

# Advocacy Priorities 2026

*The path to prosperity*

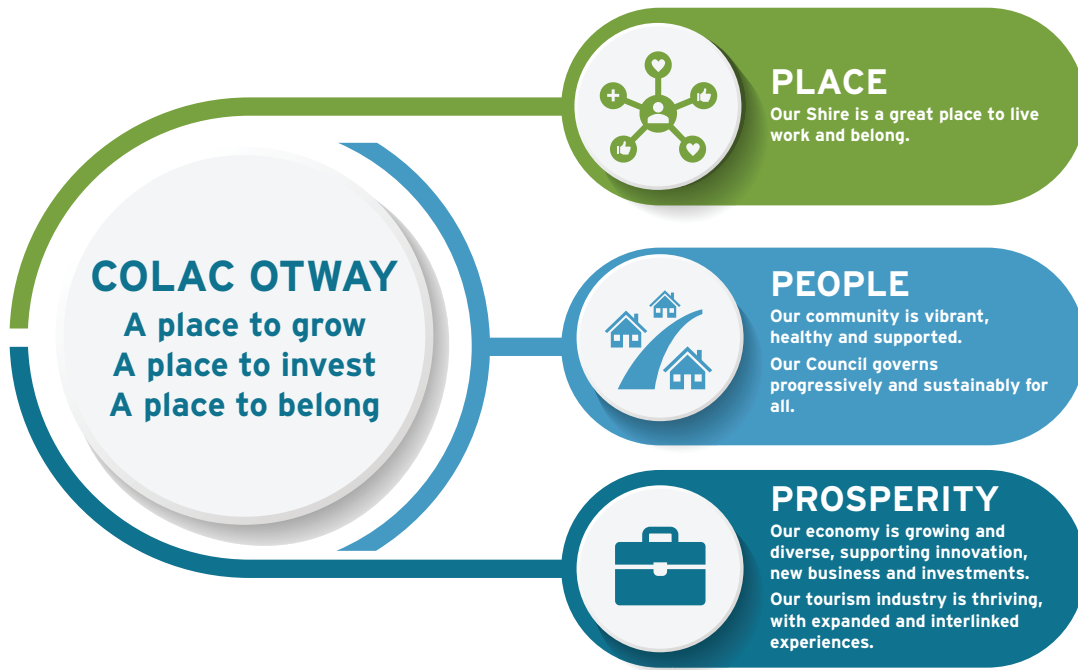
grow  
invest  
belong



Colac Otway  
SHIRE



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# Advocating for Colac Otway

a place to grow, a place to invest, a place to belong

Colac Otway Shire Council has identified a variety of priority projects to help drive the future growth and prosperity of the municipality and deliver on the strategic objectives of the Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029.

The Council Plan 2025-2029 forms a direction with three distinct focuses - Place, People and Prosperity as outlined above.

These projects will support community wellbeing, prosperity and the overall liveability of the shire. They are aimed at leading to job creation, investment attraction, increased visitation, improved community infrastructure, and opportunities for active lifestyles in our stunning natural environment.

This advocacy prospectus showcases the opportunities available throughout Colac Otway Shire.

Colac Otway Shire is located about 160 kilometres south-west of Melbourne. The region is celebrated for its stunning natural diversity - from dramatic coastlines and lush rainforests to rich farmland and serene volcanic lakes. The iconic Great Ocean Road adds to the area's appeal, drawing millions of visitors from near and far.

Manufacturing and agriculture form the backbone of the local economy, alongside vibrant health, timber, fishing, and tourism industries.

