



Scheduled Meeting of Council

Minutes

Wednesday 22 July 2026
Alexandra Chambers
28 Perkins Street
6:00 PM

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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

Present:

Councillors A Carr, P Hildebrand, D Gallagher, S McAulay, S Carpenter, E Lording

In attendance:

Acting Chief Executive Officer: Michael Chesworth

Acting Director People & Corporate Performance: Dennis O'Keeffe

Acting Director Community & Development: Ben Harnwell

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 Scheduled Council Meeting held on 17 June 2026.

RESOLUTION

Cr A Carr / Cr P Hildebrand

That Council confirm the minutes of the Scheduled Council Meeting 17 June 2026.

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

Nil.

4 REPORTS - COMMUNITY & DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Nil.

5 REPORTS - PEOPLE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE GROUP

5.1 Adjustment to User Fees and Charges for 2026/27

Department	Business Services
Approved by	D O'Keeffe, Acting Director People and Corporate Performance
Presenter	Cr Anita Carr
Portfolio	Integrity, Finance and Engagement
Purpose	For Decision
Attachment(s)	1. Revised Fees and Charges [5.1.1 - 40 pages]

Executive Summary

Council adopted the 2026/27 Schedule of User Fees and Charges on 17 June 2026 as part of the Annual Budget process. Following publication, a small number of administrative corrections and adjustments have been identified that require Council to re-adopt the Schedule.

The proposed amendments include the addition of a missing Land Information Certificate fee, minor corrections to Building and Planning fees and descriptions, updates to statutory lodgement fees set by the State Government, and adjustments to landfill-related fees to reflect the State Government's increased Landfill Levy for 2026/27.

Until the revised Schedule is approved and published, customers continue to be charged the applicable 2025/26 fee rates for the affected services. While this results in a minor temporary reduction in revenue, approval of the revised Schedule will ensure appropriate cost recovery, maintain the accuracy of Council's financial reporting and forecasting, and support responsible financial management.

The amendments are administrative in nature, with no community consultation required.

RESOLUTION

Cr A Carr / Cr S Carpenter

That Council adopt the updated User Fees and Charges Schedule for 2026/27 as contained in attachment 5.1.1.

CARRIED

6 REPORTS - ASSETS & ENVIRONMENT GROUP

6.1 CONT25/30 Plant 3120 Landfill Waste Compactor

Department	Environment and Assets
Approved by	K O'Connor, Director Sustainability and Infrastructure
Presenter	Cr Paul Hildebrand
Portfolio	Sustainability and Assets
Purpose	For Decision
Attachment(s)	1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Plant 3120 Landfill Compactor Confidential Report [6.1.1 – 5 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is for Council to appoint a supplier for Contract CONT 25/30 – Supply and Delivery of a Landfill Compactor. This is to replace Council's current Landfill Compactor and is a lump sum contract.

Tenders were sought from the MAV Procurement Panel via the National Procurement Networks under their Earthmoving Equipment Panel.

The tender for this procurement closed on 8 May 2026. Three submissions were received at the close of the tender. A detailed evaluation process was undertaken by a Tender Evaluation Committee in line with the Council's Procurement Policy and using tender evaluation criteria.

Based on the analysis undertaken, the Committee recommended (Tender 3) be awarded Contract CONT 25/30 for the supply and delivery of a Landfill Compactor for the lump sum of \$957,300 ex GST.

RESOLUTION

Cr S McAulay / Cr P Hildebrand
That Council:

- 1. Award Contract CONT 25/30 – Supply and Delivery of a Landfill Compactor to Tutt Bryant Equipment (Tenderer 3) for a lump sum price of \$957,300 (excluding GST), comprising the base compactor purchase price of \$860,000, a modified bucket at an additional cost of \$62,200, and a 5-year/4,000-hour extended powertrain plus warranty package at a cost of \$35,100.**
- 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to execute the contract agreement.**
- 3. Release this resolution and the name of Tenderer 3 into the Minutes of the Council Meeting 22 July 2026.**

CARRIED

6.2 CONT25/21 Plant 1613 Motor Grader

Department	Environment and Assets
Approved by	K O'Connor, Director Sustainability and Infrastructure
Presenter	Cr Paul Hildebrand
Portfolio	Sustainability and Assets
Purpose	For Decision
Attachment(s)	1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Plant 1613 Motor Grader Confidential Report [6.2.1 – 5 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is for Council to appoint a supplier for Contract CONT25/21 – Supply and Delivery of a Motor Grader. This is a lump sum contract to replace Council's current Motor Grader.

Tenders were sought from the MAV Procurement Panel via the National Procurement Networks under their Earthmoving Equipment Panel.

