





BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting

Agenda

Wednesday 21 October 2026

Commencing at 7:00 pm

Wycheproof Supper Room

367 Broadway, Wycheproof

Daniel McLoughlan
Chief Executive Officer

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1 COUNCIL WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WELCOME

The Mayor Cr Graeme Milne will welcome all in attendance.

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Mayor Cr Graeme Milne 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 may be 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 16 September 2026.

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 2022; and
b) 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

7 PROCEDURAL ITEMS

7.1 GOVERNANCE REPORT - OCTOBER 2026

Author's Title: Acting Manager Governance

Directorate: Corporate and Organisational Performance ***File No*:** GO/05/04

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance matters.

The Governance report is prepared as a monthly report to the Council.

The Governance report includes:

- Record of Councillor Assemblies and Meetings held.
- Record of Councillor Briefings, at Attachment 7.1.1 to this report.
- Chief Executive Officer Activity Report.
- The Status of Actions Report for Council resolutions at Attachment 7.1.2 to this report.
- Contracts awarded in accordance with the increased Financial Delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the Record of Councillor Assemblies and Meetings held.
2. Notes the Record of Councillor Briefings, at Attachment 7.1.1 to this report.
3. Notes the Chief Executive Officer Activity Report.
4. Notes the Status of Actions Report for Council resolutions at Attachment 7.1.2 to this report.
5. Notes there were no contracts entered into for this period, in accordance with the increased Financial Delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer of $1,500,000 (excluding GST).

KEY POINTS/ISSUES

The Governance Report is prepared as a monthly report to Council to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance matters.

In accordance with best practice principles of good governance practice, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, this report incorporates matters including records of meetings held, organised or hosted by Council, items relating to the delegation of Council powers and duties, and policy and strategy reporting.

Record of Councillor Assemblies and Meetings held from 3 September 2026 to 7 October 2026

Records of matters discussed at meetings organised or hosted by Buloke Shire Council that involve Councillors and Council officers are kept in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Meeting records must include attendees, including organisations represented by external presenters; the title of matters discussed; and any conflicts of interests disclosed and whether the declarant of a conflict of interest excused themselves from the meeting.

Date/Time/Venue	Councillor Attendees	Meeting Type
9 September 2026 10:00am *Wycheproof Supper Room*	Cr Delaney, Cr Hogan, Cr Milne	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
10 September 2026 5:30pm *Online*	Cr Delaney, Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Stafford	CEO and Councillor Only Time
16 September 2026 7:00pm *Wycheproof Supper Room*	Cr Barrat, Cr Delaney, Cr Getley, Cr Hogan, Cr Milne, Cr Stafford	Council Meeting
7 October 2026 5:00pm *Birchip Council Chambers*	Cr Barrat, Cr Delaney, Cr Getley, Cr Hogan, Cr Milne, Cr Stafford	Councillor Briefing

Chief Executive Officer Activity Report from 3 September 2026 to 7 October 2026

Record of meetings attended by the Chief Executive Officer on behalf of the Buloke Shire Council. Activity record includes the date, activity and location.

Daniel McLoughlan – Chief Executive Officer *(3 September 2026 - 7 October 2026)*		
Date	**Activity**	**Location**
03/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day One)	Swan Hill
04/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day Two)	Swan Hill
07/09/2026	Gold FM Radio	Radio
07/09/2026	Commissioner Dr Niki Vincent and BSC CEO	Online
09/09/2026	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting: Buloke Shire Council	Wycheproof
09/09/2026	Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy - Council Briefing	Online
10/09/2026	R U OK? Day – All Staff Event	Wycheproof
10/09/2026	Wimmera Southern Mallee Council Alliance: Mayor and CEO Meeting	Horsham
10/09/2026	CEO and Councillor Only Time	Online
11/09/2026	Loddon Campaspe Group of Councils	Bendigo
14/09/2026	Gold FM Radio	Radio
14/09/2026	Birchip Cropping Group and BSC CEO Meeting	Online
16/09/2026	Council Meeting	Wycheproof
21/09/2026	Gold FM Radio	Radio
21/09/2026	MAV | Monday Connect	Online
24/09/2026	Loddon Campaspe Councils CEOs	Online
02/10/2026	CEO and Mayor Catch-Up	Donald
02/10/2026	Liberal/National Party Members Visit - Northwest Councils	Donald
02/10/2026	Kookas Factory Visit	Donald
07/10/2026	Loddon Mallee Drought and Regional Ag Meeting	Online

	(Executive Lead, Regional Growth and Strategic Advocacy attended on behalf of CEO)	
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing	Birchip

Status of Action of past Council Meeting Resolutions

To provide Council with a list of the Status of Action of Council resolutions outstanding for completion of action since the last Council Meeting.

Exercise of Delegated Authority

Council delegates powers, duties and functions to the Chief Executive Officer to support the efficient operation and delivery of Council services.

The Chief Executive Officer has been delegated authority by Council to award contracts up to $300,000 (exclusive of GST) through an Instrument of Delegation made on 29 October 2025 (S5 Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer).

Council at its meeting held Wednesday, 17 December 2025 resolved as follows:

That Council:

1) *Increase the Financial delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer from $300,000 (excluding GST) to $1,500,000 (excluding GST).*
2) *Authorised the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the increased financial delegation of $1,500,000 (excluding GST) for the procurement of goods, services and works only when the following conditions are satisfied:*
    a. *Contracts and works are directly related to projects associated with the 2022 and 2023 flood events, namely:*
        i. *AGRN 1037 (October 2022 Flooding Event).*
        ii. *AGRN 1096 (December 2023 Flooding Event).*
    b. *Council Flood Support Fund Approved Works Schedule (AGRN 1037, AGRN 1096, AGRN 1108).*
    c. *Funded flood studies and Laser imaging Detection and Ranging projects (funded due to the 2022 and 2023 flood events).*
3) *Receive a report at the next available Council Meeting clearly identifying each Contract awarded via exercising of the temporary increased financial delegation.*
4) *Authorises the temporary increase of the CEO financial delegation up to 30 June 2027, or earlier by resolution of Council.*

There have been no contracts awarded in the past month.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 7.1.1 - Councillor Briefing Record - 7 October 2026
2. Attachment 7.1.2 - SOA - Council Resolutions - tabled 21 October 2026

Councillor Briefing - Record

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

Date:	Wednesday, 7 October 2026	**Time:**	5:00pm
Location:	Birchip Shire Office – Council Chambers		

NO.	MATTER FOR DISCUSSION
1	**Welcome / Councillor Only Time *(5:00pm)***
1.1	**Welcome:**
1.2	**Apologies:** - Nil.
1.3	**Guests:** Steven Nottle – *Birchip Community Forum;* Hayden Collins – *Birchip Community Forum*
1.4	**Attendees:** *Councillors:* Cr Graeme Milne (Mayor); Cr Bernadette Hogan (Deputy Mayor); Cr Stephen Barratt; Cr Bruce Stafford; Cr Alan Getley; Cr Charmaine Delaney *Officers:* Daniel McLoughlan – Chief Executive Officer; Jenna Allan – Director Corporate and Organisational Performance; Sarah Kernohan – Director Community Development; Paula Gardiner – Acting Director Infrastructure and Delivery; Jessie Holmes – Executive Lead, Regional Growth and Strategic Advocacy; Georgia Brown – Senior Executive Assistant; Salomme Menezes – Manager Financial Strategy
1.5	**Declaration of Pecuniary and Conflicts of Interest:** - Nil.
2	**Confirmation of Notes of Previous Meeting**
2.1	Notes of the Councillor Briefing held 2 September 2026
3	**Presentations**
3.1	Birchip Community Forum – *Steven Nottle and Hayden Collins (5:40pm)*
4	**Dinner and Chief Executive Officer Updates *(6:10pm)***
	Local Government Legislation Amendment (Stronger Communities) Bill 2026 – *(Jenna Allan)*
	Direl Submission – *(Sarah Kernohan)*
	CEO Financial Delegation Increase – addition of two new AGRN's
	CCTV Donald – *(Jessie Holmes)*
	Dr Anne Webster MP – Visiting the Wycheproof Library – *(Sarah Kernohan)*
	Pre-Election Council Advocacy Document *(Jessie Holmes)*
5	**Briefing Reports**
5.1	VNI West EES Exhibition – *Sarah Kernohan (7:00pm)*
5.2	Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024 – *Paula Gardiner (7:30pm)*
5.3	Community Summit: Your Rates, Your Services, Your Future – *Jenna Allan (8:00pm)*
6	**Next Briefing**

	The next Councillor Briefing will be held in Nullawil at the Nullawil Recreation Reserve on Wednesday, 4 November 2026 at 5:00pm.
7	**Close Meeting**
	Time: 8:30pm

Meeting Date	Item No.	Item	Department	Action Required	Latest Action Taken	Status
08-02-2024	8.2.1	110 Sutcliff Street Subdivision Community Engagement Outcomes	Infrastructure and Delivery	That Council: 1. Notes following consultation process in accordance with its Community Engagement Policy, one submission was received to the proposed nine-lot subdivision sale of land at 110 Sutcliffe Street, Sea Lake; 2. Sells nine-lot subdivision surplus land at 110 Sutcliff St, Sea Lake by private treaty or auction in accord sec 114 of the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's Sale of Land Policy; and 3. Authorises the CEO to execute the Transfer of Land documents and any other documents required to affect the sale of the land.	**14/10/2026 Senior Manager Assets and Delivery** 1. Complete. 2. Underway. Titles have now been released from the subdivision, and the sale of land process can commence which will include the preparation of a report to Council to commence this process. **3.** Not started.	In progress
18-12-2024	8.1.2	Draft Governance Rules and Council Election Period Policy	Corporate and Organisational Performance	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Having prepared the Revised Draft Governance Rules in accordance with section 60 of the *Local Government Act 2020,* approves and commences a 9-week process of community consultation in relation to the Revised Draft Governance Rules and Draft Election Period Policy, and makes the Revised Draft Governance Rules and Draft Election Period Policy available for Public Exhibition via Council's website; 2. Allows persons to make submissions in writing in relation to any proposal contained within the Revised Draft Governance Rules and/or Draft Election Period Policy; and 3. Allows presentations in support of written submissions to be heard at the Council Meeting on 19 March 2025 prior to the proposed adoption of the Draft Governance Rules and Draft Election Period Policy at this Meeting. **MOVED: Cr Graeme Milne** **SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt** **CARRIED.** **(R/24/123)**	**14/05/2026 Director Corporate and Organisational Performance** Progress has been delayed due to impending Model Governance Rules being published for public exhibition.	On hold
17-06-2026	8.2.1	Contract Award - Contract C133 2025/26 - External Plant Hire – Panel of Suppliers	Infrastructure and Delivery	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council:	**13/10/2026 Senior Manager Assets and Delivery** All contracts have been executed.	Completed

Meeting Date	Item No.	Item	Department	Action Required	Latest Action Taken	Status
				1. Awards the panel contract of Contract C133 2025/26 – External Plant Hire – Panel of Suppliers to: a. AP Earthmoving Pty Ltd b. Berne Fleming Civil Pty Ltd c. Bild Infrastructure Pty Ltd d. Gregs Digging Pty Ltd e. MF & JL Willmore Pty Ltd f. Pipe Doctor Pty Ltd g. Reeves Earthmoving Pty Ltd h. Whitfield Excavations 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to sign the contract documents on behalf of Council. 3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to approve payments to the Contractor for undertaking the works associated with the Contract. 4. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to approve all variations under the Contract. 5. Notes and declares the attachments to this report as confidential on the grounds that it relates to (g) (ii) private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage as described in s 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020.* **MOVED: Cr Bruce Stafford** **SECONDED: Cr Charmaine Delaney** **CARRIED.** **(R/26/36)**		
16-09-2026	8.2.1	Buloke Aquatic Strategy	Community Partnerships	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Notes the outcomes of the public exhibition process for the draft Buloke Aquatic Strategy, including the receipt of 46 submissions and the public submissions hearing conducted on 26 July 2026. 2. Notes the officer responses to submissions and the amendments made to the draft Buloke Aquatic Strategy as a result of community feedback (Attachment 2). 3. Adopts the Buloke Aquatic Strategy (Attachment 1).	**14/10/2026 Manager Community Partnerships** Council noted the outcomes of the public exhibition process for the draft Buloke Aquatic Strategy, including the receipt of 46 submissions and the public submissions hearing held on 26 July 2026. Following consideration of community feedback, officer responses and recommended amendments, Council adopted the final Buloke Aquatic Strategy. The adopted Strategy, together with the *What We Heard*	Completed

Meeting Date	Item No.	Item	Department	Action Required	Latest Action Taken	Status
				4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to make minor administrative and formatting amendments to the Strategy where required. 5. Notes that implementation of the Strategy will be undertaken through future operational planning and budget processes. **MOVED: Cr Bernadette Hogan** **SECONDED: Cr Charmaine Delaney** *Cr Graeme Milne called for a division on this item.* **DIVISION** **FOR:** Cr Stephen Barratt, Cr Charmaine Delaney, Cr Alan Getley, Cr Bernadette Hogan and Cr Bruce Stafford **AGAINST:** Cr Graeme Milne **CARRIED.** **(R/26/59)**	document, has since been published on Council's website for community access.	
16-09-2026	8.2.2	Establishment of the Buloke Shire Council Roads Advisory Group and Buildings Advisory Group	Infrastructure and Delivery	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Adopt the Draft Terms of Reference for the Roads Advisory Group and Buildings Advisory Group as attached to this report. 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to undertake an Expression of Interest process seeking nominations from community members for the Roads Advisory Group and Buildings Advisory Group. 3. Present all nominations to a future Council Meeting for endorsement and acceptance as community representatives for the Roads Advisory Group and Buildings Advisory Group. **MOVED: Cr Bruce Stafford** **SECONDED: Cr Bernadette Hogan** **CARRIED.** **(R/26/60)**	**14/10/2026 Senior Manager Assets and Delivery** Expression of Interest process will commence following the Community Summit to be held 14 October 2026.	In progress

Meeting Date	Item No.	Item	Department	Action Required	Latest Action Taken	Status
16-09-2026	8.2.3	Draft Asset Plan 2026-2036	Infrastructure and Delivery	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Endorse the draft Asset Plan 2026 – 2036 for public exhibition; 2. Gives public notice of the draft Asset Plan 2026 – 2036 on Council's website and invites written submissions from Thursday, 17 September 2026 until Monday, 19 October 2026; 3. Notes that in accordance with Section 93 and 96(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020,* consultation will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy; 4. Notes that any person who makes a written submission in relation to the draft Asset Plan 2026 – 2036 may be heard by Council at a public submission hearing to be held on Monday, 26 October 2026; 5. Notes that the Asset Plan 2026 – 2036 will be considered for adoption at the Council Meeting to be held in November 2026. **MOVED: Cr Alan Getley** **SECONDED: Cr Charmaine Delaney** **CARRIED.** **(R/26/61)**	**29/09/2026 Senior Manager Assets and Delivery** The draft Asset Plan was released for public exhibition.	Completed
16-09-2026	8.3.1	2025-26 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement Adoption in Principle	Financial Strategy	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Notes the accompanying 2025-26 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement. 2. Notes that Council's Audit and Risk Committee recommended that Council provide its in principle support to the financial statements and performance statement (pending circulated final auditor changes) at its meeting on 9 September 2026. 3. Adopts the 2025-26 Annual Financial Statements and the Performance Statement in principle prior to them being provided to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) for final audit sign off. 4. Nominates the Mayor and Audit and Risk Committee member Councillor Graeme Milne and Deputy Mayor and Audit and Risk Committee member Councillor Bernadette Hogan, as the two Councillors to certify the Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement.	**16/10/2026 Director Corporate and Organisational Performance** Actions completed.	Completed

Meeting Date	Item No.	Item	Department	Action Required	Latest Action Taken	Status
				5. Authorises the nominated Councillors to accept any further recommended changes by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office. 6. Designates Salomme Menezes, Manager Financial Strategy, as Principal Accounting Officer to certify the Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement, as required by the *Local Government Act 2020* and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020. 7. Approves the 2025-26 Governance and Management Checklist. 8. Authorises the Mayor, Councillor Graeme Milne, and Chief Executive Officer, Daniel McLoughlan to sign the 2025-26 Governance and Management Checklist. **MOVED: Cr Bernadette Hogan** **SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt** **CARRIED.** **(R/26/62)**		
16-09-2026	8.3.2	Draft Financial Plan 2026-2036	Financial Strategy	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Endorse the draft Financial Plan 2026 – 2036 for public exhibition; 2. Gives public notice of the draft Financial Plan 2026 – 2036 on Council's website and invites written submissions from Thursday, 17 September 2026 until Monday, 19 October 2026; 3. Notes that in accordance with Section 93 and 96(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy; 4. Notes that any person who makes a written submission in relation to the draft Financial Plan 2026 – 2036 may be heard by Council at a public submission hearing to be held on Monday, 26 October 2026; 5. Notes that the Financial Plan 2026 – 2036 will be considered for adoption at the Council Meeting to be held in November 2026. **MOVED: Cr Charmaine Delaney** **SECONDED: Cr Bernadette Hogan** **CARRIED.** **(R/26/63)**	**16/10/2026 Director Corporate and Organisational Performance** All actions completed.	Completed

Meeting Date	Item No.	Item	Department	Action Required	Latest Action Taken	Status
16-09-2026	8.4.1	Supporting Rural Councils Victoria Advocacy Campaign	Office of the CEO	Please action as per resolution. **MOTION** That Council: 1. Notes Rural Councils Victoria's strong advocacy for rural communities. 2. Acknowledges the critical role rural communities play in supporting Victoria's economy, including through agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, freight, energy production and regional employment. 3. Recognises the significant infrastructure, housing, financial and emergency management challenges currently facing rural councils and communities. 4. Endorses the key advocacy priorities in Rural Councils Victoria 2026 election platform, including: a. Increased investment in rural and regional roads; b. Expanded support for local infrastructure and community facilities; c. Additional investment in housing enabling infrastructure; d. Greater support for emergency preparedness and resilience; e. Measures to improve long-term council sustainability and financial capacity; f. Increased support for regional economic development. 5. Supports calls for the establishment of a dedicated $1 billion Rural and Regional Victoria Productivity and Growth Fund, as detailed in the Rural Councils Victoria election platform. 6. Urges all Members of Parliament and political candidates to publicly support the Rural Council Victoria platform and act on its recommendations after the election. **MOVED: Cr Alan Getley** **SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt** **CARRIED.** **(R/26/64)**	**14/10/2026 Director Community Development** Council Officers have installed 15 signs around the municipality that call for investment in key infrastructure. Council has also undertaken media including a radio update, media release, community update and social media posts that support calls for the establishment of a dedicated $1 billion Rural and Regional Victoria Productivity and Growth Fund, as detailed in the Rural Councils Victoria election platform.	Completed

8 GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 POLICY REPORTS

Nil.

8.2 MANAGEMENT REPORTS

8.2.1 PROPOSAL TO APPLY FOR A CREATING SAFER PLACES GRANT - DONALD CCTV PROJECT

Author's Title: Executive Lead Regional Growth and Strategic Advocacy

Directorate: Regional Growth and Strategic Advocacy ***File No:*** GS/09/42

Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Strategic Objective: Services supporting our communities to thrive
Accessible and responsive health and community services

PURPOSE

To provide a summary of the proposed Creating Safer Places Grant to enable CCTV to be located strategically throughout the Donald community following the recent unlawful events.

SUMMARY

The Department of Justice and Community Safety release an annual Creating Safer Places Grant that is open to all 79 Local Government Areas for grants of between $50,000 and $250,000. A request from the Donald community to install several CCTV cameras in public areas following the tragic death earlier this year has been received and is presented to Council for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Provide endorsement for the Creating Safer Places Grant at the four locations in Donald proposed within this report to be included in the funding application.
2. Note the implementation costs associated with the grant and the ongoing operational maintenance costs associated with the application.

DISCUSSION

The Donald community is still coming to terms with the tragic death of a young teenager earlier this year and as a result feeling safe in public places is compromised.