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

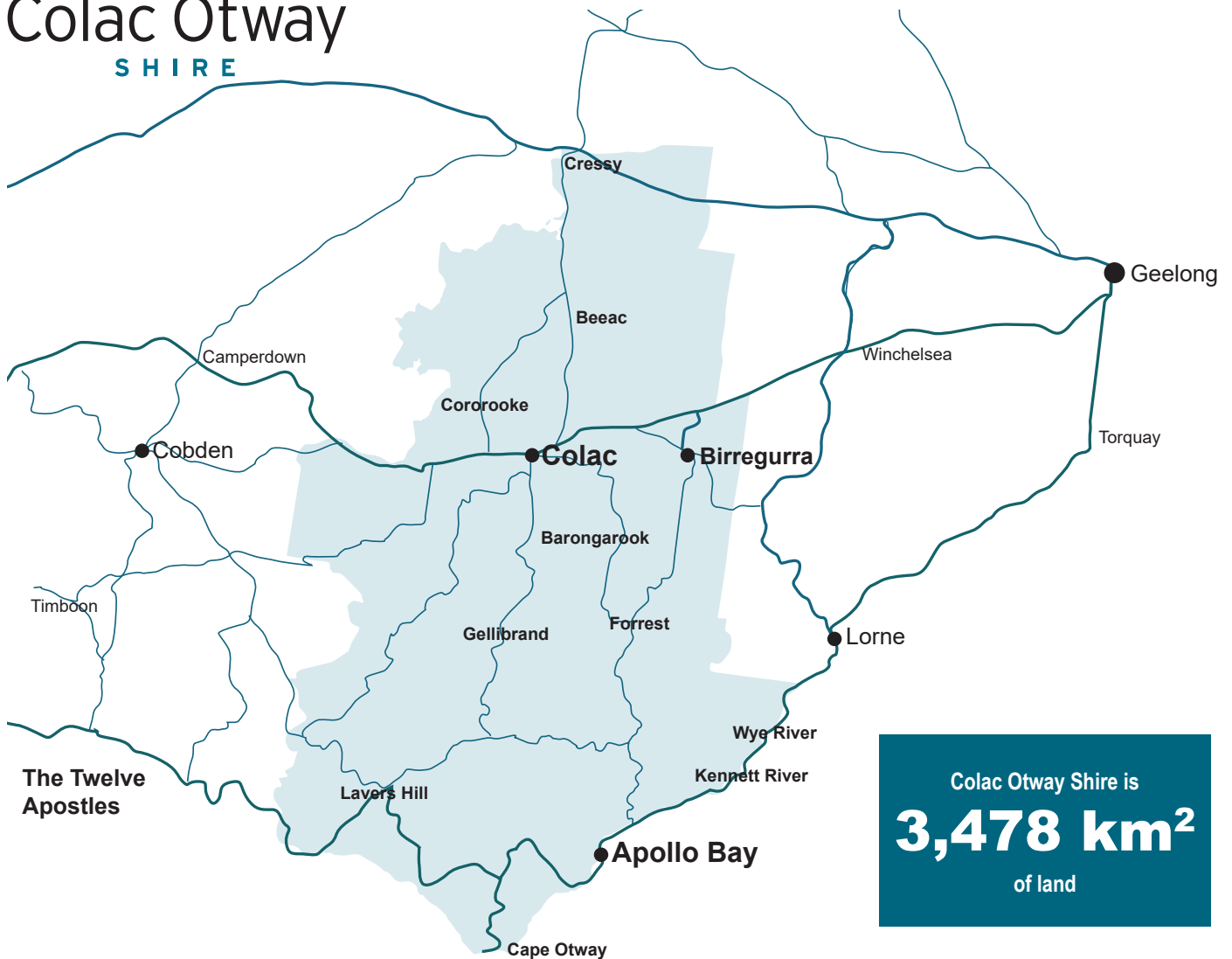
Colac Otway Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Maar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the Colac Otway region, the land and waterways upon which the activities of the Colac Otway Shire Council are conducted.

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.



# Colac Otway

SHIRE



Colac Otway Shire has an estimated population of  
**22,312**  
people\*

**3 Nights**  
average length of stay  
for visitors to Colac Otway

More than  
**85%**  
of Colac Otway's workforce  
lives locally\*

1050 people employed in  
tourism  
**9.5%**  
of the population of Colac  
Otway Shire