The tender for this procurement closed on 8 May 2026. Two submissions were received at the close of the tender. A detailed evaluation process was undertaken by a Tender Evaluation Committee in line with the Council's Procurement Policy and using tender evaluation criteria.

Based on the analysis undertaken, the Committee recommended (Tenderer 1) be awarded Contract CONT25/30 for the supply and delivery of a Motor Grader for the lump sum of \$562,525 excluding GST.

RESOLUTION

Cr A Carr / Cr P Hildebrand

That Council:

- 1. Award Contract CONT 25/21 – Supply and Delivery of a Motor Grader and Roller Control System to William Adams Pty Ltd (Tenderer 1) for the lump sum price of \$562,525 excluding GST.**
- 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to execute the contract agreement**
- 3. Release this resolution and the name of Tenderer 1 into the Minutes of the Council Meeting 22 July 2026.**

CARRIED

6.3 Multi Branded Fuel Card (Procurement Australia)

Department	Sustainability & Assets
Approved by	K O'Connor, Director Sustainability and Infrastructure
Presenter	Cr Eric Lording
Portfolio	Amenity and Road Care
Purpose	For Decision
Attachment(s)	1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Multi Branded Fuel Card Confidential Report [6.3.1 – 5 page]

Executive Summary

This report presents the options for the Supply of Fleet Fuel Card Services for Council's fleet and recommends the preferred procurement approach and supplier for Council's endorsement.

The assessment considered value for money, supply reliability, risk and compliance with public sector procurement requirements.

The evaluation determined that utilising the Procurement Australia Multi Branded Fuel Card Panel represents a low-risk and efficient procurement pathway, providing access to pre-qualified suppliers, competitive pricing, and reduced administrative effort.

Following assessment of panel suppliers, Business Fuel Cards Pty Ltd was identified as the preferred supplier due to its competitive pricing, wide range of available outlets, proven capability in supplying fuel cards to council via previous contracts, and strong health, safety, and environmental performance.

Approval to appoint Business Fuel Cards Pty Ltd via this panel will provide Council with a compliant and efficient procurement pathway, reduce the need to conduct a separate tender process, and support value-for-money purchasing.

RESOLUTION

Cr E Lording / Cr A Carr

That Council:

- 1. Note that procurements from established panel contracts, such as MAV and Procurement Australia, are exempt from open tendering requirements under section 4.3.3 of the Procurement Policy.**
- 2. Appoint Business Fuel Cards Pty Ltd as Council's preferred supplier of multi-brand fuel card services, through Procurement Australia's Panel Contract No. 2703/0110-2.1 until 31 March 2029.**
- 3. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to execute all necessary contract documentation and to access the panel in accordance with Council's procurement policy, budget approvals and delegated authority requirements.**

CARRIED

7 COUNCILLOR AND CEO REPORTS

7.1 Notices of Motions

Nil

7.2 Cr Jodie Adams

Nil

7.3 Cr Sue Carpenter

We are right in the middle of winter and what a typical winter it is with cold, wet and foggy days. It is lovely when the sun does shine.

I am sorry that I missed the June Council meeting. Surgery was scheduled for that day. I do urge people to get skin checks regularly. Don't let skin spots go untreated, or you may find yourself having surgery too.

I have been able to attend Community gatherings recognising volunteering across Murrindindi shire at Fawcett Hall and at Habbies Howe Shearing Shed in the Highlands.

Both of these events gave their communities the opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of all the wonderful volunteers and community members that have supported each other.

This initiative was the shires way of celebrating Volunteer Week this year and a recognition plaque was presented to each community after a lovely catered meal. Terip Terip has also held a Community Gathering, and Yarck is holding theirs this weekend. Unfortunately, I am not able to attend them.

Naidoc week was held from July 5th to 12th, with a variety of events held in Yea. On the Sunday, Taungurung elder Auntie Angela ten Buuren held a smoking ceremony and welcome to country at the Yea Wetlands. After recent rain, the wetlands were flooded, but the day was dry and the ceremony was able to go ahead. I was pleased to see a large crowd of people come and be

immersed in a moving Welcome to Country and learn about Aunty Angela's ancestors who lived in the district in generations past. We all enjoyed a light lunch afterwards.

The Growing Healthy Communities Community Project held their second meeting in Yea last Wednesday. We conducted an "Asset Mapping" exercise, where we collated information about Yea including facilities, sporting clubs, community groups, services available, activities offered in the area, and so much more. When you actually list all these "assets" in the town, then you can see what healthy communities can offer, and what can be done to make them more available for residents' benefits. An exciting project with more to come.

