hours only. By including the visitation of out-of-hours user groups, the cost per visit is reduced to **$14.45.**

The 2024/25 swimming pool budget adopted by Council included an operating NCTC budget of **$260,000.00** for the contract with Belgravia Leisure including the Management and Corporate Fee payable.

The 2026/25 financial statement shows a final favourable outcome of **$29,575.00** against the management budget.

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Health and Safety Considerations

The swimming pools at both Corryong and Tallangatta passed legislative water quality requirements for safe pool operation when water testing was undertaken by Kernow Environmental Services early in the pool season. Eskdale pool was also included in this testing phase to support pool operations.

Mostly minor incidents were reported at the pool facilities during the 2024/25 season, relating to very minor injuries or patron behaviour. Lifeguard staff addressed these issues competently with some support from Council. There were no WorkSafe reportable incidents, although one incident occurred relating to malfunctioning pool equipment that required Council to complete an incident investigation. This highlighted the variations in the way incidents are reported and managed by both Belgravia Leisure and Council. The reporting system for pool incidents needs to be improved and streamlined prior to season 2025/26 to achieve improved efficiency and maximise health and safety outcomes.

A range of safety and compliance assessments were conducted at both pools during 2023 and 2024, including Life Saving Victoria Pool Safety Assessments at Tallangatta (February 2023) and Corryong (February 2024), Belgravia Leisure signage audits (both pools January 2024), and Council's internal OH&S Management System Audit (both pools Jan/Feb 2024). Council has undertaken maintenance and facility improvement works to meet the requirements of these audits and assessments, with most of the actions on the Swimming Pools Hazard Action List having now been completed. Belgravia Leisure has supported this process for specific areas of responsibility including pool operating policies and procedures, staff induction processes, and incident management systems. These assessment reports and recommendations continue to be used to inform the measures Council must take to meet legislative requirements for pool operation.

Vicswim

The organisation and delivery of the Vicswim program remains a vital service for the Towong Shire communities, providing a safe, accessible and low-cost swimming program for a wide age group. The availability of alternative swimming lessons is minimal within the Shire, so it is considered essential that Council work cooperatively with Belgravia Leisure, Vicswim staff, swimming clubs and local swimming teachers to create the best possible program to meet the needs of local communities. The program has traditionally operated for two weeks at Tallangatta and Corryong pools in January, which was successfully delivered in season 2024/25.

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Accessibility

The Tallangatta and Corryong pools have both had aquatic hoists installed over recent seasons. The hoists are designed to be used by patrons accompanied by a carer. Lifeguard staff have been trained in the operation of the hoists but are not required to perform specialised physical support to users. Lifeguard staff at both pools have demonstrated a commitment to facilitating the use of the hoists by members of the community to increase access and equity for pool users. It is recommended that additional promotion of the availability of these hoists is communicated to the public next pool season, while also working with Belgravia Leisure to ensure that lifeguard teams receive training and updates for safe operation of the hoists.

The Corryong swimming pool currently has separate male and female changing/bathroom facilities, but there is no gender-neutral or family-friendly accessible changing/bathroom facility. The family/baby change room does not have a shower and is not compliant with current disability and accessible standards. It is recommended that further work be undertaken to improve the change facilities at Corryong pool to increase the accessibility of pool for all patrons.

Pool Infrastructure Assessment and Forward Plan

Council has engaged Creo Structures to undertake an infrastructure assessment of Corryong and Tallangatta pools to support the development of an asset management plan. Creo Structures specialises in design and engineering of commercial aquatic facilities and met with Council staff at the pool sites in May to conduct initial visual inspections of the aquatic facilities at each site - specifically the pools, the filtration and water treatment plant. Creo Structures will prepare a report focusing on the issues and options available to Council, with commentary including:

- DDA compliance of the pools;
- Condition of the pool concrete shells, whether further concrete core testing is warranted, and provision of an estimate on remaining life;
- Condition of applied finishes (i.e. tiling, paint systems, etc.) and fixtures;
- Condition of filtration and water treatment plant, including estimated remaining life.
- Cost estimates associated with repair and/or refurbishment works to each centre (associated with the pools).

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Eskdale swimming pool

The Eskdale swimming pool is situated on Department of Education land and is operated by the Eskdale Primary School. For many years Council has provided funding to support operation of the swimming pool to enable continued operation of the pool for the local community.

To develop a stronger partnership approach with the Eskdale pool, Council will assist with:

- Reviewing chemicals purchasing and pricings to identify potential cost savings in working in with the bulk Belgravia chemical purchases.
- Communicating and potentially aligning training opportunities for Eskdale staff with Tallangatta and Corryong staff.
- Including the Eskdale pool into the provision of extended hours during heat waves where applicable and budget allows.
- Liaise with Eskdale pool to plan, promote and deliver the Vicswim program.
- Support the school with any funding applications they make for upgrades and or equipment for the pool.

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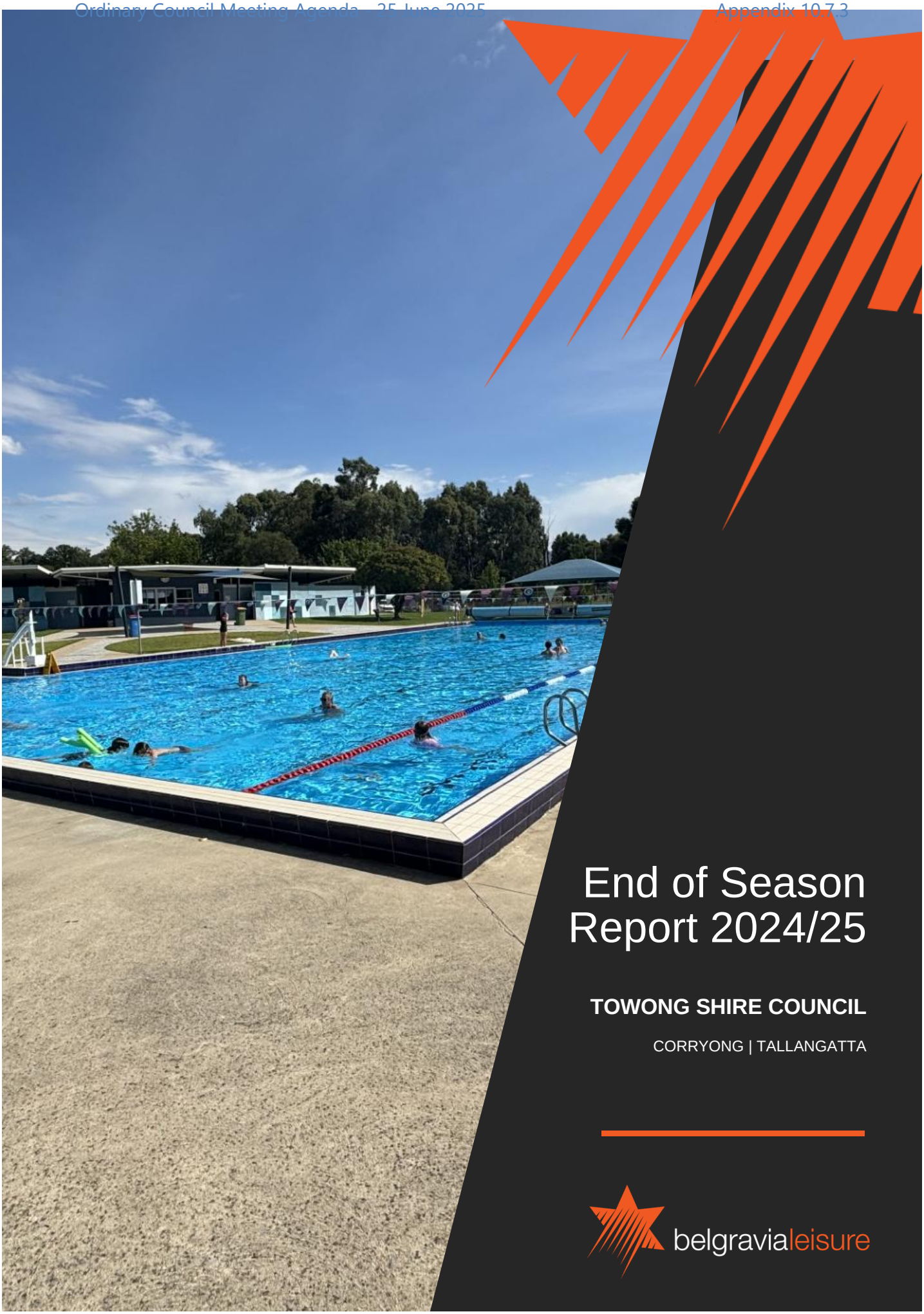
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	TOT
TALLANGATTA											
INCOME				$ 127.00	$ 3,677.00	$ 12,916.00	$ 11,313.00	-$ 11,968.00	$ 5,159.00		**$ 21,224.00**
EXPENDITURE	$ 912.00	$ 43.00	$ 2,210.00	$ 7,527.00	$ 10,671.00	$ 28,352.00	$ 30,551.00	$ 22,295.00	$ 9,070.00	$ 540.00	**$ 112,171.00**
MANAGEMENT & CORP OVERHEAD FEES					$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00		**$ 27,810.00**
NET RESULT	**-$ 912.00**	**-$ 43.00**	**-$ 2,210.00**	**-$ 7,400.00**	**-$ 12,556.00**	**-$ 20,998.00**	**-$ 24,800.00**	**-$ 39,825.00**	**-$ 9,473.00**	**-$ 540.00**	**-$ 118,757.00**

CORRYONG											
INCOME					$ 4,685.00	$ 13,301.00	$ 11,072.00	-$ 11,191.00	$ 3,963.00		**$ 21,830.00**
EXPENDITURE	$ 717.00	$ 43.00	$ 38.00	$ 205.00	$ 3,267.00	$ 34,387.00	$ 32,037.00	$ 23,728.00	$ 10,873.00	$ 393.00	**$ 105,688.00**
MANAGEMENT & CORP OVERHEAD FEES					$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00	$ 5,562.00		**$ 27,810.00**
NET RESULT	**-$ 717.00**	**-$ 43.00**	**-$ 38.00**	**-$ 205.00**	**-$ 4,144.00**	**-$ 26,648.00**	**-$ 26,527.00**	**-$ 40,481.00**	**-$ 12,472.00**	**-$ 393.00**	**-$ 111,668.00**



End of Season Report 2024/25

TOWONG SHIRE COUNCIL

CORRYONG | TALLANGATTA

belgravialeisure

Managers Summary

Venue Performance and Operation:
As we review operational performance, it is safe to say that all venue excelled this year. We had an increase in visitation, the highest number of staff we've recorded, and we created a positive environment for our community.

Lost Days:
Evidently the biggest win this season pertains to operational consistency. Both venues were opened every day of the season with 7 days (4 at Corryong and 3 at Tallangatta) impacted due to weather which required temporary or early closure.

Staff Recruitment and Resourcing:
As last season ceased, we carefully analysed and implemented learnings. Priority focus was placed on maintaining relationships and staying in contact with staff which resulted in many returning for the season 2024/2025. Having collective approach ensured we that we had sufficient staff on hand to open timely and continue uninterrupted venue operation.

Friends of the Pool and Community Relationships:
Area Manager and Venue Mangers ensured that regular communication was maintained with all stakeholders' pre-season, during the season and post season. This approach ensured further strengthening of partnerships based on honesty and transparency.

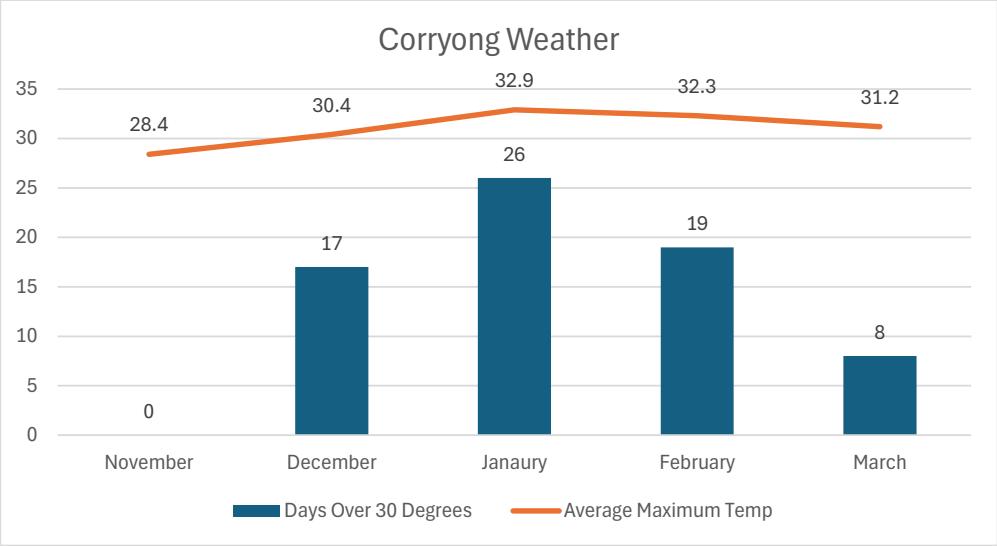
VICSWIM:
Further building on the successes from the last season, we carefully planned and ensured VICSWIM services were available at Tallangatta and Corryong and we succeeded in doing so, providing water learning opportunities for 100+ children, a fantastic outcome.

WHS Audits & Staff Training:
We continued to further build on the strong foundations set the season before, ensuring that each staff member received adequate training and understood their role within the workplace. This in turn provided operational consistency revolving around safety and consistency also reflected through our internal audits.

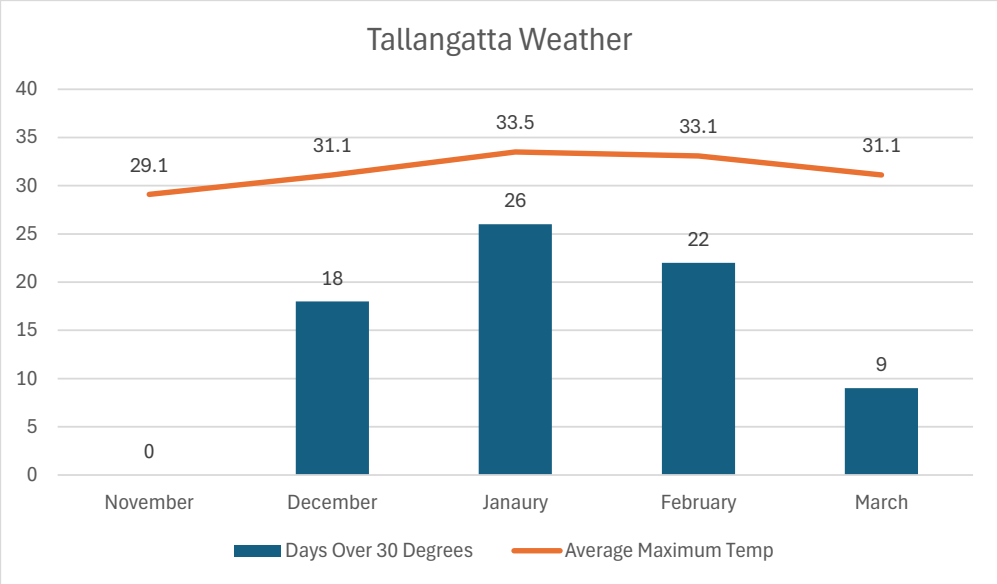
Jake Goddard
Area Manager- Alpine, Indigo, Towong

Local State of Play

Weather



- Corryong recorded 70 days of 30° or higher for the season.
  - January recorded the most number of days over 30° with 26 followed by February with 19.
  - Of the days that recorded temperatures over 30°, 20 or 29% fell on a weekend.
- The average temperatures recorded peaked in January with an average of 32.9°.



- Tallangatta recorded 75 days of 30° or higher for the season.
  - January recorded the most number of days over 30° with 20 followed by February with 22.
  - Of the days that recorded temperatures over 30°, 21 or 28% fell on a weekend.
- The average temperatures recorded peaked in January with an average of 33.5°.

Operational Impact

Venue	Days of Operation	Days Closed Due to Staffing	Days Closed Due to Weather	Days Closed Due to Plant Failure	Total Days Open	% Open for the Season	Days covered by staff from outside contract
Corryong	100	0	0	0	100	100	0
Tallangatta	100	0	0	0	100	100	0
TOTAL	**200**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**200**	**100**	**0**

We were very fortunate this season with weather and staff. All days were staffed by lifeagurds within their own contract. The pools opened every day for the season with only 7 days impacted by weather resulting in temporary or early closure – a great result. Thanks to an aamazing outdoor team, there were no days closed due to plant failure.

Human Resources

Staff Onboarding

As with last season we had a dedicated recruitment support team, where all leads were followed up, interviewed, training organised, and candidates were onboarded and inducted by our People & Recruitment state support team. This gave candidates a consistent team who were supporting them through the onboarding process.

Venue	Number of Staff Onboarded	Number of Returning Staff from Last Season	Number of Staff Resigned/Terminated
Corryong	10	4	0
Tallangatta	15	6	0
TOTAL	**25**	**10**	**0**

Lifeguard Recruitment Campaign

The Aquatics industry is continuing to face staffing challenges. Belgravia Leisure lunched their Summer recruitment campaign in Winter 2024, where Belgravia Leisure removed barriers to simplify the application process and eligible staff would have their Pool Lifeguard and First Aid/CPR course paid for.

Although there were plenty of applications there were multiple reasons why they may not have become active employees:

1. Applicant was too young
2. Applicant withdrew from process for personal reasons
3. Applicant didn't have availability
4. Applicant was enrolled into courses and did not turn up
5. Applicant did not pass the course
6. Applicant completed training and then did not complete onboarding requirements

7. Applicant completed training and onboarding but did not respond to communication for rosters

Venue	Applicants	Completed Training/Became Employees & Worked This Season	
		#	%
Corryong	14	10	71
Tallangatta	20	15	75
TOTAL	**34**	**25**	**Av 73**

Staff Training & Development

All staff undergo training and development to support them to learn the systems and procedures of their role. Training helps staff carry out their duties safely and with consistency. It affords staff an opportunity to ask questions and meet their colleagues and wider support team. Training and development begin as soon as the staff member has completed their onboarding and signed their contract of employment.

Venues	Training	Provider	Comments
All Venues	Staff Inductions	Belgravia	Site Induction, Onboarding systems, WHS Training, Lifeguard Induction, Access & Inclusion Training, Manual Handling and Chemical Training
	Site Inductions	Belgravia	Pool Chemistry, Chemical Addition, Admin Tasks, Banking Reconciliation, Facility Checklists, Maintenance responsibilities, Audit Preparation, WHS
	In-Service Training	Belgravia	Roles & Responsibilities, GSPO, Supervision & Deployment Plans, Oxygen & Defib usage, Staff Structure, Rule Enforcement/Education, Emergency Evacuation.

Attendances

ALL VENUES	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	2024/25 TOTAL	2023/24 TOTAL	Variance
Casual Swim	3	1696	2131	795	306	**4931**	**4886**	**45**
Members	32	2501	1959	1503	580	**6575**	**5917**	**658**
TOTAL	**35**	**4197**	**4090**	**2298**	**886**	**11506**	**10803**	**703**

Corryong	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	2024/25 TOTAL	2023/24 TOTAL	Variance
Casual Swim	0	764	1013	252	88	**2117**	**2067**	**50**
Members	2	1496	844	699	240	**3281**	**3059**	**222**
TOTAL	**2**	**2260**	**1857**	**951**	**328**	**5398**	**5126**	**272**

Tallangatta	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	2024/25 TOTAL	2023/24 TOTAL	Variance
Casual Swim	3	932	1118	543	218	**2814**	**2819**	**-5**
Members	30	1005	1115	804	340	**3294**	**2858**	**436**
TOTAL	**33**	**1937**	**2333**	**1347**	**558**	**6108**	**5677**	**431**

*All user groups fell outside of BL operations and were organised through Council.

Workplace Health & Safety

Incidents

Some very minor incidents across the two pools this season. Band-Aids, snake and cuts, but not major incidents and no WorkSafe reportable incidents.

Venue	Near Miss	Minor	Moderate	Major	Comments
Corryong		4			
Tallangatta		6			
TOTAL		**10**			

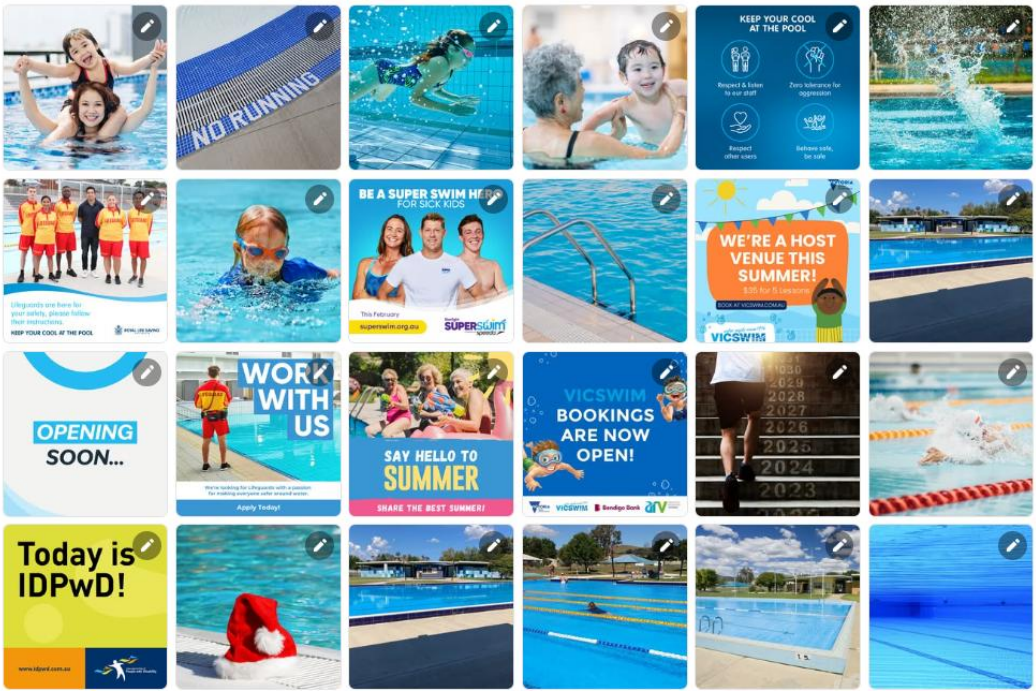
Community Engagement

User Groups

User groups that we welcomed this season were the two swim clubs, both of which accounted for many memberships and visitations

Venue	User Group	Program Type/Activity
Corryong	Corryong Swim Club	Swim Club
Tallangatta	Tallangatta Swim Club	Swim Club

Digital Marketing



Next Season Timelines

2025/2026

Indicative Date	Department	Task
May 2025	HR	Staff Recruitment/Re-engage last season staff
Aug 2025	Operations	Review last season WHS Audit and implement improvements
Aug 2025	Operations	Develop/Update/Review Supervision Documents & Manuals
Aug 2025	Operations	Develop/Update/Review Staff Induction Documents
Aug 2025	Operations	Chemical, Chemical Equipment, PPE Stocktake & Purchase.
Aug 2025	Operations	Organise Utilities & Service Contracts – Plant, Lawn, Grounds & Maintenance
Sep 2025	HR	Staff Interviews
Sep 2025	Operations	Update SOP/manuals/evac plan/risk assessments/checklists
Sep 2025	Marketing	Send eDM to past season holders/leads
Sep 2025	Marketing	Plan marketing calendar e.g. promos, program, events
Sep 2025	POS	Review Active World set up and update if required
Sep 2025	Retail	Order merchandise/kiosk items
Sep 2025	Marketing	Review and update website & Facebook pages where required
Sep 2025	Operations	Plantroom Commissioning, Vacuum all pools and chemicals levels to correct guidelines
Sep 2025	Operations	ICT commissioning Set-Up
Sep 2025	Operations	Service/review all equipment and repair/replace where required
Oct 2025	HR	Staff Onboarding
Oct 2025	Operations	BL WHS Audit
Oct 2025	Operations	Clean Venue/Update Signage/Set up Retail
Oct 2025	Marketing	Facebook ads promoting season opening & season passes
Oct/Nov 2025	HR	Staff Training
Nov 2025		Season Start
Mar 2026		Season End

Jake Goddard

Area Manager

Figure 4.2: Enlarged Site Plan

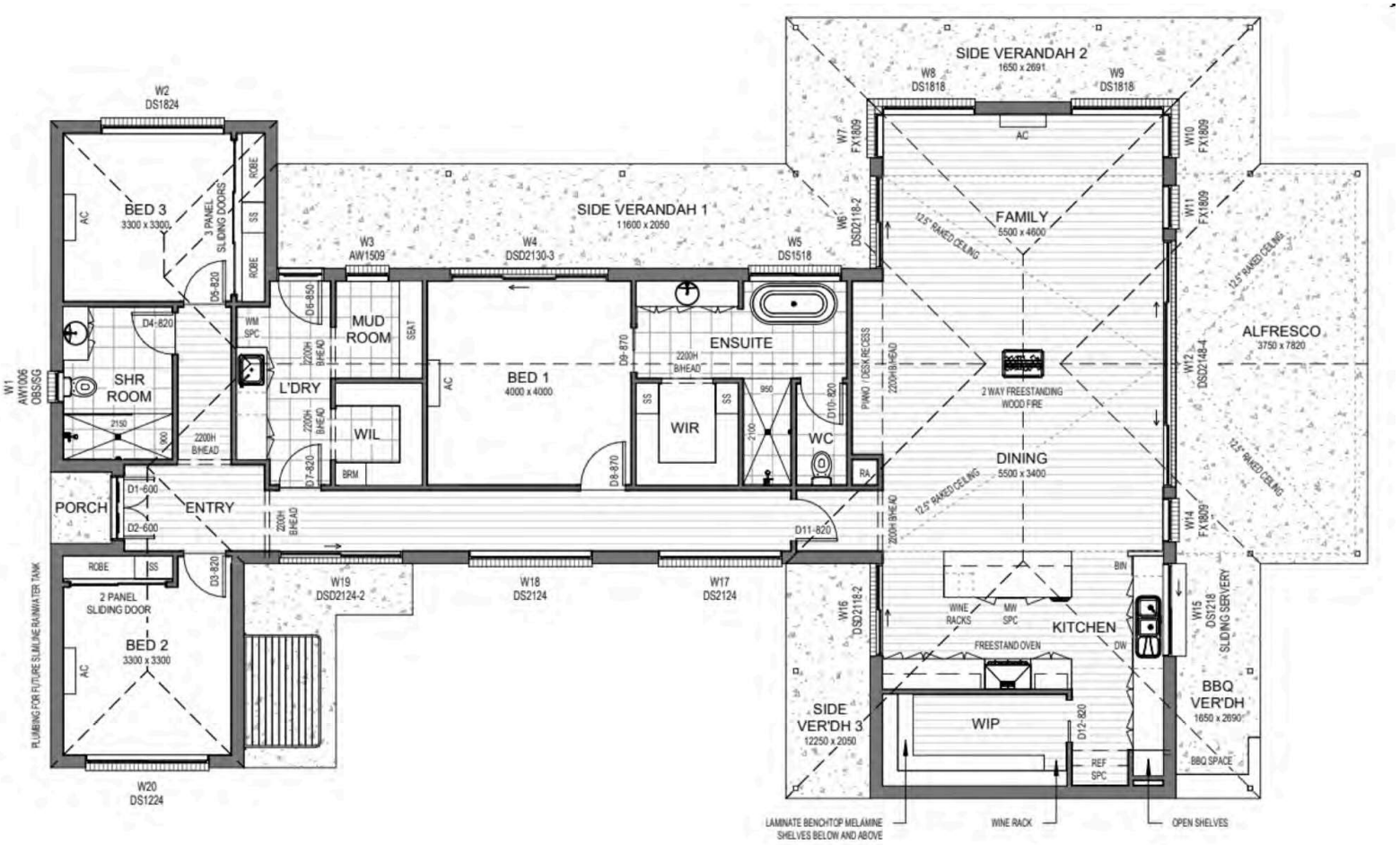


Figure 4.3: Proposed Floor Plan

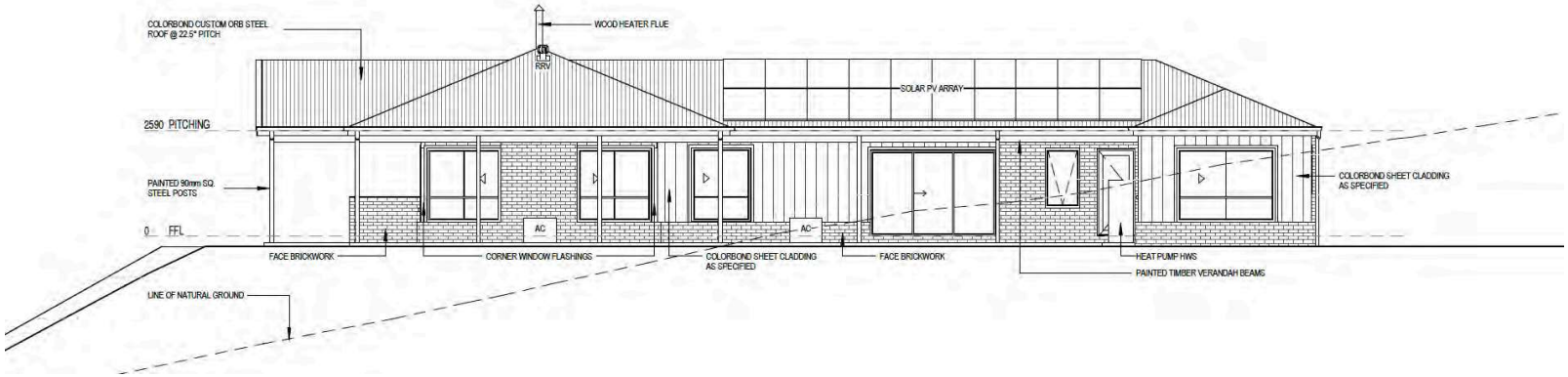


Figure 4.4: Proposed north west and south west elevations

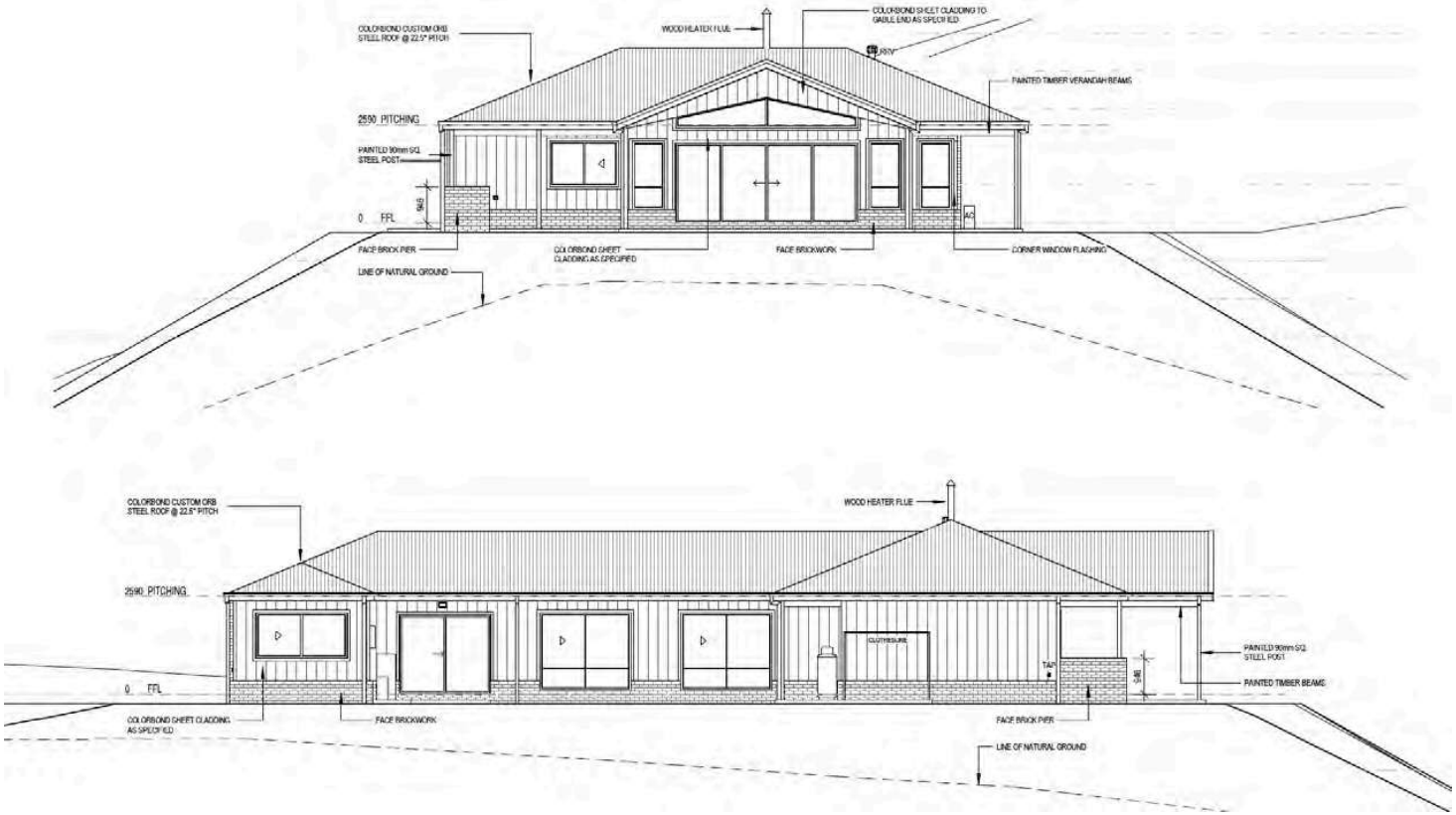


Figure 4.5: Proposed north east and south east elevations

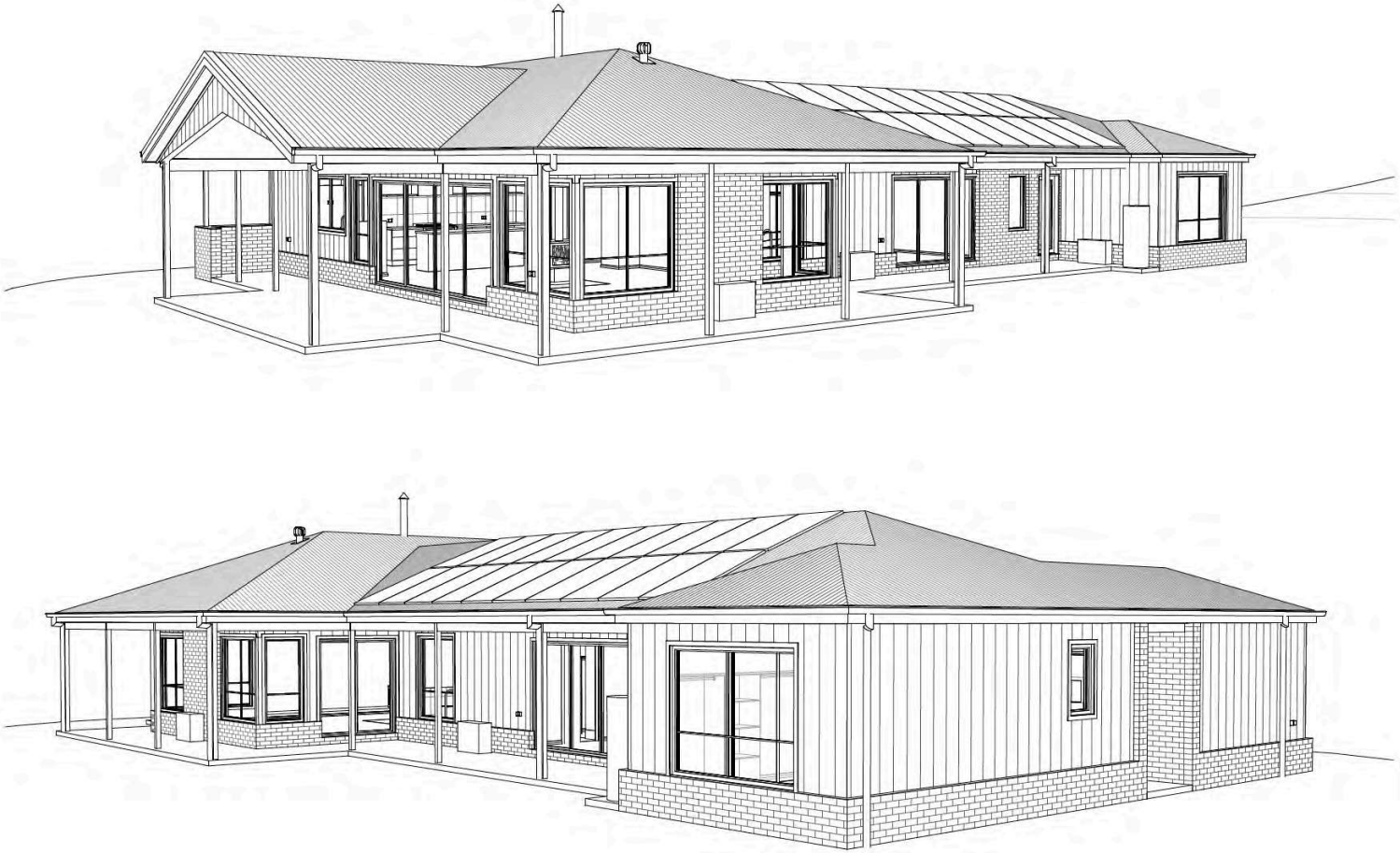


Figure 4.6: 3D perspective

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Landscape Sketch Plan

0 5 10 15 20 25
1:500 metres

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A	FOR INFORMATION	13.02.2025
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DATE: 13.02.2025
JOB NO: 14840
DWG NO: LSK01
REV: A
1:500 @ A1

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Existing view of subject site from adjacent local access road

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Proposal photo-montage (no proposed vegetation depicted)
from adjacent local access road

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DATE: 13.02.2025
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DWG NO: LSK03
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290A Talgarno-Gap Road, Bethanga

Proposal photo-montage (proposed vegetation depicted at maturity) from adjacent local access road

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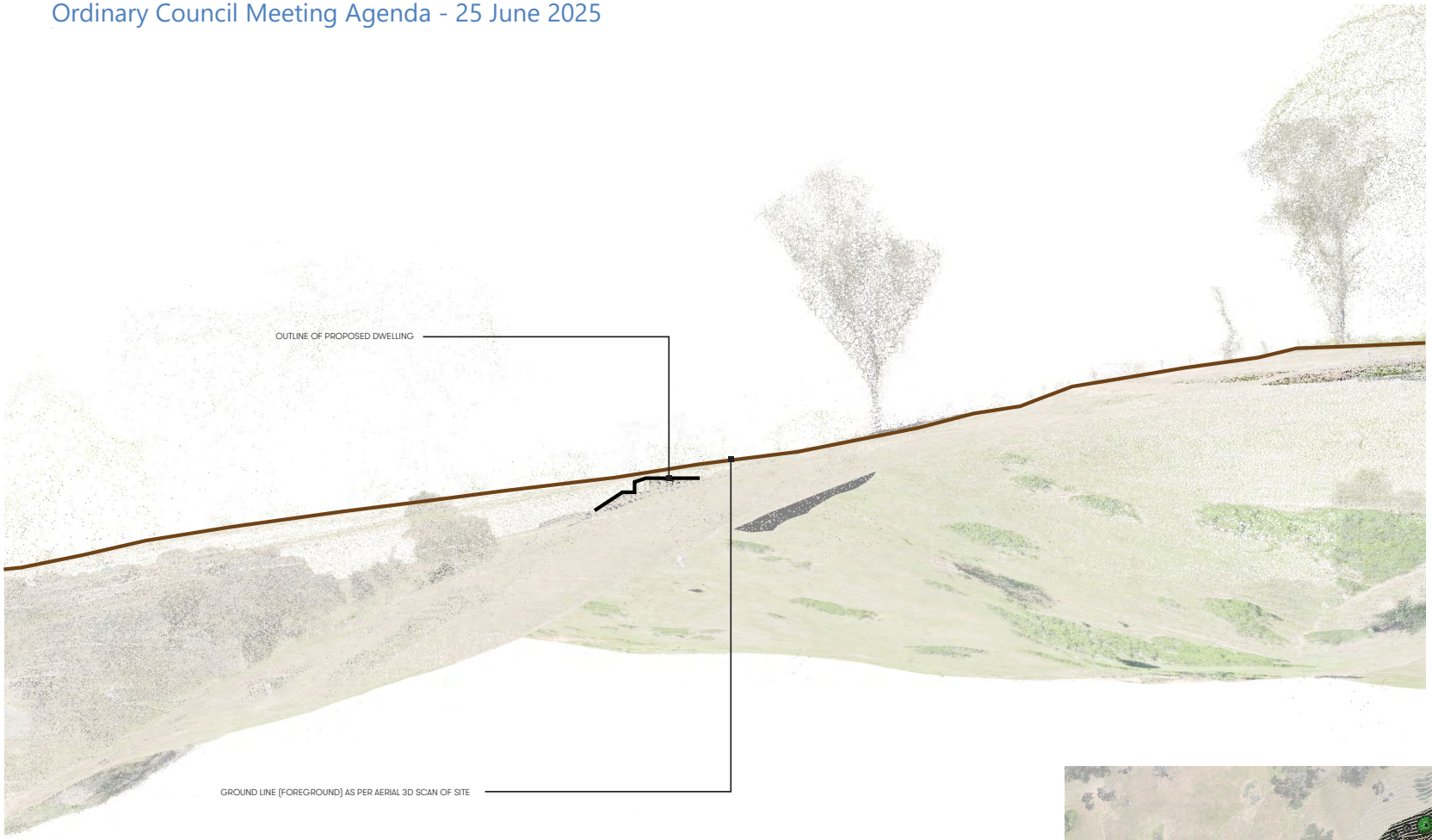
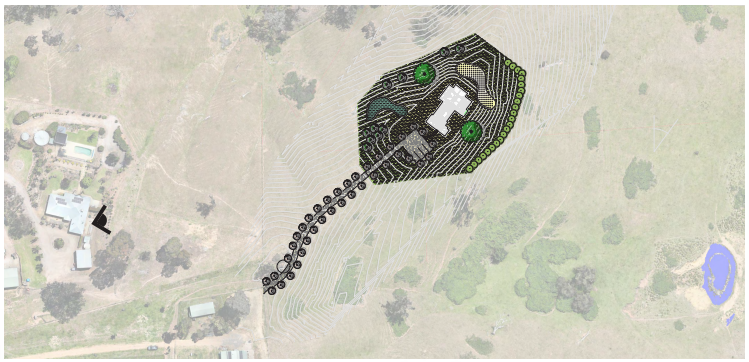
DATE: 13.02.2025
JOB NO: 14840
DWG NO: LSK04
REV: A
N/A @ A1





NOTE: View simulated at 1.7m viewing height above surveyed ground level in given location, providing an indicatve human eye level

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Example view from neighbouring property, adjacent to existing dwelling
No visibility due to total obstruction of proposal by existing landform

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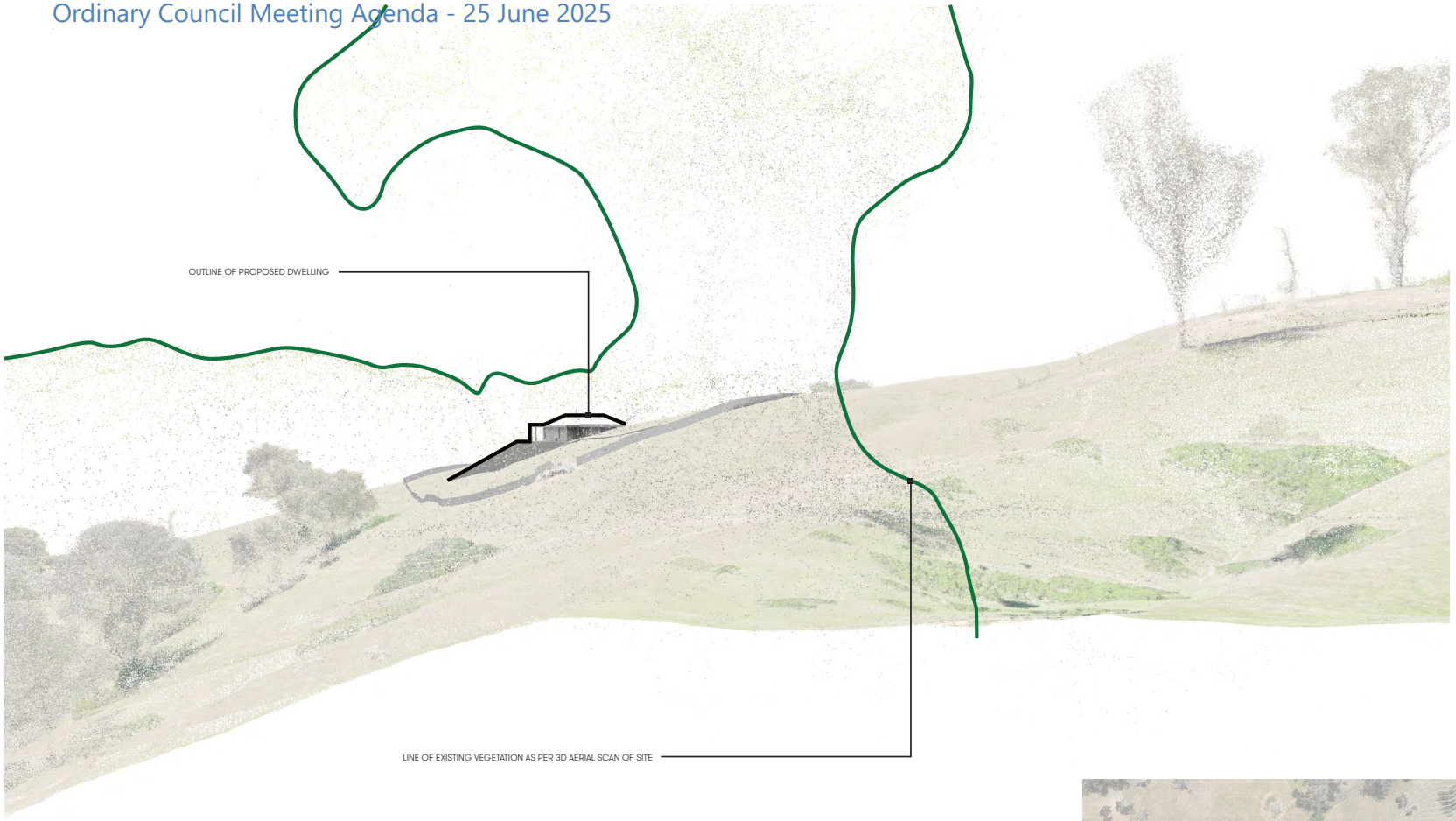
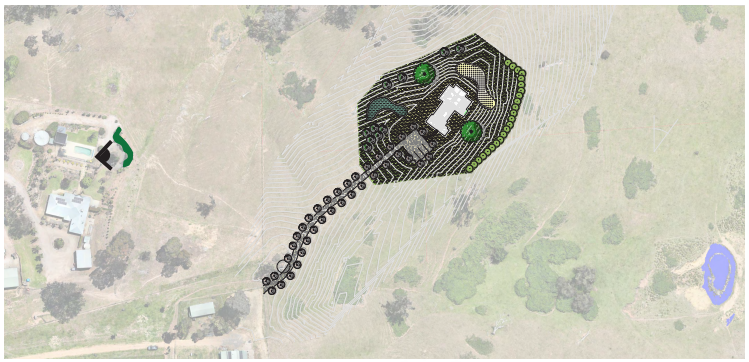
DATE: 13.02.2025
JOB NO: 14840
DWG NO: LSK05
REV: A
N/A @ A1





NOTE: View simulated at 1.7m viewing height above surveyed ground level in given location, providing an indicatve human eye level

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Example view from neighbouring property, (adjacent to existing pool):
No visibility of proposed dwelling due to existing vegetation coverage

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DATE: 13.02.2025
JOB NO: 14840
DWG NO: LSK06
REV: A
N/A @ A1

CIVIL TEST PTY LTD
ABN 91 006 855 689
SOIL TESTING & GEOTECHNICAL CONSULTANTS
ACN 006 855 689

GEOTECHNICAL SITE INVESTIGATION FOR RESIDENTIAL SLABS AND FOOTINGS

REPORT NUMBER: 4240244-1

CLIENT: TG & CF Goodwin
Attention: Catherine Goodwin
290A Talgarno Gap Road
BETHANGA VIC 3691

SITE ADDRESS: 290A Talgarno Gap Road
BETHANGA

PROPOSAL: It is proposed to construct a new single storey articulated masonry veneer and/or clad dwelling at this site.

1. COMMISSION:

Investigation for site classification in accordance with Section 2 Clause 2.2.2 (a) of Australian Standard 2870-2011 - Residential Slabs and Footings with reference to Clause 2.2.2 (b) and 2.3.2 (c) iii, recommend a founding depth and / or foundation treatment if appropriate, as per Clause 1.3.1 – Performance of Footing Systems (AS2870–2011).

Recommend safe excavation batters and provide recommendations to minimise and/or limit surface erosion.

2. SITE GEOLOGY:

The field investigation suggests that the site is in a geological area of Omeo metamorphics of Ordovician age identified as Bethanga Gneissic Granite. Geological maps of the area confirmed this.

3. SITE TOPOGRAPHY:

The site is located over a ridge line trending northeast-southwest with steep slopes falling to the north, east and south. Estimates of the ground surface slopes beyond the proposed building pad, measured with a hand-held inclinometer, indicate slopes of up to 45 degrees with the horizontal. Ground cover over the site consists of natural grasses.

4. INVESTIGATION:

Three boreholes were drilled by a truck mounted drilling rig at the approximate locations shown on the attached plan. The logs of the boreholes are attached showing the soil descriptions and depths, along with any cohesive strengths measured and observed densities on non-cohesive soils.

Samples of material were collected from the boreholes for laboratory testing (Atterberg limit and sieve analysis) for soil classification. The laboratory test results are attached in Appendix B.

5. FINDINGS:

The boreholes revealed that the natural soil profile consisted of silty SAND grading into weathered ROCK (Granite). The initial part of the weathered ROCK (Granite) has been described as extremely weathered and of very low rock strength, becoming distinctly weathered and of medium to high strength at auger refusal. Auger refusal was encountered in all three boreholes at depths of 1.0m and 1.3m.

The laboratory test results confirm that the materials encountered are typically SAND of low plasticity character.

6. SITE CLASSIFICATION:

After considering the area geology, the soil profile encountered in the boreholes, the proposed superstructure, the climatic zone of the area and the location of the site on steep slopes, this site has been classified as CLASS P with respect to foundation construction (Australian Standard 2870-2011 Residential Slabs and Footings). It is anticipated that the seasonal surface movement at this site will not exceed 40mm.

Due to the nature and composition of the soil profile found in the site, construction during or after wet weather may be difficult. Therefore, it is recommended that an open cut drain be constructed around the proposed building site, to a depth of not less than 300mm below the site foundation material, or CLAY, whichever occurs first, to intercept any surface water unless the exposed surface is on weathered ROCK. There is no need to maintain this drain after construction to ground level has been reached. At this stage the drain should be backfilled, failure to do so may have detrimental effects.

Suitable drainage should be provided to eliminate ponding of surface water or subsurface seepage during and following construction.

It must be emphasised that the heave mentioned and recommendations referred to in this report are based solely on the observed soil profile at the time of the investigation for this report without taking into account the effects of any abnormal moisture conditions that may develop after construction as defined in Clause 1.3.3 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E).

The recommendations in the following sections assume that no footings for the proposed structures will be located within 1.5 times the mature height of any currently growing trees. If this is not the case, the site will be classified as CLASS P due to the close proximity of currently growing trees to the proposed structure, and the footing system must be designed by a qualified structural engineer, as defined in AS2870-2011.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXCAVATIONS & EROSION CONTROL:

The proposed building site abuts and is over steeply sloping ground. It is understood from the preliminary site plan provided to Civiltest, that the site will be excavated to form a building pad in the middle surrounded by cut batters. It is recommended that the cut/excavation batters should be profiled to the following:

Material	Temporary Batters	Permanent Batters
Silty SAND	1Vertical:2Horizontal	1Vertical:3Horizontal
Extremely weathered ROCK (Granite)	1Vertical:0.75Horizontal	1Vertical:1Horizontal
Distinctly weathered ROCK (Granite)	Near Vertical	1Vertical:0.5Horizontal

If the exposed face of the weathered ROCK reveals severe fractures, then it is strongly advised that the exposed rock face should be covered with a steel wire mesh, pinned at strategic locations to hold the wire mesh in place, followed by the application of a thin (30-50mm thick) layer of shotcrete over the wire mesh.

Batter excavations deeper than 2.5 metres vertical height should have a bench of at least 1.0m width between the cut batters.

Revegetation with natural grasses should be encouraged over batter slopes in natural silty SAND. Covering the surface of the exposed silty SAND with fibre (coconut or similar) matting is also a suitable option to minimise and/or limit the potential for surface erosion and scouring of the exposed SAND soils under high velocity overland stormwater flows.

Site drainage is crucial at this site. It is recommended that a shallow swale/toe drain should be provided at the toe of the excavated batter, to capture any surface water including water cascading over the batter face and direct to suitable collection pit, prior to discharging in a legal point of discharge. Water from downpipes and overflow from any storage tanks should be collected and directed to appropriate collection pits prior to discharging into the legal point of discharge.

Excavations deeper than 500mm would expose extremely weathered ROCK, and the surface of the exposed extremely weathered ROCK should be graded such that the fall is towards strategically located swale drains and collection pits, in order to collect surface water runoff. To limit and/or minimise moisture penetration into the exposed weathered ROCK surface, consideration should be given to providing asphalt or concrete surfacing over the uncovered areas around the proposed building.

Where the depths of excavation are expected to be more than 2.0 metres, consideration can also be given to the use of engineer-designed retaining walls. The following parameters can be assumed for the design of retaining walls:

Material	Unit Weight (kN/m^3)	K_a	K_o	c' (kPa)
Silty SAND	18.0	0.31	0.47	0
Extremely weathered ROCK (Granite)	21.5	0.25	0.40	-
Distinctly weathered ROCK (Granite)	22.5	0.17	0.29	-

Where K_a = active earth pressure coefficient
K_o = at-rest earth pressure coefficient
c' = effective cohesion

The above parameters assume that the soil being retained has a horizontal surface and that there is adequate drainage at the back of the retaining wall to prevent the development of pore pressure.

8. SITE SUITABILITY FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The site has been classified as CLASS P, primarily because of its location on steeply sloping ground. There is NO record of slope instability in the area and the depth to the top of the weathered ROCK is less than 1.0 metre, which implies that, assuming the site earthworks adhere to the recommendations given in Section 7 above, and the recommendations provided in this report are followed, all footings of the proposed dwelling would be adequately founded in the underlying weathered ROCK.

Under this scenario, Civiltest confirms that the site will be safe and suitable for the proposed construction of the new dwelling.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SLABS:

9.1 Stiffened Raft Slab:

9.1.1 Edge Beams:

Although classified as CLASS P, a CLASS M (Refer AS2870 – 2011) slab on ground can be used at this site with edge beams founded not less than 200mm below the finished surface level surrounding the structure, following.

However, the founding depth must be at least 100mm into the extremely weathered ROCK (Granite) as described in the logs of boring, which from the site investigation can be assumed to have an allowable bearing capacity of 120kPa at this depth.

As a guide to the actual site founding depths with regard to the above along with information obtained from the boreholes, the actual founding depth at this site will be up to 600mm in relationship to the existing surface, where this surface is assumed to be the finished surface level.

9.1.2 Slab and or Stiffening Beams:

Any organic and deleterious matter should be removed from under the proposed slab area to a depth of not less than 50mm and replaced where necessary with levelling fill (See 9.1.3 below) under the slab and internal beams. This excavated surface can be assumed to have an allowable bearing pressure of at least 50kPa.

9.1.3 Levelling Fill:

Up to 300mm of CLAY FILL or 600mm of SAND FILL, imported or site derived, including existing FILL material, if any, may be placed under the slab and internal beams providing that this filling is placed in 150mm thick layers and compacted in a moist condition using a lightweight vibratory roller or vibratory plate tamper or similar to form a dense layer. Based on the likely condition of this levelling fill, an allowable bearing pressure of at least 50kPa can be assumed to exist beneath the slab and any internal beams founded in or on this filling.

If more than 300mm of CLAY FILL or 600mm of SAND FILL, imported or site derived, including existing FILL material, is required, then the slab must be designed as a suspended slab and supported by a grid of beams founded through any fill material in accordance with the above edge beam recommendations (or see 11.4 below).

In accordance with Appendix D of AS2870–2011, the soil profile and site conditions should be inspected at the footing excavation stage by Civiltest Pty Ltd or by a Building Surveyor, to confirm the soil profile and site classification.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOAD BEARING FOOTINGS:

10.1 Isolated Footings:

Although classified as CLASS P, the use of CLASS M (AS2870-2011) proportioned strip footings and stumps founded at minimum depths of 525mm and 500mm respectively below the finished surface level surrounding the structure is recommended. However, the founding depth for strip footings and / or stumps must be at least 100mm into the naturally occurring extremely weathered ROCK (Granite) as described in the logs of boring, which from the site investigation can be assumed to have an allowable bearing capacity of 275kPa at this depth.

As a guide to the actual site founding depths with regard to the above, along with information obtained from the boreholes, the actual founding depths at this site will be at least 600mm for strip footings and 600mm for stumps in relationship to the existing surface level at the date of this investigation. It is expected that following the earthworks (involving cutting and forming of batters and the building pad), the finished surface level will be on the naturally occurring extremely weathered ROCK (Granite). No load bearing footings, including the strips and stumps, should be founded on or in FILL unless the FILL has been placed and compacted as CONTROLLED FILL.

In accordance with Appendix D of AS2870–2011, the soil profile and site conditions should be inspected at footing excavation stage by Civiltest Pty Ltd or by a Building Surveyor, to confirm the soil profile and site classification.

10.2 Allowable Bearing Pressure Guide:

The following allowable bearing pressures can be assumed for foundations at deeper depths:

Depth Below the Existing Ground Level (mm)*	Founding Material	Allowable Bearing Pressure (kPa)
500	Extremely weathered ROCK (Granite)	120
1000	Extremely-distinctly weathered ROCK (Granite)	300
1500	Distinctly weathered ROCK (Granite)	450

*Depth below the surface at the date of investigation.

If bored piers are required, allowable bearing capacity values above can be adopted as the allowable end bearing capacity. A maximum allowable skin friction of 50kPa can be assumed to exist between piers and the naturally occurring weathered ROCK (Granite). No skin friction should be adopted for FILL soils or soils within 1500mm of the surface level.

Note that excavations in the encountered weathered ROCK (Granite) will require the use of excavation equipment that is of adequate capacity. Rock coring, chiselling and ripping will be required ,and controlled blasting may be required.

All load bearing foundations should be founded in the same type of material as much as practicable, to minimise differential movement.

In accordance with Appendix D of AS2870–2011, the soil profile and site conditions should be inspected at footing excavation stage by Civiltest Pty Ltd to confirm the soil profile and site classification.

11. CONDITIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

11.1 Foundations Adjacent to Easements:
It is recommended that where any footings are to be constructed next to existing underground services (sewers, etc.) and/or excavations, then these footings or edge beams should be founded at a depth below the invert of the service at an angle of repose of 45° for CLAYS and 30° for SANDS, unless special consideration has been given to the founding material.

11.2 Review of the recommendations:
The recommendations made in this report may need to be reviewed by Civiltest Pty Ltd should any of the following occur:

11.2.1 Where any site works disturb any soil 300mm below the founding depth of any footing system as defined in AS2870 Clause 1.8.25.

11.2.2 Where any individual foundation depth exceeds the investigation depth.

11.2.3 Where any earthworks lower the building area by 0.5 metres or more.

11.3 Founding soils and depths:
Since the soil horizons and layers can vary in depth and thickness over the site, the depths and bearing pressures given in this report are given as a guide only. If the footings are founded at the minimum depth as stated and are in the soil as described in the logs of boring for this site, then the requirements of this report have been met.

11.4 Use of FILL materials:
Where any filling is to be placed (other than under the floor slab, refer to 9.1.3 above), the footing founding depths recommended in this report will need to be increased accordingly by the depth of that fill unless one of the following occurs:-

11.4.1 The base of the footing is founded in the founding material recommended in 9.1.1.

11.4.2 The fill has been placed under controlled conditions and compacted to a minimum of 95% of AS1289, 5.1.1 (Standard Compaction) throughout. In this case, the footings may be placed in this fill depending on the findings of further site investigations and the revision of the recommendations made in this report.

11.5 Soil descriptions:
The descriptions of the soils found in the boreholes closely follow those outlined in AS 1726:2017 (Geotechnical Site Investigations). Colour descriptions can vary with soil moisture content. It should be noted therefore, colour and shade descriptions mentioned in this report are made when the soil is in a moist condition.

11.6 Amendment of the report:
This report has been compiled and recommendations made based on information supplied in the brief to Civiltest Pty Ltd and from the field investigations and observations made including the extent of, if any, site filling. Every care has been taken within the terms of the brief to ensure that the field investigation is representative of the site. Therefore, if it is found that for any reason information received by Civiltest Pty Ltd is incorrect, or conditions on site vary considerably during construction to those described in this report, then the comments and recommendations made in this report may need to be amended by Civiltest Pty Ltd.

11.7 Foundation design:
The recommendations in this report are not based on a design by engineering principles as defined in Section 4, AS2870 – 2011.

11.8 Long term maintenance and performance:

To ensure acceptable long term performance of the footing systems recommended in this report, care should be taken that the fundamental building, landscaping and long term maintenance procedures are adhered to as set out in the CSIRO Division of Building, Construction and Engineering: Building Technology File 18-2011, "Foundation Maintenance and Footing Performance: A homeowners guide" which is available on the CSIRO website http://www.publish.csiro.au/home.htm. This information sheet forms an integral part of this report.

11.9 Abnormal moisture conditions:

The recommendations made in this report are based on current findings and investigations. Civiltest Pty Ltd cannot be held responsible for any financial loss and / or hardship in relation to the construction of the structure and future performance of the footing system if relevant historical information has not been supplied in writing by the client to Civiltest Pty Ltd. (For example, the recent removal of trees or buildings or any other activity that is likely to have created abnormal moisture conditions as defined in AS2870 prior to Civiltest Pty Ltd being commissioned for the investigation reported herein.)

11.10 Building cost estimation:

The limitations of this report should be closely observed when carrying out detailed costings of the proposed structure.

The information and any recommendations given in this report are limited to the client named herein.

Whilst Civiltest Pty Ltd has accepted the commission for the work reported herein, the ownership of the report and any liabilities associated with it, remain with Civiltest Pty Ltd until all relevant accounts have been paid.

Any levels referred to in Civiltest Pty Ltd reports should be regarded as general and are not to be interpreted as surveyed confirmed levels. All levels should be checked and confirmed by a licensed surveying organisation or qualified personnel.

Finally, no responsibility will be taken for this report if it is altered in any way, or not reproduced in full.

This report consists of eight pages, including one site plan. Appendices A (Engineering Logs) and B (Laboratory Test Results) are attached.

PATRICK OAI
SENIOR GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER
CIVILTEST PTY LTD

REF: jk/JL/PO/jy/kg/skb

14 August 2024

Document Quality Control Reference:
CIV-DOC-004-001-SD6
Issue #1 – 5 April 2011

LOCATION OF TEST SITES: 290A TALGARNO GAP ROAD, BETHANGA

N

Denotes Boreholes

THIS PLAN IS NOT INTENDED TO BE AN ACCURATE DEPICTION OF THE NUMBER, SIZE OR LOCATION OF TREES AND/OR SHRUBS

NOT TO SCALE

APPENDIX A

ENGINEERING LOGS

ENGINEERING LOG

REPORT NO. 4240244-1 **BOREHOLE NO. 1** **DATE: 30-JUL-2024**
FIELD TECHNICIAN: Jk **DRILLING METHOD: : Land Cruiser Mounted Rig**
PROJECT LOCATION: 290A Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC

DEPTH (m)	STRATA DESCRIPTION	NOTES	GRAPHIC LOG	TESTING					
				DEPTH (m)	RESULTS				
					DCP Blows/100mm	FIELD CBR (%)	SPT	MC (%)	PP (kg/cm^2)
0	SM SAND, silty trace gravel and clay; Brown; Moist; Medium dense; Sand is angular, coarse to medium grained; Gravel is angular, coarse to medium grained								
0.500	Extremely Weathered GRANITE, Excavating Sand gravel; Pale brown; Dry; Very low strength								
1	Becoming dense at 1.0m								
1.300	REFUSAL (30-Jul-2024)								
2									
3									
4									

ENGINEERING LOG

REPORT NO. 4240244-1 **BOREHOLE NO. 2** **DATE: 30-JUL-2024**
FIELD TECHNICIAN: Jk **DRILLING METHOD: : Land Cruiser Mounted Rig**
PROJECT LOCATION: 290A Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC

DEPTH (m)		STRATA DESCRIPTION	NOTES	GRAPHIC LOG	TESTING					
					DEPTH (m)	RESULTS				
						DCP Blows/100mm	FIELD CBR (%)	SPT	MC (%)	PP (kg/cm^2)
0		SM SAND, silty trace gravel and clay; Brown; Moist; Medium dense; Sand is angular, coarse to medium grained; Gravel is angular, coarse to medium grained								
	0.500	Extremely Weathered GRANITE, Excavating Sand gravel; Pale brown; Dry; Very low strength								
1		Becoming dense at 1.0m								
	1.300	REFUSAL (30-Jul-2024)								
2										
3										
4										

ENGINEERING LOG

REPORT NO. 4240244-1 **BOREHOLE NO. 3** **DATE: 30-JUL-2024**
FIELD TECHNICIAN: Jk **DRILLING METHOD: : Land Cruiser Mounted Rig**
PROJECT LOCATION: 290A Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC

DEPTH (m)		STRATA DESCRIPTION	NOTES	GRAPHIC LOG	TESTING					
					DEPTH (m)	RESULTS				
						DCP Blows/100mm	FIELD CBR (%)	SPT	MC (%)	PP (kg/cm^2)
0		SM SAND, silty trace gravel and clay; Brown; Moist; Medium dense; Sand is angular, coarse to medium grained; Gravel is angular, coarse to medium grained								
	0.500	Extremely Weathered GRANITE, Excavating Sand gravel; Pale brown; Dry; Very low strength Becoming dense at 0.8m								
1	1.000	REFUSAL (30-Jul-2024)								
2										
3										
4										

ENGINEERING LOG

REPORT NO. 4240244-1 **BOREHOLE NO. 4** **DATE: 30-JUL-2024**
FIELD TECHNICIAN: Jk **DRILLING METHOD: : Land Cruiser Mounted Rig**
PROJECT LOCATION: 290A Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC

DEPTH (m)		STRATA DESCRIPTION	NOTES	GRAPHIC LOG	TESTING					
					DEPTH (m)	RESULTS				
						DCP Blows/100mm	FIELD CBR (%)	SPT	MC (%)	PP (kg/cm^2)
0		SM SAND, silty trace gravel and clay; Brown; Moist; Medium dense; Sand is angular, coarse to medium grained; Gravel is angular, coarse to medium grained								
	0.500	Extremely Weathered GRANITE, Excavating Sand gravel; Pale brown; Dry; Very low strength Becoming dense at 0.8m								
1	1.000	REFUSAL (30-Jul-2024)								
2										
3										
4										

APPENDIX B

LABORATORY TEST RESULTS

Material Test Report

Civiltest Pty Ltd
Albury Laboratory
886 Calimo Street Albury North NSW 2640
Phone: (02) 6024 4343
Email: admin.albury@civiltest.com.au

Accredited for compliance with ISO/IEC 17025 - Testing

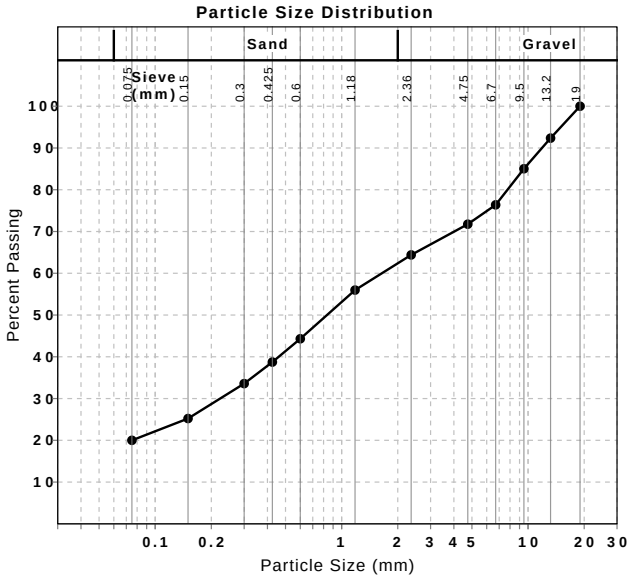
Approved Signatory: Mathew Leishman
Senior Technician
NATA Accredited Laboratory Number: 19977

Report Number: **4240244-2**
Issue Number: 1
Date Issued: 05/08/2024
Client: GOODWIN, TG & CF
290A Talgarno Gap Road, BETHANGA VIC 3691
Contact: Catherine Goodwin
Project Number: 4240244
Project Name: 290A (Lot 5) Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC
Project Location: 290A (Lot 5) Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC
Work Request: 6540
Sample Number: 244-6540A
Date Sampled: 30/07/2024
Dates Tested: 30/07/2024 - 01/08/2024
Sampling Method: AS 1289.1.2.1 6.5.3 - Power auger drilling
Sample Location: **BH 3, Depth: 1.0m**

Particle Size Distribution (AS1289 3.6.1)						
Sieve	Passed %	Passing Limits		Retained %	Retained Limits	
19 mm	**100**			0		
13.2 mm	**92**			8		
9.5 mm	**85**			7		
6.7 mm	**76**			9		
4.75 mm	**72**			5		
2.36 mm	**64**			7		
1.18 mm	**56**			8		
0.6 mm	**44**			12		
0.425 mm	**39**			6		
0.3 mm	**34**			5		
0.15 mm	**25**			8		
0.075 mm	**20**			5		

Atterberg Limit (AS1289 3.1.2 & 3.2.1 & 3.3.1)		Min	Max
Sample History	Oven Dried		
Preparation Method	Dry Sieve		
Liquid Limit (%)	33		
Plastic Limit (%)	17		
Plasticity Index (%)	**16**		

Linear Shrinkage (AS1289 3.4.1)		Min	Max
Moisture Condition Determined By	AS 1289.3.1.2		
Linear Shrinkage (%)	**5.0**		
Cracking Crumbling Curling	Cracking		



Material Test Report

Civiltest Pty Ltd
Albury Laboratory
886 Calimo Street Albury North NSW 2640
Phone: (02) 6024 4343
Email: admin.albury@civiltest.com.au

Accredited for compliance with ISO/IEC 17025 - Testing

Approved Signatory: Mathew Leishman
Senior Technician
NATA Accredited Laboratory Number: 19977

Report Number: **4240244-2**
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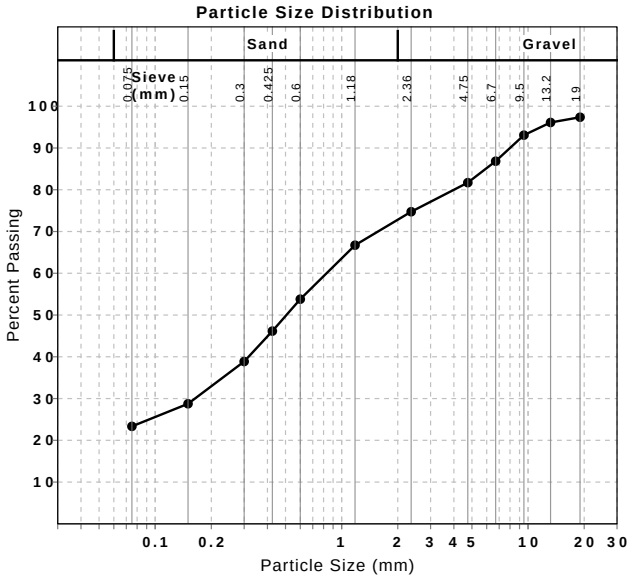
Client: GOODWIN, TG & CF
290A Talgarno Gap Road, BETHANGA VIC 3691
Contact: Catherine Goodwin
Project Number: 4240244
Project Name: 290A (Lot 5) Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC
Project Location: 290A (Lot 5) Talgarno Gap Road BETHANGA VIC
Work Request: 6540
Sample Number: 244-6540B
Date Sampled: 30/07/2024
Dates Tested: 30/07/2024 - 05/08/2024
Sampling Method: AS 1289.1.2.1 6.5.3 - Power auger drilling
Sample Location: **BH 4, Depth: 1.0m**

Particle Size Distribution (AS1289 3.6.1)						
Sieve	Passed %	Passing Limits		Retained %	Retained Limits	
19 mm	**97**			3		
13.2 mm	**96**			1		
9.5 mm	**93**			3		
6.7 mm	**87**			6		
4.75 mm	**82**			5		
2.36 mm	**75**			7		
1.18 mm	**67**			8		
0.6 mm	**54**			13		
0.425 mm	**46**			8		
0.3 mm	**39**			7		
0.15 mm	**29**			10		
0.075 mm	**23**			5		

Atterberg Limit (AS1289 3.1.2 & 3.2.1 & 3.3.1)		Min	Max
Sample History	Oven Dried		
Preparation Method	Dry Sieve		
Liquid Limit (%)	36		
Plastic Limit (%)	18		
Plasticity Index (%)	**18**		

Linear Shrinkage (AS1289 3.4.1)		Min	Max
Moisture Condition Determined By	AS 1289.3.1.2		
Linear Shrinkage (%)	**6.5**		
Cracking Crumbling Curling	Cracking		



Summary of Objections

2024/032 290A Talgarno Gap Road Bethanga

Summary

There are three general themes throughout the objections as follows:

- Building on the ridgeline and the visual impact
- Concerns around landslip and erosion as a result of the development
- The risk of fire and access in the event of a fire.