A request from community for the installation of CCTV in key public areas has been made including:

- Councils Donald Depot, Shire Office and Landfill
- Train Park and Main Park
- Both ends of the main street
- Bullocks Head Lookout

This network of CCTV would allow for a significant portion of area across Donald to be under surveillance should law enforcement need to access footage.

The procurement including installation of the CCTV would be carried out with a reputable regional company familiar with the extensive legislation governing the use of public CCTV and all locations would carry the required signage.

Access to the footage would be under the purview of the Councils adopted CCTV Policy, in accordance with data safety provisions.

The ongoing maintenance for the network of CCTV across Donald would be budgeted for and there would need to be provision made for the capital replacement costs of the physical cameras.

The grant application for the funding would need to be submitted by 26 October 2026 and requirements of the grant guidelines include a Letter of Support from Victoria Police along with Letters of Support from the community and Land Owners Consent for any locations that CCTV is proposed to be installed.

RELEVANT LAW

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 – Vic
Surveillance Devices Act 1999
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
Public Records Act 1973
Privacy Act 1988
Commonwealth Evidence Act, 2008,
Vic Freedom of Information Act, 1982, Vic

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council adopted the Closed Circuit Television Policy in September 2019 which details when and how CCTV can be used by Council in public areas for public safety.

OPTIONS

That Council does not make an application for the Creating Safer Places fund.

The application can only be made by a Local Government Agency, and the request has come from the community. Given the grant requires no co contribution and Council is already operating CCTV at two locations in Donald, it would be a positive signal to the community following recent events.

That Council makes a more significant application, covering multiple townships.

There have been requests from two other communities for CCTV. Given the ongoing maintenance cost of running a network of CCTV including an average 5 year capital cost replacement- additional data regarding criminal activity in those communities would need to be considered. This could be undertaken over the next 12 months as these grants are released annually.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The capital replacement and ongoing maintenance costs associated with the CCTV proposal are considered in the financial viability section of this report.

There are no environmental sustainability considerations regarding the installation of the network as proposed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The request for the funding has come from the community and there will be consultation with a range of community groups and Victoria Police to provide with the application. A list of appropriate community stakeholders is being prepared by the Donald Neighbourhood house and the CCTV cameras proposed to go in the main street will be discussed with business owners as will the CCTV proposed to go on Committee of Management Land to ensure Land owners consent is provided for the application.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The request for CCTV has come from the community following the recent tragic events in Donald. The close collaboration with community, Victoria Police and Council has been instrumental in maintaining the community fabric. The rationale for the grant, to strengthen community safety is understandable

following the events and support from Council will continue to demonstrate commitment to ensure members of the community can rebuild their trust in using Public spaces.

COLLABORATION

The ongoing collaboration with Victoria Police and community groups in Donald will continue and strengthen with the consideration of their request for CCTV.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The Community Safety Grant does not require matched or contribution funding, however there is the forward maintenance and replacement costs associated with the network.

Maintenance costs ascribed by Security Work who have provided the cost to purchase, and install are estimated at $2,000 per year for the 8 locations in Donald. Replacement costs are estimated at $7,000 per unit with an expected life cycle of 5-7 years.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Australian Standard AS4806.1-2006 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Management and Operation.

Victorian Ombudsman's Closed Circuit Television in Public Places Guidelines (November 2012).

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Council Plan 2025-2029
Closed Circuit Television Policy 2019

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

Should the application for the Community Safety Grant be endorsed, an outcome of the resulting project will be taken to the next available Council meeting following completion through Council's quarterly performance reporting.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No member of Council staff has a conflict of interest in relation to this matter.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 8.2.1.1 - Closed Circuit Televison Policy (1)

Policy Location	Risk Management		
Policy Title	Closed Circuit Television Policy		
Policy No	CA27	**Date Approved**	11 September 2019
Revision No	1	**Revision Date**	September 2021

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to enable Council to regulate the operation and management of Council-owned Closed Circuit television (CCTV) systems which have been (or which in the future may be) installed for use in public places and council owned premises. The policy aims to provide a suitable framework for the implementation, usage and access of CCTV and the associated data generated by these systems within public spaces and council facilities across the Buloke Shire Council. The policy aims to protect our local community and further enhance actual and perceived levels of public safety and deter instances of crime and anti-social behaviour within public spaces.

The policy will assist in the appropriate and effective usage of CCTV data by:

- Detecting and deterring crime, criminal damage and public disorder;
- Identify, apprehend and prosecute offenders in relation to crime or criminal damage, public disorder, road traffic offences and all forms of harassment;
- Provide evidence upon which to take criminal and civil actions within the Courts;
- Helping to monitor traffic management issues & traffic research;
- Assisting any other emergency services.

Scope

This policy applies to all Buloke Shire Council employees, volunteers, contractors and councillors. The implementation and usage of Council owned CCTV data will be managed collaboratively by designated Council staff, appointed external contractors and Victoria Police (where appropriate).

Objective

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Comply with Australian Standard AS4806.1-2006 *Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Management and Operation*, the *Victorian Ombudsman's Closed Circuit Television in Public Places Guidelines (November 2012),* the *Surveillance Devices Act 2007,* the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and other relevant legislation as listed at the conclusion of this policy document.
- Establish a Code of Practice within the Buloke Shire Council for the collection, access, storage and disposal of CCTV data.

Definitions and Abbreviations

Term	Definition
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CCTV Camera	Any fixed or non-fixed cameras, including mobile camera
CCTV Camera System	Council owned and/or operated CCTV system involving one or more cameras connected to a monitor for the purpose of monitoring
Council	Buloke Shire Council
Council Depot	Designated Works and Technical Services Depots across Buloke Shire – Wycheproof, Sea Lake, Birchip, Charlton, Donald
Council Employees	Buloke Shire Council employees, contractors, volunteers
Council Offices	Main Buloke Shire council office – Broadway, Wycheproof
Customer Service Centre	Designated Buloke Shire Council Customer Service Centres – Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake
FOI	Freedom of Information (in reference to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 - Vic)
Passive Monitoring	Whereby CCTV monitors are intermittently observed by operators
Public Place	Any place to which the public has access as of right or by invitation, whether expressed or implied and whether or not a charge is made for admission to the place. A public place relevant to Council can include, but is not limited to, public streets, central business district open spaces, council carparks, public parks and recreation reserves, council managed public buildings or areas.
Retrospective Review	Whereby CCTV is reviewed after an incident
SOP's	CCTV Standard Operating Procedures

Policy Statement

1. **CCTV System**
   - 1.1 Buloke Shire Council CCTV systems shall comply with Council Policies in relation to Privacy and Third Party Access, and any relevant legislation as detailed at the conclusion of this document.
   - 1.2 Where Council has outsourced the operation and monitoring of any Council owned CCTV system, a written agreement with the appointed contractor must include an agreement to comply with this policy.
   - 1.3 All matters relating to the operation and management of Buloke Shire Council's CCTV systems will comply with relevant legislation as detailed at the conclusion of this document.
   - 1.4 CCTV cameras will be housed in weather protective domes or cases which will be clearly apparent to the public and not unduly concealed.

2. Future CCTV Camera Systems

2.1 Installation or upgrading of future CCTV systems must meet the minimum technical requirements as per Council's CCTV Standard Operating Procedures.

2.2 Any decision to implement a camera system will be based on the purpose and objective of this policy.

2.3 Installation dates and locations of future CCTV systems will be included and detailed within Council's CCTV Standard Operating Procedures document.

3. CCTV Operation

3.1 CCTV systems installed and managed by the Buloke Shire Council are used for the purpose of capturing incidents involving public safety, crime or suspicious behaviour.

3.2 CCTV cameras will operate for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The majority of monitoring will be retrospective reviews, however there will be occasional periods of passive monitoring.

3.3 Councillors, council employees, contractors and volunteers will not be monitored specifically on performance, but CCTV footage may be utilised as evidence where it supports breaches in Council Policy, Code of Conduct or illegal activity.

3.4 The operation and on-going maintenance of council CCTV systems will be undertaken by trained individuals as appointed by council. Individuals responsible for the operation and maintenance of CCTV systems will at all times adhere to the Buloke Shire CCTV Camera Standard Operating Procedures.

3.5 Council appointed staff operating CCTV Camera systems will be made aware of the disciplinary proceedings and potential consequences following any breach within the Standard Operating Procedures prior to undertaking CCTV system operation within the Buloke Shire Council.

4. CCTV System Locations

4.1 Buloke Shire Council CCTV systems are located within Public Places and Council facilities as determined by Council to minimise the potential risk for anti-social behaviour or crime.

4.2 Specific locations of installed CCTV systems can be found within the Buloke Shire Council CCTV Camera Standard Operating Procedures.

5. Signage

5.1 Appropriate signage will be installed and made clearly visible to public patrons to indicate the presence of any CCTV surveillance system within the Buloke Shire.

5.2 Signage will be displayed in a manner which complies with the relevant Australian Standards and of which also adheres to the following:

- Signage will be placed at the main entryways to the CCTV system coverage area and will be displayed within clearly-visible areas of good lighting. Signs will be placed within normal eye range to enable any text to be clearly read.
- Within Customer Service Centre locations including CCTV systems, signage will be installed directly underneath each camera within those areas to clearly inform staff, volunteers, councillors and the general public of the use of cameras for security purposes.
- Signs will include a mix of both text and symbols, enabling a wide variety of the wider public

- All signage will identify the Buloke Shire Council as the owner of the system.
- Signage will indicate that the CCTV system is monitoring the area on a constant 24-hour basis.
- Signage will include contact information for any queries regarding the system or collected data.
- Signs will be monitored regularly for damage, theft and vandalism and will be replaced where required.
- Signage will be consistent and uniform across all CCTV system locations within the Buloke Shire and will include the following wording within each CCTV system location in at least one position:
  - 'CCTV in Operation';
  - 'Images are being monitored and recorded on a 24-hour basis by Buloke Shire Council for the purposes of Public Safety';
  - 'For further information please contact Buloke Shire Council on 1300 520 520'.

6. Collection, Access, Disclosure and Retention of Data

6.1 The Director Works & Technical Services is responsible for ensuring the operations of the CCTV surveillance systems continue to be utilised for the designated purposes set out within this policy only and as a result also complies with all Council Policy and privacy requirements and relevant legislation.

6.2 CCTV footage collected and retained will be used solely for the purposes outlined within this policy – primarily to monitor and investigate incidents concerning public safety.

6.3 Access to and disclosure of any live or retained footage will be restricted to the Council Chief Executive Officer and Directors. The CCTV Internal Review Committee will be held responsible for collation of any incoming requests for disclosure of data and will then report to the Chief Executive Officer and Directors in relation to each request within 48 hours of having received it.

6.4 Disclosure or review of any retained data will only be used for the purposes of investigating and providing evidence of an incident. Footage of an incident may be disclosed to a third party such as Victoria Police on the condition that the third party has an official role within an investigation, with a legitimate reason for requiring access to the retained data.

6.5 Any request by members of the public to view retained data or view prior records of incidents must be done so through the Freedom of Information (FOI) process as is required for access to other Council records.

6.6 Retained data of incidents must be stored in a secure location with restricted access. Footage must be protected from unauthorised viewing, copying, alteration, deletion and disclosure.

7. Training and Staff Responsibilities

7.1 Responsible Officers will be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer as either internal Council staff or external contractors and will form part of the Buloke Shire CCTV Internal Review Committee. Members of the Internal Review Committee must understand the contents of this Policy and are required to sign an acknowledgement of their understanding.

7.2 All Responsible Officers will undergo privacy training on an ongoing basis to ensure awareness of their obligations within the Internal Review Committee, internal policy parameters and to keep up to date with any other relevant legislation.

7.3 Training will be inclusive of (but not limited to) all relevant legislation, policy parameters and shall include other relevant information identified by the Victorian Information Commissioner on how to use, store, disclose and dispose of recorded surveillance data, probity principles and confidentiality.

References

Relevant Council Policies & Documents

CCTV Camera Standard Operating Procedures

Disciplinary Action policy and associated procedures

Relevant Legislation

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 – Vic

Surveillance Devices Act 1999

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Public Records Act 1973

Privacy Act 1988 Commonwealth

Evidence Act, 2008, Vic

Freedom of Information Act, 1982, Vic

8.2.2 CENTRAL MURRAY REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2024

Author's Title: Senior Manager Assets and Delivery

Directorate: Infrastructure and Delivery ***File No:*** GR/09/08

Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Strategic Objective:
Built and natural environment
Advocate and plan for, and manage community buildings, roads and transport networks

Council leadership and engagement
Advocacy and partnering to deliver priorities

PURPOSE

To seek endorsement of the Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024.

SUMMARY

The Central Murray Regional Transport Forum (CMRTF) represents six (6) Councils across the north-west region of the Victoria and into New South Wales being Swan Hill Rural City Council, Murray River Council, Gannawarra Shire Council, Mildura Rural City Council, Buloke Shire Council, and Balranald Shire Council.

The structure of the forum includes a steering committee and a technical committee. The technical committee is made up primarily of Council Chief Executive Officers, Directors and other agencies attending as required. The steering committee consists of one Councillor representative from each participating Council and the members of the technical committee.

The forum engaged and worked closely with a consultant to develop the Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024. The strategy was endorsed by the steering committee in early 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024.

DISCUSSION

The CMRTF engaged the services of a consultant to work with all the individual participating Councils to develop a comprehensive strategic document around transport priorities for our region. The Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024 (Strategy) was endorsed by the steering committee in early 2025. Endorsement of the Strategy is now sought from all the participating Councils.

This strategy supports the liveability for local residents while also focusing on upgrading the capability and capacity of infrastructure to support industry growth.

A copy of the endorsed strategy is shown in Attachment 1.

The four goals for transport in the region are to:

- Increase supply chain efficiency and support economic development by improving freight transport access.
- Improve community access to services through efficient and affordable mobility solutions.

- Increase community safety and well-being and decrease supply chain disruptions and productivity impacts by improving transport network safety and resilience.
- Improve community health and environmental outcomes and decarbonise supply chains through sustainable transport modes and infrastructure.

These goals will be achieved through the following ten priorities:

1. Swan Hill bridge upgrade and other priority regional bridge crossings.
2. Grow freight on rail.
3. High Productivity Freight Vehicle network for the Central Murray region.
4. Key highway upgrades.
5. Mildura freight links.
6. New and improved regional public transport.
7. Improved local bus services and active transport.
8. Road improvements for enhanced transport safety and access.
9. Climate change resilience and adaptation.
10. Supporting new industries.

These priorities also include a list of key actions that can be continuously worked on throughout the life of the strategy. Our partner agencies have supported the development of this document and have also advised that other levels of government are much better positioned to consider strategies on behalf of a region and emphasised the importance of having alignment amongst all 6 Councils, which this document achieves.

The strategy is extremely comprehensive and enables the region to work together and have a united voice around priorities for our region which can then be used to attract funding.

RELEVANT LAW

Not applicable.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

There are no previous decisions of Council with respect to this matter.

OPTIONS

Option 1 (Officer Recommended);

Endorse the Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024 without change.

Option 2 (Not Recommended);

Seek changes to the Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024 via the Central Murray Regional Transport Forum. This option would be difficult to achieve as the Strategy has been endorsed by other member Council's including Swan Hill Rural City Council. The best option to seek updates and amendments to the Strategy would be in approximately 12 months' time when the Strategy is scheduled for further review.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No formal community engagement was undertaken in the preparation of the Strategy.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The final strategy supports growth in the region and the social benefits which align with population growth, economic growth and industry growth.

COLLABORATION

The development of the strategy has included all Councils, various state departments and key stakeholders. The document has also been endorsed by the Central Murray Regional Transport Forum technical and steering committee.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The cost of the consultant for the development of the strategy was $88,220 (incl GST). This has been funded by the participating Councils who pay an annual amount to support the forum.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not applicable.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not applicable.

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

The matter is being considered in an open Council meeting to ensure transparency of Council decisions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officer declared an interest with respect to the matters considered within this report.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 8.2.2.1 - Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024



Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy 2024

Central Murray Regional Transport Forum





Acknowledging the Traditional Owners

The Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout the region and recognises the continuing connection to land, waters, and communities.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

This strategy acknowledges the Registered Aboriginal Parties that reside throughout the study area including:

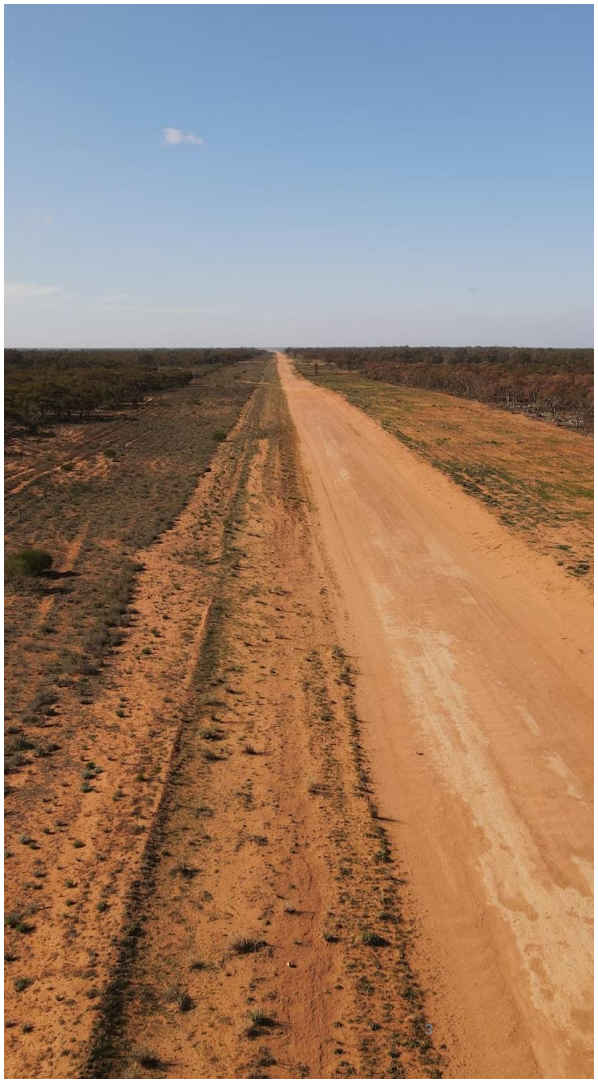
1. Millewa-Mallee
2. Barengi Dadjin
3. Wamba Wamba
4. Yorta Yorta
5. Dja Dja Wurrung

Executive summary

The Central Murray Regional Transport Forum has developed a Transport Strategy for the region that expands on the previous iteration from 2019. These updates reflect the progress that has been made on the previous priority actions as well as considering recent and emerging changes affecting the region, including population changes, the growth of industry, and challenges associated with climate change, and road safety.

Four goals have been identified for transport to support the needs of communities and industries in the region. Ten priority actions have been identified to deliver these goals, based on their urgency, the significance of their impact, and relevance to the Central Murray region. These encompass a wide range of initiatives including road upgrades, public transport improvements, and investment in the freight network.

The overarching strategy underpinning the goals and priorities is to improve the liveability for local residents while also focussing on upgrading the capability and capacity of infrastructure to support industry growth.



Central Murray region – at a glance

The Central Murray region supports a large and growing transport task, with key commodities produced in the region comprising a large proportion of state production and making a significant contribution to the Australian economy.

- **The Central Murray Region spans a large area, with a relatively small population**. Transport access is a key issue within the region, with people moving goods and services within the reach, and to reach other major population centres.

73,488 km² **110,734 (2024)**

- **Approximately 91.7% of the Central Murray region is used for agricultural production**, making agriculture the largest employment sector within the region, accounting for 7,300 jobs.

3,094,934 tonnes *of broadacre crops produced*

499,257 tonnes *of hay and silage produced*

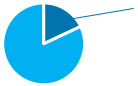
263 hectares *of nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf*

645,852 tonnes *of fruits and nuts*

98,920 tonnes *of vegetables*

2,120,334 *Livestock and livestock used for livestock products (Note: figure egg production)*

- **The gross production value of agricultural commodities within the Central Murray Region is approximately $3.16 billion**, representing approximately 17.5% of the total gross agricultural production value in NSW and 18% the total gross agricultural production value in Victoria.



