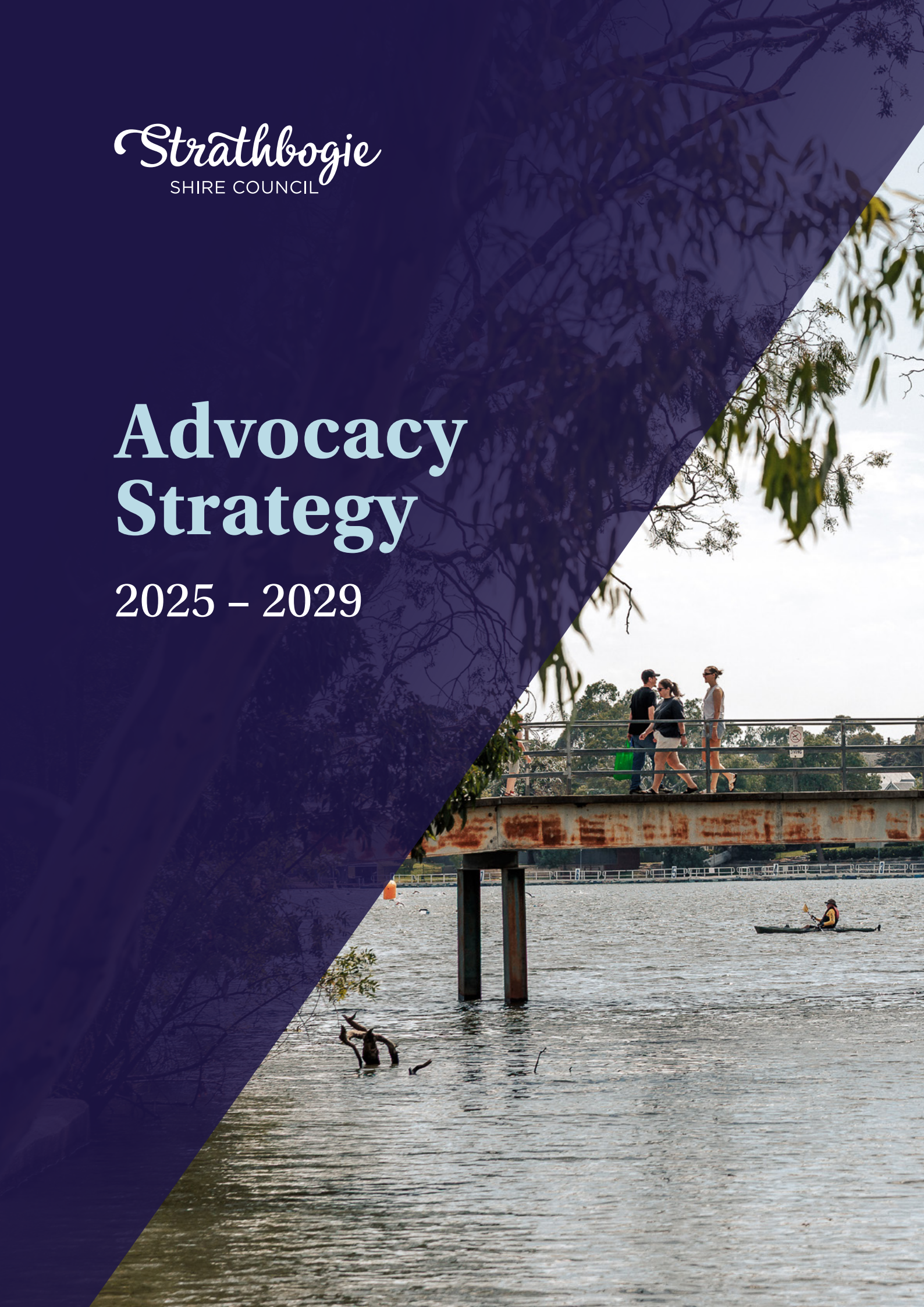


Advocacy Strategy

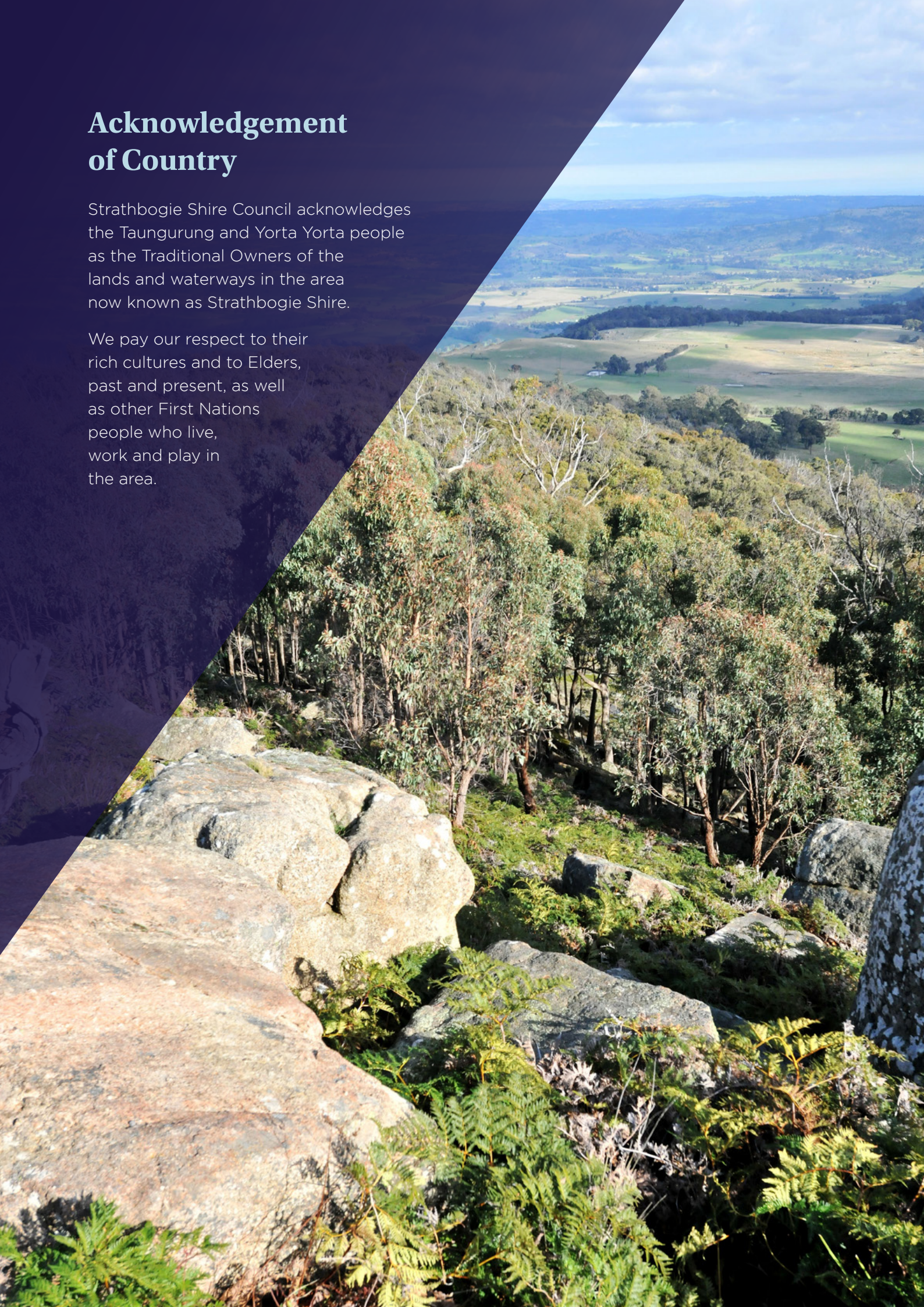
2025 – 2029











Acknowledgement of Country

Strathbogie Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Strathbogie Shire.

