



BULOKE
SHIRE COUNCIL

ADVOCACY STRATEGY

2022-23



Acknowledgement of Country

Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations and the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.



OVERVIEW

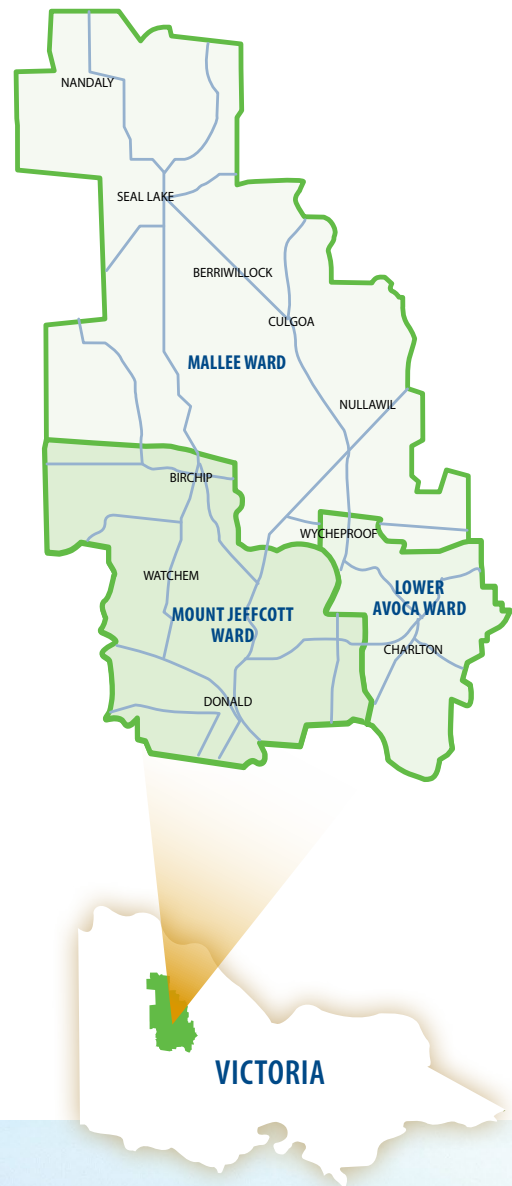
The Buloke Shire Council Advocacy Strategy 2022-23 outlines the key advocacy projects Council is currently committed to focusing on and seeking partnerships to implement.

Many of the projects presented reflect some of the challenges faced by Buloke Shire, as one of the geographically largest municipalities, with an ageing and declining population.

It is acknowledged that many rural councils face similar challenges and therefore it is important to recognise that Council cannot, and does not, work alone – but rather aims to work in partnership with the community, service providers and other levels of government to deliver on its vision for the future.

However, the priority projects presented in the Strategy are only some of the issues of Council and the Buloke community therefore work will continue on a number of other priorities as stated in the Council Plan 2021-25 and Long-Term Community Vision and other adopted policies and strategies.

The Advocacy Strategy 2022-23 outlines our top-tier priorities impacting our community right now.



OUR VISION

Building a Better Buloke

- A healthy, connected, inclusive and prosperous community.

OUR VALUES

Council addresses its key values through:

- Good communication
- Transparency in decision making
- Accountability for actions
- Working collaboratively with partners
- Taking responsibility
- Being responsive and timely

OUR ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES

Our priority projects are guided by the following principles:



Our Priority Projects for 2022-23 - Overview

PROJECT

REQUEST

1. OUR BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

| | |
|---|--|
| a) Drainage and Flood Mitigation | Funding (\$3mil) - To produce a revised drainage capital works program for Donald, Charlton, Nullawil and Birchip, including further planning for additional levee bank in Donald |
| b) Greening Buloke | Funding (\$500k annually) - To support the implementation of a five year replacement program of dangerous trees in our recreation reserves, parks and other public spaces |
| c) Buloke Roads of Strategic Importance | Funding (\$3.5mil annually) - To improve our agricultural supply chains and meet the needs of our local businesses and community |
| d) Civic Precinct and Town Centre Upgrades | Funding (\$100k) - To develop master plans to upgrade the town centres, streetscapes and parks across the smaller towns of Nullawil, Watchem, Berriwillock, Nandaly and Culgoa |
| e) Buloke Heritage Spaces | Funding (\$100k) - To undertake structural reviews and concept designs of key heritage buildings across the shire |
| f) Town Centre and Public Space Lighting | Funding (\$1mil) - To improve safety in public spaces and provide feature lighting to highlight key natural and built assets across all towns |
| g) Relocation of truck routes in Charlton and Wycheproof. | Advocacy - To work with the State Government to increase safety around the Charlton business district and the Wycheproof Early Learning Centre and P-12 College by relocating the truck routes |
| h) Five ways roundabout Birchip | Funding (\$5mil) - To construct a roundabout on the five ways intersection (Sunraysia Highway, Cumming Avenue, Birchip-Wycheproof Road and Corack Road) with associated road markings and signage for safer traffic movement |
| i) Aerodrome upgrades | Funding (\$50k) - To complete master plans to upgrade aerodromes to appropriate standards |

