



**Swan Hill Rural  
City Council**

## **SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING**

**Tuesday 13 August 2024  
to be held at 2:00 PM**

**Council Chambers  
Swan Hill Town Hall  
53 – 57 McCallum Street, Swan  
Hill. VIC 3585**

## **AGENDA**

### **PUBLIC ACCESS**

**Open to the public and  
Live streaming from Council's  
website: [www.swanhill.vic.gov.au](http://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au)**

## Governance Rules

A copy of Swan Hill Rural City Council's governance rules can be found at  
<https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/about/overview/policies/governance-rules-2020/>

## Executive Leadership Team

Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer

Bruce Myers, Director of Community and Cultural Services

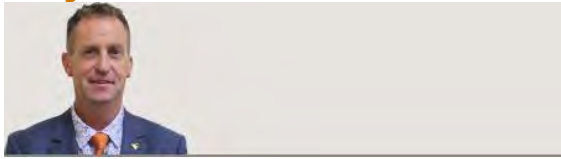
Michelle Grainger, Director of Development and Planning

Bhan Pratap, Director of Corporate Services

Leah Johnston, Director of Infrastructure

## Swan Hill Elected Members

### Mayor

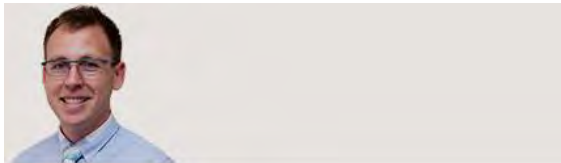


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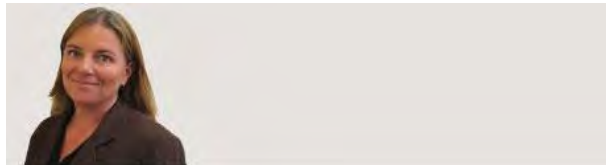
### Councillors



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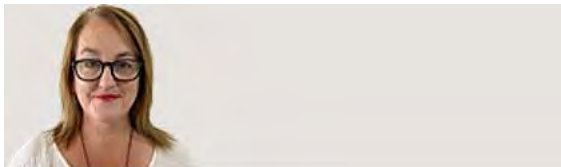
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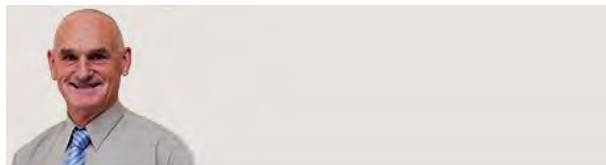
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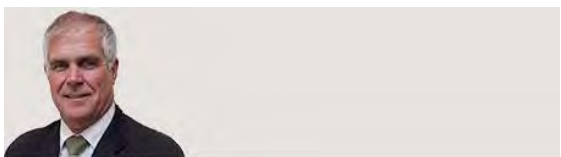
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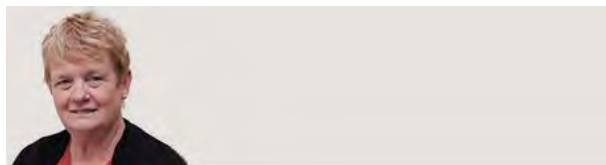
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## Vision Statement

Built on strong foundations that embrace our rich History and natural environment, our region will be a place of progressions and possibility. We are a community that is happy, healthy and harmonious - we are empowered, we are respectful and we are proud.

## Our Mission

We will lead, advocate, partner and provide efficient services and opportunities for growth and the wellbeing of our community, environment and economy.

## Our Values

Council values our residents and community and will be responsive to their needs. In pursuing our objectives, we believe in, and are committed to, the following values:

**Community engagement** - We will ensure that our communities are consulted, listened to and informed.

**Leadership** - We will be at the centre of our community and by actively engaging our community we will form the collective view on strategic issues and will then express our views through strong advocacy and action.

**Fairness** - We will value and embrace the diversity of our community and ensure that all people are treated equally.

**Accountability**- We will be transparent and efficient in our activities and we will always value feedback.

**Trust** - We will act with integrity and earn the community's trust by being a reliable partner in delivering services, projects and providing facilities.

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## 1 Procedural Matters

### 1.1 Welcome

### 1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country

*“Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present.”*

### 1.3 Opening Declaration

*“We beseech you Lord, that we may be granted wisdom, understanding and sincerity of purpose, in the decisions we are called on to make for the welfare of the people of the Rural City of Swan Hill.”*

Or

“We, the Councillors of Swan Hill Rural City Council, declare that we will undertake the duties of the office of Councillor, in the best interests of our community, and faithfully, and impartially, carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in us, to the best of our skill and judgement.”

### 1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence

None when the Agenda was distributed.

### 1.5 Directors / Officers Present

### 1.6 Confirmation of Minutes

#### 1.6.1 Confirmation of Minutes

**Recommendation/s**

**That the minutes of the Scheduled Council Meeting held on Tuesday 16 July 2024 be confirmed.**

### 1.7 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

### 1.8 Joint Letters and Reading of Petitions

Nil.

## 1.9 Public Questions Time

**You can access the form Public Question Time form from:**

<https://forms.swanhill.vic.gov.au/council-meeting-public-question-time/>

### **Please note**

- Only ONE question per form submission.
- Submission must be received no later than 10:00am on the day prior to the meeting.
- A time is set aside for public questions during a Council meeting at which time each question will be read after the Chairman has looked at its contents and determined that the question is appropriate.
- Statements and opinions are not permitted during question time and will not be read to the meeting.
- The Chairman may disallow any question. This may be because the question is repetitive of a question already asked, objectionable, irrelevant, raises an issue of a confidential nature or is asked to embarrass a Councillor or Council officer. The Chairman will provide reasons where a question is disallowed. Questions considered to be inappropriate will be made available to Councillors on request.
- The Chairman will nominate the appropriate Councillor or Council officer to answer the question or elect to answer it himself/herself.
- No debate or discussion of the questions or answers is permitted.
- The Chairman may elect to take a question on notice in which case a written response will generally be provided within 10 working days.
- A summary of the text of the question and the response will be recorded in the minutes of the Council meeting.

### **Who can use this form**

- Any community member

### **While completing this form, we will request**

- Your contact details (including your name, address, phone and email)
- Your question

It will take about 5 minutes to complete this form.

### **After you submit this form**

- We will send you an email receipt to confirm we have received your submission

### **What happens with your information?**

The information requested in this form is collected by Swan Hill Rural City Council to assist us in responding to your question.



Your name, suburb and question may be read out at the Council meeting and will be recorded in the Council meeting minutes but will not be used for any other purpose unless required by law.

We will handle any personal information you provide on this form in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. We record this information on our customer databases and make it available to relevant Council staff in line with our Privacy Statement.

You can access your personal information by contacting our Privacy Officer.

## 1.10 Open Forum

Please see below “Governance Rules 2023 – Section 7 referring to Open Forum” which outlines the rules and procedure of open forum.

### **7. Community questions and submissions**

#### **7.1. Open Forum and Questions Of Council Time To Be Held**

- (1) The Council will hold Open Forum and Questions of Council Time for up to 30 minutes duration at the beginning of each Scheduled Meeting to allow public submissions and questions of Council. Extension of time may be granted by resolution of Council.
- (2) Open Forum is an opportunity for the general public to present to Council on a matter listed on the Agenda or any other matter.
- (3) Questions of Council are an opportunity for the general public to submit a question prior to the Scheduled Meeting and receive a response from Council in the Questions of Council time.
- (4) Council meetings are recorded and broadcasted to the public; this includes community questions and submissions.

#### **Open forum and questions of council guidelines**

**7.2.** Questions of Council time and Open Forum will not apply during any period when the Council has resolved to close the meeting in respect of a matter under section 66 (1) of the Act.

**7.3.** Submissions as part of Open Forum and Questions of Council may be on any matter except if it:

- (a) is considered malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance;
- (b) relates to confidential information as defined under the Act;
- (c) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- (d) relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person;
- (e) If a person has submitted more than 2 questions to a meeting, the third and further questions may, at the discretion of the Chairperson be deferred until all other person who have asked a question have had their questions asked and answered and not be asked if the time allotted for public question time has expired.

**7.4.** Where the Mayor does not accept a question, the submitter is to be informed of the reason or reasons for which their question was not accepted.

**7.5.** The Mayor reserves the right to cease a submission as part of Open Forum if they deem the submission inappropriate.

**7.6.** Where possible Copies of all questions allowed by the Mayor will be provided in writing to all Councillors.

- 7.7. A submission or question submitted in writing by a member of the public, which has been disallowed by the Mayor will be provided to any Councillor on request.

**Open forum**

- 7.8. For any member of the public who wishes to be heard at Open Forum they must give prior notice:
- (a) in written form;
  - (b) contain the name, address and email or contact telephone number of the person to be heard;
  - (c) by online request <https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/>;
  - (d) in a letter to the Chief Executive Office, 45 Splatt Street, Swan Hill, Vic 3585; or
  - (e) in an email [council@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@swanhill.vic.gov.au); or
  - (f) hand delivery to the Council's Office, 45 Splatt Street, Swan Hill or 72 Herbert Street, Robinvale.
- 7.9. It is preferable for any group or association that wishes to be heard at Open Forum to nominate a spokesperson for an issue upon which the group or association may wish to be heard.

**Open Forum Procedure****7.10. Public addressing the Meeting**

- (1) Any member of the public addressing Council must extend due courtesy and respect to Council and the processes under which it operates and must take direction from the Chairperson whenever called on to do so.
  - (2) Council may suspend standing orders to hear from a community member or representative of an organisation, on matters of significance to the Council, only if prior arrangements have been made by written request to the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.
- 7.11. The Chair will allocate a maximum of 3 minutes to each person who wishes to address Council.
- 7.12. The Chair will first invite any person who has given prior notice to present to Council.
- 7.13. The Chair will then invite members of the gallery who would like to present to Council.
- 7.14. The Chair has the discretion to alter the order of persons to be heard.
- 7.15. The person in addressing the Council:
- (a) must confine their address to the 3-minute allocation of time;
  - (b) shall extend due courtesy and respect to the Council and the processes under which it operates; and
  - (c) shall take direction from the Chair whenever called upon to do;
  - (d) There will be no discussion or debate with the attendees to Open Forum however Councillors may ask questions of clarification of the attendee;
  - (e) Standing Orders do not need to be suspended to allow discussion for the purposes of clarification.

## 2 Officer Reports for Decision

### 2.1 Fair and Equitable Access for Community Sports Infrastructure

**Directorate:** Development and Planning  
**File No:** S16-25P-08-815  
**Purpose:** For Decision

#### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**3. Harmony** - We will be a welcoming community for all, recognised for our maturity and respect for each other.

#### **3.2 An engaged and respected Aboriginal community**

3.2.2 Encourage and support community leadership

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

#### **4.2 Transparent communication and engagement**

4.2.1 Effective and authentic engagement with our community

4.2.2 Visible presence in our community

#### Current Strategic Documents

#### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

#### Brief Summary:

Sport and active recreation are a fundamental part of the lives of many Victorians, and of its communities. Sport and recreation infrastructure shapes our towns, suburbs and cities.

The State Government has recognised that the entire community does not benefit from this infrastructure in an equitable manner and that it is contributing to unequal outcomes in sport and active recreation, and a wider culture of gender inequality in our communities.

In Victoria, female participation rates in sport and active recreation remain lower than males, particularly in community sport and recreation club settings. The facilities at clubs play a key factor in encouraging female involvement.

Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020 (the Act) requires the Victorian public sector, local governments and universities to take positive action towards achieving

workplace gender equality. As Defined Entities under the Act, local governments and other public land management groups are also required to consider and promote gender equality, including undertaking gender impact assessments on policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant public impact.

With support from Australia's first Office for Women in Sport and Recreation and other key organisations, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap has provided local governments and other public land management groups with the education and support required to fulfil the requirements of the Act as it applies to community sport and create locally relevant policies and measures to advance gender equitable access and use of community sporting facilities.

From July 2024 all Victorian Council's will need to have a Fair Access Policy in place to be considered eligible to receive infrastructure funding through Sport and Recreation Victoria. It should be noted that this is a mandatory requirement from the Victorian State Government and if Council wishes to access Sport and Recreation funding from 1 July 2024, the policy must be adopted.

The draft policy embeds gender equity and prioritises it, specifically when:

- Preparing and reviewing master plans for recreational sites;
- Facility upgrades and new development;
- Assessment of community grants program; and
- Supporting clubs and organisations to embed fair inclusion principles in their Terms of References, User Agreements and other guiding documents.

The Fair and Equitable Access policy has been largely based on a template supplied by the Office of Women in Sport.

## **Consultation**

Council carried out a consultation process on the requirement to have a Fair and Equitable Access Policy, including outlining the reasons the Victorian State Government requires such a policy and inviting submissions prior to final adoption of the policy by Council.

Consultation occurred through Council's Let's Talk page, information in the local media and direct emails (approximately 50) to all municipal clubs and sporting associations/organisations via email.

Four responses were received from the public. One indicated they felt the policy was unnecessary with other matters being more important, another indicated they felt the policy failed to capture equity for all including other marginalised groups and two agreed with the policy. The submissions are attached to this report.

There were also two emails from sporting bodies/clubs in support of the policy.

## **Attachments:**

### **1. Fair Access Policy Roadmap**



- 2. Fair Access Policy**
- 3. Fair Access Policy Fact Sheet**
- 4. Survey Data Feedback Redacted**

**Options:**

- 1. That the Fair and Equitable Access Policy be adopted as mandated by the Victorian State Government.**
- 2. That the Fair and Equitable Access Policy is not adopted and Council foregoes future State Government funding opportunities through Sport and Recreation Victoria.**

**Recommendation:**

**That Council adopt the Fair and Equitable Access Policy as mandated by the Victorian State Government.**

Date adopted June 2024  
 Last review  
 Next review  
 Responsible Officer Community Development Coordinator

Fully compliant with Victorian  
 Charter of Human Rights and



**POLICY TITLE** Fair Access Policy

**POLICY NUMBER** POL/COMM815

## 1. PURPOSE

To address known barriers experienced by women, girls and gender diverse people in accessing and using community sports Infrastructure.

## 2. SCOPE

Sport is a highly visible and valued attribute of the community's culture and identity in the municipality.

The embedding of respect, fair mindedness, and inclusion through sport and active recreation activities is an opportunity for enriching and strengthening our communities, while supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of all people.

Council, through its strong connection with the community, is well positioned to design and implement place-based, integrated actions that progress gender equality in community sport. This policy establishes the requirement that Equality is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice in the context of how it relates to community sports infrastructure.

In actively seeking gender equality the objective is to ensure our community will be fairer, healthier, and safer, with violence against women and children reduced; our resources and opportunities will be shared more fairly; and our civic governance structures will be more reflective of all of community.

- a) Swan Hill Rural City Council recognises that gender equality is the attainment of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
- b) Swan Hill Rural City Council recognises that gender equity is the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities based on gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances

Swan Hill Rural City Council identified in their Gender Equality Action Plan 2021 – 2025

*"The Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025 (GEAP) and objectives is building on a foundation of engagement and emerging capacity towards gender equality and intersectional inclusion. This is embedded in the Community Vision and Council Plan that highlights the value of Fairness; embracing diversity and ensuring everyone is treated equally"*

Fair and Equitable Access for Community Group Infrastructure POL/COMM815		
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This policy aligns with Council's identified role in Gender Equality.

### 3. PRINCIPLES

The Fair Access Principles have been developed by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth, in consultation with representatives from local government and the state sport and recreation sector. This Policy and any resultant actions are based on six (6) principles of inclusivity, including full participation, equal representation, encouraging and supporting user groups, and prioritising user groups committed to equality.

1. Community Sports Infrastructure and environments are genuinely welcoming, safe, and inclusive.
2. Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation, including as a player, coach, administrator, official, volunteer and spectator.
3. Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community infrastructure:
  - a. Of the highest quality available and most convenient.
  - b. At the best and most popular competition and training times and locations.
  - c. To support existing and new participation opportunities and a variety of sports.
4. Women and girls should be represented in leadership and governance roles.
5. Encourage and support all user groups who access and use community infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender equitable access and use practices.
6. Prioritise access, use and support to all user groups who demonstrate an ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sport infrastructure.
- 7.

### 4. POLICY ACTIONS

- a) We will continue to build the capacity of Council staff members to apply a gender lens to business as usual and conduct best practice Gender Impact Assessments (GIA).
- b) Council commits to undertake a GIA on all current community sports infrastructure access and use processes and policies (as part of the policy review process).
- c) Council will consider opportunities to strengthen gender equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Fair Access Principles where this opportunity is identified through the GIA.
- d) Council staff commits to engage fairly and equitably with all staff, governance working groups, state sporting organisations, regional sport assemblies (where applicable) and members of our sport and recreation community, regardless of their gender, in a positive, respectful, and constructive manner.
- e) Clubs with demonstrated commitment to gender equity (eg Gender Equality Action Plan) are prioritised for use of community sport facilities.

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- f) Council acknowledges that the requirement to have a gender equitable access and use policy in place, and the ability to demonstrate progress against that policy's actions will form part of the eligibility criteria for Victorian Government funding programs relating to community sports infrastructure from 1 July 2024.

Swan Hill Rural City Council has also identified the following specific actions to progress gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure:

- g) All organisations seeking Council support to apply to State Government Funding Programs relating to community sports infrastructure are required to demonstrate they are committed and actively progressing Gender Equity in their club. This is demonstrated by any of the following:
  - I. Completion of a gender equity audit and active implementation of a gender equity action plan.
  - II. Completion of gender equality related training programs by committee members and club members e.g. gender equality, Bystander, intersectionality, LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- h) Council will support clubs to progress Gender Equity and Intersectional Inclusion within their clubs through introduction to industry expertise and coordination of online training opportunities.
- i) Council will encourage and support all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement equitable access and use practices.
- j) Council's Community Grants Program Guidelines will reflect Fair Access Principles and look to projects that encourage participation of underrepresented groups including women, girls, trans and gender diverse people
- k) Council's community sports infrastructure facility user agreements will be reviewed and updated to include a statement under section 11.12 Fair Access. Responsibilities of the Organisation, outlining the Victorian Government and Councils expectation of equitable access.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION

The Community Development team is responsible for leading Council's Fair Access Policy and all staff are responsible for implementing the Policy. Management, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders (for example State Sports Associations and Regional Sports Assemblies) operating within Council have a shared responsibility to support the policy.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

Committees of Management	For the purposes of this document, refers to committees appointed by the Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 to manage recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held.
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Community Sports Infrastructure	Publicly owned local, rural, regional, or state level sport and recreation infrastructure operated and maintained primarily for the purpose of facilitating community sport activities, including sporting grounds, surfaces, facilities, and pavilions.
Gender	How you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a mix of these or neither. A person's gender and their expression of their gender can be shown in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance
Gender diverse	An umbrella term for a range of genders expressed in different ways. Gender diverse people use many terms to describe themselves. Language in this area is dynamic, particularly among young people, who are more likely to describe themselves as non-binary.
Gender equality	The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
Gender equity	The provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities based on gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances
Gender Impact Assessment, or GIA	A requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020 to be carried out on policies, programs and services Equitable Access and Usage for Community Sports Infrastructure Policy Page 5 of 5 CP 038 Public Land Management Groups Transgender, or trans which have a direct and significant impact on the public. The assessment must evaluate the effects that a policy, program or service may have on people of different genders.
Public Land Management Groups	For the purposes of this document, are the Committees of Management appointed under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and responsible for the management of recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held
Transgender or trans	Someone whose gender does not align with their sex assigned at birth. Not all trans people will use this term to describe themselves

## 7. RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES/DOCUMENTS

SHRCC Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Recreation Reserves Masterplan 2018

Swan Hill Showgrounds Sport and Recreation precinct masterplan 2024 (in Draft)

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Fair Access Policy Roadmap (Vic)

8. RELATED LEGISLATION

Gender Equality Act 2020  
Local Government Act 2020  
Equal Opportunity Act 2010

9. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version Number	Issue Date	Description of Change
0.1 Draft	June 2024	Draft

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor      Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Fair Access Policy Roadmap

Supporting gender equitable access to and use  
of community sports infrastructure in Victoria



# Acknowledgements

The Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the State of Victoria respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and play. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap has been developed by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth in collaboration with many organisations. In particular, the contributions of the many local governments, state sporting bodies and other groups which helped shape this project are acknowledged:

AFL Victoria	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions	Municipal Association of Victoria
Athletics Victoria	East Gippsland Shire Council	National Rugby League
Ballarat City Council	Fencing Victoria	Netball Victoria
Basketball Victoria	Football Victoria	Parks Victoria
Campaspe Shire Council	Glenelg Shire Council	Regional Sport Victoria
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Hockey Victoria	Southern Grampians Shire Council
City of Casey	Hume City Council	Sunraysia Community Health Services
City of Glen Eira	Indigo Shire Council	Tennis Victoria
City of Greater Dandenong	Lacrosse Victoria	Towong Shire Council
City of Stonnington	Local Government Victoria	Vicsport
Colac Otway Shire	Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector	Maroondah City Council	Victorian Local Governance Association
Cricket Victoria	Melton City Council	Wellington Shire Council
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	Mildura Rural City Council	Wyndham City Council
Department of Health	Moonee Valley City Council	
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Moreland City Council	
	Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	

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## Welcome messages

### A message from the Minister for Community Sport, The Hon Ros Spence MP



Sport is integral in shaping communities and individuals. The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring everyone has the same access and opportunities when it comes to sport and active recreation.

We are excited to launch the Fair Access Policy Roadmap, which will help deliver gender equitable access to, and use of, community sports infrastructure.

While the growth of women's and girls' participation in community sport has been tremendous, it has also highlighted the ongoing challenges many members of our community still face around access and use of facilities and infrastructure.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap represents the next advance in the momentum that the Victorian Government has already created in levelling the playing field through Australia's first Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, the Change Our Game initiative, and its significant investment in female friendly facilities.

Whether it's undertaking Gender Impact Assessments, or creating locally relevant policies and measures, the Roadmap and associated templates will provide organisations with the education and support to ensure all Victorians can fully participate in and enjoy the benefits of community sport, with fair opportunities.

In partnership with Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth, and informed directly by experts in local government and the sport and active recreation sector, the Roadmap is being delivered through the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation and aligns with Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020.

I look forward to our continued collaboration as we level the playing field for women and girls in community sport by delivering gender equitable access to publicly owned community sports infrastructure across the state.

### A message from the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, Dr Niki Vincent



Community sport has many benefits and, like other programs delivered using public funding, should aim to share these benefits equally. However, women and girls have historically been overlooked when it comes

to sporting activities and infrastructure. In Victoria, we're working to level the playing field.

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020, public sector organisations, local councils and universities are taking positive action towards gender equality. This new law requires these organisations to consider gender equality when developing or reviewing policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant public impact.

Community sport is a strong example of this, including how people of different genders access and use community sports infrastructure. I look forward to this project supporting local councils to take positive action to make community sport accessible and inclusive for more people.

### A message from the Minister for Women, The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP



Sport is a core part of our lives in Victoria. We know that in addition to benefitting our physical health, it gives us a deep sense of belonging and improved self-confidence.

Victorian women and girls, deserve to have equal access to all that sport has to offer. We know without proactive consideration, decisions routinely prevent women and girls from participating fully in sporting communities across our state due to gender biases.

Whether it's drawing up fixtures that work for players of all genders, making sure women and girls are fairly represented in leadership and governance, or ensuring car parks and change rooms are safe and welcoming – the Fair Access Roadmap provides practical guidance on creating gender equitable access to Victoria's sporting infrastructure.

We're proud to be working at all levels of society and across government to progress gender equality for all women, in all their diversity of identity and experience, in every aspect of their lives.

The partnership of councils and the community sport sector has been vital to these efforts, and I thank you for your continued support.

I look forward to continuing to work together towards a fairer, safer future for every woman and girl.

### A message from the Minister for Local Government, The Hon Melissa Horne MP



Sport has a unique ability to bring our community together and unite us all. Participating in sport is an integral part of our state and is essential to the health and wellbeing of Victorians and our communities. The Fair

Access strategy is designed to strengthen community sporting groups and enhance inclusion and equal access. It will help to ensure that all Victorians have the opportunity to participate in community sport activities and enjoy the many benefits that it brings.

By ensuring fairer access to infrastructure and community sporting facilities, the Victorian Government is implementing measures to enhance gender equity principles. The strategy ties together the work of Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020 and the Local Government Act 2020, ensuring that organisations consider gender equality, diversity and inclusion in their programs and services.

The strategy also closely aligns with the outcomes of the Growing Suburbs Fund, as announced in the 2022-2023 Victorian Budget. This means that there will be more playgrounds, cricket nets and football pitches, and other sporting facilities, helping to strengthen and support our communities as they grow.

I would like to thank the local government sector for their support and engagement throughout the development of this strategy, including the Gender Equality Advisory Committee. It is through these insights and expertise that this strategy will be able to meaningfully contribute to reversing unequal outcomes in sporting facility access across our communities.





**Imagine a world where everyone receives equal encouragement, opportunity, access, support and reward.**

**Free of bias.  
Free of stereotypes.  
Free of limitations.  
A world where everyone has the chance to realise their sporting dreams.**

**It's time to  
Change Our Game.**

## Introduction

**Sport and active recreation is a fundamental part of the lives of many Victorians, and of many Victorian communities.**

Community sport and recreation infrastructure shapes our towns, suburbs and cities, with the energy and excitement of people and teams filling fields, courts, ovals, pitches and so much more all year round, come rain, hail or shine.

But when our entire community does not benefit from this infrastructure in an equitable manner, this important pillar of our health, our culture and our identities as Victorians and Australians is contributing to unequal outcomes in sport and active recreation, and a wider culture of gender inequality in our communities.

Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020 (the Act) requires the Victorian public sector, local governments and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality.

As Defined Entities under the Act, local governments and other public land management groups are also required to consider and promote gender equality, including undertaking gender impact assessments, on policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant public impact.

Policies, programs and services that relate to community sport and active recreation are an example of where this lens should be applied.

For some local governments and other public land management groups, this work is already well advanced and, in some cases, pre-dates the Act.

For others, this journey is just beginning – and that is where the Fair Access Policy Roadmap comes in.

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**The Fair Access Policy Roadmap will advance gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure stretching to every corner of Victoria.**

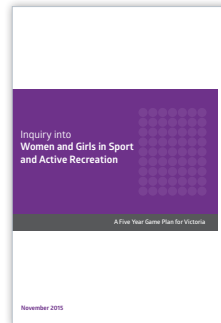
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With support from Australia's first Office for Women in Sport and Recreation and other key organisations, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap will provide local governments and other public land management groups with the education and support required to not only fulfil the requirements of the Act as it applies to community sport, but to also create locally relevant policies and measures to advance gender equitable access and use of community sporting facilities.

When brought to life in partnership with Victoria's leading sport and active recreation sector, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap will advance a level playing field that will result in greater health outcomes for all Victorians, a stronger sports sector, and fairer distribution of public asset use.



The Fair Access Policy Roadmap addresses Recommendation 6 from the Victorian Government's Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation. This Inquiry was instrumental in the formation of Australia's first Office for Women in Sport and Recreation and the Change Our Game initiative.



### Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation (2015)

*"Recommendation 6: Deliver female friendly built environments and equitable facility usage policies*

*To achieve the equitable provision of, and access to, high quality female friendly sport and active recreation facilities, which will support existing and new participation opportunities, state and local government, as well as the sector must work together ...*

*...Encourage facility owners and managers to review access and usage policies to ensure females have a fair share of access to the highest quality facilities at the 'best' and most popular times. Usage policies need to consider not just competition time, but training times, and the distribution between traditional competition and other participation opportunities, as well as different sports*

*...there are already a number of local government authorities (the primary owners of community sport and active recreation facilities) that are already active in developing policies, strategies, and audit tools to address access and use. Facilitating a universal adoption of these practices will drive change further."*

### Who is this resource for?

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap has been developed in partnership with local governments, the state sport and active recreation sector and other key stakeholders to improve gender equitable access and use of publicly owned community sports infrastructure across Victoria.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap has primarily been written for:

- sport, recreation, and relevant facility management staff within local and state government
- local government staff responsible for obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020
- community sport staff within sport and recreation bodies
- regional sport assemblies
- public land management groups overseeing publicly owned community sports infrastructure

Some local governments and other public land management groups are already well advanced when it comes to gender equality policies and practices in sport and active recreation. For others, this is the start of their journey – and it is this group that will benefit most from the Fair Access Policy Roadmap.

Critically, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap is not a 'one size fits all' approach. It is built on an appreciation that each local government, public land management group or sport and recreation organisation is best placed to understand its own opportunities and challenges to improve gender equitable access and use policies and practices.

What will be a critical challenge in one sport, may be irrelevant for the next.

What is the biggest opportunity in one local government area, may be inconsequential for the next.

And that's ok.



**For any organisation seeking support to fulfil these requirements, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap outlines the key steps on this journey.**

For those seeking support or, potentially, in need of the encouragement to act – the Fair Access Policy Roadmap sets out a three phase, three-year plan based on:



**Phase 1: Education**



**Phase 2: Readiness**



**Phase 3: Progress**

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap will provide local government, public land management groups and sporting organisations with the flexibility to use information, guidance and templates as needed, taking into account any existing policies, strategies and consideration of other local nuances.

