



Scheduled Meeting of Council

Minutes

Wednesday 17 June 2026
Yea Chambers
15 The Semi Circle
6:00 PM

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND COUNCILLORS' PLEDGE	3
2	PROCEDURAL MATTERS	3
3	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.....	4
4	REPORTS - COMMUNITY & DEVELOPMENT GROUP	5
5	REPORTS - PEOPLE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE GROUP	5
5.1	Adoption of Annual Budget 2026/27	5
5.2	Adoption of Annual Priority Action Plan 2026-27	8
5.3	Emergency Procurement Report.....	9
6	REPORTS - ASSETS & ENVIRONMENT GROUP.....	10
7	COUNCILLOR AND CEO REPORTS	10
8	RECORD OF COUNCIL BRIEFING SESSIONS.....	18
9	SEALING REGISTER.....	19
10	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS	19

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND COUNCILLORS' PLEDGE

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

The meeting will be opened with the Mayor reading the following on behalf of the Murrindindi Shire Council:

“Murrindindi Shire Council is proud to acknowledge the Taungurung and Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land we now call Murrindindi Shire.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, who are the keepers of history, traditions, knowledge and culture of this land.”

1.2 Councillors' Pledge

“The Councillors, democratically elected to represent our community as the Murrindindi Shire Council, are committed to working together in the best interests of the people who live in our municipality, those who conduct business here and those who visit.”

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Privacy Note

This public meeting is being streamed live via our Facebook page and website. A recording of the meeting along with the official Minutes of the meeting will also be published on our website.

2.2 Apologies and Request for Planned Leave

Apologies: Cr J Adams (Planned Leave), E Lording (Planned Leave), S Carpenter (Apology)

Present:

Councillors A Carr, P Hildebrand, D Gallagher, S McAulay

In attendance:

Chief Executive Officer: Livia Bonazzi

Director People & Corporate Performance: Michael Chesworth

Director Community & Development: Andrew Paxton

Director Sustainability & Infrastructure: Kim O'Connor

Manager Governance and Risk: Amanda Vogt

2.3 Disclosure of Interest or Conflict of Interest

Nil.

2.4 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the 27 May 2026 Scheduled meeting of Council and June 2026 Special Meeting of Council.

RESOLUTION**Cr A Carr / Cr S McAulay****That Council confirm the minutes of the 27 May 2026 Scheduled meeting of Council.****CARRIED****RESOLUTION****Cr P Hildebrand / Cr S McAulay****That Council confirm the minutes of the 3 June 2026 Scheduled meeting of Council.****CARRIED****2.5 Petitions**

Nil.

2.6 Community Recognition

Nil.

2.7 Matters Deferred from Previous Meeting

Nil.

2.8 Urgent Business

Nil.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**3.1 Open Forum**

Nil.

3.2 Questions of Council***A question was received from Andrea Cohen.***

Question 1: I have heard rumours today regarding the large scale redevelopment of Grant St in Alexandra, including removal of centre of road parking (and trees?) and 45 degree angle parking to be introduced. I have not seen any call for community consultation and therefore assume there are no plans of any kind for works to be done, as extensive community consultation would be required before any such change was designed, let alone implemented. Having seen consultation processes for other council development projects occur after plans were decided (in other words, ticking a box but not actually consulting at all), I wish to know how council will respond?

The Chief Executive Officer responded to Question 1:

Council has consistently demonstrated a commitment to undertake genuine and meaningful consultation and seeks to obtain, consider and incorporate community feedback when developing plans and strategies that affect our communities. This feedback directly informs the evolution of projects before decisions are made and it is not a “tick the box” exercise. While every individual perspective is important and respected, it is not always possible to accommodate every preference, and Council must ultimately balance competing views and act in the broader public interest, including reflecting the majority position where appropriate. It is important to note that consultation is not a single event; it may occur at multiple stages of a project, from early idea generation through to draft concepts and refined plans prior to adoption. Plans are often amended through this process in response to what we hear from the community. With respect to Grant Street, Alexandra, Council is currently progressing the Alexandra Town Centre Movement and Place Study and Streetscape Improvement Plan, which includes Grant Street and builds on initial consultation undertaken with the community in 2025. No final designs or decisions have been made, and there are currently no approved plans for large scale redevelopment such as those suggested in recent commentary. The project is being undertaken as a staged process, exploring a range of options to improve safety, accessibility and how the town centre functions over time. Council will undertake further consultation shortly, providing residents, businesses and stakeholders with the opportunity to review emerging options and provide input before any decisions are finalised. Feedback from this next phase will be used to refine and amend concepts, ensuring that the final outcome reflects community priorities overall, recognising that this may not align with every individual preference, but will be grounded in the majority view and the long-term interests of the town

