

Strathbogie Shire Council

Australian Government Advocacy Ask



Strathbogie
SHIRE COUNCIL

Acknowledgement of Country

Strathbogie Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we strive, the peoples of the rivers and the hills of the Strathbogie Shire region who walked these lands for generations.

We pay our respects to the elders of the past, and the speakers of the first words, who lived in harmony with this country.

We acknowledge the elders of the present, who seek to regain their culture, and to teach the elders of the future their law, their history and their language.

We pay our respects to them and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

We honour their spirit – and the memory, culture, art and science of the world's oldest living culture through 60,000 years.

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Introduction

Strathbogie Shire: Invest. Live. Visit. Play

Our region is fast becoming the destination for people to invest, live, visit and play.

We are seeing strong development in Nagambie and Euroa, and this is matched by demand as people look to relocate to our beautiful region.

For those who are lucky to live in Strathbogie Shire we know how special our region is.

However, what was once our secret is now well-and-truly out.

To ensure we can support this growth – both business and residential – Strathbogie Shire Council will advocate to State and Federal governments for funding support.

Strathbogie Shire embraces more than 1,550 businesses over 20 industry sectors who support over 10,000 residents who call the area their home.

Our people together with the natural attractions of the region sustain over \$56.1 million in tourism income each year.

For more than 150 years, the agricultural sector and the businesses that support and depend on those farms, form the backbone of our local economy.



Council Plan 2021-2023, Aligns to the Strategic Focus Area 2: Live. Access. Connect.
Strategic Focus Area 3: Protect. Enhance. Adopt. Strategic Focus Area 6:
Accountable. Transparent. Responsible.

Roads and bridges





The opportunity: A safer, more resilient, road network

In October 2022 Strathbogie Shire was impacted by flooding which, in some areas, peaked above major flood levels.

More than 40 homes were inundated, the agricultural sector lost crops, feed and stock, and businesses across the region were shut down, some for the unforeseeable future.

Strathbogie Shire Council's road network was also significantly damaged.

Across our Shire we have 2210km of roads – 1465km unsealed and 748km sealed. On top of this there are 521 bridges and culverts to maintain.

Maintenance of this extensive road network is a significant ask, even when conditions are good.

With about 7500 ratepayers our ability to generate enough revenue to cover the actual costs to construct, maintain and upgrade roads and other assets is impossible without assistance from State and Federal governments.

We are a small rural shire and an asset-heavy level of government.

We manage our road maintenance responsibly prudently, considering the combined impacts of climatic conditions, rate capping and reduced government grants.

However, the continued lack of government investment in roads, maintenance, and infrastructure renewal, will have long-term impacts on the quality and safety of local roads across Strathbogie Shire

Recent flooding and ongoing wet weather have deteriorated road surfaces to a point where some sections are difficult to navigate without significant reductions in speed.

This is not just frustrating for our community; it is a safety concern.

There has been a large increase in pavement failures due to the rain penetrating the sealed surface.

The current cost of sealed road major patching works in our area can be between \$85 – \$125 per square meter depending on depth of pavement.

The unsealed road infrastructure consists of roads which have a 150mm layer of manufactured material, typically a class 3 crush rock, and some instances Non-Descript Crushed Rock (NDCR) which is widely used for sheeting.

Heavy rain and flooding have deteriorated these roads, and, in some instances, the whole road base has been washed away.

The current cost to lay and compact the material to the original condition is about \$65 per lineal meter laid at a 4.5m pavement width.

Before the floods we had 227.68km of road that had been affected by ongoing wet weather requiring a re-sheet, equating to \$14,799,070 to restore it back to the condition it was three years ago.

Post flooding, we estimate the damage bill could be three times this amount – reaching as high as \$50 million.

Council officers are working around the clock, yet we are not keeping up.

We've been forced to enact the force majeure clauses in our Road Management and Tree Management plans.

We simply cannot provide the service levels outlined in these plans.

Cover image.

