



Rural City of  
**Wangaratta**

# Minutes

For the Scheduled Council Meeting  
Milawa Public Hall  
181 Milawa-Bobinawarra Rd, Milawa  
**6:00 PM 28 April 2026**

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## 1. Acknowledgement to Country (01:29)

*It is my privilege to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of our wonderful country. We give our thanks to our ancestors whose vision, determination, innovation and resilience built our prosperous inclusive and democratic country. We acknowledge that we are the proud inheritors of this legacy, and we accept the challenge to continue to nourish and nurture our communities and we pledge to work to implement and enhance opportunities for the benefit of future generations, our children and their children into the future.*

## 2. Opening Prayer (02:08)

*Almighty God, we humbly ask thee to bless and guide this council in its deliberations so that we may truly preserve the welfare of the people whom we serve. Amen*

## 3. Present

Councillors:

Irene Grant, David Fuller, Harry Bussell, Harvey Benton, Ashlee Fitzpatrick, Allison Winters, Tania Maxwell

Officers:

Marcus Goonan, Director Community and Infrastructure; Stephen Swart, Director Sustainability and Culture; Matt Nelson, Chief Executive Officer; Sarah Brindley, Director Corporate and Leisure

Administration:

Executive Services Coordinator; Councillor and Executive Services Support Officer

## 4. Absent

Councillors:

Officers:

## 5. Acceptance of Apologies & Granting of Leave of Absence

**Resolution:**

**(Moved: Councillor D Fuller/Councillor A Fitzpatrick)**

That **Cr H Benton** be granted leave of absence for the period 15 May 2026 to 25 June.

**Carried**

## Order of Business (03:07)

### 6. Citizen Ceremony

Nil

### 7. Confirmation of Minutes (03:09)

#### Resolution:

**(Moved: Councillor D Fuller/Councillor T Maxwell)**

That Council read and confirm the Minutes of the Scheduled Meeting of 24 March 2026 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of the meeting, subject to the amendment of Item 14.2, Supply and Deliver Suction Sweeper, so that the minutes reflect the disclosure of contract price.

**Carried**

### 8. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

In accordance with section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020 a councillor who has a conflict of interest in respect of a matter must disclose the conflict of interest in the manner required by Council's Governance Rules and exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to that matter, including any discussion or vote on the matter and any action in relation to the matter.

Clause 28.1 of Council's Governance Rules requires a councillor to indicate that they have a conflict of interest by clearly stating:

- (a) the item for which they have a conflict of interest; and
- (b) whether their conflict of interest is general or material; and
- (c) the circumstances that give rise to the conflict of interest.

**Immediately prior to the consideration of the item in which they have a conflict of interest, a councillor must indicate to the meeting the existence of the conflict of interest and leave the meeting.**

A councillor who discloses a conflict of interest and leaves a Council meeting must not communicate with any participants in the meeting while the decision is being made.

## 9. Reception of Petitions (4:00)

### 9.1 Appin Street Pedestrian Crossing (04:13)

Meeting Type:	Scheduled Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	28 April 2026
Author:	Director Community and Infrastructure
Presenters:	Chief Executive Officer

No Council officers or contractors who have provided advice in relation to this report have declared a conflict of interest regarding the matter under consideration.

#### Executive Summary

A petition containing 366 signatures from lead petitioner Peter Skinner has been received.

The petition (**Attachment 1**) requests that the Rural City of Wangaratta conduct an urgent safety assessment of pedestrian activity along Appin Street between Irwin Avenue and Wellington Street; and install appropriate marked pedestrian crossing at a suitable and safe location.

#### Resolution:

**(Moved: Councillor A Fitzpatrick/Councillor T Maxwell)**

1. That the petition regarding Appin Street Pedestrian Crossing be received.
2. That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for a report to a future Council meeting.

