



COUNCIL MEETING

AGENDA

Wednesday 13 April 2022

Commencing at 7:00pm

Wycheproof Supper Room

367 Broadway, Wycheproof

**Wayne O'Toole
Chief Executive Officer
Buloke Shire Council**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. COUNCIL WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WELCOME

The Mayor Cr Daryl Warren will welcome all in attendance.

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Mayor Cr Daryl Warren will acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting and pay our respects to their Elders and to the Elders from other communities who maybe here today.

2. RECEIPT OF APOLOGIES

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 9 March 2022.

4. REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

5. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Section 130 (2) of the Local Government Act 2020 Councillors who have a conflict of interest in respect of a matter being considered at this Meeting, must

- a) Disclose the conflict of interest in the manner required by the Council's Governance Rules 2020; and
- a) Exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to that matter, including any discussion or vote on the matter at any Council meeting or delegated committee, and any action in relation to the matter.

Disclosure must occur immediately before the matter is considered or discussed.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

NIL

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10.	MEETING CLOSE	

NEXT MEETING

THE NEXT MEETING OF COUNCIL WILL BE HELD IN WYCHEPROOF SUPPER ROOM, 367 BROADWAY, WYCHEPROOF ON WEDNESDAY, 11 MAY 2022 AT 7:00PM.

Wayne O'Toole
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Nil

7. PROCEDURAL ITEMS

7.1 REPORT OF COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: GO/05/04

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council note the report of Councillor Assembly Meetings held 2 and 16 March 2022.

- Attachments:**
- 1 [Councillor Briefing Record - 2 March 2022](#)
 - 2 [Councillor Briefing Record - 16 March 2022](#)

KEY POINTS/ISSUES

Transparency is a fundamental principle of democratic governance.

The Local Government Act 2020 (The Act) Section 9 (2) (i) provides that the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

In accordance with Section 57 of The Act, Council at its September 2020 Ordinary Meeting, adopted a Public Transparency policy, designed to improve public transparency in Council's decision making processes and to assist the community in understanding the information that is accessible to them.

As per the Council Meeting Schedule adopted 10 November 2021, Councillor Briefings are held for Councillors to meet to consider matters that are likely to be the subject of a Council decision or for the exercise of delegation.

A record of the Councillor Briefings held on 2 and 16 March 2022 is attached for public information.



Councillor Briefing Record

Build a Better Buloke – a healthy, connected, inclusive and prosperous community

Date:	2 March 2022	Time:	5:00pm – 8:00pm
Location:	Sea Lake Senior Citizens		
Distributed To:	Cr. Warren, Cr. Getley, Cr. Simpson, Cr. Milne, Wayne O’Toole, Hannah Yu, Travis Fitzgibbon, Fiona Best (item 3.1), Julie Pringle (item 3.2), Pat Amos (item 3.2), Dan McLoughlan (item 3.4, 3.5), Cr. Stewart		
Apologies:	Cr. Pollard, Cr. Vis, Aileen Douglas		
Acknowledgement of Country:	Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging		
Conflicts of Interest:	Cr. Stewart (item 5.2 – CM Agenda 8.2.2, left 7.48pm)		

ITEMS

NO.	MATTER FOR DISCUSSION	NOTES
1.	Councillor Only Time 5:00pm	
2.	Confirmation of Councillor Briefing Notes – 16 February 2022	Agreed
3.	Presentations	
3.1	Fiona Best: BCG Nexus Prospectus – Accommodation Project	
3.2	Julie Pringle, Pat Amos: Sea Lake Tourism and Town Update	
3.3	Hannah Yu: Thai Restaurant Proposal – Donald Memorial Hall	Deferred
3.4	Dan McLoughlan: Road Management Plan	
3.5	Dan McLoughlan: Outdoor Activation Funding Rnd 2 Concepts	
3.4	Travis Fitzgibbon: Mt Wycheproof Emu Matter Discussion	
3.5	Travis Fitzgibbon: NBN Advocacy Update	
4.	Councillor Matters	
4.1	Buloke Tourism Meeting	
4.2	Tree – Gordon Park	



4.3	Mt Wycheproof	
4.4	Wycheproof Caravan Park	
4.5	Hobson's Bay Bowling and Site Visit	
5.	CEO Updates	
5.1	Social and Affordable Housing Contribution and the Social Housing Rates Exemption	
5.2	Swimming Pool Break Ins	
5.3	COVID19 Update	
5.4	Northern Grampians Regional Tourism Board	
5.5	Black Water – Charlton Weir	
5.6	Submission from Traditional Owners	
5.7	CEO Vic Health Visit	
5.8	Draft Council Meeting Agenda 9 March 2022.	
Meeting closed 7.58pm		
NEXT MEETING 16 March 2022 - 5:00pm Council Chamber of Charlton District Office		



Councillor Briefing Record

Build a Better Buloke – a healthy, connected, inclusive and prosperous community

Date:	16 March 2022	Time:	5:00pm – 8:00pm
Location:	Council Chamber of the Charlton District Office		
Distributed To:	Cr Warren, Cr Getley, Cr Pollard, Cr Stewart, Cr Simpson, Cr Milne ,Cr Vis, Wayne O’Toole, Hannah Yu, Travis Fitzgibbon, Aileen Douglas		
Apologies:			
Acknowledgement of Country:			
Conflicts of Interest:			

ITEMS

NO.	MATTER FOR DISCUSSION	
	Councillor & CEO Only Time 5:00pm	
1.	Confirmation of Councillor Briefing Notes – 2 March 2022	
2.	Presentations	
2.1	DELWP re Lake Tyrrell. Anthony Judd and Jodi Cant 5:30pm TBC	
2.2	Donald Soldiers Memorial Hall Thai Restaurant Proposal 6pm – Amber (see separate report)	
2.3	Business Pilot Program 6.15pm – Amber (see separate report)	
2.4	Stuart King – 6:30pm	
2.5	Complaints Handling Policy 7:15pm – Travis (see separate report)	
3.	Councillor Queries	
4.	CEO Updates	
4.1	DJPR – Regional Tourism Board proposal.	
4.2	Short term connection to Grampians Tourism.	
4.3	Feedback from Hindmarsh re Wimmera Mallee Tourism.	
5.	Budget Meeting 8pm	



	<p>NEXT MEETING 6 April 2022 - 5:00pm Council Chamber of Donald District Office</p>	
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7.2 LETTERS OF CONGRATULATIONS AND RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT/AWARDS

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: CR/13/01

PURPOSE

This report acknowledges and congratulates community persons and/or groups for their success in being recognised for a significant achievement or for being a recipient of an honourable award.

The report also informs Council of any letters of congratulations or any particular recognition of achievement that Council has received or been awarded in the past month.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council acknowledge and congratulate the persons and/or groups mentioned in the report for their achievements.

Attachments: Nil

RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT ITEMS

Provider	Recipient	Date	Purpose for Recognition
Australian Curriculum	Wycheproof P-12 College	2021	Top NAPLAN results in the State for 2021
	Cr Carolyn Stewart	2022	selected to attend the Grain Growers on Board Director Program.
Longerenong College	Charlie Cox of Berriwillock	1 April 2022	Graduating in Apprenticeship Program
Longerenong College	Rory McClelland of Sea Lake	1 April 2022	Graduating in Apprenticeship Program
Longerenong College	Rylee McGarry of Nyarrin	1 April 2022	Graduating in Apprenticeship Program
Longerenong College	Cooper Roberts of Nandaly	1 April 2022	Graduating in Apprenticeship Program
Longerenong College	Brody Weir of Berriwillock	1 April 2022	Graduating in Apprenticeship Program
Curyo Country Fire Authority Unit	Gordon Braine		Awarded life membership for his service to the Curyo CFA Unit
Curyo Country Fire Authority Unit	Richard Ferrier		Awarded life membership for his service to the Curyo CFA Unit
Curyo Country Fire Authority Unit	Roger Lehman		Awarded life membership for his service to the Curyo CFA Unit
Curyo Country Fire Authority Unit	Ken Rickard		Awarded life membership for his service to the Curyo CFA Unit

7.3 CORRESPONDENCE INITIATED BY COUNCIL

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: GO/06/06

PURPOSE

This report notes and records correspondence initiated by Council and informs the Council of the responses received from this correspondence.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council notes the record of correspondence initiated by Council and the responses received.

Attachments: Nil

TABLE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Council Initiative	Sent/to be sent to	Sent	Response	Purpose of Letter/Response
Write to local Federal member and State members expressing concern for people who are sitting outside the legal status of vaccination currently in place. Urging for a review.	Ms Louise Staley MLA	20/12/21	23/12/21	Acknowledged Council's proactive work to unite the Shire. Advised that the National Liberals have been calling for consistent National Cabinet approach to mandate vaccines and passports, however the Andrews Government has flagged the retention of vaccine passports until 2023. Will continue to address inequities and call on the State Government to address the issues impacting our community.
Above letter	Mr Stuart Grimley MLC	20/12/21	22/12/21	Acknowledged letter and will look into it further.
Above letter	Mrs Beverley McArthur MLC	20/12/21		
Above letter	Ms Ali Cupper MLA	20/12/21		
Above letter	Dr Anne Webster MP	20/12/21		

Council Initiative	Sent/to be sent to	Sent	Response	Purpose of Letter/Response
<p>Write to Min of Transport Infr, Jacinta Allan and Minister for Roads and Roads Safety, Ben Carroll seeking urgent attention to continue to advocate to the resp auth for upgrade of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The rail crossing nth of Lalbert on the Donald-Swan Hill Road; and 2. The rail crossing north-east of Charlton on the Boort-Charlton Road. 	The Hon Jacinta Allan Minister for Transport Infrastructure	10/3/22		
Above letter sent to Hon Jacinta Allan	The Hon Ben Carroll MP Minister for Roads and Road Safety	10/3/22		

7.4 PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED - MONTHLY UPDATE

Author's Title: Planning Officer

Department: Works and Technical Services

File No: LP/09/01

PURPOSE

This report provides information on planning applications under consideration by staff and the status of each of these applications.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council note information contained in the report on planning applications under consideration by staff and the status of each of these applications.

Attachments: Nil

LIST OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Application No	Address	Date Rec	Summary of Proposal	Status
PPA967/21	Corack Road, Wycheproof (Lot 1 PS658906)	02/12/2021	Construction of a dwelling	Permit Issued
PPA968/21	Donald-Swan Hill Road, Corack East (CA 1 Section C Parish of Corack East)	10/12/2021	Installation of solar panels	Permit Issued
PPA969/21	Sproats Lane, Donald (Lot 5 PS76601)	16/12/2021	Two lot subdivision of buildings	Permit Issued
PPA970/21	Anderson Avenue, Wycheproof (Lot 2 PS63654)	28/12/2021	Three-lot subdivision of land	Permit Issued
PPA972/22	Best Street, Sea Lake (Lot 2 PS811802)	04/03/2022	Café and restaurant liquor licence	Notice of application
PPA973/22	Horace Street, Sea Lake (Lot 1 PS44867)	15/03/2022	Construction of a fence in Heritage Overlay	Permit Issued

7.5 BUILDING PERMITS - MONTHLY UPDATE

Author's Title: Statutory Administration Support

Department: Works and Technical Services

File No: DB/14/01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information on Building Permits approved by staff from 1 March 2022 to 31 March 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council note information contained in the report on Building Permits approved by staff from 1 March 2022 to 31 March 2022.

Attachments: Nil

LIST OF BUILDING PERMITS APPROVED BY COUNCIL SURVEYOR

Permit No.	BAMS Permit No.	Address	Project Description	Date Approved
20220009	6579607961919	Grandview Street, Wycheproof	Relocatable Dwelling	03/03/2022
20220027	6645067249110	Borong-Charlton Road, Charlton	Machinery Shed	22/03/2022
20220028	6429068037025	Corack Road, Wycheproof	Garage/Storage Shed	22/03/2022
20220029	1172376321748	Birchip-Wycheproof Road, Narraport	Swimming Pool & Safety Barrier	23/03/2022

LIST OF BUILDING PERMITS APPROVED BY PRIVATE SURVEYOR

Permit No.	Address	Project Description	Date Approved
20220022	Railway Place, Wycheproof	Removal of redundant fire hydrant serving existing train station	18/02/2022
20220025	Birchip Road, Nullawil	Eighteen (18) Light Towers	04/03/2022
20220026	Mildura Way, Charlton	Nine (9) Light Towers	04/03/2022

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 POLICY REPORTS

8.1.1 COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Author's Title: Director Community Development

Department: Community Development

File No: CM/14/22

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Council and Community Leadership

PURPOSE

To adopt the Complaints Handling Policy which provides a clear framework for Council to receive and manage complaints.

SUMMARY

Council has an obligation under the *Local Government Act 2020* to develop and maintain a Complaints Handling Policy. This policy makes it clear how to complain, where to complain and how the complaint will be handled.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopts the Complaints Handling Policy; and
2. Communicates the availability of the policy and places the policy on Council's website.

Attachments: 1 [Buloke Shire Council Complaints Handling Policy](#)

DISCUSSION

Council is committed to our customers and to providing efficient and responsive services, whilst always striving for improvement. Council takes an all of organisation approach to customer service and values feedback.

Members of the public have the right to complain about Council services. In simple terms, a complaint to a Council is any communication which involves the following:

- An expression of dissatisfaction
- About an action, decision, policy or service
- That relates to Council staff, including the CEO, a Council contractor, or the Council as a decision-making body (not individual Councillors, who are subject to different processes).

Council is committed to managing complaints in a transparent, fair and consistent way and feedback is encouraged. It helps improve Council services and the way business is conducted.

This policy aims to ensure that customers can raise their complaints easily and with confidence that Council will listen and respond to their concerns, and handle their complaint in a fair and equitable way.

RELEVANT LAW

Local Government Act 2020.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council adopted its inaugural Complaints Handling Policy on 11 December 2019.

OPTIONS

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no sustainability implications relating to this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council made a draft Complaints Handling Policy available to the public inviting feedback. This was promoted via local newspapers, on social media and on local radio. No feedback was received.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Council recognises the value of complaints and endeavours to make complaining about Council service as easy and practicable as possible. Council is committed to our customers and to providing efficient and responsive services, whilst always striving for improvement.

COLLABORATION

Council utilised the best practise guidance provide by the Victorian Ombudsman for councils and complaints handing in developing this policy.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

There are no financial viability implications.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2011*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

- Customer Service Strategy
- Customer Service Charter
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Information Privacy Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

Not applicable.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No staff involved in the preparing of this policy or report had a conflict of interest.



POLICY LOCATION	Community Development	POLICY TITLE	Complaints Handling Policy
POLICY NUMBER		DATE ADOPTED	
REVISION NUMBER	2	REVISION DATE	December 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

Council is committed to our customers and to providing efficient and responsive services, whilst always striving for improvement. Council takes an all of organisation approach to customer service and values feedback.

Members of the public have the right to complain about Council services. In simple terms, a complaint to a Council is any communication which involves the following:

- An expression of dissatisfaction
- About an action, decision, policy or service
- That relates to Council staff, including the CEO, a Council contractor, or the Council as a decision-making body (not individual Councillors, who are subject to different processes).

Council is committed to managing complaints in a transparent, fair and consistent way and feedback is encouraged. It helps improve Council services and the way business is conducted.

This policy aims to ensure that customers can raise their complaints easily and with confidence that Council will listen and respond to their concerns, and handle their complaint in a fair and equitable way. If Council is not the right organisation to respond to the complaint, the complainant will be referred to an organisation that can help.

Requests for service, information, suggestions and enquiries are not complaints and will not be handled through the complaints handling process.

2. PURPOSE

The policy provides an open and transparent complaint handling procedure by:

- Establishing timeframes for resolving complaints
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of Council staff
- Ensuring that staff handle complaints fairly and objectively

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Buloke Shire Council staff and to third party contractors carrying out services on its behalf.



For the purposes of the complaints policy and as defined by section 107(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a complaint includes the communication, whether orally or in writing, to the Council by a person of their dissatisfaction with –

- (a) the quality of an action taken, decision made or service provided by a member of Council staff or a contractor engaged by the Council; or
- (b) the delay by a member of Council staff or a contractor engaged by the Council in taking an action, making a decision or providing a service; or
- (c) a policy or decision made by a Council or a member of Council staff or a contractor.

4. PRINCIPLES

4.1 Guiding principles

Buloke Shire Council recognises the value of complaints and endeavors to make complaining about Council service as easy and practicable as possible.

Council adopts the seven following principles that guide effective complaints handling as outlined in the Victorian Ombudsman's Complaints – Good Practice Guide for Public Sector Agencies (2016).

Commitment: Council is committed to resolving complaints and has a culture that recognises an individual's right to complain. Council values complaints and recognises them as being part of its business of serving the community and improving service delivery.

Accessibility: People with a range of needs can easily complain and staff are available to assist them to navigate the complaints process.

Transparency: Council makes it clear how to complain, where to complain and how the complaint will be handled. The steps taken to respond to a complaint are recorded and will stand up to scrutiny.

Objectivity and fairness: Complaints are dealt with courteously, impartially, within established timeframes and assessed on merit.

Privacy: Complaint information is handled according to privacy laws and other relevant legislation. Council provides clear information about how personal information is handled. Complaint data is de-identified if reported on more widely.

Accountability: Council is accountable internally and externally for its decision making and complaint handling performance. Council provides explanations and reasons for decisions and ensures that its decisions are subject to appropriate review processes.

Continuous improvement: Acting on, learning from and using complaint data helps Council identify problems and improve services.

4.2 Making a complaint

Complaints can be made to Council by:



- By calling Council on 1300 520 520
- In person at Council's Customer Service Office located at 367 Broadway Wycheproof
- In writing, email buloke@buloke.vic.gov.au or mail PO Box 1, Wycheproof, Victoria 3527
- By using the feedback section on Council's website stating that you wish to make a complaint.

Complaints should include:

- Date, time and location
- Nature and description of complaint
- What you expect Council to do to satisfy the complaint
- Any additional supporting information you may have include photography or earlier correspondence with Council.