We pay our respect to their rich cultures and to Elders, past and present, as well as other First Nations people who live, work and play in the area.



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Overview

Our region is increasingly becoming a destination of choice for people looking to invest, live, visit, and play.

For those who are lucky enough to live in Strathbogie Shire we know how special our region is, what was once our secret is now well-and-truly out.

To support growth—both business and residential—Strathbogie Shire Council will advocate to State and Federal Governments for funding. We will advocate intentionally for the needs of our local community, and collaboratively with other councils for the broader needs of our region.

Strathbogie Shire is home to over 1,500 businesses spanning 20 different industry sectors. These businesses provide employment for more than 4,188 people—supporting a significant portion of the region’s 11,500 residents

Together, our people and the region’s natural attractions generate over \$56.1 million in tourism income each year.

For more than 150 years, the agricultural sector; along with the businesses that support and rely on it—has formed the backbone of the local economy.

This document guides Council’s advocacy work and direction, both independently, and as a collective member of local government associations, industry groups, partnerships, and collaborations through a planned, coordinated, and well-resourced approach to facilitate action and deliver results.

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*

Why We've Chosen an Advocacy Theme

In today's competitive funding environment, successful advocacy requires more than just a list of projects; it requires a compelling, unified narrative that signals confidence, ambition, and strategic focus.

The overarching theme "Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*" provides a unifying message. It reflects Council's proactive approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and community resilience. It communicates that we are not just ready; but eager; to partner with government and industry to unlock the full potential of our region.

Why a Theme Matters

By introducing a clear theme, we:

- Differentiate Strathbogie Shire in a crowded policy and funding landscape.
- Connect the dots between local projects and broader regional or state priorities.
- Support Councillors and stakeholders to speak with one voice when advocating to Ministers, departments, and potential partners.
- Appeal to multiple audiences—from funding bodies to future residents, businesses, and visitors.

How the Theme Supports Our Strategy

This theme acts as the umbrella for all advocacy messaging. Whether we are seeking funding for road and bridge upgrades, revitalising our railway precincts, improving disaster preparedness, or expanding digital infrastructure; each initiative will be framed as part of our vision for a thriving, connected, and forward-looking Shire.

The Core Message

Strathbogie Shire is investing in the infrastructure, connectivity, and community resilience needed to attract residents and visitors, grow industry, support innovation, and ensure liveability into the future. With government support and industry partnerships, we are *Investing in Tomorrow*—and we are ready to build our future together.

Mayor's Message



Cr Claire Ewart-Kennedy
Mayor, Strathbogie Shire
Council

I'm proud to share Strathbogie Shire Council's Advocacy Strategy for 2025-2029; a plan that's all about making sure our community's voice is heard loud and clear where it matters most.

If you live here, you already know what makes our Shire special. From our rolling farmland and historic towns to our thriving local businesses and close-knit communities, we have something truly unique. What was once our best-kept secret is now well and truly out—more people are discovering Strathbogie as a fantastic place to live, invest, visit, and build a future.

With this interest comes opportunity, but also the need for support. That's why Council will continue to advocate strongly for the things that matter most—better roads and connectivity, support for our farmers, more investment in our towns, and the infrastructure to keep up with our changing needs.

Our theme, "Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*," reflects our confidence in what our region offers and our determination to attract the right investment and partnerships to help it grow.

We're ready to work alongside State and Federal governments, industry, and our neighbouring Councils to deliver real results for our community.

Strathbogie Shire is a resilient, vibrant, and connected community, rich in strength and resourcefulness. It boasts significant economic ties to agriculture, equine industries, viticulture, and tourism. The purpose of our advocacy is to ensure our Shire is actively walking, talking, living, and breathing genuine economic development—alongside the incredible businesses and stakeholders we proudly partner with.

This isn't just about dollars and projects. It's about standing up for our community, making sure rural voices are heard, and building a future where Strathbogie Shire continues to be the vibrant, welcoming place we all love.

I invite everyone—residents, businesses, and community groups—to get behind this strategy. Together, we can make sure Strathbogie's best days are ahead of us.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the process of influencing others to create change.

It is often aimed at decision-makers to drive positive changes in public policy.

Advocacy can be undertaken through a series of smaller actions or through a broader, partnership-based approach.

Strong relationships are critical to our Council's advocacy activities.

Our Advocacy Strategy outlines how we identify and develop projects and undertake activities to achieve our identified priorities.

It will also encourage and support a stronger, more strategic, and collaborative approach to existing advocacy activities undertaken across Council services and within departments as well as with our communities.

Successful advocacy relies on working closely with the community to identify problems or needs, research relevant issues, plan targeted activities, take action and evaluate outcomes.

Councillors, as elected representatives of the community, play a key role in directing Council's efforts in this space.



Councillors L-R: Cr Vicki Halsall, Cr Fiona Stevens, Cr Scott Jeffery (Deputy Mayor), Cr Clark Holloway, Cr Gregory Carlson, Cr Claire Ewart-Kennedy (Mayor), Cr Laura Binks

Advocacy Principles

All advocacy activities will be guided by the following principles:



Transparent

Our advocacy efforts are regularly monitored and reviewed. We take deliberate actions to ensure they deliver the best value and outcomes for our community.



Unified

A unified message ensures clarity and reinforces our commitment to *Investing in Tomorrow*. We are ready to collaborate with partners, investors, and government to grow our region.



Balanced representation

Our advocacy activities are politically neutral and inclusive, working with all sides of politics to achieve strong, community-focused outcomes.



Evidence based

Our priority projects will be supported by sound research and reliable data to demonstrate their merit and strengthen our advocacy efforts.



Community focused

Community is our most important stakeholder. We will keep our community informed of our advocacy priorities, listen to their needs, and work together to achieve meaningful outcomes.



Solution oriented

Our approach will incorporate solutions, not just issues.



Why we Advocate

Why We Advocate at Strathbogie Shire Council

Advocacy is a core part of how we serve our communities. While delivering local services and maintaining infrastructure remains central to our role, advocating for support from other levels of government and external partners is just as important.

At Strathbogie Shire, we know that thriving communities do not happen by accident—they are built through strong partnerships and a shared vision for the future.

