



# Priority Projects



**Macedon  
Ranges**  
Shire Council

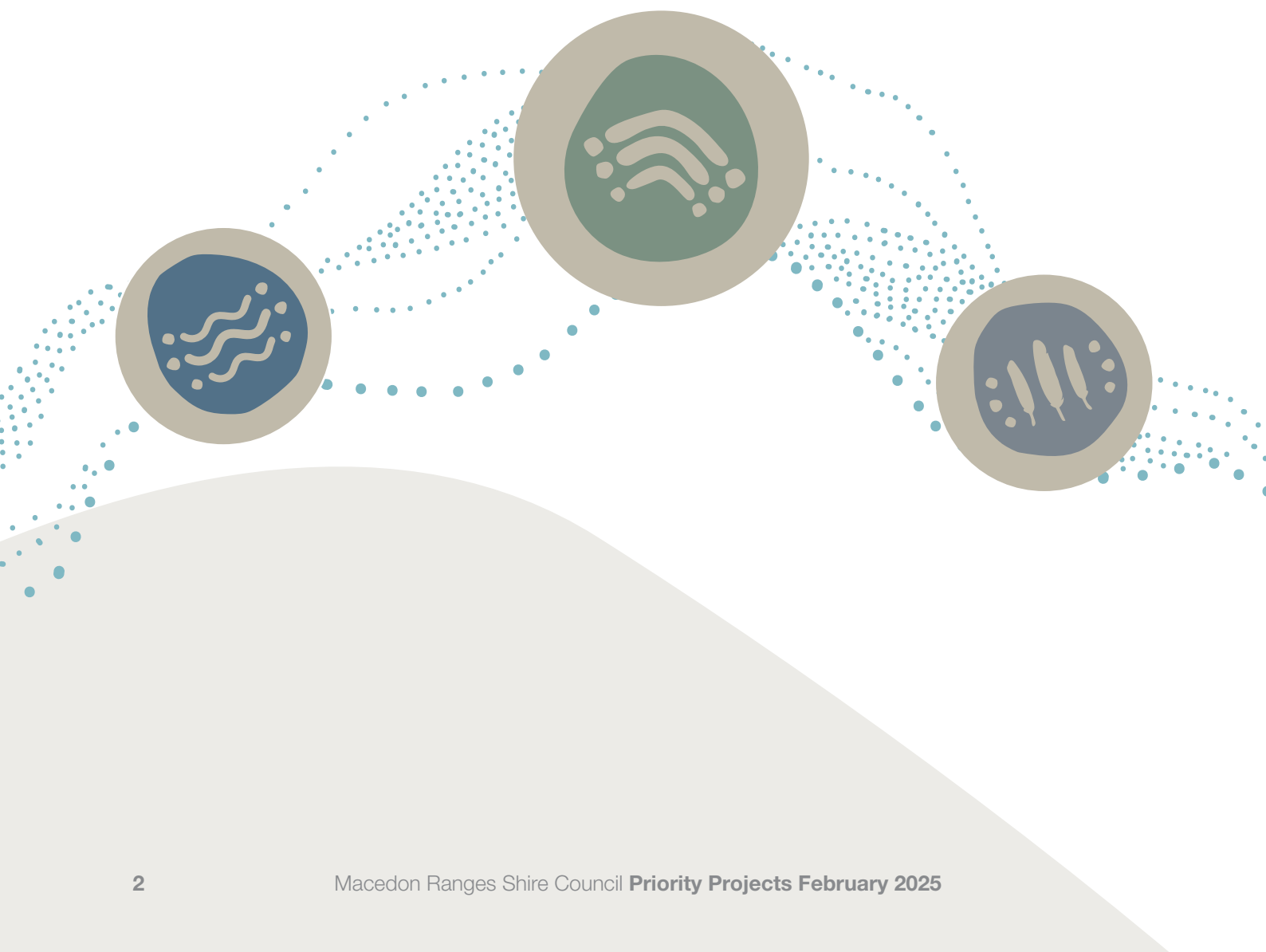
February 2025

# Acknowledgement of Country

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the **Dja Dja Wurrung**, **Taungurung** and **Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung** Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

**Artwork** by Taungurung artist Maddi Moser. *Artwork used with permission.*





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# A message from the **Mayor and CEO**



**Cr Dom Bonanno**  
Mayor



**Bernie O'Sullivan**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Welcome to the Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

At the start of 2022, we launched the inaugural Priority Projects Prospectus to put the spotlight on essential services and key infrastructure to support our community's growing needs, complement existing government strategies and policies, and support our ongoing advocacy discussions with key decision-makers.

Since that time, we've already made great progress on a number of these priority initiatives outlined in this document – such as on the Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct and Lancefield Kindergarten – but we are also continuing to regularly review and refresh our approach, in line with ongoing reviews, investigations or other status changes.

The goal remains making the Macedon Ranges an attractive place to live, work and explore. We strive to be forward-thinking, creative and adaptable, while constantly advocating to – and proudly partnering with – the Victorian and Australian governments wherever possible to achieve great outcomes.

We continue to remain willing to discuss options for funding for any or all of these yet-to-be-funded priority projects, and the bringing forward of timelines if necessary to meet the requirements of any state or federal funding.

We look forward to continue to build a better community for all of our residents and visitors, driven by this key document.



# About the **Macedon Ranges**

## By the numbers



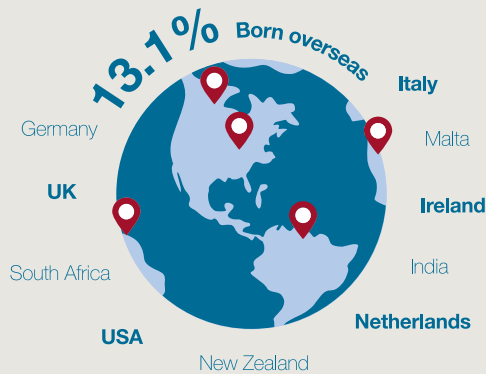
**52,920**

**Estimated resident population size in 2023**  
(forecasted to grow to 64,565 by 2036)



**43.5**

**Median age of residents in 2022**



**4.5%**  
**Speak a language other than English at home<sup>2</sup>**



**69.8%**

**Of the 15,710 people who work in the Macedon Ranges Shire, also lived in the area in 2021**  
The highest percentage by occupation was professionals (23.8%)

**\$1190**



**Household weekly income**  
median equivalised total 2021



**5,430**

**Businesses in 2023**  
The construction industry contributed the largest number (1,236)

**14,053**



**Travelled to work by car in 2021**  
400 travelled by public transport

**64,000+**

Hectares of holding area for **agricultural commodities** in 2021



**18,060**

**Total households**  
(occupied private dwellings in 2021)



**5,320 Hectares**

**of protected land in 2022**  
+720 small-scale solar panel systems installed in 2023

Statistics collated from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data and .idcommunity

# Our Vision

The community's vision for Macedon Ranges Shire Council has been developed by our citizens, via a representative Community Vision Assembly. It forms part of Council's strategic planning framework, guiding future planning across the shire, considering both short-term and long-term priorities that shape our adopted Council Plan 2021-2031, as well as the annual four-year projected budget and 10-year Financial Plan.