4 REPORTS - COMMUNITY & DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Nil.

5 REPORTS - PEOPLE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE GROUP

5.1 Adoption of Annual Budget 2026/27

Department	Business Services
Approved by	Michael Chesworth, Director People and Corporate Performance
Presenter	Cr Anita Carr
Portfolio	Integrity, Finance and Engagement
Purpose	For Decision
Attachment(s)	1. Annual Budget 2026-27 [5.1.1 - 106 pages] 2. Community submissions to the draft 2026 27 Annual Budget [5.1.2 - 6 pages]

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council’s adoption of the 2026/27 Annual Budget following public exhibition and consideration of submissions in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Budget forms part of Council’s integrated planning and reporting framework and supports delivery of the Council Plan 2025–2029 and Annual Priority Action Plan 2026/27.

The 2026/27 Budget has been prepared as a stabilisation and transition budget in the immediate aftermath of the January 2026 bushfires. It prioritises the continuation of essential services, limiting additional expenditure and preserving capacity to support community recovery while the

full impacts on assets, property valuations, funding and organisational capacity are better understood.

The final Budget incorporates several adjustments since the exhibited draft, including an anticipated \$756,000 State Government Bushfire Rates Relief Grant, a \$526,122 reduction in rates revenue following receipt of final valuation data, increased investment interest, additional borrowings of \$1.5 million for strategic investment opportunities, and minor capital adjustments for library book stock, drainage renewal and the street tree program.

Key Budget outcomes include a forecast operating surplus of \$0.78 million, including capital income; an underlying operating deficit of \$5.2 million; a projected cash balance of \$18.7 million and reserves of \$7.3 million at 30 June 2027; a \$15.7 million capital works program; total borrowings of \$1.6 million; and a strong working capital position of approximately 252%.

The Budget reflects the financial impact of the January 2026 bushfires, including a reduction in total rate revenue despite the application of the 2.75% State Government rate cap. While Council remains liquid, cash and investment balances are forecast to decline during the year and the underlying operating deficit highlights continuing structural financial pressures. Council's Financial Sustainability Roadmap will guide further work to review services, prioritise assets, consider resource realignment and advocate for government reform and funding support required to strengthen long-term sustainability.

Fourteen submissions were received during the public exhibition period. Following consideration of submissions, the Budget includes recommended changes to increase investment in new library book stock by \$10,000, clarify the description of Family and Children Services to include the Parental Early Education Program, and correct a minor fees and charges schedule error relating to printing charges.

The report recommends that Council adopt the 2026/27 Annual Budget, note the changes made since exhibition, declare the rates, levies and annual service charges for the 2026/27 rating year, endorse the officers' responses to submissions and authorise publication of the final Budget documents.

RESOLUTION

Cr A Carr / Cr P Hildebrand

That Council:

- 1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020, adopt the Annual Budget 2026/27 (Attachment 5.1.1).**
- 2. Note the following changes to the exhibited draft Annual Budget:**
 - **Movement in Income from**
 - **Anticipated State Bushfire Rates Relief Grant of \$756,000**
 - **Decrease in income from Rates of \$526,122, following receipt of final valuation data from the Victorian Valuer General**
 - **Increase interest received from investments of \$18,000**
 - **Additional borrowings of \$1.5 million to support new infrastructure and investment projects**
 - **Adjustment to the capital program with increased investment in new library book stock (\$10,000), drainage renewal (\$8,000) and inclusion of the street tree program (\$25,000).**
- 3. Formally declare the Rates Levies and Annual Service Charges for the 2026/27 rating year as follows:**

a) Rates and Charges:

In accordance with section 158 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the following rates and charges are declared for the rating year commencing 1 July 2026 and ending 30 June 2027.

b) Amount intended to be raised:

An amount of \$25.7 million is declared as the amount which Council intends to raise by general rates and the annual service charge, which is calculated as follows:

Category	Amount \$'000
General Rates	\$17,133
Municipal charge	\$3,908
Waste and recycling	\$4,410
Supplementary rates and charges	\$150
Revenue in lieu of rates	\$220
Total	\$25,771

c) Rates Information - differentials:

General rates:

A general rate is declared for the 2026/27 financial year. The rate payable for each rateable property will be determined by multiplying the Capital Improved Value (CIV) by the applicable rate in the dollar indicated in the following table:

Type or Class of Land	2026/27 cents/\$CIV
Residential	0.2031
Commercial / Industrial	0.2437
Vacant Land	0.4061
Rural 1	0.1421
Rural 2	0.2010

No minimum general rate is set for any rateable property within the municipality.

d) Municipal charge:

The municipal charge for the 2026/27 financial year is \$395.00.

