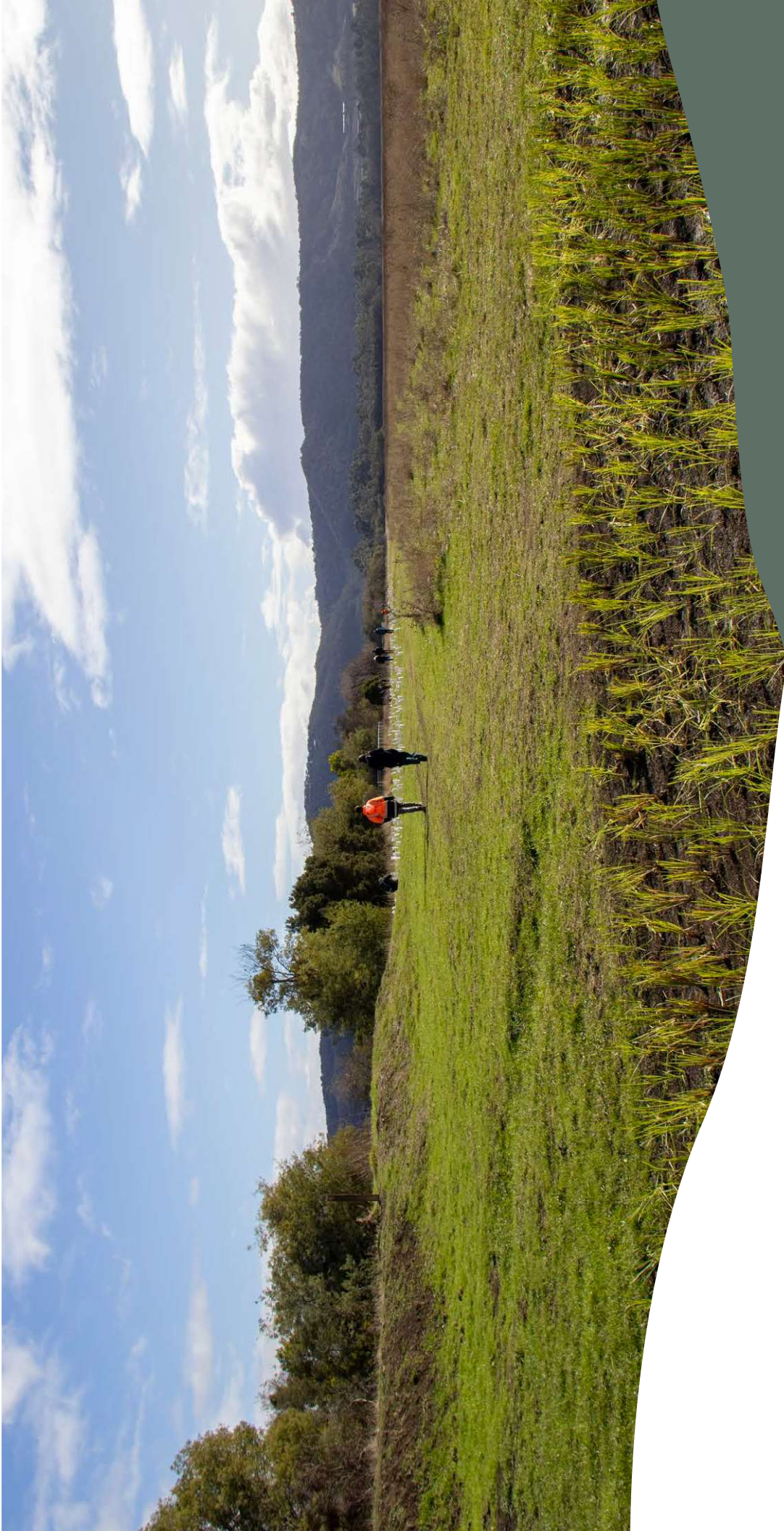




Yarra Ranges Council

# 2021–25 Council Plan Completion Report





**Acknowledgement of Country**

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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# Introduction

## About this report

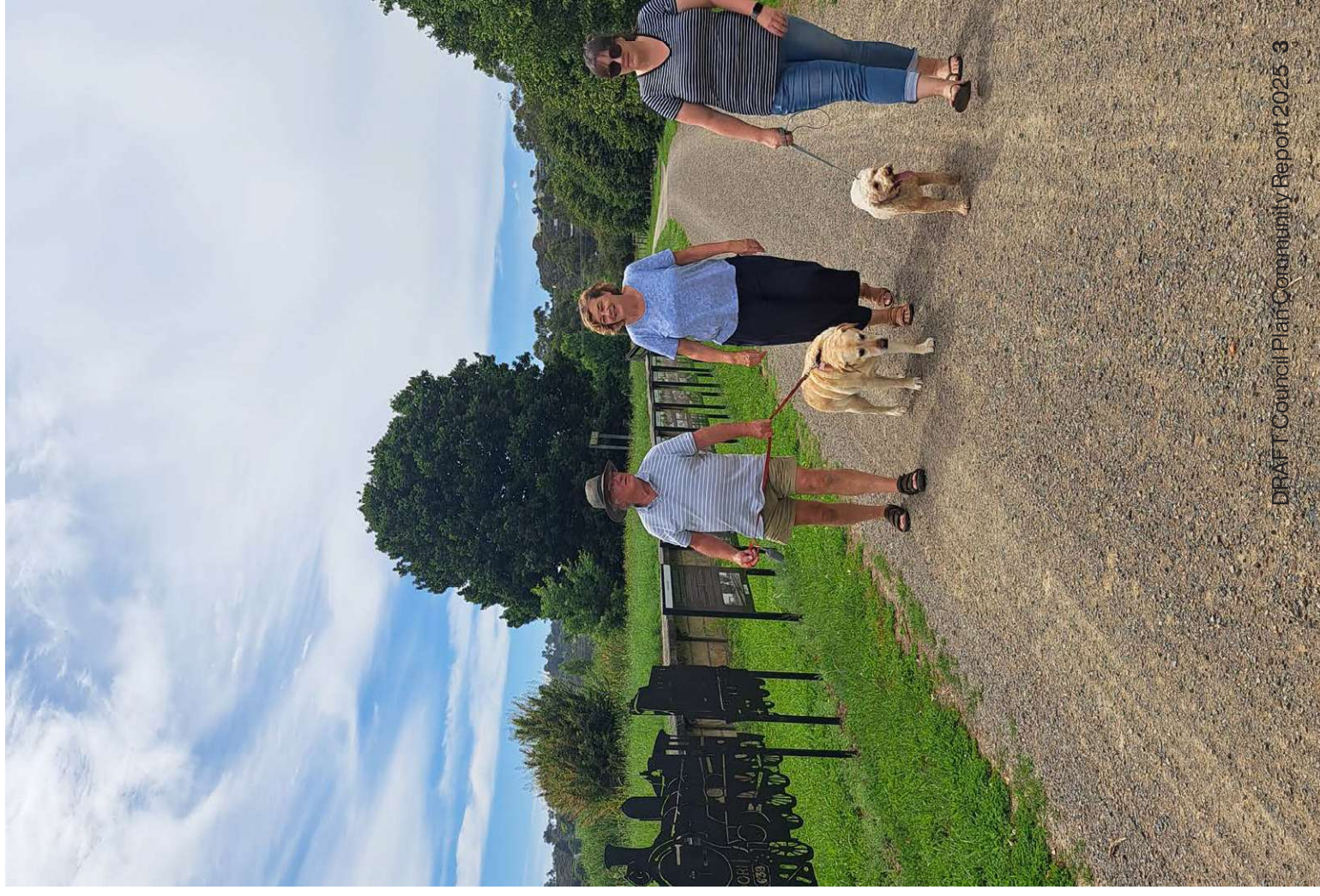
The **2021–2025 Council Plan** outlines the strategic direction of Yarra Ranges Council, setting out key objectives and eight major initiatives that guide our work. These priorities were shaped by extensive community engagement in 2020 and reflect the values, needs, and aspirations of the Yarra Ranges community. An accompanying action plan detailed the steps Council committed to in achieving these strategic objectives.

This report provides a summary of the achievements and outcomes of the Major Initiatives and Council Plan actions, all of which progress Yarra Ranges Council to achieve the Community 2036 vision.