For those organisations seeking more in-depth support on the journey ahead, three pieces of the puzzle that may assist with planning and implementation are now available:

- The **Fair Access Principles**: Six principles, developed in consultation with stakeholders, to help guide organisations seeking further support on how to approach developing a gender equitable access and use policy and action plan. These principles will form a consistent theme in the Education Phase of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap;
- The **Fair Access Policy Template**: A gender equitable access and use policy template can be used by any local government organisation or other public land management group; and
- The **Fair Access Action Plan Template**: A tool to assist any local government organisation or other public land management group to record specific, measurable and timely goals in line with each of the Fair Access Principles.



## The Fair Access Targets

The following milestones and targets will apply as we collectively work towards creating a foundation of gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure across Victoria.

From  
1 July  
2024

Victorian Government funding criteria for community sport infrastructure to require gender equitable access and use policies (or equivalent) to be in place.

By  
1 October  
2024

All local governments in Victoria have gender equitable access and use policies (or equivalent) in place for community sports infrastructure.

By  
1 July  
2027

More women and girls report equitable access to community sports infrastructure and improved experiences participating in community sport.

# The Fair Access Policy Roadmap

To achieve state-wide progress to dismantle the barriers around gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure, a change process is required.

Change takes time.

Change takes knowledge.

Change requires understanding.

Change benefits from accountability.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap links the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020 with steps shaped by extensive consultation to support local governments, other public land management groups and sport and recreation bodies to work together to progress gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure across Victoria through both procedural and cultural levers for change.

## Local governments and other public land management groups

## Sport and recreation organisations

## Office for Women in Sport and Recreation



### Phase 1. Education August 2022 – 2023

- Participate in education and community of practice initiatives
- Commence review of current sport and recreation strategies and policies in place
- Undertake Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) on community sports infrastructure access and use policies and/or processes



### Phase 2. Readiness 2023 – 30 June 2024

- As required by the Gender Equality Act 2020, submit first Progress Report by 31 October 2023 that includes any GIAs undertaken on community sports infrastructure access and use policies and/or processes
- If not already in place, develop and adopt a locally relevant gender equitable access and use policy and action plan



### Phase 3. Progress 1 July 2024 onwards

- Progress locally relevant gender equitable access and use policies and action plans
- Support a review of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap
- Accessing Victorian Government community sport infrastructure funding programs will require evidence of gender equitable access and use policies and action plans being in place and advancing from 1 July 2024
- As required by the Gender Equality Act 2020, submit second Progress Report that includes GIAs undertaken

- Participate in education and community of practice initiatives
- Raise awareness of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap and its targets with clubs, leagues and associations

- Review processes and/or policies of clubs, associations and leagues that may impact gender equitable access and usage of community sports infrastructure in your sport
- Commence education of clubs, associations and leagues to advance gender equitable access and usage of community sports infrastructure

- Support a review of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap
- Clubs, leagues and associations seeking to access Victorian Government community sport infrastructure funding programs will be asked to demonstrate how it is supporting the gender equitable access and use policy of the relevant local government authority from 1 October 2024

- Provide education seminars, including how to undertake Gender Impact Assessments
- Facilitate community of practice initiatives

- Support the development and implementation of locally relevant gender equitable access and use policies and action plans
- Continue education seminars and community of practice initiatives
- Monitor and report on gender equitable access and use status across Victoria

- Embed into the eligibility criteria of Victorian Government community sports infrastructure funding programs the requirement of gender equitable access and use policies
- Lead the review of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap
- Lead the ongoing monitoring and reporting of gender equitable access and use outcomes across Victoria

# The Fair Access Principles

In developing the Fair Access Policy Roadmap, two themes became clear:

- while some local governments are well advanced on their journey and implementing gender equitable access and use policies and programs, other organisations are at the start of their journey; and
- there are differences in the scale of resources, including people, that are available to bring gender equitable access and use policies and programs to life across different local government organisations, particularly when considering smaller rural and regional councils.

With this front of mind, six Fair Access Principles have been developed to guide local governments and other public land management groups seeking more in-depth support throughout this journey.

These six principles provide clear and defined lanes for any organisation to build a gender equitable access and use policy, that is supported by a Fair Access Policy Template and Fair Access Action Plan Template that are now available.

The principles reflect that there are both cultural and administrative elements that will drive the strongest, most sustained outcomes, as well as the opportunity to magnify and incentivise change by engaging community sporting clubs in your region directly with this process.

These principles are also relevant for sporting organisations seeking support to understand where opportunities and challenges may present themselves.

It is not compulsory for local governments and other public land management groups to adopt the six Fair Access Principles in order to comply with the Act, or to complete the Fair Access Policy Roadmap. Reasons for not adopting the Fair Access Principles may include that your organisation has existing adequate gender equitable access and use policies, or simply that your organisation has identified an alternative path that is a stronger fit for your community.

That's ok.

But for the local governments and other public land management groups who are seeking guidance, the following Fair Access Principles can be adopted to achieve gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure:





## Case studies: The Fair Access Principles in practice

**Lacrosse Victoria** implemented a flexible uniform policy, that recognises in circumstances where someone's religious or cultural beliefs, or gender identity conflicts with Lacrosse Victoria's standard dress code, that modifications will be accommodated where possible.

Lacrosse clubs are encouraged to offer flexibility in uniforms to encourage the participation of women, girls, trans and gender diverse people. Players are able to freely choose the most appropriate uniform in line with their affirmed gender and beliefs.

Lacrosse is one of a growing number of sports promoting flexible uniform policies, in line with [Victoria University's Change Our Game-backed research](#) that demonstrated the benefit of flexible sport uniform policies to help retain participants and increase the confidence of girls playing sport.

**Principles:** 1 2 3 4 5 6

### Key Takeaway

Flexible policies and strategies that listen to what women and girls prefer will help break down barriers to participation

**Barwon Soccer Club** has even more room to grow thanks to the completion of an additional gender-neutral changeroom at their home ground at Grovedale Recreation Reserve.

The City of Greater Geelong was successful in their application for funding from the Victorian Government to invest in two new gender-neutral changerooms, including closed-off and lockable showers and toilets, new access pathways, and new storage areas. The previous facilities had struggled to meet the demand of its growing women and girls' program.

The safer and more inclusive infrastructure will significantly improve the training and playing experience for women and girls playing soccer not only for the Club, but for other players in the region too.

**Principles:** 1 2 3 4 5 6

### Key Takeaway

Welcoming and inclusive environments include physical spaces – and funding opportunities are available

**Frankston City Council** is committed to gender equity. As part of this commitment, the Council's Recreation team works closely with community sporting clubs to educate and mentor clubs to become more gender inclusive.

This education has included the Council releasing a [Gender Inclusive Sporting Club Self-Assessment Tool](#) as part of its Active Leisure Strategy 2021-2029, to support clubs to self-identify their current performance relative to a scoring system, and opportunities for improvement.

**Principles:** 1 2 3 4 5 6

### Key Takeaway

Self-assessment tools and other templates are a great way to support driving change at scale

**The Stawell Gift** is Australia's oldest and richest professional footrace, having been held in all but four years since 1878 and is the centrepiece of a three-day Easter weekend annual carnival in regional Victoria.

In 1989, a Women's Gift race was introduced, but was delivered with less promotion, prizemoney and status as compared to the (men's) Stawell Gift.

In recent years, the Stawell Athletic Club has made significant progress towards gender equality, including equal prize money for both events and honouring past winners of the Women's Gift with commemorative plaques, like those provided to men, along Stawell's Main Street.

A further important step occurred in 2022 when, for the first time, the finalists in the Women's Gift had their names displayed on the historic Central Park scoreboard in the same manner as the men's finalists – something that had not occurred before, removing a further symbolic inequity by presenting the men and women athletes with equal prominence.

**Principles:** 1 2 3 4 5 6

### Key Takeaway

Consider if your language and symbols may present opportunities to advance gender equality

**Hockey Victoria's Gender Equity and Diversity Strategy** was designed to create an inclusive and gender equitable hockey community, where all genders are treated with respect and have equal opportunities, decision making power and responsibilities. An important aim of the strategy is the implementation of gender balance in all areas of the sport, and good governance principles.

The strategy outlines not only a requirement for a minimum of 40% women's representation at the Hockey Victoria board and board sub-committee level, but for equal (50%) appointments in coaching and officiating. The profile of men and women as participants of the sport is also promoted equally. All social media content, videos, annual reports are carefully analysed to ensure equal representation.

This includes club governance structures requiring a minimum of two male and two female officer bearers, as well as coaching and umpiring gender measures.

This process has helped Hockey Victoria to collect baseline data on which clubs have 40% or more women directors, allowing the identification of clubs that may require more support to achieve the gender balance standard by 2025.

Hockey Victoria also implemented an equal scheduling policy for community clubs, where men's and women's teams are given equal share of preferred match starting times and training times.

**Principles:** 1 2 3 4 5 6

### Key Takeaway

State sport and recreation bodies can drive rapid and substantial progress in gender equality in community sport

**Fairpark Football Club** set out to review its match scheduling, and test the assumption that women wanted to play 'under lights' at timeslots that followed on from men's games.

The Club consulted with members to better understand the preferences of women and girls and found that the night scheduling would actually have a negative impact on the women's game, and on volunteers. The late time slot turned many women off playing due to clashes with family and social commitments, and was generally seen as less appealing. The consultation resulted in women's games moving to a Saturday morning timeslot – a time that better suited players, spectators, and officials.

This positive action has enabled women volunteering for the club to play without being forced to forego their other club volunteer roles. The change has increased spectator numbers and has now been recommended by the Club's league as the preferred time for women's matches.

#### Key Takeaway

Ask women and girls what works best for them – don't assume

Principles: 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Greater Shepparton City Council** wanted to find a way to provide opportunities for women and girls to keep moving forward at every level in sport without financial barriers.

Following internal conversations and a review of what other organisations were offering, club support officers introduced a new category to its Our Sporting Future Funding Program, which provides funding between \$500 and \$10,000 for women and girls to take part in relevant leadership and development programs.

Successful candidates included three women who have undertaken accreditation training to further their skills as swimming coaches. The Council continues to follow news articles related to gender equity in sport and keeps an eye out for more ways they can help women and girls reach their potential, without worrying about the cost.

#### Key Takeaway

Adjusting existing programs may be a way to make significant inroads

Principles: 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Representation on Boards** In a world-first, Victorian state sport and recreation bodies have been required to have at least 40% women board directors to be eligible to receive certain funding from Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth since 1 July 2019.

This level of representation is based on the leading '40/40/20' model of representation, which means that a board or committee has at least 40% representation of men and women, with the remaining up to 20% flexible to accommodate both the management of resignations and appointments as well as the inclusion of gender diverse people.

The introduction of this quota, supported by education seminars over an extended period leading up to the effective date, resulted in significant change, with the number of organisations with at least 40% women directors more than doubling between 2017 and 2019, demonstrating that many highly qualified women are interested in sport leadership roles when historic cultural and procedural barriers are overcome.

#### Key Takeaway

Linking targets to funding is an effective way to drive change for women's representation in leadership – with the 40/40/20 model a leading example

Principles: 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Brimbank City Council's Sports Club User Guide** outlines lease and license discount assistance for junior and female participation to incentivise greater focus on increasing participation of women and girls in community sport.

The Council currently offers the following discount opportunities for community clubs:

- Clubs with a junior team or female team in the previous season receive a 10% lease and/or license discount
- Clubs with one junior and one female team in the previous season receive a 20% lease and/or license discount
- Clubs with two or more junior teams and two or more female teams in the previous season receive a 30% lease and/or license discount.

#### Key Takeaway

Incentives can be an appealing way to inspire action

Principles: 1 2 3 4 5 6

In 2021, **Bass Coast Shire** became the first council in Victoria to require professional sporting bodies holding events in Council owned or managed land and facilities to award equal prize money to men and women.

The first event under this new requirement was the AMX Motocross Open held in Wonthaggi in 2021, with its \$20,000 prize money – one of the largest purses in motocross in Australia – split equally between the winners of the men's and women's competitions.

It was the first time that equal prize money had been awarded in motocross in Australia – and believed to be a first globally as well.

#### Key Takeaway

Local governments have many levers to influence and accelerate change towards gender equality in sport – including in pay equality

Principles: 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Moreland City Council's** Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy was amended in 2009 to state that:

"Council facilities will only be given to clubs with junior sides and that have girls or women participating in either competitive and/or non-competitive physical activities."

The policy was amended further in 2016 to require clubs to register at least one full female team/side in a registered competition, with this requirement to be met no later than three seasons from that point.

#### Key Takeaway

Access to public owned community sports facilities should benefit the whole community

Principles: 1 2 3 4 5 6



## Frequently asked questions

### What's going on?

The Victorian Government is taking steps to ensure a future where there is a level playing field for women and girls in sport and active recreation, so they can fully participate in and enjoy the benefits of community sport right through to senior leadership roles.

Home of Australia's first Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap will support a foundation of gender equitable access and use policies and action plans for publicly owned community sports infrastructure.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap will be relevant to local governments in Victoria, as well as other public land management groups, including, Alpine Resort Boards and Committees of Management.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap is also relevant for sport and recreation organisations in Victoria.

### What is the connection between the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and the *Fair Access Policy Roadmap*?

The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires the Victorian public sector, local councils, and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality. It also requires these organisations to consider and promote gender equality in their policies, programs, and services, and to conduct Gender Impact Assessments on policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public.

Policies, programs and services that relate to community sport and recreation are considered to have a direct and significant impact on the public. As such, local governments are required under the Act to complete Gender Impact Assessments and to consider and promote gender equality in these community sport policies, programs and services.

This is where the Fair Access Policy Roadmap comes in.

For any organisation seeking support to fulfil these requirements, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap outlines the key steps on this journey and the guidance that will be provided by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation.

### Why do we need to undertake gender impact assessments?

A requirement of the Act is to undertake gender impact assessments on all policies, programs, and services, including those up for review which directly and significantly impact the public.

Policies, programs and services that relate to the access and usage of community sports infrastructure is an example of this. This means local councils are required, under the Act, to complete Gender Impact Assessments on any policies currently in place.

## Why do we need a gender equitable access and use policy?

Equality is not negotiable in Victoria. Sport and active recreation provide fundamental opportunities for enriching our communities, and these opportunities must be available on an equal basis to all members of our community.

Unfortunately, at the moment that is not always the case. And that needs to change.

Gender equitable access and use policies and processes will be a key driver for procedural and cultural change to ensure the full benefits of sport and recreation are available to all. In fact, removing key barriers to the participation of women and girls in sport and active recreation is arguably the single biggest growth opportunity for this sector.

In addition, with sport and active recreation being one of our most visible sectors, advancing gender equality here is a key lever to driving gender equality more broadly in our society.

## What if my organisation already has a gender equity policy?

That's fantastic news!

Many local councils have organisational gender equity or equality policies. These often relate to internal processes and practices. If your current gender equity policy does not directly or indirectly factor in gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure, it sounds like the Fair Access Policy Roadmap may support you to fulfil your requirements under the Gender Equality Act 2020.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap aims to build capacity and capability in local government and other public land management groups regarding the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery of services in relation to community sports infrastructure.

If your current policy does consider community sports infrastructure, we encourage you to simply review the Fair Access Policy to consider any opportunities to strengthen your current approach. Participation in the education seminars as part of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap may also support you to complete gender impact assessments on your community sport policies, programs and services, which will be required under the Act.

## Does my organisation need to have a standalone gender equitable access and use policy?

Not necessarily.

In consultation with local governments, it became clear that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to how councils structure their policies and strategies. For your organisation, it may make more sense for your approach to advancing gender equitable access and use of publicly owned community sports infrastructure in your region to live within other policies or strategy, such as your Sport and Recreation Strategy or your Council's Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

And that's ok.

## How long is the Fair Access Policy Roadmap?

Commencing in August 2022, the Fair Access Policy Roadmap is a three-year phased approach to support 100% of local governments in Victoria to have gender equitable access and use policies (or equivalent) in place for community sports infrastructure by October 2024.

Importantly, from 1 July 2024, the eligibility criteria of Victorian Government programs supporting the funding of community sports infrastructure will require gender equitable access and use policies to be in place.

## Will support be available?

Yes.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap has been developed in consultation with many local government, sport and recreation and other stakeholders. Throughout the consultation, there has been a clear theme that organisations early in their journey as well as those with fewer resources will need greater support.

The Office for Women in Sport and Recreation will lead the education and other support that will be provided throughout the Fair Access Policy Roadmap, in partnership with Sport and Recreation Victoria, VicHealth and other select organisations.

In addition, three key resources are now available:

- **The Fair Access Principles:** Six principles, developed in consultation with local government and the sport and active recreation sector, on which any organisation seeking additional guidance can form a foundation of a gender equitable access and use policy and action plan. These principles will form a consistent theme in the education phase of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap;
- **The Fair Access Policy Template:** A gender equitable access and use policy template able to be used by any local government organisation; and
- **The Fair Access Action Plan Template:** A tool to assist any local government and to identify and articulate specific, measurable and timely goals, in line with each of the principles.

## Who can I contact for more information?

The Office for Women in Sport and Recreation is here to support you and your organisation to progress gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure in your area. For more information, please contact [FairAccess@sport.vic.gov.au](mailto:FairAccess@sport.vic.gov.au)





## Key terms

**Committees of Management** for the purpose of this document, refers to committees appointed by the Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 to manage recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held.

**Community Sports Infrastructure** refers to publicly owned local, rural, regional, or state level sport and recreation infrastructure operated and maintained primarily for the purpose of facilitating community sport activities, including sporting grounds, surfaces, facilities, and pavilions.

**Gender** refers to how you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a mix of these or neither. A person's gender and their expression of their gender can be shown in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.

**Gender Equality** focuses on the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that everyone will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.

**Gender Equity** is the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances.

**Gender Impact Assessment**, or **GIA**, is a requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020 to be carried out on policies, programs and services which have a direct and significant impact on the public. The assessment must evaluate the effects that a policy, program or service may have on people of different genders.

**Public land management groups** for the purpose of this document, are the Committees of Management appointed under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and responsible for the management of recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held.

### Helpful links

- [About the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, the \*Change Our Game\* initiative and the \*Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation\* \(2015\)](#)
- [About the Gender Equality Act 2020](#)
- [Fair Play Code](#)
- [Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women, including a Gender Audit Tool Template \(p. 61\) \(Sport and Recreation Victoria\)](#)
- [Quick Wins for Sporting Clubs Template \(VicHealth\)](#)
- [13 Steps to Tackle Gender Resistance \(VicHealth\)](#)
- [Effects of Sport Uniform Policy Changes to Girls and Women \(Victoria University\)](#)
- [Key terms and Definitions from Pride in our Future - Victoria's LGBTIQ+ 2022-32 Strategy](#)





# Fair Access Policy Fact Sheet

*Swan Hill Rural City Council is committed to building a better municipality, for all.*

*This information sheet is designed to inform our community and community groups about the Fair Access Policy, why we have it and what it means for sporting clubs and future funding.*

## What is the Fair Access Roadmap?

The Victorian Government have introduced a Fair Access Policy Roadmap, which seeks to address known barriers experienced by women and girls in accessing and using community sports infrastructure. The Roadmap acts as an implementation guide for councils, land management groups, and sport and recreation organisations, to work together to progress gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap and further details can be found on the Change Our Game website:

<https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/leadership-centre/fair-access>

## Council's Fair Access Policy

Swan Hill Rural City Council is required to develop and adopt a Fair Access Policy prior to October 2024, to be eligible for Victorian Government Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Funding. The policy aims to address and remove the known gender barriers around accessing and using community sports infrastructure. The Draft Policy details Council's requirements, roles, responsibilities, and expectations to encourage a level playing field in sport and active recreation, so that all people can fully participate in and enjoy the benefits of community sport, from early participation right through to leadership roles. To support the Draft Policy, Council has also developed a Draft Action Plan to outline what steps and strategies Council will take to support the inclusion of women, girls, and diverse groups in accessing and using community sports infrastructure.

## What does this mean for local sporting clubs?

The implementation of the Fair Access Policy will see Council consider and prioritise gender equality in all current and future Swan Hill Rural City Council's planning, policy, service delivery and practice as they relate to community sports infrastructure. Council staff will complete a Gender Impact Assessment on all current community sports infrastructure assets and use policies and processes, to consider opportunities to strengthen gender equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Fair Access Principles. These are:

- Inclusivity
- Full participation
- Equal representation
- Equitable access
- Encouraging and supporting user groups and;
- Prioritising user groups committed to equality.



Swan Hill Rural City Council  
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## Who does this apply to?

Individual Committees are not required to create their own policy, however it's recommended that Committees of Management adopt their council's policy, which is required for councils to remain eligible for community sports infrastructure funding from the Victorian Government.

Council further supports the adoption of this policy by sporting clubs operating or managing facilities owned by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DECCA).

## What happens next?

The Draft Policy is now available on Council's website at *Lets Talk*. Feedback on the Draft Policy is being sought by Council from community sporting clubs.

The community engagement period for the Draft Policy is open until Sunday 4 August 2024. Feedback will be considered, with the Policy (and any necessary alterations) being adopted by Council on Tuesday 20 August 2024.

Once adopted, Committees of Management are encouraged to adopt/endorse Council's Fair Access Policy at a Committee Meeting at their earliest convenience as a statement of intent to support fair access to sporting infrastructure for all.

Council is required to submit evidence of progress towards gender equity and fair access in future sport and recreation funding applications from 1 July 2024. The Sporting Club's Committee adoption of Council's Fair Access Policy is one action that can assist this process.

Council's Development Officer—Sport & Recreation Grant Jones, and Community Development Coordinator Dione Heppell, are available to share information with Committees who wish to familiarise themselves with the Fair Access Policy in detail.

## Important Dates

**Draft Policy Open for Feedback:** From Monday, 15 July 2024

**Council Adoption of Policy:** Tuesday, 20 August 2024

Let's talk

Jul 17, 2024 - Jul 27, 2024

**Project:** Fair Access Policy

**Tool Type:** Form

**Activity ID:** 177

**Exported:** Aug 05, 2024, 09:23 AM

**Exported By:**

Response No:  
1

Contribution ID: 4671  
Member ID: 200  
Date Submitted: Jul 27, 2024, 07:42 AM

Q1  
Short Text

Q2  
Email

Q3  
Short Text

Q4  
Long Text

Name

Email address

Postal address

Tell us your thoughts in relation to the Draft Fair Access Policy

Meanwhile aboriginal people are left on the outer due to no fault of their own nor of the broader community and here you are rubbishing on about womans access to facilities. Have you not noticed woman have played an important part in every aspect of sporting endeavours in Swan Hill for decades! Honestly get a grip! This Policy is a total waste of money time and effort.



Response No:  
2

Contribution ID: 4658  
Member ID:  
Date Submitted: Jul 24, 2024, 01:10 PM

Q1  
Short Text  
  
Q2  
Email  
  
Q3  
Short Text  
  
Q4  
Long Text

**Name**

**Email address**

**Postal address**

**Tell us your thoughts in relation to the Draft Fair Access Policy**

Whilst it is important to facilitate fair access for women and girls to community sports infrastructure, the draft policy will influence the future shape of sports infrastructure without a view to fair access for other members of our community.

The policy fails to consider other members of our community who may be under represented in their access to sports infrastructure. Where is the fair access to community members of minority groups of differing races, religions or abilities.

Response No:  
3

Contribution ID: 4636  
Member ID:  
Date Submitted: Jul 18, 2024, 08:11 AM

Q1

Short Text

Q2

Email

Q3

Short Text

Q4

Long Text

**Name**

**Email address**

**Postal address**

**Tell us your thoughts in relation to the Draft Fair Access Policy**

This looks like a fair & equitable initiative for all regarding the use of community sports infrastructure.  
well done!

Response No:  
4

Contribution ID: 4635  
Member ID:  
Date Submitted: Jul 17, 2024, 03:12 PM

Q1

Short Text

Q2

Email

Q3

Short Text

Q4

Long Text

**Name**

**Email address**

**Postal address**

**Tell us your thoughts in relation to the Draft Fair Access Policy**

The UFNC is in support Fair Access Policy in the draft form.

## 2.2 Plan for Victoria

**Directorate:** Development and Planning

**File Number:** .

**Purpose:** For Decision

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**1. Liveability** - We will be a healthy, connected and growing community supported by a range of infrastructure and services.

#### **1.1 A modern municipality: Vibrant, connected and resilient**

1.1.1 Attractive urban areas and regional townships

1.1.2 Ensure adequate provision of a variety of safe and secure housing

1.1.3 Excellent transport links to allow ease of movement

### Current Strategic Documents

Council Plan

### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

### Summary

This report provides Council with a draft submission to the State Government as part of its consultation process for Plan for Victoria. Submissions close on 30 August 2024.

### Discussion

Council has participated in numerous online sessions held by the government to discuss formulation of an updated Plan for Victoria.

Having regard to our strategic framework including our Council Plan, the recently adopted Swan Hill Region Economic Development Strategy, the Housing Action Plan and review of Robinvale's population we have formulated a draft submission for consideration and discussion.

### Consultation

The Let's Talk page has provided information via a link for our community to get involved in the consultation for the Plan for Victoria.

Council has taken part in a series of webinars held by the State government. Additionally, we have had the chance to review and provide feedback to a number of

peak bodies on submissions and issues they are making to this review. Council should support the views of the MAV (Municipal Association of Victoria) to ensure the Plan for Victoria recognises the different opportunities and constraints between metropolitan, regional and rural areas of Victoria and ensure any strategy is not metrocentric.

The Loddon Mallee group of Councils has also shared its submission which we have referenced.

Council has made various submissions this year to state and federal reviews, and these should be appended to Council's submission to provide greater detail on food security, sustainability of local government and migration.

### **Financial Implications**

Nil.

### **Social Implications**

The Plan for Victoria consultation provides Council with a significant opportunity to advocate on behalf of its community.

### **Economic Implications**

Nil.

### **Environmental Implications**

Nil.

### **Risk Management Implications**

Nil.

- Attachments:**
1. Plan for Victoria Submission [2.2.1 - 13 pages]
  2. Appendix 1 - SHRCC submission to Review of regional Migration Settings [2.2.2 - 12 pages]
  3. Appendix 2 SHRCC submission to Victorian Freight Strategy [2.2.3 - 8 pages]
  4. Appendix 3 - SHRCC submission to Food Security in Victoria [2.2.4 - 7 pages]

### **Options**

1. That Council endorse its submission to the Victorian government on the Plan for Victoria
2. That Council not make a submission to the Plan for Victoria

### **Recommendation/s**

**That Council adopt the submission to Plan for Victoria and submit it to the State Government.**



REF:

SB/DH

13 August 2024

The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP  
Minister for Planning  
1 Spring Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Dear Minister

**A NEW PLAN FOR VICTORIA – SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL  
SUBMISSION**

Swan Hill Rural City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian State Government on the development of a new plan for Victoria.

The Victorian State Government are to be commended for reviewing the current State Plan with a view to producing a State Plan that covers all parts of Victoria and is progressive and forward thinking in its outlook for the people of Victoria.

The wide-ranging consultation process that is being undertaken will deliver a variety of views, opinions, opportunities, and suggestions as to how Victoria can progress into the future and meet the challenges that lay ahead.

***Executive Summary***

The one size fits all solution will not work for the future prosperity of the State and the plan that is developed must provide relevant weighting to the metropolitan, regional and rural communities.

The development of the new State Plan comes at a time when there are significant challenges being faced by all levels of Government, and this only serves to highlight the need for Governments and the communities that they serve to work together to find solutions in order to progress our State.

Simply put, the new plan that is developed by the Government must be inclusive of all parts of the Victoria, leave no community behind and importantly recognise the differences that exist right across the State.

Key issues that need to be addressed to ensure the Swan Hill municipality and rural areas of Victoria continue to prosper are:

- Provision of roads and infrastructure that are fit for purpose and adapt to the changing demands placed on them to support growth of the State including the transition to renewable energy, mineral sands mining and ensuring support of getting agricultural produce to market. Continued and increased investment in our road and rail network is also crucial for the safety of our community.
- Recognition of the importance of rural Victoria in producing food and fibre for the Victorian, Australian and global markets. The municipality currently contributes an agricultural output of \$1.5 billion to the economy with just under 20% of our workforce participating in farming.
- The provision of housing in all its forms including key workers accommodation, social and affordable housing is considered by Council to be a top tier priority and as an organisation we have actively engaged with the community to determine solutions.
- Ensure liveability of rural Victoria is maintained and by prioritising support for our health services to ensure our community has access to a wide range of services with local access to a range of medical, care and preventative services for a region hosting approximately 40,000 people.
- Assisting our communities to be adaptable and agile to meet current and future needs including diversity of housing, minimising environmental risks, and opportunities of a changing climate. This could include allocating a greater proportion of funding towards climate resilience, for example ensuring royalties from mining and extractive industries are returned to areas from where they are collected.
- Acknowledging the strengths of cross border connections and servicing of communities and to invest in joint infrastructure such as bridges at Swan Hill and Tooleybuc.
- Seek alignment between strategic plans of all levels of government and service authorities to co-ordinate practical outcomes and remove obstacles to development.
- Work with the regions to review and update the growth plans, in our case the Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plan
- Council would be pleased to speak to its submission if such an opportunity is provided.

#### **SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL BACKGROUND:**

Swan Hill Rural City Council covers a vast expanse of land mass in north west Victoria (over 6,000 square kms) and has a population increasing toward 22,000 people, with Swan Hill as the largest population centre and smaller communities spread across the municipality.

In addition to the population base, the municipality has seen a large influx of seasonal workers firstly for up to four months of the year however the trend is now for all year round with estimates put at approximately 5,000 additional people in our community over the course of the year.

Based on forward estimates of potential employment that was created both in traditional and emerging industries such as renewable energy and mining, the population of the municipality is expected to grow by around 3,500 people in the next decade.