What Advocacy Means for Us

Some of the biggest opportunities for our region—such as upgraded telecommunications infrastructure or improved digital connectivity—sit outside Council's direct control. That's where the power of advocacy comes in. We work with other levels of government to influence decisions, secure funding, and achieve the best outcomes for our towns, and rural communities.

We also collaborate with neighbouring councils and regional bodies when broader issues—drought funding—require a united voice.

In these cases, advocacy means amplifying the needs of rural communities like ours and ensuring we are not left behind.

Even when projects are within Council's remit—such as building a playground or upgrading local sport and recreation spaces—external funding is often key. To keep things affordable for ratepayers and deliver the infrastructure our communities deserve, we actively pursue grants, election commitments, and partnerships with state and federal governments, as well as philanthropic, private sector and community contributors.

Why It Matters

Advocacy is how we shape the future of Strathbogie Shire. It's how we bring bold ideas to life, champion equity for small communities, and make every dollar go further. Advocacy isn't just about funding—it's about standing up for what our communities need to grow, thrive, and stay resilient in the years ahead.

How We Advocate

Advocacy is about using our voice to make a difference for our communities—and we have a range of tools to help us do that effectively.

Whether it is securing funding, influencing policy, or building strong partnerships, Council uses a variety of approaches to make sure Strathbogie Shire's priorities are heard and acted on.

We use a range of tools to ensure the voices of our communities are heard and their needs are met:

- **Raising awareness** through campaigns and encouraging residents to get involved
- **Building partnerships** with key stakeholders, local groups, regional bodies, and peak organisations
- **Working closely with decision-makers**, including local MPs, Ministers, Shadow Ministers, Crossbenchers, and election candidates
- **Participating in regional and state-level organisations**, such as Rural Councils Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- **Making submissions** to government consultations, inquiries, and parliamentary processes
- **Pursuing grants and other funding opportunities** from all levels of government and beyond
- **Promoting funding commitments**, once secured, to build momentum and attract further investment
- **Engaging with media** to highlight local priorities and amplify community voices

A Flexible and Strategic Approach

Council's Advocacy Strategy sets out our top priorities—but we know that advocacy needs to remain flexible. Opportunities often arise quickly, and we must be ready to respond.

That is why our advocacy efforts are not limited to the projects listed in this Strategy. We will continue to champion any issue that aligns with our long-term goals and the needs of our community.

Importantly, this Strategy is shaped by the extensive consultation undertaken during the development of the Council Plan and the refreshed Community Vision. These conversations with our community helped us understand what matters most to residents and ensure our advocacy efforts reflect shared aspirations and local priorities.

The Strategy is a living document—designed to evolve as priorities shift, funding opportunities emerge, or major announcements are made.

How our Advocacy approach relates to our Council Plan Objectives

The Strathbogie Shire Advocacy Strategy is a critical enabler of the Council Plan 2025-2029, directly supporting its three strategic pillars:



Connect

We advocate to strengthen relationships—with community, government, industry, and regional partners—ensuring that local voices are heard and that priorities are shaped through genuine engagement and collaboration.



Sustain

Our advocacy focuses on long-term resilience and sustainability, championing initiatives that protect our natural environment, support economic development, and prepare our region for future challenges.



Deliver

Advocacy is one of Council's key delivery tools. We use our voice to secure investment, influence policy, and create the conditions needed to implement projects and services that deliver real, measurable outcomes for our community.

As one of Council's core responsibilities—alongside delivering services and fostering partnerships—advocacy is essential to achieving the goals outlined in the Council Plan. This strategy will guide how we identify priorities, engage stakeholders, and track progress, ensuring that we advocate effectively and transparently on behalf of the Strathbogie community.

Council's Advocacy Priorities

Connect 1.3 and 1.5

Attract grant finding and support community grant writing

Sustain 2.1

Review, adopt and implement Council's Advocacy Strategy

Sustain 2.1 and 2.4

Implement the annual advocacy plan

Sustain 2.4

Pursue increased funding from the State and Federal Governments (or other funding partners).

Advocacy at All Levels

Local Advocacy

Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, councils must involve the community in strategic planning and decision making. Strathbogie Shire Council ensures ongoing engagement through consultation, communication and feedback across all projects and services. This helps us stay connected to our community's changing needs and priorities.

Regional Advocacy

Council is an active member of several regional and industry bodies that bring councils and experts together to strengthen our collective voice. Regional advocacy is especially valuable when issues affect multiple councils, allowing us to push for change together.

Council's regional advocacy partners include:

- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA)
- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)
- Rail Freight Alliance (RFA)
- Regional Development Australia – Hume (RDA Hume)
- Rural Councils Vic (RCV)
- Hume Regional Local Government Network (HRLGN)

State and Federal Advocacy

We regularly engage with State and Federal Members of Parliament, Senators, Ministers, and government departments to represent our community's interests.

This includes advocating for policy changes, raising issues of concern, and seeking funding and investment. Strong relationships with these key decision-makers are vital to influencing positive outcomes.

Issue-based Advocacy

Council also responds to urgent or emerging issues as they arise. While this type of advocacy is less formal, it can be effective when backed by strong community evidence and support.

Working Across All Levels

Advocacy often crosses local, regional, state, and federal boundaries. While some efforts are planned and resourced, many are embedded within existing roles and services. As campaigns gain momentum and community support, they often require increased Council focus and coordination.

Strategic Advocacy Objectives

Objective	How we will achieve it
1 Formal endorsement of Council advocacy priorities	<p>Advocacy priority projects can be sourced from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan and policies (planned and budgeted approach) • Council resolutions as they arise (require full scoping and costing) • Issues of the day as they arise (not planned and may require resourcing.) • Government budget and policy cycles, policy announcements, election cycles.
2 Influence decision and policy makers	<p>Through carefully planned and resourced advocacy campaigns/actions (as outlined in the organisational advocacy agenda) which could include, correspondence, delegations, council resolutions, strategic partnerships, marketing, and promotion etc</p>
3 Attract and secure funding and resources to Strathbogie Shire for major projects	<p>Through research and political climate monitoring and the identification of available funding sources, open grant applications or resources. Advocacy may take the form of correspondence, delegations, Council resolutions, strategic partnerships, marketing, and promotion, and more.</p>
4 Build upon our strategic partnerships	<p>Through shared understandings, connections, agreements and formal alliances with people, organisations, peak bodies, councils, and government that have the willingness and capability to support Council's advocacy and influence policy and decision makers.</p>
6 Build the advocacy capacity of Council and the community	<p>By promoting a culture of advocacy, encouraging, and enabling participation, building the community's ability to advocate on its own behalf, sharing skills, knowledge, and expertise, mobilising of resources and reducing duplication of effort and information.</p>
7 Strengthen our position as a leading local government entity and subject matter expert in our field	<p>Through strategic partnerships and a strong position on policy that aligns with Strathbogie Shire's values and principles, innovation and communications and engagement practices.</p>

Our Advocacy Priorities:

What We're Advocating For





Priority:

Connecting Communities: Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program



Overview

Strathbogie Shire Council is seeking funding support for its Bridge and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program, targeting a staged upgrade of critical bridge and watercourse structures across the Shire. These structures are vital connectors for agricultural freight, emergency services, and everyday community access. However many are nearing the end of their serviceable life and require urgent attention.