2. OUR COMMUNITY WELLBEING

| | |
|--|---|
| a) Buloke Premier Sporting Facility Upgrades | Funding (\$8mil) - To support the implementation of the Wycheproof Recreation and Racecourse Reserve Master Plan (\$5mil) and Birchip Recreation Reserve Master Plan (\$3mil) |
| b) Buloke Aquatic Upgrades | Funding (\$2.1mil) -To support the implementation of the Buloke Aquatic Strategy |
| c) Viable Childcare Services | Advocacy - To create a viable operating model that would guarantee delivery of childcare services over the medium term (five years) |
| d) Donald and Birchip Early Years Upgrades | Funding (\$500k) - To undertake upgrades at the Birchip and Donald Early Years Centres |
| e) Charlton Driver Education Centre | Funding (\$600,000) - To undertake the development of a new office and classroom area for students to learn the theory as well as practice at this essential learning service |
| f) Changing Places Facility | Funding (\$500k) - To install a changing places facility within the shire to improve accessibility standards |
| g) Sea Lake Walking Path | Funding (\$300k) - To develop a walking path loop network throughout Sea Lake to increase active transport and better connect people with places |

PROJECT

REQUEST

3. OUR ECONOMY

| | |
|---|---|
| a) Birchip Community Housing Expansion | Funding (\$1.75mil) - To expand on the work of the Birchip Community Housing Committee by building another five rental units in Cumming Avenue |
| b) Donald Tradie Park Development | Funding (\$1.35mil) - To develop a new 'Tradie Park' in the Donald Industrial Estate that will include the construction of up to eight sheds in the industrial estate and create an efficient hub for local trades businesses |
| c) NBN Upgrade to Birchip | Advocacy - To improve the NBN services in Birchip to increase the connectivity for schools and business and add to the liveability of the town |
| d) Boosting the Wimmera Mallee Art Trail | Funding (\$350k) - To expand the existing arts trail through the Wimmera and Southern Mallee region, through the street murals, activation of silo art and value-adding to the trail |
| f) Birchip Silo Art | Funding (\$100k) - To complete silo art on the GrainCorp Silo in Birchip. |
| g) Grain Receival Access upgrades | Funding (\$1mil) - To complete upgrades to the access points of grain receival locations in Donald, Nandaly, Nullawil and Wycheproof |
| h) ICT Funding | Funding (\$300k annually) To enable Council to maintain the required maturity levels for information and communication technologies by increasing their resources and capacity. |
| i) Accessible Buloke | Funding (\$700k) - To complete Stage 2 priority improvements identified by the adoption of the footpath network hierarchy |
| j) Strategic Planning for Rural Living Zone | Funding (\$50k) – To complete and implement recommendations of a Settlement and Rural Living Issues and Options Review in an effort to introduce further diverse housing solutions that will suit the Buloke context |
| k) Rehabilitation of Sea Lake Transfer Station | Funding (\$2mil) – To complete rehabilitation works to the old Sea Lake landfill site by digging and capping a compliant cell |
| l) Regional Victorian Commonwealth Games 2026 | Advocacy - To collaborate with the State Government for either an athlete's village or demountable infrastructure erected in the Shire after the games (with potential use as social housing) and to promote the region and local attractions (i.e. silo/street art, lakes and reserves) to athletes and visitors |

4. OUR COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

| | |
|---|--|
| a) Clear Decentralisation and Housing Policy | Advocacy - To develop and fund a very clear decentralisation policy, that aims to address transport, housing, health and jobs |
| b) Asset Stabilisation Fund | Advocacy - To establish an Asset Stabilisation Fund to assist small rural Council's with the largest renewal gap to address infrastructure needs |
| c) Murray Basin Rail Project | Advocacy - To complete the Murray Basin Rail Project, including the standardisation of the Sea Lake and Manangatang lines |

OUR PRIORITY PROJECTS FOR 2022-23

An aerial photograph of a coastal area. In the foreground, there is a large, circular, light-colored structure in the water, possibly a lighthouse or a marker. A dirt road or path leads from the shore towards this structure. On the shore, there is a large, dark, rectangular sign that reads "TYRRELL". The background shows a vast expanse of water under a clear blue sky. The image is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent blue circle on the left side and a smaller, semi-transparent green circle at the bottom left.