National Tree Day was celebrated with a community webinar "Love Your Pollinators" and I called in at the library in Yea to hear a fascinating talk about pollinators including Bogong moths and how they migrate vast distances, up to 1,000km to the high-country as part of their life-cycle.

To help the conservation of endangered Bogong moths and critically endangered Mountain Pygmy-possums, I encourage people to download the MOTH TRACKER app from Zoos Victoria and log any sightings of Bogong moths.

In my portfolio area of Sustainable population growth and Land-use planning, we will be seeking detailed designs for the enabling infrastructure for the Alexandra East Development Plan. This includes the upgrade of Wattle Street, drainage, and other services. These designs will provide essential evidence for future grant applications to fund the infrastructure for this exciting development.

The Yea Structure Plan – has been on exhibition for the last few weeks and will come back to Council for adoption in August. Thank you to all who participated in the engagement on the Plan as well as those that have taken time to make a submission. This is a well-supported Structure Plan looking towards the future of Yea.

A Planning Scheme Review is underway. As part of the mandatory, regular review of the Planning Scheme, we are undertaking a light touch review thanks to State Government funding. This review will include incorporating changes from the State Planning as well as reforms such as a Bushfire Management Overlay, housing under the Plan for Victoria and other State reforms. This will be coming to Council in August.

In Bushfire Recovery, the Planning Team have been working with several residents in the bushfire impacted areas. There are no delays in planning, and they are keen to work with applicants to support them in making a planning application. The best approach is to call and book an appointment to discuss your planning needs. This might be temporary accommodation or a full-rebuild. Speaking with the planning department is the best way to ensure you have all the best advice for success.

7.4 Cr Sandice McAulay

Stakeholder consultation continues on Council's Streamline Events Project, with work focused on making it easier for event organisers to navigate Council processes and helping deliver even stronger community and visitor events across Murrindindi.

Planning is also well underway for Dindi Winterfest. It's exciting to see this event beginning to take shape as an opportunity to showcase Murrindindi during the quieter winter season, attract visitors and supporting our local businesses and community groups.

Council has also appointed a consultant to develop the Murrindindi Manufacturing Strategy. This important piece of work will help identify opportunities for innovation, investment and future

employment, while supporting the growth and long-term sustainability of our local manufacturing sector.

Council is partnering with Alexandra and Yea Hospitals and Wellways to deliver the Beyond the Business – Supporting the Supporter events. It's wonderful to see recognition being given not only to our business owners and primary producers, but also to the families, carers and support people who play such an important role behind the scenes.

Council continues to monitor the H5 Avian Influenza situation and is working closely with government and industry partners to ensure our agricultural sector has access to timely information and support if required.

As we know all too well, bushfire preparedness remains front of mind for many of our communities. Council continues its advocacy to strengthen community resilience, emergency preparedness and investment in the critical infrastructure our communities rely on.

Finally, it is really encouraging to see the continued strong stakeholder support for the Great Victorian Rail Trail bridge projects. These projects have enormous potential to further grow tourism, support local businesses and encourage more people to explore everything Murrindindi has to offer.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my role is getting out into our communities and supporting the people who give so much of their time to make Murrindindi such a wonderful place to live. This month I had the pleasure of attending the Marysville Lions Changeover Dinner, the opening of the very successful MiRA local artists exhibition in Marysville, the NAIDOC Week opening at the Yea Wetlands, and the much-enjoyed *Comedy and Conversation* evening in Ruffy. Every one of these events showcased the passion, talent and generosity of our local communities.

7.5 Cr Paul Hildebrand

Bushfire recovery works continue across the shire, with emergency repairs and tree clearing progressing well.

Around 18,000 cubic metres of fire-affected timber has been collected, with 7,000 cubic metres processed and 4,000 cubic metres of firewood already returned to local communities.

Council is also preparing major recovery projects, including bridge repairs and road restoration, with integrated works such as the planned Yarck Road re-seal.

Flood planning continues with studies underway for King Parrot Creek, the Yea River, and the wider Goulburn catchment to improve future flood planning and warning systems.

Bridge and culvert recovery works are progressing across Buxton, Glenburn, Strath Creek, Ghin Ghin and Murrindindi.

Council's 2026/27 road maintenance program is now underway, including road grading, drain cleaning and line marking. Roadside slashing is expected to begin later this spring.

Major projects progressing include:

- Eildon Key Worker Housing (Stage 1 nearing completion and Stage 2 underway).
- Kinglake Memorial Reserve reconstruction, on track for completion in October.
- Alexandra road safety improvements, with construction planned for early 2027.

The Yea Movement and Place Study is nearing completion, while community consultation for the Alexandra Movement and Place Study will begin soon.

