



To love where we live

Annual Budget

2026/27

Discover
Northern
Grampians

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is for general guidance only. It is not professional advice and should not be used, relied upon or treated as a substitute for specific professional advice. Given the changing nature of laws, rules and regulations, and the inherent hazards of electronic communication, there may be delays, omissions or inaccuracies in information contained in this document.

The model budget, including financial statements, has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*. While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this document has been accurate and complies with relevant Victorian legislation, each Council remains responsible to ensure that the budget they prepare is compliant with all statutory requirements.

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1.1

From the Mayor



My fellow councillors and I are pleased to present the second budget of our council term, for the 2026/27 financial year.

Cr Karen Hyslop

Northern Grampians Shire Council Mayor

The 2026/27 Annual Budget continues to follow the strategic direction set out in the 2025-29 Council Plan and long-term Community Vision 2041.

Throughout the past few months, councillors have worked alongside the council team to develop this document, which has been heavily shaped by our Council Plan Year Two priorities.

We thank you, our community, for reviewing and providing feedback on these priorities earlier this year – your input has been taken into account throughout the budget process.

Like last year's budget, this budget has been influenced by a range of factors, including operating within a rate-capped environment, rising inflation and cost of materials, and reduced funding opportunities from state and federal governments.

It has also been influenced by the impact of worldwide events, as you will note by our decision to allocate almost \$1 million

from the budget to mitigate longer-term fuel crisis shortfalls or cost impacts.

As you look through this budget document, you will notice we have continued our strong focus on financial viability and long-term sustainability, while balancing our commitment to delivering quality services and maintaining quality infrastructure.

The 2026/27 Annual Budget has also been influenced by our recently developed Advocacy Prospectus, which sets out council's priorities for engaging with the Victorian Government and other key stakeholders, and the outcomes we are seeking for the Northern Grampians Shire community.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

Cr Karen Hyslop,
Mayor



COUNCILLORS L-R:

- Cr. Jack Blake
- Cr. Murray Emmerson
- Cr. Justine Hide
- Cr. Karen Probst
- Cr. Karen Hyslop
- Cr. Jenny Greenberger

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work, the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Dja Dja Wurrung, and Djab Wurrung peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to other First Nations people who have connection to these lands. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

1.2

Our strategic approach

Council Plan Year 2 Priorities

Council's Annual Budget governs the implementation of services, major initiatives and policy, and strategy development as outlined in the organisation's four-year Council Plan. Council must balance income and revenue with expenditure on services, programs, capital works, new initiatives and implementation of strategy while maintaining financial sustainability. The financial and operational modelling feeding into the budget considers the long-term implications of decisions by the council.

Council's 2026/27 Annual Budget has been heavily shaped by Council Plan Year Two Priorities. Council has identified 109 priorities for delivery throughout the next financial year, which form much of the strategic direction for this budget.

- **27 tasks** that feature areas of potential advocacy, partnership and collaboration. This includes tasks where council has identified third parties who can assist with delivering the outcomes or help advocate for the resources required to deliver them.

Example: Advocating for government funding to deliver phase one of the proposed Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre redevelopment project, which will include the delivery of a new pool hall featuring a new 25-metre indoor pool and amenities.

- **45 tasks** that aim to directly deliver, implement or provide outcomes to our community. This includes tasks where council or other authorities have already allocated the funding or resources required to achieve the desired results.

Example: Delivering our Municipal Early Years Plan 2026-31. The plan will help council promote equitable access to quality early childhood opportunities, ensuring early identification and intervention for developmental needs, and support families to provide strong and nurturing environments.

- **37 tasks** that seek to support, promote, investigate or develop outcomes for our communities. These tasks often look to conduct feasibility studies or validate outcomes based on council's current servicing and operational requirements.

Example: Support community-led initiatives that promote active living lifestyles via council's community development support and funding opportunities.

1.2

Our strategic approach (cont'd)

Advocacy Prospectus

In addition to the direction provided in the Council Plan 2025-29, council's 2026/27 Annual Budget is also influenced by the Advocacy Prospectus 2026.

The Advocacy Prospectus sets out council's priorities for engaging with the Victorian Government and other key stakeholders, and the outcomes council is seeking for the Northern Grampians Shire community. The priorities align with the Council Plan 2025-29 and other adopted strategic documents.

Council faces many challenges with increasing cost pressures from both federal and state governments, including rate capping, cost shifting, declining government grants, state

levies, state and federal regulations and reporting obligations. Coupled with this is rising costs for construction, goods and services. Council will continue to look for new ways to efficiently deliver projects, programs and services.

Council advocates on the community's behalf across a wide range of issues in line with our community vision, "To love where we live". The Advocacy Prospectus outlines council's role in advocacy, its advocacy priorities and the role it will take to deliver each priority. You can read the full prospectus on council's website.



1.3

Budget Overview

Council's Annual Budget sets out priorities, projects and services for the next financial year and allocates funds to achieve them.

Many of these priorities are legislative requirements set by state government, while others are community aspirations outlined in strategic documents including the 2025-29 Council Plan and 2026 Advocacy Prospectus.

It is important to note that many factors can influence the budget process, which can significantly affect what council is able to achieve in the coming year.

Some of these factors are known and forecasted for, such as the knowledge that government grant funding opportunities are declining and becoming more competitive.

This directly influences the type and volume of projects that council will look at delivering both short and long-term in areas including infrastructure, health and wellbeing, and emergency preparedness and resilience.

Other factors cannot be forecasted, and council must react when they appear. For example, the recent worldwide fuel-shortage crisis, which directly affects council's fuel consumption, has significantly increased the cost of running machinery required to maintain roads and keep parks and amenities clean.

Several influences were taken into account while preparing the 2026/27 Budget, which are likely to impact the services delivered by council throughout the budget period. These include:

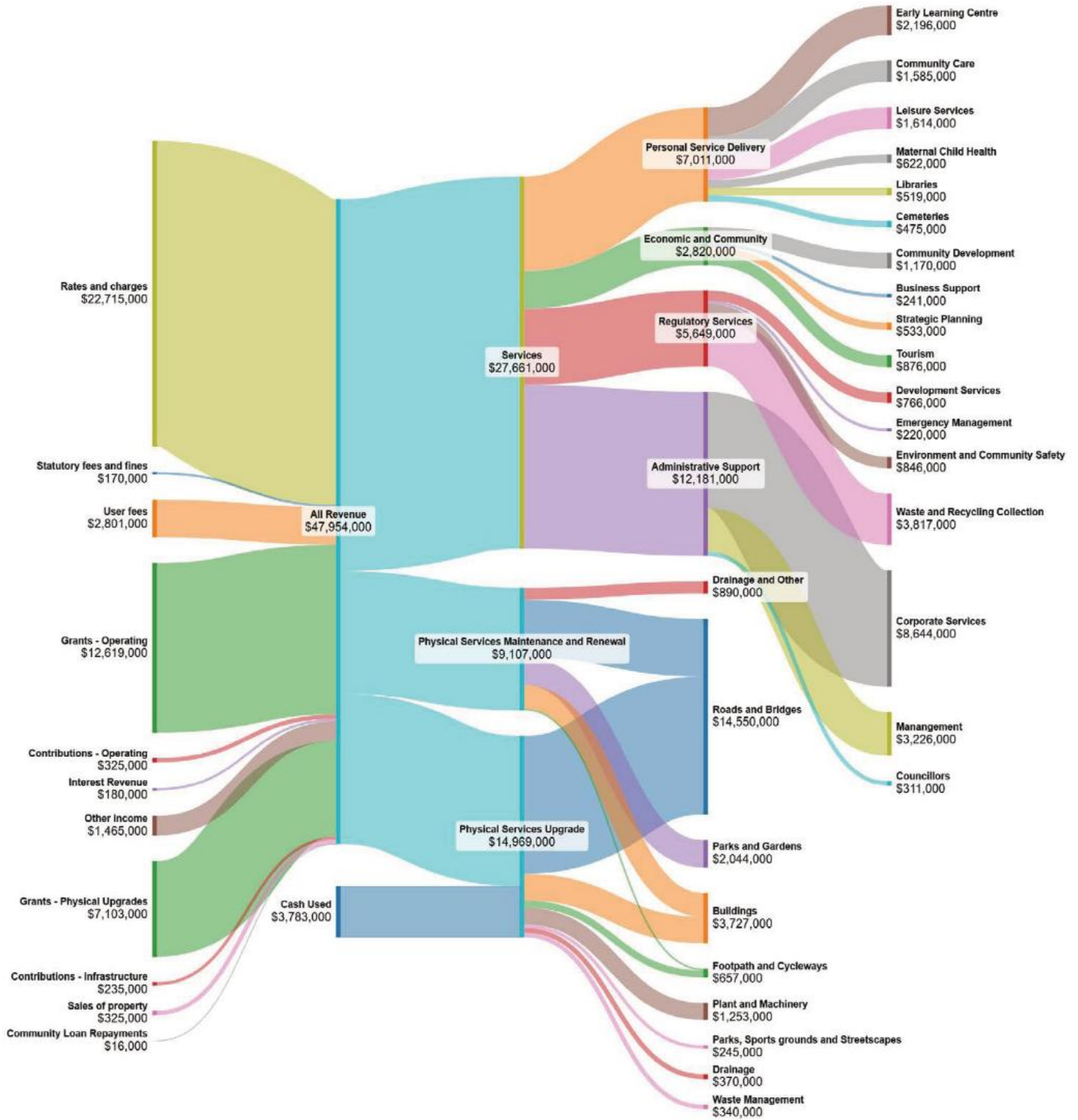
- Operating within a rate capped environment.
- Rising inflation and the cost of materials.
- Reduced funding opportunities from state and federal governments.
- Unsustainability due to a very large asset base and small resident base.
- Substantial funding and renewal gaps for council assets such as parks, buildings, roads, and drainage systems.
- Impact of a changing and ageing demographic, and the need to respond with increased staff resources to meet emerging demands such as changes outlined in the *Aged Care Act 2024*.
- Government mandate to deliver new glass and FOGO (Food Organics and Garden Organics) recycling streams by July 2027.
- Recent world events that have had far-reaching and cost-adverse effects, including a rise in fuel costs and shortages.
- Council's commitment to reviewing services and providing sufficient resources to undertake projects and works articulated within the Council Plan.
- A commitment to delivering major projects such as phase two of the St Arnaud Swimming Pool development and investment into several road safety upgrades.

How are we investing it?

- **Council services: \$27.6m** - to provide important services to the community such as strategic planning, cemeteries, libraries, maternal and child health and community development.
- **Infrastructure: \$11.1m** - to continue with major infrastructure programs such as our culvert renewal, resheeting, drainage and rural roads programs.
- **Recreation: \$2.0m** - to complete phase 2 of the St Arnaud Swimming Pool redevelopment and scope new projects such as the Grampians Rail Trail.
- **Plant and equipment: \$1.3m** - to purchase new equipment such as a tractor, tar truck and commercial reel oval mower.
- **Waste management: \$300,000** - to start the shire's FOGO and glass recycling rollout.

1.3

Budget Overview



Our shire at a glance



5,918
sq. kms in size

3,370
kms of local roads

1,342,450
sq. metres of open space



11,950
residents

49
median age

9,622
rateable properties

500,000+
annual visitors



\$47.8m
total revenue

\$1,090,000
gross regional product

1,214
local businesses

1. BUDGET OVERVIEW



1.5

Community Vision

The Community Vision was created by the community as part of the development of the 2021-25 Council Plan. Community engagement undertaken to inform the development of the 2025-29 Council Plan reconfirmed this is as the Community Vision. The Community Vision is a shared hope of how our community sees life here in the next 15 years.

It is all about what the community wants and hopes for people living in the Northern Grampians. It serves as a guide for collective action and decision-making to make that vision a reality. This vision is at the forefront of this Council Plan, informing the development of the goals, strategies, initiatives and actions.

OUR VISION

To love where we live



GOAL 1

Live it up
Health, wellbeing and community goals

- 1.1 People feel connected, included and safe
- 1.2 Supporting healthy communities
- 1.3 Improving outcomes for children and young people



GOAL 2

Build it up
Education, housing and skills goals

- 2.1 Unlock land and housing
- 2.2 Building our workforce



GOAL 3

Business buzz
Agriculture, economy and tourism goals

- 3.1 Supporting farming and rural industries
- 3.2 Building vibrant local businesses
- 3.3 Enhancing tourism experiences



GOAL 4

Clean it up
Sustainability, climate and waste goals

- 4.1 Climate adaptation and preparedness
- 4.2 Cut waste and recycle properly
- 4.3 Drive energy efficiency
- 4.4 Protect our land, water and wildlife



GOAL 5

Do it well
Infrastructure, finance and corporate services goals

- 5.1 Asset Renewal and Maintenance Program
- 5.2 Financial viability
- 5.3 Responsive, innovative and efficient

1.6

Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework

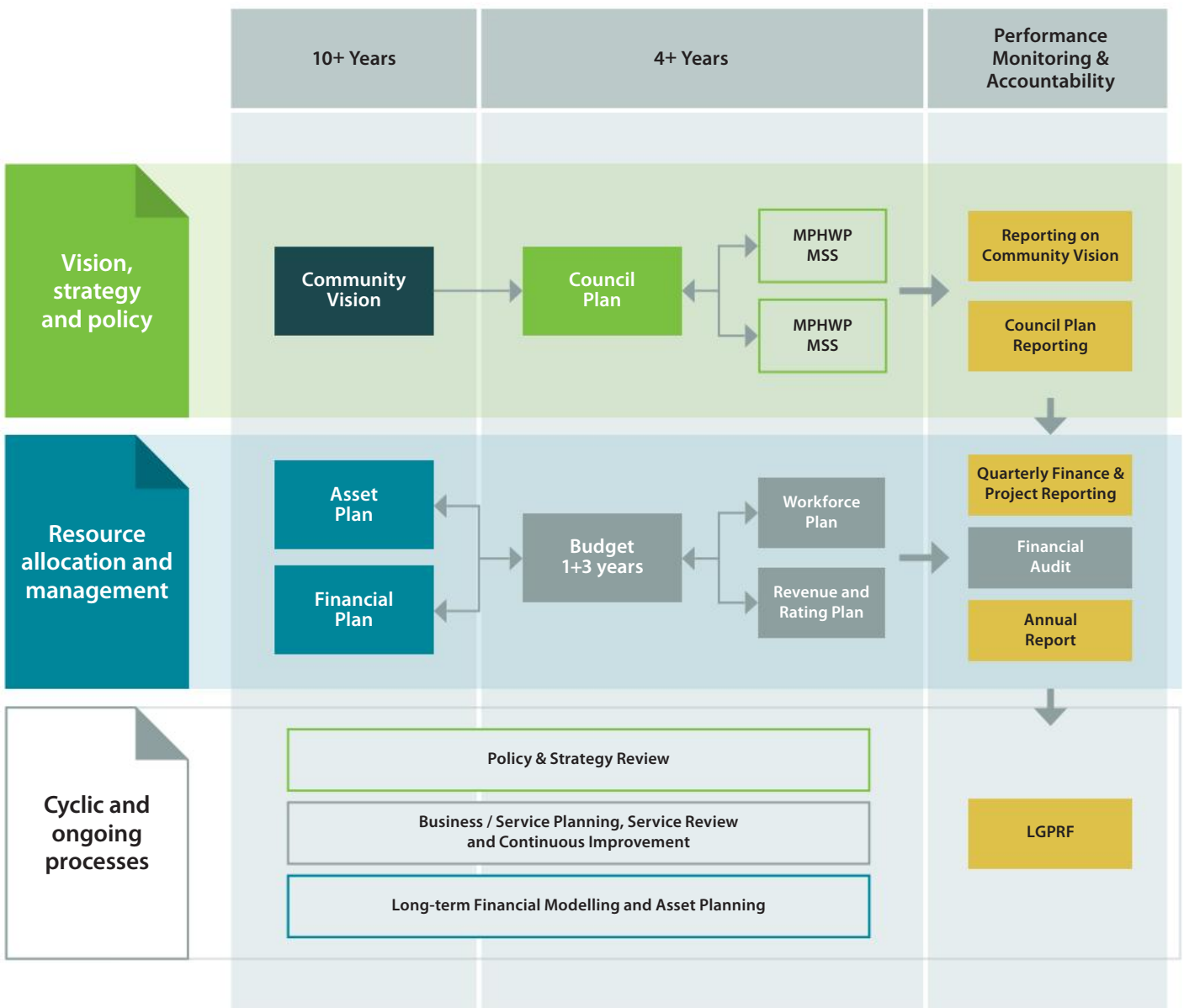
Linkage with other strategic materials

This section describes how the Budget links to the achievement of the Community Vision and Council Plan within an overall integrated strategic planning and reporting framework. This framework guides the council in identifying community needs and aspirations over the long term (Community Vision, Financial Plan and Asset Plan), medium term (Council Plan, Workforce Plan, and Revenue and Rating Plan) and short term (Budget) and then holding itself accountable (Annual Report).

The Budget is a rolling four-year plan that outlines the financial and non-financial resources the council requires to achieve

the strategic objectives described in the Council Plan. The diagram below depicts the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework that applies to local government in Victoria. At each stage of the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework there are opportunities for community and stakeholder input. This is important to ensure transparency and accountability for both residents and ratepayers.

The timing of each component of the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework is critical to the successful achievement of the planned outcomes.



2. Live it up

2025-29 Council Plan Year 2 Priorities:

Council has identified **52 tasks** that support children and young people, create healthy communities, and help people feel connected, included and safe.





2.1.1 Community Development

This service area involves two areas of work - Community Development and Open Space Planning.

Community Development empowers and enables communities to prosper. This work involves enhancing communities' wellbeing and quality of life by enabling and empowering individuals, community groups and organisations to identify and advocate for their needs, plan for and take ownership of projects, be sustainable and self-sufficient, and support a resilient and connected community. The work also involves the legislated requirement to develop and implement a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan that sets strategic goals and actions to protect, improve and promote community health and wellbeing.

The team collaborates with community, internal council departments and external organisations to create and strengthen opportunities for the community to pursue its goals.

The Open Place Planning service designs community spaces, places and buildings to enhance town livability. Through master plans, precinct plans and management strategies, the service promotes livability, sustainability, economic growth, health and wellbeing while creating spaces that nurture, attract and retain people in our communities. Community engagement is central to this process with deliberative input helping shape public spaces that harness local knowledge, assets and potential. The service also oversees local recreation advisory and project control groups, ensuring strong community voice in planning and project delivery.

These service areas are funded via a combination of council budget, and State and Commonwealth grant funding. Council

has been somewhat reliant on grant funding to deliver initiatives across youth, public health and wellbeing, healthy ageing, and resilience and recovery, however, there will be fewer grant opportunities available in the future to support these areas which is a service consideration over the coming years.

Services delivered

Community Development

- Delivery of arts and culture projects and initiatives that promote participation and activation, and raise the arts profile, including:
 - Delivery of community and public art projects, including signage, branding and promotion, management of the public art assessment process, administration of the Public Art Reference Group, and community workshops.
 - Provision of guidance, advice and project support to arts and culture community groups, including collaboration with young people to plan and deliver community events.
- Annual provision of funding via community, minor, events, arts and culture, and creative education grants and sponsorships, to at least 35 community groups to support areas such as organisational sustainability, equipment purchases, facility upgrades, community events and programs, and arts and culture projects.
- Provision of guidance and support to more than 60 community groups, including assistance with grant applications, project development, governance and sustainability, and the continual development of platforms and communication channels to support group activity, such as the Community Directory and community e-news publications.
-

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$1,170)
Income	\$185
NET COST	(\$985)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$344
Rates Subsidy	\$641
TOTAL NET	\$985

2.1.1 Community Development (cont'd)

Community Development (cont'd)

- Delivery of the Community Strengthening Program, including capacity-building workshops (such as event planning, fundraising, and multicultural responsiveness), aligned to community needs, collaboration and celebration opportunities, and flexible learning options such as council's online learning hub and grant writing support.
- Delivery of resilience-building initiatives to support communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, including Community Emergency Management Planning workshops.
- Identification of, and response to, emerging community needs, including coordination of cross-sector collaboration between community organisations, businesses and health services, to support initiatives such as farmer mental health.
- Delivery, monitoring and reporting on Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan actions, including initiatives focusing on improving outcomes for young people, multicultural inclusion, healthy eating and active living, the prevention of gendered violence, and advocacy for better healthcare access.
- Delivery of the grant-funded Healthy Ageing Hubs in Stawell and St Arnaud - these roles support older residents to stay healthy, active, connected, and empowered to access the services they need to live independently and plan for their future.

