

Yarra Ranges Council

Advocacy Agenda 2022

Electorate of Casey



Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People, as the custodians of this land. We also pay respect to all Aboriginal community Elders, past and present who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

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About Yarra Ranges

Yarra Ranges is a significant place in Victoria. Located on Melbourne's eastern edge, it is a hinterland that endures as 'Melbourne's Playground'. Our location, environment and culture are unique, and our daily population is a mix of local community, national and international visitors.

More than **160,000 residents** call Yarra Ranges home, and **14,000 small businesses** support what has been a vibrant and thriving local economy and premier tourist destination.

Our community is strong – but after a tumultuous two-year period, the health and wellbeing, social connection and financial stability of our community, businesses and tourism now hangs in the balance.

As with communities across Australia, Yarra Ranges residents and businesses have been significantly impacted as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns. But there's something that sets us apart from others...

On 9 June 2021, Yarra Ranges was at the epicentre of the worst storm to be recorded in Victoria's history, with 25,000 trees lost across the region.

Our residents and businesses are still reeling from the impact of this storm. Large mountain ash trees destroyed many homes and fell dangerously close to others, adding strain to the mental health of many people already impacted by social isolation and disconnection during lockdown.

Businesses struggled with sub-standard telecommunications as they tried to innovate and remain competitive online during lockdowns. Many were completely cut from connectivity for 3-4 months as a result of the storms, making it impossible to compete with businesses in other regions that enjoyed well-functioning network connections.

Residents and businesses have told us that social connection, emergency preparedness, business support, mental health and wellbeing are their biggest concerns moving into 2022 and beyond.

Our local tourism industry – which contributes \$635 million to the Victorian economy each year – lost even more valuable trade due to fallen trees that blocked roads and prevented customers from reaching businesses in the hills and valley townships.

Council's advocacy work comes at a critical time for Yarra Ranges.

That's why our advocacy priorities are focused on three key themes: recovery, resilience and liveability.

Recovery

- from COVID-19 lockdowns and the devastating 9 June storm and flood event.

Resilience

- future-proofing our region from further impacts relating to climate change, boosting use of renewable energy, and building Council's and the community's capacity to plan for, respond to and bounce back from future emergency events.

Liveability

- ensuring our 'metropolitan classified' municipality has access to the same services, recreational opportunities and infrastructure that our metropolitan counterparts currently enjoy.



As a Council and community, we have a rich history of bouncing back from challenges – even devastation – and rebuilding better than ever. But Council and its community cannot drive this effort alone.

That's why Council calls on the Commonwealth Government to support Council and its community and partners to deliver the services and programs that are needed right now, and to seize opportunities to deliver once-in-a-generation projects that will support our community for decades to come.

Our advocacy priorities align with the objectives of Yarra Ranges' 2021-25 Council Plan, a document our community has helped shape to support and enable our residents, local economy and businesses to survive and bounce back.

The projects identified in Council's advocacy list will be critical for our community as we recover, rebuild and reconnect as a municipality. So too will be support from all levels of government to ensure Yarra Ranges is maintained as one of Victoria's most loved places.

Roads for Agribusiness

Agribusiness is at the heart of the Yarra Ranges economy, **generating \$701 million in economic output each year**. Through COVID 19, these businesses have been hard hit, yet they are key to our region's and country's economic recovery. Unsealed roads surrounding local agribusinesses are inhibiting access to the farmgate, damaging produce and generating dust that contaminates valuable crops. Unsealed roads are a deterrent for both the essential labour force and visitors alike.

Every year Council spends approximately \$4.5 million grading unsealed roads at a cost of \$1250/km for each grade. Roads are typically graded between 3 – 6 times per year and the effects can be very short-term depending on traffic and weather conditions.

After the successful commencement of the Roads for the Community Initiative, in which Council is delivering approximately 180km of sealed roads over 9 years, Council requests a commitment to the 'Roads for Agribusiness' initiative.

Council will begin works within a year to seal roads around local farms, increasing their saleable product and, in turn, creating further opportunities for jobs and economic growth.