Objection 1

- All of the other properties around this area are discreetly located, and nestled into the landscape so as to maintain everyone's privacy.
- The proposed house location of this planning application has the dwelling out in the open, on a ridge line looking out over the other homes around it.
- feels inappropriate and not in keeping with the surrounding properties which are all hidden within the landscape.

Objection 2

Part A

1/ RIDGE LINE

I am led to believe there is a covenants & legal obligation within the Towong shire that dwellings will not be built on ridge lines. After talking to other people in the area of Bethanga & Talgarno. We believe that the aspect of building on ridge lines should be petitioned against. We feel that there has been no thought for others that live in this area. As to minimise the visual aspects, of the natural scenery and landscape including also taking away the aesthetics of the area to tourism. As this dwelling will be seen from many kilometres away , on this ridge line along road ways & other property's. This property can be seen from lake Hume we feel strongly that if this proposed development goes ahead it will set a precedent for more development to go ahead in the future. Lights at night on the skyline I believe should also be considered.

2/ ECOLOGICAL & HYDRAULIC After siting the report. We would be concerned as to the depth of the soil testing. We have spoken to a local person that dose extensive excavation in the area he also showed concern. As to the possible depth of the cut line and the retaining of the overburden. We are concerned there will be problems with underground water as we

live on a property close by and have springwater rising slightly above the level of this proposed site close to their house site that is not, uncommon in this area. I would be concerned to the dwelling plan as seen on the application to use an old style realm drainage system , as I & other in the area are concerned of it leaching through the soil. There are quite noticeable landslips to the east side of this ridge line indicating it is an area with problems of this nature. To the west side there are dams that are used for stock & domestic use. Keep in mind that there has been ground tremors in this area.

3/ LOCATION

We feel after reading the application it should be noted that any water from this development will affect up stream of the Hume dam via Johnsons creek to the west side of Talgarno gap rd & its tributaries to the East of Talgarno gap rd as this part of the ridge line runs between the catchment of those tributaries. As the ridge line is above facing Talgarno to the north not Bethanga. The ridge line & house site is quite visible from the Talgarno gap road heading southward towards Bethanga.

4 / FIRE RISK

The location of this site on the ridge line is narrow with steep descent to west & east side.If the project goes ahead it will stop access along the ridge line to private & emergency vehicles. At the moment, there is a track that runs from Retallicks rd up to & along the ridge line past the sheds & back on to 290Talgarno gap rd.

In the case of a bad fire ,vehicles could be trapped at the house site or shed site with only one way out. This property does not have a direct access route to 290 talgarno gap rd due to the steep slopes. We feel the photographs & drawings in the application do not show the true angles of the slopes. For building a road around the home. We do live in a high risk fire area. That needs to be considered.

5 / CONCLUSION

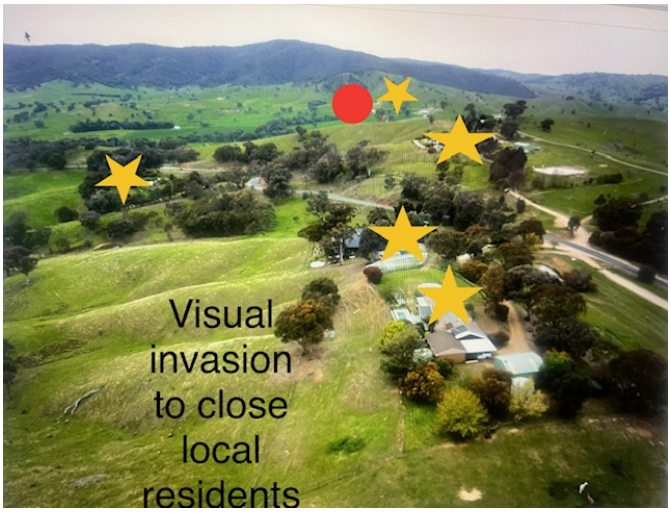
We conclude as a close neighbor to this development . We have not been given due consideration about our concerns. Council must understand that the original proposal may have moved the development slightly. Although it is still on a ridge line not off the ridge line as stated , in the conclusion for the development & use of the land. It says it has been moved off the centre of the said land what ever that means ? it is less than 100 meters from our boundary, there is over 20 ha of land why build this in full view of our bed room , living area back yard & out door living area in full view of our personal space. It does not minimise environmental impact or mitigate potential hazards or protect RIDGE LINE VIEWS & visual enemies as stated. We came to this place to live in peace & quiet. This property will have traffic driving alongside our boundary. Creating dust & noise, I hope that the council see our

point of view & that of other property owners & concerned people in the area. I believe this will devalue our property should it go ahead.

The council & people making this decision will be held totally responsible for this decision please keep that in mind.

Part B

We feel these photos may help in the decision making of this application and or objections as we & others feel the photos go against everything that was written in the conclusion of the application to the consideration of others. The fire risk issues. The emergency vehicle trap point, of only one access in & out in the case of fire. We believe this house site will stop access along the ridge line.



It will be an invasion of our & others personal privacy. The red symbol represents

approximate dwelling to be located ,yellow stars representing dwellings in full view. There are many others that will see this dwelling perched on this ridge line.

We are lead to believe many years ago this ridge line along with valley towards Bethanga was the main access route between Talgarno & Bethanga in the horse & cart days. We

believe the heritage of this ridge line shows the importance of its natural access in the case of an emergency.

Approximately

This dwelling will be on open display for many kms it will be a blight on the sky line to tourism to the area. All of the other dwellings in the area are generally located with visual

aspects recessed, from view & privacy towards each other as neighbours taken into consideration.

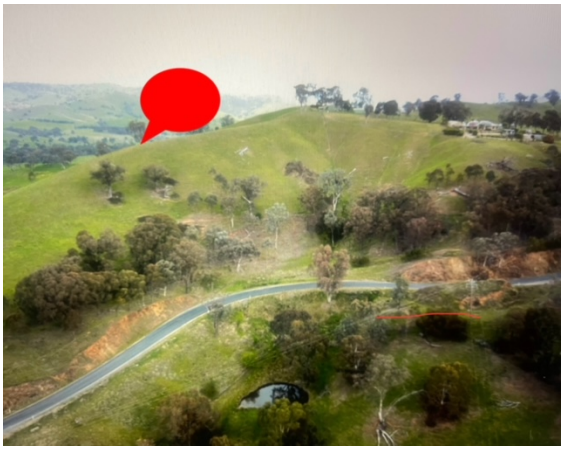
Approximate view looking towards other neighbouring properties

This ridge is quite narrow I can only imagine how this site could be left in full view to others if the project find's unstable soils or finds spring water , as we have on our property above this level on our boundary, approximately 120 metres towards the sheds on this property. Be mindful the springs & land slips to the east side of the ridge line. As they are fed from water higher up. I have seen the soil test results & don't believe they provide complete conclusive results. As to the possibly to finding issues further below 1.4 metres. As the cut line will

exceed that depth. Can we know that these soil tests were taken from the site of the exact location of the dwelling???

These points are not exactly to land measurements but very close to the site of the Dwelling.

Dwelling will over look this house & property.
The photo was taken from a high aspect. The two homes shown in this photo from ground level are not in view of each other.



The old realm drainage system designed in the dwelling report is of concern to the severe slopes & angles & property below. Along with the concerning water tables.

Objection 3

Madam I have reviewed revised plans and again object as per previous all my concerns. It still appears to be close on the Ridge line. I note soil testing as far as I am concerned is not deep enough with already marked erosion occurring and who is not to say there are not underground springs. I am also concerned of Fire Access. I urge the Council please reconsider the current position. There is plenty of other sites to build

Human Habitats
424 / 838 Collins Street
Docklands VIC 3008
www.humanhabitats.com.au
ABN 48 115 201 356
03 9909 2202

30 April 2025

Margaret Fox
Contract Planner
Towong Shire
32 Towong Street (PO Box 55)
Tallangatta VIC 3700

Dear Margaret

RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

ADDRESS: 290A TALGARNO GAP ROAD, BETHANGA

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE: 2024/032

1 Introduction

Mountain Planning continues to act on behalf of the permit applicant in relation to the above-mentioned planning application currently with Council for the construction of a dwelling & associated outbuildings at 290A Talgarno Gap Road, Bethanga.

The purpose of this correspondence is to formally respond to the submissions received from the community. As set out in this letter, the proposal comprehensively responds to the concerns raised, and, in our view, would represent an appropriate built form outcome for the site, whilst considering the surrounding visual impacts to residents and concerns pertaining to landslide, erosion and bushfire hazard.

We look forward to working with Council to ensure that a positive outcome can be achieved on the land, and we are open to further discussion regarding any of the points raised below.

We note that the correspondence relies on the information provided in reports previously submitted to Council and any additional correspondence provided in the attachments.

2 Response to Submissions

Taking key themes identified in the submissions from the public, our responses are set out below.

2.1 Visual impact

Concerns have been raised regarding the potential visual impact of the dwelling from Talgarno Gap Road, the adjoining parcel at 290 Talgarno Gap Road, and the wider ridgeline setting. These concerns have been carefully reviewed, and a thorough site analysis confirms the following:

- **Visibility from Talgarno Gap Road will be negligible.** The proposed dwelling is set well back from the road (over 100 metres) and sited behind the ridgeline crest, ensuring that its visual prominence is significantly reduced. It is further screened by both existing vegetation and an extensive landscaping plan that will provide complete visual coverage at maturity (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1 - Proposed View along Talgarno Gap Road when Vegetation has reached maturity

Figure 2 - Proposed View along Talgarno Gap Road of Proposed Dwelling without vegetation

- **The proposed landscaping is not incidental but strategic and integral to the design response.** It directly addresses visual amenity concerns and aligns with the objectives of Clause 15.01-6S – *Design for Rural Areas*, which seeks to protect rural landscapes from inappropriate development, especially along sensitive visual corridors such as ridgelines and scenic roads.
- **The dwelling will not interrupt or dominate views of the ridgeline from public or private vantage points.** The bulk and scale of the built form have been carefully considered to sit discreetly within the landscape and behind the ridgeline silhouette from Talgarno Gap Road. The resulting impact is minimal and entirely consistent with the policy intent to "minimise visual intrusion of new development."
- **With regard to the adjoining parcel at 290 Talgarno Gap Road**, concerns about overlooking and loss of amenity have been addressed through detailed site modelling and view analysis. The proposed western elevation, which faces the adjoining property, includes **no habitable room windows** — only a single high-set bathroom window for ventilation — and will be screened by existing vegetation and supplementary planting (see Figures 3 and 4). Irrespective, no overlooking controls apply within the Rural Activity Zone, and if they did, the standard overlooking assessment is measured within a nine-metre radius; whereas the proposed dwelling is over 85 metres from the shared boundary with 290 Talgarno Gap Road and further still from the dwelling itself.

Figure 3 - Proposed Western Elevation presenting to adjoining 290 Talgarno Gap Road

Figure 4 - View of Proposed Dwelling from adjoining dwelling behind existing vegetation

- **The proposed dwelling is not located in isolation but in context with the broader rural landscape,** where it complements existing built form patterns without compromising rural character. The landscaping and setbacks ensure that views from the adjoining parcel remain private, uninterrupted, and consistent with expectations in a rural living zone.
- **Views from Retallicks Road are limited and not of strategic visual significance.** This is a minor local road, not a designated tourist or scenic route, and visibility from this perspective does not warrant concern under the planning scheme.

In summary, the visual amenity concerns raised have been fully and objectively addressed. The proposal responds directly to the relevant planning policies, preserves the landscape character of the ridgeline and surrounding area, and provides a high level of visual screening to adjacent properties and public roads. There is no basis to conclude that the development would result in adverse visual impacts.

It is further noted that Council have not raised any concerns for the visual amenity from the development to the adjoining parcel, road or surrounding scenic amenity.

2.2 Landslip and Erosion

Several submissions expressed concern regarding potential landslip and erosion due to the site's slope. While we acknowledge the importance of managing geotechnical stability, we submit that these concerns are not supported by the planning controls that apply to the land, nor by the evidence available. We noted that there is scope to consider the landslip and erosion under the decision guidelines of the zone, however this has been appropriately addressed in the response below and in the preliminary planning report.

- **The site is not subject to the Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)** under the Towong Planning Scheme. As such, Council cannot reasonably assess or condition the permit based on perceived landslip or erosion risk under current statutory provisions. Planning law is clear that matters outside the scope of applicable overlays cannot form a basis for refusal or imposition of requirements.
- Notwithstanding the absence of an EMO, the **dwelling has been appropriately sited and designed in response to the site's topography**. The development will utilise standard engineered slab construction suited to the gradient, and no excessive cut or fill is proposed. There is no indication that the site presents unusual or heightened risk requiring further control.
- **No empirical evidence has been presented to substantiate the landslip concerns.** Generalised objections based on slope alone, without geotechnical or technical justification, do not constitute valid grounds for refusal — particularly where the planning scheme does not identify the land as sensitive.
- While a request for geotechnical information was included in Council's RFI, we respectfully note that this request is not enforceable under the planning framework given the absence of a relevant overlay. To impose such a requirement in the absence of policy support would be contrary to the principles of natural justice and exceed Council's authority under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
- Importantly, **any genuine concerns about geotechnical stability will be more appropriately and thoroughly addressed at the building permit stage**, where a building surveyor may request engineering certification based on relevant construction codes and site-specific assessments. This is the proper and lawful forum for addressing structural integrity.

In conclusion, there is no planning justification for elevating landslip or erosion concerns in the current assessment. The application complies with all relevant planning provisions and is based on a sound understanding of the site's physical characteristics.

2.3 Bushfire

Concerns were raised in submissions regarding the bushfire risk associated with development at the subject site. While we acknowledge community awareness of bushfire vulnerability in regional areas, it is essential to assess such concerns strictly within the framework of the applicable planning controls.

- The subject site is located within a designated Bushfire Prone Area (BPA); however, it is **not affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)**. The BMO is the sole mechanism under the planning scheme that triggers a bushfire assessment for planning applications. In the absence of the BMO, there is no planning requirement to assess bushfire hazard or to impose conditions related to bushfire protection as part of the planning permit process.
- **Planning law requires that permit applications be assessed against the controls that apply.** Any attempt to assess or condition the application based on perceived bushfire risk — without a relevant overlay in place — would be procedurally incorrect and legally unsound. Council cannot impose obligations that fall outside the scope of the statutory planning provisions.
- Importantly, **the BPA designation is addressed at the building permit stage**, where compliance with national bushfire construction standards is mandated. The applicant will be required to obtain a Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment to determine appropriate construction measures in accordance with AS 3959: *Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas*. This ensures that the dwelling is designed to mitigate bushfire risk appropriately and to the satisfaction of the relevant building authority.

In summary, while community concerns around bushfire risk are understandable, they fall outside the remit of the current planning assessment. The proper mechanisms for managing bushfire resilience are already in place

through the building permit process, which the proposal will fully comply with. There is no legal or planning basis for using bushfire risk to delay or refuse this application.

It is also significant to note that Council's own RFI did not raise bushfire risk as a concern, further confirming that the matter does not warrant additional scrutiny under the planning framework.

3 Conclusion / Next Steps

We trust this letter provides a comprehensive response to all matters raised and demonstrates that the proposal is acceptable.

As discussed, please pass on this written response along with the Visual Impact Assessment Plan by Human Habitats to objectors for their review. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with objectors to discuss this response and any remaining concerns to progress the application to a favourable decision.

Yours sincerely

Niamh Cree

Niamh Cree
Town Planner

Proposed Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701

Cultural Heritage Management Plan No: 18608

Activity Size: Large

Assessment: Desktop & Standard

Sponsor: Mitta Valley Inc

(ABN: 28687938367)

Heritage Advisor: Damian Wall

Author: Damian Wall, Olivia Hynam & Jacqui Durrant

Version 2

Date: 15/3/23

94 Kirby Flat Road,
Yackandandah, VIC 3749
Phone: 0402 344 574
ABN: 797 823 838 29
damian.wall@red-gum.com.au

RED-GUM Environmental Consulting

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
Section 65

Cultural Heritage Management Plan – Notice of Approval

CHMP Name:	**Proposed Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701**		
CHMP Number:	**18608**		
Sponsor:	Mitta Valley Inc	**ABN:**	28 687 938 367
Heritage Advisor(s):	Damian Wall		
Author(s):	Damian Wall, Olivia Hynam & Jacqui Durrant (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd).		
Cover date:	15 March 2023	**Pages:**	i-vi & 1-63

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SECRETARY (OR DELEGATE) **I have considered the Evaluation Report for this CHMP and:**	**Yes**	**No**
I am satisfied that the CHMP has been prepared in accordance with the standards prescribed for the purposes of section 53 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.	✓	
I am satisfied that the CHMP adequately addresses the matters set out in section 61.	✓	
In considering this application, I consulted with and considered the views of Aboriginal persons or bodies I considered relevant to the application.	✓	
I have given proper consideration to any relevant human rights	✓	

I, Simon Crocker, Acting Director Heritage Services First Peoples – State Relations, acting under authority delegated to me by the Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and pursuant to section 65(2) of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* hereby **approve** / ~~**refuse to approve**~~ this cultural heritage management plan:

Signed: ……

SIMON CROCKER

Dated: 14/04/2023

- **This notice of approval should be inserted after the title page and bound with the body of the management plan.**
- **The conditions in this management plan are now compliance requirements. Officers from the Department of Premier and Cabinet may attend the subject land to monitor compliance with the conditions.**

Proposed Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701

Cultural Heritage Management Plan
Number: 18608

Activity Size: Large

Assessment: Desktop & Standard

Sponsor: Mitta Valley Inc
(ABN: 28687938367)

Heritage Advisor: Damian Wall

Authors: Damian Wall, Olivia Hynam & Jacqui Durrant

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the Activity Area:
None

Version 2

Date: 15/3/23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compliance requirements are set out in Part 1 of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan. Part 2 describes the Assessment undertaken within the Activity Area.

Activity Area

Mitta Valley Inc ("the Sponsor") is proposing a new Mountain bike trail, located in the Mitta Valley, Victoria. The 30.9km of trail begins just west of the Mitta Mitta township, off the Omeo highway adjacent to the Mitta Mitta River before continuing south towards Mt Welcome and Deep Gully, forming a series of tracks and loops (Figure 1). The Activity area (being a 10m buffer of the track alignment) intersects two (2) planning zones (Public Conservation & Resource Zone and Farming Zone) and is in Towong Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA) in Northeast Victoria. The Activity area is situated on public land south of the Mitta Mitta township, currently managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP).

The Sponsor

The sponsor for this CHMP is the Mitta Valley Inc (ABN: 28687938367).

The Activity

The activity is the development of a Mountain bike trail network, in the form of a series of trails and loops 30.9 km long. The 2m wide trail be machine built with a mini excavator (1.7-1.8T) within a 20m works corridor. The scope includes the development of 19 trails to suit multiple user demands and abilities, including a skills course, a beginners loop, and appropriate signage throughout. This trail will also include a Day Visitor area at the trail head including a carpark, toilet, bike rack facilities and picnic table installation. Some native vegetation removals along the trail alignment will be required plus some excavation and levelling to create a base for the trail and navigate around natural obstructions. Specific impacts are detailed in Section 4 of this CHMP.

Assessment Undertaken & Results

A Desktop and Standard Assessment were undertaken as part of the preparation of this CHMP. As the Desktop Assessment determined that it is reasonably possible for Aboriginal cultural heritage to be located within the Activity area and in accordance with r.64(1) of the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, a Standard Assessment was deemed necessary.

The Standard assessment did not record Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Activity area and concluded that the majority of works are proposed within areas where that have been disturbed through mining and/or forestry and/or are proposed on steep slope (>1H:1V). Aboriginal cultural heritage was considered 'highly unlikely' or a 'low probability' to occur within the Activity area, therefore a Complex Assessment was not conducted in accordance with r.64 (1).

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the Activity Area

No Aboriginal cultural heritage material or places were located in the Activity area.

Contributors

Ms Jacqui Durrant' sole and specific attribution to this CHMP is Section 6.3 *Historical and Ethno-historical accounts in the geographic region*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Phillip Murray - Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation

Johnny Murray - Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation

Reg Murray - Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation

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Part 1. Cultural Heritage Management Conditions

These Management Conditions become compliance requirements once the CHMP is approved. Failure to comply with a condition is an offence under Section 67A of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006.

The Cultural Heritage Management Plan must be readily accessible to the sponsor and their employees and contractors when carrying out the activity.

1. Cultural Heritage Management Conditions

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 requires a CHMP to set out Management Conditions for measures to be taken before, during and after the activity. No Aboriginal cultural heritage was identified during the Desktop or Standard Assessment, and no areas are identified as likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage. No specific cultural heritage management activities are provided; however, one (1) general cultural heritage management condition has been detailed below.

1.1 Management Condition 1: Cultural Heritage Management Plan to be available onsite

A hard copy (or a digital copy on a suitable electronic device) of this approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) must be held onsite at all times within the on-site construction office or with the site manager if an office is not provided, where it will remain readily available to all construction staff.

2. Cultural heritage management contingencies

Clause 13(1) Schedule 2 of the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 requires that the management plan must contain a contingency plan for the matters referred to in Section 61 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, the resolution of disputes between the sponsor and the RAP, reviewing compliance with the CHMP including mechanisms for non-compliance, the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage identified during the activity, and the notification requirements in regards to the identification of Aboriginal cultural heritage during the activity.

Note that any notification and/or communication required as a result of adhering to these contingencies should refer to Appendix 6 for relevant contacts. A Compliance Checklist has been added as Appendix 5 for use prior to and during the works stage.

2.1 Contingency 1 – The discovery of Human Remains

If any suspected human remains are found during any activity, works must cease. The Victoria Police and the State Coroner's Office must be notified immediately. If there are reasonable grounds to believe the remains are Aboriginal, the Coronial Admissions and Enquiries hotline must be contacted immediately on 1300 309 519. This advice has been developed further and is described in the following 5-step contingency plan. Any such discovery at the activity area must follow these steps.

1) Discovery:
    a) If suspected human remains are discovered, all activity within at least 30 metres must stop
    b) The remains must be left in place and protected from harm or damage, and
    c) Do not contact the media; do not take any photographs of the remains other than those requested by the relevant authorities below.
2) Notification:
    a) If suspected human remains have been found, the State Coroner's Office and the Victoria Police must be notified immediately
    b) If there are reasonable grounds to believe the remains are Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, the Coronial Admissions and Enquiries hotline must be immediately notified on 1300 309 519
    c) All details of the location and nature of the human remains must be provided to the relevant authorities
    d) If it is confirmed by State Coroner's Office that the discovered remains are Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, the person responsible for the activity must report the existence of them to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council in accordance with section 17 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.
3) Impact Mitigation or Salvage:
    a) The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, after taking reasonable steps to consult with any Aboriginal person or body with an interest in the Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, will determine the appropriate course of action as required by section 18(2)(b) of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
    b) An appropriate impact mitigation or salvage strategy as determined by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council must be implemented by the Sponsor. All costs associated with this will be the responsibility of the Sponsor.
4) Curation and further analysis:
    a) The treatment of salvaged Aboriginal Ancestral Remains must be in accordance with the direction of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.

5) Reburial:

a) Any reburial site(s) must be fully documented by an experienced and qualified archaeologist and all relevant details provided to the Registrar

b) Appropriate management measures must be implemented to ensure the Aboriginal Ancestral Remains are not disturbed in the future.

2.2 Contingency 2 – Aboriginal cultural heritage (excluding Aboriginal Ancestral Remains)

1) Secret / sacred objects

a) Any suspected Secret / Sacred Objects must be reported to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, as per Part 2, Division 3 (sections 21-2) of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

b) All works must stop within at least 10 metres of the objects

c) The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council will transfer the object/s to an Aboriginal person that the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council is satisfied is entitled to and willing to take possession, custody or control of the object/s, or otherwise deals with the object/s as the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council thinks appropriate, as per section 21B of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

2) Discovery

If any other suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage, excluding Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and suspected Secret / Sacred Objects, is uncovered or identified:

i) All works must stop within at least 10 metres of the suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage

ii) The 'stop works' area around the suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage must be fenced off using appropriate temporary fencing and protected from further disturbance; "no-go zone" signage must be attached to the fencing at all times to prevent the area being disturbed further

iii) An appropriately qualified Heritage Advisor must be notified within two working days

iv) An appropriately qualified Heritage Advisor must inspect the suspected Aboriginal cultural heritage within three working days of notification

v) Relevant Traditional Owner groups must be provided the opportunity to participate in the inspection.

3) Notification

The Department of Premier and cabinet (vahr@dpc.vic.gov.au) must be notified of the discovery of any Aboriginal cultural heritage excluding Aboriginal Ancestral Remains by the Sponsor within five working days.

4) Unexpected discoveries of Aboriginal cultural heritage

If the Heritage Advisor determines that the discovery is Aboriginal cultural heritage, and is not Aboriginal cultural heritage as described in Example Contingency 2.5:

i) the Sponsor must consider whether it is possible to avoid harm to the Aboriginal cultural heritage, and if harm cannot be avoided, whether harm can be minimised, and salvage excavation of the Aboriginal cultural heritage undertaken to mitigate impact

ii) if harm cannot be avoided, the Sponsor must arrange a meeting between the Heritage Advisor, relevant Traditional Owner groups (should they wish to attend) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, as soon as practicable, to discuss and agree an appropriate way of managing the Aboriginal cultural heritage

iii) all reasonable costs arising from the meeting and any agreed management actions must be borne by the Sponsor

iv) the temporary fencing around the suspected or identified Aboriginal cultural heritage may be removed, and works re-commence in the "no-go zone", when the suspected or identified Aboriginal cultural heritage has been investigated and managed appropriately, in accordance with *the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and as agreed in discussions with the Department of Premier and Cabinet

v) the Heritage Advisor must record the Aboriginal cultural heritage in accordance with VAHR standards and relevant forms must be submitted to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register as soon as practical.

5) Not unexpected Aboriginal cultural heritage and low-density artefact distributions

If the Heritage Advisor determines that the discovery is a low-density artefact distribution or other expected Aboriginal cultural heritage:

i) the Heritage Advisor must record the Aboriginal cultural heritage in accordance with Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) recording standards, and relevant forms must be submitted to the VAHR as soon as practical

ii) works can continue once the Aboriginal cultural heritage has been recorded and all temporary fencing is removed.

2.3 Contingency 3 – Custody and Management

Where the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council determines the approval of a Management Plan, the custody of Aboriginal cultural heritage (with the exception of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, or secret or sacred objects) discovered during or after an activity must comply with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and be assigned according to the following order of priority, as appropriate:

a. any relevant Registered Aboriginal Party for the land from which the Aboriginal cultural heritage is salvaged

b. any relevant registered native title holder for the land from which the Aboriginal cultural heritage is salvaged

c. any relevant native title party (as defined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*) for the land from which the Aboriginal cultural heritage is salvaged

d. any relevant Traditional Owner or Owners of the land from which the Aboriginal cultural heritage is salvaged

e. any relevant Aboriginal body or organisation which has historical or contemporary interests in Aboriginal cultural heritage relating to the land from which the Aboriginal cultural heritage is salvaged

f. the owner of the land from which the Aboriginal cultural heritage is salvaged

g. Museum Victoria.

1) Final management arrangements, such as repatriation and / or reburial, must occur within six months of the completion of the activity.

2) If the relevant Traditional Owners request, and if it is practical, provisions should be made to re-bury artefacts within the activity area, in a place which will not be disturbed by future works. (Note, if reburial is to be within the extent of registered place the management plan must allow for that harm to occur.)

3) Any reburial must be documented by a suitably qualified Heritage Advisor and the relevant forms and spatial data provided to the VAHR, as soon as practicable.

2.4 Contingency 4 – Dispute Resolution

This contingency has no application as the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council is evaluating the Management Plan.

2.5 Contingency 5 – Compliance

In the event of suspected non-compliance:

a) All relevant works must stop
b) The Sponsor must contact the Statewide Compliance and Enforcement Unit (compliance.aboriginalvictoria@dpc.vic.gov.au) within two working days to review the suspected non-compliance and agree to any required remedies
c) If agreement cannot be reached by all parties, the Minister may order an audit of the management plan.
d) All reasonable costs arising from the meeting and any agreed remedies must be borne by the Sponsor.

Part 2. Assessment

3. Introduction

Mitta Valley Inc ("the Sponsor") is proposing a new Mountain bike trail, located in the Mitta Valley, Victoria. The 30.9km of trail begins just west of the Mitta Mitta township, off the Omeo highway adjacent to the Mitta Mitta River before continuing south towards Mt Welcome and Deep Gully, forming a series of tracks and loops (Figure 1).

The activity area intersects two (2) planning zones (Public Conservation & Resource Zone and Farming Zone) and is located in the Towong Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA) in Northeast Victoria. It is recommended that the 2m wide trail be machine built with a mini excavator (1.7-1.8T) within a 20m works corridor.

The scope includes the development of 19 trails to suit multiple user demands and abilities, including a skills course, a beginners loop, and appropriate signage throughout. This trail will also include a Day Visitor area at the trail head including a carpark, toilet, bike rack facilities and picnic table installation. Some native vegetation removals along the trail alignment will be required plus some excavation and levelling to create a base for the trail and navigate around natural obstructions. Specific impacts are detailed in Section 4 of this CHMP.

3.1 The reasons for preparing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan

This CHMP is a mandatory plan under s.46 (1)(a) of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the Act). A CHMP is required under r.7 of the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 (Vic) (the Regulations) if any part of the activity area is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity, and any part of the activity is considered to be a high impact activity. This CHMP has been prepared as a result of the following findings:

- The Activity area intersects one (1) mapped area of cultural heritage sensitivity in accordance with r.26 of the Regulations:
    1. Within 200m of a named waterway – Mitta Mitta River, Snowy Creek and Deep Gully; and
    2. The proposed activity is considered to be a *high impact activity* in accordance with r.47 Constructing specified items of infrastructure:
        (1) The construction of any one or more of the following is a high impact activity if the construction would result in significant ground disturbance—
        (b) a bicycle track with a length exceeding 500 metres;

3.2 Notice of Intention to prepare a Cultural Heritage Management Plan

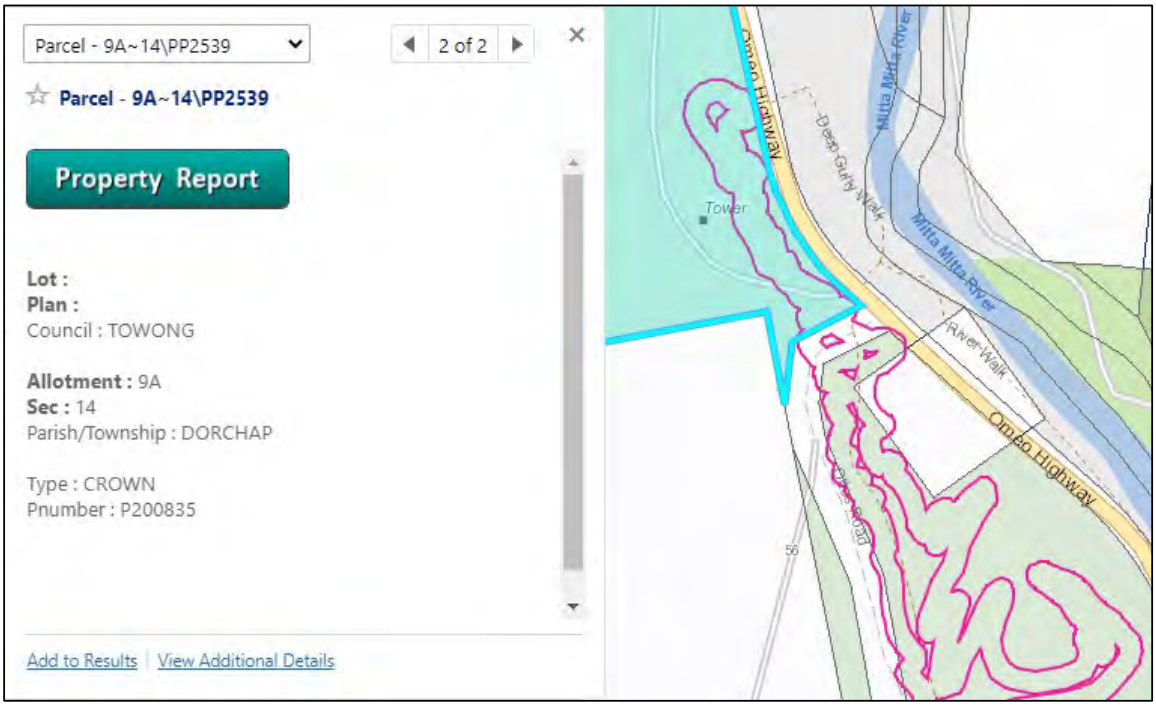
Currently there is no Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the activity area. A Notice of Intention (NoI) to prepare a plan was provided to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) on 10th February 2022. A copy of this notice is in Appendix 1.

3.3 Location and Extent of the Activity area

The 2m wide by 30.9km long walking path is to be constructed within a 20m works zone, southwest of the Mitta Mitta township located in the Towong Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA) in North East Victoria (Map 1). The entirety of the site is managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. There are no registered Aboriginal places in the activity area. The Activity area intersects SPI/LPI details listed in Table 1.

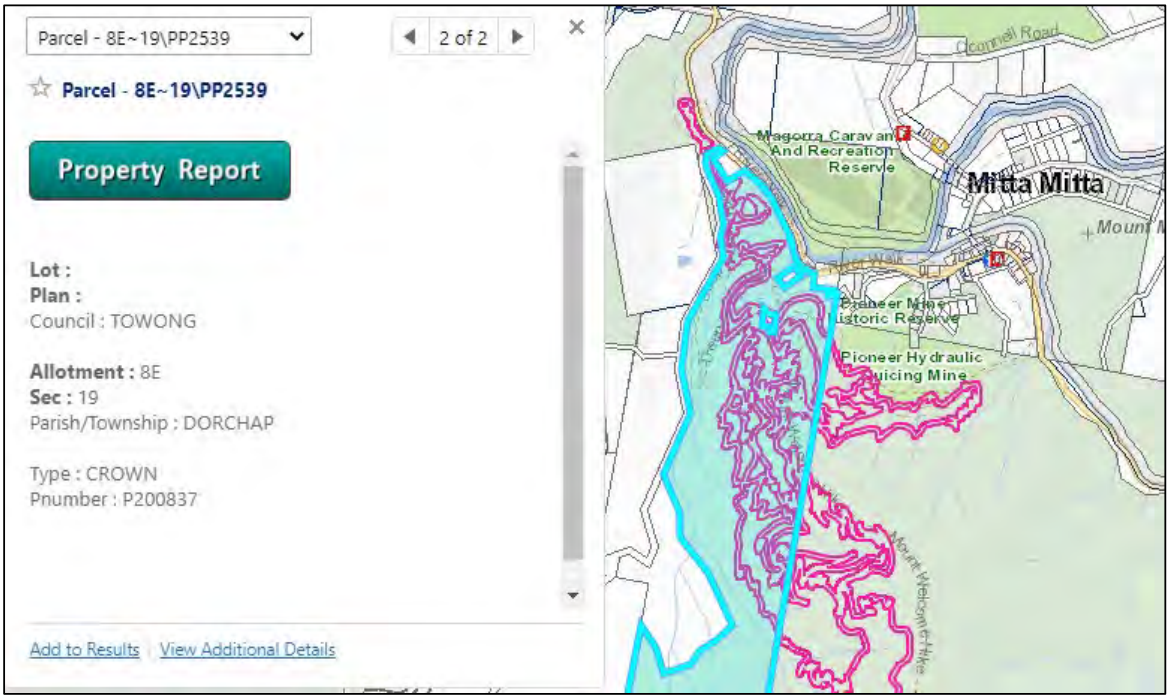
Table 1: Crown Allotment & SPI Details of the Linear Activity area

Crown Description	Address	Standard Parcel Identifier (SPI)	Parish	Screenshot
Allotment 9A	OMEO HIGHWAY MITTA MITTA 3701	9A~14\PP2539	Dorchap	A
Allotment 8E	OMEO HIGHWAY MITTA MITTA 3701	8E~19\PP2539	Dorchap	B
Lot 1	OMEO HIGHWAY MITTA MITTA 3701	1\TP865933	N/A	C
Allotment AE	OTTOS ROAD MITTA MITTA 3701	A8\PP2539	Dorchap	D
Allotment 2015	DISAPPOINTMENT TRACK MITTA MITTA 3701	2015\PP3033	Magorra	E

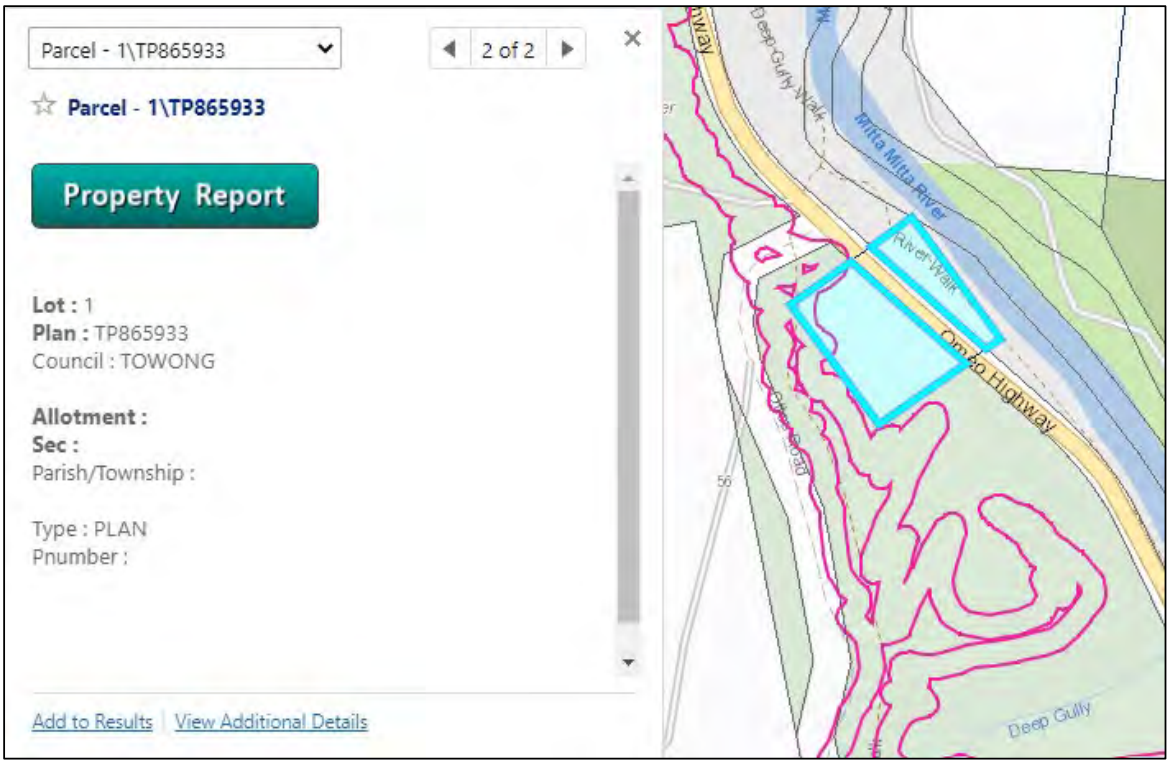


Screenshot A: Allotment 9A[1]

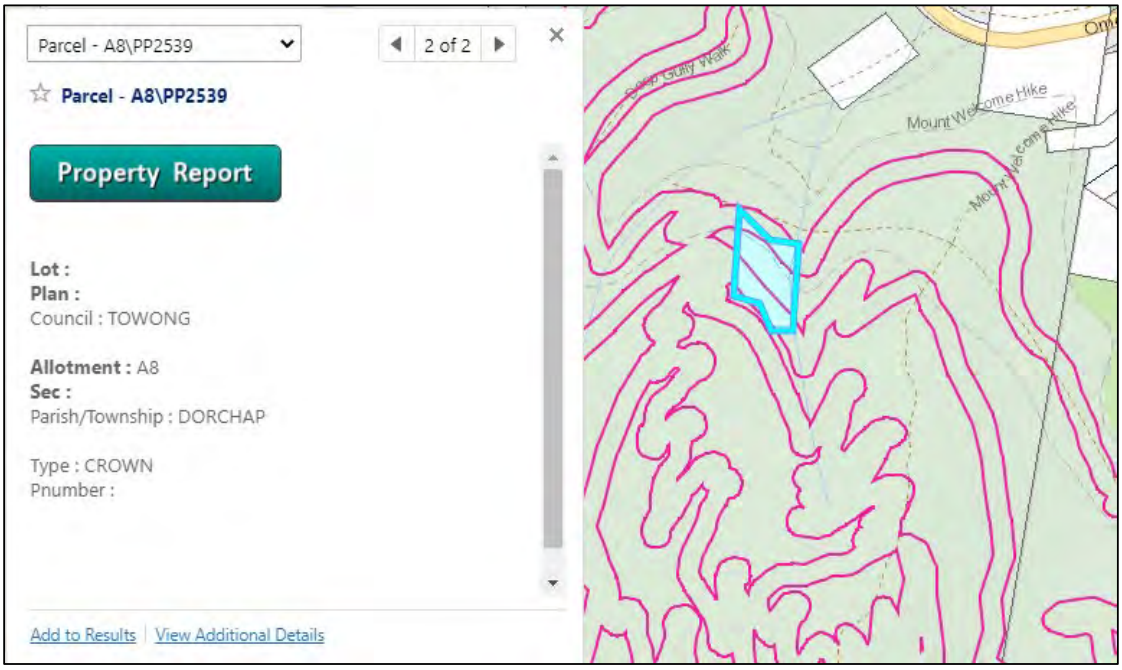
[1] Screenshots and parcel details obtained from: https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/mapsharevic/



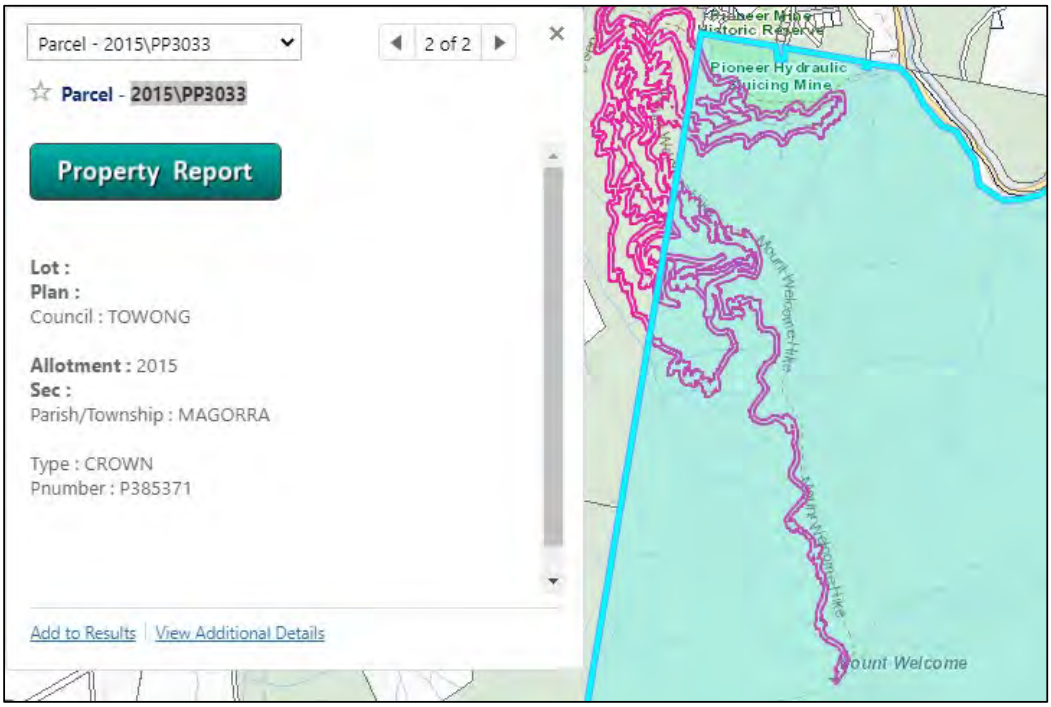
Screenshot B: Allotment 8E



Screenshot C: Lot 1



Screenshot D: Allotment A8



Screenshot E: Allotment 2015

3.4 Sponsor

The sponsor for this CHMP is the Mitta Valley Inc (ABN: 28687938367). The Sponsors contact for the works described in the CHMP is:

Name: Megan Graham
Postal Address: 5557 Omeo Hwy, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701
Phone: 0411 645 415
Email: megan.graham@latitude36advisory.com

3.5 Owners and occupiers of the land

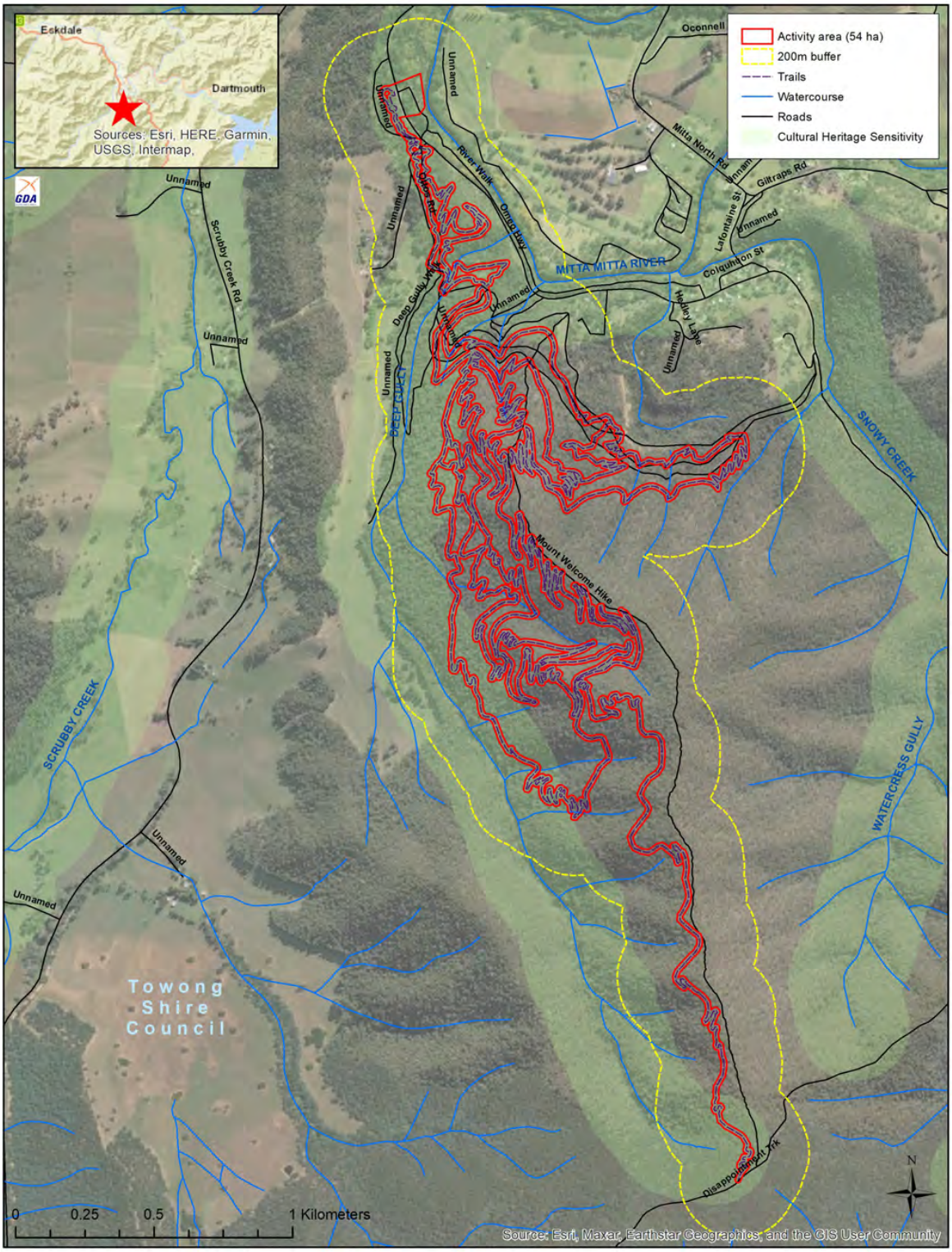
The Activity area is situated on public land south of the Mitta Mitta township, currently managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning.

3.6 Heritage Advisors

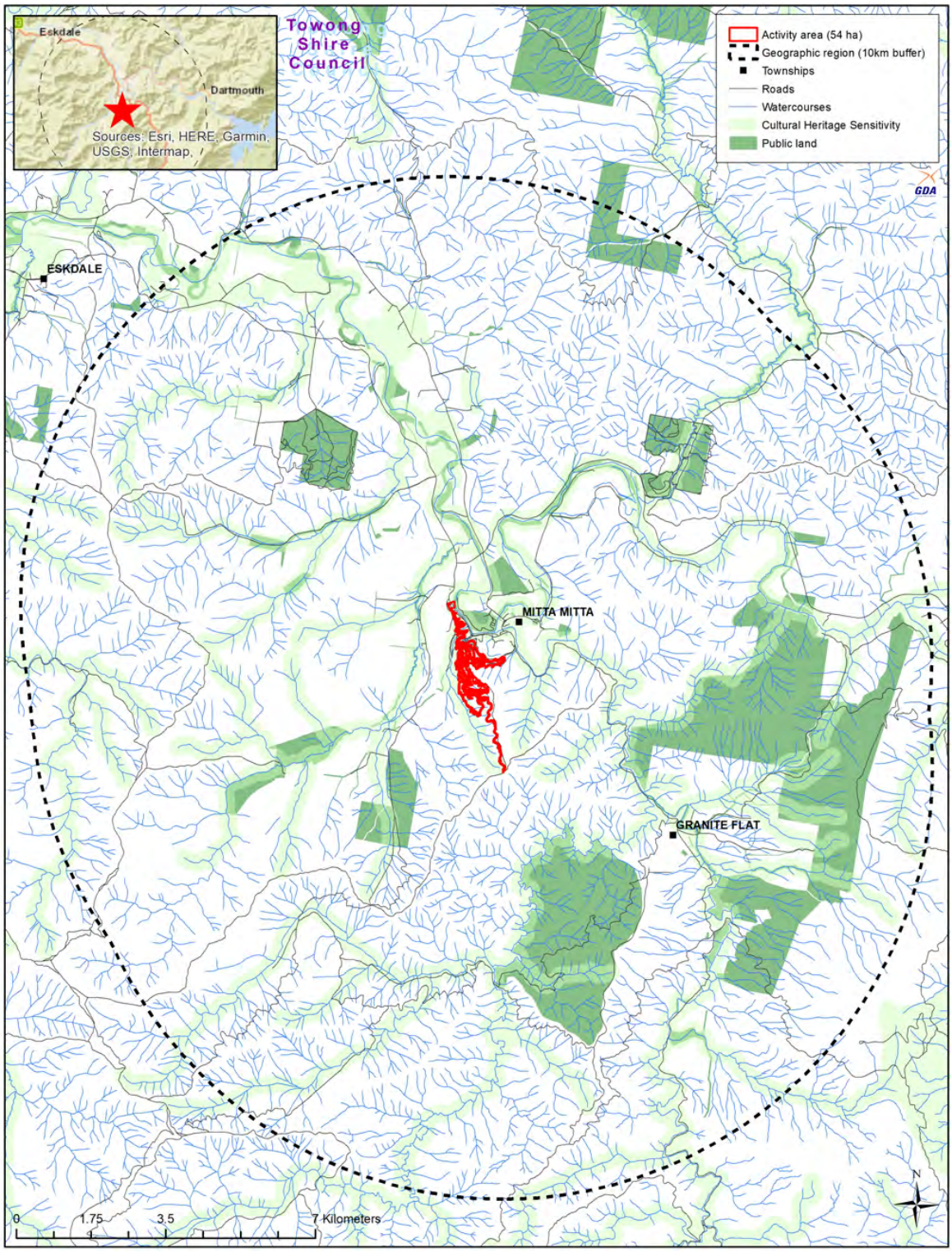
Damian Wall (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd) has 15 years' field experience in Archaeological practice, is a Full Member of the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc (AACAI) and has a Graduate Certificate in Cultural Heritage Management from Flinders University (SA). Damian is suitably qualified under section 189 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 and appropriately qualified in archaeology to supervise excavation for a complex assessment as specified in Aboriginal Heritage Regulation 2018, s.61(3).

3.7 Registered Aboriginal Parties

Currently there is no Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the Activity area. The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) will assess this CHMP. The Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation (DDAC) are an interested party in the region including the activity area and had representatives involved in review of the Draft CHMP and development of the Management Conditions.



Map 1: Activity area location. Scale 1:17,000. Source: ESRI Australia, 2022



Map 2: Geographic Region (10km buffer)of the Activity Area, Cultural Heritage sensitivity. Scale. 1:110,000. Source: Nearmap, 2022.

4. Activity Description & Potential Impacts

Mitta Valley Inc ("the Sponsor") is proposing a new mountain bike trail, approximately 30.9km in length beginning just west of the Mitta Mitta township, off the Omeo highway adjacent to the Mitta Mitta River before continuing south towards Mt Welcome and Deep Gully, forming a series of tracks and loops situated in the Towong Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA) in North East Victoria (Figure 1).

The 2m wide trail be machine built with a mini excavator (1.7-1.8T) within a 20m works corridor. The scope includes the development of 19 trails to suit multiple user demands and abilities, including a skills course, a beginners loop, and appropriate signage throughout. This trail will also include a Day Visitor area at the trail head including a carpark, toilet, bike rack facilities and picnic table installation. Some native vegetation removals along the trail alignment will be required plus some excavation and levelling to create a base for the trail and navigate around natural obstructions.

4.1 Statement of Potential Impacts

The proposed activity involves construction of the new mountain bike trail, in the form of approximately 30.9km of trail beginning just west of the Mitta Mitta township, off the Omeo highway adjacent to the Mitta Mitta River before continuing on towards Mt Welcome and Deep Gully, forming a series of tracks and loops. The proposed development will involve disturbance to both surface and potential buried land surfaces. All activities are to be contained within the area assessed by this CHMP.

The proposed trail network from the trailhead to the end of Trail 8 'Ridge descent to Mid Feeder' that connects to Disappointment track (existing) is approximately 30.9km long. It is recommended that the trail be machine built with a mini excavator (1.7-1.8T) within a 20m works corridor. This method will enable easy construction of features of the trail such as jumps, berms, etc. These features are critical to the success and sustainability of the trail.

The scope includes the development of 19 trails to suit multiple user demands and abilities, including a skills course, a beginners loop, and appropriate signage throughout. Trails graded GREEN will be suited for beginners of all abilities, with aims to develop riders skills, these trails will form a loop. Trails graded BLUE will be suitable for intermediate riders. They will be single track trails with moderate gradients, variable surface and obstacles. Trails graded BLACK DIAMOND will be suitable for the experienced rider. They will provide challenging single tracks with steep gradients, variable surfaces and many obstacles. Trails graded DOUBLE BLACK DIAMOND will be extremely difficult, incorporating very steep gradients, highly variable surfaces and unavoidable obstacles.

The proposed trail network is approximately 30.9km long with elevations ranging between 260-880m. Several sections may require small water crossings/bridges/boardwalk (Photo 1). The rest of the trail is expected to be machine built with a mini excavator (1.7-1.8T), or hand built when required. It is recommended that galvanised steel structures with fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) decking materials are used for the bridges and boardwalk sections. The trail network is to be constructed using the following methods:

- Machine constructed trail – 2m wide max., depth 0.2m max
- Hand constructed trail - 2m wide max., depth 0.2m max
- Rock armouring where required.
- Trailhead facilities – Most facilities are already constructed in the existing rest stop but there may be some minor clean-up required by mini-excavator on the surface of the carpark and entry to the trail (0.05m max depth).
- Elevated boardwalk structures including footing construction - boardwalk width 1400mm, footings: 350mm (W) 600mm (D) approximately.
- Minor bridges including footing construction - bridge width 1400mm, footings 400mm (W) and approximately 600mm (D).
- Signage –information boards, interpretive signage, caution signage - 350mm (W) 800mm (D) and interpretive signage– 350mm (W) and approximately 800 mm (D).
- Wayfinding/Directional totems - 300mm (W) and approximately 600mm (D).

4.1.1 Machine constructed trail – mini excavator

This project will largely be constructed using a 1.7T to 2T mini excavator which is used to create the defined 2m trail width. The following steps outline the process for construction of the trail using an excavator.

1. Review the assessed corridor up to 100-200m ahead of excavator. The assessed corridor is marked using pink flagging tape tied to trees/vegetation during the ground-truthing stage and mapped with GPS. The ground-truthed corridor is defined to include 10m either side of the flagged alignment, subject to other waterway constraints.
2. Determine the exact alignment to be taken within the alignment corridor, factoring in avoidance of SRZs/TPZs or other requirements advised by the heritage and ecology specialists.
3. Clear the 1-2m construction corridor of vegetation. The construction corridor is defined as the horizontal corridor from the top of the upslope batter to the toe of the downslope batter and the vertical corridor to about 2.4 m high (enough to allow passage of the excavator).
4. Cut the bench using cut and fill technique outlined in IMBA Trail Solutions guide. The topsoil and mineral earth removed from the inner side of the bench are used to build up the outer edge of the bench.
5. Clean up the trail tread, removing loose rocks and roots, compacting the tread, back sloping the batter and managing drainage.
6. On flat ground the topsoil is removed to 2m width with the excavated zone refilled with excavated material to a level marginally higher than the surrounding ground. The surface is compacted in the same manner with a slight crown at the centreline to ensure water shedding from the trail surface to the surrounding ground.

4.1.2 Hand Constructed Trail

The process for hand constructed trail is similar to machine constructed trail. It is used in situations where it may be dangerous for a machine to operate, areas of high ecological or heritage sensitivity or where trail widths are required to be kept as narrow as possible. Instead of using a machine to bench the trail tread area as described above, this is cut using hand tools.

4.1.3 Rock Armouring

Rock armouring may be used for small drainage crossings or narrow wet areas to improve the trail tread resistance and avoid damage to the environment.

1. If required, during the trail construction, rocks which are unable to stay in-situ will be re-used as part of the rock armouring process. All rock armouring installation will be in accordance with the IMBA Trail Solutions guidebook.
2. Excavate soil from the area to be rock armoured, to the approximate depth of the rocks to be used.
3. Place rocks in position per requirements in the IMBA Trail solutions guidebook.
4. Once all rock armouring is complete, use any leftover soil/rocks to pack in around the edges of the rock armouring.

4.1.4 Elevated Structures/Minor Bridges/Culverts

These structures are typically used to enable a trail to cross over a waterway or area of soft or boggy ground. The use of Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP) decking allows light and water to penetrate through the bridge, thus minimizing the impact on the vegetation below. Where extended elevated board walks are required, footings should be created in a manner which minimises impact to sensitive wet areas. Wherever possible structures should be less than 1m above the ground to mitigate the requirement for handrails which create additional riding hazards.

Construction of elevated structures/bridges should be undertaken after trails are excavated to ensure accurate measurements and easier access to the construction site with materials.

4.1.5 Signage

Wayfinding signage will be located at sections where the proposed trail intersects with other trails to provide information to users, or in locations to provide advance warning while using the trail. The signs will be installed within the 2m corridor where the trail is to be constructed, where vegetation has already been removed as part of the construction of the trails. No additional vegetation removal is required to install trail signage. Trailhead and caution signage will also provide information on use of the trail, including hazards, trail rules and general information.

Photo 1: Concept of the crossings/bridges. Source: Terrain Trail Construction, 2019.

4.1.6 Impacts Summary

These activities listed above have the potential to impact on the current land surface, subsurface deposits, any buried land surfaces and surface and/or subsurface Aboriginal cultural heritage that may be present in the activity area. The activity area intersects two (2) planning zones PCRZ and FZ (Public Conservation & Resource Zone and Farming Zone) and is located in the Mitta Valley in the Towong Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA) in North East Victoria.

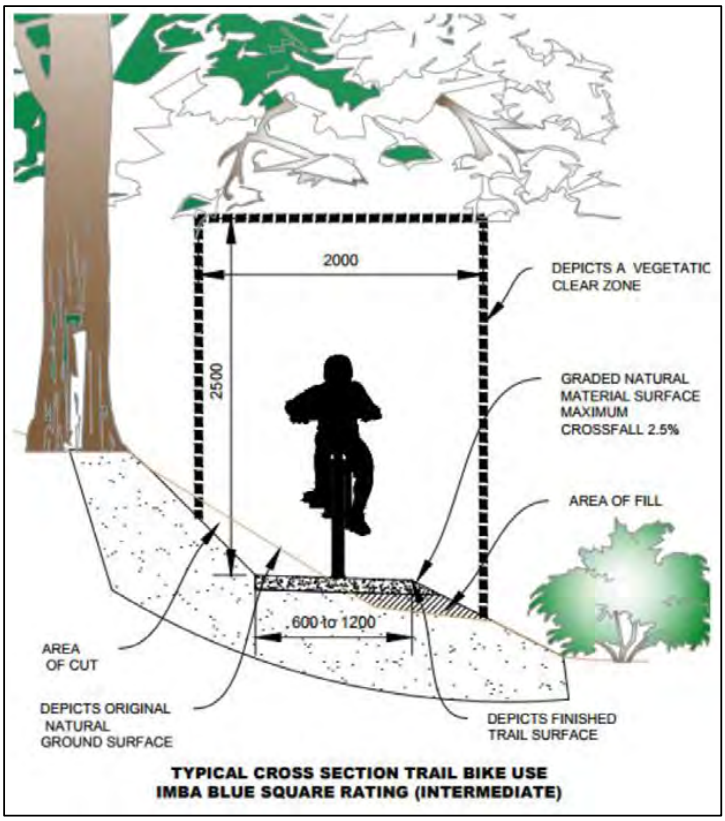


Figure 1: The proposed construction cross section of the bike trail. Source: Terrain Trail Construction, 2021.

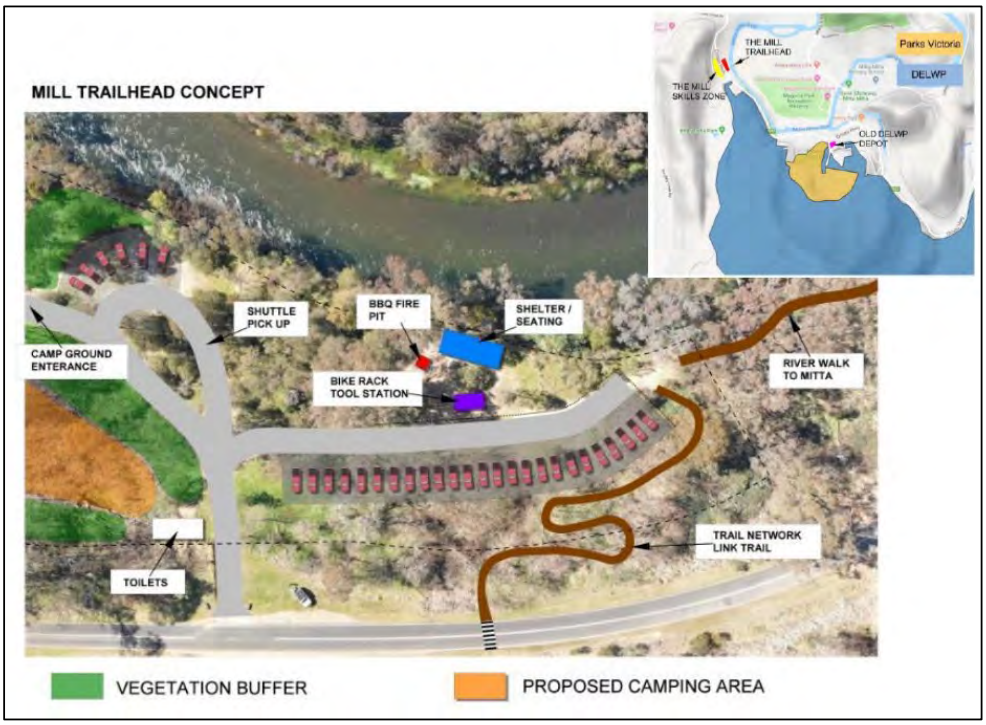


Figure 2: Concept design of trailhead area. Note most facilities are already built at the existing roadside stop. Source: Terrain Trail Construction, 2021.

