

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2025-2026

MARCH 2025

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Executive summary

The City of Greater Geelong is a dynamic and diverse regional city committed to providing essential services and infrastructure for its community, supported by investment from the Victorian Government and the Australian Government.

In the past decade, Greater Geelong's population has surged, and fast-paced growth is set to continue, with the Victorian Government-set housing target of 128,600 new homes by 2051. This growth demands timely response to growing transport, housing, infrastructure, social services and environmental needs. Alongside a commitment by all levels of governments to enabling an active and inclusive lifestyle that promotes healthy living through rich art and cultural offerings, catering to the community's physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing.

The City of Greater Geelong's 2025-2026 State Budget Submission outlines several key initiatives aimed at enhancing the region's infrastructure, economic growth, and community well-being. The proposed projects include the development of new roads and trails, investment in public transport in keeping with government priorities, and the creation of a fast rail service between Geelong and Melbourne. These initiatives are expected to improve connectivity, reduce congestion, and attract businesses and investments, thereby boosting the local and state economy.

Additionally, the submission highlights the importance of social infrastructure, such as healthcare and education facilities, to support the growing population and ensure a high quality of life for residents.

Overall, the projects and investment by governments being sought will contribute to the sustainable development and prosperity of the greater Geelong region and the regional city of Geelong, while contributing to the achievement of key Victorian government strategies and priorities.

We provide the following **43 recommendations** for consideration by the Victorian Government in preparing the state's budget for the 2025/2026 financial year.

Recommendations

Transport (9)

- Increased investment in maintaining the condition of Victoria's road infrastructure ensuring the safety of Victorian road users.

- Increased investment into road infrastructure improvements that focus on improving road safety through the TAC *Local Government and Safe Local Roads and Streets Programs*.
- Increased investment in building the state's arterial road network within the Geelong region – Bellarine Link and further duplication (Stage 3) of the Barwon Heads Road.
- Designation and investment to formalise an arterial link to the Geelong Port from Old Melbourne Road.
- Commitment to deliver, in conjunction with the Australian Government, the Outer Metropolitan Ring from Little River in Melbourne's west to Kalkallo in the north, with provision for up to four rail tracks and six road lanes.
- Increased funding for improved safe access to schools enabling active transport paths across enrolment zones, reducing transport congestion and environmental impacts and improving student health and wellbeing.
- Delivery, in conjunction with the Australian Government, of the Geelong line upgrade and Geelong Train Station Precinct as per Victoria's Big Build which seeks to achieve more frequent and reliable services for passengers.
- A comprehensive review of the Public Transport Network to establish an adequate commuter service for workers and improve connectivity into Central Geelong from growth areas and the wider G21 region.
- Commitment to deliver, in conjunction with the Australian Government, a fast rail service between Geelong and Melbourne.

Housing (7)

- Increase funding to deliver social housing within planned housing growth targets across the state, with a target delivery of 10% of housing stock.
- Increased investment in supporting enabling infrastructure and urban amenities to facilitate both infill and greenfield development and meet state housing targets for the greater Geelong region.
- Broaden eligibility of the *National Housing Infrastructure Facility Critical Infrastructure Fund* to enable regional and rural Councils to better access and utilise Housing Australia funding for resourcing to undertake planning work to develop shovel ready housing development infrastructure.
- In conjunction with the Australian Government support continuation of housing enabling funds that local

government can access to support the release of new land for new developments in regional capital cities.

- In conjunction with the Australian Government support the establishment of a *Housing Innovation Program* to fast-track innovative approaches to housing projects. This fund could improve supply and overcome supply chain and skills challenges currently in regional capitals.
- Continued funding to support implementation of the *Central Geelong Framework Plan – A plan for the heart of Djilong (2023)*.
- Address regional skills shortages, in conjunction with the Australian Government, to meet the housing needs in regional capital cities by:
 - increasing skilled migration
 - offering scholarships and subsidies for degrees and training in skills shortage areas
 - providing greater investment into technical education and apprenticeships
 - investing in vocational education in more regional locations
 - providing a reimbursement scheme for ancillary costs incurred by workers to take up roles in regional locations, such as travel and temporary accommodation.

Infrastructure (3)

- Commitment to support delivery of the City's Priority Projects which address critical infrastructure needs across the greater Geelong region, including the Geelong Health Innovation precinct (\$5 million) and the Corio Mental Health Hub (\$10 million).
- Commitment to \$20 million over four years for the *Living Libraries Infrastructure Program*, recognising that libraries are essential hubs that support the social, educational, and economic wellbeing of the community.
- Investment in social infrastructure, ensuring this crucial infrastructure receives adequate funding to meet community social needs in both greenfield and infill developments.

Regional Airport (2)

- Commitment, in conjunction with the Australian Government, to build enabling infrastructure such as roads, sewerage and power at the Avalon employment precinct to leverage the site's future as a flourishing employment precinct, primely positioned to rail, sea, road

and freight access and ripe for new big business investment, new local jobs and diversified industry growth (\$70 million).

- Investment, in conjunction with the Australian Government, in permanent event facilities to harness the Avalon International Airshow's opportunity as a major global defence capability event, as well as attract other large-scale events to the region (\$150 million).

Community Participation (6)

- Commitment to support delivery of the City's Priority Projects which address critical infrastructure needs across the greater Geelong region, including 15 sport and recreation projects.
- Investment in social infrastructure, ensuring this crucial infrastructure receives adequate funding to meet community social needs in both greenfield and infill developments.
- Commitment to index recurrent annual public library funding to Cost Price Index (CPI) for all local governments, plus an additional allocation aligned with population growth.
- Commitment to recurring funding to meet operational needs of social service delivery that is CPI adjusted to ensure sustainability of service delivery and support for communities over time, including funding of the *Geelong Gender and Sexuality Project (GASP)* for \$150,000 in 2025-26 (\$627,600 over four years, indexed).
- Coordinated efforts with Early Years providers, local government and the community, supported by increased investment into workforce capacity building and infrastructure by government, is essential to the achievement of the proposed 2025-2029 kindergarten program targets.
- Commitment to review the state's contribution to School Crossing Supervisor Program and consideration of a higher state contribution recognising the responsibility of Victorian Governments for public schools.

Arts and Culture (6)

- Continue to recognise in policy and invest in the role of arts, culture, and creative activity in strengthening local identity, contributing to liveability, and fortifying population growth in regional Victoria ensuring equitable distribution of arts and cultural funding.

- Develop funding streams specific for regional centres to work with regional based arts organisations to distribute funding and delivery outcomes via collaborative projects.
- Simplify response grants which initiate and enable a multi-staged process for developing major initiatives, such as large-scale exhibitions, public art commissions, or the development of new and vital cultural infrastructure.
- Commitment to the redevelopment of Geelong Gallery as the final part of the Geelong Arts and Cultural Precinct Master plan, creating a cultural precinct worthy of a UNESCO City of Design (\$10 million for the time-crucial project management and design phase, through to schematic design and the submission of planning permits).
- Investment into the Bellarine Arts Centre Redevelopment to unlock the economic, social, and creative potential of the region's burgeoning creative industries and visitor economy (\$39 million).
- Commitment to support the repair and preservation of three high-profile heritage features of Geelong, being \$325k for Hitchcock Gates in Johnstone park, \$250k for the Trail Fountain and \$75K for the Japanese Cranes in the Botanic Gardens, ensuring these culturally significant heritage features are maintained for futures generations (\$650,000).

Environment (8)

- Commitment to flood mitigation investment across the greater Geelong region (\$110.4 million).
- Commitment, in conjunction with the Australian Government, to fund detailed design for an upgraded North-West Water Recycling Facility to service existing residential communities and support delivery of housing targets, particularly in the north-west of Geelong, and a pipeline connecting the new facility to the existing grid. Commencing detailed design now will ensure the project is shovel-ready by 2027 (\$15 million).
- Commitment to review the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) and a review of the continued roll-out of a household kerbside glass-only services for Victoria.
- Funding commitment to support the development of a business case for the Northern Extension project to unlock the water supply required to meet industry investment interest and demand by construction of a pipeline from the existing Northern Water Plant to Avalon Employment Precinct, utilising available recycled water to save 400 million litres per year of drinking water, which is currently being used for industrial purposes (\$1 million).
- Funding commitment for a business case (\$20 million) and environmental effects statement (\$2 million) enabling 100% of the region's wastewater, and much of its stormwater to be diverted into valuable resources, with major economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits.
- Commitment to deliver a new major waste and recycling hub in Geelong to provide sufficient capacity to service the fast-growing G21 region (\$15 million).
- Commitment to funding targeted to a just energy transition from gas to electricity, prioritising support for high energy users.
- Funding to support conversion of regional swimming pools from gas to electricity delivering on the Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap to net zero emissions and ensuring reliability of service delivery.

Grant Funding (2)

- Consultation with local government in the development of funding guidelines supporting funding opportunities targeted at local government uptake, to ensure guideline restrictions do not preclude access to funding by local government entities.
- Reliability and consistency in funding, including a commitment to:
 - annual rounds of funding, ensuring that funding rounds open and close at a set time every year
 - consistency in program guidelines so that applicants can plan projects that will meet these guidelines, such as levels of co-contribution requirements, timelines, and shovel ready requirements
 - a two-step process (Expression of Interest, then full application) to ensure applicants invest resources on projects that will fit the focus of the fund and are more likely to be successful
 - timeline sharing of funding outcomes, the success or otherwise of a funding application should be known prior to Council budgets being finalised (May)
 - funding support for business case and planning
 - a minimum three-month application timeline
 - reduced complexity of reporting and variation requests.

Submission

ABOUT THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

The City of Greater Geelong (the City) is the second-largest city in Victoria. Located 75 kilometres south-west of Melbourne, the greater Geelong municipality (the municipality) covers an area of 1,252 square kilometres, comprising suburban, coastal and country areas.

Greater Geelong is bounded by the Moorabool Shire in the north, Wyndham City Council, and the Borough of Queenscliffe in the east, Surf Coast Shire and Golden Plains Shire in the west, and Bass Strait to the south.

The region is characterised by the multi-award-winning Waterfront overlooking Corio Bay, the picturesque Bellarine Peninsula, the Barwon River, You Yangs Regional Park, wetlands, beautiful parklands, and wildlife sanctuaries.

Geelong is also the gateway to the world-renowned coastline of south-west Victoria via the Great Ocean Road.

Outside of metropolitan Melbourne, the municipality is the most populated region in Victoria, with an estimated resident population of 282,809 (*ABS Estimated Resident Population 2023*).

OUR GROWTH

Over the past decade, the population of the municipality has experienced significant growth in the western and eastern corridors. In 2023 the population grew by 2.24% more than twice the rate of population growth in regional Victoria which was 1.09%. Population is forecast to grow to 396,388 by 2041.

The size and demographic profile of the municipality continues to shift and change. The population is aging. Residents over 65 years of age has increased by 22.8% between 2016–2021.