**Carried**

#### Conclusion

Clause 14 of the Rural City of Wangaratta Governance Rules, provides that a petition presented to the Council, may be dealt with in any of the following ways. The petition may:

- be received; or
- where the petition relates to an item listed on the agenda, be considered in conjunction with that agenda item; or
- be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration and response; or
- be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for a report to a future Council meeting.

Where the petition relates to an operational matter, Council must refer it to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration.

Where a petition relates to a planning matter which is the subject of a public notification process under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the petition will be treated as a joint submission in relation to that planning matter.

Where a petition relates to a matter which is the subject of a community engagement process under the *Local Government Act 2020*, the petition will be treated as a joint submission in relation to that matter.

#### Attachments

- 1 Petition Pedestrian Crossing - Appin Street, Wangaratta - Confidential

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## 10. Hearing of Deputations

### Presentation of Reports

*For full transcript, please refer to the recording on the [Rural City of Wangaratta YouTube channel](#). Time markers are noted in (minutes:seconds) format.*

## 11. Councillor Reports (05:19)

### LGA Councillor Census Results (05:29)

Cr. A Winters reported on the recent Victorian Local Governance Association Census Results. I want to take the opportunity to speak to the recent Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) Councillor Census Results, and what it tells us about the reality of being a councillor in Victoria. Firstly, to highlight the importance of data collection like this. And secondly, to help build a clearer understanding of the reality of local government. The census gives us a statewide snapshot of who councillors are, how they are working, and what they are experiencing in the role, and it highlights aspects and challenges that are not always visible to the community.

For example, one of the clearest findings from the 2025 Councillor Census is about time commitment. On average, councillors are spending around 39 hours a week on council duties. That's the equivalent of a full-time job.

At the same time, around 74% of councillors also have paid employment, and 43% have children under 18 living at home. So, for many of us, council work is being balanced alongside jobs, family responsibilities, sporting and community commitments.

The average age of a councillor across Victoria sits in the mid 50s, with the largest proportion of councillors aged between 45 and 64. While there are younger councillors, they remain in the minority. When you look at the time commitment of serving as a Councillor it starts to paint a picture as to why it can be particularly challenging for younger community members, people building careers, or raising families to step into these roles. These are often the people who will be future leaders in our communities, and who bring important perspectives to decision making. The data reinforces that if we want a broader range of voices around the table, we need to better understand and acknowledge the barriers to participation.

The other key area I want to speak to is behaviour towards councillors.

The census shows that 59% of councillors have experienced threatening or intimidating behaviour from members of the public.

Around half of all councillors say abuse from the public is a moderate to major issue in their role. When you look more closely at the data, the numbers are even more concerning.

Around 50% of women councillors reported experiencing bullying or non-sexual harassment, compared to around 25% of men.

13% of women reported experiencing sexual harassment, compared to 2% of men.

And within council environments, nearly half of women councillors reported experiencing bullying from another councillor.

The report shows a shift since COVID, where more community engagement is happening online. While that has improved accessibility, it has also led to an increase in negative and, at times, more personal hostility directed towards councillors.

Just last year the Rural City of Wangaratta endorsed the Unreasonable Conduct Policy in September that sets out how Council manages unreasonable, unsafe, or persistently disruptive behaviour. The policy aims to protect staff and Councillors, while supporting a safe working environment.

And these aren't isolated incidents. These are patterns being reported across the state, and has a personal impact, with Councillors reporting high levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout. Some implied they are reconsidering whether to remain in the role because of the behaviour they experience.

And this has broader implications. If people are experiencing hostility or harassment in these roles, it becomes harder to attract and retain a diverse group of community members to step forward and represent their communities.

For me, this report is about transparency and sharing with the community a clear picture of what being a politician at the closest level of government to the community involves, particularly the amount of responsibility, and some of the challenges that come with it. It also highlights the importance of continuing to build a community where people feel safe to participate in public and democratic life, whether that is attending meetings, asking questions, engaging in consultation, or *stepping into leadership roles themselves*.

**Resolution:**

**(Moved: Councillor A Fitzpatrick/Councillor D Fuller)**

That Council accept **Cr A Winters** Report.