5. Documentation of Consultation in Relation to the Assessment

A Notice of Intent to Prepare a Management Plan (NOI) was submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) 10th February 2022 in accordance with s. 54 of the Act (Appendix 1).

An inception meeting between Damian Wall (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd) and Phil Murray (Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation) was held via phone on 4th February 2022 and it was agreed that the survey methodology was to be the heritage advisor walking the entire area with two (2) Aboriginal representatives from Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation (DDAC).

5.1 Fieldwork Participation

A Standard Assessment was undertaken on the 11th of February 2022 by Damian Wall (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd), Phil and Johnny Murray (Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation), and Leigh Holland (Terrain) representing the Sponsor.

An additional walkover/inspection was undertaken on the 16th February 2023 by Damian Wall (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd) and Reg Murray (Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation).

5.2 Consultation in relation to the Management Conditions

A Standard assessment summary and management conditions meeting was held on site post the Standard Assessment on February 11th 2022 between Damian Wall (Heritage Advisor, Red-Gum Environmental Consulting), Phil and Johnny Murray (Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation) also involving Leigh Holland (Terrain) representing the Sponsor.

The meeting discussed the effectiveness of the methodology and the results of the assessment (Section 7). All representatives agreed that the Standard assessment had adequately assessed the Activity area for the presence of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and were satisfied with the proposed Management Conditions and contingencies.

During the second inspection with Reg Murray (DDAC), the assessment approach/effectiveness was reviewed, Reg Murray agreed that the Standard assessment (and additional inspection) had adequately assessed the Activity area for the presence of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and was satisfied with the proposed Management Conditions and contingencies.

5.3 Summary of outcomes

Following consultation with DDAC during the preparation of the CHMP and during the fieldwork stage, Management Conditions and contingencies were developed for the activity. A summary of consultation is presented in Appendix 2.

6. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Desktop Assessment

6.1 Introduction

Under Part 3 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018*, a CHMP must include a desktop assessment and if required, also a Standard Assessment and/or a Complex Assessment. The desktop assessment was undertaken by Damian Wall & Jacqui Durrant to determine the likelihood of the activity area containing Aboriginal cultural heritage and to assist in assessing the significance of any heritage that may be found. Desktop research provides information enabling predictions to be made as to whether a place may contain Aboriginal cultural heritage. This research involves the following:

- Investigating the site registry.
- Reviewing other cultural heritage reports undertaken within the geographic area.
- Reviewing local ethnographic histories of the area.
- Research into past historic land use.
- Reviewing local histories of the area.
- Researching the geomorphology and geology of the region encompassing the Activity area.

6.2 The Geographic region

For the purposes of this report, the geographic region is considered as a 10km buffer of the Activity area as this area is considered to contain a representative sample of all features that exist throughout the landforms relevant to the Aboriginal cultural heritage that may be present (Map 3). This assessment will study comparable landscape factors including geology, topography, environmental conditions and occurrence of potential archaeological sites. Those sites within the geographic region, that have the most similar landscape features to that of the activity area have been prioritised for scrutiny.

6.2.1 Climate

Climate conditions have been sourced from the nearest weather observation station in Mount beauty, approximately 30 km southwest of the activity area. Average daytime maximum temperatures in Mount beauty are 20 °C with summer time maximums reaching 29 °C and prevailing winds from the northwest. Rain typically falls as thunderstorms in the summer, and in winter with cold fronts, with February the driest month and August the wettest (BOM, July 2022). Rainfall averages out to 1263.2 millimetres (49 in) a year, most of which falls in winter with passing frontal systems; however, these can occur at any time of year, and the main form of rainfall in spring and summer is from thunderstorms (BOM, July, 2022).

Aboriginal people have been in Australia for at least 40–60,000 years and possibly longer (Allen 1989; Jones 1995). This period falls within the last world climatic downturn or glacial period, which commenced about 80,000 years ago. During the glacial period, the climate was up to 6°C lower in the southern hemisphere, the tree line was lowered, and large glaciers formed in Tasmania and on the Great Divide (Gibson et al. 1987). Greater amounts of water held within the large glaciers and ice sheets led to lower sea levels and Tasmania and Papua New Guinea were joined to Australia by land bridges. The climate was much drier and cooler and landmasses stretched to the edge of the continental shelf. After 26,000 years before present (BP) the climatic downturn became more severe and sea levels were at their lowest and the climate at its coldest at 18,000 BP (Bowler et al. 1976: 374; Dodson et al. 1992: 117; Freslov 2018: 27).

Temperatures were up to 6°C lower than today and while Tasmania was heavily glaciated, on the mainland cirque glaciers were only found at Mount Kosciusko (Peterson 1968: 74–75). As conditions ameliorated following the last glacial, it became milder, but wetter and the tree line increased to its present altitude. Vegetation dependant on wetter conditions expanded, including rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests, reaching its maximum extent during the mid-Holocene at 5000 BP (Gell & Stuart 1989: Figures 6–11). Since 5000 BP, conditions have been cooler and drier, with the ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation) weather pattern becoming more dominant (Rowland 1999: 18; Sandweiss et al. 1996). Increased fire risks and extensive fires are associated with a periodic but severe ENSO weather pattern (Freslov & Goulding 2002; Freslov 2018: 27).

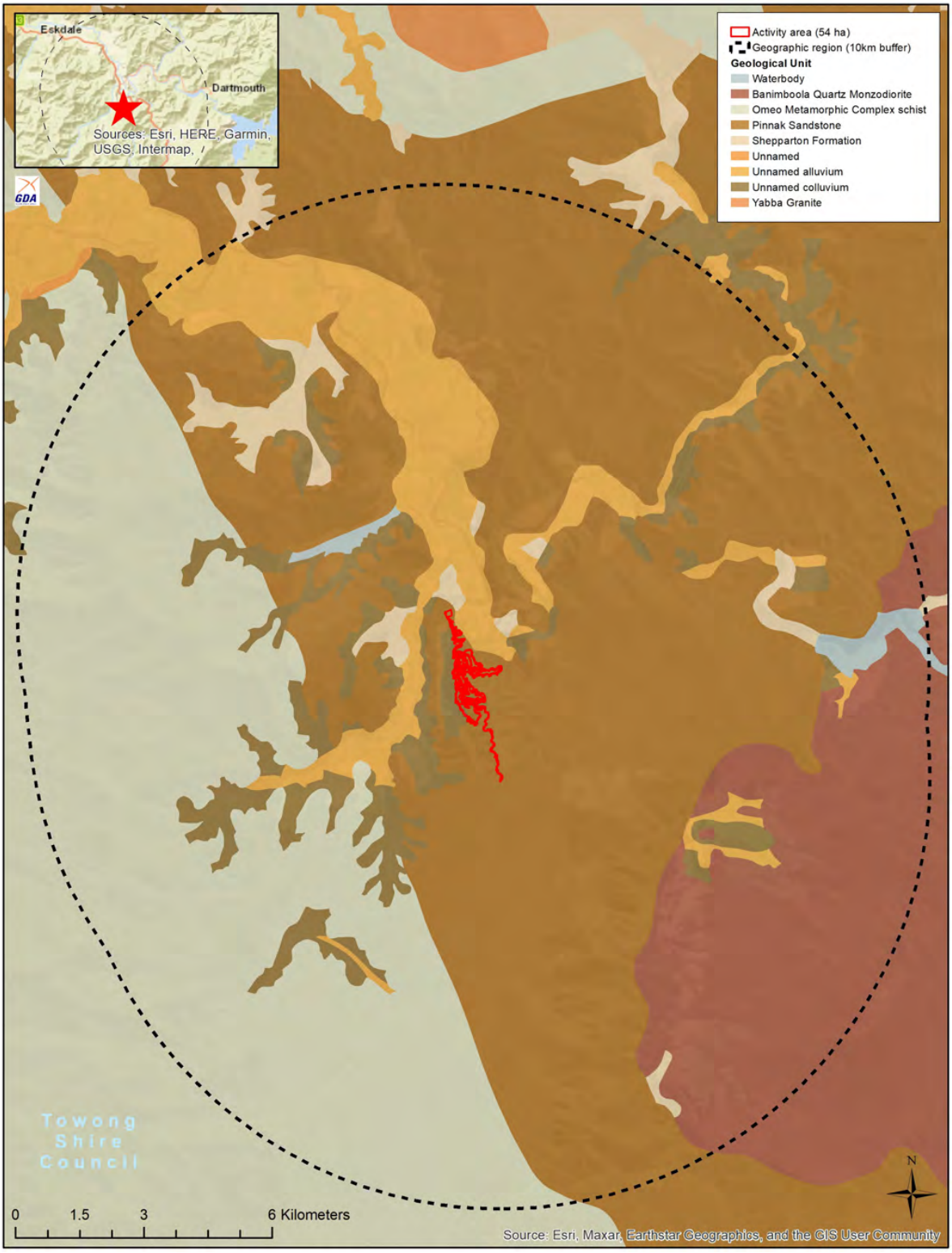
6.2.2 Geology

The Activity area is located in the Eastern Highlands (Map 3), which is mountainous with several wide, flat river valleys cutting into the highlands and draining into the Murray River system. The area is part of the Lachlan Fold Belt and within the Omeo Structural Zone, incorporating parts of the High Plains and Corryong subzones, and the Wagga–Omeo Metamorphic Belt (Simpson et al, 2001).

Oppy et al (1995) prepared a report on the Geology and prospectivity of the Tallangatta 1:250 000 sheet which includes the Activity area. The study area covered much of the Omeo Zone of Victoria, and also parts of the Kosciusko Batholith and Kiandra Group of New South Wales. The Palaeozoic history of the Omeo Zone is very complex; a poorly understood episode of sedimentation, volcanism and intrusion may have occurred as early as the Cambrian (The Bethanga Granite Gneiss, and other polydeformed gneisses of the Gundowring Terrane)(Oppy et al 1995).

Submarine sedimentation (the Hotham Group) and minor volcanism (the Kiandra Group and Blueys Creek Formation) in the Ordovician, was followed by regional metamorphism ranging from low to very high grades (involving partial melting in places) and regional folding and faulting during the Early Silurian Benambran deformation (Oppy et al 1995).The metamorphic rocks in the Tallangatta region are collectively known as the Omeo Metamorphic Complex (OMC). The geological history of the Tallangatta region since the Early Mesozoic has been one of uplift and erosion, with sporadic minor outpourings of alkali basalt lavas in the Tertiary and Quaternary (Oppy et al 1995).

The majority of the Activity area comprises of Pinnak Sandstone (Op) which consists of marine turbiditic thick bedded litharenite and minor thin bedded quartz arenite, with interbedded green slaty mudstone, siltstone, and minor chert (Oppy et al 1995). Conodonts from cherts within the Pinnak Sandstone indicate that the formation spans almost the whole of the Lower Ordovician (Oppy et al 1995).



Map 3: Activity area and Geological Units. Scale 1:110,000. Source: GeoVic Online, 2022

6.2.3 Geomorphology

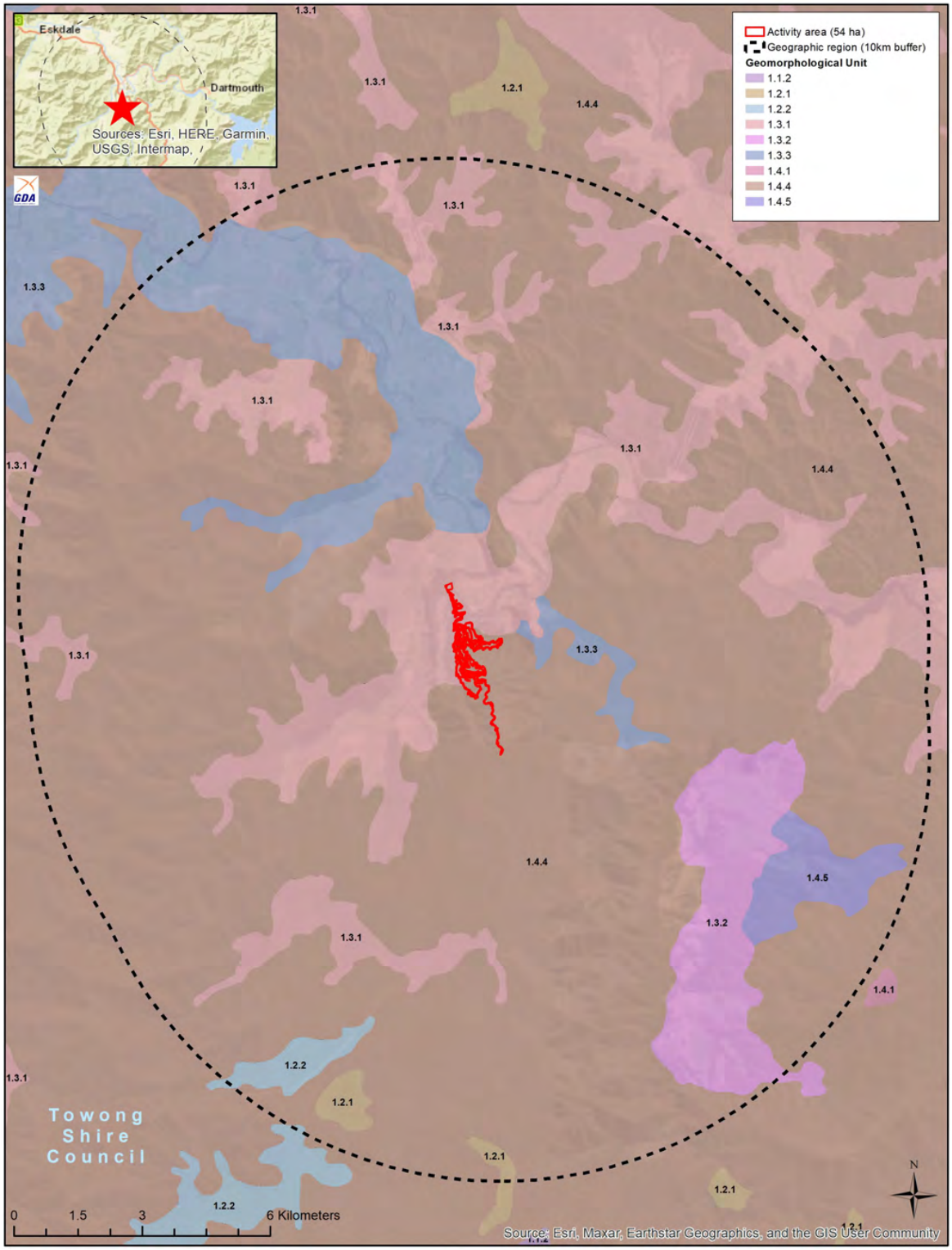
The Activity area is located within the Eastern Uplands (EU) geomorphic division. The EU is centred on the main divide in eastern Victoria, separating streams draining north to the Murray-Darling Basin from those flowing southwards directly to the sea (VRO, 2022). The EU division is variable in height and follows a meandering path as a parting of north and south draining river systems in an extensive area of mountain ridges and high plateau-like surfaces (VRO, 2022).

The Activity area is mapped as two different geomorphological tiers1.3.1 Low relief landscapes at low elevation (Cann River south, Silvan, Templestowe) and 1.4.4 Deeply dissected ridge and valley landscapes (headwaters of major rivers such as the Wonnangatta, King and Kiewa Rivers, Mt Coopracambra).

1.3.1 Low relief landscapes at low elevation (Cann River south, Silvan, Templestowe) occurs to the north of the Divide. Areas of undulating plains and low hills cut in Lower Palaeozoic sedimentary rocks and granites, characterise the Wedderburn, Bendigo and Rushworth districts, as the landscape gently descends to the Northern Riverine Plains (Tier 4) (VRO, 2022). The low hills south of Wodonga, and at Chiltern and Springhurst are also included. On the southern side of the Eastern Uplands, a dissected plateau-like surface of hills known as the Nillumbik Terrain extends from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne (e.g., Camberwell and Templestowe) around Mt Dandenong and further eastwards to the NSW border (VRO, 2022). The hilly landscape to the east from Cann River to the border has the appearance of a dissected plateau. The soils in the northern areas are predominantly red to yellow acid texture soils (Kurosols) (VRO, 2022).

1.4.4 Deeply dissected ridge and valley landscapes (headwaters of major rivers such as the Wonnangatta, King and Kiewa Rivers, Mt Coopracambra) consist of high, narrow-topped ridges that form the divides between the major streams, and steep spurs and side slopes extending down to steeply graded streams (VRO, 2022). Major stream systems (e.g. Thompson, Macalister, Wonnangatta / Mitchell, Kiewa, Mitta Mitta, upper Murray and Snowy Rivers) are deeply incised with intricately interlocking V-shaped spurs and tributary valleys, commonly with local relief of 500-700 m from ridge-top to valley bottom (VRO, 2022). In their upper reaches, stream gradients are steep, and down-cutting is still active so there is little or no accumulation of sediment along the stream margins (VRO, 2022). South of the Great Divide, gradients along the upper parts of streams are generally steeper than in the streams that drain to the north.

Soils vary from red and brown gradational soils (Dermosols) on the moister and more stable slopes to poorly structured gradational soils (Kandosols) on the drier slopes (VRO, 2022). Soils on steep slopes are usually shallow with abundant stones.



Map 4: Geomorphological Units at the Activity area. Scale 1:110,000. Source: GeoVic Online, 2022

6.2.4 Vegetation

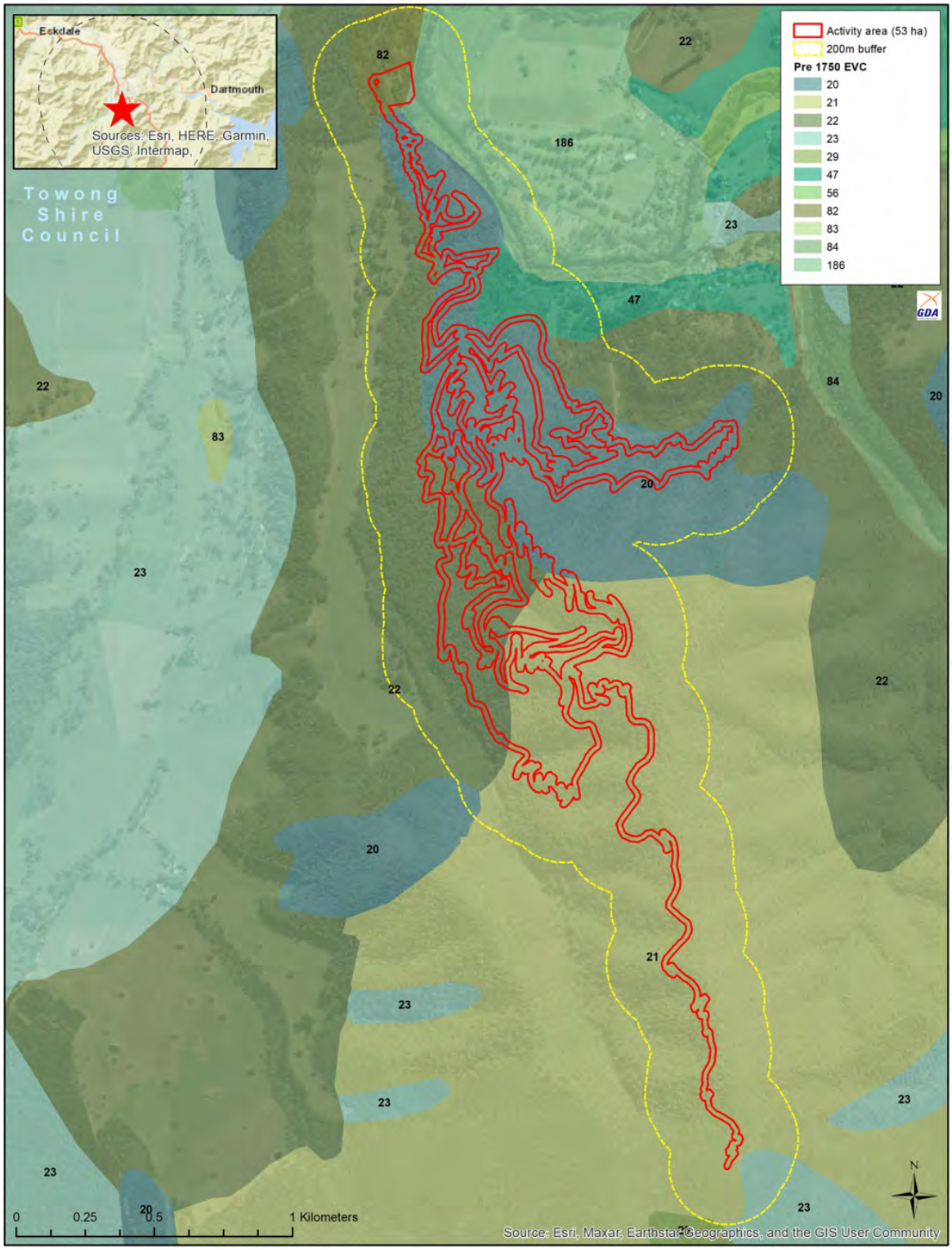
The site at Thowgla Creek is within the Highland Northern Fall bioregion, west of the Great Dividing Range. Mapping suggests that Heathy Dry Forest (EVC 20), Shrubby Dry Forest (EVC 21) and Grassy Dry Forest (EVC 22) are the most likely Pre-1750 Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) that existed within the activity area (Map 5).

EVC 20 grows on shallow, rocky skeletal soils on a variety of geologies and on a range of landforms from gently undulating hills to exposed aspects on ridge tops and steep slopes at a range of elevations. The overstorey is a low, open eucalypt forest, poor in form to 20 m tall with an open crown cover, dominated by Broad-leaved Peppermint (*Eucalyptus dives),* Brittle Gum (*E. mannifera ssp. Mannifera*) and Narrow-leaf Peppermint (*E. radiata s.l.*). The understorey is dominated by a low, sparse to dense layer of ericoid-leaved shrubs including heaths and peas. Graminoids and grasses are frequently present in the ground layer, but do not provide much cover.

EVC 21 occurs on a range of geologies on exposed aspects such as ridge-lines and medium to steep upper slopes, often in high rainfall areas and on shallow infertile soils. The overstorey is a low, open forest to 25 m tall characterised by the diversity and variability of the eucalypts, dominant species include Broad-leaved Peppermint (*E. dives*) and Brittle Gum (*E. mannifera ssp. Mannifera*). The understorey often lacks a secondary tree layer but contains a well-developed medium to low shrub layer. The ground layer is often very sparse with tussock-forming graminoids being the dominant life form.

EVC 22 occurs on a variety of gradients and altitudes and on a range of geologies. The overstorey is dominated by a low to medium height forest of eucalypts to 20 m tall, dominated by Broad-leaved Peppermint (*E. dives*). Red Stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) and Bundy (*E. goniocalyx s.l.*), sometimes resembling an open woodland with a secondary, smaller tree layer including a number of Acacia species. The understorey usually consists of a sparse shrub layer of medium height. Grassy Dry Forest is characterised by a ground layer dominated by a high diversity of drought-tolerant grasses and herbs, often including a suite of fern species.

Regardless of the vegetation community that occupied the site pre-European settlement, the area (adjacent and upslope from a permanent water source) would have provided a wide range of food and material resources for Aboriginal people. Water rushes and marsh vegetation as well as a number of plant-food resources would have grown in nearby. The rivers, creeks and swamp areas in the geographic region, would have supported various species of fish, eel, frogs and turtle as well as various larger game including kangaroos, wallabies and wombat (Reich 2018).



Map 5: Pre-1750 Modelled Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) at the Activity area. Scale: 1:17,000. Source: DELWP, 2022.

6.3 Historical and ethno-historical accounts in the geographic region

The First Nations people of the Upper Murray area were Dhudhuroa-speaking people/s belonging to one or more local groups ('clans'), one of which can be clearly identified by name: Dyinning-middhang.[2] The name 'Djilamatang' [a.k.a. 'Gele-matong'], as mapped by Tindale (1974),[3] is most likely also a cognate of this name. The first part of the name may derive from the widespread rootword 'djina' meaning 'foot',[4] while the suffix '—middhang' (rendered many different ways, including '—mittung') means a 'number or group' of people.[5] Another Dhudhuroa local group, the Theddora-mittung [a.k.a. Dodoro], occupied the alpine ranges further to the south.[6]

In general, the Dyinning-mittung occupied country centred on the Mitta Mitta River and the Tallangatta Creek (historically known as the 'Nurmalong River') to where these flowed into the Murray River. This country was most likely bounded to the west from the Tallangatta Valley most likely as far as Sandy Creek.

As for their northern boundary, Dyinning-mittung man Neddy Wheeler, reported to ethnologist R.H. Mathews that 'Dhudhuroa was [also] spoken … on the lower… Kiewa Rivers, and also the Murray Valley from Albury via Dora Dora [ie: west of present-day Talmalmo], Jingellic, to about Walaregang.'[7] This is the sole ethnohistorical basis on which Tindale (1974) mapped Dhudhuroa country as extending along the Murray River to at least as far as Wodonga.[8] Neddy Wheeler's comments regarding the extent of Dhudhuroa language along the Murray River do have a strong geographical basis: while the Murray River Valley above Albury has been altered through the construction of Lake Hume as far as Talgarno, from this point upstream it runs through what constitutes a narrow and well-defined mountain-locked valley. Wheeler's description suggests that this entire geographically distinct valley *on both sides of the river* (as indicated by Wheeler's naming of locations on the northern bank of the river) was occupied by Dhudhuroa-speaking peoples.

Dhudhuroa language was originally described by ethnographer R. H. Matthews in 1909,[9] and has been more recently analysed as a distinct language by linguists Julie Reid and Barry Blake.[10] Lexio-statistical analysis has demonstrated that Dhudhuroa has a high incidence of shared vocabulary with neighbouring 'Pallanganmiddang' (ie: Waywurru) language to the west. Linguistic comparison between Dhudhuroa and 'Snowy Mountains Language' (a linguistic grouping which includes language from Canberra, the Wolgal people, the Ngarigu-speaking people, and Omeo language), is currently being undertaken by Harold Koch;[11] however analysis by Blake and Reid already demonstrates that Dhudhuroa has at least an equal, and potentially far higher proportion of shared vocabulary with Snowy Mountains Language than with Pallanganmiddang.[12] Dhudhuroa language also has a high degree of shared vocabulary with another neighbouring language, Wiradjuri.[13]

These shared vocabularies between Dhudhuroa and neighbouring languages are mirrored in the primary ethnohistoric sources, which indicate that Dhudhuroa people also had a ceremonial relationship particularly with people who spoke Snowy Mountains Language to the north and east: Thomas Wilkinson, the first European occupant of Yallowin station (on the west bank of the Tumut River near Talbingo), who had arrived there in 1838,[14] recalled of his early days at Yallowin in Wolgal country:

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[2] R H Mathews, MS 8006 Series 3 Item 7 Notebook 7, National Library Australia, p.30.
[3] Norman Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974.
[4] Barry Blake and Julie Reid, 'The Dhudhuroa language of northeastern Victoria: a description based on historical sources,' *Aboriginal History*, 2002, VOL 26, p.183.
[5] Diane Barwick, 'Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Victorian Clans 1835–1904', Aboriginal History, vol. 8, 1984, p.106, including footnote 9; Howitt, 'Notes by Howitt on the Omeo Tribe', p. 3. This explanation is given by Howitt's informant Jenny Cooper: 'Mittung = a number, or many [people]'.
[6] Alfred Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia,* Macmillan, London, 1904, p.177. Howitt believed that this was a local group of the Yaitmathang 'tribe', but Ian Clark is of the opinion that Theddora is cognate with Dhudhuroa, and that therefore they were a Dhudhuroa-speaking people. See: Ian Clark, 'Dhudhuroa and Yaithmathang languages and social groups in north-east Victoria – a reconstruction,' *Aboriginal History*, 2009 Vo. 33, pp.201-229.
[7] R. H. Mathews, MS8006, Series 5, File 3, Box 6, National Library of Australia.
[8] Norman Tindale, op cit.
[9] R. H. Mathews, 'The Dhudhuroa Language of Victoria,' reprinted from the *American Anthropologist,* Vol. 11, No. 2, April-June, 1909, pp:278-284.
[10] Originally identified by R. H. Mathews [R. H .Mathews, MS8006, Series 5, File 3, Box 6, National Library of Australia; and confirmed by Barry Blake and Julie Reid, 'The Dhudhuroa language of northeastern Victoria: a description based on historical sources,' *Aboriginal History*, 2002, Volume 26, pp: 177-210.
[11] Harold Koch, per comm with the author, March 2021. Koch prefers the more neutral term 'Snowy Mountains Language' rather than the well-known language name 'Ngarigu', because he does not wish to privilege any particular section of the overall grouping.
[12] Barry Blake and Julie Reid, op cit.
[13] ibid.
[14] 'The late Mr. Thomas Wilkinson.' *The Tumut Advocate and Farmers and Settlers' Adviser*, Tuesday 19 July 1904, p.2.

'The blacks used to come in from Yass, Welaregang, Omeo, and Mitta Mitta, and held corrobories at Yallowin. I have seen 300 there at one time… The blacks increased in numbers after a while, and 600 of them used to come through from Tumbarumba way. Not more than a dozen of them could speak English… On a hill in front of Yallowin homestead there still remains the mark of a ring-formed by the blacks in going through their corrobories which were carried on as part of the ceremony attached to "making men" of the youths after they had attained a certain age.' Wilkinson went on to describe the tooth evulsion ceremony for 'making men', which he says took place nearby, in what is now known as the 'Bogongs Peaks wildness area'.[15]

The arrival of 'squatters' (pastoralists) in the Upper Murray area from late 1836 onwards saw violent conflict between local Dyinning-middhang people and the European invaders. When visiting Towong station on 2 August 1839, Crown Lands Commissioner Henry Bingham noted in the record of his itinerary 'The natives were hostile in this part pf the District[;] for special report of an affray — [indecipherable] both parties see my letter to the Colonial Secretary 13 August.'[16] This 'affray' may be the origin of the local folk stories relating to the later discovery of a mass grave in Towong Upper (in a gully located on Spring Creek as it crosses the Upper Murray Road, on the western side); reputedly the site of a massacre.[17]

In 1936, C. A. Smithwick (whose father owned Jingellic station from 1859, shifting to Talmalmo in 1868[18]) also wrote of an historic attack by local First Nations people on Dora Dora station (immediately west of Talmalmo), to which European occupants had responded with lethal force, having been forewarned by a friendly local 'chief', Billy Maracket (Maracket being the pastoral station just east of Talmalmo).[19] In the wake of this attack, Billy Maracket (who was given a breastplate acknowledging his assistance to the Europeans), left the area to live at Tumut in Wolgal country,[20] presumably where he felt safe in the wake of frontier violence. King Billy Maracket's decision to relocate to Tumut likewise suggests a cultural affinity between Dhudhuroa people and those who spoke Snowy Mountains Language, such as the Wolgal.

The incursion of European settlers on Dhudhuroa lands from 1836 onwards took an enormous toll on the Dhudhuroa population. By 1858, James Wilson of Tallangatta station reported that 'There are very few aborigines in the Mitta Mitta district, probably not more than twelve (12).' (This figure is probably discounting children borne to Dhudhuroa women and European men.) With respect to the Dyinning-mittung, Wilson added, 'The Tallangatta creek was the hunting ground of the Ginning-matong tribe. There are only three of this tribe now alive.'[21] Local histories often still attempt to account for the destruction of Dyinning-mittung people by stating that, in an act of inter-tribal warfare, the 'Geelamatong… were supposed to have been ultimately wiped out by a general rising of the various river tribes.'[22] However, the decimation of Dyinning-mittung people by gunshot wounds inflicted by stockmen is likely to have played a major role, as A.C. Wills attested was the case in nearby Omeo.[23]

By the early 1860s, Dhudhuroa people could be found on the Tangambalanga Aboriginal Reserve [1862-1873]: This is evident from Honorary Correspondent Thomas Mitchell's 1865 report to the Central Board appointed to watch over the interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, that 'Of the Tangambalanga tribe [ie: Waywurru] there are only eleven persons left; and of the Upper Murray tribe [ie: Dhudhuroa] sixteen.'[24] These numbers are also reflected in a vocabulary collected by Thomas Mitchell at Tangambalanga, titled 'Barwidgee,' which contains as much as 70% Dhudhuroa words.[25] However, C. A. Smithwick's story of 'King Billy Maracket' choosing to live at Tumut suggests that some Dhudhuroa people may have also ultimately ended up on Brungle Aboriginal Reserve in New South Wales.

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[15] Thomas Wilkinson, 'A Record of Olden Days,' *The Tumut and Adelong Times*, Friday 22 July 1904, p.2.
[16] NRS 906: Colonial Secretary: Commissioners of Crown Lands - Itineraries, Murrumbidgee, Henry Bingham, 10 Jul - Nov 1839, Aug 1843, Jul 1844, Mar - Nov 1845, Apr - Jun 1847 [X812], Reel 2748 [Squatters and Graziers Index, State Archives and Records NSW].
(At present the author has not yet located this letter. The letter would have been directed to Colonial Secretary Deas.)
[17] pers comm. John Murphy and Megan Carter, Corryong, Towong, 28 April, 2121.
[18] Charles Albert Smithwick (J. Henwood & M. Swann, Eds.), *Early History of the Upper Murray*, John Henwood, Camberwell, 2003, p.ix.
[19] Worth noting is that J. F. H. Mitchell attributed this act to 'King George' or 'Gentleman George', in his manuscript notes. These notes were written when Mitchell was in his mid-80s. See: 'John Francis Huon Mitchell papers, 1903-1923,' call number A 1671, State Library of New South Wales.
[20] 'The "Prince's" Badge of Honor,' *Border Morning Mail*, Saturday 9 September 1939, p.13.
[21] James Wilson in *Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Aborigines, 1858-59*, op cit., p.26.
[22] Arthur Andrews, *First settlement of the Upper Murray, 1835-1845: with a short account of over two hundred runs, 1835 to 1880*, D. S. Ford, Sydney, 1920, p.35.
[23] A.C. Wills in *Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Aborigines, 1858-59*, p.29.
[24] 'THE ABORIGINES.' *The Argus*, Thursday 14 June 1866, p.6.
[25] Barry Blake and Julie Reid, 'Pallanganmiddang: a language of the Upper Murray,' *Aboriginal History*, 1999, Vol. 23, p.17.

Other First National people who chose to remain 'on country' ended their days living and working on the properties of squatters, including those of Joseph Hanson (initially of Colac Colac and later Elm Hill at the foot of Mount Mittamatite);[26] and his half-brother and his wife, Jim and Mary Wheeler, of Colac Colac station;[27] Thomas Mitchell after he moved from Tangambalanga to Bringenbrong in 1875;[28] and also, according to the Corryong Museum, James Findlay of Towong station.

6.3.1 Aboriginal Reserves and Honorary Correspondent Depots

In 1858 the Victorian Government recommended the formation of a Central Board to replace the Protectorate system and take over responsibility for the protection of Aboriginal people within the colony (EDM Group 2008). In 1860 the 'Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria' was established. The CBA was also responsible for allocating reserves of land variously known as stations, missions or reserves on which Aboriginal people were encouraged to settle (EDM Group 2008). The Board appointed Honorary Correspondents to keep records and distribute rations within their districts.

According to the 6th report of the CBA, the Honorary Correspondent for the area was Mr Curtis A. Reid who was stationed at Reidsdale near Tarrawingee. He reported that he supplied up to 33 Aboriginal people including 11 men, 15 women and seven children, the 'greater number of the latter being half-castes' (CBA 1869:7). The report states that Reid employed several Aboriginal people on his station. Reid notes that the *'original stock of Aborigines is rapidly disappearing and has decreased fully one-half within the last seven years'* (CBA 1869:7). After the 1860s the Aboriginal people that remained in the Murray and Ovens areas were forced to move into Government or Mission controlled stations, such as Coranderrk, near Healesville and Cummeragunga, in NSW near Barmah (Long 1996:14).

According to Calladine & Ellis (2008:15) Aboriginal people were able to… *'maintain their traditional clan and moiety identity at these missions; however, the Aborigines Protection Act 1886 excluded 'half-castes' from living on the missions, and resulted in further segregation of Aboriginal people'* (Barwick 1984:113-4; Presland 1994:92-106)'. Although many of the Indigenous families in the local area were forced onto government stations at Corranderrk and Maloga (Cummeragunga) during the nineteenth century, many maintained connections with, and returned to, the North East well into the twentieth century.

There are no Aboriginal Reserves and Honorary Correspondent Depots within the Activity area geographic region.

6.3.2 Land use history of the activity area, Early Pastoralism.

The first pastoralists in the area were James and William Wyse, who took up land 16 miles (25km) south of Tallangatta in 1837.[29] However, the Activity Area falls into the outer boundary of what became 'Tallandoon run' — originally comprising 16,000 acres, and estimated to stock 900 head of cattle. Tallandoon was first occupied under license from 1839 by Norman C. Lockhart (after whom Lockhart's Gap is named) and Francis Clerk, who held the run until 1857; with the leasehold subsequently passing through a limited number of individuals until the 1880s.[30] As the land was only held under lease and was not subsequently made available for selection, it has remained Crown land.

[26] Jean Carmody, *Early Days Of the Upper Murray*, Shoestring Press, Wangaratta, 1981, p.56.
[27] ibid, p.54.
[28] ibid,p.96.
[29] R. V. Billis, and A. S. Kenyon, Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip, Macmillan & Company Ltd., Melbourne, 1932, p.218.
[30] ibid., p.256.

6.3.3 Mining

Alluvial gold was first discovered in the Mitta Mitta area as early as February 1852.[31] However, the area didn't become a major gold field until the 1880s, with the introduction of 'hydraulic sluicing', which used pressurized jets of water to wash gold bearing earth from the mountainside. This technique used to extract gold from the area's largest mine, the open cut Pioneer Mine[32] — the historic gold workings of which lay just outside of the northern boundary of the Activity Area.

Supplying this and other mining operations with the vast quantities of water needed for the hydraulic sluicing process meant that the wider Mitta Mitta area was given over the a network of water races, channeling water to mining claims. In particular, the Parish Plan for Dorchap, illustrating the area immediately east of the Activity Area, has notations for dozens of former water races associated with Scrubby Creek.[33] Although no map exists to illustrate the same situation for Deep Gully Creek (inside the Activity Area), in 1914, this Creek reportedly had an operating flume.[34]

While the lower slopes of Mount Welcome were mined for gold bearing earth, inside the Activity Area, the ridge-line which runs up Mount Welcome from the north, as well as the gully running from this ridgeline into Deep Gully Creek, became an important location for the mining of gold-bearing quartz reefs. Although the mines went by various names — the 'Yellow Boy', 'Yellow Girl' and the 'Pony' [Figure 3] — by the turn of the century, whatever remained to be worked was referred to as the 'Mount Welcome mine', which was considered, along with the Pioneer Mine, to be one of the two 'chief mines' of the area.[35] Another mine in Deep Gully, known as the 'Double Knock,' was being re-worked as late as 1914.[36]

The mine workings included adits (horizontal tunnels cut into the slope) and stopes (dug-out tunnels through which gold bearing rock was removed), as well as surface workings where easily accessible gold bearing quartz could be carried off. [Figure 3]

In addition to the mines themselves, carting the gold bearing rock from Mount Welcome to a nearby location where it could be processed required various infrastructure: In 1901, it was reported that a new 'haulage engine' had been completed at Mount Welcome, and that it 'had successful run with [the] tramway.' It was likewise reported that the mining company was 'Putting finishing touches to [the] battery, and soon as completed will start [to] mill.' They were also 'Completing connections to cyanide plant, and making slime pits.'[37]

[31] 'THE MITTA MITTA GOLD FIELD. Talangatta, Mitta Mitta. 14th February, 1852.' *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, Friday 20 February 1852 - Page 2
[32] Jacqui Durrant, *Fire on the Plateau — A History of Fire and its Management in Stanley*, Stanley Athenaeum, Stanley, 2019, p.25.
[33] 'Dorchap-1 Parish Plan, Imperial measure 2539,' A Parish plan from VPRS 16171 Regional Land Office Parish and Township Plans Digitised Reference Set. Public Records Office Victoria.
[34] 'MITTA MITTA WARDEN'S COURT.' *Upper Murray and Mitta Herald*, Thursday 13 August 1914, p.2.
[35] 'THROUGH THE NORTH-EAST. FROM TALLANGATTA TO MOUNT WILLS.' *Leader*, Saturday 29 June 1901, p.43.
[36] 'MINING INTELLIGENCE. MITTA MITTA.' *Upper Murray and Mitta Herald*, Thursday 8 July 1915, p.3.
[37] 'MINING NOTES.' *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Saturday 2 March 1901, p.1.

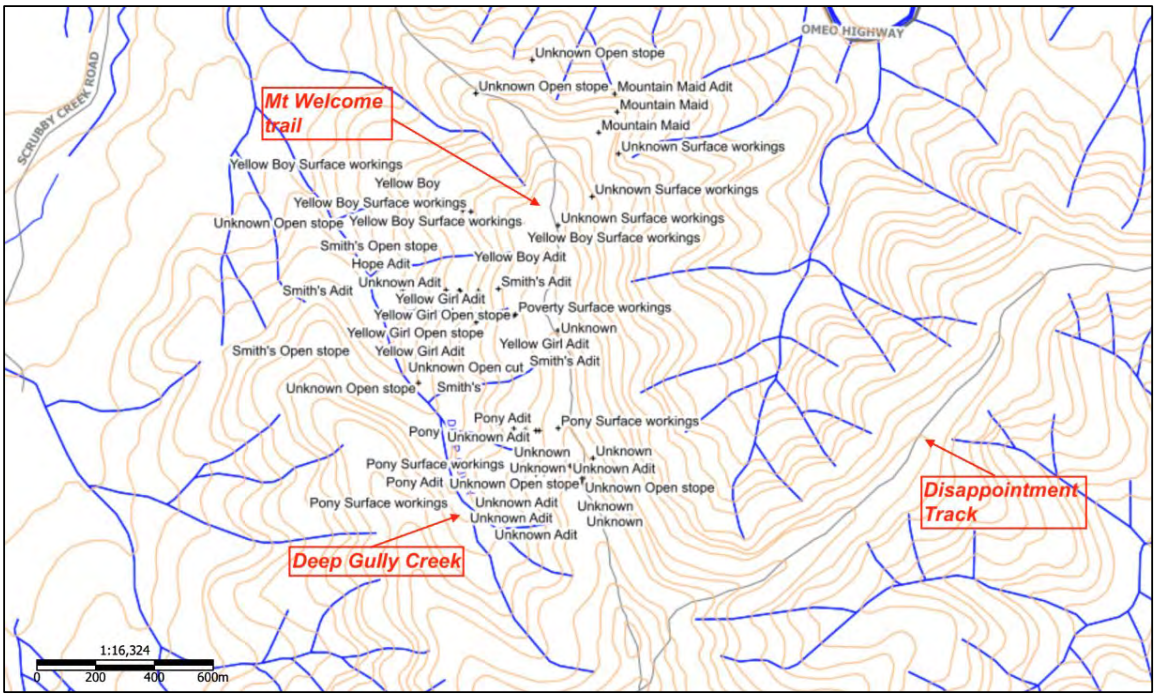


Figure 3: Excerpt from GeoVic earth resources mapping application, State of Victoria, illustrating recorded former mining sites within the Activity Area.

6.3.4 Forestry

Descriptions of logging activities within the Activity Area are virtually absent in the public historical record. However, assumptions concerning logging on Mount Welcome can be made on the basis of more generalised patterns of timber-getting in the immediate region.

In the 1950s, local historian S. A. Colquhuon reported that in the 19th century, Mitta Mitta had saw-pits where timber for hand-sawn for the construction of various local houses and buildings such as Thompson's Store and the local hall.[38] Meanwhile, the quartz reef gold mining which occurred on Mount Welcome would have also required timber for use as mine props, and also to fuel the boilers which ran the steam-powered battery stamps that crushed the gold-bearing rock. Doubtless local sawmillers and miners turned to the closest timber reserves they could find.

In terms of larger commercial logging and milling operations, as easily accessible areas of Victorian forests were progressively logged-out in the mid-to-late 20th century, logging operations shifted to the remoter forests of the Upper Murray. In 1947, Dunstan Timber Industries shifted its operations from Glen Wills and Wodonga,[39] to a modern sawmill at Eskdale in the Mitta Mitta Valley.[40] By the early 1950s, six large lorries hauled huge logs, 'some weighing up to six tonnes' through the Mitta Mitta township five days a week for nine months of the year.[41] (This mill burned down in 1975.[42]) Ruoak Industries followed a similar trajectory: with original operations located in Alexandra in the Upper Goulburn Valley which had subsequently moved to Stanley in the 1960s, it had shifted its milling operations to Corryong in 1988.[43]

[38] S. A. Colquhuon, *Mitta Mitta from the Early Pioneer Days*, Mitta Mitta, 1953, p.66.
[39] 'Wodonga Mill Saved,' *The Age*, Monday 16 January 1939, p.16.
[40] 'Eskdale And Its People,' *Illustrated - Weekly Times*, Wednesday 10 September 1947, p.43.
[41] S. A. Colquhuon, op cit., p.66.
[42] 'North East Water — Our Water Story — Eskdale,' on-line at: https://waterstory.azurewebsites.net/listing/eskdale/ Retrieved 16 August 2021.
[43] Jacqui Durrant, op cit., pp.28, 30.

The contract timber-fellers servicing such milling operations invariably left numerous logging roads and snigging tracks through whichever forests they harvested. As such operations swept across the landscape of the Upper Murray in search of old growth timber, it can be safely assumed that any remaining stands of alpine ash (*E. delegatensis*) present on Mount Welcome would have been targeted for harvesting, along with blue gum (*E. globulus*).

6.3.5 Conclusion

It is likely that the Activity Area has experienced substantial environment impacts directly from gold mining, associated mining infrastructure, tracks and waste disposal. The area has also likely sustained disturbance stemming from forestry activities, which would have resulted not only in obvious vegetation clearance but also ground disturbance via the creation of roads and tracks needed to transport the harvested logs. The existing tracks which remain within the Activity Area today — principally Disappointment Track, the Mount Welcome Hike trail and tracks associated with Ottos Road and in and around Deep Gully Creek [Figure 4] — are likely only the maintained remnants of what was likely a more complex series of tracks and trails at an earlier stage.

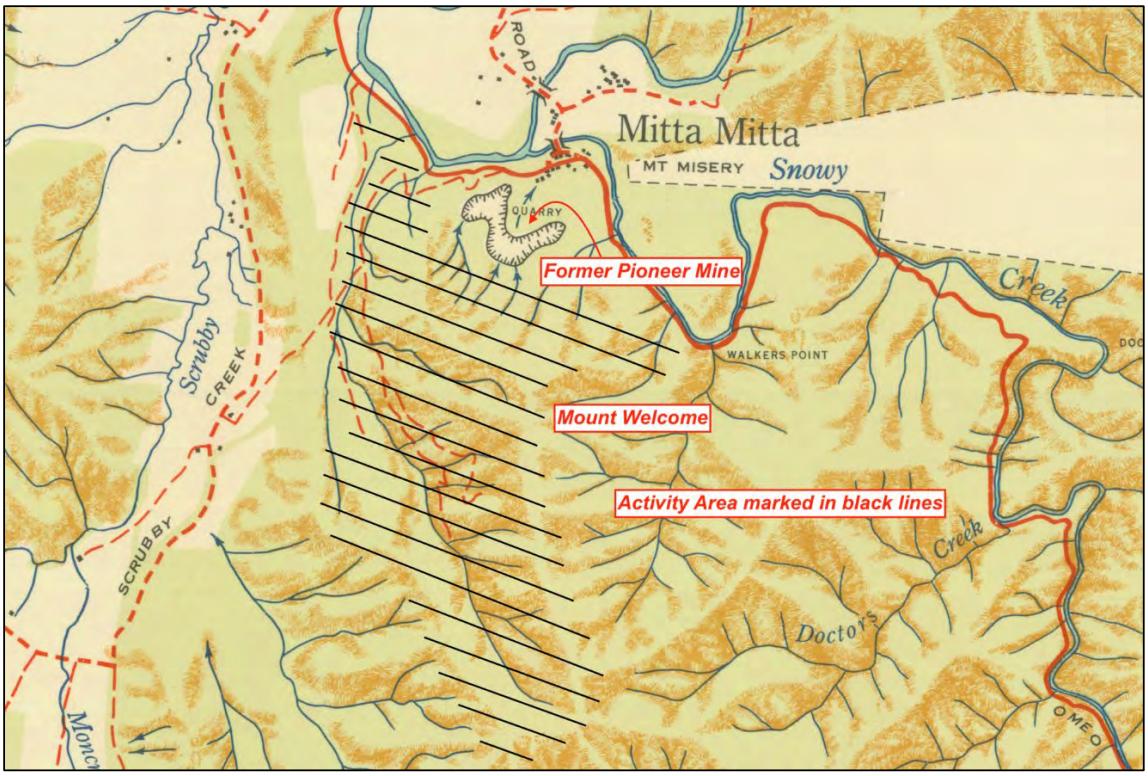


Figure 4: Excerpt from 'Tawanga B, state aerial survey', 1951, illustrating some of the tracks in the Activity Area by the mid-20th century.

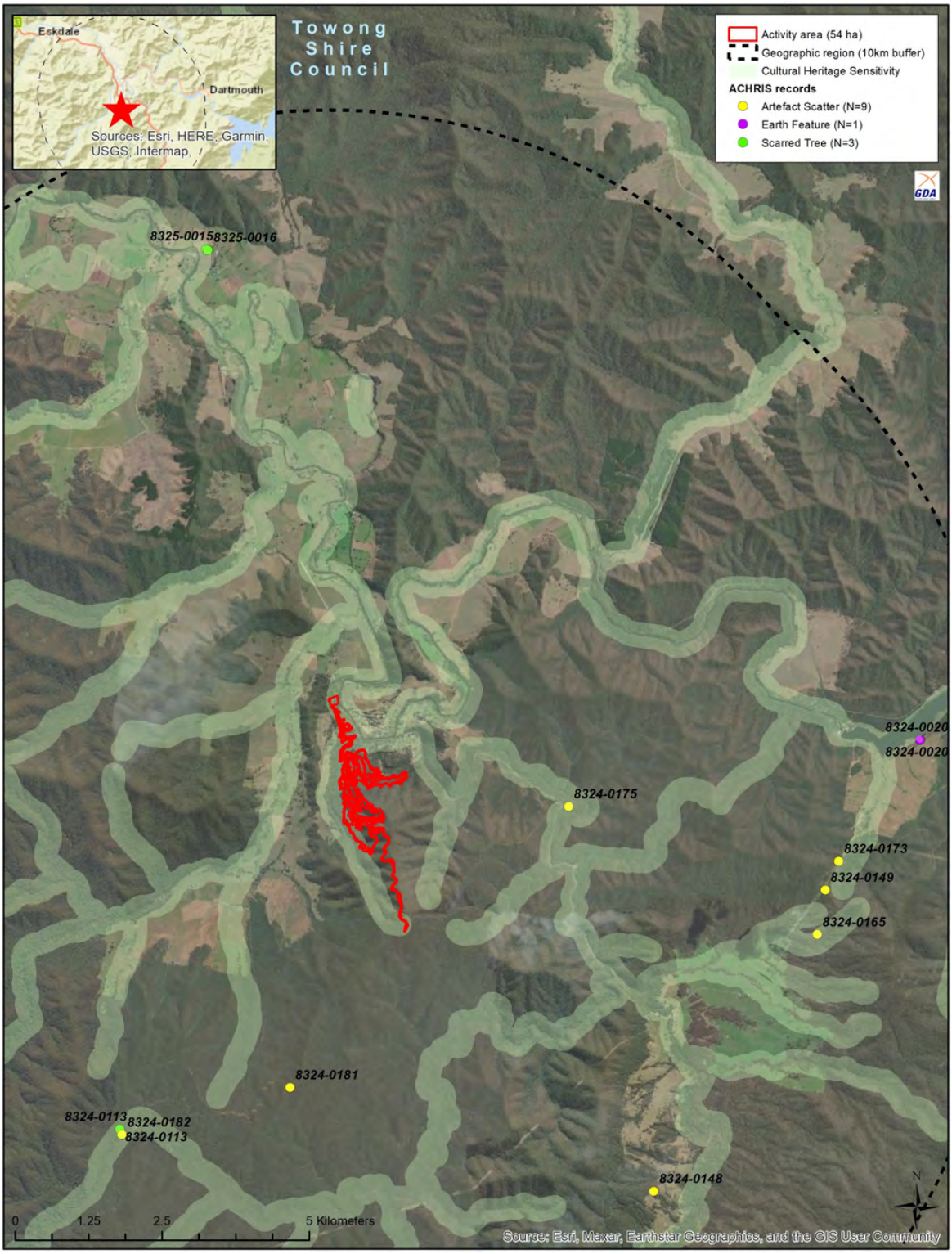
6.4 Search of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register

The search of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) was initially undertaken on 18th July 2022 by Damian Wall indicated that there are thirteen (13) previously recorded Aboriginal places within the 10km defined Geographic Region consisting of three Scarred Trees (N=3), nine Artefact Scatters (N=9) and one Earth feature (N=1) (Map 6 & Table 2).

The closest registered place is an Artefact scatter (8324-0175), listed as a 'SNOWY CREEK IA 1' in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register Information System (ACHRIS), located approximately 2.8 km east of the Activity area. The site consisted of an artefact scatter in the form of a single Quartz flake located on a low spur ridge within 50m of Snowy creek. It was noted that the site had experienced extensive disturbance through mining and bushfires.

Table 2: Registered Aboriginal Places within 10km of activity area.

Aboriginal Place No	Aboriginal Place Name	Component Place Number	Component Type	Distance/Direction from AA
8324-0020	DRP SITE 1	8324-0020-1	Artefact Scatter	8.7km East of eastern end of AA
8324-0020	DRP SITE 1	8324-0020-2	Earth Feature (Soil deposit)	8.7km East of eastern end of AA
8324-0113	FIRE SURVEY LORDS CREEK 1	8324-0113-1	Artefact Scatter	5.9km Southwest of southern end of AA
8324-0113	FIRE SURVEY LORDS CREEK 1	8324-0113-2	Scarred Tree	5.9km Southwest of southern end of AA
8324-0148	HOLLOW WAY 1	8324-0148-1	Artefact Scatter	6.1km Southeast of southern end of AA
8324-0149	MITTA GAP 1	8324-0149-1	Artefact Scatter	7km East of southern end of AA
8324-0165	BEE CREEK 1	8324-0165-1	Artefact Scatter	7km East of southern end of AA
8324-0173	MURPHY CREEK 1	8324-0173-1	Artefact Scatter	7.4km East of southern end of AA
8324-0175	SNOWY CREEK IA 1	8324-0175-1	Artefact Scatter	2.8km East of eastern end of AA
8324-0181	TRAPPERS CREEK TRACK 1	8324-0181-1	Artefact Scatter	3.2km Southwest of southern end of AA
8324-0182	TRAPPERS CREEK TRACK 2	8324-0182-1	Artefact Scatter	5.9km southwest of southern end of AA
8325-0015	OFCV 9	8325-0015-1	Scarred Tree	7.9km Northeast of northern end of AA
8325-0016	OFCV 10	8325-0016-1	Scarred Tree	7.9km Northeast of Northern end of AA



Map 6: Previously recorded Aboriginal Places within the geographic region. Scale 1:80,000. Source: Google Earth, 2022

6.5 Aboriginal Places in the Geographic Region

In the 10 km geographic region surrounding the Activity area, the following types of Aboriginal places have been recorded and registered:

Aboriginal Artefact Scatters: Artefact scatters are the material remains of past Aboriginal people's activities. Scatter sites usually contain stone artefacts, but other material such as charcoal, animal bone, shell and ochre may also be present. Artefact scatters may vary over the ground surface from one square metre to one hectare and contain few or thousands of artefacts. Artefacts often are chipped stone artefacts and occasionally, animal bone, shell, charcoal, hearth stones, clay balls and ochre,

Aboriginal Scarred Trees: Aboriginal scarred trees are the result of people marking or removing bark from a tree for a wide range of uses. Scarring exposes the sapwood on the trunk or branch of a tree, with the tree healing over a period of time, generally leaving a prominent scar. Mature trees with scars are located across Victoria, and more commonly are present on box and red gum eucalypts that occur along the margins of rivers, lakes and floodplains.

Earth features (mounds, hearths, etc): Earth features - Aboriginal mounds are places where Aboriginal people lived over long periods of time. Aboriginal people often cooked their food in earth ovens, to do this, they heated stones or burnt clay lumps and placed them in a pit. The food - a kangaroo or tubers for example - was placed on top of the heat retainers and the pit was filled in. Once the food was cooked, it was removed, and all the cooking debris, such as stone, clay and ash, was swept out. Over time, the debris from cooking and other domestic activities combined with natural sediments to form a mound. Mounds often contain charcoal, burnt clay or stone heat retainers from cooking ovens, animal bones, shells, stone tools and, sometimes, Aboriginal burials. These earth features are usually near rivers, lakes or swamps but occasionally some distance from water, often occurring on floodplains and the banks of watercourses.

6.6 Previous archaeological work in the geographic region

A review of reports and published works about Aboriginal cultural heritage in the geographic region referred to in Section 6.2 is used to provide relevant information to determine if there is any relationship between Aboriginal cultural heritage places, strategic values, geology, landforms and soil profiles. These investigations may provide insight into Aboriginal cultural heritage place patterning.

This evidence informs directly on the desktop site model presented in Section 6.9. Only reports most relevant to this CHMP are discussed in detail below. There is a general paucity of studies in the northeast, a result of the slow movement of development in this region, therefore only a few systematic field assessments have been undertaken in the geographic region, in particular in a similar environmental context.

6.6.1 Regional Studies

On a regional level, Zobel (1984) prepared a report to the Land Conservation Council on the Aboriginal occupation of the North East Study Area. Zobel (1984: 24) notes the paucity of research and, as a result, recorded Aboriginal places in the northeast of Victoria. This has not rapidly changed in anyway as development as increased swiftly around the southern and central hubs and has been slower to move in other regional locations. At the time of Zobel's research, scarred trees were the most commonly registered site type followed by stone artefact occurrences, rock art sites, mounds burials and then, lastly, quarries (Zobel 1984: 24-25). The artefacts identified at sites were interpreted as reflected small, temporary camps associated with a mobile settlement pattern and with tools made and used on the spot then discarded (Zobel 1984: 28-29).

Clark et al (2003) completed a desktop review of Cultural Heritage of the North East Catchment, including the region where the current activity area occurs. The study area is just under 2 million hectares, bordered on the north and east by the Murray River and on the south by the Great Dividing Range. It includes the Ovens, Kiewa, Mitta and Upper Murray Basin catchments. Clark, like Thompsons and Zobel previously, comments on the lack of archaeological investigation

completed in north-eastern Victoria, with research focused on Australia's south-eastern upland region, including the Australian Alpine region. Amidst the lack of documentation of Aboriginal people and territories around contact, a study of primary source information by Wesson (2000) is credited as being the most comprehensive document at the time. The *Theddora* or *Dhudhoroa,* of the *Waveroo* language group, are the traditional owners of the current activity area, are said to have utilised the river systems and resources of the upper Mitta Mitta River. A diversity of resources in the region, reflected in the diversity of landforms, would have influenced the occupation and utilisation of the landscape, relative to season and cyclic changes. At the time of publication 476 Aboriginal cultural heritage sites had been recorded, the majority of which are located along the Murray River, and in the mountains of Mount Buffalo and the Alpine National Park. However, lack of sites recorded in other areas are not reflective of lack of occupation of those sites, but potentially related to the absence of archaeological investigations throughout the region ins a systematic fashion. Artefact scatters dominate the archaeological record (60%), followed by scarred trees (27%). Other sites recorded in the study area include rock wells, hearths, mounds, burials, art sites, stone arrangements, quarries and fish/eel traps. A site prediction model for the most likely site types was attempted based on the sites recorded in the area:

- Artefact scatters were predicted to be found in flat gently sloping areas near accessible water and resources; larger sites found at lower elevations and smaller sites in upland areas; sites near to rivers and streams likely to be buried under alluvial deposits; and, in steep terrain and highland areas, sites occur around sheltered areas, ridgelines, spurs, saddle and rocky knolls.
- Scarred trees are possible anywhere were mature stands of eucalypt remnant vegetation occurs, especially along creeks and rivers at low elevations.
- Quarries are associated with exposed rock outcrops.
- Rock art sites are associated with rock shelters and overhangs, especially in granite areas on low/mid slopes.
- Mounds are related with the Murray River and adjoining wetlands

Freslov et al (2004) undertook a broad scale pedestrian archaeological survey of historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage places following a large-scale bushfire that occurred in 2003 of the Chesney Vale Reserves. Freslov concluded that there were a total of 61 previously recorded Aboriginal archaeological sites within the parks, comprising two artefact scatters, 40 scarred trees, 11 isolated artefacts, five rock wells and three mounds. Freslov's subsequent survey of the Chesney Vale Reserves located a further 21 Aboriginal archaeological sites including eight isolated artefacts, two artefact scatters, six scarred trees, three rock wells and two earth ovens.

Flood (1976) Discusses the relationship between Aboriginal people and ecology in the highlands of south-east Australia by drawing upon anthropological, linguistic, ethnographical and archaeological evidence. Flood uses the small tool tradition to indicate the timing of habitation of the highlands and hypothesised that movement into the tablelands originated from the east. She also suggests that due to the presence of European motifs in Victorian rock art indicates this art was a late introduction to southeast Australia. Several ethnographic sources were discussed, and these indicated that the average size of the Aboriginal groups was approximately 500 people. Two examples were given and discussed at length to illustrate the relationship between Aboriginal people and the ecology of the region - Bogong moth-hunting feasts and the Bunya Bunya Nut festival. These examples were used to illustrate tribal relations. Importantly, Flood (1980) remarks upon two things pertaining to tribal distribution in the region; within each group's territory there was both a major food resource and a low-lying frost-free valley suitable for winter occupation, and there was a high degree of correlation between group and physiographic boundaries. She concludes that while occupation in the region may have originally been only seasonal it later developed into year-round habitation.

Kelly (2003) produced a report detailing field survey components of a scoping study of impacts upon Aboriginal cultural values as a result of bush fires within the North East Victorian highlands in 2003. This study attempted to assess the likelihood of Aboriginal cultural values being present in the North East Victoria fire area and of fire and fire suppression activities impacting upon Aboriginal cultural values. The consistent identification of cultural material across the whole study area, even in this small sample, indicates the presence of a substantial Aboriginal archaeological record within the fire affected region. The study established the presence of physical remains of past Aboriginal occupation in a variety of ecological and landform zones within the study area with the notable exception of steep slope ash forests. Scarred trees

and lithic scatters were the dominant archaeological remains. Scarred trees, while present in all ecological and landform zones inspected, were found in greatest concentration within old growth snow gum forests. Lithic remains were most common within mid altitude riparian and-lower river valleys: The-most common-stone tool material within lithic sites was quartz with a lesser occurrence of rhyolite. In general, this study provides evidence that the physical remains of past Aboriginal occupation of the highlands of Victoria have the potential to be both diverse and widespread.

Paton (1993) conducted a survey of six short optical fibre cable routes around Northern Victoria. The closest survey section to the current Activity Area ran 42 kilometres southwest from Baranduda to Yackandandah. Two Aboriginal places were recorded in this corridor survey; both were scarred trees VAHR 8225-0083 and VAHR-0084. In total, twelve Aboriginal archaeological places were located throughout the survey of all six corridors. Paton (1993) attributed the relatively low number of Aboriginal places to a high level of disturbance along the study corridors, but considered other contributing factors may have been poor visibility; the lack of representation achieved by linear surveys; or an actual absence of artefacts. Paton identified a total of twelve archaeological finds consisting of six surface scatters and six scarred trees. Each surface scatter comprised less than five stone artefacts and were defined as isolated finds. Paton's (1993, p. 8) report indicates that a combination of only moderate surface visibility and linear survey may not have provided a representative sample of Aboriginal places across the landscape.

Gunn (2002) conducted a site-specific investigation for Mudgegonga-2 and the Rock Art of North-East Victoria. The site was located in the Foothills of the Great Dividing Range. The investigation looked at 14 rock art sites recorded in NE Victoria, represented by five distinct clusters and one singular site. Analysis suggests they consist of an early phase of small red paintings with a core of 'simple human figures' with a broader suite of 'geometric elements and simple designs'. It is largely homogeneous across the region.

Thompson (1996) conducted an archaeological survey of a large section of northeast Victoria, of which the study area encompassed the current activity area. Over a decade later Thompson (1996: 1) reiterated the observation of Zobel's (1984: 24) that very little dedicated study has been undertaken in the northeast with the result being a limited knowledge of the Aboriginal archaeological record of the region. Thompson (1996: vi) divided the study area into three landscape divisions: Murray Basin Plains, Foothills and Eastern Highlands. Within these divisions were further subdivisions, of which the current activity area fell into the 'Mountains' of the 'Eastern Highlands' classification. Sample surveying was undertaken and a total of 111 Aboriginal places were identified, including 69 scarred trees and 42 stone artefact occurrences (Thompson 1996: 23). However, of the 69 scarred trees, Thompson (1996: 23) suggested that 22 were of European origin. Of the Aboriginal scarred trees, 39 were on Grey box, seven were on Red box and one was on a tree of unidentified species. Of the stone artefact sites, as a general rule (i.e. excluding a particular exception associated with a silcrete outcrop) quartz dominated. Of all the sites recorded, two-thirds were within 100 m of a water source and two-thirds of the stone artefact sites were within 500 m of a permanent water source. In relation to the current activity area, Thompson (1996: 25) identified that the flats and terraces of the Mountains/Eastern Highlands category had high artefact density sites present.

Buckley & Hughes (2000) conducted a desktop survey, Working Toward an Aboriginal Heritage Management System for the North East RFA Region of Victoria. Was based on previous investigations and a map of archaeological sensitivity was developed for the RFA region, taking into consideration geographically represented units, elevation in relation to alpine / sub alpine zone patterning, dissected plateaux patterning, and locations of Devonian granites, Cambrian greenstone, and Devonian sandstone.

Hughes & Buckley (1999) conducted an Aboriginal heritage assessment of North East Victoria RFA. At the time noted that archaeologically the North east is not well known. Found that across the North east Scarred trees were the most common aboriginal cultural heritage place, making up 41%, Isolated artefacts were next with 22%, then surface scatters of artefacts 21% and then rock shelters 10%. 67% of these aboriginal cultural heritage places occurred on freehold land.

Shawcross & Hughes (2002) conducted an Archaelogical Investigation of the AAV 8324-0024 (DRP Site 1), Dartmouth regulating pondage, Victoria. Southern hydro partnership proposes to raise the height of the existing Dartmouth regulating dam to increase storage capacity of the regulating pondage. In 1999 Hughes undertook an archaeological survey of the

proposed inundation area, during that survey one site was found (VAHR 8324-0024, DRP Site 1). This site consisted of 17 surface visible stone artefacts and a possible hearth. It was recommended the hearth was excavated by an appropriately qualified and experienced archaeologist. The aims of this survey were therefore to excavate and analyze the Site, and more specifically the potential hearth. The survey and subsequent report concluded that there was insufficient evidence for the putative hearth. Hughes and Shawcross indicated that whilst there were charcoal particles seen during the investigation, they were too dispersed to serve as evidence for a hearth. It is likely that the charcoal was derived from natural fires or the burning of stumps.

Hughes (1999) conducted an Archaeological Survey associated with the proposal to increase the full supply level of the Dartmouth regulating pondage, Victoria. The site was broken into 3 sectors to assess the likely impacts of the proposed works on Aboriginal cultural heritage sites. Sector 1 had the best survey conditions, including 'archaeological visibility'. It was also deemed to be the sector most likely to contain archaeological sites because of its relatively gently sloping terrain and sandy soils. DRP site 1 occurred on one of only two promontories along this sector. However even in this sector with its relatively high archeological potential the amounts of archaeological material were small. Across the Activity area a scatter of artefacts was found on a very gently sloping, broad promontory leading down to the now-flooded river valley floor. The area is within a large, grassed paddock and the artefacts had eroded out of the eastern side if a 1m high section of a bulldozed track leading down to the pondage. The alluvial soils in the section consisted of 20m of light grey sandy topsoil overlying at least 90cum of yellow grey clayey sand. In total there was a Cluster of 14 quartz artefacts and a large quartz cobble in the bulldozed track section, 3 isolated quartz artefacts on eroded exposures in the area up to 200m to the east of the main cluster of artefacts and a possible Aboriginal hearth about 100m east of the main cluster of artefacts. The results of the survey supported the initial assessment that most of the area which would be impacted by the proposed raising of the full supply level has low archaeological potential.