Council looks forward to working alongside the community and external partners to work towards the community's vision for Macedon Ranges Shire Council. The Community Vision statement, as voiced by our community to shape our shire's future:

With our unique regional identity, Macedon Ranges Shire embodies a caring, resilient approach to community through our robust local economy, protection of the natural environment and a collaborative commitment to inclusivity for all.

The Community Vision Assembly developed three community vision themes, which were used to shape our Council Plan 2021-2031, along with delivering strong and reliable government.



# Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct

Accessible sport for all

## About the project

The Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct (MRRSP), a showcase project, will deliver a 15-hectare regional park providing facilities for a range of sport and passive recreation activities, enabling improved social connections and health outcomes for the growing Macedon Ranges community.

The Precinct Masterplan has been developed, although funding constraints mean that the precinct needs to be delivered in stages.

**Stage 1** is fully funded and well underway with all works expected to be completed by end of June 2024. This stage will deliver a three-court Sports Hub, a natural turf oval and sports pavilion, passive recreation facilities, landscaping and associated infrastructure.

**Stage 2** is also fully funded and will include the extension of the sports hub with an additional three multi-sport courts, additional amenities, an additional AFL/cricket oval, two outdoor sports courts, additional car parking and landscaping. A contract for detailed design and documentation is in place, with a plan to complete the design and documentation of all facilities within this stage by the end of August 2024.

**Stage 3** includes retractable seating in stadiums, a function and multi-purpose room extension to the sports hub, a canopy connecting existing outdoor netball courts and the sports hub, an extension to the sports pavilion and cricket nets.

### STAGE 3 SCOPE OF WORKS

#### Sports Hub to western side of the complex including:

- 1 Retractable seating in stadium
- 2 Function and multi-purpose room

#### External Works including:

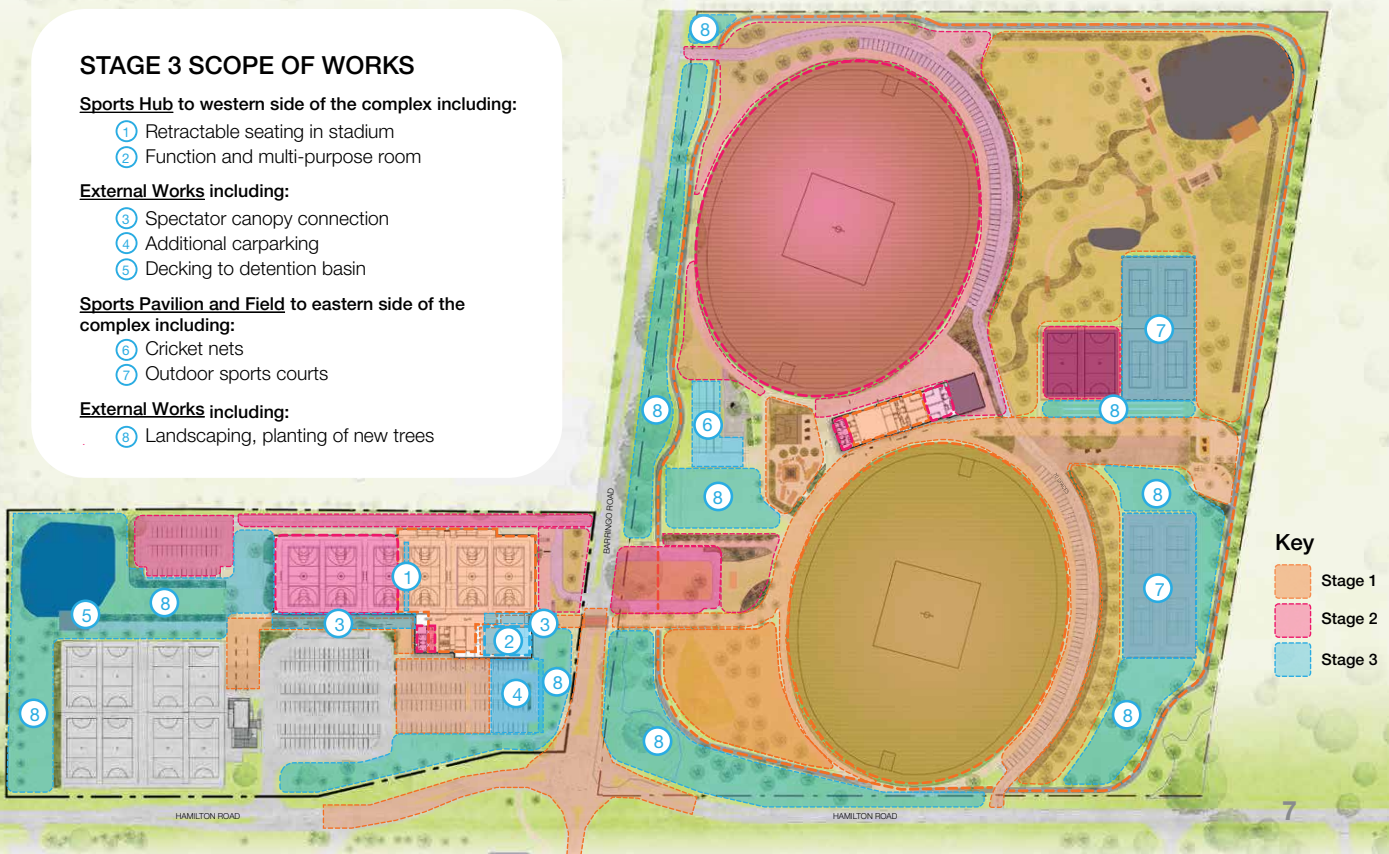
- 3 Spectator canopy connection
- 4 Additional carparking
- 5 Decking to detention basin

