

OFFICIAL



**Murrindindi**  
Shire Council

# Murrindindi Shire Council

## Bushfire Advocacy Priorities

2026



## Key advocacy priorities and estimated costs

### A. Council-led priorities

These priorities reflect costs already incurred or directly required to enable safe, timely recovery and rebuilding across affected communities. They address gaps where eligibility settings or program limits do not align with the scale and duration of recovery demand.

Item	Council-led Priorities	Estimated Cost
1	Alexandra Relief & Community Centre- establishment of a fit-for-purpose facility to support ongoing relief, recovery coordination, and community connection	\$ 22,000,000
2	Community Recovery Hubs – including mobile and outreach services to smaller and more dispersed communities over a 2–3 year recovery period	\$ 6,000,000
3	Planning and Rebuilding Support – additional planners, external specialist services, assessors, and building fee waivers to remove bottlenecks to rebuilding	\$ 3,500,000
4	Reconstruction of Community and Tourism Assets – including damaged sections of the Great Victorian Rail Trail that underpin local wellbeing and the visitor economy	\$ 12,300,000
5	Council Costs Incurred – staffing surge capacity, overtime, and lost revenue directly associated with emergency response and recovery delivery	\$ 4,000,000
6	Betterment Works – resilience improvements to bridges, roads and culverts to reduce future risk and repeat damage	\$ 3,000,000
7	Unfunded Recovery Administration and Organisational Costs – including governance, compliance, grants acquittal and recovery data management	\$ 3,200,000
8	Non-eligible Infrastructure Repairs – essential repairs to impacted infrastructure that fall outside current eligibility settings	\$ 11,000,000
	<b>Subtotal - Council-led priorities</b>	<b>\$ 65,000,000</b>

## B. Other critical recovery priorities

These priorities are essential to economic recovery, environmental restoration, and long-term community resilience, but are not fully addressed through existing recovery programs.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Other Priorities</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Primary Producer Recovery Package</b> - fencing replacement, pasture restoration, and livestock welfare support	\$ 22,000,000
<b>2</b>	<b>Business and Tourism Recovery Grants</b> - including a locally-targeted spend voucher program to stimulate recovery	\$ 3,000,000
<b>3</b>	<b>Environmental Restoration and Land Rehabilitation</b> - habitat repair, wildlife care, erosion control, and weed management	\$ 5,000,000
<b>4</b>	<b>Power and Telecommunications Resilience</b> - network redundancy, addressing 4G blackspots, and backup capability for emergency coordination	\$ 10,000,000
	<b>Subtotal - Other priorities</b>	<b>\$ 40,000,000</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 105,000,000</b>

## Overview

Murrindindi was the hardest-hit community in Victoria in the January 2026 fires. Our residents, businesses and landscapes have absorbed the greatest impact.

More than 144,000 hectares burned across the Longwood fire and more than 215 homes were destroyed within Murrindindi Shire alone in 2026 - on top of past disasters (2009 fires, 2022 floods).

Consequences span people, economy and infrastructure: 450 km of roads and dozens of bridges/culverts impacted, major tourism assets lost, and significant agricultural and wildlife harm.

While Council is working closely with communities and partner agencies to support recovery and strengthen long-term resilience, the scale, complexity and cumulative nature of these impacts exceed local capacity.

Strong, coordinated and sustained partnerships with State and Federal Governments are essential to meet immediate recovery needs and to build long-term protection against increasing climate- driven risks.

This advocacy agenda outlines key community needs, recovery pathways and policy reforms required to restore critical infrastructure, support local economies, improve emergency management, and secure a resilient future.

## Snapshot



### Population

15,603 residents and 248 Aboriginal and Torres Strait residents.



### Land area

3,879 km<sup>2</sup> encompassing the rural townships of Alexandra, Eildon, Kinglake, Marysville and Yea and 42 localities.



### Agriculture and Economy

Agriculture contributes to over \$413 million in annual output (approx. 22% of the region's total) and employing 900 people. Agriculture and tourism are main economic drivers, with the Shire acting as a nature-based destination for Melbourne visitors.