Council is committed to leading delivery of this program and is calling on state and federal government partners to co-invest in infrastructure that will:

- Enhance safety for all road users
- Strengthen rural resilience
- Unlock future economic opportunities for the region.

The Problem

Many of the Shire's bridges are ageing, structurally deteriorating, or load limited. Council has 132 bridges and over 300 culverts, with limited understanding of their current condition. This impacts not only the safety of road users but also compromises access for freight operators, emergency services, and residents. Some structures have low flood resilience, leading to frequent closures during extreme weather, and further isolating communities when it matters most.

These constraints add cost and risks for local industries, especially agriculture, and limit the potential for growth in tourism and regional development. Without investment, the gap between infrastructure performance and community needs will continue to widen. Council is currently sourcing up to date condition data on its bridge and as many culverts as possible.

The Solution

The Connecting Communities: Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program will deliver targeted upgrade of the region's most critical bridges through a mix of strengthening works, full replacements, and flood-proofing measures. Wherever appropriate, timber bridges will be replaced with modern, low-maintenance structures to improve lifespan and reliability.

Council will lead planning and delivery, coordinate stakeholder engagement, and contribute in-kind through data, design, and project management expertise. To deliver this ambitious program, Council is seeking \$1M in capital funding per year for 4 years from both state and federal governments, as well as access to technical advisory services for complex sites.



The Benefit

Investing in rural bridges delivers economic dividends. Renewed bridges reduce travel times and transport costs for local producers, freight carriers, and small businesses. They support access to wineries, farmgate operations, nature-based attractions, and local events, building resilience and reliability in our tourism economy. Future investment in the region depends on the strength of our transport networks. This program will give businesses the confidence to grow, expand, and invest in Strathbogie Shire.

Upgraded bridges reconnect people and services. Rural towns rely on these structures for everything from school bus routes to ambulance access.

Improving bridge infrastructure helps reduce isolation, enhances liveability, and increases equity for smaller, remote communities. Better bridges also support regional identity, safety, and peace of mind for residents who rely on them every day.

Modern bridge designs offer greater flood resilience and can reduce environmental impacts through low-impact foundations and sustainable materials. Replacing vulnerable crossings with more resilient structures will help keep roads open longer during storms and natural disasters, reducing costly repairs and emergency detours. Active consideration of site-specific environmental and cultural factors ensures the program aligns with long-term sustainability and planning objectives.

Conclusion

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*; but our businesses, residents, and emergency services need safe and reliable access to stay connected and thrive.

The Connecting Communities: Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program is a shovel-ready, region-shaping initiative that will deliver lasting safety, productivity and resilience. By addressing critical infrastructure gaps now, this program will secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits for our region.

Council stands ready to partner with state and federal governments to make this program a reality. Funding this program is not just about fixing bridges; it is about investing in safer, stronger, and more connected communities for tomorrow.

Priority:

Equitable Digital and Telecommunications Infrastructure



Overview

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow* – but to unlock future regional economic growth, industry attraction and community resilience, our digital and telecommunications infrastructure must match the expectations of modern life and commerce. Reliable connectivity is no longer a luxury; it is the foundation for safety, productivity, liveability, and economic participation.

We are calling on the state and federal governments to invest in targeted telecommunications upgrades across Strathbogie Shire that will close the connectivity gap between regional and metropolitan communities.

The Problem

Despite our region's strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and liveability, digital inequality continues to hold us back. Many areas in Strathbogie Shire suffer from unreliable internet, persistent mobile black spots, and insufficient infrastructure to support emergency response, remote work, and digital enterprise.

Key issues include:

- No mobile coverage in key areas like Mitchellstown and areas across the Shire
- Inadequate broadband access in towns such as Avenel and Violet Town
- Patchy service impacting emergency management, education, business, and telehealth access.

These gaps limit business growth, housing development, public safety, and social equity across the region.

The Solution

A staged, place-based infrastructure upgrade program backed by \$2 million in state and federal investment will deliver:

- A new mobile phone tower in Mitchellstown and an additional tower in Nagambie
- Fibre broadband connection to Avenel and Violet Town as Stage 1 of a Shire-wide rollout
- Elimination of remaining mobile black spots across Strathbogie Shire

Council's role will be to advocate and develop partnerships between governments and private providers to deliver locally driven solutions.

The Benefit

Improved digital and telecommunications infrastructure will deliver immediate and long-term economic benefits to Strathbogie Shire. It will enable local businesses to operate more efficiently, reduce productivity losses caused by poor connectivity, and support the growth of high-value industries such as ag-tech, tourism, and remote professional services. Reliable connectivity is also a key factor in attracting new investment and unlocking the full potential of our housing and population growth corridors, particularly in currently under-served areas like Avenel and the Nagambie region.

Socially, better connectivity will help bridge the digital divide between metropolitan and rural communities. It will

improve access to essential services such as education, healthcare (including telehealth), and enable residents to maintain strong personal and professional connections. This is especially important for vulnerable populations, young people, and older residents, who rely on reliable digital access to stay informed, engaged, and safe. Improved digital infrastructure will also support community cohesion and liveability by enabling more inclusive participation in civic and cultural life.

Environmentally, enhanced telecommunications can support remote and hybrid work models, reducing the need for long commutes and lowering emissions. It also paves the way for smarter infrastructure, more efficient land use planning, and better integration of sustainability technologies. By enabling

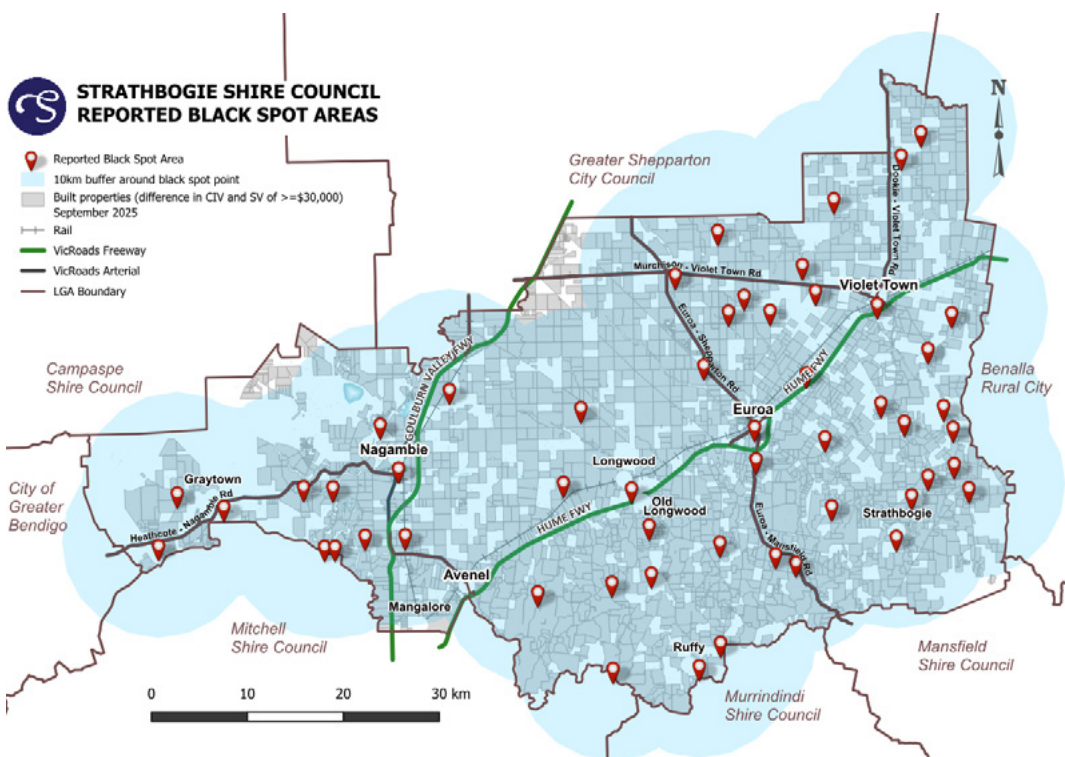
data-driven decision-making and real-time monitoring across sectors, improved digital infrastructure becomes a foundational tool in building a greener, more resilient future for our communities.