The municipality is located on the Murray River, with Swan Hill acting as a regional service centre for people on both sides of the river. This location also creates exceptional circumstances for governments and service providers in supporting not only the local community but those that are visiting the region for work, daily living activities or leisure.

According to REMPLAN's independent statistics, the municipality has around 10,500 jobs and seasonally sees this figure grow much higher, as the horticulture and agriculture industries seek workers to undertake the labour intensive work. Agriculture comprises of 20.33% of the total economic output valued at \$1.5 billion.

Manufacturing, mining, and renewable energy projects are set to have a significant impact on the municipality during the next phase of the State's Freight Plan.

The municipality's expected growth will see opportunities, however, there will be challenges around the freight, road and rail network that will need to be addressed if those opportunities are to be fully realised.

Our communities particularly Swan Hill and Robinvale are located on pivotal road network locations for industries wishing to access the ports of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide with traditional agriculture and horticulture industries needing a freight network that is fully operational to ensure that produce can reach capital cities or ports.

The emergence of new industries will only increase the need for a well maintained road and rail network within our region and municipality.

#### **A NEW PLAN FOR VICTORIA:**

It is noted that the Victorian Government intends to address the question of our First Nations People and their inclusion in the new State Plan separately.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would like to be actively involved in developing this component of the plan and looks forward to being provided the opportunity to do so at the appropriate time.

Swan Hill has a significant proportion of First Nations People living within its communities (4.5%) compared to the State average and is actively engaged with its First Nation Community through a variety of programs and engagement.

Council has established a First Nations Advisory Committee which works with Council on key projects and provides advice to Council on matters pertaining to our First Nations community.

The establishment of a Reconciliation Action Plan is a high priority with the Council's Strategic Plan and Council continues to work with our First Nations Community through events such as NAIDOC Week and the move to greater reconciliation around Australia Day Celebrations.

Through State and Federal Funding, Council is looking to introduce a First Nations Experience at the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement which will also lead to the creation of employment and business opportunities for our First Nations Community.

Council believe they are well placed to provide further suggestions and ideas on how the new plan for Victoria can benefit our First Nations Community.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would like to provide the information for the Victorian State Government to consider when developing the new plan for Victoria recognising that this is not an exhaustive list and there will no doubt be other factors that will need to be considered.

Getting the balance right for all of Victoria should be the key driving force behind the State Governments thinking.

#### **LODDON MALLEE REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN:**

The Loddon Mallee Regional Growth Plans were last updated in 2014 and therefore it is seen as a critical element for the success of the Plan for Victoria to prioritise and update this plan and with urgent attention could run alongside this plan for the State.

In order to develop a blueprint for the Loddon Mallee the regional plan has to be updated to reflect the growth over the past ten years and what future opportunities exist.

Whilst information gathered as a part of the new plan for Victoria from the Loddon Mallee Region will be important, a more detailed discussion is required and the Loddon Mallee Plans updated as a matter of urgency.

#### **POPULATION:**

It is recognised that population figures play an important role in the allocation of resources, particularly when deciding on funding of projects, therefore it is imperative that the population figures are accurate.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would contend that this is not the case with respect to the population figure for the municipality and have been advocating for a review of the accuracy of the ABS population figures being used.

As an example, Council believes that the population figure for Robinvale is underestimated by 5,550 people and it is clear that this would have an impact on decisions being made other levels of Government.

Accuracy in population figures is imperative in order to be aware the pressures on services and the demand for enhanced infrastructure is. Council would be happy to provide you with the Robinvale Population Determination Report 2019 prepared for it by Geografica.

Swan Hill Rural City Council suggests that the State Government ensure through the development of the plan that there is a process in place to ensure the accuracy of population data.

**CROSS BORDER SIGNIFICANCE:**

The new plan for Victoria must recognise that the cross border locations along the state borders of New South Wales and South Australia are impacted everyday by people from those States coming into Victoria to access services, the health sector, education, employment, business and visiting friends.

Swan Hill Rural City Council has communities at Robinvale, Nyah and Swan Hill where it is clearly evident that the crossing of the border everyday has an impact.

The number of people relying on a range of services is greatly increased with Swan Hill having a catchment area for approximately 40,000 people.

With the prospect of new large scale projects within the municipality and across in New South Wales, Robinvale and Swan Hill will be seen as a source for housing, work force and business support.

It is imperative that in the new plan for the State, the Government consider increasing its commitment to the cross border communities to meet the demand and pressures being experienced.

This could come in the form of special cross border grants, increased infrastructure spending or support for the introduction of additional services within our municipality.

**PLANNING:**

Strategic planning underpins land use decisions made by both Council and the government. The review of the planning framework to align with the Plan for Victoria must be appropriately resourced to ensure the system is fit to facilitate and achieve the desired outcomes.

The cost of administering the planning system is ever increasing and Council would benefit from a stronger partnership with the State to achieve land use outcomes that



provide a streamlined process for improving alignment between local and state objectives, and that the system is more agile in its application.

Objectives to protect agricultural land for food production, easily maintain a 15 year land supply for residential growth, and foster business and industrial growth and transition should be able to be achieved in a cost and time effective manner to support vibrant communities.

The current system is cumbersome, cost prohibitive and slow and this is a barrier to meeting the objectives being set through this Plan for Victoria implementation. This needs to be rectified to facilitate good planning outcomes for the community in a timely manner. There is a need for a dynamic and fast track system to have a turnaround approval time for strategic projects and planning scheme amendments of 12 months. It is acknowledged that a commitment to deliver and meet targets should apply equally between the State and Councils.

### **HOUSING:**

The issue of the provision of housing is by far one of the most important matters that all levels of Government and the community are addressing and it is an issue that shows no signs of being solved immediately.

There will be a considered effort required by all key stakeholders to determine a solution and the new State Plan must have housing as a high priority.

The provision of housing in all its forms including key workers accommodation, social and affordable housing is considered by Council to be a top tier priority and as an organisation we have actively engaged with the community to determine solutions.

Council notes the State Governments aspirations with respect to building 800,000 new homes across the State and the support that it is providing to achieve this goal.

The recent announcements with respect to the setting of housing targets for each council is seen as a starting point that requires additional consultation.

The targets nominate a figure for approvals to be achieved, in the case of Swan Hill Rural City Council it equates to 55 approvals per year over the designated period to achieve the nominated target of 1500.

This in fact would be a backwards step as Swan Hill Rural City Council currently issue approvals for 80 homes per year and therefore the State Government are encouraged to consider further the targets that have been set.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would contend that based on current trends and future opportunities the target required to make a significant difference would be approximately 3000 homes between 2025 and 2051.

The new plan for Victoria should recognise the need to improve planning processes and that both levels of Government should work together to achieve better strategic and statutory outcomes.

There is a need to address the critical workforce shortages in the building sector with the development of strategies to make it attractive for people to consider firstly a career in the construction industry and then secondly relocating to a regional or rural community to build homes.

Additional employment and training programs must be developed to increase the work force which also may include offering incentives to businesses to employ more trainees or apprentices whilst also offering people entering the industry incentives to consider employment across the state.

The infrastructure costs associated with housing construction are an impediment for many developers to proceed with a development and continues to be a real issue.

State Government support to offset these costs should be considered as a key strategy within the plan and also incentives to spread the housing construction right across the States.

The new plan should recognise the need to consider the development of further private/public partnerships as a way of constructing more homes. The recent Regional Workers Accommodation Fund demonstrated through the EOI's submitted a willingness of the private sector to work in partnership with State and Local Government.

The Federal Governments Housing Infrastructure Fund has the capacity to develop parcels of land for housing at a quicker pace due to providing assistance with much needed infrastructure costs.

These are examples that should be replicated and highlighted in the new plan for Victoria as an affirmative action that the State Government will be committed to.

It is also clear that the State Government has ownership of land that could be developed for housing with the land assets right across the State.

The State Government could further demonstrate its commitment to meeting housing targets by introducing a fast track process to realise the land and work in partnership with either Local Government or the private sector.

By not acting on the State Government owned land, communities are missing out on the prospect of additional land being made available in key locations for all forms of housing.

There is a need for an alignment for the provision of key infrastructure between all authorities to reduce barriers and encourage sustainable release of serviced land in order to expedite housing and land and remove blockages from systems.

A dedicated program relating to the Victorian State Governments Land Assets should feature in the new plan for Victoria.

**FOOD SECURITY:**

The new plan for Victoria should consider the findings of the recent Upper Parliamentary Committee into food security and incorporate actions into the document to ensure the long term of the agriculture and horticulture industry.

Swan Hill Rural City Council made a submission to the Parliamentary Committee and that submission is attached which outlines issues that should be considered and incorporated into the new State Plan.

Swan Hill Rural City Council and indeed large parts of the Loddon Mallee Region are a major contributor to the supply of food for the State, the Nation and indeed for export.

The protection of water rights within the north west Region is vital as the industry needs access to a reliable and affordable water source in order to grow food and expand opportunities for our farming community.

For water the discussion on reliability also needs to include viability of water, at a price which is viable for water to be used for agriculture. Irrigated agriculture is crucial for food security. It is important to ensure that any future water buy backs do not erode food production. This is necessary to ensure all Victorians have access to locally produced food at reasonable prices.

**FREIGHT NETWORK:**

The Government recently undertook a review of the States Freight Network and again Council made a submission on the review which highlighted the need for ongoing investment into infrastructure that will guarantee the State's supply chain.

For Council this means significant investment by the Government in roads, rail and key infrastructure such as the Swan Hill Bridge replacement to give the community confidence that access to ports will be guaranteed.

A copy of the Council's submission is attached for consideration and incorporation into the new State Plan.

**TRANSPORT:**

Ongoing investment by the State Government in all forms of transport is vital and with a focus on public transport and alternative vehicle types e.g. electric vehicles the State Government will be addressing the move to zero emission targets.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would support the upgrade of the rail network to velocity trains on the Swan Hill line as this would make travelling to Melbourne faster for our community and give more flexibility around travel times than currently exists.

This would certainly benefit all of communities across the municipality and enhance liveability.

There needs to be an increase in the funding for the upgrading of the road network across the State as the current conditions of some the roads is of a concern to Council and the community.

Without a plan that is reflective of the needs for an improved road network, there will be an ongoing concern for the safety of the travelling public and a threat to the freight network.

The Plan for Victoria needs to be versatile to allow for evolving technology to power our vehicles and it also needs to investigate use of low emission fuels for aviation industry. There is also a need for an improved freight network to secure benefits for the agricultural sector to get food to the market in a sustainable manner. State and local roads require significant improvement, and it is necessary to establish policy and funding to have a fit for purpose transport network.

#### **HEALTH SERVICES:**

Swan Hill Rural City Council would contend that its location is important in the State's ability to deliver health services not only to the communities of our municipality but to the surrounding region and indeed across the border.

Retaining hospital capability is of vital importance to our community. Currently not all health services are available in Swan Hill and Robinvale requiring people having to travel to either Mildura, Bendigo or Melbourne. This places added pressure on families due to having to take time off work or being away from families.

Rural health services are already struggling due to recruitment issues, leading to shortages in GPs, nurses, midwives and key specialist services in rural areas.

The proposed changes would be of even greater impact in this region as it may lead to greater distances people need to travel for care. It is important we highlight our unique situation geographically in the north west of Victoria with our wide catchment of approximately thirty thousand people, including into South West NSW.

If the intent of the new plan for Victoria is in part about choice and liveability for our population then being able to access health services locally is a key factor when people consider moving to an area.

Council recognises it has a positive, proactive community who value its health services and hospital and regularly contribute top fundraising efforts to support the hospital.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE:**

In order to achieve a plan that is for all of Victoria, the State Government must commit to providing support and assistance for infrastructure required to build more homes, upgrade roads, bridges, sewerage, drainage, water, footpaths and community facilities to enhance liveability.

Costs associated with these types of infrastructure are proving to be prohibitive to allow for key projects to proceed. The Government through its new Plan for Victoria should outline how it will commit to working in partnership with other levels of Government, statutory authorities and service agencies to provide financial support and resources to progress projects. Currently there is a lack of alignment between these authorities on service delivery which inhibits timely and economic investment in reticulated services.

## **WORKFORCE – SEASONAL WORKERS – MIGRATION TARGETS**

A key to the future prosperity of the State that should be reflected in the new plan is addressing the issues around work force development and ensuring that there are people available to take up employment in existing and future industries.

Swan Hill Rural City Council believes that it is on the cusp of an employment boom as the traditional industries continue to expand and there is the prospect of new industries emerging.

Our municipality already is a key destination for seasonal workers and PALM Scheme workers and there is a growing trend for migrants to settle within our communities.

People are moving to our region to take up jobs, but they need support as do the communities that welcomes them.

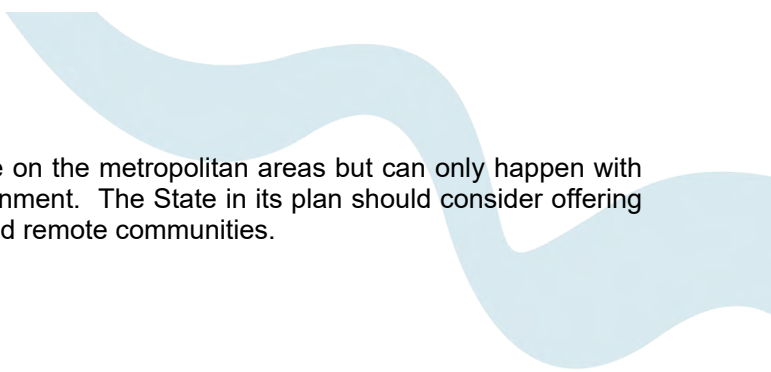
Access to housing, health services, transport, and education are just some of the issues that need addressing and there needs to be solutions because without the additional numbers in the workforce, our Council will miss opportunities around business and employment growth.

The Plan for Victoria should develop a coordinated approach to workforce development and seasonal workers that evenly supports all of the regions across the State who require access to workers and provides a support plan.

Council's and communities cannot carry the burden alone and need the support of State and Federal Governments. Quicker pathways should be provided for visas for farm workers, to support the agricultural sector.

If the balance is achieved and issues addressed there is an opportunity for the State Government to support population growth in some of the smaller rural and remote communities by offering a choice to people as a result of taking up employment outside of metropolitan Melbourne.





This will in part relieve pressure on the metropolitan areas but can only happen with appropriate support from Government. The State in its plan should consider offering incentives to relocate to rural and remote communities.

### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES:**

New industries within the renewable energy sector and mining are emerging for the municipality indeed on both sides of the Victorian and New South Wales Border.

The rising costs in the energy sector has significant impact on food processing and Council can see an alignment between energy and value adding to agriculture. Some of the power produced locally should support business growth and innovation. These new industries present both opportunity and challenges, however there is an opportunity for the Victorian State Government to invest in the region by facilitating the return of royalties generated from these new projects back into our municipality to support development of workforce demands such as housing, transport infrastructure, health services and community facilities.

Council strongly recommends the government investigate and prioritise control of minerals being extracted from the region to secure Victoria's future, rather than end up paying premiums to use the minerals as has occurred in the gas industry.

### **CONCLUSION:**

There is no doubt that Victoria needs a new plan as the current document is out of date.

Whilst the Swan Hill Rural City Council recognises as outlined in the consultation documentation that the weight of population numbers will always have an advantage for metropolitan Melbourne (expected to grow to 8 million people), the Government must recognise the important contributions being made by rural Victoria.

In drafting a new plan Council strongly recommends it must recognise the need to achieve a balance between metropolitan, regional and rural areas, with a stated aim of ensuring all Victorians are able to take advantage of future growth and prosperity.

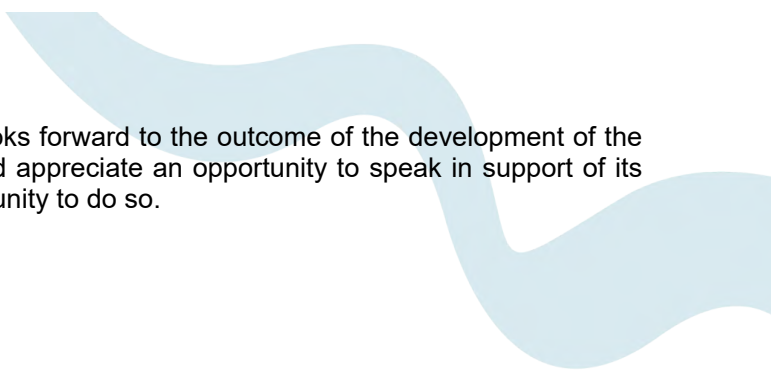
There should be a willingness to explore new thinking around partnerships between Government and the private sector to ensure projects proceed.

Unlocking Victoria's potential by enhancing planning processes or by offering up underutilised State Government land should be seen as a priority.

Ensuring that the new plan for the State has a level of flexibility contained in it will allow for the Government to be more agile when approaching new opportunities.

Swan Hill Rural City Council is committed on behalf of its communities to work with the Government to achieve positive outcomes and have projects proceed.

A new plan for Victoria should be a blueprint for how the whole of the State realises its potential, visionary in its thinking and committed to the delivery of results.



Swan Hill Rural City Council looks forward to the outcome of the development of the new Plan for Victoria and would appreciate an opportunity to speak in support of its submission if there is an opportunity to do so.

Yours sincerely

Stuart King  
**Mayor**

REF: SB/DH

21<sup>st</sup> July 2024

The Hon Claire O'Neil MP  
Minister for Home Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Minister

**RE: REVIEW OF REGIONAL MIGRATION SETTINGS- SUPPORTING STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE REGIONS SUBMISSION – SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL**

Swan Hill Rural City Council welcomes the opportunity provided by the Federal Government to make a submission on the Review of Regional Migration Settings Supporting Strong and Sustainable Regions. Council believes that it is extremely important that there is comprehensive plan in place to address the issues currently being faced by migrants and visa holders.

Importantly it is imperative the Federal Government develops and implements strategies to overcome historical problems in order that our Nation continues to prosper as a result of in part our migration programs.

There is a need to ensure that the right level of support is provided for migrants and visa holders when they immerse themselves within Regional Communities and that the local community also is supported with access to services to ensure that the outcomes for all are positive.

The complexities around the various visa categories and the time taken to process applications needs to be addressed as currently it takes an extended period of time to do so, which adds to the anxiety of all involved with the system.

Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges that there are other pressures that the Federal Government must consider in the migration discussion, such as housing shortfalls, however there is a need for an ongoing migration system that ensures that the opportunities in regional locations are fully explored due to the availability of a workforce supplemented by migration.

Council has reviewed the discussion paper relevant to the Review of Regional Migration Settings and makes it submission in the context of both the principles outlined in the document and what it perceives to be required to ensure that the systems put in place are workable.

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Email: [council@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@swanhill.vic.gov.au)  
ABN 97435620016

The Federal Government is to be commended for having the following principals guiding the review:

- Raising the living standards of communities and those people through the migration system that wish to make a regional setting their home.
- A fair go for all with a particular focus on avoiding exploitation of migrant workers and visa holders.
- Making our communities stronger.
- Strengthening Australia's International Standing and Relationships.
- Making the Migration System work better through efforts to reduce the complexities of the current arrangements

Swan Hill Rural City Council is fully supportive of these principals.

**SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL BACKGROUND:**

Swan Hill Rural City Council covers a vast expanse of land mass in Northwest Victoria (over 6,000 square kms) and has a population of over 21,000 people with Swan Hill the largest population centre with smaller communities spread across the Municipality.

The Municipality is located on the Murray River with Swan Hill acting as a large Regional Centre for people on both sides of the River which also creates special circumstances for Governments and Service providers in supporting not only the local community but those that are visiting the region for work or leisure.

Swan Hill Rural City Council is located in a pivotal location when accessing Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide however the distances from the major capital centres also presents challenges when attracting migrants to resettle in our region.

The Municipality has over 10,500 jobs and seasonally sees this figure grow much higher as the horticulture and agriculture industries, which comprises over 20% of the output (\$3.1 Billion total output) seek workers to undertake the labour intensive work.

As an example the official census data for the township of Robinvale is put at approximately 3,500 people however it is more likely to be in the vicinity of 8,500 people due to the need for migrant seasonal workers noting that this figure is likely to be all year round rather than seasonal.

It is estimated that at the height of the seasonal work there is as many 6,000 temporary workers within the region, which covers the Swan Hill Rural City Council Municipality, and this figure is likely to grow with the continued expansion of the traditional industries, value adding associated with agriculture and horticulture together with the emergence of new industries on both sides of the Murray River, in particular mining.



It is likely that the region will require upwards of 25,000 temporary migrants or workers to meet the growing demand and this will occur quickly.

The Municipality is also in desperate need of skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers in a variety of industries ranging from medical, manufacturing, building and hospitality with the local economy and business impacted by the inability to attract workers to the region on an ongoing basis.

Council acts as a skilled migration certifying agent, and works very closely with service providers who are supporting migrants and temporary workers arriving in our Municipality, is actively involved in the PALM Scheme and has been considering the establishment of a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) with neighbouring Councils on both sides of the Murray River.

Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the importance of migration to our Country and in particular the positive impact migrants can have on the community bringing not only population growth but cultural diversity together with much needed work skills.

Council has worked to support cultural diversity through events such as Harmony Day, placing migrant groups in need of meeting facilities in Council owned buildings and working to ensure that social inclusion is a high priority within its strategic documents and direction.

#### **RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF REGIONAL MIGRATION SETTINGS SUPPORTING STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE REGIONS:**

##### **1. How can the various temporary and permanent visa available to the regions work together to better meet the skills needed e.g. Designated Area Migration Agreements and Regional Sponsored Visa's**

The complexity of the current migration system was highlighted in the Federal Government's overall Migration review with the number of visa categories well in excess of 100.

The processes are time consuming and difficult for the general community to understand and often require the engagement of migration specialist to assist not only the applicants but also the community/business to work through the necessary documentation.

This adds significantly to the cost and adds to the frustrations experienced by applicants and the community.

A streamlining of the number of the visas that can be applied for and simpler documentation that is easily understood by all parties would be of assistance.

Clear identification of the eligible visa categories for both DAMA's and Regional Sponsorship together with "plain English" documentation will assist.

It is interesting to note that the review itself has highlighted that the DAMA system perhaps is in need of an overhaul. To date there are only ten DAMA's Australia wide and there is currently no consideration of any new applications for the establishment of a DAMA.

The costs associated to go through the required process to submit a DAMA application are substantial and perhaps out of the reach of many Regional Communities. In addition the time required to establish the case for a DAMA is considerable however in the meantime the issues that a DAMA might solve continue to have an impact on Regional Communities.

Swan Hill Rural City Council is considering applying to join the Goulburn Valley DAMA having approached the Local Government Partners but this will take time and financial resources at a time when the Federal Government is considering the future of DAMAs.

If Council were successful in its application, it is faced with the prospect of only having twelve months involvement in the DAMA before there might be a change which brings into question whether they should pursue the application.

It is recognised that use of DAMA's is critical in addressing a number of key worker categories in regional Australia and that it must be considered by communities alongside the large number of other visa categories and the PALM Scheme.

A coordinated approach involving all of the various categories may lead to improved outcomes and this could be achieved by determining which parts of the various programs have led to the best outcomes.

The processes around DAMA's needs to be reviewed in the pursuit of the stated goal of creating an easier to understand migration system that does not have the current significant costs associated with it.

There needs to be a whole of Government approach to making the regional migration system easier to understand and implement which involves all three levels of Government.

There should be a greater level of involvement of Local Government in regional settings as they are well placed to understand the community's needs and where there are significant gaps in workforces that need addressing.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would welcome the time-based extension of the DAMA and geographic expansion into like for like areas already accessed into DAMA.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would recommend that Designated Area Representatives (DARs) are consistently appointed through Regional Development Australia, as has been seen in NSW.

<https://rdariverina.org.au/dama>

The Swan Hill Rural City Council area plays host to large numbers of workers under the PALM scheme and there needs to be greater coordination between all visa categories and on ground support within the region not a Capital City.

These workers are playing an important role in supplementing the existing work force and will continue to do so with increased numbers however there is a wide range of issues that need constantly addressing such as housing, medical needs, cultural diversity which the local community is struggling to keep pace with.

The introduction of field workers would greatly assist the regional communities address the issues being currently experienced and plan for the future to be more prepared for new arrivals.

The Federal Government should look to introduce Field Support Officers in the regional communities who are hosting large numbers of PALM Seasonal Workers such as Swan Hill and Robinvale.

**2. Should there be a regional occupation list? How should the regional occupation list work alongside the Core Skills List? What should be considered in compiling the regional occupation list?**

Most definitely a regional occupation list should be compiled as it will give the Federal and State Governments an accurate overview of the breadth of opportunities across the nation and where to channel resources.

Without the list and data the problems of the past will be replicated and the Government will not achieve its stated goals.

The data collated will help shape the process and policy so therefore it is extremely important to have.

It should not stand alone and work alongside the Core Skills List to allow for cross checking and a safety net to ensure the accuracy of the data. This will allow for the Government to be able to respond quickly to the changing circumstances in various regions however the Government will have to have a system in place to ensure the ongoing accuracy of the data bases.

Each Region must be invited to be a part of the process to upload information and it should be an easy system to access and provide information. Local Government is well placed to be able to provide information on what skills shortages are occurring and what new skills are required for a region to prosper.

Local Government should be invited to participate in the development of a regional occupation list and to assist in maintaining its accuracy. Further Local Government should be invited to provide information on an ongoing basis to the Federal Government on the key Core Skills required to advance the community.

In both cases the system designed should not be overly complicated and onerous on users.

**3. Could the definitions of regional be aligned across the various regional visas? How can definitions be structured to better account for the unique circumstances of regions?**

It is pleasing to see in the review document, a recognition from the Federal Government, that a one size fits all mentality may not be in the best interests of all stakeholders involved in migration and visas.

In order to develop definitions relating to the regions and then apply the appropriate visa categories, there must be firstly a clear understanding the many differences that exist across the regions.

There must be a clear statement on where Regional Australia starts outside the metropolitan areas.

Once this base has been established then there needs to be consideration to having definitions for Regional, Rural and Remote Australia before you commence assigning visa categories.

Once these three definitions are established then the characteristics of each of the categories can be considered based on factors such as population, economic growth or capacity to grow, isolation, infrastructure, future business opportunities etc.

Coupled with data bases around skills required, the Federal Government is then in a position to allocate visa categories.

Any system developed should have a level of flexibility contained within which would allow for visa categories to be interchangeable between regions based on special circumstances and potential benefits to avoid opportunities not being taken up.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would support the development of clear definitions and guidelines for the apportionment of visa to the regions relevant to that region's needs.

**4. How can we reform Working Holiday Maker Program Visa settings to limit exploitation whilst still ensuring that regional Australia can access workers it needs?**

In the Federal Government Migration Review it was evident in the findings that visa's issued under the current process to Working Holiday Makers were done so in good

faith and that the failure of the system came once the participants commenced working.

It would appear that the Federal Government whilst not making wholesale changes to the visa system must address issues relating to exploitation of the visa holders by considering measures such as:

- Provision of additional funding to allow for more accommodation to be constructed for working holiday maker visa holders as high rentals for poor standard accommodation is continually highlighted as a disincentive.
- Introduction of field workers in the regions so that visa holders can quickly access support and explain the situation they are facing. The current system of trying to make contact via a remote location often is a disincentive for visa holders to continue to pursue the allegation of exploitation and it goes unreported and accepted.
- Assist the visa holder to source a new place of employment if it is found they have been the victim of exploitation. Visa holders generally enjoy the region they come into and often want to continue to work in that setting as they have established friendships and support networks.
- The establishment of a set of industry standards that must be abided by all employers of visa holders in this category.
- The establishment of a register of employers who have breached the standards and been found to have exploited visa holders including the introduction of financial penalties and suspension from being able to employ visa holders. This would have a significant impact on individual businesses but would send a significant warning on the need to stamp out exploitation.
- Consideration of the appointment of an independent body to oversight and regulate the visa program.

Swan Hill Rural City Council respectfully requests that consideration is given to the suggestion made above in an effort to address exploitation of visa holders.

**5. How can we ensure a more consistent approach to lower paid migration across various visa products whilst maintaining our commitment to maintain the primacy of our relationship the pacific countries?**

The PALM Scheme overall has delivered positive outcomes for the Pacific Nations, Employers, Visa Holders and Australia however that is not to say that it has not faced its challenges.

The participants under the scheme are doing a variety of lower skilled work but still should be protected under the program from exploitation and provided with an appropriate salary level for the work they are undertaking.

The establishment of that standard level of salary was a key recommendation of the Federal Governments Migration Review and one that the Federal Government committed to.

It is worth noting that the majority of participants under the PLAM Scheme do continue to return to the regions they have been working in on a yearly basis as they have developed community connections and are working with employers who value their work ethic and support.

The industry's that PALM scheme workers are mostly employed in should have standards developed as a minimum requirement with respect to conditions including rates of pay which should be enforced.

The ability to report underpayments is difficult under the current arrangements and often let go as the visa holder does not wish to be seen as causing trouble and that unemployment has a serious impact on families who might be travelling with the worker or in their country of origin.

Easier access to reporting through the provision of on the ground support workers should be considered and also the ability to refer to an independent body to investigate breaches of standards.

Consideration should be given to the development of guidelines and standards that can be negotiated around offering incentives for additional work as a way to allowing visa holders to earn more.

The Federal Government needs to consider how they also can support visa holders through one off assistance payments or reducing the costs associated from coming from their country of origin to Australia which ultimately must be paid back by the participant.

Swan Hill Rural City Council respectfully requests that the Federal Government consider the options listed above as a way of supporting the Pacific Island Visa Holders and ensuring that they maintain the close partnerships with our Pacific Nations.

