



# COUNCIL AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-2029

## Year One : Half Year Progress Report

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## YEAR ONE ACTION PLAN: HALF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

July to December 2025

This half-year report provides a snapshot of the progress for the first six months (July to December) of the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 (the Plan) and is presented to align with Council's financial cycle.

The Plan was adopted by Council in September 2025, since then Council has focused on building strong foundations to deliver the Plan's strategic objectives.

To support implementation, \$250,000 was allocated in the 2025/26 Annual Budget to resource priority initiatives including contribution to the new L2P car for Heywood, signage style guide development, meeting pods at the Portland Library and the initial phases of masterplan and strategy development. This demonstrates Council's commitment to turning strategy into action and delivering outcomes that improve liveability, wellbeing, and long-term sustainability for the community. All Council and Wellbeing Plan actions are on track in December 2025.





## Leading and engaging

### Our Focus: Being an active and transparent leader

Councillors have maintained strong community visibility and engagement by actively participating in a range of informal engagement activities, Council initiatives and local events. Monthly Councillor Activity Reports presented at Council Meetings provide an accessible and transparent record of this involvement showing meaningful community connection and understanding.



Some activity highlights of the last six months include the parliamentary advocacy, the new residents' welcome in Portland, local celebrations such as the Blue Tree Project launch, community and club milestones, Seniors Week activities, Live for Life celebrations, International Day of Persons with a Disability event and the opening of the Kardemudelar Karweeyn Mirring Dance Ground.

*From left to right - Cr Michael Carr, CEO Helen Havercroft, Mayor Cr Karen Stephens, Cr Robyn McDonald and Cr Duane Angelino at the Blue Tree project launch in Portland.*

Community engagement and communications have also been supported through Council's Your Say Glenelg website and Community Newsletter. Your Say Glenelg averaged 202 visitors per day with 329 submissions received between July and December on projects including the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029, Asset Plan, Domestic Animal Management Plan and Tourism Strategy development. The Community newsletter was downloaded more than 1500 times from the dedicated webpage, and more than 2700 paper copies were distributed across the Shire keeping our community informed on Council events, programs, projects and works.

Cultural awareness training has been completed to strengthen collective understanding of Guditjmara people and culture to progress Councillors commitments on making informed public statements on key issues, including Aboriginal affairs.

Advocacy on behalf of the community at regional, State, and Federal levels remains a strong focus. Council's advocacy platform, outlining local priorities, State election issues, and projects hoped for by community, will be finalised by the end of the financial year to guide consistent and targeted advocacy.

## Seven formal submissions were made by Councillors:

- Victorian Freight Plan
- The Future of Food Safety Regulation in Victoria
- Draft Victorian Access Regime
- Consultation on reducing the open road default speed limit
- Protection of recreational fishing in Portland Bay
- Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund
- Statutory Review of the Local Government Rate Cap Mechanism

Council has continued to strengthen partnerships with emergency services, neighbouring councils, and regional agencies to support coordinated emergency response and service continuity. The Municipal Emergency Management Plan and Fire Plan have been reviewed and approved, ensuring emergency arrangements remain current and effective as we enter the Summer season.

Emergency preparedness has been actively tested through practical exercises, including an Emergency Relief Centre flood drill in Heywood with agencies and authorities and completion of the Community Emergency Risk Assessment, strengthening Council's response capability. Council has also supported community preparedness and fire prevention, delivering property inspections, roadside and reserve slashing, community education programs, and free green waste drop-off services ahead of the fire season.

Strategic planning relating to water levels and possible flooding continues through the Dartmoor/Nelson Flood Study and local flood reviews, with public drop-in sessions held in December to gather community feedback.

Looking ahead, Council will test and update its Business Continuity Plan in 2026 to ensure Council's essential services continue during emergency disruptions.

## Our focus: An effective organisation set up to deliver on our priorities

Strategic planning across the organisation remains a focus, with the Council and Wellbeing Plan, 10-Year Financial Plan, Revenue and Rating Plan, Asset Plan, Road Management Plan, and Domestic Animal Management Plan all adopted by October. Community feedback directly informed these plans, ensuring alignment with local priorities. A Workforce Plan, Arts Strategy, Glenelg Libraries Strategy, and Communications Strategy have commenced early stages of development and are scheduled to be delivered in 2026.