#### Sports Pavilion and Field to eastern side of the complex including:

- 6 Cricket nets
- 7 Outdoor sports courts

#### External Works including:

- 8 Landscaping, planting of new trees



## Benefits

- Aligns with each of the four Council Plan priorities – in particular, it will foster our healthy environment, healthy people theme by offering purpose-built sporting facilities with social and recreational spaces. This will support healthy lifestyles and social connection, and help build strength and resilience in the community.
- The precinct addresses the gap in parkland and sporting opportunity in the New Gisborne area. Due to increasing population growth and increasing participation, particularly in female sport, there is a documented shortage of indoor sports courts and outdoor playing fields. The precinct will address that shortfall and provide easy access to high-quality facilities for the community.
- The precinct will enable increased participation in basketball, futsal, volleyball; AFL football and cricket; regional tournaments and carnivals; and large community events. It will relieve pressure on existing facilities and set a foundation for future expansion for growing demand.
- The precinct will provide a range of passive recreational opportunities, including walking and cycling paths, playground and open space areas providing opportunities for all sectors of the community.
- The regional significance of the precinct will encourage tourism and investment by facilitating exhibition games, large events and regional programs, and fostering economic vitality in a way that promotes positive individual and community health outcomes. This will have a positive flow-on economic benefit to our region as more events and competitors can be hosted.
- At the time of completing the economic assessment in the planning stages of the MMRSP project, the estimated regional economic benefit of construction and the flow-on effects for developing the precinct is \$59.04 million. It is estimated that the construction of Stage 1 will support 68 direct and 93 indirect jobs during the construction period. Once fully operational, the Regional Sports Precinct is expected to support 23 direct and 11 indirect jobs.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.\*

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Stage 1	29.7 million**	14.46 million	15.24 million
Stage 2	17 million	2 million	15 million (Australian Government)
Stage 3	15.5 million	In-kind support and advice	15.5 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>62.2 million</b>	<b>16.46 million</b>	<b>45.74 million</b>

\*Costing reviewed and updated: Stage 1, November 2023 | Stage 2, April 2023 | Stage 3, January 2025. \*\*This includes: Victorian Government funding of \$14.8 million (includes \$11.6 million and Growing Suburbs Funding of \$3.2 million). AFL Victoria funding of \$100,000. Melbourne Water funding of ~\$343,000.



## Project Stage

Stage 1: Detailed design complete, funding confirmed, and construction expected to be complete by the end of June 2024.

Stage 2: Funding confirmed and the detailed design and documentation is underway

Stage 3: Not yet funded. Seeking \$8 million in funding to realise final upgrades flagged within the Sports Precinct's Master Plan, outlined above.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Construction commenced August 2022.</li><li>• Construction completed and facilities open July 2024</li></ul>
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design Tender by end of November 2023</li><li>• Planned commencement early 2025</li></ul>
Stage 3	Subject to funding



Images Progress at Macedon Ranges Regional Sports Precinct



# Daylesford to Hanging Rock and Kyneton Rail Trail

Linking local communities and tourism

## About the project

The Daylesford to Hanging Rock and Kyneton Rail Trail will see the development of a unique combination of rail trail and shared use trails. The Macedon Ranges section of the shared trail project is Tylden to Hanging Rock and Kyneton. This will link communities through safe and enjoyable trails, inviting both locals and visitors to share our special landscape and distinctive areas. Council has agreed with Hepburn Shire Council to partner on the planning and delivery of this trail as a joint project.

Macedon Ranges trail sections	Proposed length (km)
Council boundary to Old Carlsruhe Station	9.2
Old Carlsruhe Station to Woodend	10
Old Carlsruhe Station to Kyneton	6
Woodend to Hanging Rock	12



## Benefits

- The trail will provide the community and users with a unique trail experience linking rural landscapes, towns and heritage through the Macedon Ranges areas of Hanging Rock, Woodend, Kyneton, Carlsruhe and Tylden (then on to neighbouring Daylesford in Hepburn Shire).
- Based on recent analysis from Daylesford Macedon Tourism on the project as a whole, the project would deliver:
  - increased domestic and international visitors to the shire, particularly for nature-based tourism; estimated at an additional 45,000 per annum
  - increased economic yield for local businesses, including generating an average additional visitor expenditure of \$10.9 million per annum in direct and indirect expenditure
  - a positive return on investment, with an expected net present value of \$44.8 million as well as a benefit cost ratio of 2.5
  - increased support for the local economy, including more than 120 new ongoing jobs
  - increased appreciation and knowledge of our biodiversity, distinctive areas and significant landscapes
  - improved opportunity for physical activity for all ages.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Planning	3.55 million*	550,000	3 million
Construction	23.07 million	TBC	TBC
<b>Total</b>	<b>26.62 million</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>

\*Excluding any land use agreement costs, MRSC component only.



