

# From the Mayor

The past year was once again a year of challenges, with the disruption of COVID-19 and ongoing recovery work following the Black Summer bushfires. I am very proud of the way our small team of Councillors and staff have pulled together and delivered some great outcomes.

As a small council, securing financial support is essential for us to deliver projects and to remain financially sustainable. In 2021/22 we secured \$13 million for projects including:

- The Lake Hume Masterplan;
- Corryong Circuit Trail – Stage One;
- Great River Road – Stage Two; and
- Walking track upgrades in Eskdale and Bellbridge.

It was exciting to see the completion of some long-term projects including:

- Stages 1 and 2 of the Georges Creek Road upgrade - resulting in improved connectivity between the Talgarno and Bellbridge areas through to the Murray Valley Highway and Tallangatta;
- The Tallangatta Holiday Park amenities upgrade;
- Renewal of the Cudgewa and Bullioh Netball courts; and
- Construction of the Tintaldra boat ramp.

Delivering on our commitment to provide quality services we:

- Implemented three-year-old kinder across the Shire;
- Expanded our childcare delivery; and
- Reactivated the Tallangatta Neighbourhood House to foster community connectedness and wellbeing.

*Towong Shire... the ideal place to be.*

In our mission to work with our communities to enhance their social, economic and environmental wellbeing we:

- Adopted our Economic Development Strategy and our Destination Management Plan;
- Delivered and supported a range of workshops for the Agricultural sector;
- Assisted small businesses to adapt and recover from COVID-19 and provided support for the development of Chambers of Commerce in Corryong, Tallangatta and the Berringa Peninsula;
- Upgraded our Resource Recovery centres; and
- Advocated for rezoning of parts of the rural activity zone to support additional residential development.

Our efforts to support our communities following the bushfires continued with the delivery of the final round of our Community Grants program. Across four rounds we were able to support over 165 recovery projects including community events, equipment purchases and community facility upgrades.

As one of the smallest councils in the State, with a very small rate base and a significant geographic area to service, we continually strive to provide quality services and infrastructure for the communities we serve whilst ensuring financial sustainability over the longer term.

Our 2021/22 Budget included a rate increase of 1.5%. This rate increase helped us to keep delivering services and infrastructure for our communities. Services like our parks and gardens maintenance, garbage collection, road grading and maintenance, and library services.

My fellow Councillors and I began this term with goals, aspirations and a drive to serve our communities. As we tick over the halfway point for this term, I'm proud of what we've achieved to date and look forward to the 'second half'.

We would like to thank all of our staff for their commitment and dedication to delivering services and projects for our communities over what has been another challenging year.

We know that 2022/23 will have its challenges, but we look forward to achieving great outcomes and delivering on our Community Vision of Towong Shire being *the ideal place to be*.

Our 2021/22 Annual Report can be viewed at [www.towong.vic.gov.au](http://www.towong.vic.gov.au).

# Halfway Point

Our Councillors began their current terms determined to deliver for their communities. As the halfway point of their term ticks over here are some of their reflections.



### Cr Aaron Scales

"I'm proud of the work we have done with our communities to develop sport and recreational facilities across the Shire."

We have secured \$500,000 for the redevelopment of Playles Hill, Corryong.

We have developed a Recreation Strategy and a Masterplan to activate Lake Hume.

### Cr Denise Anderson

"I'm proud of our ongoing efforts to share information and our continued exploration of better ways to communicate with our communities."

We have expanded the number of media and community avenues to engage and communicate with our communities.

We're using social media more to keep our communities informed in a timely way.

### Cr Peter Dikschei

"I'm proud of how Council decisions are driven by the needs of our communities and the integrity and transparency with which our decisions are made."

We have reviewed our Governance Rules and Councillor Code of Conduct.

We received over 500 individual pieces of community feedback to inform our Community Vision and Council's strategic priorities.

### Cr David Wortmann

"I'm proud of the work we have done in supporting our communities to recover from the Black Summer fires and the delivery of recovery projects."

We have supported over 165 bushfire recovery projects through our community grants program.

We have facilitated the development of municipal recovery plans in the Upper Murray.

### Cr Andrew Whitehead

"I'm proud of our strong advocacy efforts to the state and federal governments on key issues such as road funding and bushfire recovery support."

We secured \$13 million in grant funding in 2021/22 to support capital investment and service delivery.

We secured \$4.88 million in funding to support ongoing recovery works.