

Colac Otway

CONNECTION

Spring 2025

Planning Ahead

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invited to guide the next
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A Message from the Mayor

We've included some exciting projects and programs being delivered across the shire - roads on the coast, sports facility upgrades and the important Elliminyt Wetlands development.

We can all see the obvious and long-lasting impacts of the drought are impacting drastically and we are working closely with other regional Councils to advocate for further support for our farmers. Our communities have rallied and the spirit shown in lending support in a host of ways has been inspiring.

As we head into Spring we wish all Winter sports teams all the best if you're lucky enough to reach the finals.

Council has spent a lot of time in the first half of the year doing important strategic planning to set us up for success. The budget has been adopted, and now we seek your feedback on the four-year Council Plan, the long-term Financial Plan and the Asset Plan.

Please share your thoughts on these important plans so we can make Colac Otway a place to grow, a place to invest and a place to belong.

Council will be looking at engaging with our young people more over the coming months, in particular our teens to provide more activities for them to thrive in our community.

Cr Jason Schram



The Morley Avenue reconstruction is the first of many projects scheduled for improved road infrastructure for our coastal communities.

\$7 million of Coast road improvements underway

Council's Infrastructure Team is set to deliver a series of significant road reconstruction projects worth almost \$6 million this financial year that will benefit residents and visitors to the shire's coastal region.

These works are in addition to the \$1 million of improvement works to Morley Avenue in Wye River, completed in June and delivering 600 metres of upgraded road for vehicles to travel safely. Works included new kerb, channel and drainage infrastructure.

Works underway in the Bay

With the second largest population in the shire, Apollo Bay is also a major tourist destination on the Great Ocean Road with large numbers of visitors to the coastal hamlet all year round. Council's road works program will see delivery of key infrastructure to benefit locals and visitors.

Works are underway on improvements to Apollo Bay's roads, including a new roundabout at Moore and Pascoe Street and raised pedestrian crossings.

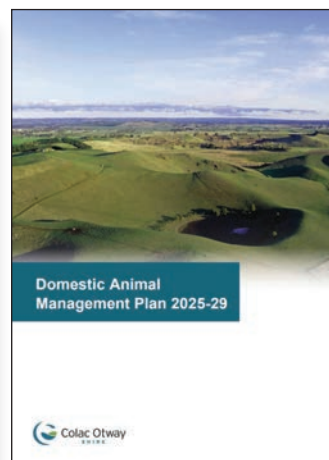
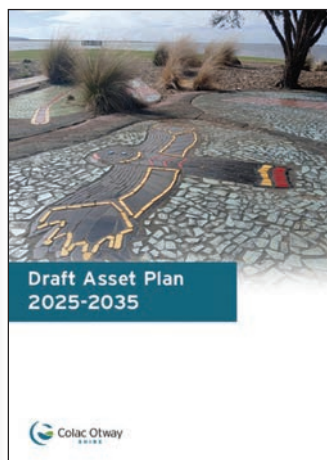
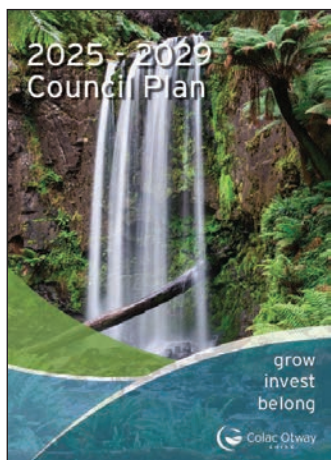
The reconstruction of Pascoe Street and roundabout and pedestrian crossings work will cost a combined total of \$1.45 million.

Ramsden Avenue will be widened with kerb and drainage upgrades (\$1 million), while Montrose Avenue (\$800k), Costin Street (475k) and Pengilly Avenue (Stage 2) (\$774k) are all in line for significant upgrades.

Upcoming projects in Wye River

Design work is currently underway, with completion expected by the end of the current financial year for construction of The Boulevard (\$605k) and improvements to Sarsfield Street between the Great Ocean Road and Harrington Street (\$276k), and Koonya Avenue (\$530k).