*From left to right:
Member for Nicholls
Sam Birrell MP, the
Honourable Catherine
King MP, Minister
for Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional
Development and
Local Government,
and Strathbogie Shire
Mayor Laura Binks*

*1. Chapmans Road,
Boho South.*

*2. Kelvin View Road,
Kelvin View*

*3. Mt Bernard Lane,
Avenel*

*4. Mitchellstown Road,
Mitchellstown*

*5. Pontings Lane,
Baillieston*

*6. Senior Engineer Jeeva
Ali inspecting the road
flood damage*

The opportunity: A future solution for Kirwans Bridge

The flood event also forced the closure of the historic Kirwans Bridge.

An engineers’ report completed post flood has found the bridge is structurally compromised and not safe for use by vehicles.

The news has been devastating for the Kirwans Bridge community and users of the bridge. We know how important access across the bridge is to residents and visitors.

We’re grateful that we’ve been working with a passionate group of residents, the Kirwans Bridge Community Panel, to identify the best long term solution for the bridge.

Through this work, two options had been identified for the future of the bridge and work is progressing to design and cost these options. The two options have been identified for the future of the bridge, are:

- A new replica bridge (with pedestrian and cycling access), or
- Extensive structural repairs and strengthening works to the current bridge.

This work is well underway, and we will have cost and detailed designs in coming months. However, we cannot put forward this advocacy ask without putting government on notice – Kirwans Bridge needs your help!



The benefits:

Small rural Councils like ours cannot afford to upkeep the road network, which has been destroyed by rain and flood.

By providing funding opportunities for small rural shires to maintain and improve our road network we are making our roads safer for all users.

We are keen to implement constructive solutions that enhance the resilience of our road network and local bridges, but we need to ensure we have the funding to do this.

We want a safe, climate resilient road network for road users in our municipality.

We need a sustainable long term future for Kirwans Bridge.

1.&3. Kirwans Bridge
2. Road in Euroa



The ask:

One.

A review into ongoing funding for small rural shires to maintain and improve road networks

Two.

A commitment to improving funding for small rural shires to maintain their roads and bridges

Three.

Funding to implement solutions to enhance the resilience of the road network.

Four.

A funding commitment to deliver a solution for Kirwans Bridge that extends the bridge life by more than 50 years.

Council Plan 2021–2025, Strategic focus area 3: Protect. Enhance. Adapt.
Section 3.1.3 Finalise the detailed design for the Greening Euroa project
in partnership with Goulburn Valley Water

Greening Euroa Project



The opportunity:

The Greening Euroa Project is an innovative community driven project taking place in Strathbogie Shire.

It is being driven by a committee of passionate locals who came together to find a way to lessen the impacts of chronic water shortages in a rapidly warming climate.

Adaptation to drought is important to provide a sustainable future for rural townships, communities and facilities.

Global engineering advisory firm GHD Group Pty Ltd released an August 2022 Aquanomics Report stating that the need for Australian investment in water adaptation infrastructure and better management of water recycling in rural areas, is imperative. This plan taps into the available excess water from the Euroa Wastewater Treatment Plant.



1

The benefits:

More than this, this proposal is the first of its kind in Victoria.

With the support of our local water authority, Goulburn Valley Water, this wastewater would be safely upgraded from Class C to Class B, before being piped underground to storage tanks throughout the Euroa Township.

Once the pipe is laid, water will be available to irrigate the many public ovals and sports grounds, that pride this community.

More than ever, community health and wellbeing are a priority for our region and by maintaining our green open spaces during prolonged dry periods, members of the public opportunities to get out and participate in community life through exercise and sporting activities.



2



The ask:

One.

\$3.8Million funding for construction and project delivery.

Now we are asking for your help to bring this project to life?!

#LetsGreenEuroa



More than this, the purple standpipe and pipeline presents a clever solution to a growing concern for many rural communities about how to sustainably manage outdoor spaces in the scorching summer months.

The Greening Euroa project is climate smart, cost efficient and community inspired. It demonstrates a smart use of a valuable resource while taking pressure off our potable water supply and our waterways heavily relied upon by farm dams and groundwater bores.