**6. Noting the limitations of the visa settings, what factors encourage more migrants to choose to settle in the regions and improve retention?**

Swan Hill Rural City Council's experience with respect to this question is summarised as per the following:

- The creation of a welcoming and supportive community for migrants and seasonal workers and establishing this reputation is critical. This involves all sections of the community offering up support.
- The prospect of the region offering steady employment or indeed new employment careers not only to the principle visa holder but also those within the family group.
- Access to Education.
- Access to support services.
- Access to Health Services.



- Provision of affordable and appropriate accommodation that is located close to facilities or transport.
- Connections to people who are already in the region who might be related – word of mouth of the strength of community and its appeal is considered invaluable.
- Community support groups.
- Recognition of the benefits of cultural diversity that migrants can bring to a community – Swan Hill has a highly successful Harmony Day, Council has recently supported the establishment of Rugby Union Club with participants coming from the Pacific Islands and the Municipality celebrates multi-cultural events.
- The promotion of future opportunities to establish businesses – Robinvale has 5 different supermarkets catering for a wide variety of cultures.
- Reasonable proximity to larger regional centres and Capital Cities.

To support the local knowledge and provide detailed information to visa holders and migrants establishment of a data base of various regions together with details of the features of the communities should be considered.

This could include employment opportunities and the support services in place for applicants to consider. Making decisions from an informed position is likely to lead to more positive outcomes and avoid the circumstances where by visa holders want to move away after a short period of time.

Swan Hill Rural City Council recommends the Federal Government consider the establishment of regional information databases with the information be included in information being provided to visa applicants based on the regions that are being considered for settlement.

#### **7. Do provisional visas successfully encourage large scale retention of migrants in the regions?**

What would achieve large scale retention of migrants within the regions in part is certainty which often is not the case under the current systems.

As an example a temporary visa holder living within and working in the Swan Hill community had to wait ten years under a temporary visa process before they finally qualified for a permanent visa.

It is difficult to imagine what living with ten years of uncertainty would be like however this person continued to be a valuable member of the community including being a volunteer firefighter.

The system must set standards that have to be met with respect to processing of applications and decision making.

Whilst there is some level of certainty around provisional visas there must be a move within an accepted time frame to a final decision.

The ability to be able to move to various visa categories also compounds the situation and is a symptom of the levels of stress that are caused by the long period of time taken to process and make decisions which leads to applicants looking for alternatives visa categories to apply for.

Ensuring that the Government commits adequate resources to process applications is imperative and this was highlighted in the Federal Governments Migration Review.

Swan Hill Rural City Council respectfully requests that the Federal Government develops a process and system that allows for the processing of provisional visas and decision making at a quicker rate to provide greater certainty for applicants than currently exists.

**8. How can we improve planning for regional migration especially given the return of migrants to regional Australia Post Pandemic? Should there be more flexibility provided to the States and Territories in planning for regional migration?**

If the Federal Government considers the adoption of the suggestions put forward by Swan Hill Rural City Council, then this will ultimately lead to the flexibility in the visa system that should be enshrined in the processes in order to achieve enhanced outcomes for regional Australia.

There needs to be an improved understanding of regional migration needs and this cannot be achieved by administering the system in a centralised location within a capital city.

State and Territories should be given flexibility in approaching the issues relating to regional migration and they there should be greater involvement of Local Government and local communities who are dealing with the consequences of the current system.

Increased communication with Local Government and local communities will avoid situations whereby migrants arrive with little or no advanced warning and limited information about the people's backgrounds. This approach already has the community on the back foot and the system needs to change.

Based on information being provided on regional needs including work force shortages, the States and Territories should be able to apply flexibility to the placement of visa holders into different regions.

There of course needs to be a reporting mechanism back to the Federal Government who ultimately must retain control and responsibility for the migration system.

Placement of field officers within the regions to enhance communication between all levels of Government should be considered.

Swan Hill Rural City Council support greater flexibility for States and Territories in planning for regional migration on the basis that Local Government and local communities are engaged in the process.

**CONCLUSION:**

The success of migration and seasonal worker programs for the benefit of the Nation, particularly regional communities should be a priority for all levels of Government.

Working in partnership together with service providers by developing relevant programs and processes should lead to a greater uptake of migration visas and the strengthening of the use of seasonal workers.

There are obvious challenges in getting the right systems in place and there are issues confronting migrants and seasonal workers that need to be addressed prior to their arrival and the support needs to continue once people have been introduced to new communities.

Our regions continue to grow and there are employment opportunities together with lifestyle choices that would be attractive to migrants and seasonal workers who in turn could strengthen the communities they choose to live in by providing cultural diversity.

The Federal Government through the initial migration review recognised the need for changes to a system that was not providing the necessary outcomes for all key stakeholders accessing the visa system and it was certainly failing those people applying for visas or work permits.

The pursuit of an enhanced system that delivers positive and timely results especially for regional Australia is supported by Council.

Swan Hill Rural City Council wishes the Federal Government every success in its deliberations and looks forward to continuing to work alongside the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to achieve improvements to the regional migration visa system.

For any further information please contact Mr Dennis Hovenden Manager Economic and Community Development on (03) 5036 2333 or mobile telephone 0497 586 503.

Yours Sincerely

Scott Barber  
Chief Executive Officer  
Swan Hill Rural City Council



REF: 673/23

SB/DH

27 June 2024



The Hon Melissa Horne MP  
Minister for Ports and Freight  
Level 16  
121 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Dear Minister

**VICTORIAN FREIGHT PLAN REVIEW DISCUSSION PAPER**

Swan Hill Rural City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian State Government on the Victorian Freight Plan Review Discussion Paper noting that the original plan for the freight task for the State was first prepared in 2018.

It is therefore very timely that the Victorian State Government embarks on the review as there has been significant impacts felt by the freight industry since 2018 including the COVID Pandemic, interruptions to the supply chain both here in Victoria and across the world and a downturn in the numbers of people working within the transport industry.

Coupled with these factors, it is noted that the Victorian State Government have embarked on a significant infrastructure program with a heavy transport focus within the metropolitan regions and that there are financial pressures on the State Governments ability to successfully maintain both the road and rail networks.

The State Government have a strong focus and clear commitment to achieving greater access to the State's Ports to enable valuable commodities to either be imported or exported and again this is an important factor in addressing the freight task needs.

As a result of consultation with industry, all levels of Government and the wider community, it is hoped that the Victorian State Government will deliver a State-wide Freight Plan that not only addresses today's freight needs but is also visionary in its approach to developing solutions to ensure that the State's Freight Network is able to operate at full capacity, is competitive, is equitable in its approach to the needs of users and importantly keeps the supply chain fully operational.

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8/8/20242

**SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL BACKGROUND:**

Swan Hill Rural City Council covers a vast expanse of land mass in North West Victoria (over 6,000 square kms) and has a population increasing toward 22,000 people, with Swan Hill as the largest population centre and smaller communities spread across the Municipality.

In addition to the population base, the Municipality has seen a large influx of seasonal workers firstly for up to four months of the year however the trend is now for all year round with estimates put at approximately 5,000 additional people in our community over the course of the year.

Based on forward estimates of potential employment that was created both in traditional and emerging industries such as renewable energy and mining, the population of the Municipality is expected to grow by around 3,500 people in the next decade.

The Municipality is located on the Murray River, with Swan Hill acting as a large Regional Service Centre for people on both sides of the River. This location also creates special circumstances for Governments and service providers in supporting the local community and those that are visiting the region for work, daily living activities or leisure.

According to REMPLAN's independent statistics, the Municipality has around 10,500 jobs and seasonally sees this figure grow much higher, as the horticulture and agriculture industries seek workers to undertake the labour intensive work. Agriculture comprises of 20.33% of the total economic output valued at \$3.02 Billion.

Manufacturing, mining and renewable energy projects are set to have a significant impact on the Municipality during the course of the next phase of the State's Freight Plan.

The Municipality's expected growth will see opportunities however there will be challenges around the freight, road and rail network that will need to be addressed if those opportunities are to be fully realised.

Our communities particularly, Swan Hill and Robinvale, are located in pivotal road network locations for industries wishing to access the ports of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. With traditional agricultural and horticultural industries needing a freight network that is fully operational, to ensure that produce can reach capital cities or ports in a reasonable time for perishable commodities.

The emergence of new industries will only increase the need for a well maintained road and rail network within our region and Municipality.



8/8/20243

Council would like to offer general comments on the Victorian Freight Plan Review Discussion Paper and then additional specific comments around our needs within our Municipality and Region.

**VICTORIAN FREIGHT PLAN REVIEW DISCUSSION PAPER:**

Council notes that the review is of the original plan developed in 2018 and would have liked to have been able to see what the status of the various projects listed in the document were, as a part of this review.

This project review would enable context as to what will need to be carried forward, and this might impact on future key projects relating to the Freight Network.

The Victorian State Government are to be commended for developing the next phase of the Freight Plan with a move towards a zero emissions target as a centre piece of the plan.

Ensuring that future Freight Plans remain relevant to the State's needs is vital and ensuring that the right level of financial investment in the key regions such as the Mallee must be a priority for the State Government.

Ensuring that the Freight Plan remains connected to the Victorian Government Ports Strategy 2022 enabling important unimpeded access into the State's Ports and striking a balance between road and rail access to Ports must be a high priority.

The Freight Plan should provide detail on funding for the short and long term for key infrastructure projects to ensure certainty for all key stakeholders. The Freight Plan should explore the possibility of additional Public/Private Partnerships as a way of completing more projects identified in the plan.

Council would concur that the protection freight supply chain should be a critical consideration of the State Government's thinking about combatting the impacts of climate change and natural disasters so as to avoid disruption to the supply chain.

Council is aware of a shortage of transport workers, particularly in the road transport, sector that parallels the current experience in a wide cross section of industries including construction and hospitality. The impacts of not being able to service an industry due to lack of staff have been well documented and have been the cause for a general downturn across many sectors.

Council would support the need for a comprehensive workforce strategy to attract more people into the transport industry through increased training opportunities and the State Government should consider a financial industry package for the transport sector which would offer on the job training incentives and guaranteed wage levels for people who are commencing in the industry.

8/8/2024

The review of the Freight Plan should address all forms of transport – Rail, Road, Sea, Air together with the infrastructure required to strike the balance to ensure a comprehensive action plan is developed.

The Victorian State Government must develop a plan that covers both metropolitan, regional and rural needs in terms of the freight network as clearly those needs are vastly different but none the less need to interconnect with each other.

As a cross-border community, Council also recommends that the State Government consider opportunities associated with the freight of the south-western NSW commodities to metropolitan Melbourne, Victorian regional centres and its Ports.

In the development of the original plan, the importance of Local Government in the delivery of the freight network was recognised particularly around the first and last mile of the network.

Whilst the current review has key stakeholders such as the transport sector and the Victorian Farmers Federation, it does not have Local Government representation which is disappointing.

Local Government will continue to play a critical role in the freight network and as such it is vital that its voice is heard and more importantly its suggestions seriously considered when developing the Freight Plan.

The Freight Plan should set out goals and projects for five year periods but should also be the subject of an annual review by the State Government to ensure that it continues to remain relevant, is progressing and if need be, adjusted due to changed circumstances.

#### **VICTORIAN FREIGHT PLAN REVIEW – SWAN HILL RURAL CITY CONTEXT**

To ensure the continuity of the supply chain of products and produce coming out of our region, there needs to be urgent attention to the road network which is suffering from a combination of the impacts of flooding and increased usage.

The freight plan should develop an action plan that identifies the maintenance needs of the region and then commits the appropriate level of funding to upgrading the road network.

Swan Hill needs a new bridge to cross the Murray River and has done so now for decades. Inaction on this project has resulted in significant impacts on the road network and the bridge is needed for accessing the key Ports of Melbourne, Geelong, Sydney and Adelaide.

Council would like to see a freight plan that recognises the need for the replacement bridge at Swan Hill as a priority.

8/8/20245

In the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Report – Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan – on page 22 of the report the importance of the Swan Hill Bridge is highlighted in a case study and Council would concur that it is time to build a new bridge.

The location of the Swan Hill Rural Council area on the Murray River makes it an important cross border region and as such the Freight Plan must give serious consideration to all of the various issues associated with cross border communities.

Differing legislation and licensing requirements amongst the states makes it confusing and costly for the transport industry. Council believe that there should be greater coordination between the states with an aim of reducing red tape and that the freight plan should have an action in it to tackle this situation.

The Freight Plan has not recognised the emergence of the mineral sands industry with mining in both New South Wales and Victoria likely to increase.

In the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan Report the impact of mineral sands is considered and indeed factored in the forward estimates around freight modelling.

There will be the potential increased use of rail in our region to move mineral sands to port and there is a contingency plan to use the road network if required.

There is an opportunity for the Victorian State Government to invest an appropriate percentage of royalties generated from significant mining projects back into the region to upgrade the freight network.

Council has also reviewed the Rail Freight Alliance submission to the Freight Network Review noting the recommendations made around the need for greater use of rail, upgrading of the rail network, increasing axle load capacities, investigating the creation of additional intermodal hubs and striking a balance between road and rail.

The Rail Freight Alliance is also seeking appropriate funding for maintenance and infrastructure investment together with a dedicated governance body to ensure that projects proceed and funding used for maximum benefit for the freight network.

Swan Hill Rural City Council supports the recommendations contained in the Rail Freight Alliance submission as it believes that if adopted, the freight network and Victoria stand to benefit greatly from the overall network enhancements.

Swan Hill Rural City Council has developed its own comprehensive freight and transport plan which will reduce traffic movements, fuel consumption and the greenhouse gas contributions significantly through network infrastructure investment. A copy of the plan that could be used as a reference document is attached to the submission.

8/8/20246

In addition to this plan, the Central Murray Regional Transport Form, to which Swan Hill Rural City Council is a member of, has also developed a comprehensive freightn which the State Government is strongly encouraged to reference when including our region into the overall State Freight Plan.

Whilst the Freight Plan for the State may take into consideration at a very high level what is required to ensure certainty for the supply chain, the Victorian State Government are also encouraged how positive changes at a local level can make a significant difference to reliability of supply.

Road Freight transport impact on local roads and as such a commitment to providing Councils with additional funds towards maintenance should be considered and infrastructure upgrades a priority. As an example with the Swan Hill Township the intersection of Gray Street and the Murray Valley Highway should be upgraded to allow improved traffic flow. Trucks using this road network make it increasingly difficult for safe pedestrian access and motorists to turn onto the major road in safety.

There is no doubt right across the State there would be many more examples of road safety upgrades that would be required but if implemented it would enhance the freight network

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Victoria needs a comprehensive, relevant and funded Freight Network Plan to ensure that it retains its competitive edge when it comes to the movement of produce and products.

Local Government has a key role to play in the support of the Freight Network and should be involved as a key stakeholder. Work with Local Government to consider investment and/or include their freight plans.

The States Freight Network Plan should be continually reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and updated to reflect emerging opportunities that need to be addressed.

All forms of transport should be reflected in the Freight Plan and appropriately funded by the Victorian State Government reflecting the needs of the metropolitan, regional and rural areas of the State.

A workforce plan to attract more people into the transport industry should be a priority consideration when developing the Freight Plan.

Improving the Freight Network reliability and moving towards zero emissions should be supported by all key stakeholders.

8/8/20247

Reducing legislative red tape and cross border licensing anomalies should be a priority in the Freight Network Plan to assist in the delivery of products and to make it easier for people to enter the transport industry.

Victorian State opportunities associated with improving freight access from south-western NSW.

Important infrastructure upgrades such as the Swan Hill Bridge and the States road network should be considered in the Freight Network Plan and time lines associated with these projects clearly articulated in the document.

The Freight Network Plan should undergo a major review every five years however should be reviewed on an annual basis with a report to all key stakeholders on what has been achieved, works in progress and what future planning is being undertaken.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Victorian Freight Network Review and would welcome the opportunity to continue to be directly involved in the development of the document.

Yours sincerely

Scott Barber  
Chief Executive Officer  
Swan Hill Rural City Council





REF: S 03-02-09

SB/DH

8<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Mr Trung Luu  
Chairperson  
Legal and Social Issues Committee  
Legislative Council  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
East Melbourne Victoria 3002



Dear Mr Luu

### **INQUIRY INTO FOOD SECURITY IN VICTORIA**

Swan Hill Rural City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian State Government as a part of the inquiry into food security in Victoria.

The right of all Victorians to access food at all times should be seen as a basic human right and the Victorian State Government are to be commended for undertaking the inquiry with the aim to ensure that this right is upheld.

The Committees terms of reference which looks at the following components of food security:

- Impact of food security
- Physical and mental health
- Poverty and hardship
- Lowering the cost of food
- Improving access to affordable food that is nutritious and culturally appropriate
- Is addressing the key factors within the community which may or may not be impacting on food security.

In considering the Terms of Reference, the Committee and what is required to put in place strategies to address food security, Council recommends that the Committee consider and prioritise;

- a reliable transport supply chain
- timely and continuous access to Ports for perishable foods
- productive land availability to grow food is not diminished,
- reliable water availability
- value adding to process food
- workforce stability

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8/8/20242

- ongoing consultation with all of the community to ensure that food cultural diversity is addressed; and
- that regions that are significant food producers are supported with infrastructure to continue to play a key role in food production.

**SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL BACKGROUND:**

Swan Hill Rural City Council covers a vast expanse of land mass in North West Victoria (over 6,000 square kms) and has a population increasing toward 22,000 people, with Swan Hill as the largest population centre and smaller communities spread across the Municipality.

In addition to the population base, the Municipality has seen a large influx of seasonal workers firstly for up to four months of the year however the trend is now for all year round with estimates put at approximately 5,000 additional people in our community over the course of the year.

Based on forward estimates of potential employment that was created both in traditional and emerging industries such as renewable energy and mining, the population of the Municipality is expected to grow by around 3,500 people over the next decade.

The Municipality is located on the Murray River, with Swan Hill acting as a large Regional Service Centre for people on both sides of the river. This location also creates special circumstances for Governments and service providers in supporting not only the local community but those that are visiting the region for work, daily living activities or leisure.

According to REMPLAN's independent statistics, the Municipality has around 10,500 jobs and seasonally sees this figure grow much higher, as the horticulture and agriculture industries seek workers to undertake the labour intensive work. Agriculture comprises of 20.33% of the total economic output valued at \$3.02 Billion.

Manufacturing, mining and renewable energy projects are set to have a significant impact on the Municipality during the course of the next phase of the State's Freight Plan.

The Municipalities expected growth will see opportunities however there will be challenges around the freight, road and rail network that will need to be addressed if those opportunities are to be fully realised.

Our communities, particularly Swan Hill and Robinvale, are located in pivotal road network locations for industries wishing to access the ports of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide with traditional agriculture and horticulture industries needing a freight network that is fully operational to ensure that produce can reach capital cities or ports.

The emergence of new industries will only increase the need for a well maintained road and rail network within our region and Municipality.

8/8/20243

Council adopted a new Economic Development Strategy 2024-2030 at its July 2024 Meeting which highlights the value of the Agriculture and Horticulture sector and to the continued prosperity of our Municipality.

[Swan Hill Region Economic Development Strategy 2030](#)

**VICTORIAN FOOD SECURITY:**

The Swan Hill Rural City Council and its community understand the need to ensure food security having played such a significant role in the production of food for many decades area and support the State Government in its endeavours to ensure that access to food for continues.

Our Municipality has a rich history in traditional farming, fruit and vegetable production and the emergence of food industries such as Almonds and Olives which has contributed significantly to the region being recognised as one of the State's food bowls.

There is great support for the Committee's Terms of Reference as they are critical factors in working towards food security. Council believes that if the Committee and the Victorian State Government address the issues listed below they will in turn then combat the potential negative impacts highlighted in the Terms of Reference.

Council agrees that Australia needs its own food certainty, as the detrimental impacts on people both physically and mentally have been made clear as evidenced by the recent COVID Pandemic.

The prospect of food shortages during the COVID Pandemic due to supply issues led to panic buying and the unavailability of basic food items which led to a range of negative impacts on people.

Recent bird flu outbreaks has challenged the availability eggs, has again highlighted the need for the State Government to have a whole of Government approach when there is a real or perceived threat to food supplies. All Government and non-Government stakeholders must be working together to remove uncertainty and allay fears of food shortages.

Swan Hill Rural City Council believes that the Committee should give careful consideration to the following issues:

- **Transport Supply Chain**

The Victorian State Government is currently reviewing its State Freight Transport Plan and the Committee should acquaint itself of the work of this review. It is aiming to address the critical issues around ensuring the supply chain for the State. Much of this work will address issues directly relating to food and the Committee should be strongly endorsing that the supply chain must be guaranteed.

8/8/20244

- **Access to Ports**

Being able to import and export food products is critical to ensure adequate access to food. Therefore the Committee should be ensuring through its work that the Victorian State Government continues investment into building the capacity for access to all of the States Ports through an appropriate level of funding for infrastructure required, including upgrading roads and rail across the State. Timely and continuous access is critical for quality perishable products particularly highly nutritious fruit and vegetables.

- **Land Availability**

The Victorian State Government's planning processes must strike a balance amongst the competing needs for access to suitable land. Within Metropolitan Melbourne significant parcels of productive land, which were historically producing food, are now being utilised for housing which then diminishes food production.

Within Regional Victoria there are emerging industries relating to renewable energy and mining that may have the capacity to impact on food production if not properly managed.

In both examples it points to the need for the Committee to consider recommending that the State Government have a clear overall plan that relates to all of the competing needs for land use to ensure that the right balance can be achieved so as to avoid a detrimental impact on food supply.

It should be noted that Council does not support the protection of non-viable land formally used for irrigated agriculture, which has been left unproductive as a result of Federal Government water buybacks. Such land cannot produce agriculture without irrigation significantly supplementing rainfall. This land can be rezoned from farming land into rural use and residential land when requested by Councils, to assist with the housing crisis.

- **Victoria - A food supplier and not reliant on imports**

Victoria needs to continue to be a major food producer and look to limit the reliance on importing food. The Victorian State Government needs to continue to work with all key stakeholders in the food industry to ensure that there is a comprehensive plan developed to ensure food security. Local Government has a key role to play in supporting the State Government and the food industry to ensure that this occurs.

There must be an ongoing discussion with the Transport industry to ensure that the food supply chain is guaranteed and to determine how to ensure the timely delivery to market and by what means.

8/8/20245

- **Water Availability**

Critical to the production of food is the access to water, an issue that is extremely important to all of the various industries with the Swan Hill Rural City Council Municipality.

Council recognises the importance of the environment and its connection to water but fully appreciates the need to ensure that a reliable source of water for food production ranks just as highly in the thinking of Government decision makers.

The Committee should be seriously considering recommending that the Victorian State Government continue to be heavily involved in the water availability debate to ensure that the right balance is struck to allow for food production to continue.

New technology to save water should be investigated and the replacement of aging water infrastructure a high priority.

- **Work force**

One of the biggest threats to food security is a lack of people within the work force to ensure that the food produced is harvested or processed to then go onto market.

Work force shortages are being experienced right across a range of industries and the food industry is not immune to such threats. Recent discussions around the reduction in the number of overseas people being allowed to come and work in our Country is a concern.

The Food Industry, in particular, relies heavily on overseas workers and backpackers to take up additional jobs when the local labour market has been exhausted and therefore the Committee needs to give serious consideration to the negative impact on food supply if the work force is not in place to continue to produce food.

The Victorian State Government should engage in ongoing discussions around seasonal migration and how it can ensure access to seasonal workers all year round.

- **Value Adding**

Consideration should be given to the introduction of value adding in those key food producing regions to allow for the additional processing of food produced to then allow for the produce to get to market quicker.

Investment in food processing in areas such as the Swan Hill Rural City Council Municipality and in close proximity to where the food is produced would add to the quality of the food and lead to additional employment opportunities.

8/8/20246

- **Cross Border Food Production**

The Committee needs to consider the impacts of cross border food production in a variety of ways as the impacts are very real for the Swan Hill Rural City Council region right along the Murray River.

Food production on both sides of the river is heavily reliant on each other and there needs to be a discussion between Victoria and New South Wales as to how best to coordinate efforts.

- **Communication**

Whilst the Inquiry by the Committee is welcomed, there needs to be ongoing comprehensive dialogue at a Government and Community level to ensure that food Security is guaranteed.

The demographics and make-up of the Swan Hill Rural City Council Municipality are changing and therefore the need to address cultural food diversity an everyday reality.

The opportunity to investigate new food groups to supplement existing food requirements together with ensuring that food is processed in such a manner to respect cultural diversity is extremely important, an opportunity that the Committee needs to have a clear understand of so as to form recommendations.

The Committee needs to recognise the shift in the food requirements of people and acknowledge that people need access to their particular type of food fairly easily and not made to feel different just because they have different food needs.

- **Food Costs**

The Federal Government has recently being inquiring into the costs associated with food and in particular the role that the large supermarket chains are playing in applying costs to food.

Clearly households are under financial pressure on a variety of fronts with the cost of food a significant contributor.

The Committee are encourage to consider the outcomes of the Federal Inquiry and determine what recommendations might be put in place to help ease the financial burden on households which in turn would assist with physical and mental health issues.

It is recognised that the supermarket chains have the right to be profitable however it should not come at the expense of vulnerable sections of the community who rely upon basic food groups.



8/8/20247

It is clear that charity food providers are also under stress because of the increased demand on their services and the Committee also needs to investigate how charity food providers can also be supported to provide food relief.

**CONCLUSION:**

The need to be able reliably access high quality food is a basic human right and the positive impact that food has on a person's lifestyle, physical and mental health is not in question but rather what actions the Victorian State Government need to undertake to ensure food security.

The Victorian State Government must develop a whole of Government approach to addressing the relevant issues impacting on food security to ensure the guarantee of food supply and quality.

Whilst the provision of food may seem to be a simple task, Council believes that there are many factors that need to be addressed and in conjunction with each other to enable the Victorian State Government to work towards a comprehensive plan for food.

There are opportunities to expand food production and employment which would benefit the whole of the State and the people of Victoria.

Swan Hill Rural City Council is committed to working with the Victorian State Government to ensuring food security given our location as one of the States key food production areas and the development of a comprehensive ongoing plan involving Government, Local Government, Food Industry and the Community critical to the success of food security.

Swan Hill Rural City Council would like the opportunity to appear before the Committee if there are to be public hearings so that they can expand on the issues raised in the submission and respond to questions the Committee may have.

Yours sincerely

Scott Barber  
Chief Executive Officer  
Swan Hill Rural City Council

## 2.3 Review of 2024 Australia Day event to obtain community feedback

**Directorate:** Corporate Services  
**File Number:** S-12-02-151  
**Purpose:** For Discussion

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**1. Liveability** - We will be a healthy, connected and growing community supported by a range of infrastructure and services.

#### **1.4 Foster Creative and Cultural opportunities**

1.4.1 Promote and celebrate the creative and cultural pursuits within the region

### Current Strategic Documents

Council Plan  
Annual Report  
Budget

### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide details on the review of the 2024 Swan Hill Australia Day event

At the September Council meeting council introduced the changes to the Australia Day events which included:

#### **25 January 2024**

- Night before 'Awards Ceremony' at the Swan Hill Town Hall.
- Robinvale's citizenship ceremony to be hosted earlier in the day.

#### **26 January 2024**

- Small towns continue to undertake Australia Day events across the municipality and will be supported with annual allocations of funding to help run their events.
- First Nations led displays (stories, images etc.) and may seek funding to assist with costs, with the funding to come from the Australia Day allocation and a Federal Government Grant.

Council also resolved to conduct a review of the 2024 event to obtain community feedback on the format and help determine the future format of events.

## Discussion

At the September 2023 Council meeting council considered that there is a great reluctance from our First Nations Community to be involved in the Australia Day events on the 26th of January, as this day is seen from a different perspective. This reluctance is reflected within the National debate about the possibility of a change to the date that the Nation reflects upon our identity. The Council also considered the ways of how to be more inclusive of the First Nations Community, it can take steps to make a positive contribution to the ongoing discussion. Council introduced the changes to the Australia Day events which included:

### 25 January 2024

- Night before 'Awards Ceremony' at the Swan Hill Town Hall.
- Robinvale's citizenship ceremony to be hosted earlier in the day.

### 26 January 2024

- Small towns continue to undertake Australia Day events across the municipality and will be supported with annual allocations of funding to help run their events.
- First Nations led displays (stories, images etc.) and may seek funding to assist with costs, with the funding to come from the Australia Day allocation.

Council also resolved to conduct a review of the 2024 event to obtain community feedback on the format and help determine the future format of events. To better understand how we can make Council led Australia Day events and activities even better in 2025 we held a community consultation from Wednesday, 21 February to Friday, 8 March, 2024.

The survey was widely promoted and broadly distributed, and we received 77 contributions, which equate to less than 1% of the municipality's population.

It is evident from the survey data received that a large percentage of respondents did not attend either the Australia Day or Shared Connections Events in 2024.

Of those that completed the online survey 88% did not attend Australia Day events on Thursday, 25 January and 12% of respondents did.

92% did not attend Shared Connections events on Friday, 26 January and 8% did attend.

34% did not attend any other Australia Day events and 66% did attend other events.

These results therefore make it difficult to gain a meaningful review of the 2024 events.

Opinions expressed in the survey results reflect that there were mixed opinions on the changes made by Council with some people indicating that they were supportive of the new direction however others felt that Council should revert to holding the traditional Australia Day Breakfast that had been conducted on Australia Day in Swan Hill.

Several people commented that they had attended Australia Day Activities in other communities within the Municipality as there wasn't an Australia Day Activity in Swan Hill on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January.