4.3 Help us to help you

Excellent customer service is a two-way street. As outlined in Council's Customer Service Charter and to ensure your complaint is handled to your satisfaction complainants must:

- Treat Council staff with respect, honesty and courtesy
- Provide accurate and (where possible) complete information.

4.4 Anonymous complaints

Council understands that members of the public may seek to lodge complaints anonymously, or ask that their identity not be disclosed.

Anonymous complainants should note Council may not be able to progress such complaints in instances where insufficient information is provided. When a complainant is unwilling to disclose their details, it can reduce Council's ability to clarify the nature of the complaint in order to investigate the matter thoroughly. If it is determined, after reasonable investigation, that insufficient information has been provided, no further action will be taken. This decision will be made at the discretion of the relevant Director.

4.5 Unreasonable complainants

Whilst most complainants will act reasonably and respectfully in their interactions with Council, there may be occasions where the complainant, despite Council's best efforts, act outside their responsibilities. In these instances, it may be necessary to alter or even restrict the complainant's rights or access to services as a result of their actions. This decision will be made at the discretion of the relevant Director.

4.6 Privacy and confidentiality

Council recognises that the responsible handling of personal information is a key aspect of good governance and is committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy to the extent required by law.



Council will only collect personal information (including sensitive information) that is necessary for its functions and activities.

4.7 Requests for service

Any request for services will be logged onto our electronic request system. Response times will vary in accordance with our set service standards depending upon the nature of the request.

In instances where circumstances beyond Council's control affect our ability to meet this commitment, we will keep you updated on the progress of your request.

4.8 Complaints relating to statutory matters

Some Council activities are governed by State or Federal legislation, for example, planning and building and land valuation. In such circumstances, Council is unable to alter its decision-making processes and is guided by the requirements of the legislation in making the final decision.

Council also has a range of objection forms that address rates and property matters, local laws and infringements. These documents may provide a better way forward for a prospective complainant.

4.9 Human rights considerations

Council has an obligation to act in accordance with the *Charter of Human Rights Act 2006* and to consider relevant human rights when making decisions and resolving complaints.

Council will:

- Acknowledge and deal with complaints in a timely way
- Provide transparent information about how complaints are handled
- Protect the privacy of information as far as possible
- Treat everyone involved in a way that is objective, respectful and fair
- Consider and respect human rights
- Promote accountability for decisions.

5. COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Frontline staff, other officers, the Chief Executive Officer, the Mayor or individual Councillors may receive a complaint, either by telephone, email, post or in person.

All complaints will be recorded and every interaction with the complainant will be documented.

If the Council is not the right organisation to respond to the complaint, staff will refer the complainant to an organisation that can help.

5.1 Procedures

5.1.1 Complaints about Service Standards (Procedure 1)



The following process applies only to complaints about service standards; e.g., “I expected that my road would be graded by now. I’m told the service standard allows for a further six months. That’s far too long to wait!”

The receiving officer will:

- Clarify issue and outcome the customer is seeking
- Confirm the complaint is about a service standard
- Record the complaint
- Acknowledge/respond within 10 business days.

Complaints about service standards must be recorded, answered and subsequently collated for review on an annual basis to evaluate and better understand community expectations.

5.1.2 Complaints about the quality of the service, response to requests/complaint or staff behavior (Procedure 2)

Receive

The receiving officer will:

- Clarify issue and outcome the customer is seeking
- Determine whether it is a complaint or a service request
- Aim, if possible, to resolve the issue at the first point of contact. (If this occurs, the matter will not be recorded as a complaint.)
- If the matter is not resolved at first point of contact, record the matter as a complaint
- Refer the complaint to relevant manager.

Investigate

The manager will assign the complaint to an officer for investigation.

As part of the investigation the investigating officer will:

- Acknowledge complaint within 10 business days of receipt and advise the complainant of the contact person for all inquiries and how long it is likely to take to respond to the complaint
- If the complaint relates to a member of staff, notify that person that a complaint has been made and give the staff member an opportunity to respond to the complaint
- Aim to resolve the complaint within 28 days. (Some regulatory processes mandate other timelines. If the complaint is to take longer than 28 days to resolve, the contact person will advise the complainant prior to or at this time and explain why.)
- At the completion of the investigation, inform:
 - a) the complainant, first by telephone and then in writing, of the outcome including the reasons for the decision, and
 - b) the staff member (where relevant) and their immediate superior of the outcome including the reasons for the decision.

Internal Review



A complaint investigation may be subject to an internal review, if:

- The complaint is not resolved in 28 days without good reason e.g., legislation or regulation that stipulates a different timeline, or
- The complainant is not happy with the outcome, in which case he or she can request an internal review.

The internal review will be conducted by a more senior manager, a Director or the Chief Executive Officer. They may also engage another appropriate member of staff to undertake the investigation. The investigating officer must be independent to the actual complaint.

The investigating officer will, at the completion of the internal review, inform the complainant first by telephone and then in writing of the outcome including the reasons for the decision.

Each complaint investigation will only be subject to one internal review only. However, there may be cause to investigate a complaint about the internal review of that complaint.

External Review

Council's aim is to resolve 100% of issues raised.

If at any time, the complainant is not satisfied with the progress or outcome of an investigation Council will advise the complainant of any other external bodies to pursue their complaint.

These can include:

Victorian Ombudsman – Regarding actions or decisions of a Council, Council staff and contractors. This includes failure to consider human rights or failure to act compatibly with a human right under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*.

Local Government Inspectorate – Breaches of the *Local Government Act*.

Office of the Victorian Information Commission – Breaches of privacy or complaints about a freedom of information enquiry.

Victorian Electoral Commission – Complaints about Council elections.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission – Corruption or public interest disclosure 'whistleblower' complaints.

5.1.3 Complaints requiring an alternative procedure (Procedure 3)

Complaints received by a Councillor

A complaint received by the Mayor or a Councillor about a service, a staff member or a contractor will be referred to the relevant Manager, Director or the Chief Executive Officer.

Council will then respond to the complaint in accordance with this policy.

Complaints about Contractors



Council is responsible for services carried out by contractors on its behalf. However, if a contractor receives a complaint, the contractor will assess and respond to the complaint in accordance with its own complaint handling process.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, he or she can ask Council to review the decision.

All outcome letters written by contractors in relation to complaints must include the name and contact details of the Buloke Shire Council staff member to whom the complainant may escalate their complaint.

Allegations of Corrupt Conduct

Where a complaint involves allegations of corrupt conduct, it will be handled in accordance with the *Protected Disclosure Act Procedures*.

Complaints about Councillors

Complaints about Councillors will be dealt with in accordance with the Councillor Code of Conduct.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer

A complaint about the Chief Executive Officer will be referred in the first instance to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will discuss the complaint with the Mayor prior to a decision being made about who will respond.

Once an investigating officer has been appointed the process outlined above under Procedure 2 will apply.

However, if the complaint relates to the conduct of the Chief Executive Officer involving bullying, victimisation or harassment including sexual harassment of: -

- Buloke Shire Councillor, or
- Buloke Shire Council staff member, or
- Any other person in the course of the CEO performing his or her role.

These will be referred to the Mayor and undergo a process consistent with that outlined in the Councillor Code of Conduct.

REMEDIES

Where Council identifies an error, it will take steps to redress the situation. Possible remedies may include, but are not limited to:

- An explanation of why the error occurred and the steps taken to prevent it happening again
- A reversal of a decision
- Disciplinary action taken against a staff member
- Providing the means of redress requested by the complainant.



Further, Council will offer a genuine apology in addition to any other remedies offered, irrespective of whether the complainant specifically requests this.

Should a complaint not be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, then it will be internally reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer. If the complaint is still unresolved, then the complainant has the right to take the matter to the Victorian Ombudsman.

6. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Council views the complaints handling process as an opportunity to learn and improve. All complaints are reviewed for service improvement opportunities.

7. AVAILABILITY

This policy is available for download from Council's website www.buloke.vic.gov.au or in hard copy from Council's Wycheproof Office, located at 367 Broadway Wycheproof.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Customer Service Strategy
- Customer Service Charter
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Information Privacy Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct

9. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2011*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*

8.2 MANAGEMENT REPORTS

8.2.1 DRAFT AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES 2 FEBRUARY 2022

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Council and Community Leadership

PURPOSE

To provide Council with the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 2 February 2022.

SUMMARY

The draft Audit and Risk Committee minutes are attached for the information of Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the draft Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 2 February 2022.

Attachments: 1 [Draft Audit and Risk Committee Minutes 2 Feb 2022](#)

DISCUSSION

The Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) is a statutory committee of Council which considers matters of governance, finance and risk management. The Committee is comprised of three independent members and the Mayor. The Committee provides advice on the integrity and effectiveness of Council's financial reporting and risk management system.

At the meeting held, the Committee considered the following matters:

- Outstanding Action Items
- Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan
- Asset Management update
- Internal Audit Update
- Internal Audit progress update
- Internal Audit Scope – Review of ICT general security controls
- Internal Audit Scope – Review of Saleyards
- Draft Information Privacy Policy
- Draft Fraud and Corruption Reporting Policy
- Draft Debtor Management Policy
- Risk Management
- Legislative Compliance
- Councillor and CEO Reimbursements
- Financial Performance report as at 31 December 2021

RELEVANT LAW

Council is required under the *Local Government Act 2020* to establish and maintain an Audit and Risk Committee.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

The Committee was established by Council at its meeting held on 12 August 2020.

OPTIONS

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Committee provides guidance and recommendations that result in improvements to methods and systems of Council.

COLLABORATION

Councillors and senior staff are invited to attend, and present as required at Committee meetings. Recommendations from the Committee are communicated to relevant staff members for action.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The costs associated with the Committee are considered in the Annual Budget.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not applicable.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

The Audit and Risk Committee Charter was adopted by Council on 12 August 2020.

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

The Audit and Risk Committee is considered an essential element of good governance, monitoring Council's financial and performance reporting, monitoring and providing advice on risk management and overseeing internal and external audit functions. The draft minutes are provided to Council to consider the activities undertaken by the Committee.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officer involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest.



AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

Wednesday 2 February 2022

Commencing at 1 pm

Wycheproof Hall Supper Room

**Wayne O'Toole
Chief Executive Officer
Buloke Shire Council**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. WELCOME

The Chair opens the meeting and welcomes those present.

2. RECEIPT OF APOLOGIES

Kathy Teasedale (RSD Audit)

3. ATTENDEES

Margaret Abbey PSM (Chair), Dean Sleigh (Member), Bernard Young (Member), Cr Daryl Warren (Mayor), Wayne O'Toole (CEO), Hannah Yu (Acting Director Works and Technical Services), Aileen Douglas (Acting Director Corporate Services), Cecilia Connellan (Manager Business Transformation), Dan McLoughlan (Manager Assets), Ken Rowe (Manager Works), Paul Harrison (RSD Audit – via zoom), Cr Bronwyn Simpson, Cr Graeme Milne, Jen Hewett (Governance).

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

MOTION:

That Council adopt the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 1 December 2021.

MOVED: DEAN SLEIGH

SECONDED: BERNARD YOUNG

CARRIED.

Minutes were confirmed and signed by Chair.

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

Briefing by Chief Executive Officer to the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting including any legal matters.

The CEO provided a briefing to the Committee on the following matters;

- Adoption of the CEO Employment and Remuneration policy occurred late 2021.
- Council appointed of Wayne O'Toole as the CEO, which has resulted in several acting arrangements.
- Application for a grant to fund a new Records Management System is underway.
- Procurement activities remain a challenge to Council with the ability to obtain suppliers and materials. This issue is expected to continue.
- Council is still waiting on advice regarding the appointment of an external auditor.
- COVID – as at today (2 Feb 2022) the shire has 23 active cases. COVID is also having some impact on Council staff.
- Council has adopted a new Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025 at its December 2021 Meeting.
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiations are commencing, it is anticipated that this process will be completed within 6 months subject to Fair Work Commission approvals.

6. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7. MATTERS FOR DECISION / DISCUSSION / NOTING

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9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**10. MEETING CLOSE****NEXT MEETING**

THE NEXT AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE HELD IN WYCHEPROOF HALL SUPPER ROOM

367 BROADWAY

WYCHEPROOF ON WEDNESDAY, 4 MAY 2022 AT 1 PM.

Wayne O'Toole
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

7. MATTERS FOR DECISION / DISCUSSION / NOTING**7.1 OUTSTANDING ACTION ITEMS****Author's Title:** Governance Officer**Department:** Corporate Services**File No:** FM/02/09**PURPOSE**

To inform the Audit and Risk Committee of the current status of actions from internal and external audit and relevant regulatory reports.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. Notes the status of the outstanding actions
2. Approves the completed actions 5, 6, 7, 22 and 27.
3. Approves the removal of Item 8 subject to reporting progress in the quarterly Asset Management update.

AMENDED RECOMMENDATION:

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. Notes the status of the outstanding actions
2. Approves the completed actions 5, 6, 7, 22 and 27.

MOVED: BERNARD YOUNG**SECONDED:** DEAN SLEIGH**CARRIED.****Attachments:** 1 Outstanding Action Items**KEY POINTS / ISSUES**

Council staff are required to provide updated commentary and to advise when an action is complete. Once completed items are to the satisfaction of the Audit and Risk Committee, the action will be removed from the report.

Council proposes to remove the action relating to the development of a formal Asset Replacement Strategy (Item 8) and incorporate it into the quarterly Asset Management Update. This strategy is a sub plan of the Asset Management Plan that is required under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Current comments are indicated by red font.

DISCUSSION

In response to how Council was managing the risks, particularly in relation to the action items with longer term dates, they were informed that Council is committed to undertaking the work required for risk management and have engaged a consultant to complete this work this financial year. Progress is being made regarding Debtor management actions that arose from a LGI report, where the Debtor Management Policy has been brought to this meeting.

The due date for the actions relating to Records Management has been set based on funding available to replace the system. Council's current system is a centralised system, actions in the current strategy have been delayed to COVID as many of the actions require staff to be onsite. Council also must comply with the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards and provide reporting to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) biennially.

7.2 REVIEW OF AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide an updated status of the Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note and review the work plan

NOTED

Attachments: 1 2022 Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

The work plan incorporates all matters that have been considered or will be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee over a twelve-month period.

The attached annual work plan has been populated to show the status of current documents and processes, and key documents and initiatives to be considered within the 2022 meeting schedule, that are known.

It should be noted that the proposed internal audit program may be subject to change based on the revised internal audit program to be undertaken by Council's Internal Auditor.

The work plan is a dynamic document. It will be reviewed and adjusted at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and additional items shall be added as they become known.

DISCUSSION

The committee noted the report

7.3 ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Author's Title: Acting Manager Works and Technical Services

Department: Works and Technical Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide Audit and Risk Committee an update on the status of the Asset Management processes and frameworks.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note the report.

NOTED

Attachments: Nil

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

Strategic Asset Management Plan

The Asset Management Committee is currently preparing a draft Strategic Asset Management Plan which is scheduled for discussion at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting in May 2022.

Road Management Plan

The Community Consultation Report has proposed the following recommendations:

- Service review of road maintenance program
- Reclassify roads – decommission, increase road class, decrease class
- Confirm traffic volumes
- Additional external funding – demonstrate the community engagement activity, the proactive steps undertaken to manage our road network efficiently and request additional funding from the state and federal government most efficiently.
- Adjust response times in Road Management Plan to align with existing funding arrangements
- Investigate mechanisms to have remote rate payers conduct work on our network.
- Review current public reporting strategies with respect to Council's overall budget and level of expenditure
- Review customer service response to customer upon close out of service requests

The report will be presented to Council at the second briefing in February.

Capital Program FY23

Council continues to improve its process in forming the Capital Budget. This year the Finance Department has introduced budget workshops for Councillors and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure a clear understanding of our current position is provided and outline the effect any asset renewal or new assets will have.

The first of the workshops was conducted on Tuesday, 18 January. The full day workshop had three focus areas: Revenue and Rating Plan; Capital Expenditure; and Aquatic Assets.

Key directions to come from the first workshop were:

- “Finish what we have started” – there is a tendency for Council to deliver projects in line with funding agreements, however these may not necessarily align with community expectations. Often Stage 2 can have a major impact on Council cash.
- Request modelling to address the road asset renewal gap – establish what effect a large road reseal program (at intervention level 6 and 7) will have on Councils future road rehabilitation program.

Rate cap analysis on Capital Program

City of Greater Bendigo recently distributed a brief analysis on the effect of the rate cap and more pointedly the gap created between the moderate increase to income and the ever-increasing costs of construction.

“Just on Capital Expenditure, the ‘gap’ for a regional City like Bendigo which often has a \$55M capital program, represents around \$2.78M (being the difference between the rate cap increase of 1.75%, and the likely construction cost increase of 6.8%)”

“Without other support, some reduced service levels in Local Gov, alongside efficiencies that can be found of course, will need to occur in 2022/2023 or over the 4-year budget.”

A brief analysis conducted by Councils Asset Department for the same scenario projected the following:

- Assuming income from rates and charges to be \$14.25M, a rate increase of 1.75% equates to approximately \$250K
- Assuming a capital program of \$14M (including carry forwards), the increase in construction costs equates to \$950K
- The “gap” (without indexing for rural areas) equates to approx. \$700K

DISCUSSION

The committee was informed that the

It was noted that added to the challenges associated with procurement is the renewal gap as identified by the City of Bendigo which is likely to compound, getting bigger over time. In response to a question of how Council can overcome the challenges this presents, the Committee was informed that Council undertakes analysis of infrastructure and where it fits within priorities and development of strategic plans and possible rationalisations whilst balancing with managing community expectations and consultation.

7.4 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide an update to the Audit and Risk Committee from Council's Internal Auditors on recent reports and publications of interest.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note the Internal Audit Update Report received from Council's Internal Auditors – RSD Audit.

NOTED

Attachments: 1 Internal Audit Update Report

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

RSD Audit has provided a summary of recent reports and publications by government agencies and other sources that may impact on public sector agencies.

The Internal Audit Update Report is attached.

DISCUSSION

The Committee noted the report.

7.5 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide an update to the Audit and Risk Committee on the status of the Internal Audit Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note the Audit and Risk Committee status of the Internal Audit Plan.