The cost savings from the Roads for Agribusiness program would be redirected to Council's asset management and renewal programs, delivering even further benefits across the community.

The ask

Funding of \$150 million to design and construct 150km of sealed roads, as part of an initial package of works targeted to 'the last mile' reaching key local producers.

(Project can be scaled to include more roads, if funding allows.)

- 1,400 residents to benefit.
- Over \$500,000 per year in Council funds redirected to other community program, upon project completion.

Strategic links

- Economic Development Strategy
- Municipal Recovery Plan
- Integrated Transport Strategy

Community case study

A produce farm is located nearby the intersection of two unsealed roads in the Valley region. Following heavy rain events, the roads become riddled with potholes and washed out sections on the curb. During harvest, the business employs more than a dozen local people in its packing shed, to process over 100 tonnes of fruit. However, as trucks containing the packed fruit travel down the unsealed roads, the shaking of the vehicle across the corrugations and potholes causes significant damage, which then reduces the price of an otherwise premium product. In poor condition, the road becomes dangerous for vehicles, and it is only expected to deteriorate further and become more difficult to maintain with additional businesses having been established along the road.

Greening the Suburbs

Yarra Ranges is fortunate to host diverse tree canopies that support community health and wellbeing, underpin the character and economy of our townships, and provide valuable natural habitat.

But as the climate changes and our urban areas evolve, severe weather events will become more frequent and tree canopy will continue to decline.

During the savage storms that swept through the region in June 2021, our region is estimated to have **lost around 25,000 trees**, forever changing the landscape.

We need more trees, with the right tree in the right location, through a targeted tree-planting initiative that will 'Green the Suburbs'. It will:

- improve amenity and liveability for families across the region
- provide sun protection for pedestrians
- future-proof our environment against climate change
- enhance the 'green' character that makes Yarra Ranges villages a destination for people to recharge and engage with nature.

The initiative has potential to incorporate school-based programs and other participation opportunities for volunteers and community groups. Council expects to deliver the program over four years, with first trees planted within 12 months.



The ask

\$9.5 million to plan over 130,000 trees, with a mix of street tree planting and bushland reserve planting across various townships in the urban, valley and hills areas.

Project funding will resource planning, community engagement, plant selection and procurement, project management and delivery, and maintenance.

- Between 2014 and 2018, our built-up areas lost 186 hectares of tree canopy cover, equivalent in size to 104 MCGs.
- Street tree planting provides direct benefits to residents e.g. 50 households engaged per street.
- Bushland planting provides opportunities for revegetation on a larger scale, with approximately 500-1,000 trees per site.