Open Space Planning

- Managing long-term strategic planning for sport, recreation and open spaces such as delivery and implementation of the Stawell North Park Masterplan 2022-32 and Walkers Lake Management Plan 2022.
- Managing sporting facility and public open space master planning and concept design.
- Oversee council's recreation and conservation reserve advisory groups, including Walkers Lake Advisory Group.
- Facilitating stakeholder engagement initiatives to support long-term strategic planning and execution of capital works for sporting facilities and public open spaces, acting as project owners. For example, coordinating user group consultations for the Market Square Senior Play Space upgrade.
- Monitoring and reviewing funding agreements to capture all relevant milestones and recipient obligations to ensure acquittals, reporting and key submissions are undertaken in a timely manner.

Service changes

Council's Healthy Ageing Hubs in Stawell and St Arnaud will close as of June 30, 2026 in accordance with funding ceasing. There will also be a reduced service level to council's resilience and recovery activities based on Emergency Recovery Victoria funding ceasing as of June 30, 2026.

2.1.1 Community Development (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

The following initiatives align with council's 2025-29 Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan year 2 priorities that underpin this budget.

Community Development

- Develop and administer a flexible community funding program to reflect emerging needs and priorities in the community including community, minor, events, arts and culture, and creative education grants, sponsorships and contributions, and the Bulgana Green Power Hub fund, that also support council and municipal public health and wellbeing priority themes of healthy eating and food security, active living and gender equity.
- Deliver arts and culture initiatives that support participation, visibility and activation of place, including community art workshops, the Stawell Entertainment Centre activation project, Cato Park Sound Shell feasibility project, support of community-led arts initiatives, and promotion of existing arts assets.
- Deliver and support initiatives that build place-based community resilience and connections, through the establishment of effective communication channels and the design and implementation of integrated community planning processes.
- Provide individualised support and resources to community groups to assist with accessing and applying for funding, developing projects, enhancing group sustainability and delivering community initiatives and events.
- Implement Community Strengthening initiatives aimed at building capable, sustainable and connected groups through tailored workshops, council's online learning hub, celebration and collaboration events, and grant writing support.
- Acknowledge a range of days of recognition, aligning with Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan priorities, including International Women's Day, Harmony Day/Week, IDAHOBIT, National Reconciliation Week, National Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week, International Day of People with a Disability, and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence.
- Partner with Traditional Owners to identify and support shared outcomes in planning, policy and service delivery, with a focus on recognition and acknowledgement initiatives.

Community Development (cont'd)

- Deliver actions from the Multicultural Action Plan, focusing on priority areas of celebration of multiculturalism, building cultural capacity within council and the community, and collaborating for better outcomes.
- Implement prevention of family violence initiatives including promotion and sponsorship of gender equity programs, community awareness-raising campaigns, and networking and collaboration opportunities.
- Implement a range of initiatives for young people focused on active recreation, leadership and civic engagement, support of youth-led events in the community, co-delivery of the NG Youth Collaborative network, and advocacy for resilience-based initiatives and dedicated youth resourcing in the shire.
- Support community-led and collaborative mental health initiatives for farmers, co-designed with the farming community, stakeholders and relevant service providers, alongside promotion of broader mental health service pathways.
- Advocate for improved health service access, including specialist services, across the shire.
- Undertake feasibility of water fluoridation in Stawell and St Arnaud.

Open Space Planning

- Deliver priority actions in the Walkers Lake Management Plan 2022.
- Deliver planning assessments for the Halls Gap East Shared Path and support advocacy for funding of project delivery.
- Support the extension of the Grampians Rail Trail (Heatherlie Rail Trail and Halls Gap Rail Trail).
- Deliver review of the Market Square Masterplan (senior youth play space) and seek funding for upgrades.
- Support the St Arnaud Bowling Club precinct strategic/ concept and determine next steps for council's role in assisting implementation of endorsed recommendations.
- Support community-led initiatives that promote active living – Halls Gap Pool upgrade project.
- Support the Great Western Future Committee to identify priority outcomes of the Memorial Park Masterplan (memorial area, front entrance, play space, accessible pathways and hardcourt), including staged design and development work.

2.1.1 Community Development (cont'd)

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Climate Change Act 2017*
- *Gender Equality Act 2021*
- *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and Land Use Agreement (ILUA)*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2016*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018*
- *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2024-34
- Building Community Resilience Strategy 2024
- Arts and Culture Strategy 2020-24
- Extreme Heat Plan 2024
- Walkers Lake Management Plan 2019-29
- Community Engagement Policy
- St Arnaud Market Square Masterplan 2019
- Open Space and Active Transport Strategy 2024-34
- Youth Strategy 2024-28
- Multicultural Action Plan 2025-28
- Fair Access Policy 2024
- Stawell North Park Masterplan 2022
- St Arnaud Lord Nelson Park Precinct Plan 2015-25
- Great Western Memorial Park Masterplan 2018-28
- Great Western Masterplan 2025-35
- Netball Strategy 2018
- Stawell Framework Plan 2020
- Activate 2020-30
- Community Engagement Policy 2025
- Funding Policy - Grants, Sponsorships and Contributions 2026
- Stawell Parks Precinct Plan 2018
- St Arnaud Civic Precinct Plan 2014
- Grampians RDV Region Cycling and Trails Infrastructure Business and Master Plan



2.2.1 Community Care

The service is funded through the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), Support at Home Program (through external case management agencies), Veterans Affairs, the HACC-PYP service (Victorian Government funding for residents younger than 65), council budget, and fees paid by clients.

The Community Care team is also contracted by other agencies to provide a range of services to clients who require support through case management or assistance following hospitalisation (post-acute care services). These brokerage services are provided under state and federally funded programs.

The new *Aged Care Act 2024* and *Aged Care Rules 2025* came into effect from November 1, 2025 and have a fundamental focus on the rights and needs of older people. This Act governs the way council provides community care services and introduces new operating requirements that require analysis before we progress further with their implementation.

As such, council is completing a thorough review of Community Care services that will help inform a decision about whether council remains in direct service delivery or focuses its resources on other valuable supports. The review will assist with making an informed decision about how council best supports older residents to remain living independently and safely in their own homes for as long as possible. A decision will be made in July 2026.

Services delivered

Council provides the following services across the shire:

- Personal care, including support with bathing, hygiene and grooming.
- Domestic assistance, including cleaning, laundry and household chores to maintain a clean and safe living environment.
- Home and garden maintenance.
- Transport to support attendance at medical appointments and shopping.
- Social outings.
- Flexible in-home respite care.
- Delivery of meals and food preparation, including assistance for residents to prepare their own meals and delivery of meals for those who require it, prepared under contract by local health services.

In 2025, council staff:

- Provided community care services to more than 471 residents.
- Provided 16,885 service hours for older residents.
- Delivered 10,095 meals to people who require assistance.

In addition, the service coordinates more than 70 volunteers who give their time to deliver the Meals on Wheels program in Stawell and St Arnaud.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$1,585)
Income	\$1,526
NET COST	(\$59)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$21
Rates Subsidy	\$38
TOTAL NET	\$59

2.2.1 Community Care (cont'd)

Service changes

A decision will be made by council in July 2026 about the future of Community Care services.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Complete Community Care Service Review 2026.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Aged Care Act 2024*
- Aged Care Rules 2025

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.2 Immunisation

Northern Grampians Shire Council's immunisation service has several components. The primary components are our monthly immunisation sessions for children from birth to five years of age, and immunisation sessions at secondary schools across the shire.

The secondary school program is a legislated responsibility of local governments in Victoria, outlined in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. The service is provided to all secondary school students in years seven and 10 or age equivalent.

The service also assists with state immunisation programs such as Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and the Enhanced Measles Response Vaccination Program.

Council's immunisation team provides individual immunisation and vaccination-related advice via email, telephone or in person. We support our multicultural community by transferring overseas immunisation histories to the Australian Immunisation Register and by creating and implementing individualised catch-up schedules. We also support vulnerable community members by creating and implementing individualised catch-up schedules.

The team liaises with pharmacies and medical centres to ensure our community has access to immunisations and engages with early education and care services to facilitate enrolment and provide information about the service and current immunisation-related events.

The immunisation service is promoted through our media communication channels, grassroots education, personal

conversations at Maternal and Child Health appointments, via school networks, and engaging directly with adolescents who are not attending school.

The service is funded via a combination of council budget, and limited State and Commonwealth grant funding.

Services delivered

The immunisation service currently provides:

- Monthly community immunisation sessions in Stawell for 0–5-year-olds and monthly community immunisation sessions in St Arnaud for 0–5-year-olds.
- Three secondary school immunisation sessions run yearly. If any students are absent from school sessions, a "catch up" session at the school can be arranged. The service liaises with schools on a regular basis to discuss improving immunisation uptake and provides education materials to assist.

In 2025, council staff provided:

- 840 vaccinations to children from birth to five years of age as part of Victoria's National Immunisation Program.
- 111 vaccinations to students in years seven and 10, or age equivalent, as part of secondary school immunisations.
- 100 influenza vaccinations to council staff to provide coverage against seasonal influenza.

Service updates

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$50)
Income	\$3
NET COST	(\$47)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$16
Rates Subsidy	\$31
TOTAL NET	\$47

2.2.2 Immunisation (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Internal service review is currently being undertaken and due for completion in Q4 2027.
- Four-year independent risk review of the service area, which is monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee. This was due in 2026 and has been put on hold pending the internal service review.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Australian Immunisation Register Act 2015*
- *Public Records Act 1973*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*
- Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017
- Local Government Functions - Retention and Disposal Authority: PROS 09/05
- *New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.3 Kindergarten

Northern Grampians Shire Council provides Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services at two locations in St Arnaud. Council staff run St Arnaud Kindergarten at 8 Dunstan Street, next to St Arnaud Primary School, and St Arnaud Early Learning Centre at 7/3 Walker Street.

The new St Arnaud Kindergarten service has been in operation since March 3, 2025. The modular building has two kindergarten rooms and is licensed to provide education and care to 66 students. The service employs six staff members, including two kindergarten teachers and four qualified educators.

The kindergarten and St Arnaud Early Learning Centre are the only ECEC services in the area, providing important support to families, employees and the community.

This service is funded by council budget and the State Government.

Services delivered

In 2025, council delivered a fully funded kindergarten program to 67 children in our new modular building. The transition was smooth, thanks to our dedicated teachers and educators who carefully prepared children and families.

The new kindergarten building was also warmly welcomed by the St Arnaud community. Strong family support has made the program a valued and well-used part of our service, supporting continuity of learning and meeting local needs.

We continue to offer three- and four-year-old sessional kindergarten programs during school terms. Three-year-olds attend 15 hours per week, and four-year-olds (Pre-Prep) attend 22.5 hours per week. Sessions run for 7.5 hours, from 8.30am to 4pm.

Service changes

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$610)
Income	\$674
NET (COST)/INCOME	\$64
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$0
Rates Subsidy	\$0
TOTAL NET	\$0

*Note: The kindergarten and long day care services are cross subsidised due to the introduction of the integrated kinder at the Long Day Care centre. The Net Cost of these two services to council is \$116,000.

2.2.3 Kindergarten (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

Learning and Curriculum Initiatives:

- Outdoor learning and nature-based play programs.
- School readiness and transition-to-school programs.
- Literacy and early language development projects.
- Cultural inclusion and diversity celebrations.
- Sustainability and environmental education projects.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- National Quality Standard (administered by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – ACECQA)
- Children's Services Regulations 2020 (Victoria)
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.4 Libraries

Northern Grampians Shire Council Libraries offers a variety of literacy and learning programs, along with activities for library users, providing a steadfast and invaluable community resource. The library service has a current and diverse collection available across print, audio visual and digital formats, featuring more than 10,543 physical items and 2464 digital items.

The service’s two branches, in Stawell and St Arnaud, provide accessible and welcoming spaces for community engagement, lifelong learning, recreation and literacy skill development. Our Libraries team also delivers social and educational programs such as story time, tailored school group and seniors programs, holiday programs, digital literacy and book clubs.

Northern Grampians Shire Council Libraries forms part of the Central Highlands Libraries network, enabling our members access to a collection of more than 3.1 million items – books, movies, music, audiobooks, newspapers and magazine collections from 27 library services throughout Libraries Victoria.

Library services are funded by the council budget and limited State Government grant funding.

Services delivered

Northern Grampians Shire Council Libraries is managed with assistance from City of Ballarat. Stawell Library is open six days per week for a total of 33 hours, and St Arnaud Library is open five days per week for a total of 24 hours.

Both locations provide access to:

- Wi-Fi
- Computers
- Printing, scanning, laminating and bookbinding
- Home library services
- Story time, holiday activity programs
- Book clubs
- Special programs and events
- Visiting authors/presenters
- Device advice
- Space for meetings and group gatherings
- More than 15 activities a month that bring the community together through a partnership with the Healthy Ageing Hubs.

The library service also provides a book deposit stand at Marnoo that is run on an honesty loan system and is frequently re-stocked.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$519)
Income	\$166
NET COST	(\$353)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$123
Rates Subsidy	\$230
TOTAL NET	\$353

2.2.4 Libraries (cont'd)

Service changes

None proposed.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Develop a Library Strategy.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.5 Long Day Care

St Arnaud Early Learning Centre (ELC) provides long day care for children from birth to five years of age. The service employs 15 staff, including qualified educators, administration staff, and a cook.

In 2025, we introduced an integrated kindergarten program into the service, allowing families to access long day care with a funded kindergarten program built into the day. This model supports continuity of learning while offering greater flexibility for working families.

The ELC currently supports 75 local families, enabling parents and caregivers to work, study, and meet family commitments. Our experienced team is committed to delivering high-quality early learning programs that promote children’s development, wellbeing and school readiness. The service remains in strong demand, with an active waitlist reflecting its value to the St Arnaud community.

This service is funded by a combination of childcare fees, Federal Government fee support (i.e. Childcare Subsidy) and council budget.

Services delivered

The centre is licensed for 90 places per day, however, due to the building’s layout, it can accommodate 70–80 children at any one time. The service operates across three rooms for children aged 0–2 years, 2–3 years, and 3–5 years. Hours of operation are 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks per year (closing on public holidays and over Christmas and New Year). Funding is provided through Federal Government subsidies, parent fees and council budget.

The integrated kindergarten currently caters for 22 children per day, with 29 enrolled overall. The program runs for 6.5 hours (8.45am–3.15pm), Monday to Thursday, with wrap-around long day care available from 8am to 5pm. Three-year-old children attend 15 hours per week, and four-year-old children attend 19.5 hours per week. The program is funded through Victorian Government kindergarten funding, parent fees and council budget.

Service updates

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000’s
Expense	(\$1,519)
Income	\$1,339
NET COST	(\$180)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$63
Rates Subsidy	\$117
TOTAL NET	\$180

*Note: The kindergarten and long day care services are cross subsidised due to the introduction of the integrated kinder at the Long Day Care centre. The Net Cost of these two services to council is \$116,000.

2.2.5 Long Day Care (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Consider a comprehensive service review of current service delivery.
- Quality Improvement: Update the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and ensure ongoing compliance with the National Quality Framework (NQF).
- Workforce Development: Implement professional development programs, support staff retention, and maintain staffing ratios.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard (administered by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – ACECQA)
- Children's Services Regulations 2020 (Victoria)
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.6 Maternal and Child Health

Northern Grampians Shire’s Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service provides support to all parents and young children from 0-6 years of age who live in the municipality, focusing on health, welfare and development. The service also provides outreach services for children and families who require additional support.

In the universal program, MCH nurses see families at 10 key ages and stages of their child’s development. The visits focus on optimising children’s health, wellbeing, safety and development.

Consultations are carried out by registered nurses with qualifications in midwifery and maternal and child health.

Service provision includes:

- Home visits shortly after the birth of a baby.
- Outreach services for children and families who require additional support.
- Sleep settling services.
- First-time parenting support groups.
- Assistance linking parents to local community activities and networks/organisations for specialist assistance if required. Such organisations include, but are not limited to, speech therapy, dietetics, physiotherapy, postnatal depression support, counselling services, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), and family violence support. Council is working with these providers and the families who require their support, as many are experiencing long wait times.

The service also provides the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health (EMCH) program which offers targeted support and interventions for families with children under three years old, focusing on improving health outcomes and addressing risk factors. EMCH works closely with various sectors including health, education and welfare to ensure a coordinated family approach.

In addition, MCH nurses continued to work collaboratively with the By Five early years initiative scheduling telehealth consultations with a pediatrician. These consultations were conducted at our MCH centres with carers and children present.

This service is funded by council budget and the State Government.

Services delivered

Our current operating hours are:

Stawell Maternal and Child Health

87 D’Arcy Street, Stawell, VIC, 3380
Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5pm

St Arnaud Maternal and Child Health

3-7 Walker Street, St Arnaud, VIC, 3478
Wednesdays and Thursdays, 8.30am to 5pm

In 2025, the MCH service enrolled 122 newborn babies with our MCH team conducting 116 home visits to families with a newborn, and a total of 916 key age and stage visits.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000’s
Expense	(\$573)
Income	\$371
NET COST	(\$202)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$71
Rates Subsidy	\$131
TOTAL NET	\$202

2.2.6 Maternal and Child Health (cont'd)

Service changes

None proposed.

2026/27 Initiatives

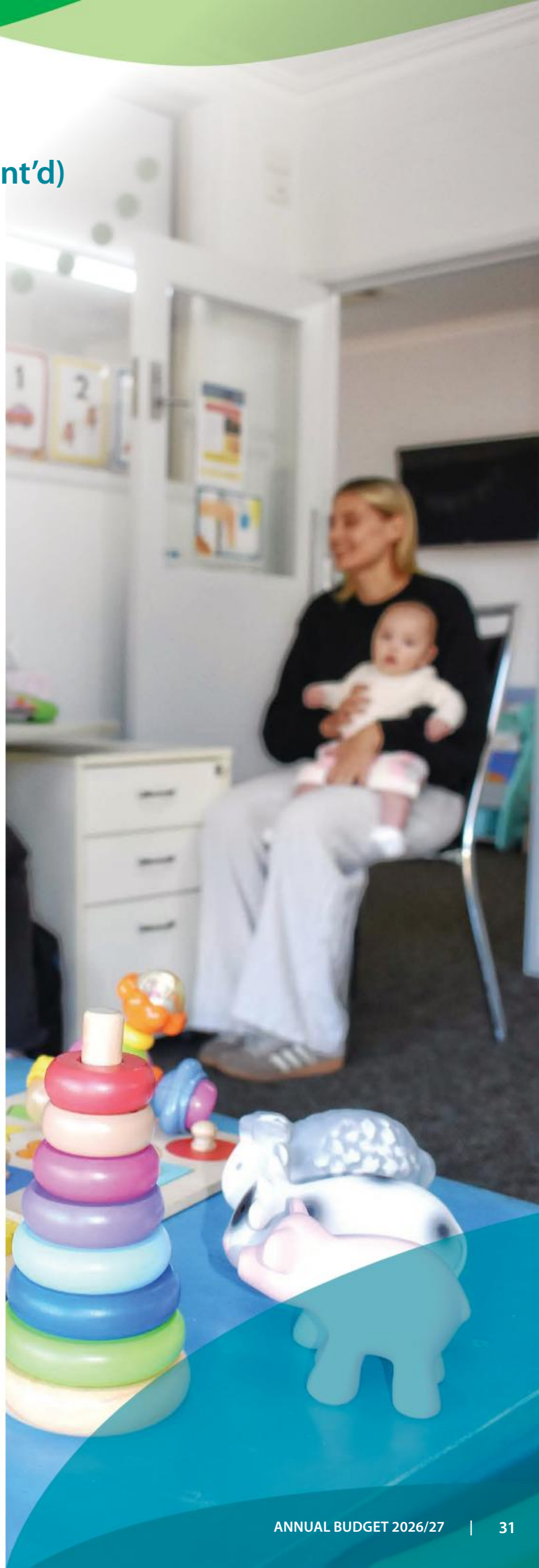
- First-time parent group sessions.
- Sleep and settling consultations and outreach services.
- Lactation consultations.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- Maternal and Child Health Service guidelines (2019)
- Maternal and Child Health Service standards (2011)
- Maternal and Child Health Service clinical practice guidelines
- Maternal and Child Health Universal program guidelines – currently Maternal and Child Health Service: practice guidelines (2009)
- Enhanced Maternal and Child Health program guidelines (2017)
- Maternal and Child Health Line program guidelines
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Children Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.7 St Arnaud Swimming Pool

The Active Communities team operates two council facilities - St Arnaud Swimming Pool and Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (SSAC).

