

- 2026 ELECTION PRIORITY -

Bairnsdale CBD Revitalisation

Rejuvenating the Bairnsdale CBD will provide a blueprint for activating the CBD, enriching community life through a mix of business, social and cultural offerings.

Why investment in the Bairnsdale CBD is needed

Bairnsdale is the major regional centre in East Gippsland and the main service and retail hub for eastern Victoria. As the region grows, there is an opportunity to revitalise and activate the CBD as a more connected civic and cultural heart of the town, strengthening visitation, supporting local business and creating a vibrant day and night economy.

Activity is uneven across parts of the CBD. While the local visitor economy continues to grow, the cultural, arts and entertainment offerings do not connect seamlessly. Bairnsdale is not fully capturing this opportunity due to limited destination infrastructure.

Improving the public realm and safety in key areas (including Nicholson Street Mall), strengthening connections to the heritage-listed Mitchell River and expanding cultural and creative spaces will create a thriving precinct for the community and increase visitation, activity and investment.

Our community is asking for

Funding support to unlock the full \$40 million project and secure private sector partnership opportunities.

- \$3 million in Victorian Government funding to:
 - Complete detailed designs
 - Develop a fully costed business case and funding and delivery model, including options for private sector partnership
 - Early works and planning/statutory approvals

Key project components (delivery stage) include:

- Upgrades to Nicholson Street Mall
- 500-seat multi-use theatre
- Expanded art gallery and potential First Nations Keeping Place
- Improved connection to the Mitchell River and visitor infrastructure

The project could also be used to inform future programs and revitalisation of other important regional CBDs in established and important non-metropolitan centres.

- 2026 ELECTION PRIORITY -

Background

Business and community support the need for improved connectedness between the CBD, shopping precinct and the Mitchell River.

Bairnsdale traders and residents have expressed concern and dissatisfaction with the CBD. The day and night economy is lacking and the cultural offering fragmented. There is also a lack of affordable and accessible creative spaces, limiting the growth of the region's artistic community, including First Nations artists.

With the visitor economy continuing to grow, the initiative will strengthen Bairnsdale as a destination.

- A 2023 economic impact assessment estimated the arts elements could generate \$59 million in economic value and support around 300 jobs, with additional benefits from workforce relocation and civic and office investment/relocation.

Plan for Victoria identifies Bairnsdale as a regional service centre, supporting a target of 11,000 new homes in the area. In supporting the growth target, this project will:

- Deliver a contemporary regional hub by strengthening the CBD's amenities and civic life as the community grows.
- Build on a feasibility study supported by a \$90,000 Victorian Government Investment Fast Track Fund grant.
- Lift CBD activity by relocating professional services workforces into the centre to boost daytime trade, alongside a more centralised civic and cultural hub for a growing community.

More information

- Chief Executive Officer Fiona Weigall
 - 03 5153 9500 / 0427 539 509 fionaw@egipps.vic.gov.au
- Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth
 - 03 5153 9500 / 0428 778 168 Cr.ashworth@egipps.vic.gov.au