The Department of Transport and Planning is also leading a separate transport study, with project information available through Council's Facebook page.

Since my last report, we have received a substantial amount of rain across the shire, with plenty of runoff filling our dams and water storages. From a farmer's perspective, there is far more money in mud than there is in dust, and at the moment we certainly have plenty of mud. Stock prices continue to strengthen and, unusually for this time of year, grass is still actively growing in the southern parts of the shire.

Late last month, I attended the Highlands Community Gathering at the Habbies Howe Shearing Shed, where local volunteers were recognised for their outstanding contribution to the community. It was wonderful to see the sun shining, and the event was very well attended, with great food, music and conversation.

This Saturday evening, I will be attending the Yarck Community Gathering, where volunteers will also be recognised in conjunction of the town's Christmas in July celebrations. Then, on 1 August, the Terip Terip community will be hosting a trivia night, which promises to be another enjoyable community event.

7.6 Cr Eric Lording

The Maternal Child Health 2025/26 data profiles a big year for Murrindindi:

- 138 Birth notices for 2025/26, an increase of 19% compared to 2024/25
- 1,167 Key Age and Stage Assessments
- 55 vulnerable families supported
- 10 child developmental assessments coordinated with external Pediatric Occupational Therapists to enable families to access the support required for their children to thrive.

Nourishing Neighbourhoods Partnership is a three-year VicHealth funded partnership between Mitchell and Murrindindi Shire Councils. The partnership engages collaboratively with community activation groups to deliver a shared vision to strengthen local food systems and improve access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food. \$36,000 was allocated to 6 local organisations in June to improve access to healthy food, strengthen local networks, and create a more sustainable and resilient food system for the future, including:

- Alexandra District Health
- Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House
- Embassy of Ideas
- Menzies Support Services

Library Services Strategy and Action Plan consultation starts on Monday 27 July. Consultation feedback will help guide future programs, library spaces and services. Officers will support both online and in-person consultations, including outreach via the mobile library bus.

The Grant Street Safety and Streetscape Improvement Plan is progressing with community consultation taking place during August to improve safety, accessibility and the overall town centre experience. Officers will support the community to have a say via online and in-person opportunities. Community feedback will help Council prepare the Grant Street Improvement Plan to guide future investment, project development and funding opportunities.

Council's Grants & Sponsorship Program received 81 grant applications during 2025/26. \$182,416 awarded to community projects and events.

The Kinglake Memorial Reserve Oval Redevelopment project is progressing with Contractors commencing works on 9 June. Despite wet weather, works are progressing on schedule. The playing surface is unavailable until March 2027 while new turf establishes.

The Thornton Recreation Reserve Lighting and Scoreboard Upgrade procurement process is in the final stages. Delivery is expected by end of 2026. The project will enhance participant safety and encourage increased usage.

The Alexandra Community Relief and Leisure Centre re-development concept design was completed in 2025/26, and Council is actively seeking funding to progress this to construction readiness through detailed design documentation preparation.

The Yea Movement & Place Study draft report is currently under review and nearing completion.

The Alexandra Movement & Place Study will be open for community consultation shortly. Targeted stakeholder engagement sessions are being finalised.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP - VicRoads) Study Project is being promoted through MSC Facebook page rather than the Council website to direct enquiries to DTP.

Maroondah Highway / Goulburn Valley Highway Intersection, Alexandra points covered include:

- Speed review
- Intersection movement data
- Next steps

National Tree Day is on 26 July. Council is hosting a planting event in Station Street (opposite Yenckens Hardware) from 9:00am to 12:30pm on Sunday 26 July. Council is also assisting several schools and environmental groups and expects approximately 2,500 plantings across the shire over the next two weeks. These plantings include trees, shrubs and grasses to enhance habitat for wildlife.

Registered Sites include:

Improving Koala Habitat in Taggerty
Date & Time: Sunday, 26 July 2026, 9:30am–12:00pm
Location: Cathedral Lane, Taggerty VIC 3714
Site Organiser: Richards Evans
Contact: 0418 579 220
Suitable for Children: Yes
Wheelchair Accessible: No

Kinglake Landcare Group
Date & Time: Sunday, 2 August 2026, 10:30am–1:30pm
Location: Extons Road, Kinglake VIC 3757
Site Organiser: Tim Connell
Contact: 0408 599 485
Suitable for Children: Yes
Wheelchair Accessible: No

The Flat Lead Road Carbon Offset Site Sugar Gum Plantation planting is scheduled for August 2026.