The combined works will improve road surface quality, safety for motorists and pedestrians and drainage in high use areas along the coast.



The Draft Council Plan was developed through extensive community engagement between February and April 2025, including focus groups, pop-up events, drop-in sessions, online workshops and surveys, and a 23-member community panel.

Council plans for success

Council is calling on the community to help shape the future of the region by providing feedback on a series of important draft plans currently on public exhibition via our website.

These documents include the Draft Council Plan 2025–2029, Draft Financial Plan 2025–2035, Draft Asset Plan 2025–2035, and the Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).

A Vision for People, Prosperity and Place

The Draft Council Plan 2025–2029, built around the themes of people, prosperity and place, outlines Council's strategic direction for the next four years.

It focuses on encouraging economic growth, supporting community well-being, and enhancing local infrastructure and the natural environment.

The plan also incorporates the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The overarching vision of the plan is Colac Otway is a thriving regional hub where residents prosper, businesses find opportunity and visitors stay longer.

Planning for Long-Term Sustainability

The Draft Financial Plan outlines how

Council will manage its financial resources over the short, medium and long term, ensuring essential services are delivered and infrastructure is maintained while remaining financially sustainable.

The Draft Asset Plan details how Council will manage and maintain infrastructure such as buildings, recreation facilities and parks over the next decade, ensuring they remain safe, accessible and responsive to community needs.

These plans were developed through extensive community engagement between February and April 2025, including focus groups, pop-up events, drop-in sessions, online workshops and surveys, and a 23-member community panel.

Managing Cats and Dogs in the Shire

Council has also released the Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) for public consultation.

The plan promotes responsible pet ownership, protects the welfare of dogs and cats, and safeguards community amenity and the environment from nuisance animals.

Key proposals include:

- Extending the current Cat Confinement Order (introduced in 2023)

from nighttime-only to 24-hour containment, requiring cats to remain indoors or in secure outdoor enclosures at all times.

- Expanding leash requirements for dogs to cover all township areas in the shire, beyond the current limited zones such as the Colac CBD and Lake Colac foreshore.
- Review the pilot dog park currently being established at Colac's Central Reserve. Its success will inform potential expansion to other townships.

How to Get Involved

Community members can view all draft plans and submit feedback:

- Online via Council's website
- In person at Council's Customer Service Centres in Colac and Apollo Bay

Written submissions are welcome, and those who submit feedback can also register to present verbally at the September Submissions Committee meeting.

Submissions for all plans close at 5pm on Wednesday 3 September 2025.

Council must adopt the final versions of the strategic plans by 31 October 2025.



Don't miss out on your opportunity to help shape Colac Otway's future. You can view the draft plans and provide your feedback via the website.
colacotway.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay



Expanding support to farmers across our shire

The Victorian Government is providing direct drought support of \$67.2 million for farmers across Victoria impacted by drought conditions.

This is in response to deteriorating seasonal conditions across the state, with some areas of Victoria now recording significant rainfall deficiencies extending back to 2023.

The lack of rainfall during autumn accelerated the hardship being faced by farm businesses, with many farms facing significant decisions around destocking, securing fodder and managing low on-farm water supplies.

Agriculture Victoria's technical and decision-making support program is available to farm businesses right across the state.

These services will be delivered in partnership with a range of technical specialists to support farmers to manage the impacts of increasingly difficult conditions.

Farmers can register at agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons.

The Drought Support Package builds on the existing supports already available to farmers across the state to prepare for and respond to drought.

For more information visit the Agriculture Victoria website or contact 136 186.



Resources available for help

The **Rural Financial Counselling Service** (rfcsnetwork.com.au) offers free, confidential and independent financial information. Call 1300 771 741.