Active Communities also works with clubs, schools and local community organisations to run programs and activities that promote active lifestyles and ensure movement-driven social interaction throughout the shire.

St Arnaud Swimming Pool operates seasonally throughout the summer months, from November to March and features a seven-lane, 50-metre solar heated pool, toddler wading pool, one-metre diving board, newly opened change room facilities, extensive undercover area and barbecue facilities.

Entry to the pool during regular opening times is free to all users. As of January 1, 2026, all bookings by schools and community groups outside of regular opening hours are charged a fee. This fee is currently discounted and will increase over the coming years to be the same as SSAC's.

Council fully funds delivery of the St Arnaud pool and its programs, which includes a small amount of income that is generated through swimming lessons, water aerobics classes and casual pool bookings.

Services delivered

During the 2025/26 summer period, the team delivered a Learn to Swim program that ran over eight weeks (three weeks in 2025 and five weeks in 2026) which also included youth swimming lessons for the first time, with 78 youth-aged participants taking part.

Two weeks of intensive swim programs were also offered in early January catering for all ages, with swimmers as young as six months participating in the program.

The past season also saw the introduction of a kiosk at the pool. To maintain consistency between St Arnaud and Stawell facilities, the kiosk stocked many of the same items including goggles, pool toys, swim accessories, ice creams, snacks and drinks. The team also ensured there was a healthy range of choices for the community which resulted in St Arnaud Swimming Pool collecting a Vic Kids Eat Well 'Monthly Lucky Bite' reward for efforts to reduce sugary drinks' bite and give children the healthy start they deserve.

Along with the introduction of the kiosk, the team has also been able to streamline the payment and enrolment process for swimming lessons and water aerobics through the implementation of Perfect Gym. The platform provides members and swimming lesson parents with greater control over their membership and bookings, including the ability to update payment details and manage failed payments.

Stage 1 of the St Arnaud Swimming Pool redevelopment project was completed prior to the 25/26 season starting. Stage 2 commenced in March 2026 with an expected completion date of October 2026, which will not impact the 26/27 season opening at this stage.

Service changes

None proposed. Council will continue to work closely with schools and community groups to increase facility usage fees outside of regular opening hours. This will also involve the swim club in the 2026/27 season.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$148)
Income	\$15
NET COST	(\$133)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$46
Rates Subsidy	\$87
TOTAL NET	\$133

2.2.7 St Arnaud Swimming Pool (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Implementation of participation plan to coincide with Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) funding.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- Guidelines of Safe Pool Operations
- Life Saving Victoria Guidelines
- Life Saving Victoria – Safer Public Pools Code of Practice
- Royal Life Saving Society Australia – Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Northern Grampians Sport and Recreation Strategy 2022-32
- St Arnaud Swimming Pool, Facility Management Plan
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.8 Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre

The Active Communities team operates two council facilities - Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (SSAC) and St Arnaud Swimming Pool.

Active Communities also works with clubs, schools and local community organisations to run programs and activities that promote and ensure active lifestyles and movement-driven social interaction throughout the shire.

SSAC operates as a health and wellness complex offering aquatic, gym and sporting options, along with competitions.

The centre facilities include a 15-metre indoor heated pool, 25m outdoor pool (seasonal), toddler pool (seasonal), water slides (seasonal), squash/racquetball courts, basketball, volleyball, netball, indoor soccer, badminton, water aerobics, group fitness programs, commercial gym, personal training, active-ageing activities, exercise physiology, reformer pilates, Learn To Swim programs, and a small kiosk.

All activities and services delivered in the centre are fee-for-service via membership options and casual fee models, however the centre is still significantly supported by council budget.

Services delivered

On average, the SSAC delivers more than 4560 swimming lessons a year through the Learn to Swim program with an average of 460 students.

All schools in Stawell including Skene Street, St Patrick's, Stawell Primary School and Stawell West, all undertake their school

swimming program with SSAC, along with the schools outside of Stawell, including Great Western, Concongella, Navarre and Marnoo. Two schools outside of Northern Grampians Shire, Landsborough and Pomonal, also use the pool, while Stawell Secondary College and Ararat West Primary School use the facility for their annual swim carnivals.

The centre's gym membership base continues to grow and reach pre-covid pandemic levels with 434 members, 93 of whom are platinum members (i.e. people over the age of 75 years who get free membership).

The centre delivers more than 760 group fitness classes and has introduced chair-based classes for people 50 and older.

The centre has restricted operating due to budgeting reasons, with regular winter hours being:

- Monday to Friday: 6am to 7pm
- Saturday: 9am to 1pm
- Sunday: Closed

During the summer period, operating hours are:

- Monday to Friday: 6am to 7pm
- Saturday: 1pm to 5pm
- Sunday: 1pm to 5pm

The centre also extends operating hours to 8pm over the summer holidays when days reach 35 degrees or above, a common occurrence in January.

Service changes

None proposed outside of annual CPI fee increases.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$1,467)
Income	\$967
NET COST	(\$500)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$175
Rates Subsidy	\$325
TOTAL NET	\$500

2.2.8 Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Advocacy for centre redevelopment project/s.
- Installation of electric heat pumps.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- Life Saving Victoria Guidelines
- Life Saving Victoria – Safer Public Pools Code of Practice
- Royal Life Saving Society Australia – Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2024–34
- North Park Master Plan 2022–32
- Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study (2022)
- Stawell Sports and Aquatic Centre – Schematic Design Report (2025)
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.2.9 Supported Playgroups

Northern Grampians Shire Council facilitates several playgroups across the municipality.

A qualified facilitator leads these sessions, enabling parents to develop skills and confidence to support their child’s wellbeing and development. One-on-one support for families is also offered, including in-home support. Council currently has two qualified supported playgroup facilitators who work part-time providing playgroups and in-home support consultations to families.

The evidence-based Smalltalk program is delivered in an unprejudiced way as part of supported playgroup sessions. This program is designed to support parents to interact in positive ways with their children and to build confidence in their parenting skills.

Supported Playgroup sessions allow families to attend at no cost, so there is no financial barrier to attending. Sessions are planned and run by facilitators who are trained in early years education. Playgroups often act as a bridge to other community services, and facilitators can identify families that will benefit from connecting with other services such as Maternal and Child Health, Allied Health, childcare and kindergarten.

Playgroups enable parents and carers to meet other families outside their usual circle, different backgrounds, parenting styles, cultures, and perspectives. Parents and carers connect through shared experiences.

The service is funded by the State Government and is free for families.

Services delivered

Council currently facilitates four supported playgroups in the shire:

- Navarre Playgroup – Navarre Primary School, Mondays, 10am to 12pm.
- Stawell Playgroup – Stawell Neighbourhood House, Tuesdays, 10am to 12pm.
- Stawell Playgroup (focusing on babies and crawlers) – Stawell Neighbourhood House, Wednesdays, 10.30am to 12pm.
- St Arnaud Playgroup – St Arnaud Lawn Tennis Club, Fridays, 10am to 12pm.

Service changes

None proposed. Service levels may change during the 2026/27 financial year with only one facilitator running playgroups rather than two, however, no changes to the playgroup schedule are anticipated at this stage.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$67)
Income	\$67
NET COST	\$0
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$0
Rates Subsidy	\$0
TOTAL NET	\$0

2.2.9 Supported Playgroups (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Continue to deliver the new Stawell Babies and Crawlers Playgroup and St Arnaud Community playgroup.
- Support Children's Week 2026.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- Supported Playgroup Policy and Funding Guidelines 2017
- Regulated by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- Victorian Early Years Learning Development Framework
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.3.1 Community Safety

Community Safety protects public health, safety and amenity across Northern Grampians Shire through the delivery of statutory compliance, education and proportionate enforcement under Victorian legislation and Council’s General Local Law 2022.

The service is predominantly mandatory in nature and includes domestic animal management (including pound operations), amenity and unsightly property matters, illegal littering, municipal places management, fire hazard compliance, emergency management-related obligations and school crossing supervision.

Community Safety operates under an education-first regulatory model. The service prioritises voluntary compliance through communication and support, escalating to enforcement action where there is informed failure or refusal to comply. This approach seeks to balance regulatory integrity with fairness, risk management and community wellbeing.

Through proactive inspections, reactive request response and structured enforcement pathways, the service manages public safety risks, protects council assets and upholds local standards of amenity on behalf of the community.

This service is funded by council budget, which includes fees and charges paid by the community where appropriate.

Services delivered

Community Safety delivers a combination of reactive response, proactive compliance programs and structured enforcement pathways to maintain public safety and amenity outcomes across the municipality.

Regulatory Service Delivery

- Statutory compliance across domestic animal management (including occasional livestock matters), amenity and unsightly properties and General Local Law 2022 matters.
- Administration of permits and compliance monitoring across municipal places and regulated activities.
- Response to customer requests, complaints and enquiries across all regulatory functions.
- Requests tracked through Council’s CRM system to monitor timeliness and operational performance.

Animal Management and Pound Operations

- End-to-end domestic animal management, including response to complaints (e.g., wandering animals, dog attacks, welfare concerns).
- Operation of council’s pound facility in Stawell and satellite operations at St Arnaud, aligned to legislative standards and Code of Practice requirements.
- Liaison with rescue groups and veterinary professionals to support reclaim and rehoming outcomes.
- Annual pound audits and continuous operational review processes.

Compliance Programs

- Response to customer requests, complaints and enquiries across all regulatory functions.
- Requests tracked through Council’s CRM system to monitor timeliness and operational performance.

Proactive Compliance Programs

- Compliance programs under the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–29.
- Targeted inspections and monitoring activities to prevent escalation of amenity and safety issues.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000’s
Expense	(\$540)
Income	\$147
NET COST	(\$393)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$137
Rates Subsidy	\$256
TOTAL NET	\$393

2.3.1 Community Safety (cont'd)

Enforcement and Governance

- Escalation to infringements or prosecutions where voluntary compliance is not achieved.
- Enforcement decisions guided by state legislation and council's General Local Law 2022.
- Performance oversight through structured reporting, LGPRF animal management measures and quarterly milestone monitoring.

School Crossings

Council provides crossing supervision services at two locations in Stawell:

1. Stawell 502 Primary School, Barnes Street, Stawell
 2. Stawell West Primary School, Cooper Street, Stawell
- School crossings operate on school days, typically from 8am to 9am and 2.30pm to 3:30pm to align with school schedules. These crossings are operational only when supervisors are present and crossing flags are displayed.

Service changes

None proposed outside of annual fee review and CPI increases.

2026/27 Initiatives

Implementation actions under the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–29 including:

- Review of dog off-leash areas and rules relating to dogs in a public place.
- Investigate renewal of Community Safety after-hours service.
- Investigate the introduction of new cat control orders.
- Continued refinement of enforcement procedures and internal review processes to ensure legislative compliance and consistency in decision-making.
- Ongoing review of pound operations and audit outcomes to maintain animal welfare standards and operational efficiency.
- Monitoring of customer request response timeframes and service performance indicators to support continuous improvement.

- Delivery of required School Crossing service needs, including:
 - Periodical recruitment, induction and training of School Crossing Supervisors to maintain roster coverage and legislative compliance.
 - Refresher training to ensure consistent application of safe operating procedures.
 - Routine inspection and maintenance of prescribed signage, flags and safety equipment to reach compliance with Victorian Government operational standards and workplace safety requirements.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Vic)*
- *Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 (Vic)*
- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- General Local Law 2022
- *Road Safety Act 1986 (Vic)*
- Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 (Vic)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–29
- Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–29
- General Local Law 2022 and Guidelines
- Victorian Government School Crossing Supervisor Program Guidelines
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

2.3.2 Emergency Management

Emergency events are as inevitable as they are unpredictable, and Northern Grampians Shire Council needs to contribute to building resilient communities. The council’s roles and responsibilities in emergency events are legislated under the *Emergency Management Act 1989*, the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, and the *Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018*.

Council’s legislated duties require the organisation to work in partnership with emergency agencies and the community to provide planning, preparation and response in regards to support and actions required before, during and after an emergency event. Council is then responsible for leading relief and recovery activities at the municipal level.

Council’s Emergency Planning service is funded through the State Government Municipal Emergency Resource Program (MERP) and supplemented by council budget. Activities that promote community resilience and emergency preparedness are currently only possible through external funding opportunities which limit the type of proactive support council can currently provide.

Services delivered

- Fire hazard inspections program (private property): 194 Fire Prevention Notices issued between 3 November 2025 and 27 February 2026.
- Emergency preparedness community messaging – seasonally consistent communications in relation to the various risks to our communities.
- Community emergency planning workshops in Great Western (Oct 2025), Navarre (Nov 2025) and St Arnaud (Feb 2026), and a planned session for Halls Gap (April-June 2026).
- Collaborative municipal emergency planning and advocacy with other agencies and organisations via the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMP), Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) and Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMPC).
- Preparation for activation of council staff in emergency roles through training and exercising opportunities.
- Maintenance of the Northern Grampians Shire Vulnerable Persons and Facilities Registers.
- Coordination of the responsibilities of legislative council emergency roles MEMO and MRM.

Service changes

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$220)
Income	\$147
NET COST	(\$73)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$25
Rates Subsidy	\$48
TOTAL NET	\$73

2.3.2 Emergency Management (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Continue to develop the emergency staff training program.
- Plan and deliver a relief centre exercise.
- Develop a written Impact Assessment process.
- Continuous review of MEMP and subplans.
- Continuous review of council complementary plans.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Emergency Management Act 1989*
- *Emergency Management Act 2013*
- *Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018*
- *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*
- *Infringements Act 2006*

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP)
- Municipal Flood Emergency Plan (MEMP sub plan)
- Municipal Fire Management Plan (MEMP sub plan)
- Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (MEMP sub plan)
- Extreme Heat Plan
- Emergency Relief Centre Operations Plan
- Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre Operations Plan



2.3.3 Environmental Health

Public Health supports improved health and wellbeing of the Northern Grampians Shire community by ensuring compliance with various health standards and legislation.

This requires routine inspections of food, accommodation, hairdressing, and tattooing premises. In addition, the council works with agencies to develop strategic plans for heat stress, infectious disease, and public health issues.

As a legislative service, Public Health promotes and maintains the public health of the municipality and delivers the requirements of legislation from the specific Acts.

The key issues the service seeks to resolve are safety to the public through food safety surveillance, registration of required premises, regulation of household wastewater disposal, and the investigation of infectious disease outbreaks and public health nuisance complaints.

This service is funded by council budget and includes registration and permit fees which assist in providing the delivery of public health services.

Services delivered

For the 2025 calendar year, council's Public Health team managed approximately 447 registerable premises, with the breakdown of premises shown below:

- *Food Act 1984*: 373
 - Directly registered with council - 230
 - Via FoodTrader - 143
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2009*: 64
 - Accommodation premises - 34
 - Hair and beauty services including skin penetration - 23
 - Swimming pools (public) - 3 locations (7 pools)
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*
 - Caravan parks: 10
- *Wastewater Management - Environment Protection Act 2017*
 - Permits to Install - 25-30 annually
 - Certificates to Use - 25-30 annually

They also responded to 15 enquiries, eight investigations regarding food/noise/pollution complaints, and managed five infectious disease outbreaks.

Service changes

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$221)
Income	\$106
NET COST	(\$115)
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FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$40
Rates Subsidy	\$75
TOTAL NET	\$115

2.3.3 Environmental Health (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Refinement of the new Public Health Software for registerable premises.
- Prioritisation of food inspections at major public events to ensure safety of attendees and compliance by all vendors.
- Review of the Municipal Domestic Wastewater Management Plan.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Food Act 1984*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2009*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*
- *Environment Protection Act 2017*

Related plans & strategies

- Municipal Domestic Wastewater Management Plan 2022-27
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



2.4.1 Cemeteries

Northern Grampians Shire Council is appointed to manage the St Arnaud and Stawell (Pleasant Creek) cemeteries. The purpose of this service is to:

- Manage all functions associated with cemetery services.
- Perform all tasks in accordance with requirements of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*.
- Strategically plan for and implement actions to meet the needs of contemporary cemetery services.

This service provides compassionate caretakers of the final resting place for our community members, and respectful and inclusive preservation of our heritage and culture. The cemeteries are a place of reflection and frequently visited by family members from both within and outside of our community.

It's important to note internal cemetery roads and drainage are not formally classified as public roads and therefore do not attract dedicated maintenance or renewal funding from either level of government, limiting council's capacity to undertake planned upgrades. Council cemeteries also have ageing infrastructure with significant asset deterioration requirements in some instances, requiring ongoing maintenance and investment.

The service is funded by council budget and cemetery fees paid by the community.

Services delivered

The service works with funeral directors, stonemasons and families of the deceased to ensure that appropriate resting places are provided for our community, and memorials are established to commemorate loved ones.

Annually, this includes approximately:

- 75 burials
- 20 cremated remains
- 15 pre-purchases
- 65 stonemason requests
- 45 plaque orders

Across the service, council works department currently undertake:

- Gravedigging
- Cremation interment services
- General cemetery asset maintenance

The parks and gardens department undertake:

- Lawn cemetery establishment and maintenance.
- Cremation memorial rose garden establishment and maintenance.
- General ground maintenance including weeding, mowing, irrigation and tree maintenance.

The engineering department also initiate contract works for new lawn cemetery sections on an as-needs basis.

Service changes

None proposed outside of annual CPI fee reviews.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$475)
Income	\$304
NET COST	(\$171)
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FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$60
Rates Subsidy	\$111
TOTAL NET	\$171

2.4.1 Cemeteries (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Undertake assessment of hazardous historic monuments to form an action plan to address high- risk areas.
- Develop cemetery fee schedule for Mary Street development.
- Develop a new lawn section at St Arnaud Cemetery.
- Delivery of grave digging and cremation interment services, ensuring timely, respectful and compliant burial operations.
- Lawn cemetery establishment and ongoing maintenance, including turf management, irrigation upkeep and presentation standards.
- Establishment and maintenance of cremation memorial rose gardens, including planting, irrigation, pruning and general landscape upkeep.
- Delivery of general cemetery grounds maintenance, including mowing, weeding, irrigation system maintenance and tree maintenance.
- Ongoing maintenance and presentation of cemetery assets, including monuments, edging, paths and ancillary infrastructure, within existing resource and budget constraints.
- Coordination between Works and Parks and Gardens teams to balance cemetery operational demands with broader municipal service delivery responsibilities.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)

Related plans & strategies

- Parks and Sporting Facilities Service Plan
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Urban Tree Nature Strip Management Plan



2.4.2 Facilities Maintenance

Northern Grampians Shire Council's Facility Maintenance team maintains council's office buildings, leisure centres, sporting structures, grandstands, visitor information centres, historical buildings and major monuments such as town halls, civic buildings, memorial structures and community facilities located across multiple townships.

Council alters the level of service provided in accordance with the community significance, condition and utilisation of each building or structure. Buildings with high public use or heritage value require higher levels of maintenance and compliance activity, with historical buildings often incurring increased maintenance costs due to age, heritage controls and construction limitations.

The service is primarily funded by council budget, with supplementary funding provided through state and federal government grants where available, particularly for building renewal, compliance upgrades and heritage-related works which often have rising operational costs.

Services delivered

The service delivers planned and reactive maintenance across council's building portfolio, featuring 137 buildings and structures, and includes activities such as routine inspections, preventative maintenance, compliance requirements and responsive repairs.

Over the past 12 months, the service has delivered cyclical maintenance programs, Essential Safety Measure inspections, reactive repairs in response to customer and facility user requests, and supervision of contracted maintenance services across council facilities.