e) Annual service charges:

- i. An annual service charge for the collection and disposal of refuse and recycling, is declared for the 2026/27 financial year.
- ii. The annual service charges are based on the criteria set out below:

Category	Rate
Community Waste Charge	\$ 155.00
Standard 4 bin service	\$ 425.00
Standard 3 bin (less FOGO)	\$ 270.00

f) Interest on rates and charges:

- i. Interest will be charged in accordance with section 172 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, on any unpaid rates and charges after the due instalment dates set by the Minister in accordance with section 167 of the *Local Government Act 1989*;
 - ii. The interest rate applied will be set under section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983*, as at 1 July immediately preceding the due date; and
 - iii. Interest will accrue from the date each instalment becomes due.
- g) The due date for the full payment of rates is 15 February 2027.
 The due dates for rate instalments are as follows:
- Instalment 1: 30 September 2026
 - Instalment 2: 30 November 2026
 - Instalment 3: 28 February 2027
 - Instalment 4: 31 May 2027.
4. Endorse the Officers' responses to the budget submissions as contained in the attachment to this report
5. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to make the final budget documents available for public viewing.
6. Authorise the Manager Business Services to advise submitters that Council has considered their submissions relating to the Draft Annual Budget 2026/27, noting that all submitters will be thanked and advised of the outcome of their submission

CARRIED

5.2 Adoption of Annual Priority Action Plan 2026-27

Department	Governance and Risk
Approved by	Michael Chesworth, Director People and Corporate Performance
Presenter	Cr Anita Carr,
Portfolio	Integrity, Finance and Engagement
Purpose	For decision
Attachment(s)	1. 2026 27 Priority Action Plan Final for Council Endorsement [5.2.1 - 4 pages]

Executive Summary

Council's Annual Priority Action Plan outlines the actions that will be taken each year to progress towards the realisation of the 10-year Community Vision and the strategic directions in the Council Plan. The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Priority Action Plan for the 2026/27 financial year for adoption.

The Plan addresses the strategies in the Council Plan 2025-2029 and is aligned with Council's annual budget and meets the Integrated Planning Principles outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Council's Priority Action Plan is funded through the Council Budget 2026/27 and is approved at the same time as the budget to enable implementation to commence from 1 July 2026.

RESOLUTION

Cr A Carr / Cr P Hildebrand

That Council adopt the Annual Priority Action Plan 2026/27.

CARRIED

5.3 Emergency Procurement Report

Department	Governance and Risk
Approved by	Michael Chesworth, Director People and Corporate Performance
Presenter	Cr Anita Carr
Portfolio	Integrity, Finance and Engagement
Purpose	For Noting
Attachment(s)	Nil

Executive Summary

Following the January 2026 bushfire event, Council enacted emergency procurement measures under Section 4.9 of the Procurement Policy to enable the timely delivery of critical response and recovery works. These included a temporary increase in the CEO's financial delegation and the suspension of procurement thresholds to avoid delays.

The CEO did not utilise the temporary \$3 million delegation, which lapsed on 30 May 2026. The Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO) has utilised the emergency provisions primarily through existing panel contracts, with total expenditure of \$5.89 million reported to Council.

As recovery has progressed, the suspension has been progressively narrowed to specific panels where works remain time-critical, supporting a controlled transition back to standard procurement requirements.

The approach involves considerations relating to reduced competition, probity and extended use of exemptions; these have been managed through panel-based procurement, maintaining financial controls, formal reporting to Council, and time-limited application of emergency provisions. The approach has enabled timely delivery while maintaining appropriate governance, accountability and transparency.

RESOLUTION

Cr A Carr / Cr S McAulay

That Council:

- 1. Note the report on the Chief Executive Officer's use of increased financial delegations.**
- 2. Note the Municipal Emergency Management Officer's decision to suspend Sections 4.3.2 – Procurement Thresholds and 4.3.6 Standing Offer and Panel Agreement Procurement Thresholds of the Procurement Policy to enable timely procurement of urgent bushfire relief and recovery works, limited to the Tree and Weed Panel (CONT22/10) and Civil Works Panel (CONT21/8), until 31 January 2027.**

CARRIED**6 REPORTS - ASSETS & ENVIRONMENT GROUP**

Nil.

7 COUNCILLOR AND CEO REPORTS**7.1 Notices of Motions**

Nil.

7.2 Cr Jodie Adams

Nil.

7.3 Cr Sue Carpenter

Nil.

7.4 Cr Sandice McAulay***Economic Development and Community Recovery Portfolio Report – June 2026***

June has been a particularly active month, with significant progress across both community recovery initiatives and longer-term economic development priorities.

