

# 2025 - 2029 Council Plan

DRAFT

grow  
invest  
belong



Colac Otway  
SHIRE





## Council's Vision

*Colac Otway is a thriving regional hub where residents prosper, businesses find opportunity and visitors stay longer.*

To achieve the Council Vision, we will be guided by

## Council's Mission

- To build on our successful and resilient existing industries and support investment.
  - To continue to nurture our stunning natural environment.
  - To enhance the wellbeing and lifestyle of residents and respect our heritage.
- To celebrate our region as a place to belong and partner with our communities to shape a dynamic future.

## Our Councillors



Cr Charlie  
Buchanan



Cr Chrissy  
De Deugd



Cr Phil  
Howard



Cr Zoe  
Hudgell



Cr Mick  
McCrickard

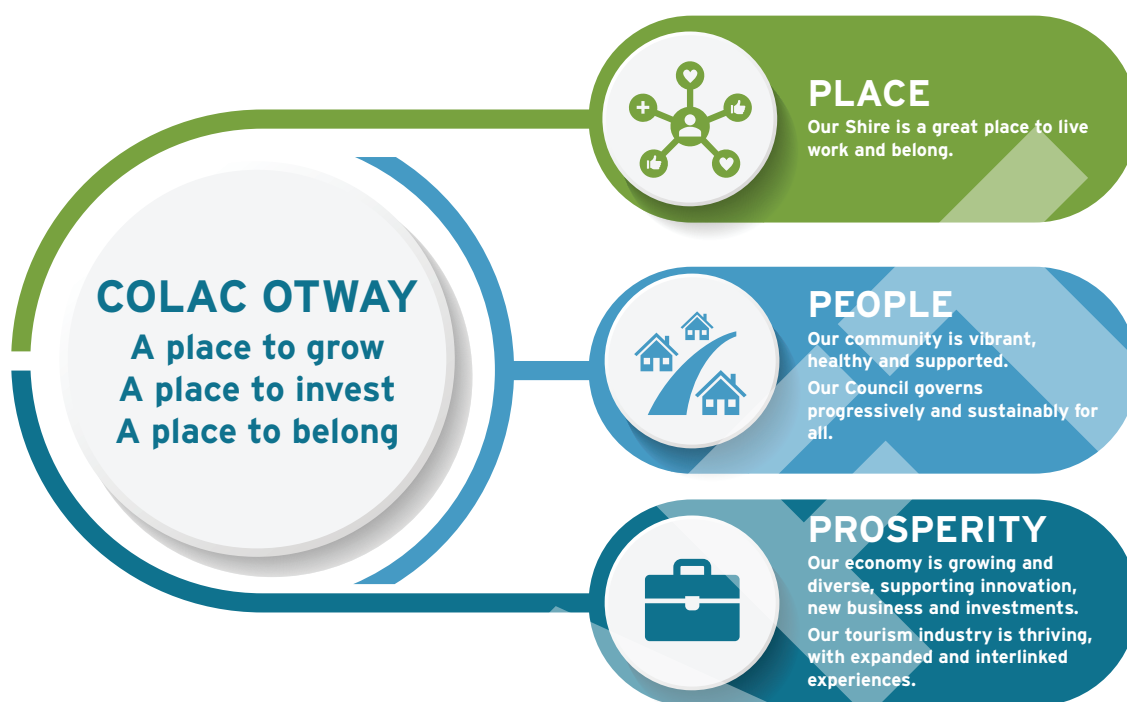


Cr Chris  
Potter



Cr Jason  
Schram





# Welcome

A Place to Grow   A Place to Invest   A Place to Belong

Colac Otway Shire Council is pleased to present its Council Plan 2025-2029 – a document that will guide our planning, decision-making and program delivery during this term of Council.

Council has set a clear vision for the next four years, describing its ambitions for the Shire.

Delivering on the vision will provide residents and visitors a place to grow, a place to invest, a place to belong.

It is supported by a set of objectives that describe in more detail what we expect to achieve:

- A Shire that is a welcoming place to live, work and belong.
- A community that is vibrant, healthy and supported.
- A Council that governs progressively and sustainably.
- An economy that is growing and diverse, supporting innovation, new business and investment.
- A tourism industry that is thriving, with expanded and interlinked experiences.

This document also identifies strategies to support each objective, and measures of success.



# Objectives and Strategies

All strategic outcomes indicated with an 🍏 include actions under Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

## PLACE

Our Shire boasts a regional city by the lake, coastal towns and riverside villages in which residents and visitors alike enjoy the variety of experiences and services on offer. It is easy and fulfilling to live here, allowing people to lead their best lives.

1	Our Shire is a great place to live, work and belong
1.1	Enliven and beautify our townships and natural environments
1.2	Enhance our community and social spaces and collaborate with communities to deliver healthy environments 🍏
1.3	Make it safe and easy to get around the Shire 🍏
1.4	Ensure our region offers a diversity of economic opportunities supported by an array of housing options 🍏

## Measuring Success

- More new housing is constructed
- More affordable housing is constructed
- More accessible and high quality green open space is available and contributes to urban cooling
- People have more options to travel in our towns and regions
- Improved community satisfaction with Council
- Net increase in the number of businesses opening in the Shire
- More people visit our region, stay longer and spend more in the Shire







# PEOPLE

Our Council and community work together to support the growth of our Shire. We make the most of the opportunities that growth presents, with the aim of improving the wellbeing of all who call our Shire home, without losing the local community spirit that makes our region great.