Service changes

None proposed, however, this service delivery is influenced by asset age, building condition, compliance requirements and usage levels, with higher-use and heritage buildings requiring increased inspection and maintenance effort. Future service delivery may be impacted by council's ageing building portfolio, rising construction and compliance costs, changing regulatory requirements and increasing demand for facility use.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$1,895)
Income	(\$8)
NET COST	(\$1,903)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$665
Rates Subsidy	\$1,238
TOTAL NET	\$1,903

2.4.2 Facilities Maintenance (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

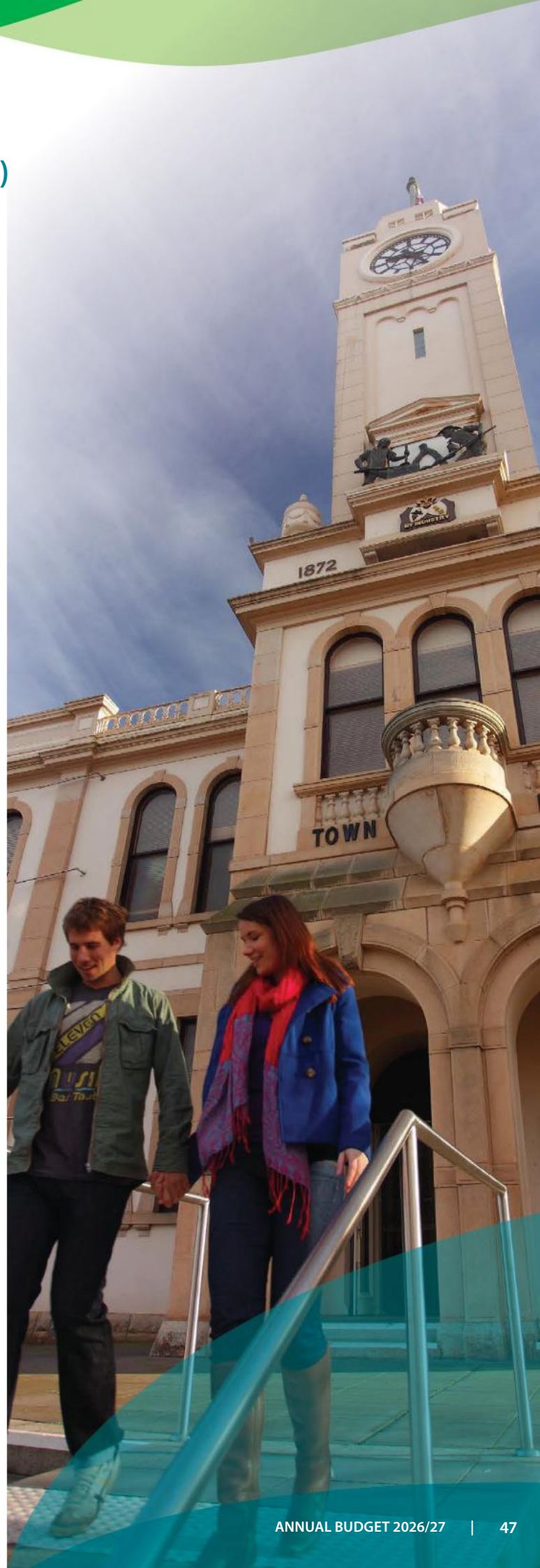
- Delivery of planned and reactive building maintenance programs across council facilities.
- Continued delivery of Essential Safety Measure audits, inspections and compliance activities.
- Continued implementation of scheduled preventative maintenance programs to reduce reactive repair demand.
- Delivery and supervision of approved building renewal, renovation and capital maintenance projects.
- Ongoing review and updating of the building asset register to improve condition data and maintenance planning.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)*
- *Building Act 1993 (Vic)*
- *Building Regulations 2018 (Vic)*
- *Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)*

Related plans & strategies

- Community Buildings and Facilities Service Plan
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Sustainable Asset Management Strategy
- Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines AS/NZS 31000:2009



2.4.3 Parks and Gardens

Northern Grampians Shire Council is committed to providing quality parks, garden areas and recreational precincts due to their importance to the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike.

The service aims to deliver an accessible and connected network of public open spaces that maximise community benefit. Maintenance is delivered to ensure effective and sustainable management practices are implemented, as public furnishings are of high value to the community.

The Parks and Gardens service maintains and manages a diverse range of high-use and high-value open spaces across the municipality, including major sporting ovals, regional and neighbourhood parks, playgrounds, landscaped civic facilities, town entrances, traffic islands and key streetscapes. Particular focus is placed on high-profile community assets such as Central Park and the Stawell Gift precinct, sporting reserves, playgrounds, memorial gardens, and open spaces that support tourism, events and community wellbeing.

The service also undertakes tree management, electrical line clearance vegetation works, weed control, stormwater reuse dam maintenance, and irrigation management to support asset health, public safety and environmental sustainability.

This service is primarily funded by council budget, with supplementary funding provided through state and federal government grants where available, particularly for playground renewal, open space improvements, tree planting programs and capital upgrades.

Services delivered

Council maintains and manages:

- Eight sporting ovals.
- Four major parks/gardens.
- 23 neighbourhood parks.
- 16 landscaped community facilities.
- 19 playgrounds.
- Landscaped traffic islands and roundabouts.
- 10 stormwater flood retention and reuse dams.
- 244,685m² of urban town slashing (Stawell and St Arnaud).
- 138,841m² of rural town slashing (Halls Gap, Great Western, Marnoo, Navarre, Glenorchy, Stuart Mill).
- 6500 trees in Stawell and St Arnaud.
- Rural town trees planting and maintenance.
- Electrical line vegetation clearance work.
- Weed control in back lanes, drains and gutters.

Service changes

Parks and Gardens maintenance levels in Stawell and St Arnaud have been reduced to enable resources to be redirected to cemetery maintenance support.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$2,044)
Income	\$0
NET COST	(\$2,044)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$714
Rates Subsidy	\$1,330
TOTAL NET	\$2,044

2.4.3 Parks and Gardens (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Delivery of planned and reactive parks and gardens maintenance across sporting ovals, parks, playgrounds, landscaped facilities and open space reserves.
- Ongoing playground inspection, audit and maintenance programs to ensure compliance with safety standards.
- Implementation of planned tree maintenance, planting and electrical line clearance vegetation programs.
- Continued delivery of irrigation system maintenance and stormwater reuse dam management to support sustainable open space outcomes.
- Park and garden renewal and improvement works, including turf renovation, mulching, planting and landscape upgrades, subject to budget allocation.
- Ongoing review and updating of the Parks and Gardens asset register to improve condition monitoring and defect reporting.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- *Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)*
- Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations (as applicable to vegetation management)

Related plans & strategies

- Parks and Sporting Facilities Service Plan
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Urban Tree Nature Strip Management Plan
- Electrical Line Clearance Management Plan
- Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines AS/NZS 31000:2009





3. Business buzz

2025-29 Council Plan Year 2 Priorities:

Council has identified **28 tasks** that support farming and rural industries, build vibrant local businesses, and enhance our tourism experiences.



3.1.1 Business Support

Economic development supports our business community to grow exports and jobs, build economic and environmental sustainability, and embrace innovation and best practice. Key sectors include agriculture, manufacturing, health care, renewable energy, tourism and retail.

In addition to one-to-one business support, council’s Business Support team manages projects that demonstrate the capacity to deliver wider economic benefit. This includes areas such as workforce and resident attraction (talent availability and workforce pipeline), investment attraction and strategic investment.

This service supports local businesses to:

- Access external funding opportunities such as state and federal regional infrastructure investment funding streams, including advocating and developing strong relationships with state and federal funding agencies to allow stronger chances of applications to be successful.
- Connect and network with each other and councils.
- Access opportunities for professional development such as the small business mentoring service, Business Victoria free virtual advice sessions and numerous business networking events and opportunities to participate in training programs as highlighted in the business monthly E-News and Agriculture-News.
- Navigate permit and approval processes through the concierge service provided by the Economic Development team having face-to-face meetings with business operators and new business operators searching for advice, service and advocacy.

The service is primarily funded by council budget outside of specific projects and initiatives where state or federal funding opportunities exist.

Services delivered

The Business Support team currently provide:

- Business growth support through personalised service meetings with current and new businesses to facilitate and advocate for funding opportunities, business to business networking events and small business Victoria support training sessions such as cash flow management and marketing.
- Investment attraction through the promotion of the investment prospectus to key business owners and stakeholders within Northern Grampians Shire and in the wider Victoria business and investment community through business events and expos highlighting the benefit of investing in Northern Grampians Shire.
- Strategic investment via targeted events and building local business associations to collaborate and work in partnership to attract investment.
- Workforce and resident attraction via advocating and working with local business and real estate agencies to increase the rental pool and in-fill housing opportunities while also collaborating with local business to look to develop training courses and opportunity for workforces to learn and grow within Northern Grampians Shire.

Service changes

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$241)
Income	\$0
NET COST	(\$241)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$84
Rates Subsidy	\$157
TOTAL NET	\$241

3.1.1 Business Support (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Support engagement with Agriculture Victoria on regional drought resilience projects.
- Deliver agricultural information and support via council's website.
- Advocate for the Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply project.
- Support improved presentation and activation of shopfronts.
- Implement outstanding actions in council's Retail Gap Analysis 2018 and continue implementation.
- Promote buy-local campaigns and networking events.
- Support establishment of a Halls Gap and St Arnaud business network to support collaboration/working together to address common challenges and opportunities.
- Deliver engagement and review of council's 'Business Growth Program', including funding accelerator program and business mentoring.
- Advocate for the delivery of the Stawell Underground Physics Lab and experience centre.
- Advocate for Halls Gap, Ararat Rd Sewer Extension.
- Support coordination of housing construction programs by connecting builders, developers, and landholders (in-fill project).
- Promote investment attraction videos and new residents guide.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

Related plans & strategies

- Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2031
- Industry Investment Prospectus 2024
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



3.1.2 Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is the research and formulation of policies, plans and strategies to implement goals and objectives relating to particular land uses or areas. These include township plans such as framework or structure plans, or subject-specific plans such as flood and heritage studies. These plans are undertaken to achieve the community’s vision for livability, health and wellbeing, economic and environmental sustainability outcomes, and places for people.

Strategic Planning is responsible for the review and maintenance of the Northern Grampians Planning Scheme. Changes to the planning scheme are made through Planning Scheme Amendments. Changes are made to implement a study, plan or policies, to correct errors in the scheme or to facilitate a development that might otherwise be prohibited. Planning Scheme Amendments are legislated via the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

The service is also responsible for responding to State Government planning policy changes, including the renewable energy transition and response to renewable energy proposals.

The service is largely funded by council budget with several specific projects supported by government grants. In particular, the Department of Planning’s Regional Planning Hub provides funding and resource support across several projects.

Services delivered

- Strategic land use planning, including preparation of plans and strategies.
- Planning Scheme Amendments, such as the C64 St Arnaud Framework Plan and C85 Planning Scheme Review.
- Heritage planning, such as the Northern Grampians Heritage Study Stage 1, 2024, along with provision of a Heritage Advisory Service.
- Renewable energy response and advocacy, which includes responding to renewable energy proposals such as the proposed VNI West Transmission Line, and council’s advocacy efforts outlined on council’s website.

Service changes

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000’s
Expense	(\$533)
Income	\$0
NET COST	(\$533)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$186
Rates Subsidy	\$347
TOTAL NET	\$533

3.1.2 Strategic Planning (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Implement the Planning Scheme Review (2025) via a Planning Scheme Amendment.
- Completion of the St Arnaud and Stawell heritage studies and implementation via a Planning Scheme Amendment.
- Completion of the Stawell Growth Area Master Plan and implementation of the master plan via a Planning Scheme Amendment along with the implementation of the Stawell Framework Plan (2021) and Stawell Western Highway Urban Design Framework (2021).
- Commence the Infill Housing Project, which seeks to support additional housing supply within the shire.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

Related plans & strategies

- Stawell Structure Plan, March 2021
- Stawell Western Highway Urban Design Framework, March 2021
- St Arnaud Township Framework Plan, August 2023
- Northern Grampians Shire Heritage Review 2024-2025
- Northern Grampians Shire Planning Scheme Review 2025
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29



3.2.1 Tourism and Events

Northern Grampians Shire Council's Tourism and Events service works in partnership with the community and other key partners, including Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism, to grow the region's visitor economy.

Township tourism strategies and action plans, tourism wayfinding (i.e. signage) and tourism event strategies are key to working in partnership with the community to develop our visitor economy, in a targeted and tactical way. This includes working with communities to identify and develop a unique point of difference (i.e. brand identity) and visitor experiences.

In addition, the team manages the Halls Gap Hub and delivers visitor information services inclusive of the accredited Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in Halls Gap and volunteer-run VICs in St Arnaud and Stawell. These services play a key role in the promotion of our region to post-arrival visitors and to encourage visitors to explore beyond the bounds of Grampians National Park.

The service is primarily funded by council budget outside of specific projects and initiatives where state or federal funding opportunities exist.

Services delivered

- Collaborate with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism through the Visitor Economy Partnership to promote and develop the region as a visitor destination.
- Providing in-kind support via advice, information and planning tools to community groups and event organisers. For example:
 - Information about event concierge services, event grants and planning guides regularly promoted on Discover Northern Grampians' social media, council's website and community and business newsletters.
 - In-kind event concierge services provided to event organisers with proactive outreach using council event registration, SpaceToCo venue booking process, and council grant agreements. Peak support provided for Easter festival and new multi-weekend CFA firefighting championships event.
- Providing financial support through council's annual Tourism Event Grants program.
- Providing support and guidance to event organisers looking to achieve compliance and legislative requirements (event registration). For example:
 - Event concierge service.
 - Event planning guidelines and workshops.
 - Tailored review and assessment of event strategies, registrations and emergency management plans etc.
- Local marketing and promotional support via listing events on the council event calendar and Discover Northern Grampians' social media channels. For example:
 - Annual events calendar published on our website.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$876)
Income	\$48
NET COST	(\$828)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$289
Rates Subsidy	\$539
TOTAL NET	\$828

3.2.1 Tourism and Events (cont'd)

- Weekly 'What's On' events calendar distributed via Instagram, Facebook, and physical hubs such as Visitor Information Centres and community noticeboards.
- Support local communities to build their visitor economy by developing and implementing:
 - Actions under tourism strategy and action plans.
 - Township brand identities and guidelines.
 - Northern Grampians Shire Tourism Signage/Wayfinding Guidelines (with final revisions being made to incorporate new partner branding and logos from Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism).
- Delivered peak period post-arrival marketing and promotion through event support, sponsorships and grant agreements that delivered co-branded Discover Northern Grampians artwork across highway billboards, street signs, fencing and event day materials, as well as acknowledgement of council through event media, opening ceremonies and naming rights to event awards (i.e. Great Western Show and Shine).
- Visitor servicing and information:
 - Promote and showcase the region through the management and operation of three Visitor Information Centres, including maintaining Victorian Tourism Industry Council accreditation for Halls Gap Visitor Information Centre).
 - Coordinated large volunteer roster, including recruitment and retention strategies.

Service changes

None proposed.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Deliver the Northern Grampians Shire Tourism Event Strategy, including support via tourism event grants.
- Investigate streamlining processes to reduce red tape in event registration/approval process.
- Deliver event planning workshops to assist the community.
- Support the development of new tourism attractions across the shire.
- Support GWM Tourism to deliver regional destination marketing.
- Deliver priority recommendations in the Stawell Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022-32 and St Arnaud Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022-32).
- Deliver priority actions in 'Tourism Signage Strategy' to ensure clear and accurate wayfinding for the region including traditional ownership recognition.
- Operate Visitor Information Centres in Halls Gap, Stawell and St Arnaud, including maintaining accreditation of the Halls Gap centre.
- Implement 'Discover Northern Grampians Destination Branding'.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 2020*

Related plans & strategies

- Tourism Signage (Wayfinding) Strategy 2024
- Stawell Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022-32
- St Arnaud Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022-32
- Tourism Event Strategy 2023-33
- Event Policy, May 2024
- Tourism Events Grants Guidelines 2025
- Visitor Information Servicing Policy, September 2025
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29

3.3.1 Depot Operations

Northern Grampians Shire Council's Depot Operations team is spread across two depots, in Stawell and St Arnaud. The two depots enable staff to effectively maintain council's assets and deliver works programs across the shire. Provisions are made to cater for day-to-day operational support, which enables work to be delivered in an effective and efficient manner.

The two teams have designated boundaries of responsibility but are known to cross those boundaries to cover resource shortages and assist with capital works. Heavy plant and minor equipment are serviced, maintained and repaired through council's internal depot and workshop arrangements to ensure assets remain safe, compliant and fit for operational use. The workshop team also supports fleet and heavy plant management through servicing, inspections and maintenance history to inform asset planning and utilisation.

This service is primarily funded by council budget with costs allocated across multiple operational service areas. Capital renewal and replacement of heavy plant is managed separately through council's Heavy Plant Capital Replacement Program. From time to time, external funding such as government grants may support specific operational projects or initiatives.

Services delivered

Depot Operations includes facilities support staff responsible for the operational management of council's town halls and hireable community facilities. These roles coordinate facility bookings, hirer inductions and event readiness, support internal meetings and community events, undertake Essential

Safety Measure (ESM) compliance inspections, and supervise and audit contracted cleaning services to ensure facilities remain safe, compliant and operational. This component of the service supports community access to council buildings and does not operate under internal recovery arrangements.

Council's team manages both the Stawell and St Arnaud aerodromes, bores, standpipes, fire hydrant plugs, strategic fire breaks and other minor facilities. The aerodromes are used by several emergency services to provide effective responses to emergency events. Depot Operations also assists with the maintenance and support of ancillary operational assets such as bores and generators across the shire to support service continuity and emergency preparedness.

There are four standpipes and 16 bores throughout the shire. Water from the bores is provided free of charge for fire prevention, road maintenance, stock water supplies and non-potable domestic supplies. Fire hydrants are routinely checked to ensure they function in an emergency, and council maintains strategically located fire breaks in rural areas to support bushfire preparedness and access.

Depot Operations also administers council's street lighting operational budget, which covers electricity consumption costs and power authority maintenance charges associated with public street lighting infrastructure.

Service changes

None proposed.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$95)
Income	\$95
NET COST	\$0
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$0
Rates Subsidy	\$0
TOTAL NET	\$0

3.3.1 Depot Operations (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Development and adoption of operational budgets to support service delivery across council facilities, infrastructure operations, depot operations, plant and fleet services and street lighting.
- Ongoing refinement of internal recovery calculations to ensure expenditure is accurately allocated and the service maintains a break-even outcome.
- Continued use of data-driven budget monitoring through fortnightly reporting and forecasting to improve financial accuracy, transparency and early identification of budget pressures.
- Supporting asset management, service planning and capital works delivery through the provision of accurate financial inputs and operational cost data.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 (Vic)
- *Audit Act 1994 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Plant and Heavy Equipment Management Plan



3.3.2 Infrastructure Maintenance

Northern Grampians Shire Council currently maintains 3368 kilometres of the local road network, comprising 833km of sealed roads, 2086km of unsealed roads, and 449km of formed or track roads, in accordance with the agreed level of service. This network includes 140 bridges and 279 major culverts.

In addition to the road network, council maintains a 121km footpath network and a comprehensive drainage system consisting of 157km of kerb and channel, 76km of drainage pipes, approximately 2700 drainage pits, and 58,851m² of car parks.

Council also manages a range of operational and emergency-support assets across the shire, including the Stawell and St Arnaud aerodromes, bores, standpipes, fire hydrants and strategically located fire breaks, as well as delivering private works services where appropriate. The aerodromes support several emergency services and play a critical role in emergency response events.

There are four standpipes and 16 bores located throughout the shire. Water from these bores is provided free of charge for fire prevention, road maintenance, stock water supplies and non-potable domestic purposes. These assets are routinely inspected and maintained to ensure availability and functionality when required.

Fire hydrants are inspected and maintained to ensure effective operation during emergency response situations. Strategic fire breaks are maintained in rural areas to support bushfire preparedness, access and risk mitigation.

Private works may also be undertaken on a cost-recovery basis where resources permit, in accordance with council policy, ensuring these activities do not detract from council's core service delivery obligations.

This service is funded through council's annual operating and capital budgets, with supplementary funding from state and federal government grants where available, particularly for asset renewal, rehabilitation, emergency preparedness and infrastructure improvement works.