6.6.2 Local studies

Bell and Grinter (2016) undertook a CHMP (14042) for the replacement Weir and Fishway on the Snowy Creek at Mitta Mitta. The activity area consisted of a heavily modified watercourse and floodplain on three sides with a steep escarpment associated with Mt. Misery making up the northern flank. The activity area sustained some considerable ground disturbance, especially at the site of the weir itself and both upstream and downstream, which would have occurred during initial construction and during periods of maintenance. Landscaping and the installation of utility infrastructure has caused further disturbance within the activity area. The nature of the steep hillslope and the cutting in this area indicated that Aboriginal cultural heritage was unlikely to be identified. No Aboriginal cultural heritage was located in the activity area during the assessment. No areas of potential cultural heritage sensitivity were identified during the standard assessment. Whilst poor ground surface visibility impeded the possible discovery of surface evidence of Aboriginal cultural heritage, this was heavily off-set by the fact that there was little if any, original land surface remaining.

Robb and Freeman (2011) prepared a CHMP (11852) for the Omeo Highway Upgrade. Desktop and standard assessments were undertaken The proposed works were all located either within the existing roadway or cuttings excavated into the banks, or on steep slopes (greater than 25 degrees). As such there was no likelihood of intact Aboriginal cultural heritage material occurring in the excavated parts, and it is very unlikely that Aboriginal occupation of the area would have left any cultural heritage evidence on the steep slopes as these did not form suitable locations for Aboriginal activities. There were no previously recorded Aboriginal archaeological places in the Activity area and no new places were recorded during this assessment. No areas of archaeological potential were identified. Due to the nature of the proposed activity, the characteristics of the Activity area and the historical use of the Activity area associated with the construction of the current road, there little likelihood of impacting Aboriginal cultural heritage material within the Activity area.

6.6.3 Summary

Previous assessments summarised in Section 6.6 suggest that the region is sensitive for Aboriginal cultural heritage material, primarily in the form of stone artefact scatters. The types of Aboriginal cultural places occur most frequently in close proximity to the major watercourses that transect the region. Review of CHMPs within the geographic region shows that Aboriginal Cultural heritage is less likely to be located on slopes at an angle greater than 5 degrees and has a greater probability to be located at lower elevations, adjacent to major creeks and rivers.

In fact, it is noted that regional studies have demonstrated that very few (if any) sites in the Victorian Alps occur on steep hill slopes (Freslov et al. 2004, Robb & Freeman 2011, Bell & Grinter 2016). Whilst this observation in a critical factor in determining the archaeological potential of the activity area, other regional and localised studies demonstrate that there is still some possibility of heritage occurring in a range of landforms (Clark et al 2003; Zobel 1984).

Only thirteen (13) Aboriginal places have been previously recorded within the 10km defined Geographic Region, however the lack of recorded sites in the past may be attributed (in part) to lack of survey effort within the region.

6.7 Oral history

No oral history information was collected during the desktop assessment.

6.8 Obstacles encountered in completing the desktop assessment

No obstacles were encountered in completing the desktop assessment.

6.9 Site prediction model

Generally speaking, Aboriginal places would be expected to be situated close to either an ephemeral or permanent water source, providing adequate shelter from the elements and rising floodwaters, and have access to a food source. Additionally, for Aboriginal places to remain *in situ* in these situations through time, the landscape will not have been subject to ground disturbing activities.

The results of the desktop assessment indicate that the Activity area likely comprises three (3) landforms, Ridgelines, Gullies and Mid slopes. The majority of the Activity area comprises of Pinnak Sandstone (Op) which consists of marine turbiditic thick bedded litharenite and minor thin bedded quartz arenite, with interbedded green slaty mudstone, siltstone, and minor chert (Oppy et al 1995). A search of the VAHR database for registered Aboriginal Places within the defined Geographic Region suggests that artefact scatters are the most likely place type to be found in association with the activity area landform.

Review of CHMPs within the geographic region shows that Aboriginal Cultural heritage is less likely to be located on slopes at an angle greater than 5 degrees and has a greater probability to be located at lower elevations, adjacent to major creeks and rivers. In fact, it is noted that regional studies have demonstrated that very few (if any) sites in the Victorian Alps occur on steep hill slopes (Freslov et al. 2004, Robb & Freeman 2011, Bell & Grinter 2016). Whilst this observation in a critical factor in determining the archaeological potential of the activity area, other regional and localised studies demonstrate that there is still some possibility of heritage occurring in a range of landforms (Clark et al 2003; Zobel 1984).

6.10 Conclusions from the Desktop Assessment

The desktop assessment has demonstrated that:

- There are no (0) previously registered places within the Activity area;
- The search of the VAHR indicated that there are thirteen (13) previously recorded Aboriginal places within the 10 km defined Geographic Region consisting of three Scarred Trees (N=3), nine Artefact Scatters (N=9) and one Earth feature (N=1);
- The Activity area intersects statutory areas of cultural heritage sensitivity, being land within 200m of a named waterway (Mitta Mitta River, Snowy Creek and Deep Gully);
- Areas of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity within the geographic region have been deemed as proximity to fresh water on a range of landforms;
- Aboriginal Cultural heritage is less likely to be located on slopes at an angle greater than 5 degrees and has a greater probability to be located at lower elevations adjacent to major creeks and rivers.
- Regional studies have demonstrated that very few (if any) sites in the Victorian Alps occur on steep hill slopes;
- The area would have provided a wide range of food and material resources for Aboriginal people across a range of habitats within the forest environs; and
- Previous land use activities such as cattle grazing, extensive gold mining/prospecting, logging, and road/bridge development, will have impacted the subsurface deposits in the Activity area.

As it is 'reasonably possible' that Aboriginal cultural heritage may be present in parts of the Activity area, a standard assessment is required pursuant to r.62(1) of the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018.

7. Standard Assessment

The results of the desktop assessment indicated that a standard assessment was required to further investigate the potential for Aboriginal cultural heritage to be located within the activity area. The specific aims of the survey are to identify and investigate the following:

- All areas of high ground surface visibility for targeted detailed surface inspection;
- Ground disturbance;
- Any surface or obtrusive cultural heritage places, if present;
- Landform patterns and elements;
- Areas of proposed activities that would result in ground disturbance; and
- Test the site prediction model generated by the desktop assessment.

7.1 Methodology

The pedestrian survey was conducted in a systematic manner and in accordance with proper archaeological practice. All areas were examined to determine areas of good ground surface visibility and/or high potential archaeological sensitivity for Aboriginal cultural material. The pedestrian survey examined all accessible areas, landform patterns, elements and attributes. Detailed notes were taken, including descriptions of landform elements, ground surface visibility, ground disturbance, vegetation, water sources and potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity (Burke & Smith 2004). The standard assessment was recorded using recording forms to note features and disturbance within the activity area. The location of the features and disturbance were recorded using a dGPS. Photographs of the activity area were also taken using a digital camera.

7.2 Fieldwork participants

A Standard Assessment was undertaken on the 11th February 2022 by Damian Wall (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd), Phil and Johnny Murray (Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation), and Leigh Holland (Terrain) representing the Sponsor.

An additional walkover/inspection was undertaken on the 16th February 2023 by Damian Wall (Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd) and Reg Murray (Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation).

7.3 Oral history

No oral history information was provided during the standard assessment.

7.4 Obstacles encountered in completing the standard assessment

The site has been severely affected by historical mining practices making some areas difficult/dangerous to traverse. The site is also very steep and heavily vegetated making access to many areas proposed for tracks unsafe to access. The survey team agreed to focus survey effort on the accessible areas of the major ridgelines and any exposed areas on the lower slopes leading up from the Mitta River Valley floor.

7.5 Ground Surface Visibility, Survey Areas and Effective Survey Coverage

Archaeological visibility refers to the amount of ground surface that is clearly visible for inspection. The greater the ground surface visibility, the more effective are surface surveys. Examples of high surface visibility are vehicular & pedestrian tracks, dune blow outs (100% per m²); and examples of poor visibility are areas of heavy vegetation cover (0-10% per m²) (Murphy & Thomson 2016).

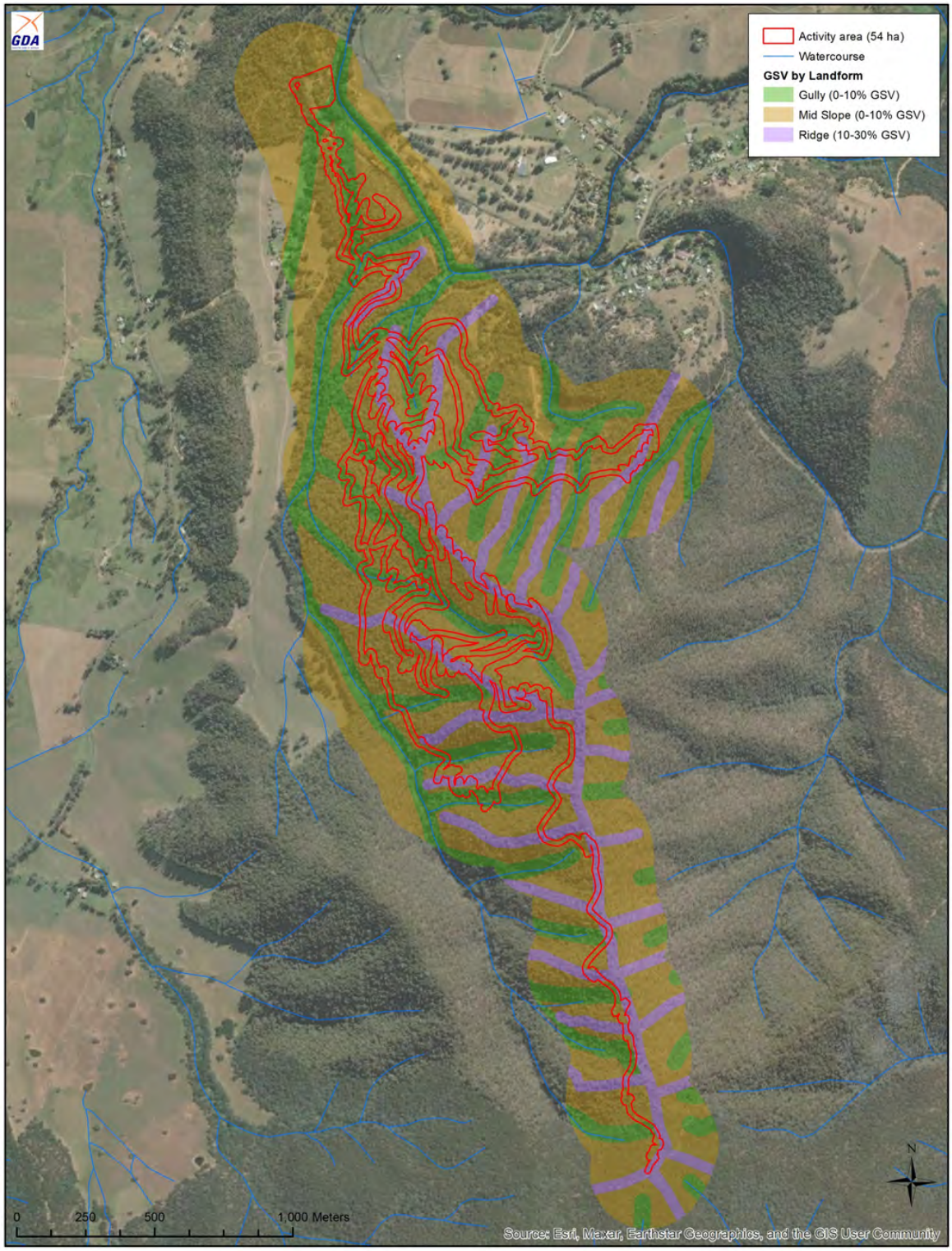
Unfortunately, it is often the case that highly visible Aboriginal cultural heritage places are also often highly disturbed. High ground surface visibility (GSV) is therefore often related to the amount of disturbance that has occurred. This disturbance may be manmade (such as drainage lines, vehicle tracks), by stock (overgrazing, tracks), or due to natural processes (erosion by wind or water). The level of GSV is typically assessed as is shown in Table 3. Effective Survey Coverage (ESC) is a measure of each Survey Unit (identified in the Activity area – Map 8A & 8B) that was adequately surveyed during the Standard Assessment by the survey team (Table 4).

Table 3: Ground Surface Visibility (GSV)

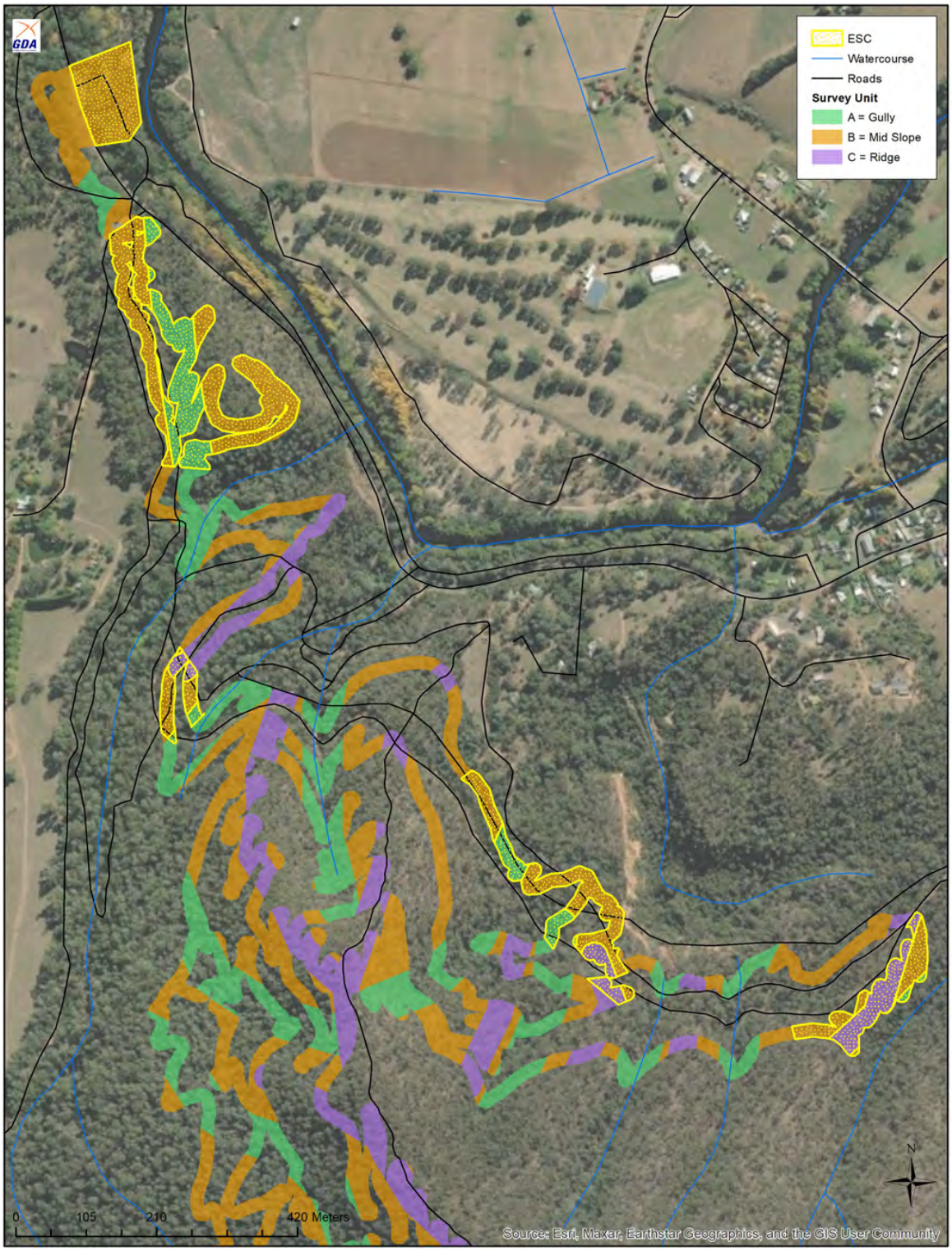
%	0%	0 – 10%	10 – 30%	30 – 50%	50 – 70%	70 – 90%	90 – 100%
Rating	No visible ground surface	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent

Table 4: Effective Survey Coverage

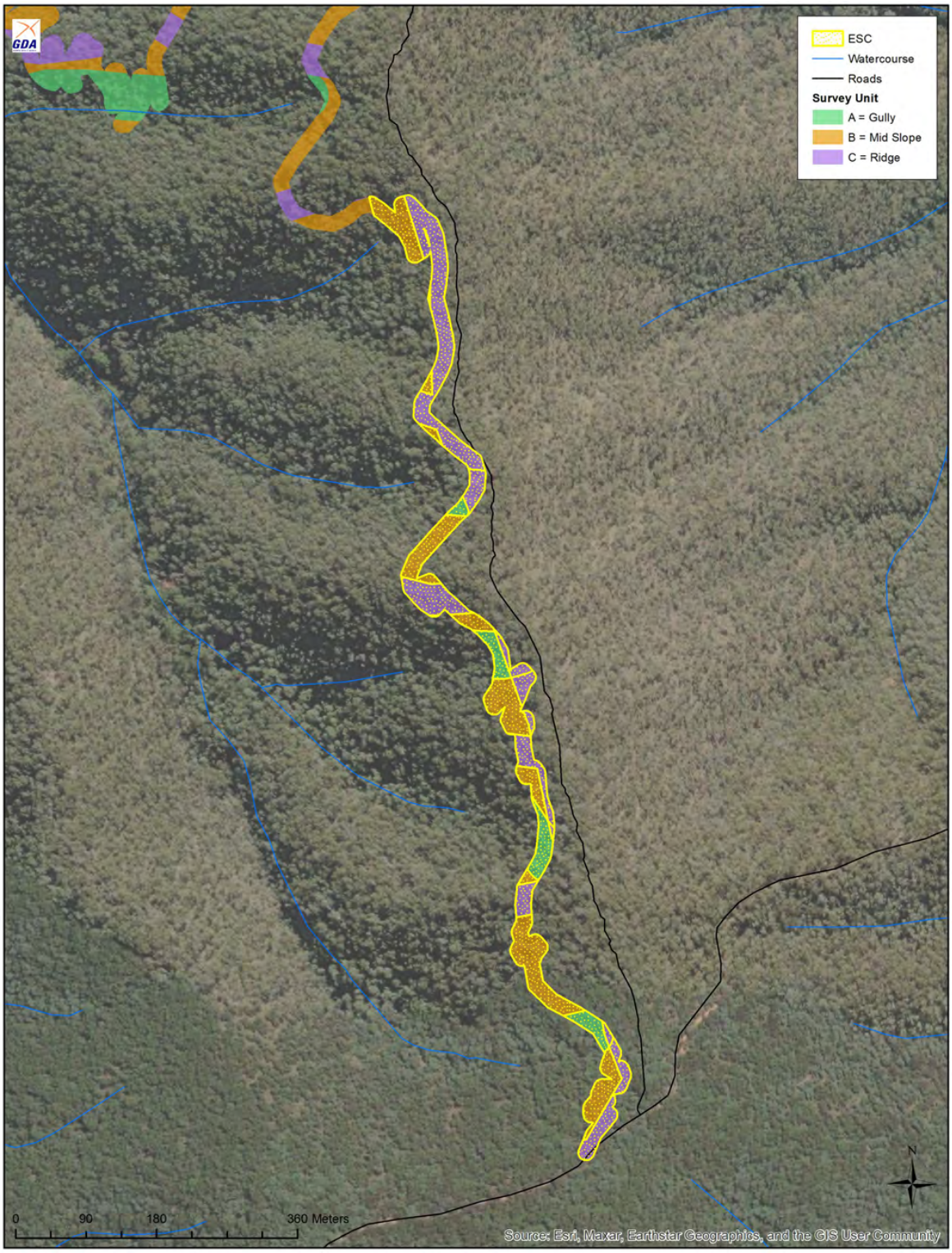
Survey Unit	Area of Survey Unit (ha)	Area Surveyed (ha)	% Surveyed
A (Gully)	12.8	1.9	14%
B (Midslope)	30	6.6	22%
C (Ridge)	11.7	2.6	22%
Totals	54.5 ha	11.1 ha	20%



Map 7: Standard Assessment results showing GSV by landform type in the Activity area. Scale 1:17,000. Source: Google Earth, 2023.



Map 8A: Survey Units in the Activity area. Scale 1: 7,000. Source: Esri 2023.



Map 8B: Survey Units in the Activity area. Scale 1: 6,000. Source: Esri 2023

7.6 Results of the Standard Assessment

The Pedestrian survey confirmed the findings of the desktop assessment in that the entire activity area has been subject to various degrees of disturbance, such as logging, early grazing, track/road/bridge building and most notably historical gold mining and associated impacts. The entire Activity area either utilises or intersects a complex series of old mining and or forestry tracks.

The Activity area traverses three (3) landforms, Ridgelines, Gullies and Mid slopes across a range of elevations (Map 9A & 9B). Due to the area being heavily vegetated and with almost all of the proposed track on steep slopes, the site was difficult to traverse with steep grades of >1V:1H making up a large proportion of the area. GSV was Poor (10-30%) over the areas that were assessed – mainly the ridges (Map 7) due to a thick layer of leaf litter in most situations.

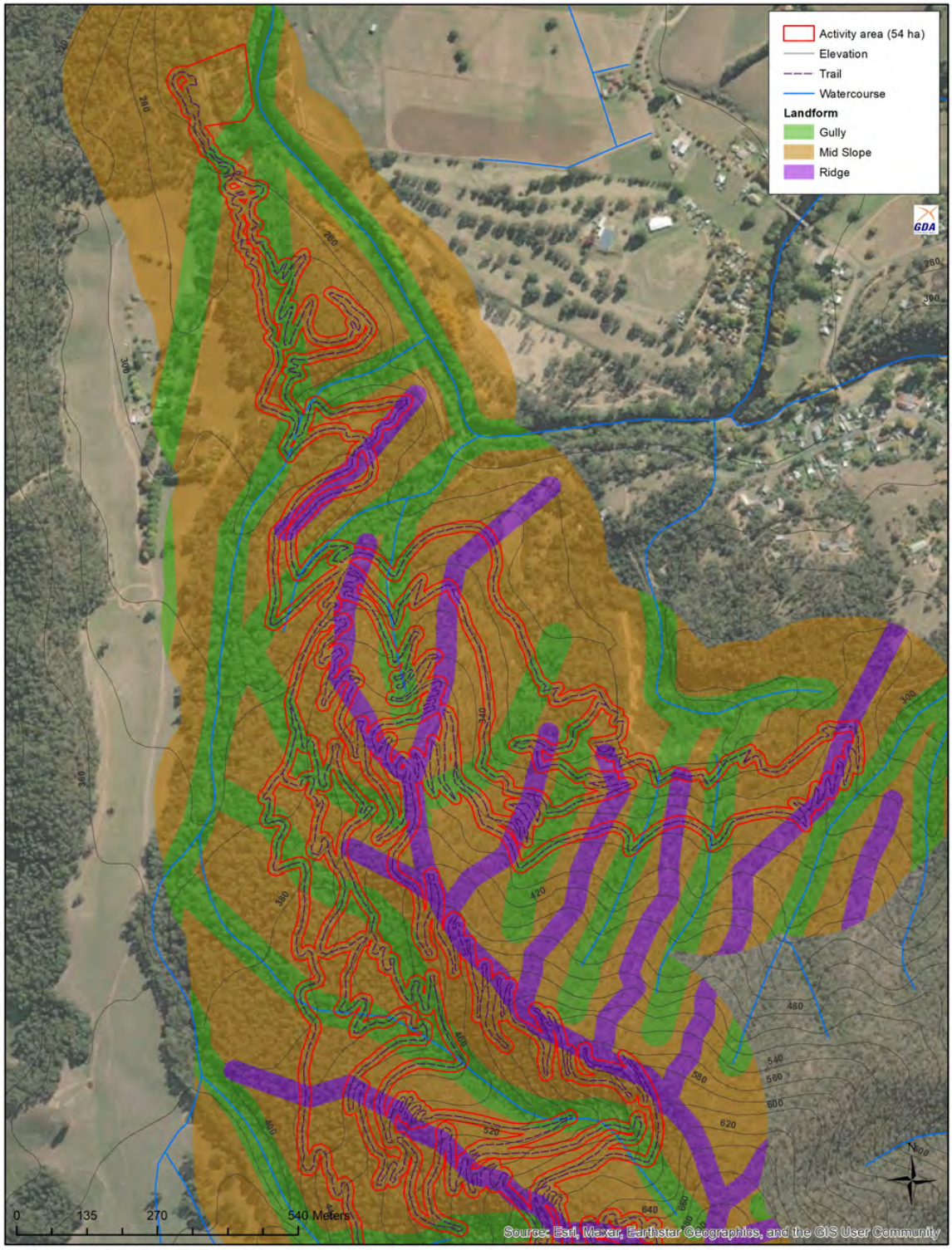
The survey team agreed to focus survey effort on the accessible areas of the major ridgelines and any exposed areas on the lower slopes leading up from the Mitta River Valley floor. The major ridgelines were accessed by 4WD to the highest elevations able to be accessed and pedestrian survey down the ridgelines was initiated from where the access tracks intersected the spurs or ridges.

The existing walking trail that extends from the Mitta township to Disappointment Track was clearly evident along some of the ridges (Photo 2) and GSV (10-30%) in these areas was hindered by heavy leaf litter, however the minimal public use that these areas currently get is maintaining a clearway (Photos 4-6) that was thoroughly inspected.

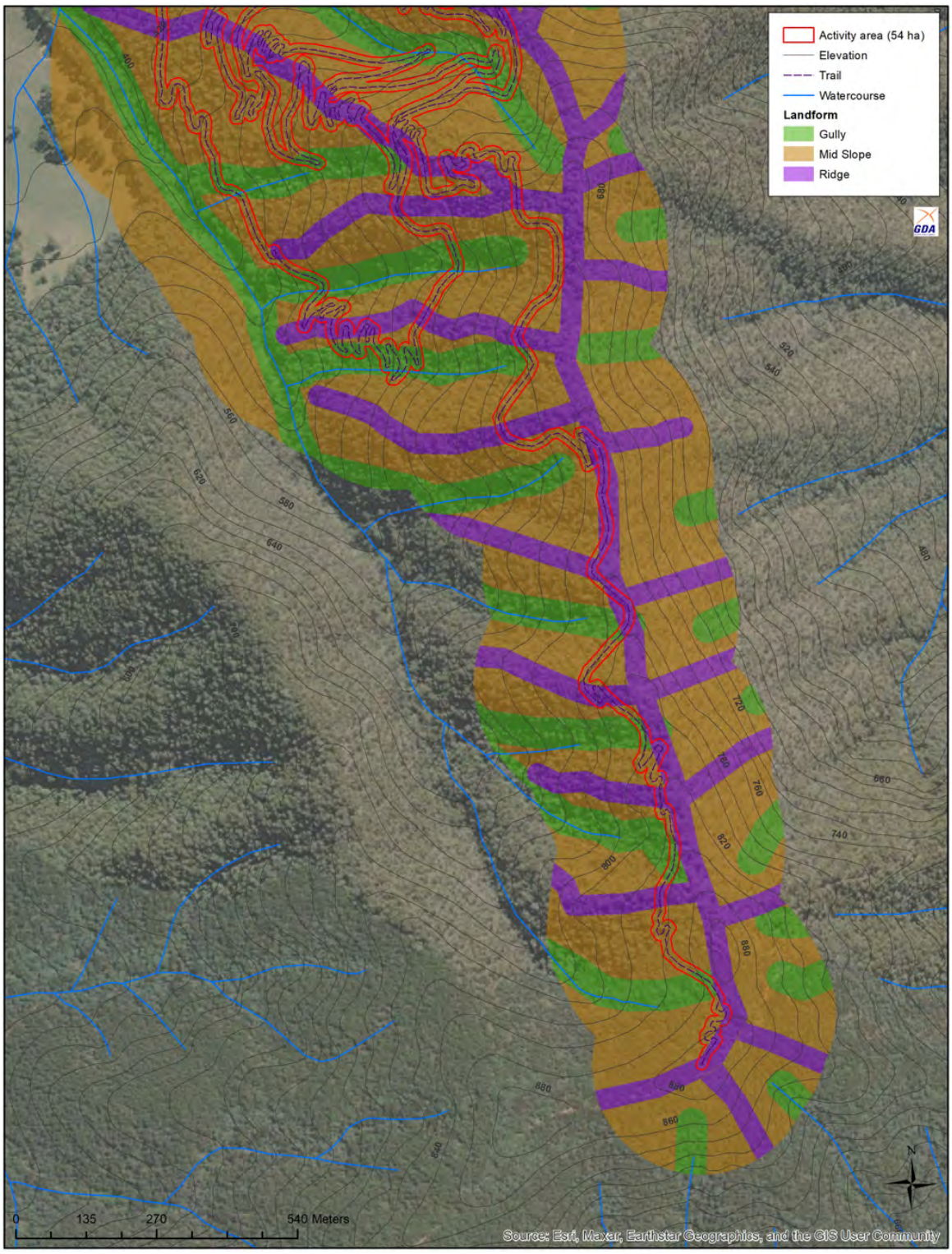
Some old mining (presumably) small tracks to very steep sections of the east and west slopes off the main ridges were observed (Photo 7) and one area on the lower slopes adjacent to the Pioneer Mine site was also inspected as several trails were proposed to intersect at that location. The area had been previously cleared and evidence of a house site was observed (Photo 8). It was noted that very few 'scar age' native vegetation seemed to be present on the steeper slopes or the ridges which is likely due to the extensive mining history that has impacted the majority of the landscape.

Several gullies at on the lower slopes, south of the Mitta township were accessible by 4WD and the survey team observed that these areas were also heavily vegetated and inaccessible aside from some already developed bike and walking paths that have been informally established. Several locations had extensive areas of water races/contour banking and were extensively disturbed (Photo 10).

No scarred or culturally modified trees and no rock shelters or caves that may contain Aboriginal cultural heritage material are present in the Activity Area. There are no naturally occurring waterholes and soaks present within the Activity area. No Aboriginal cultural material was observed during the Standard Assessment.



Map 9A: Landforms within the Activity area. Scale 1:9,000. Source: Google Earth, 2023



Map 9B: Landforms within the Activity area. Scale 1:9,000. Source: Google Earth, 2023

Photo 2: Existing walking track off Disappointment Track. Note the AA is approximately 50m east of this position down a 1V:1H slope. Poor GSV. North orientation. Photo: D. Wall 2022

Photo 3: Ridge conditions showing approximate location of the trail on the western facing slope in thick vegetation. Poor GSV. North West orientation. Photo: D.Wall 2022

Photo 4: Steep ridgeline displaying Poor GSV. Proposed trail 50m to the west down slope. North orientation. Photo: D.Wall 2022

Photo 5: Existing trail conditions, no scar age trees, mid-way down ridge above Deep Gully. North orientation. Photo: D.Wall 2022

Photo 6: Clear zone maintained by foot traffic. Note lack of topsoil and heavy rock substrate. Photo: D.Wall 2022

Photo 7: Old mining track, leaf litter covering ground surface, steep mid slope. Poor GSV. South orientation. Photo: D.Wall 2022

Photo 8: Previous miners cottage site adjacent to Pioneer Mine site, extensively disturbed. Poor GSV. West orientation. Photo: D.Wall 2022

Photo 9: Lower slopes above Mitta River valley, heavily vegetated landscape unaffected by the AA which is approximately 50m downslope on the steep east aspect: D.Wall 2022

Photo 10: Mining water race on lower slopes of Deep Gully. Poor GSV. North orientation. Photo: D.Wall 2022.

7.7 Areas likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage & Aboriginal cultural heritage scientific sensitivity model

Generally speaking, Aboriginal places would be expected to be situated close to either an ephemeral or permanent water source, providing adequate shelter from the elements and rising floodwaters, and have access to a food source. For intact Aboriginal places to remain in these areas, the landscape will not have sustained ground disturbing activities. Where they do remain in disturbed landscapes or contexts, they are not likely to be *in situ*.

The Activity area traverses three (3) landforms, Ridgelines, Gullies and Mid slopes, therefore, the majority of the trail traverses steep slopes, up and down multiple ridges and gullies. The standard assessment did not record any cultural heritage material within the Activity area with a high degree of subsurface disturbance was noted across the entire Activity area.

The area is heavily vegetated and with almost all of the proposed track on steep slopes, the site was difficult to traverse with steep grades of >1V:1H making up a large proportion of the area. GSV was poor (10-30%) over the areas that were assessed due to a thick layer of leaf litter in most situations.

The results of the standard assessment have been used to refine the desktop assessment Aboriginal cultural heritage prediction model (Section 6.9). Any 'scar age' mature trees within the Activity area were inspected, with no cultural scarring observed.

7.8 Conclusions from the Standard Assessment

The standard assessment has demonstrated that in relation to the Activity area:

- No Aboriginal cultural heritage was identified during the standard assessment;
- The Standard assessment confirmed the findings of the desktop assessment in that the Activity area has experienced substantial environment impacts directly from gold mining, associated mining infrastructure, tracks and waste. Additional impacts to the Activity area would have been early pastoralism/grazing, forestry activities such as land clearing and track building and the construction and maintenance of existing access roads and other fire access tracks, this includes grading road shoulders, maintaining table drains, movement of soil, etc;
- GSV encountered was Poor (10 -30%) across the parts of the Activity area that were accessible, due to thick leaf litter and native grasses covering the ground surface;
- No Aboriginal cultural heritage material was located during the Standard assessment;
- There were no rock shelters or caves within the activity area.
- The site is extremely steep and the track construction is restricted to the gullies, ridgelines and mid-slope landforms which is >1V:1H in many areas. These parts of the landscape are highly unlikely to have been occupied for any length of time or used as rest areas due to the steepness;
- There are no areas that are likely to contain Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and any Aboriginal cultural heritage material that may have existed in the Activity area has likely been destroyed or displaced.

The Standard assessment did not record Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Activity area and concluded that the much of works are proposed within areas that have been extensively disturbed. Aboriginal cultural heritage was considered 'highly unlikely' or a 'low probability' to occur within the Activity area, therefore a Complex Assessment was not conducted in accordance with r.64 (1).

8 Impact assessment – Section 61 matters

In accordance with Section 61 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 an assessment must be made as to whether the proposed activity will be conducted in a way that avoids harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage or be conducted in a way that minimises harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The purpose of the Act is to provide for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. In the first instance, harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage should be avoided. This may be achieved through appropriate management strategies (or specific measures) in relation to the Aboriginal Places and the activity, the use of protective fencing during construction or restricting access, in addition to cultural awareness training for contractors. In the second instance, harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage must be minimised. This may be achieved through re-aligning infrastructure, locating public open space areas over cultural values (if appropriate) or using less invasive construction methods. The final resort is the salvage of cultural heritage where appropriate.

This CHMP has undertaken desktop and a standard assessment in order to investigate the nature and extent of any Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the Activity area and to mitigate the risks to these Aboriginal Places through appropriate management strategies.

8.1 Can Harm to Identified Cultural Heritage Places be Avoided?

The proposed activity will not harm Aboriginal cultural heritage places as there were no Aboriginal cultural heritage places identified within the Activity area.

8.2 Can Harm to Identified Cultural Heritage Places be Minimised?

No specific measures are required as no Aboriginal cultural heritage material was identified.

8.3 Are Specific Measures Needed for the Management of Identified Cultural Heritage Places?

No specific measures are required as no Aboriginal cultural heritage material was identified.

8.4 Are There Particular Contingency Plans That Might be Necessary?

Processes to be followed in relation to delays and other obstacles are outlined in the management conditions in Section 2. Procedures are outlined for factors that may affect the conduct of the activity. These include procedural guidelines in the event that suspected human remains are discovered, as well as safety requirements.

8.5 What Custody and Management Arrangements Might be Needed?

The custody and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage are addressed in Section 2.3.

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10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Notice to prepare Cultural Heritage Management Plan

VICTORIA State Government | Premier and Cabinet

Notice of Intent to prepare a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the purposes of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*

This form can be used by the Sponsor of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan to complete the notification provisions pursuant to s.54 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the "Act").

For clarification on any of the following please contact Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) enquiries on 1800-726-003.

SECTION 1 - Sponsor information

Sponsor:	Mitta Valley Inc		
ABN/ACN:	28687938367		
Contact Name:	Megan Graham		
Postal Address	5557 Omeo Hwy, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701		
Business Number:	0411645415	Mobile:	0411645415
Email Address:	megan.graham@latitude36advisory.com		

Sponsor's agent (if relevant)

Company:			
Contact Name:			
Postal Address			
Business Number:		Mobile:	
Email Address:			

SECTION 2 - Description of proposed activity and location

Project Name:	Proposed Mitta Mitta Mountain Bike Park, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701
Municipal district:	Towong Shire Council

Clearly identify the proposed activity for which the cultural heritage managment plan is to be prepared (ie. Mining, road construction, housing subivision)

Bicycle track

SECTION 3 - Cultural Heritage Advisor

Name	Company	Email address
Damian Wall	Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd	damian.wall@red-gum.com.au

SECTION 4 - Expected start and finish date for the cultural heritage management plan

Start Date:	11-Feb-2022	Finish Date:	31-Mar-2022

Submitted on: 10 Feb 2022

VICTORIA State Government | Premier and Cabinet

SECTION 5 - Why are you preparing this cultural heritage management plan?

☑ A cultural heritage management plan is required by the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007

What is the high Impact Activity as it is listed in the regulations?

Is any part of the activity an area of cultural heritage sensitivity, as listed in the regulations? 1

☐ Other Reasons (Voluntary)

☐ An Environment Effects Statement is required

☐ A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is required by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

☐ An Impact Management Plan or Comprehensive Impact Statement is required for the activity

SECTION 6 - List the relevant registered Aboriginal parties (if any)

This section is to be completed where there are registered Aboriginal parties in relation to the management plan.

SECTION 7A - List the relevant Aboriginal groups or Aboriginal people with whom the Sponsor intends to consult (if any)

*This section is to be completed only if the proposed activity in the management plan is to be carried out in an area where there is **no Registered Aboriginal Party.***

Duduroa Local Custodians

SECTION 7B - Describe the intended consultation process (if any)

*This section is to be completed only if the proposed activity in the management plan is to be carried out in an area where there is **no Registered Aboriginal Party.***

All aspects of the CHMP will be in partnership with DDAC

SECTION 8 – State who will be evaluating this plan (mandatory)

The plan is to be evaluated by:

☐ Joint - Registered Aboriginal Party AND The Secretary

☐ A Registered Aboriginal Party

☑ The Secretary

☐ Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

SECTION 9 – Preliminary Aboriginal Heritage Tests (PAHTs)

List the Reference Number(s) of any PAHTs conducted in relation to the proposed activity:

SECTION 10 - Notification checklist

Ensure that any relevant registered Aboriginal party/ies is also notified. A copy of this notice with a map attached may be used for this purpose.
(A registered Aboriginal party is allowed up to 14 days to provide a written response to a notification specifying whether or not it intends to evaluate the management plan.)

Submitted on: 10 Feb 2022

Appendix 2: Summary of Consultation

Date	Time	Type	Name (from)	Party (to)	Discussion/Details
4/2/22	9.00	Phone	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Phil Murray (DDAC)	DW rang PM to organise an initial meeting and a field visit. PM and DW agreed on the approach to the CHMP development. PM advised that Johnny Murray and himself would be attending site.
11/2/22	8.00	Site Inspection	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Phil & Johnny Murray (DDAC), Leigh Holland (Terrain)	Standard Assessment conducted.
11/2/22	15:00	Site Meeting	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Phil & Johnny Murray (DDAC), Leigh Holland (Terrain)	Management Conditions meeting.
6/12/2022	19:00	Email	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Reg Murray (DDAC)	DW emailed RM a draft copy of the report and requested that DDAC advise if the CHMP was acceptable.
7/12/2022	15:00	Phone	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Reg Murray (DDAC)	DW phoned RM to discuss the CHMP and RM advise that the Management conditions etc had not changed from those discussed with Uncle Phil and that the CHMP was acceptable to DDAC.
16/02/2023	9.00	Site Inspection	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Reg Murray (DDAC)	Additional site inspection undertaken.
16/02/2023	11.00	Site meeting	Damian Wall (Red-Gum)	Reg Murray (DDAC)	Approach/effectiveness of the assessment was reviewed. Reg Murray agreed that the Standard assessment (and additional inspection) had adequately assessed the Activity area for the presence of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and was satisfied with the proposed Management Conditions and contingencies.

Appendix 3: Qualifications of Heritage Advisors

Damian Wall

Managing Director - Red-Gum Environmental Consulting Pty Ltd

Qualifications:

- Bachelor of Applied Science (Parks, Recreation & Heritage), CSU Albury, 1996
- Master Environmental Management and Restoration, CSU, 2005
- Certified Environmental Practitioner (CENVP), Environment Institute of Australia & New Zealand, 2008
- Full Member Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc (AACAI)
- Graduate Certificate in Cultural Heritage Management (CHM), Flinders University, 2011
- Heritage Advisor as defined under section 189(1) of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

Appendix 4: Glossary of terms

Activity	The development or use of land
Activity Area	The area or areas to be used or developed for an activity
Archaeology	The study of the past through the systematic recovery and analysis of material culture.
Artefact Scatter	A group of stone or other artefacts found scattered on the ground surface.
Assemblage	A collection of artefacts that are derived from the same Aboriginal place.
Burial (Aboriginal Ancestral Remains)	Usually represented by a concentration of human bones or teeth. Burials can be associated with charcoal or ochre, shell, animal bone or stone tools. They tend to be located in sandy areas, which were easy to dig or in rock shelters or tree hollows. They are usually exposed through earthworks or erosion.
Culturally Modified Tree	See Scarred Tree
Earth Feature	Includes mounds, rings, hearths, post holes and ovens.
Excavation	The systematic recovery of archaeological data through the exposure of buried sites and artefacts.
Low Density Artefact Deposit (LDAD)	Artefact deposit with average stone density of less than 10 artefacts in a 10m x 10m area.
Material culture	The tangible evidence or cultural remains that are produced by human activity.
Object Collection	A collection of Aboriginal cultural heritage objects.
Quarry	A location from which Aboriginal people have extracted stone for making stone artefacts or mineral such as ochre for use in painting.
Rock Art	Paintings or engravings on the surface of caves or rock shelters, created by Aboriginal people in the past.
Scarred Tree	Trees from which bark has been removed for the manufacture of utilitarian items such as containers, shelter sheets, canoes or medicine.
Shell Midden	A midden is the remains of a meal. In the case of shell middens, marine or freshwater molluscs are the dominant component.
Stone Feature	Rock art consisting of stones arranged in a pattern.

Appendix 5: Compliance Review Check list

COMPLIANCE CHECK LIST CHMP 18608						
Item	Date	Compliance (Y/N)	Issue/reason for non-compliance	Action	Person supervising action	Date to be completed by
Management Conditions						
Is a copy of this CHMP stored at all times in the site construction office? (1.1)						
Contingencies						
If any skeletal remains area identified during the activity have all works ceased & the remains been protected *in situ*? (2.1)						
If any skeletal remains area identified during the activity have Victoria Police and the State Coroner's Office been notified immediately? (2.1)						
If Aboriginal cultural material (non-skeletal) is found during the activity have all works ceased within 10 m of the find and a fenced buffer zone been established and clearly marked as a 'no-go' zone? (2.2)						
Have all following steps been followed regarding notification, inspection, reporting, managing, agreement and custody been followed? (2.3)						
Have appropriate and required VAHR forms been completed and submitted as per Section 2.3?						
Has compliance with the CHMP been reviewed (2.5)?						
If any non-compliance has been identified have works ceased (2.5)?						
Have any non-compliance issues been managed as per 2.5?						
Comments (can the process be improved)						
Signature:			Date:			

Appendix 6: Communication Contact Table

Name	Role	Company	Phone	Address	Email
Dr Dan Cummins	Manager, Heritage Programs (Hume)	First Peoples - State Relations	(03) 5722 7116 M: 0488 002 141	Level 1, 62 Ovens Street, Wangaratta VIC 3677	dan.cummins@dpc.vic.gov.au
Megan Graham	Sponsor Contact	Mitta Valley Inc	0411645415	5557 Omeo Hwy, Mitta Mitta, VIC 3701	megan.graham@latitude36advisory.com

MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

SITE CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (S/CEMP)

OCTOBER 2024

Version 1

Prepared for Mitta Valley Inc.

MITTA VALLEY
a world of its own

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SITE LOCATION

The Mitta Valley is located in North-East Victoria at the foothills of the Great Dividing Range with magnificent views of Mt Bogong. Mitta Mitta is at the end of the Valley on the Omeo Highway approximately one-hour east from Wodonga. With the road now sealed through to Omeo, it is becoming an increasingly popular tourist route between Gippsland and Albury Wodonga. Mitta Mitta is at the junction of the Mitta Mitta River and Snowy Creek. Immediately to the south of the township lays Mt Welcome and the project site. (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 1

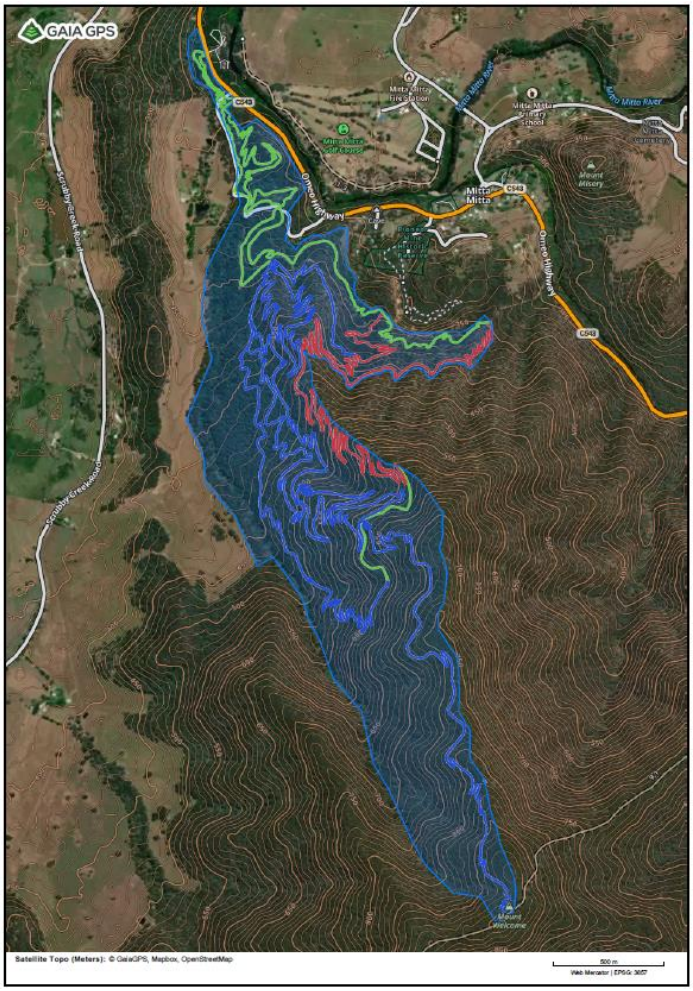


Figure 2

The mountain bike trail network project is located within State Forest south of Mitta Mitta as shown in Figure 2. The subject land is managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and is zoned Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ). It is affected by the Bushfire Management (BMO) overlay controls of the Towong Shire planning scheme.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 2018, members of the Mitta Valley community successfully sought funding to develop a Masterplan for the construction of a Mountain Bike Park in the Mitta Valley. The Masterplan was completed, along with a multipurpose carparking area that would double as a Trailhead once funding for the park construction had been sought.

The development of the Masterplan involved a comprehensive community engagement process; over half the households in the Valley participated in the process and the support for the development was strong.

In 2021 Mitta Valley Inc. received $1.5 million through the Victorian State Government's Local Economic Recovery program to deliver the first stage of the trail network. Approximately 50% of the trail network will be developed, in addition to branding, and the establishment of a social enterprise that will assist in the expense associated with maintaining the park.

North East Victoria, branded as Victoria's High Country, is recognised as Victoria's premier cycling destination. With the exception of Towong Shire, each local government area within the region has at least one mountain biking product to capitalise on the growing cycle tourism market. The Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park will remedy this situation.

As outlined in the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park Masterplan, the Mitta Valley presents highly suitable terrain and geology for the development of a successful mountain bike destination.

This S/CEMP provides construction management, risk assessment and control measures associated with the delivery of these works.

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Site Establishment and Storage

Primary site establishment and setdown locations will be as indicated on the attached trail maps (see attachment 1).

There are existing hardstand locations with 4WD access allowing material delivery, material stockpiling and vehicle parking. These will be the locations for any material/machinery storage for use during the trail works.

All stockpile areas will be suitably bunded with silt fencing in accordance with attached EPA guidelines.

Working areas are to be maintained, kept free of rubbish and cleaned up at the end of each working day. Once the works have been completed, any waste material is to be removed from site and disposed of at a licenced facility.

A mobile toilet facility and 10' tool container will also be placed at this location.

Site Induction

A site induction for the construction team will be held consistent with standards or conditions outlined in the S/CEMP and related permits and assessments. It will cover the relevant requirements of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan and Native Vegetation Report.

The site induction will cover threatened species identification and incident reporting protocols.

The site induction will cover unexpected cultural finds reporting protocols.

Relevant technical experts will provide this induction.

The Project Manager and contractor Site Supervisor will ensure copies of the endorsed S/CEMP, construction plans and associated requirements including the CHMP are always kept on site while works are conducted.

A Job Safety Analysis (JSA) and Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) will be provided to the Project Manager at the site induction prior to work commencing.

Prior to works commencing, all controls that apply to a stage of works are to be installed, including erosion and sediment controls, tree protection zones and exclusion zones. The limit of works is also to be pegged were appropriate. Once established, a pre-start meeting will be organised with MVI's Project Manager, MVI's Environmental Consultant and the contractor's Site Supervisor.

Construction Zones and Site Access

Vehicle access will be limited to 4WD tracks only and primarily to the site set down/storage areas identified on the attached trail map. (attachment 1)

Any areas close to trail works identified by the Project Manager as '**High Sensitivity Exclusion Zones'** will also be bunted in an appropriate fashion (minimum star pickets and bunting) to prevent inadvertent site disturbance.

Works to be carried out during normal work hours (i.e. 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday; 8am to 1pm Saturdays). Any work that is performed outside normal work hours or on Sundays or public holidays will have measures in place to minimise noise impacts

Plant and Equipment

The works will be conducted using a 1.7 T mini-excavator with a track width of 1m maximum. The machine will be serviced prior to entering the site. Standard checks including, leaks (hydraulic oil, engine oil), rubber tracks in good condition, excavator fitted with a fire extinguisher, etc will also be carried out daily and prior to site entry.

A mini skid steer with a rubber track width of maximum 900mm may also be used to construct trail on very shallow slopes.

Plant will remain on site for the duration of the construction project. Mini-excavators will be left on the trail in a safe manner during periods of no work to minimise trail impact during construction. Refuelling of mini-excavators will be performed on the trail for the same reason. Refuelling will be via a 20ltr jerry can and appropriate funnel/nozzle to prevent spills. A 900mm x 900mm organic absorbent spills mat will be placed below the fuel cap to catch any minor spills whilst refuelling. Refuelling of plant and equipment is to occur a minimum of 50 metres from drainage lines or waterways.

Fuel and oils are not to be stored on site.

Hand tools should be stored in work vehicles or other secure location. Tools should not be left on the trail at the end of the day.

Tools should not be used in areas outside the work site for the duration of the project to avoid the spread of weed and fungus.

Biosecurity and Equipment Washdown

All plant, hand tools and footwear must be thoroughly cleaned prior to entering and leaving the site to avoid the spread of weed, phytophthora and fungus such as Myrtle Rust or introduce anything foreign to the environment. Washdown should be undertaken prior to entering the site and undertaken using a pressurised spray unit containing a disinfectant/fungicide:

- Phytoclean. Add 1 part of Phytoclean® to 50 parts of water (or similar approved product)
- Disinfectant should be allowed to penetrate for at least one minute (preferably 10 minutes) before equipment departs.
- Do not drive through washdown effluent.

- Do not allow mud and wash-down effluent to drain into bushland and surface waters, such as rivers, creeks, reservoirs and dams.

Additionally, to further prevent the spread of weeds, phytophthora and fungus

- Should the trails construction pass through a heavily infested area then the above equipment washdown procedure will be employed before passing into un infested areas.
- All weed material containing seed heads, weeds that contain toxins, and weeds that are able to reproduce vegetatively encountered during construction will be sprayed or mechanically removed. This will be undertaken by the trail contractors as required.
- All herbicides should be used in accordance with the requirements on the label. Any person undertaking pesticide (including herbicide) application should be trained to do so and have the proper certificate of completion/ competency or statement of attainment issued by a registered training organisation.
- Only inert materials free of weed seeds will be brought into the work site.
- No soil is to be brought in for the proposed works.

Existing Services Locations

Prior to construction works being undertaken a Dial Before You Dig will be undertaken to locate all utilities in the vicinity of the trail. The location of the trails is unlikely to have any specific issues due to their remote nature.

Threatened Species Considerations and Biodiversity Management

All requirements in the Native Vegetation Report (NVR) will be undertaken during this project. The construction team will be briefed during the site induction and during daily toolbox meetings on appropriate practices to minimise construction impacts.

The final trail alignment should be micro-sited prior to construction starting to avoid as much high-quality vegetation as possible. No trees beyond sapling size (three metres high) to be removed.

All efforts should be made to retain as much native vegetation as possible during construction. No disturbance to vegetation outside the 1m trail tread will occur.

Wet areas, wet grassland, wetlands and swamps must be avoided by the final alignment. The final alignment must be micro-sited to select existing disturbed areas, trails, game trails and weedier areas for the trail, avoiding any higher quality native vegetation areas wherever possible. Where creeks or wet areas must be intersected, installation of fibreglass boardwalks are to be installed with low impact techniques, including screw piles which can be installed by hand. Crossing points must be selected where existing disturbance exists where practicable, such as game trails or other vegetation clearings. Erosion and sedimentation controls along with relevant permit requirements must be implemented including silt fencing in accordance with attached EPA guidelines.

Avoid and minimise excavation within TPZs and strictly no excavation within SRZs. Large habitat trees, especially those with hollows, must be avoided and no works to occur within their SRZ. If a tree has hollows (potential nesting and glider habitat), low noise and vibration works (hand build) must be conducted within their vicinity to reduce potential disruption to threatened mammals. If SRZ of large trees is unavoidably breached, then no excavation is permitted. instead use fill created from trail bench construction either side of tree to create a raised level surface for the trail without disturbance being made to the tree or shrub roots.

The trail is to avoid large hollow logs. No fallen timber is to be removed from the study area, but instead can be moved to a location out of the work zone. As a precaution, where any trail clearing is required that involves moving hollow logs or large areas of fallen timber, the project ecologist or a wildlife handler should be present to ensure there are no listed fauna present in the works area. If located, work must stop until the specimen can be relocated away from the work site.

There were no threatened ecological communities identified during site assessments. If potential threatened ecological communities are identified during construction, works must stop immediately, and advice must be sought from the Project Ecologist or DEECA.

Any change to proposed design increasing or changing the alignment of the assessed scope would result in an immediate stop works and subject to further assessment.

The trailhead signage will inform trail users about the Crown reserve assets and educate people about the need to keep to the trail and to stay out of sensitive areas.

If threatened species (or if suspected to be a threatened species) or fauna, are found on site, the Unexpected Threatened Species or Fauna finds procedure includes:

- Stop works within 200m of the detection
- Alert the Project Manager, Project Ecologist or suitably qualified person (DEECA) for assessment and possible re–location during works
- Any confirmed records must be recorded with GPS, and photographs are to be taken where possible
- Any fauna that is encountered during the removal of vegetation or soil disturbance shall be protected and relocated by the Project Ecologist or wildlife handler to a suitable habitat

Cultural Heritage Management

The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 requires a CHMP to set out Management Conditions for measures to be taken before, during and after the activity. No Aboriginal cultural heritage was identified during the Desktop or Standard Assessment, and no areas are identified as likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage. No specific cultural heritage management activities are provided; however, one (1) general cultural heritage management condition has been detailed below.

A hard copy (or a digital copy on a suitable electronic device) of the approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) must be held onsite at all times within the on-site construction office or with the site manager if an office is not provided, where it will remain readily available to all construction staff.

In the event that any object suspected of being of Aboriginal origin or of cultural (Aboriginal or European) significance is discovered all construction personnel must:

- Not harm/further harm the object
- Immediately cease all work at the particular location
- Secure and bunt the area to avoid further harm to the object
- Notify the Project Manager immediately, providing details of the suspected object and its location
- Not commence any work at the particular location unless authorised in writing by the Project Manger

Unexpected cultural finds procedure includes:

In the unlikely event that skeletal remains are unexpectedly encountered during the activity, works must cease. The Victoria Police and the State Coroner's Office must be notified immediately. If there are reasonable grounds to believe the remains are Aboriginal, the Coronial Admissions and Enquiries hotline must be contacted immediately on 1300 309 519.

This advice has been developed further and is described in the CHMP 5-step contingency plan. Any such discovery at the activity area must follow these steps.

In the unlikely event that skeletal remains are unexpectedly encountered during the activity, work must stop immediately, the area secured to prevent unauthorised access and NSW Police and Heritage NSW contacted.

Incident Reporting

Any environmental incidents, including chemical spills, fauna injury or death, damage to retained native vegetation or introduction of invasive weeds, are to be reported as soon as practicable to the Project Manager. An incident report is to be submitted along with any other protocols covered in the site induction.

TRAIL WORKS

Construction techniques shall generally be in accordance with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) Trail Solutions guidelines, contemporary sustainable trail building best practice and comply with all controls and requirement of this S/CEMP.

The final trail alignment should be micro-sited with the Project Ecologist prior to construction starting to avoid as much high-quality vegetation as possible

Prior to works commencing: Thorough knowledge and understanding is required of the project's protocols and recommendations contained in the *Threatened Species Considerations and Biodiversity Management* and *Cultural Heritage Management* sections of this S/CEMP along with the Cultural Heritage Management Plan and Native Vegetation Report.

Construction Techniques

Machine constructed trail – mini excavator

This project will largely be constructed using a 1.7T to 2T mini excavator which is used to create the defined 1m trail width. The following steps outline the process for construction of the trail using an excavator.

1. Review the assessed corridor with the Project Ecologist for a minimum of 200m ahead of the excavator and ground crew. The assessed corridor is marked using pink flagging tape tied to trees/vegetation or ground pins during the ground-truthing stage and mapped with GPS. The ground-truthed corridor is defined to include 10m either side of the flagged alignment, subject to identified constraints.

2. Determine the exact alignment to be taken within the alignment corridor with the Project Ecologist, to minimise impact to higher value vegetation, factoring in avoidance of SRZs/TPZs or other requirements advised by the heritage and ecology specialists.

3. Clear the construction corridor of vegetation. A hazard free corridor of 1.5 metre wide is recommended for a 400mm to 600mm singletrack and allows the riders to ride safely and reduces maintenance. The vertical corridor extends to approximately 2.4 m high (enough to allow passage of the excavator) see Figure 3.

Vegetation removal along the trail corridor is usually undertaken manually using motorized tools such as brush cutters, chainsaws, hedge trimmers and hand tools like loppers, hand saws and secateurs. No mature trees (greater than 3m high) or major tree limbs are to be removed. Trees should be used to add to the rider experience and to anchor the trail to prevent shortcutting. Overhanging small branches that

encroach on the trail corridor should be trimmed. Minor limbs are to be cut flush with the tree trunk making sure that removal will not tear or strip bark from the tree.

Any large or hollow bearing deadfall to be removed must be inspected immediately prior to removal by the Project Ecologist to ensure that no fauna is present. If located, work must stop until the specimen can be relocated away from the work site.

If a tree is deemed unsafe or problematic it will be flagged and advice sort from the project manager prior to works continuing.

All vegetation that is removed is cut into small pieces and dispersed throughout the surrounding area - no large windrows or stockpiles should be present. Do not place vegetative materials in creek lines, drainage (nicks, sumps, etc), or other locations where they would prevent the free flow of water.

At this stage, all vegetation is removed except for ground covers, herbs and grasses (which are left in place for later removal by the excavator).

4. Cut the bench using cut and fill technique outlined in IMBA Trail Solutions guide (Figure 4). Where possible ground covers, herbs and grasses are to be cut with topsoil, similar to a turf sod. This sod is then to be used on batters and the back of berms etc. This will stabilise the works, reduce sedimentation and retain as much native vegetation as possible, minimising construction impacts. Mineral earth removed from the inner side of the bench are used to build up the outer edge of the bench. The trail bench is to be out sloped by min 5% to encourage water to cross the trail, not run down it, minimising erosion.

Cut nicks every 10 metres on shallow side slopes (less than 5%). Construct grade reversal and rolling grade dips as required to ensure water is forced off the trail to minimise erosion. (Figure 5)

5. Clean up the trail tread, removing loose rocks and roots, compacting the tread, back sloping the batter. Install required sediment controls where appropriate such as gulley crossings drainage lines etc.

6. On flat ground the topsoil is removed to 1m width with the excavated zone refilled with excavated material to a level marginally higher than the surrounding ground. The surface is compacted in the same manner with a slight crown at the centreline to ensure water shedding from the trail surface to the surrounding ground.

Hand Constructed Trail

The process for hand constructed trail is similar to machine constructed trail. It is used in situations where it may be dangerous for a machine to operate, areas of high ecological or heritage sensitivity or where trail widths are required to be kept as narrow as possible. Instead of using a machine to bench the trail tread area as described above, this is cut using hand tools.

Rock Armouring

Rock armouring may be used for small drainage crossings or smaller boggy areas to improve the trail tread resistance to erosion and avoid damage to the environment.

1. If required, rocks that are won during the trails construction, are to be re-used as part of the rock armouring process. All rock armouring installation will be in accordance with the IMBA Trail Solutions guidebook. No rock is to be harvested from around the trail corridor.

2. Excavate soil from the area to be rock armoured, to the approximate depth of the rocks to be used.

3. Place rocks in position per requirements in the IMBA Trail solutions guidebook.

4. Once all rock armouring is complete, use any leftover soil/rocks to pack in around the edges of the rock armouring.

Elevated Structures/Minor Bridges/Culverts

These structures are typically used to enable a trail to cross over a waterway or area of soft or boggy ground. The use of Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP) decking allows light and water to penetrate through the bridge, thus minimizing the impact on the vegetation below. Where extended elevated board walks are required, footings should be created in a manner which minimises impact to sensitive wet areas. Wherever possible structures should be less than 1m above the ground to mitigate the requirement for handrails which create additional riding hazards. Screw piles should be used where practicable to minimise impact.

Construction of elevated structures/bridges should be undertaken after trails are excavated to ensure accurate measurements and easier access to the construction site with materials.

Signage

Wayfinding signage will be located at sections where the proposed trail intersects with other trails to provide information to users, or in locations to provide advance warning while using the trail. The signs will be installed directly adjacent to the trail where vegetation has already been removed as part of the construction of the trails. No additional vegetation removal is required to install trail signage. Trailhead and caution signage will also provide information on use of the trail, including hazards/risk mitigation, trail rules/code of conduct, emergency procedures and general information.

This freshly completed trail was constructed in Dinner Plain Alpine Village following the techniques specified in this S/CEMP

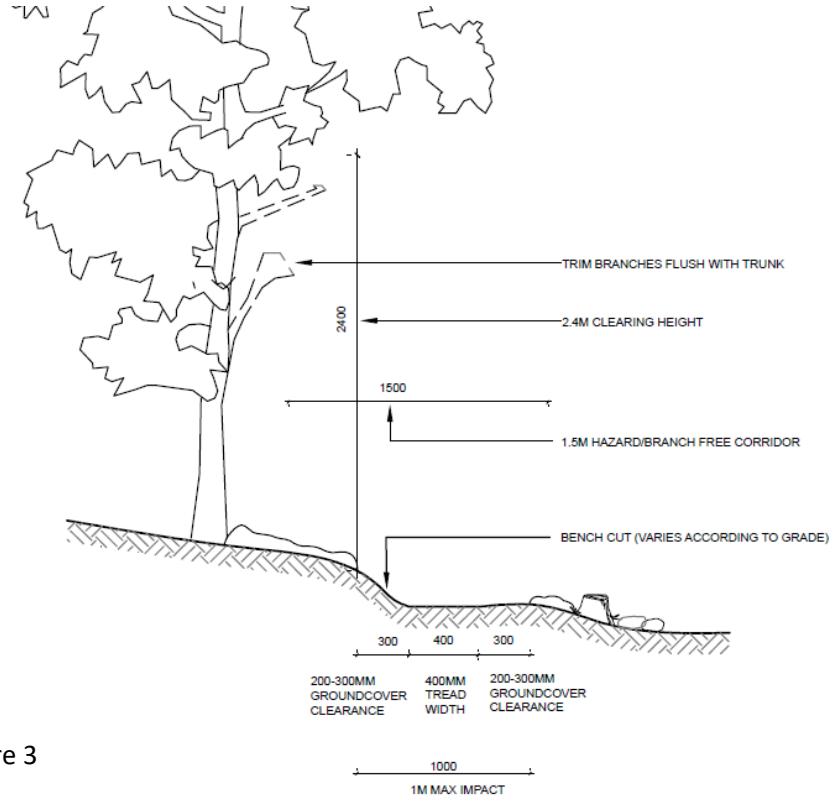


Figure 3

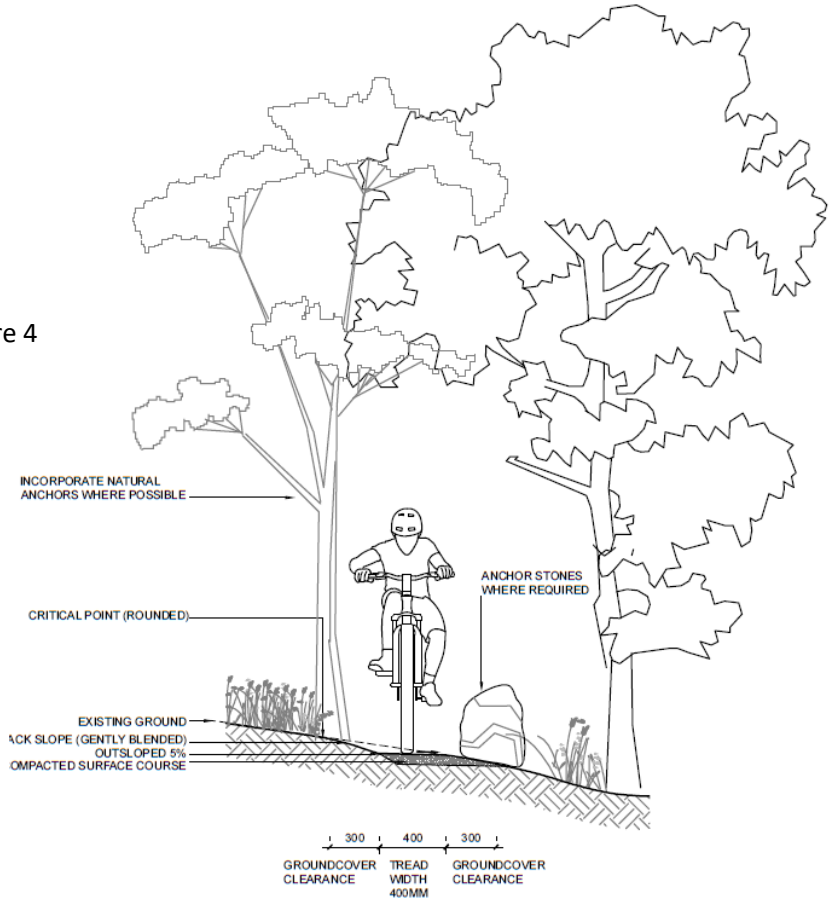
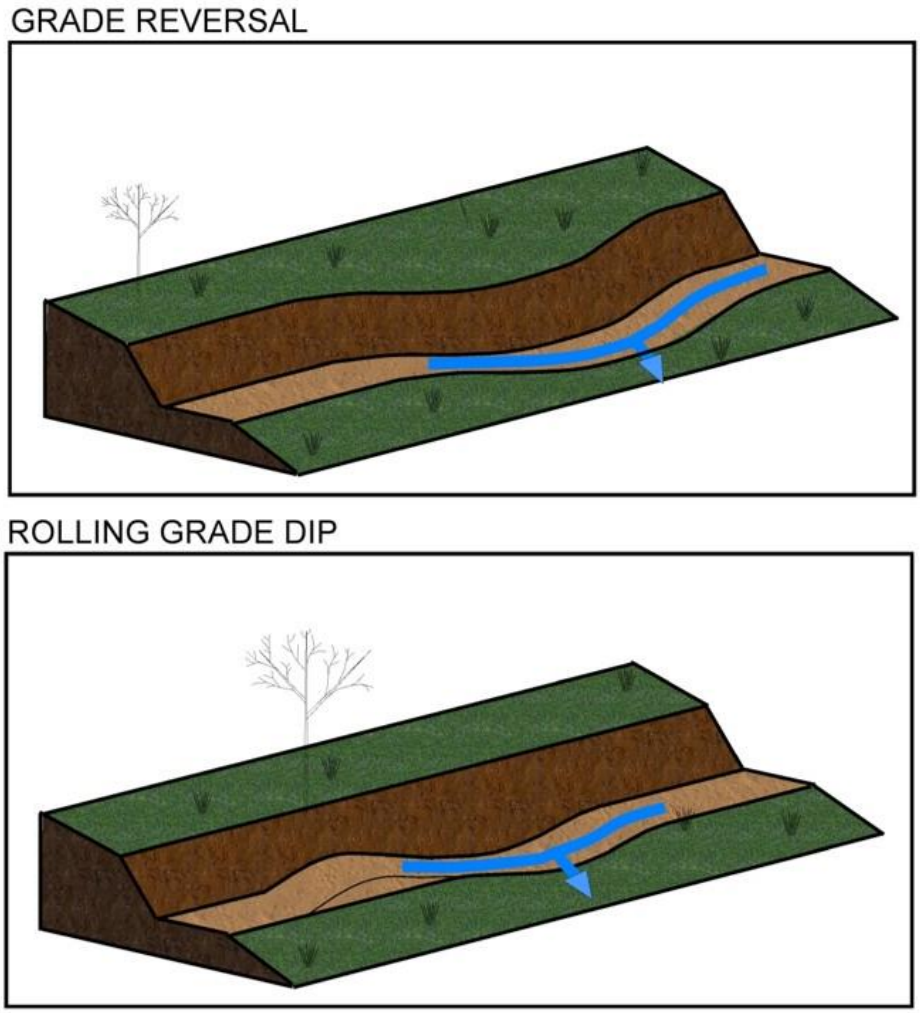


Figure 4

Figure 5



Sediment, Erosion and Dust Control

There is to be no release of dirty water into drainage lines and/or waterways.