Cover image.
Friendlies Oval, Euroa,
one of the sites to benefit
from this project

- 1. Euroa Memorial Oval, one of the sites to benefit from this project
- 2. New trees planted along the Sevens Creek, one of the sites to benefit from this project
- 3. Euroa Arboretum one of the sites to benefit from this project
- 4. Purple standpipe connected to water cartage truck with contractors.

Profile:

“We know having green spaces in times of drought is increasingly important to our community. It is essential to community health and wellbeing.

The proposal would initially service the schools, their ovals and gardens, sporting fields and other community locations.

It would ensure that during times of drought our prized community spaces stay green, meeting a critical public health need.

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has left us in no doubt about the positive benefits of increased physical activity and relaxation for mental and social health.”



“The plan will hugely benefit the use and aesthetics of outdoor facilities at local schools and sports clubs, many of which are still struggling to recover from years of prolonged drought and water restrictions.

This project can change that.”

Shirley Saywell
Greening Euroa Project member



Council Plan 2021–2025, Strategic Focus area 3: Protect. Enhance. Adapt.
Action 3.1.8 Advocate to Federal and State Governments for investment
in reliable power supply infrastructure with a focus on renewable energy.

Reliable power supply infrastructure and renewable energy





The opportunity:

Power failures during peak periods is a common occurrence throughout Strathbogie Shire.

In January 2019, Nagambie, Avenel, Longwood, Euroa and surrounds experienced an extended power outage lasting up to three days.

During the height of summer the heat was consistently reaching 40 degrees Celsius (Koob and Latimer, 2019, theage.com.au) and our power supply did not cope.

Outages occurred again in January and February 2020 at intermittent periods.

These repeated outages result in economic loss to retail and local industry providers and cause severe inconvenience and hardship for our residents and vulnerable citizens.

The reason: A single Ausnet electricity supply connecting Benalla to Euroa via Violet Town is the only infrastructure to service the surrounding localities.

The electricity source connecting Nagambie from Seymour is also struggling. Growing tourism, residential and commercial investment use will continue to place severe strain on the power supply along with other utilities into the future.

The lack of energy security is one of the most significant barriers to attracting new small to medium businesses to Strathbogie Shire.

1. From left: Glen Burnside (local business owner), Shirley Saywell (EEG chairperson and local business owner) and David Mawson (Mawsons Bakery owner).



The benefits:

With a moderate climate and close proximity to Melbourne, Shepparton, Wangaratta and Benalla, Strathbogie Shire is conveniently located to import renewable energy generation into the grid.

However, the current lack of a secure and stable grid system prevents investment in large scale renewable energy in the region.

Council is keen to work with our communities with the view to implementing micro-grids (with battery storage and generator backup) as a sustainable means for energy security.

This will ensure residents and businesses have independence and island-able capacity for townships on the Benalla AusNet line and the Seymour AusNet line.

This project provides opportunity for future renewables integration for townships and as AusNet advises, increases the potential for new small-medium businesses to connect to the grid that have previously faced limitations in the sector.

2. BD North East Electrics install solar panels on the Brady & Kibble truck wash as part of the Euroa Business Microgrid Demonstration Initiative.

3. Euroa Energy and Mondo sponsored truck trailer curtain promoting the Euroa Microgrid project

4. Microgrid stakeholders: Bruce Thompson, Shirley Saywell, The Hon. Jaclyn Symes MP, Rob Morphet, Matt Charles-Jones (Mondo Power), Charlie Brydon, Luke Scott (Globird), Tom Brown (DELWP).



The ask:

One.

We ask the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to consider Strathbogie Shire’s regional growth of 11.9% and land mass in equitable measure when applying the Regulatory Investment Test for Distribution (RIT-D) to determine our eligibility for power supply upgrades.

Two.

That the Federal Government continues to support renewable community energy grids and battery energy programs in Strathbogie Shire for energy security and emergency community resilience.

Three.

We urge that the Australian Energy Regulator reviews an Ausnet line upgrade from Seymour to Benalla in the vicinity of \$20 Million, in line with current development increases in Nagambie and Avenel, particularly if renewable funding is not provided.