**Carried**

**Mayoral Report (09:46)**

Cr. I Grant reported on the passing of former Mayor J.K Howard and former councillor Kieran Klemm.

I present this Mayoral report to acknowledge the recent passing of two former councillors who served the Wangaratta community.

The Rural City of Wangaratta extends its condolences to the families and loved ones of former councillors John Kevin Howard and Kieran Klemm and we acknowledge their service to local government and to the Wangaratta community.

John Kevin Howard served as a councillor with the former City of Wangaratta (prior to amalgamation) and was Mayor in 1973–74 and again from 1976–78.

Cr Kieran Klemm served as a councillor with the Rural City of Wangaratta from 2000 to 2005 and also served with the former Shire of Wangaratta (also prior to amalgamation).

The RCOW acknowledges and appreciates their service to local government and the community. Cr. I Grant reported on the establishment of the Oxley nurse's memorial.

The Rural City of Wangaratta Council formally acknowledges the significant work undertaken by the Oxley and district community to preserve and interpret a difficult, but important, part of our local history through the establishment of the Oxley nurse's memorial at the Oxley cenotaph.

On 28 March 2026, bronze busts of Oxley Shire nurses, and former residents, Sister Dorothy "Bud" Elmes and Sister Caroline "Carrie" Ennis were officially unveiled. The beautiful memorial recognises the role these and other nurses played in the war and tells a story of great dedication and heroism.

Both nurses were local women who lived in the district and served as Australian Army nurses in Singapore during World War II. Sister Elmes and Sister Ennis were killed on Banka Island off the coast of Sumatra on 14 February 1942. Only one survivor Sister Vivian Bullwinkle survived to tell the horrific story.

It is particularly important to acknowledge that this historic memorial and contribution to the municipality was organised and driven by the Oxley and district community, with limited support from any tier of government or organisation and truly reflects what can be achieved through the commitment and perseverance of local volunteers, families and descendants to remembrance and education. Despite the many hurdles and the need for funding, they made it happen- well done to all involved.

**Resolution:**

**(Moved: Councillor H Benton/Councillor A Fitzpatrick)**

That Council accept **Cr I Grant's** Report.

**Carried**

**Officers' Reports (12:42)**

**12. Executive Services**

Nil

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## 13. Corporate and Leisure (12:53)

### 13.1 Updated S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisations (13:01)

Meeting Type:	Scheduled Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	28 April 2026
Author:	Governance and Reporting Advisor
Presenters:	Director Corporate & Leisure

No Council officers or contractors who have provided advice in relation to this report have declared a conflict of interest regarding the matter under consideration.

#### Executive Summary

This report is presented to Council to adopt updates required to Council's S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisations to ensure they remain compliant with the latest legislative developments.

#### Resolution:

**(Moved: Councillor T Maxwell/Councillor D Fuller)**

That Council:

1. Adopts the S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisations March 2026, made under section 11(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2020, as presented, and,
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to execute the Instrument on behalf of Council, and,
3. Notes that the Instrument comes into force immediately upon execution and remains in effect until revoked or varied by Council.

**Carried**

#### Background

Section 11(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2020 (VIC) empowers Council to appoint and authorise officers to exercise powers, perform functions and discharge duties under other Acts, regulations and local laws by way of an Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation.

The S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisations March 2026 has been prepared to ensure that Council officers who are responsible for regulatory, statutory and enforcement functions are lawfully authorised to act on Council's behalf. The Instrument consolidates appointments and authorisations across a range of legislation administered by Council, including (but not limited to) building, public health, road management, emergency management, animal management and land administration legislation.

The Instrument is periodically reviewed and updated to reflect organisational changes, staff movements, legislative amendments and operational requirements. Adoption of the updated Instrument ensures that Council's regulatory decisions, enforcement actions and proceedings are

undertaken by properly authorised officers, reducing legal and operational risk and supporting good governance and compliance.