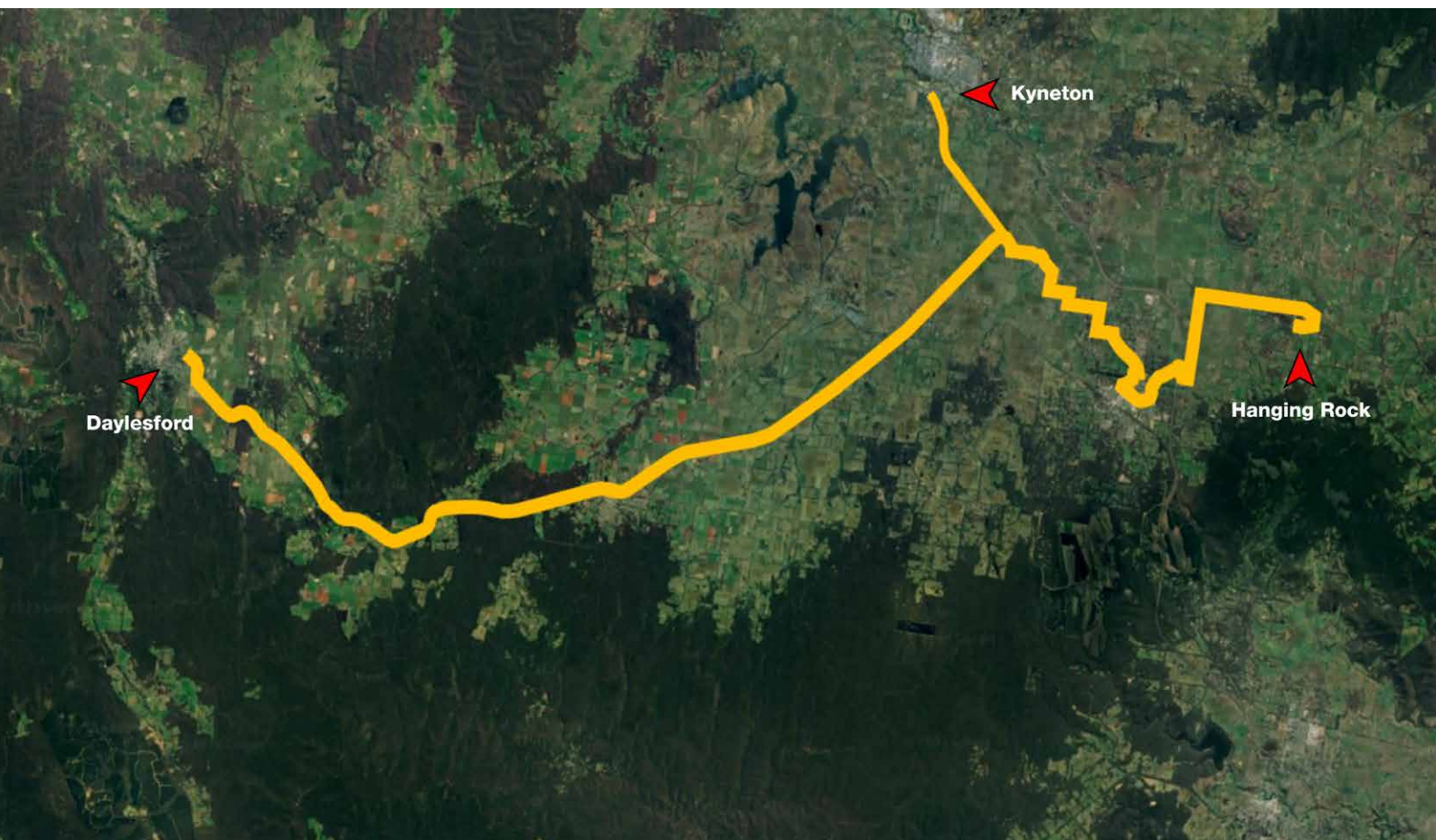
## Project Stage

Initial feasibility study complete and a full visitor and economic analysis for the project was completed in 2023. The next step is to complete the detailed design work, including the next stage of planning, permits, assessments and landowner/land manager negotiations flagged within the Sports Precinct's Master Plan, outlined above. flagged within the Sports Precinct's Master Plan, outlined above.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Planning	Subject to funding
Construction	Subject to funding



Map trail overview



# Woodend Community Centre

A reimagined community hub

## About the project

The Woodend Community Centre – housing critical community spaces including the library, multi-purpose meeting spaces, a community hall/performance space and the Visitor Information Centre – will provide a well-designed, innovative and multi-purpose public space for the community now and into the future. The Woodend Community Centre space also incorporates the regular outdoor markets that showcase local produce and crafts.

The schematic designs for the Woodend Community Centre have been completed and

costed for Stage 1. Stage 1 incorporates the library, multi-purpose meeting spaces, the Visitor Information Centre and a small café to showcase local produce (operated by a social enterprise). Stage 2 requires design and will incorporate the community hall/performance space, revitalised market space, and is critical to complete the Centre and interaction with the outdoor space.

All stages of the project have strong community support from a range of user groups, who have been actively involved in the reimagined Centre design process.



## Benefits

- A reimagined Community Centre that reflects community values and provides spaces for a modern, connected and engaged community.
- Provision of a much needed upgraded library that has dedicated spaces for all users of the library.
- Encourages greater community collaboration and gathering with beautifully designed dynamic, multi-purpose meeting spaces.
- Provision of multi-generational areas for children, youth, adults and seniors.
- The Centre has been designed to demonstrate best practice sustainable design, to include passive design principles, increased natural light, thermal comfort and ventilation. The roof is designed to accommodate solar panels and enable water capture and re-use.
- The design of the Stage 2 community hall/performance space will support the internationally known Winter Arts Festival as well as many and regular community performances.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Stage 1 (Construction)	10.9 million	2.8 million	8.1 million
Stage 2 (Detailed design)	500,000	In-kind project management	\$500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.4 million</b>	<b>2.8 million</b>	<b>8.6 million</b>



## Project Stage

Planning and construction funds now being sought.

Stage 1: Schematic design and costings completed.

Stage 2: Pre-planning; Council is seeking funding for the detailed design of Stage 2 – the community hall/ performance space and revitalised market space.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Stage 1	Subject to funding
Stage 2	Subject to funding



**Image** Interior rendering of facility.

# Hanging Rock Precinct Master Plan

## Implementation Stage 1 Planning

### About the project

Hanging Rock is an iconic and highly significant feature of the Victorian and Australian landscape, it has many different meanings and values for the people and groups who live in and visit the area. Renowned for its importance to First Peoples, its dramatic geological form and its wider landscape setting within the Macedon Ranges. The role of the Rock throughout history as a place of gathering, reflection and intrigue will be understood and celebrated. The revegetated bushland environment will enhance the secluded ambience and provide a habitat for native wildlife. Activities around the Rock will reflect its historical uses centred on recreation and education, and its state and national significance.

The Hanging Rock Precinct Master Plan is a detailed plan that ensures the long-term development and management of Hanging Rock is sustainable. The Master Plan outlines an agreed approach to ensure the long-term development and management of Hanging Rock is sustainable. It was developed as one of the key actions from the Strategic Plan.

The Master Plan was developed in consultation with the community and stakeholders, including extensive consultation with Traditional Owner groups Djaara, Taungurung and Wurundjeri.





## Benefits

- A new visitor centre / Discovery Centre will provide a multi-function space for educational activities and temporary event space for group activities and environmental education. The intention of a new visitor centre would be to provide:
  - services that support visitor site use and interpretation
  - a space for Traditional Owner ceremonies
  - consideration of an Indigenous art gallery space with a small supporting retail component
  - a place for school groups and others to meet for education purposes.
- The re-vegetated bushland environment will enhance the secluded ambience and provide a habitat for native wildlife.
- Activities around The Rock will reflect its historical uses centred on recreation and education and its State and National significance.
- Restructuring of the site and relocation of the main vehicle arrival point and visitor centre facilities will allow for visitors to experience the key eastern view of the Hanging Rock formation.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Stage 1 design	5 million	Significant and ongoing in-kind costs	5 million
Stage 1 construction	55 million (TBC)	Significant and ongoing in-kind costs	55 million (estimated)
<b>Total</b>	<b>60 million</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>60 million</b>

## Project Stage

The Precinct Master Plan identifies the scope of Stage 1 planning:

- Civil infrastructure and servicing to East Paddock
- New entry road and car park design
- Visitor Centre and surrounding landscape design works
- Detailed design works for environmental rehabilitation works for the Smokers Creek corridor.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Stage 1 design	Subject to funding
Stage 1 construction	Subject to funding



# Kyneton Town Hall Reimagined

## A contemporary theatre upgrade

### About the project

Kyneton Town Hall is situated in the heart of town, attracting visitors who enjoy the cultural offerings as well as spend time at local restaurants and shops.

Revitalizing the Kyneton Town Hall will unlock tourism opportunities while enhancing its cultural appeal and fostering community engagement. A wider variety of cultural events will be able to be showcased enhancing the value of the venue.

The Kyneton Town Hall is a historically and culturally significant building for the Macedon Ranges, with a requirement to retain the National Trust of Australia (Vic) listed original 1878-9 and 1929 portions of the building.