Conversely, over the past 10 years, birth rates have increased significantly, with the population of young children expected to continue to increase.

The municipality's culturally and linguistically diverse communities also continue to increase. A total of 17.7% of the total population were born overseas. Migration has been key to the development of the region and today the City welcomes new arrivals from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, South Sudan, Congo, and Myanmar. International students continue to be an important part of the rich multicultural fabric of the region.



The Geelong Waterfront

Geelong, located on the picturesque shores of Corio Bay in Victoria, Australia, is a vibrant city known for its rich history and bustling waterfront. Recognised as a UNESCO City of Design, Geelong is emerging as a key regional hub for innovation and development.

Greater Geelong's economy is diverse and growing rapidly. It frequently outpaces every other region in Australia in terms of growth in population, jobs and Gross Regional Product (GRP). Jobs are growing at double the pace of the population and the region has never been more attractive for its lifestyle and opportunity.



Geelong is Victoria's second city and one of the state's fastest growing areas.

Population: 282,800 (2023)
Growth of 6,280 over last year
Growth of 36,425 over last five years

Source: ABS (2024)



Geelong has the second largest economy in Victoria.

GRP (2022-23): \$19.6b
1 year growth: 5.0%
5 year average annual growth: 5.4%

Source: economy.id (2024)



Geelong is booming

\$12.4b in major projects
Recently completed: \$961m
Commenced: \$4.3b
Including Nysal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre (\$456m)
Approved: \$2.0b
Proposed: \$5.1b

Source: Geelong Data Exchange, May 2024



Recently Completed Projects

Geelong Quarter (incl. Holiday Inn and Suites Geelong) (\$200m)
GMHBA Stadium - Stage 5 (\$142m)
Geelong Arts Centre redevelopment (\$140m)
Spirit of Tasmania Terminal (\$135m)
Quest Geelong Central (\$70m)

TOP INDUSTRIES



Contribution to Economy (\$b)

Healthcare: \$2.6 (16%)
Construction: \$1.9 (12%)
Education and training: \$1.3 (8%)
Retail trade: \$1.2 (8%)
Manufacturing: \$1.2 (8%)

Source: economy.id (2024)



Top Exporting Industries (\$m)

Manufacturing: \$1,857
Healthcare: \$1,200
Wholesale trade: \$922
Retail trade: \$777
Finance and insurance: \$746

Source: economy.id (2024)



Contribution to Jobs (No.)

Healthcare: 30,840 (21%)
Retail trade: 15,370 (11%)
Construction: 15,210 (11%)
Education and training: 13,840 (10%)
Accommodation and food services: 9,695 (7%)

Source: economy.id (2024)



Important Exporters

Viva Energy
Herd Group
Golden Farms
Godfrey Hirst
Incitec Pivot
University Hospital Geelong
Deakin University
Midway

VISITOR ECONOMY AND EVENTS



Geelong and the Bellarine Visitation

Visitors: 6.3m
Visitor nights: 4.6m
Visitor expenditure: \$1.8b

Source: Tourism Research Australia (YE September 2023)

Major Events (2022-23)

Number of events: 18
Event visitors: 757,500
Economic impact: \$77.5m



Economic Contribution of Visitor Economy and Events to the Geelong Economy

Direct contribution to GRP: \$434m (2.7% of total)
Direct contribution to employment: 6,270 jobs (4.3% of total)

Source: economy.id (2024)



CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Geelong is Australia's first (and only) City of Design and a member of the UNESCO Creative City Network.

The Creative Industries are an evolving mix of sectors spanning arts, culture, screen, design, publishing, advertising and a range of professional services.

Direct contribution to GRP: \$755.8m (4.7% of total)

Direct contribution to employment: 7,942 jobs (5.5% of total)

Source: Lucid Economics (2024)



Geelong has world-leading innovative talent across a variety of creative pursuits, from fashion and the arts to engineering and production.

Community size and expectations on local governments have significantly changed in the last 10 years, this can be seen in the community profile of the municipality:

Population growth: 282,809 (*ABS Estimated Resident Population 2023*) between 2016 and 2021 the population increased by 37,626 people (16.1%). This represents an average annual population change of 3.03% per year, with 2024 estimates sitting at 289,272. Increasing demands and stress on all aspects of community life.

Population density: 225.8 persons per square km (*ABS Estimated Resident Population 2023*).

SEIFA Index of Disadvantage: In 2017 the municipality sat at a score of 1,007. For Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s) across Australia, the average (population weighted) SEIFA score on the index of disadvantage is 1,000. Comparatively the municipality sits at a higher level of disadvantage than the G21 Region at 1,016.4. Increasing demand on social services infrastructure.

Health and Wellbeing: 35.9% of the population identify as having long term health conditions, increasing demands on health and social assistance.

Employment: 23.4% of the population identify as having a household income of less the \$800 (low). 34.3% of the population identifies as not in the labour force, 4.4% unemployment.

Between 2016 and 2021, the number of people employed in the municipality showed an increase of 26,010, and the number unemployed showed a decrease of 1,068. In the same period, the number of people in the labour force showed an increase of 24,942 or 22.5%. Of the 117,834 people who work in the municipality, 96,343 or 81.8% also live in the area. This places increased demand on roads, transport and parking as more people commute to work.

Economic Profile: \$19.57 billion GRP with 144,568 Local jobs and 22,090 Local businesses. Largest Industry – Health Care and Social Assistance. (*NIEIR State of the Regions* dataset May 2024) which talks to the demand for health care and social assistance across the region.

Affordable housing: It is estimated that 5,487 households have an unmet need for affordable housing in the municipality. This represents 5.3% of all households compared to 4.5% for Regional Victoria. (*ABS Estimating Homelessness 2021* and *ABS Census 2021*).

While the City welcomes this growth across the municipality this brings with it fiscal challenges during tight economic times.

Over the twelve months to the December 2024 quarter, all living cost indexes rose between 2.5% and 4.0%. Costs have been on an upward trend year-on-year placing pressures on local governments to deliver against Precinct Structure Plans and Developer Contribution Provisions that were developed and agreed on during more favourable financial times.

The financial impost on local government to fully carry the financial risk for infrastructure provision when costs escalate is unsustainable. Local government carry substantial risk when supporting infrastructure growth.

This is not a situation peculiar to the City, many local governments and businesses are facing financial pressure. This is driven by significant escalations in wages as well as materials and service.

In Victoria, the capacity to raise revenue is artificially constrained by the Victorian Government's rate cap policy, the cost to deliver services and infrastructure however continue to climb at a higher rate than the 2.75% rate cap. With a small increase due for the 2025-2026 financial year of .5%.

The City is continually challenged to balance the needs of the community against fiscal responsibility relying heavily on government funding and grants to support infrastructure and major project delivery.

OUR CHALLENGES

Research commissioned by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) shows that over the past decade local government expenditure per capita has flatlined, while spending by other governments has continued to rise. This is despite additional responsibilities increasingly being forced onto local government by other spheres of government.

Cost-shifting to local government means that already limited funds and resources are being diverted to new services while existing community services and local facilities go unfunded.

By international standards, investment in local government across Australia is low, and this is constraining local governments capacity to deliver core services, such as maintaining local roads and community infrastructure. Furthermore, the constraints presented by government grant funding guidelines can preclude the City's capacity to avail of such funding.

Local government plays a critical role in ensuring that communities are productive, resilient, and liveable. They have a small revenue base to do this work, with substantial assets to maintain.

The City is continually challenged to balance the needs and aspirations of the community against fiscal responsibility, and like most local governments, continues to face financial pressure. This is driven by significant escalations in wages as well as materials and service.

As already noted, in Victoria, the capacity to raise revenue is artificially constrained by the Victorian Government's rate cap policy, the cost to deliver services and infrastructure however continue to climb at a higher rate than the current or projected rate caps.

In 2023 the Grattan Institute identified local governments needed an additional \$1 billion per year to effectively maintain their roads. The ALGA's *2024 National State of the Assets Report* highlights that 8% of local government infrastructure assets are in poor condition, with significant defects needing intervention and repair. While this is an increase from the 2021 findings of 10% with improvements attributed to a significant increase in federal funding for local community infrastructure and services from both Coalition and Labor governments more work is required. The report calls for more funding to support ongoing maintenance alongside new project investment.

The City's *2023-2024 Annual Report* identified the number one challenge impacting services at the City as the growing pressure of financial sustainability.

The City operates within budget constraints, limiting the ability to invest in new services and infrastructure.

Because of these constraints the City is forced to consider a range of strategies to maintain essential services and programs, while managing costs. This may include finding cost savings through efficiency measures, exploring alternative funding sources, or generating revenue through strategic commercial opportunities.

Other challenges which the City is facing, which impacts service delivery, includes:

- Digital divide
- Climate change
- Social and economic inequity
- Population growth
- Changing community needs

- Organisational change
- Infrastructure and maintenance

Despite these ongoing financial pressures, the City remains dedicated to delivering important services and infrastructure for our community.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES

Due to its size and location, the City makes a significant contribution to the state's transport, freight network, housing supply and economy.

Transport

Road maintenance

The 2023 Grattan Institute report *Potholes and Pitfalls: How to Fix Local Roads* revealed that local governments need an additional \$1 billion annually to effectively maintain their roads. This funding would represent a 25% increase over current spending by local government on road maintenance.

The report highlighted that many local governments, especially in rural and remote areas, lack the financial resources to keep their roads in good condition. The report also emphasised the need for better-targeted funding and improved management practices to ensure safer and more reliable local roads.

Similarly, as already highlighted, the ALGA's *2024 National State of the Assets Report* found that 8% of local government infrastructure assets are in poor condition, with significant defects needing intervention and repair. This includes essential infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and public facilities. The report underscored the urgent need for increased investment to address these deficiencies and prevent further deterioration.

Greater Geelong has an extensive road network, including more than 2040 kms of sealed roads and 330 kms of unsealed roads.

The City appreciates the funding provided by the Victorian Government through the Transport Accident Commission (TAC). This funding supports road infrastructure improvements, particularly focusing on road safety.

1. *Local Government Grant Program*: This program provides funding for projects aimed at improving road safety. Grants are available for infrastructure projects, road safety strategies, and variable message signs

2. *Safe Local Roads and Streets Program*: This \$200 million program, running from July 2023 to June 2027, supports the development and delivery of road safety infrastructure projects on local roads. It aims to integrate local governments' priorities with a Safe System approach to reduce road trauma

These programs are designed to help local governments plan, fund, and deliver safety improvements, ultimately contributing to the aim of no lives lost or serious injuries on Victorian roads by 2050. The City's *Vision Zero Geelong: Safe Local Travel 2022-2027* was adopted by Council in June 2022 and continues to guide our focus on road safety across the region:

We have a long-term vision of achieving the Vision Zero target of zero deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030 sets an interim target of halving road deaths and reducing serious injuries by 2030. We aim to play our part in reaching these targets, and making our roads and streets safer.