Services delivered

This service delivers planned and reactive maintenance, renewal and capital works delivery, as well as operational activities across council's transport, drainage, emergency-support and associated infrastructure assets, in accordance with the Road Management Plan, Asset Management Plan and relevant operational policies.

The service maintains agreed service levels for sealed and unsealed roads, bridges, footpaths, drainage assets, car parks, aerodromes, bores, standpipes, fire hydrants and strategic fire breaks, with performance measured through delivery of programmed maintenance and capital works, inspection regimes, customer response times and compliance with intervention requirements.

The service also includes delivery of capital works projects, other works and private works where appropriate, while ensuring priority is given to statutory obligations, emergency response readiness and adopted maintenance, renewal and capital delivery programs.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$3,537)
Income	\$0
NET COST	(\$3,537)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$1,236
Rates Subsidy	\$2,301
TOTAL NET	\$3,537

3.3.2 Infrastructure Maintenance (cont'd)

Service changes

None proposed.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Sealed roads (resealing, pothole repairs and defect rectification, including response to Road Management Plan inspection defects).
- Unsealed roads (resheeting, grading and routine maintenance programs, including rectification of defects identified through Road Management Plan inspections).
- Bridges and major culverts (inspection-aligned maintenance and minor works, including defects identified through formal inspection and Road Management Plan processes).
- Footpaths (inspection-aligned maintenance and renewal, including rectification of Road Management Plan defects).
- Drainage assets (pits, pipes, kerb and channel and swales, where defects impact road safety or functionality under the Road Management Plan).
- Traffic control and road-related infrastructure (signage, line marking, street furniture).
- Street cleaning programs across urban and rural areas.
- Roadside vegetation management programs.
- Gravel pit management and maintenance.
- Aerodrome inspections and seasonal maintenance activities.
- Bore and standpipe inspections and maintenance.
- Event Traffic Management Plan delivery.
- Fire hydrant inspection and testing programs.
- Strategic fire break maintenance programs.
- Private works delivered on a cost-recovery basis, subject to resource availability.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Road Management (General) Regulations 2016 (Vic)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- *Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic)*
- Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (Vic)
- *Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)*

Related plans & strategies

- Road Management Plan 2025-29
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Roadside Vegetation Management Plan

4. Build it up

2025-29 Council Plan Year 2 Priorities:

Council has identified **9 tasks** that help unlock land and housing opportunities, and build our local workforce.



4.1.1 Statutory Planning

Northern Grampians Shire Council is responsible for ensuring statutory services are delivered in line with legislative requirements, particularly those under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Council’s Statutory Planning team plays a key role in giving effect to the strategic land use direction set out in the Council Plan and Municipal Strategic Statement. The Statutory Planning team does this by ensuring that land use and development is consistent with the Northern Grampians Planning Scheme.

The Statutory Planning team uses the planning scheme as a tool to enable use and development to occur in a way that balances the needs of the economy, environment and community. The planning services provided by council assist in protecting the community from major risks to life and property and contribute to the sustainability of the shire’s built environment.

The Statutory Planning team also contributes to the municipality’s strategic development through monitoring existing and emerging land use issues for the council’s consideration. The team works collaboratively with the council’s Strategic Planning and Economic Development teams to drive investment in Northern Grampians Shire through seeking and working with new businesses to develop.

Planning permit application fees, subdivision fees and non-regulatory fees assist in funding the delivery of statutory planning services, which is otherwise funded by council budget.

Services delivered

For the 2025 calendar year, council’s Statutory Planning department was responsible for:

- 439 planning enquiries
- 88 planning permit applications
- 24 certification (subdivision) applications
- 34 planning enforcement investigations

Processing timeframes for planning permit applications were approximately 94.9% and issued within the statutory timeframes for 2025 calendar year.

Service changes

None proposed.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Continue to improve internal procedures to streamline assessment processes for timely decision-making.
- Continue to support the community with development proposals through pre-application meetings to provide advice to potential applicants.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Planning and Environment Regulations 2015*
- *Subdivision Act 1988*

Related plans & strategies

- Northern Grampians Planning Scheme
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$471)
Income	\$108
NET COST	(\$363)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$127
Rates Subsidy	\$236
TOTAL NET	\$363

4.1.2 Building Control

The Building Control services provided by council assist in protecting the community from major risks to life and property, and oversee and ensure compliance with building legislation.

From July 1, 2025, council has moved to a regulatory model of service for building permits, with the issue of building permits being phased out. Council’s Building Department monitors compliance, investigates complaints, audits building documentation, oversees essential safety measures (including pool register), provides customer advice, maintains building records and exercises report and consent functions under the Act where specific building matters require municipal approval.

Council’s Building Department also uses its enforcement powers to issue building notices and orders, address dangerous or dilapidated structures, direct rectification of non-compliant work, and, where necessary, initiate prosecutions.

The receipt of registration fees for some building services assists in the delivery of building control services, which is otherwise funded by council budget.

Service delivery

For the 2025 calendar year, council’s Building Department was responsible for:

- 123 building enquiries
- 21 building permits issued
- 4 POPEs (Places of Public Entertainment)
- 246 Building Information Certificates
- 37 building enforcement investigations
- 18 report and consent applications

Service changes

None proposed.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Continue to advocate for ministerial exemption from the issuing of building permits.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Building Act 1993*
- Building Regulations 2018

Related plans & strategies

- National Construction Code (NCC)
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$295)
Income	\$61
NET COST	(\$234)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$82
Rates Subsidy	\$152
TOTAL NET	\$234



5. Clean it up

2025-29 Council Plan Year 2 Priorities:

Council has identified **10 tasks** that help us cut waste and recycle properly, support climate adaptation and preparedness, drive energy efficiency, and protect our land, water and wildlife.



5.1.1 Weeds and Pests

Northern Grampians Shire Council delivers the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program (RWPP) to protect agricultural productivity, biodiversity and local amenity by reducing the spread and impacts of invasive plants and pest animals along municipal rural roadsides. Roadsides are a known pathway for invasive species to spread across the region, threatening parks, forests and rural land asset values.

The program is delivered in accordance with council’s Roadside Weeds and Pest Control Plan 2023-26 (endorsed through the state program framework) and focuses on early detection, prevention and targeted control of priority weed species and established pest animals (including rabbits) across council-managed rural road reserves.

Council manages approximately 3140 kilometres of rural roadsides with weed growth cycles and pest activity influenced by rainfall, temperature and seasonal conditions. Variable climate patterns can accelerate spread or reduce treatment effectiveness, requiring adaptive planning. Invasive species can also migrate from adjoining private land, Crown land or neighbouring Local Government Areas, requiring a coordinated regional responses to achieve sustained outcomes.

This service is fully funded through Victorian Government Roadside Weeds and Pests Program (RWPP) grant support, with council coordinating program planning, contractor delivery and community reporting pathways to support consistent, best-practice roadside management outcomes.

Services delivered

The program focuses on a proactive and strategic roadside management plan rather than reactive service requests and is delivered within the parameters and funding envelope established by the Victorian Government.

Program Planning and Targeting

- Implementation of a three-year Roadside Weeds and Pest Control Plan (2023–26) endorsed under the state funding framework.
- Annual prioritisation of treatment areas based on invasive species risk, regional classification and spread potential.
- Alignment with Agriculture Victoria species classifications (regionally prohibited, regionally controlled and restricted).

On-Ground Weed Control

- Targeted treatment of priority invasive weed species along our municipal rural roadsides (road reserves).
- Early intervention and prevention activities to reduce spread into adjacent to residential and agricultural land, parks and native vegetation corridors.
- Delivery through a combination of council coordination and contracted field services (Landcare and Committee Management).

Pest Animal Management

- Targeted roadside rabbit control in identified areas.
- Collaboration with adjoining landholders and Landcare agencies to support coordinated control outcomes.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Mapping, inspection and monitoring of treated sites to assess effectiveness and inform future prioritisation.
- Compliance with state reporting requirements under the RWPP funding agreement.
- Engagement with Landcare agencies to support reporting of priority infestations.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$85)
Income	\$85
NET COST	\$0
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$0
Rates Subsidy	\$0
TOTAL NET	\$0

5.1.1 Weeds and Pests (cont'd)

Partnership and Stakeholder Coordination

- Collaboration with Agriculture Victoria, DEECA, Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare groups and neighbouring councils to support regional consistency in treatment and intervention.

Service changes

None proposed, subject to continued Victorian Government Roadside Weeds and Pests Program (RWPP) funding.

2026/27 Initiatives

Annual Roadside Treatment Program

- Delivery of targeted invasive weed control across rural road reserve corridors in accordance with the program's objectives.
- Targeted roadside rabbit control activities in identified high-risk areas.

Monitoring and Compliance Reporting

- Inspection and mapping of treated sites to assess effectiveness and inform future treatment and intervention.
- Fulfilment of state reporting obligations under the RWPP funding agreement.

Program Transition and Planning

- Review of outcomes achieved under the 2023-26 Roadside Weeds and Pest Control Plan.
- Preparation of the next program cycle and updated Control Plan (subject to future funding confirmation).

Stakeholder Coordination

- Continued collaboration with Agriculture Victoria, DEECA, Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare agencies and neighbouring LGAs to support coordinated invasive species management outcomes.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (Vic)*
- Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework (Victoria)
- *Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)*
- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*

Related plans & strategies

- Roadside Weeds and Pest Control Plan 2023–26
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–29
- Victorian Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework
- Victorian Catchment Strategies and Regional Catchment Management Authority Plans
- Agriculture Victoria Species Classifications and Compliance Guidelines

5.2.1 Waste Management

Northern Grampians Shire Council's Waste Management service provides essential municipal waste, recycling and resource recovery services to residents within urban (compulsory) and rural (non-compulsory) areas, extending these services to businesses (with some opting for commercial contracts outside council contract) and visitors to our shire.

The service includes kerbside collection of general waste and mixed recycling, management of public place waste infrastructure, and operation of transfer stations at Stawell (sub-leased), St Arnaud and Halls Gap. These transfer stations provide accessible disposal and recovery options for residents and local businesses, supporting multiple waste management recovery. The service also includes oversight and environmental management of former landfill sites to ensure ongoing compliance with Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) requirements.

Beyond collection and disposal, the service actively advances resource recovery and circular economy initiatives. This includes improving material separation at source, expanding recycling pathways, supporting Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) diversion, planning for separate glass collection, undertaking bin audits, collaborating with neighbouring councils, and aligning service delivery with state reform under the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*. These initiatives aim to reduce landfill dependency, improve recycling performance, and position Northern Grampians Shire within the broader Grampians Western regional waste and resource recovery framework.

In line with council's Waste Management Strategy 2020–30 (mid-implementation update), council's kerbside service is progressively transitioning toward a four-stream system, including separate glass and FOGO services by 2027. This transition supports council's strategic objective to improve resource recovery, protect the natural environment and deliver sustainable infrastructure outcomes.

The service is primarily funded through waste service fees and charges applied to ratable properties, supplemented by user-pays charges at transfer stations and external grant funding for specific infrastructure and reform initiatives where available.

Services delivered

Kerbside Collection Services

- Weekly kerbside general waste and fortnightly commingled recycling collections across the shire under contracted service arrangements.
- A kerbside Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service operating in St Arnaud, transitioning to a paid service model effective 1 July 2025 following council resolution, with the service remaining subsidised as part of council's staged reform approach.
- Ongoing contract management and performance oversight to ensure service standards are maintained in accordance with contractual obligations.
- FOGO processing arrangements include the collection of material from St Arnaud, staged at the St Arnaud transfer station, and transported to BioGro Pty Ltd for processing under a separate contractual arrangement.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$3,817)
Income	\$3,733
NET COST	(\$84)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Waste Reserve	\$84
TOTAL NET	\$84

5.2.1 Waste Management (cont'd)

Transfer Station Operations

Operation of three rural transfer stations located at Stawell (sub-leased), St Arnaud and Halls Gap.

- Stawell Transfer Station is sub-leased to Wimmera Mallee Waste (WMWM Pty Ltd) under a current lease arrangement through to 30 June 2029.
- Facilities provide disposal and resource recovery options for general waste, green waste, recyclables, e-waste and other prescribed materials (excluding “industrial”) at all facilities.
- Transfer stations operate under scheduled opening hours and days aligned with users’ needs.

Public Places

- Management and servicing of approximately 210 public place waste and recycling bins across townships and key visitor areas.
- Ongoing monitoring and servicing adjustments to maintain township amenity and respond to demand fluctuations.

Waste Contract Governance and Service Oversight

- Structured contract management, invoice review and compliance monitoring processes.
- Scheduled facility inspections and bin audits to support contamination reduction and operational effectiveness.
- LGPRF data collection and annual reporting to meet statutory performance obligations.

Education and Community Engagement

- Planning of waste education initiatives to support improved recycling behaviours and responsible waste disposal.
- Community engagement aligned with the Waste Management Strategy 2020–30 (mid-implementation update) and preparation for future mandated service reform.

The current service model maintains regulatory compliance, supports township amenity, and positions council for the staged transition to a four-stream kerbside system commencing July 2027.

Service changes

None proposed outside of annual CPI fee reviews. The 2026/27 financial year represents a transition and preparation period. Structural fee adjustments associated with the expanded kerbside model will be reviewed as part of the 2027/28 financial year and budget process.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Deliver a review of waste transfer station services across the shire, including fees, free metal and green waste drop-off, and FOGO incentives.
- Deliver communication on current waste management practices (e.g. what is recycled, where it goes), including clearer recycling instructions, and determine next steps.
- Investigate feasibility and affordability for hard rubbish collection services across the shire and determine next steps.
- Investigate for garden mulch to be provided from processed green waste in St Arnaud and determine next steps.
- Investigate solutions to address litter created by kerbside bins being tipped over by animals and determine next steps.
- Kerbside bins Procurement and Replacement Program to align with the Waste Management Strategy.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 (Vic)*
- Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) (Mandatory Service Provision and Other Matters) Regulations 2024 (Vic)
- *Environmental Protection Act 2017 (Vic)*
- Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (Vic)
- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 (Vic)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*

Related plans & strategies

- Northern Grampians Shire Council Waste Management Strategy 2020–30 (and Mid-Implementation Update January 2026)
- Waste Action Plan 2020–30 (abridged – January 2026 – WMS 2020-30)
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–29
- Asset Plan 2025–35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan 2024
- Grampians Organics Feasibility Study 2022
- Sustainability Victoria Strategic Plan 2024–27



6. Do it well

2025-29 Council Plan Year 2 Priorities:

Council has identified **10 tasks** that support a position of financial viability, deliver important asset and maintenance renewal programs, and ensure we are being efficient, responsive and innovative.



6.1.1 Organisational Services

Several organisational services form the backbone of Northern Grampians Shire Council. These include the provision of governance support for councillors, department and team management, and internal support services required to enable all other functions of council to be delivered to the community.

In the 2026/27 budget, all other services provided to residents and visitors as outlined in earlier profiles, only contain costs that directly relate to the operation of that area or service and do not include administrative, compliance or governance overheads.

This group of services is funded by council. The extent of the services provided in this function is determined by the chief executive officer, given the level of services provided to the community.

Services delivered

The service area is responsible for leading the organisation and delivering on the 20-year vision for our shire and council plan objectives, as well as ensuring the efficient and timely completion of activities and projects. It provides for the cost of management across the organisation and includes the CEO, directors and managers.

Management services

The council's organisational structure is based on a three-directorate model led by the chief executive officer. Within that model, each directorate is led and managed by a director who forms part of our Executive Leadership Team, supported by department managers. There are also coordinators and team leaders in those areas with larger staff numbers such as childcare, parks and gardens, roads, community care, leisure and recreation, and community development, planning and resilience.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$11,999)
Income	\$606
NET COST	(\$11,393)
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$3,981
Rates Subsidy	\$7,412
TOTAL NET	\$11,393

Councillor services

A high level of administrative and civic support is provided to the mayor and councillors. Services include diary coordination and travel arrangements, provision of support documents, briefing and agenda papers, research, protocols and presentations, civic events and citizenship ceremonies, administrative support and coordination of councillor communications and professional development. More than 12 council meetings and more than 39 briefing sessions are run and supported each year.

Corporate services

Corporate Services provides effective information and communication services that support efficient operations across the organisation and are responsible for ensuring accountability for legislative and regulatory compliance.

Services include:

- Financial: including customer support, fleet operations, rates, charges, expense and revenue management, borrowings and reporting.
- Business Transformation: including information and communication technology and network management across the whole of council, providing support for different service areas such as leisure, Stawell and St Arnaud libraries, tourism, positive ageing, maternal and child health, children's services, planning, engineering and geospatial systems and data security management.
- People and Culture: including organisational development, training, occupational health and safety, recruitment, performance management, payroll and media and communications.
- Governance: including Freedom of Information requests, records management, lease administration, risk, insurance, privacy, cemeteries and executive support.

Service changes

None proposed.

6.1.1 Organisational Services (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

Governance

Council is waiting on Local Government Victoria to introduce the following new governance documents that will affect the department's operations (i.e. will require new internal policies and processes):

- Model Governance Rules
- Model Public Transparency Policy
- Victorian Privacy and Data Security Standards compliance (VPDSS)

People and Culture

- Implementation of Strategic Workforce Plan 2026-30 items.
- Gender Equity Action Plan monitoring and reporting.
- Delivery of Council Plan 2025-29 year two priorities.
- Ensure ongoing compliance with Child Safe Standards.
- Continue Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) compliance.

Business Transformation

- Review and update of the Business Transformation Strategy 2022-26 focusing on accessibility, usability and security.
- Provision of ongoing support for collaborative ICT-enabled projects with a focus on stability, efficiency and customer experience.
- Development and implementation of appropriate governance and use of AI technology to support effective and efficient delivery of services.
- Investigation and implementation of automation tools to streamline processes supporting effective and efficient service delivery.
- Ongoing rollout and improvement of council's new electronic document records management system (EDRMS) using the Microsoft platform.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2024*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1982*
- *Public Records Act 1973*
- Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020
- Model Councillor Code of Conduct

- Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025
- Northern Grampians Shire Council Enterprise Agreement
- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- National Employment Standards (NES)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*
- *Taxation Administration Act 1953*
- *Public Records Act 1973*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Gender Equity Act 2020*
- Australian Accounting Standards
- Local Government Planning and Reporting Regulations 2020
- Taxation Legislation (GST, FBT)
- Australian Cyber Security Centre - Essential Eight Maturity Model
- Whole of Victorian Government (WoVG) Office 365 Security Guidance compliance
- Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) Victorian Protective Data Security Standards

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Protective Data Security Plan
- Workforce Strategic Plan 2026-30
- Workforce Action Plan 2026-27
- Gender Equity Strategic Action Plan 2026-28
- Occupational Health and Safety Management Plan 2026-27
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria)

6.2.1 Project & Asset Management

The Project and Asset Management service is responsible for the strategic planning and lifecycle management of council's infrastructure assets, along with coordination of capital works and delivery of priority projects.

The service ensures infrastructure is planned, maintained, renewed and delivered in a sustainable, efficient and financially responsible manner to meet current and future community needs.

Core service functions include:

- Development and implementation of the Asset Plan in line with the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- Strategic asset planning and lifecycle management across infrastructure networks.
- Asset data management, condition assessment and lifecycle modelling.
- Alignment of asset priorities with the Capital Works Program.
- Coordination and delivery of capital works, including major and priority infrastructure projects.
- Asset-based input into project planning and delivery.
- Administration of National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) heavy vehicle access permits.

The service works collaboratively across council and external agencies to support infrastructure planning, approvals and compliance. It also provides asset-focused advice to inform decision-making and ensure investment is aligned with long-term service outcomes.

Project delivery is undertaken in line with asset priorities, with a focus on efficient implementation and alignment with lifecycle and risk-based planning.

Through a practical and data-driven approach, the service supports sustainable infrastructure outcomes and contributes to the liveability, economic development and long-term resilience of the municipality.

This service is funded through a combination of council rate revenue, grant funded projects and untied government grants that support operational delivery.

Services delivered

The service is primarily focused on asset management and long-term infrastructure planning, ensuring that council's infrastructure is managed, renewed and prioritised in a sustainable and financially responsible manner.

Project delivery functions support the implementation of asset priorities, with the team providing coordination and oversight to ensure projects align with long-term asset outcomes.