Council invested in modern systems to improve efficiency, transparency, and service delivery. Digital enhancements include the Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) for kindergarten placements and the successful completion of Phase 1 of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, which transitioned key services, including customer requests, building and planning applications, animal registrations, infringements, finance, and payroll to a cloud-based platform, improving reliability and laying the foundation for enhanced online experiences. Phase 2 will focus on reporting and process refinements.



## Thriving towns and communities

### Our focus: Inclusive, engaged and active communities

Council is progressing practical measures to improve community safety, through the rollout of CCTV signage and planned staff training to ensure systems meet governance and privacy requirements.

Community facilities are being enhanced, with funding secured for new quiet meeting booths at the Portland Library to provide flexible, accessible spaces for study, work and private appointments. The Glenelg Libraries membership has increased, and visitation numbers remained steady. Glenelg Libraries programs hosted 216 programs and events including early years activities, youth and school holiday programs, author talks, exhibitions, performances, seniors' events and all-abilities arts showcases to almost 2500 attendees across Portland, Casterton and Heywood.

Council has actively supported community connection and celebration by providing event funding to 13 community groups via Round 1 of the Community Grants program and Iconic Event funding, helping volunteers bring a wide range of community events to life and ensuring these much-loved celebrations continue to thrive.

From July to December 2025, 43 event permit applications were processed and approved of which 37 were community-led and 6 were Council-led, bringing people together, fostering connection, and creating vibrant experiences across the Shire for residents and visitors.

Young people remain a key focus for Council as we work to create a community where they feel connected, supported, and inspired to stay and grow.

Council continues to offer a wide range of programs that support young people's personal growth, creativity, and wellbeing. The Life Hacks workshops gave around 30 young people hands-on experience in areas like self-care, coffee making, basic mechanics, and safety certifications, while the Youth Mental Health First Aid courses trained 36 adults to better understand and support young people experiencing mental health challenges.

Creative and social opportunities have also been a focus, with programs such as the Glow Roller Disco, attended by 240 community members, the Art Mural Project, where 16 young people transformed a local space with their artwork, and Music Mondays, a youth-led series of seven sessions supporting musical expression and mentorship for 50 participants. The Drag workshop hosted as part of the Oceanside Pride festival, further encouraged self-expression, confidence, and celebration of diversity for young participants.

Health education and wellbeing were strengthened through initiatives like the Anti-Vaping Project, engaging 17 local students in creative projects to explore the real impacts of vaping. The Live4Life Awareness Day, fully student-led and attended by 200 young people, brought

participants together to celebrate creativity, leadership, and mental health awareness across the Glenelg Shire.

Alongside wellbeing initiatives, Council has delivered practical programs to help young people gain independence and life skills. The L2P learner driver program has continued its success, providing hands-on support for young people working towards their driver's licence. A dedicated vehicle has been secured in Heywood, and across Glenelg a total of 1567 hours have been driven, we have 19 active volunteer mentors, 33 active learners participating in the program and 18 young people gained their licence. These programs not only equip young people with essential skills but also help them feel included and empowered to remain active members of their community.



### Family Violence Prevention

16 days of activism events were held across Casterton, Heywood and Portland, supported by online awareness campaigns and regional partnerships. These activities encouraged open conversations about respect and safety and provided clear pathways for support. Council staff participated in training and webinars to strengthen understanding and responses across a range of service areas.

*Health partner Casterton Memorial Hospital staff L-R Lucinda Jenkins, Kane Forbes and Paula Layley-Doyle who led the 16 days of activism walk in Casterton*

Council has supported female focused initiatives by increasing supporting clubs and community groups to provide opportunities for women and girls in sport and recreation.

Through the *Active Her Way* campaign, nine local clubs delivered female-friendly "Come and Try" events, creating welcoming spaces for participation and building confidence to get involved. The Walk to School initiative held in October 2025 also encouraged healthy, active habits, with 529 students from seven schools taking part.

Ongoing communication and promotion through the *Active Glenelg* newsletter continue to support clubs and community groups by sharing updates, celebrating female leaders, and encouraging greater participation in recreation across the Shire.

Preparation for future investment in community facilities has remained a priority with planning work linked to the Heywood Recreation Reserve Masterplan progressing, ensuring projects are ready to take advantage of funding opportunities for female-focused facility upgrades.