Revitalisation of the Kyneton Town Hall will leverage the venue's historical and architectural significance paying homage to the Victoria Goldfields heritage.

Council has completed a refurbishment of the exterior of the town hall, and a revitalisation of the space will see the building's use flourish.



## Benefits

- The Macedon Ranges Arts and Culture Strategy 2018-2028 recognises that broad community participation in creative activities creates the cultural vitality that is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society, as is social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability. Art is important to culture for many reasons including that it communicates in a way that cuts across many boundaries – racial, cultural, social, educational and economic.
- The project will deliver a modern and accessible performing arts venue to cater for a range of performers, programs and experiences.
- Supports our community’s need for access to a range of diverse and vibrant cultural assets across the shire. The project will deliver an accessible and appropriately designed space, capable of hosting significant events and performances. The community will be able to experience these events without needing to leave the shire.
- Attract visitors from outside the regions to attend high class acts in a premier venue. These visitors will also be able to enjoy the surrounding shopping, dining and accommodation options that showcase what the Macedon Ranges has to offer.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Feasibility study	\$169,000	\$33,960	\$135,840 - Grant application submitted to Enabling Tourism Fund
Planning & Design	510,000	Staffing in-kind	510,000
Implementation	8.78 million	1 million	7.78 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.46 million</b>	<b>1.03 million</b>	<b>8.43 million</b>

## Project Stage

Pre-planning; Council is currently undertaking detailed design works and investigation.



## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Feasibility study	June 2025
Planning & Design	June 2025
Implementation	1-2 years

## Possible smaller and targeted project opportunities

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Front of House Audio System to Professional Level	120,000	Staffing in-kind	120,000
Replace Lower Stalls Seating Bank	290,000	Staffing in-kind	290,000
Renew Lighting Fixture Compliment	75,000	Staffing in-kind	75,000
Projector and Screen Replacement	40,000	Staffing in-kind	40,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>525,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>525,000</b>

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Front of House Audio System to Professional Level	Subject to funding
Replace lower Stalls Seating Bank	Subject to funding
Renew Lighting Fixture Compliment	Subject to funding
Projector and Screen Replacement	Subject to funding

# Lancefield Kindergarten and MCH Centre

## Improved facilities for young families

### About the project

The Lancefield Kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Centre project involves the building of a three-room kindergarten and MCH service in Lancefield – to accommodate the increase in demand for both services in the Lancefield/Romsey area. The Victorian Government’s progressive roll-out of 15 hours a week access to funded kindergarten for three-year old children, and the Best Start, Best Life reform offering 30 hours of four-year-old kindergarten, will further increase this demand situation in our shire.

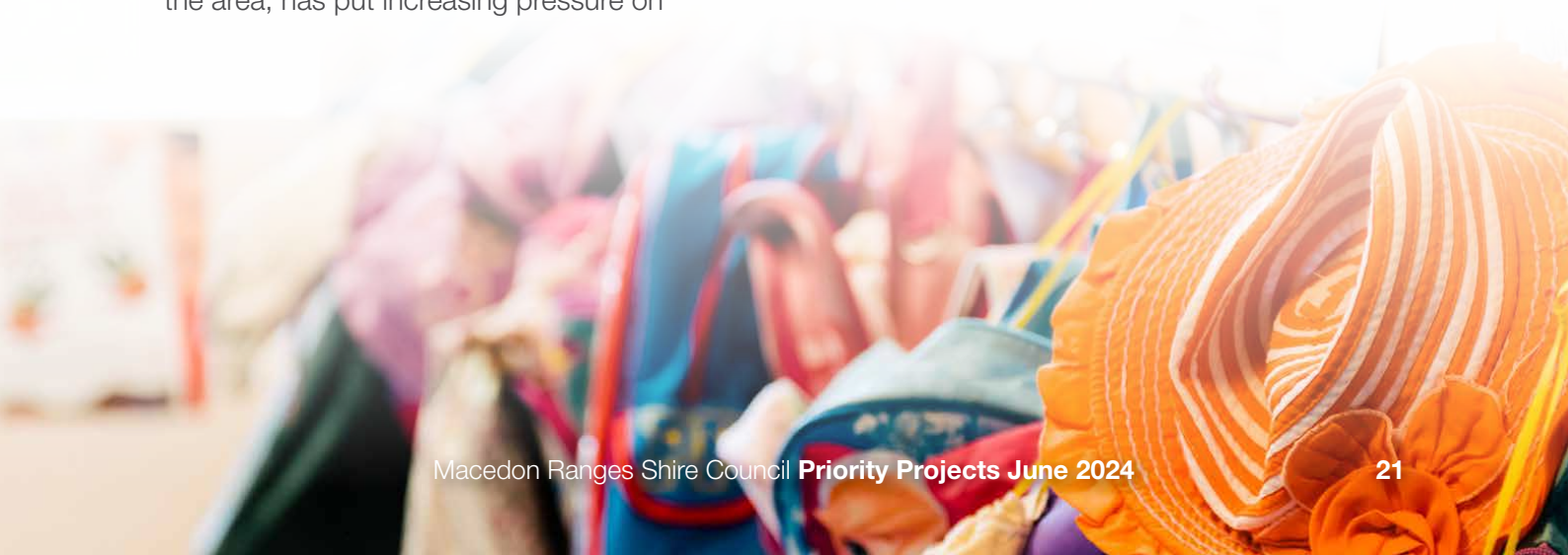
In 2021, Council undertook service-modelling forecasting to inform Council’s strategic direction in Early Years operations. The findings of this work noted some areas are likely to be strained in the future, particularly Lancefield. The current Lancefield kindergarten is leased, and will require significant financial investment in the coming years for it to be fit for purpose.

With no dedicated MCH service in Lancefield, the Romsey MCH centre currently services Lancefield and surrounds. Recent growth in the Romsey township, with its new housing developments and families moving into the area, has put increasing pressure on

the Romsey MCH centre to accommodate appointments. The increase in demand has generated a higher workload for the service, resulting in an additional MCH nurse working offsite at the Romsey Hub on Wednesdays. The limited public transport between Lancefield and Romsey, combined with population growth in these areas, means it makes sense to provide a dedicated MCH service in Lancefield.

Feedback gathered from our community in the development of the Municipal Early Years plan CREATE 2021-2025, strongly emphasised the need for additional contemporary early years infrastructure in Lancefield to accommodate the growing community.

Following consultation with key stakeholders, Council was successful in receiving a \$3 million Building Blocks Capacity Grant from the Victorian School Building Authority to make this new facility a reality. Planning and design commenced in 2023, with works getting underway at the start of 2024. These works have paused due to the discovery of a cultural artefact during site preparation works, with revised timelines subject to those outcomes.