Attendance for the Swan Hill Town Hall activities on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 was estimated to be 345 people and for the various Shared Connections Events held in Robinvale and Swan Hill the estimated attendance was 320.

Notwithstanding the comments received in the online survey, the overall reaction to the changes introduced were positive. Naturally improvements can be made to the various activities with a view to enhancing the experience.

Given that 2024 was the first year of the new format, if Council were to make wholesale changes to the program this may lead to greater uncertainty and angst amongst various communities' cohorts and groups.

In the survey results there is a view that Swan Hill should have an Australia Day Breakfast on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January with some suggesting a return to the previous format. It is considered that if a community organisation wishes to pursue the staging of an Australia Day Breakfast, that they should approach Council with such a request together with the details of what is being proposed and what level of support they would be expecting from Council.

Community organisations are also eligible to apply for Australia Day Events Grant Funding and this would form a part of the discussions with any interested community organisations.

Council Officers could then work with community organisations to determine what level of support might be provided including financial assistance noting that it is very likely that the support would not be at the previous historical levels given that other arrangements have been put in place.

In addition, Council Officers will continue to work with our First Nations Community to further develop and enhance the program of events as we work towards greater inclusion and reconciliation.

Feedback on the various Shared Connections Events that were staged by our First Nations Community was as follows:

- Members of the First Nations Community were pleased to be able to join the recognition of community service through the awards presentation and citizenship events on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January.
- Organizers of the Shared Connections Events were pleased with how the various activities went but recognize that improvements can be made.
- Increased advertising and information relating to the activities will assist in the ongoing efforts to bring the community together.
- People who may have had a preconceived idea about the event had their opinion changed by attending and involving themselves in the activities.
- A similar format for the 2025 event will be developed.
- The possum skin and didgeridoo that were created because of the activities undertaken are seen as a legacy.
- An application for grant funding will be prepared again.

Council established an internal Australia Day working group and the Mayor was also invited to participate in the discussing ideas for both Australia Day Events and the Shared Connections Events.

The working group did have a review meeting of the 2024 Australia Day and Shared Connections activities earlier in the year and met on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2024 to commence planning for Australia Day and Shared Connections 2025.

Based on all the various views expressed it is suggested that the Council continue with the 2024 format in 2025 this will include the ongoing support for Australia Day Events in our smaller towns.

## **Consultation**

The First Nations Community Development Officer, Mayor, CEO, Director of Corporate Services, Community Development Coordinator, Events and Economic Development Officer, Executive Assistant, Community Engagement and Communications Coordinator and Communications Officer met to revisit the 2024 Australia Day Celebrations and to discuss the plans for the 2025 celebrations.

## **Financial Implications**

Australia Day Event funding and possible grant funding available to assist with costs to stage events.

For the events associated with Australia Day 2024, Council from its budget allocation spent the following amounts:

- Australia Day Town Hall Activities and associated advertising - \$6,600.00
- Small Town Australia Day Grants - \$1,400.00
- Shared Connections \$1,800.00

In addition to these amounts the Shared Connections Event attracted a \$10,000.00 grant from the Federal Government.

Council in its 2024/25 Budget has again allocated funding for Australia Day Shared Connections Activities - \$20,000.00

Applications for grant funding will be prepared once activity details have been determined and finalised.

## **Social Implications**

- Encouraging community to come together
- Council taking a progressive approach in a respectful and inclusive manner
- Improved respect and consideration towards the First Nations community

## **Economic Implications**

A broader range of celebrations may attract visitors to the municipality

## Environmental Implications

Event organisers must consider and minimize the environmental impact that their event will have on the environment. Designated supplier arrangements will assist in ensuring events have adequate waste arrangements in place.

## Risk Management Implications

All events on Council owned and/or managed land must go through Council's Events Approval Process, which includes risk management.

**Attachments:** 1. AUST DAY Placeholder [2.3.1 - 1 page]

## Recommendation/s That Council:

1. Continue with the same Australia Day celebration format in 2025 as it did in 2024.
  - The Citizenship and Awards Ceremonies will be conducted on 25 January.
  - The Robinvale ceremony will take place at the Robinvale Performing Arts Centre during the day, and the Swan Hill ceremony will be held at the Swan Hill Town Hall Performing Arts Centre in the evening.
  - The Shared Connections Events will be held on 26 January. The Swan Hill event will be held at the Swan Hill Riverside Park, starting late in the afternoon.
  - The Robinvale event (time and location) will be determined by the local First Nations community.
2. Call for expressions of interest from community groups interested in holding an Australia Day Event in Swan Hill and determine what level of support will be provided by Council if an event is organized.
3. Communications department to gather further opinion from attendees of all of the planned Australia Day events in 2025, using QR codes, one-on-one interviews (survey questions), and collect feedback from those attending the events – while at the events.



## **Confidential attachment**

- Australia Day Review – OVERVIEW
- Australia Day Results – SUMMARY
- Australia Day Shared Connections events - REVIEW

## 2.4 KSI 4th Quarter

**Directorate:** Corporate Services  
**File Number:** NA  
**Purpose:** For Decision

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

#### **4.1 Excellent management and administration**

4.1.2 Provide robust governance and effective leadership

### Current Strategic Documents

Council Plan 2021-25.

### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to discuss and review the fourth quarter progress report of Council's performance against the Council Plan 2021-2025. The period reported is from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

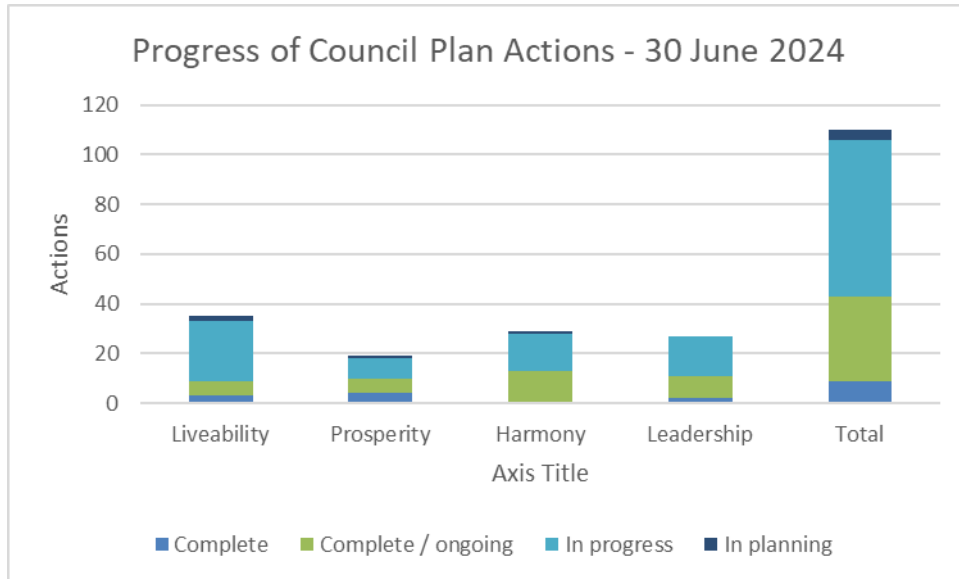
### Discussion

The quarterly progress report, provided as an attachment, offers a summary of the progress against the four Council Plan pillars — Liveability, Prosperity, Harmony and Leadership. The intent of this report is to give Councillors and the community the confidence that Council is on track to meet its published commitments.


In accordance with Section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council developed and adopted a four-year Council Plan on 26 October 2021. The plan is a strategic document outlining what Swan Hill Rural City Council will do to help achieve Council's and the community's vision for the municipality. The plan describes Council's priorities and outcomes for its four-year term and how these will be resourced.

The Council Plan has four strategic pillars which represent the strategic direction to achieve the Community's Vision. The plan consists of strategic objectives and initiatives from which actions are formed and progress is reported.

The table below shows the status of progress of the 110 actions against each of the four strategic pillars on 30 June 2024.



The following actions progressed to the next stage during this quarter.



**Liveability**

**1.3.1 - ENCOURAGE ACTIVE AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, ABILITIES AND INTERESTS:**

**1.3.1.2. Develop detailed plans for the Lake Boga - Swan Hill trail** – *Consultant is currently 'plotting' a new alignment via Back Boga Road, including seeking approvals/conditions for a proposed under-rail pass with v/line (north of Lake Boga).*



**Prosperity**

**2.3.1 - DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY FOR HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND ACCESS TO ALL BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS:**

**2.3.1.1. Advocate for high-speed broadband access to all businesses and residents** - *Projects in the Swan Hill Region received funding under the Commonwealth Government's Regional Connectivity Program in July 2023.*

**2.3.2 - ASSETS FOR OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS:**

**2.3.2.1. Complete road network services review, identify and pursue funding opportunities, focusing on the agricultural sector and industry** – *High Productivity Freight Vehicle (HPFV) strategy for both SHRCC and Gannawarra Shire Council completed in March 2023.*



**Harmony**

**3.1.4 - OUR ELDERLY AND VULNERABLE ARE CARED FOR:**

**3.1.4.3. Undertake actions in the Municipal Early to Middle Years Plan associated with improving services to greater assist vulnerable families** - *A Memorandum of Understanding has been established to deliver a Maternal Child Health service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at Mallee District Aboriginal Services*

**3.2.1 - STRENGTHENING OUR TRUST, RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY:**

**3.2.1.1. Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan** – *A working group has been established to develop the Reconciliation Action Plan.*

**3.2.2 - ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP:**

**3.2.2.1. Continue to offer Aboriginal Scholarships and leadership opportunities** – *Council continues to encourage and support community leadership by offering Aboriginal scholarships and leadership opportunities on an ongoing basis. Mid-Year Scholarships to be advertised soon.*

**Leadership****4.1.2 - PROVIDE ROBUST GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

**4.1.2.3. Provide Councillors with professional development and support to ensure effective governance –** *This is ongoing as opportunities arise. Compulsory training of Councillors will occur following the October 2024 election.*

**4.3.2 - STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS TO INFLUENCE ADVOCACY AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

**4.3.2.2. Review Council's advocacy strategy on an annual basis –** *Advocacy Strategy adopted on 21 May 2019, and reviewed annually prior to Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly.*

**Consultation**

Council consulted the community during the development of the Council Plan 2021-2025. ELT has reviewed the report and requested it be progressed to Council.

**Financial Implications**

This report contains no financial implications, however many of the initiatives contained within the Council Plan require Council to allocate funds in its 2024/25 budget to implement the Council Plan.

**Social Implications**

The report is provided and made available to the community to increase awareness of the activities of Council, provide a mechanism for transparency and could increase community involvement in decision making at Council level.

**Economic Implications**

Implementation of the actions will improve economic outcomes for our community.

**Environmental Implications**

Implementation of the actions will improve environmental outcomes for our community.

**Risk Management Implications**

Council is required to be compliant with the *Local Government Act 2020* regarding the Council Plan and annual reporting. This quarterly report supports that compliance.

**Attachments:** 1. Council Plan Progress Report June 2024 6 (2) [2.4.1 - 27 pages]

**Recommendation/s**

**That Council adopt the 2023-24 fourth quarter Council Plan Progress Report June 2024, as presented.**



# COUNCIL PLAN

## PROGRESS REPORT – June 2024





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# INTRODUCTION

## What is the Council Plan?

The Council Plan is a strategic document outlining what the Swan Hill Rural City Council (Council) will do to achieve Council's and the community's vision for the municipality. The 2021-2025 plan describes Council's Strategic Initiatives for its four-year term.

The Council Plan is an important document that drives everything the Swan Hill Rural City Council does over a four- year period. It sets the vision, priorities and outcomes for Council's term and lists how progress will be measured. The plan guides Council's annual budget, which determines the projects, services, events and other initiatives that will be funded and delivered in the next financial year.

Council is held accountable for its progress on the Council Plan's outcomes through quarterly progress reports, and annually in the Swan Hill Rural City Council's Annual Report.

## How we will track and measure our progress

Each of the Council Plan Initiatives has a number of actions that will track Council's progress. Council will report on its progress in completing the four-year priorities quarterly with updated progress commentary.

All actions will be marked with the following symbols to represent their current status:



Complete - the action has been completed.



Complete/ongoing - actions that span over a number of years that cannot be marked as completed until later years.



In progress - these actions are past the planning phase, and are in progress towards completion.



In planning - actions that are not complete or in progress but actions have been taken are marked as in planning stage.

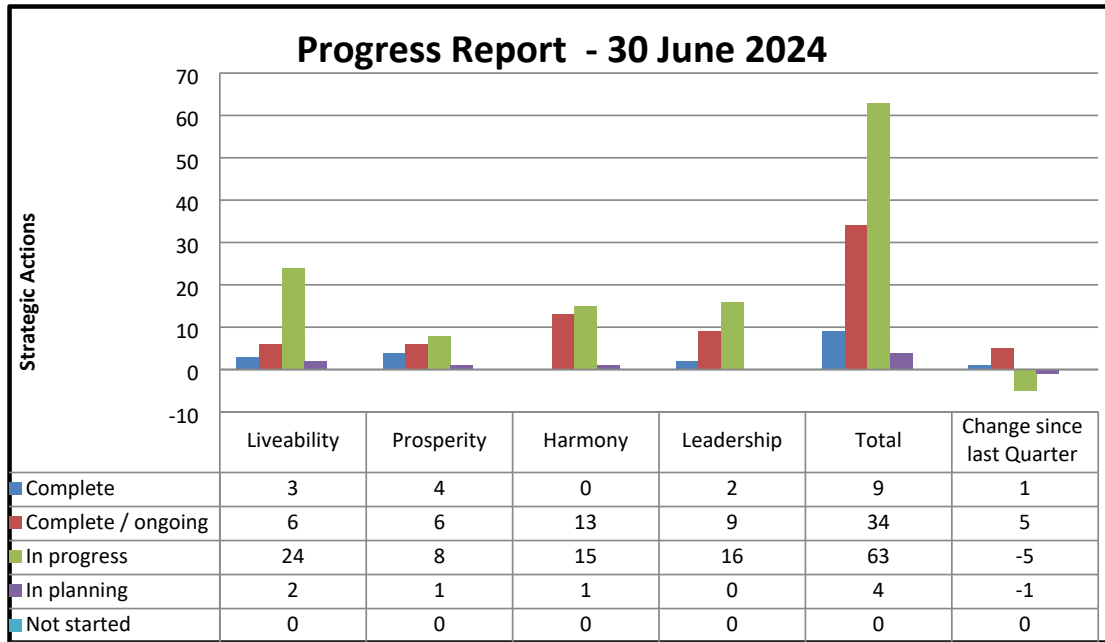


Not started - actions that have not been commenced at the time of reporting.

# OVERALL RESULTS SNAPSHOT

The Council Plan 2021-25 includes 29 initiatives and 110 actions through which the achievement of the Council Plan may be measured over its four-year term.

Each action has a nominated responsible officer who is a member of the Leadership Team, reflecting the importance placed on achieving targets. As some objectives/actions span over a number of years they cannot be marked as completed until later years.



Council further progressed the following actions this quarter:

- 1.3.1.2. Develop detailed plans for the Lake Boga - Swan Hill trail** – *Consultant is currently 'plotting' a new alignment via Back Boga Road, including seeking approvals/conditions for a proposed under-rail pass with v/line (north of Lake Boga).*
- 2.3.1.1. Advocate for high speed broadband access to all businesses and residents** – *Projects in the Swan Hill Region received funding under the Commonwealth Government's Regional Connectivity Program in July 2023.*
- 2.3.2.1. Complete road network services review, identify and pursue funding opportunities, focusing on the agricultural sector and industry** – *The review has been completed.*
- 3.1.4.3. Undertake actions in the Municipal Early to Middle Years Plan associated with improving services to greater assist vulnerable families** – *SHRCC MCH and Mallee District Aboriginal Service (MDAS) have established a Memorandum of Understanding to deliver a MCH service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at MDAS. Service delivery is progressing.*
- 3.2.1.1 Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan** – *A working group has been established to develop the Reconciliation Action Plan.*
- 3.2.2.1. Continue to offer Aboriginal scholarships and leadership opportunities** – *Council continues to encourage and support community leadership by offering Aboriginal scholarships and leadership opportunities on an ongoing basis. Mid-Year Scholarships to be advertised soon.*
- 4.1.2.3. Provide Councillors with professional development and support to ensure effective governance** – *This is ongoing as opportunities arise. Compulsory training of Councillors will occur following the October 2024 election.*
- 4.3.2.2. Review Council's advocacy strategy on an annual basis** – *Advocacy Strategy adopted on 21 May 2019, and reviewed annually prior to Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly.*

# STRATEGIC PILLARS

The Community Vision is supported by four themed pillars – which form the key directions and focus of this Council Plan.

Our vision for the municipality anchors and connects these pillars to deliver real outcomes for the community.



## Liveability

**We will be a healthy, connected and growing community supported by a range of infrastructure and services.**



## Prosperity

**We will continue to build and strengthen a prosperous local economy, through sustainable growth and education. We will focus on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in all areas of our economy.**



## Harmony

**We will be a welcoming community for all, recognised for our maturity and respect for each other.**



## Leadership












**We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.**











**1. We will be a healthy, connected and growing community supported by a range of infrastructure and services**








**Liveability**




1.1. A modern municipality: Vibrant, connected and resilient				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
1.1.1. Attractive urban areas and regional townships	1.1.1.1. Finalise and implement rural living / rural residential strategy	2022/23	In Progress 	Report has been finalised and will be presented to the Council in July 2024.
	1.1.1.2. Complete stage 1 of Vibrant Villages project	2021/22	Complete 	Vibrant Villages Stage 1 project completed (re:\$500,000 RDV funding) Nyah, Nyah West, Lake Boga and Woorinen.
	1.1.1.3. Continue to implement relevant actions of the Swan Hill Riverfront Masterplan.	2021-2025	In Progress 	Discussions continue with relevant State Government Departments in order to reach agreement on a preferred crossing point over the railway line. Final design work for the Pental Island Bridge undertaken with communities to be informed of the project and additional funding is being sought for the project. Ten Steps concepts finalised and will be reported to Council. Community will be advised of the replacement of the ten steps on the basis of like for like. EDU/Community Development/Engineering/Project Management Team working on a coordinated approach to a number of projects on the Swan Hill/Robinvale Riverfronts around delivery and value for funding.
	1.1.1.4. Complete and implement the Robinvale Riverfront Masterplan	2021-2025	In Progress 	Tenders have been evaluated. Discussions with tenderer on the playground component underway to achieve bringing the project within the budget allocated. Funding for the Robinvale Riverbank Restoration Project has been secured and design work will be undertaken to enable the project to go to tender.
	1.1.1.5. Develop Nyah Riverfront Masterplan	2021/22	In Progress 	Nyah West Project due to be completed by September 2024. Lake Boga Footpath Project design being undertaken. Lake BBQ Shelter completed.
	1.1.1.6. Develop Boundary Bend Riverfront Masterplan (Pending funding)	2022-2025	In Planning 	Scope of works to be developed for consideration in the 25/26 budget. Further investigation into the Boundary Bend (BB) Community Plan items has led to the realisation around areas of responsibility and asset ownership. Council will advocate on behalf of the BB Community to the relevant authorities for improvements to the riverfront. More information is being compiled to better record the detail and subsequent feasibility of the project.

	1.1.1.7. Develop a Small Town Strategy	2022/23	In progress 	Implementing Small Town Strategy having regard to Housing Summit outcomes.
1.1.2. Ensure adequate provision of a variety of safe and secure housing	1.1.2.1. Explore the development or sale of Council and other government land in urban areas	2022/23	In Progress 	Council continues to review land ownership with a view of development or sale. For example Feldtmann Lane, Swan Hill, Herbert St, Robinvale and development of land in Ronald Street, Robinvale for housing.
	1.1.2.2. Develop and build houses on Council owned property	2021-2025	In Progress 	Construction of Ronald St, Robinvale underway and on track to achieve a completion date mid October 2024. Preparing to go to market for the provision of real estate agent services for the sale once construction is complete.
	1.1.2.3. Continue to Implement the Robinvale housing strategy	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council adopted its Housing Action Plan for 2024-2026 in May 2024.
	1.1.2.4. Continue development of Tower Hill stages	2021-2025	In Progress 	Nine lots remain available for sale in Stage 14, 2 are currently under offer. Stage 15 civil construction almost completed. The Public Open Space design completed and tender being prepared, planting/completion of the POS will be during the warmer season. Statement of compliance will follow.
	1.1.2.5. Assist South West Development Precinct developers	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council continues to assist developers as required, in order to deliver the best outcomes for the community.
1.1.3. Excellent transport links to allow ease of movement	1.1.3.1. Advocate for a review of the Swan Hill Town Bus route	2022/23	In Progress 	Council continues to advocate for a review of the Swan Hill Town bus route, which will also be considered as part of the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy.
	1.1.3.2. Advocate for the completion of the Murray Basin Rail Project	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council made a submission to the Victorian Rail Freight Strategy.
	1.1.3.3. Advocate for the continual improvement of the Murray Valley Highway and upgrade of the Robinvale Sea Lake Road	2021-2025	In Progress 	Some renewal works have been undertaken on the Robinvale Sea Lake Road and Murray Valley Highway. However, Council will continue to advocate for further improvements to the arterial network on behalf of the community.
	1.1.3.4. Actively participate in the Central Murray Regional Transport Forum	2021-2025	Complete and Ongoing 	Consultants have been appointed to undertake a review of the existing strategy. Meeting held on 27 June 2024 was facilitated by consultants with great participation from Councils and various stakeholders.
	1.1.3.5. Implement relevant actions from the CMRT strategy	2021-2025	Complete and Ongoing 	Consultants have now been appointed to undertake a review of the existing strategy and will be reporting on progress of current actions, and determining new more specific actions with participating Councils.



1.2. Careful and responsible management of our Environment for a sustainable future				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
1.2.1. Engage, empower and mobilise communities to prepare for, adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate	1.2.1.1. Support initiatives that align with policy such as the Circular Economy and provide tangible outcomes for the community, for example: ↑ cleaner air for all, quality and smell ↓ litter, roadside dumping, co-mingling waste	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council was a successful recipient in round three of the state government's Circular Economy Council Fund, which enabled Council to create a Circular Agricultural Plastics Economy.  The project is nearing completion - trailer and mobile baler have been purchased and trial 'work' process has been initiated (bales have been produced). The compost facility is progressing with hardstand area constructed, major operating plant purchased, composting infrastructure purchased, fencing installed, and the sealed entry constructed, with shed and power to be installed soon.
	1.2.1.2. Prepare an advocacy document for renewable energy resources in the municipality	2022/23	In Progress 	Advocacy document completed. Proposed actions to be considered.
	1.2.1.3. Develop drainage strategies for key urban areas in the municipality	2023/24	In Progress 	Due to delays in finalising the base drainage model for both Swan Hill and Robinvale, the expected completion date of the project is to be revised to later in the year (TBC). Community consultation is scheduled to take place in August 2024.
	1.2.1.4. Implement effective diversion and reuse of waste resources	2022/23	In Progress 	The mattress shed has been constructed and solar power installed and connected. Two external concrete slabs are to be constructed and the external natural surface is to be tidied up.
	1.2.1.5. Develop irrigation strategies for key urban areas in the municipality	2022/23	In Progress 	Riverside Park defects liability period ends on August 21. LMW channel currently down for maintenance. Final testing to be completed in August.
1.2.2. Accessible open spaces and healthy rivers and lakes	1.2.2.1. Improve the presentation of the Lake Boga foreshore and its environs in collaboration with the community	2021-2025	In Progress 	Pump station has been constructed. Pruning/removal of trees has been completed to allow trenching for main. Main line has been surveyed.
	1.2.2.2. Prepare a Murray River and lakes access strategy for the municipality incorporating - camping / walking and bike tracks	2024/25	In Progress 	Information provided on proposed alignment by identifying points of interest and connectivity to consultants. Broad community consultation is about to be undertaken by Murray River Tourism and will involve Council's Media Department 15 July - 20 August.
	1.2.2.3 Plan and construct open space development of the decommissioned Number 9 Channel	2024/25	Complete and ongoing 	Work continues with Goulburn Murray Water to determine the purchase of land along the decommissioned channel.

1.3. Building Healthy Communities				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
<b>1.3.1.</b> Encourage active and healthy lifestyles for people of all ages, abilities and interests	1.3.1.1. Continue to implement master plans for all recreation facilities	2021-2025	In Progress 	Ken Harrison Advisory Committee has conducted its first meeting and has considered the issues relating to the future development of the reserve that they will need to address. Community survey for Swan Hill Showgrounds completed, results collated and will return to Council with recommended outcomes.
	1.3.1.2. Develop detailed plans for the Lake Boga - Swan Hill trail	2022/23	In Progress 	Consultant is currently 'plotting' a new alignment via Back Boga Road, including seeking approvals/conditions for a proposed under-rail pass with v/line (north of Lake Boga).
	1.3.1.3. Support initiatives leading to better outcomes for children and families	2021-2025	In Progress 	The Robinvale Pregnancy and Early Years Expo was held on 8 September 2023. The Swan Hill Pregnancy and Early Years Expo was held in Swan Hill on 8 May 2024.
	1.3.1.4. Partner with agencies to address preventable illnesses and active lifestyles	2021-2025	In Progress 	Robinvale Early Years Workforce Development Partnership Team, with secretariat support from Council, was established and is working to develop and implement a workforce development model to support local participants to undertake early childhood studies and endeavour to build the early years workforce locally. At the end of June 2024 there are 12 people currently undertaking Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) studies. There is a further 5-10 people interested in ECEC studies. There are 13 participants in a pre-accreditation program being conducted by Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council in Robinvale to assist people to build their skills prior to starting a course. Robinvale College has donated desktop computers, deemed in excess, for distribution to people wanting to undertake ECEC studies who do not have a computer at home.
<b>1.3.2.</b> Spaces where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can flourish	1.3.2.1. Reinvigorate performance spaces across the area, including Robinvale Community Art Centre	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	Usage of Robinvale Community Arts Centre has continued to increase. Robinvale Ballet Guild are presenting classes from 4pm - 7.45pm three days a week. In June St Marys Primary School presented their first Performing Concert in the theatre. In July SHTHPACC presented renowned First Nations musician William Martin and Veronique Serret, utilizing foyer as a performance area. It has been identified Heating / Cooling System needs to be replaced after this Winter Season. It has been suggested to delay renovations until this has taken place.
	1.3.2.2. Incorporate child and family-friendly principles into development of outdoor spaces	2022/23	In Progress 	Council service areas are committed and taking meaningful action to progress compliance with Child Safe Standards and is ongoing.
	1.3.2.3. Review and implement the public art policy	2021/22	Complete 	Public Art Policy reviewed and approved 15 March 2022.






1.4. Foster Creative and Cultural opportunities				
TRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
1.4.1. Promote and celebrate the creative and cultural pursuits within the region	1.4.1.1 Deliver creative industries projects across the region	2022/23	In Progress 	Delivered for Manangatang and district. Currently planning is underway for Balranald and Manangatang schools to host a writer in residence in October/November.
	1.4.1.2. Support local creatives in developing their businesses (Arts Action)	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	An 'Australia's Creative Rural Economy' (ACRE) residency in Manangatang supported local creative and videographer.
	1.4.1.3. Enhance artistic outreach programs in smaller towns and communities, including Fairfax Youth Initiative and ACRE programs	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	The process of The Fairfax Youth Initiative becoming a not for profit entity has begun, with the engagement of a consultant. Within the next 12 months this process will be completed. Plans for the 2024 Go North Arts Festival are underway. The Winter Twilight Arts Market is currently being curated.












## Prosperity

**2. We will continue to build and strengthen a prosperous local economy, through sustainable growth and education. We will focus on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in all areas of our economy**

2.1. Effective partnerships for prosperity				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
2.1.1. Support diverse educational opportunities that fosters life-long learning	2.1.1.1. Establish an effective relationship with the education sector through regular engagement	2022/23	In Progress 	February 2024 - Suntafe accommodation planning - Robinvale Secondary College - Discussion about the Stars Foundation. (Female equivalent of Clontarf) April 2024 - CUC Mallee Official Opening
	2.1.1.2. Advocate for the establishment of an education hub in Swan Hill	2023/24	Complete 	Country Universities Centre (CUC) Mallee officially opened in April 2024.
	2.1.1.3. Support effective and responsive early years education opportunities in Manangatang, Woorinen South and Swan Hill	2023/24	In Progress 	The Swan Hill Early Years Services Consultants Project is currently underway and will be completed in September 2024. This research project entails a comprehensive early year's community consultation to understand the impact of the rollout of 3 and 4 year old kindergarten, unmet demand for kindergarten and child care. Maternal and Child Health and Out of Hours School Care, impact on workforce and infrastructure, and the best site for a Children's Hub in Swan Hill.
	2.1.1.4. Assist youth with diverse employment pathways through the Empower a Engage! Programs	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	Youth Support Officer established connection with Manangatang Student Representative Council and working with them fortnightly. Empower supporting Robinvale with industry tours and also work placement support. Began a Pasifika industry connection program with Latrobe University in Robinvale.
2.1.2. Support our key industries	2.1.2.1. Establish a Terms of Reference and develop an Annual Plan with the AgriBusiness Advisory Committee	2022/23	In Progress 	Terms of Reference in place. Annual Plan to be developed.