The proposed Instrument will come into effect immediately upon execution and will remain in force until revoked or varied by Council.

### Implications

#### Policy Considerations

There are no specific Council policies or strategies that relate to this report.

#### Financial/Economic Implications

There are no financial or economic implications identified for the subject of this report.

#### Legal/Statutory

Council has legal requirements under a variety of legislation. Ensuring that appropriate Council officers have delegated authority provides assurance that Council is complying with this legislation.

#### Social and Diversity

There are no specific social impacts identified for the subject of this report.

#### Environmental/Sustainability Impacts

There are no specific environmental or sustainability impacts identified with this report.

### Risk Management

#### Risk Management Framework

Risks	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation Action
Insufficient delegations coverage resulting in legislative non-compliance.	Unlikely	Moderate	5 - Medium	Ensure sufficient Council delegates are provided.

### Consultation/Communication

Officers believe that appropriate consultation with Councillors and Council Officers has occurred and the matter is now ready for formal Council consideration.

### Options for Consideration

1. Adopt the updated S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation.
2. Request consideration of any other proposed changes, with the updated S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation to be presented to a future Council meeting once appropriate advice has been taken.

### Conclusion

Council is recommended to endorse the updated S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation.

### Attachments

- 1 S11 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisations March 2026 

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### 13.2 Loan Agreement – Refinancing (14:56)

Meeting Type:	Scheduled Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	28 April 2026
Category:	Strategic
Author:	Financial Accountant
Approver:	Director of Sustainability and Culture

No Council officers or contractors who have provided advice in relation to this report have declared a conflict of interest regarding the matter under consideration.

#### Executive Summary

This report is presented to seek the necessary formal authorisation for Council to execute new loans. This will enable the organisation to execute the \$7.052m of new borrowings (debt refinancing) set out in Council's Annual Budget. The financing body requires the Chief Executive Officer to be authorised to execute any associated loan agreements on behalf of the Rural City of Wangaratta, and the Manager Finance to be authorised as a dual signatory.

#### Resolution:

**(Moved: Councillor H Benton/Councillor T Maxwell)**

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to enter into loan agreements on behalf of Wangaratta Rural City Council for any amount approved by the Treasurer of Victoria and where borrowings are included in Council's Adopted Budget or an Adopted Revised Budget; and
2. Authorises the Manager Finance to be a dual signatory with the Chief Executive Officer on any required loan documentation provided by the Treasury Corporation of Victoria to execute the loan agreements.

**Carried**

#### Background

At the June 2025 Scheduled Council Meeting, Council adopted the 2025/26 Budget, and at the 22 July 2025 adopted the 2025/26 Revised Budget. In both Budget documents, Council authorised the refinancing of \$7.052 million of borrowings maturing during 2025/26 with loan agreements.

To achieve this, Council intends to refinance the maturing debt with the Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV). To legally complete the borrowing process, TCV requires Council to formally authorise the above positions to enter into new loan agreements and to execute the required documentation. This report ensures that the relevant authorisations are in place.

## Implications

### Policy Considerations

The proposed loan refinancing is consistent with Council's Borrowings Policy 2021, as it relates to the refinancing of existing borrowings, does not increase Council's overall level of debt, and continues to support sustainable debt management in line with the Local Government Act 2020.

### Financial/Economic Implications

By entering into loan agreements now with the Treasury Corporation of Victoria and locking in the interest rate, Council will be protected from any future interest rate increases.

### Legal/Statutory

There are no legal/statutory implications identified for the subject of this report.

### Social and Diversity

There are no social impacts identified for the subject of this report.

### Equity Impact Assessment (EIA)

There are no equity impacts identified for the subject of this report.

### Environmental/Sustainability Impacts

There are no environmental/ sustainability impacts identified for the subject of this report.

## Strategic Links

### Council Plan 2025 – 2029

This report supports the 2025-2029 Council Plan by aligning to the included Financial Sustainability Guiding Principles.