The Supply of Fleet Fuel Card Services report outlines the preferred procurement approach for Council's fleet fuel card services. Following an assessment of value for money, supply reliability, risk and compliance, the Procurement Australia Multi-Branded Fuel Card Panel was identified as the most efficient procurement pathway. Business Fuel Cards Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred supplier due to:

- Competitive pricing

- Extensive fuel network coverage
- Proven local government experience

Approval will provide Council with a compliant, low-risk and value-for-money fuel card solution through to March 2029.

MSC has been successful in obtaining road safety grants since development of the Road Safety Strategy in 2025. Grant-funded projects currently in detailed design include:

- Raised pedestrian crossing at Grant Street and Nihil Street roundabout.
- Raised pedestrian crossing at the Rotunda.
- Raised pedestrian crossing on Webster Street.

Resource Recovery 2026/27 Landfill Levy EPA increase for general tipping of over 4%.

Council is progressing road safety improvements for Kinglake-Glenburn Road. Murrindindi Shire Council acknowledges concerns raised by Glenburn residents regarding road safety on Kinglake-Glenburn Road and West Bridge Road. The proposal has been under development since July 2025 and involved consultation with:

- Local community
- Victoria Police
- TAC
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)

The proposed works include:

- Extend the existing 50 km/h zone north past Orchards Road intersection.
- Reduce speed limit from 80 km/h to 60 km/h in areas with closer property frontages.
- Reduce speed limit from 100 km/h to 80 km/h on winding sections.
- Install additional guideposts, curve warning signs and advisory speed signage.
- Seal the bell-mouth at Orchards Road intersection.
- Introduce kerb and channel adjacent to the shared path near Thomson Lane and Hawkins Drive (subject to funding).

The current status of the project is:

- Victoria Police endorsed the speed limit changes.
- TAC approved project funding in January 2026.
- Proposal currently awaiting DTP approval of speed limit changes.
- Council cannot finalise detailed design or commence delivery until DTP approval is received.

Council remains committed to progressing the project and keeping the community informed.

7.7 Cr Anita Carr

Community consultation on the Murrindindi Library Strategy and Action Plan 2027-2030 will commence on Monday, 27 July and remain open until Friday, 28 August 2026, inviting residents to help shape the future of library services across the Shire.

The consultation seeks feedback from library members and non-users alike, ensuring the Strategy reflects the needs of current users, occasional visitors and those who may face barriers to accessing library services.

Community members will be able to provide feedback online through The Loop, complete paper surveys at Alexandra, Yea and Kinglake libraries or in the Mobile Library, submit written feedback, participate in ideas boards or speak directly with library staff.

A series of drop-in "Meet the Coordinator" sessions will be held to provide opportunities for community members to discuss ideas and ask questions.

- Alexandra Library – Monday, 3 August, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
- Yea Library – Wednesday, 5 August, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
- Kinglake Library – Thursday, 6 August, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

The new Strategy will build on the strengths of Murrindindi's highly valued library service while considering changing community needs, the introduction of the new Mobile Library in 2027, service accessibility, partnerships, financial sustainability and opportunities to optimise and innovate.

Community feedback will be analysed alongside service data, benchmarking, research and Council priorities to inform the Draft Library Strategy, with the final Strategy proposed for Council adoption in November 2026.

Lake Eildon has officially passed the 50% capacity mark and continues to rise steadily since 2 June. This is fantastic news for our communities. With forecasts pointing to a dry spring and summer, every drop of winter rain is a welcome boost for our farmers, environment and local economy as we head into the warmer months.

On Thursday 18 June, Mayor Gallagher had the privilege of conferring citizenship on our newest Australians. Cr McAulay, Cr Hilderbrand and I were delighted to welcome 26 new citizens, each receiving a native plant and a gift bag including important information such as an enroll to vote form.

This was Murrindindi's first ceremony of the year following the earlier postponement due to the fires and was perfectly timed to take place during Refugee Week. The Alexandra Shire Hall was bursting at the seams with proud supporters, including special guests from some of the fire recovery hubs. Speaking with our new citizens afterwards was a highlight. Hearing their stories, their journeys and why they chose Australia and Murrindindi was truly inspiring.

The Yea Rotary Changeover Dinner at the Country Club Hotel was a wonderful celebration of service and achievement. Outgoing President Darryl King was, as always, entertaining and warmly acknowledged for his contributions over the past year. Incoming President Ann Drysdale introduced her new board, and I look forward to seeing what they accomplish together over the coming year. Special awards celebrated a number of truly deserving individuals, honouring both long-serving and newly involved Rotary members, along with standout contributors from the wider community. Every contribution strengthens our community. Thank you to all Rotarians for your ongoing commitment.