## Benefits

- A contemporary, purpose-built kindergarten in Lancefield which accommodates all children that require a place.
- A dedicated Maternal Health Centre in Lancefield.
- Reduces the over demand at the Maternal Child Health Centre in Romsey (which currently also services Lancefield families).
- Improves accessibility for the community (including vulnerable families) to experience services locally, thereby reducing isolation.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
N/A	3.2 million *	144,000	up to 3 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.2 million</b>	<b>144,000</b>	<b>up to 3 million</b>

**FUNDED**

\*Final project cost TBC.

## Project Stage

Application for grant funding via Victorian State Government outcome successful.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
N/A	TBC - subject to cultural heritage works

# Barrm Birrm

## A bushland worth protecting

### Creating a new nature reserve in the Macedon Ranges

#### About the project

The purpose of this project is to resolve a historic planning decision that creates conflict and risk for the environment and adjacent Riddells Creek community, via the public acquisition of a piece of beautiful bushland.

This potential nature reserve is Barrm Birrm - place of many yam roots. The 118-hectare open forest is arguably the most intact flora and fauna area in the region which comes alive in spring with a vast diversity of groundcover plants and wildflowers – particularly Yam Daisies or Murnong.

The area is also known as “Riddells Ranges Estate” or the former Shone and Schultz sub-division in Riddells Creek. Unfortunately, due to a legacy of planning from the 1880s, this land is divided into 162 lots and owned by 98 different landowners. Due to the site’s natural values, high fire risk and lack of services, the land is not considered suitable for development. As a result, current planning controls prevent development in the estate – creating frustration for many of its owners.

Council currently operates a “gift back” scheme to encourage the transfer of private land parcels to Council. This process is slow and relies on the voluntary participation of

landowners. Through this process, Council now owns 56 of the lots. However, Council has found that with increasing land prices, this program has stalled.

Public acquisition has significant support from the local community. In 2005, residents formed Riddells Creek Landcare to care for Barrm Birrm, removing rubbish and invasive weeds, introducing the local community to its plant and animal life and advocating for its permanent protection.

Public acquisition of Barrm Birrm meets actions identified in multiple strategy documents:

- Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2018 – actions aimed at achieving the transfer of Barrm Birrm properties to public ownership and, ultimately, the creation of a nature conservation reserve.
- Port Phillip Regional Catchment Strategy 2021 - New parks – significant areas of additional new parks established across this region providing improved security, extent and quality of native habitat.
- Victorian Government’s “Protecting Victoria’s Environment - Biodiversity 2037” plan – create new areas of permanently protected native vegetation.



## Benefits

- Permanent protection of native vegetation of high conservation significance on the south east side of the Macedon Ranges, including over 27 species of native orchids and the only plant endemic to the Macedon Ranges Shire – the Hairy-leaf Triggerplant.
- Prevents use of the site by multiple landholders including destruction of flora from illegal camping, firewood collection, 4WD and dirt bikes.
- Allows for appropriate management of fire risk to adjoining Riddells Creek township.
- Open space for the Riddells Creek community for passive recreation such as bushwalking, picnics and appreciating local biodiversity.
- Opportunity for a nature reserve to attract visitors to Riddells Creek and create longer distance walking tracks linking up with adjoining public land including Conglomerate Gully Reserve, Sandy Creek Bushland Reserve and Mount Charlie Flora Reserve.
- Economic benefits – significantly rising land prices create an urgency around public acquisition.
- Landscape connectivity linking public land at Conglomerate Gully Reserve and providing habitat links for threatened species through to T Hill Flora Reserve and Mount Charlie Reserve.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
N/A	6.5 million*	In-kind project management	7 million**
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.5 million</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7 million</b>

\*Includes \$6.36 million Land Costs and \$140,000 Legal, conveyancing and administration costs.

\*\*Includes \$50,000 for community vision and interpretive signage project.

## Project Stage

Council has completed detailed ecological and cultural heritage assessments that further demonstrate the significant ecological and heritage values of the site. The reports confirm that Barrm Birm is a bushland area with significant natural and cultural values, and that these values are subject to ongoing threats related to the complex land tenure of the site.

Council is continuing to advocate for the public purchase of the privately owned lots within the area of Barrm Birm for community benefit. Council will work with Riddells Creek Landcare to develop a future vision and improved signage of the cultural and ecological values of the site at key entrances.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
N/A	ASAP



Images Barrm Birm nature reserve



# Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

## Charging the Macedon Ranges

### About the project

Council is advocating for the installation of public, fast-charging electric vehicle (EV) charging stations (50kW systems) in Council's largest town - Gisborne - as well as Riddells Creek, Romsey and Malmsbury, which support the establishment of an extended network for the benefit of visitors and residents.

To date, Council has successfully advocated for installation of EV charging stations in Lancefield, Macedon, Woodend and Kyneton. The proposed additional locations would enable a regional network of charging stations and assist in tackling the shire's second largest source of emission (31 per cent).

There continues to be a growing interest and uptake in battery electric vehicles (BEVs) or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) across Australia and Victoria. An October 2023 report

from the Victorian Government's Department of Treasury and Finance, titled A region-based examination of electric vehicle take-up rates in Australia, showed that Victoria sold more than 11,500 electric vehicles that year, with an average regional growth rate of EV registrations between 2013 and 2020 of 23 per cent.

Additionally, a breakdown of all light vehicle registrations in Australia by key fuel types, from the Australian Automobile Association as at 31 January 2023, showed a total of 162 BEVs and 605 hybrid or PHEVs across Macedon Ranges postcodes.

With a population of 11,715 at the 2021 Census, the 3437 Gisborne postcode is a particular priority alongside the three other towns identified, as having the highest total of BEVs and PHEVs (151) without having a public EV charging station.



## Benefits

- A network of stations is critical to facilitating the transition to low emissions vehicles. This contributes to Council's response to the climate emergency by facilitating emission reductions across the shire.
- The network of fast-charging stations across the shire enables Council to take advantage of the market of electric vehicle drivers who plan their day trips and weekends away according to the location of charging facilities. Attracting these visitors will grow the region's tourism economy and directly support local businesses.
- The project deepens the electric vehicle touring routes made possible across central and northern Victoria as a result of the Victorian Government funded 'Charging the Regions' project.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
N/A	540,000*	30,000 (project management)	540,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>540,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>540,000</b>

\*Includes four stations at \$135,000 each.

## Project Stage

Ready to go.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
N/A	As soon as possible

# Digital Connectivity and Communications

## Mobile and high-speed broadband infrastructure

### About the project

Now more than ever it is critical to deliver improved digital connectivity across our region. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that the transition and use of digital capabilities was critical to ensuring social cohesion and business health and continuity. Governments at all levels acknowledge the vital economic and social value of high-speed broadband infrastructure being universally available to businesses and residents.

Our shire has known mobile and connectivity black spots, including, but not limited to, parts of the townships of Gisborne South, Kyneton, Lancefield, Tylden, and Woodend.