## Vision 2036

**“Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how sustainable balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.”**

The Yarra Ranges community vision and vision statement was developed in consultation with over 1,000 local community members in 2016 and revisited again in 2021 with the Council's community panel. It captures the community's vision for our municipality in 2036. Read the Yarra Ranges Community Vision Statement here: **Community Vision 2036 Yarra Ranges Council**.



# What we set out to achieve

Council identified five strategic objectives that underpin our commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes for the community. These objectives, and the activities that have been completed across the Council Plan term, were developed in response to the community's priorities and the big issues facing Yarra Ranges at the time.

## These objectives are identified below:

| Key Strategic Objective (KSO)                                                                                                                                             | What the community told us they value in 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Connected and Healthy Communities</b><br>Communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well connected. Quality services are accessible to everyone. | <p>The community values families, friends and neighbours, close knit communities and the support freely given to each other in towns. Community members value the way they help each other in times of need and how they work together to make our communities safe and friendly places to settle into, raise our families, care for and engage with our older residents.</p> <p>They value our active spaces and healthy lifestyle and how it sustains them in both mind and body. They value their vibrant culture and their opportunities for creative expression. They value that no one ever needs to feel isolated or unable to be part of the diverse and inclusive community.</p> <p>They value the rich history that our older residents bring to community and what they offer to family life.</p> |
| <b>Protected &amp; Enhanced Natural Environment</b><br>A healthier environment for future generations.                                                                    | <p>The community values fresh air, clean rivers and streams, valley views and mountain vistas. They value the diverse and unique natural environment they live in, the many native plants and animals that inhabit it and the opportunities they have to 'go bush' in their backyard. They value our close connection to place. They value the spiritual connection the traditional custodians of the land have to place in Yarra Ranges, and the role in respecting these places, learning about them and preserving them for future generations.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



| Key Strategic Objective (KSO)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | What the community told us they value in 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places</b></p> <p>Quality facilities and infrastructure meet current and future needs. Places are well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.</p>             | <p>The community values close connection to place. They value the spiritual connection, especially the traditional custodians of the land and place in Yarra Ranges, and the role in respecting these places, learning about them and preserving them for future generations. They value our “best of both worlds” location where they can access nearby services while living in a peaceful and natural environment.</p> |
| <p><b>Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism</b></p> <p>Our tourism, agriculture, health, manufacturing and other industries are leading and dynamic. Strong investment and attraction underpin sustainable economic growth and job creation.</p> | <p>The community values the many wonderful attractions, as they live somewhere special that others come to visit and enjoy. They value our highly productive communities, our internationally recognised high quality produce and the opportunities to buy local and support local businesses.</p>                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>High Performing Organisation</b></p> <p>An innovative, responsive organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community.</p>                                                                              | <p>Council recognises the Values Statement as the collective voice of the Yarra Ranges community. Council will ensure that these values remain at the forefront of all its decision making and that it informs Council's planning and advocacy for the future.</p>                                                                                                                                                        |

# Major initiatives

The following section reports on the work undertaken to achieve each of the Major Initiatives identified in the Council Plan Action Plan. All initiatives are reported as Complete to reflect the close of the four-year planning cycle. In some cases, 'complete' means that the action has been delivered in full, or that scheduled milestones for this Council Plan action have been achieved and the activity is now part of ongoing operations or has been incorporated into another strategy.

**100 per cent of major initiatives  
have been completed.**



# Major Initiative 1

**Complete – milestone met.**

Improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing by providing a range of supports to Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation to establish the Healesville Belonging Place, an integrated Aboriginal health facility.

## Overview

Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Yarra Ranges. In all the work we do supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing, we recognise their resilience, courage, grace and generosity.

By listening to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, we know that connection to culture, community, family and Country is a key social determinant of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. This recognition is fundamental to closing the gap of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage across the shire.

The Healesville Belonging Place initiative was a collaborative effort between Council and Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation. The project aimed to address the health and wellbeing disparities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by supporting the development of a culturally safe and integrated health facility in Healesville. Aligned with the commitments in our Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026, the initiative focused on cultural healing, identity and reclaiming traditional practices.



## Key achievements

Council has provided long-term support to Oonah through planning, advocacy and funding culminating in the unanimous approval of the planning permit in May 2025.

The consultation process (and subsequent design) was guided by principles of self-determination, including integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, ensuring Oonah retained leadership in the decision-making process throughout the development phase.

## Overall impact

Council's support enabled the transformation of a long-held community vision into a planned and endorsed development project.

The interim Belonging Place continues to deliver essential services. The future facility, once funding for development is secured, will serve as a hub for health, culture and community empowerment across the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Council's formal role in the initiative is now complete. We will continue to focus on truth-telling to share the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, heritage, cultures and reconciliation in the Yarra Ranges over time. This initiative has provided an opportunity to share our story and reflect on the deep relationships, commitment and the incredible contribution by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal peoples to Council's reconciliation journey.





# Major Initiative 2

**Complete – milestone met.**

Become a world class trails and eco-tourism destination through project development, delivery, advocacy and partnerships, including the delivery of the four Rivers and Ridges projects; Warburton Community Recreation Precinct; ngurrak barring (RidgeWalk); the Yarra Valley Trail and the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.

## Overview

Council is positioning itself as a premier destination through a transformative suite of interlinked projects known collectively as the Ridges and Rivers initiative. This major initiative includes three key developments:

- Warburton Bike Park – a world-class mountain bike destination featuring 160km of mountain bike trails
- Yarra Valley Trail – a shared-use trail connecting Lilydale with Yarra Glen and Healesville, then to the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail
- ngurrak barring (RidgeWalk) – a 39km trail through the iconic Dandenong Ranges, connecting towns, delivering new and improved tracks, architectural nodes, permanent sculptures, land art and heritage interpretation.

## Key achievements

Warburton Bike Park construction commenced in 2024 following the approval of key planning documents, including the Construction Environment Management Plan and the Emergency Management Plan. The first 30 kilometres of trails (stage 1A), which includes largely beginner and intermediate climbing and descending trails, 11 timber boardwalks and two steel bridges are on track to open in July 2025, with a significant bridge over Old Warburton Road to be installed in late 2025, linking Stages 1B and 1C.

The Yarra Valley Trail also progressed. Construction of Stage 1A Lilydale to Yering opened in 2021. Stage 1B.1 (Yering to Melba Hwy bend) is approaching completion, with the heritage bridges currently under construction.

The tender for the 1.5 kilometre Stage 1B.2, across the railway viaduct to the Yarra River, has been awarded with preliminary works to commence in mid-2025 and construction expected to take 12 months. The Cultural Heritage Management Plan approval was obtained for the Northern Loop, with works along Gulf Road finalised in late 2024.

Construction is underway on a new bridge to complete the new 2.5 kilometre Gulf Road section of the Northern Loop Trail. Detailed planning for Stage 2A (Yarra Glen to Tarrawarra)

is underway, with fieldwork and environmental assessments complete. Preliminary planning continues for Stage 2B, Tarrawarra to Healesville, with land adjacent to road and railway reserves purchased from VicTrack to secure the future trail route.

ngurrak barring – RidgeWalk has seen over 11 kilometres of tracks upgraded. Land art installations, including Kalorama Land Art, Storm Leaves, Doongalla and Djirra Binak sculptures, are either complete or under fabrication/installation. The project has integrated Indigenous and local storytelling, environmental artwork and community engagement at its core. Pedestrian crossings, carpark upgrades and wayfinding signage are also in various stages of implementation. The associated digital platforms, including an interpretive app and trail map are entering the testing phase. The project will open in stages but is due for full completion in early 2026.



## Overall impact

These projects promote sustainable tourism, cultural expression and environmental protection. Economic benefits are already being felt with increased visitation to pump tracks in Coldstream and Wesburn and local businesses reporting greater foot traffic and economic activity.

Funded through a mix of Federal, State and Council contributions, and with over \$41 million secured (including \$31 million from external sources), the initiative is forecast to bring 910,000 visitors annually, generate 597 jobs and inject \$103 million into the local economy. The combined length of upgraded or newly constructed trails will significantly expand walking, cycling and tourism infrastructure across the Yarra Ranges.