On Saturday 27 June, Highlands hosted a beautiful volunteer appreciation lunch at the Habbies Howe Shearing Shed. Caitlin from Thornton General Store provided an incredible meal, and staff from both Murrindindi and Mitchell Shire Councils became honorary baristas for the day, keeping up with the steady stream of coffee orders.

Cr Hilderbrand shared heartfelt words acknowledging the extraordinary efforts of volunteers who have supported their communities through an incredibly challenging start to the year. We were then entertained by local musician Steve Paix, which was a treat as always. Thank you again to all volunteers in our communities.

On Saturday 11 July, I joined volunteers from Blackburn Cycling Club at the Eildon Bowling Club for registrations for the Cupra Brighton Eildon bike race.

It was fascinating to learn that this event is one of the last remaining true road races in Victoria, with most others now held on velodromes or cycling tracks.

Thankfully, the heavy fog from Friday night lifted in time for racing to proceed smoothly on Saturday morning.

I returned on Sunday for the junior presentations from Under 11s through to Under 17s. The venue was full and the atmosphere was one of encouragement and positivity.

The Blackburn Cycling Club has been coming to Eildon for 26 years and I thanked them for their ongoing support of our town, region and local businesses. I hope to welcome them back for year 27 next July.

On Thursday 16 July, I travelled from sunny Eildon to Kinglake for the Neighbourhood House's Christmas in July lunch.

Despite the rain and fog, the dining room was warm and welcoming. The smells from the kitchen were incredible. Roast chicken with gravy and vegetables, followed by sticky date pudding and pavlova, really hit the spot.

I enjoyed helping the volunteers alongside Cr Lording as we served lunch and chatting with around 50 locals.

Mayor Gallagher moved around the room speaking with many community members about their issues, highlights and everything in between.

It was a wonderful afternoon and, with seven more community lunches scheduled, I hope to get back there again soon.

Yarck Hall was buzzing on Monday night for Parma Night, hosted by the Yarck CFA. Amanda and her team cooked a fantastic meal and I enjoyed helping out in the kitchen, although I did sneak away halfway through the clean-up, leaving Mayor Gallagher with the task of drying the dishes.

It is heartening to see the Hall and CFA working together, continuing to provide a safe and friendly place for locals to gather six months on from the fires.

The new Yarck CFA Captain Norm Stokes introduced his crew, acknowledging everyone from behind-the-scenes helpers to frontline responders. He also acknowledged Molesworth CFA Captain Matt Ridd, Koriella CFA Captain Scott Reeves, D12 Officer Pip and many other CFA volunteers in the room. Their ongoing service is deeply appreciated.

It was also great to have our local State Member, Cindy McLeish, in attendance. Her support for our communities is always valued and never goes unnoticed.

This Sunday 26 July, I am looking forward to joining the Thornton Eildon District Women's Football Club at the Thornton Recreation Reserve for their National Tree Planting Day event, which is supported by Council. A free BBQ will kick things off at 1.00 pm before planting begins. Their tagline, "Let's plant for our future", says it all. Planting trees is a simple but powerful investment in our environment and our community's future. I hope to see many locals out enjoying the day. Please remember to turn your lights on in foggy conditions and drive safely to the conditions.

7.8 Cr Damien Gallagher

In June, Council participated in a community meeting called by members of the Rubicon and Thornton community to share concerns about the proposition of a solar farm and battery energy storage system on productive agricultural river flats adjacent to the Rubicon River and the Great Dividing Range. Council is not aware that a planning application has yet been lodged with the Minister for Planning.

Nevertheless, Council has been clear and consistent in articulating community expectations as set out in the adopted *Guidelines for Successful Renewable Energy in Murrindindi Shire*. Those expectations include:

- Consideration of impacts upon agriculture, significant landscapes, and visual amenity.
- Establishment of social licence and tangible legacy community benefits.

These requirements are underpinned by an expectation that proponents engage early, deeply, transparently, and authentically with the community and with Traditional Owners.

At another community-instigated meeting this month, anxieties and concerns related to operations of Dame Pattie Menzies Centre Inc., and the sale of “The Mount” property, were addressed to Committee of Management Chair, David Beattie, and Acting CEO, Kellie Fielder. The leadership responded to questions regarding financial sustainability, governance, and the organisation's future direction.

The strength of feeling in the room reflected the community's deep connection to both the organisation's home on the Goulburn Valley Highway and its enduring purpose: *“To enhance the lives of people who need support”*. A commitment was graciously offered by the Chair to take further property sales to the membership for consultation.