A major focus has been supporting local businesses through the delivery of our June Business Month program, which brings together workshops, networking opportunities and advisory support across the Shire to assist businesses to recover, adapt and grow.

At the same time, Council has continued its advocacy and funding efforts, including progressing support for the Great Victorian Rail Trail in partnership with regional stakeholders, tourism operators and community organisations. We have also continued working closely with business and tourism stakeholders through forums such as the Agri-Business and Tourism Sub-Group, helping coordinate recovery activities and identify priorities for farmers, small businesses and the visitor economy.

Within the Events and Visitor Economy unit, significant progress has been made on the Streamline Events project. Following a review of potential system vendors, procurement is now being finalised, paving the way for implementation of a more efficient and user-friendly digital platform for both event organisers and Council staff.

Looking ahead, ongoing recovery coordination remains a key priority, with continued support for our business, farming and tourism sectors through engagement with regional recovery partners and advocacy for critical infrastructure investment, particularly tourism assets such as the rail trail.

Work is also progressing on the business case for a Regional University Study Hub. This initiative builds on Council's previous applications under the Federal Regional University Study Hub Program and findings from the recently completed work examining future health and care service delivery in Murrindindi. A key theme emerging from this work is the importance of improving local

access to education, training and workforce development opportunities. Strengthening pathways into education and skills development will be critical to supporting future workforce needs and economic resilience across the Shire.

Council is also continuing to explore new economic development opportunities, including an Advanced Manufacturing project aimed at strengthening local industry, attracting investment and unlocking under-utilised industrial land across the municipality. During the month I attended the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance forum, *Climate Risk and Financing Resilience*, held in Benalla.

The forum attracted strong regional participation and explored innovative financing mechanisms to support climate adaptation and resilience. Discussions covered renewable energy initiatives, emissions reduction opportunities, climate adaptation planning and advocacy priorities for rural and regional communities. The forum provided valuable insights into emerging funding opportunities and collaborative approaches that can assist councils and communities to strengthen resilience while supporting sustainable economic development.

I have also continued participating in meetings of the Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network (CRLLEN). The network remains concerned about proposed School-to-Work funding reforms, which would require substantially increased service delivery outcomes while reducing available funding by approximately 60%. At the same time, KPI expectations are proposed to increase by around 40%. There is a genuine risk that local capacity, employer engagement and school partnerships may be diminished, particularly in rural communities where strong local relationships are critical to achieving successful outcomes for young people. CRLLEN will continue to advocate for funding arrangements that are equitable, sustainable and responsive to regional needs, and Council will continue to support and advocate alongside CRLLEN for funding models that recognise the unique challenges and opportunities of rural communities.

Overall, our focus remains on supporting communities and businesses through recovery while continuing to build the foundations for a more resilient, connected and prosperous Murrindindi.

7.5 Cr Paul Hildebrand

A number of important projects and programs continue to progress across Murrindindi Shire, delivering improvements to our townships, supporting community wellbeing and strengthening local infrastructure.

The Sustainable Streetscapes Alexandra project continues to transform the township, with Nihil Street now planted along its entire length with Canadian Maples and Chinese Pistachios. Additional planting is planned throughout Alexandra to replace trees previously removed and to further enhance the town's character, shade and environmental benefits.

As part of the Naturally Cooler Murrindindi initiative, planting works are scheduled to commence during the week beginning 22 June in Miller Street and Whatton Place. These new plantings will contribute to cooler, greener and more attractive public spaces.

The Healthy Hamlets program has now completed planting works across a number of our smaller townships, delivering long-term environmental and community benefits while improving the appearance and amenity of these local communities.

Significant capital works continue throughout the shire. Renewal works at Kinglake Memorial Reserve are now underway and are expected to be completed by September or October. Drainage improvement works at Meadow, Moyle and View Streets in Yea are commencing, while major culvert replacement works in Limestone continue to progress. These projects will improve safety, resilience and service delivery for local residents.

The refurbishment of the John Cotton Footbridge within the Yea Wetlands has been completed, including upgrades to the bridge deck and approaches. The improvements will provide safer and more accessible access for the many residents and visitors who enjoy this important community asset.

Planning for the 2026/27 works program is also well advanced. Road grading schedules have been developed, pit and drain cleaning programs are being prepared, and the annual line-marking program is expected to commence later this year. Council's roadside slashing contract will soon be released for tender, with works anticipated to begin in mid to late spring.

Recovery from the January bushfires remains a significant focus for Council and the community. The scale of the clean-up effort continues to be evident, with more than 10,765 tonnes of bushfire waste material received at the Alexandra Transfer Station up to 31 May 2026. This highlights both the magnitude of the recovery task and the ongoing support being provided to affected residents.