# Major Initiative 3

**Complete – milestone met, ongoing service.**

Ensure the plants, animals and ecologies of Yarra Ranges that our community value so much are supported and retained alongside us in healthy landscapes, by preparing and implementing a Biodiversity Plan that provides renewed focus for Council, the community, and partners.

## Overview

The Yarra Ranges Nature Plan: Protecting our Biodiversity Assets (2024–2034) represents a cornerstone initiative in Council's long-term strategy for environmental stewardship. Officially endorsed in December 2023, this 10-year plan aims to support and retain the rich biodiversity that defines our region. Guided by a commitment to sustainable and evidence-based management, the plan addresses the accelerating threats to local ecosystems posed by climate change, invasive species and land-use pressures. The initiative is the result of extensive community consultation and scientific review and positions Council as a leader in local biodiversity preservation.

## Key achievements

The Nature Plan was developed following comprehensive community engagement in 2022, where residents and environmental stakeholders were invited to identify key concerns and priorities. This process helped shape the Nature Plan which now reflects a deep commitment to ecological resilience and community-led environmental action. It also prompted Council to increase the financial investment pathway required for delivery.

### **The Nature Plan has four targets:**

- achieve an overall 'net gain' in native vegetation cover by 2034
- triple the restoration and revegetation works on private and Council managed land per annum
- increase the conservation value across our bushland reserve network over the next 10 years
- enable at least 200 land stewards to improve the biodiversity on their land each year.

## Overall impact

Although still in its early implementation stage, the Nature Plan is already influencing how environmental decisions are made across Yarra Ranges. It has established a clear governance structure for biodiversity investment, with a focus on transparency, accountability and measurable outcomes. The baseline data gathered during Year 1 will provide critical benchmarks to evaluate progress and refine targets over time.

The Nature Plan serves as the comprehensive framework to attain our biodiversity preservation objectives, setting ambitious and robust targets and aligning with our strategic focus on environmental stewardship. Implementation of the actions within the Nature Plan will be delivered through a combination of existing resources, grant funding and other funding, subject to future Council business case submissions and advocacy efforts.

We will continue to report progress against our commitments over the life of the 10-year plan.

It is structured around four pillars – climate, ecosystems, pests and people – and guides habitat restoration, community engagement and sustainable land management. Council allocated \$500,000 for Year 1 which includes activities such as data collection, mapping and on-ground works. Strategic partnerships with the State Government, local Landcare groups and academic institutions are also being established to enable multi-stakeholder collaboration throughout the Plan's delivery.





# Major Initiative 4

**Complete – ongoing service.**

Reduce our ecological footprint through our commitment to source renewable energy generated by Council and extend benefits to community through advocating and securing funding to deliver on initiatives including Council's Solar Farm project.

## Overview

Council's commitment to reducing its ecological footprint and enhancing climate resilience is exemplified through this major initiative, which aimed to transition Council operations to 100 per cent renewable energy while supporting community adaptation. The initiative is underpinned by the Liveable Climate Plan and aligns with the goal of achieving a zero-emissions fleet and sustainable infrastructure across the municipality. It delivers outcomes through changes in Council operations and empowering the community through innovative, locally driven programs.

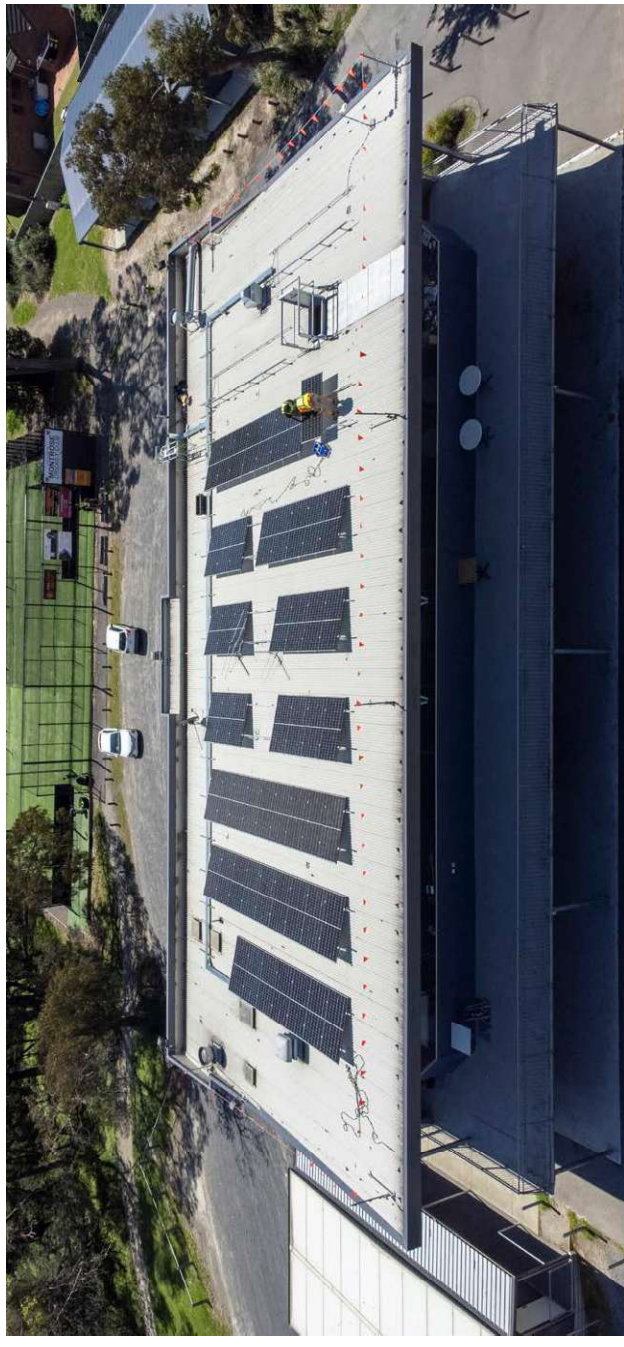
## Key achievements

- Achieved 100 per cent renewable electricity in 2022 through the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO), a 10-year contract involving over 50 Victorian councils. This transition from fossil fuel energy sources to renewables is essential for mitigating climate impacts, benefiting Council and the community.
- Reduced emissions by 48 per cent from the 2004-05 baseline (as of July 2024).
- The draft Energy Transition Plan (under development) will guide future electrification and renewable supply post-VECO.
- Progressed Council's Biochar Facility toward carbon offset accreditation.
- Participated in regional programs such as Solar Savers, Energy Savers, the Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action and the Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning. These programs support local communities in adapting to a changing climate and help shape the supply of locally generated renewable energy.
- Enabled, through the Monbulk microgrid (a local government first) two Council facilities to share solar power and battery storage during outages.

## Overall impact

- Installed electric vehicle charging stations in Healesville, Upwey and Yarra Junction. Council has investigated the feasibility of a solar farm/s, however the viability of the concept and the implications for closed landfill sites means it is not possible at this stage. Further investigation, the introduction of new technology and community cost benefit modelling is required for the viability of the Solar Farm Project to be achieved.

These initiatives have strengthened our reputation as a regional and state leader in climate action. Notably, it has expanded our involvement in collaborative programs that support residents and businesses in accessing clean energy technologies and reducing their energy costs. This has contributed to broad-based climate mitigation and social equity.





# Major Initiative 5

**Complete – ongoing service.**

Improve mental health outcomes for the community, strengthen social connections, and advocate for equitable and accessible mental health services across the municipality.

## Overview

Council recognised mental health and social connection as essential components of community wellbeing. This major initiative is part of our broader key strategic objective to ensure our communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well connected, with quality services accessible to everyone.

Each project outlined below aimed to improve mental health outcomes, reduce stigma, build resilience and support equitable access to mental health services. However, as we cannot address the challenges alone, this initiative has been delivered with support from grant funding and in partnership with local health organisations, community groups, and most importantly, individuals with lived experience of mental ill health.

## Key achievements

- Delivered Mental Health First Aid training to over 480 community members through partnerships with 17 organisations since 2020.
- Shared lived experiences of people managing mental health challenges, including carers through the Living Stories Project to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking, with strong community engagement and positive evaluation.
- Revitalised the Mental Wellbeing Network to coordinate efforts across Council and partners and improve mental health and wellbeing in the Yarra Ranges. While Council remains a critical partner, this initiative is now led by Eastern Health.
- Identified five key areas, through the Internal Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative project working group, where Council can make a measurable impact including cultural wellbeing, climate resilience and inclusive infrastructure.