At the Marysville Lions Club changeover dinner last week, on behalf of Council, I offered appreciation to Neil Fookes for his efforts as president these past 12 months. It was pleasing to hear many remark that the relationship between Council and the Marysville Lions Club has never been stronger. I'm sure that Delice Guscott, in her fourth term as President, will again be a dedicated leader of the club. A highlight of the dinner was the awarding of a Melvin Jones Fellowship to Andrew Embling in recognition of conspicuous service to the community, and Progressive Melvin Jones recognitions to Neil Guscott and Norm Fiske.

This week, a record attendance at a Murrindindi-East U3A AGM saw Deirdre Penhale celebrated for her leadership over the past 3 years. The membership endorsed Jeane Roberts as the new President and members celebrated Greta Vallance's outstanding contribution to the organisation through the awarding of Life Membership. I commend U3A to anyone inspired to join the 262 local members for life-long education, social activities, and community connection.

Since our last meeting, I joined Council's Chief Executive Officer in Canberra to represent the Murrindindi Shire community at the Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly. The conference brings together council leadership from across Australia to learn and to set the advocacy agenda for the sector.

On the eve of the conference, at the 40th National Awards for Local Government, Murrindindi Shire Council was recognised with an Honourable Mention for the Local Emergency Action Planning (LEAP) program, our community-owned resilience project which has served our impacted and supporting communities so well since January this year.

On the first day of the National General Assembly, Murrindindi was invited to share the challenges of Disaster Fatigue. It was an honour to share the experience of volunteers who've supported our community from the start, with seemingly, no off-ramp. Then to convey the experience of Councillors and council staff, many of whom were directly impacted themselves while navigating complex and often frustrating recovery systems, and pleading for Commonwealth and State Government funding proportional to the impact of our disaster. Finally, I spoke about the fatigue of community members eager to clear properties and begin rebuilding their homes, businesses and lives.

Throughout the week, we seized every opportunity to advocate directly to Ministers, Shadow Ministers and parliamentarians.

Of note, was a valuable conversation with the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC. Her Excellency listened thoughtfully and with genuine compassion to the experiences we shared and has since lent her voice to our advocacy efforts.

Council's State Election advocacy campaign is gaining momentum. Our advocacy priorities have been carefully developed to address Murrindindi's unique challenges while aligning with broader state priorities and opportunities for regional Victoria.

We're seeking:

- Infrastructure investment to support future emergency relief and recovery facilities
- A partnership with the Victorian Government to support generational transformation unlocking the Lake Eildon Activation Master Plan.
- \$10m over 2 years to rehabilitate 720km of critical unsealed Murrindindi roads.
- A financial sustainability package to enable Council to continue to deliver the economic, infrastructure, and social outcomes valued by our community
- Investment in the reconstruction of the Yea Oval.
- An ongoing commitment to funding for locally delivered youth services to improve connection and mental health and reducing youth disengagement.

This week, we took the next step in that campaign through productive discussions with Northern Victoria MLC Rikky-Lee Tyrrell.

Over the next 129 days until the election, we'll be inviting candidates for election to meet with Council and to discuss policy platforms.

I continue to be inspired by the commitment made by new citizenship conferees as they embrace Australia as their home and submit to the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship. It was truly a privilege to participate and to welcome 26 residents first as Murrindindi Shire community members, and then as new Australians. Our recent ceremony occurred in Refugee week, during which we took the opportunity to consider the challenges faced by refugees coming to Australia, and to celebrate the enduring contribution refugees make to our community.

To me, citizenship at its core is about active participation in a society and so Council continues to proudly acknowledge the committed volunteers who mobilised so selflessly and effectively to guide our community through the bushfire recovery. Volunteer recognition events have been equal parts emotional and inspirational, and remind us that the recovery journey is long, and not without pain and frustration.

Six months have passed since the devastating January fires and storms that damaged homes, impacted livelihoods and left lasting scars on our environment. Across our Shire, neighbours, volunteers and Council staff continue the quiet, often unseen work of recovery, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Recovery is not measured in weeks or months. It is measured in homes rebuilt, businesses reopened, landscapes restored and confidence regained. While much work remains ahead of us, the compassion, resilience and determination shown by our communities gives me every confidence that we will get there together.

For those who need support, please reach out. Our recovery team remains ready to connect residents with information, services and practical assistance. Council will continue to stand alongside our community for as long as it takes, because looking after one another is after all, the Murrindindi way.

7.9 Chief Executive Officer Report

We are very pleased to have been successful in securing external funding during the last month for several initiatives, all of which support the achievement of Council's strategies and goals in the Council Plan.

We have received \$45,000 under the Federal Government's Australian Heritage Grants Program to develop a heritage management plan for the Yea Flora Fossil site in Limestone. The site was listed on the National Heritage Register in 2007 as a place of national significance due to the internationally significant discovery last century of fossils of the plant *Baragwanathia Longifolia*, one of the first plants to make the transition from water to land some 420 million years ago.