The service works closely with Engineering Services, Finance and Operations to support informed decision-making, effective planning and delivery of infrastructure across the municipality. The integrated model provides flexibility in resourcing and allows for scalable delivery, with specialist support engaged where required for complex or technical matters.

Core functions include:

- Strategic asset planning and lifecycle management.
- Asset data management, condition assessment and modelling.
- Development and ongoing review of the Asset Plan.
- Alignment of the Capital Works Program with asset condition, risk and service levels.
- Asset-based input into project planning and delivery.
- Delivery of major projects.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$705)
Income	\$0
NET COST	(\$705)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$246
Rates Subsidy	\$459
TOTAL NET	\$705

6.2.1 Project & Asset Management (cont'd)

2026/27 Initiatives

- Maintain up-to-date, evidence-based lifecycle models for key transport asset classes (roads, pathways, kerb and channel, car parks) to inform sustainable capital budgeting and renewal planning.
- Deliver bridge and major culvert condition assessment, drainage condition assessment, revaluation and capital works programs in accordance with the Annual Budget and grant-funded commitments, ensuring compliance with industry standards.
- Coordinate and optimise infrastructure investment programs (including resealing and rehabilitation) to maintain network performance and minimise whole-of-life costs.
- Implement advanced condition assessment and testing methodologies (e.g. Light Weight Deflectometer testing) with appropriate staff training to improve data quality and decision-making.

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Building Act 1993*
- *Environment Protection Act 2017*
- *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- *Heritage Act 2017*
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

Related plans & strategies

- Australian Accounting Standards (AASB Standards)
- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Road Management Plan 2025-29
- Risk Management Policy 2023
- Procurement Policy 2022 (Rev. June 2025)
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy 2018
- OHS Contractor Management Procedure 2020-25

6.2.2 Engineering Services

The Engineering team is responsible for the planning, design, delivery and technical oversight of council’s civil infrastructure projects and programs.

The service exists to ensure that the municipality is provided with safe, sustainable and cost-effective infrastructure that supports the community to live, work and play. Through the application of engineering principles, the team contributes to the development, renewal and maintenance of roads, drainage systems, bridges, footpaths, streetscapes, public facilities and other essential infrastructure assets across the municipality.

Engineering services plays a central role in delivering the majority of council’s Capital Works Program and provides technical engineering advice across the organisation. Projects are managed through their full lifecycle including concept development, surveying, feasibility and cost estimation, grant applications, detailed design, procurement, contract administration, construction supervision and grant acquittal. The team also prepares infrastructure concepts and budgets to inform future capital works programs and funding opportunities.

The service also provides technical support where engineering assessment is required. This includes occasional support to the Asset team in administering NHVR heavy vehicle access permits, while Legal Point of Discharge (LPOD) permits and Works Within Road Reserve (WWRR) permits are administered directly by the Engineering team. In 2024/25 the team processed 186 NHVR permits, 70 WWRR permits and 60 LPOD permits, while in 2025/26 (to date) the team has processed 113 NHVR permits, 35 WWRR permits and 20 LPOD permits.

Engineering Services also manages traffic data collection, quarry work authorities, development referrals and technical investigations. The service handles a significant volume of community infrastructure requests, with more than 1000 requests managed in 2025 and more than 200 requests received in January and February 2026 alone.

Engineering Services also plays an important role in securing external funding by preparing and coordinating grant applications for infrastructure projects and managing reporting requirements for funded works. The team provides technical input and feedback on Environmental Effects Statements (EES) and other planning processes associated with major developments, including the increasing number of renewable energy projects proposed across the shire.

By delivering projects in-house where possible, the service reduces reliance on external consultants while ensuring strong local knowledge informs infrastructure planning and delivery. Through these activities, Engineering Services contributes significantly to economic development, community wellbeing and the long-term sustainability of council’s infrastructure network.

This service is funded through a combination of council rate revenue, grant funded projects and untied government grants that support operational delivery. Infrastructure projects delivered by the Engineering Services team are also frequently supported through state and federal grant programs, enabling council to leverage external funding and maximise investment in community infrastructure across the municipality.

SERVICE COSTS	\$000's
Expense	(\$863)
Income	\$0
NET COST	(\$863)
<hr/>	
FUNDED BY	
Untied Grants	\$302
Rates Subsidy	\$562
TOTAL NET	\$864

6.2.2 Engineering Services (cont'd)

Services delivered

Engineering provides in-house engineering expertise to plan, design and manage council's civil infrastructure program. The team oversees the delivery of most roads and bridges capital works projects, managing activities from concept development and surveys to design, procurement, construction oversight and grant reporting. The service also provides technical advice on infrastructure planning, development referrals, heavy vehicle permits, works within road reserves, and traffic data collection, ensuring projects meet engineering standards, legislative requirements and community infrastructure needs.

Engineering work closely with a range of internal teams to deliver infrastructure outcomes across the organisation. During the planning stage, the team collaborates with project owners to understand project objectives, community needs and operational requirements. The team also engages community members and stakeholders to gather feedback and ensure solutions address local concerns.

Engineering provide technical advice, concept designs and feasibility input to support initiatives such as the Grampians Rail Trail connections and the Halls Gap East Shared Path. The team also assists in coordinating between council, community groups and external authorities including the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), VicTrack, DEECA, Catchment Management Authorities (CMA), and GWMWater to navigate approvals and technical requirements.

In addition, the team supports major community events by providing engineering services such as traffic management plans and site set-out for events including the Stawell Gift, show and shine events and other major community activities.

Service changes

Works with Roads Reserve Permit fees will update per Victorian Government fee units.

2026/27 Initiatives

- Enhanced coordination and resource planning across projects.
- Focus on developing a multi-skilled team with shared responsibilities and task ownership.
- Mooney Dams Reactivation – Investigation and Design (grant dependent).
- St Arnaud Flood Mitigation Works - Retention Dam Construction (grant dependent)

Legislative & regulatory requirements

- *Road Safety Act 1986*
- *Road Management Act 2024*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Water Act 1989*
- *Professional Engineers Act 2023*
- Road Management Regulations 2016

Related plans & strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29
- Asset Plan 2025-35
- Financial Plan 2025-35
- Road Management Plan 2025-29

7. Appendices

The following appendices include voluntary and statutory disclosures of information which provide support for the services listed in this document.

This information has not been included in the main body of the budget report in the interests of clarity and conciseness. Council has decided that whilst the budget report needs to focus on the important elements of the budget and provide appropriate analysis, the detail upon which the annual budget is based should be provided in the interests of open and transparent local government reporting.

The contents of the appendices are summarised below:

APPENDIX	NATURE OF INFORMATION
7.1	Services and service performance indicators
7.2	Financial statements
7.3	Notes to the financial statements
7.4	Performance and financial indicators

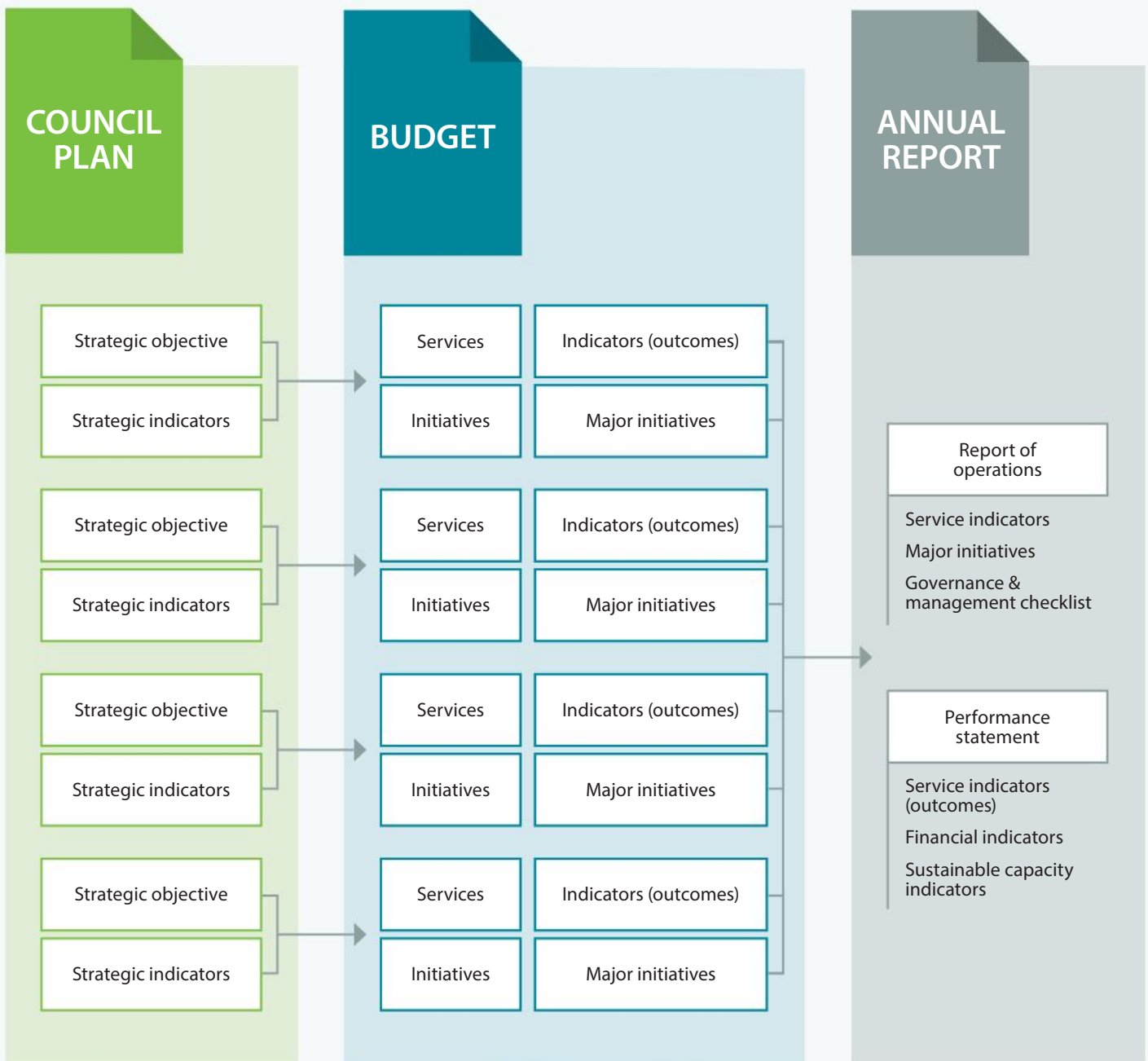


7. APPENDICES

7.1 Services & Service Performance Indicators Overview

This section provides a description of the services and initiatives to be funded in the Budget for the 2026/27 financial year and how these will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives outlined in the 2025-29 Council Plan. It also describes several 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 its 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.



7.1.1 Live It Up

Services

SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES PROVIDED		2025/26 FORECAST \$'000	2026/27 BUDGET \$'000
Community Development	Community Development	<i>Inc</i>	260	185
		<i>Exp</i>	1,718	1,170
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(1,458)	(985)
Community Services	Community Care, Immunisations, Kinergartens, Libraries, Long Day Care, Maternal Child Health, Sports and Aquatic Centres, Playgroups and Cemeteries	<i>Inc</i>	5,546	5,127
		<i>Exp</i>	6,994	6,537
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(1,448)	(1,410)
Development Services	Community Safety, Emergency Management, Environmental Health	<i>Inc</i>	390	400
		<i>Exp</i>	914	981
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(524)	(581)
Public Facilities	Cemeteries, Facilities Maintenance and Parks and Gardens	<i>Inc</i>	342	296
		<i>Exp</i>	3,980	4,413
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(3,638)	(4,117)

Service Performance Outcome Indicators

DOMAIN	INDICATOR		2025/26 FORECAST	2026/27 BUDGET
Community	Library services		28%	28%
Community	Maternal and child health services		85%	85%
Community	Maternal and child health services		76%	76%
Responsiveness	Food safety		100%	100%
Cost	Library services		\$21.00	\$21.00

*Refer to table at end of section 7.1.5 for information on the calculation of Service Performance Outcome Indicators

7.1.2 Business Buzz

Services

SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES PROVIDED		2025/26 FORECAST \$'000	2026/27 BUDGET \$'000
Economic Development	Business Support, Strategic Planning	<i>Inc</i>	112	-
		<i>Exp</i>	859	774
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(747)	(774)
Tourism	Tourism	<i>Inc</i>	52	48
		<i>Exp</i>	902	876
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(850)	(828)
Transport Infrastructure	Depot Operations, Infrastructure Maintenance	<i>Inc</i>	85	95
		<i>Exp</i>	3,192	3,632
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(3,107)	(3,537)

Service Performance Outcome Indicators

DOMAIN	INDICATOR		2025/26 FORECAST	2026/27 BUDGET
Environment	Roads		93%	93%

*Refer to table at end of section 7.1.5 for information on the calculation of Service Performance Outcome Indicators

7.1.3 Build It Up

Services

SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES PROVIDED		2025/26 FORECAST \$'000	2026/27 BUDGET \$'000
Development Services	Statutory Planning, Building Control	<i>Inc</i>	157	169
		<i>Exp</i>	750	766
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(593)	(597)

Service Performance Outcome Indicators

SERVICE	INDICATOR		2025/26 FORECAST	2026/27 BUDGET
Responsiveness	Statutory Planning		80%	80%

*Refer to table at end of section 7.1.5 for information on the calculation of Service Performance Outcome Indicators

7.1.4 Clean It Up

Services

SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES PROVIDED		2025/26 FORECAST \$'000	2026/27 BUDGET \$'000
Protect Land and Wildlife	Weeds and Pests	<i>Inc</i>	85	85
		<i>Exp</i>	87	85
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(2)	0
Waste Management	Waste Management	<i>Inc</i>	3,191	3,733
		<i>Exp</i>	4,169	3,817
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(978)	(84)

Service Performance Outcome Indicators

DOMAIN	INDICATOR		2025/26 FORECAST	2026/27 BUDGET
Environment	Waste Management		30%	30%
Cost	Waste Management		\$285	\$371

*Refer to table at end of section 7.1.5 for information on the calculation of Service Performance Outcome Indicators

7.1.5 Do It Well

Services

SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES PROVIDED		2025/26 FORECAST \$'000	2026/27 BUDGET \$'000
Corporate Services	Business Transformation, Financial Services, Fleet, Governance Administration and People & Culture	<i>Inc</i>	724	606
		<i>Exp</i>	24,876	8,772
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(24,152)	(8,166)
Infrastructure Planning	Asset Management, Engineering Services	<i>Inc</i>	62	-
		<i>Exp</i>	1,462	1,568
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(1,400)	(1,568)
Management	Councillor Services, Management	<i>Inc</i>	-	-
		<i>Exp</i>	2,919	3,226
		<i>Surplus / (deficit)</i>	(2,919)	(3,226)

Service Performance Outcome Indicators

DOMAIN	INDICATOR		2025/26 FORECAST	2026/27 BUDGET
Governance	Community engagement		50	50
Governance	Financial decisions		10%	10%

*Refer to table at end of section 7.1.5 for information on the calculation of Service Performance Outcome Indicators

7.1.5 Do It Well

Service Performance Outcome Indicators

DOMAIN	INDICATOR	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	COMPUTATION
Governance	Community engagement	Satisfaction with the opportunities offered by Council to be consulted on or engaged in Council decisions (community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council)	Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on community consultation and engagement
	Financial decisions	Total unpaid rates and charges (total unpaid rates and charges and unpaid interest on rates and charges for all financial years as a percentage of all rates and charges for the financial year)	[Sum of unpaid rates and charges and unpaid interest on rates and charges for all financial years / Sum of all rates and charges for the financial year] x100
Community	Library services	Library membership (Percentage of the population that are registered library members)	[Number of registered library members / Population] x100
	Maternal and child health services	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 financial year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100
	Maternal and child health services	Participation in the 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 financial year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100
Environment	Roads	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)	[Number of kilometres of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100
	Waste management	Kerbside collection waste to landfill per serviced property (amount of waste collected from kerbside waste collection services that is sent to landfill per serviced property)	Amount of waste in tonnes (t) collected from kerbside waste collection services that is sent to landfill / Number of serviced properties
Responsiveness	Food safety	Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications. (Percentage of critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications that are followed up by Council)	[Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance outcome notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance outcome notifications about food premises] x100
	Statutory planning	Planning applications decided within the relevant required time (percentage of regular and VicSmart planning application decisions made within the relevant required time)	[Number of planning application decisions made within 60 days for regular permits and 10 days for VicSmart permits / Number of planning application decisions made] x100
Cost	Library services	Cost of library services (direct cost of library services per head of population)	Direct cost of library services / Population
	Waste management	Cost of kerbside waste collection services (direct cost of kerbside waste collection services per serviced property)	Direct cost of kerbside waste collection services / Number of serviced properties

7.1.6 Reconciliation with Budgeted Operating Result

	SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) \$'000	EXPENDITURE \$'000	INCOME / REVENUE \$'000
Live It Up	(7,093)	13,101	6,008
Business Buzz	(5,139)	5,282	143
Build It Up	(597)	766	169
Clean It Up	(84)	3,902	3,818
Do It Well	(12,960)	13,566	606
Total	(25,873)	36,617	10,744
Expenses added in:			
Depreciation	17,007		
Others	227		
Surplus/(Deficit) before funding sources	(43,107)		
Funding sources added in:			
Rates and charges revenue	19,187		
Victorian Grants Commission	10,311		
Capital Grants	7,103		
Capital Contributions	460		
Total funding sources	37,061		
Operating surplus/(deficit) for the year	(6,046)		

7.2 Financial Statements

This section presents information in regard to the Financial Statements and Statement of Human Resources. The budget information for the year 2026/27 has been supplemented with projections to 2029/30.