However, we highlight that increased funding is required to address the list of issues facing local roads across the greater Geelong region and more widely across Victoria and deliver on the objective of the *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030*.

New roads and trails

The City has identified three specific areas requiring new roads and trails investment in Geelong's northern region. These projects will deliver improved transport flow and connections.

1. An Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) that stretches from Little River in Melbourne's west to Kalkallo in the north, with provision for up to four rail tracks and six road lanes. The OMR would:
 - a. be the connection between key freight transport hubs and employment precincts including Melbourne Airport, Avalon Airport, the Port of Geelong and the two intermodal freight terminals in Beveridge and Truganina
 - b. provide a bypass for the regional centres
 - c. unlock land supply for State Significant Industrial Precincts in the north and west of Melbourne to attract commercial investment and create jobs
2. Designation and invest in an arterial link to the Geelong Port from Old Melbourne Road. A designated arterial road is crucial for Victoria's imports and exports and as an interstate tourism road link:
 - a. Geelong Port is a significant hub for dry bulk and bulk liquid trade. An efficient road network can support increased trade volumes, boosting the local and state economy.
 - b. The relocation of the Spirit of Tasmania has, and will continue to increase traffic accessing and requiring clear direction to Geelong Port.
 - c. A designated arterial link can help manage and reduce congestion by directing heavy vehicles onto specific routes, improving overall traffic flow and safety.
 - d. Enhancing road connectivity to the port ensures that higher productivity vehicles can operate more efficiently, reducing transportation costs and improving supply chain reliability.
 - e. Better road infrastructure can lead to reduced emissions by minimising traffic congestion and promoting smoother, more efficient vehicle movements.
 - f. With freight traffic expected to continue to increase significantly, a well-planned arterial link is essential for accommodating future growth and maintaining the port's operational efficiency.
3. Shared User Trails and active transport paths:
 - a. You Yangs-to-Lara Trail, to create a continuous trail that will link the existing Hovells Creek Trail with Serendip Sanctuary and the You Yangs Regional Park.
 - b. Bay Trail Revitalisation, to deliver a 9-kilometre section of existing shared trail from North Shore, through to Western Beach Foreshore along the Geelong Waterfront.
- d. connect the Hume Freeway with the Calder, Western and Princes Highways
- e. provide the north-south, east-west, and south-west rail connections
- f. connect millions of new residents in the outer growth municipalities, relieving traffic congestion from the Western Ring Road which is currently at capacity.

- c. Northern connectors to connect Central Geelong to the northern suburbs supporting active transport. Investment required \$1.4 million.

Active transport

Noting that safe active transport is not just about trails and recreational usage it is also essential for school children as it promotes physical health by increasing daily activity, which helps maintain a healthy weight and improves mental well-being. It also reduces environmental impact by lowering greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion around schools, making the area safer. Additionally, it fosters social and emotional development by encouraging independence and social interaction.

Funded infrastructure improvements that enhance safety and accessibility are crucial to realising the goal of healthy active Victorians as per the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023–27 which articulates the importance of increasing active living across all stages of life. Overall, safe active transport supports healthier lifestyles and creates more connected, sustainable communities.

The Victorian Government Active Travel strategy for schools requires an investment by government into every school to ensure an active transport path across the enrolment zone for each school, furthermore it requires a commitment by government that all new schools will be built with active transport paths across the supporting school zone, funded by government as part of the infrastructure plan for each build.

Road connectivity

Additionally, we want to highlight the need for better connectivity across arterial roads to ensure delivery of traffic seamlessly between suburbs and employment and activity precincts.

The Bellarine Link (Geelong Ring Road Extension) and the further duplication of Barwon Heads Road are crucial infrastructure projects aimed at improving connectivity and reducing congestion in the Geelong region. The Bellarine Link is required to provide an alternative route, easing traffic congestion and enhancing road safety, while supporting local economic growth through better connectivity. Extensive planning, including traffic modelling and environmental studies will ensure the project's success when funded.

The Barwon Heads Road Duplication (Stage 3) involves duplicating a 4 km section, constructing a new bridge, and upgrading intersections. This project is required to enhance

road safety, reduce travel times, and incorporate environmentally friendly designs.

Both projects are key Victoria's Big Build initiatives. Timely investment by government will demonstrate a significant commitment to improving infrastructure, road safety and supporting future growth in the region.

Without adequate funding, new projects will be limited, the condition of local roads and other infrastructure will continue to decline, impacting the safety and quality of life for road and active transport users and the economic stability of existing and growing communities across our municipality.

Public transport

We look to the Victorian and Australian governments to deliver on the public transport services that a regional City needs. The City's Clever and Creative Future articulates what we seek for the region from an active transport and public transport perspective:

Sustainable, connected and networked walking, cycling and public transport services that allow all abilities access into and across the city-region with fast access to Melbourne and other parts of Victoria. A region where 50% of journeys to work are made by public transport, walking or cycling

The City recognises the investment by the Victorian Government and the Australian Government in the Geelong line upgrade and Geelong Train Station Precinct as per Victoria's Big Build which seeks to achieve more frequent and reliable interconnected services for passengers.

We highlight the importance of planning for the Armstrong Creek transit corridor with consideration of future land use and population plans. The Armstrong Creek region is experiencing rapid growth. It is one of the largest contiguous growth areas in Victoria, covering 2,500 hectares of developable land.

The area is expected to provide housing for between 55,000 to 65,000 people and approximately 22,000 residential homes. Additionally, it aims to create around 22,000 jobs, with a focus on high technology and synergies with Deakin University. This growth is part of a broader plan to develop a sustainable community with early provision of physical and social infrastructure.

The infrastructure required to deliver services into growth areas is required now. The City is seeking investment in the



Map of the approximate Armstrong Creek growth boundary within the Greater Geelong municipality

regions Public Transport Network to improve connectivity into Geelong from these growth areas and the wider G21 region.

The City is currently consulting with community on a new *Integrated Transport Strategy* which will inform the detailed investment required by governments to meet public transport needs in this growing region.

Fast rail

While also recognising that as part of the Australian Government’s Infrastructure Investment Review, that the Australian Government has withdrawn funding for a fast rail service between Geelong and Melbourne. The City recognises and appreciates that the Victorian Government is working to conclude the project considering this decision.

A fast rail service between Geelong and Melbourne, that compliments the regions public transport network, will bring numerous benefits to Geelong. It will significantly reduce travel time, making commuting more convenient and efficient. This improved connectivity, vital for the region, will attract businesses and investments, boosting the local economy. Additionally, easier access to Melbourne might encourage more people to live in Geelong, leading to population growth and increased demand for housing and

services. This demand will provide impetus for the City to deliver on the housing growth targets expected across the municipality.

The fast real service will also create job opportunities during the construction phase and beyond, fostering growth and development in the region.

The City therefore seeks a recommitment from the Victorian and Australian governments to investigate and invest in a Geelong-Melbourne Fast Rail.

Recommendations

- Increased investment in maintaining the condition of Victoria’s road infrastructure ensuring the safety of Victorian road users.
- Increased investment into road infrastructure improvements that focus on improving road safety through the TAC *Local Government and Safe Local Roads and Streets Programs*.
- Increased investment in building the state’s arterial road network within the Geelong region – Bellarine Link and further duplication (Stage 3) of the Barwon Heads Road.

- Designation and investment to formalise an arterial link to the Geelong Port from Old Melbourne Road.
- Commitment to deliver, in conjunction with the Australian Government, the Outer Metropolitan Ring from Little River in Melbourne's west to Kalkallo in the north, with provision for up to four rail tracks and six road lanes.
- Increased funding for improved safe access to schools enabling active transport paths across enrolment zones, reducing transport congestion and environmental impacts and improving student health and wellbeing.
- Delivery, in conjunction with the Australian Government, of the Geelong line upgrade and Geelong Train Station Precinct as per Victoria's Big Build which seeks to achieve more frequent and reliable services for passengers.
- A comprehensive review of the Public Transport Network to establish an adequate commuter service for workers and improve connectivity into Central Geelong from growth areas and the wider G21 region.
- Commitment to deliver, in conjunction with the Australian Government, a fast rail service between Geelong and Melbourne.

Housing

The municipality has the largest proposed housing target for the state of 128,600 new homes to battle the housing crisis. The implications of this are far reaching and need careful planning and investment by Victorian and Australian governments.

Social housing

While the City is facing growth at unprecedented levels housing affordability is a significant issue in Geelong, impacting all aspects of the community.

The City's Social Housing Plan 2020 - 2041 identified that Geelong is a community with a higher than state average of lone and single households. House prices are escalating while private rental, social and public housing options are unable to meet the increasing demand.

It is estimated that 5,487 households have an unmet need for affordable housing in the municipality. This represents 5.3% of all households compared to 4.5% for regional Victoria. With 1,546 people experiencing homelessness in the same period, or 1.5% of population compared to 1.1% for regional Victoria.

Many residents experience housing stress, spending a large portion of their income on housing costs. This leaves less money for other essentials like food, healthcare, and education.

There is a high demand for social and affordable housing. The City has recognised this need and developed a Social Housing Plan to address the shortage and improve living conditions.

High housing costs can deter new residents and businesses from moving to Geelong, potentially slowing economic growth. Affordable housing is also crucial for attracting and retaining a diverse workforce.

Housing affordability affects overall community well-being, as stable and affordable housing contributes to better health outcomes, educational attainment, and social cohesion.

Addressing housing affordability through social housing policy development and investment into delivering social housing is essential for ensuring vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable communities in greater Geelong and across the state.

The City recognises the work of the State Government through the Homes for Victorians Program which provides more than \$2 billion in support for social and affordable housing and the Public Housing Renewal Program which aims to redevelop approximately 2,500 public housing dwellings across Victoria with a minimum of 10% increase in the total number of social housing dwellings.

Geelong should be under consideration for the Public Housing Renewal Program as more than 50% of Geelong's public housing is concentrated in three suburbs (Corio, Norlane and Whittington) and more than 50% of these dwellings are either beyond or close to the end of their economic life.

While previous neighbourhood renewal programs have brought improvements to Corio, Norlane and Whittington, market forces have been insufficient to complete the process of renewal.

Growth areas

The Armstrong Creek growth area is the largest contiguous growth area in Victoria, consisting of 2,500 hectares of develop-able land, and is one of the largest growth fronts in the country.

The Armstrong Creek growth area will:

- provide housing for between 55,000 to 65,000 people
- provide approximately 22,000 residential homes
- provide 22,000 jobs, with a focus on high technology jobs and developing synergies with Deakin University
- be developed as a sustainable community, with a focus on walkability, public transport provision and sustainable water use
- have physical and social infrastructure provided at an early stage, with an aim of building communities rather than just releasing land for development - there will not be just homes and jobs in the growth area, but schools, retail space, parks, open space, bike paths and a place for people to create a home and be part of a community
- provide a boost to local employment during the construction phase
- assist in addressing housing affordability issues currently experienced in the region
- have significant public transport provision
- provide for more sustainable housing choices.