Use of sediment control systems are to be used such as silt fencing, Jute Mesh and Coir Logs, to prevent newly constructed trail from creating silt runoff into waterway systems. These will be placed in key areas where this may occur such as waterway crossings or major trail grade reversals on cross sloped sections and stockpiles at the site set down area. EPA silt fencing installation details are provided in the CEMP attachments.

Ensure large storm events are managed in advance by securing machinery, temporary storage items and materials appropriately.

A visual inspection of a new trail's drainage features is to be conducted following the first rain event is particularly important to assess the effectiveness of the trails drainage and to check for sedimentation. A section of trail that shows evidence of ineffective drainage or sedimentation will be rectified with

increased drainage and/or additional sediment control measures to the satisfaction of the Project Supervisor.

Visual surveillance for dust generation will occur at all times. Work will cease when high levels of airborne dust cannot be controlled. Dust suppression techniques will be utilised in response to visible dust, such as watering dusty work areas were practicable and stockpile sites (using non-potable water where available).

Works will be minimised during windy periods to minimise dust creation and ensure no dust impacts occur along public roads or at sensitive receivers.

Rehabilitation work

Rehabilitating temporarily disturbed areas next to the new trails has two key benefits. It provides for a better, natural immersive user experience and allows vegetation to recover stabilising the immediate surrounds of the new trails. If these areas are not stabilised and native vegetation cover is not re-established, they will be sources of erosion and ideal locations for weed establishment. These areas must be returned to a semi-natural functioning state dominated by colonising native plant species from adjacent native woodland, grassland and wetland vegetation. For new trails, the following rehabilitation actions will be implemented:

- Prior to trail works commencing, a site inspection involving the Project Ecologist, the trail Construction Supervisor and Project Manager will be undertaken to work through actions prescribed here and resolve any 'on ground' issues.
- In accordance with the project S/CEMP, soil and vegetation disturbance will be kept to an absolute minimum during new trail construction. This means:

  - Trim vegetation rather than remove entire plants.

  - Minimise unnecessary machinery/personnel traffic across vegetation.

  - Use allocated parking and stockpile areas only.

  - Cut vegetation material (thatch, brush and sods) should be stockpiled for use in rehabilitation along the new trails, including mulching of woody material.

- Develop a maintenance program for high threat weeds or woody weeds along trail edge.
- Areas of active erosion, or where significant drainage issues have occurred post trail works, will be reshaped by hand or with small machinery to restore the natural surface profile. If required, silt fencing, coir sediment logs (organic material only) or weed free straw bales (ideally rice straw) will be used to capture and disperse run off.
- The edges of new trails will be covered with any excess vegetation cut material from new trail construction (i.e. thatch, brush, sods) to naturalise the trail, providing ground cover with organic material. This process of replacing organic material along the trail edges will happen progressively as the trail is built.
- Replanting/re-vegetation of areas will be done with local indigenous plant species relevant to the Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) and in accordance with the DSE guidance: Mid Kiewa Native Plant Lists as approved by the Project Supervisor.

- For ongoing trail maintenance, minimise soil disturbance during vegetation management works and implement only trimming of native plants rather than complete removal.

Construction Monitoring

Trails will be monitored daily during the construction period, including environmental risks. Any issues will be reported as soon as practicable to the Project Manager.

The Project Manager will meet at regularly with the construction team to discuss progress and issues to ensure they can be resolved in a timely manner.

The Site Supervisor will be responsible for undertaking a general daily assessment of positive and negative impacts during the construction program and appropriate photographic records will be kept. Specialist advice on environmental or heritage issues will be sought as required from the project manager and identified specialists during the construction period.

The construction monitoring program for identified risks is outlined in the following table:

Risk	Monitoring response	Frequency of monitoring	Responsibility
1. Local erosion and sedimentation as a result of exposed soil in the immediate vicinity of the trail surfaces (e.g. vegetation smothering)	Visual inspections of trail construction progress including maintaining agreed alignments, gradients, bunded stockpiles and installation/maintenance of sediment control devices. Monitoring of waterways will be undertaken at times when works are being undertaken at each crossing. Where sedimentation is noted, action to rectify will be undertaken, including suspension of works if necessary.	Daily As required at waterways	Site Supervisor Project manager, site supervisor

2. Disturbance and sedimentation of waterways, boggy areas, drainage systems and aquatic habitats including beds and banks for construction of elevated structures and trail surface.	Visual inspection of all bogs, waterway crossings and downstream areas to detect sedimentation point sources. Monitor per 1 above. No works will be undertaken during rain/storm events.	Daily during works in these areas After rain events	Site Supervisor
3. Removal/impact to native vegetation beyond the approved construction corridors	Visual inspection and photo record of pre- and post- construction clearing. Ensure overburden is not spread beyond the 1m corridor. Ensure material staging is on the excavated track bed or defined storage area only.	Daily inspections and weekly photographs	Project Manager and Site Supervisor
4. Introduction of weeds and soil pathogens	Follow up visual inspections to detect weed germination and signs of soil pathogen infection Ensure machinery is fully cleaned prior to use on site.	Weekly during construction and monthly for 1 year after construction completion.	Project Manager, Site Supervisor
	Visual inspections and supervision by project ecologist during trail construction in	As required at alignment mark out	Project ecologist

5. Destruction of threatened flora or their habitats.	identified sensitive areas if required. Ensure and NGZ or TPZ fencing remains in place for duration of works	and when working in these areas As required at alignment mark out and when working in these areas	Project Manager, Site Supervisor
6. Disturbance to terrestrial wildlife	Visual inspections and supervision by project ecologist during trail construction in identified sensitive areas	As required at alignment mark out stage and when working in these areas (e.g. rocky outcrops)	Project Manager, project ecologist
7. Bushfire	Have a spotter observing any welding or grinding operations, and when chainsaws or machinery with hot exhausts are in use. Minimise this type of work during high fire danger periods.	As required during and after such works	Site Supervisor
8. Pollution and litter	Visual inspections of storage and machinery/equipment lay down areas. Ensure elevated structure material off-cuts are removed from the site.	Daily	Site Supervisor
9. Failure of rehabilitation works	Follow up visual inspections of rehabilitation works to assess the success of soil, slope and vegetation stabilisation	Weekly during construction and monthly for 1 year after construction completion.	Project Manager

	Visual inspection of vegetation recovery		
10. Damage to the trees in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trail	Ensure requirements of TPZs are monitored as needed during construction. Engage an arborist if necessary, to seek advice on specific cases where TPZ impacts cannot be avoided – refer also to Environmental Risks section.	As required during works	Project Manager and Site Supervisor
11. Damage to cultural or heritage sites in the vicinity of the proposed trail	Visual inspections of trail works throughout designated heritage sensitive areas. Ensure identified heritage forms are not impacted by construction works in accordance with heritage assessments. NGZ's to be erected, inspected and maintained.	As required during works	Site Supervisor

RISK MITIGATION

Response to previously stated risks are detailed in the following table:

Risk	Mitigation Measures
1. Local erosion and sedimentation as a result of exposed soil in the immediate vicinity of the trail bench construction or from surfacing materials (e.g. vegetation smothering)	The trails will be constructed according to current best practice guidelines for out-sloping and grade reversal. In addition to the construction types described above, suitable erosion control measures will be implemented during all proposed works. The most common sediment control measure to be implemented during the works is a silt fence. Silt fences will be installed on major grade reversals, drainage lines and in wet areas during the construction period and removed once trails have consolidated after a nominal bed-in period. Subject to rain events, sediment traps may also be installed downslope of the mini excavator during construction. This will be determined by the Project Manager and Site Supervisor. Sediment traps (such as silt fences) will be erected at regular intervals to intercept sediment laden run-off and minimise any impacts on surrounding vegetation. Sediment control measures will be checked and maintained at regular intervals and after rainfall events. Coir logs and/or Jute Mesh will also be installed as required
2. Disturbance and sedimentation of waterways, bogs, drainage systems and aquatic habitats including beds and banks.	Works near waterways will be scheduled appropriately. For example, works will be timed to coincide with periods of low flow and completed quickly. Works will be stopped if conditions are not suitable, such as during and after heavy rain. Access to these sites will only be along the built trails or existing access tracks. Any materials for construction will be transported along the trails. Sediment control devices will be installed where sedimentation risks are identified, and stream/bog condition will be regularly visually monitored during and after rainfall events. Minimal riparian vegetation will be removed to allow for works and these areas will be allowed to regenerate or be rehabilitated (where required) when works are complete. The use of a high sunlight penetration

	fibreglass reinforced plastic (FRP) decking will ensure some vegetation cover is maintained under the elevated structures. All requirements will be in accordance with the Works on Waterways permit conditions.
3. Removal of native vegetation beyond the approved construction corridors	Access/egress to the construction corridors will be via the constructed trail alignments or previously established tracks. No new access tracks will be created outside the assessed alignment corridors. Logs/rocks moved from the trail alignment must be placed next the trail in a manner which minimises impact other native vegetation adjacent to the trail alignment. All work must be within the assessed trail corridor being 1m. Site Storage areas will be established on existing hardstand areas such as parking locations or tracks.
4. Introduction of weeds and soil pathogens	Prior to works commencing any machinery, equipment and PPE will be washed down to remove soil and weed seeds. All equipment that has been previously contaminated with soil material will be washed down off-site with Phytoclean anti-fungal solution prior to works commencing. No additional fill material will be imported.
5.Destruction of threatened flora or their habitats. Impacts to threatened ecological communities.	The proposed alignments have been assessed by a professional ecologist. The site induction will cover threatened species identification and incident reporting protocols.
6. Disturbance or injury to terrestrial wildlife	Large logs or rocks will be left in situ to minimise disturbance to fauna habitats where possible. Where rocky habitat is encountered during construction the trails will have a minimal footprint to take advantage of naturally open areas. No large, embedded rocks will be disturbed in rocky habitats. There is no requirement for large tree removal as part of the trail works.

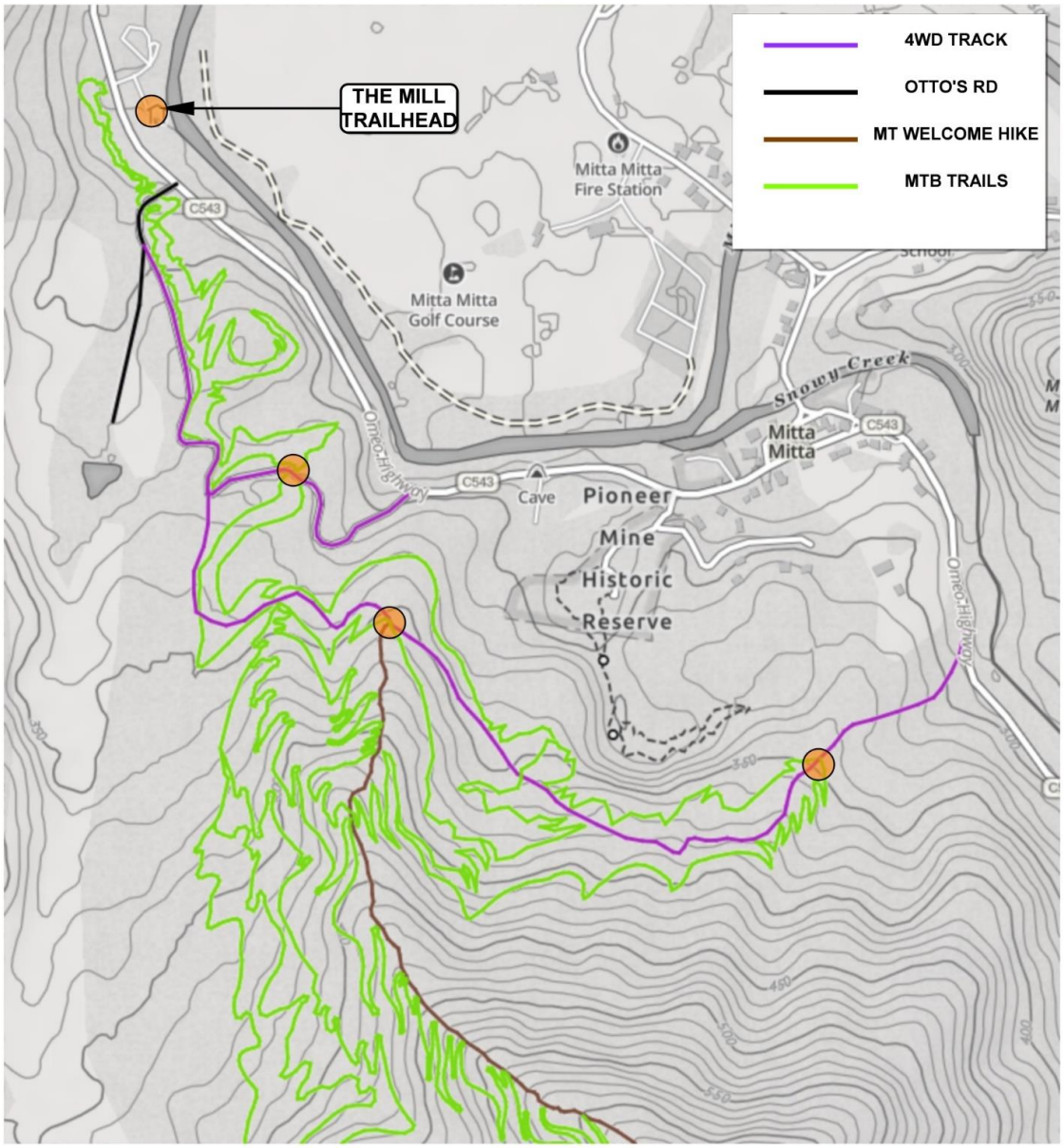
	If any fauna is found to be present, work will stop immediately. The Project Manager is to be notified immediately and a licensed wildlife carer or ecologist should be contacted to assist in relocation.
7. Bushfire	No construction works will take place on days of Extreme or Catastrophic fire risk rating. Construction during Total Fire Bans will comply with CFA requirements. During fire danger periods, risks posed by hot exhausts on chainsaws and machines, will be monitored by a spotter equipped with a fire extinguisher, rake hoe and suitable water supply. Cigarette smoking also poses a risk of bushfire ignition and is not permitted during construction. The construction contractor will be responsible for developing an OHS and emergency plan to deal with issues such as bushfire.
8. Pollution and litter	All litter and materials introduced to the trail corridors will be removed on a daily basis or as trail lengths are completed, this includes items such as flagging tape, contractor equipment and materials packaging. The trails do not require the specific use of any hazardous substances other than machinery fuels and oils. All refuelling shall be conducted at least 50m away from drainage lines and waterways using approved jerry cans and funnels. A 900mm x 900mm organic absorbent spills mat will be placed below the fuel cap to catch any minor spills whilst refuelling. Fuels and oil are not to be kept on site. Machinery servicing and oil changes will not be performed on site and any maintenance is required to be approved by the Project Manager prior to execution.
9. Failure of rehabilitation works	Where possible topsoil will be retained to respread on excavated zones to promote localised regrowth. Ensure trail edges are hand finished with a smooth transition to the trail bed, with rocks/woody vegetation mulched and dispersed.

	Apply erosion mitigating techniques for excavated areas (such as jute mesh) and plant native flora to assist with stabilisation and rehabilitation of these areas. Ensure weed treatments are applied to promote native vegetation recovery along trail edge.
10. Damage to trees in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trail.	Where possible trail alignment will avoid large trees in accordance with TPZ requirements. If a trail is required to enter the TPZ, the tree has been considered lost during calculation of native vegetation offset requirements where >10% of the TPZ is impacted. However, during construction, the tree will be retained where possible and excavation will be minimised to 100mm depth to avoid the structural root zone (SRZ). Where excavation is required within the SRZ deeper than 100mm to establish a trail bed, the trail construction will preferentially utilise fill material in lieu of excavation. If this is not possible the construction team will consult the direction of a qualified arborist. Given the difficulty of calculating SRZs for all trees on site, these can nominally be considered as: · Trees <150 mm diameter: SRZ 1 m radius · Trees >150 mm <250mm diameter: SRZ 1.5 m radius · Trees >250 mm <400mm diameter: SRZ 2.3 m radius · Trees >400 mm <600mm diameter: SRZ 2.7 m radius · Trees >600 mm <800mm diameter: SRZ 3 m radius · Trees >800 mm diameter: SRZ 3.5 m radius The Project Manager will consult the direction of a qualified arborist where specific concerns are identified during the construction process.

11. Damage to cultural or heritage sites in the vicinity of the proposed trail	Where items are uncovered during construction, the trail works will cease until these can be appropriately assessed.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: Nominated access roads and set down locations.



ATTACHMENT 2: Silt Fences.

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

Stormwater Best Management Practice

Silt Fences

Permits for Clean Water NPDES

Minimum Measure

Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control

Subcategory

Sediment Control

Purpose and Description

The purpose of a silt fence is to retain the soil on disturbed land (Figure 1), such as a construction site, until the activities disturbing the land are sufficiently completed to allow revegetation and permanent soil stabilization to begin. Keeping the soil on a construction site, rather than letting it be washed off into natural water bodies (e.g., streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, estuaries) prevents the degradation of aquatic habitats and siltation of harbor channels. And not letting soil wash off onto roads, which readily transport it to storm sewers, avoids having sewers clogged with sediment. The cost of installing silt fences on a watershed's construction sites is considerably less than the costs associated with losing aquatic species, dredging navigation channels, and cleaning sediment out of municipal storm sewers.

Figure 1. *Silt fence retaining sediment*

A silt fence is a temporary sediment barrier made of porous fabric. It's held up by wooden or metal posts driven into the ground, so it's inexpensive and relatively easy to remove. The fabric ponds sediment-laden stormwater runoff, causing sediment to be retained by the settling processes. A single 100 foot (ft) run of silt fence may hold 50 tons of sediment in place. Most construction sites today do have silt fences. But many do not work effectively because they are not well designed, installed, or maintained. The focus of this fact sheet is—how to make silt fences work.

Design

The three principal aspects of silt fence design are: proper placement of fencing, adequate amount of fencing, and appropriate materials.

Proper Placement of Fencing

Placement is important because where a fence starts, runs, and ends is critical to its effectiveness. Improper placement can make the fence a complete waste of money. Analyze the construction site's contours to determine the proper placement. Segment the site into manageable sediment storage areas for using multiple silt fence runs. The drainage area above any fence should usually not exceed a quarter of an acre. Water flowing over the top of a fence during a normal rainfall indicates the drainage area is too large. An equation for calculating the maximum drainage area length above a silt fence, measured perpendicular to the fence, is given in Fifield, 2011. Avoid long runs of silt fence because they concentrate the water in a small area where it will easily overflow the fence. The lowest point of the fence in Figure 4 is indicated by a red arrow. Water is directed to this low point by both long runs of fence on either side of the arrow. Most of the water overflows the fence at this low point and little sediment is trapped for such a long fence.

Figure 2. *Create manageable sediment storage areas*

Figure 3. *Water should not flow over the filter fabric during a normal rainfall*

Figure 4. *Avoid long runs of silt fence*

Office of Water, 4203M
www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/siltfences.pdf
www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps

EPA 833-F-11-008
April 2012

Use J-hooks as shown in Figures 5 and 6, which have ends turning up the slope to break up long fence runs and provide multiple storage areas that work like mini-retention areas. If the fence doesn't create a ponding condition, it will not work well. The silt fence in Figure 7 doesn't pond water or retain sediment. Stormwater will run around the fence carrying sediment to the street, which will transport the water and its sediment load to the storm sewer inlet.

Figure 5. *Use J-hook fences to break up long fence runs*

Figure 6. *J-hook silt fences provide multiple storage areas*

Figure 7. *This silt fence doesn't work*

Water flowing around the ends of a silt fence will cause additional erosion and defeat its purpose. The bottom of each end of the fence should be higher than the top of the middle of the fence (Figure 8). This insures that during an unusually heavy rain, water will flow over the top rather than around either end of the fence. Only fine suspended material will spill over the top, which is not as harmful as having erosion at the ends. When there is a long steep slope, install one fence near the head of the slope to reduce the volume and velocity of water flowing down the slope, and another fence 6–10 ft from the toe of the slope to create a sediment storage area near the bottom. A common misconception is that you only have to worry about water running off steep slopes. However, steep slopes may have a relatively small water collection area. The total drainage area of a gentle slope, if large (Figure 10), can be more important than its slope in determining sediment loss. A silt fence should not be placed in a channel with continuous flow (channels in Figures 8 and 9 don't have a continuous flow), nor across a narrow or steep-sided channel. But when necessary a silt fence can be placed parallel to the channel to retain sediment before it enters the watercourse.

Figure 8. *Proper installation, bottom of both ends are above the top of the middle*

Figure 9. *Poor installation, water can flow around the ends causing additional erosion*

Figure 10. *Gentle slopes may require a silt fence*

Paved streets are major conduits of stormwater and silt, and they drain to storm sewer inlets. The best solution is to retain as much sediment as possible before it reaches paved surfaces. Install a silt fence at the inlet side of a storm sewer or culvert, rather than at the discharge where there is greater velocity and less storage area. Streets cut in the grade, but not yet paved, are also prime erosion conduits. If the streets are not going to be paved right away, they need a containment barrier such as a silt fence. Finally as a construction site's dynamics change, the silt fence layout should be adjusted when necessary to maintain its effectiveness.

Designers and contractors should also consider diverting sediment-laden runoff water to a sediment detention pond. If the site can provide a large enough area, this is usually the most effective and economical best management practice for retaining sediments. Silt fences are needed when there is insufficient space for a detention pond or when roads and other structures are in the way.

Adequate Amount of Fencing

The amount of fencing means the total linear length of the silt fencing runs on the construction site. A reasonable rule-of-thumb for the proper amount of silt fence is—100 ft of silt fence per 10,000 square foot (sq ft) of disturbed area. Soil type, slope, slope length, rainfall, and site configuration are all important elements in determining the adequate silt fence protection for a site, and to what extent it fits the 100 ft per 10,000 sq ft rule-of-thumb. If the amount of fencing provides the volume of runoff storage needed, then over-flowing the silt fence runs will be minimized. This is the basic test; if fences are over-flowing after a moderate rainfall event, the amount of fencing probably needs to be increased to avoid undercutting, washouts, and fence failures.

Stormwater Best Management Practice: ***Silt Fences***

Appropriate Materials

There are different types of porous fabrics available, e.g., woven, non-woven, mono-filament, but all types tend to clog rapidly and don't provide lasting filtration. The support posts and installation method are more important than the fabric type for overall sediment retention. However, a lightweight fabric tends to tear where it is attached to the posts. Posts must hold the fabric up and support the horizontal load of retained water and sediment. Hardwood posts (2" x 2") are potentially strong enough to support the loads, but are difficult to drive into the ground more than 6–8". To hold 2 ft of sediment and water, the posts should be driven 2 ft into the ground. Steel posts are best because they can be driven into compacted soil to a depth of 2 ft. The support posts should be spaced 3–4 ft apart where water may run over the top of the fence, 5 ft in most other areas, and 6–7 ft where there isn't a considerable horizontal load. Improper post depth and spacing is often the cause of sagging fabric and falling posts. Some authorities believe a more robust wire or chain link supported silt fence is needed to withstand heavy rain events. However, this may double the cost of a silt fence installation and entails disposing of more material in a landfill when the fence is removed. Installing silt fencing having five interacting features: (1) proper placement based on the site's contours, (2) adequate amount of fencing without long runs, (3) heavy porous filter fabric, (4) metal posts with proper depth and spacing, and (5) tight soil compaction on both sides of the silt fence will usually obviate the need for wire or chain link reinforced fencing. Prefabricated silt fences, e.g., fabric attached to wooden posts in a 100 ft package, doesn't provide for posting after the ground is compacted or allow variable post spacing.

Figure 11. *Chain link supported silt fence*

Silt Fence Installation

Two commonly used approaches for installing silt fences are the static slicing method and the trenching method.

Static Slicing Method

The static slicing machine pulls a narrow blade through the ground to create a slit 12" deep, and simultaneously inserts the silt fence fabric into this slit behind the blade. The blade is designed to slightly disrupt soil upward next to the slit and to minimize horizontal compaction, thereby creating an optimum condition for compacting the soil vertically on both sides of the fabric. Compaction is achieved by rolling a tractor wheel along both sides of the slit in the ground 2 to 4 times to achieve nearly the same or greater compaction as the original undisturbed soil. This vertical compaction reduces the air spaces between soil particles, which minimizes infiltration. Without this compaction infiltration can saturate the soil, and water may find a pathway under the fence. When a silt fence is holding back several tons of accumulated water and sediment, it needs to be supported by posts that are driven 2 ft into well-compacted soil. Driving in the posts and attaching the fabric to them completes the installation.

Figure 12. *Static slicing machine*

Figure 13. *Tractor wheel compacting the soil*

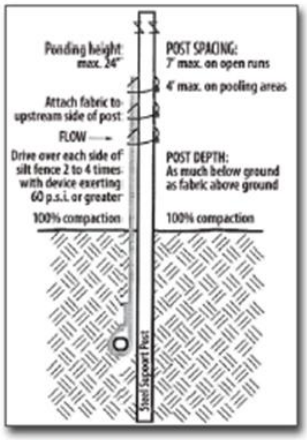


Figure 14. *Silt fence installation using the static slicing method*

Trenching Method

Trenching machines have been used for over twenty-five years to dig a trench for burying part of the filter fabric underground. Usually the trench is about 6" wide with a 6" excavation. Its walls are often more curved than vertical, so they don't provide as much support for the posts and fabric. Turning the trencher is necessary to maneuver around obstacles, follow terrain contours or property lines, and install upturns or J-hooks. But trenchers

Figure 15. *Trenchers make a wider excavation at turns*

Figure 16. *Poor compaction has resulted in infiltration and water flowing under this silt fence causing retained sediment washout*

can't turn without making a wider excavation, and this results in poorer soil compaction, which allows infiltration along the underground portion of the fence. This infiltration leads to water seeking pathways under the fence, which causes subsequent soil erosion and retained sediment washout under the fence. The white line on the fence in Figure 16 and red arrow both mark the previous sediment level before the washout. Post setting and fabric installation often precede compaction, which make effective compaction more difficult to achieve. EPA supported an independent technology evaluation (ASCE 2001), which compared three progressively better variations of the trenching method with the static slicing method. The static slicing method performed better than the two lower performance levels of the trenching method, and was as good or better than the trenching method's highest performance level. The best trenching method typically required nearly triple the time and effort to achieve results comparable to the static slicing method.

Proper Attachment

Regardless of the installation method, proper attachment of the fabric to the posts is critical to combining the strength of the fabric and support posts into a unified structure. It must be able to support 24" of sediment and water. For steel posts use three plastic ties per post (50 lb test strength), located in the top 8" of the fabric, with each tie hung on a post nipple, placed diagonally to attach as many vertical and horizontal threads as possible. For wooden posts use several staples per post, with a wood lath to overlay the fabric.

Perimeter Silt Fences

When silt fences are placed around the perimeter of a stock pile or a construction site, the conventional silt fence design and materials discussed previously may not be sufficient.

Stock pile example. A stock pile of dirt and large rocks is shown in Figures 17 and 18 with a silt fence protecting a portion of its perimeter. Rocks that roll down the pile would likely damage a conventional silt fence. The bottom of the porous fabric is held firmly against both the ground and base of precast concrete, highway, barriers by light-colored stones. An alternative installation would be having the concrete barriers rest directly on the bottom edge of the filter fabric, which would extend under the barriers about 10", so the barriers' weight will press the fabric against the ground to prevent washout. Water passing through the silt fence (red arrow in Figure 18) flows to a storm sewer culvert inlet, which is surrounded by a fabric silt fence (yellow arrows in Figures 17 and 18) that reduces the runoff's velocity and allows settling before the water is discharged to a creek.

Figure 17. *Back of silt fence on part of the stock pile's perimeter*

Figure 18. *Front of silt fence on part of stock pile's perimeter*

Bridge abutment example. During the construction of a bridge over a river between two lakes, an excavation on the river bank was needed to pour footings for the bridge abutment. The silt fence along the excavation's perimeter, composed of concrete highway barriers with orange filter fabric, was designed to prevent stormwater from washing excavated spoil into the river and to fend off the river during high flows. A portion of the orange filter fabric that has blown away from the concrete barriers shows the need to overlap and reinforce the joints where two sections of filter fabric are attached.

Figure 19. *Silt fence for bridge abutment excavation*

Highway example. Because of the proximity of a construction site to a highway, a concrete barrier was required by Minnesota's DOT to protect the highway and an underground fiber optic cable next to the highway from construction activities. The concrete barrier was used to support a silt fence along the perimeter of a large amount of dirt that was stock piled before being used for fill at a different location.

Figure 20. *Silt fence protecting a highway and underground fiber optics cable*

Figure 21. *Silt fence protecting a lake shore*

Lake shore example. The lake's shoreline is being restored with plant plugs and seeded with native plant species. A plywood, perimeter, silt fence is used to trap sediment from a construction site on the right-side of the picture, protect the lake shore from boat-wake erosion, and to prevent geese from eating the seeds and young plants. This fencing will be removed when 70% vegetative cover is achieved.

Inspection and Maintenance

Figure 22. *A silt fence full of sediment that needs maintenance*

Silt fences should be inspected routinely and after runoff events to determine whether they need maintenance because they are full (Figure 22) or damaged by construction equipment. The ASTM silt fence specification (ASTM 2003) recommends removing sediment deposits from behind the fence when they reach half the height of the fence or installing a second fence. However, there are several problems associated with cleaning out silt fences. Once the fabric is clogged with sediment, it can no longer drain slowly and function as originally designed. The result is normally a low volume sediment basin because the cleaning process doesn't unclog the fabric. The soil is normally very wet behind a silt fence, inhibiting the use of equipment needed to move it. A back hoe is commonly used, but, if the sediment is removed, what is to be done with it during construction? Another solution is to leave the sediment in place where it is stable and build a new silt fence above or below it to collect additional sediment as shown in Figure 23. The proper maintenance may be site specific, e.g. small construction sites might not have sufficient space for another silt fence. Adequate access to the sediment control devices should be provided so inspections and maintenance can be performed.

Figure 23. *New silt fence below the old fence*

Permanent Soil Stabilization

When the land disturbing activities are sufficiently completed to allow permanent soil stabilization on the site, the silt fences and sediment basins are removed. The fabric and damaged posts go to the landfill. Steel posts and some of the wooden posts can be reused. Then the sediment is spread over the site to provide fertile soil, and the area can be seeded and mulched to support revegetation.

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Figure 11. *Pete Schumann, Fairfax County, Virginia, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services*

Figure 17–21. *Dwayne Stenlund, CPESC, Minnesota Department of Transportation*

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MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

TRAIL MANGEMENT PLAN

Prepared for Mitta Valley Inc.

MITTA VALLEY
a world of its own

Version 1 November 2024

Document History

Version	Date	Author	Purpose
1.0		LH	Initial draft

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Definition of Terms

Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park	MVMTBP
TSC	Towong Shire Council
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
FFM	Forest Fire Management
CFA	Country Fire Authority
IMBA	International Mountain Biking Association
NECMA	Northeast Catchment Management Authority
MVI	Mitta Valley Inc.
TMP	Trail Management Plan (this document)
MTB	Mountain Bike
ESTA	Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority

Purpose

This document provides a detailed maintenance and operating framework for the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park for Mitta Valley Inc. who hold responsibility for management of the trail network within the Mitta Mitta State Forest.

1. Introduction

Project Description/Background

In 2018, members of the Mitta Valley community successfully sought funding to develop a Masterplan for the construction of a Mountain Bike Park in the Mitta Valley. The Masterplan was completed, along with a multipurpose carparking area that would double as a Trailhead once funding for the park construction had been sought.

The development of the Masterplan involved a comprehensive community engagement process; over half the households in the Valley participated in the process and the support for the development was strong.

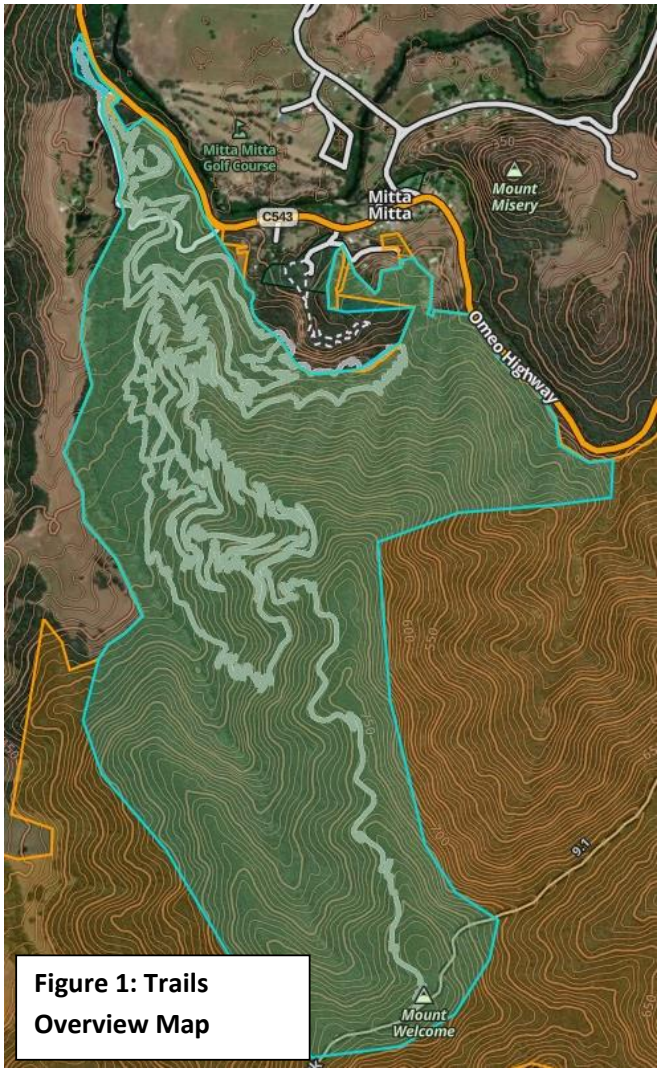


Figure 1: Trails Overview Map

In 2021 Mitta Valley Inc. received $1.5 million through the Victorian State Government's Local Economic Recovery program to deliver the first stage of the trail network. Approximately 50% of the trail network will be developed, in addition to branding, and the establishment of a social enterprise that will assist in the expense associated with maintaining the park.

North East Victoria, branded as Victoria's High Country, is recognised as Victoria's premier cycling destination. With the exception of Towong Shire, each local government area within the region has at least one mountain biking product to capitalise on the growing cycle tourism market. The Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park will remedy this situation.

As outlined in the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park Masterplan, the Mitta Valley presents highly suitable terrain and geology for the development of a successful mountain bike destination.

Mitta Mitta has a population of approximately 170, with the wider Valley expanding that number to approximately 600.

Tourism is increasing in the Valley and is focused on the region's strengths of pristine and pure natural assets; fishing, bushwalking and water sports are popular activities. The built assets of the Mitta Pub and Mitta Mitta Brewing Co. are attractions in their own right, regularly bringing day trippers out of Albury Wodonga.

The Valley is at the heart of the Omeo Highway, a popular touring route between Albury Wodonga and Gippsland. With the Omeo Mountain Bike Park soon to be completed, the Valley is increasingly seeing cyclists en route to the new park.

Mitta Valley Inc

Mitta Valley Inc. are a For Purpose Community Group that supports a range of community and business initiatives and events in the Mitta Valley, that promote and facilitate economic and community development.

Mitta Valley Social Enterprise

Mitta Valley Inc. and the wider community are aware that the mountain bike park will bring with it expenses to maintain the park as a quality destination. It is proposed to develop a social enterprise to generate income to support these ongoing costs.

A social enterprise business plan has been developed, which includes activities including but not limited to, e-bike bike hire and the leasing of space for a café pod operation.

Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Masterplan

Following extensive fieldwork and community and stakeholder engagement, the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park Masterplan was completed in 2019.

The following items summarise the trail networks objectives and requirements.

Develop a large-scale marketable cycle tourism product for Towong Shire Council.

The Mountain Bike Park will complement other cycle assets already situated in Towong Shire, including the High Country Rail Trail for recreational riders and strong

road and gravel cycling offerings. The Park will support the Shire to establish a critical mass of ride product. The Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park will complement the existing bike parks in the region, adding diversity and a new destination within the region to explore.

Develop local area recreational and economic opportunities.

- Improve local community connectivity for the Mitta Valley
- Create business opportunities consistent with cycle tourism
- Improve existing business viability by improving 'off season' visitor numbers
- Improve ownership and pride for local assets

Develop a high-quality MTB rider experience.

- Ensure the trails have broad appeal across targeted MTB rider segments.
- Provide IMBA limited green rated segments for beginner riders, particularly around trailhead areas.
- Remaining trail network to contain 80% IMBA blue rated trail (intermediate), with suitable climbing gradients and flow descent elements.
- Include Technical Trail Features to support advanced level riders.

The trail network will be an iconic, immersive heritage and natural environment experience.

- Inclusion of scenic, natural and heritage interest points
- Provision of interpretive signage
- Create ownership of the landscape to improve conservation outcomes and foster stewardship

Design the trails to be sustainable and minimise impact to heritage and environment.

- Assist and improve access for weed control
- Minimise trail lengths and footprint through high value areas
- Meet or exceed all recommendations determined during heritage and environment impact assessments.
- Avoid and minimise native vegetation removal and meet all native vegetation offset obligations.
- Ensure established land area values are not detrimentally impacted by the trail project.

Develop and maintain robust trail management arrangements.

- Council to become Land Manager or Committee of Management or licensee/lease of the Network area. Mitta Valley Inc to assume responsibility and management of the network area.
- Continually review and update the Trail Management Plan.

- Develop partnerships with local historical societies, Landcare groups and MTB clubs for specific management activities.

1.5.9 Design and build trails using international sustainable trail construction 'best practice' standards.

- Comply with IMBA trail guidelines as defined in the Trail Solutions guidebook
- All new trail to be machine built with key focus on sustainability and safety
- Trail design to meet Australian and international MTB rider/visitor expectations
- Apply a consistent construction technique for all trails
- Separation of descending and ascending trail for user safety. Trail to be single direction where possible
- Descending trail to be 'flow trail' design with bermed corners
- Two-way trail segments to ensure safety of users with appropriate gradients and sight lines
- Multi-use trail segments to consider requirements of AS2156 – Walking Tracks
- Provide modern and user-friendly signage, maps and digitally integrated information platforms
- Undertake detail risk assessment and mitigation processes in accordance with standard land management practices
- Consider emergency access/egress points

Land Tenure

The proposed development site utilises the Mitta Mitta State Forest's northern slopes of Mt Welcome. This area is currently managed by DEECA / FFM. Most of the northern and western perimeter of the subject area adjoins private property. There is a small parcel of private land within the project area. Permission has been granted to cross this for the development of the project.

Crown Description	Address	Standard Parcel Identifier (SPI)	Parish
Allotment 9A	OMEO HIGHWAY MITTA MITTA 3701	9A~14\PP2539	Dorchap
Allotment 8E	OMEO HIGHWAY MITTA MITTA 3701	8E~19\PP2539	Dorchap
Lot 1	OMEO HIGHWAY MITTA MITTA 3701	1\TP865933	N/A
Allotment AE	OTTOS ROAD MITTA MITTA 3701	A8\PP2539	Dorchap
Allotment 2015	DISAPPOINTMENT TRACK MITTA MITTA 3701	2015\PP3033	Magorra

Trail Management Plan Overview

This Trail Management Plan will provide:

- Usage monitoring requirements
- Asset maintenance intervention levels
    - Trail
    - Bridges/crossings
    - Signage
    - Rock armouring
    - Drainage
- Preventative maintenance requirements
- Rubbish collection
- Trail closure procedures
- Weed and vegetation management processes
- Dangerous trees removal within the trail corridor
- Environmental/heritage management considerations advised by technical experts
- Emergency Management processes
- Event Management processes
- Visitor enquiries, maintenance requests and feedback

Trail Maintenance

Maintenance of the trail network and ancillary assets is critical to the long-term success of the MVMTBP. MVI is committed to the planning and resourcing of this which initially will be executed in conjunction with the trail building contractors for the first three years. After this three-year period, the proceeds of the MTB Park's operation and ancillary products, services and activities (bike hire, events etc) will be used in conjunction with the future local MTB club to complete maintenance tasks.

Maintenance work will focus on the following elements:

1. Maintaining the trail at the intended trail rating
2. Maintaining the visitor experience
3. Maintaining associated infrastructure and signage to ensure safe recreational use
4. Ongoing minimisation of environmental or heritage impact

Environment and Heritage Impact Minimisation

The TMP includes key asset management activities which ensure there is continued minimal impact to the ecology and heritage within the trail network area.

Managing vegetation along trail corridors is a critical part of the maintenance program to ensure the sight lines and trail bed remains in good operating condition. **A key focus will also be on weed management, including the mitigation of existing weed areas accessed by trail construction.**

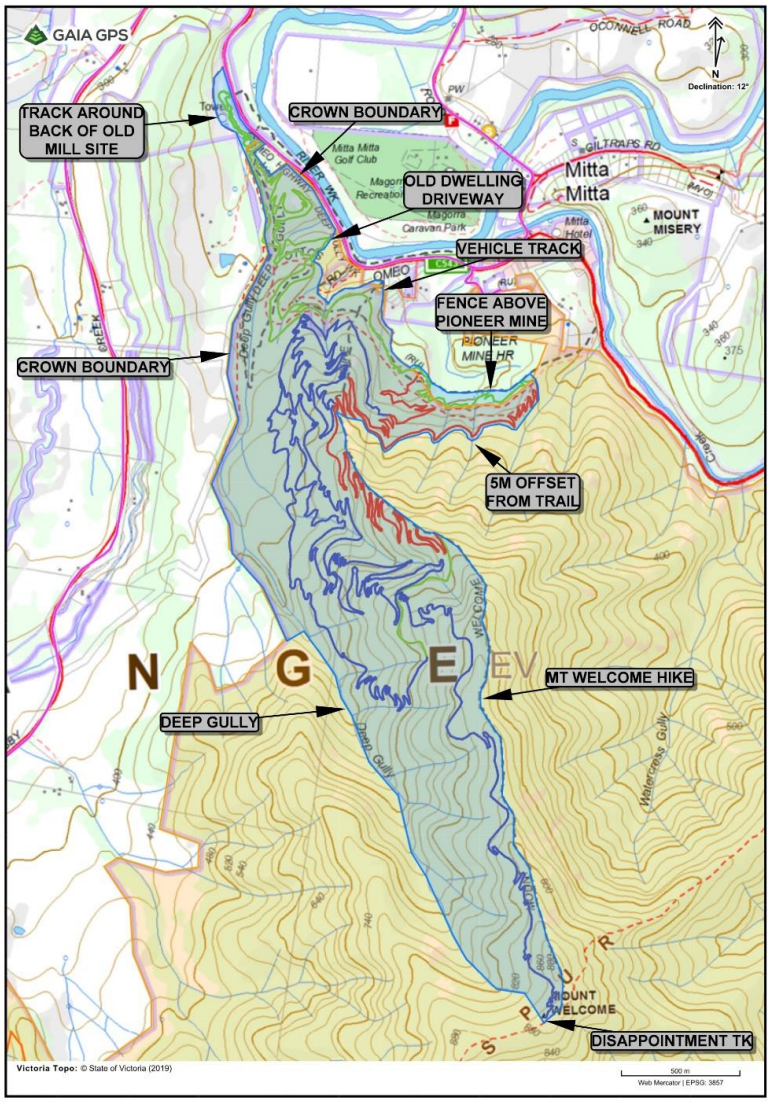
2. Trail Governance

Management Structure

The management arrangement for the Mitta Valley MTB Park area is:

- Establishment of Council as the Committee of Management for the defined trail network area in accordance with Section 14 of the *Crown Land Reserves Act 1978*.
- Re-reserve the trail network area from Forest Purposes to Public Purposes (DEECA).
- Council will establish a Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) to transfer maintenance and operational responsibilities of the MTB Park to Mitta Valley Inc.

Figure 2: CoM Area Map



Key Stakeholder Contacts

Stakeholder contacts for all management agreements are contained in Attachment 1.

Trail Design Considerations

Trail Grading

All trails proposed for stage 1 of the project will be designed and constructed in accordance with the Australian Mountain Bike Trail Difficulty Rating System (TDRS) October 2020 (refer to the following table).

Difficulty Symbol	*Short Description*
○	**Very easy** Wide trail with a gentle gradient smooth surface and no obstacles Suitable for beginner cyclists with basic bike skills, and most bikes
●	**Easy** Wide trail with a gentle gradient smooth surface Some obstacles such as roots, logs and rocks Suitable for beginner cyclists with basic mountain bike skills, and off-road bikes
◔	**Easy with Intermediate Sections** Likely to be single track with a moderate gradient, variable surface and some obstacles Some obstacles such as roots, logs and rocks Suitable for mountain bikers with mountain bikes
■	**Intermediate** Single trail with moderate gradients, variable surface and obstacles May include steep sections Suitable for skilled mountain bikers with mountain bikes
◢	**Intermediate with Difficult Sections** Suitable for competent mountain bikers, used to physically demanding routes Expect large and unavoidable obstacles and features Challenging and variable with some steep climbs or descents and loose surfaces
◆	**Difficult** Suitable for experienced mountain bikers, used to physically demanding routes Navigation and personal survival skills are highly desirable Expect large, dangerous and unavoidable obstacles and features Challenging and variable with long steep climbs or descents and loose surfaces Some sections will be easier to walk
◆◆	**Extreme** Suitable for highly experienced mountain bikers, used to physically demanding routes Navigation and personal survival skills are highly desirable Severe constructed trails and/ or natural features, all sections are challenging Includes extreme levels of exposure and / or risk Expect large and unavoidable obstacles and features Some sections will be easier to walk

Most of the trails will fall within an IMBA blue rating category. Green and green/blue trails will be developed lower in the network to support beginner riders and blue/black trails developed higher in the network providing rider progression. This well used progressive 'stacked loop' network design provides a proven risk minimisation strategy.

Existing Walking Trails

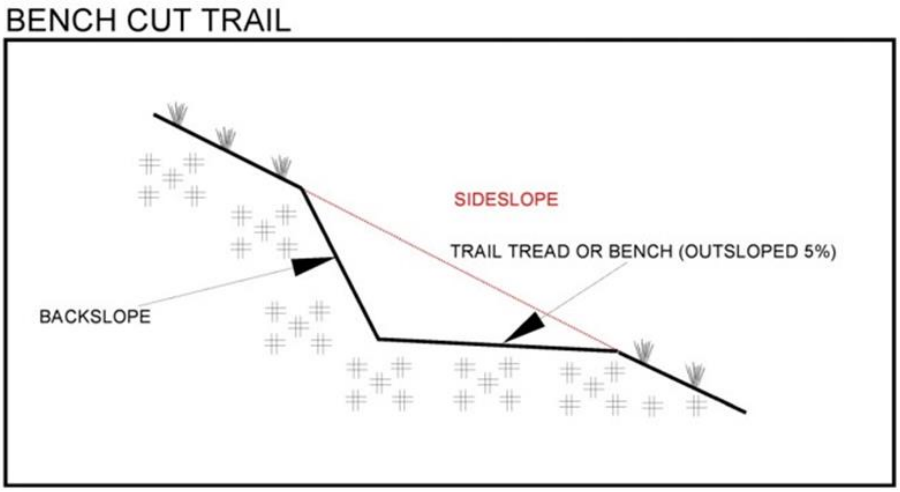
The MTB trail network has been designed to avoid and minimise impact on the existing walking trails within the network area with crossing points kept to an absolute minimum. Crossing points are located in areas with good sightlines to maximise safe user interactions. MTB trail design will slow riders prior to reaching crossing points and signage will remind riders to give way to walkers and to stay off walking trails as per the MVMTBP Code of Conduct.

Trail Standards and Details

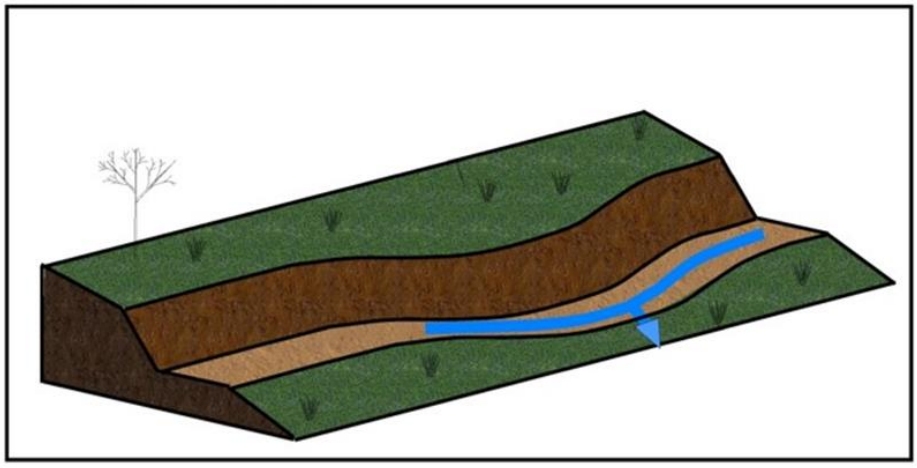
The trail construction standards are in accordance with the IMBA Trail Solutions Guidebook for single track MTB trail.

This generally has the following requirements:

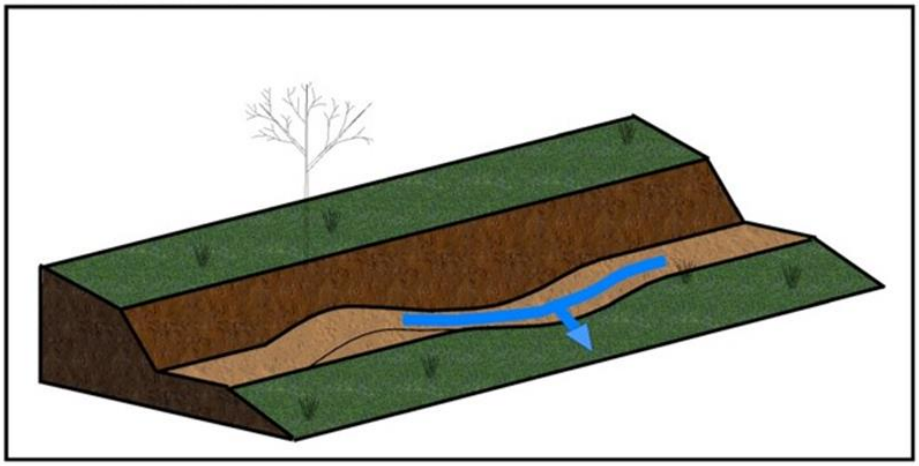
1. Do everything you can to keep water off the tread and users on it.
2. Build on the contour and use frequent grade reversals.
3. Follow the Half Rule: a trails gradient should not exceed half the cross slope.
4. Regardless, average trail gradients should not exceed 10%.
5. Maximum gradients must remain < 15% unless natural or rock structures.
6. Route trails to positive control points: viewpoints, water, heritage/natural features.
7. Use cut-fill bench construction technique.
8. Use rock armouring and elevated tread or structures to avoid damage to sensitive wet areas.



GRADE REVERSAL



ROLLING GRADE DIP



Elevated structures are generally adopted from DEECA engineering drawings for similar projects such as the Indigo Epic in the Stanley SF. Elevated structures use 'minimal impact' construction techniques including hydraulically driven posts or augured piles, small spans (no more than 6m) allowing machinery to transport materials along the trail length and use of FRP decking material with open matrix for light penetration through the structure.

Trail Signage and Information

Trailhead Signage

A Large trailhead sign will be installed at The Mill Trailhead to provide user information such as trail maps, code of conduct, emergency procedures and risk mitigation information. These signs will include digital web App integration via QR Codes, allowing further information to be accessed quickly and easily from smart phones.

Trail User Signage

Way finding and trail identification signage is to be installed in a manner consistent with DEECA requirements. On Trail signage will be kept to a minimum and will be sympathetic to the environment. Signage will be installed immediately next to the trails tread. Way finding and trail identification signage will include hazard, risk mitigation and emergancy location identification information. Signage information will be in alignment with AusCycling national standards.

Examples of hazard signage

Examples of trail identification signage

Integrated Digital Maps/Interpretive Information

QR Code link to the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park website will be included on all signage in the park. This will allow access to trail maps and natural and heritage interpretive information at key 'location specific' points around the trail network to enhance the user experience.

Trail Facilities

Existing Facilities

The Mitta Valley MTB Park trailhead has already been developed at The Mill next to the Mitta Mitta River.

The Mill precinct includes parking, shelter and seating, fire pit, tool station, bike rack, toilet facilities and limited free camping. These facilities are managed by DEECA and under a CoM with Towong Shire Council, Mitta Valley Inc.

The Mill trailhead is the singular key user access point to the trail network.

New Trail Facilities

With the exception of trail signage and elevated trail structures, there are no new facilities being delivered within stage 1 scope of works.

Mining Heritage

The trail network has been designed to mitigate risk to trail users from mining heritage sites. This has been achieved through:

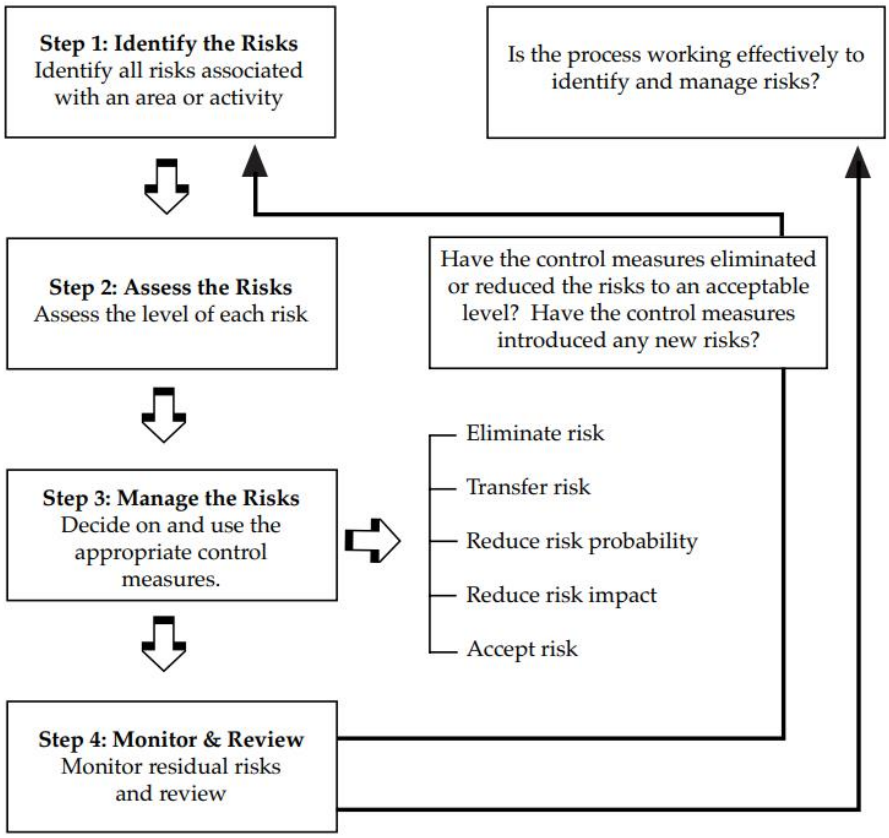
- Deliberate avoidance of areas with dangerous shafts, rockfall hazards and mullock rock heaps.
- Safety signage highlighting mining hazards and the risks of leaving the trail.
- Including a minimum 10m buffer between the trail and mine sites.
- Fencing to prevent access to hazardous locations

3. Risk Management Approach

Overview

Mountain biking as a recreational pursuit contains some risks that are generally expected by users, and which contribute to the enjoyment of the activity. These risks must be recognised and mitigated to an acceptable level of impact.

The Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park proposal includes a high-level Trail User Health & Safety Risk Assessment, in accordance with GUI-131 Risk Management Guideline as developed by Parks Victoria.



User Health & Safety Risk Analysis

The table below provides a nominal risk framework based on the consequence criteria in use under GUI-131:[1]

Consequence Matrix – Health & Safety				
Insignificant	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**Major**	**Catastrophic**
No medical treatment required	Medical treatment required, no enduring physical impact	Hospitalisation with potential temporary adjustment to lifestyle	Hospitalisation with ongoing irreversible impairment	Fatality or permanent total disability

Consequence ratings are then used in conjunction with Likelihood to determine a Risk Rating[2]

[1] GUI-131 Risk Management Guidelines v2.1, Parks Victoria, p19
[2] GUI-131 Risk Management Guidelines v2.1, Parks Victoria, p22

CONSEQUENCE						
LIKELIHOOD	Frequency	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Almost Certain	>50%, several times per year	Medium	Significant	Significant	High	High
Likely	25-50%, once per year	Medium	Medium	Significant	Significant	High
Possible	10-25%, once per 2 years	Low	Medium	Medium	Significant	Significant
Unlikely	5-10%, once per 5 years	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Significant
Rare	< 5%, not likely in next 10 years	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

The goal of any risk assessment process is to reduce the risk rating to as low as reasonably practicable. Acceptable risk ratings are LOW or MEDIUM with appropriate procedural management in place.

A summary of the Trail User Health & Safety Risk Assessment is contained in Attachment 2.

The risk assessment highlights the following higher risk areas specific to trail users to be addressed by the project:

1. Rider accident – consideration required on emergency response/access to key trail locations as part of the Trail Management Plan, including defined ESTA locations.
2. Tree/branch or rock falling onto rider – regular inspection and mitigation of, are part of the Trail Management Plan.
3. Bushfire threat – Trail Management Plan highlights arrangements for management of warnings/closures.
4. Heritage mine accidents – the project will actively provide fencing, barriers and signage if deemed to be within the 10m trail buffer as required.

User Conflict

Trail crossings can create user conflict if not established with appropriate planning and design.

Trail crossings must not create high speed interaction particularly between mountain bikers and pedestrians:

- Trail crossings are on climbing only or flat trail segments wherever possible.
- Blind spots are eliminated with good sightlines.
- Trail widths allow safe passing by utilising fire roads where possible.
- Separate mountain bike descending sections from climbing/pedestrian trails where possible.
- Use signage in key areas to highlight risk.
- Use signage to indicate the 'code of conduct' – **riders must give way to walkers at all times**. This is standard protocol internationally and will be adopted for this network.

Mita Valley Inc. will also actively promote IMBA Rules of the Trail to assist with responsible riding of the Epic Trail (https://www.imba.com/ride/imba-rules-of-the-trail).

Safe Work Method Statements

All trail works will require the development of Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS) in accordance with Worksafe Victoria requirements. Prior to any work being undertaken all volunteers, MVI staff or contractors will be required to develop or sign onto existing approved SWMS.

SWMS should be developed for the following activities/tasks as a minimum:

- Use of mini excavator (qualified operators only)
- Use of power carrier
- Operation of chainsaw (crosscut – qualified operators only)
- Tree felling (qualified operators only)
- Operation of brushcutter
- Operation of hand tools
- Weed spraying/chemical handling (qualified operators only)
- Rock armouring works
- Minor bridge maintenance works
- Manual handling
- Work during difficult weather conditions
- Use of 4WD or ATV vehicles
- Control of maintenance work zone
- All SWMS should include relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

4. Asset Management

Trail Head Facilities

The TMP addresses maintenance and operation of the following minor facilities:

The Mill Trailhead

- Trailhead sign
- Picnic shelter
- Picnic table
- Water tank
- Bike repair station
- Bike rack
- Fire pit and seating
- Car park and bollard treatment

Trail Maintenance

Trail Network Overview

TRAIL	GRADE	STYLE	LENGTH (M)
Beginner/skills loop TRAIL 1	Green	Beginner	470
Trailhead to House Site TRAIL 2	Green/Blue	XC	2050
House Site to Lower Hills TRAIL 2	Green/Blue	XC	520
Lower Hills to Knoll Climb TRAIL 4	Blue	XC	870
Knoll Climb to Pioneer TRAIL 4	Blue	XC	510
Pioneer to Knoll Climb TRAIL 6	Blue	Climb	1530
Knoll Climb TRAIL 5	Blue	Climb	2060
Knoll Climb to Lower Hills TRAIL 7	Blue	XC/Descent	1180
Lower Hills to House Site TRAIL 3	Green/Blue	XC	600
House Site to Trailhead TRAIL 3	Green/Blue	XC	1000
Knoll to Lower hills TRAIL 8	Blue	Flow Descent	1460
Knoll to Lower hills TRAIL 9	Blue	Flow Descent	1330
Knoll to Mid Feeder TRAIL 10	Blue	Climb	3000
Mid Feeder TRAIL 11	Blue	Feeder Trail	800
Lower Collector TRAIL 14	Blue	Collector Descent	1800
Gulley Desent TRAIL 14	Blue/Black	Tech Descent	1380
Mid feeder to Lower Collector TRAIL 12	Blue/Black	Tech Flow Descent	3260
Summit to Mid Feeder Trail 15	Blue	Signiture Descent	3500
Mid Feeder to Lower Collector TRAIL 13	Blue	Signiture Descent	3210

(Table to be updated with trail names post construction)

Signage

Signs will be checked once per year to ensure they are in place and visible. This annual review will assess if additional signs are required and conduct repairs as required.

- Pedestal wayfinding signage
- Caution/hazard signage
- Interpretive signage
- ESTA emergency location signage

Refer to trail alignment maps in Attachment 5 for as installed signage locations.

Deadfall and Vegetation

On a priority basis cut and remove windfall/deadfall over the trail. This should be removed to a minimum of 0.5m from the trail edge or as required for safe use of the trail.

Remove brush and juvenile tree regrowth to 0.5m from trail edge, particularly during the spring growth period. Scatter the cut material adjacent to the trail to assist quick decomposition.

Remove tree limbs/branches to allow 2.4m of overhead clearance and 1.0 – 1.5m total clearance width. Ensure branches are cut clean and without damaging the main trunk of the tree.

Rake accumulated organic matter off the ride lines to expose the trail tread.

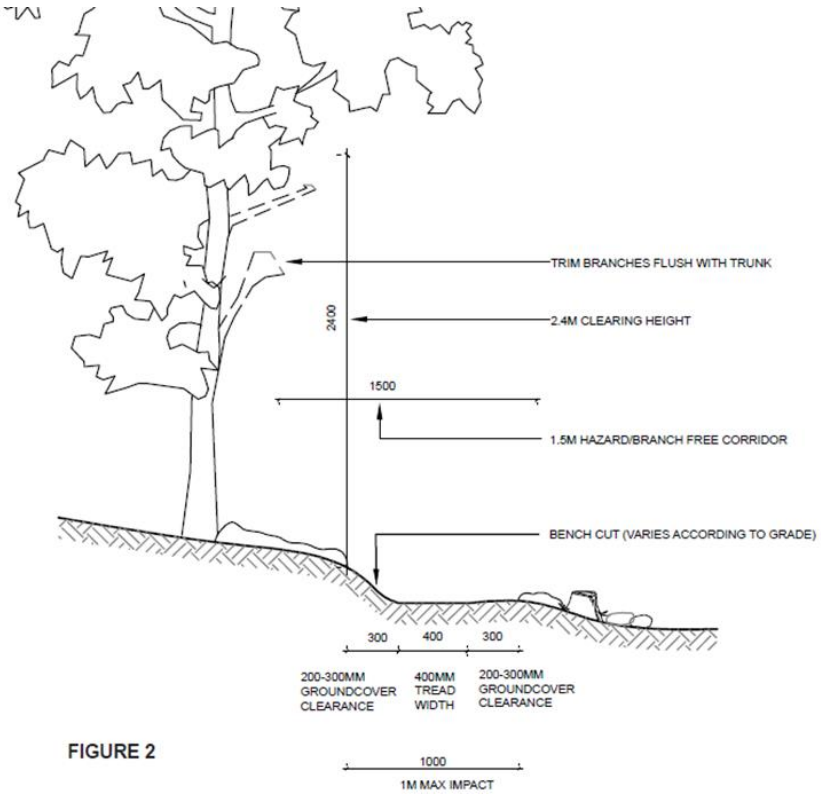


FIGURE 2

Weed Management

Remove and/or spray areas of weed infestation to allow native species to regrow. Chemical spraying must be in accordance with targeted best practice. Spraying adjacent to waterways requires specific consideration to avoid ecological damage.

Erosion/Sedimentation Control

Maintain pipes/culverts and grade reversals to shed water from the trail and avoid damage. Clean out and reset any silt fencing. Ensure sediment build up adjacent to the trail is not smothering vegetation in these areas or entering waterways.

Ensure batter erosion measures are in place and functional. Install silt fencing or jute mesh to areas which require further stabilisation.

Rubbish Removal

Remove rubbish from trail edges during inspections. Rubbish at trailheads to be removed as part of normal public facility garbage collection operations.

Technical Trail Features (TTFs)

TTFs require regular evaluation and to ensure they are kept in safe and working order.

Fall Zones

Keep falls zones around TTFs and berms free of debris and hazards

Sight Lines

Maintain corridor sightlines, particularly at trail junctions and trail crossings.

Hazards

Identify, and where possible eliminate or minimise trail hazards as soon as possible. If the hazards can't be minimised to the extent that the trail will remain unsafe for an extended period, consider closing the trail until the hazard has been repaired or eliminated (refer to trail closure section 5).

Hazardous trees will be assessed by an arborist and removed where the risk is deemed to be a clear and present danger. Assessment may be needed after major storm events.

If hazards to users are caused by conducting maintenance work, ensure that appropriate signage is in place along the trail to warn users.

Trail Tread Maintenance

- Drain and rock armour boggy areas and ensure existing rock armouring is secure.
- Repair washed out or rutted areas
- Remove rocks and roots as necessary to keep the tread clear and rollable
- Undertake surface repair as required, particularly high erosion areas.

Minor Bridges/Structures

Inspect bridges, elevated platforms and retaining structures annually:

- Tighten any loose fixings
- Ensure no damage to structural components or decking
- Ensure footings or retaining components haven't moved or are not being undermined by erosion

Heritage Site Risk Mitigation

Inspect specific items installed as required to mitigate risk associated with heritage mining within the trail corridor buffer:

- Exclusion fencing: ensure fence is secure and not damaged by tree/limb fall, repair as required
- Shaft covers: ensure cover integrity remains in place, repair as required
- Regularly inspect areas along trails for evidence of historic mining sites that have recently become hazardous to users and conducting maintenance works

Trail Access Points

The vehicle tracks around the top of Pioneer Mine and along the western crown land boundary, provide access to parts of the trail network The majority of these require 4WD vehicles due to the rough ground condition and clearance requirements.

Vehicle access can be impacted by weather conditions, treefall or erosion and should be monitored regularly to maintain vehicle access.

Where a 4WD is required, it is highly recommended that appropriate recovery equipment and support vehicles are also used to mitigate risks associated with travel in these areas.

The Mount Welcome Hike provides key access to the trail network which is now wide enough to accommodate a 4WD following recent fuel reduction burns. This is particularly steep in sections and should only be attempted by experienced 4WD drivers.

Routine Inspections and Response

Asset inspection frequencies vary according to asset type, however all assets must be inspected as least annually. Refer to Attachment 3 for more detail on inspections.

Response to maintenance items will be prioritised based on safety, operations and availability.

Priority 1	Trail user safety requires action to be taken within 24 hours. Actions include rectification, warning signage or trail closure.
Priority 2	Item requires action within 1 week to 1 month.
Priority 3	Item requires action > 1 month.

Maintenance Requests

The primary method for logging maintenance requests will be via Trailforks using the Trail Reports functionality built into this app.

This will be highlighted as part of the information system provided to users via signage and linked digital platform.

Maintenance Records

Maintenance records and hours spent on maintenance tasks will be logged to track and forecast future costs

Machinery & Tools

Plant

Plant will only be used by professional trail contractors for larger maintenance tasks such as trail refurbishment.

Plant required for maintenance activities must be in safe operating condition and appropriate for use on narrow trail widths.