This section includes the following financial statements prepared 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

7.2.1 Comprehensive Income Statement

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	FORECAST	BUDGET	PROJECTIONS		
		2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Income / Revenue						
Rates and charges	4.1.1	21,795	22,830	23,764	25,143	26,428
Statutory fees and fines	4.1.2	236	170	177	184	191
User fees	4.1.3	2,484	2,801	2,913	3,029	3,151
Grants - operating	4.1.4	8,228	12,619	13,163	13,682	14,221
Grants - capital	4.1.4	9,880	7,103	8,396	8,116	5,605
Contributions - monetary	4.1.5	287	560	353	180	232
Other income	4.1.6	1,722	1,645	1,711	1,779	1,850
Total income / revenue		44,632	47,728	50,477	52,113	51,678
Expenses						
Employee costs	4.1.7	20,906	22,540	23,135	23,816	24,769
Materials and services	4.1.8	14,028	12,930	13,960	14,572	14,964
Depreciation	4.1.9	16,592	17,007	17,432	17,868	18,314
Amortisation	4.1.10	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing costs		40	-	-	-	-
Other expenses	4.1.12	1,240	1,297	1,235	1,198	1,142
Total expenses		52,806	53,774	55,762	57,454	59,189
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(8,174)	(6,046)	(5,285)	(5,341)	(7,511)
Other comprehensive income		-	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive result		(8,174)	(6,046)	(5,285)	(5,341)	(7,511)

7.2.2 Balance Sheet

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	FORECAST	BUDGET	PROJECTIONS		
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Assets					
Current assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	9,447	5,779	4,607	4,098	4,568
Trade and other receivables	3,895	3,895	3,895	3,892	3,879
Inventories	89	89	89	89	89
Prepayments	343	343	343	343	342
Total current assets	13,774	10,106	8,934	8,422	8,878
Non-current assets					
Non-current loan debtors	45	29	13	-	-
Right-of-use assets	440	440	440	440	440
Property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	497,600	495,237	491,152	486,348	478,394
Total non-current assets	498,085	495,706	491,605	486,788	478,834
Total assets	511,859	505,812	500,539	495,210	487,712
Liabilities					
Current liabilities					
Trade and other payables	3,101	3,100	3,101	3,100	3,100
Deposits	7	7	7	7	7
Provisions	2,198	2,198	2,198	2,198	2,198
Development liability	52	52	52	52	52
Unearned Income	3,079	3,079	3,079	3,079	3,079
Lease liabilities	184	184	184	184	184
Total current liabilities	8,621	8,620	8,621	8,620	8,620
Non-current liabilities					
Provisions	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020
Land improvement liability	132	132	132	132	132
Lease liabilities	256	256	256	256	256
Total non-current liabilities	1,408	1,408	1,408	1,408	1,408
Total liabilities	10,029	10,028	10,029	10,028	10,028
Net assets	501,830	495,784	490,499	485,158	477,647
Equity					
Accumulated surplus	91,762	86,250	81,783	76,895	69,426
Reserves	410,068	409,534	408,716	408,263	408,221
Total equity	501,830	495,784	490,499	485,158	477,647

7.2.3 Statement of Changes in Equity

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	TOTAL \$'000	ACCUMULATED SURPLUS \$'000	REVALUATION RESERVE \$'000	OTHER RESERVES \$'000
2026 Forecast					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		510,004	97,785	405,621	6,598
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(8,174)	(8,174)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	2,151	-	(2,151)
Balance at end of the financial year		501,830	91,762	405,621	4,447
2027 Budget					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		501,830	91,762	405,621	4,447
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(6,046)	(6,046)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves	4.3.1	-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves	4.3.1	-	409	-	(409)
Balance at end of the financial year	4.3.2	495,784	86,125	405,621	4,038
2028					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		495,784	86,125	405,621	4,038
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(5,285)	(5,285)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	943	-	(943)
Balance at end of the financial year		490,499	81,783	405,621	3,095
2029					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		490,499	81,783	405,621	3,095
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(5,341)	(5,341)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	453	-	(453)
Balance at end of the financial year		485,158	76,895	405,621	2,642
2030					
Balance at beginning of the financial year		485,158	76,895	405,621	2,642
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(7,511)	(7,511)	-	-
Net asset revaluation gain/(loss)		-	-	-	-
Transfers to other reserves		-	-	-	-
Transfers from other reserves		-	42	-	(42)
Balance at end of the financial year		477,647	69,426	405,621	2,600

7.2.4 Statement of Cashflows

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	FORECAST	BUDGET	PROJECTIONS		
		2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
		Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities						
Rates & Charges		21,795	22,830	23,764	25,143	26,428
Statutory Fees & Fines		236	170	177	184	191
User Charges		2,484	2,801	2,913	3,029	3,151
Operating Grants		8,228	12,619	13,163	13,682	14,221
Contributions		237	325	327	180	182
Interest Revenue		172	180	162	162	162
Other Revenue		1,549	1,465	1,549	1,617	1,688
Employee costs		(20,906)	(22,540)	(23,135)	(23,816)	(24,769)
Materials and services		(14,028)	(12,930)	(13,960)	(14,572)	(14,964)
Borrowing costs		(40)	-	-	-	-
Other payments		(963)	(1,116)	(1,120)	(1,171)	(1,143)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	4.4.1	(1,236)	3,804	3,839	4,437	5,148
Cash flows from investing activities						
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(14,756)	(14,969)	(13,685)	(13,330)	(10,486)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		1,247	325	339	265	127
Capital grants		9,880	7,103	8,396	8,116	5,605
Contributions		50	235	26	-	50
Payments of loans and advances		12	16	16	16	13
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	4.4.2	(3,567)	(7,290)	(4,908)	(4,933)	(4,691)
Cash flows from financing activities						
Repayment of borrowings		(1,000)	-	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities		(275)	(182)	(114)	(26)	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	4.4.3	(1,275)	(182)	(114)	(26)	-
Net increase/(decrease) in cash & cash equivalents		(6,078)	(3,668)	(1,183)	(522)	457
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		15,525	9,447	5,779	4,596	4,074
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year		9,447	5,779	4,596	4,074	4,531

7.2.5 Statement of Capital Works

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	NOTES	FORECAST	BUDGET	PROJECTIONS		
		2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Property						
Buildings		1,996	1,970	200	-	-
Total property		1,996	1,970	200	-	-
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery and equipment		1,448	1,253	1,311	1,317	958
Total plant and equipment		1,448	1,253	1,311	1,317	958
Infrastructure						
Roads		7,685	7,565	9,233	9,296	6,777
Bridges		1,985	2,700	2,225	2,236	2,200
Footpaths and cycleways		383	526	386	391	359
Drainage		-	370	310	90	92
Parks, open space and streetscapes		1,259	245	20	-	100
Waste Management		-	340	-	-	-
Total infrastructure		11,312	11,746	12,174	12,013	9,528
Total capital works expenditure	4.5.1	14,756	14,969	13,685	13,330	10,486
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure		-	175	30	-	-
Asset renewal expenditure		8,597	8,971	7,312	7,323	7,058
Asset upgrade expenditure		-	5,823	6,343	6,007	3,428
Asset expansion expenditure		6,159	-	-	-	-
Total capital works expenditure	4.5.1	14,756	14,969	13,685	13,330	10,486
Funding sources represented by:						
Grants		9,879	7,103	8,396	8,116	5,605
Contributions		50	460	365	265	177
Council cash		4,827	7,406	4,924	4,949	4,704
Borrowings		-	-	-	-	-
Total capital works expenditure	4.5.1	14,756	14,969	13,685	13,330	10,486

7.2.6 Statement of Human Resources

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	FORECAST	BUDGET	PROJECTIONS		
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Staff expenditure					
Employee costs - operating	20,906	22,540	23,135	23,816	24,769
Employee costs - capital	661	684	711	740	769
Total staff expenditure	21,567	23,224	23,846	24,556	25,538
	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
Staff numbers					
Employees	213.9	204.1	203.6	203.8	203.8
Total staff numbers	213.9	204.1	203.6	203.8	203.8

*Note: the Forecast 2025/26 FTEs are all positions in the organisational structure (including vacant roles) at the time of the budget preparation but the Forecast 2025/26 expenditure is the full year cost of all employees during the year.

A summary of human resources expenditure categorised according to the organisational structure of Council is included below:

DEPARTMENT	BUDGET 2026/27 \$'000	COMPRISES			
		PERMANENT		CASUAL	TEMPORARY
		FULL TIME \$'000	PART TIME \$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Live It Up	8,730	4,310	3,851	569	-
Build It Up	569	412	157	-	-
Business Buzz	4,169	3,903	266	-	-
Clean It Up	262	223	39	-	-
Do it Well	8,152	6,598	1,554	-	-
Total permanent staff expenditure	21,882	15,446	5,867	569	-
Other employee related expenditure	658				
Capitalised labour costs	684				
Total expenditure	23,224				

A summary of the number of full time equivalent (FTE) Council staff in relation to the above expenditure is included below:

DEPARTMENT	BUDGET 2026/27	COMPRISES			
		PERMANENT		CASUAL	TEMPORARY
		FULL TIME	PART TIME		
Live It Up	85.0	38.1	39.7	7.2	-
Build It Up	5.4	4.0	1.4	-	-
Business Buzz	36.4	33.5	2.9	-	-
Clean It Up	2.4	2.0	0.4	-	-
Do it Well	60.0	47.3	12.7	-	-
Total staff	189.1	124.8	57.1	7.2	-

*Note: This table does not include capitalised FTEs.

7.2.7 Summary of Planned Human Resources Expenditure

For the four years ending 30 June 2030

	2026/27 \$'000	2027/28 \$'000	2028/29 \$'000	2029/30 \$'000
Live It Up				
Permanent - Full time	4,310	4,363	4,537	4,719
Women	1,784	1,736	1,805	1,878
Men	2,526	2,627	2,732	2,841
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Permanent - Part time	3,851	4,149	4,305	4,477
Women	3,803	4,099	4,253	4,423
Men	48	50	52	54
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Total Live It Up	8,161	8,512	8,842	9,196
Build It Up				
Permanent - Full time	412	443	446	464
Women	194	202	210	120
Men	218	241	236	344
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Permanent - Part time	157	164	171	177
Women	69	72	75	78
Men	88	92	96	99
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Total Build It Up	569	607	617	641
Business Buzz				
Permanent - Full time	3,903	4,117	4,282	4,453
Women	620	703	731	760
Men	3,283	3,414	3,551	3,693
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Permanent - Part time	266	210	218	227
Women	235	210	218	227
Men	31	0	0	0
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Total Business Buzz	4,169	4,327	4,500	4,680
Clean It Up				
Permanent - Full time	223	232	241	251
Women	223	232	241	251
Men	0	0	0	0
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Permanent - Part time	39	40	42	43
Women	0	0	0	0
Men	39	40	42	43
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Total Clean It Up	262	272	283	294
Do It Well				
Permanent - Full time	6,598	6,879	7,353	7,647
Women	2,866	3,077	3,399	3,535
Men	3,732	3,802	3,954	4,112
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Permanent - Part time	1,554	1,556	1,474	1,532
Women	1,370	1,364	1,257	1,307
Men	184	192	217	225
Persons of self-described gender	0	0	0	0
Total Do It Well	8,152	8,435	8,827	9,179
Casuals, temporary and other expenditure	1,227	982	747	779
Capitalised labour costs	684	711	740	769
Total staff expenditure	23,224	23,846	24,556	25,538

7.2.7 Summary of Planned Human Resources Expenditure (cont'd)

For the four years ending 30 June 2029

	2026/27 FTE	2027/28 FTE	2028/29 FTE	2029/30 FTE
Live It Up				
Permanent - Full time	38.1	36.8	36.8	36.8
Women	16.3	15.0	15.0	15.0
Men	21.8	21.8	21.8	21.8
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Permanent - Part time	39.7	41.8	41.8	41.8
Women	39.2	41.3	41.3	41.3
Men	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Live It Up	77.8	78.6	78.6	78.6
Build It Up				
Permanent - Full time	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Women	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0
Men	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Permanent - Part time	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Women	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Men	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Build It Up	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4
Business Buzz				
Permanent - Full time	33.5	33.9	33.9	33.9
Women	5.0	5.4	5.4	5.4
Men	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Permanent - Part time	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.4
Women	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.4
Men	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Business Buzz	36.4	36.3	36.3	36.3
Clean It Up				
Permanent - Full time	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Women	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Men	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Permanent - Part time	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Women	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Men	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Clean It Up	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Do It Well				
Permanent - Full time	47.3	47.5	48.5	48.5
Women	22.5	23.5	24.5	24.5
Men	24.8	24.0	24.0	24.0
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Permanent - Part time	12.7	12.3	11.5	11.5
Women	10.7	10.3	9.5	9.5
Men	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Persons of self-described gender	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Do It Well	60.0	59.8	60.0	60.0
Casuals and temporary staff	7.1	6.1	6.1	6.1
Capitalised labour	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0
Total staff numbers	204.1	203.6	203.8	203.8

7.3 Notes to the Financial Statements

This section presents detailed information on material components of the financial statements. Council needs to assess which components are material, considering the dollar amounts and nature of these components.

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement

Rates and Charges

Rates and charges are required by the Act and the Regulations to be disclosed in council's budget.

As per the *Local Government Act 2020*, council is required to have a Revenue and Rating Plan which is a four year plan for how council will generate income to deliver the Council Plan, program and services and capital works commitments over a four-year period.

In developing the Budget, rates and charges were identified as an important source of revenue. Planning for future rate increases has therefore been an important component of the financial planning process. The Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) sets out the maximum amount councils may increase rates in a year. For 2026/27 the FGRS cap has been set at 2.75%. 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 total general rate and the municipal charge will increase by 2.75% in line with the rate cap to ensure the average increase in rates and charges doesn't exceed the rate cap.

Recreational and Cultural Rate Land is any rateable land which is within the Shire and eligible in accordance with the Cultural and *Recreational Lands Act 1963*.

The council sets rates for recreational lands based on the services provided by Council in relation to such lands and the benefit to the community. The 2026-27 budget includes a 2.75% increase from the previous year.

Council raises Revenue in lieu of rates from all electricity generating facilities in the shire under the *Electricity Industry Act 2000*.

This will raise total rates and charges for 2026/27 to \$22,830,000.

7.3.1 (a) The reconciliation of the total rates and charges to the Comprehensive Income Statement is as follows:

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
General rates*	18,142	18,655	513	2.83%
Waste management charge	3,097	3,643	546	17.63%
Cultural and recreational	16	17	1	6.25%
Interest on rates and charges	135	95	(40)	-29.63%
Revenue in lieu of rates	405	420	15	3.70%
Total rates and charges reconciled to the CIS	21,795	22,830	1,035	4.75%

*Note: These items are subject to the rate cap established under the FGRS and do not exceed the 2026/27 rate cap of 2.75% despite the calculation shown. Please refer to table 7.3.1(l) on page 99 for more information.

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

7.3.1 (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	2025/26 cents/\$CIV	2026/27 cents/\$CIV	CHANGE
General rate for residential properties	0.4812	0.4744	-1.41%
General rate for commercial properties	0.6160	0.6008	-2.47%
General rate for rateable industrial properties	0.6160	0.6008	-2.47%
General rate for rateable farm properties	0.1551	0.1629	5.03%

7.3.1 (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	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	CHANGE	
			\$'000	%
Residential	10,566	10,873	307	2.91%
Commercial	1,090	1,145	55	5.05%
Industrial	598	593	(5)	-0.84%
Farm	5,883	6,044	161	2.74%
Total rates and charges	18,137	18,655	518	2.86%

7.3.1 (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	2025/26 Number	2026/27 Number	CHANGE	
			Number	%
Residential	6,719	6,730	11	0.16%
Commercial	389	387	(2)	-0.51%
Industrial	231	230	(1)	-0.43%
Farm	2,254	2,267	13	0.58%
Total number of assessments	9,593	9,614	21	0.22%

7.3.1 (e) The basis of valuation to be used is the Capital Improved Value (CIV)

7.3.1 (f) The estimated total value of each type of class of land, and the estimated total value of land, compared with the previous financial year

TYPE OR CLASS OF LAND	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	CHANGE	
			\$'000	%
Residential	2,187,691	2,291,590	103,899	4.75%
Commercial	176,360	190,637	14,277	8.10%
Industrial	96,721	98,662	1,941	2.01%
Farm	3,788,230	3,709,746	(78,484)	-2.07%
Total value of land	6,249,002	6,290,635	41,633	0.67%

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

7.3.1 (g) The municipal charge under section 159 of the Act compared with the previous financial year

TYPE OF CHARGE	PER RATEABLE PROPERTY		CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$	2026/27 \$	\$	%
Municipal Charge	-	-	-	%

7.3.1 (h) The estimated total amount to be raised by municipal charges compared with the previous financial year

TYPE OF CHARGE	2025/26	2026/27	CHANGE	
	\$	\$	\$	%
Municipal Charge	-	-	-	%

7.3.1 (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 and detailed disclosure of the actual service/s rendered for the amount levied

TYPE OF CHARGE	PER RATEABLE PROPERTY		CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$	2026/27 \$	\$	%
Kerbside Collection	285	371	86	30.18%
Additional Kerbside Collection	164	169	5	3.05%
Recycling	195	194	(1)	-0.51%
FOGO	52	67	15	28.85%
Total	696	801	105	15.09%

7.3.1 (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	2025/26	2026/27	CHANGE	
	\$	\$	\$	%
Kerbside Collection	1,721,685	2,254,938	533,253	30.97%
Additional Kerbside Collection	71,504	78,754	7,250	10.14%
Recycling	1,229,475	1,230,348	873	0.07%
FOGO	63,558	78,859	15,301	24.07%
Total	3,086,222	3,642,899	556,677	18.04%

7.3.1 (k) The estimated total amount to be raised by all rates and charges compared with the previous financial year

TYPE OF CHARGE	2025/26	2026/27	CHANGE	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$	%
General rates	18,142	18,655	513	2.83%
Cultural and recreational	16	17	1	6.25%
Revenue in lieu of rates	405	420	15	3.70%
Waste charges	3,097	3,643	546	17.63%
Total Rates and charges	21,660	22,735	1,075	4.96%

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

7.3.1 (l) Fair Go Rates System Compliance

Northern Grampians Shire Council is required to comply with the State Government's Fair Go Rates System (FGRS). The table below details the budget assumptions consistent with the requirements of the Fair Go Rates System.

	2025/26	2026/27
Total Rates	\$17,566,904	\$18,158,759
Number of rateable properties	9,593	9,614
Base Average Rate	\$1,831	\$1,889
Maximum Rate Increase (set by the State Government)	3.00%	2.75%
Capped Average Rate	\$1,886	\$1,941
Maximum General Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	\$18,093,911	\$18,658,125
Budgeted General Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	\$18,091,966	\$18,655,000
Budgeted Total Rates and Municipal Charges Revenue	\$18,091,966	\$18,655,000

7.3.1 (m) 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 (2025/26: \$51,520)
- The variation of returned levels of value (e.g. valuation appeals)
- Changes of use of land such that rateable land becomes non-rateable land and vice versa
- Changes of use of land such that residential land becomes business land and vice versa.

7.3.1 (n) Differential rates

Rates to be Levied

Council has a general rate, a commercial differential rate for commercial properties, a industrial differential rate for industrial properties, a farm land differential rate for eligible farm properties, and a concession rate for eligible rateable recreational properties.

The eligibility criteria for each category is detailed below. The rate and amount of rates payable in relation to land in each category are as follows:

- a general rate of 0.4744% (0.4744 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable general properties
- a commercial rate of 0.6008% (0.6008 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable commercial properties
- a industrial rate of 0.6008% (0.6008 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable industrial properties
- a farm rate of 0.1629% (0.1629 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable farm properties
- a general rate of 0.4077% (0.4077 cents in the dollar of CIV) for all rateable recreational properties

In the 2022/23 rating year, Council introduced a 'floating differential' model to reduce the impact of year on year rates variations caused by disproportionate valuation movements between the types of properties.

For 2026/27, the total rates collected by Council will apportioned as follows:

- general - 58.2%
- commercial/industrial - 9.3%
- farm - 32.5%

Each rate will be determined by multiplying the Capital Improved Value of each rateable land (categorised by the characteristics described below) by the relevant amounts indicated above.

In accordance with the *Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2012*, Council has considered the Ministerial Guidelines with regards to the setting of differential rates and believes its differential rates to be consistent with the guidelines. Council considers that the differential rates will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of council functions. Details of the objectives of the differential rate and the types of classes of land which are subject to the differential rate and the uses of the differential rate, are set out below.

General Rate Land

Purpose and Objectives:

The objective of the General Rate is to ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic and statutory service provision and community services obligations.

Types and Classes:

General Rate Land means any rateable land which is not farm land, commercial, industrial or recreational and cultural land. Council applies its general rate to all residential and non-farm land.

Commercial Rate Land

Purpose and Objectives:

The objective of the Commercial differential rate is to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Northern Grampians Shire Council. The differential recognises the impact that commercial land use places on Council infrastructure and seeks to achieve vertical equity due to the tax deductible nature of rates on commercial properties.

Types and Classes:

Commercial land is any land which is used or adapted to be used primarily for business and/or administrative purposes.

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

Industrial Rate Land

Purpose and Objectives:

The objective of the Industrial differential rate is to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Northern Grampians Shire Council.

Types and Classes:

Industrial land is any land which is used primarily for or is capable of being used for industrial purposes, which includes manufacturing, processing, repairing and servicing.

Farm Rate Land

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of the Farm Rate is to assist farmers who, unlike other businesses, require a large amount of land to generate their income. Farm profitability is affected by the vagaries of weather and international markets and agricultural producers are unable to pass on increases in costs like other businesses. In this sense farms are seen to be more susceptible or fragile than other commercial and industrial operations. The farm land rate is only applied to genuine commercial farming operations as distinct from hobby or rural lifestyle properties.

The objective of the farm land rate differential is to provide a more equitable rating system to ensure that these properties do not pay disproportionately higher rates due to the larger land component that they require.

Types and Classes:

Farm Rate Land is any rateable land, which is all of the following:

- is two or more hectares in area;
- qualifies as a farm under the definition of Farm Land as prescribed in the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*;
- qualifies as a farm land in accordance with Council's *Rate Differential Policy*.

Farm land under the Act, means land that it is not less than 2

hectares in area and is used primarily for grazing (including agistment), dairying, pig farming, poultry farming, fish farming, tree farming, bee keeping, viticulture, horticulture, fruit growing or the growing of crops of any kind or for any combination of those activities.

In addition the Act clearly states that the property must be used by a business that has a significant and commercial purpose or character and seeks to make a profit on a continuous or repetitive basis from its activities on the land, and that is making a profit from its activities on the land, or that has a reasonable prospect of making a profit from its activities on the land.