## Overall impact

While Council is not a mental health service or treatment provider, we play a critical role in preventing mental illness and promoting mental wellbeing. The insights and evidence gathered through this initiative have paved a strong foundation for the years ahead and has been embedded in Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 which identifies a clear priority area of 'Improving Mental Wellbeing'. This work will continue to be guided by the strengths, needs and aspirations of our diverse communities across Yarra Ranges.



# Major Initiative 6

**Complete – milestone met.**

Undertake and deliver integrated place planning for priority activity centres and town centres to achieve coordinated community outcomes across Yarra Ranges, in accordance with the Living Places Framework.

## Overview

Council's long-term place-based planning initiative is designed to deliver coordinated, inclusive and well-researched urban outcomes for key town and activity centres across the municipality. This major initiative aligns with the principles of the Living Places Framework with the primary aim to embed community voice, sustainable infrastructure and thoughtful design into future planning and development. Our aim is to ensure that growth across the region is equitable and community-focused and delivers coordinated community outcomes.

## Key achievements

- Adopted the Warburton Urban Design Framework, Monbulk Urban Design Framework, Lilydale Structure Plan, Yarra Ranges Housing Strategy and Yarra Junction Place Plan, following targeted community engagement.
- Opened two Cycle Centre Nodes in Lilydale drawing trail users into the centre.
- Implemented early actions from the Kilsyth Recreation Masterplan.
- Adopted the Lilydale Lake Masterplan which proposes to make improvements to facilities including to accessibility, signage, pedestrian access and to the toilet block.



- Adopted the Morrison Reserve Masterplan, which explores opportunities to upgrade the reserve including the youth activation space with activity nodes, bike park and play space.
- Delivered Stage 1 landscape works for 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth.
- Completed early investigations for priority projects coming out of the Monbulk Urban Design Framework.
- Installed new wayfinding signage throughout Lilydale.

Preparation of Planning Scheme Amendments to the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme include:

- adopting of a Monbulk Specific Design and Development Overlay and land use local policy
- preparing a draft planning scheme amendment to Implement the Lilydale Structure Plan
- approving an anomalies and corrections amendment
- approving the update of the schedule to the Erosion Management Overlay Stage 1
- approving the application of the Heritage Overlay to a number of properties in Lilydale's Main street and surrounds.

## Overall impact

Early background work has been completed for Belgrave and Healesville in preparation for Township Design Frameworks, and a new Structure Plan is underway for Chirnside Park. Following early feedback from our community, a draft concept for the Upwey Town Centre Masterplan is now out for consultation.

These frameworks and masterplans provide coordinated and clear actionable visions for infrastructure, open spaces, pedestrian access and overall urban improvement, and are tailored to each township's unique character, identity and needs. In each case, Council has prioritised early-stage community engagement, ensuring each place plan or masterplan reflects local values and aspirations.



This initiative has laid the foundation for ongoing transformative change across the Yarra Ranges by providing a structured and participatory approach to local planning. The emphasis on co-design and community collaboration has deepened trust between residents and Council, improving local engagement and shared ownership of public spaces.

This initiative also plays a key role in enabling climate-conscious and future-ready urban environments. With upgraded streetscapes, integrated green spaces and safer pedestrian networks, we are actively shaping more liveable and inclusive towns.

The process has also informed broader housing and planning strategies, including the adoption of the Yarra Ranges Housing Strategy 2024. As implementation accelerates, these town centres will increasingly reflect the community values and strategic foresight embedded throughout the Living Places Framework.

# Major Initiative 7

**Complete – ongoing service**

Build community resilience by working together to achieve greater emergency planning and preparedness with a focus on traditional cultural burning practices. This will include the development a firestick program across public, private land and local training hubs.

## Overview

Council is dedicated to fostering a resilient community that is actively involved in disaster preparedness and resilience. Running from July 2021 to June 2025, this initiative aligned with the Safer Communities Strategy and supported a strategy goal of building resilient communities.

Our commitment to enhancing community resilience occurs through collaborative emergency planning and the revitalisation of traditional Aboriginal cultural burning practices. The project is grounded in culturally respectful partnerships with Traditional Owners and aims to embed Aboriginal knowledge systems in land and emergency management across the municipality.

Our approach has been seeking to prioritise learning and listening, followed by community capability building, local action and implementation.

## Key achievements

- Showcased Council's leadership in community-led disaster resilience at the 2023 Australasian Fire Agencies Conference, generating national interest and partnerships with other councils, universities and authorities.
- Delivered a series of place-based workshops, forums and community capability sessions to over 500 participants, building disaster preparedness, social connection, disaster resilience and enhancing community capability.
- Conducted the first cultural burn on council-managed land at Spadonis Reserve in Yering (1 June 2024). The cultural burn was led by a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Traditional Owner with support from the bushlands team, and marked a pivotal moment after delays due to plagues, floods and storms.
- Hosted the Our Country Our Way National Symposium, celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait led approaches to resilience and bringing together experts from across Australia to share practices and indigenous perspectives.
- Supported 15 community-led resilience groups with asset mapping, training and community-led hub development. The Eastern Metropolitan Region Municipal Emergency Relief Sub Plan, led by Yarra Ranges Council, now formally incorporates community-based organisations into emergency response frameworks.
- Advanced the Firesticks Project and Resilient Yarra Ranges initiatives, integrating Indigenous knowledge into land and emergency management.

The Eastern Metropolitan Region Municipal Emergency Relief Sub Plan (led by Yarra Ranges Council) now formally incorporates community-based organisations into emergency response frameworks. The Firesticks Project guided by Traditional Custodian practices, is a paradigm shift for local councils and is a model of how Aboriginal ecological knowledge can be respectfully and effectively implemented through government structures. This initiative exemplifies how cultural healing, environmental sustainability and community resilience can be simultaneously achieved through place-based, culturally inclusive strategies.

## Overall impact

The program involved 15 communities, representing a quarter of all townships in the region, and included asset mapping, training and community-led hub development. It has deepened council-community partnerships, especially evident during bushfires, storm events and power outages where local groups provide crucial services and real-time information. Community members gained skills and confidence in leading local responses.

Moving forward, we continue to garner community appetite and energy, alongside organisational leadership and commitment with a place-based model. Three reserve locations have been identified for cultural burns, continuing the momentum for a generational shift that galvanises an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approach to caring for Country, not as allies, but as embedded practice.



# Major Initiative 8

**Complete – ongoing service**

Implement a Build Back Better approach to economic recovery and adaptation activities that improves the well-being of the community and business.

## Overview

The Build Back Better initiative represents Council's long-term commitment to supporting economic resilience, recovery and inclusive growth. The initiative sits under the Economic Development Strategy (2022–2032) and seeks to transform the local economy through adaptation, diversification and capacity-building. The strategy acknowledges the unique needs of businesses in the Yarra Ranges, particularly those in tourism, agribusiness, retail and creative sectors, while fostering new industries and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

## Key achievements

- Established a Business Concierge service, facilitating 150 discussions with small business owners looking to start or expand their businesses.
- Offered entrepreneurship programs to provide mentoring and training for emerging business leaders.
- Awarded grant funding to eight business and trader groups across the region, assisting with economic and social recovery and providing ongoing support and advocacy for small businesses in our townships
- Ran Wellbeing and Resilience workshops to help business owners manage stress and build community recovery capacity. These sessions were particularly valued in regions impacted by recent emergencies, where stress and burnout among business owners was widely reported.
- Revamped our Business and Jobs portal and award-winning Region of Choice campaign, boosting engagement and local workforce attraction.
- Developed an Investment Attraction Plan and Lilydale Investment Plan to guide sector-focused growth.

## Overall impact

The Build Back Better initiative helped stabilise the local economic landscape by diversifying income sources, investing in human capital and streamlining support services.

Looking forward, Council will continue to align the Build Back Better initiative with regional innovation strategies and infrastructure planning. This initiative demonstrates our proactive approach to recovery, not as a return to normal but as a step towards a more equitable, innovative and community-driven future.





# Council Plan Actions

The following section details the work completed to achieve each of the Council Plan actions as identified in the Council Plan Action Plan.