	2.1.2.2. Consider the establishment of an Industry Support Committee (Manufacturing and other)	2022/23	In Progress 	Economic Development Strategy to be considered by Council at its July 2024 Council Meeting and following its adoption Council Officers will develop the committee concept given that support for industry/manufacturing is highlighted as a key pillar in the document. Terms of Reference will be developed and to be endorsed by ELT and Council.
	2.1.2.3. Review the Economic Development Strategy to ensure a targeted focus on key outcomes	2022/23	In Progress 	Housing Action Greater Swan Hill Committee has been formed and has commenced working on projects relating to finance, vacant land and workforce demand. Council adopted its Housing Action Plan and the actions are being implemented. Council awaiting the outcome of the Regional Workers Accommodation Grant application for the McCartney Court Housing Project. Council will develop an application for infrastructure funding for housing for the Federal Government funding program.
	2.1.2.4. Develop a strategic plan for future success of the Pioneer Settlement	2023/24	In Planning 	Approval for the new building has been granted by Heritage Victoria and the plans are set to go to tender. Once confirmed, work on the Pioneer Settlement Strategic Plan will commence.
	2.1.2.5. Develop an Economic recovery plan in response to Covid-19	2021/22	Complete 	An Economic Recovery Response Plan was developed in late 2020 and is complete.
	2.1.2.6. Establish a Livestock Exchange Stakeholder Committee to improve stakeholder engagement and to better meet the needs of Livestock Exchange users	2022/23	Complete 	Meeting held on 18 June 2024. Representation low, so need to ensure that the meetings are adding value to participants. Next meeting to discuss stakeholder and recruitment initiatives to be a part of the Committee may be considered.

2.2. A thriving diverse economy				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
2.2.1. Encourage the growth and development of our economy	2.2.1.1. Develop a new planning scheme that is clear in its intention, supports growth and builds confidence and certainty in land use	2024/25	In Progress 	Work is progressing on planning scheme amendments in Monash Drive Swan Hill (Old GrainCorp site). Authorisation has been received for this amendment.  River Road Swan Hill (Lower Murray Water proposed Water Treatment Plant) amendment is not progressing. The responsible Department has requested further information from the proponent which has yet to be provided.
	2.2.1.2. Continue to support existing businesses to grow through the implementation of the Better Approvals process	2021-2025	Complete and ongoing 	Business Support Team is established and guides have been finalised.
	2.2.1.3. Actively pursue the establishment of a designated area migration agreement (DAMA)	2021-2023	In Progress 	Council will make contact with Shepparton to find out how the DAMA is working and whether there might be interest now in Swan Hill to join the Dama after 18 month of operation.








2.3. Infrastructure that enables prosperity				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
2.3.1. Digital connectivity that allows people to live, work and play across our region	2.3.1.1. Advocate for high speed broadband access to all businesses and residents	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	Projects in the Swan Hill Region received funding under the Commonwealth Government's Regional Connectivity Program in July 2023.
	2.3.1.2. Seek innovative solutions for broadband and mobile connectivity	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	Council Officers continue to identify possible opportunities including funding and meet with providers on a semi regular basis.
2.3.2. Assets for our current and future needs	2.3.2.1. Complete road network services review, identify and pursue funding opportunities, focusing on the agricultural sector and industry	2022/23	Complete 	High Productivity Freight Vehicle (HPFV) strategy for both SHRCC and Gannawarra Shire Council completed in March 2023.
	2.3.2.2. Deliver and review Councils capital works program and Major Projects Plan each year	2021-2025	Complete and ongoing 	Fourteen projects underway, two with significant design components. The design for the Art Gallery Redevelopment Project was finalised in April-May 2024, and will now proceed to tender.  The Lake Boga Floating Pontoon, fully funded by Victorian Fisheries Authority, was completed in June'24 and opened to public.
	2.3.2.3. Review current assets and identify future needs - create a program to bridge the gap and identify funding requirements.	2021-2025	In Progress 	Asset Management Plan's for all asset classes being progressed.
	2.3.2.4. Continue to plan and seek funding to implement the development of community infrastructure	2021-2025	In Progress 	Successful in obtaining funding for LED Screens, Ten Steps, Pental Island Bridge, Robinvale Bank Restoration, Pental Island Stage 1, Dining PODS. The Swan Hill Riverfront Precinct was completed in May 2024.



























## Harmony

3. We will be a welcoming community for all,  
recognised by our maturity and respect for each other.

3.1. Communities that are safe, welcoming and inclusive				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
3.1.1. The diversity of our communities is celebrated	3.1.1.1. Engage with LGBTIQ+ community members to improve inclusion and community awareness through leadership of the Inclusion Network.	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	Continuing working within the Gender Equality group.
	3.1.1.2. Support co-designed development of multicultural events and activities	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	Council continues to support co designed events and activities.
	3.1.1.3. All-abilities events and activities are well-planned and promoted	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	This is now part of established procedure, to liaise with key support agencies.
	3.1.1.4. Continue to develop the annual Harmony Day and Lantern Festival events.	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	Council supports these events annually, and is alert to new and upcoming events that are led by the multicultural community.
3.1.2. Encourage the growth and positive development of our youth	3.1.2.1. Improve Youth Support Services outreach to young people in Manangatang and Robinvale	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	A Robinvale based Youth Worker is based out of the Robinvale College. Another outreach worker currently spending a day and half in Robinvale and looking to re-establish in Manangatang in 2024.
	3.1.2.2. Ensure young people are involved in co-design of annual events	2023/24	Complete and ongoing 	Robinvale Youth Group is active with 18 current members- weekly meetings. NOVO Youth Council Active with 8 members - weekly meetings. Manangatang SRC group of 12 young people with weekly meetings. Completed Leadership Camp at Mt Evelyn. Camp was co-designed with Youth Council and Robinvale Youth Group.
	3.1.2.3. Support and redevelop the Fairfax Youth Initiative to enhance leadership outcomes for rural and remote youth involved in creative pursuits	2022/23	In Progress 	External consultant is working with the parties involved with Fairfax to complete this project.

	3.1.2.4. Undertake the youth wellbeing actions from the Youth Strategy, specifically mental and sexual health.	2023/24	Complete and ongoing 	Three groups of young people attended PE/Health Week and we delivered an Affirmative Consent Program. The Leadership Camp also conducted workshops on Self-Worth and Healthy Relationships
3.1.3. Flourishing community organisations	3.1.3.1. Actively promote the benefits of Volunteering in all our communities, streamline the process to facilitate volunteering in Council activities and programs	2022 - 2024	In Progress 	Council departments work with Media to coordinate an annual advertising campaign aligned with Volunteers Week. Individual services such as the Library and Pioneer Settlement conduct volunteer appreciation events.
	3.1.3.2. Provide support and training (Governance, Leadership and Strategic Planning) for our small town progress/improvement groups	2022/23	In Progress 	New arrangements relating to Councils ongoing support for community development have been delivered to all town groups, continuing to support town groups with grant applications.
	3.1.3.3. Improve engagement with community based special interest groups	2022/23	In Progress 	Mayor/Councillors have actively represented Council at a number of special interest groups and functions throughout this quarter.
3.1.4. Our elderly and vulnerable are cared for	3.1.4.1. Support the development of Residential Aged Care services	2023/24	In Progress 	There have been no increases in residential aged care facilities in the area; however, Council would be involved in assisting through provision of data, planning and building advice.
	3.1.4.2. Determine Council's role in aged care services	2022/23	In Progress 	Council completed the transition process in May-June 2024; however, work continues on defining some key elements of ongoing support for elderly residents, such as the establishment of an Aged Care Network.
	3.1.4.3. Undertake actions in the Municipal Early to Middle Years Plan associated with improving services to greater assist vulnerable families	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	A Memorandum of Understanding has been established to deliver a Maternal Child Health service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at Mallee District Aboriginal Services.
	3.1.4.4. Actively engage with local support networks to assist with accessibility and inclusion initiatives	2022/23	Complete and ongoing 	Ongoing - Youth Program working with schools, headspace, and other agencies such as health services to ensure inclusion in all events and programs. Annual support for Mental Health Week Youth Balls and Youth Arts Festivals during the Council term. Accessibility support agencies now involved in major events such as Harmony Day, some of these groups are headspace, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Intereach, and Mallee Family Care.
	3.1.4.5. Review Community Access and Inclusion Strategy (CAIS).	2021/22	In Progress 	No progress on this action item since the cessation of the Rural Access Officer.




3.1.5. All members of our Communities are supported	3.1.5.1. Work in partnership with local agencies to prevent all forms of Family Violence.	2021 - 2025	In Progress 	Ongoing - Council supports the 16 days of activism events and through the Swan Hill District Gender Equity Network other initiatives such as promoting the prevention of violence message campaigns by Rotary and other agencies.
	3.1.5.2. Develop and implement a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)	2021/22	Complete and ongoing 	Gender Equality Action Plan completed and implementation is underway.
	3.1.5.3. Ensure that we consider people of all abilities in the development of infrastructure and events	2021-2025	In Progress 	Ongoing - most recent example is the redevelopment of all abilities toilets in the Town Hall, in consultation with users.
	3.1.5.4. Develop a Building Safer Communities program	2022/23	In Planning 	Awaiting suitable funding rounds to open. Department of Justice funding criteria has changed.








.2. An engaged and respected Aboriginal community				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
3.2.1. Strengthening our trust, relationships and partnerships with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community	3.2.1.1. Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan	2022/23	In Progress 	A working group has been established to develop the Reconciliation Action Plan.
	3.2.1.2. Adequately resource Aboriginal Engagement	2022/23	In Progress 	Council's new website has been updated with First Nations Community Information, First Nations Committee continues to meet.
	3.2.1.3. Support our Aboriginal community to work towards a treaty or treaties	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council's Aboriginal Development Officer has been appointed to the First Nations Advisory Committee, working together with recommendations for the Reconciliation Action Plan.
3.2.2. Encourage and support community leadership	3.2.2.1. Continue to offer Aboriginal scholarships and leadership opportunities	2021-2025	Complete and ongoing 	Council continues to encourage and support community leadership by offering Aboriginal scholarships and leadership opportunities on an ongoing basis. Mid-Year Scholarships to be advertised soon.
	3.2.2.2. Continue to assist to develop Our Place identifying an Aboriginal language name and business model	2021/22	In Progress 	Council has been successful in receiving a grant that will allow replacement of the Pental Island pedestrian bridge and commence Stage 1 activation of Pental Island including a yarning circle and pathways.
	3.2.2.3. Proactively support leadership within our Aboriginal community	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council has engaged a consultant to work with First Nations Committee to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan, and a working group has been established to assist in developing the Plan.
3.2.3. Celebration and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait history and culture	3.2.3.1. Investigate and seek funding for Aboriginal tourism opportunities	2022-2025	In Progress 	Funding received to undertake Pental Island Bridge Construction and stage 1 of the Pental Island Masterplan. Additional funding sought to enable stage 2 of the Pental Island Masterplan to be implemented. Discussions to be held with the First Nations Committee about the business model that needs to be prepared and implemented for the Pental Island Project. First Nations Committee involved in the Pioneer Settlement Building Hub Design and operation.
	3.2.3.2. Formal inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input in Art Gallery programming and cultural activities	2021-2025	Complete and Ongoing 	Exhibition 'On Country', celebrating First Nations artists from our permanent collection, opened in June and is running for ten weeks.
	3.2.3.3. Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander days of significance	2021-2025	Complete and Ongoing 	Review of activities undertaken and community consultation outcomes with respect to Australia Day to be reported to the August 2024 Council Meeting together with any suggested changes to event formats.




## Leadership







### 4. We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.



4.1. Excellent management and administration				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
4.1.1. Well managed resources for a sustainable future	4.1.1.1. Invest in the development of employees to enable a highly skilled and engaged workforce	2021-2025	In Progress 	Staff reviews are underway, training needs analysis (identifies individual training needs) occurs during this process which results in the organisational training plan. Additional training outside of this occurs in accordance with council policy.
	4.1.1.2. Promote a culture of continuous improvement with a focus on efficiency and customer service	2021-2025	In Progress 	<p>The budget process has been completed and adopted by Council at its June meeting. The Authority Altitude upgrade has seen a number of processes within the Finance department change, with the receipt, authorisation and processing of accounts payable being a significant change. While the improvements can be seen from those procuring goods and services and the authorisation of such, the additional workload on processing was unexpected. We now move onto the finalisation of the 2023/24 financial accounts. Work has been done with project managers to determine which projects have been completed and the recognition of assets, along with the review of program results and performance.</p> <p>Customer Service initiatives:</p> <p>Looking to launch a quick customer service questionnaire for customers to complete at the counter along with a website questionnaire with slightly more detail (drafts completed).</p> <p>Various items on the knowledge base require updating along with new items to reviewed and included.</p> <p>First draft of Customer Service Charter completed. Customer Service Strategy still in progress.</p>
	4.1.1.3. Embed rigor in our planning process to ensure long-term sustainability and continuity of Council's services	2021-2025	In Progress 	<p>Our 10-Year Major Projects Plan and our long term Financial Plan detail the activities that Council proposes to undertake over the short, medium and long term and guides the future strategies and actions of Council to make sure that it continues to operate in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>The 2024-25 Council Budget was presented for consideration and adoption at the June Council Meeting. To inform the Budget preparation, a formal advertising and submission process was undertaken. Suggestions for projects and programs from the community were also received during the year and considered as part of the Budget</p>








				<p>preparation process.</p> <p>Councils 'Lets Talk' page invites the community to learn more about, and provide input on, current projects and plans.</p>
	4.1.1.4. Develop and implement a Workforce Development Plan	2021/22	<p>Complete and ongoing</p> 	<p>The Workforce Development Plan contains 41 Actions, 30 have been completed, with another 9 in progress, and 2 yet to commence. 73 per cent of the Plan completed by 30 June 2024.</p>
4.1.2. Provide robust governance and effective leadership	4.1.2.1. Implement a Project Management Framework and system	2021/22	<p>Complete</p> 	<p>The Project Management Governance Framework (PMGF) has been in place for a year. A survey was conducted to understand any shortcomings and areas for improvement. Responses received from 50% of the respondents. Further action being planned to ensure effectiveness of the PMGF.</p>
	4.1.2.2. Develop and implement a Strategic Asset Management plan and supporting Asset Management plans	2021/22	<p>Complete and ongoing</p> 	<p>Strategic Asset Management Plan due for review after election.</p> <p>Draft Fleet Asset Management Plan completed.</p> <p>Sealed road condition assessment awarded, Transport Asset Management Plan to be updated.</p> <p>Stormwater valuation to be completed 2024-25, SWAMP AMP to be updated.</p>
	4.1.2.3. Provide Councillors with professional development and support to ensure effective governance	2021-2025	<p>Complete and ongoing</p> 	<p>This is ongoing as opportunities arise. Compulsory training of Councillors will occur following the October 2024 election.</p>
	4.1.2.4. Work with Town Representative groups to better plan and deliver projects	2021-2025	<p>In Progress</p> 	<p>Ultima reviewing town plan and governance arrangements. Piangil reviewing community plan. Manangatang Community plan to be reviewed. Funding Grants for PODS for Manangatang and Piangil successfully secured.</p>
4.1.3. Sound, sustainable: o Financial management o Excellence in service delivery o Strategic planning	4.1.3.1 Deliver projects on time, on budget and within scope	2021-2025	<p>Complete and Ongoing</p> 	<p>Project/Milestones completed this quarter: Lake Boga Floating Pontoon. Design for Art Gallery.</p>
	4.1.3.2. Working to budget and ensure future planning to meet financial needs	2021-2025	<p>Complete and Ongoing</p> 	<p>The 2024-25 Budget has undergone public consultation during May and was adopted at the June 2024 Council meeting. Annual Financial Statements preparation in progress. Work is currently underway for the revaluation of infrastructure assets. Capitalisation of projects undertaken during 2023-24 has been ongoing during June. The assessment of program budget results to budget are being undertaken, to ensure the correct allocation of costs for the financial year and assists in the determination of a rates result to be reported to Council.</p>


	4.1.3.3. Review two service delivery areas in years 2 (Parks and Gardens / Library) and 4 (Economic and Community development / Circular economy) of this Council Plan to improve and ensure accessibility and consistency of our customer experience	2022/23 & 2024/25	In Progress 	Plans for the service review for parks and garden and the library has been drafted by the internal auditors and review to be conducted in August (Parks and Gardens) and in September (Library).
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4.2. Transparent communication and engagement				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
4.2.1. Effective and authentic engagement with our community	4.2.1.1. Review our Community Engagement Strategy to ensure our engagement is meeting the needs of the community	2022/23	In Progress 	Community Engagement Strategy has been reviewed and updated with new style - currently updating the action plan.
	4.2.1.2. Embed the Community Engagement principles and practices across the organisation	2023/24	In Progress 	Further modules have been secured and will be running next quarter.
	4.2.1.3. Build constructive relationships with special interest groups in our community	2021-2025	In Progress 	Significant community engagement has taken place this quarter. We actively engaged with a number of sporting user groups for the Swan Hill Reserve Masterplan survey process, with 385 contributions. We reached out to schools and young people, promoting the Yamagata Youth Exchange Program and successfully received promising applications. Community groups and event organisers had the opportunity to apply for vital funding support via our community grants program and we received an influx of applications. We launched an Ag plastic recycling trial, working alongside local farmers to assist them with more sustainable solutions.
	4.2.1.4. Review our use of social media platforms across Council with a view of increasing Councils exposure and ensuring consistent moderation	2021/22	Complete 	Consistent media monitor this quarter. During this quarter we also established a Social Media Users Register to identify all staff members with access to social media sites and we will be developing a Social Media Users Code of Conduct in the future.
4.2.2. Visible presence in our community	4.2.2.1. Maximising the opportunities for Councillors and senior staff to represent Council at relevant community meetings, functions and events	2021-2025	Complete & ongoing 	<p>In April, the viewing platform overlooking the Little Murray River was unveiled.</p> <p>In May, Council had the honour of hosting Her Excellency The Hon. Margaret Gardner, Victorian Governor. Her Excellency visited a number of locations; including, the Robinvale Villiers-Bretonneux Memorial, toured the Robinswood Homestead, attended a Civic Reception at the Art Gallery, and viewed the Heartbeat of the Murray laser lightshow at the Pioneer Settlement.</p> <p>In June, the CEO and Mayor went to Canberra to attend the Australian Local Government Associations National General Assembly. Whilst there, Council joined with its partners in the Murray River Group of Councils and other key stakeholders, to voice their concern about the potential negative impact of the open market water buyback scheme on regional communities.</p>
	4.2.2.2. Continue quarterly Coffee with a Councillor around the municipality	2021-2025	In Progress 	Coffee with a Councillor sessions were held in Swan Hill, Woorinen South and Robinvale. Each session gave Councillors the opportunity to engage with a broad range of residents about matters that are important to them.

	4.2.2.3. Arrange structured tours of the municipality where Councillors and senior staff meet with key community groups	2022/23	In Progress 	Mallee Regional Partnership Tour of the Almond Processing Plant (Australian Farming Services) Pickering Transport with Justin Pickering – Freight challenges impacting the Region.
	4.2.2.4. Create a culture where staff are ambassadors for the Council	2021-2025	In Progress 	Staff continue to maintain a visible presence in the community. Annual Staff Recognition Awards help embed Council values whilst acknowledging the achievements of our staff as internal and/or external ambassadors for the Council.

4.3. Bold leadership, strong partnerships and effective advocacy				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	ACTION	DUE DATE	PROGRESS	COMMENTARY
<b>4.3.1.</b> Create meaningful partnerships across our communities	4.3.1.1. Continue involvement in community groups	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council report on this monthly at Ordinary Council meeting and this is recorded in the minutes which are available to the public <a href="https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/about/council/meetings/2024-council-meetings">https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/about/council/meetings/2024-council-meetings</a>
	4.3.1.2. Support Robinvale with its Committee for Robinvale Euston (C4RE)	2022/23	Complete and Ongoing 	Robinvale Euston Workforce Network is in the process of establishing itself as Company Limited by Guarantee, with an associated Foundation. In June 2024 workshops and planning sessions conducted to begin this work. Council is an active partner/member.
	4.3.1.3. Support the health and wellbeing partnerships that address preventable illnesses.	2023/24	Complete and Ongoing 	Council is represented on both the Murray and Mallee Primary Health Units (PHUs), as the LGA is now split across two Department of Health sub-regions. These PHUs will be assisting Council with development of the Public Health and Wellbeing components of the Council Plan in 2025.
	4.3.1.4. Continue to support and work with Swan Hill Incorporated	2021-2025	In Progress 	Ongoing partnership with Swan Hill. Council Officers working closely with Swan Hill Inc on Events, Christmas Promotion, New South Wales State Golf Championship. Regular meetings with Swan Hill Inc Executive continue. Swan Hill Inc Board to present to Council its budget and marketing plan for consideration and endorsement by Council in August 2024.
<b>4.3.2.</b> Strong relationship with State and Federal governments to influence advocacy and funding opportunities	4.3.2.1. Continue to advocate on the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved Healthcare for our people, including a new hospital for Swan Hill</li> <li>A new Murray River Bridge at Swan Hill</li> <li>Complete the Murray Basin Rail Project</li> <li>Housing and enabling infrastructure</li> <li>Better use of environmental water and the development of a plan specific to the Murray River between Swan Hill and Robinvale.</li> </ul>	2021-2025	In Progress 	Council continues to advocate with State and Federal governments on these issues including most recently raising these issues as part of the Victorian Governors visit to our municipality.
	4.3.2.2. Review Council's advocacy strategy on an annual basis	2021-2025	Complete and Ongoing 	Advocacy Strategy adopted on 21 May 2019, and reviewed annually prior to Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly.
<b>4.3.3.</b> Working together in	4.3.3.1. Positively promote our region as a great place	2021-2025	In Progress 	Tourism benefits of region is outlined in advertised positions. Additionally, look at all tourism marketing opportunities available to Council.

promotion of the municipality	4.3.3.2. Continue to work with Murray River Tourism and Swan Hill Incorporated to promote the municipality	2021-2025	In Progress 	Murray Valley Tourism Trail underway with community consultation to commence late July/early August 2024.
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## 2.5 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Policy

**Directorate:** Corporate Services  
**File Number:** S16-25-02-008  
**Purpose:** For Decision

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**3. Harmony** - We will be a welcoming community for all, recognised for our maturity and respect for each other.

#### **3.1 Communities that are safe, welcoming and inclusive**

3.1.1 The diversity of our communities is celebrated

### Current Strategic Documents

No strategic documents applicable.

### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

### Summary

It is a legislative responsibility of State and Local Government bodies to act compatibly with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter). The purpose of the Charter is to protect and promote human rights in Victoria. This is achieved by:

- Setting out the rights that are protected (20 human rights are set out in the Act);
- Requiring that all statutory provisions (eg. Laws and regulations) be interpreted so far as is practicable in a way that is compatible with human rights; and
- Requiring all public authorities to act compatibly with the Charter.

The attached policy contains minor amendments reflecting council's experiences in administering the Act and responding to complaints.

### Discussion

There has been no significant change to the intent of the Act or the Regulations that would warrant change to the Policy. However, the changes recommended by this report reflect council's experiences with the Act over the previous four years.



The changes recommended in this report are minor and relate to the range of applicable documents to be reviewed against 'Human Rights' and the list of legislation related to 'Human Rights'.

Firstly, it is recommended that 'Plans' be added to the list of documents and programs that should be reviewed upon their creation or amendment for their compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights. The list currently encompasses 'local laws, policies, procedures, project delivery and service delivery'. For clarity, 'plan' refers to 'a set of decisions about how to do something in the future' and not a diagrammatic rendition of something to be made or built.

Secondly, it is recommended that the list of 'Related Legislation' in the Policy document be updated to include:

- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006;
- Constitution Act 1975;
- Gender Equality Act 2020; and
- Local Government Act 2020.

Each of the above instruments include provisions relevant to human rights. The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, Constitution Act 1975 and Local Government Act 2020 provide for acknowledgement of, and cultural rights of, Aboriginal peoples. Whilst the Gender Equality Act 2020 was enacted to, amongst other objectives, further promote the right to equality.

Finally, a minor administrative change is being made to reflect the designation of the policy. The policy numbering will be amended to recognise its status as a Council policy (ie. The policy's identification will be denoted by CPOL rather than POL in the construction of its policy number).

### **Consultation**

Nil.

### **Financial Implications**

Nil.

### **Social Implications**

Nil.

### **Economic Implications**

Nil.

### **Environmental Implications**



Nil.

### **Risk Management Implications**

Nil.

**Attachments:** 1. Charter of Human Rights policy CPOLGOV008 V1 5 202012  
[2.5.1 - 3 pages]

### **Options**

1. Adopt the recommended changes to the Policy;
2. Not adopt the recommended changes to the Policy.

### **Recommendation/s**

**That Council adopt the recommended changes to the Policy.**

Date adopted November 2007  
 Last review August 2024  
 Next review August 2028  
 Responsible Officer Information Coordinator

Fully compliant with Victorian  
 Charter of Human Rights and  
 Responsibilities Act 2006



**POLICY TITLE** CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
**POLICY NUMBER** POL/GOV008

## 1. PURPOSE

The policy sets out Council's position to ensure compatibility and compliance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter).

## 2. SCOPE

The Policy applies to all Council local laws, plans, policies, directives, procedures, project delivery and service delivery as well as when Council manages risk, makes decisions and manages complaints. Council is required to ensure that the policy principles are universally adopted and that all staff have an awareness and respect for the intent of the Charter of Human Rights.

## 3. POLICY

All Council business will be conducted with a view to providing a fair go for all persons that reflect four basic Charter principles of freedom, respect, equality and dignity as follows:

### Freedom

The principle of freedom includes:

- freedom from forced work
- freedom of movement
- freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- freedom of expression
- right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association
- property rights
- right to liberty and security of the person
- fair hearing
- rights in criminal proceedings
- right not to be tried or punished more than once
- protection from retrospective criminal laws.

### Respect

The principle of respect includes:

- right to life
- protection of families and children
- cultural rights, including recognition of the distinct cultural rights of the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

Charter of Human Rights Policy CPOL/GOV008		
Version: 1.5	This document is uncontrolled when printed	Page 1 of 2

## Equality

The principle of equality includes:

- recognition and equality before the law
- entitlement to participate in public life (including voting).

## Dignity

The principle of dignity includes:

- prohibition on torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment
- protection of privacy and reputation
- humane treatment when deprived of liberty
- appropriate treatment of children in the criminal process.

## 4. RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES/DOCUMENTS

POL/STAFF105 Equal Opportunity Policy

## 5. RELATED LEGISLATION

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

Constitution Act 1975

Crimes Act 1958

Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1995

Freedom Of Information Act 1982

Gender Equality Act 2020

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

Local Government Act 2020

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012

Crimes Act 1914 (Cmwlth)

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cmwlth)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1996 (Cmwlth)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cmwlth)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cmwlth)

## 6. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version Number	Issue Date	Description of Change
1.0	November 2007	Initial release
1.1	December 2012	Review
1.2	May 2013	Review
1.3	March 2015	Review
1.4	June 2016	Review
1.5	December 2020	Review

Charter of Human Rights Policy CPOL/GOV008		
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**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mayor** **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Charter of Human Rights Policy CPOL/GOV008		
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## 2.6 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation

**Directorate:** Corporate Services  
**File Number:** S18-08-02-04  
**Purpose:** For Decision

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

#### 4.1 Excellent management and administration

4.1.2 Provide robust governance and effective leadership

### Current Strategic Documents

No strategic documents applicable.

### Declarations of Interest

Director of Corporate Services - as the responsible Director, I declare that I have the following disclosable interests in this matter:

### Summary

Many of the functions and powers of council staff stem from their delegations and/or Appointments as Authorised Officers. With the appointment of new staff within the Planning and Development Directorate, it is timely to issue two new Instruments of Appointment and Authorisation.

### Discussion

There is a basic distinction between a Delegation and an Appointment. A Delegate acts on behalf of the Council, exercising the Council's powers. A person who is appointed to a position has the powers of that position under the Act.

Council's Chief Executive Officer has the power to authorise various members of Council staff under the instrument of delegation issued by Council. However, advice from Council's solicitors recommends the appointment of Planning Officers as Authorised Officers by Council under section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

With the appointment of two new Planners to the Development Team, it is necessary for Council to appoint the officers named in the attached Instruments of Appointment and Authorisation as Authorised Officers under section 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

### Consultation

Nil.

### **Financial Implications**

Nil.

### **Social Implications**

Nil.

### **Economic Implications**

Nil.

### **Environmental Implications**

Nil.

### **Risk Management Implications**

Appointment of a person as an Authorised Officer must be aligned to their role, associated functions of that role and qualifications and/or necessary experience required to perform the role.

- Attachments:**
1. Rutvik Muley [2.6.1 - 1 page]
  2. Muhammad Salman [2.6.2 - 1 page]

### **Options**

1. Appoint the personnel recommended within this report As Authorised Officers;  
or
2. Decline to appoint the personnel recommended within this report as Authorised Officers.

### **Recommendation/s**

#### **That Council:**

1. **Appoint Mr Rutvik Muley and Mr Muhammad Salman as Authorised Officers as set out in the attached instruments.**
2. **Resolve that the instruments take effect upon signing and sealing and remain in force until varied or revoked.**
3. **Sign and seal the instruments as soon as possible.**

## **Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation** ***(Planning and Environment Act 1987)***

In this instrument "**officer**" means -

Rutvik Muley

**By this instrument of appointment and authorisation Swan Hill Rural City Council -**

1. under section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* - appoints the officer to be an authorised officer for the purposes of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the regulations made under that Act; and
2. under section 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020* authorises the officer generally to institute proceedings for offences against the Acts and regulations described in this instrument.

**It is declared that** this instrument -

- (a) comes into force immediately upon its execution;
- (b) remains in force until varied or revoked.