Council's *Rate Differential Policy* gives guidance to the community on what Council has determined are properties that are eligible for the farm land rate differential. In order for a property to receive this rate it needs to be more than 150 hectares in land size or a property of a commercial farming nature that meets the farming criteria within the policy.

Council's *Differential Policy* further states that some farm land could not be used as a substantial commercial purpose on small holdings and specifies property sizes for some types of farm activities.

Recreation & Cultural Rate Land

Recreational and Cultural Rate Land is any rateable land which is within the Shire and eligible in accordance with the *Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963*.

Provision is made to levy the rate for recreational lands at an amount that Council believes is reasonable having regard to the services provided by Council in relation to such lands and having regard to the benefit to the community derived by such recreational lands.

Statutory fees and fines

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Infringements and costs	73	39	(34)	-46.58%
Land information certificates	33	34	1	3.03%
Permit Fees	40	-	(40)	-100.00%
Town planning fees	90	90	-	0.00%
Other statutory fees and fines	-	7	7	100.00%
Total statutory fees and fines	236	170	(66)	-27.97%

User fees

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Property lease and rentals	56	29	(27)	-48.21%
Registrations	185	211	26	14.05%
User fees	2,243	2,561	318	14.18%
Total user fees	2,484	2,801	317	12.76%

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

Grants

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Grants were received in respect of the following:				
Summary of grants				
Commonwealth funded grants	12,435	17,441	5,006	40%
State funded grants	5,495	2,101	(3,394)	-62%
Other grants	178	180	2	1%
Total grants received	18,108	19,722	1,614	9%
(a) Operating Grants				
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Financial Assistance Grants	5,120	10,311	5,191	101%
Immunisations	3	3	-	0%
Commonwealth Home Support Program	628	642	14	2%
Civic Events	2	2	-	0%
Recurrent - State Government				
Emergency Planning	120	120	-	0%
Libraries	159	159	-	0%
Maternal Child & Health	370	371	1	0%
Childrens Services	1,106	674	(432)	-39%
Community Care	113	99	(14)	-12%
Weeds and Pests Program	85	85	-	0%
Total recurrent grants	7,706	12,466	4,760	62%
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
People and Culture	40	-	(40)	-100%
Childrens Services	150	-	(150)	-100%
Community Care	77	-	(77)	-100%
Non-recurrent - State Government				
Other	60	-	(60)	-100%
Community Care	-	18	18	100%
Public Health Plan	18	-	(18)	-100%
Childrens Services	177	82	(95)	-54%
Community Development	-	53	53	100%
Total non-recurrent grants	522	153	(369)	-71%
Total operating grants	8,228	12,619	4,391	53%
(b) Capital Grants				
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Roads to recovery	6,255	5,105	(1,150)	-18%
Total recurrent grants	6,255	5,105	(1,150)	-18%
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government				
Roads, Bridges, Footpaths, Kerb & Channel	160	1,378	1,218	761%
Non-recurrent - State Government				
Buildings	60	195	135	225%
Roads, Bridges, Footpaths, Kerb & Channel	1,856	30	(1,826)	-98%
Natural Disaster Funding	581	-	(581)	-100%
Open Space	790	215	(575)	-73%
Non-recurrent - Other				
Energy Efficient Buildings	178	180	2	1%
Total non-recurrent grants	3,625	1,998	(1,627)	-45%
Total capital grants	9,880	7,103	(2,777)	-28%
Total Grants	18,108	19,722	1,614	9%

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

Contributions

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Contributions - Monetary	287	560	273	95.12%
Total contributions	287	560	273	95.12%

Other income

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Interest	177	184	7	3.95%
Other income	1,335	1,255	(80)	-5.99%
Rental	210	206	(4)	-1.90%
Total other income	1,722	1,645	(77)	-4.47%

Employee costs

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Wages and salaries	16,956	18,578	1,622	10%
Superannuation	2,247	2,328	81	4%
Fringe benefits tax	10	15	5	50%
Workcover	665	573	(92)	-14%
Other employee costs	1,028	1,046	18	2%
Total employee costs	20,906	22,540	1,634	8%

Materials and services

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26 \$'000	2026/27 \$'000	\$'000	%
Consultants	1,354	776	(578)	-43%
External works (contractors)	5,281	4,653	(628)	-12%
Information technology	1,261	1,381	120	10%
Insurance	938	968	30	3%
Office administration	507	568	61	12%
Plant and Fleet Operations	715	956	241	34%
Support services and supplies	3,080	2,688	(392)	-13%
Utilities	892	940	48	5%
Total materials and services	14,028	12,930	(1,098)	-8%

7.3.1 Comprehensive Income Statement (cont'd)

Depreciation

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Property	2,585	2,650	65	2.51%
Plant and equipment	645	661	16	2.48%
Infrastructure	13,362	13,696	334	2.50%
Total depreciation	16,592	17,007	415	2.50%

Other expenses

	FORECAST	BUDGET	CHANGE	
	2025/26	2026/27	\$'000	%
	\$'000	\$'000		
Auditor remuneration - VAGO	46	55	9	19.57%
Contributions and donations	499	492	(7)	-1.40%
Councillor Allowances	251	264	13	5.18%
Operating lease rentals	314	279	(35)	-11.15%
Other expenses	130	207	77	59.23%
Total other expenses	1,240	1,297	57	4.60%

7.3.2 Balance Sheet

Borrowings

	FORECAST	BUDGET	PROJECTIONS		
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Amount borrowed as at 30 June of the prior year	1,000	-	-	-	-
Amount proposed to be borrowed	-	-	-	-	-
Amount projected to be redeemed	(1,000)	-	-	-	-
Amount of borrowings as at 30 June	-	-	-	-	-
Amount (of opening balance) to be refinanced	-	-	-	-	-

7.3.3 Capital Works Program

This section presents a listing of the capital works projects that will be undertaken for the 2026/27 year, classified by expenditure type and funding source.

Summary

	FORECAST 2025/26 \$'000	BUDGET 2026/27 \$'000	CHANGE \$'000	%
Property	1,996	1,970	(26)	-1.30%
Plant and equipment	1,448	1,253	(195)	-13.47%
Infrastructure	11,312	11,746	434	3.84%
Total	14,756	14,969	213	1.44%

	PROJECT COST \$'000	ASSET EXPENDITURE TYPE				SUMMARY OF FUNDING SOURCES			
		NEW \$'000	RENEWAL \$'000	UPGRADE \$'000	EXPANSION \$'000	GRANTS \$'000	CONTRIBUTIONS \$'000	COUNCIL CASH \$'000	BORROWINGS \$'000
Property	1,970	-	1,620	350	-	375	-	1,595	-
Plant and equipment	1,253	-	1,253	-	-	-	225	1,028	-
Infrastructure	11,746	175	6,098	5,473	-	6,728	235	4,783	-
Total	14,969	175	8,971	5,823	-	7,103	460	7,406	-

7.3.3 Capital Works Program (cont'd)

Current Budget

CAPITAL WORKS AREA	PROJECT COST \$'000	ASSET EXPENDITURE TYPE				SUMMARY OF FUNDING SOURCES			
		NEW \$'000	RENEWAL \$'000	UPGRADE \$'000	EXPANSION \$'000	GRANTS \$'000	CONTRIBUTIONS \$'000	COUNCIL CASH \$'000	BORROWINGS \$'000
PROPERTY									
Buildings									
Central Park Number One Grandstand Heritage Timber Repairs	170	-	170	-	-	-	-	170	-
St Arnaud Pool Projects	1,395	-	1,395	-	-	195	-	1,200	-
Stawell Entertainment Centre Activation works	15	-	15	-	-	-	-	15	-
Stawell Entertainment Centre Safety Operation	40	-	40	-	-	-	-	40	-
Energy Efficiency Program	350	-	-	350	-	180	-	170	-
Total Property	1,970	-	1,620	350	-	375	-	1,595	-
PLANT AND EQUIPMENT									
Plant, Machinery and Equipment									
Heavy Plant Replacement Program	863	-	863	-	-	-	70	793	-
Plant replacement program	390	-	390	-	-	-	155	235	-
Total Plant And Equipment	1,253	-	1,253	-	-	-	225	1,028	-
INFRASTRUCTURE									
Roads									
Final Seal Program	379	-	379	-	-	366	-	13	-
Resealing Program	1,280	-	1,280	-	-	1,223	-	57	-
Resheeting Program	1,084	-	1,084	-	-	711	-	373	-
Road Rehabilitation Program	655	-	655	-	-	588	-	67	-
Major Rural Roads Program	1,470	-	-	1,470	-	500	-	970	-
Road Safety Improvement Program	482	-	-	482	-	482	-	-	-
Rural & Residential Program	538	-	-	538	-	225	148	165	-
Town Street Sealing Program	127	-	-	127	-	-	-	127	-
Transport Development Program	1,500	-	-	1,500	-	1,010	-	490	-
Urban Road Improvement Program	50	-	-	50	-	-	-	50	-
Bridges									
Bridge Renewal Program	820	-	820	-	-	35	-	785	-
Major Culvert Renewal Program	1,880	-	1,880	-	-	1,200	-	680	-
Footpaths and Cycleways									
Bike Path Development Zoo Link	110	-	-	110	-	30	-	80	-
Cycling and Active Transport Program	91	-	-	91	-	-	-	91	-
Footpath Program	325	-	-	325	-	-	-	325	-
Drainage									
Drainage Program	370	-	-	370	-	143	77	150	-
Waste Management									
Waste Action Plan	340	-	-	340	-	-	-	340	-
Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes									
Grampians Rail Trail	15	15	-	-	-	15	-	-	-
Moonlight Dam Revitalisation	160	160	-	-	-	160	-	-	-
St Arnaud Bowling Club Master Plan	70	-	-	70	-	40	10	20	-
Total Infrastructure	11,746	175	6,098	5,473	-	6,728	235	4,783	-
Total New Capital Works	14,969	175	8,971	5,823	-	7,103	460	7,406	-

7.3.3 Capital Works Program (cont'd)

Summary of Planned Capital Works Expenditure

For the four years ending 30 June 2028, 2029 & 2030

2027/28	ASSET EXPENDITURE TYPES					FUNDING SOURCES				
	TOTAL \$'000	NEW \$'000	RENEWAL \$'000	EXPANSION \$'000	UPGRADE \$'000	TOTAL \$'000	GRANTS \$'000	CONTRIBUTIONS \$'000	COUNCIL CASH \$'000	BORROWINGS \$'000
Buildings	200	10	-	190	-	200	-	-	200	-
Total Buildings	200	10	-	190	-	200	-	-	200	-
Total Property	200	10	-	190	-	200	-	-	200	-
Plant and Equipment										
Plant, machinery and equipment	1,311	-	1,311	-	-	1,311	-	339	972	-
Total Plant and Equipment	1,311	-	1,311	-	-	1,311	-	339	972	-
Infrastructure										
Roads	9,233	-	3,776	5,457	-	9,233	6,718	26	2,489	-
Bridges	2,225	-	2,225	-	-	2,225	1,260	-	965	-
Footpaths and cycleways	386	-	-	386	-	386	108	-	278	-
Drainage	310	-	-	310	-	310	310	-	-	-
Parks, Open Spaces and Streetscapes	20	20	-	-	-	20	-	-	20	-
Waste Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Infrastructure	12,174	20	6,001	6,153	-	12,174	8,396	26	3,752	-
Total Capital Works Expenditure	13,685	30	7,312	6,343	-	13,685	8,396	365	4,924	-
2028/29										
	TOTAL \$'000	NEW \$'000	RENEWAL \$'000	EXPANSION \$'000	UPGRADE \$'000	TOTAL \$'000	GRANTS \$'000	CONTRIBUTIONS \$'000	COUNCIL CASH \$'000	BORROWINGS \$'000
Property										
Buildings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Buildings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Property	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plant and Equipment										
Plant, machinery and equipment	1,317	-	1,317	-	-	1,317	-	265	1,052	-
Total Plant and Equipment	1,317	-	1,317	-	-	1,317	-	265	1,052	-
Infrastructure										
Roads	9,296	-	3,770	5,526	-	9,296	6,748	-	2,548	-
Bridges	2,236	-	2,236	-	-	2,236	1,260	-	976	-
Footpaths and cycleways	391	-	-	391	-	391	108	-	283	-
Drainage	90	-	-	90	-	90	-	-	90	-
Parks, Open Spaces and Streetscapes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Waste Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Infrastructure	12,013	-	6,006	6,007	-	12,013	8,116	-	3,897	-
Total Capital Works Expenditure	13,330	-	7,323	6,007	-	13,330	8,116	265	4,949	-
2029/30										
	TOTAL \$'000	NEW \$'000	RENEWAL \$'000	EXPANSION \$'000	UPGRADE \$'000	TOTAL \$'000	GRANTS \$'000	CONTRIBUTIONS \$'000	COUNCIL CASH \$'000	BORROWINGS \$'000
Property										
Buildings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Buildings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Property	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plant and Equipment										
Plant, machinery and equipment	958	-	958	-	-	958	-	127	831	-
Total Plant and Equipment	958	-	958	-	-	958	-	127	831	-
Infrastructure										
Roads	6,777	-	3,800	2,977	-	6,777	4,237	-	2,540	-
Bridges	2,200	-	2,200	-	-	2,200	1,260	-	940	-
Footpaths and cycleways	359	-	-	359	-	359	108	-	251	-
Drainage	92	-	-	92	-	92	-	-	92	-
Parks, Open Spaces and Streetscapes	100	-	100	-	-	100	-	50	50	-
Waste Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Infrastructure	9,528	-	6,100	3,428	-	9,528	5,605	50	3,873	-
Total Capital Works Expenditure	10,486	-	7,058	3,428	-	10,486	5,605	177	4,704	-

7.4.1 Performance and Financial Indicators

Targeted performance indicators - Council Selected

The following table highlights Council's current and projected performance across eight targeted performance indicators selected by Council from the range of prescribed performance measures contained in the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. These indicators provide a useful

analysis of Council's intentions and performance and should be interpreted in the context of the organisation's objectives. Results against these indicators and targets will be reported in Council's Performance Statement included in the Annual Report.

INDICATOR	MEASURE	ACTUAL	FORECAST	TARGET	TARGET PROJECTIONS			TREND
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	+ / O / -
Environment								
Roads	Community satisfaction with sealed local roads							
The community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads	Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on the condition of sealed local road	47	50	50	50	50	50	+
Cost								
Aquatic Facilities	Cost of aquatic facilities per visit							
The direct cost less any income received from providing aquatic facilities per visit	Direct cost of the aquatic facilities less income received / Number of visits to aquatic facilities	\$ 4.33	\$ 4.33	\$ 4.33	\$ 4.33	\$ 4.33	\$ 4.33	o
Community								
Maternal & Child Health	Infant enrolments in the MCH service							
The percentage of infants enrolled in the MCH service.	Number of infants enrolled in the MCH service / Number of birth notifications received	100.8%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	o
Library Services	Library visits per population							
The number of library visits per head of population.	Number of library visit / Population	3.3	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	+
Aquatic Facilities	Utilisation of aquatic facilities							
The number of visits to aquatic facilities per head of population.	Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Population	6.6	8	8	8	8	8	+
Responsiveness								
Waste	Kerbside collection bins missed							
The number of kerbside collection bins missed per 10,000 scheduled kerbside collection bin lifts.	Number of kerbside collection bins missed / Number of scheduled kerbside collection bin lifts	6.1	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	-
Statutory Planning	Time taken to decide planning applications							
The median number of days taken between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application.	The median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application	49	49	49	49	49	49	o
Statutory Planning	Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT							
The percentage of planning application decisions subject to review by VCAT that were not set aside.	Number of VCAT decisions in relation to a planning application that did not set aside council's decision on the application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning application	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	o

Key to Forecast Trend:

- + Increase in Council's overall targets
- o Maintaining Council's overall targets
- Decrease in Council's overall targets

7.4.1 Performance and Financial Indicators (cont'd)

Targeted performance indicators - Mandatory

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.

INDICATOR	MEASURE	ACTUAL 2024/25	FORECAST 2025/26	TARGET 2026/27	TARGET PROJECTIONS			TREND + / O / -
					2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
TARGETED SERVICE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS								
Governance								
Community engagement (council decisions made and implemented with community input)	Satisfaction with the opportunities offered by Council to be consulted on or engaged in Council decisions Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with the consultation and engagement efforts of Council	51	55	55	56	57	58	+
Environment								
Roads (sealed local roads are maintained and renewed to ensure a safe network)	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	92.4%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	o
Responsiveness								
Statutory planning (Councils decide on planning applications and fulfill their legislative duties in a timely manner)	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	93.5%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	o
Environment								
Waste management (waste is minimised and sustainability is promoted)	Kerbside collection waste to landfill per serviced property Waste in tonnage collected from kerbside waste collection services sent to landfill / Number of serviced properties	33.1%	35.0%	35.0%	35.0%	35.0%	35.0%	o
TARGETED FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS								
Financial management								
Liquidity (sufficient working capital and cash is available to cover expenses)	Current assets compared to current liabilities Current assets / current liabilities	206.30%	159.8%	117.2%	103.5%	97.4%	102.6%	-
Financial forecasting								
Asset renewal and upgrade (renewal and upgrade of assets is planned and delivered)	Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation Asset renewal and upgrade expenses / Asset depreciation	68.69%	88.93%	52.75%	41.95%	40.98%	38.54%	-
Financial management								
Rates concentration (revenue is generated from a range of sources)	Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue Rate revenue / adjusted underlying revenue	44.77%	53.80%	46.03%	46.96%	44.92%	42.89%	-
Financial management								
Expenditure and revenue level (resources are used efficiently in the delivery of services)	Expenses per property assessment Total expenses / no. of property assessments	\$5,565.41	\$5,504.64	\$5,593.30	\$5,800.08	\$5,976.08	\$6,156.54	+

Key to Forecast Trend:

- + Increase in Council's overall targets
- o Maintaining Council's overall targets
- Decrease in Council's overall targets

7.4.1 Financial Performance Indicators (cont'd)

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 2 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 2024/25	FORECAST 2025/26	TARGET 2026/27	TARGET PROJECTIONS			TREND + / O / -
					2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
Financial forecasting								
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	5.45%	5.13%	4.93%	4.93%	4.67%	4.45%	-
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 own-source revenue Interest bearing loans and borrowings / own-source revenue	NA	0.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%	o
	Loans and borrowings repayments compared to own-source revenue Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / own-source revenue	NA	0.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%	o
Population (population is a key driver of a Council's ability to fund the delivery of services to the community)	Expenses per head of population Total expenses / Population	\$4,777	\$4,474	\$4,556	\$4,724	\$4,867	\$5,014	+
	Infrastructure per head of population Value of infrastructure / Population	\$40,886	\$42,155	\$41,955	\$41,609	\$41,202	\$40,528	o
Revenue and grants (revenue is generated from a range of sources to fund the delivery of services to the community)	Own-source revenue per head of population Own source revenue / Population	\$2,188	\$2,077	\$2,186	\$2,275	\$2,402	\$2,522	o
	Recurrent grants per head of population Recurrent grants / Population	\$1,623	\$1,183	\$1,489	\$1,489	\$1,489	\$1,489	o
Financial management								
Liquidity (sufficient working capital and cash is available to cover expenses)	Cash compared to current liabilities Cash / current liabilities	161.4%	109.6%	67.0%	53.3%	47.3%	52.6%	-
Operating position (an adjusted underlying surplus is generated in the ordinary course of business)	Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / Adjusted underlying revenue	-20.1%	-24.8%	-19.7%	-33.3%	-31.0%	-29.0%	-
Rates effort (rating level is set based on the community's capacity to pay)	Rates compared to property value Rate revenue / CIV of rateable properties in the municipal district	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	o
Expenditure and 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	\$1,730	\$1,935	\$1,986	\$2,025	\$2,065	\$2,106	+
Rates collection (rates and charges are being responsibly collected)	Rates and charges debt Unpaid rates and charges / all rates and charges	NA	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	o

Key to Forecast Trend:

- + Forecasts improvement in Council's financial performance/financial position indicator
- o Forecasts that Council's financial performance/financial position indicator will be steady
- Forecasts deterioration in Council's financial performance/financial position indicator