Geelong's growth areas have the potential to welcome 175,000 new residents to the City. The Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Project alone is the largest urban grown project in regional Victoria, comprising 5,367 hectares with the potential to accommodate 110,000 new Geelong residents.

All levels of government play a significant role in funding high order infrastructure such as schools and arterial roads to support housing growth. As do the stakeholders that the City works with such as developers who construct roads, drainage, local parks, and shared paths and then gift this infrastructure to the City as public assets, which the City then maintains.

However, without innovative thinking and government funding the City cannot meet the housing demand and social infrastructure or ongoing maintenance needs of the growing communities across the region.

Central Geelong

The *Central Geelong Framework Plan – A plan for the heart of Djilang (2023)* presents a target of 16,000 people living in central Geelong and 60,000 jobs. This project, like many infill developments, presents both opportunities and challenges, as outlined in the *Central Geelong Framework Plan*. Central Geelong has the capacity to unlock over \$1

billion in potential private sector investment by supporting the delivery of enabling infrastructure and improving urban amenity within the designated strategic development zone covered by the *Central Geelong Framework Plan*. Investment required \$150 million.

Employment precincts

Greater Geelong also has thirteen existing and planned employment precincts including the major precincts of Avalon Airport, Geelong Port, and central Geelong.

A review of industrial land in 2018 found there is approximately 21 years industrial zoned land across greater Geelong based on the average annual rate of land consumption in the period 2015 to 2018 (excluding the Industrial Employment Precinct next to Avalon Airport and the Western Employment Precinct). In terms of future (unzoned) industrial land stocks it is estimated that there is 7 years of additional supply.

Victorian and local government Investment Facilitation Units report that businesses have had difficulty in finding appropriate industrial land for investment.

A lack of industrial land for future development and economic growth has a flow effect on job opportunities to support future population and housing growth.

Skills gap

As highlighted in the City's *Submission into Developing a New Plan for Victoria* in 2024 the Victorian Government will need to work closely with suppliers, industry, and educational institutions to ensure that the pipelines are in place to support housing demand in the locations required.

Poor pipeline planning will not only escalate costs, through the addition of regional supply oncosts, but also potentially delay delivery of construction due to lack of supply of both the human resources required and the construction resources and tools required to meet the target. This includes access to, and availability of, all distribution routes required to support supply such as roads and ports.

The supply of the tradespeople required to deliver on the Plan will require a coordinated approach to workforce planning led by industry i.e., Master Builders Association of Victoria and Master Plumbers, in partnership with trade specific educational institutions, including the Victorian TAFE network.

These associations along with the Australian Jobs and Skills Councils, BuildSkills representing the build environment, are well versed in assessing workforce growth demand and

supporting workforce development to meet future growth plans

As highlighted in the [Skills Priority List Fundings Technicians and Trades Workers](#):

Across all Technician and Trades Worker occupations assessed for the 2021 Skills Priority List (SPL), 42% were found to be in shortage compared with 19% across all occupation groups.

The Victorian Government need to address not only regional skills shortages but also the broader statewide shortage of qualified technicians and tradespeople to deliver on housing targets and growth demands.

Recommendations

- Increase funding to deliver social housing within planned housing growth targets across the state, with a target delivery of 10% of housing stock.
- Increased investment in supporting enabling infrastructure and urban amenities to facilitate both infill and greenfield development and meet state housing targets for the greater Geelong region.
- Broaden eligibility of the *National Housing Infrastructure Facility Critical Infrastructure Fund* to enable regional and rural Councils to better access and utilise Housing Australia funding for resourcing to undertake planning work to develop shovel ready housing development infrastructure.
- In conjunction with the Australian Government support continuation of housing enabling funds that local government can access to support the release of new land for new developments in regional capital cities.
- In conjunction with the Australian Government support the establishment of a *Housing Innovation Program* to fast-track innovative approaches to housing projects. This fund could improve supply and overcome supply chain and skills challenges currently in regional capitals.
- Continued funding to support implementation of the *Central Geelong Framework Plan – A plan for the heart of Djilong (2023)*.
- Address regional skills shortages, in conjunction with the Australian Government, to meet the housing needs in regional capital cities by:

- increasing skilled migration
- offering scholarships and subsidies for degrees and training in skills shortage areas
- providing greater investment into technical education and apprenticeships
- investing in vocational education in more regional locations
- providing a reimbursement scheme for ancillary costs incurred by workers to take up roles in regional locations, such as travel and temporary accommodation.

Infrastructure

There is an ongoing expectation placed on local government to invest in and maintain aging infrastructure to meet the diverse needs and demands of a changing and growing population.

The City recognises that renewing and upgrading existing assets, in established areas, is as important as providing new assets in growth areas. Since 2021-22 the City has been allocating an increasing share of capital investment towards renewing and upgrading the City's existing assets.

In 2024-25 financial year the City will invest \$59.1 million in renewal of assets, \$40.3 million in asset upgrades, and \$111.2 million in new assets.

The City is working hard to avail of both Victorian and Australian government grant opportunities to help fund capital projects, and help ease the burden on the City's own finances. While the City receives significant income through developer contributions, these do not cover the full cost of providing the necessary community infrastructure in newly developed areas.

Four-year capital projects forecast \$752.6 million:

- 2024-25 \$210.5 million
- 2025-26 \$209 million
- 2026-27 \$195.9 million
- 2027-28 \$137.2 million

These figures include City and external funding such as government grants and developer contributions.

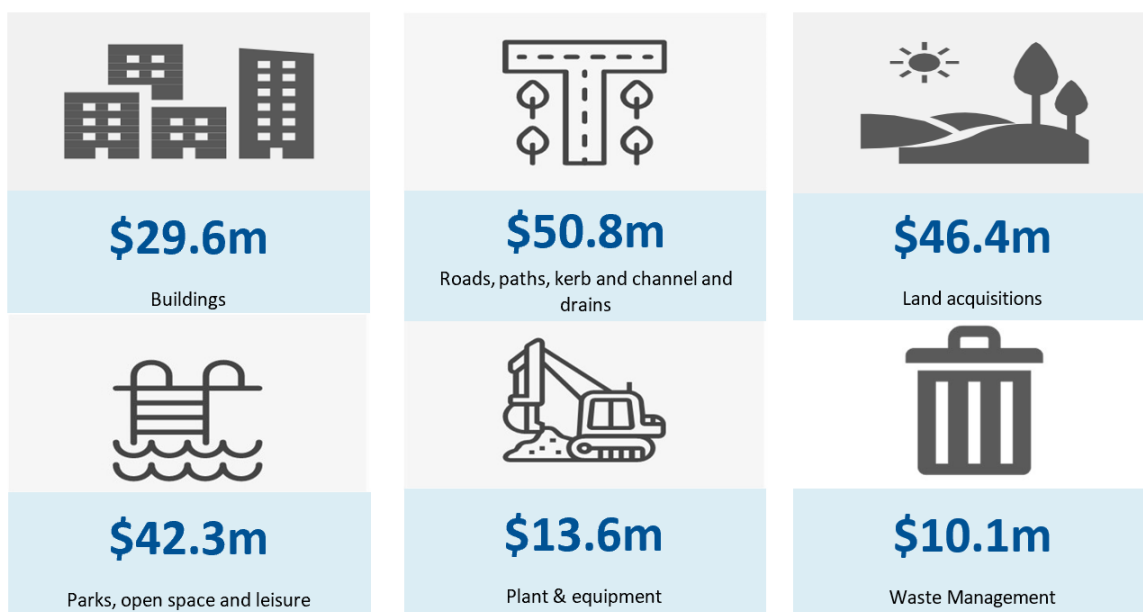
2024-2025 Capital expenditure by category:

- Roads, paths, kerb, and channel and drains \$50.8 M
- Land acquisitions \$46.4 million
- Parks, open space, and leisure \$42.3 million
- Buildings \$29.6 million
- Plant and equipment \$13.6 million
- Waste management \$10.1 million
- Other \$17.7 million

investment does not reflect the current cost of such infrastructure work.

Libraries are vital to Victorian people, they provide a safe and welcoming space for community connection, free access to information and resources, support for mental health and wellbeing, and services for diverse communities.

They also contribute to the local economy by offering study and workspaces, access to technology, and programs that enhance skills and job opportunities.



The ability of the City to make long-term financial investment decisions relies on certainty of revenue over time that is indexed realistically. While future sustainability is dependent on the ability to reap returns on investment over time and a revenue base that is not restricted and grows in line with demand and cost of living.

Libraries

The City values funding from governments that supports infrastructure build, this is critical for the City to deliver on the needs of a growth community. Local government need certainty around infrastructure funding both in the timing of grants and the value of the investment. The Living Libraries fund is a good example of inconsistency. While the City recognises the increased investment by government into this fund, last year only minor works funding was available, this year minor and major works funding is available, however major works have been capped at \$1M. Even though the funding guidelines state that major works are for 'construction of new, multi-purpose library facilities'. This

Libraries are essential hubs that support the social, educational, and economic wellbeing of the community and require increased investment by the state to deliver.

The City supports the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) advocacy for commitments from the Victorian Government to commit \$20 million over four years to expand the *Living Libraries Infrastructure Program*.

Health Infrastructure

The City must also meet the growing health needs of its population, currently the municipality needs health infrastructure to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of its communities.

Vital health infrastructure proposed for the Geelong Region:

- Developed in collaboration with Deakin University, Barwon Health has proposed the development of a Geelong Health Innovation Precinct. This is an economic development initiative that leverages University Hospital Geelong as an anchor institution.

The precinct would be aligned with the *Greater Geelong Economic Development Plan 2024-2034*, utilising the expertise and innovation at Deakin, and the advanced manufacturing capability in Geelong. Anticipated budget \$5 million.

- Barwon Health has funding for specialised mental health service delivery in Corio but no facility. A Mental Health Hub would be modelled on the new mental health hub in Moorabool Street, and delivered through a developer partnership. The proposed Corio Mental Health Hub would be smaller than the Central Geelong hub, but provide a “one-stop, walk-in service” open seven days a week and capable of providing the full range of services needed to support the growing region. Anticipated budget \$10 million.

Infrastructure priority projects

The City's *Priority Projects* include major infrastructure works across the following priority themes and require investment by all levels of government to deliver:

1. Integrated transport network and better connections
2. Clever and creative economic investments
3. Essential facilities, including sport and recreation facilities for a healthy and diverse community
4. Protecting our environment and driving a circular economy

The City faces many fiscal challenges in the current economic environment with escalating costs and skills gap in critical workforce needs, but it is important to highlight those factors such as rate-capping and cost-shifting, when responsibilities are transferred down from higher levels of government, that impact the financial stability of local governments and limit their ability to deliver such large-scale infrastructure projects.

Recommendations

- Commitment to support delivery of the City's Priority Projects which address critical infrastructure needs across the greater Geelong region, including the Geelong Health Innovation precinct (\$5 million) and the Corio Mental Health Hub (\$10 million).
- Commitment to \$20 million over four years for the *Living Libraries Infrastructure Program*, recognising that libraries are essential hubs that support the social, educational, and economic wellbeing of the community.