- The **Regional Investment Corporation** (ric.gov.au) offers low interest loans including Farm Investment and Drought loans. Call 1800 875 675 or email info@ric.gov.au
- The **National Centre for Farmer Health** (farmerhealth.org.au) has information and resources including factsheets, a Farmer Health Assessment tool and a booklet about Managing Stress on the Farm. They also have their Support Hub.
- Australian Government – **drought resources page** (agriculture.gov.au), includes information on RIC concessional loans, Farm Household Allowance and available tax measures.
- **Water and Catchments** (water.vic.gov.au) – water access and infrastructure.
- **Country Women's Association of Victoria** (cwaofvic.org.au) – for information on household relief payments.

Visit **Agriculture Victoria's Resource Directory** (agriculture.vic.gov.au) for a list of agency contacts services.

Farmers to benefit from Saleyards fee changes

Councillors have approved a proposal not to increase fees that were made as part of the recent 2025-26 budget process for sale types and to maintain last year's levels.

The change follows a request from the Colac Regional Saleyards Advisory Committee for Council to review the fees and charges in light of the current challenges being experienced by our farmers.

Infrastructure and Environment General Manager Doug McNeill said the change applied to fees for the five most common transactions at the saleyards for farmers trading stock.

"Our farmers have been facing severe drought over the past two years, and keeping fees low will help support the

shire's agricultural sector and the viability of farming enterprises," Mr McNeill said.

"This change will also ensure the saleyards maintain their reputation as an ideal place to sell cattle," he said.

In recognition of the need to support farmers in current drought conditions being experienced, Council also reduced the farming rate from 75 per cent of the base rate to 65 per cent in the 2025-2029 Rating and Revenue Plan.

"Council remains committed to supporting the local agricultural sector and ensuring the sustainability of the Colac Regional Saleyards."

It is estimated the fee reduction will cost Council about \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year.



Transform your garden into a fire-wise haven

Spring in the Colac Otway shire is the perfect time to get your garden bushfire-ready.

When landscaping with safety in mind, a few thoughtful choices in design, planting, and fuel placement around your home can go a long way in reducing fire risk.

The CFA's *Landscaping for Bushfire: Garden Design and Plant Selection* guide is full of inspiring ideas for both new and established homes.

The guide provides practical examples of landscaping in suburban, rural, hills and coastal environments and an interactive plan selection tool to help you choose plants for gardens in high bushfire risk areas.

Explore it at cfa.vic.gov.au and give your outdoor space a refresh that's both beautiful and bushfire-resilient.



The Elliminyt Wetlands project is underway. Once completed the wetlands will feature Informal nature trails and shaded seating areas and be a haven for bird and wildlife.

Elliminyt Wetlands redevelopment begins

Construction has started on Council's new Elliminyt Wetlands project which will redevelop the existing stormwater basin at Irrewillipe Road into wetlands, recreation facilities and public open space.

The contract for the \$4.11 million project was awarded to Bild Greenfields and in addition to a functioning wetland that will treat existing and future stormwater, will also include boardwalks, a carpark, a viewing platform and a neighbourhood playground.

The basin will hold back, store and treat stormwater, reducing the extent of flooding in Deans Creek and allowing new housing in parts of Colac's west.

The new stormwater wetland will facilitate development of land and housing south of the basin, which was rezoned for residential development in 2023.

This project is funded in part by a \$3-million grant from Regional Development Victoria's Regional Infrastructure Fund.

Get bushfire ready with simple steps to protect your home

Even if you plan to leave early on fire-risk days, preparing your property can make a big difference.

It's not too early to prepare: Start by reducing the chance of fire entering your home; seal gaps, install ember-proof mesh, and move flammable items like woodpiles and outdoor furniture away from the house.

Windy conditions can carry embers far and wide, so think ahead.

Outdoors, clear gutters, trim overhanging branches, and maintain firebreaks.

Design a fire-wise garden with compact, green shrubs and keep vegetation under control. Indoors, seal roof and wall gaps and opt for non-flammable fencing materials.