## Our focus: Investing in local communities

Work is underway to capture and review lessons learned from previous capital projects, helping to improve processes and ensure future projects better reflect community needs and priorities. A Project Planning Group, involving Infrastructure Services and Community Services, meet regularly to coordinate project planning across the organisation. Improvements to capital project reporting for senior management and Councillors are also underway, strengthening oversight and transparency.

Council has continued to protect community health through strong food safety monitoring and compliance. The Environmental Health Unit has completed 210 inspections of food businesses and community facilities, ensuring hygiene, labelling, and handling standards meet the Food Act 1984. As a result, 99% of required inspections were completed, with 20 new food premises registered and 10 premises closed. Statutory sampling was also completed, with 51 samples collected and three deemed unsatisfactory, helping to prevent food-borne illness and maintain public confidence in the local food supply.

Environmental Health Officers also work to educate the food industry, reducing the need for compliance and addressing risks promptly. Feedback has been provided to the Food Safety Regulator Forum, and consultation is underway with the Federal Government regarding pre-packaged food requirements. Through these efforts, Council is supporting safe, healthy dining and retail environments, helping local businesses thrive while safeguarding the health of the community.



## Sustainable environment

### Our focus: Protecting the natural environment

Council is committed to protecting the natural environment while balancing growth and the Shire's unique rural character. Preparation works have been completed to ready the Bridgewater Road to Fawthrop Lagoon drainage channel for upcoming restoration and stabilisation. These early activities set the groundwork for construction to begin in early 2026, in partnership with the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority. The project will be delivered in stages, starting at the Lagoon and progressing through to Clarke Street, and will include drainage improvements and vegetation management to improve stormwater flow and reduce environmental degradation.

Work has progressed to better understand and manage local stormwater issues. In Nelson, local flooding has been investigated, with design work developed using topographical data and contour mapping to identify water flow patterns. This information is guiding future maintenance planning, enabling targeted drainage upgrades and proactive management of flood-prone areas.

### Our focus: Sustainable Glenelg

The Waste Education Strategy was adopted in September with the aim to establish a framework for how Council communicates, educates and drive changes as part of its waste transition. Work is well underway with the rollout of the Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) program. Bins and caddies are on order, and delivery options are being explored with the support of local community members. Community engagement and education programs are planned to ensure everyone knows how to use the new system, including school visits, social media updates, event drop-ins, static displays, and website information.



### FOGO is GoGo!

Primary schools across the Shire were recently invited to submit a design for the new FOGO branding and slogan. More than 120 students submitted their striking designs showing their passion for recycling and waste reduction. The winning slogan was "FOGO is a Go Go", which featured across multiple entries!

*Mayor Cr. Karen Stephens with the primary school submissions for FOGO slogan on display in the Portland Library.*

Development of an Environment and Sustainability Strategy has commenced with early engagement with Councillors to ensure policy alignment. The strategy will guide Council's approach to sustainability, including environmentally friendly buildings, services, and operations, as well as community-focused initiatives such as increased tree canopy, climate change, resilient public spaces, and support for local food networks.

The strategy is being developed with input from across Council and through consultation with the community and external partners. Once finalised, the strategy and its accompanying action plan will be rolled out in 2026.

Council is helping the community respond to climate change and support local biodiversity through hands-on environmental programs and tree planting initiatives. 1,200 native plants and 450 native trees were planted across the Shire with a strong focus on localised species to our Shire. Partnerships with local groups, including the Southwest Environmental Alliance (SEA), the Southwest Environmental Education Inc. (SWEE), and Winda Mara Junior Rangers, have helped deliver targeted projects, such as planting 210 Manna Gums to support koala habitats and revegetation at Fawthrop Lagoon in Portland.

Two community planting days were held at the Kardemudelar Karweeyn Mirring Dance Ground, where youth groups and community members joined together to plant out the space. Council has also begun planning a larger tree planting day to bring together schools, First Nations representatives, environmental groups, and the wider community, celebrating nature and inspiring long-term stewardship of our environment.

These initiatives are embedding sustainable habits from the ground up and making it easier for the community to participate in protecting the environment.

Council is actively embedding circular economy principles into its operations, making road maintenance and fleet management more sustainable. Road renewal contracts now require the use of recycled materials, including crumbed rubber in reseals and crushed glass in asphalt, helping reduce waste and extend the life of materials.