**10%\***  
of the population  
born overseas

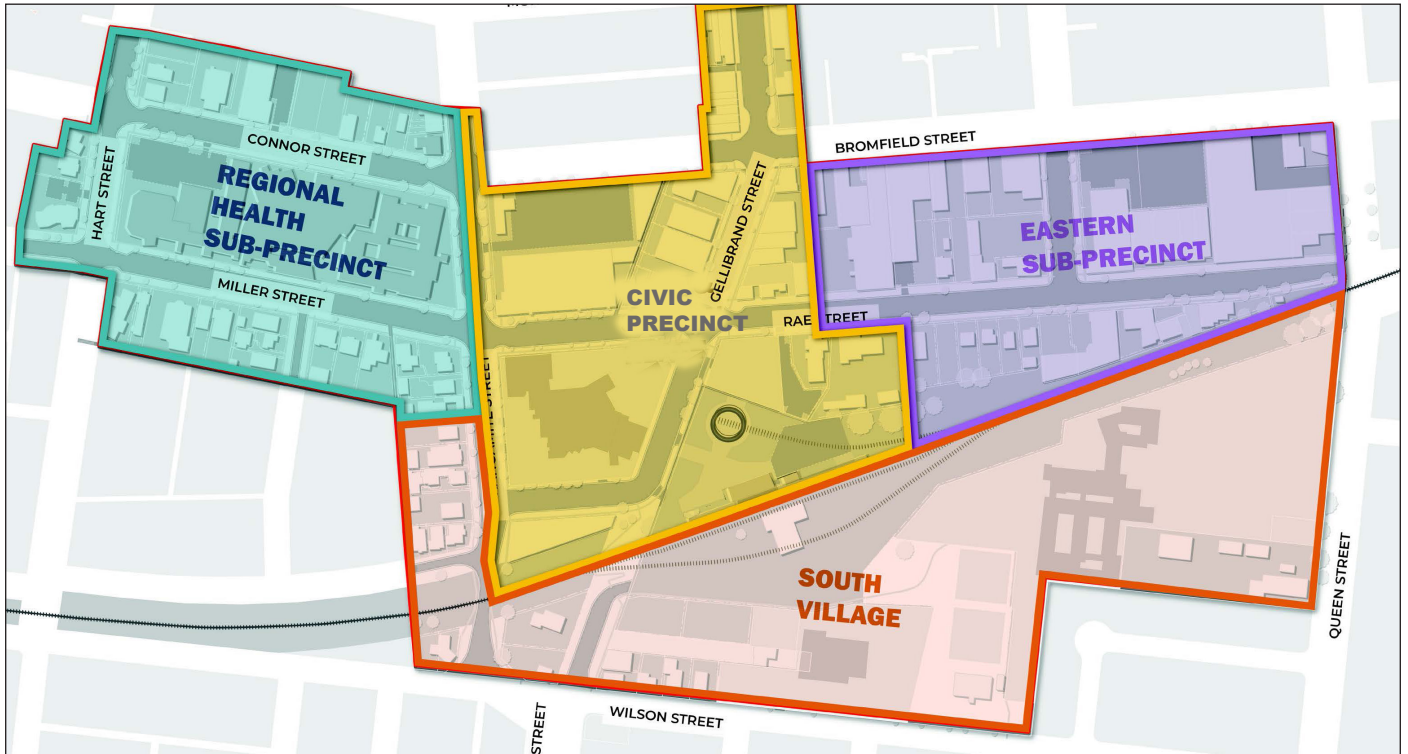
Sealed Roads  
**566 km**  
Unsealed Roads  
**1059 km**

Dominant Industries\*  
**Manufacturing**  
**Health**  
**Agriculture**  
14% / 13% / 11%

Economic Output  
**\$2.02B**  
30% of economic output  
comes from manufacturing

\*Sourced from the Colac Otway Shire (Profile ID)





*A strategic lever in getting people to come and stay and experience everything Colac and the region has to offer is to provide higher quality short and medium stay accommodation options for tourists as well as corporate visitors attending for meetings and other business reasons.*

## Priority Project: **Civic Precinct Redevelopment**

### What will it deliver?

The project will be the preparation of a master plan to guide the redevelopment of Colac's Civic precinct.

Features could include an upgrade of the Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre (COPACC), the provision of higher quality short and medium stay accommodation, the relocation of Council office accommodation and other associated cultural and civic facilities.

The project will prepare concept plans and form the basis of a business case for future investment attraction to strategically develop the precinct.

The work will explore the potential feasibility of public-private partnerships, creating a precinct development that will leverage the prime location adjacent to the Colac train station and on the edge of the Colac CBD.

### What is our ask?

We are seeking \$300,000 for strategic planning for the future use of the Colac Civic Precinct and civic facilities.

### Other projects:

- \$150,000 to build the case for other opportunities to establish quality short and medium stay accommodation.



Project Ready



*Within the Colac Otway Shire there are a range of recreation facilities that support various community sporting clubs and groups. Many of the facilities are old and in dire need of investment to ensure they are fit for purpose and safe for the community.*

## Priority Project: Elliminyt Reserve Pavilion

### What will it deliver?

The Elliminyt pavilion has significant structural problems that require rectification as soon as possible.