- Investment in social infrastructure, ensuring this crucial infrastructure receives adequate funding to meet community social needs in both greenfield and infill developments.

Regional Airport

Regional airports are vital to the social and economic fabric of regional Australia, linking regional capitals and their residents to metropolitan areas. Despite their importance, many regional airports are under significant financial pressure. They face challenges such as ageing infrastructure, rising security costs, high staffing expenses, community service obligations, and a heavy regulatory burden.

Avalon Airport Infrastructure

The City seeks prioritisation of Victorian Government investment, to deliver a staged approach to transport infrastructure which can help drive traffic and support the enablement of Avalon Airport's capacity, competition and choice in the Melbourne and Victorian aviation market.

Strategic benefits to the region:

- Strategic infrastructure that supports future growth
- Enhanced accessibility for travellers and workers
- Boost to Regional Economy; Improved rail access makes it easier for tourists and business travellers to fly in and out of Avalon
- Improved Public Transport integration
- Supports new precinct development and defence opportunities
- Aligns with government policy and objectives of improving transportation efficiency, regional development, and sustainability
- Linfox willing to co-contribute capital for the establishment of the rail connectivity
- Initial stages can consist of a terminal (similar to Williams Landing) and use of a trackless tram (co-existing on improved road infrastructure) with direct access to terminals and employment hub.

Prioritisation of investment, in conjunction with the Australian Government's support, is also essential to deliver a staged approach to transport infrastructure which can help drive traffic and support the enablement of Avalon Airport's

capacity and viability in the Melbourne and Victorian aviation market.

The current local road classification requires the City to maintain a nationally significant road providing key freight and passenger access to Avalon Airport, which has international airport status, including 'first port of entry' rights for freight. Recognition and responsibility for road connections of national significance to Avalon Airport and Geelong Port is critical, local government can no longer fund the maintenance of these major transport routes.

Avalon Airshow

The biennial Avalon Australian International Airshow is the largest event of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, serving as a key gateway to the aviation, aerospace, and space markets in Australia and the Indo-Pacific. With strong support from the Royal Australian Air Force and significant industry presence from Asia, Europe, and the United States, Avalon connects Australian, regional, and international industries at all levels. The event features an international industry exhibition, relevant conferences, networking events, formal meeting request systems, Innovation Awards, and programs for STEM, careers, and skills development.

The 2023 [Avalon Australian International Airshow](#) had a substantial impact on the Australian economy. It generated approximately \$200 million in economic activity and supported around 2,000 jobs. The event also provided a platform for showcasing advanced aviation technologies, including electric aircraft and drones, which are crucial for the future of the aerospace industry. This airshow continues to be a significant contributor to both the local and national economies.

An investment of \$150 million in a permanent event facility to harness the Avalon International Airshow's opportunity as a major global defence capability event, as well as attract other large-scale events to the region would enable this opportunity to be maximised and further grow the international engagement in the aviation, aerospace, and space markets in Australia.

Recommendations

- Commitment, in conjunction with the Australian Government, to build enabling infrastructure such as roads, sewerage and power at the Avalon employment precinct to leverage the site's future as a flourishing employment precinct, primely positioned to rail, sea, road

and freight access and ripe for new big business investment, new local jobs and diversified industry growth (\$70 million).

- Investment, in conjunction with the Australian Government, in permanent event facilities to harness the Avalon International Airshow's opportunity as a major global defence capability event, as well as attract other large-scale events to the region (\$150 million).

Community Participation

The City is a growing, diverse regional city, our community is enriched by the presence of people from all over the world. We are a multicultural city with just under 18% of our total population born overseas. We recognise and value our cultural diversity, which allows us to be a more inclusive and welcoming community that values and respects everyone, regardless of their cultural background.

Inclusive and welcoming communities are created on a basis of trust, trust that those within the community will have access to the services and supports they need, and trust that they will not be disadvantaged based on the different aspects of any one individual's identity. We recognise that the diversity in our community can expose individuals to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation, and we focus on ways to remove any intersectional disadvantage and marginalisation through our community plans and strategies.

The [Social Determinants of Health](#) are a list of factors that are recognised as influencing the health and wellbeing of individuals and the community. These determinants play a role in encouraging migrants to choose to settle and stay in regions. For example, feeling safe in the community, access to culturally appropriate services, access to transport and social support are crucial factors that will encourage people to settle and stay in regions. Clear communication, representation and inclusion is critical for social cohesion.

In early 2023, the greater Geelong community was invited to provide feedback to help us plan and deliver project, services and programs that meet and support the needs of our culturally diverse population. The responses provided showed what is important to the culturally and linguistic diverse community and therefore factors that may be important to migrants in choosing to settle and stay in the regions.

The following points were identified as important and valued:

- Inclusive and affordable community events and activities that celebrate different cultures and faiths.
- Friendly and welcoming community and neighbours.
- Cultural representation and visibility in public spaces.
- Accessibility and language support.
- Community spaces that are affordable for community groups to hold events.

These reinforce the importance of the delivery of social infrastructure to support growth areas.

Social infrastructure

Social infrastructure plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life and community participation of residents and visitors in regional locations such as Geelong. It includes facilities and services such as healthcare, education, libraries, recreational centres, and community spaces. Research by [Infrastructure Victoria](#) demonstrates the importance of social infrastructure especially in growth areas for community health, education and belonging.

Social infrastructure fosters a sense of community and belonging. It provides spaces for social interaction, cultural activities, and recreational opportunities, which are essential for mental and physical health.

In regional areas, access to essential services like healthcare and education can be limited. Investing in social infrastructure ensures that residents have better access to these critical services, reducing disparities between urban and rural areas.

As already highlighted Barwon Health has identified vital health infrastructure required to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of its communities – the anticipated Geelong Health Innovation Precinct and a proposed Corio Mental Health Hub. Meeting the community's health and wellbeing needs is critical for future growth and sustainability.

Quality social infrastructure can also attract new residents and businesses to regional areas, boosting local economies. It supports workforce development by providing education and training facilities.

Social infrastructure helps communities adapt to changes and challenges, such as those posed by climate change or economic shifts. It provides the necessary support systems to help communities recover and thrive.

Improved social infrastructure leads to better health outcomes and educational opportunities. For example, libraries and recreational centres promote lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles.

Overall, investing in social infrastructure is vital for the sustainable development and prosperity of regional Australia. It ensures that all residents, regardless of their location, have access to the resources and opportunities they need to lead fulfilling lives. However investing in social infrastructure alone will not ensure that the required services are delivered, service delivery funding to meet operational needs must have bi-partisan support, be recurring and CPI adjusted to ensure sustainability of service delivery and support for communities over time.

The Victorian Government's [Active Victoria 2022-2026 Strategy](#) underscores the importance of sport and recreation for enhancing community health and wellbeing, fostering social cohesion, and driving economic growth. It emphasises equitable access to physical activities, ensuring inclusivity for all Victorians, including marginalised groups. The strategy also highlights the role of sport in youth development, teaching valuable life skills and providing positive outlets for energy and creativity. Overall, it aims to create a more active, healthy, and connected community through strategic investments and programs. The City is committed to supporting the greater Geelong community to [get active](#) and participate in the healthy lifestyle that the municipality offers.

In responding to the state and regional position on active lifestyles the City has identified [15 priority Sport and Recreation projects](#), ready for design and construction, projects that need investment to enable the City to meet current and future active lifestyle needs of the municipality. This focus requires a total investment of \$75.55 million to support realisation of the [City's health and wellbeing priorities](#).

Library Operations

The [Public Libraries Funding Program](#) provides annual funding to councils, regional library corporations, Myli - My Community Library Ltd, Your Library Ltd, and Vision Australia for the provision of public library services. This funding contributes to the purchase of collection items (physical and electronic), information technology, library and outreach programs, and other services provided by Victorian public libraries

The City supports the MAV's advocacy work which sought commitment from the Victorian Government to index

recurrent annual public library funding to Cost Price Index (CPI) for all local governments, plus an additional allocation made for population growth. As a regional city with substantial population growth estimates we recognise the need to ensure future workforce capacity to service existing and future library hubs.

Early years

Early Years centres in Victoria face several challenges in meeting the new government targets for 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten programs and increased funding must be considered. These include significant workforce shortages, the need for infrastructure upgrades, and securing adequate funding for staff salaries, training, and facility improvements. Additionally, maintaining high-quality education while scaling up programs, managing increased administrative tasks, and effectively communicating with families and the community are all critical issues. Coordinated efforts with early years providers, local government and the community supported by increased investment into workforce capacity building and infrastructure by government, is essential to overcome these challenges and ensure successful implementation.

School crossings

In the 2024/25 Victorian Budget, \$57.379 million was allocated for two years for the School Crossing Supervisor Program. As highlighted by the Victorian Government *“this funding supports the Victorian Government’s commitment to meet the 50 per cent state contribution to the Program”*.

The City is seeking a review of the state allocation supporting the School Crossing Supervisor Program given that the Victorian and Australian Government are ultimately responsible for funding public education and this program is critical to ensuring the safety of students as they travel to and from school. The City recognises the importance of this program and is seeking a higher contribution from state to support its sustainability.

Youth Services

The City offers a variety of programs and services to support young people aged 12-25 and provides space for young people - The Nest, Armstrong Creek, and The fOrT Youth Hubs - which offer safe and inclusive spaces for activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, and socialising

Additionally, the City delivers school and community programs focused on health, wellbeing, and inclusion, including mental health first aid, respectful relationships training, and employment readiness workshops

These initiatives aim to create a supportive environment for young people to thrive and connect with necessary resources and services.

We acknowledge the support provided by the Victorian Government in support of all Victorian young people and especially the funding provided to the City to support some of these programs, for example the VicHealth Vaping Program and development of the youth hubs.

The City works closely with the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) on programs to support LGBTIQ+ young people in the greater Geelong region to ensure that they are safe, supported and celebrated. The City supports the budget ask by YACVic for funding of the *Geelong Gender and Sexuality Project (GASP)*.

GASP was established in 1996 by the City’s Youth Development Unit and is one of the longest standing LGBTIQ+ youth support services in Australia. GASP currently receives no funding from Victorian or Australian governments. Funding of this program will ensure its sustainability during tight economic times.

We therefore seek \$150,000 in the 2025-26 (\$627,600 over four years, indexed) to fund GASP through the *HEY Program* under the Department of Health (Vic) Diverse Communities Grants Program. This funding will enable the City to continue to deliver targeted place-based interventions across the municipality for LGBTIQ+ young people.