Council's trial of Container Deposit Scheme baskets attached to public litter bins has received extremely positive feedback from the community. The initiative is helping to reduce litter, increase recycling opportunities and provide a practical benefit for those collecting eligible containers. Strategic planning work also continues across the shire. The Alexandra Movement and Place Study is preparing to enter the community consultation phase, while detailed design work and engagement regarding raised pedestrian crossings continues. The Yea Movement and Place Study is also progressing well, with the draft report currently under review.

Since my last report, we have received substantial rainfall across much of the shire. The rain has been extremely welcome, with gullies flowing once again and water storages receiving valuable inflows. After a challenging start to the year, conditions are looking increasingly positive and there is renewed confidence throughout our agricultural sector. Combined with strong cattle, sheep and wool prices, many farmers are feeling more optimistic about the season ahead.

Last Saturday, I had the pleasure of attending the first of Council's Community Recognition Celebrations at Terip Terip. The event was very well attended and provided an excellent opportunity to acknowledge the dedication and contribution of local volunteers. Guests enjoyed a wonderful two-course meal prepared by Grant Street Grocer, while entertainment by Solomon and Lacey created a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. It was particularly pleasing to see so many people reconnecting, sharing stories and celebrating the strength of their community. The feedback received from attendees was overwhelmingly positive.

This coming Saturday, Council will host the Fawcett Community Gathering to recognise local volunteers and community leaders, commencing at 12.30 pm. A similar event will be held at Highlands on 27 June, with the Yarrck celebration scheduled for 25 July in conjunction with its popular Christmas in July festivities.

These local gatherings are being held in place of the traditional shire-wide volunteer celebration and recognise the extraordinary contribution volunteers make across Murrindindi Shire. Whether through emergency response, sporting clubs, community groups, events or local organisations, volunteers are the backbone of our communities and play a vital role in making our shire such a great place to live.

Council is also preparing applications for the Sport and Recreation Victoria Local Sports Infrastructure Fund. Among the projects being considered are upgraded tennis court lighting and a clubhouse expansion at the Terip Terip Recreation Reserve. These improvements would strengthen local sporting opportunities, support participation and help ensure community facilities continue to meet the needs of residents into the future.

As we move into winter, it is encouraging to see significant progress being made across a range of projects and recovery initiatives. Council remains committed to supporting our communities, delivering essential infrastructure and working alongside residents to build a stronger, more resilient Murrindindi Shire.

7.6 Cr Eric Lording

Nil.

7.7 Cr Anita Carr

Integrity, Finance & Engagement Portfolio Update – June Report

As briefly mentioned when speaking to the budget, the Financial Sustainability Roadmap — which was initiated late last year but paused due to the January fires—will be reactivated in the second half of this year.

While the roadmap covers many important aspects of long-term financial sustainability, one key component is the Facilities Review Advisory Group (FRAG). This group will consist of community members who will work with Council to assess surplus assets that may be decommissioned or rationalised.

Thank you to everyone who submitted an expression of interest. Your willingness to contribute is greatly appreciated. When the process resumes, Council officers will contact you to get things underway. They look forward to working with you and gaining your valuable insights

Now that the annual budget 2026-2027 has been adopted the focus for the corporate services team will shift to preparing for end of financial year reporting and the external financial audit by the Victorian Auditor General. This end of year reporting includes preparation of annual financial statements, annual reporting of the local government performance indicators which are published on the 'know your council' website and preparation of the Council's Annual Report.

This Annual Report includes reporting on the progress in meeting the Council Plan strategic objectives and in achieving the annual priority actions for 2025/26. A fair task ahead for the team and I look forward to receiving the reports later in the year.

DEPUTY MAYOR/EILDON WARD REPORT

I'm kicking things off with some exciting news — **Lake Eildon has now risen for 16 days in a row** thanks to the fantastic rain we've been receiving. On June 1st it was at 40.5%, and as of today, June 17th, it has climbed to 42.2%. No firm predictions yet for the rest of winter, but here's hoping the upward trend continues. A high lake level benefits everyone, and it's great to see it heading in the right direction.

The 29th Annual Alexandra Truck Show was a huge success

The Truck Show held on the King's Birthday weekend was nothing short of massive. Kicking off Saturday morning with breakfast at Yarck followed by the truck convoy into Alex; Saturday afternoon saw the annual truck drivers memorial service which is such an emotional time; Saturday night was the sponsors dinner and of course Sunday the main event where an estimated 15,000 people were in attendance, it certainly pushed for a record crowd. 349 entered vehicles (trucks, Utes, rods), 51 additional vehicles on display, 91 lots auctioned across the sponsors' dinner and Sunday's event. The committee has said the funds raised will go directly toward mental health initiatives in our shire.