The facility caters to the fastest growing area in Colac. It hosts various sporting groups including the South Colac Sports (football and netball) Club, City United Cricket Club, Colac Cycling Club and the Elliminyt Tennis Club.

The project will include the development of changerooms, amenities and social club facilities for the key users of the reserve.

It will support increasing active and social participation, providing health and wellbeing benefits for the local community.

### What is our ask?

We are seeking \$6.6 million in capital funding to re-build the pavilion. Council has detailed designs and plans ready to go.

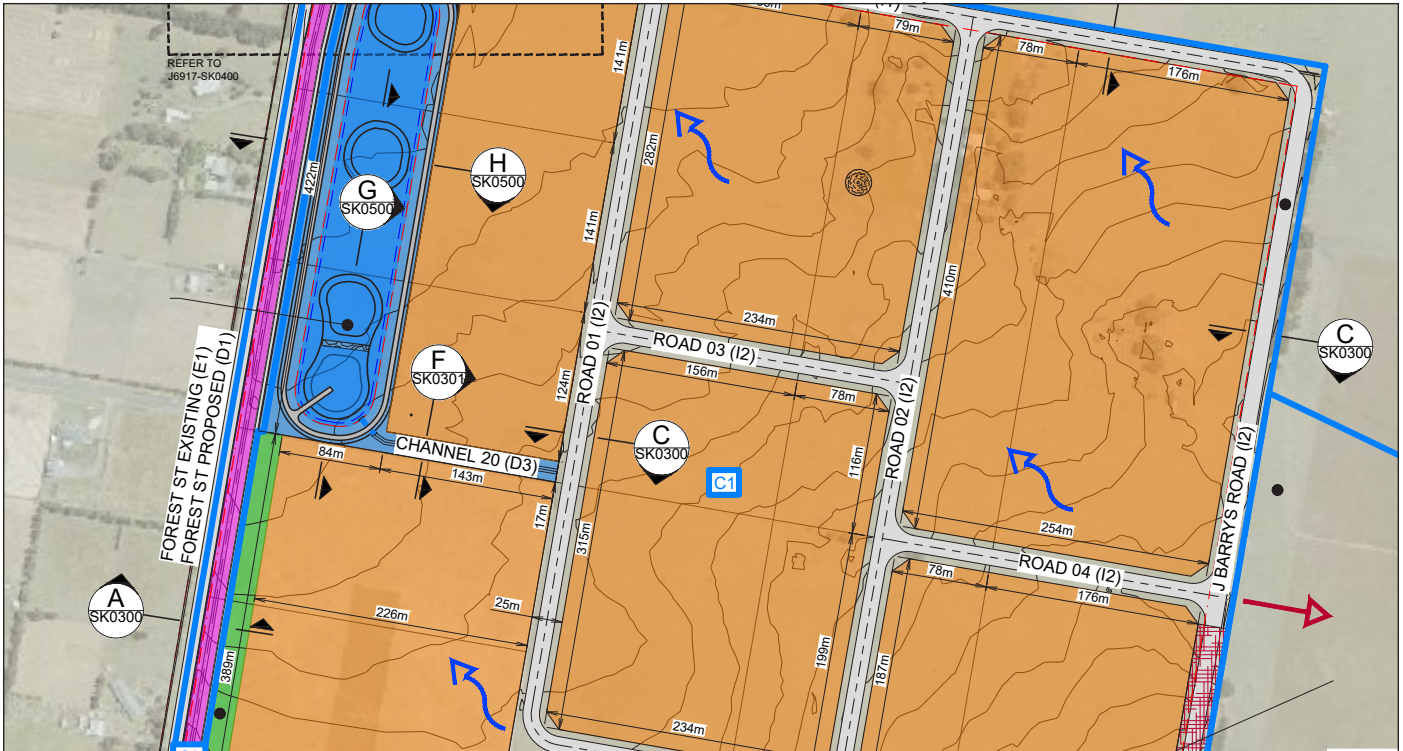
### Other projects:

Similarly a new pavilion is required at Irrewillipe Recreation Reserve, the cost of which is estimated to be around \$6 million.

A new pavilion at Birregurra Recreation Reserve is estimated to cost around \$6 million.

An upgrade is required of the Lake Colac Oval pavilion. Detailed design to be undertaken in 2026.