Conclusion

To realise the full potential of Strathbogie Shire's economy and community, equitable digital infrastructure must be treated with the same urgency as roads, water, and power.

Reliable telecommunications are the bedrock of modern regional development. With strategic investment now, our region can become a place where businesses thrive, families stay connected, and emergency services function without fail.

We are ready to *Invest in Tomorrow* – we just need the tools to connect.



Priority:

Euroa Railway Precinct Masterplan



Overview

The Euroa Railway Precinct Masterplan is a community-driven blueprint to transform Euroa's rail corridor into a vibrant, connected, and future-ready hub that benefits not just Euroa, but the wider region. As the Federal Government's Inland Rail Project progresses, we have a rare opportunity to align this investment with local priorities—ensuring rail upgrades strengthen, rather than divide, our township.

This plan is more than transport infrastructure. It's about creating a place of shared benefit—where transport, commerce, and community life come together to build resilience, grow the economy, and improve liveability. By revitalising the heart of Euroa, we can create a precinct that honours our heritage while preparing for a connected, sustainable future.

The Problem

Without coordinated investment, the scale of infrastructure changes from Inland Rail works, risks leaving Euroa with disconnected spaces and lost potential.

Key challenges include:

- Limited connectivity between residential, commercial, and civic areas
- Underused public land that could be activated for community or commercial benefit
- Reduced amenity at Euroa's main gateway, impacting town identity and appeal
- Missed opportunities to align local upgrades with national infrastructure investment.

This is not simply a local issue—without strategic planning, the benefits of Inland Rail works will bypass smaller towns like Euroa, instead of integrating them into a stronger regional economy.

The Solution

The Euroa Railway Precinct Masterplan sets out a clear, staged pathway to revitalise the town centre and leverage Commonwealth investment for long-term community gain. Supported by Victorian Government funding for its development, the plan proposes:

- A connected public precinct with safe, accessible links between the station, town centre, and surrounding areas
- Integrated transport solutions prioritising pedestrians, cyclists, and active travel, while supporting future-ready mobility options
- Activation of underutilised land to drive tourism, retail, and small business opportunities
- Streetscape and gateway upgrades that showcase Euroa's unique heritage and rural character
- Infrastructure to attract and retain investment, strengthen regional visitation, and reinforce Euroa's role as a key stop along the Inland Rail corridor.

Council has completed community engagement and scoped shovel-ready components on Council-managed land. We are now seeking Commonwealth co-investment to deliver the first stages through programs that support regional economic growth, place-based renewal, and transport-linked community infrastructure.

The Benefit

This project supports national priorities around regional development, transport connectivity, and liveable communities:

- **Economic Impact:**

Increased foot traffic and improved access will stimulate local spending, attract private investment, and create jobs. Euroa's revitalised centre will become a stronger economic driver within Victoria's growing freight and passenger network.

- **Social Benefits:** A connected, people-focused precinct will bring residents, visitors, and businesses together. Enhanced public spaces will host events, encourage social interaction, and strengthen community cohesion.

- **Environmental Sustainability:**

Sustainable design—including green landscaping, water-sensitive infrastructure, active transport links, and EV charging—will reduce car reliance, enhance amenity, and build climate resilience.

This is an investment in community resilience and regional prosperity, ensuring the benefits of Inland Rail extend beyond freight to deliver tangible, place-based outcomes.

Conclusion

The Euroa Railway Precinct Masterplan is a shovel-ready opportunity to align national infrastructure priorities with regional renewal. By partnering with the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, Strathbogie Shire Council can deliver a precinct that strengthens Euroa, boosts regional productivity, and sets a benchmark for integrating rail infrastructure into thriving local communities.

This is a high-return, place-based investment: one that supports the common good, fosters stronger connections between people and places, and helps regional Victoria grow with confidence.

This is an investment in tomorrow:

- In stronger regions
- In connected communities.



- ① Scott/Anderson Streets boulevard street trees
- ② Footpath
- ③ Improved pedestrian crossing
- ④ Formalised car parking
- ⑤ Formalised RV parking
- ⑥ Northern Reserve Landscape Attraction
- ⑦ Picnic shelter/pavilion
- ⑧ Public Art Opportunity
- ⑨ Public amenities block
- ⑩ Street trees (centre median)
- ⑪ Binney/Railway Street intersection upgrade
- ⑫ Canopy/understorey landscaping
- ⑬ Open pavilion (covered seating area)
- ⑭ Event infrastructure
- ⑮ Frost Street landscaping
- ⑯ Shared Path to Showgrounds and Seven Creeks Trail

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Footpath | Existing/Inland Rail Canopy Tree |
| Shared Path | Proposed Canopy Tree |
| Street | Understorey Planting |
| Pedestrian Crossing | Public Art Opportunity |

Priority:

Greening Euroa – Recycling Water, Revitalising Community Spaces

Overview

Greening Euroa is a community-led project designed to deliver long-term economic, environmental, and social benefits for our town. By using recycled water from the Euroa Wastewater Treatment Plant to irrigate our parks, sporting grounds, school ovals, and public green spaces, we can futureproof Euroa against drought, improve liveability, and create spaces where our community can come together.

Greening Euroa is a shovel-ready, community-led initiative developed in partnership with Goulburn Valley Water. It has strong grassroots support from local schools, sporting clubs, environmental groups, and businesses—all of whom recognise its potential to transform Euroa’s public spaces and climate resilience.