In addition, localised connectivity issues are experienced throughout much of the shire. A survey conducted in the Macedon Ranges in May 2021 identified that over 70 per cent of respondents are not satisfied with their current reliability. Service reliability impacts on the ability of regional communities to actively plan and participate in business, social, learning and health activities online. The Macedon Ranges survey specifically asked respondents what services or activities they had been unable to undertake due to a lack of connectivity. Just under 60 per cent of responses referred to being unable to access education; over 90 per cent identified they were unable to work effectively from home.

Council has been successful through advocacy actions for equitable, reliable access to digital connectivity and communications across the Macedon Ranges. Achievements include:

- NBN fibre upgrades across the shire enabling Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)
- an upgrade of NBN fixed wireless scheduled to begin early 2024
- new mobile telecommunications infrastructure in Kyneton
- scheduled, funded mobile infrastructure in Gisborne South and Tylden

Working collaboratively with the Loddon Mallee Regional Partnership, the Macedon Ranges was part of the 100 Gigabit City region project that identified three pillars to prepare the region for the digital future: Connectivity, Digital Hubs and Skilling. Continuing the advocacy for connectivity improvements a focus to other pillars can now take place. A detailed feasibility study and business case for a digital hub and skilling presence in the Loddon Campaspe employment corridor is necessary as the next stage. This builds on the work already done on a regional level by the 100Gig project.



## Benefits

- Reduction or elimination of connectivity blackspots.
- Price and service quality in the shire through competitive services for residents and businesses.
- Adequate supply of, and access to, high speed broadband throughout the region will meet current and future demand, and support local innovation, business opportunities and growth.
- Support for the shire’s visitor economy with improved and more reliable connection providing more options for cashless transactions.
- Enable and support community access to education, telehealth and other vital services.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Infrastructure	Costs dependent on required solutions	Significant and ongoing in-kind costs	Required funds to implement solutions tailored to communities and landscapes
Skilling	Detailed feasibility study and business case for a regional digital hub and skills program	Significant and ongoing in-kind costs	\$100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>

## Project Stage

Requires support to identify, cost and fund tailored solutions appropriate to communities and our distinctive landscapes throughout the Macedon Ranges. Council continues to work collaboratively with telecommunications providers and other stakeholders to progress digital connectivity improvements, especially in the known blackspot areas.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Infrastructure	As soon as possible
Skilling	As soon as possible

# Victoria's Big Housing Build

## Affordable Housing

### Background

Population growth is an underlying factor for housing demand and, without new dwellings, pushes up prices for both purchasing and renting. The population of the Macedon Ranges is projected to increase by 28 per cent over the next fifteen years (2021-2036)<sup>1</sup>. To meet this growth, a further 8,244 dwellings are needed<sup>2</sup>.

It is projected that 1,790 social and affordable dwellings (about 7 per cent of the total stock) may be required by 2036 to accommodate the number of homeless households, social housing households and very low, low and moderate income households in housing stress already living in the shire<sup>3</sup>. The shire currently has 342 social housing dwellings<sup>4</sup>.

In November 2020, the Victorian Government announced Victoria's Big Housing Build. This program will see a minimum investment of \$30 million in the Macedon Ranges to build social and affordable housing<sup>5</sup>.

Currently there are four projects underway in the Macedon Ranges to build 19 homes with an investment of \$12.5 million.

### About the project

Affordable housing is identified as a priority area in the Council Plan 2021-2031 and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025. The Affordable Housing Policy for the shire was endorsed by Council in June 2023.

By 2036, 33.5 per cent of residents in the Macedon Ranges will be aged over 55<sup>6</sup>. Persons over 55 is one of the most frequently cited cohorts in need of housing assistance.

Specialist community housing association Wintringham currently operates 49 one-bedroom social and affordable housing units for seniors in Gisborne, Romsey and Lancefield, which are owned or managed by Council. Built in the 1970s and 1980s the units are nearing end of life and will require renewal or redevelopment.

1 Home | Macedon Ranges Shire | Population forecast (id.com.au), accessed August 2021

2 Dwellings and development map | Macedon Ranges Shire | Population forecast (id.com.au)

3 SGS Economics and Planning September 2021

4 Victorian State Government, Housing Assistance Additional Service Delivery Data 2019-2020 Updated 12 July 2021

5 Regional investment | Victorian Government (www.vic.gov.au), accessed September 2021

6 Population and age structure | Macedon Ranges Shire | Population forecast (id.com.au)

Council is advocating for Victorian Government investment in these sites. Investment would align with Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051 advocating that the Victorian Government:

- set targets to grow social housing – in the next year, set a transparent statewide social housing growth target to reach and maintain at least the national average of 4.5 social housing dwellings for every 100 households by 2031
- expand social housing in regional centres, in locations with good access – focus social housing investments in regional centres, near transport and services, for better access to health, social and economic support
- make social housing suitable for changing local climates – continue to deliver a long-

term program of modifying social housing to be climate resilient by improving the energy efficiency and energy affordability of residences.

Further to this, Council has provided Homes Victoria with a shortlist of potential sites either owned by Council or by the Victorian Government that may be suitable for development under the Big Housing Build initiative.

Council will advocate for a strong partnership between state and local government that gives council a 'seat at the table' in identifying priorities for social and affordable housing growth in the shire.





## Benefits

- Regional Victoria is experiencing deteriorating housing affordability. The proportion of new rentals affordable to lower income households has fallen from around 60 per cent to 35 per cent in five years. Social housing infrastructure is central to the Victorian Government's response<sup>1</sup>.
- Well-located social housing, with good transport access, allows people to live close to jobs and services. Affordable housing can assist local economies to attract and retain staff to keep business open and grow industries<sup>2</sup>.
- Safe and appropriate housing contributes to health and wellbeing of people and communities<sup>3</sup>.
- Council owns or manages 49 seniors' housing units across Gisborne, Lancefield and Romsey valued at approximately \$8.8 million.
- Council is advocating for investment at these sites to achieve an increase in the overall supply of social housing in Macedon Ranges and improved amenity for tenants.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
N/A	13 million	Council provides significant ongoing expenditure and in-kind support for the operation of 49 seniors housing units in Gisborne, Romsey and Lancefield.	8 million <b>(state)</b> Big Housing Build committed to \$5 million to redevelop Lancefield site (Dec 2022). Further funding required for other sites.
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 million</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>13 million</b>

## Project Stage

Concept, pre-design.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
N/A	Aligned to the Big Housing Build grant funding rounds

1 Infrastructure Victoria, Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021-2051, 2021  
 2 Infrastructure Victoria, Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021-2051, 2021  
 3 Health of people experiencing homelessness - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au), accessed August 2021

# Mental Health Service for Young People

A vision for the future – Improved Mental Health Support

## Background

Young people in rural and remote areas are likely, as result of unique structural, economic and social factors, to have poorer mental health outcomes and a heightened risk of suicide compared to their metropolitan peers. Modelling by Orygen indicates an additional 82,000 young Victorians aged 12-25 years could experience mental health disorders because of COVID-19. This represents a 32 per cent increase.