At present 4 vehicles have transitioned to Hybrid Electric Vehicles, one of which is a Plug In Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV), which is undergoing a trial to assess its suitability for day-to-day operations. The trial is collecting data on performance, fuel and electricity use, towing capacity, and overall running costs compared to conventional vehicles. Council commenced a review of public and workplace charging options across the Shire to inform planning for future low-emissions vehicle adoption. These initiatives are helping Council reduce its environmental footprint while exploring innovative, cost-effective ways to operate sustainably.



## Essential services and facilities

### Our focus: Accessible services supporting communities

Council has continued to work closely with neighbouring councils, regional bodies and State agencies to strengthen access to essential services such as health services and supports, public health infrastructure and digital connectivity.

Council has re-signed as a partner in Respect 2040, a regional initiative led by Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West focused on preventing gender-based violence, with future collaborative action now being developed around active bystander training and awareness.

Strong partnerships also continue in children's services, with maternal and child health contracts reviewed annually and regular meetings held with service providers to support positive health outcomes for families across the Shire.

In wastewater management, inspections are progressing in high-risk areas, and Council is working closely with Wannon Water through the Integrated Wastewater Management program to clarify roles and responsibilities for sewerage servicing in existing and future developments, supporting clearer, more coordinated planning.

Council remains an active member of the South West Victorian Alliance, contributing to region-wide initiatives including airport planning, transport strategy development, State election advocacy and regional health and wellbeing infrastructure planning, ensuring Glenelg's needs are well represented in broader regional decision-making.

### Our focus: Quality, fit for purpose facilities, places and infrastructure

Council has continued to progress capital projects that improve local facilities, accessibility and liveability across the Shire. The Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) projects are now complete or nearing completion, delivering tangible improvements for residents and visitors.



Works at the Bridgewater amenities have refreshed and extended the life of the facilities, with upgrades such as warm showers, improved cubicles and aesthetic enhancements.

Councillors had a tour of the new facilities that were opened in time for the peak summer tourism period.

*Councillors and staff visiting the refurbished amenity block at Cape Bridgewater.*

The Casterton Railway Precinct has been upgraded with widened (DDA-compliant) pathways, inclusive play equipment and picnic facilities that will open soon as a welcoming space for all ages and abilities.

The refurbishment of the Island Park Oval 2 pavilion has now been successfully completed, delivering improved facilities for the Casterton Little Athletics Club and the Casterton Cricket Club. The project focused on making the pavilion more functional and fit for purpose, with upgrades to the kitchen and amenities, including new electrical fit-outs, kitchen cabinetry, toilet improvements, and fresh internal and external painting. In addition, a new 16-metre by 10-metre storage shed was constructed to better support the needs of both user groups, ensuring the pavilion continues to serve the local sporting community well into the future.

The new four-bay garage and office at the Heywood Transfer Station is streamlining waste management operations and supporting circular economy practices.

Planning feasibility is also underway for future footpath improvements in Nelson and Dartmoor, while key approvals and funding have been secured to progress the Portland Foreshore Multipurpose Facility.

Council has adopted a new Asset Plan, which provides clear strategic direction for improving Council's asset planning and management approach over the life of the Council and Wellbeing Plan. The Asset Plan guides future decision-making and investment priorities and is supported by ongoing implementation actions, including building audits and inspections, and the review and update of existing asset management policies and asset management plans. This work has included undertaking a criticality assessment of Council's building assets to help inform and prioritise future asset renewal and investment decisions.

In parallel, Council has also commenced Phase 1 of the Portland Multipurpose Sport and Recreation Facility Project through the appointment of a specialist consultant. This phase involves a community recreation review, including a needs assessment and demand analysis for sport and recreation in Portland, to inform future sport and recreation facility planning as part of Phase 2.

Community input is helping to shape future planning, through targeted engagement to understand priorities for the Heywood Library, such as opening hours, activities and the role of the space within the town.

Key strategic plans are also advancing, with the Island Park Masterplan endorsed, resurfacing works planned for the Heywood Netball and Tennis Courts in early 2026, and the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan underway to ensure early years facilities can be best placed to meet future demand in a fast moving service delivery landscape.

Planning has commenced for the Portland Airport and Local Port of Portland Bay Masterplans, with background reviews and early engagement set to inform long-term, community-focused development and investment across these important assets for Glenelg.

## Moving around Glenelg

### Our focus: Connecting our towns and communities

Funding applications have been submitted and successfully secured to deliver Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) projects, focused on improving pedestrian safety and access. These projects are guided by previously completed LATM studies and identified road safety issues, and will help improve connections to key community facilities, making it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to walk, use mobility aids and move around their local areas with confidence.