18% of total gross agricultural production in Victoria.

- **Substantial growth in horticulture production is driving growth in freight movements.** Approximately **7.2 million tonnes** of road freight is transported in and out of the Central Murray Region, with an estimated value of $19.2 billion.

- **Improving transport across the region requires solutions to various challenges, including:**

Harmonising freight access for High Productivity Freight Vehicles and **grow the use of rail freight** to reduce transport costs for freight producers and the impacts of freight on the community.

Air services are essential to the region, but are limited to airports in Mildura and Bendigo. **Train and bus services are also limited.**

The Central Murray Region is comprised of councils that are considered either regional or remote areas, creating significant **challenges for maintaining and improving local road networks under current funding arrangements.**

Around 10 people are killed and 75 people are seriously injured on roads in the Central Murray region each year, costing the region $146.1 million.

Climate change is already impacting on the region and will exacerbate existing challenges with maintaining under-funded local roads.

A transport strategy for the Central Murray region

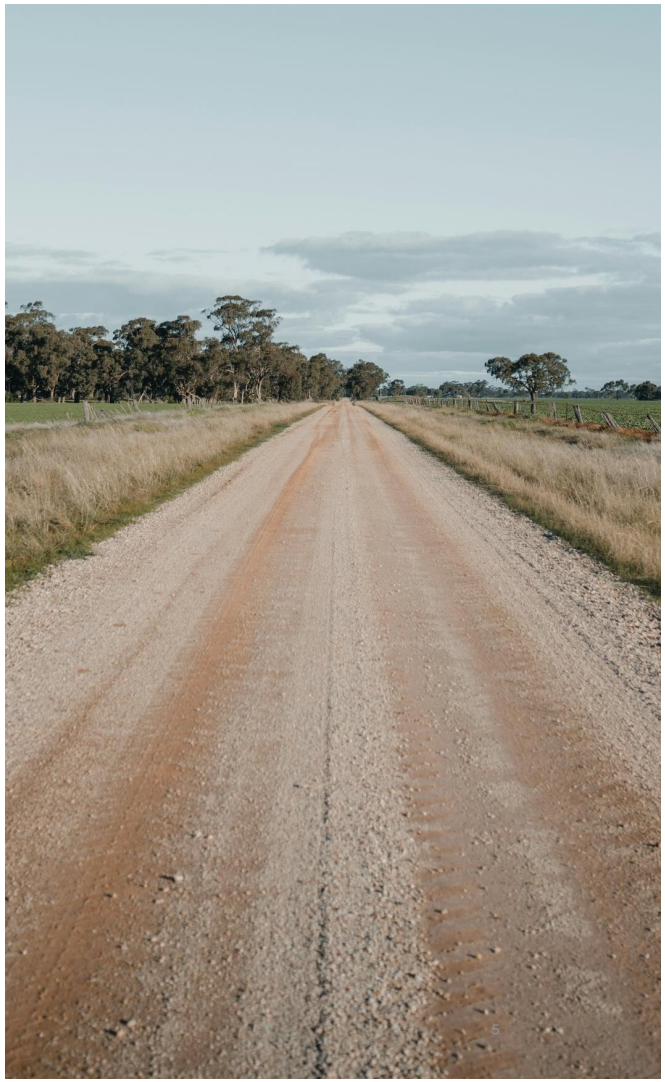
This strategy sets out transport issues opportunities and priorities for the six councils making up the Central Murray Regional Transport Forum - Swan Hill Rural City Council, Murray River Council, Gannawarra Shire Council, Mildura Rural City Council, Buloke Shire Council, and Balranald Shire Council. This 2024 document updates priorities identified in the Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy, published 2019.

The four goals for transport in the region are to:

1. Increase supply chain efficiency and support economic development by improving freight transport access
2. Improve community access to services through efficient and affordable mobility solutions
3. Increase community safety and well-being and decrease supply chain disruptions and productivity impacts by improving transport network safety and resilience
4. Improve community health and environmental outcomes and decarbonise supply chains through sustainable transport modes and infrastructure

These goals will be achieved through the following ten Priorities:

1. Swan Hill bridge upgrade and other priority regional bridge crossings
2. Grow freight on rail
3. High Productivity Freight Vehicle network for the Central Murray region
4. Key highway upgrades
5. Mildura freight links
6. New and improved regional public transport
7. Improved local bus services and active transport
8. Road improvements for enhanced transport safety and access
9. Climate change resilience and adaptation
10. Supporting new industries



1 Goals of the Strategy

The Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy identifies strategic transport needs and priorities for councils within this economically important region.

The Central Murray Regional Transport Forum (CMRTF, the Forum) comprises of six member Councils located along the Murray River in northwestern Victoria and New South Wales – Swan Hill Rural City Council, Murray River Council, Gannawarra Shire Council, Mildura Rural City Council, Buloke Shire Council, and Balranald Shire Council. Participating Councils are strongly focused on meeting broader regional transport needs as well as the needs of communities within their own council areas. This includes consideration of freight productivity, connectivity and rail freight services and network reliability.

In 2011, the Forum engaged consultants to develop a Regional Transport Strategy (the Strategy). The development of this strategy has led to success in the region's ability to attract funding for transport initiation studies and projects. The Strategy was updated in 2014 and again in 2019 and is recognised as an important strategic document at all levels of government.

The Forum has been updated to reflect changes in the operating environment for councils and new challenges and opportunities. These include the growth of agricultural production and freight movements in the region, emerging industries and the increasing challenges that climate change poses on the transport network.

The Strategy has been prepared by Forum councils with the assistance of key stakeholders including the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, the Department of Transport and Planning and Transport for NSW. The Strategy has been prepared with the assistance of consulting firm NineSquared.

The goals of the strategy are shown on the following page. Section 2 of the Strategy discusses why the Central Murray region is important and the current transport network and services. Section 3 presents the top ten regional transport priorities and Section 4 outlines the implementation approach.



The vision of the Central Murray Regional Forum is to provide a collective voice for transport needs of the Central Murray region and deliver priorities that improve the social and economic well-being of its communities.

The Strategy has four overarching goals, with underpinning initiatives and performance measures.

	Goal 1 - Access	Goal 2 - Mobility	Goal 3 - Safety & Resilience	Goal 4 - Sustainability
Regional Transport Goals	**Increase supply chain efficiency and support economic development by improving freight transport access**	**Improve community access to services through efficient and affordable mobility solutions**	**Increase community safety and well-being and decrease supply chain disruptions and productivity impacts by improving transport network safety and resilience**	**Improve community health and environmental outcomes and decarbonise supply chains through sustainable transport modes and infrastructure**
Supporting Initiatives	• Road freight access improvements • Increased use of rail freight	• New and improved passenger transport services • Technology based mobility solutions	• Road improvements • Initiatives to reduce risks for vulnerable road users • Road works to improve flood resistance	• Active transport networks • Intermodal terminals and rail network improvements • Infrastructure to support zero and low emission vehicles
Performance Measures	• Roads/networks allowing heavy vehicle access • Number of permit applications for restricted access vehicles	• Number and frequency of passenger transport services • Service patronage	• Number of deaths and serious injuries from crashes • Number of unplanned road and rail network closures	• Surveys of active transport • Rail freight mode share • Number of EV charging points • Number of zero and low emission trucks

8

2 The Central Murray Region and its transport network

The Central Murray region has a growing population – the size and location of the region make transport access a key issue.

Key characteristics

73,488 km² **110,734 (2024)** **0.40% (2024-2036)**

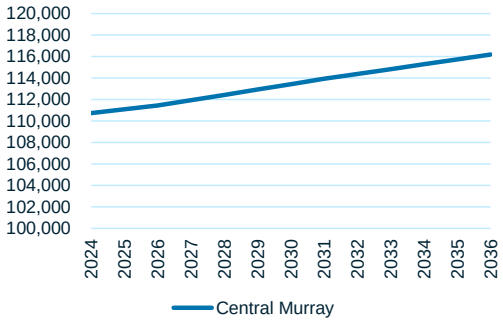
The Central Murray Region comprises six local councils, four of which are in Victoria (Swan Hill, Mildura, Buloke and Gannawarra) and two in New South Wales (Murray River and Balranald). The Central Murray Region includes over 70 thousand square kilometres of land and has a total population of 111,000 people. The area covered by the region is roughly equivalent to the size of Tasmania. Transport access is a key issue, with people and goods moving significant distances within the region and to reach other major population centres. State government projections indicate that the region's population is expected to reach 116,000 by 2036 (as seen right).[1]

Mildura Council has the highest projected population, which is expected to reach 63,000 by 2036 (see right). While current projections indicate there will be population growth in the Murray River and Mildura Council areas, the population of other council areas is expected to remain stable, with some declining slightly between 2024 and 2036.

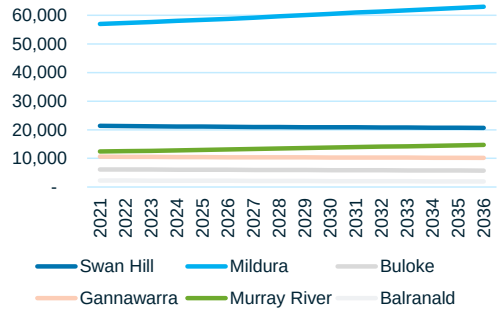
The Central Murray region has a very high seasonal workforce, with workers moving into and through the area for jobs in horticulture and other agricultural sectors. The emerging critical minerals and renewable energy sectors are also expected to generate employment opportunities. The region's seasonal workforce includes workers who come to the region through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) program. There is a trial of longer-term visas (four years) planned/underway which will allow family to accompany PALM workers. The number of four-year visas in Victoria is currently 2,366 of the 7000 workers, with these numbers expected to increase.[2]

Work by the region's councils and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has found that the region's seasonal workforce is significantly under-reported in official population figures, impacting the ability of councils to fund essential services. A recent research study found Census non-response rates for Robinvale-Euston and Swan Hill ranged from 7% to 18%. Various initiatives are now underway to better understand the region's seasonal workforce, including improvements to data collection for the 2026 Census.[3]

Projected Population to 2036



Projected Population to 2036 by LGA



1. Methodology for population projections and growth rates are outlined in Appendix A
2. Swan Hill Council (2024), 'A new Rugby Club in Swan Hill, Media Release, June 2024
3. Information provided by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

The Central Murray region employs 46,000 people – agriculture is a key industry and contributes $5 billion to the Central Murray region.

Based on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, approximately 46,000 people are employed in the Central Murray region. Key employment categories are shown below.

Top 5 industries of employment



- 17.7% (8,200) – Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- 14.3% (6,600) – Health Care and Social Assistance
- 9.9% (4,600) – Retail Trade
- 8.2% (3,800) – Construction
- 8.4% (3,900) – Education and Training

Agriculture is the largest individual employment sector within the region, accounting for 7,300 jobs. The other main areas of employment within the Central Murray Region include; Preschool and School Education (3,300 jobs), Food and Beverage Services (3,300 jobs), Construction Services (2,500 jobs) and Hospitals (2,200 jobs). These employment figures were used as a proxy for determining the economic contribution of the Agricultural industry in the Central Murray Region using Input-Output (IO) modelling techniques.[1] The economic contribution analysis calculates the effects of the expenditure on agricultural commodities within the Central Murray region (calculated as the Total Gross Production Value of Agricultural Commodities as seen on p8).

Central Murray Region



Expenditure associated with the agricultural industry in the Central Murray region
$3.16 billion

Economic contribution of the agricultural industry in the Central Murray Region

Additional **Gross Regional Product** associated with the local spend in the Central Murray Region
$2.26 billion

Average number of annual jobs (direct and indirect) created through the Central Murray regions agricultural industry
18,144 FTEs

Total economic output generated by the agricultural industry in the Central Murray Region
$5.08 billion

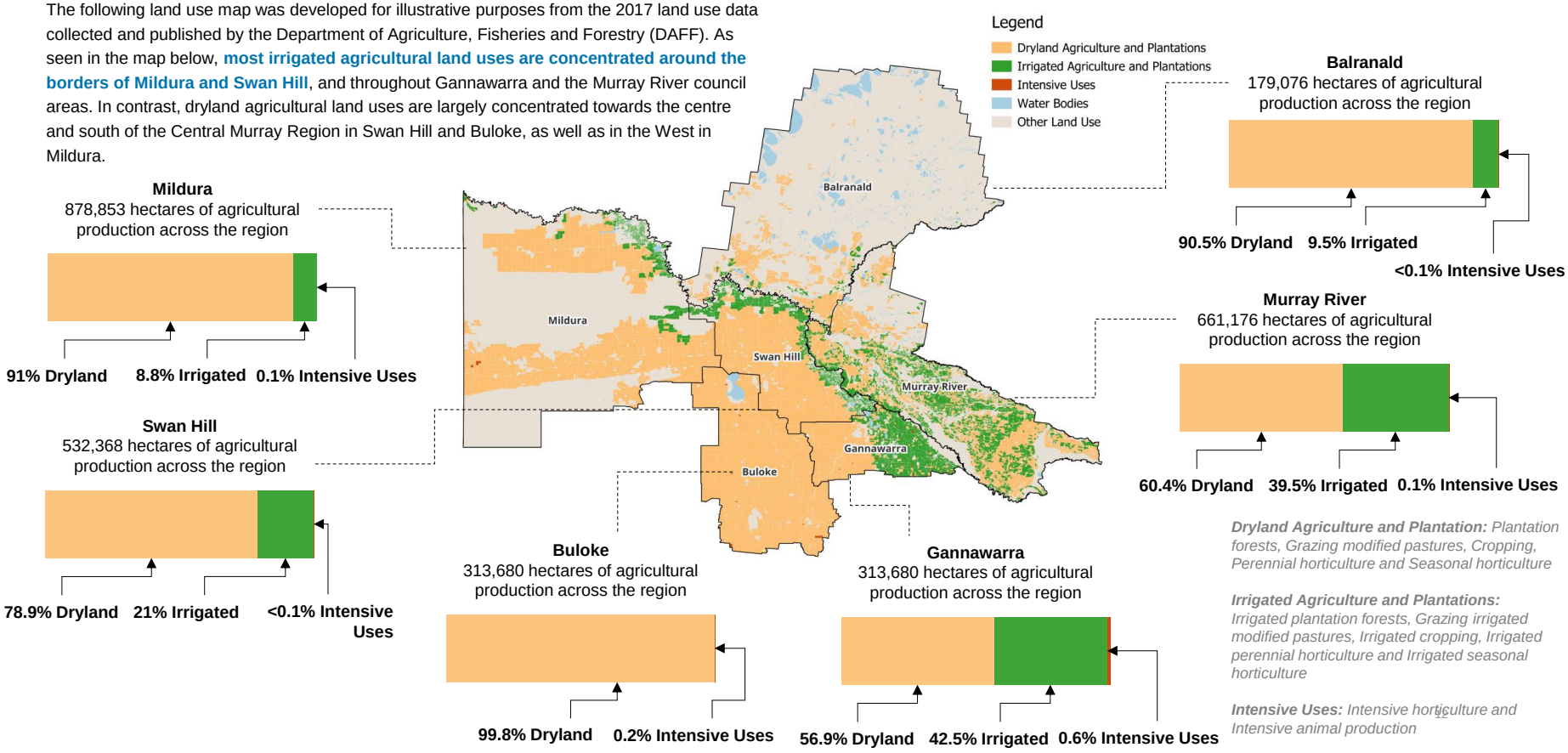
Total income generated by the agricultural industry in the Central Murray Region
$0.65 billion

1. Methodology outlined in Appendix B

11

Dryland cropping and irrigated agriculture are key industries in the region.

The following land use map was developed for illustrative purposes from the 2017 land use data collected and published by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). As seen in the map below, **most irrigated agricultural land uses are concentrated around the borders of Mildura and Swan Hill**, and throughout Gannawarra and the Murray River council areas. In contrast, dryland agricultural land uses are largely concentrated towards the centre and south of the Central Murray Region in Swan Hill and Buloke, as well as in the West in Mildura.



Substantial growth in horticultural production in the central part of the region is driving growth in freight movements.

Approximately 91.7% of the Central Murray region is used for agricultural production - with 58% of this agricultural land used for grazing, 41.7% used for crops, 0.2% used forestry and 0.1% used for other agricultural purposes.

Advice from industry indicates that there has been substantial growth in horticultural production in the central part of the region in recent years, particularly in Swan Hill. In response to this growth, Australian Farming Solutions has recently constructed a major Almond Processing Plant at Murray Downs on the Border of Swan Hill Rural City Council and Murray River Council. The plant, which has commenced operations, has been designed to process 35,000 tonnes of almond kernel and is expected to create over 61 full time jobs.[1] Stakeholders indicate that this shift in production is increasing road freight movements in this part of the region, a trend that will continue to increase.

The 2020-21 ABS Agricultural Census, provides production volumes and land use estimates for agricultural commodities that have been grouped into the following categories; broadacre crops, hay and silage, nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf, fruit and nuts, vegetables and livestock and livestock products.

Agricultural Production in the Central Murray Region[2]

3,094,934 tonnes
of broadacre crops produced

499,257 tonnes
of hay and silage produced

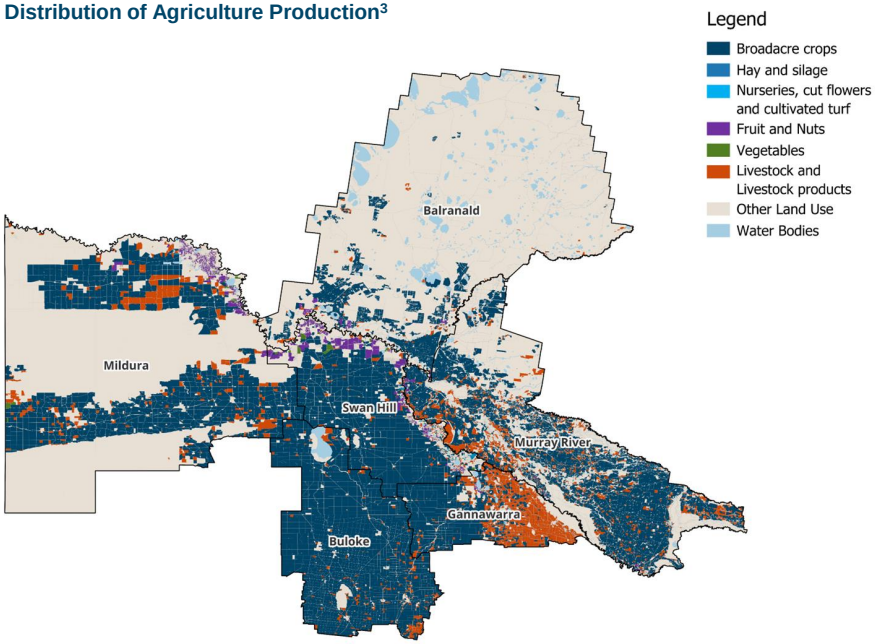
263 hectares
of nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf

645,852 tonnes
of fruits and nuts

98,920 tonnes
of vegetables

2,120,334
Livestock and livestock used for livestock products (Note: figure egg production)

Distribution of Agriculture Production[3]

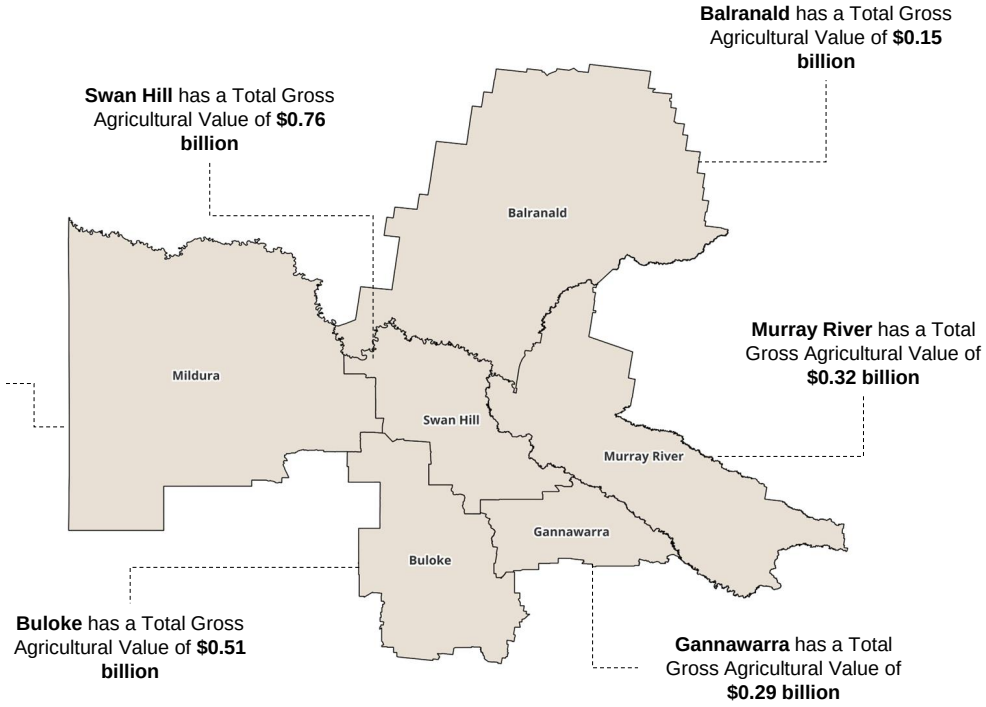


1. Murray River Council (2023), 'New almond hulling and shelling facility at Murray Downs, Media Release, April 2023
2. Production volumes are based on the 2020-21 ABS Agricultural Census
3. Map is based on the DAFF 2017 land use data and provides an indication of where commodities are produced within the Central Murray Region. The data is not up to date and is therefore only used for illustrative purposes. 13

The gross production value of agricultural commodities within the Central Murray region is approximately $3.16 billion.