Strategic links

- Tree Canopy Strategy
- Municipal Recovery Plan
- Biodiversity Plan

Solar on Community Facilities

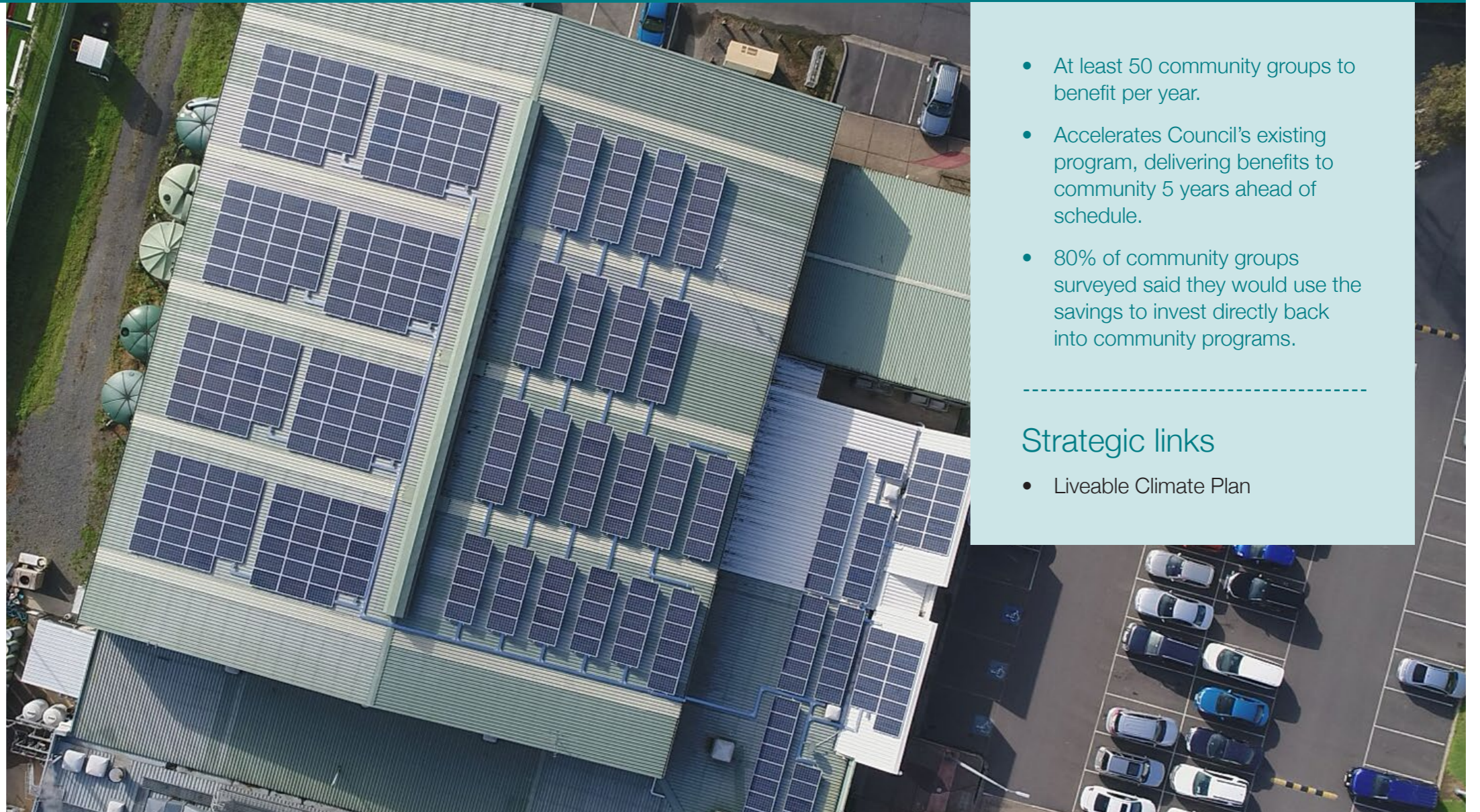
Retrofitting community buildings to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs for community groups at council-owned facilities.

With investment from the Commonwealth Government, Council can accelerate its existing program, delivering benefits to community groups 5 years ahead of schedule.

The project will reduce operational costs for community groups over time, supporting their economic recovery from the pandemic and storm events.

Council has capacity to deliver 10 sites per year, as a program of works, which delivers benefits to at least 50 community groups.

A priority list of sites and project budgets have been prepared, with the first community groups to benefit within 1 year of a funding commitment.



The ask

Funding contribution (\$500k pa for 4 years) to retrofit solar, batteries and LED lighting at community facilities.

(Can be tailored to any funding commitment.)

- At least 50 community groups to benefit per year.
- Accelerates Council's existing program, delivering benefits to community 5 years ahead of schedule.
- 80% of community groups surveyed said they would use the savings to invest directly back into community programs.

Strategic links

- Liveable Climate Plan

Telecommunications

Broadband and mobile services are essential for how we work, learn and connect with each other. Reliable connectivity is also critical in an emergency.

But we know Yarra Ranges has widespread mobile blackspots, lagging broadband speeds, and poor network resilience. Service is broadly unreliable and substandard, even in urban townships.

During the June 2021 storm events, telecommunications service was cut to thousands of residents. People were left with no line out of the impact zone, and no access to emergency information for days.