- Mini Excavator: no more than 2T capacity with track width of 1m. This would only be used for large scale repair works executed by a contractor.
- Mini Site Dumper or skid steer: used for carting material along a trail.

Prior to crossing low level bridges, the load ratings should be checked as in some cases may not be possible to cross without damaging the bridge. This requires consideration of trail access points when plant is required for maintenance purposes.

Use of plant during the Fire Danger Period must ensure a 9L pressurised water fire extinguisher is installed in the plant cab.

Power Equipment

All users of power equipment must be appropriately trained in their operation with equipment and ensure use is in accordance with the defined SWMS including use of correct PPE:

- Power Carrier: used for transporting up to 400kg of material along the trail to get to more remote locations.
- Chainsaws: used for deadfall and limb clearing
- Brushcutters: used to trim smaller vegetation/regrowth beside the trail.

Other power equipment may be needed where specialist work is required to rectify bridges or retaining structures – this will be the responsibility of contractors appointed to undertake these works.

Use of power equipment during the Fire Danger Period must ensure a 9L pressurised water fire extinguisher is present at all times.

Hand Tools

Hand tools include mattocks, axes, trail tools, rakes, etc. All maintenance personnel shall be familiar with how to use the tools safely and efficiently. Most maintenance tasks for the trail can be effectively executed using hand tools.

Trail Use Monitoring

Trail use is an important tool to determine which segments of trail are being most impacted by use. This allows maintenance teams to focus on areas which provide the best outcomes for trail users and determine the user patterns. Trail counters will be installed at key locations.

Routine inspections will include retrieval of trail use data which can also be correlated against the Trailforks app user information.

Where there is evidence of trail use by introduced feral animals, counting may also be supplemented with trail cameras to assist with management/removal programs.

5. Trail Closure

Closure Triggers

Trail closures will be executed as outlined in the following sections.

Major Trail Hazard Present

Where a user or environmental hazard is identified which rates as a major unacceptable hazard, a trail segment may be closed until the hazard is rectified.

An assessment of the hazard will be made by MVI or authorised contractor.

Examples include:

- Large scale erosion/flood damage making use unsafe
- Trail embankment collapse or rock fall onto the trail
- Major tree and limb fall from storm damage
- Bridge, TTF, elevated platform failure

Event In Progress

Where an event has been authorised to use all or part of the trail network, specific closures will be in place as agreed with the event organisers for the duration of the event.

It is the event organisers responsibility to set up the closure and signage, inspect the trail post event, re-open the trail if safe to do so and advise MVI that the trail has re-opened.

Maintenance In Progress

Where specific maintenance work impacts the use of the trail, it may be determined that the trail be closed temporarily to reduce hazard to workers in the area. The trail will be re-opened once works are completed

For Operational Reasons (e.g. controlled burn)

Appropriate procedure (generally complete network closure) shall be determined by CFA and/or DEECA FFM and implemented as instructed.

Emergency Management Requirement

Where an emergency management process is activated, access to part of the trail or the whole trail may be prohibited – refer to Section 7 for more detail.

User Notification

Notification of trail closures will occur using a combination of the following methods:

- Social media via MVI
- Physical signage/chains in place at The Mill trailhead, Otto's Rd network access point or appropriate locations within the network
- Notification on MVI and MVMTBP web pages
- Notification on Trailforks app by MVI administrator

Notification should include:

- **WHERE** the closure is located
- **WHY** the closure has occurred
- **WHEN** the closure is expected to start and finishing
- **HOW** to contact MVI/MVMTBP for more information
- Additional information for users such as temporary detours in place

6. Event Management

Application & Approval Process

Use of MVMTBP for events is required to seek approval from MVI – Use of the park for events will attract a fee to cover trail remediation following the event. This will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis to consider the likely impact to the network. Gravity style events generally result in higher user erosion than a XC event.

Event Considerations

The MTB event approvals process will need to consider the following impacts:

- Is the event appropriate for the MVMTBP and Mitta Mitta?
- Minimising impact to general users of the trail network
- Management of parking and increased traffic in the town
- Emergency management planning including response to incidents on challenging terrain
- Risk assessment and proposed mitigation measures
- Insurance
- Waste management and post event clean up
- Course marking and proposed routes
- Promotion of the event in conjunction with MVI and Council
- Development of a detailed Event Management Plan for approval by MVI

7. Emergency Management

Large scale emergency response may require response by emergency service agencies. This process will be managed by the agencies involved and is not covered as part of the TMP.

Active encouragement of users downloading the Emergency Plus app and VicEmergency app to phones will be part of trailhead signage. These apps facilitate contact with Triple Zero, provide accurate location data for users and provide emergency warnings to users based on location.

The following emergency scenarios are the most common for trail users or trail maintenance workers and focus specifically on steps to be taken by MVI.

Fire Danger

Decision making steps will be based on information supplied by the Bureau of Meteorology and/or the CFA under the revised Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) per table below:

Name	Fire Behaviour Index Range	Final community messaging
NO RATING	0 - 11	No proactive community action required
MODERATE	12 - 23	**Plan and prepare**
HIGH	24 - 49	**Be ready to act**
EXTREME	50 - 99	**Take action now** to protect life and property
CATASTROPHIC	100+	For your survival, **leave bushfire risk areas**

Fire Danger Period

The MVMTBP is within CFA District 24 and will be subject to the declared Fire Danger Period (FDP) for this district. Declarations are made in conjunction with DEECA FFM to ensure FDP alignment with adjacent forest areas normally under DEECA FFM jurisdiction.

Total Fire Ban

If a subsequent day is declared as a Total Fire Ban (TFB):

STEP 1 – Ensure the TFB information is contained on the MVI/MVMTBP website, including specific advice regarding emergency information monitoring.

STEP 2 – Check the Fire Danger Rating and confirm if further steps are needed per below.

STEP 3 – Advise maintenance workers that all activities are hand tools only – **use of plant or power equipment is not permitted on a days of TFB.**

AFDRS No Rating to Moderate (FBI up to 23)

No specific trail management steps are required – refer to information on the website and link through to any CFA/DEECA recommendations. Ensure caution is always used during the fire danger period.

Maintenance operations can continue as planned.

FDR High (FBI 24 - 49)

No specific trail management/advice is required – refer to information on the website and link through to any CFA/DEECA recommendations. Ensure caution is always used during the fire danger period.

Maintenance operations using plant or power equipment (chainsaws/brushcutters) must cease by 12:00PM

FDR Extreme or Catastrophic (FBI >50)

STEP 1 – Physically close trails by 9:00AM with signage in place at The Mill trailhead and Otto's Rd trail network access point. **Note that all Victorian public parks and reserves are closed during a Catastrophic fire rating, including forest access roads.**

STEP 2 – Advise trail closure per section 5.2 User Notification.

STEP 3 – Re-open trail segments where safe to do so based on forecast fire conditions and advise per 5.2.

No maintenance operations are permitted under this scenario.

Fire Activity/Hazardous Smoke in the Local Area

STEP 1 – Follow emergency services advice on trail closures based on local conditions.

STEP 2 – When requested, physically close trails as soon as possible with signage in place at The Mill trailhead and Otto's Rd trail network access point (refer to maps Attachment 5).

STEP 3 – Advise trail closure per section 5.2 User Notification.

STEP 4 – Re-open trail segments where safe to do so based on advice from emergency services. Advise re-opening via 5.2.

Medical Emergency/Major Injury

Medical emergencies and major injuries require contact to emergency services via Triple Zero in all circumstances. MVI will provide assistance to emergency services if requested, although response capability is limited.

STEP 1 – If MVI are contacted by Emergency Services (Police, CFA or Ambulance Victoria) to confirm access/location, information on nearest ESTA marker, provide information on access to this location.

STEP 2 – Confirm if trail closure is required to assist with response. If required, activate per Section 5.

STEP 3 – Re-open affected trail segment once advised to do so by emergency services.

Note: Most of the Trail Network area has Telstra mobile reception.

Storms

Where major storm events are forecast with lightning, rainfall > 50mm in 24 hours or wind speeds > 60km/h the following steps will apply:

STEP 1 – Physically close trail network at The Mill trailhead and Otto's Rd access point prior to the event.

STEP 2 – Advise trail closure per section 5.2 User Notification.

STEP 3 – Undertake trail asset inspection as soon as possible after the storm has passed and when safe for maintenance teams to access.

STEP 4 – Re-open trail segments where safe to do so and advise per 5.2.

STEP 5 – Undertake trail clearing and maintenance in areas where required, re-open remaining areas when safe for use. Advise per 5.2.

Flood

Flash flooding is unlikely to occur within the trail network however, The Mill trailhead is subject to inundation. Flood hazards within the trail network area are more likely related to wash outs and land slips.

STEP 1 – Where possible, safe and accessible, physically close the trailhead or trails affected with signage at all key access locations

STEP 2 – Advise trail closure per section 5.2 User Notification.

STEP 3 – Undertake trail asset inspection as soon as possible after the floodwater has subsided.

STEP 4 – Re-open trail segments where safe to do so and advise per 5.2.

STEP 5 – Undertake trail clearing and maintenance in areas where required, re-open remaining areas when safe for use. Advise per 5.2.

Other Emergency Activation

For all other emergencies MVI will follow the direction of the emergency services agencies and provide assistance where practicable when requested.

Warnings

In addition to the preparation and response elements outlined in this section, prior to these trigger points MVI will also provide warnings and recommendations via the MVMTBP website and/or Trailforks to alert users to the changing conditions within the trail network area.

Attachments

Attachment 1 Key Contacts – Trail Management

Attachment 2 Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park User Health & Safety Risk Assessment

Attachment 3 Maintenance Activity/Asset Inspection Schedule

Attachment 4 Trail Asset List

Attachment 5 Trail Network Maps

References

International Mountain Biking Association, January 2004

Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack

Memorandum of Understanding: Mitta Valley Inc and Towong Shire Council

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Attachment 1 – Key Trail Management Contacts

To be completed during construction period prior to network opening

Management Group	Name	Title	Mobile	Email
Towong Shire Council	TBC			
Mitta Valley Inc	TBC			
DEECA Forest Fire Management	TBC			
Northeast Catchment Management Authoriry	TBC			
Trail Contractor	TBC			

Attachment 2 – MVMTBP User Risk Management Plan

This Risk Management Plan will form the template for annual or as needed risk assessments relating to the Parks operation.

Risk Management Plan

Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park

Site / Area:	Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park (MVMTBP)

To Complete a Risk Assessment

1. Complete the table below, including a photo (if available) to assist identifying the area, task, plant or equipment (if relevant).
2. Ensure all people involved in the risk assessment are recorded on this form.
3. Use the Hazard Checklist on page 2 as a prompt/guide, and then record all identified hazards from page 3.
4. Using the ***Risk Matrix,*** complete the risk assessment process for all identified hazards.
5. For all identified hazards, ensure that you record controls, utilising the Hierarchy of controls, and add comments if applicable; this may include existing control measure effectiveness.
6. A review date should be identified after corrective actions have been implemented to ensure the corrective actions are effective and appropriate.

Risk Assessment Number:		**Reason for Risk Assessment**	Public space	**Date of assessment:**		New ✓
				Next review date:		Revised

Risk Assessment Team			
Name	**Position**	**Signature**	**Date**

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS
Start at the top and work down

Most effective control	Elimination e.g. Discontinue use of product, equipment, cease work process
	Substitution e.g. Replace with a similar item that does the same job but with a lower hazard level
	Isolation e.g. Put a barrier between the person and the hazard
	Engineering controls e.g. Change the process, equipment or tools so the risk is reduced
	Administration controls e.g. Guidelines, procedures, rosters, training etc. to minimise the risk
Least effective control	Personal protective equipment e.g. Equipment worn to provide a temporary barrier

Hazard Checklist – Use this checklist as a prompt/guide and then complete the table below (on following pages)**.**

1.	**Cutting, Stabbing and Puncturing**	**4.**	**Ergonomic / Manual Handling**	**8.**	**Entanglement**
Can anyone be stabbed or punctured due to:		**Can anyone be injured due to**		**Can anyone be entangled by:**	
Y	Contact with a sharp or flying object eg glass being thrown or other projectile?		Poorly designed seating?		Hair, clothing, gloves, jewellery, cleaning brushes, rags or other materials become entangled with moving parts of any equipment, vehicles or materials etc in motion?
	Uncontrolled or unexpected movement of any equipment etc ?		Repetitive body movement; constrained body posture or the need for excessive effort in setting up, moving equipment ?		
	Parts of any equipment disintegrating?				
	Pieces of any equipment being ejected?		Inadequate or poorly placed lighting?	**9.**	**Burns**
	The quality of equipment?		Lack of training/awareness in correct Manual Handling or other techniques?	**Can anyone be burnt due to contact with**	
	Contact with moving equipment due to testing, inspection, operation, maintenance, cleaning or repair?		Other factors not mentioned?		Moving parts of any equipment?
		5.	**Electrocution**		Materials being handled?
2.	**Crushing**	**Can anyone be injured by electrical shock or burnt due to:**			Other structures, equipment or activities?
Can anyone be crushed due to:			A person contacting live electrical conductors?	**10.**	**Environment**
	Material falling off equipment, limbs from trees etc?		A person working in close proximity to electrical conductors?	**Can anyone be injured or suffer ill health from exposure to:**	
	Uncontrolled or unexpected movement of any equipment?				Chemicals, toxic gases or vapours, fumes, dust; noise, vibration, radiation, asbestos and other mineral fibres, extreme temperatures (high or low)?
	Any equipment being unable to be slowed, stopped or immobilised?		Overload of electrical circuits? Equipment not tested and tagged?		
	Any equipment tipping or rolling over?		Damaged or poorly maintained electrical leads or cables?		
	Parts of equipment collapsing?		Damaged electrical switches?	**11.**	**Explosion**
	Coming in contact with moving parts of any equipment during testing, inspection, operation, maintenance cleaning or repair?		Water near electrical equipment?	**Can anyone be injured by explosion of:**	
			Lack of isolation procedures?		Gases, vapours, liquids, dusts or other substances, triggered by the activities at the event or other activities in the area or during an event in the area?
	Being thrown off or under plant or equipment?		Static electricity or electrical conduction?		
	Being trapped between the plant, vehicles, animals etc and materials or fixed structures?	**6.**	**Striking**		
3.	**Slipping, Tripping and Falling**	**Can anyone be struck by moving objects due to:**		**12.**	**Lighting**
Can anyone slip, trip or fall due to:			Uncontrolled or unexpected movement of equipment or material etc from plant, vehicles or equipment.	**Is lighting:**	
	An uneven or slippery surface?				Poor or non-existent?
	Poor housekeeping (area not kept tidy – rubbish present)?		Parts or pieces of equipment disintegrating?		Hazardous - too bright, direct, inconsistent, or flickering?
	Obstacles being placed in the vicinity of an event?		Pieces of equipment being ejected?	**13.**	**Other – Enter Hazard**
	Lack of a proper platform?		Mobility of the equipment?		Can anyone become a victim of violence or other crime?
	Lack of proper stairs or ladders?	**7.**	**Psychological / Stress**		Children being violated or approached in toilets etc
	Lack of a guardrail?	**Can people be exposed to inappropriate levels of:**			Lack of consideration for access/egress for elderly, etc
	Unprotected holes?		Unreasonable deadlines?		Unauthorised photography of minors (and others)
	Penetrations or gaps?		Workplace bullying, harassment or discrimination?		Interaction between pedestrians and vehicles
	Poor or unstable floor or walking surfaces		Stress?		Pests, insects, vermin, animal attacks
			Duties which they are not qualified for or competent in?		

Hazard.	Causes/consequences	Risk rating			Control measures/comments
		C	L	R	
Cyclists falls	• User colliding with and/or falling onto natural feature(s) such as sharp or hard rocks, low hanging branches, tree trunks, etc. • User colliding with / falling onto remnant infrastructure (e.g. an old fence) **Any of which could result in:** • user sustaining an injury that could be minor (e.g. minor cuts, abrasions, bruising) or need immediate medical attention. • amage to property, bike or infrastructure. **Likelihood of occurrence is influenced by:** • Technical skill level of cyclist. • Weather conditions (eg track surface loose / slippery due to rain) • Mechanical condition & intended capability of bike. **Potential extent of injury is influenced by:** • Presence of safety wear / equipment on rider	2	4	M	**Install signage at The Mill trailhead and MVMTBP website that:** Advises users of the level of skill required to negotiate the trails. Advises users of Trail Forks App and Emergency Plus App. Advises users of their responsibility to be aware of the possible risks Advises users to wear adequate protective equipment (e.g. helmet, shoes, gloves, pads etc) Provides emergency contact details (ambulance fire police) Advises users of the presence of other users on the trails, intersecting walking tracks, and management access roads. **Code of Conduct** Advises users of management contact details. Advises users of potential collision with wildlife. Install appropriate warning signage where require for technical trial features. Have a reporting process for concerns relating to trail conditions. **Track design and construction:** • Track to be designed and constructed to IMBA principles. • Risk of collision with natural obstacles and remnant infrastructure reduced by track route selection. • Loose /slippery surfaces to be avoided or improved as part of track construction. • Fall zones to be cleared of hazards/debris • Park has been designed to minimise cross-over with existing walking paths and management access roads.

Hazard.	Causes/consequences	Risk rating			Control measures/comments
		C	L	R	
Cyclists falling whilst using the trails. • Collision between 2 cyclists • Collision between pedestrian and cyclist • Collision between motorbike and cyclist	• User colliding with another user and/or falling onto natural feature(s) • User colliding with a pedestrian • User colliding with vehicle. **Any of which could result in:** • user sustaining an injury that could be minor (e.g. minor cuts, abrasions, bruising) or need immediate medical attention. damage to property, bike or infrastructure. **Likelihood of occurrence is influenced by:** • Technical skill level of cyclist. • Weather conditions (e.g. track surface slippery due to rain) • Mechanical condition & intended capability of bike. • Potential for bush walkers to use the track • Potential for motorcycles/4WD to use the track. **Potential extent of injury is influenced by:** • Presence of safety wear / equipment on rider	3	3	M	**Install signage at the track access points that:** • Advises users that the trails are for single file only • Advises other possible users (pedestrians/motorbike/ 4WD) that the trails are for non-motorised use only (mountain bike use only). • Advises users of Trail Forks app and emergency location feature. • Have a reporting process for concerns relating to trail conditions. **Track design and construction:** • Trails to be designed and constructed to IMBA principles • Risk of collision (passing) reduced by track being constructed for single file only. • Trail entries to be narrow to prevent motorbike and 4WD access and include trail filter • Trail features to deter motorbike access (such as tight corner radii). • Park designed to minimise cross-over with existing walking paths and management access roads.

Hazard.	Causes/consequences	Risk rating			Control measures/comments
		C	L	R	
Risk of object(s) falling on park user Primarily related to natural occurrences:	• Falling tree-limbs / rocks / debris • User being hit / crushed by falling tree limbs / rocks / debris **Any of which could result in:** • user sustaining an injury that could be minor (e.g. minor cuts, abrasions, bruising) or need immediate medical attention. • damage to property, bike or infrastructure	4	1	M	• Close the park during catastrophic weather events. Additionally, it is unlikely individuals would use the trails during these days. • Inspect track after severe weather for damage to infrastructure and rectify as necessary. • Track inspected as part of regular maintenance. • Track inspected pre-events. • Have periodic inspection of 'at risk' trees that are located close to trails. Implement any action required from inspections.
Risk of blocking trail access Primarily related to conditions after a natural occurrence	• Tree limb(s) falling on trail(s), rocks or debris spread over track after natural event such as high wind or fire that could cause user(s) to crash / fall (see risk 2)	2	3	M	• Have periodic inspection of 'at risk' trees that are located close to trails. Implement any action required from inspections. • Inspect track after catastrophic weather for debris or other risks on trails. • Clear track of loose debris and the like as necessary. • Provide signage that encourages users to monitor the track for fallen branches (and other impassable obstacles) and remove if safely possible, and/or to contact management (provide management contact details).
User (s) engaging in any activity that causes damage to the natural values of the immediate area around the trails.	• User(s) building / creating additional trails and/or changing the trail routes • Users riding off the track • User(s) introducing weeds into the area or spreading weeds in the area • User(s) deliberately harming natural assets in any way • User (s) causing fire	1	3	L	• Where possible, trail route to be designed such that it is the best option, and follows natural desired lines to minimise the appeal to ride off trail and/or create unauthorized trails. • Possible alternatives to be identified and "blocked off" with natural features (e.g. logs or rocks) as part of construction. • Run education programs with youth using the park to decrease chances of

Hazard.	Causes/consequences	Risk rating			Control measures/comments
		C	L	R	
	• Illegal trail construction can jeopardise legitimate access to land for mountain biking				them creating unsanctioned trails. • Introduction of new invasive species by cyclists is unlikely due to weeds not being in the areas where cyclist may commence riding from. • Implement weed removal as part of construction activities. • Plant equipment appropriately cleaned prior to construction and maintenance activities to mitigate the chance of introducing new invasive weeds. • By means of signage educate users about the following issues: The environmental problems associated with unauthorised trail building, • Principles of sustainable trail development and the IMBA trial building Principles. • Biodiversity and why it is important. • Environmental weeds and their management. • Invite and encourage users to become involved in trail maintenance and Management.
Risk of fire	• Fire by natural causes, • User(s) accidentally starting fires, • User (s) deliberately starting fires, **Any of which could result in:** • Damage to natural assets (e.g. vegetation, soil, fauna etc.) • Damage to infrastructure • Damage to persons	2	2	L	• Support DEECA via the CFA with the Forest Fire Management activities (directly surrounding the park). • Liaise with DEECA to identify hazard reduction requirements – implement recommendations accordingly. • The 4WD tracks and the planned fire break above Pioneer Mine will aid crews in the event of a fire. The trails will also provide additional fire breaks and aid crew access to help reduce the spread of fires. • Assist Fire Response agencies (Emergency Services, CFA, DEECA) with known user activity • Follow Park closure protocols as per the Trail Management Plan

Hazard.	Causes/consequences	Risk rating			Control measures/comments
		C	L	R	
Injury from fire	• User(s) sustains injury from being caught in a fire event	2	2	L	• Fire Response units (Emergency Services, Rural Fire Brigade, Defence) informed that the track is in regular use. • Checking for users on the track to be part of fire response plan. • No club activities to be held if fire (threat) is occurring or high risk
Trailer User Gets Lost	• Unfamiliar with trailer network Could result in: • Dehydration and heat stress	2	1	L	• Encourage use of Trailer Forks App and Emergency Plus App • Install trialhead and trail wayfinding signage • Encourage self-sufficiency on signage

RISK MATRIX

Consequence	Financial	People	Reputation	Operations	Compliance
5. Catastrophic	Greater than $5.0m	• Incident resulting in death or Total and Permanent Disability	• Irreversible environmental damage • Sustained negative publicity in national newspapers.	• Organisation failure	• Court Conviction
4. Major	$1.0m to $5.0m	• Incident resulting in lost work time of greater than 1 year	• Environmental issue resulting in major remedial works • Sustained negative publicity in local newspapers. • Singular negative publicity in national press.	• Disruption for extended period	• Prosecution
3. Moderate	$500,000 to $1.0m	• Incident resulting in lost work time of 3 months to 1 year	• Sustained negative publicity in local newspapers		
2. Minor	$50,000 to $500,000	• Incident resulting in lost work time of 1 to 3 months	• Singular negative publicity in local press.		
1. Insignificant	Less than $50,000	• No injury or illness, or • Incident resulting in lost work time less than 1 month	• No community impacts, or • No apparent environmental impact, or • Singular negative publicity in local press.	• No property damage • No continuing impact on operations	• No breaches of OHS, EPA or other requirements

RISK LEVEL – work out the consequence and likelihood from tables above and to the left, and then where they intersect on this table below is your risk level

Likelihood	Occurrence
5. Frequent / almost certain	Every year
4. Likely	1-3 years
3. Possible / occasionally	3-5 years
2. Unlikely	5-10 years
1. Rare / practically impossible	>10 years

	1. Insignificant	2. Minor	3. Moderate	4. Major	5. Catastrophic
1. Rare / practically impossible	Low (**L**)	Low	Low	Medium	High
2. Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
3. Possible / occasionally	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
4. Likely	Medium (**M**)	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
5. Frequent / almost certain	Medium	High (**H**)	High	Extreme	Extreme

Attachment 3 – Maintenance Activity/Asset Inspection Schedule

Activity	Procedure	Frequency	Priority	Responsibility
Trail condition assessment	Walk/ride through all trails and document issues for resolution. Review service requests or issues raised on Trailforks	Monthly	1-2	MVI Trail Contractor
Trail tread rectification	During walk/ride inspections, resurface trail tread, rocks, roots and features to match trail rating.	Monthly	1-2	Trail Contractor
Technical Trail Features	Re-build/reset TTFs to ensure they are safe for use and entry/exit is appropriate for the feature.	Monthly	1-2	Trail Contractor
Trail usage data collation	Access key locations where trail counters are located, document counter numbers. Could be done weekly during busy summer period, monthly over winter months.	Weekly/ Monthly	2	MVI
Trail alterations or major rehabilitation	Assess issues and ensure MVI is made aware of works extent. MVI to execute where contractual engagement and permits are required.	Annually	3	MVI Trail Contractor
Weed management	During walk/ride, address minor weed issues and identify larger scale spraying operations required (strategic Firebreak). MVI to execute where contractual engagement and permits are required.	Monthly/ Annually for major	2-3	MVI Trail Contractor

Erosion management	During walk/ride inspections, address minor drainage issues and ensure reverse grade components are functioning as intended.	Monthly	2	Trail Contractor
Bridges/elevated structures inspection	inspect bridge/elevated structure condition as part of maintenance program. MVI to execute where contractual engagement and permits are required.	Annually or if damage reported	3	MVI Trail Contractor
Trail side retaining structures inspection	inspect retaining structures as part of maintenance program. MVI to execute where contractual engagement and permits are required.	Annually or if damage reported	3	MVI Trail Contractor
Signage/trail assets	During walk/ride inspections, confirm signage condition and fix where minor. Replacement of signage by MVI.	Monthly	2	MVI Trail Contractor
Sedimentation adjacent to trail	During walk/ride inspections, restore silt traps or erosion mitigation systems. Advise MVI if sedimentation of drainage gullies is occurring – may require trail alterations.	Monthly	2	Trail Contractor
Deadfall removal	Where deadfall is blocking safe trail access, remove as soon as possible Use of chainsaws by ticketed operators only. Large scale cross fall removal by accredited contractors only.	As required	1	MVI Trail Contractor
Limb removal	Remove tree limb growth impacting the safe use of the trail. Clean up broken limbs and remove from trail alignment.	Monthly	2	Yack Tracks, BCG

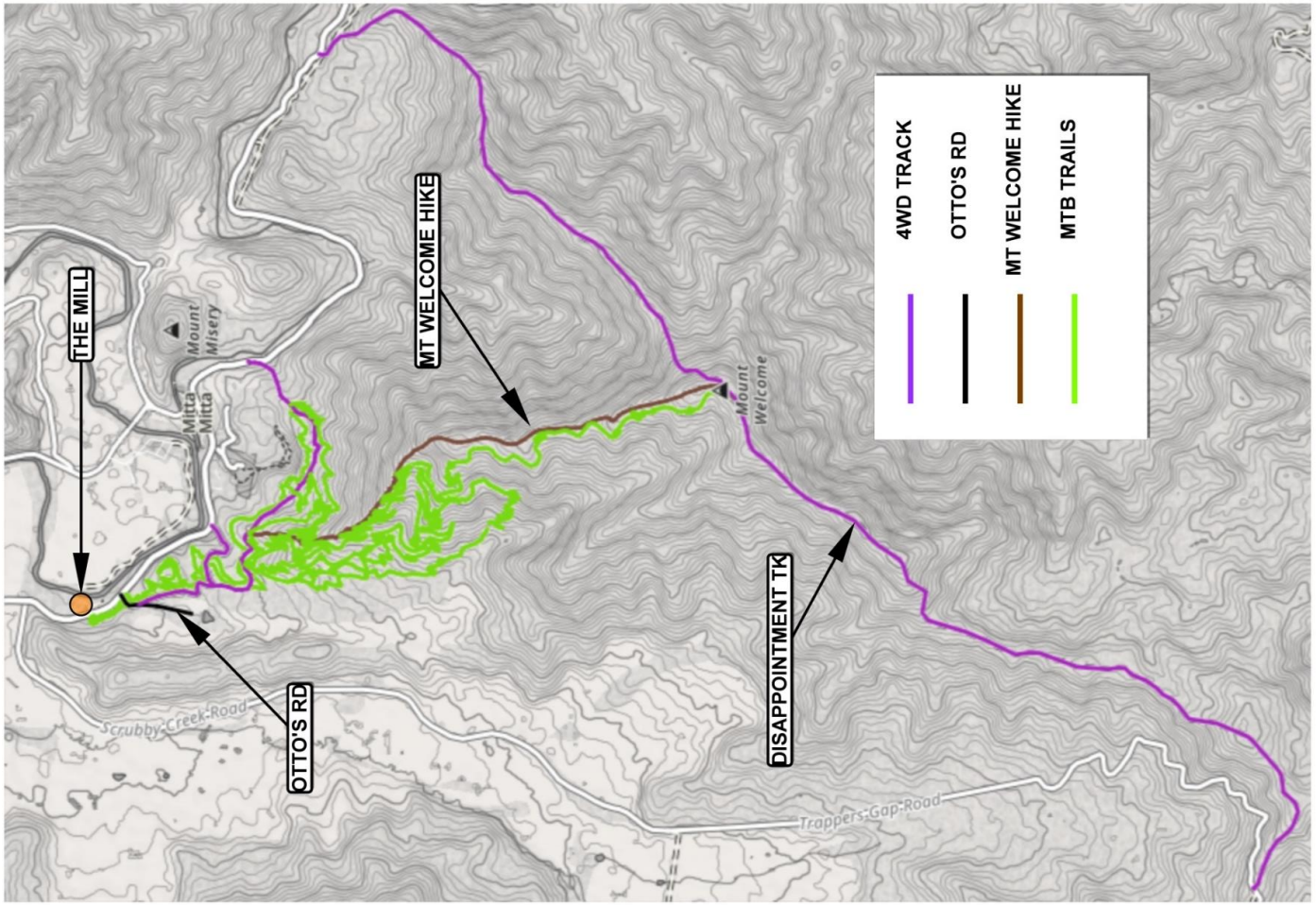
Dangerous tree removal	Felling of dangerous trees by accredited contractors only. Dangerous trees can only be removed after assessment by a qualified arborist and DEECA approval.	Annual inspection/as required	2-3	MVI Trail Contractor
Undergrowth trail edge management	Remove foliage growth crowding the trail ride line during high growth periods in spring and summer. Ensure sight lines are maintained.	Monthly – Spring	2	Trail Contractor
Removal of debris	Rake trail surface to remove litter and loose stones/rocks from the trail tread.	Monthly	2	Trail Contractor
Rock armouring	During walk/ride inspections identify areas for rock armouring repairs or soft areas requiring armouring.	Monthly	2-3	Trail Contractor

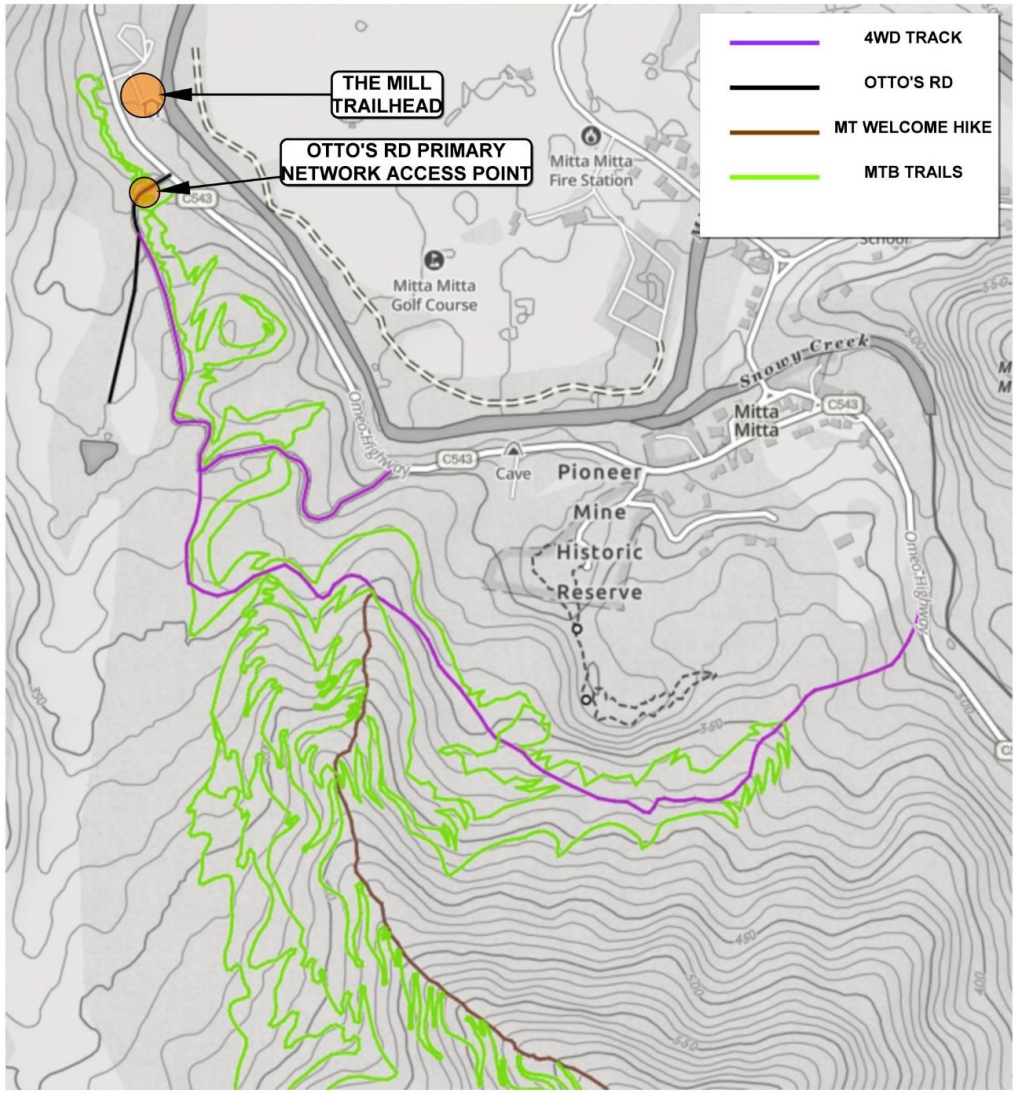
Attachment 4 – Trail Asset List

To be completed post construction

Asset ID	Asset Description	Trail Segment	Replacement Cost ($)	Useful Life (Years)

Attachment 5 – Trail Network Maps




4WD TRACK
OTTO'S RD
MT WELCOME HIKE
MTB TRAILS
THE MILL TRAILHEAD
OTTO'S RD PRIMARY NETWORK ACCESS POINT
Mitta Mitta Fire Station
Mitta Mitta Golf Course
Snowy Creek
Mitta Mitta
Omeo Highway
C543
Cave
Pioneer
Mine
Historic
Reserve

MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

TRAIL MAP SET

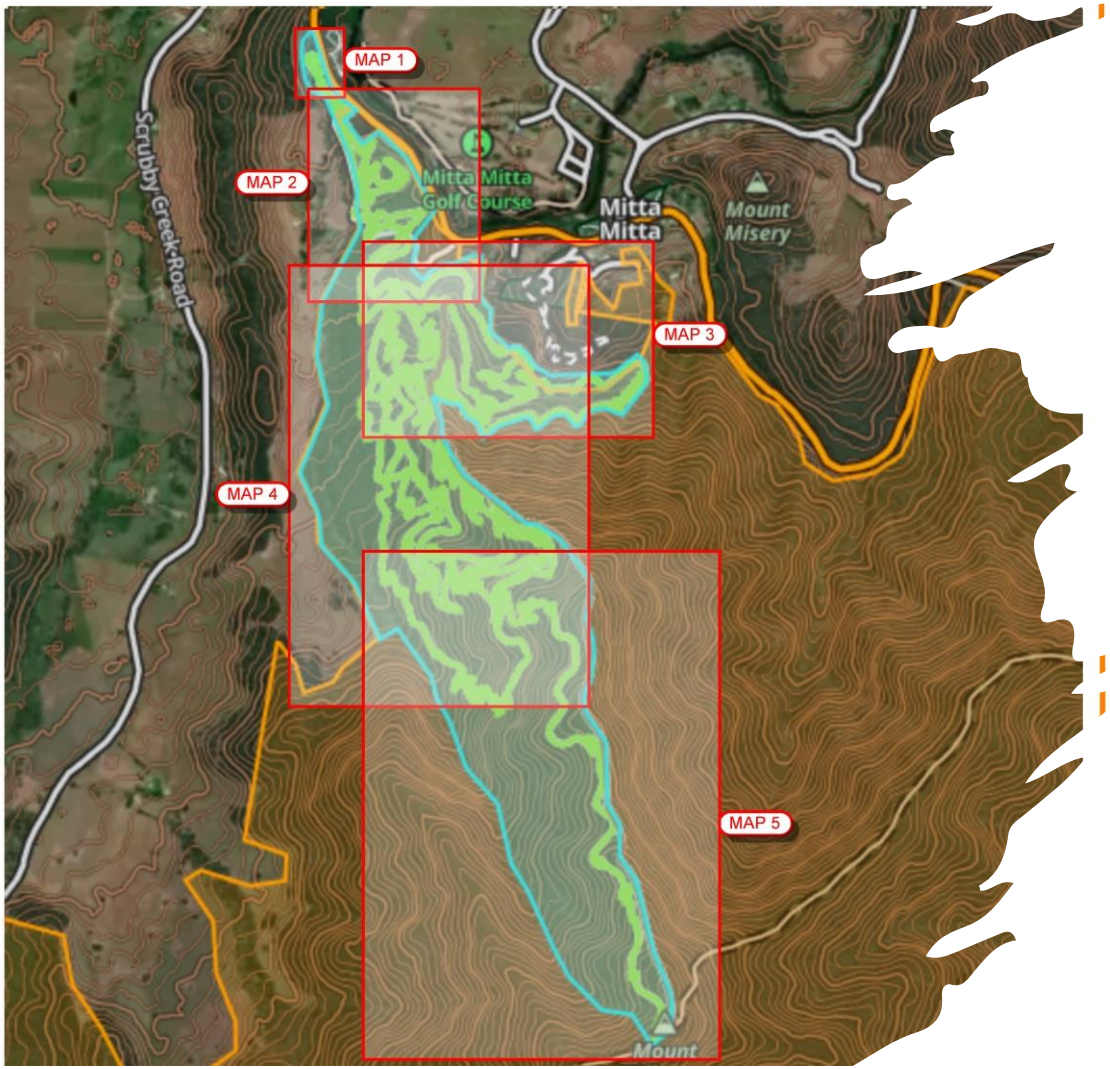
MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

MAP OVERVIEW

Crown Land

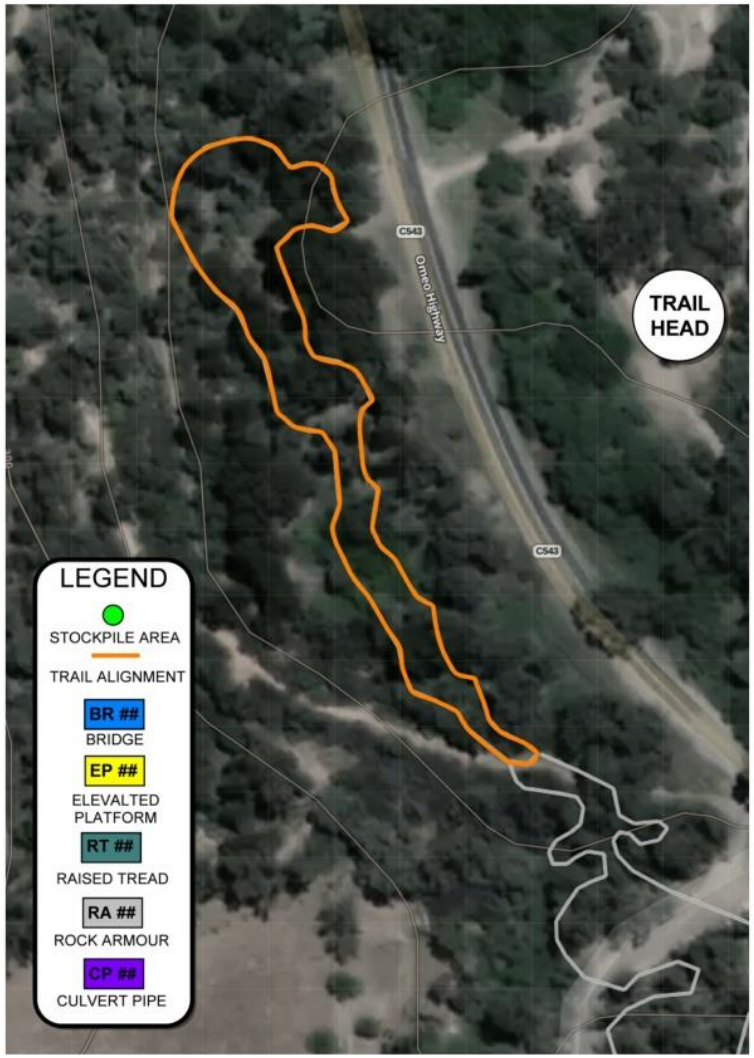
Trail Network Area



MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

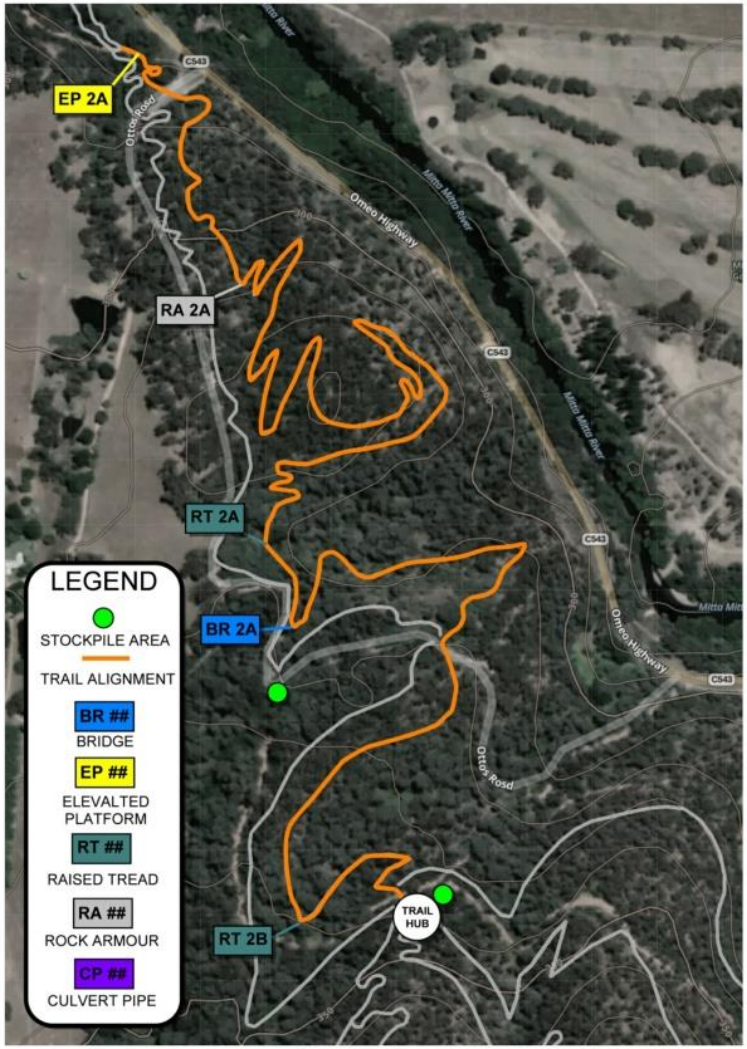
MAP 1 TRAIL 1



MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

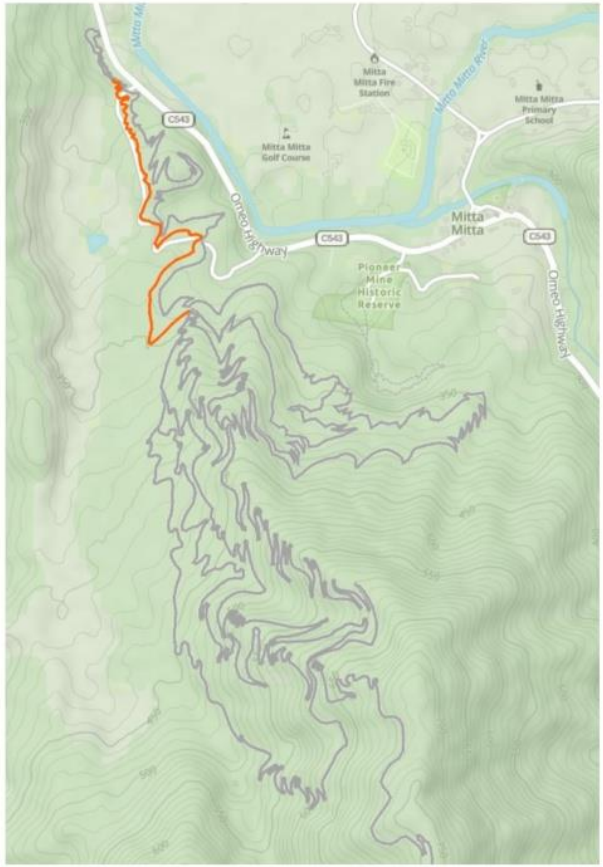
MAP 2 TRAIL 2

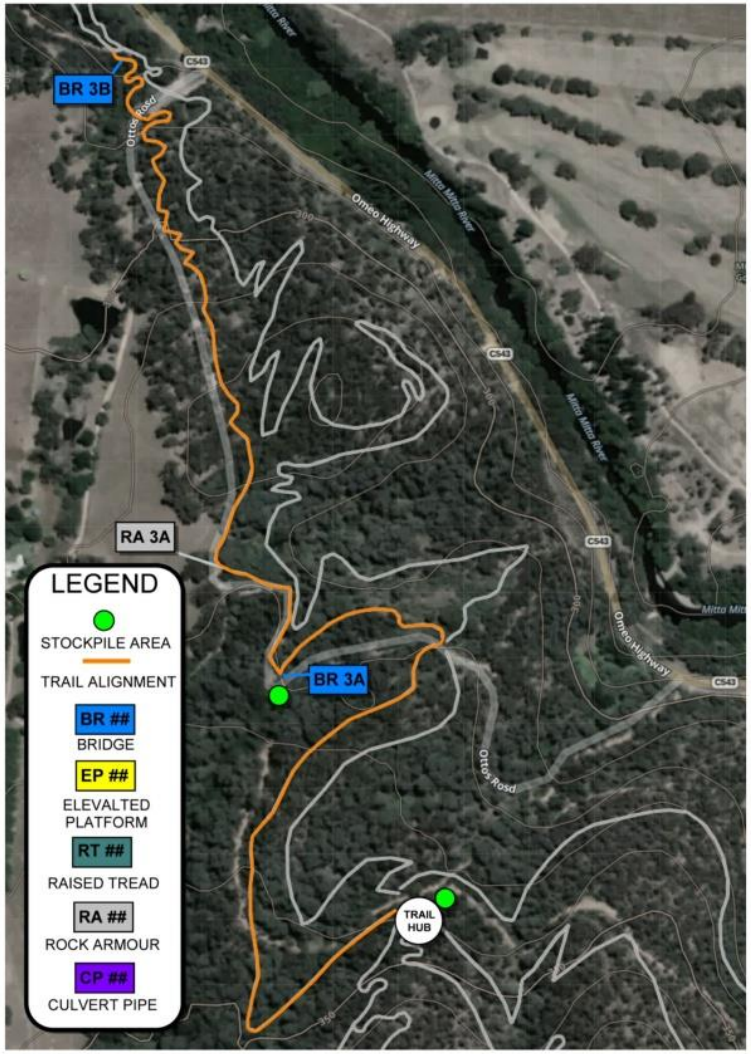


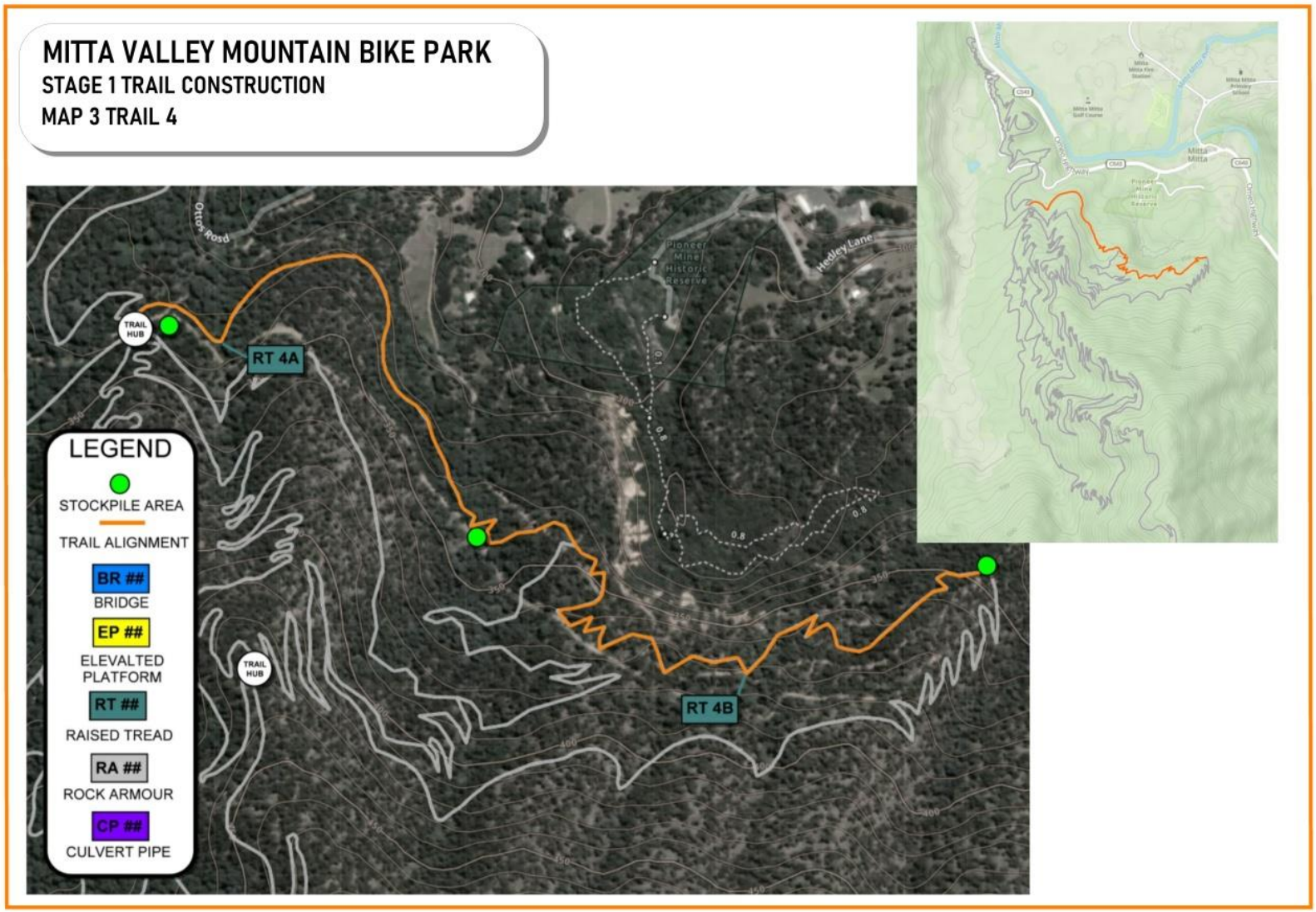
MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

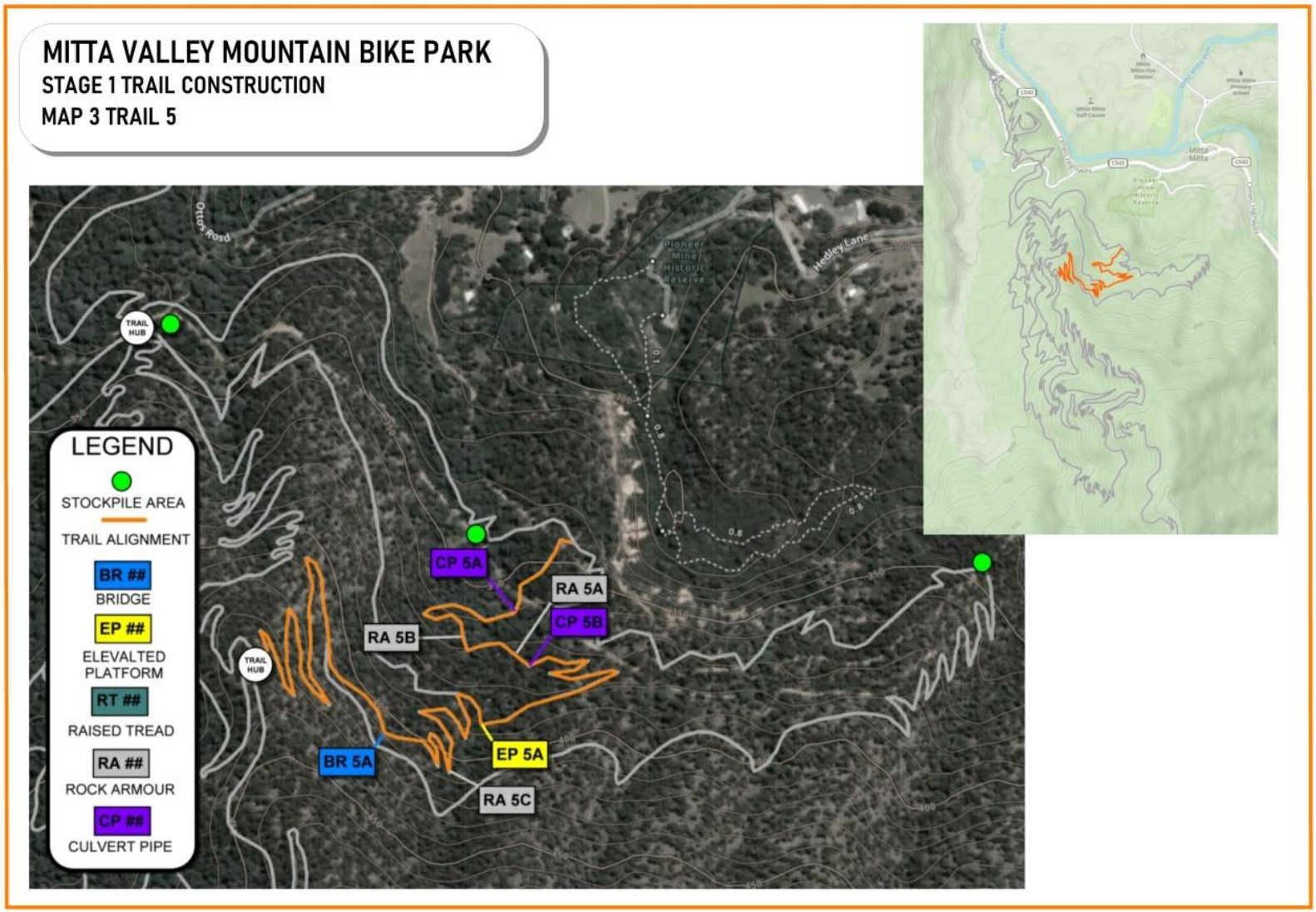
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

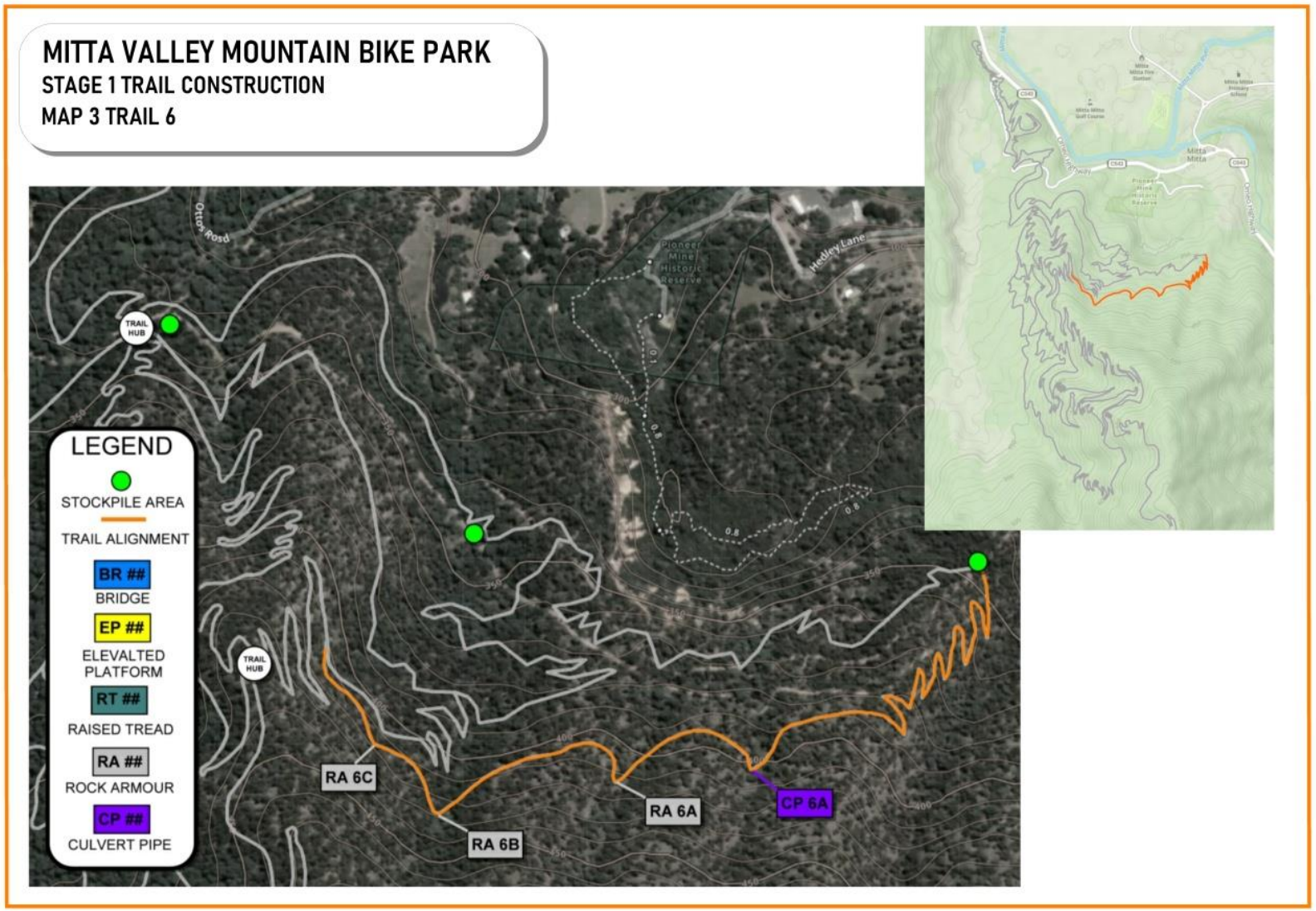
MAP 2 TRAIL 3

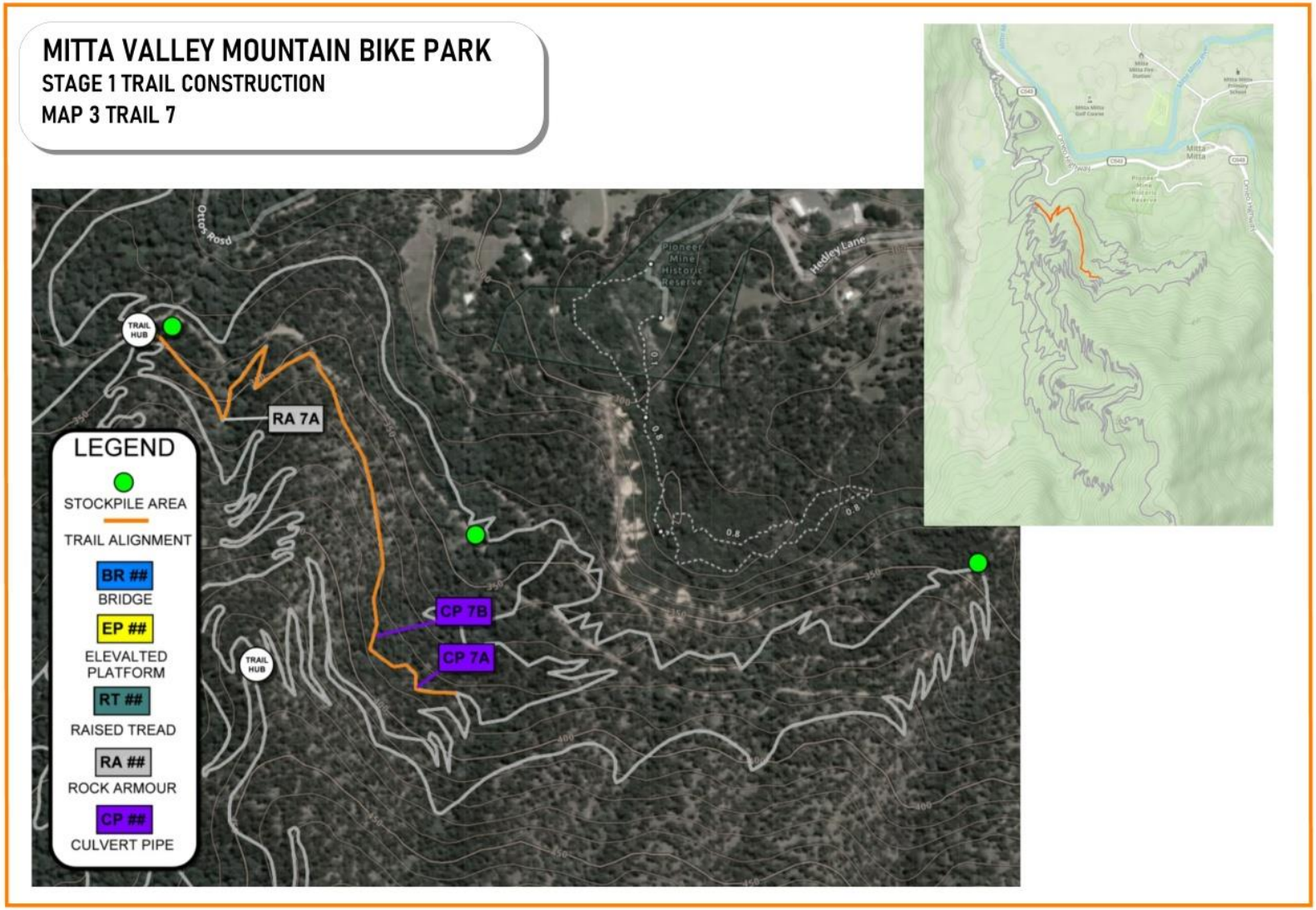


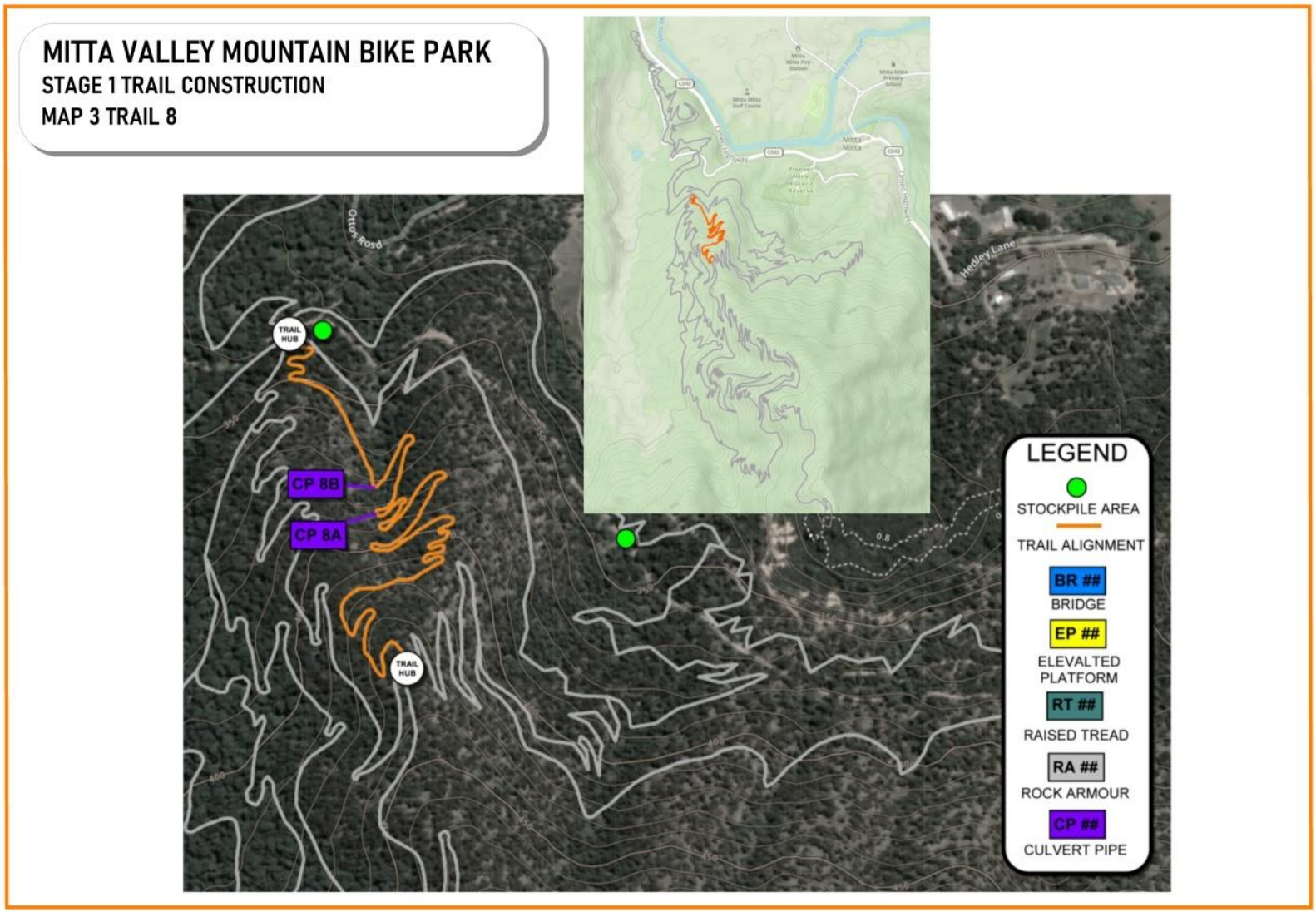


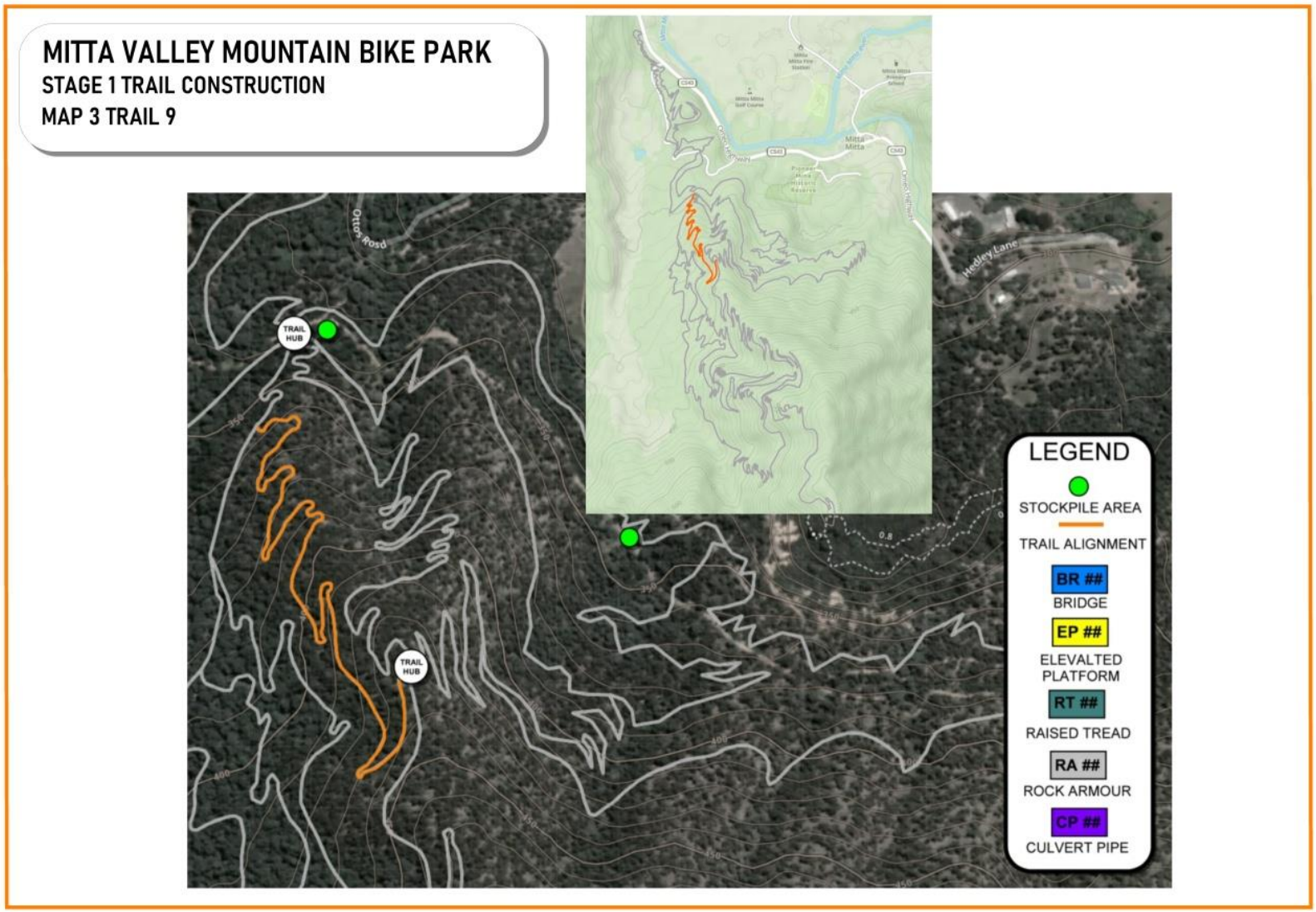

MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
MAP 3 TRAIL 4
Otters Road
Pioneer Mine Historic Reserve
Hedley Lane
TRAIL HUB
RT 4A
RT 4B
LEGEND
STOCKPILE AREA
TRAIL ALIGNMENT
BR ##
BRIDGE
EP ##
ELEVALTED PLATFORM
RT ##
RAISED TREAD
RA ##
ROCK ARMOUR
CP ##
CULVERT PIPE