The gross production value of agricultural commodities within the Central Murray Region is approximately $3.16 billion, with Mildura and Swan Hill making up approximately 60% of the total gross production value within the region.

Comparatively, the Central Murray Region represents approximately 17.5% of the total gross agricultural production value in NSW and 18% the total gross agricultural production value in Victoria.



Source: Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia 2020-2021 (ABS)

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Key commodities produced in the region comprise a large proportion of state production.

Fruit and nuts have the highest total gross agricultural production value in the Central Murray Region out of all commodity groups.

Production from fruit and nuts and broadacre crops make up approximately 74% of the total gross agricultural production value within the Central Murray region, with livestock and livestock products contributing a further 15%. The remaining three commodity groups combined constitute around 11% of the total gross agricultural production value within the Central Murray Region.

Comparing the total gross production value of a commodity in the Central Murray Region to the total gross production value of the commodity in either NSW or Victoria provides context to the significance of the agricultural production in the Region. The total value of fruit and nuts in the Central Murray Region comparatively represents approximately 86% of the total production value of fruit and nuts within NSW, or 62% of the total production in Victoria.

Broadacre crops

$1.01 billion *gross production value*



of the gross production value of broadacre crops in NSW



of the gross production value of broadacre crops in Victoria

Fruit and nuts

$1.32 billion *gross production value*



of the gross production value of fruits and nuts in NSW



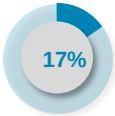
of the gross production value of fruits and nuts in Victoria

Hay and silage

$117.1 million *gross production value*



of the gross production value of hay and silage in NSW



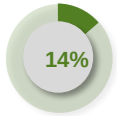
of the gross production value of hay and silage in Victoria

Vegetables

$152.6 million *gross production value*



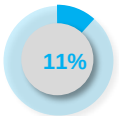
of the gross production value of vegetables in NSW



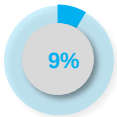
of the gross production value of vegetables in Victoria

Nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf

$64.1 million *gross production value*



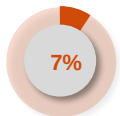
of the gross production value of nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf in NSW



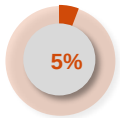
of the gross production value of nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf in Victoria

Livestock and livestock products[1]

$484.3 million *gross production value*



of the gross production value of livestock and associated products in NSW



of the gross production value of livestock and associated products in Victoria

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1. Livestock products and livestock slaughtered and other disposables have been grouped into Livestock and livestock products (see Appendix C for calculation methodology)

Approximately 7.2 million tonnes of road freight is transported in and out of the Central Murray region, with an estimated value of $19.2 billion.

Most agricultural commodities produced in the Central Murray region are transported outside the region, including overseas markets. Most produce is transported by road.

Freight task volume and value data was collected from the CSIRO Transport Network Strategic Investment Tool (TraNSIT) Supply Chain Dashboard on road freight movements for the relevant LGAs within the Central Murray region[1]. This data was then filtered for inbound and outbound freight i.e. moving in and out of the Central Murray Region, removing any road freight movements within or between LGA's within the Central Murray Region.

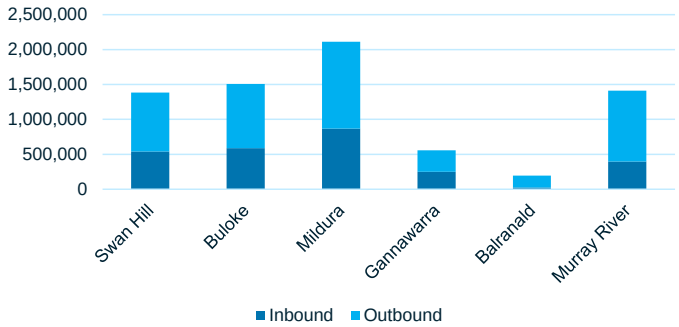
Based on CSIRO TraNSIT data (2024), approximately 7.2 million tonnes of road freight is transported in and out of the Central Murray Region. This annual road freight task is valued at around $19.2 billion.

Based on the analysis, 62.8% of annual road freight tonnage originating from the LGAs within the Central Murray region is transported out of the region, with freight movements occurring both to intrastate and interstate destinations. Outbound freight is dominated by commodities related to cropping, horticulture, livestock and fuel. Comparatively, 37.2% of the annual road freight tonnage is transported into the Central Murray region. Key commodities include beverages, chemicals, horticulture, fuel, cropping, livestock, health, vehicles and general products.

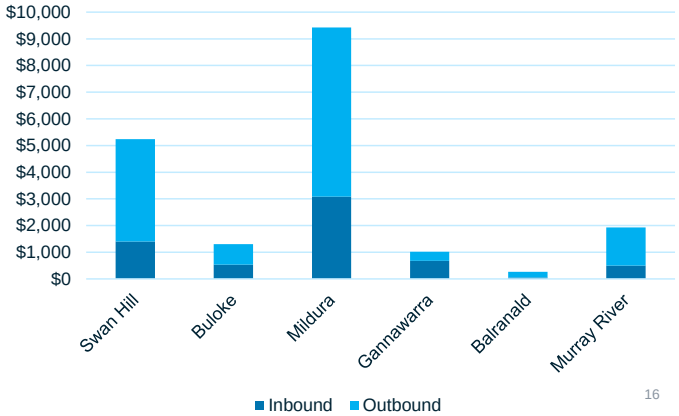
Within the Central Murray region, approximately 29% of annual road freight tonnage is transported in and out of Mildura LGA (see right) followed closely by the Buloke and Murray River LGAs. Mildura LGA accounts for inbound and outbound freight valued at around $9.4 billion, which comprises almost 50% of the regions annual freight task value (see right). Cropping and horticulture related commodities make up the majority of Mildura's outbound freight, while the main inbound freight consists mostly of cropping and fuel.

In addition to freight moving in and out of the region, significant freight volumes also circulate within the region. For example, grain and horticultural products grown in the region will typically be transported from farms to nearby bulk storage or packing facilities where they are consolidated before being transported to end customers.

Annual freight volume (t) by LGA



Annual freight task value ($m) by LGA



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There are opportunities to harmonise access for High Productivity Freight Vehicles across the region

Improving road access for High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFVs or HPVs) was identified as a key priority in the 2019 Strategy. HPFV's are trucks that are designed to increase payload efficiencies over conventional trucks. Unlike 'general access vehicles' that can effectively use all parts of the road network, HPFVs operate on restricted networks.

HPVs are already used extensively to move freight in the Central Murray Region. There are a variety of types of HPFVs, including performance-based standards (PBS) vehicles. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) and state government road managers have policies to increase the use of performance-based standard (PBS) vehicles. PBS vehicles allow operators to move more freight using vehicles that occupy the same amount of road space as more conventional vehicles

Providing access on local roads for these vehicles is an increasing challenge because of the quality of many local roads and the larger and heavier nature of the vehicles. Advances in access on state road networks will generate more heavy vehicle access requests and increase pressure for council road managers to provide access.

Currently access for PBS vehicles in the region is inconsistent and includes various gaps. As an example, the maps right show roads with gazetted (pre-approved) access for the most common type of HPV, 26m B-Doubles, compared to an equivalent PBS Tier 1 vehicle. Despite being assessed as having he same relative impact on road infrastructure, access for the PBS vehicle is more restricted compared to B-Doubles.

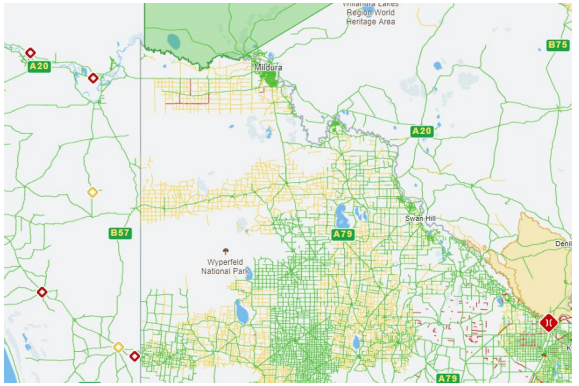
The PBS vehicle can allow operators to move the same load with less trips, but under current arrangements operators would need to apply for permits to use these vehicles. This can disincentive investment in safer and more productive combinations of heavy vehicles, or contribute to additional cost and environmental impact by necessitating lengthy detours.

1. Based on desktop analysis using the NHVR National Network Map [National Network Map | NHVR]

Comparison of heavy vehicle access for a B-Double and equivalent PBS vehicle[1]

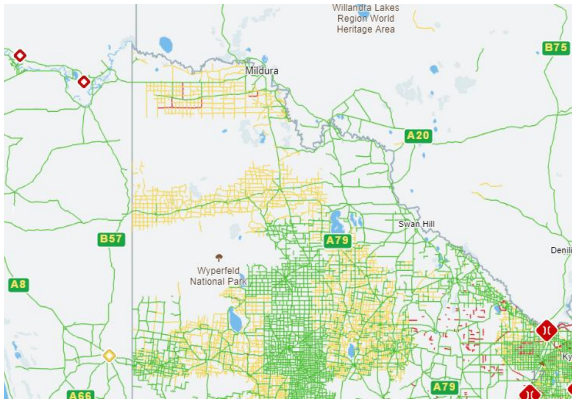


B-Double, up to 26m





PBS Tier 1, Level 2A, up to 26m, Truck and Dog



Rail plays an essential role supporting the movement of bulk commodities and containerised freight from the Central Murray region for exporters.

Benefits of Rail Freight[1]

16 times less
carbon pollution per tonne kilometre travelled compared to road

20 times lower
accident costs per tonne kilometre compared to road

Rail is well suited to moving bulk commodities and containerised freight, particularly over longer distances (300 km or more). A combination of standard, broad, and dual-gauge rail lines make up the rail network that services the Central Murray region (see map right).

Rail services transport a large amount freight out of the Central Murray Region, including:

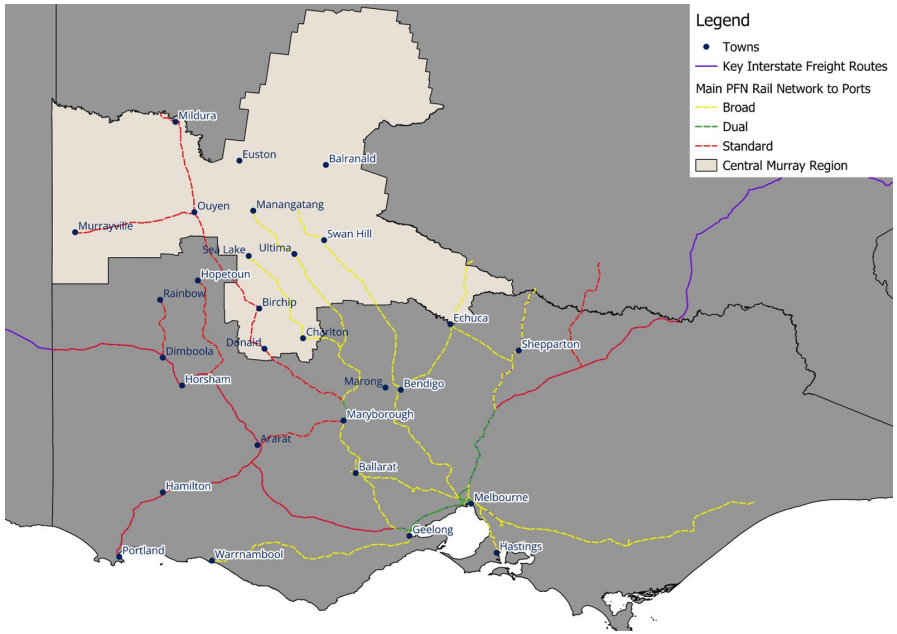
- **Containerised freight**, including horticultural products and grain from various packing facilities and intermodal terminals to the Port of Melbourne for export
- **Bulk grain**, transported from various grain storage facilities in the region to the Ports of Geelong, Melbourne and Portland for export and to domestic grain customers (e.g. mills)

At current estimates, the rail network facilitates an estimated 20-25% of the regions containerised freight task (approximately 40,000 - 50,000 TEUs), and around 45% of the region's bulk freight task (comprised exclusively of bulk grain, approximately 650,000 tonnes) moving to the 3 ports serving the Central Murray region.[2]

In the past, rail services have also transported Mineral sands from the Iluka Resources Limited's WRP mine near Ouyen to the Port of Portland. Various new mineral sands mines are proposed in the region, including approximately 35 km south of Swan Hill Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths project. Planning for this project is well progressed, and it is proposed that processed materials will be transported using sealed sea containers via road to Ultima and then rail to Port of Melbourne.

Further information on freight terminals and proposed mineral sands development are shown in Appendix D.

The regional rail network



1. Value of Rail 2020, Australian Railway Association REPORT-ValueofRail2020-1.pdf (ara.net.au)
2. NineSquared (2024) Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan, Report prepared for the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

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Growing the use of rail for moving freight will provide significant economic benefits for the Central Murray region.

Infrastructure limitations on the regional rail network and the impending mineral sands freight task (see right) present challenges for rail services.

These factors and innovation in road freight operations create on-going challenges for rail to maintain a competitive advantage over road freight for long distance freight movements.

Given that rail services can move much larger volumes of freight in a single trip compared to heavy vehicles, increases in the relative share of freight that rail transports can result in significant cost savings, environmental and safety benefits.

The recent Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan[1] analysed the implications of changes in rail mode share. This found that even modest reductions in rail mode share could significantly increase the amount of freight moved by road, increasing costs and negative impacts on safety, the environment and infrastructure. Conversely, increases in rail mode share will provide economic benefits to the region. Key findings from the analysis are summarised below.[2]

10% reduction rail's share of bulk freight

↓

7600 additional truck trips per week

↓

↑ **$3.2 million p.a.**
Additional costs for freight customers

↑ **1.8 million litres p.a.**
Fuel consumption

↑ **4.7 million kg p.a.**
CO2 emissions

5% reduction rail's share of containerised freight

↓

1,700 additional truck trips year

↓

↑ **$1.1 million p.a.**
Additional costs for freight customers

↑ **1.3 million litres p.a.**
Fuel consumption

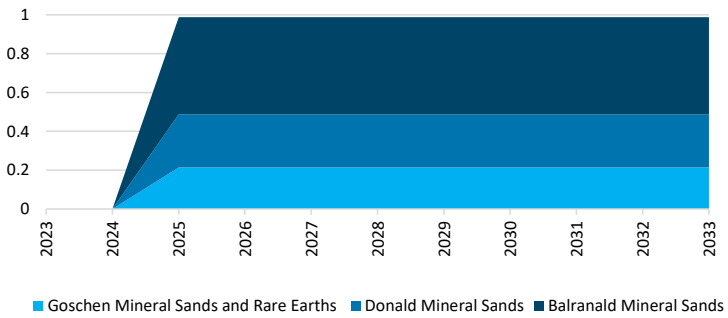
↑ **3.6 million kg p.a.**
CO2 emissions

Based on analysis conducted as part of the Mallee Future Freight Investigation[2] and Action Plan, if all the mineral sands mines that are currently proposed or under investigation in the Central Murray region were to be operational, this would add as much as 1 million tonnes of processed bulk materials on transport networks per annum. This assumes that materials are processed at or near mines, with the 'yield' transported on regional networks.

If processed bulk material in this scenario were to be transported exclusively on the road network, the estimated cost of pavement wear to transport the material could amount to $11 million annually.

Minimising road freight movements and maximising rail freight will help to minimise damage to road networks, the environment and road safety, and maximise supply chain efficiency.

Estimated yield from proposed mineral sands projects in the Central Murray region



1. NineSquared (2024) Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan, Report prepared for the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
2. Impacts calculated using study assumptions detailed in the Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan report.
3. Based on analysis in the Mallee Future Freight Investigation and Action Plan, excluding projects outside the Central Murray region

Air services are essential to the region but are limited to airports in Mildura and Bendigo.

There are two airports within the vicinity of the Central Murray Region that offer passenger airline services.

There is limited access via passenger airline services within the Central Murray Region. Qantas/Qantaslink and Rex operate services from between Mildura Airport and Sydney and Melbourne, with approximately 48 arrival and 54 departure flights per week. The next closest airport to the Central Murray Region that offers passenger airline services is Bendigo Airport with Qantas operating services to/from Sydney. Bendigo Airport is outside the Central Murray region but is a closer option for towns in the eastern part of the region.

There are 19 other regional airports within or near the Central Murray Region, however, they primarily offer unscheduled general and commercial aviation services such as private charters, flying school, airshows, Royal Flying Doctors Services or agricultural and haulage services. Air ambulance services are also available to Mildura Airport, Swan Hill Airport and Balranald Airport[1].

Regional airports



Based on desktop research

[1]*Medial Air Service Worldwide* (Airports | Air ambulance | Rescue flight - Australia (medical-air-service.com))

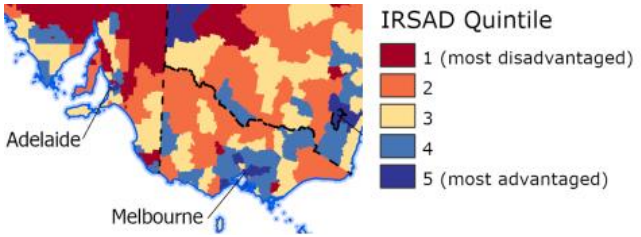
Case study – Aging in place and active transport

Alongside broader regional priorities, at a local level actions are needed to enable an aging population to age in place as much as practical, through improvements to land use, public transport and active transport. Local transport improvements are currently being considered through Integrated Transport and Land Use Studies and complement priorities identified in this Strategy.

Communities in the Central Murray region experience a higher level of transport disadvantage compared to other regions because of lower median household incomes, and the requirement to travel longer distances than other parts of NSW and Victoria to reach essential services.

The region's population is aging, and it is desirable that people can live at home as long as possible to maintain quality of life. The challenges facing the Central Murray region are similar to the broader trend for Victoria's population. In 2021 there were almost 1.5 million Victorians aged 60 years or older. This represents 22% of the total population. By 2046 that number is expected to increase by around 60% to more than 2.3 million people. This aging population is particularly challenging in the Central Murray region due to many small towns in remote areas, which may have declining populations. Increasing economic participation for women is also of high priority for the region.