*Strategic planning has been undertaken providing for the expansion of the Colac East Industrial Precinct, which is supported by the State Government 10-Year Plan for Industrial Land. With Colac's proximity being two hours from Melbourne and one hour from other major regional centres we are well placed to offer a strategic base for major business.*

## Priority Project: J Barry's Road Intersection

### What will it deliver?

The Colac East Industrial Precinct is a greenfield site encompassing 70ha of industrial zoned land. The site is located in an existing industrial precinct readily accessible to the Princes Highway and in close proximity to large scale manufacturers including Bulla Dairy Foods and AKD.

The precinct is currently encumbered due to the upfront infrastructure upgrades required to unlock the land. A key piece of enabling infrastructure is the redevelopment of the intersection of Forest Street, Hearn Street and J Barry's Road, which would support opening up of the precinct.

The project includes design and construction of a major roundabout and associated roadworks and at the gateway to the precinct to accommodate large trucks and heavy duty vehicles.

Realising this development will bring significant investment to the Shire as well as direct benefits for Council through additional rates and charges.

### What is our ask?

We are seeking \$4 million to introduce a major roundabout and associated roadworks to unlock the potential of the site and to make investment in the site more attractive for potential business opportunities.

### Other projects:

- Aerodrome redevelopment works \$1+ million. Our airport strategy is being developed in 2026.
- Upgraded truck wash at Colac Regional Saleyards \$100,000. The current truck wash is the only one in the region supporting our agriculture industry and requires an upgrade to service the needs of industry.





*Demand for soccer facilities in Colac Otway has grown rapidly in recent years and a lack of playing standard facilities and associated infrastructure is hampering further growth of the game and limiting involvement and the health and wellbeing benefits the sport offers.*

## Priority Project: Colac Soccer (Football) Hub

### What will it deliver?

Colac doesn't have a facility to cater for the provision of soccer (football) which is limiting the development of the sport locally and throughout the Shire.

Despite the lack of a dedicated facility, the local club, the Colac Otway Rovers AFC, continues to grow and has increased its membership from 35 to over 200 in 3 years.

The unprecedented growth clearly shows the popularity of the sport and the demand for a dedicated home.

This project would result in the development of a purpose-built regional soccer (football) facility in Colac West to cater for the growing participation in the region.

The project would include two pitches, lighting, changerooms and amenities, car parking and associated infrastructure.

### What is our ask?

An investment of \$300,000 is required for detailed design works.

A further investment of approximately \$20 million is required to provide a purpose-built facility for soccer (football).

The creation of a hub in Colac will create the opportunity for those with a love for the game in all parts of the Shire to come together and enjoy the ability to compete.

A Colac hub would also enable an alignment with the wider regional expansion of the game.

Council has acquired land. A regional football feasibility study and concept designs have been completed.





*In a number of cases, development has occurred throughout Colac Otway without the necessary infrastructure required to properly connect our communities socially and physically.*

## Priority Project: Footpath Infrastructure

### What will it deliver?

This strategic footpath project will implement key priorities identified through the Apollo Bay and Colac Footpath Strategies.

The strategies identify significant gaps in the commuter footpath network and this project seeks to meet the shortfall in the provision of infrastructure in both towns.

The provision of well-located footpaths encourages physical exercise and better social connection.

This project will result in a network of safe and accessible infrastructure to encourage active transport and recreational activity, creating health and wellbeing outcomes.

### What is our ask?

Capital funding of \$4 million is required to build footpath connections that don't currently exist in parts of Colac, Elliminyt, and in Apollo Bay.

### Other projects:

- Birregurra footpath network \$1 million as informed by the Birregurra Structure Plan.
- Improving our public halls \$500,000.



*Provision of recreation spaces is a priority of Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and supports active outdoor lifestyles, particularly for the youth of our shire.*

## Priority Project: Colac Bike Park

### What will it deliver?

The development of a bike park has been a long-held ambition for our community.

Following an extensive community engagement process, Council is seeking to construct a new bike facility at the Elliminyt Recreation Reserve following the completion of schematic designs.

The proposed bike park includes two components – a pump track and a jumps park for the more advanced riders.

The new facility would cater for a growing population, particularly young families in the Elliminyt area.

The development of a bike park in Colac will create a greater connection of townships across the shire through biking activities

Further enhances our attraction as a destination for recreational and competitive biking activities by adding to the world-renowned tracks and events in Forrest and along the Great Ocean Road.