## Risk Management

### Risk Appetite

The contents of this report is aligned to Council's Risk Appetite Statement. Specifically the Financial Risk Category.

Risk Management Framework

Risks	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation Action
Certainty of Funding	Low	Medium	Medium	Eligibility and interest already established with TCV.
The best price will not be achieved	Low	Medium	Medium	Best price achieved by accessing TCV rates which are cheaper than rates offered by commercial banks.

### Consultation/Communication

Officers believe that appropriate consultation was undertaken through the previous annual Budget process, and the matter is now ready for Council consideration.

### Options for Consideration

There are no other options for consideration: Council must formally authorise the relevant positions to legally complete the borrowing process.

### Conclusion

Council is committed to continuing to pursue opportunities to further improve its financial sustainability over time whilst continuing to deliver essential community services. Refinancing maturing debt is a responsible action to protect Council's financial liquidity on an ongoing basis.

### Attachments

Nil.

### Public Questions

<p>13.2.1 (16:29)</p>	<p><b>Vivvian King asked the following question:</b></p> <p><b>I'm just curious about the signatories to be dual signatories, is that necessary on all of those items</b></p> <p><i>Director Sarah Brindley responded:</i>  <i>This particular approval is required specifically by the Treasury of Victoria to issue the borrowing. It's not required for every type of borrowing we undertake, but to borrow through the Treasury of Victoria it is, and those rates are typically preferable to Council, to borrow through them.</i></p>
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## 14. Community and Infrastructure (18:07)

### 14.1 Budget Variation Request - Recycling Kerbside (18:18)

Meeting Type:	Scheduled Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	28 April 2026
Category:	Strategic
Author:	Waste Management Coordinator
Approver:	Director Community and Infrastructure

No Council officers or contractors who have provided advice in relation to this report have declared a conflict of interest regarding the matter under consideration.

#### Executive Summary

This report is presented to Council to seek a budget variation of \$145,000 resulting in a revised forecast for the year to \$1,445,000 for ledger 00443 Recycling – Kerbside.

#### Resolution:

**(Moved: Councillor H Benton/Councillor A Winters)**

That Council:

- Approves budget variation revising the 2025/2026 forecast to \$1,445,000 for ledger 00443 Recycling - Kerbside

**Carried**

#### Background

##### Overview

Ledger 00443 Recycling – Kerbside (contractors) accounts for expenditure associated with the contractor responsible for collecting and processing commingled recyclables from Council's kerbside (yellow lidded) bins.

- Original 2025/26 Budget Forecast: \$1,300,000
- Year to Date Actual: \$1,063,555
- Revised Forecast Requirement: \$1,445,000

##### Contributing Factors

- Carry over Expenditure from 2024/25

A late June 2025 invoice resulted in \$69,000 of expenditure being carried forward into 2025/26 budget, increasing the current year's expenditure.

- Retrospective Rise and Fall Contract Adjustment (June 2022– June 2025)

Cleanaway has applied a retrospective rise and fall adjustment, this aligns with the timeframe between tender submission and acceptance under the Hume Region Collaborative procurement, which involved 11 councils. All respondents included this adjustment condition in their tender submissions. As a result, an increase of 11.313% has been applied, raising the processing gate fee from \$200.00 to \$222.63 per tonne (plus GST).

### 3. 2025/26 Rise and Fall Adjustment

A further rise and fall adjustment effective 1 July 2025 adds \$13.32 per tonne, increasing the gate fee to \$235.95 per tonne for 2025/26.

*Note: The original budget was based on a forecast gate fee of \$205.00 per tonne, significantly lower than the adjusted rate.*

### Financial Impact

The combination of carried over expenditure, and higher-than-budgeted processing costs has fully absorbed the anticipated cost sharing revenue from the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS). As a result, the revised forecast for the year is \$1,445K, creating an unfavourable variance of \$145K

### Implications

#### Policy Considerations

This report has been prepared and presented in accordance with the Budget Variation Policy.