As the population ages transport disadvantage is likely to increase. Opportunities to enhance public transport access and accessibility in coordination with future land use changes planning in the main regional centres are critical for the development of the Central Murray region.



1. ABS SIEFA Index map (2024) [online]

To enable aging in place, improvements are needed to active transport networks in local towns and major regional centres, to enable wheelchairs, mobility buggies and other mobility aids to operate safely as well as promote healthy lifestyles options. This will provide opportunities develop local community networks that are inclusive of all ages, genders and abilities. Creating streets that provide a people focus[1] can act as a catalyst for the development of well-located and low maintenance dwellings that enables older residents to maintain independence and age in place in their home communities.

It will be important to prioritise key active transport corridors and street enhancements through the movement and place framework and improve them through targeted upgrades including street calming and filtering, speed optimisation, the extension of the footpath network and separated cycling facilities and key intersection enhancements. Implementation of such projects has already begun, such as the Mildura CBD 30km/h speed limits, and Integrated Transport and Land Use Studies in Mildura and Swan Hill and the Swan Hill Riverfront activation project as well as an increased awareness of the need for viable transport links, to support all users in the community.

1. The 'Safe Active Streets Pilot Program' is an example of a initiative to encourage more people to walk, wheel and ride in their communities, see Safe Active Streets Pilot Program (transport.wa.gov.au)

The Central Murray region has substantial local road networks that are challenging to maintain under current funding arrangements.

The Central Murray Region is comprised of councils that are considered either regional or remote areas, creating significant challenges for maintaining and improving local road networks. Despite these funding challenges, there is continued pressure on councils to continually expand local road access for heavy vehicles.

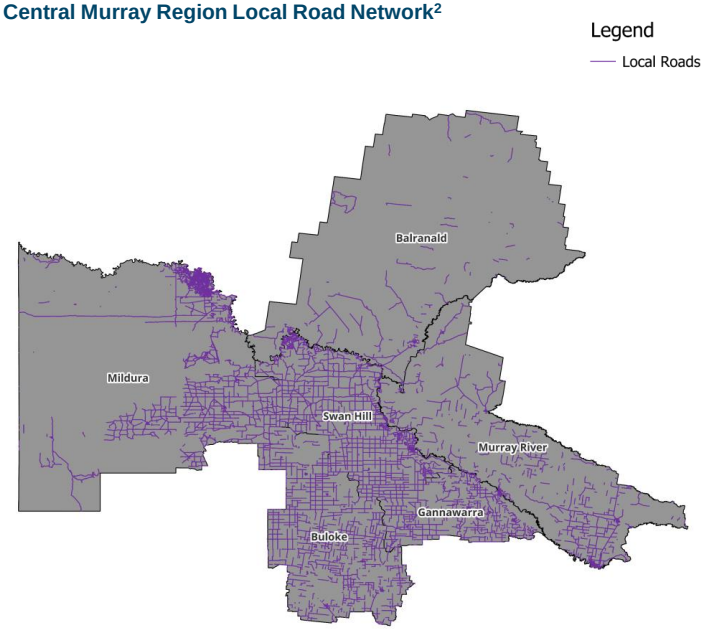
A recent report on funding for the maintenance of local roads by the Grattan Institute[1] argues that maintaining local roads to a safe and acceptable standard is an essential government service. The report found that local roads are primarily funded through a complex combination of councils' own-source of revenue, and tied and untied grants from the federal, state and territory governments. The report found that there is a serious overall underspend on local roads within regional and remote councils that have large land areas with vast road networks that require maintenance. Due to smaller populations, it is difficult for local councils in those areas to raise sufficient revenue to adequately fund the maintenance of these local road networks – resulting in significant underspending on local roads of 42% in regional areas and more than 75% in remote areas.

According to the Grattan Institute report, the median population density of regional and remote areas is 3.9 persons per km^2 and 0.1 persons per km^2, respectively. As seen in the table below, the local councils in the Central Murray region all have population densities within this range. Median road lengths within the Central Murray Region range from 0.1 km to 0.4 km, and maximum road lengths range from 6.4 km to 8.6 km – with the local road network spread throughout the entire region (see figure right), highlighting the challenges of maintaining and improving roads in the absence of increases in external funding.

Characteristics of LGAs in the Central Murray Region

LGA	Population	Median road length (km)	Maximum road length (km)	Total road length (km)	Land area (km^2)	Population Density (per km^2)
Mildura	58,027	0.1	8.7	3,894	22,082	2.6
Swan Hill	21,162	0.2	7.1	3,380	6,116	3.5
Buloke	6,059	0.4	7.1	2,913	7,998	0.76
Murray River	12,796	0.1	9.0	1,906	11,863	1.1
Gannawarra	10,484	0.2	7.1	1,723	3,738	2.8
Balranald	2,206	0.2	8.6	791	21,691	0.1

Central Murray Region Local Road Network[2]



1. Grattan Institute (2023), Potholes and Pitfalls: How to fix local roads Potholes and pitfalls: How to fix local roads (grattan.edu.au))
2. Road length values and map were generated through spatial analysis using the Digital Atlas of Australia National Roads (2024) dataset, and therefore the accuracy is subject to its collection methodology (National Roads | Digital Atlas of Australia)

Around 10 people are killed and 75 people are seriously injured on roads in the Central Murray region each year, costing the region $146.1 million[1]

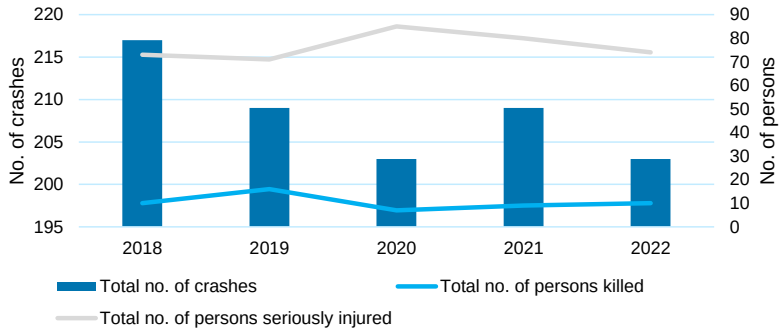
From 2018-2022, the Central Murray Region experienced a total crash rate lower than the average total crash rate of all LGAs in NSW and all LGAs in VIC

There were 1,041 crashes in the Central Murray Region from 2018-2022, with an average of 208 crashes occurring per year. Over the 5-year period, 788 crashes were attributed to cars, 64 crashes were attributed Light Commercial Vehicles and 54 crashes were attributed to Heavy Commercial Vehicles. The total number of crashes have declined since 2018 (see Figure 6), despite a spike in crashes in 2021. Over the 5-year period a total of 52 persons were killed during these crashes, and 383 persons were seriously injured (see right). Over the 5-year period, between 7 and 10 people had been killed on roads in the region each year, with spike of 16 people killed in 2019. Similarly, the total number of persons seriously injured has also remained relatively stable year on year, ranging 71 to 80 persons excluding an increase to 85 persons in 2020. The total number of persons killed, and the total number of persons seriously injured displays a slightly inverse relationship over the 5-year period.

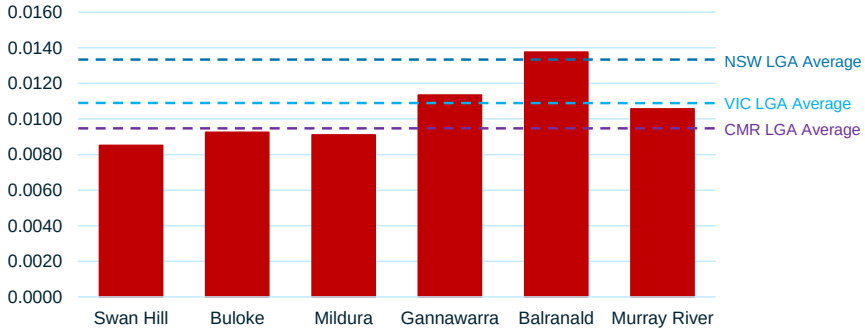
The average total crash rate for LGAs in the Central Murray Region was 0.0095 per person, with 0.0040 crashes per person resulting in either fatal or serious injury within the 5-year period. As shown right, the Central Murray Region total crash rate is lower than the average of the total crash rates of all LGAs in both NSW (0.0134) and VIC (0.0108) per person. Within the Central Murray Region, Balranald (0.0138) has the highest total crash rate exceeding both the NSW LGA and VIC LGA average followed by Gannawarra (0.0113) which only exceeds the VIC LGA average. All other LGAs within the Central Murray Region have total crash rates lower than both state's LGA average total crashes per person.

For LGAs within both states the distribution of fatal and serious injury crash rates per person show a relative spread when scaled by the LGAs population (see Appendix E). All LGA's within the Central Murray Region have a relatively small population, with Gannawarra and Buloke having higher 5-year fatal and serious injury crashes per person than both the NSW LGA (0.0042) and VIC LGA (0.0057) averages. All other LGAs within the Central Murray Region experienced lower fatal and serious injury crash rates than both the NSW and VIC LGA averages.

Road Safety within the Central Murray Region)



Total crashes per person (2018-2022)



1. Calculated using TfNSW Economic Parameter Values (August 2024) Table 5.2 'Inclusive WTP costs per casualty. for Fatalities and Serious Injuries in Rural areas

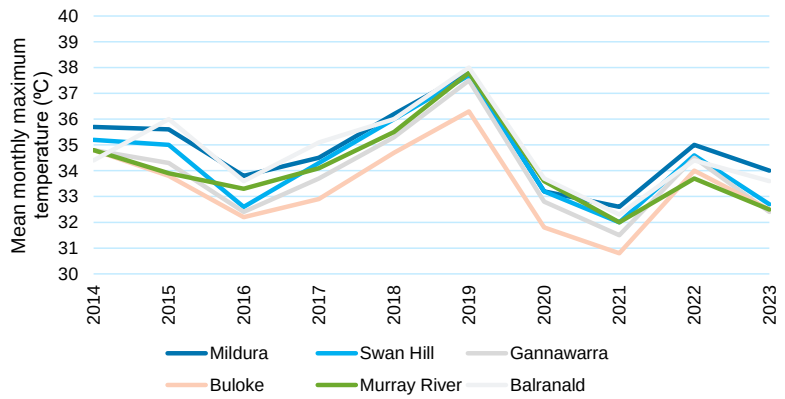
Climate change is already impacting on the region and will exacerbate existing challenges with maintaining under-funded road networks.

Climate change poses significant challenges for the Central Murray region. Work by the Grattan Institute[1] highlights the detrimental impact that climate change is having on roads. During summer months, the Central Murray Region experiences extreme heat with temperatures exceeding 30ºC (see chart on left below). In 2019, the highest mean monthly maximum temperature of each local council within the region exceeded 36ºC. Extreme heat bakes the surface of asphalt and bitumen, resulting in cracks or fails that leaves local roads susceptible to water getting into the pavement and causing further damage. Increased droughts also decrease water available to agriculture. Extreme heat days in the Mallee region are predicted to increase from the current average of 7.8 days per year to 15-23 days per year by the 2030s.[2]

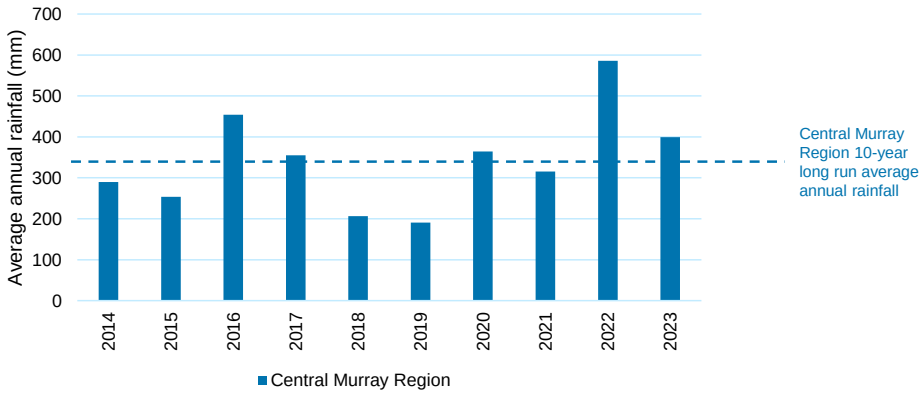
The average annual rainfall across all local councils within the Central Murray Region has exceeded the 10-year long run average of 341mm for 5 out of the past 10 years (see chart below right), with average annual rainfall in the region reaching 585 mm in 2022. Heavy rainfall also affects the slopes and batters of the road formation, water seeping into the sub layers of a road can cause potholes and major damage to the road's topmost layers. The 2022-2023 Murray River flood event is estimated to have caused over $30 million of damage to Mildura, with an estimated $15 million of damage occurring to roads and footpaths across the municipality.[3]

These climate change issues exacerbate existing challenges with maintaining under-funded local roads and are likely to become worse in the future, further highlighting the need for increasing local road funding.

Central Murray Region highest yearly mean monthly maximum temperature (2014-2023)[2]



Central Murray Region average annual rainfall (2014-2023)[3]



1. Grattan Institute (2023), Potholes and Pitfalls: How to fix local roads
2. Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology
3. ibid
4. Mildura City Council (2024) Draft Mildura Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy, p.50
5. ibid, p.51

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3 Regional Transport Priorities

Priority 1: Swan Hill bridge upgrade and other priority regional bridge crossings

Develop a new two-lane crossing of the river at Swan Hill, capable of handling oversize and over mass vehicles and High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFVs). The bridge will also improve safety for road users and pedestrians.

Councils in the Central Murray Region have been advocating for a new Swan Hill Bridge since 1998. This has been a key priority in previous Regional Transport Strategies, and stakeholder engagement indicates that it remains a key concern for industry and community. The 2018 Murray River crossings investment priority assessment found that Swan Hill bridge was the number one short-term priority crossing for investment. The work highlighted a 400km section of road between Tocumwal and Euston-Robinvale where there were no B-Double Higher Mass Limit (HML) crossings between NSW and Victoria.

The Swan Hill bridge is a one-way crossing with a limited 65 tonne General Mass Limit (GML), which cannot accommodate more modern heavy vehicle combinations capable of carrying over 85 tonnes.

This means that many heavy vehicles are currently forced to use a longer route, or to drop a trailer and make multiple crossings or switch to a less efficient older-style truck to transfer product across the bridge. This is a particular problem given the nature of heavy freight commodities transported in the region, such as bulk grain and horticultural products for export. With the addition of the almond processing facility in Murray River and growth in horticultural production in the Central Murray region, this constraint will become more of a problem. The bridge is also a constraint on the use of rail from the Ultima Intermodal Freight Terminal as it limits the number of export containers that can be transported to the terminal in a single trip, increasing costs for exporters and limiting the cost competitiveness of rail compared to road.

An upgraded crossing will contribute to all four of the Strategy goals through significant improvements to access and mobility across the river, significant safety improvement to the bridge and sustainability improvements through allowing heavy vehicles to take shorter travel routes.

While upgrading the Swan Hill bridge is a key regional priority because of its limitations and central location, there are a range of other bridges and structures that limit the use of HPVs. Bridges at Toolybuc, Nyah, Moama, and Sea Lake all have mass restrictions which limit the productivity of freight movements. There are also bridge restrictions on the Murray Valley Highway, Charlton Rd, Pyrenees Highway and Northern Highway.

Swan Hill Bridge



Alignment with goals

Access	Significant improvement
Mobility	Significant improvement
Safety and resilience	Significant improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Continue to advocate for an upgrade of Swan Hill bridge with Transport for NSW and Victorian Department of Transport and Planning, with a goal of commencing construction in the next 3-5 years.

Continue to advocate for other critical upgrades of other major Murray River Bridge crossings.

Priority 2: Grow freight on rail

Improve access to freight terminals and advocate for a strategy to improve performance of the Murray Basin rail network to grow freight moved on rail.

The rail networks in the Central Murray Region have only been partially standardised due to cost overruns of the original Murray Basin project. As a result, there is a mixture of broad and standard gauge lines in the region and passing loops that are below the modern standard – which is to accommodate a 1500m long train. This reduces the productivity, feasibility and use of freight rail in the region.

While the project has delivered benefits, submissions by major freight operators into the Victorian Freight Plan[1] have highlighted various continuing challenges for current operations including network interoperability issues, access limitations on lines shared with passenger services (particularly for trains 800m in length), poor planning of network possessions for maintenance and upgrade projects. These issues impact on limit train utilisation and increase the costs of using rail relative to road. In some cases, freight has been permanently lost to road because of advances with HPFVs and rail network possessions that have resulted in some lines being closed for 2-3 months at a time. The limitations of the Victorian Government's Mode Shift Incentive Scheme (MSIS) have also resulted in Ultima Intermodal Terminal losing freight to road, and the process of renewing the MSIS annually has also provided no certainty to users of rail services.

The Rail Operators Group (ROG) includes Australia's largest main line rail freight operators and has proposed various reforms[2] to the Victorian government to help improve the competitiveness of rail and achieve government policy goals of increasing the use of rail freight. These include developing a rail freight strategy for Victoria, developing binding obligations for rail network managers to provide access for rail freight, improving planning passenger rail projects to minimise impacts on rail freight services and reviewing the MSIS and ensure incentive payments for rail freight are adequate and include additional terminals.

Access limitations on roads around intermodal freight terminals also impact on rail competitiveness by increasing the cost of moving freight between terminals and customers. Access limitations, including mass restrictions on Swan Hill bridge, are currently impacting on operations at Ultima intermodal terminal (see further discussion on page 28). Level crossings also pose risks for road safety and can limit train speeds. This is an issue for trains operating to the Merbein Intermodal Terminal which are required to travel through Mildura, traversing 22 level crossings (see Mildura Freight Links on page 30 for further discussion).

Alignment with goals

Access	Improvement
Mobility	Neutral
Safety and resilience	Improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Identify opportunities to improve road freight access to intermodal terminals in collaboration with terminal operators.

Advocate for the development of a rail freight plan for Victoria by the Department of Transport.

Engage with rail freight users and operators on potential improvements to rail efficiency.

Continue to advocate for improvements to the Murray Basin rail network to improve the productivity and reliability of rail freight services.

1. See Qube (2024) Submission in the Victorian Freight Plan Update, 5 July 2024
2. Rail Freight Operators' Group (2024), Submission to the Victorian Freight Plan review, 30 June 2024

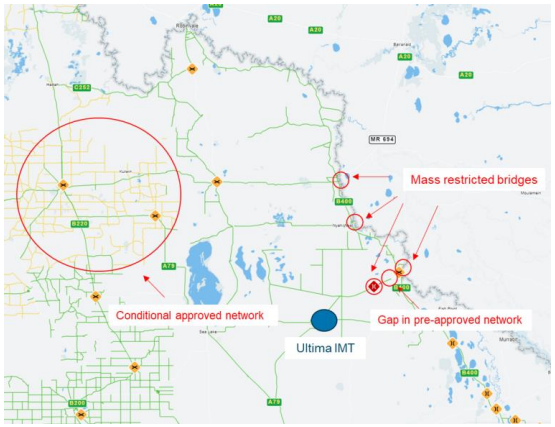
Priority 3: HPFV network for the Central Murray region

A regionwide priority network for High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFVs) that links across council boundaries and with Victorian and NSW arterial networks.

The Central Murray region contributes significantly to the economy of both NSW and Victoria and encompasses an important area of the freight network and of agricultural production, generating over $5 billion dollars of economic output from agriculture alone. The majority of freight moved in and out of the region is transported on trucks. Major freight routes linking state capital cities also pass through the area.

Current access for PBS vehicles in the region is inconsistent and includes gaps. While accommodating larger and heavier vehicles on local roads may require significant investment, there are opportunities to harmonise access for PBS vehicles that are equivalent to more conventional HPVs that are already allowed on networks in the region. In some cases, freight access may need to be restricted to discourage inappropriate vehicles from travelling in residential areas and other roads not suitable for them.