Improving connectivity means better access to education and employment opportunities, improved social connections and mental health, access, and greater preparedness for and responses to emergencies.

The ask

- 1. Improve mobile connectivity** in 5 key areas with low or no mobile service quality: Dandenong Ranges, Hoddles Creek, East Warburton, Steels Creek, Fernshaw.
- 2. Upgrade NBN broadband services** from fixed wireless, satellite and FTTN to FTTP in key areas with slow broadband service.
- 3. Strengthen telecommunications network resilience** during power outages and emergencies e.g. increased battery back-up at mobile towers, generator power for NBN nodes.

- An independent study on mobile blackspots in Yarra Ranges found that 25% of sites tested had unusable signal or no coverage.
- The study tested more than 24,000 sites, including key segments of the road network, community fire refuges, schools, aged care and CFA stations.
- More than 98% of residents rely on telecommunications in an emergency.

Strategic links

- Municipal Recovery Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Plan

Ridges and Rivers

Ridges and Rivers is a celebration of all that makes the Yarra Ranges Victoria's most iconic and popular destinations – its abundant natural environment, rich experiences, unique townships and vibrant, connected communities.

Consisting of three signature outdoor attractions – the Yarra Valley Trail, RidgeWalk and Warburton Mountain Bike Destination – Ridges and Rivers takes locals and visitors alike from the forested ridges of the Dandenongs and Yarra Ranges, through to the lush pastures and alpine fresh rivers of the Yarra Valley.

Early stages of the Ridges and Rivers projects have been funded by a partnership between the Federal Government, Victorian Government, Yarra Ranges Council and Bendigo Bank (Warburton & Yarra Junction).

Through an increased network of improved trails and walking tracks, Ridges and Rivers will help to connect local townships and provide convenient, easy access to walking, cycling and mountain biking opportunities, delivering significant health and wellbeing benefits for Yarra Ranges communities.

Ridges and Rivers will also provide a much-needed economic boost to the region which has been particularly impacted by the pandemic and the June 9 storms.

Strategic links

- Council Plan 2021-2025 major initiative
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Recreation and Open Space Plan



Warburton Mountain Bike Destination,

STAGE 1

Constructing a unique world-class mountain biking trail network, Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (WMBD) will create over 170 kilometres of new mountain bike trails and connections.

A network of trails nestled among the surrounding mountains will bring visitors from across the world to experience Warburton's natural beauty and relaxing village atmosphere.

The project recently hit a major milestone, completing an Environmental Effects Statement, one of the most comprehensive investigations into the potential effects of MTB trails undertaken in Australia, supporting strong environmental, social and economic outcomes.

The ask

\$5 million to enable the full delivery of the WMBD project, as scoped in existing funding agreements with Commonwealth and Victorian Governments.

Once complete in 2031, WMBD will:

- inject \$48 million a year into the local economy
- create 229 FTE jobs
- attract 128,000 new visitors to the Yarra Ranges annually
- generate 77,000 overnight stays annually
- see 222,000 rides per year.

Yarra Valley Trail,

STAGE 2A

The Yarra Valley Trail (YVT) is an immersive visitor experience that connects people with some of Melbourne's best wineries, arts and culture experiences and iconic destinations such as the Healesville Sanctuary, and the natural beauty of the Yarra River.

The trail significantly improves infrastructure for local communities, increasing opportunities for walking and cycling with improved safety and accessibility.

The YVT is designed as a valley-wide loop, that connects a network of trails through Lilydale, Yarra Glen and Healesville.

Stage 2A will enable a future connection to the northern and southern trail loops around Yarra Glen connecting the trail to major tourism destinations.

The ask

Co-contribution to \$4.9 million cost for the next section of the Yarra Valley Trail, running parallel to the tourist railway, connecting Yarra Glen Station to Tarrawarra Road.

- 18.8 FTE jobs created.
- 220,000 annual visitors.
- Average of 635 daily users and over 100,000 annually on the Yarra Valley Trail through 2021.