### What is our ask?

We are seeking \$750,000 to build the Colac Bike Park. Council has identified the site and has detailed plans. This project is ready to go.

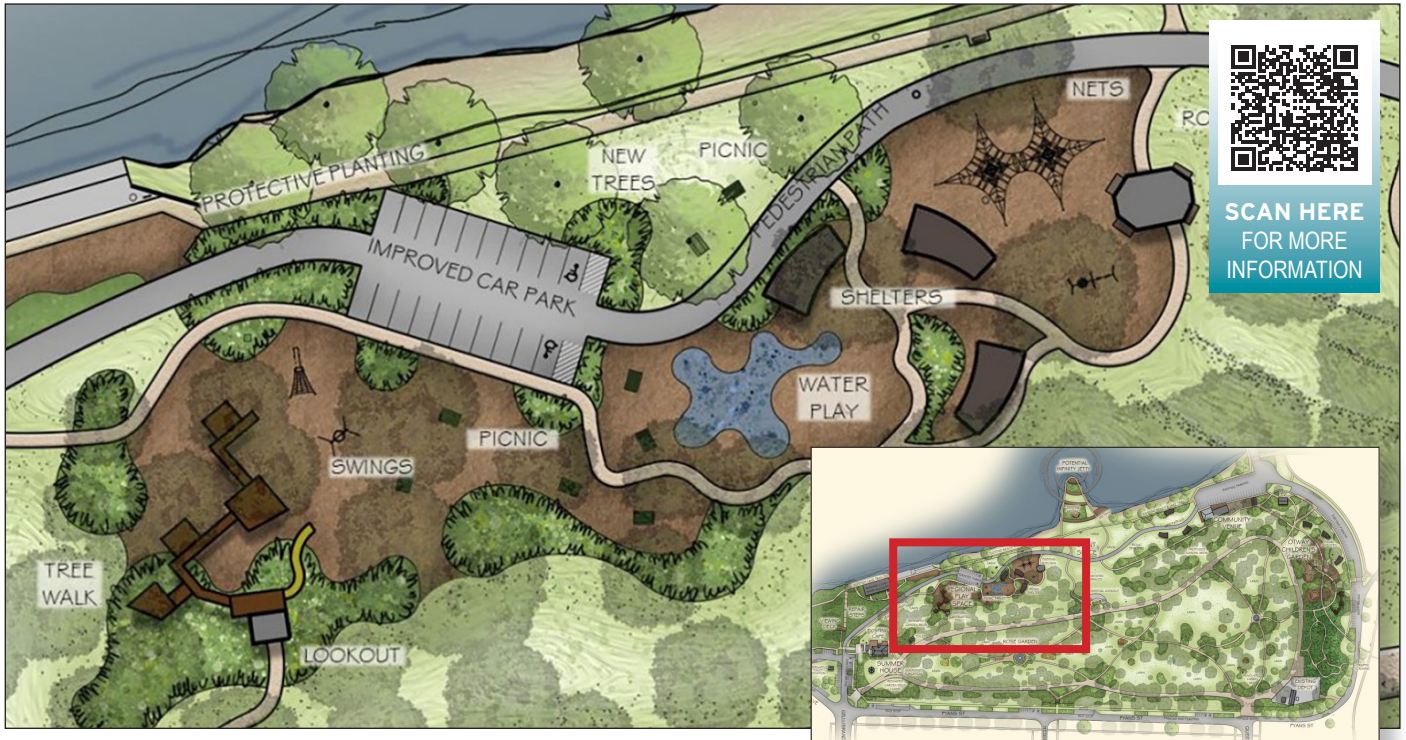
### Other projects:

Birregurra Bike Park \$750,000. Designs are nearing completion.

Forrest Mountain Bike Trails Stage Two \$2.1 million. Designs are complete.



# Activating Natural Assets



*Lake Colac and the Botanic Gardens are the jewel in Colac's crown, both offering public open space that is loved by locals and visitors alike.*

## Priority Project: Lake Colac Regional Playspace

### What will it deliver?

Council is seeking to implement the vision of activating the lake foreshore further through strategic infrastructure development.

Guided by the Lake Colac Foreshore Master Plan and the Colac Botanic Gardens Master Plan, the development of a regional playspace will offer opportunities for imaginative and exploratory play in a naturally stunning environment.

The universally accessible playspace will cater to a diverse age range – children-tweens-teens – and have flexible spaces in which to not only play but socialise.