Improvements to road access to intermodal rail terminals should be progressed as a priority. The map below shows road access limitations impacting on Ultima IMT. These increase the cost of moving freight to and from the terminal which reduces the cost competitiveness of rail services.



Heavy vehicle access limitations impacting on Ultima IMT

Alignment with goals

Access	Significant improvement
Mobility	Neutral
Safety and resilience	Improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Establish a road engineers working group to share knowledge and consider opportunities for improving the consistency of PBS networks.

Gather information on local road freight movements and engage with road freight operators in the region to identify and prioritise constraints for PBS vehicles.

Develop a PBS/HPFV network plan which includes restricting HPFV access on unsuitable residential roads in councils which currently allow full access.

Upgrade roads which have been identified as key freight routes to support their use as preferred freight corridors, including projects identified in the Swan Hill and Gannawarra Freight Road Network Mapping and Infrastructure Investment Study.

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1. Based on stakeholder advice and desktop analysis using the NHVR National Network Map [National Network Map | NHVR]

Priority 4: Key highway upgrades

Continued improvements to key highway corridors in the region including the Calder, Sturt, Sunraysia, Mallee, Murray Valley, and Kerang Leitchville Highways can improve road safety and travel time. Upgrades that reduce heavy vehicle traffic through some townships can also improve amenity.

Regional and remote communities have a greater risk of experiencing road trauma compared to those in metropolitan areas. This is due to various factors including vehicles travelling at higher speed and longer distances and greater use of single carriageway roads compared to car travel in urban areas. Regional and remote communities also face greater risks of being involved in a crash with a heavy vehicle, which are disproportionately represented in crashes that result in serious injuries and fatalities compared to light vehicles. An average of 10 people are killed, and 75 people experience serious injuries from road crashes each year in the Central Murray region, costing the regional economy $146 million.

Road managers take a 'Safe System' approach to improving road safety. This involves targeting various pillars to reduce crashes and road trauma, including safe people, safe vehicles and safe infrastructure. Improvements to regional highways and other roads used by large numbers of vehicles can significantly reduce the risk of crashes. This includes increasing lane width, separating lanes, providing passing lanes, new and improved driver rest areas, targeted speed reductions, intersection treatments and improvements to signage.

The following improvements to regional highways have previously been proposed by the Forum:

- **Calder Highway Corridor** - Corridor requires duplication of lanes, extra passing lanes, rest stops, intersection treatments, e.g. at Marong, and upgrade of the Keilor and the Bridgewater bridges (also identified in Mildura ITLUS)
- **Sturt, Sunraysia, Mallee, Murray Valley and Loddon Valley Highways** - More passing lanes, rest stops and some intersection treatments are needed to reduce conflicts between freight/buses/caravans and cars and to improve safety and travel time on these corridors.
- **Kerang Leitchville Highway** – Upgrade to achieve a shorter transport route and possibly reduce transport through townships such as Cohuna/Kerang which has frequent heavy rigid transport through Sampson St Cohuna, which is a transport route through the town centre.

The Forum will work with state road managers to identify and prioritise highway upgrades, including through the development of corridor strategies. Councils will also work with state government road safety groups to better understand crash risks and outcomes in their areas to improve planning of road safety initiatives including infrastructure improvements.

Alignment with goals

Access	Significant improvement
Mobility	Improvement
Safety and resilience	Significant improvement
Sustainability	Neutral

Actions:

Analyse crash data to develop a baseline of road safety for the region, identify crash hot-spots and prioritise potential treatments to reduce or mitigate risks.

Engage with DTP/TfNSW on corridor strategies and regional road safety plans and advocate for the delivery of priority upgrades.

Advocate for new and improved rest areas for vehicles and freight.

Priority 5: Mildura freight links

Introduce freight link to reduce heavy vehicle traffic through central Mildura.

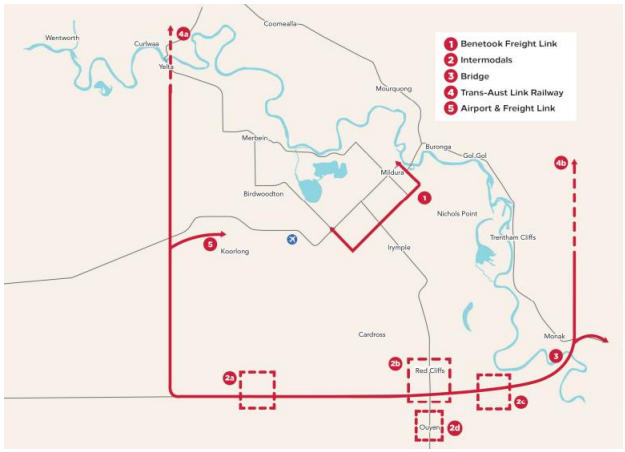
The Mildura Rural City Council accounts for a large proportion of agricultural production in the Central Murray Region and comprises half of the region's population. Freight movements are vital to the economy but trucks and trains moving through the Mildura urban area have negative impacts on amenity, increase safety risks and increase costs for freight operators because of increased journey times. Freight trains operating to the Merbein Intermodal Terminal which are required to travel through Mildura, travel through 22 level crossings in Mildura urban area, increasing travel times for freight customers and residents. This also impacts on the ability to grow the share of freight transported on rail because additional travel time increases train cycle times.

Mildura Rural City Council has identified five key enabler projects which aim to increase rail freight uptake and enhance amenity impacts on local streets. These are:

1. The Benetook Freight Link
2. Intermodal Terminal and Industrial Parks
3. A Bridge Crossing at Monak
4. Connection to the Trans-Australian Railway
5. Mildura Airport and Freight Link.

The enabler projects include a bypass of the town centre for the Sturt Highway, a proposal to relocate the Merbein IMT and GrainCorp operations at Yelta to Thurla, an area located to the south of Mildura. A new IMT and freight precinct at Thurla is expected to have the capacity of taking even longer trains (up to 2000m) to allow for the eventual connection to the national standard gauge network through a link with the Trans-Australian Railway. Similarly, storage and handling of LCL (less than container load) cargo is currently less efficient than through purposely designed facilities.

Mildura Freight Link Projects[1]



Alignment with goals

Access	Significant improvement
Mobility	Improvement
Safety and resilience	Improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Advocate for funding to investigate and deliver projects to improve freight access at Mildura and enhance amenity impacts on local streets.

30

1. Mildura City Council (2024) Draft Mildura Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy, p.14

Priority 6: New and improved regional public transport

Improve passenger rail services between Swan Hill and Bendigo, and advocate for a passenger rail service to Mildura.

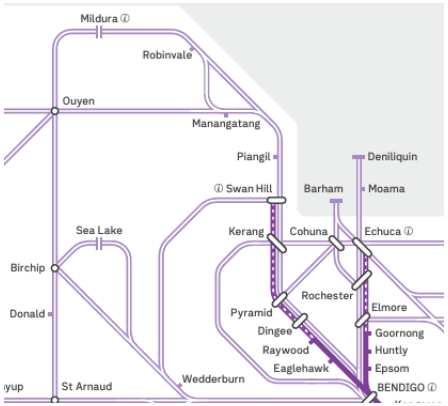
The recent North West Victoria Regional Transport Study[1] found that North West Victoria's passenger transport system suffers from a number of notable deficiencies including not having a rail passenger service, limited inter and intra-regional bus services and expensive air services.

The Victorian Regional Development Plan indicates that Swan Hill will receive 3 to 5 services per day, which Ararat already receives on weekdays. With this uplift to the Swan Hill line, a redesign of the coach network could be undertaken to meet the principles above, and enable better connectivity for the region, both for residents and tourism, and enable connections to the two largest inland cities in Victoria (Ballarat and Bendigo). The increase in the number of services on the Swan Hill services and enhanced coach services with better linkages to the Ararat line, with appropriately timed services will also improve tourism within the region, without a private vehicle. Tourism is a major potential growth industry, given the mild climate, and highly productive and premium agricultural produce. Similar agriculture tourism examples would be Orange; Wagga Wagga; and the North-East valley regions.

Mildura is currently the only regional city in Victoria without a passenger rail service. Two direct rail services between Swan Hill and Melbourne operate each day but the timing of these cause challenges for passengers, particularly the evening train from Melbourne which does not arrive in Swan Hill until almost 11.00 pm.

More frequent shuttle services to and from Bendigo (see map at right) would provide residents with greater choice and minimise the need for connecting coach travel. The North West Victoria Regional Transport Study recommended that a series of 'quick-wins' including further investigation of a passenger trail service to Mildura. Subsidisation of flights between Mildura and Melbourne could also be considered, as part of the public transport network. Similar programs already exist in NSW, Queensland and Western Australia, to enable maximum connectivity.

Passenger rail connection to Swan Hill[2]



Alignment with goals

Access	Neutral
Mobility	Significant improvement
Safety and resilience	Improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Advocate with Loddon-Campaspe to DTP for improvements to services to provide a shuttle-style passenger service to operate between Swan Hill and Bendigo.

Advocate for funding from DTP to assess demand and benefits of a passenger rail service to Mildura and other options to improve regional accessibility.

Advocate for subsidised flights from Mildura to Melbourne, like access programs within WA, NSW and Queensland.

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1. Tonkin (2022) North West Regional Victoria Passenger Study, report prepared for Mildura City Council
2. Public Transport Victoria (2024) Network Map [online]

Priority 7: Improved local bus services and active transport

Improve the bus services and active transport networks in regional centres, including Mildura, Swan Hill and Moama-Echuca.

Regional towns and cities experience various accessibility challenges. Dwelling density in small population centres is typically low, creating long distances between where people live and where they work and access services. This makes residents overly reliant on car travel. Residents that cannot afford a car or are limited on how much they can use a car may have fewer options, and it may not be practical or cost effective for councils to fund public transport services to meet these needs.

Integrated Land Use Strategies currently being developed by Mildura and Swan Hill are considering connectivity between townships as well as improvements to increase accessibility within them. Targeted improvements to existing bus services and new mobility services, such as community and on-demand transport are being considered and will become increasingly important to service the needs of aging populations.

Active modes of transport such as walking and cycling, are important for improving the health and wellbeing of regional communities and allow aging in place (see page 12). In many regional centres, pedestrians and bicycle riders are not provided with sufficient road space, priority, or segregation through the design of the network.[1] This makes active transport less attractive and can place pedestrian and cyclists at risk. Between 2014 and 2019, the MRCC community saw 45 crashes involving pedestrians. Of these crashes, 15 resulted in serious injuries to pedestrians.[2]

Bicycles are an efficient and low-cost transport option, ideal for use in Mildura's towns due to their small geographic size. However a lack of bicycle lanes in and around townships discourages residents to ride bicycles for daily travel.[2] Broader strategies for improving urban amenity and the health and wellbeing of communities such as initiatives to make more inclusive public spaces, establishing better walking and bicycle networks within centres throughout the Central Murray region, and reduce the need for more expensive mobility solutions such bus services.

Alignment with goals

Access	Neutral
Mobility	Significant improvement
Safety and resilience	Improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Engage with DTP/TfNSW on strategies to reduce transport disadvantage.

Establish a council working group to identify opportunities for improving the public transport services within and between centres.

Undertake a comprehensive review of existing bus routes and services.

Identify and deliver improvements to active transport networks in line with Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategies.

Advocate for greater funding for active transport projects throughout the region.

1. Mildura City Council (2024) Draft Mildura Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy, p.28
2. Ibid
3. Ibid

Priority 8: Road improvements for enhanced transport safety and access

Identify key intersections in the network, improvements to culvert structures along with other road improvements to enhance transport safety in the region.

Various Intersections and roundabouts across the region have limitations. While these do not always restrict heavy vehicle access, many intersections require improvements to make them more suitable for longer vehicles and to minimse the risk of damage to road infrastructure (e.g. insufficient space for the swept path of PBS vehicles). In other cases, design limitations of some intersections limit the efficient movement of people and vehicles resulting in localised congestion during some times of the day.

Priority intersections that have been identified by Central Murray Councils include:

- Intersections of Gray St and the Murray Valley Highway and Murlong and McCallum St
- The intersection of Murray Valley Highway & Wellington St to improve traffic flow and safety by reconfiguring the layout to accommodate larger vehicles and enhancing pedestrian pathways. It includes drainage upgrades to manage stormwater, reducing flooding risks, and traffic calming measures to lower vehicle speeds, creating a safer environment for all users. The project is investment ready with construction designs and costings.
- Five Way intersection Birchip (Sunraysia, Cumming Avenue, Corack Road and Birchip-Wycheproof Road)
- Signalisation at Deakin and 16th Street, and Benetook and 11th Street
- All Y intersections throughout Buloke shire including Birchip Wycheproof Road and Donald-Swan Hill Road.

Existing local government road funding programs are overly restrictive and limit the number of intersections that can be improved. For example, the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program is limited to intersections of local council roads and does not allow local councils to nominate intersections that interface with state roads. In many cases it is the intersections with state roads that experience the most challenges and have the greater impact on road users given they have larger numbers of vehicles using them compared to many local councils. Amendments to funding criteria could allow issues with regionally significant intersections to be addressed more quickly.

Many roads in the region are unsealed, or sealed to widths that do not meet modern standards and require targeted improvements to ensure that they meet new and changed travel demands. The new almond processing plant is a case in point – where transport routes have changed to accommodate a new use.

The variability of the road width and whether it is sealed or unsealed can change intersection to intersection, which also increases safety risks, risk taking and fatigue. Targeted improvements including signage, speed changes and other low cost solutions can improve safety.

Alignment with goals

Access	Significant improvement
Mobility	Improvement
Safety and resilience	Significant improvement
Sustainability	Neutral

Actions:

Improve critical intersections in towns to improve road safety and travel times.

Implement movement and place on all roads to ensure the right road, right treatment in the right place.

Advocate for changes to the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program to enable improvements to intersections of state and local roads.

Identify and advocate for tactical sealing of unsealed roads to improve safety based on changed travel patterns and tourism destinations.

Identify improvements required to irrigation structures and work with irrigation authorities to advocate for improvements.

Examples of areas in the Central Murray region with variable road widths, showing sealed and unsealed roads





1. Murray Valley Highway at Lake Charm showing variable road widths with sealed and unsealed roads (nearmap)
2. Balranald outskirts showing differences in road widths, construction and sealing within intersections (nearmap)

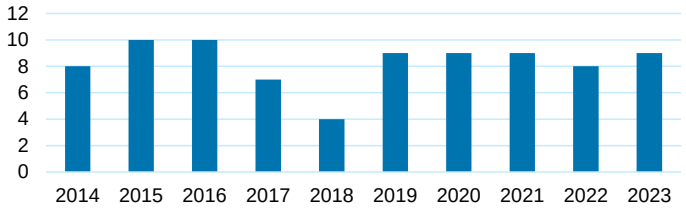
Priority 9: Climate change resilience and adaptation

Improve flood resilience to the Murray Valley Highway between Kerang and Swan Hill by upgrading Wandella creek culvert crossing to a bridge and raising the bridge over the Loddon River at Kerang township.

Climate change is already impacting the Central Murray region, along with most other parts of Australia. Bushfires and floods in particular pose a significant risk to accessibility and safety in the region. Over the past 10 years in Victoria there have consistently been 8-10 declared natural disasters annually, highlighting the need to better understand and improve infrastructure resilience. In surrounding areas such as the Goulburn Valley and Eastern Murray Basin, there have been multiple major flooding events which significantly affected residents, producers and employers. This is a portent of what may occur with increased heatwaves and flooding rains in the Central Murray Basin.

When floods occur Kerang township is completely isolated for up to several days, posing a safety and accessibility risk as well as impacting on the local economy and hindering freight productivity. This is only expected to increase in the future with climate change. The Patchell Bridge at Loddon River could be raised to improve flood resilience of Kerang, as shown in the map at right.

Declared natural disasters in Victoria, 2014-2023



Source: Australian disasters (disasterassist.gov.au)

Patchell Bridge



Alignment with goals

Access	Improvement
Mobility	Improvement
Safety and resilience	Significant improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Assess the economic and social costs of communities such as Kerang being inaccessible because of natural disasters and develop proposal for improvements.

Assess the flood resilience of roads and rail lines in the region and identify how to proactively upgrade and repair for the ‘new normal’.

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Priority 10: Supporting new industries

Advocate for co-ordinated planning of mineral sands projects to enable efficient, safe and sustainable freight transport solutions, enabling new industries, and minimising their impact on infrastructure and safety.

Support other growth industries (e.g. Almond processing) through ongoing engagement with industry.

Identify and support other potential growth industries in the region, such as sustainable energy generation and storage.

Assess the implications of zero and low emission trucks for local roads and identify opportunities to support increased use of electric vehicles.

New and emerging industries will impact on the transport sector of the Central Murray region, creating both challenges and opportunities.

The almond processing plant in Murray River is already operational and upon planned expansion will take on processing of the almond crop for a significant portion of southern NSW. This will create significant freight growth in the area.

Upcoming mineral sands projects in the Central Murray region will also create large additional freight volumes. Indicative analysis shows that if all the mineral sands mines that are currently under investigation were to be operational, this would add as much as 1 million tonnes of processed bulk materials on transport networks per annum. If the 1 million tonnes of processed bulk material in this scenario were to be transported exclusively on the road network by 9-Axle B-doubles operating at HML, the estimated cost of pavement wear to transport the material could amount to $11 million annually.

Minimising road freight movements and maximising rail freight will help to minimise damage to road networks and road safety risks, and maximise supply chain efficiency.

The rising electric vehicle uptake in Australia is another emerging industry for the region. In the year to March 2024, electric vehicle sales in Australia rose by 120%, with a total of more than 180,000 EVs on Australian roads[1]. The availability of charging infrastructure will have an increasing impact on tourism for the region.

Alignment with goals

Access	Improvement
Mobility	Neutral
Safety and resilience	Improvement
Sustainability	Improvement

Actions:

Advocate for the development of a mineral sands transport strategy with Resources Victoria and DTP.

Engage with state road managers and the Commonwealth on freight decarbonisation initiatives.

Explore opportunities for funding work to assess the implications of zero and low emission trucks on local roads.

Engage with state road agencies and motoring groups to identify opportunities to improve EV charging infrastructure to support regional tourism.

Trials to improve infrastructure sustainability (e.g. increased recycled materials in road resurfacing).

1. The Guardian (2024) "'No longer a novelty': massive rise in Australian EV sales, industry report finds"

4 Implementing the Strategy

A key focus will be on enhancing the evidence base on regional transport to assist in advocating for priorities and demonstrating the benefits of transport improvements.

Many of the priorities identified in this strategy relate to assets that are owned and managed by other government entities. For priorities that involve upgrades to local roads will require funding support from state and federal government given local government resource constraints.

The Central Murray Regional Transport Forum will continue to advocate jointly for major transport infrastructure projects and service delivery improvements, seek funding for infrastructure projects and additional studies and will collaborate to further refine priorities.

A key focus of the Forum will be on enhancing the evidence base on regional transport to assist in advocating for priorities and demonstrating the benefits of transport improvements. This includes developing performance indicators (as shown on page 8) that can help councils better understand the effectiveness of transport and progress in achieving the goals in this plan.

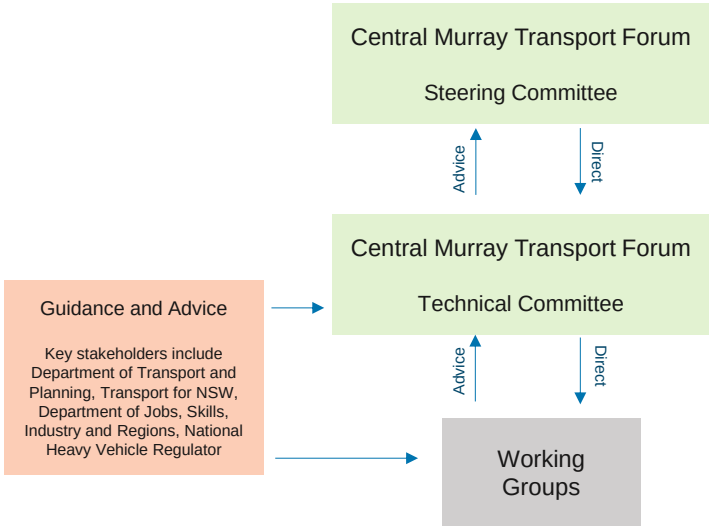
The existing governance structure for the Forum will be retained for the delivery of the Strategy. Opportunities exist, however, for improved collaboration and possibly joint projects with neighbouring regional transport bodies, particularly where common issues have been identified.