Even better — no additional service requests and no community complaints were received by Council. That speaks volumes about how strongly locals and visitors support this event and recognise its value to Alexandra and the wider shire.

A huge congratulations to the Truck Show Committee, Alexandra Events Committee, and every volunteer who helped bring this event to life. As well as all the community groups and businesses that kept everyone fed and hydrated. And of course, a massive thank you to the Murrindindi Shire

Council staff, who worked tirelessly in the lead-up and on the day. The positive feedback about the presentation of our parks, streets, toilets and paths was welcomed and well deserved. It's also been pleasing to hear how the flow on affects from the truck show spilled into our other towns, with accommodation, cafes, restaurants and shops busy over the long weekend. It is a much-needed economic boost as we head into the quieter months after a very disrupted and quiet summer.

Council is a proud supporter of the Truck Show, and I'm already looking forward to the 30th anniversary celebration next year.

There are so many events coming up but I will just speak about a few I am looking forward to attending.

Glenburn Hall Community Night – This Friday, 19 June

Everyone is welcome for a relaxed evening of pizza, conversation and community connection from 6pm at Glenburn Hall.

Special guest Warren Davies – “The Unbreakable Farmer” – will be speaking. Warren is a passionate advocate for mental health and wellbeing in rural communities. Drawing on his own life experiences, he shares a powerful message about resilience, staying connected, and supporting one another through life's challenges. It's set to be a meaningful and uplifting night.

Eildon & Surrounds – Community Recovery Workshop - This Saturday, 20 June – 10am at Pixies at The Billabong

Join Anne Leadbeater OAM for a supportive and reflective community recovery session. This workshop offers a safe space to share experiences, strengthen understanding and explore the ongoing recovery journey — particularly for Eildon and surrounding areas, whose experiences differ from the fire-impacted regions.

Fawcett Community Gathering – This Saturday, 20 June – from 12:30pm @ Fawcett Hall

Everyone is invited to an afternoon of connection, recognition and celebration, including:

- A shared meal
- Live music from Solomon & Lacey
- Presentation of a recognition plaque honouring community contributions

This event is one of four being held across the shire in place of our usual volunteer dinner. With the scale of the 2026 events, it wasn't possible to single out just a few individuals — so instead, we're celebrating everyone who has contributed to disaster and recovery efforts. Whether you've given an hour or many, donated, helped a neighbour or supported in any way, this event is for you.

Local Sport & Community Spirit

After a weekend of cold water, ice buckets and costumes, both the Thornton Eildon District Women's Football Club and the Alexandra Football Netball Club are gearing up for another big weekend.

Last weekend, both clubs raised funds and awareness for MND, a cause that touches many in our community, including the recent loss of a well-known local. Congratulations to both clubs for their efforts and community leadership.

This weekend:

- Thornton Football Club – Music Trivia Night, Saturday 20th from 5:30pm, everyone is welcome
- Alexandra Rebels – Annual Club Ball, Saturday 20th, open to everyone in the community, with a red, white and black theme
- Tickets available via each club's Facebook page.

I hope everyone enjoys the rest of June and finds a chance to get out and about to one of the many fantastic events happening across our shire this winter. There is so much to be proud of and so much to look forward to.

Take care and stay connected.

7.8 Cr Damien Gallagher

The Kinglake Ranges Youth Showcase night last week, led by the Rotary Club of Kinglake President Nina Lunde, and Youth portfolio champions, Tamara Fowkes and Jordyn Princi, was an inspirational success. A wealth of opportunities for young people across the Ranges to engage, participate, and grow were presented by SES Kinglake Unit, Kinglake CFA, Kinglake West Fire Brigade, Rotary Club of Kinglake Ranges, Kinglake Junior Football Club, and Murrindindi Shire Youth.

With so many things competing for their attention, it's tough to engage our young citizens but it's never been more important. Our young, engaged, community-conscious citizens become future community leaders and community-conscious adults.

At the Municipal Association of Victoria State Council event last month, local government representatives from across the state assembled to develop its state election year advocacy agenda. Proudly, Council's advocacy direction aligned in full. Murrindindi Shire Council's own motions received overwhelming sector support. 98% of Councils supported the Murrindindi proposition that Municipal disaster response, relief, and recovery capabilities could be strengthened and made more efficient by establishing an appropriately funded 'flying squad' or pool of emergency specialists deployable to emergency events across the state. Unanimous support was received for the Murrindindi motion to establish a harmonised, integrated system for the collection and management of personal and property impacts following disaster. All Victorian

Councils recognise the value of sharing information across all levels of government to enable prompt, humane service delivery while maintaining privacy protections.