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
MAP 3 TRAIL 5
LEGEND
STOCKPILE AREA
TRAIL ALIGNMENT
BR ##
BRIDGE
EP ##
ELEVALTED PLATFORM
RT ##
RAISED TREAD
RA ##
ROCK ARMOUR
CP ##
CULVERT PIPE
TRAIL HUB
TRAIL HUB
CP 5A
RA 5A
CP 5B
RA 5B
BR 5A
EP 5A
RA 5C
Hedley Lane
Pioneer Mine Historic Reserve


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
MAP 3 TRAIL 6
LEGEND
STOCKPILE AREA
TRAIL ALIGNMENT
BR ##
BRIDGE
EP ##
ELEVALTED PLATFORM
RT ##
RAISED TREAD
RA ##
ROCK ARMOUR
CP ##
CULVERT PIPE
TRAIL HUB
TRAIL HUB
RA 6C
RA 6B
RA 6A
CP 6A
Otto Road
Hedley Lane
Pioneer Mine Historic Reserve


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
MAP 3 TRAIL 7
LEGEND
STOCKPILE AREA
TRAIL ALIGNMENT
BR ##
BRIDGE
EP ##
ELEVALTED PLATFORM
RT ##
RAISED TREAD
RA ##
ROCK ARMOUR
CP ##
CULVERT PIPE
TRAIL HUB
RA 7A
CP 7B
CP 7A
Otter Road
Hedley Lane
Pioneer Mine Historic Reserve

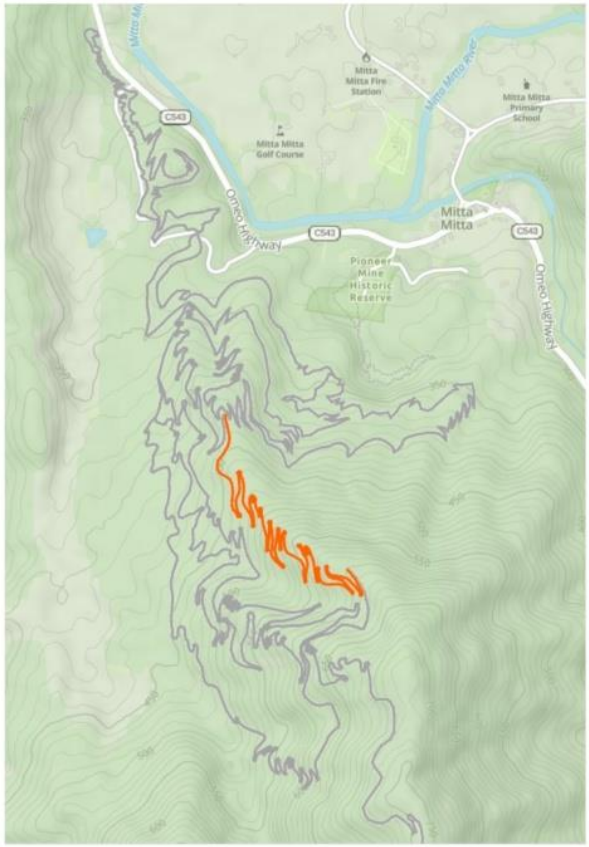

MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
MAP 3 TRAIL 8
Otter Road
Hedley Lane
TRAIL HUB
TRAIL HUB
CP 8B
CP 8A
LEGEND
STOCKPILE AREA
TRAIL ALIGNMENT
BR ##
BRIDGE
EP ##
ELEVALTED PLATFORM
RT ##
RAISED TREAD
RA ##
ROCK ARMOUR
CP ##
CULVERT PIPE

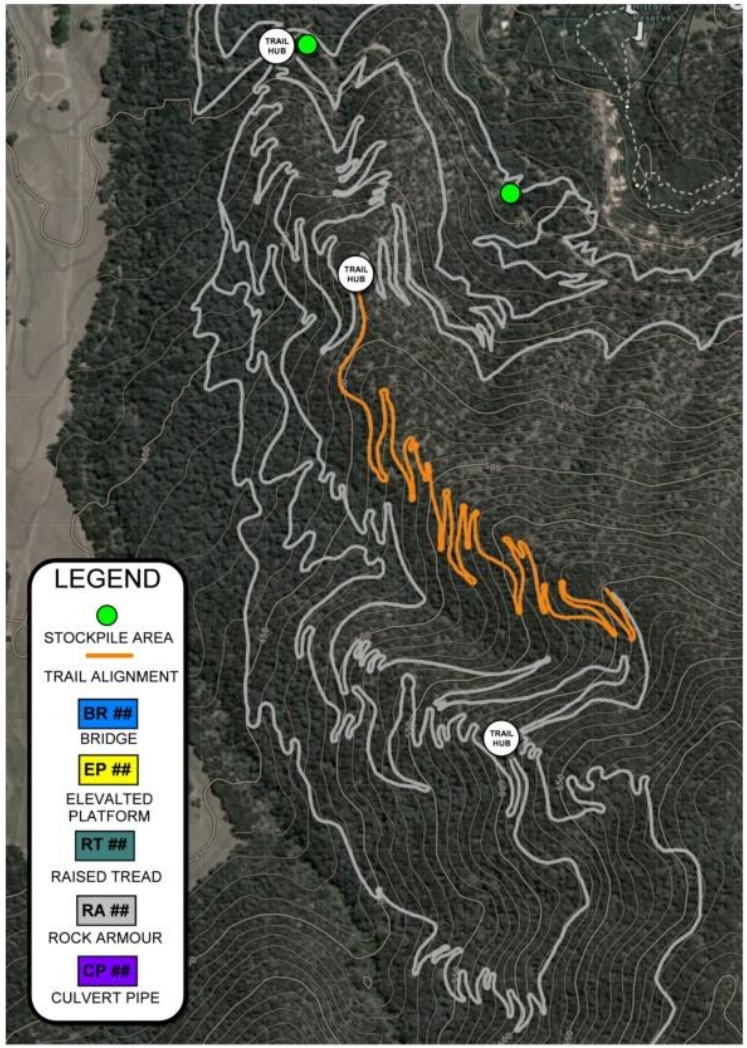

MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
MAP 3 TRAIL 9
Otto's Road
Medley Lane
TRAIL HUB
TRAIL HUB
LEGEND
STOCKPILE AREA
TRAIL ALIGNMENT
BR ##
BRIDGE
EP ##
ELEVALTED PLATFORM
RT ##
RAISED TREAD
RA ##
ROCK ARMOUR
CP ##
CULVERT PIPE

MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

MAP 4 TRAIL 10

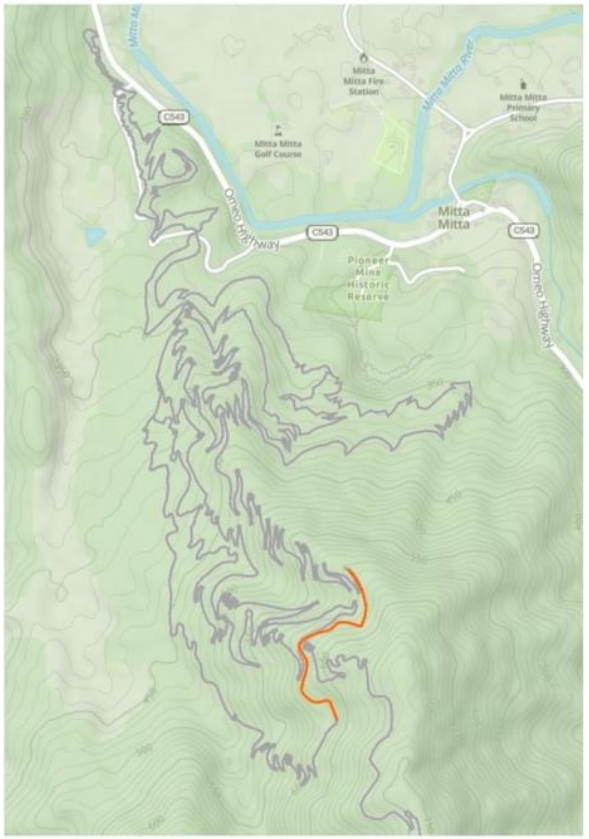


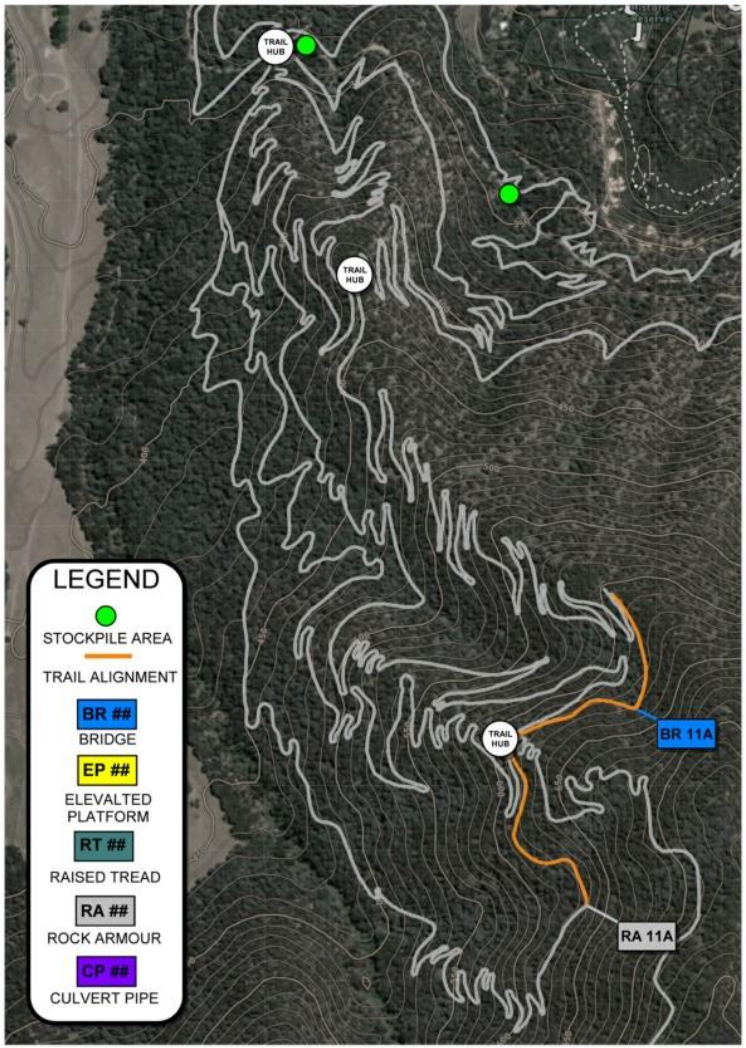


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

MAP 4 TRAIL 11

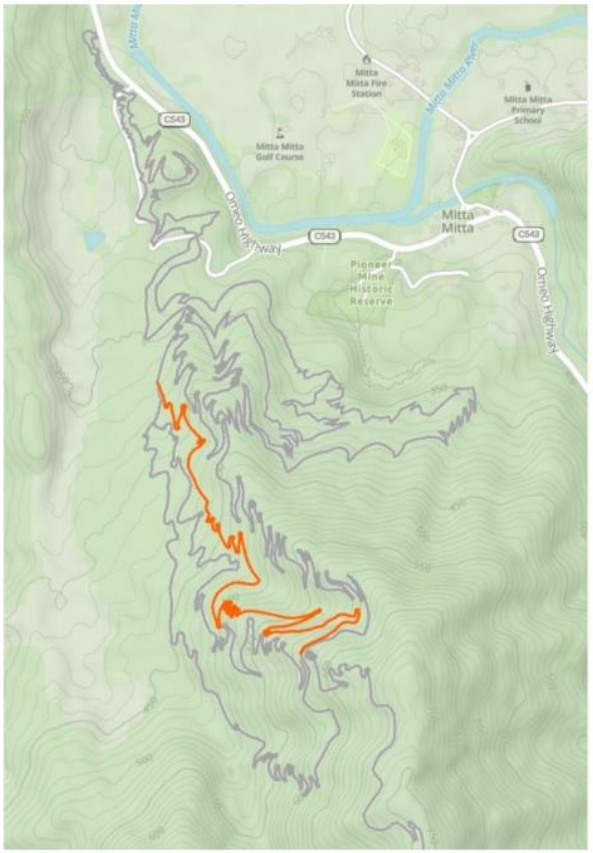


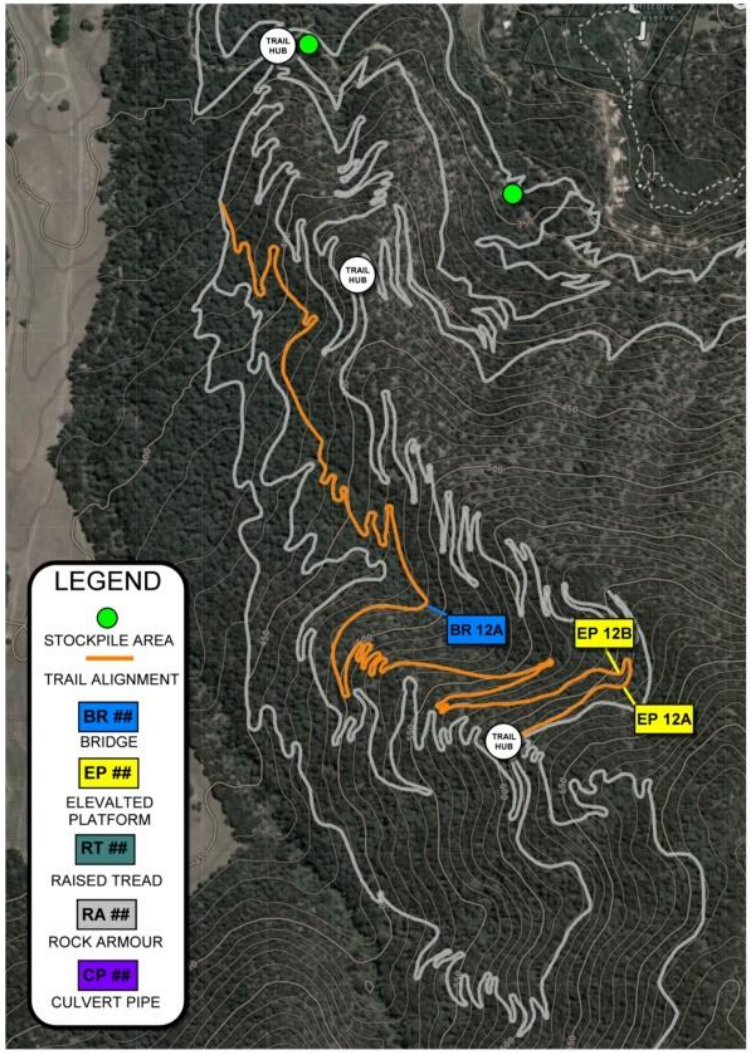


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

MAP 4 TRAIL 12

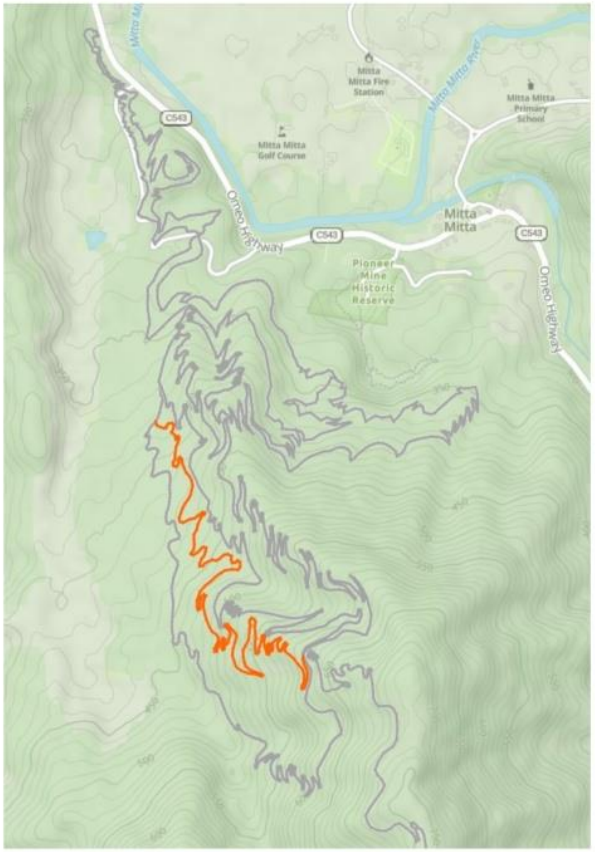


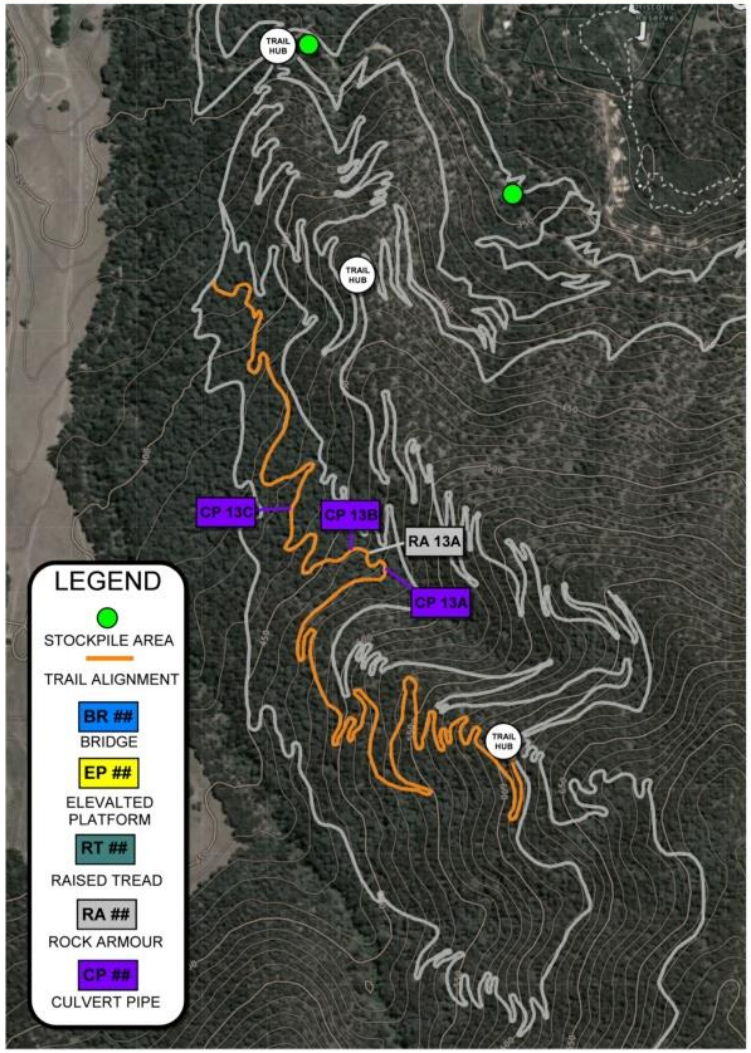


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

MAP 4 TRAIL 13

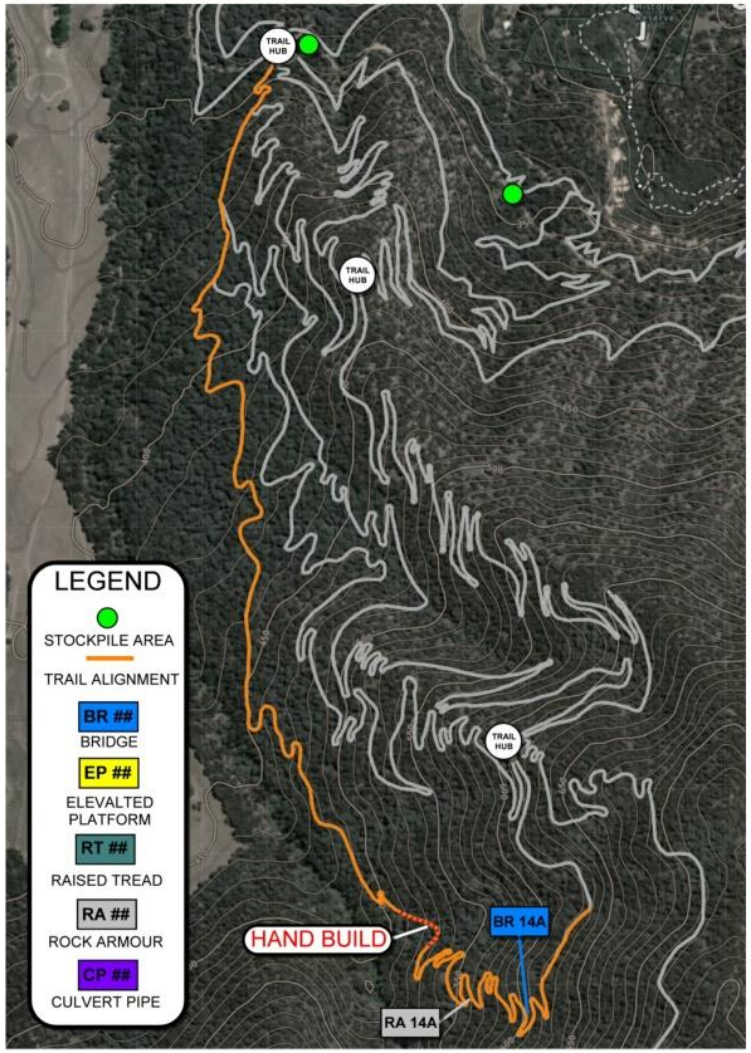




MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

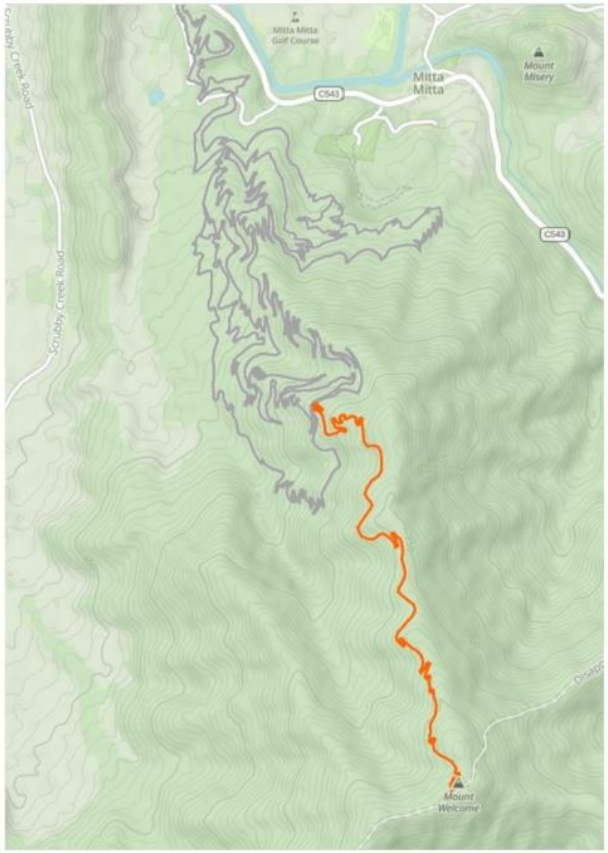
MAP 4 TRAIL 14

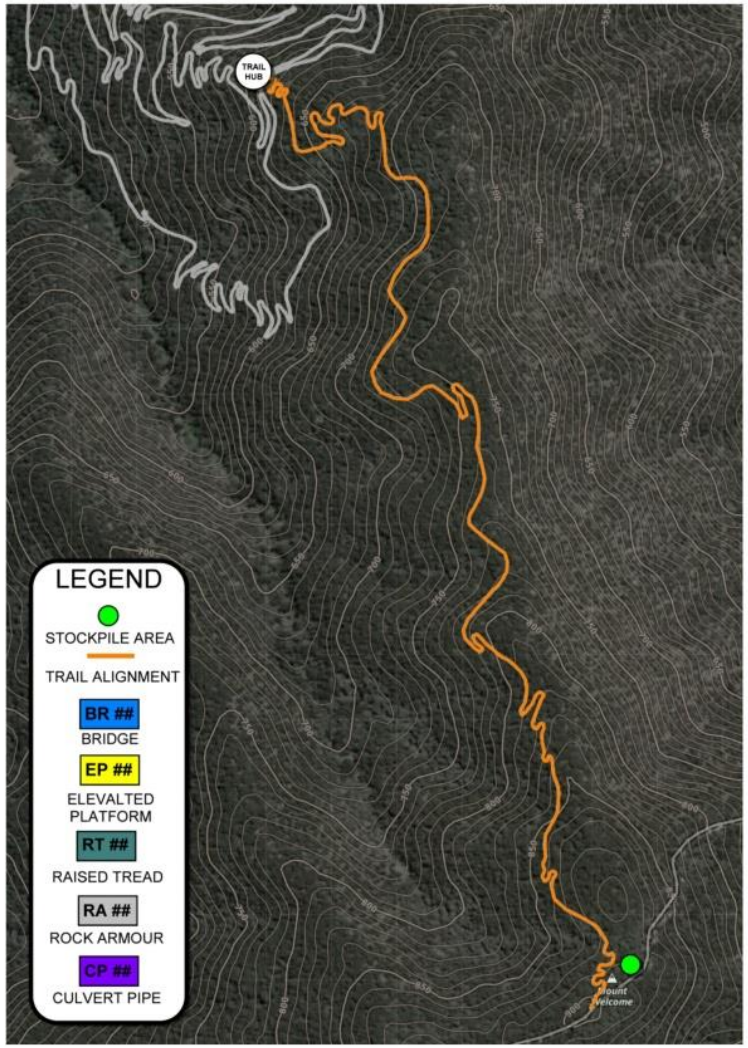


MITTA VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

STAGE 1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

MAP 5 TRAIL 15





TRAIL	GRADE	STYLE	LENGTH (M)	NOTES	RAISED TREAD (l/m)	ROCK ARMOUR (m2)	STORMPRO (No.)	ELEVATED PLATFORM (No.+l/m)	BRIDGE (No.+l/m)	OTHER
Beginner/skills loop TRAIL 1	Green	Beginner	470							
Trailhead to House Site TRAIL 2	Green/Blue	XC	2050		20	10		1X5	1X6	Culvert entry from Ottos Rd.
House Site to Lower Hills TRAIL 2	Green/Blue	XC	520		20					
Lower Hills to Knoll Climb TRAIL 4	Blue	XC	870	thick tea tree in areas	30					
Knoll Climb to Pioneer TRAIL 4	Blue	XC	510	thick tea tree in areas	20					
Pioneer to Knoll Climb TRAIL 6	Blue	Climb	1530			17	1			
Knoll Climb TRAIL 5	Blue	Climb	2060			19	2	1x2.4	1x5	
Knoll Climb to Lower Hills TRAIL 7	Blue	XC/Descent	1180			8	2			
Lower Hills to House Site TRAIL 3	Green/Blue	XC	600							
House Site to Trailhead TRAIL 3	Green/Blue	XC	1000		10				1x3, 1x5	Exit culvert and barrier posts on Ottos Rd
Knoll to Lower hills TRAIL 8	Blue	Flow Descent	1460				2			
Knoll to Lower hills TRAIL 9	Blue	Flow Descent	1330							
Knoll to Mid Feeder TRAIL 10	Blue	Climb	3000							2x view/rest stops
Mid Feeder TRAIL 11	Blue	Feeder Trail	800						1x2.5	
Lower Collector TRAIL 14	Blue	Collector Descent	1800							
Gulley Desent TRAIL 14	Blue/Black	Tech Descent	1380	steep/rocky		15			1x2.5	40m hand built
Mid feeder to Lower Collector TRAIL 12	Blue/Black	Fast Flow Descent	3260	Only Blue/Black due to exposure				2x2.4	1x4	
Summit to Mid Feeder Trail 15	Blue	Signiture Descent	3500							view/rest stop
Mid Feeder to Lower Collector TRAIL 13	Blue	Signiture Descent	3210			3	5			
		TOTALS	30530		100	72	12	12.2		

Mitta Mountain Bike Trail

List of Objections & Response

A total of seven objections and 45 letters of support were received.

Of the seven objections six of these objections are from residents of Mitta Mitta. One objection was from a resident of Melbourne.

Of the 45 letters of support 3 were located within 10m of the site and 29 were within 100km of the site. The balance of letters of support were located more than 100km from the site.

Summary
The issues raised by the objectors relate to traffic management, car parking, increased demand on wastewater facilities, capacity of emergency services to respond to accidents, demand for accommodation, biodiversity and biosecurity and conflicting land uses with the walking track and the privately owned land within the reserve. Further concerns were raised about the financial viability of the social enterprise however this is not a planning consideration.

It is proposed to include a condition on the permit that the impacts of any increased traffic or car parking demand be monitored over a 12-month period to assess if any traffic calming or signage is required.

It is recognised that wastewater is an issue in Mitta Mitta and no additional wastewater facilities are proposed as part of the development. Any event that increases the demand for toilet facilities will be support by portable toilets.

It is proposed to include a condition requiring the preparation of a detailed emergency response plan for the site that will include liaising with the various authorities

The provision of additional accommodation in Mitta Mitta does not form part of the application. Council does not have any applications for development of additional accommodation in Mitta Mitta. The existing available accommodation will be utilised.

The application was referred to DEECA in relation to the removal of native vegetation and biodiversity impacts. DEECA have consented to the issue of a planning permit subject to conditions in relation to the method of removing of vegetation and to the ongoing management of the trail.

The financial viability of the social enterprise is not a planning consideration nor is the operation of the organisation.

Objections

Theme	Response
Concern regarding biodiversity, biosecurity and public amenity.	The applicant has provided a detailed assessment of the vegetation proposed to be removed. This has been supplied to DEECA.

EPBC Act referral - According to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas there are 11 species within the project area that are listed under the EPBC Act (see below for details of species). The documents we reviewed did not mention EPBC approvals to clear vegetation, which would be required. We would like to see more specific provisions for avoiding impacts on threatened species in bike path construction and use. Weed invasion – We would like to see biosecurity and weed invasion prevention plans for the project. There is a strong risk that this intact vegetation with very little weed invasion at present will suffer weed and pathogen invasion during the construction period. There is also risk of weeds and pathogens being distributed by bikes over the 30km of new trails weaving throughout the project site. The risk of phytophthora spread is of particular concern given the magnificent grass trees present on ridge lines of Mt Welcome and the recent appearance of phytophthora in the Mitta region. We would strongly advise active avoidance of areas with grass trees as these species are particularly affected by phytophthora. There are questions around the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of biosecurity conditions (sterilizing of bike tires before cyclists enter the bush etc.) – how will this be resourced and implemented? Loss of amenity for town residents – The main existing recreational use of the Mt Welcome area is horse riding and hiking on the Mt Welcome track and around the Lower Pioneer track. The Mt Welcome Walk is the primary tourist walk accessible from the town that tourists are encouraged to use, and the Upper Pioneer track is the most widely used track with walkers, horse riding, and jogging. The existing density of bike tracks on the north face of Mt Welcome will reduce amenity for walkers and horse riders and generate risk and conflict. We strongly recommend removing planned trails 4, 5 and 6 with a view to avoiding conflict with existing recreational use on the existing Pioneer trail. Redeployment of these trails into the west face of Mt Welcome and further south in the crown land footprint would be highly desirable to reduce potential conflict and injury to existing recreational users of this area. Map 5 indicates significant potential use area to the west and southwest of the Mt Welcome walking trail and summit. Track	A detailed Assessment report has been prepared by Redgum Environmental Consulting that has considered the vegetation removal and the ecological impact on flora and fauna. DEECA has consented to the issue of a planning permit subject to conditions.

maintenance - The soil in the project area is highly soluble and erodes easily, as can most recently be seen by the dramatic land slide and erosion of Watercress Gully onto the Omeo Highway and surrounding gullies and tracks. After this event, graders were used extensively along the Pioneer trail and other tracks to restore access, but a rain event a few weeks later resulted in the tracks being washed out again. A culvert was lost from the river walk, and erosion is again widespread. The maintenance of the tracks will need to be very well resourced as tracks will have dropped branches and will be washed out regularly. It would be a tragedy to clear 30km of track through this largely intact environment to find that the maintenance costs were too high resulting in the project being disbanded. It would be important to have a substantial, ongoing maintenance budget (not funded by tax or rate payers) for this project to be viable. EPBC Act Listed Species (data obtained from the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas) Eastern bentwing bat (critically endangered sighted 1999 Eastern bitter cress (endangered sighted 2011) Mountain phebalium (endangered sighted 2004) Narrow leaf star hair (endangered sighted 2011) River leafless bossiaea (endangered sighted 2004) Spiny crayfish (threatened sighted 2002) Platypus (vulnerable sighted 2021) Poverty wattle (vulnerable sighted 1996) Square tailed kite (vulnerable sighted 2019) Gang gang cockatoo (endangered sighted 2023) Greater glider (endangered sighted 2024)	
The bike and car traffic that will be using Otto's Road adjoining our family property and the effect this traffic will have. 2. How much traffic is anticipated in using Otto's Road adjoining our property and how often will this road be in use? 3. Where will cars be parking in bush land behind our property? 4. There has been a recent creation of another access trail or small fire break along the ridge line from the north end of OTTOS Rd to the South end which directly impacts out family property and its privacy. What is council proposing to do to ensure that the secluded nature of the bush and surrounds is maintained?	Traffic and car parking will be directed to the trail head. Ottos Road is proposed to be use by emergency vehicles to access. The creation of an access track/fire break has been constructed by DEECA as the manager of the land. Any permit issued could contain conditions requiring the bike track to be setback from the property boundary.

As a longtime resident of the Mitta Valley, I am against the bike trail. Because of the increase of traffic on an unsuitable section of the Omeo Hwy, mainly concerning the intersection of Scrubby Creek Road and the Hwy. It's dangerous enough already with the speed vehicles approach the intersection . I have raised my concerns before with the Shire as well as Vic Roads , it would be well justified to reduce the speed limit to 60 or 80 KMH , as they have on the Mitta North road . This should be the number one priority before works begins .	The application was referred to VicRoad who did not object to the issue of a permit with no conditions. Any permit issued for the development will require a review of traffic movement and car parking after 3, 6 and 12 months.
The Head Start Site • There is no potable drinking water available • Insufficient parking available • The highway adjacent has a 100 km/hr speed limit, a serious danger to cyclists crossing the road to access the tracks B) Impact on the Town • There is insufficient infrastructure in the town to handle an influx of visitors: lack of parking, no water supply or sewerage • Residents did not ask for MB Park C) Mitta Valley Inc • Is not an organization representing the community • Does not hold advertised General Meetings • Is a de facto 'chamber of commerce' representing business interests that will financially gain from the project • The Council has a conflict of interest with representation of the working group • The two panel members purporting to represent residents have not consulted or reported to the residents on the progress of the project D) Financial and Business Case • Mitta Valley Inc and the Council will be exposed if there is a financial failure of the project • The project was 'sold' to the community on the basis of excess profits being returned to the public. There is little chance of this occurring.	Any permit issued for the development will require a review of traffic movement and car parking after 3, 6 and 12 months. The proposal is to utilise the existing public toilet facilities and accommodation facilities. The commercial operation of Mitta Valley Inc is not a planning consideration. The commercial viability of the proposal is not a planning consideration No Council staff associated with the assessment of the application have any connection or conflict of interest in relation to the application.
Ambulance Access Concerns Mitta relies on a single ambulance, staffed by local volunteers. Once that is sent on a callout, that means the closest ambulance is at least an hour away, and another hour back to an intensive care unit. 36 people a year are, on	The application was referred to Ambulance Victoria who have not responded to the referral. An in principal letter of support was provided with the application

average, killed in cycling accidents in Australia. Response time is a major factor in determining whether people live or die. The in-principal approval from Ambulance Victoria provided in the appendices of the permit application references both access requirements and difficulty levels for the tracks. Do Ambulance Victoria consider the current layout sufficiently accessible? Is the inclusion of advanced trail features, which were not given in-principal approval by Ambulance Victoria, an issue of concern? How will emergency services know if solo riders are in the park, and possibly injured? Will there be a system to count how many go in and how many come out	
Traffic congestion. There is no mention in this application of traffic management or parking options, yet the trails begin on Mt Welcome, with the only access via a rough 4wd track with no designated parking areas or emergency vehicle access or evacuation plan.	Any permit issued for the development will require a review of traffic movement and car parking after 3, 6 and 12 months.
Loss of Vegetation. This planning permit references 30kms of trails, 2m in width, which means a minimum vegetation clearance of 60,000 square metres of native bush, and that's before access road upgrades and suitable parking provisions. How is this to be managed with minimum impact? There is no Native Vegetation Removal Report included with the permit application. There is no Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act approval included in the permit application. There is no mention of biosecurity concerns from imported weed species via bicycle tyres, nor any mention of monitoring and enforcement that would be associated with this. Loss of amenities	The applicant has provided a detailed assessment of the vegetation proposed to be removed. This has been supplied to DEECA. DEECA has consented to the issue of a planning permit subject to conditions.
The current walking trails in the area would be altogether altered by cyclists barreling along them. There is no mention of how cyclists will be deterred from using the existing trails as well as the 30kms of proposed new trails.	The proposed trails cross the existing walking track however it is not proposed to combine the tracks. Cyclists could use the existing walking track now.
Sewage systems Inviting lots of newcomers to the valley is one thing, managing the human waste and rubbish generated is another. Again, for a town with no sewerage system it's a major oversight to not consider this in a planning	It is proposed to utilise the existing toilet facilities at the trail head.

permit. Who will cover the cost of new toilet facilities, or the added stress upon existing ones? Accommodation pressure Where will these people stay? There's very little accommodation in the Mitta Valley, and it's a long, fossil fuel-powered drive to anywhere, with zero public transport options. Can any aspect of this mountain bike park be considered remotely close to responsible social planning in 2025	It is anticipated that users of the park will travel from Wodonga/Albury as day visitors. Any overnight stay is likely to reduce the vacancy rate of existing accommodation.
No on-ground environmental assessments, if indeed they have been undertaken, have been shared with Mitta Valley residents. There is no attached Native Vegetation Removal Report. Just some click 'n' flick overlay assessments, brushed off as if the flora and fauna of the area is utterly unworthy of serious consideration. Flora and fauna which include, and here I'll refer to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas- the following EPBC Act Listed Species: Eastern bentwing bat (critically endangered sighted 1999) Eastern bitter cress (endangered sighted 2011) Mountain phebalium (endangered sighted 2004) Narrow leaf star hair (endangered sighted 2011) River leafless bossiaea (endangered sighted 2004) Spiny crayfish (threatened sighted 2002) Platypus (vulnerable sighted 2021) Poverty wattle (vulnerable sighted 1996) Square tailed kite (vulnerable sighted 2019) Gang gang cockatoo (endangered sighted 2023) Greater glider (endangered sighted 2024) On-site Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys were undertaken on only 20% of the area proposed to be affected. The reason why other areas were not accessed during the on-ground survey is because the other areas were "very steep and heavily vegetated, making access to many areas proposed for tracks unsafe to access". That this is this case tie into the following point, about emergency services access. A letter is attached to this planning application in which Ambulance Victoria have given in principle support - only - if the project is for beginner and intermediate levels of mountain bike riders, and if emergency vehicle access is available to all parts of the mountain bike park. According to All Terrain Trails, it will consist of 80 percent intermediate trails, with "Technical Trail Features to support advanced level riders". Later in the report blue/black level trails (intermediate/advanced) are also referenced. A quick glance at the map shows that emergency vehicle access will not be	DEECA have reviewed the reports submitted with the application and additional information supplied as a result of DEECA requesting further information. This has been assessed by DEECA who have consent to the issue of a planning permit subject to conditions. DEECA have considered the impact on flora and fauna. The application was referred to several emergency services agencies. Any permit issued for the development will require a detailed emergency management plan to be prepared before the use commences.

available to large areas of the trails. In fact, the Cultural Heritage Assessment that was undertaken was only able to access 20% of the proposed areas, and only 14% of the gully areas, as it was "very steep and heavily vegetated, making access to many areas proposed for tracks unsafe to access". This unsafe access is what Ambulance officers will be relying on to evacuate riders who have fallen afoul of a "Technical Trail Feature". This discrepancy between what Ambulance Victoria have expressed in-principal support for, and what is being proposed, really ought to be resolved before approving a design which is likely to result in overwhelming pressure on local emergency services. There is nothing in this planning permit or it's appendices to suggest that there is a clear plan in place for dealing with emergencies, and it seems that through lack of communication between the trail designers and emergency services, this may create conditions for serious injuries and loss of life, that could be avoided through better design choices made prior to approving this current, unsafe design. The loss of amenity for bushwalkers who will now have mountain bikers zipping across the lovely walking tracks in that area is particularly significant. Residents in Towong shire rated walking and bushwalking as their second and third most preferred recreational activities in a survey published in Towong shire's own Recreational Strategy for 2022-2033. Yet, despite Mountain biking only reaching equal 13th on this list of activities, the current plan cuts through walking trails with these less popular mountain bike trails. Rather than, say, opting to avoid the walking trails, or relocating the trails to an area that will not negatively impact upon existing walking trails. Rather than degrade the experience for people already enjoying Mitta Mittas fine natural features, a better design could, for example, make use of the southern face of Mt Welcome, which is cooler and more shaded during the months in which Mitta Mitta actually receives large visitor numbers, less fire-prone, and currently without any conflicting walking trails. Why on earth would accumulate data from surveys on recreational interests only to preference the 13th option over the 2nd and 3rd option? There has been no viable business case for the Mountain bike park presented to Mitta	The applicant is required to comply with the Cultural Heritage Management Plan

Valley residents, only a statement that: "Mitta Valley Inc. and the wider community are aware that the mountain bike park will bring with it expenses to maintain the park as a quality destination. It is proposed to develop a social enterprise to generate income to support these ongoing costs. A social enterprise business plan has been developed, which includes activities including but not limited to, e-bike bike hire and the leasing of space for a café pod operation. " The business plan alluded to here, the failure of which would result in maintenance/rehabilitation costs being dumped back onto Towong shire ratepayers, has not, as far as I'm aware, been shown to Mitta Valley residents. It's certainly not on their website. To begin something of this magnitude without a clear and ongoing funding mechanism responsible for trail maintenance is fiscal irresponsibility in the extreme. Weed management, rubbish removal, erosion mitigation, not to mention public liability insurance for the inevitable accidents that will occur - all this requires serious funding. The vague idea that somebody might want to manage the renting of ebikes out of the goodness of their heart, and that a few people renting half a dozen ebikes every now and then could pay, in perpetuity, for maintenance contracts that have not even been costed? It's mind boggling. Even the 1 million dollars round figure chosen for the project on this application comes with absolutely no breakdown of expenses. Finally, parking is not taken into consideration at all in this planning application. Where will the proposed users of this park store their vehicles while they ride? How will they access the top of Mt Welcome? Via the poor condition 4WD only Mt Disappointment track? DEECA state in their attached email that "Upgrading and maintaining for 2WD access is not within the district's current funding or plans for improving strategic fire access across the estate." If users can manage to get to the top of Mt Welcome, where will they park? How many can park before emergency evacuation access to this dry flammable hilltop (which will, if all goes well, start to see far increased traffic levels) compromised? None of this is considered in the plan. In the interest of public safety and amenity this planning application needs to be paused until there is a serious answer to the following:	The viability of the Social Enterprise is not a planning consideration

1) Demonstrate that there is a long-term financial management team, with ongoing funding or turnover sufficient to implement the project without becoming a burden to Towong Shire ratepayers, and provide costings for this. 2) Emergency vehicle access, and clarification as to whether the trails are only beginner/intermediate, or if they are also intermediate/advanced. 3) Adequate all weather access roads for users, plus sufficient parking that doesn't jeopardize emergency vehicle access. Not even a temporary event permit would be granted without this, because it can easily least to a preventable death. 4) Adequate on-ground environmental surveys, a compliant Native Vegetation Removal Report, a Site Construction Environmental Management Plan, and a fully costed ongoing Environmental Management Plan.	
Objection to proposal to construct 30km bike paths through Mitta State Forest While we broadly agree with the provision on mountain biking facility in the area, we hold significant concerns about the current proposal from biodiversity, biosecurity and public amenity perspectives. We object to the extensive construction of bike paths on the north/north-east facing slopes of Mt Welcome (Trails 4, 5, 6) and strongly recommend extending the path network to the south and southwest of the Mt Welcome summit walking trail.	
EPBC Act referral - According to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas there are 11 species within the project area that are listed under the EPBC Act (see below for details of species). The documents we reviewed did not mention EPBC approvals to clear vegetation, which would be required. We would like to see more specific provisions for avoiding impacts on threatened species in bike path construction and use.	The application was supported by a detailed ecological assessment that was referred to DEECA who have consented to the construction of the trail subject to conditions. The detailed assessment includes the impact on flora and fauna.
Weed invasion – We would like to see biosecurity and weed invasion prevention plans for the project. There is a strong risk that this intact vegetation with very little weed invasion at present will suffer weed and pathogen invasion during the construction period. There is also risk of weeds and pathogens being distributed by bikes over the 30km of new trails weaving throughout the project site. The risk of	Any permit issued for the development will require the track to be maintained which includes weed control and eradication

phytophthora spread is of particular concern given the magnificent grass trees present on ridge lines of Mt Welcome and the recent appearance of phytophthora in the Mitta region. We would strongly advise active avoidance of areas with grass trees as these species are particularly affected by phytophthora. There are questions around the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of biosecurity conditions (sterilising of bike tires before cyclists enter the bush etc.) – how will this be resourced and implemented?	
Loss of amenity for town residents and tourists – The main existing recreational use of the Mt Welcome area is horse riding and hiking on the Mt Welcome track and around the Lower Pioneer track (advertised to tourists). The Mt Welcome walk is the primary tourist walk accessible from the town that tourists are encouraged to use, and the Upper Pioneer track is the most widely used track with walkers, horse riding, and jogging. The existing density of bike tracks on the north face of Mt Welcome will reduce amenity for walkers and horse riders and generate risk and conflict. We strongly recommend removing planned trails 4, 5 and 6 with a view to avoiding conflict with existing recreational use on the existing Pioneer trail. Redeployment of these trails into the west face of Mt Welcome and further south in the crown land footprint would be highly desirable to reduce potential conflict and injury to existing recreational users of this area. Map 5 indicates significant potential use area to the west and southwest of the Mt Welcome walking trail and summit.	The proposal will provide additional recreational activities for the town. The area is not located within the town centre. The trail will not use the existing walking track.
Track maintenance - The soil in the project area is highly soluble and erodes easily, as can most recently be seen by the dramatic land slide and erosion of Watercress Gully onto the Omeo Highway and surrounding gullies and tracks. After this event, graders were used extensively along the Pioneer trail and other tracks to restore access, but a rain event a few weeks later resulted in the tracks being washed out again (see attached photos). A culvert was lost from the river walk, and erosion is again widespread. The maintenance of tracks will need to be very well resourced as tracks will have dropped branches and will be washed out regularly. It	Any permit issued for the proposal will include requirements that the track is maintained in accordance with the Trail Management Plan

would be a tragedy to clear 30km of track through this largely intact environment to find that the maintenance costs were too high resulting in the project being disbanded. It would be important to have a substantial, ongoing maintenance budget (not funded by tax or rate payers) for this project to be viable. EPBC Act Listed Species (data obtained from the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas) Eastern bentwing bat (critically endangered sighted 1999) Eastern bitter cress (endangered sighted 2011) Mountain phebalium (endangered sighted 2004) Narrow leaf star hair (endangered sighted 2011) River leafless bossiaea (endangered sighted 2004) Spiny crayfish (threatened sighted 2002) Platypus (vulnerable sighted 2021) Poverty wattle (vulnerable sighted 1996) Square tailed kite (vulnerable sighted 2019) Gang gang cockatoo (endangered sighted 2023) Greater glider (endangered sighted 2024)	DEECA have considered the impacts of the EPBC Act and have consented to the issue of a planning permit.
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As a longtime resident of the Mitta valley, I am against the bike trail. Because of the increase of traffic on an unsuitable section of the Omeo Hwy, mainly concerning the intersection of Scrubby Creek Road and the Hwy. It's dangerous enough already with the speed of vehicles approaching the intersection . I have raised my concerns before with Shire as well as Vic Roads , it would be well justified to reduce the speed limit to 60 or 80 KMH , as they have on the Mitta North Road. This should be the number one priority before works begins.	Any permit issued for the proposal will require the applicant to provide a traffic assessment after 3, 6 and 12 months. This information can be used to support any required speed reduction.

Mitta Valley MTB Park Objections Response

Before addressing the objections, it is important to consider some of the original key project objectives.

The 'Our Valley Our Future' Mitta Valley Community Plan 2013 – 2016 identified the following challenges facing the valley including:

- Business and employment opportunities, especially for the young
- Economic diversity and resilience
- Established business profitability/sustainability
- Lack of attractions to drive tourism
- Youth engagement
- Reducing, ageing population
- Social cohesion

The Mitta Valley MTB Park will offer substantial opportunities to address these challenges.

Many concerns relate to park visitation overwhelming current town infrastructure and further impacting local amenity.

It is important to note that this has been acknowledged and considered throughout the planning process. Key points include:

- Following 2019 community consultation, two conceptual town connection trail alignments were deleted due to residents' privacy concerns.
- Following 2019 community consultation, the preferred trailhead site utilising the old DSE Depot was abandoned in favour of The Mill, 1.8km from the centre of town. This was due to residents' concern about traffic congestion and parking pressure.
- Visitation to the park will peak during winter months when alpine parks are closed for winter. This will boost much needed visitation during the Valley's quiet period increasing business sustainability and stabilise staffing requirements.
- Promotion and events will focus on quiet months only, minimising additional pressure on existing infrastructure during seasonal busy periods.

The planning permit application relates to stage 1 (30km of trail) only. It is anticipated that this stage alone will result in modest day visitation from in region and will be of insignificant impact to the towns amenity compared to events such as The Mighty Mitta Muster and Christmas/New Year celebrations.

We feel that this project is being leveraged to push Council for town sewerage and potable water supply. MVI do not question the validity of these requirements but is concerned that as potential collateral damage in the push for town services, this game changing opportunity for the Valley and Shire as a whole is being jeopardised.

Concerns and responses

Mitta relies on a single ambulance, staffed by local volunteers. Once that is sent on a callout, that means the closest ambulance is at least an hour away, and another hour back to an intensive care unit. 36 people a year are, on average, killed in cycling accidents in Australia. Response time is a major factor in determining whether people live or die.

Specific statistics on the number of fatalities exclusively attributed to mountain biking in Australia each year are limited. In the year ending July 2023, there were 46 road deaths involving cyclists in Australia.

statista.com

It's important to note that this figure encompasses **all** forms of cycling, including road cycling, commuting, and mountain biking. The exact number of fatalities specifically resulting from mountain biking is not distinctly reported in publicly available sources.

Research indicates that fatalities associated with mountain biking are relatively rare, with estimated mortality rates ranging from approximately 2 to 3.5 per million riders.

PubMed Central

This suggests that while mountain biking carries inherent risks, the occurrence of fatal accidents is uncommon.

In 2021–22, there were approximately 8,600 injury hospitalisations attributed to cycling as a sport in Australia, with 7,100 males and 1,500 females affected.

aihw.gov

In 2021–22, Australian rules football and rugby, encompassing both league and union codes, had a combined total of approximately 8,100 hospitalisations.

aihw.gov.au

Nearly 4 million Australians ride a bicycle each week, with 86% of them doing so for recreational purposes Australian Bureau of Statistics

When adjusted for participation rates, rugby and Australian rules football exhibit higher injury hospitalisation rates per 100,000 participants. In 2021–22, rugby had one of the highest rates, with 185 per 100,000 participants, while Australian rules football had 160 per 100,000 participants.

aihw.gov.au

Summary

While mountain biking does carry risks, fatalities are relatively rare. Detailed annual statistics specific to mountain biking-related deaths in Australia are not readily available, and reported figures often encompass **all** cycling activities. When adjusted for participation rates, rugby and Australian rules football exhibit higher injury hospitalisation rates per 100,000

The in-principle approval from Ambulance Victoria provided in the appendices of the permit application references both access requirements and difficulty levels for the tracks. Do Ambulance Victoria consider the current layout sufficiently accessible?

The majority of mountain biking facilities are by nature remote with accessibility challenges. This is inherent with the landscape and typography required to meet user group expectations and is an accepted risk of the sport.

Consultation with Ambulance Victoria included discussions around proposed trail locations (presented on digital maps with GPS alignments), emergency access points and the commitment to consult with Ambulance Victoria during the construction phase to ensure best access/response outcomes.

The trails for this stage of the MTB park targets beginner to intermediate rider skill levels. The design and features of the trails are strictly guided by the Australian MTB Trail Difficulty Rating System (TDRS). The classification of a trail must reflect the most difficult section of that trail for visitor risk management purposes.

Adhering to this national standard will:

• Help riders make informed decisions

• Encourage riders to use trails that match their skill level

• Manage risk and minimise injuries

• Aid in the planning and design of trails.

Trail classifications allow trail designers, builders and land managers to develop trails appropriate for the anticipated users, based on objective criteria.

Concepts for improving emergency access to the park for future stages were also discussed.

Is the inclusion of advanced trail features, which were not given in-principle approval by Ambulance Victoria, an issue of concern?

All trails and their features will be in accordance with the Australian Trail Difficulty Grading System (TDRS). Any trail feature that elevates risk will be located on sections of the trail with higher accessibility and signed accordingly.

There are no advanced trails proposed for this stage of construction.

How will emergency services know if solo riders are in the park, and possibly injured?

Will there be a system to count how many go in and how many come out?

With the exception of large scale commercial MTB parks such as Whistler (Canada) and Rotorua (New Zealand) trail counters are only used for Park Operations. Knowing rider numbers can help with maintaining the park, such as adjusting staffing levels or ensuring that the trails are not overcrowded. Collecting data also helps parks improve their services, plan for future growth, and track trends in rider behaviour and demand.

Most riders prefer to ride in groups. All riders are encouraged to let people know their intentions and download the Emergency Plus app via trailhead and on trail signage. In the unlikely event a rider is missing in the park, it is a relatively small well mapped search area compared to trying to locate say a hiker, trail runner, horse rider or dirt bike rider.

Traffic congestion.

There is no mention in this application of traffic management or parking options, yet the trails begin on Mt Welcome, with the only access via a rough 4wd track with no designated parking areas or emergency vehicle access or evacuation plan.

The trail network does not begin on Mt Welcome. Trail access and return is via the trailhead located at The Mill, adjacent to the Omeo Highway approximately 1.8km from the centre of town. The trailhead provides picnic facilities, toilet facilities and parking for 15 vehicles. It is anticipated that this will be more than sufficient for stage 1 rider visitation.

The trailhead location was the residents preferred location as identified in the master planning community consultation conducted in 2019.

Emergency vehicle access has been considered in consultation with Ambulance Victoria and evacuation procedures are contained within the Trail Management Plan.

Loss of Vegetation.

This planning permit references 30kms of trails, 2m in width, which means a minimum vegetation clearance of 60,000 square metres of native bush, and that's before access road upgrades and suitable parking provisions. How is this to be managed with minimum impact? There is no Native Vegetation Removal Report included with the permit application. There is no Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act approval included with the permit application. There is no mention of biosecurity concerns from imported weed species via bicycle tyres, nor any mention of monitoring and enforcement that would be associated with this.

The trails construction width is 1m with an impact buffer of 500mm either side of the trail. Parking has already been constructed at The Mill trailhead and no access Rd upgrades are proposed within this stage of construction. A Native Vegetation Report has been completed and a quote for respective vegetation offsets obtained.

Biosecurity concerns are no different for the Mitta MTB Park as they are for any other MTB park in Australia. Trailhead signage will outline the risks associated with the introduction of invasive plant species and encourage cyclists, hikers, and outdoor enthusiasts to thoroughly clean their footwear and equipment.

This is not policed at any MTB facility.

Comparing Biosecurity Risks:

1. **Horse Riding** – The highest biosecurity risk, largely due to manure, potential disease spread (e.g., equine influenza), and hoof damage leading to erosion. Horses also inadvertently spread invasive plant seeds.
2. **4x4 Driving** – High biosecurity risk because of soil compaction, potential for spreading invasive species via mud, and pollution. 4x4 driving can cause significant environmental damage in sensitive ecosystems.
3. **Mountain Biking** – Moderate risk due to soil disturbance and the potential for spreading plant pathogens or invasive species via tires. While it lacks animal-related biosecurity risks (like manure or parasites), it still can damage ecosystems and introduce non-native species.
4. **Hiking** – The least biosecurity risk, though still present. Hiking can cause erosion and introduce plant seeds via shoes, but overall, it is the least disruptive of these activities.

Loss of amenity

The current walking trails in the area would be altogether altered by cyclists barrelling along them. There is no mention of how cyclists will be deterred from using the existing trails as well as the 30kms of proposed new trails.

This concern was raised during the 2019 community consultation. The trail network has been designed to minimise interactions with the existing walking trails. No walking trails form part of the MTB trail network. Wheels give way to walkers trail etiquette will be enforced with signage and walkers only signage installed where required.

This has also been addressed within DEECA's request for further information.

Sewage systems

Inviting lots of newcomers to the valley is one thing, managing the human waste and rubbish generated is another. Again, for a town with no sewerage system it's a major oversight to not consider this in a planning permit. Who will cover the cost of new toilet facilities, or the added stress upon existing ones?

The anticipated rider visitation following completion of stage 1 will be insignificant compared to current events such as the Mighty Mitta Muster. The toilet facilities at the trailhead managed by DEECA will service the majority of rider visitation.

Connection with nature and appreciation of the environment are primary drivers for mountain bikers. They are advocates for these areas and much like hikers, pack out what they pack in.

Accommodation pressure

Where will these people stay? There's very little accommodation in the Mitta Valley, and it's a long, fossil fuel powered drive to anywhere, with zero public transport options.

Overnight accommodation demand resulting from this stage of construction will be catered for with the existing options available in Mitta Mitta, Dartmouth and Eskdale.

It is anticipated that completion of stage one (30km) will mainly attract day visitation from within region.

Where do you start and finish with the fossil fuel argument. At least this user group are using pedal power while they are in the Valley.

Get comment from Debbie at Dart Motor Inn on benefit to business.

Can any aspect of this mountain bike park be considered remotely close to responsible social planning in 2025?

The following has been considered during the planning phase:

1. Environmental Sustainability

- **Trail Design and Maintenance**: The Mitta MTB Park will prioritise sustainable trail construction to minimise environmental impact and reduce lifecycle maintenance. This includes designing trails that prevent erosion, maintain natural hydrology, and preserve the integrity of local ecosystems. The parks management has plans in place for routine trail maintenance to reduce wear and tear and prevent damage to surrounding flora and fauna.
- **Invasive Species Management**: Park management will actively manage the spread of invasive species (like promoting the cleaning of bike tyres and equipment) demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the health of the local ecosystem.
- **Waste Management**: Responsible planning includes effective waste management and toilet facilities for visitors via the trailhead. Ensuring that the park encourages cyclists to pack out rubbish.

2. Accessibility and Inclusivity

- **Accessibility for All Riders**: In 2025, inclusive planning means making mountain biking accessible to a broader audience, including riders with disabilities. This has been addressed by designing beginner-friendly trails that encourage new riders of different backgrounds, ages, and abilities. Creating an adaptive mountain bike trail will be considered in a future construction phase.
- **Diversity of Trail Options**: Responsible planning has ensured that a range of trail difficulties are offered, ensuring that everyone, regardless of skill level, has a safe and enjoyable experience.

3. Community Engagement

- **Involvement of Local Communities**: As a community led project, planning has included collaboration with local communities and stakeholders to ensure the park's impact is positive. Engaging with nearby residents and businesses has been crucial in the planning process. Involving the community in decision-making processes about development, trailhead location, and opportunity creation has directly shaped the project.

- **Education and Awareness**: The park will focus on educating visitors about responsible behaviour, such as the importance of environmental stewardship, safety, and respect for local cultures. Educational signage, workshops, or volunteer programs have been discussed to foster community responsibility.

4. Safety and Well-being of Riders

- **Infrastructure for Safety**: The park will prioritise safety measures, such as well-marked trails, appropriate signage and trail grading and emergency response plans. This reflects the social responsibility of ensuring visitors' well-being.
- **Mental Health Considerations**: Providing spaces for reflection or rest, as well as promoting mountain biking as a mental health-friendly activity, can also be a modern aspect of responsible planning. Encouraging outdoor exercise and community-building through group events or riding clubs contributes to social well-being.

5. Economic Considerations

- **Sustainable Tourism**: The economic model of the park prioritises long-term sustainability over short-term profits. This includes collaborating with local businesses to ensure that the park's success benefits the broader community. Ensuring that the delivery of stage 1 of the park does not overwhelm local infrastructure or increase congestion has been considered.
- **Support for Local Economies**: A park that promotes local tourism, jobs, and offers small businesses opportunities (e.g., bike shops, accommodations, and restaurants) supports responsible economic planning. Partnerships with the social enterprise that help fund conservation efforts or local community projects will further enhance the park's positive impact on the region.

6. Technological Integration for Responsible Planning

- **Data Collection for Improvement**: In 2025, many parks are incorporating technology for park management (such as tracking rider numbers via counters or using apps for safety). Using data to improve operations, address issues like overcrowding, or monitoring environmental health could reflect responsible and forward-thinking social planning.

7. Collaboration with Government and Policy Makers

- **Adherence to Regulations**: Operation of the Mitta MTB Park will adhere to local, regional, and national regulations, such as those related to wildlife protection, land-use zoning, and environmental conservation**.** Consulting with DEECA will ensure that the park does not inadvertently harm natural habitats or wildlife and forms a key component of responsible governance.

In Australia, there has been a noticeable trend of youth moving away from traditional team sports and taking up individual activities like mountain biking. Several factors contribute to this shift:

1. Changing Interests and Preferences

- **Desire for Individual Pursuits**: Many young people are seeking individual activities that allow for personal freedom, self-expression, and flexibility. Mountain biking provides an opportunity for youth to challenge themselves, push their limits, and explore nature on their own terms, without the structure of team sports.
- **Adventure and Thrill**: The thrill and adrenaline of mountain biking, combined with the chance to explore diverse terrains and natural landscapes, attract many young riders who may be looking for more excitement than traditional team sports can offer.

2. Accessibility and Flexibility

- **Fewer Time Constraints**: Unlike team sports, which often require scheduled practices and games, mountain biking offers greater flexibility. Youth can ride alone or with friends, without the pressure of team commitments. This appeals to young people with busy schedules or those who prefer spontaneous activities.
- **Minimal Equipment Needed**: While mountain biking requires a bike, the cost and equipment are generally lower than those required for some traditional sports, making it more accessible for youth in many communities.

3. Social Media and Influence

- **Influence of Social Media and YouTube**: Many young people are drawn to mountain biking through social media platforms, where they see exciting videos, tricks, and extreme rides. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram feature mountain biking influencers and events, which encourage youth to try the sport themselves.
- **Peer Influence**: Peer groups and local riding communities can significantly impact youth interests. As mountain biking gains popularity, more young people are being exposed to it through friends, family, or local events, which contributes to the growing trend.

4. Growing Infrastructure and Support

- **Improved Mountain Biking Trails and Facilities**: Australia has made significant strides in building mountain biking infrastructure, such as purpose-built trails,

bike parks, and dedicated riding areas, particularly in regions like Tasmania, the mid NSW Coast, and Victoria. These developments provide a safe and exciting environment for youth to explore the sport.

- **Mountain Biking Events and Competitions**: The rise of mountain biking events and competitions, such as the Australian National Mountain Bike Championships, provides young riders with opportunities to compete at various levels. This competitive scene is appealing for youth who might be seeking new challenges outside of traditional team sports.

5. Health and Wellbeing

- **Physical and Mental Health Benefits**: Like team sports, mountain biking offers physical exercise, but it also has mental health benefits, including stress reduction and a sense of personal achievement. Youth who may not thrive in the social and structured environment of team sports often find individual sports like mountain biking to be more rewarding for their mental wellbeing.
- **Connection to Nature**: As part of the shift towards outdoor activities, many young people are drawn to mountain biking's connection to nature. It allows them to escape the screen-heavy lifestyle and engage with the natural environment in a meaningful way.

6. Youth Programs and Initiatives

- **Youth Engagement Programs**: There has been a rise in mountain biking programs targeting young people, helping them develop skills, engage with their peers, and gain confidence. These programs provide a structured way for youth to get into mountain biking while still building social bonds and a sense of community. The Beechworth Chain Gang run a youth rider development program where it is not uncommon to see up to 60 kids on a Wednesday night from surrounding towns.

Mountain biking in Australia offers several social benefits, fostering community engagement, inclusivity, and a positive connection to nature. Here are some of the key social benefits:

1. Community Building

- **Local Clubs and Events**: Mountain biking fosters strong community networks through local riding clubs and events. These gatherings bring people of all ages and backgrounds together, creating social connections.

- **Volunteering Opportunities**: Many trails and events rely on volunteer efforts, allowing people to contribute to their community while building bonds with like-minded individuals.

2. Promotes Inclusivity and Diversity

- **Accessible for All Ages and Skill Levels**: Mountain biking is inclusive, as it caters to a wide range of ages and skill levels. This makes it an activity that can be enjoyed by families, children, seniors, and beginners alike.
- **Inclusive Programs**: Programs are increasingly being introduced to encourage women, Indigenous groups, and people with disabilities to participate in mountain biking, promoting inclusivity and diversity in the sport.

3. Mental Health and Wellbeing

- **Stress Relief and Relaxation**: Riding through nature helps reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing. The physical activity and connection to the outdoors are known to boost mood, reduce anxiety, and promote overall mental health.
- **Social Support Networks**: Group rides and club activities create a sense of belonging and support, offering a social environment where people can connect, share experiences, and support one another.

4. Encourages Active Lifestyles

- **Physical Health Benefits**: Mountain biking encourages physical activity, which in turn leads to improved fitness, cardiovascular health, and overall physical well-being.
- **Family and Group Activities**: Many families enjoy mountain biking together, making it an opportunity for shared experiences that encourage active, healthy lifestyles.

5. Tourism and Economic Impact

- **Tourism Boost**: Popular mountain biking destinations in Australia, such as North East Victoria, Tasmania, and the Otway Ranges, attract tourists, which supports local businesses and fosters community development. In the 2018-2019 period, the Ride High Country campaign, aimed at promoting cycling tourism in the High Country region (which includes North East Victoria), reported that 103,000 cyclists visited the area, contributing to a total visitor spend of over $80 million. This represents an increase of approximately $31 million compared to previous years.

- **Local Job Creation**: The rise in mountain biking can generate job opportunities in trail building, guiding, and tourism services, creating a positive economic impact on local communities.

6. Environmental Awareness and Conservation

- **Promotes Sustainable Practices**: Mountain biking in natural areas promotes environmental awareness, encouraging cyclists to adopt responsible practices, such as respecting trails, wildlife, and ecosystems. This can lead to increased conservation efforts within communities.

7. Youth Engagement and Development

- **Youth Programs**: Mountain biking programs for young people provide opportunities for them to develop physical, social, and leadership skills. These programs often focus on discipline, teamwork, and respect for nature, helping to develop positive habits.
- **Mentorship**: Experienced riders often mentor younger participants, fostering intergenerational relationships and teaching important life skills such as resilience and perseverance.