### What is our ask?

We are seeking \$3 million to construct a regional playspace on the banks of Colac Botanic Gardens overlooking Lake Colac. Council has concept designs for the space with detailed designs to be completed in 2026.

### Other projects:

Lake Colac Path Stage 1 \$4 million. To continue the lake path west towards Cororooke.



*The centres of our major towns are in need of some refreshing of streetscapes to ensure both safety and amenity of these high traffic and pedestrian zones.*

## Priority Project: Colac CBD Streetscape Works

### What will it deliver?

The Colac Central Business District (CBD) and Entrances Project articulates a vision for the design of buildings and spaces of the Colac CBD and east and west entrances to Colac.

Council prepared detailed designs for streetscape improvements and completed Stage 1 construction works in 2018.

Stage 2 would result in reconstruction of Murray Street (Princes Highway) from Corangamite to Hart Street, which is a key visitor precinct.

The revitalisation of the Colac CBD would create a destination for visitors, supporting existing hospitality businesses and attracting new businesses to the precinct.

### What is our ask?




















We are seeking \$12 million to complete Stage 2 of the Colac CBD and Entrances Project. Detailed designs have been completed.

### Other projects:

■ Apollo Bay Streetscape Designs \$250,000.



# Support Advocacy Priorities

Priority	Key Partners	Alignment
<b>Colac short stay accommodation</b> Colac has a distinct lack of supply of 4+ star accommodation. To further enhance the visitor economy and support local industries, seek private investment for the development of good quality short term accommodation.	Local industries Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Regional Development Victoria Colac Chamber of Commerce	  
<b>Establish local mental health and wellbeing services</b> Working with Colac Area Health, advocate for the greater provision of local mental health and wellbeing services in the shire.	Colac Area Health Great Ocean Road Health Barwon Health Headspace	 
<b>Childcare - Apollo Bay Early Years Hub</b> Apollo Bay has limited childcare service and has been supported by Great Ocean Road Health (GORH). Council understands that GORH may not be in a position to continue the delivery of service longer term. Planning for the Apollo Bay Early Years Hub includes provision for a childcare facility at the P-12 College site. Council's position is that the Victorian Government, as owner of the land and building, takes over responsibility of this facility and further develops the centre to include the provision of childcare.	Apollo Bay P-12 College Great Ocean Road Health Department of Education	  
<b>Childcare - Broader childcare provision</b> Support initiatives that provide increased childcare opportunities across the shire.		  
<b>Forrest Wastewater</b> In partnership with the Forrest community, seek a commitment from Barwon Water for the implementation of a township sewer system.	Barwon Water Local community	 
<b>Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve Redevelopment</b> Support the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority's efforts to implement key priorities of the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve Master Plan, particularly upgraded community facilities such as player and official changerooms, social rooms, oval resurfacing, cricket practice nets, netball/tennis courts etc.	Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority Local sporting groups	  
<b>Public Transport Service Improvements</b> In partnership with major employers and community advocacy groups, advocate to V/Line and the Department of Transport to review the number and timing of services both between Geelong and Colac, and down to the coast. This will assist in attraction and retention of key workers and strengthen the shire's value proposition as a place to live and work.	Colac Area Health Major Employers	  

# Policy Change Advocacy

## Priority

## Alignment

### Tax reforms to support accelerated housing outcomes

Advocate to Victorian Government for policy changes to reduce disincentives of development e.g. Windfall Gains Tax, Land Tax etc.



### Victorian Government Regional Infrastructure Fund

Call on the Victorian Government to reintroduce an infrastructure funding program with appropriate funding levels specifically for rural and regional Councils to fund key infrastructure that supports economic development and population growth.



### Drought Relief/Support

Requests that the Federal Government declares Victoria a “Natural Disaster Area” due to the ongoing drought conditions and provide the necessary initial and ongoing funding as allocated for these natural disaster events to the communities in desperate need, such as the Colac Otway Shire.



### Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund

Seek support from the Victorian Government to reverse its position on the new Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund and not implement the revised levy due to significant financial impact on regional and rural areas.



### Victorian Government Waste Levy

Noting that rural Councils have limited capacity to sufficiently allocate funds for the purpose of rehabilitating old landfills, request that the Victorian Government makes available funds collected from the waste levy for landfill rehabilitation projects.



### Key Skills Program

Expansion of training and education programs in regional Victoria for key skill gaps.





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

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