TYRRELL

1. Our Built and Natural Environment



Drainage and Flood Mitigation



Request:
Funding \$3mil



Status:
Designed



Strategic Alignment:
Asset Management Plan



Charlton and Birchip are two of Buloke's largest townships and have had a history of flash flooding in recent years, causing damage to infrastructure and property. Nullawil has also had a history of flooding. Reviews and investigations have found the underground drainage for each township was not designed to meet current climatic changes and large rainfall events.

Upgrades at Birchip, Nullawil and Charlton will mitigate against flash flooding, protect vital community and private property and provide these communities with improved security. In addition, completion of the temporary levee at the Donald Levee Bank is a necessity to protect from future flooding. Designs have been completed for these works and are ready to proceed.

Greening Buloke



Request:
Funding \$500k annually



Status:
Shovel ready



Strategic Alignment:
Climate Change Mitigation
and Adaptation Strategy



Over a five year period, the Buloke community aims to improve its sustainability performance and provide a more liveable community for residents and tourists.

Council has worked closely with the CVGA to identify priority tree canopy deficiencies and aims to improve tree canopy cover and provide an appealing and cooler township.

1. Our Built and Natural Environment



Buloke Roads of Strategic Importance



Request:

Funding \$3.5mil annually



Status:

Designed



Strategic Alignment:

Road Management Plan, Asset Management Plan, Financial Plan, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy



Works are required to improve the efficiency of the road network and remove blockages for freight to use the most direct route to get products to port. Key projects include pavement rehabilitation, seal widening, line marking, improving dangerous intersections and first-and-last mile issues.

By improving efficiency of freight movements, more money will end up in farmers pockets to reinvest into their businesses. This project extends beyond dry-land farming, and considers the emergence of intensive agriculture as a driving industry within the Shire. Many projects have been designed and costed, with projects such as the Jeffcott and McLoughlans Road requiring urgent works.

Civic Precinct and Town Centre Upgrades



Request:

Funding \$100k



Status:

Scoped



Strategic Alignment:

Community Plans, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy



The development of master plans to be undertaken to support the upgrade of town centres, streetscapes and parks across the smaller towns of Nullawil, Watchem, Berriwillock, Nandaly and Culgoa.

1. Our Built and Natural Environment



Buloke Heritage Spaces



Request:
Funding \$100k



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Community Plans, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy



The Buloke townships have amazing history and many of the heritage community buildings have an amazing story to tell. Buildings such as the Watchem and Wycheproof Halls, Charlton, Birchip and Wycheproof Courthouses and Auchmore Museum (Nullawil) stand to tell the stories of generations and pioneers of our region and are central to civic pride of current day residents. Yet, there is a need to preserve and upgrade these historical buildings and make them suitable for current day use. This project will see the refurbishment, critical renewal works and expansion of Council's halls, museums and courthouses. These facilities are some of the most utilised facilities in the Shire and are arts and culture hubs within the townships and a tourism drawcard.

Town Centre and Public Space Lighting



Request:
Funding \$1mil



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Community Plans, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Inclusiveness Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan.



Increasing the lighting of places and buildings has been shown to revitalise town centres by enhancing the attractiveness of the natural and built environment, improving perceptions of safety, and increasing pedestrian usage.

This project aims to improve safety in public spaces and provide feature lighting to highlight key assets across all towns.

1. Our Built and Natural Environment



Relocation of Truck Routes



Request:
Advocacy



Status:
Shovel ready



Strategic Alignment:
Road Management Plan, Transport Asset Management Plan, Wycheproof Community Plan.



To work with the State Government to increase safety in Charlton and Wycheproof. In Charlton by relocating the truck route to Back St. Arnaud Road. In Wycheproof by relocating the truck route away from the Early Learning Centre and P-12 College from Mount Street to Camp Street.

Five ways roundabout Birchip



Request:
Funding \$5mil



Status:
Shovel ready



Strategic Alignment:
Road Management Plan, Transport Asset Management Plan, Birchip Community Plan.