Outcomes by 2031:

- 140.5 FTE jobs created.
- \$10.804 million regional income generated by the operation of the trail.
- Estimated health benefit for users in excess of \$20 million.
- User/visitor spending in the region above \$29 million.



WARBURTON

Oonah Belonging Place

Self-determination is the key to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A Belonging Place operating under the Aboriginal community control of Oonah is a self-determinative response to meeting the health and wellbeing needs of Indigenous communities in Melbourne's east. It is a place of connecting, learning and healing, where the Indigenous and broader community can access a range of services and information.

Yarra Ranges has the largest concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Eastern Region. Located at Oonah's existing site in Healesville, the development of a Belonging Place will **increase service accessibility, deepen cultural and social connections, and make significant inroads towards 'Closing the Gap'**.

Concept designs for the facility and its surrounding landscape boast low environmental impact, meet Indigenous design principles, and strengthen connection to the site's heritage and traditional owners – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation.

Located in the Yarra Ranges, with the highest bushfire risk rating in Australia, the Belonging Place can also function as an emergency relief site for communities in times of natural disaster.

The ask

Oonah requests a \$10-15 million investment, shared by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, to construct the Belonging Place and realise its potential to enhance Aboriginal health and wellbeing across Melbourne's east.

Yarra Ranges Council urges you to visit Oonah, to listen and see for yourself the immense potential of the Belonging Place to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing through a sector-leading, self-determinative approach.

Oonah's integrated model holistically addresses the social and cultural determinants of health, with services including but not limited to:

- mental health
- food security
- caring for Country
- L2P
- cultural strengthening and connections
- family violence
- education and training
- social enterprise
- arts therapy
- nutrition and chronic disease
- employment
- youth development
- active ageing
- dental
- maternal and child health

Strategic links

- Council Plan 2021-2025 major initiative
- Closing the Gap: National Aboriginal & Torres Islander Health Plan 2013-2023
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Korin-Korin Balit-Djak – Victorian Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Plan 2017-2027
- Reconciliation Action Plan

Mental Health

- Yarra Ranges community members have sought help for a mental health-related problem in the last 12 months 7% more than Victoria overall.
- Young people from Warburton would face a 4-hour round-trip to access services in Knox via public transport, if services such as headspace and the Lilydale Youth Hub were not available – or did not have capacity – in the Yarra Ranges.

The Yarra Ranges communities are vibrant and resilient, but the compounding impacts of the pandemic and storm events are taking a serious toll.

Our communities need and deserve access to quality mental health services, to support their wellbeing and recovery through some of the toughest times we've ever faced.

But services are struggling to attract staff who are adequately skilled to support our diverse communities, and there are extensive waiting list for psychologists across the municipality.

Ensuring Yarra Ranges communities have access to appropriate services means our people can get back on their feet, and back to thriving and fully participating in our community.

Strategic links

- Council Plan 2021-2025 major initiative
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Municipal Recovery Plan

The ask

- Extend funding for the Lilydale Youth Hub.
- Expanded resourcing for headspace services (including headspace Lilydale), more outreach services across the region, and a new headspace facility in Manningham (in line with Eastern Region Group advocacy request).

Lilydale Youth Hub

In 2019, the Commonwealth Government delivered funding for the Lilydale Youth Hub – a new integrated service led by Inspiro Community Health, supported by a consortia of partners operating across Melbourne's east.

The Hub provides treatment, support and links for young people aged 12-25 years living in the Yarra Ranges area.

The Hub uses outreach care to assist young people's aspirations and development, addresses identified needs and connects those at risk to a broader treatment and support system.

Young people can access services through various referral pathways, including self-referral, GP, schools and other community services. Support programs include mental health, housing, employment, social connections and education, which can be accessed on-site or via outreach.

While the Hub has delivered much-needed capacity into the strained mental health system, the site could not open its doors until late 2021 due to the pandemic.

There is ongoing need and opportunity to extend funding for the Hub, to maintain access to services for young people in the Yarra Ranges.