It has been inspiring to see the work of community-led recovery progressing strongly. At recovery hubs, neighbours are coming together to socialise, to celebrate wins, to work solutions for the future together, to advocate for need, and to escalate pressing issues. For example, at Terip Terip, the Murrindindi Mobile Health Van attended and Alexandra District Health representatives provided blood pressure and blood sugar tests and supported skin checks for early signs of skin cancer and pre-cancerous lesions. In Yarck and Fawcett this month, the recovery champions and Council met with Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, Ryan Batchelor MP and Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Management Victoria, Mariela Diaz.

Community members spoke of the trajectory of recovery to date, and raised immediate concerns regarding:

- inappropriate temporary accommodation,
- the rate of clean up,
- the cost of permit fees to rebuild,
- and that 25 families still can't shower each day.

Council spoke of:

- the need to improve access to the funding of local mental wellbeing services for bushfire affected communities, and a distinct gap in mental health support for 18–26-year-olds
- a greater focus on *local* business involvement in the Victorian Government-funded clean-up program,
- the significant toll on local road and bridge infrastructure – disrupting communities, farms and local business, and
- the deep, lasting, and compounding impacts of *successive* emergency events on individuals, and on the local economy.

Council also met this month with the office of the Minister for Small and Family Business, The Hon Natalie Suleyman MP, and conveyed the experiences of small and family businesses who had the peak tourist visitation season severely impacted by fire or road closures. We spoke of the recovery support packages which are simply not landing in Murrindindi to relieve the 978 small and family primary production businesses affected by fire, and we implored economic recovery measures comparable to those deployed after previous emergency events, such as vouchers to attract visitors into our affected communities.

As I reflect on all the discussions, all the advocacy, all the conversations that have been met with ungratifying and unsatisfactory responses, I'm heartened that our Murrindindi community recovery hub champions and Murrindindi Shire Council are in lockstep, united as Team Murrindindi craving support that is commensurate with our impact. Victorian and Commonwealth Government funding is available – over \$420m to date in fact – but the support, the resources – they're just not landing in our community. I will be calling upon our business and industrial sector to join with Council, to tell the stories of their impact, and to collectively stress the urgency of Murrindindi's reasonable, respectful calls for adequate recovery assistance. It's not too late for the Government to act. Team Murrindindi is here to work with Government.

Next week Council's CEO Livia Bonazzi and I are heading to Canberra for the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly. We will be taking every opportunity to influence the national agenda for the benefit of Murrindindi Shire residents, businesses, and visitors. We'll be making the case – at a federal level for improved information sharing following emergencies, and we'll also be calling for sector support to call on the Commonwealth Government to deliver meaningful reform informed by the findings and final recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport's Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Fiscal Sustainability.

Again, it's our community's passionate commitment to one another that continues to be the force driving recovery. It's the Murrindindi way. For continuing to turn up, for your relentless advocacy, and your care, thank you.

7.9 Chief Executive Officer Report

Grants Update

I'm pleased to advise that Council has recently been successful in securing a number of external grants, through the Safer Local Roads and Streets Program, delivered in partnership with the TAC and the Department of Transport and Planning.

These include:

- \$373,000 for speed management improvements on the Eildon–Jamieson Road

- \$244,000 for speed management improvements in Highlands Road and Caveat-Dropmore Road, Caveat
- \$130,000 for a raised priority pedestrian crossing in Webster Street, Alexandra

These projects will improve road safety outcomes across the shire.

Building Community Resilience Through Local Food Systems

The Nourishing Neighbourhoods program is now in its second year of a three-year VicHealth-funded partnership between Mitchell and Murrindindi Shire Councils, focused on strengthening local food systems and improving community wellbeing.

To date, approximately \$36,000 has been distributed across Murrindindi groups to support a range of community-led initiatives, including backyard harvest activities, kindergarten food literacy resources, the expansion of community gardens, and the establishment of new food-growing spaces. What is particularly encouraging is that these projects are locally driven and reflect the priorities and strengths of our communities.

Community groups and organisations were invited to submit expressions of interest, with applications assessed through an independent governance process.

Planning and growth – Structure Plan

The Yea Structure Plan was developed with extensive community input and supported through the State Government Planning Hub. This important strategic planning document is now moving to formal exhibition, a significant milestone. It reflects a shared vision for how we grow, where development occurs, and the standards we expect in terms of design, liveability and resilience. Importantly, this is a tool that will guide decision-making and give greater certainty to both community and investors. It will be available on our website later this week, and I encourage Councillors and the community to engage with it through the exhibition process.

Disaster readiness funding

In relation to the Commonwealth Disaster Ready Fund, Council has identified the construction of a new \$22 million Alexandra Stadium and Relief Centre as a priority project, and we have actively advocated for a matching contribution by the State to support the Federal grant application.