## 2 Our community is vibrant, healthy and supported 🍏

- 2.1 Work with partners to ensure important services like employment, health, and education are readily available 🍏
- 2.2 Build greater community connection through social, cultural, and recreational opportunities 🍏
- 2.3 Identify and advocate for increased support for vulnerable communities, and vulnerable and socially disadvantaged members of our communities, wherever possible 🍏
- 2.4 Promote and enable healthy behaviours 🍏
- 2.5 Ensure opportunities for greater community connections for multicultural and First Nations groups within our Shire 🍏

## 3 Our Council governs progressively and sustainably for all 🍏

- 3.1 Elevate the efficiency and effectiveness of our Council
- 3.2 Make well-informed, transparent decisions for the betterment of the community through best-practice governance 🍏
- 3.3 Build and maintain effective working relationships with all levels of government 🍏
- 3.4 Communicate and engage positively and clearly with the community 🍏
- 3.5 Develop and refine policies that support the health and wellbeing of the community 🍏

## Measuring Success

- More affordable housing is constructed
- More people are involved in community life
- People feel access to services has improved
- Improved community satisfaction with Council
- More young people (aged 18-35) are choosing to live in the Shire, beyond projected rates (VIF)
- Improved customer experience when interacting with Council



# PROSPERITY

Our Shire is a place of continual improvement and investment, which builds on its strengths and creates new opportunities as it evolves. Visitors stay and play longer, residents enjoy diverse work, while new businesses are drawn here for the variety of opportunities and experiences on offer.

4	Our economy is growing and diverse, supporting innovation, new businesses and investments 🍏
4.1	Attract business and government investment to stimulate industry and business growth 🍏
4.2	Protect and leverage our traditional agricultural and manufacturing industries to create new economic opportunities, preparing for and responding to changes to the natural environment 🍏
4.3	Build economic opportunities from local arts, culture, sports, science and technology 🍏
4.4	Work with key partners to improve the employability of our residents based on the opportunities and networks available 🍏
5	Our tourism industry is thriving, with expanded and interlinked experiences 🍏
5.1	Facilitate growth and diversification of the visitor economy to increase visitation, length of stay and employment outcomes 🍏
5.2	Enhance promotion of Colac Otway Shire as a destination
5.3	Increase tourism offerings and investment in Colac Otway Shire through events, products and attractions
5.4	Improve tourism infrastructure that leverages our natural tourism and recreation assets

## Measuring Success

- More new housing is constructed
- More affordable housing is constructed
- More people are involved in community life
- People have more options to travel in our towns and regions
- More young people (aged 18-35) are choosing to live in the Shire, beyond projected rates (VIF)
- Net increase in the number of businesses opening in the Shire
- Greater number of local and major events
- More people visit our region, stay longer and spend more in the Shire





# Creating the Plan

In preparing this Council Plan 2025-2029, Council sought community views between February and April through a deliberative engagement program that attracted widespread interest and input.

Through a three-stage process we canvassed priorities to be considered as we created the roadmap for success over the next four years.

Council thanks community members, groups and business leaders for their input.

That input helped guide Council in its strategic discussions across several workshops that culminated in this plan.

All strategic outcomes indicated with an 🍏 include actions under the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (MHWP).

The MHWP demonstrates actions that Council and key stakeholders will implement over the plan period to realise outcomes under the themes of People, Place and Prosperity.

Colac Otway Shire's Community Vision 2050 was reviewed and tested through the deliberative engagement and community feedback in this Council Plan process.

Through this, the majority of participants confirmed that the vision still reflects the community aspirations and should remain.

Council is required to review and adopt its long-term Community Vision in its first year.

The document went before Council in July 2025.



## Stage 1: Community engagement

In early 2025, Council conducted an extensive community engagement initiative across the Shire. Activities included 13 focus groups, 6 pop-up events at community gatherings, 6 drop-in sessions across various locations and 4 online workshops. The community was informed through print, radio, and social media, as well as direct communications via postcards, newsletters, emails, and letters. An online survey was also available throughout the consultation period to gather feedback.

## Stage 2: Deliberative community engagement

We worked with independent consultants to recruit a representative sample of the Colac Otway community through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to form a Community Panel. Members of the Community Panel participated in three sessions at Colac, Forrest and Apollo Bay to provide priorities, feedback and ideas to inform our Council Plan.

## Stage 3: Public exhibition

The Draft 2025-2029 Council Plan will be on public exhibition for a period of six weeks to allow the community to provide their feedback.

## Stage 4: Formal adoption

Council will consider community feedback on the 2025-2029 Council Plan before formal adoption of the final document in September 2025.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

Colac Otway Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Maar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the Colac Otway region, the land and waterways upon which the activities of the Colac Otway Shire Council are conducted. We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

[www.colacotway.vic.gov.au](http://www.colacotway.vic.gov.au)

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