Elevate, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Youth Strategy 2018-28, identified mental health as the most important issue for young people in the shire, with mental health having the greatest impact on survey respondents. The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental

Health System revealed the significant disadvantage rural young people experience in accessing mental health supports.

The geographical makeup of the Macedon Ranges is a unique factor that affects young people's ability to access mental health services. There is a lack of public transport between the nine townships in the shire, which is of particular concern for young people in our community with limited transport options and/or mobility. Currently, young people of the Macedon Ranges are expected to travel up to an hour to access youth-centred psychologists at headspace. Out of hours, access to mental health support services is currently almost non-existent, with most of the services in the shire providing a traditional business hours office-based model.



## About the project

The aim of the Youth Space Project is to develop a primary Youth Space in Macedon Ranges, close to public transport, schools and businesses. The service will offer young people and families access to a range of youth services including - but not limited to - youth engagement, mental health, and drug and alcohol support programs.

Youth spaces will collaborate with public and private providers delivering Medicare funded services to ensure that pathways for more intensive and acute services are available for young people requiring specialised support and treatment.

Council has also partnered with Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health and other partners in seeking funding to deliver this project.

## Benefits

- Address the gap in mental health support and intervention for young people living the Macedon Ranges. This will have a positive effect on the community with direct correlation to a range of social, economic and personal benefits such as inclusion, reduced isolation and increased civic participation.
- Decrease the wait time for young people who require a mental health response in the shire, as well as in neighbouring local government areas where there is a service.
- Decrease the rate of hospitalisation because of serious mental health episodes in young people.
- Decrease the suicide rate of young people who reside in the Macedon Ranges.
- The Youth Space Project will create employment opportunities and attract mental health and wellbeing practitioners to rural mental health services, and retain those practitioners in such services.
- Employment services operating from the Youth Space primary site in Gisborne will ensure that young people have access to employment support, and pathways to jobs in local businesses and industries.





## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage*	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Stage 1	N/A	20,000	<b>FUNDED</b> 100,000 pa
Stage 2 <b>COMPLETED</b>	N/A	10,000	NIL
Stage 3	N/A	10,000	<b>FUNDED</b> 50,000
Stage 4	N/A	In-kind youth work staffing In-kind buildings and assets	\$1.5-2 million (Establishment and staffing)
<b>Total</b>	<b>up to 3 million</b>	-	-

\*Stage 1: Increase Mental Health Outreach Services to operate with the Macedon Ranges.

Stage 2: Service design and consultation with young people, families and key stakeholders.

Stage 3: Council to scope existing assets, including buildings, to accommodate integrated youth and family hubs for the provision of services. Including, attracting new and existing service providers to the region.

Stage 4: Establishment of an integrated youth and mental health service in the Macedon Ranges. The service would be led by a public/community health organisation.

## Project Stage

Concept and design planning.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Stage 1	July 2023
Stage 2	December 2023
Stage 3	March 2024
Stage 4	2024-2026

# Healthy Landscapes

## Private Land Conservation Program

### Sustainable land management practices

#### About the project

This new three-year Private Land Conservation Program is aimed to continue to build the capacity of farmers and rural land owners to implement sustainable land management practices through delivery of individual on-farm advice, workshops, field days, short courses, discussion groups and webinars. Adding to this successful program will be a master-class stream, recognising that past participants continue their transition to better practices will require on-going capacity building.

The project aims to achieve on-ground practice changes that enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, increase carbon sequestration in soil, trees and vegetation, improve water quality and enable farmers to be resilient in the face of climatic and market volatility.

The project would build on the success of the Healthy Landscapes program which has been delivered between 2019 and 2024 and includes partnership with Hepburn Shire

Council, the City of Greater Bendigo, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Coliban Water, Melbourne Water and the Upper Campaspe Landcare. The program is expanding in 2024-2027 to include Mount Alexander Shire Council.

It was very pleasing that the Healthy Landscapes won the Premier's Regional Recognition Award at the November 2021 Premier's Sustainability Awards. An evaluation from 110 participants indicated that 100 per cent of respondents had positively changed their land management practices as a result of attending.

## Benefits

- Over 80 per cent of land in the Macedon Ranges is in private ownership, much of which is rural land managed by lifestyle property owners and farmers. As such, rural land owners play a critical role in contributing to Council's response to the climate emergency through actions that reduce emissions and enhance ecosystem resilience.
- Previous surveys of farmers and rural land owners determined that rural landholders desire a combination of individual advice tailored to their property, along with peer to peer learnings and information from experts. This combination is critical to achieving on-ground practice changes.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
Stage 1	\$270,000 (three years at \$90,000 each year)	Council provides approximately \$400,000 per annum on environmental programs	\$270,000 over three years
Stage 2	\$489,000 (three years at \$163,000 each year)	\$44,000 per annum (officer salary)	\$357,000* over three years
<b>Total</b>	<b>759,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>627,000</b>

\*Partner contributions to subsidise total costs.

## Project Stage

Ready to go.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
Stage 1	July 2021 – June 2024
Stage 2	July 2024 – June 2027



# Aquatic Facility Feasibility Study

## Macedon Ranges Shire Council (East)

An indoor aquatic facility in the east of the shire

### About the project

Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy identified a community desire for a future indoor aquatic facility in the east of the shire. Currently, residents must travel to Gisborne or Kyneton to access indoor facilities. In 2013, the requested facility was identified as hosting a projected 113,000 visits per annum.

Council developed high level, draft concept plans in 2013. These plans indicated the redevelopment of the Romsey Recreation

Centre to include: an Indoor 25m, six-lane pool; beach entry toddler's pool; adjoining Learn to Swim/leisure water; spa; gymnasium; program room; upgraded amenities, reception and car parking.

Funding for a feasibility study is required. This study will test the current demand for an aquatic facility in the east of the shire in the context of the wider demand and utilisation across the municipality. Subject to need it will also determine the most appropriate location and enable the development of concept plans.



## Benefits

- Test the current demand/need for investment.
- Subject to need, ensure the right site and scale for an aquatic facility development.

## Project costs

A summary of estimated project costs and funding sources.

Project stage	Total estimated project cost (\$)	Council Funds (\$)	Funding sought (\$)
N/A	100,000 for feasibility study	Significant in-kind project management costs	100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,000</b>

## Project Stage

Feasibility study.

## Project timeline

Overview of project target dates.

Stage	Timeline
N/A	Subject to funding



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