Council is also reviewing the condition of our tracks, trails, and pathways, working closely with community user groups to identify maintenance and connectivity priorities to support safe and enjoyable active travel.

A new, consistent style guide for signage has been drafted and will be finalised in early 2026, with the inclusion of wayfinding signage to help everyone navigate key locations with more ease.

Early planning has begun on an accessible parking guide to help inform practical and fair parking solutions across Council-managed facilities. This work will support clearer and more consistent decision-making around accessible parking, making it easier for people of all abilities to get around Glenelg.

### Our focus: Improving transport options to support moving around

Council has been actively working to enhance transport options across Glenelg through contribution to the South West Regional Transport Study, which is due for completion by the end of the financial year. This work focuses on identifying opportunities to improve bus timetables, road conditions, and other key transport networks, ensuring safer, more accessible travel for residents, visitors, and freight around the region. Council has also advocated to via the Southwest Vic Alliance to acknowledge the significant contribution the Portland Airport has regionally. Through these advocacy initiatives, Council is helping shape stronger, better-connected transport options for our communities.



Preparation has commenced to trial innovative new technology to help keep our local roads, streets and footpaths in great condition. Cameras will be attached to Council vehicles to automatically identify and measure potholes, overgrown vegetation, and other maintenance needs. This technology will help Council make informed decisions about repairs and future investment.

*Staff with one of the vehicles scheduled for fit out of the camera technology*



## Growing economy

**Our focus: Supporting businesses to grow and prosper**

Council is exploring ways to support new opportunities to support, grow and strengthen our local economy and business.



### Celebrating our Business and Tourism Industry

In August Council recognised the Shires hard working business community and tourism operators at the biennial Business and Tourism awards highlighting and celebrating local growth, innovation, and community contribution to the shire's vibrant economy and providing an opportunity to connect.

*Business of Year winner: The Royal Hotel Portland*

Work on the Airport Masterplan is underway, which includes a feasibility assessment and engagement with stakeholders and community to consider how the vacant hangar at Portland Airport could be reused.

Councils' visitation numbers continue to grow across the Shire with a total of 32,296 visitors through the Nelson, Portland and Casterton Visitor Information Centres collectively from July to December. To strengthen Glenelg as a vibrant destination for visitors the new Tourism Strategy commenced development guided by insights gathered through consultation with tourism operators, Local businesses, visitors and the community. Three workshops were held across the Shire with 46 community members participating in deliberative engagement to help inform the strategy. Wider community received information on the strategy via Your Say Glenelg with the page reaching 441 visitors and 53 formal submissions. The draft strategy will be released for public feedback in early 2026 and, once finalised, will guide future projects, destination marketing, and tourism business support.

### Our focus: Investments that strengthen our local economy

Council is taking proactive steps to strengthen Glenelg's economy by better understanding growth opportunities across the Shire. The Future Portland Project is underway to develop a dashboard to capture data on current and planned economic development projects and their broader impacts on the community.

This tool will help Council make informed decisions about future investments, identify any potential service or workforce gaps that will need further planning and consideration and

will be available in mid-2026. Stakeholder engagement with key partners, including Wannon Water, Regional Development Victoria, and internal Council teams, will guide the next phases of the project.

Work is underway to assess local land use capacity and planning controls, identifying opportunities for housing growth in alignment with State Government housing targets. Key projects include the Narrawong, Dutton Way, and Allestree Framework Plan.

These projects are informed by previous work such as the Portland Strategic Framework Plan 2020 and Portland Rural Living Assessment 2020 and currently involve assessments of housing supply and demand, economic factors, traffic impacts, and bushfire risks. To ensure the Shire's planning framework remains fit for purpose and aligns with State requirements, a full planning scheme review will be undertaken in alignment with legislative requirements, setting the strategic land use priorities for the next four years.

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## The Next steps

The first six months of the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 have laid strong foundations, with all Year One actions on track and early progress made across community wellbeing, infrastructure, sustainability and economic development. Council's focus on practical delivery, strategic planning and meaningful community engagement will continue to guide our work as we move into the next stage of implementation.

Looking ahead, Council remains committed to building on this momentum and working in partnership with our community to deliver lasting benefits for Glenelg. The full Year One report for the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 will be included in Council's 2025–2026 Annual Report, providing a comprehensive update on progress and outcomes.