The Technical Committee will be responsible for delivery of the strategy under the oversight of the Steering Committee. The Technical Committee will convene working groups to examine specific issues (e.g., heavy vehicle access) where this can assist with implementation. Industry representatives and other government agencies will be included in working groups as appropriate.

An implementation action plan will be developed by the Technical Committee which includes key tasks, lead responsibility, stakeholders and timelines. This will be reviewed regularly as work progresses.

The governance structure will also be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Governance of the Central Murray Regional Transport Forum



Actions:

Develop an implementation plan and convene working groups to improve collaboration between councils and with stakeholders.

Improve the evidence base on regional transport and develop performance indicators.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Population Projections Methodology

The population projections for each local council have been taken from the Victorian State Governments Victoria in the Future 2023 Report and the NSW Planning Departments 2022 NSW Common Planning Assumption Projections for year ending 30 June data. The population projections for local councils in Victoria were available in 5-year intervals with 2021 as the base year, linear interpolation was to determine the population numbers for the years within each 5-year interval. The population projections for NSW were taken straight from the data source. The population projections for each local council were summed to calculate the projected population for the Central Murray Region.

Appendix B: IO Modelling assumptions and limitations

IO analysis assumptions:

Input-output modelling has some basic assumptions:

- There is a fixed input structure in each industry, described by fixed technological coefficients;
- All products of an industry are identical or are made in fixed proportion to each other;
- Each industry exhibits constant returns to scale in production;
- The method assumes unlimited labour, and capital is available at fixed prices;
- There are no other constraints, such as the balance of payments or the actions of government, on the response of each industry to a stimulus.

IO analysis limitations:

Input-output modelling is useful analysis in ascertaining the potential economic impact of spending in a certain industry at a point in time and provides a useful preliminary evidence case for carrying out further detailed studies. This being said, IO modelling has some inherent limitations, some of which are listed below:

- IO analysis underlying multiplier results describe average effects, not marginal effects, and therefore do not account for economies of scale, unused capacity or technological change.
- IO analysis' underlying multiplier results only account for one form of interdependence – the sales and purchase links between industries. All other interdependencies in an economy are not considered.
- IO analysis tends to overstate the potential impact of final demand stimulus.
- IO analysis' underlying multiplier results do not account for pre-existing conditions. For example, the implicit assumption for new employment is that those taken into employment were previously unemployed and therefore were consuming nothing. This is obviously not the case. Employment, output, and income responses therefore tend to be further overstated.

As such, IO results should not be the sole evidence for investment and policy decisions and should be accompanied by other economic investigations.

Appendix C: Total Gross Agricultural Production Value

The Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced (VACP) 2020-2021 ABS data set was used to calculate the total gross value of principal agricultural commodities for each LGA in the Central Murray Region, and then summed to determine the total gross production value of agricultural commodities for each LGA . VACP is derived using gross prices to calculate a weighted average commodity price per tonne and then multiplying this by the quantity of the commodity produced (except for livestock which is calculated using adjustments from the Livestock Products quarterly survey and ABS export data values). Despite the availability of a VACP 2021-2022 data set, the 2020-2021 data set was chosen for its completeness due to its base year aligning with the most recent ABS Agricultural Census.

Using the VACP 2020-2021 data set, the total gross production value of each principal commodity group was calculated for each LGA within the Central Murray Region, New South Wales and Victoria. For each respective commodity the gross production value for each LGA within the Central Murray Region was calculated and summed to determine the gross production value for the entire region. For each commodity, the total gross production value for the Central Murray region was then compared to the total gross production value for that commodity for all of NSW and all of VIC separately. For example, the total gross production value of broadacre crops within the Central Murray Region was divided by the total gross production value of broadacre crops within the whole of NSW to derive a representative percentage of the proportion of the value of broadacre crops within the state that is attributed to the Central Murray Region (the same process was done for VIC).

Appendix D Mineral sands projects and intermodal terminals

Proposed Mineral Sands Mines in the Central Murray region[1]

Company	Project	Estimated commence date	Estimated mine life	Deposits (approximation)	Estimated annual yield
VHM Limited	**Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths**	2025	20 years+	199 Mt of ore	5 Mt of ore
Astron corporation limited	**Donald Mineral Sands and Rare Earth**	2025 (ore production) With 2 phases	40 years+	Over 2,634 million tonnes of Mineral Resource, consisting of 2 deposits	7.5Mt of ore (250-300 ktpa-HMC production)
ACDC Metals	**Goschen Central Mineral Sands**	Under investigation			
Iluka Resources Limited	**Balranald Mineral Sands**	2023 Production-2025	9.5 years (initial estimate)	West Balranald: total 36.8 Mt	1 Mt of ore, producing 0.5 Mt of HMC.
Iluka Resources Limited	**Euston Critical Minerals Project**	Under investigation			

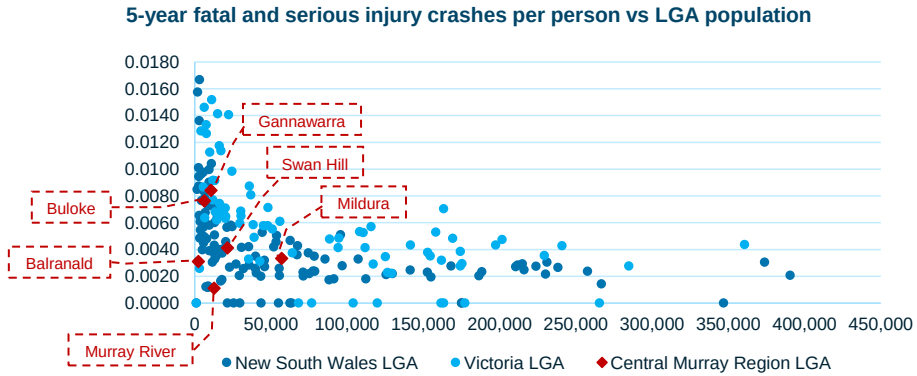
Intermodal Freight Terminals in the Central Murray region

Terminal	Location and LGA	Commodities	Services
Merbein Intermodal Terminal (Seaway/Pacific National)	Merbein, Mildura	• Cold chain services for fresh produce including almonds, citrus, stone fruit and other export commodities from the region to the Ports. • Export of grain from the region, including consolidation and packing services • Containerised bulk liquid movements from the region, for commodities such wine. • General containerised freight imported into the Mallee region.	3 return standard gauge services per week to Port of Melbourne
Ultima Intermodal Terminal (Pickering Transport/Qube)	Ultima, Swan Hill	• Containerised grain • Compressed and containerised hay (currently not in production) from local farms for export to Asian markets	2 return board gauge services per week to Port of Melbourne
Peaco Ltd	Donald, Buloke	• Containerised lentils and pulses	3 return standard gauge services per week to Port of Melbourne (added to Merbein train)
Other consolidation and container loading sites	Various	Various grain receival, processing and storage sites in the Central Murray region that facilitate the consolidation and transport of bulk grain and oilseed products grown in the Mallee region to the Ports of Geelong and Melbourne for exports. These are sites primarily operated by agricultural commodity firms such as GrainCorp, Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC), and Cargill.	Various – services vary by time of year and are subject to grain volumes and export prices

1. Note: These freight task estimates assume that the extracted product is refined and processed on site, avoiding the need to transport the unrefined extracted materials. If extracted materials need to be transported to another facility domestically or internationally for refinement, this will increase the freight task significantly, since refined product only translates to between 2% to 4% of extracted ore.

Appendix E: Road Safety within the Central Murray Region

NSW Crash Data (2022) and Victora Road Crash Data (2023) was used to calculate the total number of crashes and total number of fatal and serious injury crashes for each LGA within the Central Murray region. The analysis considered annual crashes from 2018-2022. These figures were then divided by the average population from the same 5-year period for each LGA, taken from the *ABS Population estimates by LGA 2001 to 2023*[3] to determine the total crashes per person and the fatal and serious injury per person crash rates for the LGA's in the Central Murray Region, and the rest of NSW and VIC.



8.2.3 EXPANSION OF TEMPORARY INCREASE TO CEO FINANCIAL DELEGATION

Author's Title: Senior Manager Assets and Delivery

Directorate: Infrastructure and Delivery ***File No:*** PE/02/01

Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Strategic Objective: Council leadership and engagement
Responsible leadership and decision making

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to expand the scope of the temporary increased financial delegation previously granted to the Chief Executive Officer to include additional Australian Government Reference Number (AGRN) disaster events declared since Council's original resolution of 17 December 2025.

SUMMARY

Council previously approved a temporary increase to the Chief Executive Officer's financial delegation to facilitate the efficient delivery of disaster recovery projects arising from AGRN 1037, AGRN 1096 and AGRN 1108, and other flood related projects at the Council Meeting held on 17 December 2025.

Since that resolution, additional disaster events have been declared within the municipality and are expected to generate further infrastructure restoration, emergency response and recovery works funded through State and Commonwealth disaster recovery programs.

The current Council resolution is limited to the AGRN events specifically identified at the time of adoption.

To ensure efficient delivery of recovery works and avoid unnecessary delays in procurement and contract awards, it is proposed that Council expand the scope of the existing delegation to include additional AGRN events and any future AGRN declarations occurring before the delegation expires.

The proposed amendment does not increase the delegation amount previously approved by Council. It only expands the categories of eligible recovery works that can utilise the existing delegation, and the timeframe for which the temporary delegation applies.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes that Council previously resolved to increase the Chief Executive Officer's financial delegation from $300,000 (excluding GST) to $1,500,000 (excluding GST) for the procurement of goods, services and works associated with AGRN 1037, AGRN 1096 and AGRN 1108.
2. Notes that Council previously resolved to authorise the temporary increase of the CEO financial delegation up to 30 June 2027, or earlier by resolution of Council.
3. Authorises the expansion of the conditions associated with the exercising of the increased financial delegation of $1,500.000 (excluding GST) to include;
    a. AGRN 1270 (March 2026 Flooding Event)
    b. AGRN 1294 (August 2026 Flooding Event)

c. Any additional AGRN events declared within the Shire of Buloke and approved under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) until the expire of the delegation.

4. Authorises the extension of the period for which the temporary increase of the CEO financial delegation can apply through to 31 December 2027.

5. Confirms that all other conditions of Council's original resolution remain unchanged.

6. Continues to receive reports identifying contracts awarded under the temporary increased delegation at the next available Council Meeting.

DISCUSSION

At its meeting of 17 December 2026, Council resolved to temporarily increase the Chief Executive Officer's financial delegation from $300,000 (excluding GST) to $1,500,000 (excluding GST) for procurement associated with disaster recovery and flood related projects. The resolution made at this meeting was;

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Increase the Financial Delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer from $300,000 (excluding GST) to $1,500,000 (excluding GST).*
2. *Authorised the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the increased financial delegation of $1,500,000 (excluding GST) for the procurement of goods, services and works only when the following conditions are satisfied:*
    a. *contracts and works are directly related to projects associated with the 2022 and 2023 flood events, namely;*
        i. *AGRN 1037 (October 2022 Flooding Event).*
        ii. *AGRN 1096 (December 2023 Flooding Event).*
    b. *Council Flood Support Fund Approved Works Schedule (AGRN 1037, AGRN 1096, AGRN 1108).*
    c. *Funded flood studies and Laser imaging Detection and Ranging projects (funded due to the 2022 and 2023 flood events).*
3. *Receive a report at the next available Council Meeting clearly identifying each Contract awarded via the exercising of the temporary increased financial delegation.*
4. *Authorises the temporary increase of the CEO financial delegation up to 30 June 2027, or earlier by resolution of Council.*

MOVED: Cr Alan Getley

SECONDED: Cr Bruce Stafford

CARRIED.

(R/25/135)

The purpose of the increased delegation was to enable the timely engagement of contractors, consultants and service providers required to deliver restoration programs funded under disaster recovery arrangements.

Since Council adopted the resolution, further natural disaster events have occurred, and additional funding opportunities are anticipated through State and Commonwealth recovery programs.

The scale and complexity of flood and storm recovery works within the municipality continues to place significant demands on Council's resources and procurement processes.

Disaster recovery funding programs generally operate within prescribed delivery timeframes and require works to be completed in accordance with approved schedules. Delays in procurement and contract execution can affect Council's ability to meet program milestones and funding requirements.

The original resolution achieved its intended objective by allowing recovery works associated with specified AGRN events to proceed more efficiently while maintaining transparency through reporting to Council.

However, the wording of the current resolution restricts the delegation to a specified list of AGRN events and limits the timeframe for when the temporary delegation increase will expire.

As new disaster events are declared, Council is required to consider additional reports to amend the resolution before recovery works can proceed under the higher delegation threshold. Extending the scope of the delegation to include additional AGRN events and extend the period the temporary delegation increase can apply will:

- improve responsiveness to disaster recovery requirements;
- reduce administrative delays associated with repeated Council reports;
- support the timely delivery of externally funded recovery works;
- maintain consistency in procurement decision-making; and
- continue to provide Council oversight through regular reporting requirements.

The proposed change is administrative in nature and does not alter Council's governance framework, procurement policies or reporting obligations.

RELEVANT LAW

The tender processes were conducted in accordance with the requirements of the :

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Council's Procurement Policy

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council considered this matter and carried the following Motion at the 17 December 2025 Council Meeting;

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Increase the Financial Delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer from $300,000 (excluding GST) to $1,500,000 (excluding GST).*
2. *Authorised the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the increased financial delegation of $1,500,000 (excluding GST) for the procurement of goods, services and works only when the following conditions are satisfied:*
    a. *contracts and works are directly related to projects associated with the 2022 and 2023 flood events, namely;*
        i. *AGRN 1037 (October 2022 Flooding Event).*
        ii. *AGRN 1096 (December 2023 Flooding Event).*
    b. *Council Flood Support Fund Approved Works Schedule (AGRN 1037, AGRN 1096, AGRN 1108).*

c. Funded flood studies and Laser imaging Detection and Ranging projects (funded due to the 2022 and 2023 flood events).

3. *Receive a report at the next available Council Meeting clearly identifying each Contract awarded via the exercising of the temporary increased financial delegation.*
4. *Authorises the temporary increase of the CEO financial delegation up to 30 June 2027, or earlier by resolution of Council.*

MOVED: Cr Alan Getley

SECONDED: Cr Bruce Stafford

CARRIED.

(R/25/135)

OPTIONS

Option 1:

Council approves the expansion of the current resolution carried at the 17 December 2025 Council Meeting to make provision for additional declared disaster events and extend the period of time for which the temporary financial delegation increase will apply.

Option 2:

Council does not approve the expansion of the current resolution carried at the 17 December 2025 Council Meeting.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no identified sustainability implications relating to this matter.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable to this report.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

There are no innovation and/or continuous improvement opportunities identified relating to this matter.

COLLABORATION

Not applicable to this report.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

There would be no financial implications if the financial delegations are expanded as detailed within this report.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not applicable to this report.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Council's Procurement Policy

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

The consideration of this matter in an open Council Meeting ensures Council decisions are made in full view of the community.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officer declared an interest under the *Local Government Act 2020* in the preparation of this report.

Attachments: Nil

8.3 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Nil.

8.4 ORGANISATIONAL REPORTS

8.4.1 BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL DRAFT 2026 STATE ELECTION ADVOCACY

Author's Title: Executive Lead Regional Growth and Strategic Advocacy

Directorate: Regional Growth and Strategic Advocacy ***File No:*** GR/17/11

Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Strategic Objective: Council leadership and engagement
Advocacy and partnering to deliver priorities

PURPOSE

To provide Buloke Shire Council with a Draft 2026 State Election Advocacy Document to adopt and present to potential political candidates and senior bureaucrats.

SUMMARY

The upcoming 2026 State Election provides an opportunity for Buloke Shire Council to advocate to prospective political candidates on key priorities across the Shire. The attached draft 2026 State Election Advocacy document provides a basis for this targeted advocacy seeking election commitments.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Draft 2026 State Election Advocacy Document as attached.

DISCUSSION

Buloke Shire Council is one of 79 Local Government Authorities (LGAs) across Victoria vying for the attention of political candidates in the lead up to the 2026 State Election to be held Saturday 28 November 2026.

As part of the election campaign period, Councilors and Council Staff are meeting with a range of candidates to ensure they understand the priorities of Council.

The draft 2026 State Election Advocacy Document sets out the priority projects taken from a Community Plans, the Council Plan 2025-2029 and adopted policies and strategies by Buloke Shire Council.

The document is intended to make it as accessible and efficient as possible for candidates to understand the key projects that could form an election commitment in Buloke Shire Council. It is not intended to limit any additional advocacy efforts across government and parliament, and a larger Buloke Advocacy Strategy will be developed in 2027 considering several Council based strategies that are currently in the community for consultation.

The priorities identified in each of the five larger communities reflect community and Council priorities whilst also aligning with state priorities across recreation, housing, industrial precinct development and there is also a heavy focus on roads given its critical importance across the LGA.

RELEVANT LAW

The *Local Government Act 2020* sets out the role of Council and section 9 (b) describes one of those roles is:

Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;

In adopting the draft 2026 State Election Advocacy Document, Council is ensuring it is advocating for the community and progressing the community's strategic direction.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Not applicable.

OPTIONS

Council does not support the 2026 State Election Advocacy Document or;

Council makes amendments to the proposed 2026 State Election Advocacy Document.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The projects contained in the 2026 State Election Advocacy Document have a range of sustainability implications, including any built outcomes meeting environmental sustainability requirements and lower emissions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The priorities set out in the 2026 State Election Advocacy Document are collectively taken from a range of Council documents that have been the result of community engagement including Master planning, community plans, and Councilor informed input.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Buloke Shire Council has previously developed advocacy documents and specifically documents for the federal election. This document builds on that by having a state election focused document.

COLLABORATION

The Draft 2026 State Election Advocacy Document has been developed with local and regional community stakeholders including regional transport groups, emergency and recreational bodies, our business community and Rail Freight Alliance. Seeking to have these projects funded by State government through relevant departments including Sport and Recreation Victoria and Regional Development Victoria demonstrates alignment with the state's strategic direction.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Buloke Shire Council is heavily reliant on external funding to ensure appropriate assets in the community, including renewal and new infrastructure. The need for capital funding across recreation, housing, aerodromes, civic centers and the significant road networks is a priority of Council and the 2026 State Election Advocacy Document aligns with Councils 10-year financial plan. Any funding received aligns with Council adopted plans and strategies, and whole life costs have been factored in.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Resource Ready - North-Western Victoria Energy & Mining Impact & Readiness Strategy 2026 Plan for Victoria

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Council Plan 2025-2029

Council leadership and engagement - Advocacy and partnering to deliver priorities

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

The 2026 State Election Advocacy Document has been prepared in consultation with Councilors and Council staff with reliance on Council Strategies, Community Plans, and ongoing alignment with existing local and regional priorities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No member of Council staff that has prepared this document has a conflict of interest in relation to this matter.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 8.4.1.1 - Buloke Advocacy 2026

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL 2026 STATE ELECTION COMMITMENT ADVOCACY



BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL
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BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL 2026 STATE ELECTION COMMITMENT ADVOCACY



SEA LAKE

COST: $2.2 MILLION
ASK: $2.155 MILLION

Sea Lake Aerodrome is the northern anchor of Buloke Shire's emergency response network. It is the priority base for Country Fire Authority aerial firefighting across a large catchment in the northwest of the Shire and broader region. It also supports agricultural aviation and provides emergency access for a dispersed community facing long travel distances to health services. However, its unsealed runway loses grass cover, requires regular maintenance and becomes unusable after minor rainfall. The site has no helipad and the existing surface is unsuitable for helicopter landings.