NOTED

Attachments: 1 Internal Audit Status Report Feb 2022

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

The Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2022 – 2024 was endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee on 1 December 2021. The objectives of the Internal Audit program are to provide a risk based, cyclical, strategic plan which focuses on the organisations risks and internal control systems. The status update provides an update on the status of the Internal Audit program.

The Audit and Risk Committee Status Report dated February 2022 is attached.

DISCUSSION

The Committee noted the report.

7.6 INTERNAL AUDIT SCOPE - REVIEW OF ICT GENERAL SECURITY CONTROLS

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To Provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the draft scope for the audit of the ICT General Security Controls.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting approve the scope for the Internal Audit of the ICT General Security Controls.

Attachments: 1 Scope - IA - ICT General Security Controls

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

At its December 2021 Meeting the Audit and Risk Committee endorsed the revised internal Audit Plan. This plan included an audit of the ICT General Security Controls.

The draft scope for the Internal Audit for ICT General Security Controls provides for the collection of documentation and the fieldwork to be undertaken in March 2022 with the final report to be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in May 2022.

The draft scope for the review has been attached for consideration and approval by the Audit and Risk Committee.

DISCUSSION

The committee was informed that the scope relates to IT policy and procedures, physical security and user access, change and release management was excluded to enable the audit to focus on security controls and provide specific identification of security gaps. Adequacy of the current infrastructure has also been excluded due to some of the infrastructure being replaced later this year.

7.7 INTERNAL AUDIT SCOPE - REVIEW OF SALEYARDS**Author's Title:** Governance Officer**Department:** Corporate Services**File No:** FM/02/09**PURPOSE**

To Provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the draft scope for the audit of a review of the Saleyards.

MOTION:

That the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting approve the scope for the Internal Audit of a review of the Saleyards.

MOVED: DEAN SLEIGH**SECONDED:** BERNARD YOUNG**CARRIED.****Attachments:** 1 IA - Departmental Review of Saleyards**KEY POINTS / ISSUES**

At its December 2021 Meeting the Audit and Risk Committee endorsed the revised internal Audit Plan. This plan included a review of the Saleyards activity.

The draft scope for the Internal Audit for Saleyards provides for the collection of documentation and the fieldwork to be undertaken in May 2022 with the final report to be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee later after that time.

The draft scope for the review has been attached for consideration and approval by the Audit and Risk Committee.

DISCUSSION

The audit being undertaken is a departmental review, to provide an understanding of the current operations and controls and the effectiveness of the controls, cash handling and OHS being key areas and recommend improvements or opportunities. In response to a question about if online sales was being considered as part of the review, the committee was informed that reviewing the direction of the industry and possible opportunities would be considered.

7.8 DRAFT INFORMATION PRIVACY POLICY

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the draft Information Privacy Policy.

MOTION:

That the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting endorse the attached Information Privacy Policy.

MOVED: DEAN SLEIGH

SECONDED: BERNARD YOUNG

CARRIED.

Attachments: 1 Draft Information Privacy Policy

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

The *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* requires Victorian public sector organisations to comply with the ten information privacy principles governing the collection, management, use and disclosure of personal information. It is a requirement to have a policy setting out Council's management of personal information.

The draft policy is the same as the policy, last adopted in 2019 except for:

- updated references to the *Local Government Act 2020*, references to the *Local Government Act 1989* remain due to legislation relating to rates remains in the 1989 legislation;
- the inclusion of a paragraph regarding disclosure of information to other government or infrastructure agencies for the purpose of consulting with landowners when works may impact their properties, or to facilitate consultation.

A copy of the revised draft policy is attached.

DISCUSSION

The committee endorsed the Policy.

7.9 DRAFT REVISED FRAUD AND CORRUPTION REPORTING POLICY

Author's Title: Chief Executive Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM|02|09

PURPOSE

For the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) to consider the draft and revised Fraud and Corruption Reporting Policy

MOTION:

That the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting note and endorse the draft revised Fraud and Corruption Reporting Policy.

MOVED: DEAN SLEIGH

SECONDED: BERNARD YOUNG

CARRIED.

Attachments: 1 Draft Revised Fraud and Corruption Reporting Policy

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

Council's Fraud and Corruption Reporting Policy (Policy) has fallen due for review in accordance with the Council's Policy Review Schedule. The Policy is subject to biennial review.

There have been no material changes made to the Policy in the current review, which is recommended to the Committee for its consideration prior to being presented to the Council recommending formal adoption.

Following Policy adoption, arrangements will be made for refresher training on:

- Fraud and Corruption Reporting, including an overview of reporting under the Public Interest Disclosure framework
- Delegations and Authorisations
- Procurement, and
- Conflicts of Interest.

The above short courses are incorporated as regular refresher training in Council's 10-year Corporate Training Calendar and supported by e-learning modules through Council's learning management system.

DISCUSSION

In response to a question raised regarding the reporting to the CEO or Mayor, the committee was informed that this a reflection of the employment relationship between the CEO and Council should an allegation be made against the CEO.

The committee endorsed the Policy.

7.10 DRAFT DEBTOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Author's Title: Acting Director Corporate Services

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the draft Debtor Management Policy.

MOTION:

That the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting endorse the attached Debtor Management Policy.

MOVED: BERNARD YOUNG

SECONDED: DEAN SLEIGH

CARRIED.

Attachments: 1 Draft Debtor Management Policy

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

In March – April 2021, RSD conducted an internal audit relating to Debtor Management (including Rates Collection).

The RSD internal audit found:

- Currently, Buloke do not have an overarching debtor management policy/procedure document in place. Processes in place for follow up of debtors are understood by individual staff members, however, as there are no documented procedures these decisions have either not been made at all or inconsistently applied.
- This lack of decision making has resulted in Council experiencing increased longstanding debtor balances and general delays in receiving payments.

As part of the internal audit process, RSD provided a recommended debtor management policy template based on policies of several Council's and overall government policy and guidelines.

This template now been customised to Buloke Shire Council resources and is presented in the attached draft policy for consideration.

DISCUSSION

In response to a question regarding the clarity of the Council's terms of trade, the committee was informed that with regards to rates, despite experiencing issues in the past, it is clearly stated the

options available on the rates notices, with regards of terms of trade on other debtors, it will be clearly documented on invoices.

The committee was also informed that outstanding rates and infringements of properties being sold, Council is acknowledged as an interested party on settlement.

7.11 RISK MANAGEMENT

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the status of Risk Management within Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note the status of Council's Risk Register.

NOTED

Attachments: Nil

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

Council and management are responsible for reviewing all major strategies, plans and actions to identify risks to the organisation. Additionally, management is responsible for establishing and maintaining an effective system of internal controls that support the achievement of Council's objectives.

The Risk Register is a useful tool in providing an analysis of Council's key risks. It ensures there is a common and consistent understanding of risks to Council. The Risk also Register a means of communicating key risks to the Audit and Risk Committee.

As outlined in previous reports to the Committee, Council's risk management maturity is low. To further address some of the outstanding actions from the Risk Management Audit, provision has been made in the 2021/22 budget. Quotations have been received since the last Audit and Risk Committee in line with Council's Procurement Policy and associated procedure. RSD Audit has been appointed to assist Council.

The quotation includes the review and finalisation of the Risk Management Policy, Framework and Strategy, review of the risk matrix and undertake staff, councillor and Audit and Risk Committee training. It also includes the review and finalisation of the Business Continuity Policy and Framework and assisting with the development of BIA templates and guidance information and post incident review procedure. Training for staff will also be undertaken.

In the interim, the current organisational risk profile which reports residual risk is produced below. Not all risks have been reassessed and some will still show an assessed inherent risk.

**Organisational Risk Profile
Buloke Shire Council
September 2021**

Likelihood	Consequences				
	1 : Insignificant	2 : Minor	3 : Moderate	4 : Major	5 : Extreme
RARE: A. Highly unlikely to occur in the next 5 years	2	5	5	3	2
UNLIKELY: B. Slight possibility of occurring in the next 5 years	2	18	35	5	0
POSSIBLE: C. 50/50 chance of occurring in the next 3 - 5 years	1	16	25	6	0
LIKELY: D. 50/50 chance of event occurring in next 3 years	0	5	8	2	0
ALMOST CERTAIN: E. likely to occur once in the next 12 months	0	7	5	1	0

DISCUSSION

The committee noted the report.

7.12 LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE REGISTER

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the status of legislative compliance obligations.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note the Legislative Compliance Report.

NOTED

Attachments: 1 Legislative Compliance Report

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

A Legislative Compliance Register has been developed containing items for compliance pursuant to the *Local Government Act 1989* (LGA89), the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA20) and associated regulations.

Compliance obligations have been included in the report, taking into consideration the commencement dates of the various sections of the LGA20. Items for compliance to other legislation are being added progressively as these items are identified.

The Legislative Compliance Framework places the responsibility on individual departments to identify compliance items and to notify the Governance Team for inclusion into the Register. The subscription service offered through the Reliansys compliance module provides Council with alerts when there are changes to key legislation monitored by that service provider.

The Register provides for:

- Identification of legislative obligations and assignment to staff members.
- The setting of due dates. The system will send reminder emails to staff members when their assigned obligation is near due, minimising non-compliance risks.
- An assessment of items of compliance / non-compliance (labelled as "Complies", "Partially Complies", "Does not comply" and "Not yet assessed"). Comments are required to be added into the Register when signing off as "Complies" or "Partially Complies". The obligations "Not yet Assessed" are those obligations that have come from new or changed legislation and have not yet reached their first due date.

The Register is monitored monthly to ensure that compliance obligations are met.

DISCUSSION

The Committee noted the report

7.13 COUNCILLOR REIMBURSEMENTS

Author's Title: Manager Finance

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To note the report on reimbursement of Councillor expenses in accord with section 40(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and reimbursements to the Chief Executive Officer.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee note the report of reimbursements of Councillor expenses and reimbursement of CEO expenses.

NOTED

Attachments: 1 Councillor reimbursements 25-11-2021 to 25-1-2022
2 Interim CEO reimbursements 24-11-2021 to 25-1-2022

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

Section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to reimburse Councillors or members of a delegated committee for out-of-pocket expenses, and to provide details of all reimbursements under this section to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Council has adopted a Councillor Expenses Policy that provides information on what expenses can be reimbursed, and the conditions of the reimbursement;

- Must be a bona fide expense;
- Have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or member of a delegated committee; and
- Are reasonably necessary for the Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform that role.

The attached report itemises all reimbursements to Councillors and to the Interim CEO from 24 November 2021 to 25 January 2022.

DISCUSSION

The Committee noted the report

7.14 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

Author's Title: Acting Director Corporate Services

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

PURPOSE

To present to the Audit and Risk Committee the draft financial statements for the period ending 31 December 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting note the Draft Financial Performance Report as at 31 December 2021.

NOTED

Attachments:

- 1 Income Statement
- 2 Balance Sheet
- 3 Cashflow Statement
- 4 Capital Works Program

KEY POINTS / ISSUES

SUMMARY

The forecasted year-end surplus in the approved budget was \$10.82m and is reported at a similar level as of 31 December 2021. Finalisation of the capital project forecasting is still in progress and the anticipated year-end result is expected to decrease due to project delays and funding milestone adjustments once forecasting is complete.

The budget amendments at the start of the financial year approved after the formal budget process, increase both Council's income and expenses as most are generated by additional grants received and related expenditure. However, some budget amendments have negatively impacted to the forecasted year-end Operating Net Surplus by approximately \$600K.

DISCUSSION

Report:	Report explanation:	Year to date performance to Budget and Forecast outcome:
Income Statement	<i>The Income Statement provides a summary of the total income and total expenditure relating to Council's annual operations for the reporting period. Capital grant income is included in this statement, but any related expenditure is not reflected as this is reported as increased assets on the Balance Sheet. To</i>	Operating result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates instalments received to 31st December is less than anticipated but expected to level out following annual instalment in February. • Correction of allocation between Statutory fees and fines and User fees mostly off-set the variance between these two income categories. • Grants – operating variance reflects several additional grants received as result of Covid-19 recovery and the reallocation of the Wycheproof Library grant from

Buloke Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 2 February 2022

<p>Income Statement (Continued)</p>	<p><i>exclude potential distortion of underlying operations in the Income Statement, capital income is reported separately to identify the Operating Net Surplus/(Deficit).</i></p> <p><i>Prescribed expenditure of Capital Income is not included in the Income Statement, and this can distort the analysis of the financial performance which is better reflected by the Operating Net Surplus/(Deficit). Capital expenditure against capital grant income is provided in the Capital Work Program report and as additional assets on the balance sheet.</i></p>	<p>Grants - capital. The additional grant income and related expenditure have been added to the budget and mostly offset to provide minimal impact to net result.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution income year to date reflects a negative variance due to delay with pension rebate processing due to Rates system changeover. • Other income reflects positive variance year to date due to increased reimbursements from community facility management and Workcover. • Budgeted back-pay of EBA increase has not occurred to date as expected. This accounts for the year-to-date positive variance but is anticipated to level out later in the year. Forecast to be updated further in February. • Full year forecast for Materials and services mostly reflects additional expenditure relating to additional Grant – operating funding and catch-up required in Waste service. • Due to underspending and capital project delays additional expenditure is required in the Waste service to align our waste charge to Essential Services Commission requirements for rate capping. This increase anticipates annual expenditure by \$315K • Insurance for 2021-22 has been finalised and came in significantly higher than budget due to impact of recent building replacement valuation. • The Operating Net Surplus for the full financial year is reported to be \$200K less than the approved budget but this will be further impacted by EBA back-payment (still to be confirmed) bringing the estimate closer to \$300K less than approved budget. <p>Capital Income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of capital income recognition is currently being aligned to project milestone completion. This may impact full year estimates if projects have been delayed and/or renegotiated with the funding body. • Project forecasting is due to be completed in February.
<p>Balance Sheet</p>	<p><i>The Balance Sheet summarises the value of Assets (what Council owns) and our Liabilities (what Council owes), and the difference between assets and liabilities (Net Assets or Equity) reflects Council's net worth as at the end of the month reported.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash has decreased \$6.3m since 30 June reporting as we meet outstanding payables relating to capital works. • Approximately \$9.5m of cash is restricted and relates to Capital Grant income held in advance of milestone completion. This amount is still to be confirmed through capital project forecasting and it is expected to be higher due to project delays. • No change to anticipated year-end Net Assets expected

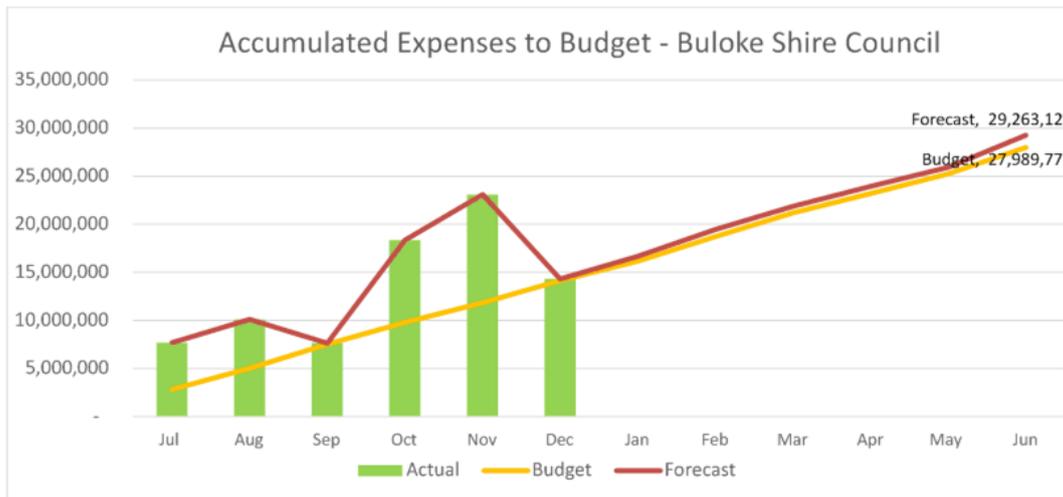
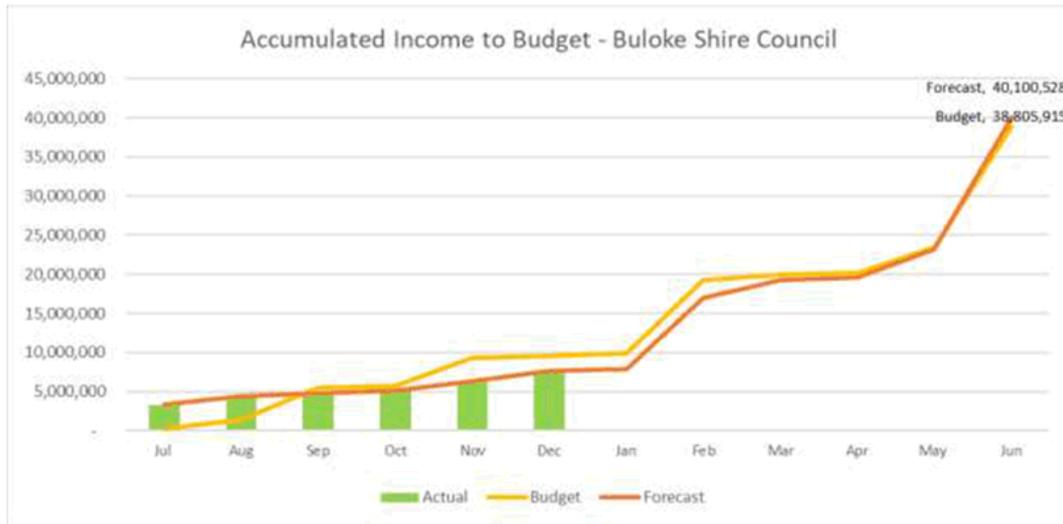
Buloke Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 2 February 2022

		at this stage.
Cashflow Statement	<i>The Cashflow Statement reflects actual results for the reporting period in line with statutory financial reporting.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$13.0m cashflow has been used to support the capital works program year-to-date.
Cashflow Forecast	<i>The Cashflow Forecast is a projection of cashflow for the remainder of the year based on the month-end cash balance, the monthly budgets, specified timing parameters (such when BAS/super are due and quarterly rate receipts) and capital expenditure.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report held over while capital project timing is confirmed through forecasting process to be completed in February.
Cashflow Chart	<i>The Cashflow Chart visually depicts the cashflow forecast and the updated format is illustrated in a dual design, based on best practice reporting.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report held over while capital project timing is confirmed through forecasting process to be completed in February.
Capital Works Program	<i>The Capital Works Program lists the income and expenditure for each project incurred to date.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report includes committed expenditure (Purchase Orders). List of active projects listed by required reporting levels under multi-funded/multi-year arrangements. Additional \$3.5m in project expenditure forecast above Council adopted budget. Highlighted projects are multi-year and variations between financial years have occurred. All projects remain within approved budget across financial years at this stage but may report advisedly due to estimated breakdown between financial years.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The tables below provide an overview of Council's financial performance against Approved budget income and expenses as at 31 December 2021.