### Environment

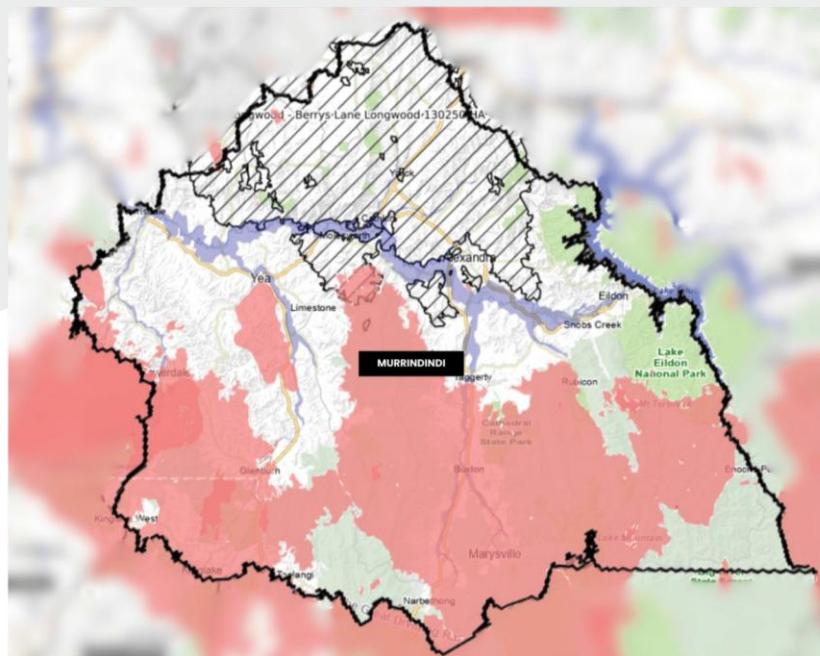
Significant natural assets not only shape the identity of Murrindindi, but also support livelihoods, tourism, agriculture, and construction.



### Tourism

\$154.8 million generated from visitor spend, through tourism attractions such as Great Victorian Rail Trail and Lake Eildon.

## Impact



Murrindindi

### Key:

- Municipal Boundary
- 2009 Victorian Bushfires
- 2022 Victorian Floods
- ▨ 2026 Bushfires

144,000 hectares impacted across 4 municipalities (330km perimeter), Emergency Recovery Victoria sent 59,625 text messages and 16 Emergency Alerts were issued.

### Community and Economic Impact

- Over 215 dwellings destroyed, 520 sheds and other structures.
- Significant livestock loss (thousands).
- Damage to agricultural properties, equipment and vineyards – livelihoods lost.
- Roof catchments and tanks polluted by the fire event.
- Loss of water & feed supplies for stock.
- Damage to tanks and septic systems.

### Council Infrastructure impacted

- 450 km roads
- more than 35 culverts damaged
- more than 45 road bridges impacted
- 22 pedestrian bridges damaged or destroyed
- major tourism assets destroyed. Environment, Flora and Fauna Impact
- significant loss of habitat and native wildlife
- widespread ecosystem destruction
- high risk of landslip and erosion.

## **Business and Tourism**

- Whole-of-region data required to quantify losses and long-term economic impacts.
- Up to 60% loss of revenue for businesses not directly impacted by fire.
- Donations of goods have led to a dramatic reduction in local expenditure.
- Significant agricultural losses, including livestock, equipment and buildings.
- More than 550 businesses within the area impacted.
- 4.8 million generated from visitor spend, through tourism attractions such as Great Victorian Rail Trail and Lake Eildon.