This instrument is authorised by a resolution of the Swan Hill Rural City Council on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

THE COMMON SEAL )  
SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL )  
Was hereunto affixed in the presence of: )

.....Councillor

.....Councillor

.....Chief Executive Officer



## **Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation** ***(Planning and Environment Act 1987)***

In this instrument "**officer**" means -

Muhammad Salman

**By this instrument of appointment and authorisation Swan Hill Rural City Council -**

1. under section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* - appoints the officer to be an authorised officer for the purposes of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the regulations made under that Act; and
2. under section 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020* authorises the officer generally to institute proceedings for offences against the Acts and regulations described in this instrument.

**It is declared that** this instrument -

- (a) comes into force immediately upon its execution;
- (b) remains in force until varied or revoked.

This instrument is authorised by a resolution of the Swan Hill Rural City Council on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

THE COMMON SEAL )  
SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL )  
Was hereunto affixed in the presence of: )

.....Councillor

.....Councillor

.....Chief Executive Officer

## 2.7 Road Gazettal Amendment- 180 Karinie Street

**Directorate:** Infrastructure  
**File Number:** AST-RD-34254-02  
**Purpose:** Information Only

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**2. Prosperity** - We will continue to build and strengthen a prosperous local economy, through sustainable growth and education. We will focus on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in all areas of our economy.

#### **2.1 Effective partnerships for prosperity**

2.1.2 Support our key industries

**2. Prosperity** - We will continue to build and strengthen a prosperous local economy, through sustainable growth and education. We will focus on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in all areas of our economy.

#### **2.2 A thriving diverse economy**

2.2.1 Encourage the growth and development of our economy

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

#### **4.1 Excellent management and administration**

4.1.3 Sound, sustainable:

- Financial management • Excellence in service delivery • Strategic planning

### Current Strategic Documents

Asset Management Plans  
Road Management Plan 2021

### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

### Summary

On 19 October 2021, a report was presented and approved by Council regarding a road deviation and land exchange for McKerrow Road, Swan Hill (off Karinie Street) and an adjacent development.

A new application has now been received from the same developer seeking support to relocate the newly gazetted road, a further 10.67 metres west to better suit the proposed development.

## Discussion

On 19 October 2021, a report was presented and approved by Council (refer Attachment 1 – Council Report 19-10-2021) regarding a road deviation and land exchange for McKerrow Road, Swan Hill (off Karinie Street) and an adjacent industrial development.

The intent of the report at that time, was that McKerrow Street would be discontinued and a new road created. The new road would align with a road proposed within an endorsed industrial subdivision plan at 180 Karinie Street (refer Attachment 2 – Subdivision Plan). This new road was to be given government road status.

Council supported the recommendation for “road exchange” and the change was subsequently noted and formalised in the Victorian Government Gazette on 9 December 2021 (refer Attachment 3 – Original Gazetteal). At present the road does not appear on any subdivision plans or plans of title.

The developer has now requested a re-alignment of the gazetted road to align with a new proposed subdivision plan (refer Attachment 4 – Road Realignment Request and Attachment 5 – Plan of Proposed Subdivision Version 17). The previously gazetted road will be required to move 10.67 metres west of its current location (refer Attachment 6 – Plan of Road Deviation).

The reasons given for requesting the change in road alignment are that:

- lot sizes and depths are being driven by market forces and have precipitated a layout change
- there is a possible conflict with a sewer manhole (Lower Murray Water (LMW) asset) which should be avoided
- fencing has already been installed along Karinie Street corresponding to this new road location and survey pegs have been placed along with some topsoil stripped off for road works to commence within the site.

The intention is that this request, if approved, will be carried out in accordance with Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1989.

It should be noted that the revised subdivision plan will be required to create a stormwater easement in favour of Council within the land previously occupied by McKerrow Street (to protect an existing stormwater rising main), and a reserve to allow LMW access to their infrastructure situated on a small parcel of land previously located adjacent to McKerrow Street.

Council consent is requested to allow realignment of the recently gazetted road.

## Consultation

As part of the original process in 2021, comments were sought from the community, adjacent property owners and service utilities in relation to the proposal. As this proposed change is minor in nature and the road is still to be created within the same property, further consultation was not considered necessary.

### **Financial Implications**

Nil. All costs are to be borne by the Developer.

### **Social Implications**

N/A

### **Economic Implications**

It is suggested by the developer, that the proposed changes provide better opportunities for development of the industrial site.

### **Environmental Implications**

N/A

### **Risk Management Implications**

There is a risk that the developer may reconsider the subdivision layout again.

- Attachments:**
1. Council Report 19-10-2021 [2.7.1 - 6 pages]
  2. Subdivision Plan [2.7.2 - 1 page]
  3. Original Gazettal [2.7.3 - 1 page]
  4. Road Realignment Request [2.7.4 - 1 page]
  5. Plan of Proposed Subdivision Version 17 [2.7.5 - 1 page]
  6. Plan of Road Deviation [2.7.6 - 1 page]

### **Options**

1. Proceed with gazettal of the proposed road re-alignment, and ensure that the approved subdivision plan for the development provides a stormwater easement for Council's stormwater rising main and a reserve to allow LMW access to their infrastructure
2. Retain the existing gazetted road alignment

### **Recommendation/s**

#### **That Council:**

1. Proceed with the request from the developer to gazette the proposed road re-alignment
2. Recover all associated costs to Council, of the gazettal process, from the developer
3. Ensure that the approved subdivision plan for the development provides a stormwater easement for Council's stormwater rising main and a reserve to allow LMW access to their infrastructure

**B.21.89 ROAD DEVIATION AND LAND EXCHANGE - MCKERROW ROAD, SWAN HILL**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Infrastructure  
**File Number:** AST-RD-34254-10  
**Attachments:** 1 [↓](#) Endorsed Plan  
2 [↓](#) Plan of deviation  
3 [↓](#) Aerial map

**Declarations of Interest:**

Svetla Petkova - as the responsible officer, I declare that I have no disclosable interests in this matter.

**Summary**

A request has been received from a developer for a road exchange in relation to an 18 lot subdivision on Karinie Street, Swan Hill.

**Discussion**

The lots for the proposed subdivision are located within the industrial zone of the township of Swan Hill. The proposal seeks to develop unused industrial zoned land into 18 lots of varying size for industrial businesses.

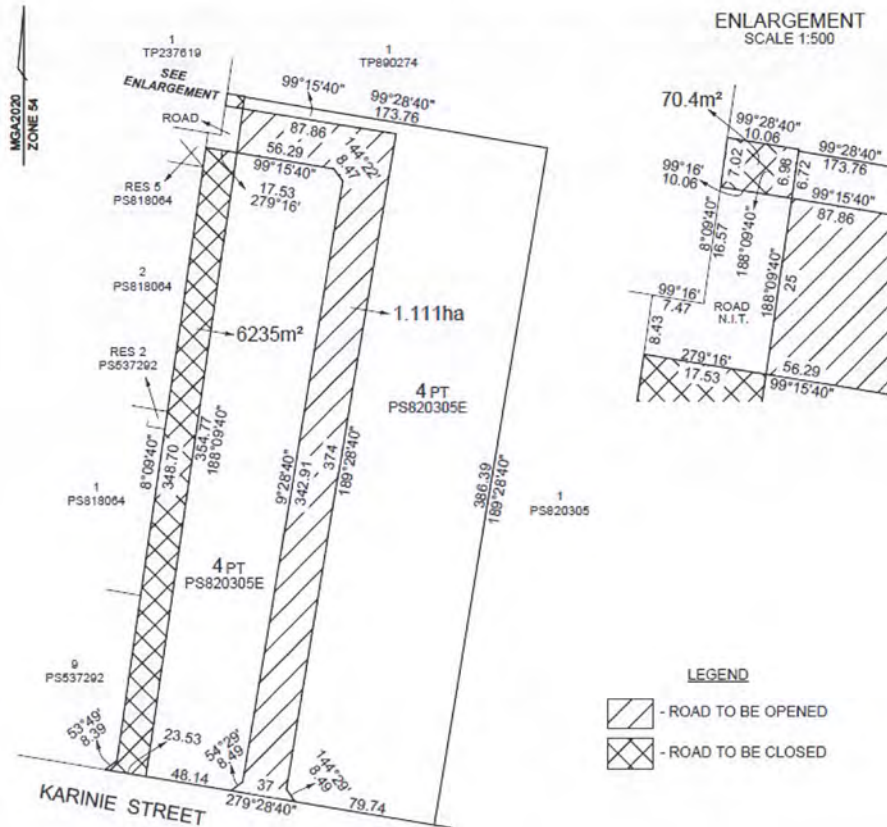
The proposal also seeks to discontinue McKerrow Road and access will be from a newly created road.

McKerrow Road is currently an unmade road reserve with no road infrastructure. It provides access to Council's drainage reserve and also Lower Murray Water's pump station.

The intention is that a road exchange be carried out in accordance with Clause 2 Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1989. The existing government road (McKerrow Road) will be closed and the new road will be given government road status.

A stormwater easement in favour of Council will be created over the land previously occupied by road; whilst a separate easement will be created for the water authority to access their infrastructure.

Council consent is requested for the exchange.



### Consultation

Consultation will be carried out in accordance with Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 and Council's Community Engagement Policy.

### Financial Implications

Nil financial implications as all costs are to be borne by the developer.

### Social Implications

Not applicable.

### Economic Implications

The exchange will make the development of the land for industrial purposes easier.



**Environmental Implications**

Not applicable.

**Risk Management Implications**

Not applicable.

**Council Plan Strategy Addressed**

***Infrastructure*** - Infrastructure that appropriately services community needs.

**Options**

1. Proceed with road exchange.
2. Retain existing road and decline road exchange request.

**Recommendation**

**That Council proceed with the road exchange.**

**121/21 Motion**

**MOVED Cr Benham**

**That Council proceed with the road exchange.**

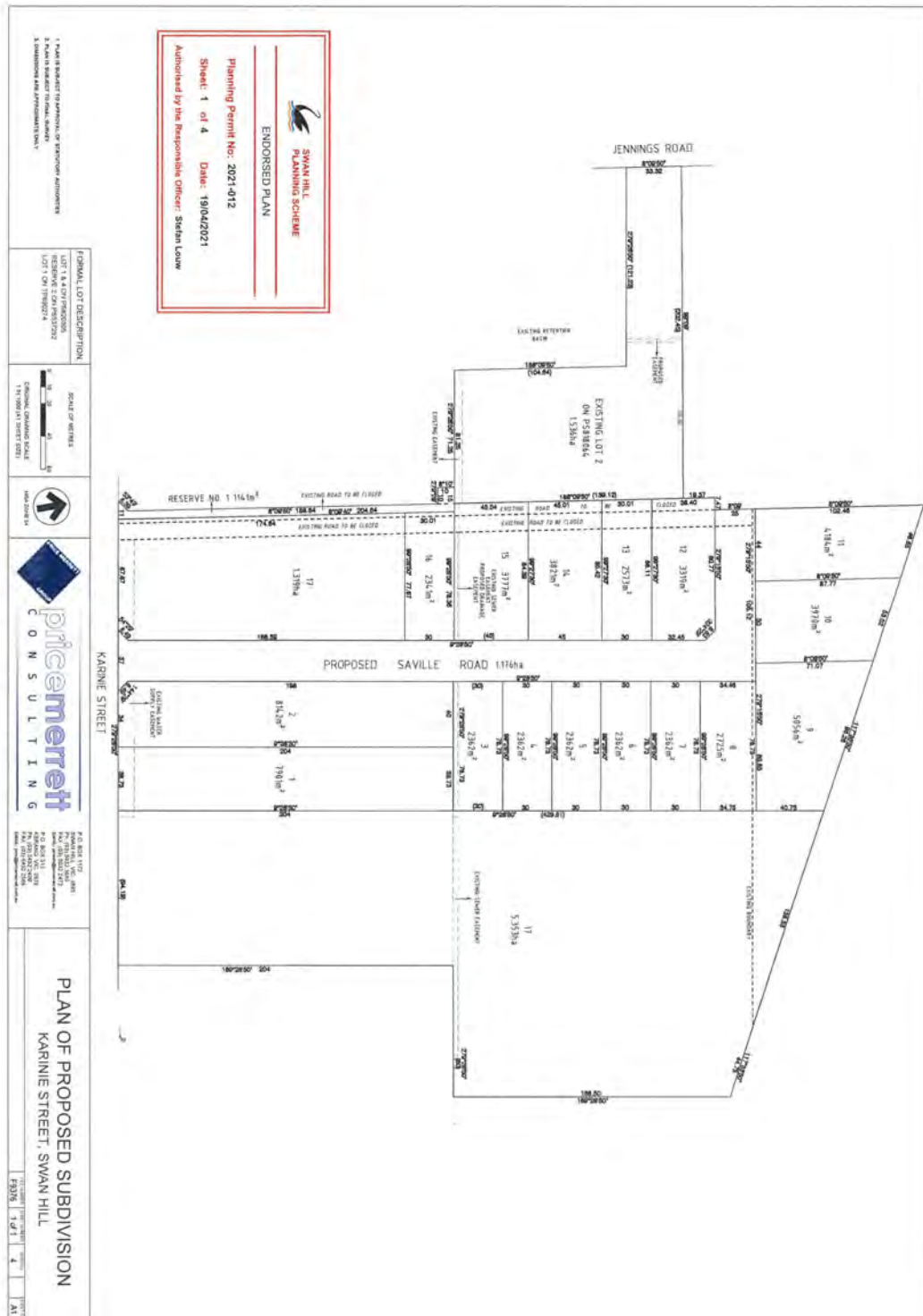
**SECONDED Cr Young**

**The Motion was put and CARRIED**



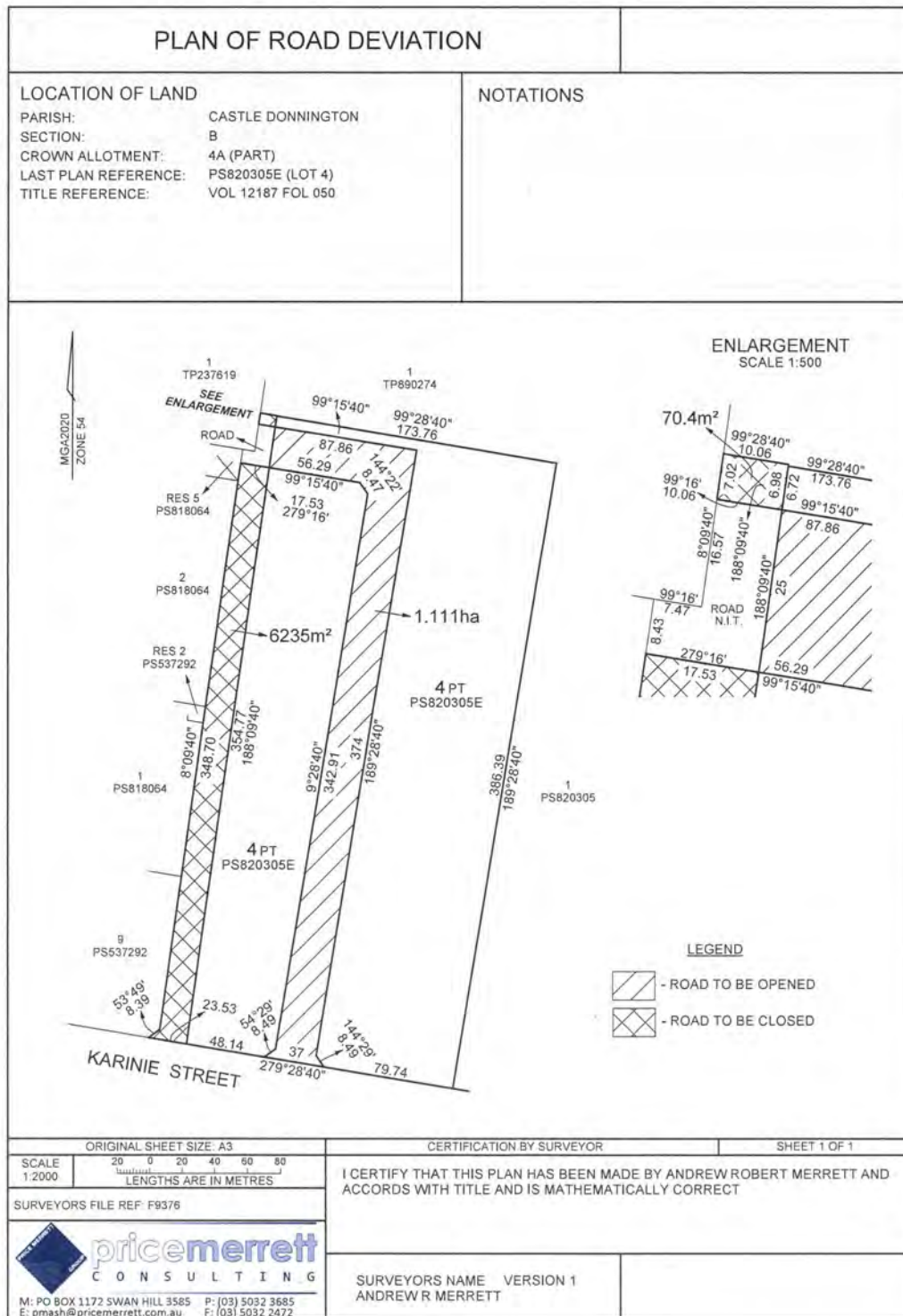
Attachment 1

Endorsed Plan



Attachment 2

Plan of deviation

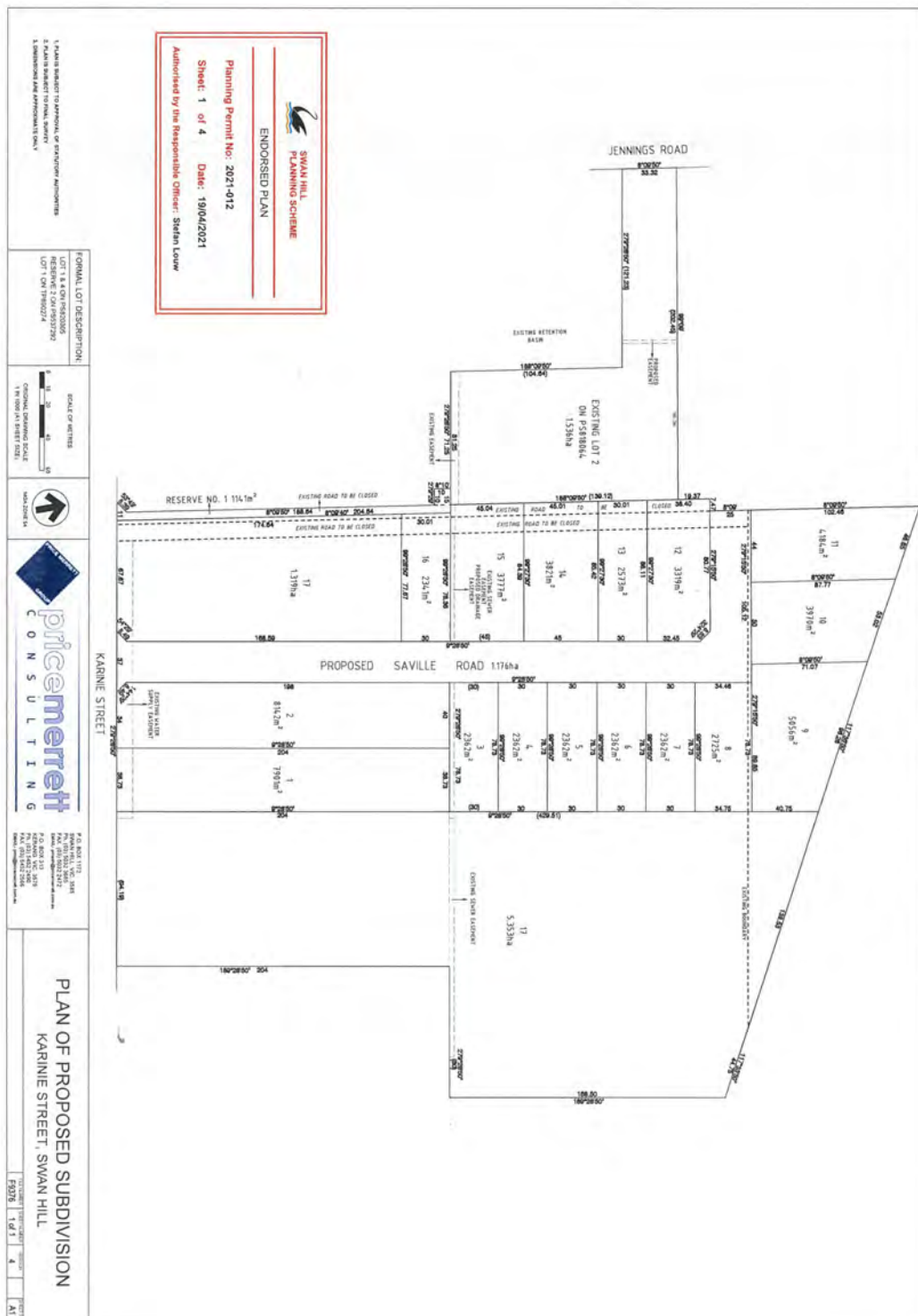






Attachment 1

Endorsed Plan





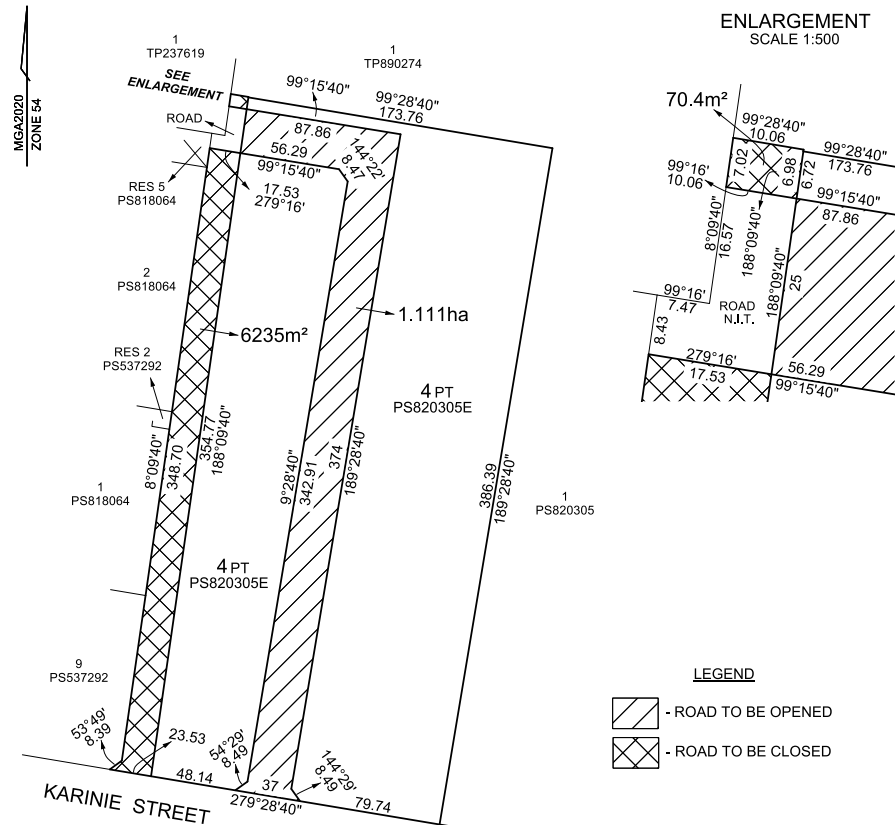
# ROAD DEVIATION AND LAND EXCHANGE

## McKerrow Road, Swan Hill

Swan Hill Rural City Council, at its Ordinary meeting on 19 October 2021, resolved to proceed with the road deviation and land exchange of McKerrow Road, Swan Hill, pursuant to section 207B and Clause 2 of Schedule 10 of the **Local Government Act 1989** (the Act) in accordance with the accompanying plan.

Council resolved to deviate the section of road shown cross-hatched to the section of road shown hatched.

Following the vesting, the discontinued section of road shown cross-hatched will be transferred to the adjoining land owner. The hatched area will become road owned by Council.



Dated 9 December 2021

ROSEANNE KAVA  
Acting Chief Executive Officer



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ABN: 62 903 527 353  
ACN: 139 256 938

Our Ref: F9376

18/06/2024

Swan Hill Rural City Council  
Planning Department  
[planning@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:planning@swanhill.vic.gov.au)

Dear Swan Hill Rural City Council,

**180 Karinie Street SWAN HILL – Road Deviation**

We are submitting this application for a road reserve deviation located for the Road off Karinie Street abutting 180 Karinie Street, Swan Hill. The effect of the deviation is to shift the road 10.67m west.

The Deviation is required due to:

- Market driven lot sizes and depths
- Avoid conflict with a sewer manhole
- Fencing has been installed corresponding to this location and survey pegs have been placed along with some topsoil stripped off for road works to commence.

A Road Deviation is required to be Gazetted to allow the road to be shifted. A plan has been prepared to reflect the proposed change and is submitted with this letter.

Since the meeting with council staff on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June it has been indicated by Mayor Stuart King that this supporting information could be presented to council at the July Council assembly meeting.

We trust that the information will assist council with this application. Should the above be insufficient for council to proceed we can assist in supplying additional written details and are available for contact at the above number.

Regards,

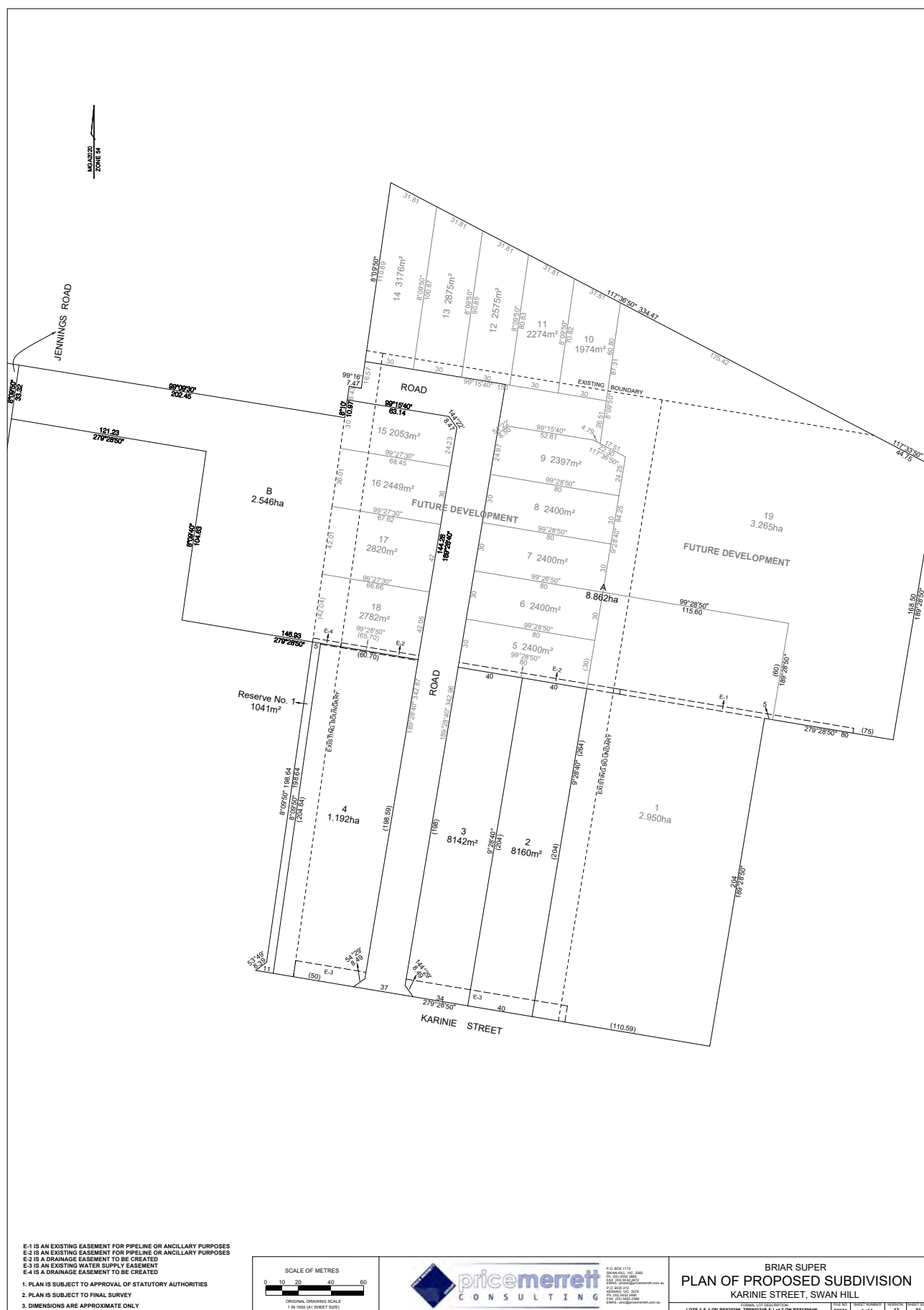
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andrew Merrett'.