Creating a cleared buffer zone, pruning trees, and keep-

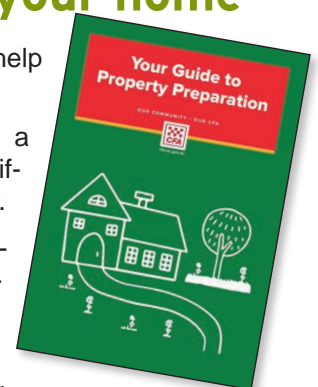
ing your garden well-irrigated all help reduce fuel and fire intensity.

Even small actions like spending a weekend tidying up can mean the difference between disaster and safety.

Visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare for more information and support to help prepare your property.

Council will be offering extra green waste kerbside collections during October and November. Subscribe to our Extra Waste Collection Services page and be notified of additional waste services.

 colacotway.vic.gov.au/extra-waste





Colac Otway Shire Councillors, executive staff, the Bluewater team and community members were able to try the new gym equipment.

Equipment upgrade is exciting for community

Colac's Bluewater Leisure Centre is making waves with a major gym upgrade, featuring an Australian-first piece of fitness equipment and a renewed focus on community wellness.

Bluewater becomes the first gym in the country to introduce the cutting-edge Matrix Upper-body Cycle, a revolutionary addition designed to enhance cardio and strength training.

The upgrade also includes a new assault runner and a dedicated Reformer Pilates space equipped with 10 reformer beds, offering members a broader range of training options.

General Manager of Community and Economy Ian Seuren says the transformation is about more than just new machines.

"This upgrade is more than just new equipment; it's about creating a vibrant, inclusive space where our community can thrive," Mr Seuren says.

"We're excited to bring cutting-edge fitness options to

Bluewater, making it a hub for health, wellness and connection."

The official reopening on Monday 21 July drew over 400 visitors, with the gym offering free access throughout the day to celebrate the launch and interactive challenges including a treadmill race with Colac Otway Mayor, Cr Jason Schram, and a bench press competition.

Early membership numbers show strong momentum with around 30 new signups immediately following the reopening.

Mr Seuren highlights the broader impact of the upgrade:

"Facilities like Bluewater enhance people's quality of life, promote physical activity, provide social opportunities, and contribute to the shire's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit."

With summer just around the corner, now is the perfect time to join Bluewater Gym. Whether you're looking to improve your fitness, try Reformer Pilates, or build water confidence, Bluewater offers something for everyone.



You can find out about all of Bluewater Leisure Centre's services and facilities online.
bluewater.org.au/about-us



Choose your adventure at COPACC

Spring is the perfect time to explore something new, and COPACC has a vibrant lineup of live entertainment to suit every taste. From family-friendly fun to legendary music and powerful storytelling, there's something for everyone.

The Librarian by Le Gros Orteil is a fun holiday show that the whole family will enjoy. Step into the imaginative world of Paul-Émile Dumoulin, a librarian whose love of books sends him on wild adventures. Blending clowning, theatre and music, Le Gros Orteil is based in Quebec, Canada. This delightful show celebrates the magic of reading and is perfect for the whole family.

The Librarian by Le Gros Orteil is on at COPACC on Sunday 28 September at 2.00pm. Tickets are \$16 or \$15 for concession, COPACC Members' tickets are \$13.

Get ready to relive the soundtrack of a generation. The Eagles Greatest Hits is a two-hour concert featuring all the classics—Hotel California,



Canadian circus Le Gros Orteil will entertain audiences with *The Librarian* during the September school holidays. Contact the COPACC Box Office for tickets.

Desperado, Take It to the Limit—performed by a world-class six-piece band led by Whalen Hughes and David Thompson.

The Eagles Greatest Hits is on Saturday 4 October at 7.30pm. Tickets are \$79 and \$74 for concession and available online or from the COPACC Box Office. Call 5232 9418 to book your tickets now.

Queenie van de Zandt is back and she's handing the reins to you! Choose

Your Own Adventure is an interactive cabaret lets the audience decide what happens next—from powerhouse ballads to pub quizzes and stand-up comedy.