Summary

If a mountain bike park in 2025 considers the above factors — particularly focusing on environmental sustainability, community engagement, accessibility, and safety — it could certainly be seen as engaging in responsible social planning. The integration of technological solutions, inclusive policies, and a focus on long-term sustainability whilst supporting local economies, would mark it as forward-thinking and community-conscious, aligning well with principles of social responsibility.

While traditional team sports still hold significant importance in Australian culture, the shift towards mountain biking among youth is growing. This shift is influenced by a combination of personal preference for individual activities, the thrill of adventure sports, greater accessibility, and the rise of youth-focused mountain biking infrastructure and events. This change reflects broader cultural shifts in how young people engage with physical activities, where the focus is increasingly on personal challenge, flexibility, and connection to nature.

Mountain biking in Australia offers significant social benefits by promoting community, inclusivity, mental and physical health, and sustainable practices, all while supporting local economies and creating positive connections between people and nature.

No on ground environmental assessments, if indeed they have been undertaken, have been shared with Mitta Valley residents. There is no attached Native Vegetation Removal Report.

Just some click 'n' flick overlay assessments, brushed off as if the flora and fauna of the area is utterly unworthy of serious consideration.

Flora and fauna which include, and here I'll refer to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas- the following EPBC Act Listed Species:

Eastern bentwing bat (critically endangered sighted 1999)

Eastern bitter cress (endangered sighted 2011)

Mountain phebalium (endangered sighted 2004)

Narrow leaf star hair (endangered sighted 2011)

River leafless bossiaea (endangered sighted 2004)

Spiny crayfish (threatened sighted 2002)

Platypus (vulnerable sighted 2021)

Poverty wattle (vulnerable sighted 1996)

Square tailed kite (vulnerable sighted 2019)

Gang gang cockatoo (endangered sighted 2023)

Greater glider (endangered sighted 2024)

As previously addressed, a thorough Native Vegetation Report has been completed and a quote for respective vegetation offsets obtained. DEECA will not support the permit application if this element is not satisfied.

On-site Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys were undertaken on only 20% of the area proposed to be affected. The reason why other areas were not accessed during the on ground survey is because the other areas were "very steep and heavily vegetated making access to many areas proposed for tracks unsafe to access". That this is this case ties in to the following point, about emergency services access.

This was the case at time of study as there currently are no trails to access these areas. Not the case post construction.

A letter is attachment to this planning application in which Ambulance Victoria have given in principle support - only - if the project is for beginner and intermediate levels of mountain bike riders, and if emergency vehicle access is available to all parts of the mountain bike park.

According to All Terrain Trails, it will consists of 80 percent intermediate trails, with "Technical Trail Features to support advanced level riders". Later in the report blue/black level trails (intermediate/advanced) are also referenced.

A quick glance at the map shows that emergency vehicle access will not be available to large areas of the trails. In fact, the Cultural Heritage Assessment that was undertaken was only able to access 20% of the proposed areas, and only 14% of the gully areas, as it was "very steep and heavily vegetated making access to many areas proposed for tracks unsafe to access". This unsafe access is what Ambulance officers will be relying on to evacuate riders who have fallen afoul of a "Technical Trail Feature".

This discrepancy between what Ambulance Victoria have expressed in-principle support for, and what is being proposed, really ought to be resolved before approving a design which is likely to result in overwhelming pressure on local emergency services.

As previously addressed, The majority of mountain biking facilities are by nature remote with accessibility challenges. This is inherent with the landscape and typography required to meet user group expectations and is an accepted risk of the sport.

Consultation with Ambulance Victoria included discussions around proposed trail locations (presented on digital maps with GPS alignments), emergency access points and the commitment to consult with Ambulance Victoria during the construction phase to ensure best access/response outcomes.

The trails for this stage of the MTB park targets beginner to intermediate rider skill levels. The design and features of the trails are strictly guided by the Australian MTB Trail Difficulty Rating System (TDRS) (attached). The classification of a trail must reflect the most difficult section of that trail for visitor risk management purposes.

Adhering to this national standard will:

• Help riders make informed decisions

• Encourage riders to use trails that match their skill level

• Manage risk and minimise injuries

• Aid in the planning and design of trails.

Trail classifications allow trail designers, builders and land managers to develop trails appropriate for the anticipated users, based on objective criteria.

Concepts for improving emergency access to the park for future stages were also discussed.

There is nothing in this planning permit or it's appendices to suggest that there is a clear plan in place for dealing with emergencies, and it seems that

through lack of communication between the trail designers and emergency services, this may create conditions for serious injuries and loss of life, that could be avoided through better design choices made prior to approving this current, unsafe design.

Emergency response procedures are contained in the Trail Management Plan.

There has been and will continue to be communication between the trail contractors and emergency services.

We question the experience and expertise of the objector to deem the proposed trail network unsafe.

The loss of amenity for bushwalkers who will now have mountain bikers zipping across the lovely walking tracks in that area is particularly significant. Residents in Towong shire rated walking and bushwalking as their second and third most preferred recreational activities in a survey published in Towong shire's own Recreational Strategy for 2022-2033.

Yet, despite Mountain biking only reaching equal 13th on this list of activities, the current plan cuts through walking trails with these less popular mountain bike trails.

Rather than, say, opting to avoid the walking trails, or relocating the trails to an area that will not negatively impact upon existing walking trails.

Rather than degrade the experience for people already enjoying Mitta Mitta's fine natural features, a better design could, for example, make use Of the southern face of Mt Welcome, which is cooler and more shaded during the months in which Mitta Mitta actually receives large visitor numbers, less fire-prone, and currently without any conflicting walking trails.

As previously addressed, this concern was raised during the 2019 community consultation. The trail network has been designed to minimise interactions with the existing walking trails. No walking trails form part of the MTB trail network. Wheels give way to walkers trail etiquette will be enforced with signage and walkers only signage installed where required. The few times a MTB trails crosses a walking trail the location allows for good sightlines and the MTB trail will be directed uphill to slow riders to walking pace. The crossing will be supported by appropriate warning signage.

The connection of the trail network with the township is a critical element of a mountain bike destination product and ensure the economic benefits associated with this user group flow into the local businesses.

The suggestion of moving the trail network to the more remote inaccessible southern side of Mt Welcome contradicts previous accessibility concerns.

The proposed network is largely located in Deep Gully, providing shade and higher soil moisture content. As suggested this provides a cooler, less fire prone environment and a more sustainable soil type.

This has also been addressed within DEECA's request for further information.

Why on earth would accumulate data from surveys on recreational interests only to preference the 13th option over the 2nd and 3rd options?

Mountain biking placing 13th is to be expected when Towong Shire is currently one of the few Local Government Areas within our region that does not possess any mountain bike facilities.

There has been no viable business case for the Mountain bike park presented to Mitta Valley residents, only a statement that:

"Mitta Valley Inc. and the wider community are aware that the mountain bike park will bring with it expenses to maintain the park as a quality destination.

It is proposed to develop a social enterprise to generate income to support these ongoing costs.

A social enterprise business plan has been developed, which includes activities including but not limited to, e-bike bike hire and the leasing of space for a café pod operation. "

The business plan alluded to here, the failure of which would result in maintenance/rehabilitation costs being dumped back onto Towong shire ratepayers, has not, as far as I'm aware, been shown to Mitta Valley residents. It's certainly not on their website.

To begin something of this magnitude without a clear and ongoing funding mechanism responsible for trail maintenance is fiscal irresponsibility in the extreme. Weed management, rubbish removal, erosion mitigation, not to mention public liability insurance for the inevitable accidents that will occur - all this requires serious funding.

The vague idea that somebody might want to manage the renting of ebikes out of the goodness of their heart, and that a few people renting half a dozen ebikes every now and

then could pay, in perpetuity, for maintenance contracts that have not even been costed?

This has all been considered within the masterplan and social enterprise business case.

It's mind boggling. Even the 1 million dollar round figure chosen for the project on this application comes with absolutely no breakdown of expenses.

Finally, parking is not taken into consideration at all in this planning application. Where will the proposed users of this park store their vehicles while they ride? How will they access the top of Mt Welcome? Via the poor condition 4WD only Mt Disappointment track? DEECA state in their attached email that "Upgrading and maintaining for 2WD access is not within the district's current funding or plans

for improving strategic fire access across the estate."

If users can manage to get to the top of Mt Welcome, where will they park?

How many can park before emergency evacuation access to this dry flammable hilltop (which will, if all goes well, start to see far increased traffic levels) is compromised?

None of this is considered in the plan.

As Previously addressed, the trail network does not begin on Mt Welcome. Trail access and return is via the trailhead located at The Mill, adjacent to the Omeo Highway approximately 1.8km from the centre of town. The trailhead provides picnic facilities, toilet facilities and parking for 15 vehicles. It is anticipated that this will be more than sufficient for stage 1 rider visitation.

The trailhead location was the residents preferred location as identified in the master planning community consultation conducted in 2019.

Emergency vehicle access has been considered in consultation with Ambulance Victoria and evacuation procedures are contained within the Trail Management Plan.

Upgrades to the Mt Disappointment track will be addressed in consultation with DEECA as part of stage 2 construction concept development.

In the interest of public safety and amenity this planning application needs to be paused until there is a serious answer to the following:

1) Demonstrate that there is a long term financial management team, with ongoing funding or turnover sufficient to implement the project without becoming a burden to Towong shire ratepayers, and provide costings for this.

This has all been considered within the masterplan and social enterprise business case.

Mitta Valley Inc are acutely aware that the park is to be self sufficient and not rely on ongoing support from council.

2) Emergency vehicle access, and clarification as to whether the trails are only beginner/intermediate, or if they are also intermediate/advanced.

As previously stated, beginner (green) to intermediate (blue) as per Australian Mountain Bike TDRS

3) Adequate all weather access roads for users, plus sufficient parking that doesn't jeopardise emergency vehicle access. Not even a temporary event permit would be granted without this, because it can easily least to a preventable death.

All weather access road will be factored into the scope of stage 2 development.

Parking has already been addressed.

4) Adequate on-ground environmental surveys, a compliant Native Vegetation Removal Report, a Site Construction Environmental Management Plan, and a fully costed ongoing Environmental Management Plan.

All completed and will be assessed adequate or not by the appropriate determining authority as part of the statutory planning process.

While we broadly agree with the provision on mountain biking facility in the area, we hold significant concerns about the current proposal from biodiversity, biosecurity and public amenity perspectives. We object to the extensive construction of bike paths on the north/north-east facing slopes of Mt Welcome (Trails 4, 5, 6) and strongly recommend extending the path network to the south and southwest of the Mt Welcome summit walking trail.

See below.

EPBC Act referral - According to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas there are 11 species within the project area that are listed under the EPBC Act (see below for details of species). The documents we reviewed did not mention EPBC approvals to clear vegetation, which would be required. We would like to see more specific provisions for avoiding impacts on threatened species in bike path construction and use.

See previous responses to biodiversity concerns.

Weed invasion – We would like to see biosecurity and weed invasion prevention plans for the project. There is a strong risk that this intact vegetation with very little weed invasion at present will suffer weed and pathogen invasion during the construction period. There is also risk of weeds and pathogens being distributed by bikes over the 30km of new trails weaving throughout the project site. The risk of phytophthora spread is of particular concern given the magnificent grass trees present on ridge lines of Mt Welcome and the recent appearance of phytophthora in the Mitta region. We would strongly advise active avoidance of areas with grass trees as these species are particularly affected by phytophthora. There are questions around the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of biosecurity conditions (sterilising of bike tires before cyclists enter the bush etc.) – how will this be resourced and implemented?

See previous responses to biosecurity concerns.

Construction biosecurity protocols are contained in the Site Construction Environment Management Plan.

Areas containing grass trees were identified during the Native Vegetation Assessment and have been avoided during the final trail alignment process.

Loss of amenity for town residents – The main existing recreational use of the Mt Welcome area is horse riding and hiking on the Mt Welcome track and around the Lower Pioneer track. The Mt Welcome walk is the primary tourist walk accessible from the town that tourists are encouraged to use, and the Upper Pioneer track is the most widely used track with walkers, horse riding, and jogging. The existing density of bike tracks on the north face of Mt Welcome will reduce amenity for walkers and horse riders and generate risk and conflict. We strongly recommend removing planned trails 4, 5 and 6 with a view to avoiding conflict with existing recreational use on the existing Pioneer trail. Redeployment of these trails into the west face of Mt Welcome and further south in the crown land footprint would be highly desirable to reduce potential conflict and injury to existing recreational users of this area. Map 5 indicates significant potential use area to the west and southwest of the Mt Welcome walking trail and summit.

See previous response to walking trail and user conflict minimisation considerations.

The mis and upper part of the Mt Welcome hike sees minimal use.

The area west of stage 1 contains conceptual alignments for stage 2.

Track maintenance - The soil in the project area is highly soluble and erodes easily, as can most recently be seen by the dramatic land slide and erosion of Watercress Gully onto the Omeo Highway and surrounding gullies and tracks. After this event, graders were used extensively along the Pioneer trail and other tracks to restore access, but a rain event a few weeks later resulted in the tracks being washed out again. A culvert was lost from the river walk, and erosion is again widespread. The maintenance of tracks will need to be very well resourced as tracks will have dropped branches and will be washed out regularly. It would be a tragedy to clear 30km of track through this largely intact environment to find that the maintenance costs were too high resulting in the project being disbanded. It would be important to have a substantial, ongoing maintenance budget (not funded by tax or rate payers) for this project to be viable.

The largely sustainable clay/shale and loam soil types that exists in the Deep Gully area were identified early in the planning process. The dry and potentially unstable soil on the upper slopes, east of the Mt Welcome hike, particularly upper Watercress Gully, is the reason this area was avoided.

See previous response to park management/maintenance.

Construction contract includes 3 years trail maintenance.

As a long time resident of the Mitta valley , I am against the bike trail .

Because of the increase of traffic on an unsuitable section of the Omeo Hwy , mainly concerning the intersection of Scrubby Creek Road and the Hwy . Its dangerous enough all ready with the speed vehicles approach the intersection .

I have raised my concerns before with the Shire as well as Vic Roads , it would be well justified to reduce the speed limit to 60 or 80 KMH , as they have on the Mitta North road.

This should be number one priority before works begins.

This is a valid concern that was raised during the 2019 community consultation. MVI will continue to advocate for an extension of speed limit reduction to the Dartmouth Rd intersection or alternatively a side road activated speed limit reduction.

The additional traffic generated by stage 1 construction alone will be minimal.

I have reviewed the proposed document re the establishment of the bike trail and removal of native vegetation re planning permit PA240059

and have the following concerns .

1. The bike and car traffic that will be using Otto's road adjoining our family property and the effect this traffic will have.

No cars or bike will be directed to use Otto's Rd as part of this permit application.

2. How much traffic is anticipated in using Otto's road adjoining our property and how often will this road be in use ?

See above

3. Where will cars be parking in bush land behind our property?

No, cars will be parked at The Mill trailhead.

4. There has been a recent creation of another access trail or small fire break along the ridge line from the north end of OTTOS Rd to the South end which directly impacts out family property and its privacy .

No knowledge of this and is not part of this project. Most likely DEECA works.

What is council proposing to do to ensure that the secluded nature of the bush and surrounds is maintained ?

Addressed and assed by determining authorities as part of the statutory planning process.

The Head Start Site (trailhead?)

There is no potable drinking water available

A water tank is available for water bottle refill.

Insufficient parking available

There is parking for 15 vehicles. See previous response to parking concerns.

The highway adjacent has a 100 km/hr speed limit, a serious danger to cyclists crossing the road to access the tracks

This is a valid concern that was raised during the 2019 community consultation. MVI will continue to advocate for an extension of speed limit reduction to the Dartmouth Rd intersection. An underpass will be included within the scope of stage 2.

There is insufficient infrastructure in the town to handle an influx of visitors : lack of parking, no water supply or sewerage

See previous responses to these concerns. Compared to events such as The Mighty Mitta Muster the increase in daily visitation due to delivery of stage 1 will be minimal.

Residents did not ask for the MTB Park

Business owners and some residents have been advocating for a mountain bike park since the 'Our Valley Our Future Mitta Valley' Community Plan 2013-2016

Mitta Valley Inc:

Is not an organisation representing the community

We have stived to attract more community members for many years. This would add considerable weight as an entity, increase community representation and reduce volunteer burn out on the few that put their hand up. Our doors are always open.

Does not hold advertised General Meetings

General meetings are not advertised but AGMs are. All are welcome to attend, become members and contribute.

Is a de facto 'chamber of commerce' representing business interests that will financially gain from the project

Yes. Our goal is to see local businesses succeed, create business and employment opportunities, create economic resilience and see our community prosper.

The Council has a conflict of interest with representation on the working group

Towong Shire Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Priority 3.9 Support Mitta Valley Inc to develop the Mitta Valley mountain bike park

The council representative has provided support until lodgement of the planning permit application at which they have declared a conflict of interest and has purely supported by taking minutes at meetings.

The two panel members purporting to represent residents have not consulted or reported to the residents on the progress of the project

Regretfully, due to substantial delays in the ecological and cultural assessments, there has not been much progress to report. However, project updates and media releases have been posted to the Mitta Valley Inc website.

Mitta Mountain Bike Park | Mitta Valley

Mitta Valley Inc and the Council will be exposed if there is a financial failure of the project

All efforts have been made to ensure the success of t

he project. However, as with any business plan involving projections, it is best judgment with the information available at time of writing. In the unlikely event that the management model fails, signage will be removed and the park will simply close.

The project was 'sold' to the community on the basis of excess profits being returned to the public. There is little chance of this occurring.

The project was definitely not sold on the basis of excess profits. The concept of a social enterprise managing the park was in response to feedback received during the 2019 community consultation process that the community wanted to maintain control of the park. Excess profits are unlikely as a result of stage 1 alone. This will be different with the delivery of the full network, including a shuttle service. Being able to use excess profits for other community projects is just a benefit of this management model.

To whom it may concern,

I put forth my objections to the proposed mountain bike park project based on my opinion that the project in it current form is socially irresponsible and economically flawed. a project of this scale will put overwhelming pressure on the existing services and amenities within the community as listed in dot form below:

The township of Mitta Mitta don't have public toilets that have a sufficient capacity to service the large tourist base it already has and an aging (likely non-compliant with EPA regulations) septic system within close proximity to a waterway which also provides untreated drinking water for the community. further tourism pressure on this asset could increase the risk of contamination of drinking water and health related issues downstream.

See previous responses social responsibility and economic viability.

As previously mentioned, the extra visitation generated by the delivery of stage 1 alone will not add significant pressure on existing infrastructure.

The township of Mitta Mitta doesn't have any water treatment plant or reticulation of potable water system. with increased tourism to the area this becomes more paramount to address which as indicated by the Towong shire likely to ever happen.

See above.

The township of Mitta Mitta is already experiencing congestion and traffic issues to due limited availability of parking. further tourism development will only increase the frustrations of local rate payers.

See previous responses to parking.

The increased popularity of Mitta Mitta due to promotion and tourism development has led to more holiday houses and AIR BNB accommodation options. This reduces the capacity for people and families to live in our community and fulfil roles that are needed to have a have sustainable community. This proposed project will likely further exacerbate this issue and negatively impact the structure of our community. Mitta has long had a symbiotic relationship with tourism and the community understands its importance to our local economy but I fear that this project could move the relationship into a parasitic like relationship.

The number of largely vacant properties used as occasional holiday homes has long been an issue in Mitta Mitta. Not only has housing stock not been available for new residents, the economic benefits to the town derived from regular accommodation guests has also been missing.

Attracting new families to the valley to counter a diminishing, aging population has been a goal for many years. The challenge is not only somewhere to house these new families but also providing the business and employment opportunities to attract and support them when they are here.

The development of the Mitta MTB Park aims to help provide these opportunities.

Mitta Valley Inc will continue to advocate for the appropriate rezoning to enable the carefully considered development of the valley therefore providing housing for new residents.

The fundamental principle of this project being a social enterprise is flawed. the project proponents have failed to identify an appropriate method to generate sufficient income to maintain and manage the asset. I believe there is a high risk to Towong shire, as the responsible land managers of this area, that additional rate payer money will need to be injected to ensure compliance with the regulatory commitments. I sense that there is a growing negative sentiment towards Towong shire being able to justify large spending on tourism related projects when basic services that rate payers expect (waste management, roads repairs, signage maintenance, flood recovery works, community consultation) are being diminished, reduced or not being completed at all.

See previous responses to park management and council risk.

Towong Shire Riverine Plains Agriculture Officer

November - May 2025 Report

The Agriculture Officer role, through the partnership with Riverine Plains, continues to deliver agricultural information, networking and knowledge sharing opportunities between farmers and agricultural professionals, businesses, and groups within and beyond the Shire. The partnership leverages the resources and networks Riverine Plains continues to develop to assist farmers to maximise efficiencies.

Agricultural Challenges in the Towong Shire

The 2024/2025 summer and then into autumn has been challenging for graziers in the Shire and particularly in the Upper Murray, where monthly rainfall records have been between Deciles 1-3 since November to May, meaning "very much below average" to "below average" according to the Australian Government's Bureau of Meteorology (Recent and historical rainfall maps, Australian Bureau of Meteorology). Low rainfall in the early part of the new year caused pasture feed deficits and reduced crop growth across the Shire, causing productivity losses and increased input costs to dairy, beef and crop producers. With the 'autumn break' occurring at the end of May there has been some small relief however this has come at the end of a harsh summer. Farmers have been feeding animals all summer, with downsizing herds the only option for some. The emotional and financial toll on landholders has been extreme with little relief in sight. Feed supplies are tight with transport costs their major hurdle.

Apart from the main challenge of lack of feed and transport, the recent reports and the concerns around water availability and access, the growing feral animal populations, particularly deer and wild dogs are still prevalent. Feral animals are moving further to get feed which makes roads more dangerous particularly at night.

With the 'drought support' announcements it provides a small relief however it also raises more angst and the pressures of the dry conditions brings with it more challenges around mental health issues.

Agriculture Officer activities

Staff changes – Until April, Sophie Hanna had been delivering all of the agricultural officer roles. Sophie has taken extended leave and will return in November. During her absence, Jane McInnes has been acting in the role.

In April, there was a stall at the Tallangatta Farming expo where pre-paid feed test bags were handed out to landholders with the explanation around the importance of knowing what you're feeding your animals. There was great interaction at this event.

Following this event Upper Murray Landcare held two dry season drop in information sessions where we attended and spoke about containment feeding. The numbers at Cudgewa were great (25) and Corryong not as good (10) possibly due to the time of day.

Berringa Community Group reached out to the agricultural officer about holding an event locally. The topic of succession planning was put forward, so an event was held with Talgarno Landcare and the Berringa Community Group at the end of May. The night had 35 attendees, with a lot of interaction. People travelled from across the shire to attend and asked for more in their regions.

Following only a few events this past quarter, and appreciating the challenges of the dry year, the Officer prioritised disseminating information on 'managing dry seasons' to farmers through key stakeholders. This has included a note from the shire especially after the emergency services tax was introduced. There was also communication and distribution of physical and digital information resources with networked farmers, business and groups, as well as assisting in the coordination of, and participating in, agriculture information events. Upper Murray Incorporated have been holding dry season events so we are careful not to double up and assist rather than deliver, while using the sessions as a networking and information gathering.

Key stakeholders within the region the Officer has been collaborating with include Agriculture Victoria, Alpine Valleys Dairy, Upper Murray Landcare Network, Mitta to Murray Landcare Network, Mitta Valley Landcare Group, Agmate Rural Services Yenda Producers Co-operative, Costello Rural Corryong, Ag Warehouse Corryong, independent advisers and key local farmers who disseminate information with their local farming networks. As the North-East Node of the Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, Riverine Plains collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders interstate and industry wide. The Officer continues to bridge these connections, to strengthen the network of the Shire's agricultural community.

Regular engagement with farmers and members of the agricultural community provides knowledge sharing opportunities, increasing farmers awareness of resources and opportunities, and highlighting important issues for the Officer to address. The Officer continues to participate in local activities such the Alpine Valleys Dairy quarterly meetings, and Upper Murray Incorporated's (UMI) Ag Innovation Working Group Meetings. It will be important over the coming months to work closely with support staff that are on the ground and linking farmers with the support services that they need.

Representing farmers from the Shire is also a priority to advocate for the challenging conditions farmers have experienced in the recent years and we will continue to do this both at a state and federal level.

Riverine Plains looks forward to continuing to deliver relevant agricultural information to Towong Shire farmers and the agricultural community to assist productivity and efficiency advances. The officer aims to continue strengthening stakeholder engagement and communication of timely information, to minimise the implications of the challenging seasonal conditions and maximise long-term productivity and profitability.

Economic Development and Tourism Report

October 2024 – May 2025

Major Projects

High Country Rail Trail

Council continues to actively pursue the significant tourism potential presented by the High Country Rail Trail. Recognising the importance of robust planning documentation in securing future funding, efforts have been focused on ensuring the trail is investment-ready.

To support this, Council engaged Biosis, specialists in heritage and ecological consulting, to deliver the following:

- A Cultural Heritage Management Plan, and
- A Native Vegetation Assessment.

Additionally, an arborist has been commissioned to assess specific trees that may be impacted by the proposed trail alignment.

These assessments pertain to the proposed future trail section between Berringama and Colac Colac. It is important to note that the Shelley to Berringama section, known as the Shelley Wilderness Trail, has already been completed.

To further strengthen the project's readiness, Council has also engaged an engineering firm to develop structural plans for a bridge crossing at Nariel Creek. These plans will enable the development of an accurate cost estimate for construction.

Mitta Mountain Bike Park

The Mitta Mountain Bike Park project continues to progress, bringing the region closer to realising new recreational and economic opportunities in the Mitta Valley.

Council supported the project through to the end of 2024, culminating in Mitta Valley Inc. submitting a planning permit application for the park's construction.

In parallel, a brand identity has been developed for the Park, capturing the uniqueness and authenticity of the Mitta Valley and enhancing its appeal to future visitors.

Great River Road

At the end of 2024, the Pine Mountain Interpretive Stop was finessed with final landscaping works.

All planned artworks along the route are now installed, including the final piece, 'The Brolgas' sculpture at Towong. This installation has been particularly well received by the Upper Murray community, fostering a strong sense of pride and connection.

Working closely with local residents, interpretive signage artwork was finalised, fabricated, and installed at all new wayside stops, as well as along the Towong walking path and the Walwa to Jingellic walking path.

A marketing and promotional campaign for the Great River Road was delivered by branding specialists Us&Us. However, due to the company entering receivership earlier this year, further work on the Great River Road website and updated brochure remains incomplete. Council will now undertake this work in-house, with support from Tourism North East.

Mount Elliot Masterplan

Council's work to develop a Masterplan for Mount Elliot reached a key milestone with the plan's adoption at the November 2024 Council meeting. This followed a comprehensive process of stakeholder engagement and detailed research.

The Masterplan outlines a long-term vision for Mount Elliot as an accessible, high-quality, and environmentally sustainable adventure destination. The development is intended to make the most of the site's natural features, delivering both a valued community asset and a regional tourism attraction. The project is expected to generate positive social and economic outcomes for Upper Murray communities.

In support of the Masterplan, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan and a Native Vegetation Assessment were also completed. These documents provide Council with a clear understanding of the site's environmental and cultural constraints, as well as the associated development costs. Together, they position the project as investment-ready and well-informed for future funding opportunities.

The Masterplan was publicly exhibited prior to adoption, and community feedback received during this period informed several refinements to the final version.

The planning aspect of this project is now complete.

Bellbridge Container Cafe

The Bellbridge Place-making Plan identifies the need to enhance both social and economic opportunities within the township. One of the key initiatives emerging from this plan is the development of a container café, proposed to be located adjacent to the public toilet carpark on Lake Road, featuring a relaxed outdoor seating area overlooking Lake Hume.

The project is designed to deliver multiple community and economic benefits:

- Support for local business – Creating a new commercial opportunity for a small business owner or entrepreneur.
- Tourism enhancement – Improving the visitor experience along the Great River Road and adding value for the thousands of visitors who frequent the Bellbridge foreshore during the warmer months.
- Community connection – Establishing a welcoming space for residents to gather, socialise, and enjoy their village.

The project commenced in February 2025, with Wotbox, a container fit-out specialist based in Albury, engaged to construct the café unit. Barton Street Developments has been contracted to deliver landscaping works and ensure compliance with building requirements.

Progress to Date:

- Finalisation of container design and fit-out materials
- Completion of community and stakeholder engagement
- Planning permit obtained for the development
- Fabrication of the container commenced.

Most recently, a prospectus and Expression of Interest (EOI) for the operation of the café was developed and released. The EOI closes on 6 June 2025.

This project represents a strategic investment in Bellbridge's future, supporting local enterprise, enhancing the visitor economy, and strengthening community amenity.

Hanson Street Murals

As part of the broader Hanson Streetscape works project, funding was allocated for the creation of two public murals to enhance the visual appeal of the streetscape and celebrate the identity of the Upper Murray region.

A creative tender was developed and, with the support of Murray Arts, released to the creative industry. In parallel, Council officers issued an Expression of Interest inviting local residents to participate in a project steering group (PSG) to help shape the mural themes and determine appropriate locations.

The tender process attracted a strong response, and Council is pleased to confirm that Alex Sugar, a highly regarded mural artist, was awarded the commission.

In collaboration with the PSG, two mural themes have been developed:

- Arnold Playle – A creative tribute to the pioneering photographer who, through his glass negative camera, documented the life and times of the Upper Murray during the early days of European settlement.
- Upper Murray Tourism – A celebration of the region's natural beauty, highlighting local flora and fauna, the pristine source of the Murray River, and recreational activities such as bushwalking and hang gliding.

Following initial discussions with the owners of two buildings on Hanson Street, Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) are currently being finalised for signing by both the property owners and Council.

Subject to the signing of MOAs and favourable weather conditions, mural installation is scheduled to commence in mid-June, with completion anticipated by the end of July 2025.

Marketing and Promotions

Destination Website

In 2022, Council engaged Us&Us to lead the development of a new Destination Website which featured the three destination brands of the Shire: Lake Hume, Mitta Valley, and Upper Murray. After completing the branding phase, the project transitioned to creating the unified website. Photography shoots and professional copywriting was completed to populate the site, in parallel with developing the site's architecture and functionality. Despite numerous unforeseen setbacks, the site was successfully launched in October 2024.

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

As part of the development of the new destination website, strong efforts were made to onboard local tourism operators to the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW)—the national platform for tourism listings and lead generation.

Towong tourism businesses can register directly via the ATDW portal, enabling their self-managed listings to appear on a wide range of high-traffic tourism websites, including the soon-to-be-launched theundiscovered.com.au (incorporating visituppermurray.com.au, visitmittavalley.com.au, and visitlakehume.com.au), as well as victoriashighcountry.com.au, visitvictoria.com, australia.com, and others such as ridehighcountry.com.au. An ATDW listing is also a prerequisite for inclusion on the Victoria's High Country app and for participation in Tourism North East marketing opportunities, including media famils and editorial features.

Historically, uptake among small businesses has been low. To address this, Council initiated a 12-month free ATDW membership program to coincide with the launch of the new website, which offers significantly greater value than the previous platform. A targeted campaign was launched, and Council officers have been actively engaging with businesses to encourage participation.

December on Hanson

In an effort to support Hanson Street traders following the streetscape works, and to stimulate Christmas trade, Council initiated the December on Hanson campaign. The initiative aimed to create a festive atmosphere in Hanson Street throughout December, foster community engagement, and encourage Upper Murray residents to shop local.

The campaign featured a range of creative and inclusive activities designed to deliver both economic and social benefits:

- The local Men's Shed constructed a variety of pallet Christmas trees in different sizes.
- Community workshops were held, inviting residents to create handmade mosaic baubles to decorate the trees.
- A professional photographer captured portrait photos of Upper Murray community members, which were printed at life-size and adorned with festive hats.

These elements were arranged in festive clusters along Hanson Street, accompanied by signage encouraging people to "Shop and Win."

To incentivise local spending, shoppers who made purchases over $50 at participating businesses were eligible to enter a draw to win one of five $100 gift vouchers. A total of 196 entries were received, and the vouchers were purchased from five different local traders, ensuring the benefits of the campaign were shared across the business community.

A strong communications plan underpinned the campaign's success, helping to drive participation, promote local businesses, and reinforce community pride during the holiday season.

Signage

Council is progressing the design and fabrication of numerous new tourism interpretive signs, as well as the renewal of outdated signage, across several locations within the Shire. Current works are focused in areas including Mitta Mitta, Eskdale, Lochardt's Gap, and Tallangatta. All signage will incorporate the new destination branding, ensuring consistency and improved visual identity across the region.

In addition, a bespoke sign for the Corryong Saleyards was recently designed and installed, contributing to the broader enhancement of visitor infrastructure at the site.

Visitor Information Centres

Tallangatta Visitor Information Centre

The Tallangatta Visitor Information Centre (VIC) has undergone a significant revitalisation aimed at celebrating the region's rich heritage and enhancing the overall visitor experience. This transformation reflects Council's commitment to preserving local history while improving the accessibility and functionality of the space.

Works completed during this reporting period include:

- Thematic videography: Five short films, each exploring a different theme relevant to the region, have been produced and are now displayed on an internal screen activated by motion sensors.
- Interpretive signage: Internal interpretive panels have been thoroughly researched, professionally designed, fabricated, and installed to provide engaging historical context.
- Historical displays: Display cabinets have been curated with artefacts that reflect Tallangatta's unique heritage.
- Custom fixtures: Bespoke brochure racks and a magnetic noticeboard have been installed to improve visitor engagement and information access.
- External enhancements: New decals and signage have been applied to the building's exterior, improving visibility and presentation.
- E-bike friendly: A bike charging station has been installed to support cycling tourism.
- Destination website access: external touchscreen has been fitted to provide 24/7 access to visitor information.

As part of the revitalisation, Council officers worked closely with the Tallangatta Heritage Group to relocate artefacts they had in storage. While selected items were incorporated into the VIC displays,

the remainder were appropriately managed—either transferred to Council Records, State Records, returned to affiliated families, or redistributed to regional heritage organisations.

The initial new door to the VIC was severely damaged on two occasions during high winds. In response, a new sliding door, still compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), was recently installed.

Outstanding works:

A small number of tasks remain to complete the revitalisation project:

- Minor concrete and ceiling repairs associated with the new door installation
- Installation of 'caution tape' around the bike charging station for safety
- Activation of the external touchscreen, pending the installation of specific cabling currently being sourced.

Corryong Visitor Information Centre

Reporting Period: 1 October 2024 – 31 March 2025

The Corryong Visitor Information Centre (VIC) recorded a total of 5,402 in-person visits during the reporting period, representing a 2.82% decrease compared to the same period in the previous year. In addition to walk-in visitors, the Centre managed 431 other interactions, including 344 telephone enquiries, reflecting continued community and visitor engagement.

This reporting period was marked by significantly drier conditions, with Lake Hume falling below 30% capacity. Anecdotal feedback suggests that both residents and local businesses have experienced increased economic pressures.

The majority of visitor enquiries related to:

- Travel information, directions, and road conditions (27%)
- Local attractions, including Kosciuszko National Park, Upper Murray parks, the Victorian High Country, and other regional activities (22%)

It is noteworthy that the scope of enquiries extended beyond the Upper Murray and Towong Shire, indicating the VIC's broader regional relevance.

Visitor Arrival Routes:

- 54% via Murray Valley Highway (MVH)
- 18% via Alpine Way
- 13% via Snowy Valleys Way (SVW)

Visitor Departure Routes:

- 36% via MVH
- 27% via Alpine Way
- 17% via Great River Road (Murray River Road)

When compared to the alternate seasonal data, it appears that whilst the Murray Valley Highway remains the primary access route, particularly in winter due to its practicality, there is a seasonal shift in travel patterns during warmer months, with visitors exploring alternative scenic routes such as the Great River Road.

Several events contributed to increased visitation during the reporting period, including:

- October: Run Upper Murray (RUM), Tallangatta Tall Trestle Treadle
- November: Upper Murray Garden Getabout
- December/January: Nariel Folk Festival, Hang Gliding activities
- February: Paragliding events, Bullioh BnS
- March: Inaugural Sports Class Paragliding Competition
- Ongoing: Regular market weekends

During the reporting period, the Corryong Visitor Information Centre underwent a branding refresh, with updated ceiling signage, pull-up banners, and decals installed to reflect the Shire's new visual identity. These enhancements contribute to a more cohesive and contemporary presentation of the Centre, aligning with broader regional branding efforts.

The Corryong Visitor Information Centre remains vital in supporting and promoting the Shire's small businesses and events, maintaining content on the destination website, executing all activity on the Upper Murray Tourism Facebook and Instagram pages, and developing promotional materials - including the annual Calendar of Events poster.

Eskdale Visitor Information Centre

The Eskdale Visitor Information Centre, while clean and well-maintained, currently displays outdated information and is in need of a significant upgrade to better serve visitors and reflect the region's tourism offering.

In October 2024, the State Government launched the Tiny Towns Fund, providing an opportunity to support small-town infrastructure and community assets. Council officers collaborated with the Eskdale Progress Association to develop a funding application aimed at revitalising the Centre.

In April 2025, the application was announced as successful.

The project is scheduled to commence in July 2025 and will include:

- Installation of new internal and external signage
- Internal painting to refresh and modernise the space
- Installation of an accessible entry door to improve inclusivity
- Improvements to the disabled toilet facilities and door to meet compliance.

This revitalisation project will significantly enhance the visitor experience in the Mitta Valley and support Council's tourism objectives.

Events

Run Upper Murray

The Towong Shire Council Destination Management Plan identifies the region's outstanding potential to develop tourism products that showcase its natural beauty. Supporting this strategic direction, independent research highlighted a growing trend in running events, with increasing recognition of their value as tourism assets.

In late 2023, the concept of establishing major running events within Towong Shire was explored. This led to a partnership with Mat Doré Coaching in early 2024 and the successful delivery of the inaugural Pub to Pelican marathon.

Following the success of this event, attention turned to developing a trail running event in the Upper Murray. In collaboration with Mat Doré Coaching, the inaugural Run Upper Murray Trail Run was held on Saturday, 19 October 2024. The course traversed Mount Elliot Forest and surrounding private farmland, with Thowgla Hall serving as the event's staging area.

The inaugural trail run attracted just over 100 participants and was very well received. Participants provided positive feedback on:

- The relaxed and welcoming atmosphere at Thowgla Hall
- The high standard of event organisation
- The scenic and immersive natural setting.

Planning is now underway for the 2025 event, with a goal to increase participation by 100–200%.

Pub to Pelican 2025

Following the success of the inaugural event in 2024, preparations for the 2025 Pub to Pelican marathon are well advanced. Scheduled for Sunday, 1 June 2025, the event follows the High Country Rail Trail from Koetong Pub to Pelican Park in Tallangatta, and offers participants a choice of four distances: full marathon, half marathon, 10km, and 3km.

A number of key developments have been implemented to support the safe and efficient delivery of the event and to accommodate anticipated growth. These include:

- Development of a comprehensive project plan to guide event delivery and stakeholder coordination
- Traffic management planning to ensure participant and public safety
- Acquisition of all required permits
- Extensive stakeholder engagement with landholders, emergency services, and community
- A targeted promotional campaign to attract participants and visitors
- Recruitment of a strong volunteer team, including many local community members.

The 2025 event was capped at 500 participants, with an initial target of 400. At the time of writing, the event has sold out three weeks in advance, highlighting its growing popularity. On event day, Tallangatta is expected to welcome approximately 1,000 visitors, including participants, supporters, and event crew—delivering a significant boost to local tourism and the regional economy.

Upper Murray Business and Tourism Expo

The Upper Murray Business and Tourism Expo 2025 was held on 27 February 2025, in collaboration with Upper Murray Inc. and the Man from Snowy River Tourism Association. The event was designed to inform, inspire, and connect businesses across the Upper Murray and Towong Shire, offering a valuable platform for networking, learning, and collaboration.

The evening featured five engaging speakers, each bringing unique insights and experiences:

- Jeff Sheather, Brigham House – *Capitalising on Your Passion*
- Tom Hutcheon, Us&Us Brand Agency – *The Undiscovered*
- Charlie Vincent and Dean Cleave-Smith, Tourism North East – *The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse*
- Sally Wright, The Stanley Pub – *A Serial Entrepreneur*

Catering was provided by a selection of local producers, including Café Corryong Brew, Mitta Mitta Brewing Co., and Mount Tumbarumba Vineyard, showcasing the region's food and beverage offerings.

The event was well received by attendees, with particularly strong feedback following Sally Wright's presentation, which inspired several businesses to take immediate action in the days that followed. The Expo demonstrated the value of targeted business support initiatives and highlighted the appetite for continued professional development and collaboration within the Upper Murray business community.

Corryong 150 Years Celebration

In February 2025, a group of Corryong residents expressed interest in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the town's proclamation. Since then, Council officers have worked closely with community members to support the development and coordination of the event.

The celebration is shaping up to be a significant and inclusive community occasion, with strong involvement from a wide range of Upper Murray groups and organisations. These include The Man from Snowy River Tourism Association, Red Cross, Corryong College, Sacred Heart School, the Memorial Hall Committee, David Cottage, and many others.

The event aims to honour Corryong's rich heritage, celebrate its vibrant present, and inspire a shared vision for the future.

The Corryong 150 Years Celebration is scheduled to take place from 20–27 July 2025, and is expected to attract both local residents and regional visitors to the region.

Council will continue to provide support, particularly in the way of marketing, to ensure the success of this community initiative.

Other

Digital Assets Library

Over the past decade, the Economic Development Team has accumulated a substantial collection of digital media, comprising more than 20,000 photographs and video files. These assets were previously managed using an outdated and inefficient system that lacked essential functionality. The legacy system was labour-intensive, offered no safeguards for preserving original files, lacked user access controls, and provided no effective search capabilities beyond file name recognition. This placed a significant burden on Council resources and limited the usability of the asset library.

In response to these challenges, a Request for Quotation (RFQ) was issued to identify a modern digital asset management solution that could meet Council's evolving needs. Following a comprehensive evaluation process, DB Gallery was selected as the preferred platform. This system offers a range of advanced features, including artificial intelligence-powered search capabilities that significantly enhance the accuracy and efficiency of locating specific assets.

Council formally adopted DB Gallery in April 2025. The process of migrating and cataloguing the existing digital asset collection into the new system has commenced, marking a significant step forward in improving the accessibility, security, and long-term management of Council's digital media resources.

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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:	25 June 2025
Date of next review:	June 2029

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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. Objectives

Council regularly receives correspondence from the community, third parties and government entities, which may be at times addressed to Councillors. This policy identifies the process in which correspondence is consistently handled to ensure the privacy and protection of both the Councillors and the senders of correspondence.

~~3.~~4. Policy Details

4.1. General Correspondence

All correspondence addressed to Councillors (including the Mayor), is forwarded unopened to the ~~Coordinator, Office of~~Executive Assistant to the CEO. Mail, which is identifiable as personal, private or confidential is left sealed and handled in accordance with the ~~following section~~section 4.2 of the policy. All other mail will be opened and:

- If upon opening the mail it is found to be personal, private of 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 Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~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 Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~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 Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~Coordinator, Office of the CEO~~ to Councillors via their trays located at the Tallangatta office.

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

4.2. Personal, Private and Confidential Correspondence

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

The Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~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 Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~Coordinator, Office of the CEO~~ a suitable time for visiting the office to open the correspondence.

The Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~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 Executive Assistant to the CEO ~~Coordinator, Office of the CEO~~ who will arrange for this to take place.

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

5. Responsibilities

Responsibility	Role/Position
Councillors will abide by the processes within the policy when receiving correspondence in their capacity as a Councillor.	Councillors
The Chief Executive Officer will assist Councillors with implementing this policy through guidance and advice, as well as action Mayor correspondence as per section 4.1 of the policy.	Chief Executive Officer
The Executive Assistant to the CEO will follow processes as per sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the policy.	Executive Assistant to the CEO
The Director Corporate and Organisational Development act as the contingency for follow processes as per section 4.1 and 4.1 of the policy, in the absence of the Executive Assistant to the CEO.	Director Corporate and Organisational Development

The Customer Service team will follow the process of the initial receipt of correspondence addressed to Councillors as per section 4.1 and 4.2 of the policy.	Customer Service Team

~~4.~~6. Deployment

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

~~5.~~7. Human Rights Charter Compatibility

~~1.~~ The policy gives regard to relevant legislation, principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, community values and Council's resource capacity. It is considered that this policy supports the rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006). ~~This policy has been assessed as being compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 [Vic]*.~~

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~~6.~~8. Relevant Legislation

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant legislative requirements and Council policies.

Relevant legislation includes:

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

Relevant Council policies includes:

- *Councillor Gift Policy*

~~7.~~9. Results

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

Authorised by: _____

~~Amanda Pagan~~Juliana Phelps

~~Acting~~ Chief Executive Officer

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Councillor Gift Policy

Responsible officer:	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
Key Result Area:	Governance and Decision Making
Document type:	Policy
Reference:	
Approved by:	Council
Date approved:	25 June 2025
Date of next review:	June 2029

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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. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to enable Councillors with an understanding on the expectations of both Council and the legislation guiding integrity within Victorian Local Government, when receiving gifts or benefits as a result of their position with Council. This will be achieved through highlighting the different scenarios this may occur and assisting with identifying what to do if this situation arises to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest.

~~3.~~4. Policy Details

4.1. 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.

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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~~g~~ 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.~~will be subject to disciplinary action set by both Council and the Local Government Inspectorate.

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.

4.2. 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:

- **G**iver - who is providing the offer and what is their relationship to me? Could they benefit from a decision I make?
- **I**nfluence – are they seeking to gain an advantage or influence my decisions or actions?
- **F**avour – Are they seeking a favour in return?
- **T**rust – 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.

5. Responsibilities

Responsibility	Role/Position
Councillors must abide by this policy and the obligations set by the Local Government Act 2020 and associated regulations.	Councillors

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The Chief Executive Officer will provide guidance and advice to Councillors in relation to this policy and the legislative instruments that set integrity standards in Victorian Local Government.	Chief Executive Officer
The Director Corporate and Organisational Development will facilitate the recording of gifts received by Councillors and support both the Chief Executive Officer and Local Government Inspectorate in relation to investigations and breaches of the policy/regulations.	Director Corporate and Organisational Improvement

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Gift	Anything of monetary or other value and includes free or discounted items or services.
Benefit	Preferential or privileged treatment, favours or another form of advantage.
Hospitality	The friendly reception of guests and may involve, for example, refreshments, travel, entertainment and accommodation.
Perceived Conflict of Interest	If an impartial, fair-minded person could observe a scenario to be either a General or Material Conflict of interest, whether it is real or not.
General Conflict of Interest	If an impartial, fair-minded person would consider that the person's private interests could result in that person acting in a manner that is contrary to their public duty.
Material Conflict of Interest	If an affected person would gain a benefit or suffer a loss depending on the outcome of the matter.
Local Government Inspectorate	An independent agency responsible for making sure Victorian councils follow the *Local Government Act 2020*. They assess and investigate complaints about potential breaches of the Act by councils, councillors and staff, including: • conflict of interest • misuse of position • disclosure of confidential information • directing council staff • electoral offences.

~~4.~~7. Deployment

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

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~~5.~~8. Breaches

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

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~~6.~~9. Human Rights Charter Compatibility

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

~~7.~~10. 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*
- *Local Government Act (Governance and Integrity Regulations 2020)*

Related Council Policies and Plans

- *Councillor Code of Conduct*
- *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Policy*

~~8.~~11. Results

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

Authorised by: _____

~~Amanda Pagan~~Juliana Phelps
~~Acting~~ Chief Executive Officer

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External Grant Application

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:	9 December 2020
Date of next review:	October 2021

Background and Scope

State and Federal Government grants and programs are a key source of income for Council.

When drafting the annual Budget, every effort is made to ensure that all approved and confirmed grants, both recurrent and capital, are included in the Budget.

Throughout the year however new grant opportunities and programs arise which were not known at the time of preparing the Budget. It is important for management to be able to take advantage of these opportunities as they are generally an ideal way for Council to fund and progress priorities which may not have been possible otherwise. In many cases there is a requirement for some form of Council contribution to the associated project.

This Policy has been developed to outline the requirements when grant opportunities arise after the annual Budget has been approved.

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to ensure Council is aware of and where appropriate, approves applications made on behalf of Council, for grants or programs that arise subsequent to the adoption of the annual Budget.

Approach

Council aims to achieve the objectives of this policy by:

- Assessing new grant and program opportunities to ensure their outcomes are consistent with Council's objectives and priorities;
- Referring to Council for approval any proposed project or grant application (which is not already included in Council's Budget) that has a total value exceeding $150,000; and
- Referring to Council any grant application (regardless of the project cost) which requires a Council contribution of more than $50,000.

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Responsibilities

- The Chief Executive is responsible for implementing this policy.
- The Senior Management Team is responsible for the review of all applications prior to referral to Council.
- Management and staff are to be familiar with, and are accountable for, the implementation of this Policy within their areas of responsibility.
- Council is responsible for the approval of proposed projects and grant applications that have a total value greater than $150,000 or where a Council contribution of $50,000 or more is required that has not been included in the annual Budget.

Human Rights

The policy gives regard to relevant legislation, principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, community values and Council's resource capacity. It is considered that this policy supports the rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006).*

Relevant legislation

Nil.

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.

Authorised by:

Rachael Gadd
Acting Chief Executive Officer

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Procurement Policy

Responsible officer:	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
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1. Purpose

Towong Shire Council (Council) recognises the importance of consistent, fair and transparent purchasing practices to provide best value outcomes for ratepayers and equal opportunity for suppliers. We are committed to:

- Providing best value outcomes for ratepayers;
- Ensuring that purchasing is open, fair and unbiased;
- Achieving high standards of probity, accountability and risk management;
- Ensuring that purchasing practices are socially and environmentally sustainable;
- Promoting continuous improvement and collaboration;
- Ensuring compliance with legislation.

This policy establishes the principles, processes and procedures supporting Council's purchasing activities to provide consistency and control in the delivery of these objectives.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all purchases of, and contracts to purchase, goods, services and works. It is binding upon Council staff and all persons undertaking procurement on behalf of Council, including volunteers, Councillors, and members of delegated committees and community asset committees.

This policy does not apply to investment of Council funds; statutory payments such as the Fire Services Property Levy; or grant moneys provided to community groups, which are not considered to be purchases of "goods, services or works".

3. Policy Details

3.1. Principles

We will apply the following principles to all procurement activities:

Best Value Outcomes

We will seek to maximise value in all purchase decisions. Factors such as quality, quantity, risk, timeliness and cost on a whole-of-contract and whole-of-asset-life basis will be considered to achieve the optimum combination which delivers best value.

Open, Fair and Unbiased

Minimum standards apply to the procurement approach in accordance with the selection methods and purchasing thresholds specified in this policy. Staff are encouraged to consider seeking more than the minimum number of quotes when it is likely to yield a materially better value outcome. Impartiality will be maintained in selecting suppliers and evaluation criteria should be determined prior to quotes being sought in order to ensure a methodological approach that withstands scrutiny.

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Probity and Accountability

Procurement activities are to be performed with integrity and in a manner able to withstand the closest possible scrutiny. Documentation is to be maintained to ensure a clear audit trail.
The security and confidentiality of commercial interests must be maintained.

Requirements will be clearly communicated to staff and enforced through management oversight.

Risk Management

We will maintain appropriate controls to ensure that procurement activities are undertaken ethically, diligently and within the parameters outlined within this policy. We will ensure that risks are identified, evaluated and treated, and that appropriate systems and processes are in place to provide a high level of confidence that policy is being followed. In particular high impact risks that we may be exposed to through the purchasing process such as fraud, financial loss, project and service delivery failure, compliance risks and health and safety risks are to be mitigated as far as is practicable.

The policy and implementation of internal controls will be monitored and reviewed by Council's Audit and Risk Committee, who may also provide assurance of higher value procurements.

There will be at least two staff members involved in, and responsible for each transaction.

Environmental Sustainability

We will aim to make purchases that have the least impact on the environment and human health, within the context of purchasing on a best value basis. Preference will be given to purchasing products and services which:

- Minimise use of raw materials and energy;
- Maximise reuse and extension of goods already in circulation;
- Minimise residual waste including emissions and pollution;
- Minimise the impact on habitats.

Local Sourcing

Council is committed to sourcing goods, services and works from competitive local suppliers where possible. Where equivalent value can be sourced both locally and elsewhere, the goods or services should be procured from the local supplier.

Continuous Improvement

We will seek to continually drive improvement in processes, tools and technologies with the objectives of reducing costs, achieving best practice and most effectively delivering on Council objectives.

Collaboration

We will seek and encourage the development of procurement collaboration with other councils and organisations in order to pursue economies of scale, and to enable more efficient collaborative approaches to service delivery.

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3.2. Treatment of GST

All monetary values stated in this policy exclude GST.

3.3. Governance

3.3.1. Standards

Council's procurement activities shall be carried out to the professional standards required by best practice and in compliance with:

- The *Local Government Act 2020;*
- Other relevant legislative requirements including but not limited to the *Consumer and Competition Act 2010, Goods Act 1958,* and the *Environment Protection Act 2017*; and
- The Victorian Local Government Best Practice Procurement Guidelines 2013;
- Council policies, including the Credit Card Policy, Councillor Code of Conduct and Employee Code of Conduct.

3.3.2. Conflicts of Interest

Councillors and Council staff shall at all times avoid situations in which private interests conflict, might reasonably be thought to conflict, or have the potential to conflict, with their Council duties.

Where potential conflicts arise, staff must make their supervisor aware and allow them to decide whether they should continue to be involved in the specific procurement activity with appropriate controls in place. Staff should also feel comfortable to raise potential conflicts that other staff may have to ensure that they are considered and appropriately treated. Conflicts are to be handled in a way that meets the highest standard of governance, transparency and probity.

3.3.3. Procurement Methods available

- Open market process (refer section 3.3.5 for thresholds and requirements)

- Selective process – Prequalified Supplier Panel (refer section 3.3.7 for requirements)

3.3.4. Procurement - Contractual arrangements

Council will enter into commitments to purchase via electronic purchase orders where required (per section 3.3.6).

Care should be taken to ensure that a written contract is in place where it may aid in mitigating any significant risks, for example fraud risk, financial risk, project or service delivery risk, compliance risk, or occupational health and safety risk.

In the case that this policy requires that a contract be in place, a supplier issued contract may suffice if there are no significant risks that a Council issued contract could further mitigate. Contracts should always be signed by the supplier prior to being signed by an authorised Council representative.

When a contract is appropriate or required by this policy, a commitment to purchase, (issuing a purchase order) should not be completed or issued until a written contract is in place and signed by both the supplier and an authorised Council representative. The purchase order should refer to the name and number of the written contract to ensure that they are identified as being for the same purchase.

3.3.5. Tenders

Procurements with an estimated expenditure of $150,000 or more must be undertaken by tender unless a valid exemption is in place as specified by this policy.

Tenders may be one-stage or multi-stage based on the complexity and cost of the project. Typically, a multi-stage tender process will commence with an expression of interest (EOI) stage, followed by a tender process involving the organisations selected as a consequence of the expression of interest stage.

An EOI process may be appropriate where:

- the requirement is complex, difficult to define, unknown or unclear;
- the requirement is capable of several technical solutions;
- Council wishes to consider ahead of a formal tender process such issues as whether those tendering possess the necessary technical, managerial and financial resources to successfully complete the project;
- tendering costs are likely to be high and Council seeks to ensure that companies incapable of supplying the requirement don't incur unnecessary expense;
- it is necessary to pre-qualify suppliers and goods to meet defined standards; or
- the requirement is generally known but there is still considerable analysis, evaluation and clarification required (both of the objective and the solution).

An alternative configuration of a multi-stage tender is to conduct a first stage to solicit solutions, and a second stage to solicit quotations for the solution selected by Council. Such sequential tenders may or may not be preceded by the expression of interest phase based on the actual needs of the project.

Tenders will at minimum be advertised online, via a publicly available tender management platform, on Council's website, and in the Border Mail They will also be published in other local newspapers where practical and relevant. A relevant council officer may be contacted to clarify supplier questions during the tender period. Responses will be formally assessed and documented against the evaluation criteria and an evaluation report will be produced to support the final selection.

3.3.6. Exemptions from purchases requiring a purchase order

The following good and services are exempt from requiring a purchase order:

- Sundry items for staff amenities, including water, milk, newspapers;
- Sundry items less than $1,000 in line with delegations;

- Legal advice or legal services;
- Utility accounts such as power, water, gas;
- Audit services under contract;
- Lease payments for equipment secured under contract;
- Insurance payments;
- Fuel on account;
- Australia Post;
- Bank fees;
- Subscriptions;
- Memberships;
- Waste collected from Council Landfill and to be disposed of by third parties.

3.3.7. Prequalified Supplier Panel

Council will establish a Prequalified Supplier Panel.

Suppliers can only be included on the Prequalified Supplier Panel with Council approval or alternatively, if they are included in the State Purchase Panel or Contract or the MAV Preferred Supplier Panels.

To be eligible for consideration by Council for inclusion on the Prequalified Supplier Panel, a supplier must meet the selection criteria. Determining whether a supplier meets the criteria and qualifies for inclusion on the panel will be undertaken by the CEO and one Director and a report will be presented to Council.

The criteria will include:

1. Relevant experience
2. Performance history including quality, cost, reliability, timeliness
3. Safety system and processes
4. Risk Management
5. Insurance cover
6. Local operations base/local employment
7. Labour and Human Rights
8. Environmental sustainability
9. Social responsibility

Procurement of up to $100,000 from a Supplier from the Prequalified Supplier Panel is permitted provided that the following requirements are met:

i. A Scope of Works, jointly approved by the relevant Director and CEO, is to be provided to the prospective supplier
ii. A written quotation from the supplier responding to the Scope of Works
iii. Quotation not to exceed $100,000.

If the quotation is acceptable to both the Director and CEO, a Purchase Order, jointly approved by the relevant Director and the CEO, is to be issued to the supplier together with any other contractual documentation deemed necessary or appropriate by the CEO for the procurement.

If the value of the procurement of works/services/products exceeds $100,000 and items i and ii above have been met, a Council decision will be required to proceed with the procurement.

For procurement where it is appropriate to consider a supplier(s) on the Prequalified Supplier Panel, a quote may be sought from one or multiple suppliers on the Panel. The CEO will determine the number of quotes required depending on the nature of the procurement.

Any procurement activities with suppliers from the Prequalified Supplier Panel are to be recorded in a register and the register is to be presented to Council each quarter.

3.4. Procurement Thresholds and Minimum Requirements

For procurement that is not exclusively with suppliers on the Prequalified Supplier Panel, the following methods and conditions are the minimum requirements to apply to all procurement activities within each nominated spend threshold.

Spend Thresholds	Selection Method	Documentation	Evaluation Panel
Up to $2,000	1 verbal quotation	Credit Card or Petty Cash Receipt, Invoice	Not Required
>$2,000 to $8,000	1 written quotation	Purchase order signed by two officers* Quote(s) saved in Recfind	Not Required
>$8,001 to $20,000	2 written quotations	Purchase order signed by two officers* Evaluation Report Quotes and Evaluation Report saved in Recfind	Two Officers including a Director
>$20,001 to $100,000	Use a Request For Quotation (RFQ) to seek responses from at least 3 suppliers	Contract and purchase order signed by two officers* Evaluation Report Quotes, evaluation report and contract saved in Recfind	Two Officers including a Director
>$100,001 to $180,000	Public RFQ process	Contract and purchase order signed by two officers* Evaluation Report Quotes, evaluation report and contract to be saved in Recfind	Three Officers including a Director
$180,000 and over	Public Tender process open to	Contract and purchase order signed by the CEO and relevant Director*	Three Officers including a Director

	response from any supplier	Evaluation Report Tenders, evaluation report and contract to be saved in Recfind	

* Purchase orders are to be signed by two officers of which at least one must have a sufficient financial delegation to commit to the purchase. A purchase order is a commitment to purchase and is not to be signed prior to any relevant contract being signed by both the supplier and an authorised Council representative. The purchase order should refer to the name and number of the written contract to ensure that they are identified as being for the same purchase. Contracts are to be signed by the supplier prior to being signed by Council's representative.

Officers may choose to publicly invite tenders for purchases with a value of less than $150,000 if it may produce a better outcome.

3.4.1. Determining Value of Procurement

In order to determine whether a procurement exceeds the relevant procurement threshold, its value must be estimated at the start of the procurement process.

The value of the procurement must include:

- All forms of remuneration, including any premium, fees, commissions, interest and other revenue streams that may be provided for in the final contract;
- The maximum value of the proposed contract over the contracted term, including any options.

It is not permissible to divide a contract into separate smaller procurements to avoid procurement thresholds. Splitting of purchase orders to avoid thresholds is strictly forbidden.

If it is anticipated that a procurement will be close to the procurement threshold, or if it is likely that the final value of a procurement may exceed the relevant threshold, it should be treated as if it exceeds the threshold and the higher requirements are to apply.

3.5. Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria will be applied in assessing supplier quotations:

- Price;
- Qualifications and previous performance;
- Delivery;
- Environmental and social sustainability.

Additional criteria may be included as appropriate. Council is not under any obligation to proceed with any supplier and is not obligated to select the supplier with the lowest price.

An Evaluation Matrix is to be completed to demonstrate the purchasing officer's assessment of criteria (refer Procurement Procedures and Guidelines).

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3.6. Delegations

3.6.1. Staff Delegations

Purchasing officers must operate within approved purchasing limits. Purchases in excess of an officer's limit must be authorised by a more senior officer with an adequate approved limit. Only an officer with an adequate limit can sign and issue a purchase order or enter into a contract.

The purchasing officer must ensure that funding is or will be available prior to raising a purchase order.

Delegated purchasing limits are as follows. It is noted that approval to enter into a contract valued at more than $200,000 (the Chief Executive Officer's delegation) must be put to the Council for a decision.

POSITION	LIMIT (INCLUDING GST)
Chief Executive Officer	$200,000
Director Corporate and Organisational Development	$75,000
Director Infrastructure and Environment	$75,000
Director Community and Planning	$75,000
Deputy Director Infrastructure and Environment	$25,000
Deputy Director Community & Planning	$25,000
Manager Operations	$15,000
Manager People and Customer	$15,000
Manager Finance	$15,000
Manager Assets	$15,000
Manager Early Years	$15,000
Project Manager Infrastructure	$10,000
Coordinator Works	$10,000
Coordinator Tourism and Eco Dev	$10,000
Coordinator Governance & Compliance	$10,000
Senior Asset Engineer	$10,000
Civil Asset Engineer	$10,000
Coordinator Circular Economy and Environment	$10,000
Area Coordinator - Early Years	$10,000
Coordinator Recreation, Arts and Culture	$10,000
IT/GIS Officer	$10,000
Strategic Emergency Management Coordinator	$10,000
Coordinator Asset Inspections	$10,000
Technical Officer	$5,000
Team Leader Education	$5,000
Team Leader Maternal and Child Health	$5,000
Relief & Recovery Development Officer	$5,000
Economic Development Tourism Officer	$5,000
Customer Liaison Officer	$2,000
Coordinator Office of the CEO	$2,000
Project Delivery Support Officer	$2,000
Relief & Recovery Hub Support Officer	$2,000

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POSITION	LIMIT (INCLUDING GST)
Senior Customer Service Officer	$2,000
Senior Communications & Engagement Officer	$2,000
Senior Finance Officer (Property and Rates)	$2,000
Assistant Accountant	$2,000
Communications Officer	$2,000
Human Resources Officer	$2,000
Governance Officer	$1,000
Communications Officer	$1,000
Local Area Recovery Officer	$1,000
Tourism Visitor Services Officer	$1,000
Agricultural Officer	$1,000
Economic Development Tourism Officer	$1,000
Economic Recovery Officer	$1,000
Maternal and Child Health Nurse	$1,000
Youth Services Officer	$1,000
Community Development Officer	$1,000
Early Years Centre Director	$1,000
Occupational Health and Safety Officer	$1,000
Ranger / Local Laws Officer	$1,000
Records Officer	$1,000
Team Leader Tallangatta (Outside)	$1,000
Team Leader Corryong (Outside)	$1,000
Transfer Station Supervisor	$1,000
Team Leader Customer Service	$1,000

3.6.2. Contract Variations

All contract variations must be documented by the relevant officer and approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Where a contract variation results in the total contract value exceeding the CEO's delegation, Council delegates the approval of the variation to the CEO when:

- the variation amount is within the CEO's delegation;
- there are sufficient unallocated funds remaining within the project budget to provide for the variation.

Any such variation approvals by the CEO are to be tabled at the next available Council Meeting. Variations which are larger than the CEO's delegation must be approved by the Council; and variations that cause the total contract value to exceed the CEO's delegation and the total project expenditure to exceed the project budget must be approved by the Council.

3.7. Procedural Exemptions

Situations may arise where the procuring officer is unable to satisfy procurement requirements (for example obtaining three quotes). This may occur for a number of reasons, for example, there are few suppliers; the works being sought are highly specialised; or the work is of an urgent nature.

Under specific circumstances a Procedural Exemption from the methods of this policy can be sought. This must be done in writing with an explanation for the non-compliance by completion of the form

and in line with the guidelines provided in the approved Procedural Exemption Memo (refer Procurement Procedures and Guidelines).

Procedural Exemptions must be approved by the CEO. Where the value of a Procedural Exemption exceeds the CEO's delegation, it must be approved by the Council. All approved Procedural Exemptions must be recorded on Council's records management system and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.

3.8. Procurement for Clubs and Community Groups

Where Council is paying for goods and services on behalf of a Club or Community Group, Council's procurement policy will apply in all circumstances. The provider of the funds (if external) and the Club or Community Group will be made aware of this requirement.

3.9. Collaborative Procurement

In line with section 108 of the *Local Government Act* 2020, Council may collaborate with other Councils and public bodies in the procurement of goods of services, and may authorise another agency to act on its behalf to undertake collaborative procurement. Contracts may be made together with or under a contract made by:

- Other Federal, State or Local government entities or government owned entities or purchasing schemes;
- Purchasing agencies including the Municipal Association of Victoria and Procurement Australia.

The procurement does not need to be undertaken directly by Council or delegated officers, however the procurement approach followed must comply with the minimum selection process and purchasing method in accordance with the purchasing thresholds outlined by this policy. An evaluation report justifying best value outcomes is required and the procurement must be approved by an officer with appropriate delegated purchasing limit and the relevant Director (or Council where the CEO's purchasing limit is exceeded).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility	Role / Position
Conduct procurement in accordance with the principles, processes and methods outlined within this policy	Delegated officers
Continually improve this policy and advise on its implementation as relevant	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
Oversee effective implementation of this policy throughout departments	Directors
Oversee development and effective implementation of this policy in accordance with all legislative requirements	Chief Executive Officer
Review and approve procurements above the relevant threshold specified within this policy	Council

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5. Human Rights Charter

This policy has been considered in relation to the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and it has been determined that it does not contravene the Charter.

6. Breaches

Failure to comply with this Council policy, supporting procedures or guidelines, will be subject to investigation which may lead to disciplinary action. Breaches will be reported to the next scheduled Audit and Risk Committee and the Chairperson may be informed in advance for major or high risk breaches.

7. Definitions and Abbreviations

Definitions of terms used in the policy and explanations of any abbreviations and acronyms.

Term	Meaning
Contract	An agreement between two or more authorised persons on behalf of their organisations to perform or not perform a specific act/s that is enforceable in law. A contract is legally binding whether it is verbal or written or inferred by conduct. Contracts may be developed in line with the Australian Standards where relevant.
Local	In the context of this policy the definition of local is one that seeks to support manufacturers and suppliers located: • Firstly within the municipal boundary; • Secondly within municipalities adjacent or near to the municipality; and • Thirdly within Australia.
Probity	In the context of a procurement process, probity is a defensible process that is able to withstand internal and external scrutiny – one that achieves both accountability and transparency, providing suppliers with fair and equitable treatment.
Procurement	Procurement is the whole process of acquisition of external goods, services and works. It can include planning, design, standards determination, specification writing, preparation of quotation and tender documentation, selection of suppliers, financing, contract administration, disposals, and other related functions. It also includes the organisational and governance frameworks that underpin procurement processes.
Purchase order	A form of contract, which is an official document used to authorise and record the purchase of goods or services by a buyer. It is the prime reference confirming the contractual situation between the buyer and supplier.
Quotation/quote	A document in the form of an offer to supply goods and/or services, usually in response to a request for quotation.
Request for quotation (RFQ)	A written process of requesting offers to supply goods and/or services involving simple documentation that specifies the requirements.
Public Tender	A publicly advertised opportunity open to response from any supplier to tender against a set of clearly defined and specified requirements.

Term	Meaning
	Tenderers are advised of all requirements involved, including the conditions of tendering and proposed contract conditions. Public Tenders are published on Council's tender website and advertised on Council's website and via public notice.
Sustainability	Activities that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
Tender	An offer in writing to supply goods and/or services, usually submitted in response to a public or selective invitation such as an invitation to tender.
Tender process	The process of inviting parties to submit a tender using public advertisement, followed by evaluation of submissions and selection of a successful bidder or tenderer.
Thresholds	The value above which a procurement, unless exempt, is subject to the mandatory procurement procedures.

Authorised by: _____

Juliana Phelps
Chief Executive Officer