To construct a roundabout on the five ways intersection (Sunraysia Highway, Cumming Avenue, Birchip-Wycheproof Road & Corack Road) with associated road markings and signage for safer traffic movement.

1. Our Built and Natural Environment



Aerodrome upgrades



Request:
Funding \$50k



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Interim Economic Development and
Tourism Strategy, Community Plans



To complete master plans to upgrade aerodromes to appropriate standards including access for fixed wing air ambulances.

2. Our Community Wellbeing



Buloke Premier Sporting Facility Upgrades



Request:
Funding \$8mil



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Community Plans, Recreation Reserve Masterplans, Gender Equality Action Plan



The Birchip, Nullawil, Wycheproof and Sea Lake Recreation Reserve facilities are some of Buloke's highest utilised community assets. Currently, some of these facilities do not provide female friendly change spaces and therefore restrict the current and future usage.

The upgrades will create a function space that acts as the hub for each community, create viewing spaces, improve oval lighting and improve accessibility for players, spectators and umpires. These facilities are the heart of these communities and will increase community connectivity and participation in physical activity into the future.

Buloke Aquatic Upgrades



Request:
Funding \$2.1mil



Status:
Aquatic Strategy completed 2022/23



Strategic Alignment:
Aquatic Strategy, Community Plans, Health and Wellbeing Plan



With seven pools across the Shire all built between 1950 - 1970 (Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Birchip, Watchem and Berrillock), the need for investment into Council's aquatic facilities is significant.

Upgrades to plant, pipework and pools shells are all required to ensure the pools remain accessible into the future, and value additions, such as solar heating and splash parks are also required to drive additional patronage.

2. Our Community Wellbeing



Viable Childcare Services



Request:
Advocacy



Status:
Report complete



Strategic Alignment:
Community Plans, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Gender Equality Action Plan, Municipal Early Years Plan.



Our region, and other rural areas across Victoria, have well established placed-based early years initiatives, with leadership partnerships and networks of community organisations and services, ready to work through the barriers to create a viable operating model that would guarantee delivery of childcare services over the medium term (five years).

Donald and Birchip Early Years Upgrades



Request:
Funding \$500k



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Community Plans, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Gender Equality Action Plan, Municipal Early Years Plan.



Complete much required upgrades to improve staffing, storage and play space areas for children and educators at the Donald and Birchip Early Years Upgrades.

This funding will improve safety for the educators and improve the early learning outcomes for children attending these important services.

2. Our Community Wellbeing



Charlton Driver Education Centre



Request:
Funding \$600K



Status:
Ready to commence



Strategic Alignment:
Charlton Community Plan



The Charlton Driver Education Centre provides an essential learning service for students' right across Victoria. Whilst the cars and roads at the centre are in good condition, there is no adequate classroom and staff amenity.

This funding will see the development of a new office and classroom area for students to learn the theory as well as practice at this essential learning service.

Changing Places Facility



Request:
Funding \$500k



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Inclusiveness Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan



A Changing Places Facility within the shire will provide people with disabilities and their families a safe, fit for purpose environment, where their dignity and needs are upheld.

The location of the shire's first Changing Places Facility is proposed within Donald Memorial Park.

2. Our Community Wellbeing



Sea Lake Walking Path



Request:
Funding \$300k



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Sea Lake Community Plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan, Asset Management Plan



The proposed path commences near Lascelles Road and extends south east along the golf course to reach the Birchip Sea Lake Road. Following Greenswamp Road and Dunmunkle Lane, the path will cross the Calder Highway into Cox Street before heading east toward the Community Centre.

The path will then extend north, east and north around the perimeter of the township, along Wilkinson Street, George Street, Edgumbe Street, Lascelles Street, before returning west along McLelland Avenue and Tyrell Street and heading south along Greer Street to cross the Calder again, forming a loop.

3. Our Economy



Birchip Community Housing Expansion



Request:

Funding \$1.75mil



Status:

Shovel ready



Strategic Alignment:

Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Wimmera Development Association Housing Review



The Buloke Shire has a housing shortage and has been actively looking at ways to improve the housing offerings for all segments of the market. This project expands on the work of the Birchip Community Housing Committee by building another five units on the old bowling green site.

This will cater for the ageing population and will serve to open up family homes as retirees downsize into these custom built units.

Donald Tradie Park Development



Request:

Funding \$1.35mil



Status:

Designed



Strategic Alignment:

Donald Community Plan, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy



This project aims to deliver a new 'Tradie Park' in the industrial estate in Donald. It will service and build a series of medium size sheds to allow for the expansion of the many tradespeople that Donald has and will also promote the relocation of other tradies to town to utilise the sheds.