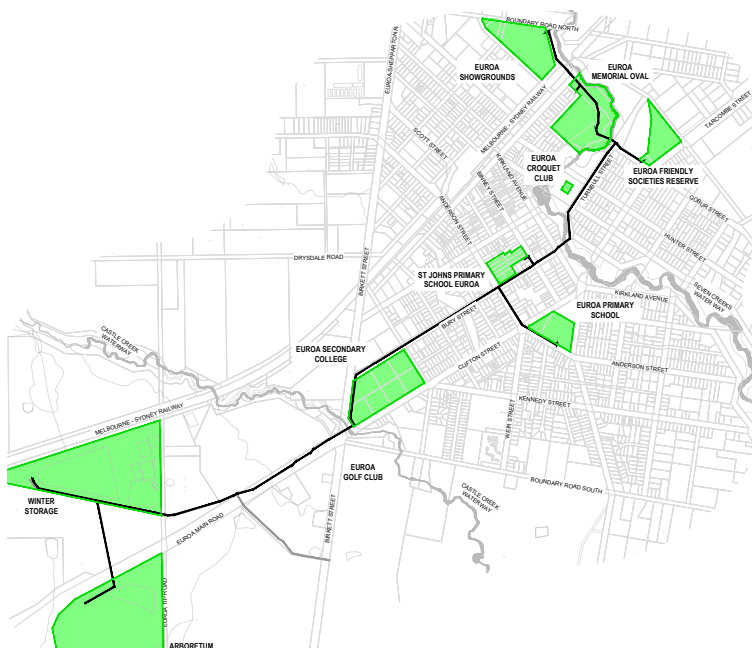
Together, Strathbogie Shire Council and Goulburn Valley Water are seeking \$6 million in Victorian and/or Commonwealth Government funding to deliver the final stage of this cost-effective, climate-smart project.

This is more than a local solution—it’s a replicable model for other regional towns across Victoria and Australia. It demonstrates how collaborative, sustainable infrastructure can deliver long-term benefits for communities, economies, and the environment.

The Problem

Like many regional towns, Euroa faces increasing water scarcity, with hotter, drier summers making it harder to maintain our open spaces. Currently, irrigating ovals, parks, and school grounds relies on expensive potable water, which is unsustainable and often restricted during dry periods—leaving our green spaces dry and inaccessible when we need them most.

At the same time, high-quality recycled water produced at the Euroa Wastewater Treatment Plant remains underused. Without the right infrastructure to capture and distribute it, we are missing a vital opportunity to reduce costs, protect our environment, and support the health and wellbeing of our community.





The Solution

The Greening Euroa Project will build the infrastructure needed to repurpose recycled water for irrigation across Euroa's major public green spaces. This includes installing a pipeline and standpipe system to supply water to key sites such as Euroa Secondary College, Memorial Oval, the Arboretum, and other sporting and education precincts.

Stages 1 and 2—technical assessments, site audits, stakeholder planning, and environmental approvals—are complete. More than \$300,000 has already been invested by Council and Goulburn Valley Water. Now, we are ready to move to Stage 3: Construction and Delivery, with strong community support demonstrated through initiatives like the Standpipe Cup and the Euroa Youth Growers Festival.

The Benefit

This project delivers significant benefits for Euroa:

- **Economic Impact:** Lowering irrigation costs and improving green spaces will help attract tourism, events, and investment—boosting local businesses and jobs.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Greening Euroa promotes sustainable water use, reduces reliance on potable water, and creates cooler, greener public spaces that support biodiversity and urban cooling in a changing climate.
- **Social Benefits:** From sporting grounds to school ovals, these spaces are central to community life. Well-maintained green spaces promote health, social connection, civic pride, and provide safe, inclusive places for all ages to gather and participate.

Conclusion

Greening Euroa is a shovel-ready, community-powered project that addresses one of our region's greatest challenges—water security in a changing climate. With \$6 million in funding support, we can deliver infrastructure that will transform Euroa, support our economy, and create a model of sustainable water use for other rural towns.

We are ready to work with Victorian and Commonwealth Governments to make Greening Euroa a reality—building greener spaces, stronger communities, and a brighter future for Euroa.

Priority:

The Nagambie Freight and Industry Connector



Overview

The Nagambie Freight and Industry Connector is a transformative infrastructure project that will enhance freight efficiency, community safety, and liveability across Strathbogie Shire.

It is designed to meet the region's growing industrial demands while preserving the character of Nagambie's residential and tourist areas by diverting heavy vehicles away from the town centre.

By leveraging existing brownfield corridors, the project minimises environmental impact and delivers a cost-effective, future-ready solution that balances growth with sustainability.

Council is seeking \$250,000 in initial funding to complete concept and detailed designs, and a further \$30 million to construct the bypass. This investment will unlock economic, social, and environmental benefits for the region and contribute to a more resilient and efficient Victorian freight network.

The Problem

Heavy vehicle traffic currently passes directly through Nagambie's town centre, creating significant challenges for residents, businesses, and visitors. Local roads—many of which remain unsealed or inadequate for high freight volumes—are experiencing increasing degradation, congestion, and safety concerns due to rising industrial activity and freight movement.

The town's popularity as a regional tourism destination, its proximity to the Hume Freeway, and its strategic location between Melbourne and Shepparton mean that the transport network is under growing pressure. Without intervention, heavy vehicle movement will continue to compromise pedestrian safety, reduce the appeal of the town centre, and hinder both tourism and residential development.

In addition, key roads such as Habel, McDonald, and Ballantynes require significant upgrades to support current and future freight needs. Many areas are subject to flooding risks, further compounding safety issues and complicating emergency access during extreme weather events.

The Solution

The proposed Nagambie Freight and Industry Connector will divert heavy vehicle traffic from residential streets and the town centre onto a designated freight corridor. This corridor will strengthen links between the Nagambie industrial area, regional farms, and arterial routes leading to Melbourne and northern Victoria.

The project will be delivered in two stages: an initial phase focused on preliminary design and stakeholder consultation—including engagement with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority—followed by a detailed design and delivery phase.



Wherever possible, existing transport corridors will be leveraged, ensuring that new construction is both efficient and environmentally responsible. Road widening, sealing, and intersection upgrades will be completed to support safe and effective freight movement, while new flood mitigation measures will enhance the resilience of the network.

The Benefit

The benefits of the Nagambie Freight and Industry Connector will be felt across the region. Economically, the project will improve freight reliability and logistics efficiency, supporting local producers, manufacturers, and businesses. It will help unlock land for industrial expansion, encouraging investment and job creation in Nagambie and the broader region. By improving connections to Melbourne and Shepparton, the project will enhance access to markets and reinforce the strategic value of the Hume corridor.

Socially, the bypass will dramatically improve safety for residents and visitors. By removing heavy trucks from residential streets, the project will reduce the risk of accidents, lower noise levels, and make the town centre more accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, and tourists. This will significantly enhance liveability, support the growth of local tourism, and increase community satisfaction and wellbeing.

Environmentally, the use of brownfield alignments minimises land disturbance and preserves the Shire's natural landscapes. The removal of trucks from the town centre will reduce local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, while road upgrades will improve stormwater management and flood resilience.

Conclusion

The Nagambie Freight and Industry Connector is a vital investment in the future of Strathbogie Shire and the broader region. It responds to immediate infrastructure pressures while unlocking long-term economic and community benefits.