Recommendations

- Commitment to support delivery of the City’s Priority Projects which address critical infrastructure needs across the greater Geelong region, including 15 sport and recreation projects.
- Investment in social infrastructure, ensuring this crucial infrastructure receives adequate funding to meet community social needs in both greenfield and infill developments.
- Commitment to index recurrent annual public library funding to Cost Price Index (CPI) for all local governments, plus an additional allocation aligned with population growth.
- Commitment to recurring funding to meet operational needs of social service delivery that is CPI adjusted to ensure sustainability of service delivery and support for communities over time, including funding of the *Geelong*

Gender and Sexuality Project (GASP) for \$150,000 in 2025-26 (\$627,600 over four years, indexed).

- Coordinated efforts with Early Years providers, local government and the community, supported by increased investment into workforce capacity building and infrastructure by government, is essential to the achievement of the proposed 2025-2029 kindergarten program targets.
- Commitment to review the state's contribution to School Crossing Supervisor Program and consideration of a higher state contribution recognising the responsibility of Victorian Governments for public schools.

Arts and Culture

The City believes that thriving and liveable towns and cities is not just about road and rail transport, open spaces, active transport, and healthcare, it is also about being connected to a strong arts, culture, and heritage environment. Thriving neighbourhoods, suburbs and cities need spaces for residents to engage creatively and deliver the lifestyle that they want.

Arts, culture, and heritage industries are significant contributors to local employment, community wellbeing and vitality, tourism, and economic development - and provide an essential government service to communities.

UNESCO City of Design

Geelong's accreditation as a UNESCO City of Design provides a unique opportunity to set the direction for arts and culture in Geelong.

UNESCO Design Cities share several similar characteristics including cultural landscape maintained by design and the built environment (architecture, urban planning, public spaces, monuments, transportation); opportunity for local designers and urban planners to take advantage of local materials and urban/natural conditions; design-driven creative industries such as architecture and interiors, interaction design, urban design, sustainable design.

This designation, and the expectations that come with it, are embedded into the planning and design for greater Geelong, and forms part of our planning approach to support future population and housing growth.

Regional equity

According to the Cultural Funding by Government - Australia 2021-2022 Report by the Office for the Arts, the total expenditure by all levels of government on cultural activities was \$8,317.5 million for FY 2021-2022. Local Government funding accounted for \$1,826.7 million, or 22% of the total national spending on arts and culture, primarily sourced from limited rate-based income streams.

Addressing the imbalance in arts and culture between capital cities and regional areas requires more than just adjusting funding and supporting population growth. It involves recognising, valuing, and enabling the creative capacity of regional Australians and institutions on equal terms with those in capital cities.

The 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan recommended capturing, measuring, and assessing the benefits of social infrastructure, including arts and culture, to collaboratively plan, develop, and invest in infrastructure that enhances regional identities and brands.

The City recognises the Victorian Government's policy on creative arts and regional distribution as outlined in the Creative State 2025 strategy. This strategy aims to support the recovery, reactivation, and growth of the state's creative industries, with a strong focus on regional inclusion. Key aspects include:

- Ensuring that creative opportunities and resources are accessible to all Victorians, regardless of their location. This includes funding for regional arts projects and infrastructure
- Supporting regional artists and creative practitioners through targeted programs and initiatives. This includes the delivery of regional forums and roundtables to gather input and address local needs
- Investing in the development and refurbishment of creative spaces in regional areas to provide high-quality facilities for arts and cultural activities
- Working with local councils, regional arts organisations, and community groups to foster a collaborative approach to arts and culture in regional Victoria

We recognise that these efforts aim to ensure that the benefits of a vibrant creative sector are felt across the entire state, promoting cultural diversity and economic growth in regional communities.

We highlight that policy, and funding must continue to recognise that regional and remote locations should not just

be passive recipients of arts and culture from capital cities, but rather, they should be recipients of funding tailored to build regional spaces, arts, and culture in situ.

Creative Victoria

The City recognises and values funding provided by Creative Victoria and Creative Australia. This funding supports the arts sector through various funding programs, aimed at enriching the nation by fostering the practice and enjoyment of the arts, including:

1. Creative Projects Fund: Supports the creation and presentation of new creative works across all art forms
2. Music Works: Provides funding for musicians, bands, and music industry professionals to create, develop, and promote their work
3. 10,000 Gigs: The Victorian Gig Fund: Aims to support live music events and gigs across Victoria
4. Creative Learning Partnerships: Encourages collaborations between schools and creative professionals to enhance students' learning experiences through creative projects
5. Touring Victoria: Supports the touring of creative works to regional and remote areas, ensuring access to high-quality arts experiences for all Victorians

Priority Arts and Culture Projects

The City has three key projects important to the cultural landscape of the region, projects it cannot deliver without the assistance of the Australian Government:

1. The redevelopment of Geelong Gallery is the final part of the *Arts and Cultural Precinct Master plan*, needed to complete the Cultural Precinct for a clever and creative city. The Gallery is unable to grow due to its small exhibition space and collection storage; infrastructure and other constraints are hindering Geelong Gallery from attracting and presenting more commercially viable exhibitions (\$210 million), to:
 - fund the time-crucial project management and design phase, through to schematic design and the submission of planning permits.
 - fund outcomes from the business case for the Geelong Gallery redevelopment into Geelong City Hall building. The gallery seeks investment from all levels of governments along with philanthropic sources.

2. The Bellarine Arts Centre's footprint is too small, it does not meet contemporary cultural venue standards and is critically under-equipped to cater for the needs of the Bellarine community now and into the future. A new, reimagined Bellarine Arts Centre will unlock the economic, social, and creative potential of the region's burgeoning creative industries and visitor economy (\$39 million).
3. The City's Outdoor Collection is the largest public collection of art and heritage objects in Victoria, comprising 368 items valued at over \$14 million. Digital archiving, repair, and conservation of three high profile heritage features of Geelong is needed to maintain and care for the collection into the future. \$325,000 for Hitchcock Gates in Johnstone Park, \$250,000 for the Trail Fountain and \$75,000 for the Japanese Cranes in the Botanic Gardens (\$650,000).

It is important to note that the financial burden and complicated application processes for arts and culture funding can disproportionately impact regional local governments compared to those in capital cities due to financial constraints and conflicting demands on resources in a limited market, making access to funding streams challenging and time-consuming.

Recommendations

- Continue to recognise in policy and invest in the role of arts, culture, and creative activity in strengthening local identity, contributing to liveability, and fortifying population growth in regional Victoria ensuring equitable distribution of arts and cultural funding.
- Develop funding streams specific for regional centres to work with regional based arts organisations to distribute funding and delivery outcomes via collaborative projects.
- Simplify response grants which initiate and enable a multi-staged process for developing major initiatives, such as large-scale exhibitions, public art commissions, or the development of new and vital cultural infrastructure.
- Commitment to the redevelopment of Geelong Gallery as the final part of the Geelong Arts and Cultural Precinct Master plan, creating a cultural precinct worthy of a UNESCO City of Design (\$10 million for the time-crucial project management and design phase, through to schematic design and the submission of planning permits).
- Investment into the Bellarine Arts Centre Redevelopment to unlock the economic, social, and creative potential of

the region's burgeoning creative industries and visitor economy (\$39 million).

- Commitment to support the repair and preservation of three high-profile heritage features of Geelong, being \$325k for Hitchcock Gates in Johnstone park, \$250k for the Trail Fountain and \$75K for the Japanese Cranes in the Botanic Gardens, ensuring these culturally significant heritage features are maintained for future generations (\$650,000).

Environment

Creating sustainable environments and managing climate change impacts are about more than managing transport emissions and greenspaces, it is about ensuring that we have the infrastructure and resources to support the development of liveable and socially responsible communities.

Waste Management

As highlighted by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Cwlth) in their [2021 State of the Environment Report](#) we are seeing growing pressures on our environment impacting our populations health and wellbeing.

Australia's population and cities are expanding and so are the associated pressures on the environment — urban heat, congestion, pollution and waste. There is growing pressure on water and energy resources, and climate change is driving higher temperatures and more frequent and intense extreme weather events. Together this is damaging biodiversity and ecosystems in and around our cities, as well as human health and wellbeing.

Our municipality is projected to generate up to 58,000 tonnes of household waste by 2026. This waste will pose a threat to our natural environment if not managed well, particularly plastic waste, which is already polluting our land, rivers, coasts, and the oceans.

The City is committed to a circular economy and continues to strive towards eliminating waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Local government cannot do this alone and seeks the support of all governments to make this happen.

The Victorian Government's [Container Deposit Scheme \(CDS\)](#) has been highly successful, achieving record numbers of glass containers collected in its first year. The scheme's easy-to-access infrastructure and clear educational messaging have led to widespread community acceptance.

Funded by producers rather than local communities, the CDS effectively recovers sorted, uncontaminated, and high-value glass. This approach contrasts with the [household kerbside glass-only service](#) being proposed by the Victorian Government, which require additional mechanical processing to remove contamination and substantial investment by Local Government during tight economic times. Utilising the CDS infrastructure and existing transport fleet also results in lower transport emissions compared to household kerbside glass-only services.

Expanding the CDS to include wine and spirit bottles aligns with the [National Environment Ministers' agreement for a nationally harmonized CDS](#) by the end of 2025.

The City recommends that the commitment to national harmonisation of the CDS is honoured and a review of the CDS locations and demand across Victoria be considered in lieu of continued roll-out of a household kerbside glass-only services for Victoria.

Reducing waste going to landfills is crucial during periods of growth:

- Landfills are a significant source of pollution. They release harmful toxins, leachate, and greenhouse gases like methane, which contribute to global warming and climate change.
- Landfills can emit pollutants that affect air and water quality, leading to respiratory problems and other health issues for nearby communities.
- Landfills take up valuable land space that could be used for other purposes. Reducing waste helps minimise the need for new landfill sites.
- Recycling and waste reduction can create jobs and save money by reducing the costs associated with waste disposal and landfill management.
- Landfills can harm wildlife by destroying habitats and introducing toxic substances into the environment.

While recycling and reusing materials can conserve natural resources and reduce the need for new raw materials, preserving ecosystems and reducing the energy required for

manufacturing a broader approach needs to be planned, looking at all levels of waste production.

Local governments will require continued support from government to facilitate waste management and recycling initiatives that reduce waste going to landfill as the urban footprint expands under the expected growth.

There will be no landfills available in the Barwon region once Anglesea and Drysdale Landfills reach their capacities in 2027 and 2030 respectively. Residual waste will need to be transported over longer distances to disposal facilities outside the G21 region, requiring the development of bulk haulage transfer facilities.

Stormwater Management

The City has 2,450 kilometres of drains to manage across our municipality, this network of structures including pipes, pits, open drains, retarding basins, and litter traps meets current housing and industry needs.

Servicing new growth areas presents many challenges to local government, as does maintaining and upgrading systems that were constructed last century.

Growth is fuelling infill development which will put increasing pressure on aging assets that were not designed to meet current standards or high levels of demand.

Climate change, removal of vegetation and the increase in severe weather events such as localised flooding also present additional demand and challenges on ageing stormwater systems.