This will build up to eight sheds on the industrial estate using local trades and will support the community by having many trades located on the one site.

3. Our Economy



NBN Upgrades to Birchip



Request:
Advocacy



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Birchip Community Plan, Interim
Economic Development and Tourism
Strategy



Birchip has a strong retail sector, with a range of shops including, bakery, supermarkets, two hotels, butcher, clothes and hardware stores and several large employers.

The town also has a Prep to Year 12 school, a hospital and a new Early Years Centre. All levels of government have joined to fund a recent delivered multi-million-dollar streetscape upgrade.

An NBN connectivity upgrade will add to the liveability and attractiveness of the town as we are seeing more and more entrepreneurs interested in moving to Birchip and be connected with the vibrant community.

Boosting the Wimmera Mallee Art Trail



Request:
Funding \$350k



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Interim Economic Development and
Tourism Strategy



In recent years, Buloke has been invigorated by public and community art, and has seen the benefits of community connectedness and enhanced tourism outcomes. Off the back of the Silo Art Trail, there are now amazing painted silos in Sea Lake and Nullawil and also wall art through many towns.

To build on this and create a critical mass and a major tourism drawcard, there is the need to create public art in the 'gaps' and enhance existing art through night time activation and augmented reality. This project will paint an additional silo, street art, create night time viewing and augmented reality on key public art spaces.

3. Our Economy



Birchip Silo Art



Request:
Funding \$100k



Status:
Designed and approved by
GrainCorp



**Strategic Birchip Community
Plan, Alignment:**
Interim Economic Development and
Tourism Strategy



This proposal is to further extend Buloke Shires inclusion in the Silo Art trail by completing a silo art installation on the GrainCorp Silo in Birchip featuring Melbourne Cup winning jockey Ray Neville.

The site will complement both the Silo Art stops in Nullawil and Sea Lake as well as new legacy street art pieces in Birchip born during the 2022 Mali Heart Festival.

Grain Receival Access upgrades



Request:
Funding \$1mil



Status:
Designed



Strategic Alignment:
Interim Economic Development and
Tourism Strategy



Buloke land and environment is well suited to broad-acre cropping, coupled with over 150 years of inter-generational expertise in growing grains. The proposal is to complete upgrades to the access points of grain receival locations in Donald, Nandaly, Nullawil and Wycheproof to ensure safety and efficiency of the cornerstone of the Buloke economy.

3. Our Economy



ICT Funding



Request:
Funding \$300k annually



Status:
Scoped



Strategic Alignment:
Business Transformation Strategy



Digital preservation is an important element to ensure that the long-term integrity and availability of important data is maintained and that it complies to Buloke Shire Council's obligation as a local government authority. Digital preservation is a vital part of business continuity and disaster recovery.

Small rural councils such as Buloke are at a disadvantage in maintaining maturity levels for information and communication technologies due to their limited resources and capacity.

Accessible Buloke



Request:
Funding \$700k



Status:
Designed



Strategic Alignment:
Asset Management Plan,
Inclusiveness



A recent review of Council's Road Management Plan 2022 and Transport Asset Management Implementation Plan 2022, including lengthy deliberative engagement, recognised the need for Buloke to comply with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements when renewing its aging footpath network. In particular, the review of the network hierarchy identified the need for a primary footpath network, linking central business districts to health and education services.

Stage 2 will continue to address section of paths on the network determined non-compliant by both the DDA standards and Councils hazardous condition assessment.

3. Our Economy



Strategic planning for rural living zone



Request:
Funding \$50k



Status:
Options review underway



Strategic Alignment:
Rural Land Use and Settlement Strategy, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Wimmera Development Association Housing Review



Council is currently undertaking a Settlement and Rural Living Issues and Options Review in an effort to introduce further diverse housing solutions that will suit the Buloke context.

There is an identified need to look more deeply at the rural-residential land supply as both a result of strategic projects and anecdotal evidence of demand. There is a perception that there is a need to increase the supply of rural-residential land to broaden the range of accommodation and/or housing choices available in the Shire.

Rehabilitation of Sea Lake Transfer Station



Request:
Funding \$2mil



Status:
Shovel ready



Strategic Alignment:
Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy



Buloke Shire Council received a Pollution Abatement Notice on the old Sea Lake Landfill site due to exposed asbestos being present on the site. Council engaged a consultant to give a recommendation of the way to address this situation.