Council adopted its Annual Budget 2021/22 in June 2021. The Buloke Shire Council Plan 2021-2025 outlines Council’s commitment to providing clear and concise reporting on a quarterly basis to Council meetings.

DISCUSSION

The adverse forecast of expenses against budget was discussed, and the committee were informed that whilst operational expenses are on track, capital expenditure can swing around quickly. Council has invested resources to improve the forecasting of capital projects, improved forecasting will be completed before May, which will provide a more accurate prediction of the end of the year.

Comment was made that is an election year that may result in government ‘splurges’ during election time, which may result in higher carryovers, particularly with respect to the shortage of suppliers and materials currently being experienced and could offer more challenges to Council.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. MEETING CLOSE

Meeting was closed at 2:15pm

8.2.2 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORT

Author's Title: Governance Officer

Department: Corporate Services

File No: FM/02/09

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Council and Community Leadership

PURPOSE

To provide Council with the annual assessment of the Audit and Risk Committee's performance against the Audit and Risk Committee Charter and biannual audit and risk report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

SUMMARY

The biannual audit and risk report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee was provided to the Chief Executive Officer on 22 March 2022. It describes the activities of the Committee and includes its findings and recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Attachments: 1 [Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Chair Report March 2022](#)

DISCUSSION

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) provides that the Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) must prepare a biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the Committee and includes its findings and recommendations.

The Act further provides that these reports must be provided to the Chief Executive Officer for tabling at the next Council meeting.

RELEVANT LAW

Section 54(5)(b) of the Act requires the Chief Executive Officer to provide a copy of the biannual audit and risk report to the Chief Executive Officer for tabling at the next Council meeting, following the audit and preparation of the report.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

The Committee was established by Council at its ordinary meeting held on 12 August 2020. The Audit and Risk Committee Charter was adopted on 12 August 2020. The last report by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee was noted by Council at its ordinary meeting held on 10 November 2021.

OPTIONS

Not applicable

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Not applicable

COLLABORATION

Not applicable

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The Committee is required to monitor financial and performance reporting.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not applicable

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not applicable

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

The Audit and Risk Committee Charter's purpose and objectives are to ensure good governance and provide guidance on how Council will work with the Committee for the benefit of the organisation and the community.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In providing this advice to the Council as the Manager Transformation I, Cecilia Connellan, have no interests to disclose in this report.

Buloke Shire Council

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT

PURPOSE

To advise the Councillors and Chief Executive Officer at Buloke Shire Council of the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee over the past six months since the last Chair's report in September 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The Buloke Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee Charter provides that the Chair will prepare a biannual audit and risk report that "describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee and includes its findings and recommendations." The Charter also provides that this report will be tabled at the next Council meeting by the Chief Executive Officer and that the Chair may present the report to Councillors at that meeting if desired.

The Audit and Risk Committee is established in accordance with s53 of the Local Government Act 2020 which provides that the Committee is not a delegated committee but rather fulfils an advisory role.

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE CHARTER

The Charter was reviewed by the Committee and subsequently approved by Council on 12 August 2020. It outlines the Scope of Authority, Composition and Responsibilities of the Committee. The Charter is due for review in 2022.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Committee comprises four members – the Mayor and three external, independent members and has not changed during this reporting period.

The Committee has met in person on two occasions during this period and all members have been in attendance. These meetings were held on:

- 1 December 2021
- 2 February 2022

The Committee continues to be ably supported by Council staff who provided timely updates and responses to issues and questions raised by the Committee.

AUDIT FUNCTIONS

The Committee continues to assist the Council in addressing financial, strategic and operational risks and also ensuring that the Council maintains a reliable system of internal controls. As is the usual practice, the Committee reviewed its Work Plan at the two meetings held during this reporting period.

GOVERNANCE

In order to ensure accountability, compliance and transparency, in addition to this biannual report, the minutes of each Committee meeting are presented to the next available Ordinary Council meeting.

The Committee also receives a report from the Chief Executive Officer at each Committee meeting regarding any legal, significant OH&S issues, fraud events, or any other events or issues affecting Council as an organisation at a strategic level.

EXTERNAL AUDITORS

In accordance with the Local Government Act, Council's Auditor is appointed by the Victorian Auditor General (VAGO). It is of concern to the Committee that Council only received advice on 3 March 2022 of the appointment of the external auditor for the 2021/2022 financial year.

INTERNAL AUDITORS

Buloke Shire Council has continued the engagement of RSD Audit Bendigo as its Internal Auditors. The Committee receives a regular Internal Audit Progress report which provides not only a progress report on the Buloke internal audit program but also a very useful summary of recent reports from public bodies.

During this reporting period the Committee received the Internal Audit Report on Debtor Management and the Audit Scope for the Review of ICT General Security Controls and the Review of Saleyards. Given what has occurred in the sector, and at Council, over recent months, the Committee is particularly interested in the outcomes of the audit relating to ICT controls.

MANAGEMENT REPORTS

In addition to the Internal and External audit functions of the Committee, in order to meet its advisory functions, the Committee also receives regular management reports at each meeting which have incorporated the following:

- Progress on implementing outstanding actions arising from past internal and external audits and other regulatory reports.

- An asset management update is received at each meeting, recognising its importance of Council.
- A risk management update is also presented to each meeting.
- The regular updating of the legislative compliance register is an important tool for Council to be assured that it is meeting its legal obligations.
- Financial Performance reports are received by the Committee for the preceding quarter enabling discussion on management reports, the statutory accounts, performance statements and forward looking reports such as the budget and strategic resource plan.
- The Committee also undertakes various management duties such as preparing and reviewing its annual work plan, setting meeting dates and also undertaking its annual self-assessment.

The Committee is keen to ensure that there is a focus on the timely completion of outstanding actions from past internal and external audits, acknowledging the resourcing challenges that Council faces.

Specific reports and presentations were also received during this reporting period in relation to the following matters:

- Information Privacy Policy
- Fraud and Corruption Reporting Policy
- Debtor Management Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Corporate Card Policy
- Local Government Inspectorate Report: Personal Interest Returns
- Audit and Risk Committee Self-Assessment Survey Outcomes

In relation to the survey outcomes, it was pleasing that there was an increased participation this year in the self-assessment survey. As indicated in my previous report, participation is welcome so that the Committee is able to receive feedback from the Council and is able to ensure that it is providing the necessary advice required by Council.

The survey highlighted three areas where there was slightly less confidence by the Committee. These being:

- Risk Management and the assurance that systems are in place to identify high risks and that they are being dealt with appropriately;
- Internal Audit – providing a structured reporting line for internal audit to ensure audit independence; and
- External Audit – providing a structured reporting line for external audit.

This feedback provides a focus for the Committee over the coming 12 months.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Audit and Risk Committee continues to be greatly assisted by the diligence and professionalism of both Councillors and officers. The Committee encourages all Councillors to attend and participate in Committee meetings when they are able to do so,

and looks forward to continuing to fulfil its obligations to Council as set out in its Charter and the Local Government Act.

Margaret Abbey PSM

Chair

Audit and Risk Advisory Committee

Buloke Shire Council

8.2.3 TOURISM BUSINESS INNOVATION GRANT GUIDELINES

Author's Title: Manager Facilities and Projects

Department: Works and Technical Services

File No: GS|09|50

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Economy

PURPOSE

To endorse the Tourism Business Innovation Grant Guidelines.

SUMMARY

In 2021, Council received \$790,000 in funding under the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) Tourism Infrastructure Program (Flagship Projects) to deliver a four-part project. Council has the opportunity to administer a once-off grant program worth a total of \$60,000 to fund tourism business pilots in the Buloke Shire. This report recommends Council endorse the Tourism Business Innovation Grant Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorse the Tourism Business Innovation Grant Guidelines; and
2. Delegate the Chief Executive Officer to advertise the grant program and accept applications to the Tourism Business Innovation Grant program.

Attachments: 1 [Tourism Business Innovation Grant Guidelines](#)

DISCUSSION

In 2021, Council received \$790,000 in funding under the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) Tourism Infrastructure Program (Flagship Projects) to deliver a four-part project including:

- Buloke accommodation for lakes inviting niche tourism,
- Night activation for Silo Art,
- A Street Art Festival, and a
- Business Innovation Pilot program.

The purpose of the fund is to deliver priority projects identified in the Silo Art Gap Analysis which was funded and developed by the DJPR, in partnership the with Wimmera Mallee Tourism member Councils (Buloke, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack Shire Councils).

As part of this funding, Buloke is represented on a greater Project Design Steering Group (PDSG) with representatives from Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack Shire Councils, Regional Development Victoria (RDV) Grampians, RDV Loddon Mallee, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Visit Victoria and the Tourism and Tourism Events Visitor Economy (TEVE) department of DJPR.

The purpose of the Business Innovation Pilot program under the grant agreement is to:

- Support local businesses to maximise benefits from increased tourism,
- Provide financial support to at least one pilot project per year over two financial years, and
- Increase visitor expenditure by 2023-2024 using a 2019-2020 baseline.

Guidelines

Officers have prepared grant guidelines which are aligned to Councils tourism objectives, prioritising applications which can demonstrate:

- Alignment with key strategies in the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2023-2024:
 - *Theme 1: COVID Recovery – “Positioning Buloke for Domestic Visitor Experiences”*
 - *Theme 4: Targeted industries investment – “Tourism Attractions and Responsive Town Businesses”, and “Enhance agribusiness diversification and value-adding”*
- Alignment with priorities identified in the Silo Art Gap Analysis for Buloke:
 - *Improved visitor servicing (improved and consistent offering, or innovative offerings)*
 - *Adding value to existing Silo Art Trail through innovative activation of current tourism product or development of new tourism product*
- Increase visitor expenditure in Buloke by 2023-2024.

Funding model

Officers propose two funding rounds across the FY22 and FY23 financial years, inviting applications for funding up to \$30,000.

Assessment

Under the guidelines, Officers propose the establishment of an assessment panel which includes representation from Councils key tourism stakeholders, including a representative from the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDATAC), Buloke Tourism Board (BTB), specialist Council Officers, and an independent tourism professional.

Funding decision

It is recommended that allocation of funding to successful applicants is decided and endorsed by Council.

RELEVANT LAW

Not applicable.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Not applicable.

OPTIONS

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The guidelines propose that applications which directly contravene or contradict Councils plans and policies will be ineligible.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council’s Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee were consulted upon receipt of funding by the DJPR to discuss the most effective way to allocate the funding.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Officers have prepared these guidelines in collaboration with industry stakeholders to ensure that funded activities align with tourism objectives and priorities identified at a local, regional and state level.

COLLABORATION

Officers sought advice from DJPR, member Councils of Wimmera Mallee Tourism, and the Tourism Infrastructure Program (Flagship Projects) PDSG in the development of these guidelines

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The grant program is being funded by the DJPR Tourism Infrastructure Program (Flagship Projects) funding received by Council in 2021.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Officers have prepared the funding model and associated guidelines in line with priorities outlined in the Wimmera Mallee Silo Art Gap Analysis.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Officers have prepared the funding model and associated guidelines in line with priorities identified in the following Council plans and strategies:

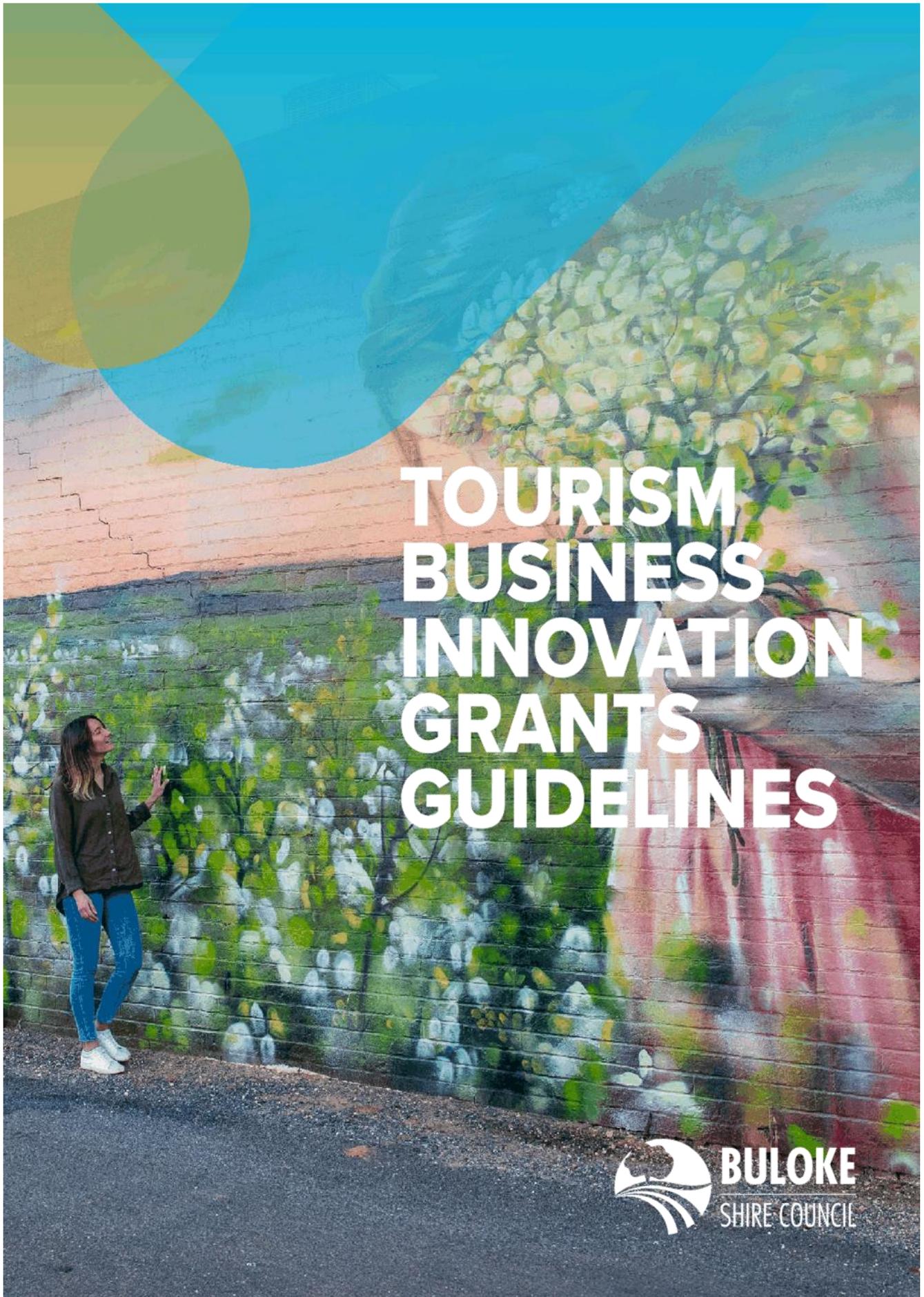
- Long-Term Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025
- Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-23

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

Not applicable.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers in the preparation of this report have a conflict of interest to declare.



TOURISM BUSINESS INNOVATION GRANTS GUIDELINES



TOURISM BUSINESS INNOVATION GRANTS GUIDELINES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations and the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community. Buloke has significant number cultural heritage places including an Aboriginal historical place, burials, artefact scatters, earth features, low density artefact distributions, scarred trees and a stone feature.

INTRODUCTION

Buloke Shire Council in partnership with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions will this year be supporting new and innovative tourism business ideas in Buloke.

The *Tourism Business Innovation Grants fund* aims to maximise benefits from increased tourism, through the provision of seed funding to new and innovative tourism business ideas in Buloke.

Businesses, individuals and organisations are invited to apply for funding up to \$30,000 to establish their new business, idea or venture within Buloke.

Council is seeking applications which:

- Align to key tourism strategies for Buloke,
- Will increase visitation to the region,
- Add value to existing tourism products and experiences within Buloke, and
- Bring new target markets to our community.

There are two rounds of funding available in 2022.

 **CRITERIA**

APPLICANTS MUST BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THEIR BUSINESS IDEA ALIGNS TO ALL KEY BULOKE SHIRE STRATEGIES DETAILED BELOW:

- **Activities must align with key strategies in Buloke Shire Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2024:**
 - Theme 1: COVID Recovery – “Positioning Buloke for Domestic Visitor Experiences”
 - Theme 4: Targeted industries investment – “Tourism Attractions and Responsive Town Businesses”, and “Enhance agribusiness diversification and value-adding”
- **Activities must align with priorities identified in Silo Art Gap Analysis for Buloke:**
 - Improved visitor servicing (improved and consistent offering, innovative offerings)
 - Adding value to the existing Silo Art Trail through innovative activation of current tourism product, or development of new tourism product
- **Activities which will increase visitor expenditure by 2023-24 through:**
 - Attracting new target markets to the region, in line with Council’s tourism target markets, or
 - Extending overnight stay within the region through traditional target markets

BULOKE TOURISM TARGET MARKETS

GREY NOMAD DAY TRIPPERS	LIFESTYLE LEADERS	YOUNG ACTIVE FAMILIES
Typically 50+ living locally	Typically metro-based adults aged 20-35	Typically adults 30-50 with children under 18
Attracted to:	Attracted to:	Attracted to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food & wine • History • Arts & culture • Nature-based activities • Affordable day out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food & wine • Wellbeing and creativity • Nature-based activities • Scenic destinations • Arts & culture • Shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable holidays • Nature-based activities • Arts & culture • Food
Most likely to:	Most likely to:	Most likely to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day trip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend their stay • Stay and work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel within scheduled holiday periods • Consider a treechange

TOURISM BUSINESS INNOVATION GRANTS GUIDELINES



EXAMPLES OF
TYPES OF
PROJECTS WHICH
MAY BE FUNDED

- Activities/ideas that are unique to Buloke such as star gazing, astronomy,
- Innovative and new 'destination' accommodation offerings which showcase and celebrate the region, or
- Tourism product offering such as hot air ballooning, joy flights, tours, night art, paddock to plate experiences,
- Traditional owner experiences, cultural partnerships to deliver educational experiences on Country and cultural arts trails,
- Experiences which encourage improved visitor dispersal throughout Buloke townships, or partner with neighboring regions to develop trails such as culinary trails, arts trails and nature-based trails,
- Development of a new annual 'destination' tourism event which will attract significant numbers to the region and encourage repeat visitation,
- Activities which add value to the existing supply chain such as microbreweries or distilleries, or other experiences which develop new products and experiences derived from primary production in Buloke.