Part of our Cocktails & Canapés Season, this show includes a complimentary drink and snack. Queenie van de Zandt – Choose Your Own Adventure is a Victorian Seniors' Week performance and proudly supported by Co-

lac Otway Shire's Ageing Well service.

Queenie van de Zandt – Choose Your Own Adventure is on at COPACC on Wednesday 15 October starting at 6pm. Contact the COPACC Box Office for more information.

Experience the heartfelt music of Gunditjmara/Kokatha songman David Arden. With a career spanning over 30 years, David's performances honour First Nations culture and history, blending tradition with contemporary sound to create a deeply moving experience.

David Arden – Songman is inspired by all those who have gone before on this ancestral land, along his with own life experiences, to help audiences understand past injustices and promote cultural understanding.

David Arden – Songman is on Wednesday 22 October at 8pm in the COPACC Auditorium. Tickets are \$25, \$23 for concession, \$18 for COPACC members and Mob tickets are \$18.

 copacc.com.au

Beat the drought: hardy natives for Colac Otway

Drought conditions have been affecting gardens across the shire, but there are attractive native garden plants that cope well in dry conditions.

Purple coral-pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*): A very hardy plant that grows well in most well-drained soils.

Common everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*): Thrives in well-drained sand and loam soils and has a long flowering period.

Cushion bush (*Leucophyta brownii*): Grows well in heavy clay soils to sandy soil and is useful for defining pathways.

Golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*): Adaptable to all soils and useful for erosion control, screening, or as a windbreak.

Ruby saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*): An attractive and useful spreading plant, especially in dry conditions. The sweet berries are edible.





Funding will light up Colac Otway

A proposed regional playspace on the Lake Colac foreshore and lighting upgrades for three sports facilities will be a boost for physical activity across the Shire.

Council has welcomed news of funding for four projects under Round Two of the State Government's Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund.

The grants program will provide \$40,000 towards the design of a new regional playspace on the Lake Colac Foreshore. Council will contribute up to \$60,000 for the design stage.

The playspace would cater to a broad range of ages and could include larger equipment such as climbing nets, slides, flying fox and a tree walk.

Meanwhile, Colac's Eastern Reserve Netball Courts will receive \$128,000 for a lighting upgrade. Gellibrand Recreation Reserve Netball Courts will receive \$138,666 for a lighting upgrade. Irrewillipe Recreation Reserve Netball Courts will receive \$158,914 for a lighting upgrade and new shelters for the second court.

The lighting projects will replace outdated halogen lights with new LED lighting systems and will be supported by additional funding from Council and user groups.

Grants support wields success for participation

Women are chopping down barriers in timber sports, thanks to new equipment and a Colac Council grant.

The Western Victoria Axemen's Association made an impact with their \$4995 community grant last year.

The grant has supported programs that encourage women to join timber sports such as woodchopping and sawing, traditionally dominated by men.

Western Victoria Axemen's Association used the money to buy equipment for women and to host demonstrations come-and-try events. Women's participation has increased as a result.

Member Georgia Anderson, 17, has been woodchopping for two years, having grown up watching her dad Scott travel the country competing.

She trains every weekend with her dad, and some weeknights if the weather allows, and she's competed through Victoria and New South Wales.

"I'm very excited about it because I never thought I'd be able to do it."

Georgia said she loved woodchopping because it gave her ways to meet people, travel and learn a lot.

"It definitely helps with your fitness. It's a full-body workout," she said.

She said she would love for more women and young people to take up the sport.

"Lately a lot more women have been getting into it.

"It would be great to find a lot more people, especially women."

To learn more about the Western Victoria Axemen's Association, visit www.facebook.com/western.victoria.axemans.associatin

Council awarded over \$338,000 in grants to support 73 local projects for the 2025-26 Community Grants program.



To find out more about our Community Grants recipients for the 2025/26 grants, or sign-up to our newsletter visit our website.

colacotway.vic.gov.au/Community-Grants



Connect with us



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