As towns and cities grow, more land is covered with impermeable surfaces like roads, parking lots, and buildings. These impervious surfaces prevent rainwater from naturally infiltrating into the ground. Instead, water runs off quickly, leading to higher peak flows in stormwater systems during heavy rainfall events. This excess runoff can overwhelm drainage infrastructure and cause flooding.

Barwon Water's 2022 Urban Water Strategy outlines the ambitious goal of 100% productive use of recycled water.

The regional alternative water grid concept involves the staged transition away from a traditional water, sewerage and stormwater systems that discharge to the ocean, to a connected grid of alternative water sources that distributes alternative water for beneficial uses, enhancing the resilience and prosperity of the region in the face of a changing climate.

Such approaches need to be embraced by governments and supported, and should set a benchmark for best practice in any future planning. Barwon Water's 2022 Urban Water Strategy highlights the importance of including Traditional Owners, local government, statutory authorities, and government agencies, to drive collaborative and integrated approaches to water management for the region.

Urbanisation introduces pollutants such as oil, heavy metals, and chemicals into stormwater runoff. Any alteration of the natural landscape due to urban growth also impact run-off and affect streamflow patterns, erosion, and sediment transport.

The 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit outlined the challenges faced.

... urban water sector faces challenges, including the impacts of climate change, population growth, ageing assets, and changing needs and expectations from users. Failure to adequately address these challenges could lead to rising water bills, as well as exposing users to risks of declining service quality and reliability.

As cities grow, it's essential to balance development with sustainable stormwater management to reduce flooding, protect water quality, and boost resilience.

Without direct government funding, these infrastructure limitations undermine water security, impacting households, commercial industries, and vital agricultural sectors, which are crucial to Australia's economic stability.

The City's flood mitigation priorities in Geelong West, Clifton Springs and Lara require an investment of an estimated \$110.4 million. This work is required to address ineffective control of stormwater by the current drainage and complete infrastructure upgrades to minimise flooding to communities.

No local government has the capacity to meet this type of response to climate change. MAV in their Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria highlighted the need for implementation of a consistent state-wide planning approach to flood and coastal inundation, similar to the current bushfire arrangements, with the Minister for Planning made responsible for implementing best-available flood and inundation data into planning schemes.

Noting that this approach must be supported by ongoing review, the provision of clear policy direction, updating of state-wide flood, inundation and sea-level rise benchmarks and updating of overlays and planning provisions to ensure development is appropriate to current and future risk.

In looking at this the City highlights the need for a *Central Geelong Stormwater Management Strategy* which would help the City and relevant authorities better understand and manage flood risks, address stormwater quality impacts on local waterways, and explore alternative water supply options for the region (\$65 million estimated cost).

A recent stormwater catchment study has identified 25 infrastructure upgrade opportunities that can minimise flooding for the community. One project has been delivered by the City in the previous financial year with further work to be done in this area (\$38 million).

Barwon Water has a goal to turn 100 per cent of the region's wastewater, and much of its stormwater into valuable resources, with major economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits. Currently, 26-billion litres of recycled water is discharged via ocean outfall each year and even greater volumes of stormwater, which will continue to increase as our region grows. The project will support a thriving economy through job growth, community wellbeing through green open spaces, and healthy river flows. The goal aligns with Federal Government policy and is supported by *Victoria's Central & Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy* (\$22 million).

As can be seen managing stormwater and flood risk across a municipality the size of the City takes significant investment which will require financial contribution by all levels of government.

Electricity Grid

Like the stormwater network, increased housing development places additional demands on the state's electricity grid. Over the last few years we have seen brown outs and black outs become part of life, as climate change impacts electricity use and loads.

Providing continued investment for the integration of renewable energy sources like solar and wind, is important to ensure localised power and reduce dependency on centralised power plants can be achieved.

Additionally, transitioning from gas to electricity is essential to reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change. Electrification, combined with the use of renewable energy sources, helps decrease reliance on fossil fuels, which are

major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. This shift not only supports environmental sustainability but also promotes cleaner air, improved public health, and long-term economic benefits through energy efficiency and reduced maintenance costs. Investment by the Australian Government is required to support this transition.

Commitment to funding targeted to build social licence is required, it is essential that it includes the need to consult with and support communities through a just energy transition from gas to electricity, prioritising support for high energy users as well as local governments who hold a large asset portfolio that requires consideration.

Of particular importance is the financial support required to enable conversion of regional swimming pools from gas to electricity delivering on the *Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap* to net zero emissions and ensuring reliability of service delivery.

Again it is important to note that funding to support sustainability is highly contested with complex guidelines and high levels of consultation not always achievable within required timelines for local government applicants. The Grant Guidelines and application requirements can impact the ability of regional local government to apply and achieve successful outcomes. Refer [grant funding](#) challenges and recommendations below.

Recommendations

- Commitment to flood mitigation investment across the greater Geelong region (\$110.4 million).
- Commitment, in conjunction with the Australian Government, to fund detailed design for an upgraded North-West Water Recycling Facility to service existing residential communities and support delivery of housing targets, particularly in the north-west of Geelong, and a pipeline connecting the new facility to the existing grid. Commencing detailed design now will ensure the project is shovel-ready by 2027 (\$15 million).
- Commitment to review the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) and a review of the continued roll-out of a household kerbside glass-only services for Victoria.
- Funding commitment to support the development of a business case for the Northern Extension project to unlock the water supply required to meet industry investment interest and demand by construction of a pipeline from the existing Northern Water Plant to Avalon Employment Precinct, utilising available recycled water to save 400

million litres per year of drinking water, which is currently being used for industrial purposes (\$1 million).

- Funding commitment for a business case (\$20 million) and environmental effects statement (\$2 million) enabling 100% of the region's wastewater, and much of its stormwater to be diverted into valuable resources, with major economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits.
- Commitment to deliver a new major waste and recycling hub in Geelong to provide sufficient capacity to service the fast-growing G21 region (\$15 million).
- Commitment to funding a just energy transition from gas to electricity, prioritising support for high energy users.
- Funding to support conversion of regional swimming pools from gas to electricity delivering on the Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap to net zero emissions and ensuring reliability of service delivery.

Grant Funding

The City welcomes grant funding from the Victorian Government.

Victorian and Australian government grants represented 15.64% of revenue for the fiscal year 2023/24 and a 14.53% of projected revenue for 2024/25. This investment by governments has however dropped relative to total revenue over the last 10 years. Budget projections work on an assumption of recurrent funding availability with embedded CPI increase.

The City is highly dependent on grants to deliver services and capital works to the community it serves, budget extract:

	2023/24 (\$*000)	2024/25 (\$*000)
Total operating grants	\$66,433	\$73,906
Total capital grants	\$26,050	\$24,484

Victorian government grants provide an opportunity to deliver infrastructure and growth work which otherwise could not be delivered alongside program and service delivery. However, often the requirements of the grants, as defined within the Grant Guidelines and Funding Agreements, preclude the City's capacity to apply.

Meeting grant guidelines creates several challenges, primarily related to the reliability and consistency of funding.

- There needs to be a reliable commitment to annual funding rounds.
- Applications should be solicited at the same time each year to ensure predictability.
- Clear and consistent guidelines are essential so that projects can be planned to meet these requirements, including securing co-contributions, and ensuring shovel readiness.
- Implementation of a two-step process (Expression of Interest followed by full application) would help avoid wasting resources on projects that do not align with the fund's focus. Grant applications take up extensive resources, in the past year the City has reviewed 197 potential grants and applied for 68 grants, with 20 applications currently in progress. With a success rate of 68%. A twostep process will help streamline this process and reduce resource wastage, important in tight fiscal times.
- Coordinating the timing of funding outcomes so that funding contribution by governments is known before local government budgets are finalised in May. Knowing the outcome of a grant application by May will help local government finalise their budget with certainty of revenue.
- Support for Business Cases and Planning is crucial as it allows the City to be shovel ready for infrastructure funding, and demonstrates to the community that future investment in the region is possible.
- A minimum of three months should be allowed for the grant application process, the current average for all grants for 2024 was 7 weeks, with timelines as short as 4 weeks. Short timelines create resourcing issues which compound heavy workloads and add to staff stress. The health and wellbeing of City officers is paramount in our planning and approach to work, the current timelines for grant applications combined with variable timing of grant releases makes human resource planning a challenge.
- Simplify reporting - officers often site the complexity of reporting and variation requests as a disincentive to applying, officers are put in the position of weighing up the time it takes to apply for and manage a grant against the benefit to the City and the community. For some types of applications that benefit can be very low when weighed against the impacts on work. Simplifying these requirements would also allow grantees to focus more on the project and less on the paperwork.

It is important to highlight that local governments operate under unique conditions shaped by budget constraints, staffing shortages, and outdated technology. They often rely on fluctuating funding models, which can impact their ability to maintain essential services. Additionally, local governments must address diverse community needs, from public safety to social services, while managing limited resources. Rates, roads and rubbish no longer define the work of local government.

When funding guidelines do not take into consideration the specific challenges faced by local governments then the ability to apply for funding is often impacted. For example funding guidelines which preclude expenditure for project management restrict the ability for new projects or programs to be considered when staff are already working at capacity.

Consultation with local government in the development of funding guidelines is sought to ensure guideline restrictions do not preclude access to funding by local government especially regional municipalities.

Consideration of these factors is critical to ensuring that future grant offerings are effective in reaching where the need is greatest.

Recommendations

- Consultation with local government in the development of funding guidelines supporting funding opportunities targeted at local government uptake, to ensure guideline restrictions do not preclude access to funding by local government entities.
- Reliability and consistency in funding, including a commitment to:
 - annual rounds of funding, ensuring that funding rounds open and close at a set time every year
 - consistency in program guidelines so that applicants can plan projects that will meet these guidelines, such as levels of co-contribution requirements, timelines, and shovel ready requirements
 - a two-step process (Expression of Interest, then full application) to ensure applicants invest resources on projects that will fit the focus of the fund and are more likely to be successful
 - timeline sharing of funding outcomes, the success or otherwise of a funding application should be known prior to Council budgets being finalised (May)
 - funding support for business case and planning

- a minimum three-month application timeline
- reduced complexity of reporting and variation requests.

SUMMARY

Investment by the Victorian Government into the greater Geelong region is critical in enabling the City to deliver on the infrastructure and priority needs of the community it serves. Adequate and timely investment by government would allow the City to plan, with certainty, for delivery of the regions Priority Projects, while addressing current infrastructure and service needs.

As mentioned throughout this submission, the City's Priority Projects include major infrastructure works across the following priority themes:

- Integrated transport network and better connections
- Clever and creative economic investments
- Sport and recreation facilities for a healthy and diverse community
- Protecting our environment and driving a circular economy

These projects are critical to the success and sustainability of the municipality, and the economic prosperity, health, and wellbeing of the communities that the City serves.

We include the highlighted **43 recommendations** for consideration by the Victorian Government in preparing the state's budget for the 2025/2026 financial year and would welcome the opportunity to discuss them further.