The resultant report has recommended digging a compliant cell and putting a cap over the waste to avoid any future exposure of asbestos and waste.

3. Our Economy



Regional Victorian Commonwealth Games 2026



Request:
Advocacy



Strategic Alignment:
Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Wimmera Development Association Housing Review, Gender Equality Action Plan, Inclusiveness Plan



Buloke Shire Council sees benefit in collaborating with the State Government to provide important outcomes and economic benefits to the region in the form of organised trips from Bendigo and/or Ballarat to explore our silo and street art, enjoy our many recreational lakes and explore the scenic Lake Tyrrell. This would give athletes and visitors an experience of tourism in a rural setting.

We would also like to see an athlete's village built in our Shire to become social housing as a legacy or demountable infrastructure erected in the Shire after the games.

4. Our Council and Community Leadership



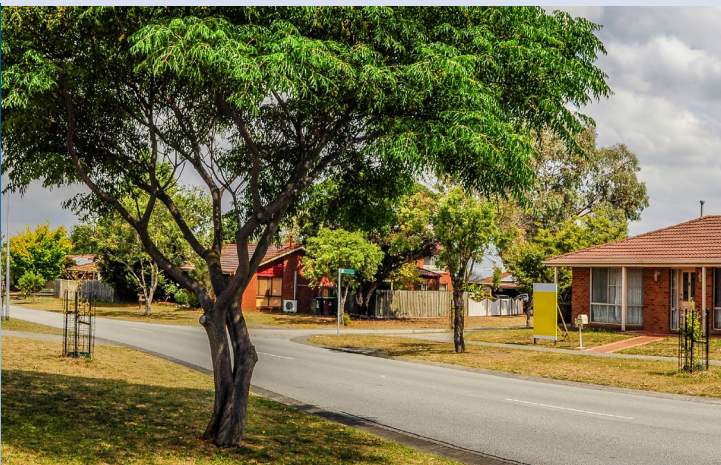
Clear Decentralisation and Housing Policy



Request:
Advocacy



Strategic Alignment:
Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Wimmera Development Association Housing Review, Gender Equality Action Plan, Inclusiveness Plan



There is the need for the development and funding of a clear decentralisation policy that aims to address key inhibitors such as transport and accessibility, housing, health and jobs.

Asset Stabilisation Fund



Request:
Advocacy



Strategic Alignment:
Financial Plan, Asset Management Plan



A recent KPMG report into the sustainability challenges of small rural councils highlighted the need for an asset stabilisation fund to address key asset renewal challenges that face Councils such as Buloke.

The challenge of maintaining buildings across ten towns and 5,300kms of road is growing for the declining rate base and a structural funding solution that addresses these challenges would make a significant difference to the liveability of these communities.

4. Our Council and Community Leadership



Murray Basin Rail Project



Request:
Advocacy



Strategic Alignment:
Interim Economic Development and
Tourism Strategy, Community Plans



Council considered the Murray Basin Rail Project one of the most important funding wins for the region over many years. With the Mildura line standardised, and the Sea Lake line still on broad gauge, the outcome is simply poorer for the Buloke community.

Council advocates for the full project to be completed to ensure that Buloke farmers have access to all ports in an efficient manner. In addition to rail, \$2mil is required to upgrade the Charlton Avoca River Bridge to take Heavy Vehicles.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Advocacy Strategy is designed to be a live document and remain relevant as work on the priority projects develops. Council will monitor progress towards delivery of these priorities on an ongoing basis, with regular updates provided to Council and the community through Council reports and a formal annual review.

OUR ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Council will undertake a range of activities to promote and deliver on our advocacy projects. These activities will be undertaken by council officers, the Executive Management Team and Councillors as appropriate. Activities may include:

Undertaking public campaigns and producing collateral to raise awareness of the issues in the community and encouraging their involvement in advocacy efforts.

Developing partnerships with key stakeholders, local and regional organisations, and peak bodies whose interests align with the Advocacy Strategy objectives.

Promoting alignment with government priorities to local Members of Parliament, state and federal ministers, shadow ministers, opposition and cross bench members, and local state and federal election candidates.

Aligning Council activities and participating in the advocacy work of peak bodies and regional organisations including the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association.

Making submissions to government and parliamentary enquiries to advance the goals of the Advocacy Strategy.

Identifying and applying for grants to secure funding in order to deliver on our advocacy priorities.

Promoting commitments, where we receive them, to encourage other parties and stakeholders to lend their support.

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