## Key Advocacy Priorities Detailed

	Community need	Required action
1	<p><b>Community and Relief Centre in Alexandra</b></p> <p>To provide community connectedness and a clear and accessible location as a Relief Centre in an emergency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund the development of a dedicated, fit-for-purpose community relief facility to support recovery coordination, and community connection and relief to support future emergency events.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Community Recovery Hubs</b></p> <p>Access to clear information and support during relief and early recovery – including outreach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund the operation of Bushfire Recovery Hubs (Alexandra &amp; Yea) with outreach to small communities</li> <li>• provide: multi-agency presence (EPA, DFFH, Red Cross, AgVic)</li> <li>• fund 2–3-year community hub</li> <li>• provide psychosocial support programs to ensure equitable access for rural residents.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Planning and Rebuilding Support</b></p> <p>Support for residents rebuilding homes, building to Code and access to consultants and contractors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional planners</li> <li>• assessors and wastewater inspectors;</li> <li>• waive planning and building fees;</li> <li>• provide planning consultants to help residents navigate overlays and obtain required technical reports;</li> <li>• support temporary accommodation solutions (e.g., sheds)</li> <li>• rebuilding events with specialist rebuilding expo.</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Reconstruction of Community and Tourism Assets</b></p> <p>Repairing the Great Victorian Rail Trail will help to underpin local wellbeing and improve the visitor economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund replacement of the significantly damaged rail trail including damage/burnt out bridges and culverts, trees, vegetation.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Council Costs Incurred –</b></p> <p>To ensure that Council has the capability to support the community through recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loss of rates revenue while properties are rebuilt – this is anticipated to be several years</li> <li>• expand the Local Emergency Action Plan project to build future resilience</li> <li>• digitise records to assist residents in future emergencies for copies of plans and records</li> <li>• provide staff psychosocial supports.</li> <li>• provide Disaster Claims Admin Officers to ensure that claims are correctly lodged</li> </ul>

	<b>Community need</b>	<b>Required action</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural/Economic Recovery Officer to work with the farming industry</li> <li>• GIS data support officer to ensure correct mapping for DFRA claims</li> <li>• CrisisWorks integration with Altitude and Assetic for improved claims processing.</li> </ul>
6	<b>Betterment Works</b>  Ensure community infrastructure is built back better than before to ensure resilience and reduce future risk and repeated damage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide clarity and additional funding for Crown land and Council assets not eligible under DRFA;</li> <li>• fund rebuild of community and tourism assets</li> <li>• rebuild to contemporary standards with resilient infrastructure (bridges, roads, culverts).</li> </ul>
7	<b>Unfunded Recovery Administration and Organisational Costs</b>  To ensure that Council has the capability to support the community through recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including governance, compliance, grants acquittal and recovery data management.</li> <li>• the administrative cost of completing DRFA claims including photographic evidence/audits etc.</li> <li>• proportionality of funding to match scale of impact and need.</li> </ul>
8	<b>Non-eligible Infrastructure Repairs</b>  Ensure community infrastructure is built back better than before to ensure resilience and reduce future risk and repeat damage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• essential repairs to impacted infrastructure that fall outside current eligibility settings eg the Great Victorian Rail Trail</li> <li>• impacts to infrastructure following significant use after and during and after an emergency eg septic systems at community halls.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Critical Recovery Priorities</b>		
	<b>Community need</b>	<b>Required Action</b>
1	<b>Primary Producer Recovery Package –</b>  To support the region's agribusiness which is crucial for broader Victoria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• targeted fencing and infrastructure recovery programs, recognising fencing as critical economic infrastructure</li> <li>• extended income-support and business-continuity assistance for primary producers</li> <li>• flexible grant programs and reduced administrative burden for disaster-affected primary producers</li> <li>• assistance with funding recovery of crops/orchards/fodder etc.</li> </ul>

	<b>Community need</b>	<b>Required action</b>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Business and Tourism Recovery Grants</b></p> <p>Provide locally-targeted financial support program for local business and tourism providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish a coordinated and comprehensive grant program with inclusive eligibility criteria that doesn't exclude large swaths of the community</li> <li>• conduct comprehensive economic impact analysis</li> <li>• introduce local-spend vouchers</li> <li>• fund tourism recovery campaigns</li> <li>• support population retention strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Environmental Restoration and Land Rehabilitation</b></p> <p>To provide habitat repair, wildlife care, erosion control, and weed management for the local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fund wildlife shelters and carers</li> <li>• protect significant habitats</li> <li>• deliver weed, erosion and landslip management support</li> <li>• provide nest boxes, salvaged hollow logs and flora reinstatement program</li> <li>• fund programs for private landowners to manage erosion and bushfire resilient landscaping.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Power and Telecommunications Resilience</b></p> <p>Provide the community with reliable connectivity and backup capability for emergency coordination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• address prolonged outages</li> <li>• improve tower resilience and battery backup</li> <li>• deliver redundancy for the single fibre link</li> <li>• fix 4G blackspot</li> <li>• provide emergency backup power and comms for the Alexandra ICC</li> <li>• strengthen community emergency radio capacity.</li> </ul>