Andrew Merrett  
Licensed Surveyor / Land Consultant / Town Planner  
Price Merrett Consulting

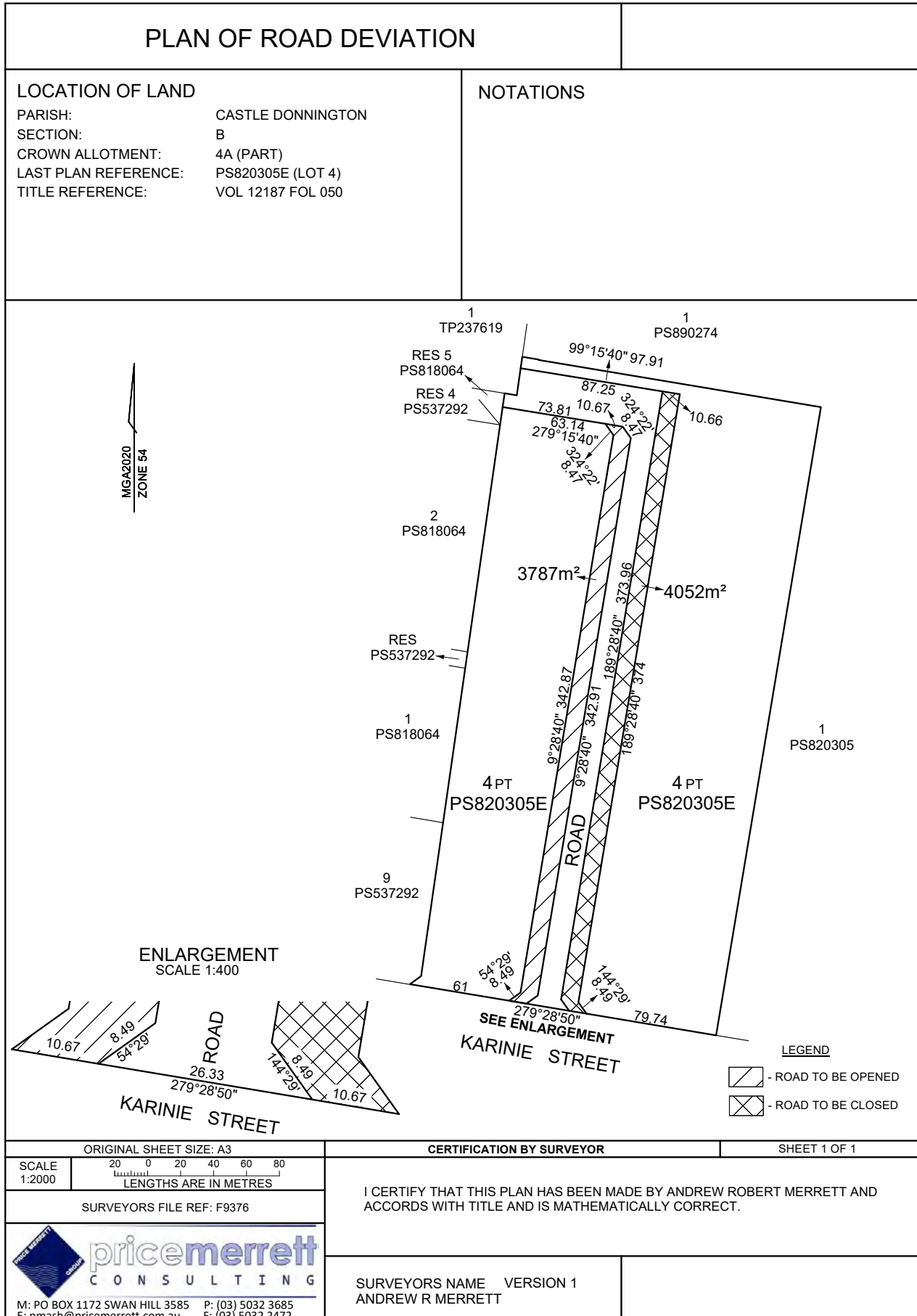
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Engineers, Surveyors, Irrigation Consultants

N:\F9376\Letters\F9376 Road realignment application.docx  
Document Created on 18/06/2024 12:55:00 PM Version Date 18/06/24 4:34:00 PM







### 3 Officer Report for Noting

### 4 Decisions Which Need Action / Ratification

#### 4.1 Councillor Assemblies - Record of Attendance and Agenda Items

**Directorate:** Chief Executive Officer  
**File Number:** S15-05-06  
**Purpose:** For Noting

#### Declarations of Interest:

Council officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the matter of this report.

#### Summary

The following report provides attendance details of Councillor Assemblies on a monthly basis.

#### Discussion

Whilst Minutes have not been recorded, Agenda items and those in attendance are reported and presented to Council.

An assembly of Councillors is defined as a meeting that is planned or scheduled and where the matters being considered that are intended or likely to be the subject of a Council decision.

No formal decisions can be made at an assembly but rather direction can be given that is likely to lead to a formal decision of Council.

Details of the most recent assemblies of Council are attached.

#### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

4.1 Excellent management and administration

4.1.1 Well managed resources for a sustainable future

4.1.2 Provide robust governance and effective leadership

4.1.3 Sound, sustainable:

• Financial management • Excellence in service delivery • Strategic planning

#### Current Strategic documents

No strategic documents applicable.

### **Key Legislation**

There is no key legislation applicable

**Attachments:** 1. COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA  
August [4.1.1 - 4 pages]

### **Options**

Council Assemblies are reported to ensure good governance and transparency.

### **Recommendation**

**That Council note the contents of the report.**

**COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA**  
**16 July 2024 at 1.00pm, Swan Hill Town Hall – Council Chambers**

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- Questions on Council Meeting agenda items

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED**

- Nil

**ATTENDANCE**

**Councillors**

- Cr Jacquie Kelly
- Cr Nicole McKay
- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Bill Moar
- Cr Chris Jeffery
- Cr Ann Young

**Apologies / Leave of Absence**

- Cr Les McPhee

**OFFICERS**

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure
- Bhan Pratap, Director Corporate Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning

**Other**

Nil

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- Nil

**COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA**

**23 July 2024 at 1.00pm, Swan Hill Town Hall – Council Chambers**

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- 217 Robinvale-Sea Lake Road Robinvale - Dwelling Excision in the FZ
- Dealing with Difficult Behaviours
- New Council website
- Charter of Human Rights Policy
- Drainage Strategy
- Councillors, CEO and Directors re: Pre-meeting assembly
- Councillor and CEO re: Chamber layout
- Councillor Only Session

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED**

- Nil

**ATTENDANCE**

**Councillors**

- Cr Jacquie Kelly
- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Bill Moar
- Cr Chris Jeffery
- Cr Les McPhee

**Apologies / Leave of Absence**

- Cr Ann Young
- Cr Nicole McKay

**OFFICERS**

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure
- Bruce Myers, Director Community and Cultural Services
- Bhan Pratap, Director Corporate Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Warrick Fisher, Planning Team Leader
- Helen Morris, Organisational Development Manager
- Karen Taylor, Web Design and Development Officer
- Brooke O'Connor, Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator
- Anthony Duffin, Information Coordinator

**Other**

- Nil

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- Nil

**COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA**

**30 July 2024 at 1.00pm, Swan Hill Town Hall – Council Chambers**

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- Gazetting of Road Realignment
- Tender Evaluation and Recommendation Report Art Gallery Reconstruction Works
- Community Satisfaction Survey Results
- Robinvale Hotel

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED**

- Nil

**ATTENDANCE**

**Councillors**

- Cr Jacquie Kelly
- Cr Nicole McKay
- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Bill Moar
- Cr Chris Jeffery (attended virtually)
- Cr Ann Young
- Cr Les McPhee

**Apologies / Leave of Absence**

- Nil

**OFFICERS**

- Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
- Leah Johnston, Director Infrastructure
- Bruce Myers, Director Community and Cultural Services
- Bhan Pratap, Director Corporate Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Peter Ross, Engineering and Strategic Projects Manager
- Jess Chislett, Procurement and Properties Coordinator

**Other**

Nil

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- Nil

**COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES ATTENDANCE AND AGENDA**

**6 August 2024 at 1.00pm, Swan Hill Town Hall – Council Chambers**

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- Victoria Critical Minerals Roadmap Consultation

- Integrated Land and Transport Plan Intro/update
- Fair Access Policy
- Riverside Park 10 Steps
- KSI 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter
- Telecommunications Lease – Aerodrome
- Plan for Victoria
- Review of 2024 Australia Day Event – Community Feedback
- Councillor/Directors question time

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED**

- Nil

**ATTENDANCE**

**Councillors**

- Cr Jacquie Kelly
- Cr Nicole McKay
- Cr Stuart King
- Cr Bill Moar
- Cr Chris Jeffery
- Cr Ann Young

**Apologies / Leave of Absence**

- Cr Les McPhee

**OFFICERS**

- Leah Johnston, Acting Chief Executive Officer
- Laura O'Dwyer, Acting Director Infrastructure
- Bhan Pratap, Director Corporate Services
- Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
- Heather Green, Executive Manager Strategic Projects
- Dione Heppell, Liveability and Project Development Coordinator
- Nathan Keighran, Economic Development Coordinator
- Awais Sadiq, Development Manager
- Helen Morris, Organisational Development Manager
- Jess Chislett, Procurement and Properties Coordinator

**Other**

Grant Clark, Manager Strategy and Engagement, Geological Survey of Victoria  
David Meiklejohn, Director Meiklejohn

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- Nil



## 5 Notices of Motion

### 5.1 Reopening the Swan Hill Drag Strip

Having given due notice, **Councillor Bill Moar MOVED That**

**That a report be brought to council at the September 2024 meeting in consideration of the following:**

**That Council re-open the former Drag Strip Site ("The facility") following the negotiation and entering into a mutually agreeable and acceptable 3 year lease with the Skid City consortium. The lease agreement shall include, but not limited to, the following:**

- **Providing access to and usage of the facility for sanctioned events only**
- **Providing access to and usage of areas common to all motoplex users**
- **Acceptance of the existing conditions of the Facility and associated defined areas and infrastructure facilities**
- **A waiver of any current or ongoing legal liability of the Swan Hill Rural City Council in relation to the Facility**
- **A memorandum of understanding between Skid City and other Swan Hill Motorplex user groups**
- **Provision for subletting of the Facility for other uses (subject to Council approval)**
- **Cooperative participation in Council's strategic planning for the Swan Hill Motorplex**
- **No requirements for any financial commitment of Council**

**The organisation shall be permitted to undertake capital upgrades and/or improvements to the track and/or facilities at their own expense (subject to Council approval).**

**Council agrees in principle to support any applications by the organisation for external funding for improvements or expansion, subject to Council's normal processes for such.**

#### ***Preamble***

Council resolved at the December 2023 meeting to close the Swan Hill Drag Strip on a permanent basis. Since this resolution was made and subsequently publicised, Council has had approaches from several parties who have expressed an interest in possible uses for the former Drag Strip site.

Following a resolution at the June meeting, Council heard submissions from two interested parties for possible uses for the former Drag Strip site. Both of these submissions related to properly sanctioned Motorsport usage.

This motion now seeks to re-open the former drag strip site and prepare a lease agreement with one of the interested parties, Skid City, who have the support and endorsement of the Swan Hill Drag Racing Club Incorporated.

Whilst the main proposed conditions of the lease agreement are outlined in the motion it is anticipated that in the development of the agreement that Council's risk and liability will be minimized to the greatest extent possible, and Skid City have outlined that that is also their intent and that they accept the current conditions of the site.

No events can be undertaken without the express consent of the relevant motorsport sanctioning body who are also supportive of this proposal.

Skid City have proposed capital investment into the site with no financial contribution from Council, a willingness to participate in the strategic planning for the Swan Hill Motorplex, and to work with the other Motorplex user groups for the betterment of motorsport in the region.

This motion allows for the re-establishment of events at the former Drag Strip site whilst the strategic planning work is undertaken and an action plan developed.

This is an outcome that just over 6 months ago was inconceivable. This motion provides a pathway for utilization of a disused asset, more events for motorsport enthusiasts and capital investment without ratepayer funds - all with the support of the Swan Hill Drag Racing Club Inc.

**Attachments:** Nil

## 5.2 Murray Darling Basin Plan

Having given due notice, **Councillor Nicole McKay MOVED**

**That Swan Hill Rural City write to the Victorian Water Minister, Harriet Shing, the Federal Water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, and the NSW Water Minister, Rose Jackson, and also to continue to discuss these issues during meetings with ministers, both state and federal.**

- 1. To encourage prompt progress of Constraints Relaxation Program in both NSW and Victorian River Systems, and encourage that the program rollout be expedited for the benefit of downstream communities and: to enable more efficient use of environmental water; to mitigate floods; to protect entitlement by reducing spill events; and to enable the agreed SDL adjustment related to this project.**
- 2. To request that the Commonwealth Government make a commitment to purchasing significant volumes of secure water entitlement for the environment in the Murrumbidgee and Darling River systems to support the connectivity and water quality of the Lower Darling and Lower Murrumbidgee, the health of the entire Murray Darling, and to ensure equitable water recovery from all regions.**

### ***Preamble***

The point of the Basin Plan is to maintain flows in the river systems; maintain water quality to support humans and ecology; and to support river communities.

This is best and most efficiently achieved by when adequate environmental flows are able to be used in co-ordination. Currently due to inadequate water recovery on the Darling and Murrumbidgee Rivers, and also the restriction on flows in all rivers due to delays in relaxing constraints, effective environmental flows have not been achieved. Consequently Blackwater, Cyanobacteria, and therefore fish and crustacean kills continue to devastate the river systems and our communities.

### **References:**

The goal of the Basin Plan is to maintain: flows in the river systems; water quality to support humans and ecology; and, the supply of water to river communities in all parts of the Basin, whilst enabling prosperous and adaptable horticulture industry.

This is most effectively and efficiently achieved by when environmental flows on the major river systems: the Murray; Murrumbidgee; and Darling rivers, are able to be

used in co-ordination. Currently, due to inadequate water recovery on the Darling and Murrumbidgee Rivers, effective environmental flows have not been achieved. This situation is made even worse as the constraints relaxation program has not progressed and therefore river flows are being restricted from being released at seasonally appropriate times. Consequently, Blackwater and Cyanobacteria outbreaks are becoming regular across the entire system, and consequently mass fish, yabbie, and crayfish kills continue to devastate the river system, and render it unfit for recreational use on a regular basis.

A number of reports have been released that provide evidence to support this positions.

1. The Constraints Management Program Feasibility Study produced by DEECA.  
<file:///C:/Users/namck1/Downloads/Victorian-CMP-Feasibility-study.pdf>  
<https://www.water.vic.gov.au/our-programs/murray-darling-basin/victorian-constraints-measures-program>

The constraints measures program feasibility study discusses the relevant factors:

- a. That constraints relaxation will reduce the water recovery target. (Pg. 11)
- b. The environmental benefits to enable water to lakes; creeks; and billabongs, of particular benefit to this region. (Pg. 13)
- c. That relaxing constraints could offer flood mitigation benefits. (Pg. 16, and Pg. 134) with the potential to reduce spill events, which also protects entitlement.
- d. That constraints relaxation can assist to reduce deadly blackwater events. (pg. 134)

Further water recovery is legislated. Across the Basin money has been wasted recovering insecure water entitlement that is difficult to access in dry years. Examination of the holdings of the CEWH, will show clearly that the Murray has contributed the highest volumes of High Security water to water recovery. The volumes available to be used to maintain river health on the Darling and Murrumbidgee River systems are minute by comparison.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/cewh/manage-water/basin/water-holdings#commonwealth-environmental-water-holdings>

In order to achieve the best outcomes and to protect the Murray Darling system ongoing we need to be able to achieve moderately high flows in a co-ordinated way down the major tributaries. This is impossible if the water available to be used in the Murrumbidgee and Darling Rivers is too small. It also would ensure that the impact of water recovery was borne equitably across the states.

2. The NSW Connectivity Final report has been released which examines ongoing issues of low flows in the Lower Darling preventing connection between the Northern Basin and the Southern Basin.

[https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/616737/connectivity-expert-panel-final-report.pdf](https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/616737/connectivity-expert-panel-final-report.pdf)

The Report discusses the ongoing issues of reduced flows from the Northern Basin that impact on the ecology of the Lower Darling and consequently water security across the basin during dry periods.

- a) That periods of no flows have increased substantially due to over extraction and rule changes that have allowed it. (Pg. 6)
- b) The impact of floodplain harvesting. (Pg. 9)

Additionally, it is frustrating to note that according to the NSW Conservation Council using sources from the Natural Resources Access Regulator, and NSW Senate Estimates, that there continue to be issues with metering and telemetry and compliance in NSW and particularly across the Northern Basin has still not been achieved. [https://www.nature.org.au/nsw\\_metering\\_policy\\_not\\_holding\\_water](https://www.nature.org.au/nsw_metering_policy_not_holding_water)

This Notice of Motion is consistent with the SHRC Management of the Murray Darling Basin policy document.

It is important that the Murray Darling Basin Plan achieves sustainability and protects water quality for the farmers; fishers; cultural and recreational users right across the basin. To do that all participants, that is all states, need to co-operate, and contribute to systemic flows.

**Attachments:** Nil

### 5.3 Renewable Energy Generation

Having given due notice, **Councillor Nicole McKay MOVED That**

**Swan Hill Rural City representatives, discuss the issue of rating of energy generation companies at their upcoming meetings with relevant Federal and State Ministers in Canberra and through the Murray River Group of Councils. SHRC, in conjunction with the MRGC is supportive of renewable energy generation investment, to mitigate climate change, but also as a source of economic development for our region. However, it is important that our municipalities are appropriately compensated via rates for hosting energy generation companies, and for provision of services to them.**

#### ***Preamble***

There will be multiple benefits from the development of renewable energy generation in our region, including: economic development; increased employment, and long-term reduction in global warming.

An important factor to ensure that rural communities receive the rewards of hosting renewable energy generation businesses is that they pay rates in a manner consistent with all ratepayers. In the Victorian Rating System Review of 2020, (pg 108), it was recommended that energy generation companies move to a system of paying rates based of Capital Improved Value, consistent with other ratepayers. This would generally increase the rate income for rural councils. It is important that in welcoming new industries rural councils receive a just amount of rating revenue from them. Rural councils must maintain a huge network of roads and infrastructure with limited resources due to our smaller population. Increasing the amount of rates to be paid by renewable energy generation companies will assist to reduce the rates of all residents, and to improve ability of rural councils to provide essential services to their communities. Our municipality is already seeing increased rates from renewable energy generation. However, there should be equity with all ratepayers.

[https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0032/184379/Local\\_Government\\_Rating\\_System\\_Review\\_Final\\_Report\\_March\\_2020.pdf](https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/184379/Local_Government_Rating_System_Review_Final_Report_March_2020.pdf)

It is of note that in order to make renewable energy generation viable, and for rural councils and residents to achieve the benefits of the investment in the region, energy transmission infrastructure must be improved. A very significant proportion of homeowners and businesses in our region are reaping the benefits of reduced power bills through generating their own solar power. Individual property owners' power is also being considered as a valuable resource to be transmitted to the urban areas, potentially generating income for individuals. Renewable energy generation is



supported by SHRC in the recent Economic Development Strategy and new transmission projects are supported by the Murray River Group of Councils.

As is our role, SHRC will engage in upcoming public consultation in regard to location and type of transmission lines, including encouraging the upgrading of existing transmission lines as a priority. Naturally we will seek to achieve the best outcome for the community, both for individual landholders and for all residents.

[https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0032/184379/Local\\_Government\\_Rating\\_System\\_Review\\_Final\\_Report\\_March\\_2020.pdf](https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/184379/Local_Government_Rating_System_Review_Final_Report_March_2020.pdf)

Murray River Group of Councils <https://www.mrgc.com.au/advocacy-priorities/>

[https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/our-council/council-meetings/2024/agenda\\_16\\_july\\_2024.pdf](https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/our-council/council-meetings/2024/agenda_16_july_2024.pdf)

## 13 Reforming Alternative Rating Arrangements

### 13.1 Electricity Industry Act 2000 – Payment in Lieu of Rates

#### 13.1.1 Background to the Topic

The privatisation of the electricity industry in Victoria in the 1990s resulted in a rates liability for power generators, for the first time as public assets, which were exempt from rates, moved into private ownership. The Electricity Industry Act 1996 (now the Electricity Industry Act 2000, referred to as the EIA in this chapter) provided for the newly privatised electricity generators to choose to negotiate an agreement with councils to make payments in lieu of rates. The agreement is generally referred to as a PLoR (Payment in Lieu of Rates) agreement.

Under PLoR, the rates payable can be any amount agreeable to both parties.<sup>13.1</sup> If agreement cannot be reached, the EIA provides for third party arbitration. Since 2005, arbitrators must have regard to the method published by the Minister in the Victoria Government Gazette. In practice, many councils appear to apply the gazetted methodology, thereby avoiding the need for arbitration.

The PLoR arrangements apply only to the land on which the generation units are situated. Related assets, such as transformers and connection infrastructure, are rated under the LGA.

#### The PLoR formulae

The gazette notice contains a number of formulae for determining rates based on power generation capacity or output, rather than property value.<sup>13.2</sup>

#### Generators other than solar-/wind-powered generators

If a generator is not powered by solar or wind it is rated based on the capacity of the power station in megawatts (MW). These generators pay rates made up of a fixed charge (\$54,400 in 2018) plus a variable charge (\$1225 per MW in 2018). The fixed and variable amounts are indexed annually.

#### Solar- and wind-powered generators

Since 2018 separate formulae for solar and wind generators have been included in the gazette, with the intention of supporting this type of generator. These consist of a variable charge based on output in megawatt-hours (MWh) with solar/wind generators that are deemed "community-owned" paying a lower variable charge. In 2018 the charges were \$0.50 per MWh produced for community generators, and \$1.12 per MWh for other solar/wind generators. Both charges are indexed annually.

### 13.1.2 Issues for Consideration

#### Concerns about inequity between industries

Submissions from the local government sector and council forum participants were critical of the PLoR arrangement. They pointed out that such arrangements result in power generation companies paying less in rates than many businesses rated under the Act, despite benefiting from council services like other business ratepayers. The MAV submission further argued that recouping rates based on property valuations from



**Concerns about administrative burden.**

Alpine Shire Council commented that the scheme is administratively cumbersome, particularly where it relates to the volatile output of hydroelectricity generators. This can make the PiLoR calculations difficult and subject to frequent negotiations with the generation company.

**Inconsistency between State and local government in taxing power generators.**

In contrast to the council rating system, the Victorian Government's Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) is applied to power generators based on CIV without any special arrangements. Several councils noted that it was inconsistent for the State to require councils to levy generators on a separate basis.

**13.1.3 Evidence and Analysis**

***The effect of the PiLoR arrangement is generally a discounted rate liability for power generators.***

Details of some of the PiLoR arrangements in place indicate an inequity across business sectors in rates contributions. For example, Swan Hill Rural City Council estimates that rating power generation land in Swan Hill based on CIV would have raised approximately \$1.5 million more in revenue<sup>114</sup> than the value of rates under PiLoR in 2019-20. Similarly, Towong Shire Council estimated that the difference between rating generators in the Shire of Towong based on CIV rather than PiLoR would be approximately \$700,000 in additional revenue.<sup>115</sup>

Revenue collected under the PiLoR arrangements is not part of the rate cap calculation. Councils that have seen significant growth in power generation assets in recent years from solar and wind are realising a revenue increase which sits outside of general rate revenue and the rate cap calculation.

***PiLoR arrangements create complexity and uncertainty compared with property-based rates.***

PiLoR arrangements are potentially complex for some councils and can create uncertainty for councils (and generators).

While general rates under the Act are calculated based on property valuations conducted annually by the State, the PiLoR formulae are based on separate rating bases, namely output or generation capacity. The gazette includes separate formulae for three categories of generator: coal/gas generators; small solar/wind generators; and small solar/wind community generators. The formulae are based on estimates of either maximum or average output and capacity, which are disclosed by the generator to the council. However, there must be a final reconciliation between the actual and estimated figures in order to come to a final rates payment.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, the gazette notice requires the formulae to be adjusted if production is significantly lower than capacity and allows for adjustments more generally as agreed by both parties (and the arbitrator). These uncertainties reduce the transparency of the rating system and increase administrative costs for councils.

***There is no clearly stated rationale for electricity generation businesses to pay rates under a separate arrangement.***

There appears to be no clear record of why a separate rating arrangement was created for generation businesses when Victoria's electricity assets were privatised. Parliamentary records do not provide any rationale, while a recent DELWP discussion paper on PiLoR notes only that:<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Based on Swan Hill industrial rate 2019-20.

<sup>115</sup> Based on Towong industrial rate 2019-20. The Swan Hill Rural City Council and Towong Shire Council estimates formed part of the submission by the Municipal Association of Victoria to this Review.

<sup>116</sup> While maximum capacity would generally remain fixed over time (barring improvements to the generation equipment) average capacity may need to be verified on an annual basis.

*"[s.94 of the EIA]... aimed to result in fair and equitable charges—considering the capital-improved land value of the generation facility—for generators as they were at time: most were large, base-load generators."*

While most business ratepayers are charged rates based on the capital-improved value of their property, power generators may pay rates based on the amount of power they can (or do) generate. This generally results in a lower rate bill than under property value-based rates. While power generators provide an essential service, they are still private entities extracting private benefit from their property like any other business. The principle of horizontal equity (i.e. that taxpayers in similar circumstances should be treated in a similar way) is contradicted when this small group of businesses receives more favourable rating treatment than other businesses.

#### **13.1.4 Conclusions**

The complexity of the PILoR arrangements and the special circumstances of their application have remained unchanged since the privatisation process in the 1990s. This has resulted in inequitable revenue outcomes across many communities and inequity between electricity generators and other businesses that are levied rates under the Act. While energy generation companies may make direct contributions to community activities and have agreements to pay for infrastructure damage or upgrades related to particular construction projects, these arrangements are ad-hoc. Electricity generation companies also benefit from the other services provided by councils.

Power generators operate as private businesses. Although they are important providers of essential services, the Panel concludes that in the absence of a clear rationale for these arrangements, it is not clear why councils should continue to provide effective rate concessions by way of a complex, specialist scheme. Similarly, while the 2018 changes to the PILoR methodology were intended to support the development of smaller generators, the Panel's view is that Victorian Government support should not impact the fair distribution of rates in a municipality.<sup>18</sup>

Bringing the rating of power generators under the same arrangements as the majority of ratepayers would likely impact on the rates paid. While it is difficult to model the outcomes given the number of factors involved in most circumstances, this will entail an increase in rates for power generators. The benefits will be increased simplicity and transparency for all parties and increased equity in the rating system.

#### **13.1.5 Recommendations**

**Recommendation 38:** That in the absence of a clear policy rationale, section 94 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* be repealed in bring the rating of all power generation companies under the *Local Government Act 1989*.

**Recommendation 39:** If section 94 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (EIA) is repealed, that a transition arrangement and timeframe for electricity generators to be rated under the *Local Government Act 1989* (LGA) be implemented. (For example, the difference in rates payable under the EIA and the LGA could be phased in evenly over time, years).

**Attachments:** Nil

## 5.4 Advocating on Needs of Refugee and Visa Holders

Having given due notice, **Councillor Jacquie Kelly MOVED**

**That Council write to Minister Tony Burke, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Immigration to bring the issues of the Swan Hill and Robinvale region to his attention. To brief him on issues and needs such as:**

- **Pathway to permanent residency**
- **Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme**
- **Real population**
- **Settlement resources**
- **Health and housing of seasonal migrant workers.**

### ***Preamble***

As a new Minister for these portfolios it is important that our issues are brought to the Ministers immediate attention and that we request assistance to deal with them. This letter will add to the work already done in our recent submission to the Federal Governments 'Review of Regional Migration Settings Supporting Strong and Sustainable Regions'. This letter can be used to advocate when we meet with relevant politicians and leaders.

**Attachments:** Nil

## **5.5 Health Needs of Community, GP Availability and Swan Hill Hospital**

Having given due notice, **Councillor Jacquie Kelly MOVED**

**That Council writes to Victorian Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure The Honourable Mary-Anne Thomas to request a meeting to discuss the Victorian Governments plans for health networks and hospitals in our region and to request to have input into the health, infrastructure and social needs in our communities.**

**Topics will include:**

- **GP shortages and retention,**
- **housing, and**
- **maternity, specialist, emergency and community health capability needs for our regional hospital.**

### ***Preamble***

Retaining hospital capability is of vital importance to our community and Councils role to advocate for this is obvious.

Our community is very concerned about health services, particularly in the context of the recently announced proposed plans for State-funded health services. The health system is already struggling due to recruitment issues, leading to shortages in GPs, nurses, midwives and key specialist services in rural areas.

It is not clear what engagement has taken place with the Victorian community, considering the availability of health services is a basic human right, and should be considered in a broader context than budgetary constraints.

The Duckett Report from 2016 showed that a greater emphasis on clinical governance and skills-based boards in health services were crucial to ensuring safe and effective public health outcomes.

The proposed changes would be of even greater impact in this region as it may lead to greater distances people need to travel for care. It is important we highlight our unique situation geographically in the North West of Victoria with our wide catchment of approximately thirty thousand people, including into South West NSW. Also our health statistics and socioeconomic status are relevant.

We are a positive, proactive community who value our health services and hospital. While welcoming and celebrating our new Emergency Department, we know we must retain and improve our levels of service, demand further infrastructure upgrades and solve health workforce issues .

Through this letter we will respectfully highlight our needs and seek cooperation to solve problems.

**Attachments:** Nil

## **5.6 Improving Solar Deals and Lowering Power Bills**

Having given due notice, **Councillor Jacquie Kelly MOVED**

**That Council;**

- 1. Advocate to Powercor to remove the blockages that exist in parts of the municipality that mean that not all residents with solar can sell back to the grid**
- 2. Request Powercor undertake an audit of what the problem is and what can be done to improve the situation for these residents; and**
- 3. Request a meeting with Powercor to discuss the issue.**

### ***Preamble***

With power bills being high and the high penetration of solar in our community (%) it is only fair that all people can supply to the grid and gain the benefits from that. Many areas of Swan Hill have infrastructure capacity issues that constrain them getting the most from their solar system.

**Attachments:** Nil

## **6 Foreshadowed Items**

## **7 Urgent Items Not Included In Agenda**

## **8 To Consider and Order on Councillor Reports**

## **9 In-Camera Items**

## **10 Close of Meeting**