INELIGIBILITY

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE FUNDED UNDER THIS GRANT:

- Applicants who are seeking funds for activities taking place outside of the Buloke Shire,
- Applicants with an outstanding debt to Council, or incomplete acquittal across other grant programs with Council,
- Applicants seeking retrospective funding, or reimbursements of funds already spent,
- Applicants who seek a grant through this program to fund a position of employment,
- Activities which directly contradict or contravene Council policies and strategies,
- Applications which do not meet eligibility criteria, guidelines and/or respond to application in full,
- Applicants who canvass or lobby Councillors or employees of Buloke Shire Council in relation to their application during the application and assessment period,
- Applicants who are seeking funding to acquire land,
- For the payment of ongoing core business expenses (e.g., utilities, payment of staff).



FUNDING TERMS

- Only one application per individual or organisation
 - Applicants must submit a business plan with their application
 - All funds must be expended in accordance with the funding agreement
 - Applications will be accepted from community groups, if they are an Incorporated Association, or are under the auspices of a business or Incorporated Association
 - Successful applicants will be required to submit a funding acquittal by the end of the funding period
 - A full project budget must be submitted with the application which details all expenditure and income items
 - Organisations with an Australian Business Number (ABN) not registered for GST - An invoice stating the organisation's ABN
 - Organisations without an Australian Business Number (ABN) - An invoice for the Grant amount and a completed Statement by Supplier form.
- All organisations must submit one of the following to receive payment:**
- Organisations with an Australian Business Number (ABN) registered for GST - A tax invoice, inclusive of GST stating the organisation's ABN



KEY DATES

ROUND ONE	
Applications open	Thursday 14 April, 2022
Applications close	2pm, Monday 16 May, 2022
Successful applicant decided	Wednesday 8 June, 2022
Funding agreement executed and payment	Prior to 30 June, 2022
ROUND TWO	
Applications open	Thursday 11 August, 2022
Applications close	2pm, Monday 12 September, 2022
Successful applicant decided	Wednesday 12 October, 2022
Funding agreement executed and payment	Prior to 31 October, 2022



ASSESSMENT

APPLICATIONS WILL BE ASSESSED AGAINST THE BELOW CRITERIA:

- Application meets all eligibility requirements outlined in this document under 'Eligibility'
- Demonstrable alignment with key strategies identified in the Buloke Shire Council Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2023,
- Demonstrable alignment with priorities identified in Silo Art Gap Analysis for Buloke
- Demonstrates ability to achieve increased visitor expenditure by 2023-24 through:
 - Attracting new target markets to the region, in line with Council's tourism target markets, OR
 - Extending the overnight stay in region

- Sustainability: ability to demonstrate a sustainable business model which will be successful beyond the funding period of 12 months,
- Originality and uniqueness of the idea in Buloke, and
- Ability to impact/benefit multiple towns within Buloke.

After the application closing date, Council Officers will collate all applications and present to an Assessment Panel. The Panel will score each application against the assessment criteria. Officers will then prepare a recommendation for Council to consider and ultimately decide the successful applicant/s at a Council meeting.

THE ASSESSMENT PANEL WILL INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM:

- The Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDATAC)
- Buloke Tourism Board (BTB)
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions,
- Specialist Council Officers, and
- An independent tourism professional.



TOURISM BUSINESS INNOVATION GRANTS GUIDELINES

HOW TO APPLY

- Complete an application form which can be found at <https://www.buloke.vic.gov.au/buloke-shire-tourism>
- Submit form and all required supporting documents outlined on Councils website to buloke@buloke.vic.gov.au by no later than 2pm on application closing dates.

Please note that late applications

will not be accepted. Incomplete applications will not progress to assessment.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION

Kerrie Mulholland,
Tourism Projects Officer
on 1300 520 520 or at kmulholland@buloke.vic.gov.au



8.2.4 INTERIM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 2022 - 2023

Author's Title: Manager Facilities and Projects

Department: Works and Technical Services

File No: ED/07/01

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Economy

PURPOSE

To endorse the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2023.

SUMMARY

Officers have prepared the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2023 in close consultation with a sub-committee of the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDATAC). Officers have sought feedback internally from Council's Management Team and Senior Leadership Team, and consulted Councillors and key stakeholders on the development of the Strategy. Officers are recommending that Council endorse the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2023.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopt the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2023; and
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to take steps to implement the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-2023.

Attachments: 1 [Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022 - 2023](#)

DISCUSSION

The 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is due to be reviewed and there as a provision for this review in the 2021-2022 Annual Budget. It was determined in mid-2021 that factors including the inability to accurately forecast the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the timing of the results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics *2021 Census of Population* would likely be detrimental to the development of a new four to five year strategy.

As such, Officers have developed the 2022-2023 Interim Economic Development Strategy in close consultation with a sub-group of the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDATAC). The interim Strategy will build upon the 2018-2021 Strategy and propose further ambitious strategies to remain to responsive to community needs and the advice of key industry and community stakeholders including EDATAC.

Officers consulted Councils Management Team and Senior Leadership team for feedback, and further consulted with Councillors and key stakeholders. Feedback from the consultation has been incorporated in to the final document which is presented to Councillors for adoption.

The new actionable strategies have been categorised in to four themes:

- COVID-19 recovery,
- Community partnerships in economic development and tourism,
- Councils role in facilitating economic development, and
- Targeted industry investment.

Some key actions which Council will commit to delivering with partners in the Strategy include:

- Reviewing and establishing a restructured EDATAC committee which will be focused on delivering specific projects,
- Facilitating the development of business cases to support private business investment in the agribusiness, renewable energy and mining sectors,
- Preparing investment guides and supportive investment materials to assist in facilitating investment attraction, and
- Leading local and regional projects to expand tourist attractions and responding to growing visitation to Buloke.

The Strategy also recognises Councils achievements and progress against the previous Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-2021, including:

- Completed Industry Gap Analysis and Investment Attraction Plan,
- Developed Skills Gap Analysis and Workforce Plan
- The establishment of EDATAC,
- Receipt of funding for key infrastructure projects including streetscapes in five Buloke townships, new early years centres and Silo Art, and
- Revised tourism branding and supportive materials including a tactical marketing campaign, township brochures and a new image library.

RELEVANT LAW

Not applicable.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council supported the development of an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy in it's Annual Budget 2021-2022 which was adopted in June 2021.

OPTIONS

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Officers have considered the priorities and findings in the *Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020-2025* and *Climate Action Plan and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy* in the preparation of the Interim Strategy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Officers engaged with members of EDATAC, Buloke Tourism Board, Township Forums and other Special Interest Groups in the context of Economic Development and Tourism when preparing the Strategy.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This Strategy has been prepared by Officers and a working group of community members to ensure that Council's Economic Development and Tourism priorities are responsive to those identified by the Buloke community.

COLLABORATION

Officers collaborated with Street Ryan and Associates in the preparation of this Strategy.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Actions identified in the Interim Strategy are subject to Councils budgeted position and available resources.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

This Strategy has been prepared in line with priorities outlined in the Wimmera Development Association *Housing Review and Regional Housing Solutions Initiatives*, the *Wimmera Southern Mallee Destination Management Plan* and *Silo Art Gap Analysis*.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

This Strategy has been developed in line with priorities and findings identified in the following Council-plans and policies:

- Long Term Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025
- Buloke 2030 Community Plan
- Industry Gap Analysis and Investment Attraction Plan
- Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy
- Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020-2025
- Climate Action Plan and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

Not applicable.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officer in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest to declare.

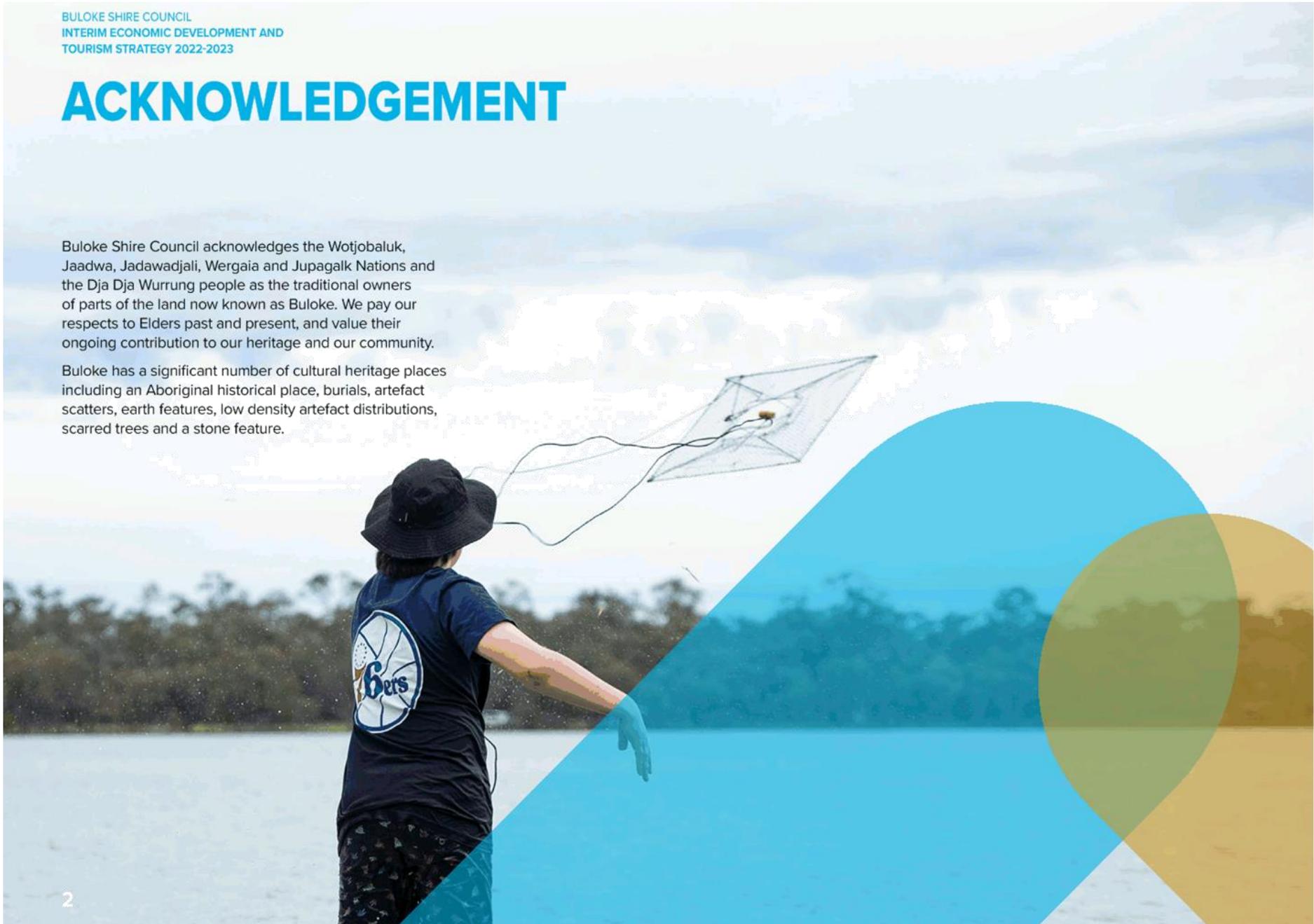


BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
INTERIM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
TOURISM STRATEGY 2022-2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

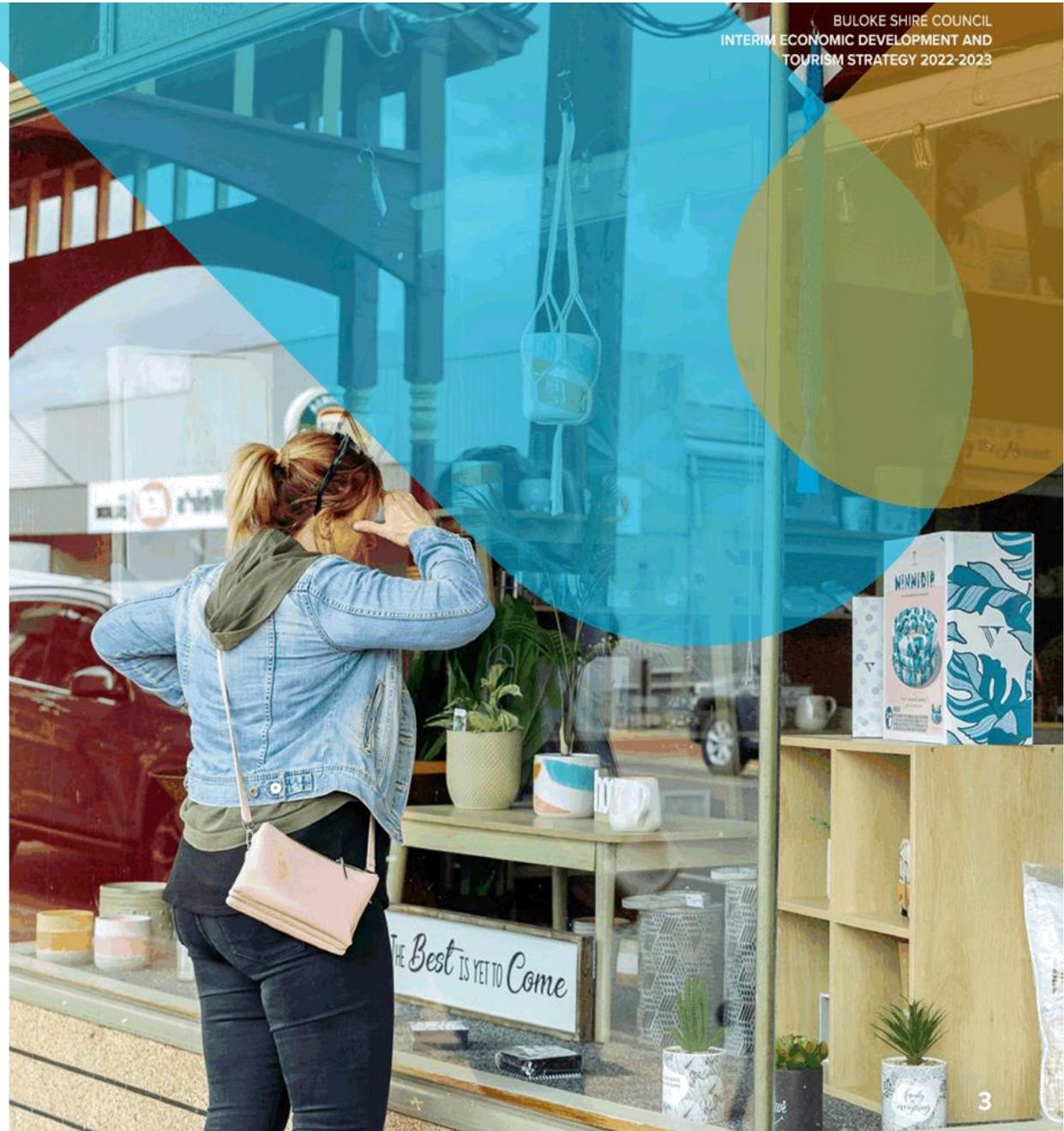
Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations and the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.

Buloke has a significant number of cultural heritage places including an Aboriginal historical place, burials, artefact scatters, earth features, low density artefact distributions, scarred trees and a stone feature.



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BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is due for renewal. It was determined in mid-2021 that factors including the inability to accurately forecast the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the timing of the results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census of Population would likely be detrimental to the development of a new four to five year strategy.

As such, Council has developed the 2022-2023 Interim Economic Development Strategy in close consultation with a sub-group of the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDATAC). The interim Strategy will build upon the 2018-2021 Strategy, and propose further ambitious strategies to remain responsive to community needs and economic opportunities, as well as follow the advice of key industry and community stakeholders at both local and regional level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Buloke would like to acknowledge the three community members on the EDATAC Strategy Development sub-committee for volunteering their time to assist in the development of this document:

- Ms Kaylene Cossar
- Cr Graeme Milne
- Ms Julie Pringle

We would also like to acknowledge these community members who form a part of the broader EDATAC who helped guide the direction of the Strategy:

- Mr Adam Campbell
- Mr John Coleiro
- Mr Vin Delahunty
- Mr Graeme Harris



STRATEGIC CONTEXT



METHODOLOGY

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
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The Interim Economic Development Strategy was developed in close consultation with a sub-group of the EDATAC. The establishment of the EDATAC was an action from the 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. Community leaders, Township Forums, the Buloke Tourism Board, broader EDATAC members, Councillors and Council staff were consulted on the draft and provided feedback.



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2022-2023 INTERIM STRATEGIES





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ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Buloke Shire, located north-central Victoria, covers over 8,000 square kilometres and is the fifth largest Local Government Area in Victoria by area, with many small towns and a significant road network.

Buloke is within the Victorian administrative region of Northern Loddon Mallee, but has much in common with municipalities to the west so often is considered part of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.

At June 30, 2020 Buloke had an estimated resident population of 6,101¹ having decreased by just 0.4% on the previous year; the lowest decrease in many years. The resident population decreased by an annual average of 1.0% over the 2006-2016 decade. At 0.78 persons per square kilometre, Buloke has the second lowest population density in the State².