Despite engagement with Ministers and local Members of Parliament, we have not received a commitment. Given Council's current financial position, we are not able to meet the co-contribution required to submit a full funding application at this time. This funding round closes next month.

Rather than overextend, we will take a staged approach - seeking funding to complete detailed design and documentation so that we are well-positioned for a future round. This keeps the project live and viable, while recognising the financial constraints we must operate within. The Alexandra Stadium & Community Relief Centre remains a key advocacy priority, particularly in the context of the upcoming election, and we encourage community members to support our advocacy.

Great Victorian Rail Trail

The Great Victorian Rail Trail remains one of the Shire's most significant assets, both as a tourism driver and as a place for community recreation and connection.

The trail sustained significant damage in the January fires, with estimated impacts in the order of \$9.3 million. As Mr Chesworth mentioned, this is not something Council can deliver alone.

We are continuing to work closely and constructively, with State agencies to secure the funding required to restore the trail, recognising its importance to both our local economy and our

community. These discussions are progressing, however the scale of the damage means that restoration will take time.

In the meantime, our focus is on maintaining momentum, refining the scope of works, and ensuring the project is well positioned for funding consideration. At this stage, it is realistic to expect that restoration will be a staged process rather than a rapid rebuild.

Special Thanks for the Truck and Rod Show

Finally, Mayor I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the organisers and volunteers behind the Truck and Rod Show, held on the long weekend in Alexandra. By all accounts, it has been an outstanding success, and events like this play a vital role in supporting our local economy, drawing visitors into the Shire and showcasing the strength and pride of our community.

These outcomes don't happen by accident. They are the result of a huge amount of effort behind the scenes, and it's important we recognise the contribution of those who make it possible. Congratulations to everyone involved - it's a great example of what this community can achieve.

8 RECORD OF COUNCIL BRIEFING SESSIONS

Purpose

For noting.

Executive Summary

This report presents the records of Council Briefing Sessions for 27 May 2026 to 10 June 2026, for Council to note.

Meeting name / type		Council Pre-Meet		
Meeting date:		27 May 2026		
Matters discussed		1. Alexandra East Development Plan 2. Framework for Strategic Investment 3. Grants and Sponsorship Quarterly Allocations 4. Priority Action Plan – Quarterly Report 5. Audit & Risk Meeting Minutes 6. March Quarterly Finance Report		
Councillor attendees		Cr D Gallagher, Cr A Carr, Cr S Carpenter, Cr P Hildebrand, Cr S McAulay		
Council Officer attendees		L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, A Paxton, K O'Connor, A Vogt, N Rongong		
Conflict of interest disclosed?		Yes		
Matter No.	Councillor making disclosure	Wast a vote taken?	Did the Councillor leave the room?	When? Before or after discussion?
3	Cr D Gallagher	No	Yes	Before

Meeting name / type		Briefing Session		
Meeting date:		3 June 2026		
Matters discussed		1. Draft Annual Priority Action Plan 2026-27 2. Development Services Report – July 2025 to April 2026 (Year to Date Report)		
Councillor attendees		Cr D Gallagher, Cr A Carr, Cr S Carpenter, Cr P Hildebrand, Cr S McAulay		
Council Officer attendees		L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, A Paxton, K O'Connor, A Vogt, N Stewart		
Conflict of interest disclosed?		No		

Meeting name / type	Special Council Meeting Pre-Meet
Meeting date:	3 June 2026
Matters discussed	1. Submissions to the Draft Budget
Councillor attendees	Cr D Gallagher, Cr A Carr, Cr S Carpenter, Cr P Hildebrand, Cr S McAulay
Council Officer attendees	L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, K O'Connor, Nikki Rongong
Conflict of interest disclosed?	No

Meeting name / type	Briefing Session
Meeting date:	10 June 2026
Matters discussed	1. Planning Scheme Review 2. Planning Application – 6489 Melba Highway Yea – Smith Street Development Plan – 22 Lot Low Density Residential Development 3. Emergency Procurement Report 4. Murrindindi Road Safety Projects and Grant Funding Success 5. Alexandra Movement & Place Consultation
Councillor attendees	Cr D Gallagher, Cr A Carr, Cr S Carpenter, Cr P Hildebrand, Cr S McAulay
Council Officer attendees	L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, K O'Connor, B Harnwell, A Vogt, P Schier, C Fraser, N Stewart, P Guru, P Bain, C Allingham
Conflict of interest disclosed?	No

RESOLUTION

Cr S McAulay / Cr P Hildebrand

That Council receive and note the records of Council Briefing Sessions for 27 May 2026 to 10 June 2026.

CARRIED

9 SEALING REGISTER

Nil.

10 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Nil.

The meeting was closed at 7:25pm.