

Budget engagement - what you told us and how we are responding

May 2025



We deliver a wide range of services across a large rural shire, including libraries, emergency management, roads, waste and recycling, sport and recreation, health, and local laws.

To inform the development of Council's integrated planning documents and assist in the review of the Community Vision 2040, Council undertook significant community engagement with input from over 4,000 people - one of East Gippsland's most extensive community engagement programs.

Your feedback has helped shape our draft plans, ensuring they reflect the needs and aspirations of our community.

As part of our budget engagement, in February this year (for the first time) we provided an opportunity for you to tell us which services matter most to you and your community.

Through this engagement, we received 976 contributions where participants allocated funding to their preferred services. Additionally, 492 individuals left comments, offering more detailed insights and suggestions.

This feedback has allowed us to consider what resources are needed to provide the services that have the greatest impact on our community.

Overall, you want Council to spend wisely, focusing on practical improvements that make the area safer, cleaner, and more liveable. Fair decisions, good infrastructure and a Council that genuinely listens to the community were also rated as important. Key service areas you prioritised included the below.

Roads, footpaths and drainage

What's important - you told us:

- Better roads, footpaths and bike lanes.
- Potholes fixed, drainage improved, and more streetlights to make roads safer.

- Weed control and roadside maintenance.
- Environmental plans to deal with climate challenges.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$16.4m on maintaining our 2,800km of council managed local roads, as well as footpaths, drainage and culverts.
- \$3.3m on resealing roads (\$3m from grant funding).
- \$1m on gravel road renewals.
- \$1.9m to install a roundabout at Francis and Pyke streets, Bairnsdale (\$1.459m from grant funding).
- \$1.4m on new and renewed footpaths across the Shire (\$0.42m from grant funding).
- \$400,000 on kerb and channel replacements (\$0.3m from grant funding).
- \$250,000 on major culvert renewals.
- \$3.2m on various drainage projects.

We're also:

- Regularly inspecting our roads, drainage and footpath networks against industry standards to ensure they are safe and reliable.
- Regularly reviewing our renewal and maintenance programs to ensure infrastructure (including public amenities) and processes are efficient and cost effective.
- Undertaking major upgrades to key areas through our capital works program.
- Undertaking roadside slashing during the high fire risk season of November through to February to reduce fire risk in communities.

Parks and playgrounds

What's important - you told us:

- Parks, playgrounds, bike paths and walking tracks.

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- Better public facilities like toilets.
- Tree planting.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$6.6m on maintaining our parks and playgrounds.
- \$10.2m on parks, playgrounds, walking track upgrades and open spaces.

We're also:

- Frequently inspecting playgrounds with our qualified playground inspector and conducting regular maintenance to make sure they meet the right standards for their type and how much they are used.
- Allocating new open space areas in new developments, guided by our Open Space Policy.

Aquatic and recreation centres

What's important - you told us:

- Aquatic and recreation facilities are important.
- Some areas of improvement and maintenance are required.
- Major upgrades, better management, and extended accessibility.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$5.8m on operating and maintaining aquatic and recreation facilities.

We're also:

- Allocating budget annually to maintain court surfaces.
- Addressing cleanliness concerns at the BARC with the cleaning contractor and ensuring our team conducts regular checks during the day.

- Reviewing aquatic and recreation facility assets to identify appropriate maintenance and renewal programming.
- Using the Sporting Facilities Plan (Bairnsdale and East Gippsland) to guide the development of new facilities and the maintenance of existing ones.

Community facilities

What's important – you told us:

- Accessible spaces and facility maintenance
- Public toilets, especially in tourist areas.
- Family-friendly spaces like playgrounds and baby change tables.
- Modern, multi-use facilities for sports, events and local businesses.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$2.6m on maintaining buildings and facilities.
- \$716,000 for building new toilet blocks.

We're also:

- Undertaking a service review of our public toilets and facilities to ensure these amenities meet the needs and expectations of residents and visitors.
- Enhancing the proactive maintenance of our existing facilities through the development of our new Asset Management Plan.

Waste services

What's important – you told us:

- Waste bins in public spaces and improvements in waste infrastructure.
- Regular hard rubbish collections.

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- Free green waste disposal year-round.
- More recycling education.
- More efficient, accessible, and environmentally friendly services.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$14.6m for the operation and maintenance of waste facilities.
- \$2.5m on upgrading waste facilities.

We're also:

- Undertaking a Waste Service Review to assess and improve the waste management services.
- Implementing a transition plan to guide future waste and recycling services and education programs in response to Recycling Victoria policy.
- Partnering with community, industry and social enterprise to increase recycling and develop circular economy opportunities.
- Retaining the waste levy to ensure equitable funding of our waste services, reduce unintended incentives for illegal dumping and ensure compliance and other costs can be met.

Recreation and sporting reserve management

What's important – you told us:

- Sports and recreation facilities.
- Sporting fields.
- Building new facilities such as skate parks and bike trails.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$4.4m to continue the WORLD Sporting Precinct (\$0.76m from grant funding).

- \$730,000 allocated to design the Lakes Entrance Multi-Use Stadium which is planned to be funded from a grant that we are awaiting confirmation of.
- \$160,000 to design netball changerooms at Lindenow Recreation Reserve.
- \$500,000 to design the West Bairnsdale Recreation Reserve redevelopment.

We're also:

- Using the Sporting Facilities Plan (Bairnsdale and East Gippsland) developed with community to inform the maintenance of existing and the development of new facilities.
- Developing a Marine and Coastal Management Plan.
- Seeking funding to construct an indoor sports stadium in Lakes Entrance.

Environmental management and sustainability

What's important – you told us:

- Stronger action on climate change.
- Protection of our natural environment.

2025/26 expenditure:

- \$608,000 to address a range of environmental issues like the management of natural values on Council land and energy efficiency programs.

We're also:

- Implementing the fourth year of our Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- Managing pest weed control on Council managed reserves and roadsides.