Our major economic development and tourism strengths are:

- Land and environment suited to broad-acre cropping, coupled with over 150 years of inter-generational expertise in growing grains,
- Industry-driven capabilities in innovation and research and development in broad-acre farming,
- Land and environment suited to extensive livestock and intensive livestock production:
 - Extensive sheep grazing has a long history in the region, with Wycheproof recognised as the largest store sheep selling centre in regional Victoria

- Intensive pig production and cattle-lot feeding are well established in Buloke, and there has been recent growth in intensive poultry growing (for both meat and table eggs)
- Abundant locations suited to wind, solar and biomass renewable energies, and undeveloped mineral sands deposits,
- Assets that attract visitors, including:
 - Victoria's largest salt lake (Lake Tyrrell),
 - An acclaimed silo art trail, street art, heritage sites and historic buildings and collections,
 - Geological features, spectacular night skies, recreational lakes (Watchem, Tchum, Wooroonook, Foletti Park and Green Lakes), sporting and recreational facilities (clubs, courses, grounds, parks, fields and courts), and
- Regular events which are visitor attractions in their own right, such as the Mallee Root RoundUp, Charlton Film Festival, regular race meetings and sporting events, and emerging events such as OK Motels, steam passenger rail trips to Wycheproof, and the Esoteric Dance and Music Festival.

¹ ABS, Regional Population Growth by LGA 2020 (released March 2021)

² West Wimmera Shire has the lowest population density, at 0.43 persons per square kilometre



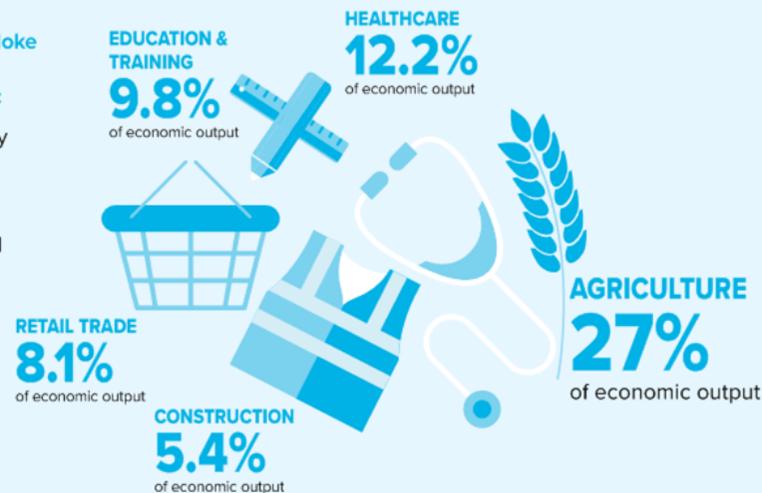
Our main townships are Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof, with several smaller towns that have dwindled through grain farm aggregation and automation (such as Berriwillock, Culgoa, Nandaly, Nullawil and Watchem).

Buloke is considered as socio-economically disadvantaged among Victorian Local Government Areas (LGAs), with population decline, low rates of workforce participation, an ageing population, and a relatively lower income structure. Conversely, our communities have considerable resilience, very high rates of volunteerism, and social cohesion.

Buloke's economy is dominated by agriculture (mainly dry land cropping and livestock) which generates 27% of economic output, 56% of Buloke exports, and employs 29% of all workers. Other major employing industries are, in order:

- Health care and social assistance, 12.2% (led by medical and other health care services),
- Education and training, 9.8%
- Retail trade, 8.1% (supermarkets and other food retailing are the largest sub-sectors), and
- Construction, 5.4% (including trades).

Just as the overall economy is highly dependent on broad-acre farming, so are the townships of Buloke, where a majority of businesses contribute to agribusiness supply chains and provide services to farming communities. Agricultural activity is dominated by cereals, pulses, oilseeds and sheep for meat and wool. This agricultural focus has been responsible for the many distinctive features in the towns, strong resilience and connected communities, but it has also led to decades long population decline as farms have become larger and more automated, and the financial returns from agricultural commodities have declined in an increasingly competitive global environment.



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2018-2021 STRATEGY: ACHIEVEMENTS

Buloke developed and adopted a broad Economic Development and Tourism Strategy for the four-year period 2018 to 2021. This Strategy proposed new approaches to the delivery of economic development functions, greater explicit involvement of the community, addressing our population challenges and activating several specific opportunities. Staff changes, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, have impacted on the ability to implement all of the actions in the 2018-2021 Strategy, however the achievements still had a significant impact. Of the 37 actions in the 2018-2021 Strategy, 29 of those are either complete, in progress or ongoing, which is a significant achievement, and have given Buloke an excellent platform for further success in job creation, population stability, and investment. Achievements in the past four years, in no particular order, are summarised in Table 1.1. A comprehensive audit of progress against all actions in the 2018-2021 Strategy is provided in Appendix 1.

The four years 2018 to 2021 have exceeded economic development and tourism expectations:

- Buloke Shire's population challenges have been partially overcome, with resident population levels approaching stability.
- Tourism sectors and newly emerging tourist attractions have become a focus for the Council, from a very modest base prior to 2018, now with \$23.7 million in new capital investment for tourism and liveability projects.

The most significant economic development shortfall in the four-year period has been an inability for Buloke and our communities to respond rapidly enough to new opportunities, resulting in some being lost³. This inability to respond has been most notable in tourism and in provision of land, housing and support infrastructure for business. Some Buloke towns were unprepared for their new attention from tourist visitors and, as a result, have not captured the complete local 'economic yield' from visitor expenditure.

³ For example:

- The average expenditure by overnight visitors to Buloke has been well below the regional Victorian averages, as recorded by the Tourism Research Australia Domestic Tourism Monitor regional profiles (\$93 per night compared with a regional Victorian average of \$131 per night) indicating lost economic yield.

- Hundreds of interviewed visitors at Buloke recreational lakes during 2018 to 2021 reported disappointment with trading hours, range of food service options and accommodation choices in local towns.



Table 1.1 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-21: Major Achievements

Activity/Achievement	Industry Sector	Detail	Relevant 2018-21 Strategy ⁴	Approximate Capital Investment
Buloke Tourism Board	Tourism sectors*	Ongoing operation of an active and committed Buloke Tourism Board.	2	N/A
Wimmera Mallee Tourism involvement ^{5,6}	Tourism sectors*	Collaborating with Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack Shire Councils on the Silo Art Trail, Destination Management Plan, Trading off the Trails programs, and tourism marketing.	6	\$700,000
Bendigo Region of Gastronomy	Tourism Sectors*	Partnering with City of Bendigo and eight other municipalities in promoting regional food and beverages throughout the supply chain.	6	N/A
Economic Development and Tourism Resourcing	All Sectors	Appointment of an Economic Development and Tourism Lead and receipt of funding for a temporary Tourism Projects Officer to deliver specific projects to activate the Silo Art Trail.	3	N/A
Formation of EDATAC	All Sectors	Formation Buloke Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee and selected sub-committees.	2	N/A
Lake Tyrrell and Sea Lake Tourist Developments ⁷	Arts and Recreation Services	Construction of a viewing platform and on-lake walking path, Visitor Information Centre (at Sea Lake), interpretive materials, and development of tours.	5, 7	\$2,800,000
Silo Art Trail ⁸	Arts and Recreation Services	Completion of art works at silos in Nullawil and Sea Lake to extend the Wimmera Mallee Silo Art Trail. Funding received to activate artworks at night in Buloke, build cabins at lakes, and deliver a Street Art Festival and Business Innovation Grants.	7	\$1,300,000
Play Spaces Trail ⁹	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for the construction of five destination play space complexes in Berrillock, Birchip, Charlton, Donald, and Wycheproof. The play spaces accommodate play equipment which combine adventure activities, variety, innovative design and a social atmosphere. The Play Spaces Trail project objectives are to add to the diversity of Buloke visitor experiences and provide new assets that complement existing attractions.	4, 5, 7	\$2,800,000
Charlton Rex Theatre Development ¹⁰	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for further development of the Rex Theatre, Charlton.	4, 7	\$800,000

⁴ See Figure 3.1 for full name of 2018-21 Strategy

⁵ Trading off the Trails: \$600,000 BBRF funded project, Brightening Broadway RIF project funded for \$450,000, Boosting the Buloke Art Trail \$300,000, WM Tourist Trails \$562,500 funded from BBRF.

⁶ WSM Partnerships Tourism Project: \$375,000 (WDA audited financials 2018)
⁷ \$125,000 (WDA audited financials 2020)

⁷ Sea Lake VIC funding of \$300,000 through COVID Infrastructure Stimulus Programs. 'Buloke's Big Builds' 2 March 2018 Council media release \$2,500,000

⁸ Funding support from Victorian Government

⁹ Buloke Shire Annual Report 2020-21, Regional Infrastructure Funded project of \$2,800,000

¹⁰ Funding support from Victorian Government

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
INTERIM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
TOURISM STRATEGY 2022-2023

Table 1.1 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-21: Major Achievements

Activity/Achievement	Industry Sector	Detail	Relevant 2018-21 Strategy ¹¹	Approximate Capital Investment
Meat Poultry Industry Expansion ¹²	Agriculture	Establishment of new broiler sector operations with new intensive production sheds. (Private investment).	6	N/A
Layer Poultry Industry Expansion ¹³	Agriculture	Establishment of new layer sector operations with new intensive production sheds. (Private investment).	3	N/A
Lot Feeding Expansion ¹⁴	Agriculture	New investment in lot feeding. (Private investment).	2	N/A
Recreational Lake Improvements ¹⁵	Arts and Recreation Services	Construction and renovation of facilities at Wooroonook, Tchum, Watchem, Green and Donald Foletti lakes, the development of lake master plans, socio-economic assessments, and re-establishment of Green Lake.	4, 7	\$3,400,000
Lighting up Buloke ¹⁶	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for the construction of sports ground lighting and upgrading of existing lighting infrastructure at multiple sporting venues at selected Buloke towns to reach standards expected by the relevant State Sporting Associations.	4, 5, 7	\$2,360,000
Charlton Three Walls Murals ¹⁷	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding for, and developing mural artworks in Charlton's main thoroughfare to complement the expanding regional 'outdoor gallery'.	7	\$40,000
Charlton Park ¹⁸	Arts and Recreation Services	Completion of improvements and a new multipurpose facility at Charlton Park.	5, 7	\$4,000,000
Donald Stadium Stage 1 ¹⁹	Arts and Recreation Services	Indoor sport and recreation facility at the Donald Recreation Reserve.	4, 5	\$2,000,000
Birchip Sporting Facilities Upgrades ²⁰	Arts and Recreation Services	Netball upgrade, leisure centre changeroom redevelopment, and oval redevelopment.	4, 5	\$1,184,000

¹¹ See Figure 3.1 for full name of 2018-21 Strategy

¹² Commercial in Confidence

¹³ Commercial in Confidence

¹⁴ Commercial in Confidence

¹⁵ 'Buloke's Big Builds' 2 March 2018 Council media "The Charlton Park Multi-Purpose Facility project reached its funding goal in October last year when Minister for Regional Development Jaala Pulford announced \$1.5 million dollars of State Government funding for the project. Three of Buloke's iconic recreational lakes are also getting amenity upgrades to both ensure

and grow their popularity with locals and tourist alike. The works at Tchum Lake, Watchem Lake and Wooroonook Lake will see the construction of new or heavily renovated fully accessible toilet blocks and shower facilities to modern standards at each destination. These four projects alone represent more than \$5 million of investment in community recreation facilities with substantial funding from Council and communities alongside Federal and State Government grants"

¹⁶ Community Sports Infrastructure Stimulus Program application funded for a project of \$2,363,812

¹⁷ Funding support from Victorian Government

¹⁸ State 'Building Works Package' funding of \$4,000,000 plus Enabling Infrastructure funding of \$1,100,000

¹⁹ State 'Productive and Liveable Cities and Centres' funding of \$1,000,000 - Balance

²⁰ Buloke Shire Annual Report 2020-21

* Tourism sectors are: Tourism Characteristic (accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services, and transport) and Tourism Connected (retail, education)

Table 1.1 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2018-21: Major Achievements

Activity/Achievement	Industry Sector	Detail	Relevant 2018-21 Strategy ¹¹	Approximate Capital Investment
Wycheproof Wetlands Development Stage 1	Arts and Recreation Services	Securing funding and developing a walking trail network through the Mount Wycheproof flora and fauna reserve looping into a wetlands precinct on the site of disused GWM Water storages.	4, 7	\$350,000
Wycheproof Saleyards ²¹	Wholesaling	Securing funding for the implementation of the Saleyards Masterplan. Addressing sustainability improvements for the Wycheproof livestock exchange including construction of roofing, ramps and races, gates, pens and a drive-through unloading area.	5, 8	\$285,000
Buloke Food Processing Companies ²²	Food Manufacturing	Business expansions, building extensions and introduction of new processing technologies. (Private investment).	3.	\$7,000,000
Charlton, Wycheproof and Sea Lake Early Learning Centres ²³	Education	Establishment and redevelopment of children's early learning centres.	4.	\$2,395,000
Residential developments in Sea Lake ²⁴	Construction	Securing funding for land developments by Council.	3, 4.	\$500,000
Sea Lake Hotel, B&Bs and Lake Tyrrell Accommodation ²⁵	Accommodation and food services	Restoration of an existing local hotel by Sea Lake community investors, and a new motel-style development (Private investment).	4, 7.	\$2,000,000
Housing construction ²⁶	Construction	Value of building approvals 2018-19 to 2021.	5.	\$15,699,000
Commercial and industrial construction ²⁷	Construction	Value of building approvals 2018-19 to 2021 (excluding construction components of projects included above).	5.	\$14,481,000
Total				\$81,593,600
Total Private Investment				\$56,680,000
Total Public Investment				\$24,913,600

²¹ BBRF Application funded for a project of \$285,399

²² Commercial in Confidence

²³ Buloke Shire Annual Report 2020-21

²⁴ Regional Recovery Fund \$300,000 - Balance

²⁵ Commercial in Confidence

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics Building Approvals 2018-2021

²⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics Building Approvals 2018-2021

INTERIM STRATEGY: RATIONALE AND LINKAGES

The 2018-2021 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is due for renewal. However there are a number of factors at play which have made it inappropriate for a new, longer term strategy to be developed at this time. Instead, this document presents a two-year strategy update for 2022 and 2023. Key factors supporting this approach have been:

- Just as the COVID-19 pandemic could not have been anticipated, it remains too early to gauge whether its impacts will be short, medium or long-term. This Interim Strategy gives an opportunity to propose some strategic responses for COVID recovery and, by the end of 2023, it should be clearer whether the tourism, migration and local, state and national economic stimulus measures will have long-term implications for Buloke.
- Detailed results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census of Population and Housing at small area and municipality levels will be important in quantifying the extent to which population stability and employment have been achieved, this information is not yet available. The 2021 Census results are scheduled to be released in three stages. Release 1 is scheduled for July 2022 (with population and demographic characteristics), release 2 in October 2022 (with employment related data and workforce profiles) and release 3 in mid-2023 (with Socio-Economic Indices and distance to work data).

- Agriculture is fundamental to the Buloke economy, and results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020-21 Agricultural Census at municipal level will be progressively released from mid-2022. This will include detailed data on agricultural commodities and the value of agricultural production.

The Interim Strategy builds on the work undertaken during 2018 to 2021 and proposes an ambitious set of new strategies. It offers a solid foundation for the next four to five year strategy, to be considered at the end of 2023.

An important consideration in preparing an Interim Strategy has been cognisance of, and the relationship with, other strategic and operational plans of Council, and the extent to which the Interim Strategy is influenced by these plans. In this context, the Interim Strategy is closely aligned to the Long-Term Vision and Council Plan for 2021-25 and is particularly geared to the Plan's 'Our Economy' theme:

“ Future buloke ... is an innovative and strong economy with agriculture, small business and industry capitalising on new ideas to provide a range of employment and tourism opportunities backed by the services, connectivity and housing to achieve population stability”.

The following current Council documents have been reviewed and used in guiding the development of the Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy:

- Integrated Buloke 2030 Plan (and related community plans)
- Advocacy Strategy
- Financial Plan
- Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020-2025
- Climate Action Plan and the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Plan
- Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy
- Industry Gap Analysis and Investment Attraction Plan
- Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) Wimmera Southern Mallee Destination Management Plan
- WMT Silo Art Gap Analysis
- Wimmera Development Association (WDA) Housing Review and Regional Housing Solutions Initiatives

NEW ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the Buloke economy since March 2020 and it is unknown how it will impact the economy in the long-term. Disruptions have both negative and potentially positive consequences which were unforeseen prior to 2020.

Our 'population challenge' was identified in the 2018-2021 Strategy. It reported our population had declined by on average 1.0% per annum over the decade 2006 to 2016, a loss of 658 people or 9.6% of all residents. The average age of a Buloke resident increased from 45 years to 51 years in the ten years 2006 to 2016. At the time, the Victorian Government's Victoria in Future projections suggested the rate of decrease would be -1.1% per annum through to 2031; a further population loss of 948 people or 15.3% of all residents.

The 2018-21 Strategy concluded "reversing the population trends and future outlook by creating jobs and sustaining community and lifestyle services is a key challenge for economic development and tourism in Buloke". In the intervening four years, the evidence in meeting the population challenge is positive and, unexpectedly, the COVID-19 pandemic may contribute to stabilising the Shire's population. In the next two years, the challenge has shifted from attracting population to a 'housing challenge', with the risk of population stabilisation in jeopardy due to lack of appropriate rental housing.

The 2020 intercensal population, calculated by the ABS²⁸, was 6,101 persons; just 103 fewer residents than 2016.

Australia's and Victoria's population growth has been about 67% from net-migration and 33% from natural increase during the 21st century to date. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, international migration has been temporarily halted and will take several years to recover dependent on both health risks and Government policy directives. For the first time in the 21st Century, Victoria recorded a decrease (-0.7%) in population in 2021. The contribution of migration and natural increase components is predicted to be reversed for at least five years, with 65% of growth from natural increase and 35% from net-migration.