Profile:

“On a sunny day in Euroa the six tenanted apartments above the bakery are now making their own clean energy.

Euroa Connect, with partner Mondo Power, has installed large arrays on six business premises and linked the energy production of five of them with batteries.

These businesses are now enjoying the co-benefits of cheaper power, better energy management, sharing knowledge and being part of the change.”



“Blue sky thinking delivered this possibility.

A good bit of lateral thinking about contract renegotiation and smart sparkies did the structural orchestration.

But beyond all of that it was the commitment AND imagination of dedicated community members which made it happen!

Change is not just possible but do-able.”

Charlie Brydon
Euroa Connect

Cover image and 1.
Community renewable energy advocate, Charlie Brydon
2. The rear of the Euroa Microgrid building that houses residential apartments and Mawson's Bakery

Council Plan 2021-2025, Section 2.1.4 Lobby State and Federal governments to fund improved digital and telecommunications infrastructure.

Equitable digital and telecommunications infrastructure



The opportunity:

Increased internet connectivity and capacity is a must if people wish to move to Strathbogie Shire or operate a business in the municipality.

With its difficult topography and increasing population Strathbogie Shire suffers from inadequate mobile telephone and Internet coverage.

And, while some towns and districts are fortunate to have connectivity, capacity is limited.

In recent years we have seen improvements however, the process is slow and the lack of adequate infrastructure and services is inhibiting residential and commercial investment in the municipality.

These issues are particularly problematic at Avenel, Violet Town, Mitchelton and across the Strathbogie ranges.

In addition, the increasing demands due to population and business growth in Nagambie is placing great pressure on existing services. This is further exasperated during large events as the system does not have the capacity to deal with large influxes of people.

Cover image.
Hayley Purbrick,
Tahbilk Winery,
Nagambie

- 1. An olive farm in Ruffy
- 2. Sheep grazing in prime lamb country, Longwood
- 3. NBNCO Road Muster truck demonstrating the Sky Muster satellite service
- 4. Mt Wombat Telecommunications Tower



The benefits:

We believe telecommunications infrastructure is just as important as road, waste and utility services and the lack of this infrastructure and service providers makes rural districts uncompetitive in attracting commercial and residential investment, and at a disadvantage.

For local retailers, the EFTPOS machine internet reception wavers and peak internet usage times by school students cause slow and unreliable service.

Major event organisers of GoFish Nagambie Tournament, the Violet Town Market and the Euroa Music Festival face phone and internet congestion challenges which reduce participant satisfaction and the likelihood of them returning or providing positive feedback.

We need to ensure Strathbogie Shire residents, businesses and visitors receive the same level of connectivity capacity and service reliability as those in metropolitan Melbourne and our larger regional centres.

Without this, we will be left out of the digital race and miss out on economic development opportunities.

We know from lived experience that emergency resilience of rural communities is severely compromised during emergency events such as storm and fire events.

This is not a situation we accept.

The ask:

Improved infrastructure and service delivery through secured funding to meet community service expectations and needs that metropolitan-based residents enjoy as a right. Specifically:

One.

Build a mobile phone tower in Mitchelton

Two.

Provide NBN Co fibre connections to the towns of Avenel and Violet Town as a Stage 1 response of a comprehensive roll out across the Shire.

Three.

The continuation of the Federal Telecommunications Blackspots Program

Four.

The elimination of over 50 registered blackspots across Strathbogie Shire



Profile:

Rob Jamieson is a Ruffy resident who has experienced poor telecommunications first-hand in personal life as well as business.

“In the agriculture industry the National Livestock Identification System is now entirely online. This means that rural farmers and business owners need reliable and efficient internet coverage to fulfill regulatory requirements such as biosecurity recording and online audits which are now mandated.

We need telecommunications infrastructure and services to support this reliance to:

- buy and sell stock online
- input agricultural requirements
- provide remote monitoring of irrigation, feed, water tanks and lightning trackers
- equipment research and maintenance
- security monitoring
- data analytics to track yields for spraying and fertiliser
- drones to monitor fencing and livestock
- emergency communications in fires, storms, floods and more.