Local Sport and Recreation

Yarra Ranges Council provides a diverse range of community infrastructure assets that directly support healthy and active living, tourism and connection to culture and community. Our assets are enjoyed by millions of people from all over Victoria, Australia and the world.

However, there continues to be a widening gap between available revenue and the infrastructure and asset requirements of our community.

The following priority projects have will see Council and the Commonwealth Government working to fill that gap, accelerating a program of work that improve the health and wellbeing of our community.

Pump tracks

Estimated costs:	
Wesburn Park (identified in current draft Master Plan)	\$940,000
Queens Park – Healesville (identified to be included in future Master Plan)	\$2,000,000
Morrison Reserve – Mt Evelyn (identified in draft Master Plan)	\$1,000,000
Lillydale Lake/Eyrefield Park – Lilydale (identified in draft Master Plan)	\$2,000,000
Balcombe Ave Reserve - Mooroolbark (identified to be included in future Master Plan)	\$2,000,000
Wandin Station – Wandin	\$500,000
Seville Rec Reserve – Seville (identified in approved Master Plan)	\$500,000
Yarra Junction Rec Res – Yarra Junction (identified in approved Master Plan)	\$800,000
Kilsyth Rec Reserve – Kilsyth (identified in draft Master Plan)	\$400,000
Brickworks Reserve – Montrose	\$400,000
Kimberly Reserve – Chirnside Park	\$400,000
Yering Mountain Bike Loops – Yering	\$100,000
Seal Mt Evelyn Pump Track	\$500,000

Play spaces

Renewal and upgrade	
Belgrave Recreation Reserve	\$300,000
Bimbadeen Reserve	\$300,000
Blackburn Carronvale	\$50,000
Burrinja Cultural and Community Centre Playspace, Upwey (district upgrade)	\$600,000
Carmen Reserve, Lilydale	\$300,000
Fairway Park, Coldstream	\$50,000
Glen Valley Reserve, Seville East	\$300,000
Kemp Reserve, Mount Evelyn	\$300,000
Kiloran Park, Mooroolbark	\$600,000
Koonaburra Reserve, Wandin North	\$300,000
Palm Grove, Selby	\$300,000
Queens Road, Lilydale	\$300,000

Women's & girls sports infrastructure

Total cost: \$25 million	
Funding for a package of 70 x key sports infrastructure projects - including Female Temporary Change facilities, Sports Oval and Pitch Renewal, Sports Ovals and Pitch Lighting Renewal, Tennis and Netball Court Renewal & Cricket Practice Net Renewal.	

Community sport pavilions

Total cost: \$92.6 million	
Co-contribution for the renewal of 25 x community sports pavilions identified in Council's 10 year program	

Paths and Trails

Total cost: \$92 million	
Funding for 28 x priority active transport and recreational trails (including additional RidgeWalk, Yarra Valley Trail and Warburton Mountain Bike Destination projects) being proposed in Council's draft Paths & Trails Strategy.	
Major projects:	
Yarra Valley Trail – Southern Loop Project	\$8,530,000
Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Stage 2	\$12,000,000
Kilsyth Pipe Track Extension	\$1,380,000
Olinda Creek Shared Trail (including Swansea Road & York Road)	\$2,670,000
Yarra Valley Trail Stage 2B	\$11,200,000
Little Yarra Trail – Yarra Junction to Wesburn	\$2,300,000
Yarra Valley Trail Stage 3A (including Badgers Weir to Healesville Sanctuary connection)	\$7,720,000
Yarra Valley Trail Stage 3B	\$13,980,000
Lilydale Rail Trail – Croydon to Kinley Estate – Strategic Cycling Corridor	\$2,750,000
Belgrave to Ringwood bike trail and linear park upgrade	\$3,000,000
RidgeWalk Stage 2	\$10,000,000
Mt Evelyn to Monbulk trail	\$1,620,000
Lilydale Warburton Trail extension – Warburton to East Warburton & Redwoods	\$3,100,000
Puffing Billy Trail extension (Belgrave to Menzies Creek)	\$1,550,000





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