This implies a reduction in the overall national growth rate from about 1.6% per annum (or 400,000 people per year) to 0.98% per annum (or 251,000 people per year). Other consequences are likely to include:

- An escalation in the rate of population ageing, and
- Increased internal (domestic) migration to regional areas.

Notably the Commonwealth *Inter-Generational Report 2021* work was produced early in the 2021 year (and released in June), prior to the onset of extended 2021 pandemic restrictions in Victoria. This suggests the post-pandemic growth rate for Victoria will need to be further revised and will be lower than estimated in the Commonwealth's inter-generational report. In this revised outlook, any growth in the Buloke resident population require attracting hire rates of domestic migration as well as international migration, when it resumes (probably at a reduced level for at least 3-5 years).

²⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Regional Populations 2020.



This implies a
**REDUCTION IN
THE OVERALL
NATIONAL
GROWTH RATE**
400,000
people per year to
251,000
people per year

FUTURE POPULATION AND HOUSING DEMAND

There is evidence of Buloke’s population moving towards stability after more than 50 years of decline. Interviews conducted by Wimmera Development Association (WDA) with local employers reveal there will be 243 expected new full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs located in Buloke over the next ten years.

Projections for our population and housing demand for 2021 to 2036 resulting from WDA’s work are summarised in Tables 2.1, Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2. These projections indicate progress towards population stability over the next 15 years, with the average annual change reducing to -0.4% per annum over the 2016-36 period and -0.3% over 2021-36. Although small population decline is still anticipated, the difference between the current projections and the 2019 Victoria in Future (VIF) projections (which calculated an annual rate of decrease of 1.1%) is 740 persons by 2036.

243
EXPECTED NEW
FULL-TIME JOBS
located in Buloke over
the next ten years.

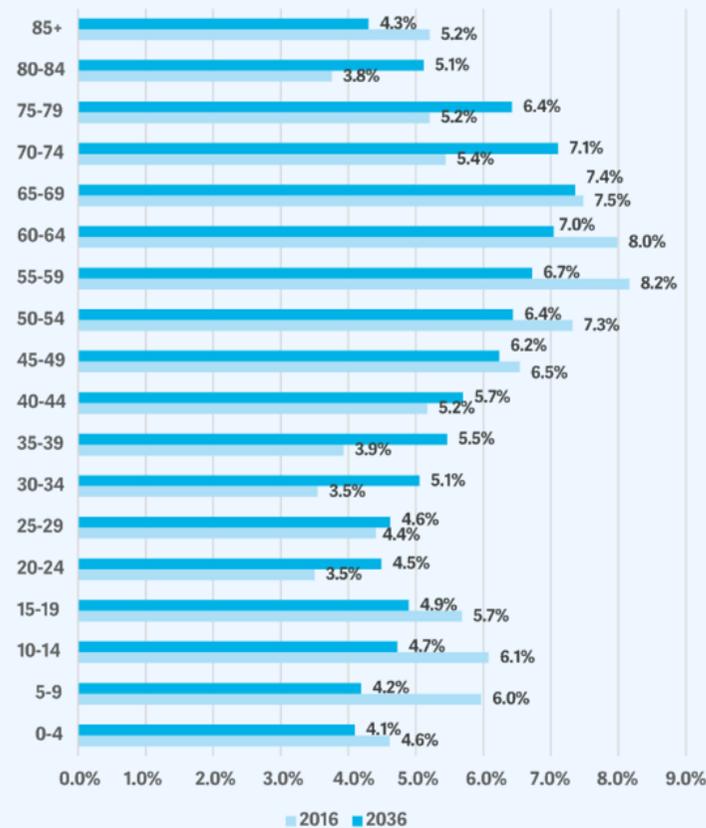


Table 2.1 Buloke Population Projections

Age Group	2021	2026	2031	2036	% change p.a.
0-4	282	237	235	236	-1.17%
5-9	307	269	248	241	-1.60%
10-14	369	328	291	272	-2.02%
15-19	361	343	309	282	-1.63%
20-24	264	295	283	258	-0.15%
25-29	229	275	279	266	1.01%
30-34	240	278	292	291	1.29%
35-39	245	293	307	314	1.67%
40-44	271	302	317	328	1.29%
45-49	350	344	349	359	0.17%
50-54	413	383	369	371	-0.71%
55-59	463	425	397	387	-1.18%
60-64	491	458	426	405	-1.27%
65-69	495	479	449	424	-1.03%
70-74	422	444	431	409	-0.21%
75-79	338	371	380	370	0.60%
80-84	246	273	293	295	1.20%
85+	252	229	240	248	-0.11%
Total	6,037	6,026	5,894	5,755	-0.32%

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 1

Figure 2.1 Buloke Population by Age 2016 and Projected 2036



SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 1

Moving towards population stability in Buloke will generate new housing demand. Reducing household sizes creates demand for additional residential dwellings, offsetting the effect of slightly declining populations. During the decade between 2006 and 2016, our residential housing stock decreased by 80 dwellings. Buloke towns have surplus infrastructure and affordable properties (compared with metropolitan and regional city markets), but with limited choice and poor return-on-investment incentives to develop new houses. The fact that housing values are well below those in metropolitan and regional city markets has brought new people to Buloke; an affordability choice rather than a lifestyle or career choice. At the same time there is a shortage of quality housing for employees (especially in professional and technical service sectors), and retirees or semi-retirees looking to locate in the Shire²⁹.

²⁹ Wimmera Development Association (2020), Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Housing Review. This Review challenged the directions proposed in Buloke's Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy by demonstrating strong evidence that residential demand has potential to exceed the Victoria in Future projections (upon which the Settlement Strategy assumptions are based) which suggest a continuation of population decline trends. However, it warned that the VIF projections could be self-fulfilling unless more ambitious targets are set and unless there is a level of community, government or other intervention in the housing market to meet known demand.

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Higher quality housing and rural residential allotments are needed for professional and technical workers, and people seeking a tree change lifestyle and/or an affordable active retirement. Anecdotally, many in the business community think this is an opportunity and should be assessed as an economic development project.

Social housing is an issue of focus. Rental property is in very short supply in Buloke. People living in substandard or insecure housing are being identified and while there is some social housing stock in Buloke, it is currently fully occupied.

The projections suggest demand for housing will average 14 dwellings per annum over the next fifteen years compared with the current 8 dwellings over recent years.

14
DWELLINGS
PER ANNUM
over the next
fifteen years



Table 2.2 Buloke Housing Demand Projections

	2016	WDA Projection 2031	WDA Projection 2036	% p.a. 2016-31	% p.a. 2016-36
Estimated Resident Population	6,284	5,894	5,755	-0.43%	-0.44%
Occupied Private Dwellings	2,827	2,797	2,772	-0.07%	-0.10%
Persons in Private Dwellings	6,135	5,706	5,544	-0.48%	-0.51%
Vacant Dwellings and Stock Losses	359	667	700	4.22%	3.40%
Total Private Dwellings	3,186	3,464	3,472	0.56%	0.43%
Household Size	2.17	2.04	2.00	-0.41%	-0.41%
% in Private Dwellings	97.63%	96.80%	96.32%		
Estimated Average Annual Dwelling Demand		19	14		

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 1

Projected populations for Buloke’s five largest towns are summarised in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

Table 2.3 Buloke Towns Population Projections

Town	2016	2021	2026	2036	% p.a. change 2021-36
Birchip	702	691	710	695	0.04%
Charlton	1,050	1,034	1,057	1,011	-0.15%
Donald	1,498	1,468	1,500	1,514	0.21%
Sea Lake	640	624	648	643	0.20%
Wycheproof	635	615	631	611	-0.04%

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 2

Table 2.4 Buloke Towns Population Projections by Age (%)

Age Group	Birchip		Charlton		Donald		Sea Lake		Wycheproof	
	2021	2036	2021	2036	2021	2036	2021	2036	2021	2036
0-14 years	16.5%	15.2%	13.0%	13.5%	14.3%	15.0%	13.4%	12.7%	12.5%	14.5%
15-34 years	22.4%	22.4%	16.0%	20.7%	19.3%	22.9%	18.6%	20.1%	16.7%	17.2%
35-54 years	20.1%	25.0%	20.6%	20.4%	19.3%	23.7%	22.3%	25.2%	20.8%	24.3%
55-74 years	26.2%	22.6%	34.2%	26.4%	29.7%	21.9%	30.9%	25.8%	30.8%	26.4%
75+ years	14.8%	14.7%	16.2%	19.0%	17.5%	16.5%	14.8%	16.2%	19.3%	17.6%

SOURCE: Wimmera Development Association (2021) Wimmera Southern Mallee Jobs, Population and Housing Targets 2021-2036 Report 2



BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
INTERIM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
TOURISM STRATEGY 2022-2023

UPDATED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGIES



**STRATEGIC
THEME 1:**

COVID-19 RECOVERY

**STRATEGIC
THEME 1:**

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 1:

POSITIONING BULOKE FOR DOMESTIC VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Post-pandemic restrictions, and with lingering health warnings and potentially new variants of COVID-19, there will be timid and slow returns of international visitation. Conversely, the experience over summer seasons in 2020 and 2021 proved that Australians willingly substitute overseas and interstate travel for visits to regional areas. Increased domestic tourism is a likely component of COVID-19 recovery. High level promotion of local tourism in Buloke will complement the tourism strategies which involve regional collaboration, improved accommodation and food service businesses, and formalising new trails (recreational lakes and play spaces).

STRATEGIC THEME 1:

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 2:

CAPTURING A SHARE OF REGIONAL MIGRATION - PLANNING FOR A SHIFT IN POPULATION CHANGE

One immediate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has been an increase in regional migration. It is too early to tell whether this will be sustained, however early data supports the anecdotal evidence, with internal migration to regional Victoria up by 600% (from a small base), the value of Buloke's residential building approvals up by 35% on pre-pandemic levels, and the resident Buloke population edging closer towards stability.

Prospects of vastly reduced State and National growth (which has been negligible in past two years) tempers the ability to target growth in Buloke, especially with the probable slow return of international migration to Australia. However, adopting the relatively ambitious projections prepared by WDA will be important for Buloke Shire in capturing a small share of regional migration, and these projections should be explicitly used by any consultants or contractors to Buloke Shire who are working on infrastructure, investment, service provision and other plans for the Shire in 2022 and 2023. The projections will need to be revised after the *2021 Census of Population and Housing* full results are available.

STRATEGIC THEME 1:

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 3:

ADDRESSING THE HOUSING CHALLENGE

Projections for Buloke suggest demand for housing will average 14 dwellings per annum over the next fifteen years compared with an average of 8 dwellings over recent years. Buloke should ensure shortages of rental and for sale housing is not an impediment to COVID-19 recovery opportunities by working to:

- Attract social and affordable housing investment,
- Revising and adopting acceptable housing and business incentives, and
- Encouraging provision greater housing range and choice from medium-density units through to large-lot rural residential developments.

STRATEGIC THEME 1:

COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY 4:

SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY

After decades of transition to a global economy, Australia's sensitivity to product shortages from one or two international sources has been somewhat exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, many Australian producers in trade exposed sectors (especially agricultural and mining commodities) benefit from the scale and competitive advantages offered by global markets and building a self-sufficient Australian economy is not an option. However, it would be timely for Buloke Shire to review its approach to supply chain security following COVID-19, by assessing the potential for supply chain diversification among its broad-acre growers (through new grower collaborations and alliances to service new export and domestic markets) and local value-adding. Supply chain vulnerability has been exacerbated by staff and skills shortages, including harvest labour and workers at food processing plants (where COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred) during the pandemic. Securing local supply with ongoing viable local freight and logistics services is also important, as well as maintaining and improving health and social services facilities and staffing in Buloke.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 2:**

**COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS IN
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
AND TOURISM**

This Strategic Theme builds on two of the Strategies from 2018-21:

- Strategy 2. Building community capacity to facilitate economic development
- Strategy 6. Maximise regional economic development and tourism potential through partnerships.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 2:**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND TOURISM STRATEGY 1:**

**ESTABLISHING A RESTRUCTURED
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(EDATAC)**

The EDATAC established in 2019 began as an information exchange forum in its early meetings but by 2020-21, creation of sub-committees helped to encourage greater sense of purpose among members.

Re-establishing the EDATAC with limited core membership and Buloke Tourism Board as a standing committee offers a structure that enables flexible sub-committees dedicated to short or medium-term specific projects jointly agreed by the EDATAC and the Council. This will involve three to four meetings per annum, revised terms of reference and determining identified prioritised projects for the next two years.

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**STRATEGIC
THEME 2:**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND TOURISM STRATEGY 2:**

**A LEADING ROLE IN REGIONAL
PARTNERSHIPS**

Active participation in regional partnerships relating to economic and tourism development initiatives require broader collaboration to achieve collective impact (e.g. WMT, Bendigo Region of Gastronomy, INVEST Loddon Mallee, Traditional Owner relationships, and participating in Wimmera Development Association projects) is essential in driving economic development in Buloke.

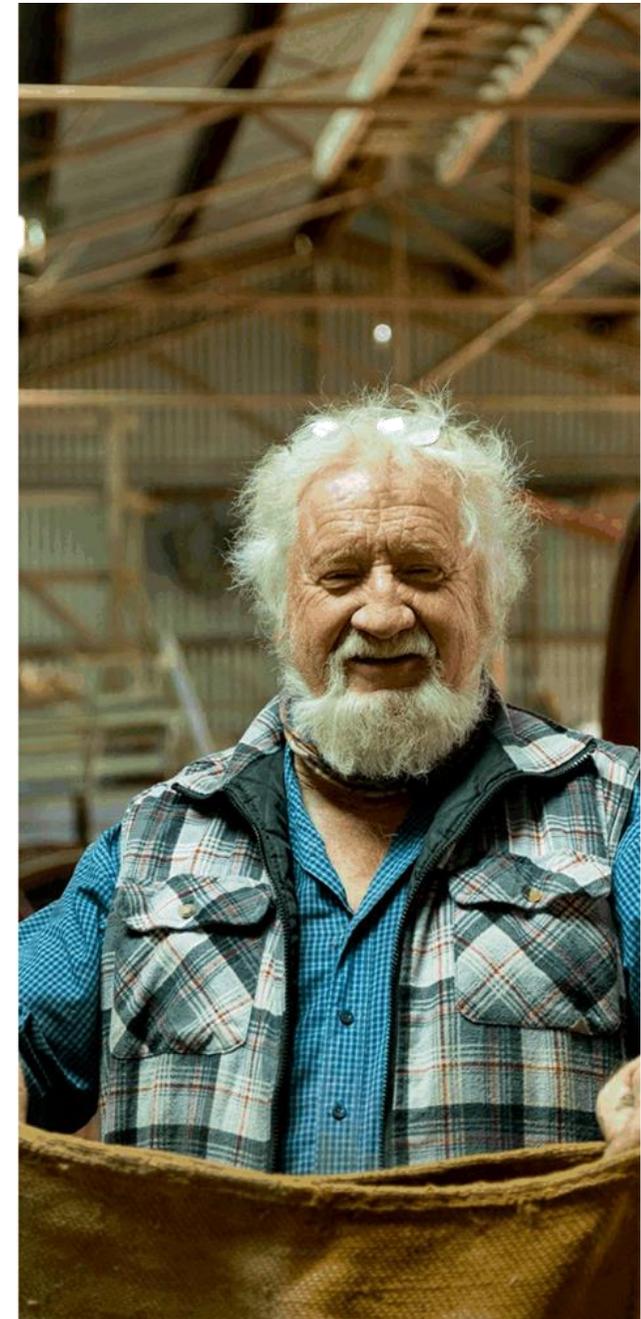
Buloke has the potential to not only actively participate in regional initiatives, but to drive them where resourcing allows. This has been exemplified in recent years by Buloke's leading role in WMT, and participation in WDA's housing study, and its ability to offer diverse opportunities in regional tourism and gastronomy.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 2:**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND TOURISM STRATEGY 3:**

**ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR
LIAISING WITH TOWN FORUMS/
COMMITTEES AND MANAGING
INVESTMENT ENQUIRIES**

An action from the 2018-21 Strategy was to agree on a whole-of-Council coordination approach to new business and business expansion, with nominated case officers. This has been implemented though more streamlined regulatory processes. It is now suggested that guiding principles be drafted on the scope of business investment that Council supports (industry sectors/types of businesses such as agribusiness, manufacturing, tourism) so that these businesses receive the greatest level of support. Developing a framework to enable Council to engage with town forums to work in partnership with Economic Development staff in facilitating investment enquiries may be both appropriate and effective, particularly the current human resources available in this department at this time.



**STRATEGIC
THEME 3:**

COUNCILS ROLE IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CREATING A CLIMATE FOR INVESTMENT

This Strategic Theme builds on three of the Strategies from 2018-21:

- Strategy 3. Ensure Council's investment in economic development and tourism,
- Strategy 4. Secure appropriate services to improve liveability and investment, and
- Strategy 5. Secure funding for our infrastructure to attract economic development.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 3:**

COUNCILS ROLE IN FACILITATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1:

BUDGETING AND BIDS FOR SUSTAINABLE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPTIMISING USE OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Buloke has been quite successful in attracting infrastructure support for economic development projects in the past four years (over \$8 million since 2018), although the investments are often not recognised as economic development facilitators. Buloke will continue to take opportunities to access relevant infrastructure projects to enhance private investment, liveability and tourism visitor experiences, subject to Council being in a position to meet any required co-contributions and having the internal resources to successfully manage the projects (including collaborative projects across more than one local government area).

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
INTERIM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
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**STRATEGIC
THEME 3:**

**COUNCILS ROLE IN
FACILITATING ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2:**

**CONTINUING GAP IDENTIFICATION
COMPLEMENTED BY INVESTMENT
GUIDES AND SUPPORTING
MATERIALS**

Demonstrating that Buloke is a competitive location for targeted industry sectors and specific business opportunities can be a significant factor in attracting new investment. This can take the form of investment guides, industry facts and specifics of potential sites and infrastructure within Buloke.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 3:**

**COUNCILS ROLE IN
FACILITATING ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 3:**

**REFINING AND ADOPTING
DRAFT HOUSING AND BUSINESS
INCENTIVES**

An EDATAC Housing sub-committee developed draft incentives for consideration by Council in mid-2021. These will be revised, to the extent considered necessary by Council for adoption in order to promote Buloke as a supportive location for investment, and as a residential location.