None of this can be achieved with the current telecommunications infrastructure in Strathbogie Shire. We need accessible and reliable phone and internet service coverage.”

Rob and the community experience slow internet speeds and intermittent coverage in the Ruffy Tablelands.

Rob Jamieson

Ruffy Community Action Group



Ruffy community members from left: Edward Sprunt, Theo Lagarde, Rob Jamieson, Gerry Ginnivan, Darryl Otzen and Bill Eddy

“I use the internet to receive and pay my bills, access My Gov and other online services, for news updates and for connection to family and friends.

In business, as a farmer I need coverage in order to stay updated with industry standards and to access online banking, ATO portals, payroll systems and more...”

Council Plan 2021–2025, Strategic focus area 2: Live. Access. Connect. Action 2.6 Prepare and implement a playground strategy following the adoption of the Open Space Strategy, and Strategic focus area 5: Strong. Health. Safe. Action 5.1.1 Seek external funding for the preparation and implementation of an Open Space Strategy

Nature Based Play Space



The opportunity:

Strathbogie Shire Council and the Euroa community has a vision. We want to develop an intergenerational destination nature-based play space in our town that is suitable for all ages and abilities.

Modern life has removed the traditional nature play many of today’s adults experienced as children.

This project will help re-engage our childrens relationship with nature by bringing it back to the play and learning places of everyday life.

Euroa is the perfect place located two hours from Melbourne. With a Tesla Electric Charge station, this proposal will not only support residents of the Shire with an exciting place to meet, but also those arriving at our Traveller’s Rest and others who stop to charge their vehicle.

The Marsden Jacob Associates Report, 2016 Victoria’s nature-based outdoor economy cited that residents and visitors to Victoria spend a minimum



Nature Based Play Space

The benefits:

\$7.4 Billion annually on nature-based outdoor activities and equipment purchases in Victoria. This shows there is need and demand from local, state and visitor populations to substantiate this equipment in Euroa.

A destination playground would create a place for families wanting a genuine child and youth friendly place to stop with a unique offering.

This community supported project will offer improved liveability and help strengthen Euroa and our Shire’s reputation as a destination.

Increasing economic development with an estimated linger time of about 20 to 60 minutes providing local cafes and businesses with greater visitation and tourism expenditure.

Further to this, delivery of this project would support local jobs and provide equitable playground facilities to neighbouring regions and metropolitan councils.



Research indicates that, when children play and learn in nature, they do so with more energy, engagement, imagination, and cooperation than in wholly artificial environments.

Sensory stimulation derived from interacting with natural environments allows children to learn with sight, smell, touch and sound.

Creating natural environments supports children to become environmentally engaged and show respect for the environment, and it is well known that physical activity is greatly beneficial for children’s cognitive development, health and wellbeing.

From a sensory garden to explore, rocks to clamber over, to logs to balance on, the possibilities to interact with nature and the environment are endless.

It is proposed the all-abilities play space will be designed with the people who will use it most. This means extensive consultation with children, young people, families, grandparents and carers.



The ask:

One.

A pre-election commitment to fund the \$1.5 million design and delivery of a Nature Based Play Space for Euroa.



Cover image.
Wangaratta Children’s Garden

2 and 3. Mansfield
Botanic Park
Playground

1, 4 and 5. Wangaratta
Children’s Garden

Profile:

“As Mothers with young children we know and understand the importance of encouraging playtime in the natural environment of where we live.

Euroa and neighbouring areas are experiencing a baby boom at present and population growth in children aged 6 years and under.

It is important that we meet the developmental needs and demands of this generation and build the infrastructure to provide this active and inclusive space for everyone to enjoy.

We have observed visitors to the township pull-up at the current playgrounds which are restrictive in age, size and sensory applications, and our community wants us to address this.”

1. Mansfield Botanic Park Playground



“There is great need and support for a nature-based playground in Euroa and we know the perfect setting among the green grass and leafy trees of Seven Creeks Park.”

Cr Kristy Hourigan and Cr Sally Hayes-Burke
Strathbogie Shire Council