APPENDIX 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS LIST

City of Greater Geelong Priority Projects

Priority Project	Project Description	Investment required
Avalon Airport Precinct	There is major industry interest and demand for investment in the Avalon Airport and employment precinct, but funding is required to build permanent and enabling infrastructure to unlock the opportunities that will create thousands of new jobs and business, secure the future of the Avalon International Airshow and open-up our new aviation industry.	<p>\$70 million for enabling infrastructure to unlock opportunities at the Avalon Airport employment precinct.</p> <p>\$150 million to deliver permanent event facilities for the Avalon International Airshow.</p> <p>Funding for the staged development of the Avalon Airport Rail Link.</p> <p>Federal Government designation of Beach Road as a Road of National Importance. The current Local Road classification requires the City to maintain a nationally significant road providing key freight and passenger access to Avalon Airport, which has international airport status, including 'first port of entry' rights for freight.</p>
Housing	Draft housing targets set by the Victorian Government propose 163,600 more homes across G21 by 2051, with 139,800 homes to be built in Greater Geelong. Action is needed to meet these targets sustainably and unlock private investment.	<p>\$150 million investment in central Geelong to unlock over \$1 billion in potential private sector investment by supporting the delivery of enabling infrastructure and improving urban amenity (safe and attractive streetscapes) within the designated strategic development zone covered by the Central Geelong Framework Plan (CGFP).</p> <p>Broader eligibility of the National Housing Infrastructure Facility Critical Infrastructure Fund to enable regional and rural Councils to better access and utilise Housing Australia funding for resourcing to undertake planning work to develop shovel ready housing development infrastructure.</p>
Geelong Gallery expansion	The redevelopment of Geelong Gallery is the final part of the Geelong Cultural Precinct Master plan needed to complete the cultural precinct for a clever and creative city.	<p>\$10 million - Business case</p> <p>\$200 million - to extend the Geelong Gallery into Geelong City Hall.</p>
Northern Suburbs Mental Health Hub	Barwon Health has funding for mental health service delivery in the Corio area but has no infrastructure to provide a base for specialist service delivery. Barwon Health seeks funding to construct or establish a purpose-built facility similar to the Mental Health Hub model in Central Geelong, but on a smaller scale.	\$10 million

Priority Project	Project Description	Investment required
Regional Indoor Sports & Events Centre (RISEC)	The delivery of a regional 4000+ seat capacity show court that has the features and capability to host major sport and cultural events.	\$200 million
Fast Rail	The City of Greater Geelong seeks a recommitment from the Federal and State Governments to investigate and invest in a Geelong-Melbourne Fast Rail.	Victorian and Australian government project
Outer Metropolitan Ring	The Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) Transport Corridor is a proposed 100-kilometre high-speed transport link that provides connection from west of Werribee to the Hume Freeway at Kalkallo. The OMR would deliver significant benefits for Geelong including growth opportunities for freight and employment.	\$20 million – Funding for a Detailed Business Case \$2 million – Environmental Effects Statements
Alternative Water Grid	Barwon Water has a goal to turn 100 per cent of the region’s wastewater, and much of its stormwater into valuable resources, with major economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits. Currently, 26-billion litres of recycled water is discharged via ocean outfall each year and even greater volumes of stormwater, which will continue to increase as our region grows. The project will support a thriving economy through job growth, community wellbeing through green open spaces, and healthy river flows. The goal aligns with Federal Government policy and is supported by Victoria’s Central & Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy.	\$15 million design of a shovel ready foundation project by 2027 (Project 1) \$1 million business case for Northern Extension project (Project 2) \$24 million implementation of Surf Coast Hinterland Stage 2 (Project 3)
Devilins Road Reserve – Master plan delivery	Devilins Road Reserve Master plan outlines the development of additional sports fields and an associated pavilion, a play space, pedestrian paths, car parking and other landscape improvements.	\$6 million - A new pavilion \$4 million - New soccer pitches
Barwon Heads Village Park – Pavilion Redevelopment	The project aims to upgrade facilities to support local cricket, soccer, and junior football, meeting the growing needs of the community and addressing gaps in current infrastructure. The redevelopment will provide additional change rooms that meet modern standards for use and replace the existing public toilet with an accessible facility at the rear of the building.	\$2.6 million - Female-friendly changerooms \$3.6 million - Social space redevelopment
Burdoo Reserve - Netball Court Redevelopment	Deliver two new compliant netball courts with flood lighting that meets Netball Victoria Guideline requirements.	\$1 million

Priority Project	Project Description	Investment required
Grinter Reserve - BMX Pavilion	The current BMX pavilion at Grinter Reserve lacks essential amenities such as toilets and showers, which are critical to supporting participation and hosting events. The existing building, featuring a secure steel structure with a kiosk and club room, serves basic needs but relies on adjacent public toilets that are insufficient for the demands of BMX activities.	\$2.5 million
Portarlington Recreation Reserve	Funding is required to complete the upgrade of the Portarlington Reserve main pavilion, transforming it into a modern, accessible, and inclusive community space that will benefit approximately 6,000 residents.	\$3.2 million
St Leonards Lake Reserve – Pavilion Redevelopment	The St Leonards Lake Reserve pavilion redevelopment will upgrade facilities to meet current demand, ensuring they are female-friendly and accessible to all abilities. Used by the St Leonards Cricket Club, Bellarine Sharks AFC Soccer Club, St Leonards Men’s Shed, as well as the community, the upgrades are essential to support the evolving needs of a diverse population, including retirees and growing young families.	\$3.5 million
Waurm Ponds Skate Park – Skating and dirt jump precinct	This project will deliver the following improvements to create a regional wheeled sports precinct: A new advanced skate bowl. Replacement of the existing vert ramps. Reconstruction of the dirt jumps track. Installation of sporting lights. Construction of a new toilet facility. Improved parking capacity and pedestrian connections.	\$1.2 million to improve skate provision and lighting. \$700,000 to reconstruct the dirt jumps. \$1.1 million for safety, accessibility and amenity improvements.
Bellarine Link - Stage 1	The Geelong Ring Road Extension (Bellarine Link) between Baanip Boulevard (Surf Coast Highway) and Barwon Heads Road, proposed as part of Victoria’s Big Build is a key road infrastructure project for Greater Geelong.	Victorian and Australian government project
Peninsula Drive, Drysdale	To extend Peninsula Drive to Belchers Road in Drysdale. To create road links from Peninsula Drive through to Belchers Lane; upgrade Belchers Lane and the Grubb Road intersection.	\$24-30 million - extend Peninsula Drive to Belchers Road. \$8 million - road connection improvements Drysdale Precinct.

Priority Project	Project Description	Investment required
Flood Mitigation – Clifton Springs & Drysdale	A recent stormwater catchment study has identified 25 infrastructure upgrade opportunities that can minimise flooding for the community. One of these projects has been delivered by the City in FY23/24 with the below projects remaining unfunded.	\$3 million - Priority 1 Projects \$20 million - Priority 2 Projects \$15 million - Priority 3 Projects
Leisuretime Sports Precinct - Court Upgrade	The project involves removing the central mezzanine and refurbishing the Beggs and Branch Stadium to create a four-court facility. The facility will be designed to meet basketball-compliant standards, with new flooring and LED lighting. The project also includes the removal of asbestos from the walls, refurbishment of the roof, and reconfiguration of the rooms off the courts into storage spaces and a referee room.	\$15 million
Aldershot Reserve – Active Recreation Development	This project will deliver the remaining components of the Aldershot Reserve Master plan: asphalt pump track fitness equipment station public toilets social spaces and public area lighting.	\$1.1 million - Active fitness and recreation \$900,000 - New reserve entrance \$750,000 - Pump track
Myers Reserve	A Master plan for the redevelopment of Myers Reserve was completed in 2022. The first phase of implementing the Master plan focuses on high-priority improvements which align with the overall vision, objectives and community needs.	\$6 million - Relocate bowls facility \$3 million - Relocate the netball courts \$6.5 million - Construct new soccer pavilion
Hamlyn Park Reserve	Hamlyn Park supports over 1,100 participants across football, netball, cricket, tennis and ballroom dancing. The social rooms and ballroom are a hive of activity, regularly hired out to community and private groups each week. However, facilities do not meet modern standards for universal access or female-friendly design and lack adequate space and functionality.	\$2 million - refurbish Alex Rizun Pavilion \$2 million - Geelong Ballroom Facility upgrade \$1.2 million - Northern open space development
Windsor Park - Netball Courts Upgrade	Windsor Park is an integral piece of community infrastructure for Geelong's northern suburbs, in particular Norlane- North Shore. Over the years, the Windsor Park precinct has had minor improvements, however delivery of the Facility Development Plan is essential for the precinct to provide compliant, modern sporting infrastructure.	\$4 million

Priority Project	Project Description	Investment required
Elderslie Reserve – Pavilion Redevelopment	The current change facilities at Elderslie Reserve are outdated, non-compliant, and do not meet the necessary standards for modern sporting use. As identified in the 2022 Facility Development Plan, the change rooms and supporting amenities require significant upgrades. The existing facilities fail to align with the AFL Preferred Community Facility Guidelines and do not adequately accommodate female participants, limiting both inclusivity and growth in local football.	\$2.5 million
Winter Reserve – Social room and kitchen upgrade	Upgrade of the Winter Reserve main pavilion will improve the kitchen to provide a larger, more functional space that meets the growing needs of the Belmont Lions Sports Club and East Belmont Cricket Club.	\$1.5M
Howard Glover Reserve - Female-friendly facilities	The pavilion and change facilities at Howard Glover Reserve are significantly outdated, failing to comply with modern accessibility and functional standards. This project will replace the ageing infrastructure with a contemporary, multipurpose pavilion designed to meet the diverse needs of newly relocated Geelong City Football Club as well as the broader community.	\$5M
Protecting our heritage	Repair, conservation and digital archiving of three high profile heritage features in Geelong is required to maintain and care for the collection into the future	\$325,000 - Hitchcock Gates \$250,000 - Trail Fountain \$75,000 - Japanese Cranes
Lara to You-Yangs Trail	The development of the Lara to You Yangs Shared Trail will provide a scenic and enjoyable route to the You Yangs while also enhancing the region's tourism offerings, creating a unique and iconic shared trail experience.	\$30 million
Flood Mitigation – Central Geelong	The Central Geelong Stormwater Management Strategy will help the City and relevant authorities better understand and manage flood risks, address stormwater quality impacts on local waterways, and explore alternative water supply options for the region.	\$65 million (estimated)
Drainage infrastructure - Lara	The Lara Flood Study (2020) has improved our understanding of flood risk in the area. It identified structural mitigation works that could deliver a minor	\$2.2 million - Stage 1 Lipson Drive \$3.2 million - Stage 2 Kyema Drive

Priority Project	Project Description	Investment required
	reduction in flood levels in several low-lying residential areas of Lara.	
	Stage 1 - Lipson Drive drainage upgrade	
	Stage 2 - Kyema Drive drainage upgrade	

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