The funding will enable Council to engage a heritage specialist to advise on managing, protecting and conserving this nationally recognised site into the future. This project supports the Council Plan strategy to manage and care for natural and cultural heritage across the Shire.

We have also received \$500,000 from the State's VicHealth, Partners in Place Program for a five-year project to embed universal health education and literacy in early years education across the Shire. The project aims to produce positive health and wellbeing outcomes for young people and families by building knowledge and skills from the earliest ages. Education at early stages is most likely to promote long lasting improvements in health outcomes in communities. This project supports the Council Plan strategy to promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing across the Shire.

Council and the Yea Saleyards Community Asset Committee have received \$134,000 from Ausnet for the installation of new solar panels and a battery at the Yea Saleyards. This project will improve energy resilience, lower emissions and improve operating efficiencies at this important Council and farming community facility. The project is consistent with Council's goal to support local efforts to reduce emissions and transition to cleaner energy.

State Funding has also been approved for several Local Development Strategy projects. The funding is part of the State's broader forestry transition program and is provided through a Community Development Fund managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. Whilst still awaiting formal public announcement these projects are designed to support economic growth, community development, and local business opportunities across Murrindindi.

Projects already funded and either delivered or being implemented under this program include:

- The Murrindindi Health network Plan
- Farm Forestry project
- Beyond the Black Spur Tourism initiatives
- Advanced Manufacturing – involving an industrial Futures Strategy

Six more projects are expected to be announced shortly and another two applications are currently being assessed. Council has applied for the total maximum allocation of \$2 million under this funding program.

Collectively these economic development projects address Council's strategy in the Council Plan to support the economic transition in forestry-affected communities through job pathways, innovation and regional resilience

Maximising opportunities to secure external funding to support key initiatives under the Council Plan such as those mentioned, is a critical part of our long-term financial sustainability roadmap. Such funding provides community benefits whilst reducing pressure on Council's own limited financial resources which are fully allocated to the delivery of our day-to-day services and operations.

8 RECORD OF COUNCIL BRIEFING SESSIONS

Department People & Corporate Performance
 Approved by Michael Chesworth, Acting Chief Executive Officer
 Purpose For Noting

Executive Summary

This report presents the records of Council Briefing Sessions for 17 June 2026 to 17 July 2026, for Council to note.

Meeting name / type	Council Pre-Meet
Meeting date:	17 June
Matters discussed	1. Adoption of Annual Budget 2026-27 2. Adoption of Annual Priority Action Plan 2026-27 3. Emergency Procurement Report
Councillor attendees	Cr D Gallagher, Cr A Carr, Cr P Hildebrand, Cr S McAulay
Council Officer attendees	L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, N Rongong, A Paxton, A Vogt
Conflict of interest disclosed?	No

Meeting name / type	Briefing Session
Meeting date:	08 July 2026
Matters discussed	1. Local Development Strategy Update 2. Bushfire Places of Last Resort - Status update 3. Annual Community Satisfaction Survey results 4. CONT25-21 Plant1613 Motor Grader 5. CONT25-30 Plant3120 Landfill Waste Compactor 6. Multi Branded Fuel Card (Procurement Australia)
Councillor attendees	Cr D Gallagher, Cr S Carpenter, Cr S McAulay, Cr A Carr, Cr E Lording
Council Officer attendees	B Harnwell, K O'Connor, M Chesworth, A Paxton, A Paix, A Vogt, P Sharman, D O'Keeffe
Conflict of interest disclosed?	No

Meeting name / type	Briefing Session
Meeting date:	15 July 2026
Matters discussed	1. Food Systems update (inc Nourishing Neighbourhoods) 2. Library Strategy & Action Plan 2027-2030 - Project overview and Community Engagement 3. Fees and Charges 2026/27 4. Tree Hollow Survey - Bushfire Area 5. Grant Street Movement and Place Community Engagement
Councillor attendees	Cr D Gallagher, Cr A Carr, Cr S Carpenter, Cr S McAulay, Cr P Hildebrand
Council Officer attendees	M Chesworth, K O'Connor, D O'Keeffe, B Harnwell, A Cullen, M Whatnall, S Coller, S Kadri, N Rongong, B Chapman, J Rae, P Guru
Conflict of interest disclosed?	No

RESOLUTION

Cr S McAulay / Cr S Carpenter

That Council receive and note the records of Council Briefing Sessions for 17 June 2026 to 17 July 2026.

CARRIED

9 SEALING REGISTER

Nil

The meeting was closed at 7:00pm