**STRATEGIC
THEME 4:**

**TARGETED
INDUSTRIES
INVESTMENT**

This Strategic Theme builds on three of the Strategies from 2018-21:

- Strategy 1. Enhancing the role of agriculture in Buloke,
- Strategy 7. Tourism experience development, and
- Strategy 8. Promote the economic advantages of sustainability in Buloke.

**STRATEGIC
THEME 4:**

**TARGETED INDUSTRIES
INVESTMENT STRATEGY 1:**

**ENHANCE AGRIBUSINESS
DIVERSIFICATION AND VALUE
ADDING**

Support and facilitate business cases and private investment in identified agribusiness sectors which have strong supply chain links in Buloke and expected growth opportunities.

STRATEGIC THEME 4:

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2:

DEVELOPMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGIES, MINERAL SANDS AND RARE EARTH MINERALS

Support and facilitate business cases and private investment in identified renewable energy and mining sectors which have underdeveloped resources in Buloke and expected growth opportunities. We are well-placed to accommodate renewables. Presently, 60 new wind turbines are expected to be sited around the Wimmera Southern Mallee region over the next five years. At least 10 of these could be located in Buloke Shire, and growth in solar power installations is inevitable.

Buloke has some of the world's greatest concentrations of undeveloped heavy and rare earth minerals (particularly the most valuable, zircon and titanium). Exploration and project development activities are continuing in this sector. There is also some prospect of further exploration of gold resources and assessment of a feasible gold extraction enterprise.

STRATEGIC THEME 4:

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 3:

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND RESPONSIVE TOWN BUSINESSES

Buloke Shire will lead and support local (e.g. Play Spaces Trail, Lake Tyrrell experiences and Charlton Arts Precinct), and contribute to regional (e.g. Silo Art Trail and Recreational Lakes Trails) projects to expand tourist attractions and work with local businesses and Buloke Tourism Board to respond to growing visitation numbers.

The most pressing of these for 2022-23 are:

- The construction of the Play Spaces Trail,
- More diverse visitor accommodation,
- A greater range of food service businesses in Buloke,
- Formalisation of trails and events at pipeline filled lakes (in collaboration with other WSM lakes and weir pools), and
- Additional placement of trainers at Charlton Harness Racing Club to increase the status, employment, visitor numbers and viability of the facility.

STRATEGIC THEME 4:

TARGETED INDUSTRIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY 4:

CREATE CIRCULAR ECONOMY OPTIONS FOR A RANGE OF PRODUCT CATEGORIES

In 2022 and 2023 Buloke will support the trialling of selected products which can be recycled within the municipality. These could create new business opportunities, product applications in their own right or transformed products will be able to return to the original supply chain.

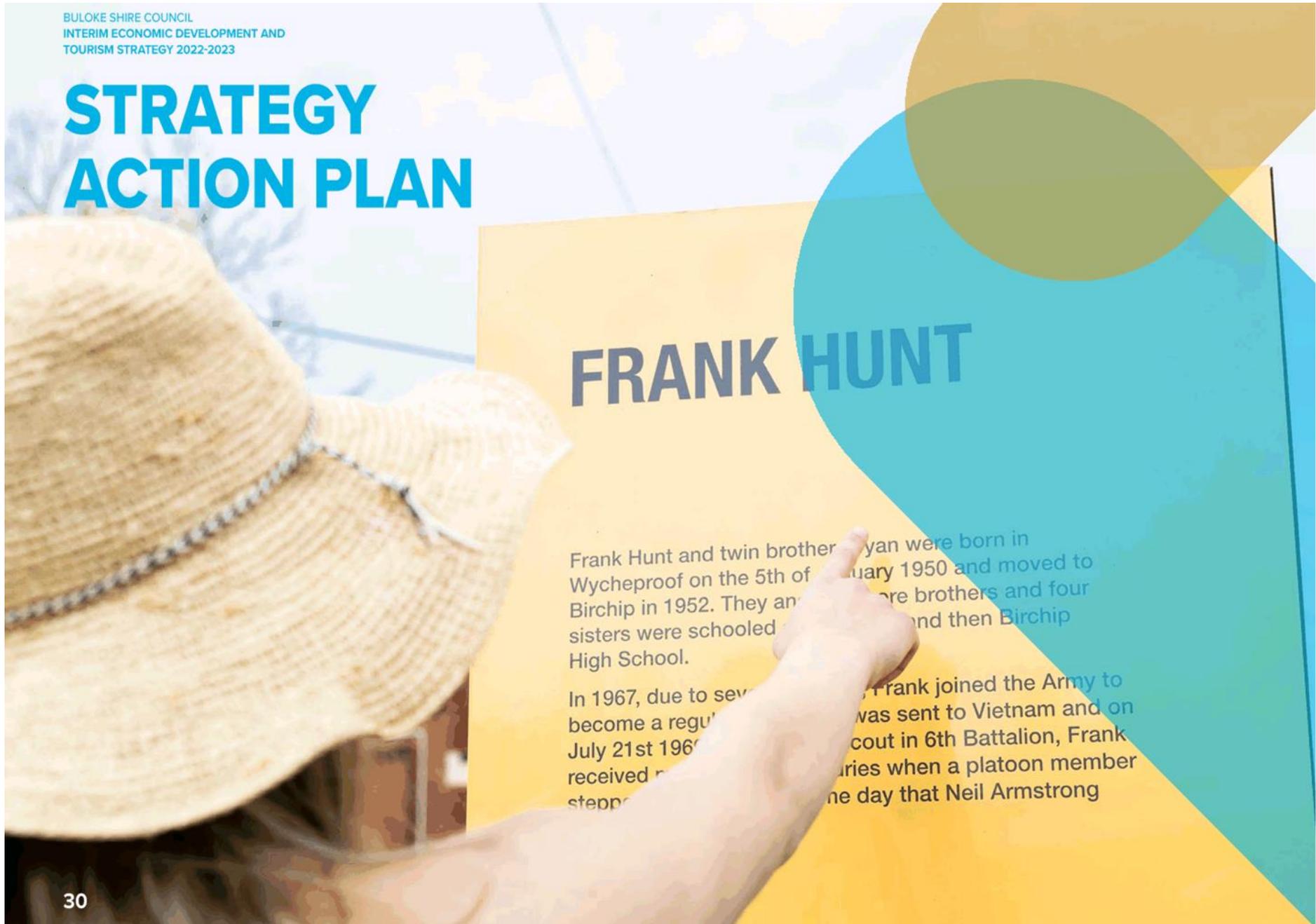
Trials which are already underway in Buloke are:

- Recycled glass from household waste processed into road surfacing material (a not-for-profit venture in partnership with other local Councils in Wimmera Southern Mallee),
- Textiles and clothing, and
- Used litter from poultry sheds spread as fertiliser or converted into biomass products.

Links between the former (2018-21) Strategies, the new 2022-23 Strategic Themes, and the Actionable Strategies for 2022 and 2023 are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Updated Strategies





ACTION PLAN

Strategic Theme	Actionable Strategy	Actions	Resource Lead	Resource Partner	Timing
	Positioning the Shire for domestic visitor experiences.	Promotion of local tourism in Buloke to complement regional collaboration, improved accommodation and food service businesses, and new trails.	BSC	BTB, EDATAC	2022-2023
	Capturing a share of regional migration: Planning for the evident shift in population trends.	Reviewing and developing the application of projections prepared by WDA.	BSC	EDATAC	2022
	Addressing the housing challenge.	Address shortages of rental and for sale housing through: (1) Supporting the Birchip Community Housing Project. (2) Attracting social and affordable housing investment which improves the range and choice of residential lots. (3) Revising and adopting acceptable housing incentives.	BSC (1)(2)(3)	Birchip Community Housing, EDATAC	2022-23
	Building secure supply chains.	(1) Review Buloke's approach to supply chain security following COVID-19. (2) Secure local supply with ongoing viable local freight and logistics services. (3) Maintain and improve health and social services facilities and staffing.	BSC (1)(2), Regional Partnerships and Government Initiatives (2), Facilities owners (3)	EDATAC, Regional Partnerships (1)(2), Health and Social Service Providers (3)	2023

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Strategic Theme	Actionable Strategy	Actions	Resource Lead	Resource Partner	Timing
 <p>THEME 2 Partnerships to Deliver Economic Development and Tourism</p>	Establish a restructured EDATAC dedicated to specific projects.	Re-establishing EDATAC.	BSC		2022
	Take a leading role in regional partnerships.	Active participation, and leadership where appropriate, in regional partnerships.	BSC		2022-2023
	Engaging town forums and facilitating investment enquiries.	Development of guiding principles for business investment that Council supports. Engage town forums in assisting with investment enquiries.	BSC	EDATAC, Town Forums	2022
 <p>THEME 3 Council Roles in Facilitating Economic Development: Creating a Climate for Investment</p>	Budgeting and bids for sustainable new infrastructure and optimising use of existing infrastructure	Continue to pursue relevant infrastructure projects subject to Council being in a position to meet any required co-contributions and internal resourcing.	BSC		2022-2023
	Continuing gap identification complemented by investment guides and supporting materials.	Preparation of investment guides, industry facts and specifics of potential sites and infrastructure within Buloke.	BSC	EDATAC	2022-2023
	Refining and adopting draft housing and business incentives.	Revise and adopt the package of incentives developed by the EDATAC Housing sub-committee.	BSC	EDATAC	2022

Strategic Theme	Actionable Strategy	Actions	Resource Lead	Resource Partner	Timing
	Enhance agribusiness diversification and value adding.	Support and facilitate business cases and private investment in identified agribusiness sectors.	BCG	BSC	2022-2023
	Development of renewable energies and mineral sands and rare earth minerals.	Support/facilitate business cases and private investment in identified renewable energy and mining sectors.			2022-2023
	Tourism attractions and responsive town businesses.	Lead local and regional projects to expand tourist attractions and work with town businesses and Buloke Tourism Board to respond to growing visitation numbers.	BSC	BTB, EDATAC, WMT, Township Forums	2022-2023
	Create circular economy options for a range of product categories.	Support trialling of selected products which can be recycled within the Shire.	BSC	EDATAC	2022-2023

Notably this Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy does not itemise budgets for projects which might arise if Council opts to take up funding support in implementing opportunities, from either government programs or private sector investment, particularly those in Strategy Themes 3 and 4. Projects arising from actions in the strategy which are beyond Council's existing budget provisions will need to be funded either by community and private sector funding,) or be approved by Council on a case-by-case basis.

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS OF ACTIONS IN 2018-2021 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY

1. Enhance the role of agriculture within the Buloke Shire Council	1.1	Ongoing	Continue to actively seek intensive animal husbandry opportunities including achieving critical mass for value adding options from waste stream or for feed and litter.
	1.2	Ongoing	Support and advocate for automation ventures such as AgTide.
2. Build community capacity to facilitate economic development & tourism	2.1	Complete	Conduct research to identify gaps in services and products across the Shire and build business cases to attract private investment. Outcome: Adopted Industry, Products and Services Gap Analysis and Investment Attraction Plan Next steps: 1. Integrate findings from Gap Analysis into EDT Strategy 2. Integrate Actions from Investment Attraction Plan into EDT Strategy 3. Implement Investment Attraction Strategy
	2.2	Complete	Identify knowledge and skill gaps amongst business as well as a preference for training solutions. Outcome: Developed Skills Gap Analysis and Workforce Plan. Next steps: 1. Continue to work with key partners including the North Central Local Learning and Employment Network to implement actions
	2.3	Complete	Establish a Buloke Economic Development and Tourism Board with representatives from a range of towns and areas (Agriculture, Retail, Tourism) to provide advisory input in to Council on local priorities. Outcome: Established Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee. Next steps: Review committee performance and provide recommendations on ongoing establishment in EDT strategy.

2. Build community capacity to facilitate economic development & tourism	2.4	Not started	Implement a business support system to interface with business and Council.
	2.5	Not started	Support town communities to establish and oversee community enterprises in meeting local needs.
3. Ensure Council's continued and strengthened investment in Economic Development Support	3.1	Complete	Agree on a whole-of-council coordination of new business and business expansion, with nominated case officers. Outcome: Better Approvals Program implemented and 'Buy Buloke' website developed. Next steps: 1. Review effectiveness and consider recommendations for further development in EDT strategy
	3.2	In progress	Decide on the most appropriate package of business and investment incentives to send a welcoming message to businesses.
	3.3	Complete	Review the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and other Council documents to ensure land use strategies are attractive to investment. Outcome: Adopted Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy. Next steps: 1. Review outcomes and recommendations for inclusion in EDT strategy where appropriate
4. Secure appropriate services to improve liveability and investment	4.1	Ongoing	Lobby for equity of access for Buloke businesses in accessing new technology.
	4.2	Not started	Develop a partnership to attract new technology providers and system developed to overcome current IT challenges.
	4.3	Ongoing	Ensure the Buloke Planning Scheme provides for quality housing options and potential rural residential allotments near townships.

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4. Secure appropriate services to improve liveability and investment	4.4	Complete	Secure funding support to map current and develop new opportunities for Early Childhood education provision. Outcome: Funding secured for new Kinder and Childcare centres in Charlton, Sea Lake and Wycheproof. Next steps: 1. Continue to partner with providers to ensure service provision
5. Secure funding for infrastructure to attract economic development	5.1	Ongoing	Regular seeking of investment for critical town and rural assets through grant programs Outcomes to date: Funding received for 1. Streetscapes in Birchip, Sea Lake, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof 2. Lakes infrastructure 3. Destination play spaces 4. Implementation of the Wycheproof Saleyards Masterplan 5. Charlton arts/culture hub 6. Sea Lake Visitor Information Centre 7. Lake Tyrrell facilities 8. Recreational facility improvements
	5.2	Ongoing	Having a clear asset management plan and project priorities pipeline to ensure shovel readiness when grants are released. Outcomes to date: 1. Asset management committee established 2. Asset Management Strategy and Policy adopted 3. Strategic Asset Management Plan and suite of asset management plans in development 4. Advocacy Strategy updated annually 5. Project pipeline created and updated regularly 6. Dedicated roles within Council identifying pipeline projects, funding opportunities, developing masterplans and designs 7. Project Management Framework developed 8. Project planning and delivery teams established

5. Secure funding for infrastructure to attract economic development	5.3	Ongoing	Actively lobby all levels of government for improved rural funding models that address asset renewal.
	5.4	Ongoing	With Rail Freight Alliances, campaign for improved rail freight and infrastructure.
	5.5	Not started	Seek opportunities to promote public transport including sustainable funding models for community and transport.
	5.6	Complete	Prioritise advocacy for streetscape updates. Outcome: 1. Funding secured for streetscapes in Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Wycheproof and Sea Lake 2. Construction underway
6. Maximise regional economic development and tourism potential through partnerships	6.1	Complete	Present the benefits of all formal partnerships to Council for consideration. Outcome: Reviewed annually
	6.2	Ongoing	Active involvement in directing and participating in work programs and potential projects with partners. Consideration of how the projects lead to economic development for BSC such as preparing investment guides for legumes and oil seeds.
	6.3	Ongoing	Work with NPC on attracting intensive animal value add products. Outcome: Over 1 million new poultry livestock accommodated within the Buloke Shire, with more than \$15 million in investment since 2018.
	6.4	Ongoing	Participate and support WMT initiatives including production of new prints and online visitor information. Outcomes to date: 1. Augmented Reality at Silo Art Trail 2. Development of new Visit Wimmera Mallee website and online trails 3. Secured funding through Silo Art Gap Analysis 4. Secured and implemented Trading off the Trails funding

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7. Tourism experience development	7.1	Ongoing	Continue targeted community grants program to support events.
	7.2	In progress	Assist with event promotion including calendar of events online and in print.
	7.3	Ongoing	Feasibility of chartered air services to tourism destinations.
	7.4	Not started	Incentivise shop owners to upgrade shop facades. Council could subsidise as part of streetscape improvement program.
	7.5	Ongoing	Address the gaps in infrastructure facilities in towns to ensure the provision of essential, quality visitor amenities such as caravan parking, signage and improved public toilet facilities. Outcomes to date: 1. New amenities block/toilet facilities in towns along the Calder Highway funded and constructed.
	7.6	Started	Develop tourism signage strategy to encourage consistency in appearance. Outcomes to date: 1. Audit of existing signage completed 2. Partnered with Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) in broader Visitor Signage project
	7.7	Complete	Prepare Buloke Country marketing plan which includes as style guide, brand name, inclusive information and utilises commissioned photography. Outcomes: 1. Marketing plan developed 2. Town brochures created 3. New Style Guide and branding created 4. New image library developed Next steps: 1. Integrate into EDT strategy 2. Partner with Buloke Tourism Board to implement marketing plan and branding

7. Tourism experience development	7.8	Ongoing	Improve the online content about Buloke Shire's attractions and services.
	7.9	Ongoing	Develop thematic trails with adjacent shires to connect self-drive and coach visitors with key attractions and supporting services. Outcomes to date: 1. Thematic trails developed with WMT 2. Buloke Play Spaces Trail funded and under development
	7.10	Ongoing	Improve the distribution of visitor information. Outcomes to date: 1. Development of new tourism brochures and marketing plan 2. Secured funding for, and constructed Visitor Information Centre in Sea Lake
8. Promote the economic advantages of sustainability in the Buloke Shire	8.1	Ongoing	Continue the land use policy support for alternative energy provision in the Buloke Planning Scheme whilst also providing support and active engagement with potential small scale programs.
	8.2	Ongoing	Develop a partnership to attract new technology providers and system developers to overcome IT challenges.
	8.3	Started	Investigate the options for farmers to secure native vegetation offsets on their property for investment. Outcomes to date: 1. Established relationships with DELWP to negotiate education for farmer on their options



8.3 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Nil

8.4 ORGANISATIONAL REPORTS

Nil

8.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

Nil

8.6 MATTERS WHICH MAY EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

Nil

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil

9.2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Nil

9.3 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

9.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nil

10. MEETING CLOSE