By separating freight from residential traffic, this project delivers safer roads, supports regional productivity, and strengthens the liveability of one of Victoria's most picturesque towns. With planning ready to proceed and strong alignment with state and federal infrastructure goals, this is a shovel-ready opportunity that will deliver lasting returns for government, industry, and community alike.

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow* — and we are ready to connect.

Priority:

Reliable Power Supply Infrastructure



Overview

Strathbogie Shire is on the brink of a new wave of economic growth. With population increases, investment interest, and the growing need for renewable and resilient infrastructure, the time is right to invest in the systems that underpin a growing regional economy. One of the most critical - and limiting - of these systems is our power infrastructure.

To ensure our region is ready for business, Council is calling for urgent and strategic investment in energy reliability, sustainability, and equity for rural communities. Whether it is keeping our towns connected during emergencies, supporting new businesses, or providing certainty for housing development and industry, reliable power is essential.

The Problem

Strathbogie Shire's potential is being held back by outdated and unreliable power infrastructure. The current system is not fit-for-purpose to support growing towns such as Nagambie, Avenel, and Euroa, nor to meet the demands of future housing, agricultural expansion, industry attraction, or emergency resilience.

Due to the current regulatory environment, regional and rural areas like ours are not receiving equitable consideration. Our sparse population and vast land area mean essential infrastructure upgrades struggle to meet cost-benefit thresholds, despite the critical importance of energy security for community safety and regional development.

The Solution

The Solution: A Four-Pronged, Government-Supported Approach to Energy Reliability. To achieve long-term energy reliability for rural and regional communities, we are advocating for a coordinated, four-part strategy:

- **Policy Reform**

We call on the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to reform its Regulatory Investment Test for Distribution (RIT-D) process to better reflect the needs of rural and geographically dispersed communities—not just urban density—when assessing distribution network upgrades.

- **State Support for Regional Renewables**

We urge the Victorian Government to continue supporting regional renewable energy programs, enabling the rollout of microgrids and stand-alone power systems that enhance emergency resilience and support long-term sustainability.



- **Federal Investment in Microgrids**

We seek Australian Government funding for renewable energy solutions—particularly microgrids—along critical rural transport corridors such as the Seymour–Nagambie and Benalla–Euroa lines, where reliability is essential for both residents and industry.

The Benefit

A reliable modern power supply will transform Strathbogie Shire's economy and resilience:

- **Economic Growth**

Supports business investment, housing development, and regional industry attraction — key drivers of jobs and population growth.

- **Community Resilience**

Builds the community's capacity to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from sustained power outages, minimising negative impacts and ensuring essential services and well-being are maintained, along with keeping the direct cost of such outages to individuals and business who rely on power.

- **Equity**

Level the playing field for rural communities, ensuring they are not left behind in national and state energy planning.

Reliable energy is the foundation of a competitive, investable regional economy, and essential to the liveability and safety of our growing communities.

Conclusion

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*; but we need the right infrastructure in place to support our future. Reliable, renewable, and resilient power supply is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

With \$30 million in federal and state investment and the right regulatory reform, Strathbogie Shire can unlock its potential and confidently welcome new residents, businesses, and industries. Council stands ready to partner with all levels of government to deliver this critical infrastructure for our communities.

Priority:

Kirwans Bridge Restoration



Overview

Strathbogie Shire Council is seeking \$7.5 million in funding to restore the iconic Kirwans Bridge, which has remained closed since the October 2022 floods. The project proposes two viable future options: building a new replica bridge with pedestrian and cycling access or undertaking extensive structural repairs and strengthening works on the existing bridge.

Council has committed \$500,000 towards the project, subject to the receipt of external funding, and continues to explore both state and federal grant opportunities, including the Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program and Heritage Victoria's Living Heritage Grant.

This project aligns with Council Plan Objective 2 – Sustain, specifically Initiative 2.1, which prioritises investment in essential infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications, transport, and water services to build a stronger, more connected and resilient region.

The Problem

Kirwans Bridge, a heritage-listed timber bridge and vital local connector, was significantly damaged in the 2022 floods and remains closed. This ongoing closure has disrupted daily life for residents, delayed emergency response times, and negatively affected local tourism and agribusiness.

The bridge acts as a critical link for both the local community and the broader region; supporting tourism, agricultural supply chains, and emergency access. Its closure is more than an inconvenience; it severs economic, social and cultural ties.

Despite strong community advocacy and Council's continued efforts, funding to fully repair or rebuild the bridge has not yet been secured. The absence of a clear commitment from all levels of government has left this vital infrastructure in limbo.

The Solution

Strathbogie Shire Council is advocating for \$7.5 million in funding to deliver the following:

- Major structural repairs and upgrades to the existing bridge that restore functionality while increasing flood resilience and reducing long-term maintenance.

This solution would ensure the bridge can once again support local traffic, active transport, and emergency and service vehicles.

Council has already invested \$500,000 and secured a further \$140,000 to advance planning and design. With engineering reports, concept plans, and specialist heritage assessments now complete, this project is ready to move forward – subject only to final approvals.



The Benefit

Restoring Kirwans Bridge will deliver significant economic benefits to the region. The bridge is a key link in local transport and tourism routes, supporting businesses in the Nagambie wine region, farmgate producers, and regional accommodation providers. Reopening the bridge will improve connectivity for residents, visitors, and freight operators, helping to strengthen local supply chains and unlock future tourism growth. It also adds value to the regional visitor economy by preserving a unique heritage asset that sets the Strathbogie Shire apart.

The bridge holds deep cultural and historical importance for the local community, serving as both a physical and symbolic connection across the region. Its restoration would help restore community pride and support social cohesion, particularly in smaller, more isolated settlements that have been directly affected by its closure.

This project also responds to long-standing community advocacy, ensuring that residents are heard and their history respected. A restored Kirwans Bridge would once again serve as a shared space, bringing people together and reinforcing the Shire's identity.

There is a clear opportunity to incorporate improved environmental outcomes through the bridge's restoration. Design enhancements can improve flood resilience and reduce future maintenance demands, helping to future-proof the asset. Incorporating pedestrian and cycling infrastructure promotes active transport and reduces reliance on car travel for local trips. With careful planning and modern materials, the project can meet current sustainability standards while preserving the character of the original bridge.

Conclusion

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*; but to make that happen we need strong, resilient infrastructure.

The restoration of Kirwans Bridge is not only about preserving a treasured historical asset; it is about reconnecting a region, supporting industries, and future-proofing a community. We welcome the Coalition's \$6.3 million commitment and now call on all parties to match this support and help deliver a bipartisan solution for a project that transcends politics.

Council is ready to work in partnership with state and federal governments to bring Kirwans Bridge back to life. The community has waited long enough. Let us honour their advocacy and invest in a solution that delivers regional benefit, economic value, and long-term resilience.

Priority:

Avenel Pedestrian Rail Crossing



Overview

Avenel is growing – and it’s time that local infrastructure kept pace.

Strathbogie Shire Council is calling on the Victorian Government to invest \$3.1 million in urgent safety upgrades at two pedestrian rail crossings in Avenel – Bank Street and Ewings Road – to support a safer, more connected and accessible township.