The proposed investment will chip seal the existing 1,040 metre east-west runway, provide a sealed taxiway and apron, improve drainage and construct a compliant concrete helipad with shelter and access road. These works will give emergency services a reliable all-weather facility when it matters most. A sealed surface will also reduce the recurring maintenance burden and strengthen aerial firefighting and agricultural operations. The helipad closes the remaining gap in the Shire's helicopter network, supporting patient transfers and emergency response across the north. Reliable access protects lives and livelihoods in a region exposed to bushfire, flood and extreme heat. This is a targeted, practical investment that addresses an immediate safety and operational need. It is the recommended first stage of works under the Aerodrome Strategy.

BIRCHIP COMMUNITY HOUSING

COST: $1.5 MILLION
ASK: $1 MILLION

Birchip Community Housing is aimed at furthering the housing initiative that has been in place in Birchip for close to forty years, providing suitable and affordable housing for people to age in place. Building on the existing house stock in the community and addressing the substantial demand for more housing, the Birchip Community Housing group is seeking funding to build an additional 4 Two-bedroom units.

The $1.5 million would see the delivery of these 4 Two-bedroom units on a central town allotment and allow for additional existing housing stock to be released back into the community for use alongside providing ongoing resilience and community strengthening

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL

WYCHEPROOF
Wycheproof Recreation Reserve

COST: $11 MILLION
ASK: $2 MILLION

The Wycheproof Recreation Reserve, located on the Calder Highway, is a cornerstone of community life in Buloke Shire—supporting sport, recreation and social connection for residents and visitors alike. The reserve services a wide range of activities, including football, netball, cricket, tennis, hockey, bowls, croquet, golf and horse racing, alongside informal recreation such as swimming, walking and jogging. This breadth of use makes it one of the Shire's most important multi-purpose community assets. However, ageing infrastructure is limiting its capacity to meet current standards and community expectations.

Existing facilities constrain participation, reduce the ability to host regional events, and fall short of providing inclusive, safe and modern amenities. Without investment, the reserve's role as a community hub will continue to decline. A clear, staged pathway for renewal is already in place through the adopted Master Plan. Priorities include a modern multi-sport change facility, upgraded playing surfaces and targeted improvements across six pavilions. These works will significantly enhance accessibility, participation and the overall user experience. Investment in the reserve will deliver strong returns—strengthening community cohesion, improving health and wellbeing, and attracting visitors and regional events that support the local economy. Most importantly, it will secure the long-term sustainability of a vital community asset.

CHARLTON
Charlton Civic Rejuvenation

COST: $600,000
ASK: $300,000

The Charlton Civic Rejuvenation project is a township-wide strategic planning process designed to develop a shared vision for the future of Charlton's community infrastructure. Led by Buloke Shire Council, the process will engage a broad cross-section of the Charlton community to determine what a reimagined civic heart for the township should look like, one that is safe, accessible, multi-purpose and reflective of the community's priorities.

Charlton is a resilient rural township with a strong community identity, deep volunteer culture and natural amenity that makes it a genuinely attractive place to live. However, like many small towns across regional Victoria, its community infrastructure has not kept pace with evolving community needs and expectations. The Charlton Shire Hall, long a centrepiece of community life is no longer able to fulfil that role and the broader network of township facilities requires a strategic rethink to serve current and future generations.

Investment in this project will deliver a renewed community hub that strengthens social connection, supports local economic activity, and creates the conditions for Charlton to attract and retain the residents and families it needs to thrive. Critically, it will secure the long-term co-location and sustainability of essential community services including Council administration, library services and programs delivered through the Charlton Neighbourhood House and Senior Citizens facilities in a new facility that is fit for purpose for the decades ahead.

DONALD
Powering the Donald Industrial Estate

COST: $9 MILLION
ASK: $1.5 MILLION

The Dondd Industrial Area is a suitable location for renewed power infrastructure due to its established industrial land use, proximity to existing road and rail infrastructure, and ability to further economic activity across the Shire. The site is already designated for industry and manufacturing uses and accommodates existing businesses. The presence of established industry demonstrates suitability of the land for employment-generating activities and additional energy supply supports its ongoing use for industrial development.

GWM Water, Buloke Shire Council and Powercor have developed a micro grid solution for the Donald Industrial Estate that would increase the electricity available to new and existing business growth. Funding is being sought via the Federal government through ARENA with the design and consultation having occurred and connection consent provided by Powercor.

BULOKE ROAD NETWORK:
Heavy Plant

COST: $12.5 MILLION
ASK: $4.5 MILLION

Buloke Shire's heavy plant and equipment fleet is critical to delivering essential services, including road maintenance, drainage and community infrastructure. However, much of the fleet has reached or exceeded its useful life, leading to increasing breakdowns, higher maintenance costs and declining operational efficiency. This ageing fleet is now a direct risk to service delivery. Equipment failures delay critical works, reduce productivity and increase reliance on expensive repairs and contractors—placing growing pressure on Council's limited resources. Without timely replacement, these challenges will continue to escalate. Targeted investment will enable the renewal of key assets, including graders, loaders, trucks and water carts, with modern, fuel-efficient machinery. The introduction of GPS and telematics will further strengthen asset management, enabling real-time monitoring, improved planning and data-driven decision-making.

New equipment will also meet contemporary safety and environmental standards, reducing risk and improving operator safety. A modernised fleet will deliver immediate and long-term benefits—improving reliability, reducing downtime and enabling faster, more cost-effective delivery of infrastructure works. It will also support a more sustainable, planned approach to future asset management. Importantly, this investment will deliver strong economic returns, with an estimated $3–4 million injected into the regional economy and new employment opportunities created through procurement and commissioning. Over time, increased productivity and reduced operating costs will further support Buloke Shire's economic resilience. This is a practical, high-value investment that will secure service delivery, strengthen financial sustainability and ensure Council can continue to meet the infrastructure needs of its community.

DRFA

COST: $60 MILLION
ASK: $60 MILLION

Buloke Shire Council is facing a critical disaster recovery funding shortfall following consecutive flood events in October 2022 and December 2023. These events caused widespread and compounding damage across the Shire's 5,300-kilometre rural road network—an essential backbone for freight, agriculture, emergency response, school transport and daily connectivity for a dispersed population of 6,000 residents. Council's response was decisive and effective. Proactive flood mitigation protected property, and rapid restoration works ensured farmers maintained access during crucial harvest periods. However, the cumulative damage has left the network structurally compromised, with accelerated deterioration now occurring under ongoing heavy vehicle use.

The recovery need is substantial but clearly defined. Buloke has refined its reconstruction program from an initial $90 million estimate to a disciplined $60 million REPA claim, independently validated and fully aligned with DRFA requirements. This represents a credible, evidence-based investment in essential public infrastructure. Without adequate funding, road conditions will continue to decline—escalating safety risks, constraining freight and agricultural productivity, and increasing financial pressure on Council. The consequences will be felt across the regional economy and in the daily lives of residents who rely on this network. Targeted investment is essential. Restoring Buloke's road network will safeguard critical infrastructure, support primary industry, enable efficient emergency access, and maintain the connectivity that underpins community sustainability. Funding this recovery is not optional—it is fundamental to ensuring the resilience, productivity and future of Buloke Shire.

BIRCHIP
Birchip 5 Ways Intersection

COST: $5 MILLION
ASK: $5 MILLION

The Birchip "Five Ways" intersection is a critical transport junction connecting the Sunraysia Highway, Corack Road, Birchip–Wycheproof Road and Cumming Avenue. It carries high volumes of local, freight and agricultural traffic, making it a vital link for community access and regional productivity. However, its current configuration presents a serious and ongoing safety risk. The complex layout creates driver confusion, restricts visibility and increases the likelihood of vehicle conflicts. As a result, it is widely recognised as one of the most dangerous intersections in Buloke Shire.

The $5 million upgrade is urgently required to address this risk. Delivering a roundabout and associated road improvements will simplify traffic movements, improve visibility and significantly reduce the potential for crashes. Roundabouts are a proven solution for improving safety outcomes at high-risk intersections like this. Beyond safety, the upgrade will improve freight efficiency, supporting the movement of agricultural goods that underpin the local economy. It will also provide safer, more reliable access for residents, visitors and service providers, strengthening connectivity across the region. This is a practical, high-impact investment that will resolve a long-standing safety issue, protect lives, and support the ongoing resilience and productivity of Birchip and surrounding communities.

SUNSHINE CROSSOVER REMOVAL

ADVOCACY

The proposed removal of the two Sunshine Regional Rail Link crossovers as part of the Sunshine Super Hub development poses a significant risk to the efficiency and competitiveness of rail freight across Victoria. These crossovers provide critical operational flexibility, enabling more direct routing and efficient network use. Their removal would force freight services to divert via Geelong—adding approximately 47 kilometres to each journey and materially reducing network efficiency.

This longer routing will increase transit and cycle times, raise operating costs through higher fuel use and additional crewing, and ultimately erode the competitiveness of rail freight compared to road. This outcome directly conflicts with state and national policy objectives to shift freight from road to rail, reduce congestion and lower emissions. Retaining the crossovers is essential to maintaining a flexible, efficient and cost-effective freight network. It will protect supply chain performance, support regional productivity, and prevent unnecessary pressure on already constrained road infrastructure. This is a practical, low-regret decision that safeguards freight efficiency today while supporting a more sustainable, resilient transport network into the future.

8.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

Lower Avoca Ward

Name: Cr Stephen Barratt
Date: 3 September 2026 – 7 October 2026

Meetings Attended:

Date	Meeting / Event
03/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day One) – *Swan Hill*
04/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day Two) – *Swan Hill*
06/09/2026	Birchip Silo Art Opening – *Birchip*
09/09/2026	Cuppa with a Councillor – *Wycheproof Resource Centre*
15/09/2026	Men's Shed – *Wycheproof*
16/09/2026	Council Meeting – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
17/09/2026	Aerodrome Strategy - Stafford Strategy (Councillor Session) – *Online*
30/09/2026	Wycheproof Recreation Reserve Committee Meeting – *Wycheproof*
04/10/2026	Dr Ken Mulligan Farewell – *Wycheproof Golf Club*
07/10/2026	One Foot Forward Walk – *Birchip*
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing – *Birchip Council Chambers*

Name: Cr Bruce Stafford
Date: 3 September 2026 – 7 October 2026

Meetings Attended:

Date	Meeting / Event
03/09/2026	Walklate Lane Unveiling – *Charlton*
10/09/2026	CEO and Councillor Only Time – *Online*
16/09/2026	Council Meeting – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
21/09/2026	Aerodrome Strategy - Stafford Strategy (Councillor Session) – *Online*
07/10/2026	One Foot Forward Walk – *Birchip*
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing – *Birchip Council Chambers*

Mallee Ward

Name: Cr Alan Getley
Date: 3 September 2026 – 7 October 2026

Meetings Attended:

Date	Meeting / Event
03/09/2026	Walklate Lane Unveiling – *Charlton*
07/09/2026	Advance Sea Lake Inc. Meeting – *Sea Lake*

09/09/2026	Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy - Council Briefing – *Online*
09/09/2026	NGSC Transmission Forum – *Online*
10/09/2026	CEO and Councillor Only Time – *Online*
16/09/2026	Council Meeting – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
17/09/2026	Calder Highway Improvement Committee Meeting – *Online*
29/09/2026	Wimmera Mallee Recreation Lakes Alliance Meeting – *Birchip*
06/10/2026	Regional Recreation Water Users Group Meeting – *Jeparit*
05/10/2026	Advance Sea Lake Inc. AGM – *Sea Lake*
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing – *Birchip Council Chambers*

Name: Cr Bernadette Hogan
Date: 3 September 2026 – 7 October 2026

Meetings Attended:

Date	Meeting / Event
03/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day One) – *Swan Hill*
04/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day Two) – *Swan Hill*
06/09/2026	Birchip Silo Art Opening – *Birchip*
07/09/2026	Advance Sea Lake Inc. Meeting – *Sea Lake*
09/09/2026	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting: Buloke Shire Council – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
09/09/2026	Birchip Cropping Group's Main Field Day – *Curyo*
16/09/2026	Council Meeting – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
17/09/2026	MAV Annual Oration with Ms Patricia Karvelas – *Melbourne*
20/09/2026	Birchip Watchem Football Club Vote Count – *Birchip*
05/10/2026	Advance Sea Lake Inc. AGM – *Sea Lake*
07/10/2026	One Foot Forward Walk – *Birchip*
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing – *Birchip Council Chambers*

Mount Jeffcott Ward

Name: Cr Charmaine Delaney
Date: 3 September 2026 – 7 October 2026

Meetings Attended:

Date	Meeting / Event
06/09/2026	Birchip Silo Art Opening – *Birchip*
08/09/2026	Watchem Progress Association - Community Meeting – *Watchem*
09/09/2026	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting: Buloke Shire Council – *Online*
09/09/2026	Central Murray Regional Transport Strategy - Council Briefing – *Online*
10/09/2026	R U OK? Day – All Staff Event – *Wycheproof*

10/09/2026	CEO and Councillor Only Time – *Online*
16/09/2026	Council Meeting – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
23/09/2026	Donald Family Precinct Meeting – *Donald*
30/09/2026	Donald 2000 AGM – *Donald*
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing – *Birchip Council Chambers*

Name: Cr Graeme Milne

Date: 3 September 2026 – 7 October 2026

Meetings Attended:

Date	Meeting / Event
03/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day One) – *Swan Hill*
04/09/2026	Rural Councils Victoria - Annual Forum (Day Two) – *Swan Hill*
06/09/2026	Birchip Silo Art Opening – *Birchip*
08/09/2026	Watchem Progress Association - Community Meeting – *Watchem*
09/09/2026	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting: Buloke Shire Council – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
10/09/2026	Wimmera Southern Mallee Council Alliance: Mayor and CEO Meeting – *Horsham*
10/09/2026	CEO and Councillor Only Time – *Online*
11/09/2026	Loddon Campaspe Group of Councils – *Bendigo*
14/09/2026	Birchip Community Forum – *Birchip*
16/09/2026	Council Meeting – *Wycheproof Supper Room*
17/09/2026	MAV Annual Oration with Ms Patricia Karvelas – *Melbourne*
20/09/2026	Birchip Watchem Football Club Vote Count – *Birchip*
21/09/2026	Buloke Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee Meeting – *Wycheproof*
23/09/2026	Donald Family Precinct Meeting – *Donald*
26/09/2026	Donald Show Working Bee – *Donald*
28/09/2026	Buloke Tourism Board Monthly Meeting – *Culgoa Hall*
30/09/2026	Donald 2000 AGM – *Donald*
30/09/2026	ABC Mildura Interview - *Radio*
02/10/2026	CEO and Mayor Catch-Up
02/10/2026	Liberal/National Party Members Visit - Northwest Councils – *Donald*
02/10/2026	Kookas Factory Visit – *Donald*
02/10/2026	Charlton Art Show Opening – *Charlton*
03/10/2026	Back to Berriwillock Event – *Berriwillock*
06/10/2026	Rail Freight Alliance - Finance Meeting – *Online*
07/10/2026	One Foot Forward Walk – *Birchip*
07/10/2026	Councillor Briefing – *Birchip Council Chambers*

9 OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 NOTICES OF MOTION

9.1.1 RECREATIONAL WATER SUPPLY

Author's Title: Senior Executive Assistant

Directorate: Office of the CEO ***File No:*** GO/09/01

Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Strategic Objective: Services supporting our communities to thrive
Active advocacy and participation in service networks

PURPOSE

Councillor Alan Getley has given notice of their intention to move the motion below at the 21 October 2026 Council Meeting.

The purpose of this Notice of Motion is to seek Council's support to write to the Minister for Water, the Hon. Michaela Settle MP, and local candidates standing in the 2026 Victorian state election, asking each of them to commit to:

- fully funding the supply of recreational water to all water bodies in the Wimmera Mallee Recreational Lake Alliance; and
- raising the security of that recreational water supply to the same level as Stock and Domestic water, as originally promised in the business case for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

Recreational lakes and weir pools are central to the wellbeing, liveability and visitor economy of our communities. Securing these commitments before the election will help give these water bodies a reliable, long-term supply.

SUMMARY

The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline was completed in 2010. It replaced around 17,500 km of open earthen channels with more than 9,000 km of pressurised pipeline, supplying water to about 9,000 farms and 34 townships. When the pipeline was planned, the communities of the Wimmera and Mallee were informed that some of the water it saved would go to recreational lakes. The project was to make available up to 3,000 ML a year for recreational lakes, and Stock and Domestic supply was to have 96% security. During that process, the community made clear that strategically located lakes needed high-security water, like Stock and Domestic water.

That promise has not been fully delivered. The recreation entitlement sits as a separate line item in the Bulk Entitlement Order and has lower reliability than other pipeline products.

The 2026 Victorian state election on Saturday 28 November gives Council a timely chance to raise this with the Minister for Water and local candidates. The notice of motion recommends that Council write to them seeking two commitments: full funding of recreational water for all Alliance water bodies, and an increase in its supply security to the same level as Stock and Domestic water.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council writes to the Minister for Water, the Hon. Michaela Settle and local candidates standing in the Victorian 2026 state election asking each candidate to commit to:

1. fully funding the supply of recreational water to all water bodies in the Wimmera Mallee Recreational Lake Alliance.
2. lifting the security of that recreational water supply to the same level of security as Stock and Domestic water, as was originally promised in the business case for the building of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

Attachments: Nil

9.1.2 CALDER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Author's Title: Senior Executive Assistant

Directorate: Office of the CEO ***File No:*** GO/09/01

Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029

Strategic Objective: Built and natural environment
Advocate and plan for, and manage community buildings, roads and transport networks

PURPOSE

Councillor Alan Getley has given notice of his intention to move the notice of motion below at the 21 October 2026 Council Meeting.

The purpose of this Notice of Motion is to seek Council's support to raise serious concerns about the dangerous condition of the Calder Highway, particularly the section north of Berriwillock. Council would do this by:

- writing to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, the Hon. Paul Hamer MP, and the Regional Director of Transport and Planning, Mr Anthony Judd, to highlight the dangerous conditions on this section of the Calder Highway
- seeking an urgent onsite meeting with Mr Anthony Judd
- seeking a timeline for repairing and rehabilitating the section north of Berriwillock, and a commitment to ongoing maintenance of the Calder Highway.

The Calder Highway is a vital freight, agricultural and community link for our region. Its current condition is a significant safety risk for residents, visitors and heavy vehicle operators. This motion aims to make sure the State Government understands how urgent the issue is and commits to a clear plan for repair and long-term maintenance.

SUMMARY

The Calder Highway is a key state-managed freight, agricultural and community route through the Buloke Shire. Under Council's Road Management Plan, it is maintained by the State, not by Council. The section north of Berriwillock, towards Sea Lake, has become seriously unsafe and is a growing concern across the Mallee.

There have been several recent incidents and near misses within the immediate area north of Berriwillock along the Calder Highway, with increasing concerns raised by our local community, as well as travellers and heavy vehicle operators passing through the area. More recently a truck lost control after hitting a large pothole between Culgoa and Sea Lake. The impact snapped an axle on its trailer. Additionally, emergency services recently attended another incident approximately six kilometres from Berriwillock, where a vehicle broke its axle in a pothole on the Calder Highway.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Writes to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, the Hon. Paul Hamer and the Executive Director Loddon Mallee and Hume at the Department of Transport and Planning, Mr. Anthony

Judd, highlighting the dangerous conditions on the Calder Highway and in particular the section North of Berriwillock.

2. Seeks an urgent onsite meeting with the Executive Director Loddon Mallee and Hume at the Department of Transport and Planning, Mr. Anthony Judd.

3. Seeks a timeline for the repair and rehabilitation of this section North of Berriwillock and a commitment to the continuing ongoing maintenance of the Calder Highway.

Attachments: Nil

9.2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

9.3 URGENT BUSINESS

9.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.5 MATTERS WHICH MAY EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

Nil.

10 MEETING CLOSE