All actions are reported as Complete to reflect the close of the four-year planning cycle. In some cases, 'complete' means that the action has been delivered in full, or that scheduled milestones for this Council Plan action have been achieved and the activity is now part of ongoing operations or has been incorporated into another strategy.

**100 per cent of active council plan actions have been achieved. One Council Plan action was deferred.**







# Connected and Healthy Communities

Communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well connected. Quality services are accessible to everyone.



| Connected and Healthy Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Status Year 4          |
| <p><b>Implement priority actions arising from the Health and Wellbeing Plan.</b></p> <p>The implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–2025 included 91 actions under seven strategic priorities. The Plan is legislated under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and requires Council to develop a new plan every four years and drives Council to achieve a healthy and connected community and improve community health outcomes. The Plan is guided by the Health and Wellbeing Steering and Advisory Committees and reviewed annually.</p> | <p><b>Complete</b></p> |

| Connected and Healthy Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                            |
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| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Status Year 4                              |
| <p><b>Implement Council's Healthy and Active Ageing Plan to increase the age and dementia friendliness of the municipality and improve social connection.</b></p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council developed the Healthy and Active Ageing Plan (2019–2023) to support the growing population of residents aged 50 and over. The plan was shaped through extensive community consultation and collaboration with the Positive Ageing Reference Group (PARG), ensuring older residents' voices guided its priorities.</p> <p>Consultation identified key areas affecting older people: their physical and natural environment, social and economic conditions, and intrinsic capacity. These informed 18 actions across four strategic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority 1: The views of older residents will influence service and policy decision</li> <li>• Priority 2: Age-friendly environments enable people to age in place with dignity and support.</li> <li>• Priority 3: The older community will enjoy life-long economic, social and civic participation</li> <li>• Priority 4: Older residents will be healthy and connected to their communities of choice</li> </ul> <p>Key activities included 110 events across the Shire during Seniors Month, Cafe Connect workshops and the formation of a Dementia Friendly Working Group, who met to develop a plan for raising awareness of dementia in the community.</p> <p>Yarra Ranges also partnered with seven Eastern Metropolitan Region councils to deliver the Tackling Ageism Campaign, reaching 7,755 Facebook views locally. Yarra Ranges Council reinforced its commitment by encouraging both staff and community members to take the pledge to end ageism.</p> <p>Community consultations during the plan's final phase informed the development of the Key Life Stages Plan (due for adoption in September 2025, which will incorporate remaining actions and continues the focus on healthy ageing and social connection.</p> | <p><b>Complete and ongoing service</b></p> |



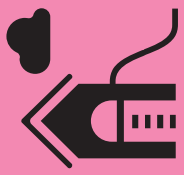
| Connected and Healthy Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |               |
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| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Status Year 4 |
| <p><b>Implement the Pandemic Recovery and Resilience Framework and other key recovery actions to support the rebuilding of community resilience.</b></p> <p>In response to the pandemic and storm events, Yarra Ranges Council implemented a comprehensive suite of recovery programs throughout 2023 and evaluated in 2024. Insights have been embedded into both the Municipal Recovery Plan and broader Emergency Management (EM) planning frameworks for the municipality.</p> <p>Key achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recovery Evaluation &amp; Integration: findings integrated into ongoing recovery and emergency management plans and inform future preparedness strategies.</li> <li>• Knowledge Sharing &amp; Sector Engagement: Lessons learned were shared across local government and emergency management forums to strengthen local resilience and collaboration.</li> <li>• Municipal (Storm) Recovery Plan Implementation: All but eight actions completed by mid-2024. Remaining actions embedded into the business unit plans</li> <li>• Transition to BAU: Recovery programs were transitioned into ongoing operations and annual planning.</li> <li>• Strategic Funding &amp; Program Delivery: The Council leveraged federal government funding to enhance resilience-building efforts, including Preparing Australian Communities funding and the Resilient Yarra Ranges Program which upgraded 10 Community facilities to act as relief centres during emergencies.</li> </ul> | Completed     |

| Connected and Healthy Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |               |
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| <p><b>Update the Aquatics Strategy to strategically plan for the provision of aquatic facilities across the municipality that are inclusive, sustainable, well designed and positioned to improve community health and wellness.</b></p> <p>The update of the Aquatic Strategy commenced with community consultations in early 2023. Over 2,000 responses to the community survey were received and Council officers engaged with 523 residents through face-to-face information sessions. A further 47 residents took part in community focus groups.</p> <p>The results of the consultation, together with specialist industry knowledge, detailed analysis of the current facilities and future needs of the community guided the development of the Draft Yarra Ranges Aquatics and Wellness Strategy. The Strategy unanimously endorsed at the Council Meeting on Tuesday 9 April 2024. The last 12 months has seen the first stages of implementation completed, including the commencement of a business case for an urban facility following the closure of Kilsyth Centenary Pool.</p> <p>Council remains committed to ensuring aquatic facilities across the municipality are inclusive, sustainable, well designed and improve community health and wellness, but most importantly, represent the needs and aspirations of our residents.</p> | Completed     |

| Connected and Healthy Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                            |
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| <p>Revise and implement key actions of the Recreation and Open Space Strategy to increase community access, support community connections and activate Council's community facilities and open space network.</p> <p>Significant work has been completed to increase community access, support community connections and activate Council's community facilities and open space network. This has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play spaces: safer, modernised areas at Elizabeth Bridge, Bluegum, Morrisons Reserve, Upwey, Belgrave South (including pump track), Queens Road (Lilydale), Badger Creek, McKenzie King Adventure Playground and Millgrove Wright Avenue.</li> <li>• Facilities: new pavilion at Gary Tait (Pinks Reserve) and upgrades at Kilsyth Stadium, Seville Oval, Morrison Reserve and multiple tennis clubs.</li> <li>• Master Plans adopted for Kilsyth Recreation Reserve, Morrison Reserve, Lillydale Lake and 150 Cambridge Road</li> <li>• Tree planting - over 50,000 trees planted in partnership with the community.</li> <li>• Trails upgrades and extensions – for example the Wesburn Pump Track, Brushy Creek Trail upgrades, Lilydale to Warburton Trail, Belgrave Rail Trail, Yarra Valley Trail 1b.</li> </ul> <p>The 2024 Parks User Survey showed an overall satisfaction rating of 89 per cent while key service gaps include shade, toilets, and safety. These will inform future planning as we continue to increase community access, community connections and activate our community facilities and open spaces.</p> | <p><b>Complete and ongoing service</b></p> |



| Connected and Healthy Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                            |
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| <p><b>Implementing key actions in the Integrated Transport Strategy 2040 with a focus on people's localised movements and advocating for a cohesive public transport network that connects people with services, employment and to each other.</b></p> <p>The rollout of the Integrated Transport Strategy 2040 is well underway, with several key actions progressing. Nine new footpaths are planned for design or construction in 2025-26 as part of the Footpath Prioritisation Program, with further projects scoped for future budgets.</p> <p>Council endorsed the Parking Management Framework in March 2025. A smart technology trial for paid parking began in Warburton in May and early feedback is being addressed. Consultation for the Chimside Park Local Area Traffic Management project has concluded with results currently being analysed. Active travel initiatives are progressing through partnerships with local schools and minor improvements are planned over the school holidays. Council continues to support and promote sustainable transport as part of ongoing strategy delivery.</p> | <p><b>Complete and ongoing service</b></p> |



# Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

Quality facilities and infrastructure meet current and future needs. Places are well planned hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.



| Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                          |
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| <p><b>Improve our social infrastructure planning by working across Council to integrate place, service and infrastructure planning to meet the needs of our diverse communities and improve the unique places they live.</b></p> <p>The Living Places Framework was finalised in late 2023. Since its adoption, considerable progress has been seen social infrastructure planning progress in Lilydale, the adoption of the Monbulk and Warburton Urban Design Frameworks, as well as progress on the Upwey Town Centre Masterplan, Master Planning of Lillydale Lake, Morrisons Reserve, 150 Cambridge Rd Kilsyth and Don Road Healesville.</p> <p>A detailed audit was conducted for Mooroolbark Structure Plan actions, and similarly in Yarra Junction for the Place Plan. The Green Street Masterplan was completed, and early discussions have begun on the Belgrave and Healesville Township Design Frameworks, and with Sassafras and Kallista in advance of master planning in late 2025.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Develop and implement a strategic approach for activating and providing functional and affordable community assets and spaces that are welcoming to all and support the wellbeing and connectedness of the community.</b></p> <p>Council has significantly improved its approach and decision making for activating and providing functional and affordable community assets. Improvements include a renewed building asset plan and development of the Property Strategy, with greater focus on service delivery. The place planning approach has also incorporated information about community facilities; their use and the services being offered. Elements of these improvements are being tested through the Seville Community Precinct project.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Continue to evolve the maturity and sophistication of Council's Asset Management planning to ensure existing community infrastructure is renewed and maintained for the benefit of future generations.</b></p> <p>Council's Asset Management has been improved through review and update of new Asset Management Plans, input and guidance from the Asset Management Steering Committee and the implementation of the new asset management system ensures that infrastructure assets are planned, maintained and renewed in a more efficient way and underpin capital investment decision making.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |



| Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                               |
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| <p><b>Activate, develop and construct significant community facility projects across the municipality to respond to current and future community and social needs.</b></p> <p>Significant work has been completed to activate, develop and construct community facilities to respond to current and future community and social needs. Many of these are mentioned under the Council Plan action related to “delivering key actions of the Recreation and Open Space strategy” .</p> <p>Additionally, Council was successful in obtaining Thriving Suburbs grant funding from the Federal Government for Don Road Pavilion Healesville (\$5.7M) and upgrades at Lillydale Lake (\$1.5M) to enhance and activate parklands, improve access to the lake, carparking, recreation and fitness facilities. Across the four years of the Council Plan, a total of \$105m in grant funding has been utilised for capital works projects delivering outcomes for the community.</p> <p>Finally, access and amenities upgrades to Charles Street Kindergarten in late 2024, were important to improving the early years program.</p> <p>This is a significant body of work, and we continue to improve community facilities to support the needs of current and future generations.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p>                      |
| <p><b>Seal gravel roads in townships across the municipality enabled through funding provided by the Federal Government combined with landowner contributions to improve local amenity and liveability for the community.</b></p> <p>The sealing of gravel roads under the Roads for the Community Initiative is nearing completion with the final two construction projects, Alpine Street Group, Warburton, and Cedar Court Road Group, Monbulk, having recently received their first layer of asphalt and are about to reach practical completion.</p> <p>The gravel road sealing program has been improving amenity and liveability for the community who live on the 96 roads covered by the program (approximately 32 kilometres length) with the works funded via a Federal Government grant as well as landowner contributions via Special Charge Schemes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p><b>Complete – external dependency, ongoing service</b></p> |

| Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                             |
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| <p><b>Integrate and strengthen the planning, maintenance and management of community assets to ensure the needs and priorities of current and future communities are balanced against investment requirements and Council's ability to pay for them.</b></p> <p>Key achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of asset management plans &amp; review of a roles and responsibilities matrix and regular asset inspection audits</li> <li>• Implementation of the Strategic Asset Management (SAM) system</li> <li>• Modelling of assets based on condition and levels of service</li> <li>• Development of the Property Assets Strategy informs on property that requires disposal and opportunities for better utilisation based on condition, utilisation rates and income generation.</li> <li>• Pipeline Evaluation Process ensuring project bids are evaluated with outcomes that deliver maximum benefit for community while balancing investment requirements.</li> <li>• Development of governance groups including the Asset Management Steering Committee and the Capital Works Steering Committee to ensure proper assessment and approval processes are implemented.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Completed – ongoing service</b></p>                   |
| <p><b>Complete the Lilydale Structure Plan and incorporate key actions into the Planning Scheme through an amendment to provide clear direction of the future land use, urban design, transport and access and landscaping forms for Lilydale.</b></p> <p>The Lilydale Structure Plan was Adopted by Council on 9 August 2022. A planning scheme amendment (PSA) is proposed to implement the Structure Plan's land use and development recommendations into the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme, C218. The C218 PSA was presented to a Council Meeting of 13th August 2024, in which Council resolved to submit C218 to the Minister for Planning for Authorisation, in order to commence the PSA process. The Minister has granted authorisation for the amendment to proceed to public exhibition subject to a number of complex conditions that are currently being considered by officers.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p><b>Complete – milestone met, external dependency</b></p> |

| Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |                                |
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| <p><b>Amend the planning scheme by using the outcomes of the reviewed Housing Strategy to ensure housing needs of the community are met, new housing is well designed, provides for housing choice and improve neighbourhood character outcomes in residential areas.</b></p> <p>The Housing Strategy was adopted by Council on 11 June 2024. Preparation of a planning scheme amendment has been drafted; however recent State Government reforms will mean that the way in which Council is able to implement the Strategy will need to be reviewed as more information becomes available.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  | Complete – external dependency |
| <p><b>Plan, facilitate and develop urban renewal projects, including Lilydale Revitalisation project, Kinley development and Level Crossing Removal to facilitate the revitalisation of Lilydale. Ensuring alignment with Council's place making objectives of encouraging a vibrant, attractive, sustainable, healthy and connected community.</b></p> <p>A number of milestones have been achieved on several urban renewal projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site rehabilitation of the former Lilydale Quarry (Kinley Estate), including advancing filling of the former quarry pit</li> <li>• Planning approvals for Precinct 1 are well underway with approval granted to commence bulk earthworks and a subdivision permit application is under consideration.</li> <li>• Planning commenced for Precinct 3 with the recent lodgement of precinct plans relating to heritage, landscape, sustainability, transport and stormwater management.</li> <li>• Required agreements relating to infrastructure contributions and affordable housing contributions have been signed and registered on title.</li> <li>• The State Transport infrastructure contributions agreement is still being negotiated.</li> <li>• The Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) has seen all parts of the project and sites completed.</li> </ul> |  | Complete – ongoing service     |



| Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                        |               |
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| <p><b>Establish a municipal wide Development Contributions Plan to provide funds for new infrastructure to support future growth and development.</b></p> <p>A draft Municipal Wide Development Contributions Plan (DCP) was developed to explore potential funding for infrastructure through developer contributions. However, analysis found several challenges, including a decline in planning permit activity, the likelihood of frequent updates to align with the Capital Expenditure Program, and potential State Government reforms in the developer contributions space. These factors created uncertainty around the plan's financial viability, particularly in terms of cost recovery in the early years. The draft DCP was presented at a Council Forum on 23 January 2024, and it was determined that proceeding with the plan was not feasible at this time.</p> | <p><b>Deferred</b></p> |               |



# Protected & Enhanced Natural Environment

A healthier environment for future generations



| Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                         |
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| <p><b>Implement actions of the Liveable Climate Plan and shift to low carbon and renewable energy sources across all facilities, buildings, plant and fleet to reduce Council's climate impact.</b></p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council continues to progress toward net zero and renewable energy targets under the Liveable Climate Plan with key achievements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewable energy: 1,600kW of solar installed across 75 Council buildings; electricity contracts shifted to 100 per cent renewables, cutting 3,000+ tCO<sub>2</sub>e emissions</li> <li>Fleet Transition: Zero emissions fleet plan endorsed supporting the transformation of the Council fleet to zero emissions technology; nine dedicated EVs &amp; multiple hybrids currently in use; 10 chargers installed at the Lilydale Civic Centre.</li> <li>Resilient infrastructure: As part of the Resilient Yarra Ranges program, 21 community sites upgraded with solar panels, batteries, generator plug-in-points, LED lighting, and HVAC systems, funded by federal and state grants.</li> <li>Innovation: Monbulk Microgrid enables power sharing between the Monbulk Living &amp; Learning Centre and the Monbulk Sporting Pavilion.</li> <li>Stage 2 of the Sustainable Streetlighting Project has been completed with 773 lights upgraded to LEDs, with approximate savings of 2,206 tCO<sub>2</sub>e and \$1m in operational costs over 20 years.</li> <li>Circular economy: Yarra Ranges Council's Biochar Facility was recognised at the 2025 LG Pro VIC Awards for Excellence, receiving the prestigious Environmental Sustainability Award. This recognition highlights Council's leadership in climate action and circular economy initiatives within local government. Since opening in October 2023, the facility has processed over 1,500 cubic metres of woody waste into 450 cubic metres of biochar and 15,500 litres of wood vinegar, sequestering approximately 300 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e).</li> </ul> | <p><b>Complete – milestone met, ongoing service</b></p> |



| Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                          |
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| <p><b>Deliver actions of the Urban Tree Canopy Strategy and deliver the parks and reserves improvement program to enhance amenity, access and participation in public spaces and places.</b></p> <p>Following the 2021 storms where an unprecedented number of trees were lost, Council committed to the development and implementation of a Tree Canopy Strategy to provide the foundation for best practice tree management to maximise the benefits of the municipality's tree canopy and to minimise risk.</p> <p>The 2024-2044 Tree Canopy Strategy was endorsed by Council in May 2024. The strategy sets Council's vision, objectives and targets for the long-term protection, management and planting of trees in the Yarra Ranges. The Tree Team continue with implementation of the actions as identified in the strategy.</p> <p>Councils Parks, Trees and Trails team have delivered an extensive operational program maintaining parks, reserves township streetscapes and Civic Centres with ongoing mowing, garden maintenance, mulching, weed control and litter clean up and graffiti control maintaining an inviting and accessible network for our community and visitors to enjoy.</p> | <p><b>Complete - ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Develop a Municipal Waste Plan, education programs and pursue innovative waste processing technologies to maximise waste resource recovery for a more sustainable future.</b></p> <p>The Community Waste Resource and Recovery Plan was finalised and adopted by Council with Council pursuing innovative waste technologies through involvement in an advanced waste processing project with eight (8) other neighbouring councils. In late 2023, Council also implemented a comprehensive education program as part of the changes to kerbside waste collection, including the implementation of a Food Organics and Garden Organic (FOGO) service.</p> <p>Comprehensive auditing was undertaken to establish contamination levels within waste streams to assist in developing targeted education programs with the recycling contamination program achieving positive results. Further education programs have been developed to align with the Community Waste Resource and Recovery Plan, and work continues in the innovative waste processing technologies space to maximise waste resource recovery for a more sustainable future.</p>                                                       | <p><b>Complete - ongoing service</b></p> |

| Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                          |
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| <p><b>Continue to develop and support the capability of Environmental Volunteer Groups including seeking funding support to invest in our shared environment.</b></p> <p>The Resilient Environment department has actively supported environmental volunteer groups through a range of initiatives, including training opportunities, development sessions, and recognition activities delivered both directly and in partnership with local organisations, providing CPR training, collaborating on site plans with volunteer groups, offering insurance coverage, sponsoring venue use, and offering promotional support opportunities, such as through short videos.</p> <p>Additionally, the teams assisted volunteer groups with grant applications, fostering networks, and distributing education pamphlets. Development of an interactive map for volunteer groups is complete and can now be found on the Yarra Ranges website.</p> <p>The Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee (SEAC) continues to play a crucial role in advocating and sharing environmental expertise on Council strategies. Recruitment for the new committee was completed in February 2025.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Improve our green corridors to enable native wildlife movement across the landscape by investing in restoration and revegetation works on private and council land.</b></p> <p>The 2025 planting season is underway with expectations that revegetation activities will surpass the previous planting season, with a target of 185,000 plants to go in the ground.</p> <p>The Gardens for Wildlife participation has 15 garden guides that have delivered 91 visits in 2024, with 1000 plants provided to private properties within urban environments to date. The nestbox program has delivered 288 boxes and hollows to date, including installations in the recently fire-affected Ken Leversha Reserve. Monitoring is ongoing through a partnership with Deakin University students.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |



# Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism

Our tourism, agriculture, health, manufacturing and other industries are leading and dynamic. Strong investment and attraction underpin sustainable economic growth and job creation.





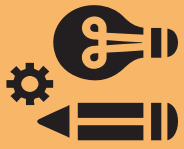
| Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                          |
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| <p><b>Implement a plan that improves employment opportunities and mental health outcomes for everyone.</b></p> <p>The Region of Choice and JobLink programs were successfully launched with improvements made as the programs were reviewed to further build on learnings, information gained, and data captured. Council participated in Youth Employment Expos and became a member of the Outer Eastern Local Learning Employment Network.</p> <p>A government grant was secured for Mental-Wellbeing-of-Business-Communities and supported the Co-working Plus Project, targeting health and wellbeing, trades and construction, home based and community business groups. It also allowed for networking events that provided opportunities for connection, relationship building and collaboration.</p> <p>The Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program, Partners in Wellbeing Program and the Yarra Ranges Jobs Portal were all successfully completed. The Eastern Melbourne PHN Wellbeing and Resilience Grant are supporting the facilitation of workshops for business owners to assist in personal wellbeing (mental health), while a series of workshops with the Unbreakable Farmer have commenced.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Develop and deliver improvements to Council's network of recreational trails across the municipality to support improved recreational, health, social, and economic needs of the community and become a world class trails, agritourism and eco-tourism destination.</b></p> <p>A range of upgrade and renewal works have recently been completed to support safer, more accessible, and a better-connected trail network: including the Brushy Creek Trail Mooroolbark, Belgrave Rail Trail, the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail, Lillydale Lake trail, Eastern Dandenong Ranges Trail and the Badger Creek Trail. Council was also successful in obtaining a Federal Government Active Transport Fund grant of \$464,000, as a 50 per cent contribution, towards a new 1.7 km long shared user path along Liverpool Road, between Canterbury Road and Mount Dandenong Road, Kilsyth.</p> <p>Further achievements to this action are detailed under major initiative 2, related to the Rivers and Ridges projects.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |

| Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                             |
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| <p><b>Finalise and implement a new Economic Development Strategy and Investment Attraction Plan, to create local jobs, business, and investment to deliver positive and sustainable economic community outcomes.</b></p> <p>The approved Economic Development Strategy is a five-year strategy, with implementation of 18 actions taking place over 10 years (2022 – 2032). The priority areas for action are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity, Leadership and Collaboration</li> <li>• Trade Commerce and Workforce Capability</li> <li>• Investment Attraction</li> <li>• Innovation and Entrepreneurship</li> </ul> <p>The Strategy was endorsed by Council in November 2022, and actions will be delivered throughout the lifecycle of the Strategy. Implementation, monitoring, and review are also key elements of measuring the impact of the strategy. The Investment Attraction Plan is complete, and the first stage actions have been initiated.</p>                            | <p><b>Complete – milestone achieved</b></p> |
| <p><b>Deliver key initiatives outlined in the Bayswater Business Precinct Transformation Strategy that create jobs, attracts future investment and progresses the revitalisation of the Precinct, in association with Knox and Maroondah Councils.</b></p> <p>The Bayswater Business Precinct (BBP) structure plan is underway by the three participating Councils of Yarra Ranges, Knox and Maroondah and an updated Memorandum of Understanding signed.</p> <p>Preparation of the structure plan is a major action under the BBP Transformation Strategy and will seek to align policy and planning controls for the precinct in each Councils planning schemes, identify opportunities to improve transport links, urban design and public spaces as well as develop an agreed advocacy framework for improvements to local infrastructure including roads, paths, and public transport.</p> <p>The structure plan will take approximately 12 months to finalise and is due for completion in early 2026.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p>    |

## Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Status Year 4                            |
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| <p><b>Raise the cultural profile of Yarra Ranges to drive creative industry development and cultural tourism spend via attracting and retaining new creative professionals and businesses and supporting existing creative professionals and businesses.</b></p> <p>Council supported the arts through both the multiyear Partnership Program and annual Grants for Community Program, funding 18 and 31 recipients respectively. These programs continue to strengthen local creatives and creative businesses.</p> <p>The ngurrak barring project progressed with cultural elements and public art pieces underway providing local creatives with high profile opportunities. Governance planning is in development to position it as a key cultural tourism asset.</p> <p>Council teams are exploring capacity-building initiatives for creatives, while the Creative Communities team have finalised a marketing plan with the objective of driving cultural visitation and raise the regional profile.</p> <p>Grant processes have been refined to better support creative professionals, enabling artists to deliver funded arts projects beyond traditional community development.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Develop a destination management Plan with Yarra Ranges Tourism Board to support the right eco-tourism, infrastructure growth that also protects our natural environment.</b></p> <p>The development of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) is owned and managed by Yarra Ranges Tourism (now Tourism East). Yarra Ranges Council has been a key stakeholder throughout the progress of the DMP.</p> <p>The DMP was developed with broad stakeholder and community consultation. Final feedback was accepted in late 2023, and the 10-year plan is now being implemented through various agencies, including Traditional Owners, local councils, state departments and industry partners.</p> <p>The plan outlines marketing and advocacy opportunities, as well as supporting activities such as employment and workforce.</p> <p>The Local Area Plan and Workforce Plan are also complete. These will be refreshed to reflect the new Visitor Economy Partnership between Yarra Ranges Council, Nillumbik and Cardinia Shires.</p>                                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |





# High Performing Organisation

An innovative, responsive organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community.



| High Performing Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                             |
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| <p><b>Ensure Council's workforce reflects the community it serves by embedding the principles of diversity and inclusion in our day-to-day leadership and share our experience and knowledge with the community.</b></p> <p>Council continues to embed diversity and inclusion in leadership and workplace culture, ensuring our workforce reflects the community we serve.</p> <p>Key initiatives included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rollout of Councils Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) and Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) programme with progress reports submitted to The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector.</li> <li>• Recognition from the Department of Fairness, Families &amp; Housing for leadership in gender equality through the Free from Violence grant.</li> <li>• Refreshed Active Bystander training to empower staff to challenge inappropriate behaviour.</li> <li>• Updated Sexual Harassment Policy and participation in 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.</li> <li>• Celebration of key dates including International Women's Day, Neurodiversity Week, and Midsumma Pride March, reinforcing support for LGBTQIA+ staff and community.</li> </ul> | Completed – ongoing service |



| High Performing Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                          |
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| <p><b>Improve the community's trust and connection with Council through more meaningful and inclusive community engagement and innovative approaches to communication.</b></p> <p>Recognising levels of trust are difficult to measure when looking at engagement alone, Council has been focussed on continuous improvement through reflection on practice, community feedback and industry benchmarking.</p> <p>The Community Engagement team continues to support engagement across the organisation, providing meaningful and inclusive engagement opportunities for the community. High levels of engagement were maintained on Shaping Yarra Ranges with over 5,000 members, 153,368 views, 61,489 visitors and 4,884 contributions. In addition, there were 37 formal community engagement roadshow activations, connecting with over 3,000 community members, three community summits with over 100 attendees and a productive deliberative panel.</p> <p>Following the adoption of the revised Community Engagement policy in July 2024, the focus has been on improving reporting back to the community on how their feedback was considered in recommendations. Further, the induction for Councillors on community engagement at Yarra Ranges and upskilling of staff by offering facilitation training have strengthened the way we do engagement at Yarra Ranges.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |



| High Performing Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                           |
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| <p><b>Develop and grow an organisational culture committed to delivering exceptional customer experience.</b></p> <p>The Customer Experience team have worked to embed a culture of responsiveness, accountability, and helpfulness across the organisation through the refreshed Customer Commitment. Our performance against these values is being measured via our new 'Voice of Customer' survey, which is sent to customers upon completion of certain requests to understand their experience with our organisation.</p> <p>In its first year, the Voice of Customer survey is showing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 per cent of customers found it easy to lodge a request.</li> <li>• 66 per cent said that we were helpful.</li> <li>• 63 per cent said we responded to them in a timely manner.</li> <li>• 53 per cent were satisfied with the outcome of their request.</li> </ul> <p>Furthermore, we're seeing a decrease in complex and escalated complaints.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average active cases are down by 34 per cent compared to the same month last year.</li> <li>• Overall complaint volume has reduced by 13 per cent.</li> <li>• Complaints to the Victorian Ombudsman have decreased by 33 per cent.</li> <li>• Complaints about Council staff are down 17 per cent.</li> </ul> <p>Over the Council Plan period, the organisation's culture has further developed and grown its commitment to delivering exceptional customer experience. This will continue to be an important area of focus for Council.</p> | <p><b>Completed – ongoing service</b></p> |

| High Performing Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                           |
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| <p><b>Streamline internal Council processes and improve systems to deliver more efficient services and improved interactions with our community.</b></p> <p>Over the last twelve months Council has streamlined systems and processes to increase the customer experience in a range of areas.</p> <p>Key achievements include website improvements; improved payable system; planning e-tool; changes to governance workflows; establishment of the Voice of Customer survey; improved technology systems for corporate reporting, strategic asset management, project lifecycle management and finance; and events process reviews.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p><b>Completed – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Increase the community's visibility, understanding of and access to Council's information and performance to improve accountability to the community.</b></p> <p>Increasing community's visibility to Council information and performance is an area of continuous improvement and ongoing growth for the organisation.</p> <p>Work that has been completed with the aim of increasing visibility includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refreshed Annual Report with clearer formatting and content to improve readability and understanding.</li> <li>• A new internal performance reporting system has been rolled out to enable greater transparency and visibility of actions across the organisation, driving greater accountability and improving reporting.</li> <li>• Increased social media communications; particularly around agendas and decisions of Council</li> <li>• More opportunities for community to connect face-to-face with increased numbers of pop-ups, township engagements and community summits.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Completed – ongoing service</b></p> |

| High Performing Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                          |
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| <p><b>Consolidate and strengthen advocacy through evidence and stronger relationships to ensure other levels of government are effectively and efficiently engaged to support local services and programs.</b></p> <p>Council strengthened its advocacy through a refreshed agenda adopted in early 2024, guiding focused engagement with Ministers and MPs on key priorities.</p> <p>Key activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submissions to state and federal budgets and engagement with local candidates for the Federal Election in May 2025.</li> <li>• Regular meetings between the Mayor, CEO and local MPs to build strong community-focused relationships.</li> <li>• actively contributed to collective advocacy with other councils and local government peak bodies.</li> <li>• submitted a number of motions to the May 2025 MAV State Council which received support from the sector.</li> <li>• Continued advocacy, individually and with local government partners, for the inclusion of Yarra Ranges in Federal and State grant funding programs, which are critical to the delivery of local infrastructure and services and enable Yarra Ranges to contribute effectively to the local, state and national economy.</li> </ul> <p>Recent funding wins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$5.76m for Don Road Community and Sporting Pavilion</li> <li>• \$1.9m for Monbulk Aquatic Centre electrification</li> <li>• \$1.5m for Lillydale Lake improvements</li> <li>• \$464,000 for Liverpool Road shared path.</li> <li>• \$200,000 for Monbulk Regional Soccer Centre lighting upgrades.</li> </ul> <p>While grants enable us to deliver capital projects and some services, advocacy efforts also seek to reduce cost burdens on Council arising from government policy or program changes. The savings achieved for Council are much harder to quantify.</p> <p>These funding successes are a measure of how Council's advocacy can deliver on identified needs in the community and to support community infrastructure.</p> | <p><b>Complete – ongoing service</b></p> |



| High Performing Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                           |
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| <p><b>Adapt and improve our service delivery to ensure the measurable provision of services that are supporting our municipality to rebuild resilience.</b></p> <p>Over the last 4 years, Council has delivered several service improvement projects aimed at improving quality, enhancing community experience, and strengthening financial sustainability.</p> <p>Following these initiatives, Council has started its transformation towards implementing an Integrated Planning Framework. This approach includes service profiling and a refined service catalogue. Once fully implemented, the framework will provide a clear view of all Council services, their costs, customer impact, legislative requirements, and associated risks, enabling more informed decision-making, better budget development and stronger alignment with community needs.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>Completed – ongoing service</b></p> |
| <p><b>Strengthen relationships and networks to support local community groups and build their capacity to be active in achieving community outcomes.</b></p> <p>Council strengthened support for local groups through leadership programs, township networks, emergency relief coordination, and place-based planning.</p> <p>Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of the Changemakers Leadership Program and active township groups in Sassafra, Kallista, Millgrove, and Badger Creek.</li> <li>• A community forum with 80+ participants focused on supporting refugee communities from Burma/Myanmar.</li> <li>• Support for new facilities like Mooroolbark Community House and Seville Community Precinct.</li> <li>• Community-led initiatives such as Badger Creek's 100-year celebration and planning in Healesville and Yarra Junction.</li> </ul> <p>Council delivered well-subscribed skill building workshops focused on governance, volunteering, and communication. Monthly and annual grants reach record levels, enabling more community-led projects.</p> <p>These efforts have increased social connection, leadership, and resilience, with strong volunteer engagement and impressive outcomes across the municipality.</p> | <p><b>Completed</b></p>                   |

Yarra Ranges Council

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