New developments continue to bring young families and visitors to the area. But without a modern, safe, and accessible pedestrian crossings near the train station – a key gateway to the town – lives are being placed at risk and we are missing opportunities to support inclusive growth.

This *Investment in Tomorrow* will improve safety, enhance accessibility, and reinforce Avenel as a well-planned, future-ready destination for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Strathbogie Shire Council is urgently seeking \$3.1 million in funding from the State Government to deliver critical safety upgrades at two pedestrian rail crossings in Avenel: Bank Street and Ewings Road. These crossings are essential access points near the Avenel train station and serve as vital pedestrian links for schoolchildren, families, older residents, and the wider community.

In 2022, Council worked with the community to develop draft streetscape plans, which included a new carpark and road safety enhancements adjacent to the intersection of Banks Street and Saleyard Road. Discussions are ongoing with the Department of Transport and planning and VicTrack to determine a mechanism for progressing these works.

There is currently no formal pedestrian crossing at Ewings Road, and a recent serious incident involving a school-aged child and a freight train, at the Banks Street crossing, has reinforced the immediate need for investment in infrastructure that prioritises safety and accessibility.

The Problem

Avenel’s population is steadily growing, supported by new housing developments to the west and north-west of town. These areas are predominantly home to young families, meaning more children and pedestrians are crossing the railway daily to reach essential services like the school, post office, pharmacy, medical clinic, and community facilities.



However, the current crossings at Bank Street and Ewings Road are outdated and present significant safety risks:

- No active pedestrian gates or signal integration
- Non-compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Ewings Road lacks a formal footpath, forcing pedestrians to walk along unsafe road shoulders
- Bank Street crossing lacks a formal pedestrian path on the southern end and requires pedestrians to cross an arterial road from the northern side
- A recent near-fatal incident at this location involving a 9-year-old girl and a train has exposed the urgency of these hazards

In addition to pedestrian issues, the complex intersection where Queen Street and Bank Street meet the rail line has been the focus of over four years of community advocacy calling for both safety and amenity improvements.

While the installation of controlled pedestrian gates would significantly reduce risk, complementary streetscape and traffic treatments identified in the 2022 concept designs would deliver a safer, integrated solution for both pedestrians and road users.

This is also an opportunity to resolve longstanding land management and access issues between Bank Street and Ewings Road, providing a safer and more connected transport corridor through the heart of Avenel.

Without urgent intervention, these outdated and unsafe crossings will continue to place lives at risk—particularly those of children and vulnerable residents.

The Solution

Strathbogie Shire Council proposes comprehensive upgrades to both crossings to improve pedestrian safety and ensure full compliance with accessibility standards.

Proposed Infrastructure Enhancements (both crossings):

- Installation of active pedestrian maze gates linked to train signals
- Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) to AS1428.1 standards
- Automatic swing gates and escape gates
- New and upgraded footpaths connecting to existing infrastructure (especially critical at Ewings Road).



Crossing-Specific Details:

Bank Street Crossing:

- Four pedestrian mazes with active swing gates and four escape gates
- Likely requires full replacement to achieve DDA compliance
- Estimated cost: \$900,000–\$1,200,000

Ewings Road Crossing:

- Two pedestrian mazes with active swing gates and two escape gates
- New footpath links to improve access and visibility
- Estimated cost: \$750,000–\$900,000

Estimated Pedestrian Safety Project Cost: \$1.65M–\$2.1M

Road Safety improvements
Car Parking and linear Park
landscaping cost: \$1M

Total Project Cost: \$3.1M

Community Benefits

- Significantly improved safety at two high-risk rail crossings
- Full DDA accessibility compliance
- Safer access to schools, health services, and community infrastructure
- Alignment with broader regional transport and infrastructure goals
- Addresses long-term community priorities for the Queen/Bank Street intersection

Conclusion

Avenel is ready for future opportunities – but safety must come first. The most recent near fatality incident involving a child must serve as a catalyst for action. With concept plans already developed and community support firmly in place, Council is ready to move quickly into detailed design and delivery with the support of the State Government, VicTrack, and the Department of Transport.

Strathbogie Shire Council has a clear plan and strong community backing to deliver safer, more accessible rail crossings at Bank Street and Ewings Road. This plan has been discussed with and is support by key State Stakeholders. The time to act is now.

We urge the State Government to fund this critical \$3 million project and partner with us to deliver infrastructure that protects our most vulnerable, unlocks economic opportunity, and strengthens the liveability of a town on the rise.

By investing in a safe tomorrow, the State Government can help prevent future tragedies and deliver the infrastructure that Avenel's growing and engaged community deserves and has long been advocating for.

Let's work together to build a safer, more connected Avenel — one that's ready for the future.

Evaluation

Advocacy priorities within Strathbogie Shire Council are designed to support long-term, strategic outcomes—such as funding, project collaboration, and enhanced service delivery—that often extend beyond Council’s direct control.

Not every priority will result in a formal campaign; however, meaningful progress can still be tracked through a range of indicators that reflect both community impact and strategic alignment.

A key measure of success is alignment with the Council Plan 2025-2029, which outlines the areas where the community expects Council to lead change. In addition, economic drivers offer a valuable framework for evaluating advocacy impact, particularly where direct campaign activity is not undertaken.

Evaluation will be guided by the following tools and indicators:

- Biannual Community Report - providing updates on advocacy progress, community engagement, and emerging priorities.
- Partnerships Report - highlighting outputs from regional collaborations such as Goulburn Regional Tourism Incorporated and Regional Partnerships, even where Council’s role is supportive rather than leading.

- Funding Outcomes
 - tracking financial contributions, grants, and support secured through advocacy efforts, whether through formal campaigns or strategic engagement.
- Annual Economic Development and Tourism Report - including key economic development indicators.

Additional Indicators:

- Evidence of community support (e.g. petitions)
- Media coverage and public visibility
- Register of correspondence and stakeholder engagement

Evaluation is also supported by the Local Government Victoria Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, conducted by independent market researchers.

Conclusion

Strathbogie Shire Council is Investing in Tomorrow; and this advocacy strategy reinforces our commitment to unlocking opportunities, driving investment, and delivering outcomes for our community.

Advocacy is a vital tool to support the region's economic growth, social wellbeing, and long-term sustainability. By taking a proactive, collaborative, and evidence-based approach, Council is positioning the Shire as a ready and willing partner—whether in infrastructure delivery, policy reform, or regional development.

Aligned with the strategic objectives of Connect, Sustain, and Deliver, this strategy ensures our advocacy is grounded in community aspirations, backed by strong relationships, and focused on achieving tangible results.

It outlines how Councillors, staff, stakeholders, and the wider community can contribute to a united voice that strengthens our influence and secures real outcomes.

Strathbogie Shire is ready to grow, ready to partner, and ready to act. Through this strategy, we will continue to demonstrate that we are committed to *Investing in Tomorrow*; and ready to deliver for our community.

For further information on Strathbogie Shire Council's advocacy program, contact 1800 065 993 or info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au



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