#### Financial/Economic Implications

A budget variation of \$145,000 will adjust the revised forecast for the 2025/26 year to 1,445,000 for 00443 Recycling - Kerbside

	Approved Budget for this proposal \$	This Proposal \$	Variance to Approved Budget \$	Comments
Revenue/Income				
Expense	\$1,300K	\$1,445K	-\$145K	
Net Result	\$1,300K	\$1,445K	-\$145K	

#### Legal/Statutory

Councils in Victoria are legally required under the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 to provide household kerbside services for general waste, mixed recycling, glass recycling, and food and garden organics (FOGO).

#### Social and Diversity

There are no social impacts identified for the subject of this report.

#### Equity Impact Assessment (EIA)

There are no equity impacts identified for the subject of this report.

#### Environmental/Sustainability Impacts

Supports positive environmental outcomes by reducing landfill waste, improving resource recovery, and lowering emissions through increased recycling and diversion of materials.

## Strategic Links

### Council Plan 2025 – 2029

This report supports the 2025-2029 Council Plan through the following objectives and actions:

### 2. Natural Environment

2.2 Drive a strong circular economy with resource recovery and reuse

2.2.2 Implement the Circular Economy regulatory requirements to minimise the amount of waste to landfill

### Rural City of Wangaratta 2045 Community Vision

This report supports the 2045 Community Vision through the following objectives:

- Care for nature and the environment

## Risk Management

Officers have assessed the overall risks associated with the affected tasks and deemed the proposed cause of action as having the lowest potential risk to Council. These considerations are outlined in the table below.

### Risk Management Framework

Risks	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation Action
Uncontrolled overspend against approved budget	4 – Likely	4- Major	16 – High	Implement immediate monthly variance reporting.
Noncompliance with statutory obligations	3 – Possible	5 – Catastrophic	15 – High	Maintain minimum service levels; to meet statutory requirements
Service disruption or reduced service quality	3- Possible	3 – moderate	9 – Medium	Assist with service delivery with Council owned vehicles.

## Consultation/Communication

Officers do not believe communication or consultation is required for this item.

## Options for Consideration

- That Council approve the budget variation of \$145,000
- That Council do not approve the budget variation of \$145,000

**Conclusion**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Budget Variation Policy, and approving this variation will ensure recycling service expenditure is accurately forecast and effectively delivered.

**Attachments**

Nil.

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**15. Sustainability and Culture**

Nil

**16. Special Committee Reports**

Nil

**17. Advisory Committee Reports**

Nil

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## 18. Minutes of Advisory Committee Meetings (20:59)

### 18.1 Minutes of Advisory Committee Meetings (21:06)

Meeting Type: Scheduled Council Meeting  
 Date of Meeting: 28 April 2026  
 Author: Councillor & Executive Services Support Officer  
 Presenters: Chief Executive Officer

#### Executive Summary

Minutes of Advisory Committee Meetings and committee reports are reported to Council for information (refer to attachments).

Date	Meeting details	Refer
2 February 2026	Arts and Culture Advisory Committee Meeting	Attachment 1
31 March 2026	Youth Council Advisory Committee Meeting	Attachment 2

#### Resolution:

**(Moved: Councillor A Fitzpatrick/Councillor A Winters)**

That Council notes the minutes of these Advisory Committees.

**Carried**

#### Attachments

- 1 Arts and Culture Advisory committee meeting 02 February 2026 
- 2 Youth Council Advisory committee meeting 31-March-2026 

## 19. Notices of Motion

Nil

## 20. Urgent Business

## 21. Public Question Time (22:35)

**Note:** Actions arising from Public Question Time will be recorded and tracked by the Chief Executive Officer.

21.1 (22:45)	<p><b>Wendy Toppin submitted the following question:</b></p> <p><b>What happens to the glass that is collected in the purple bins? Whilst I'm happy to be part of the process of recycling, I would like to know..</b></p> <p><i>Mayor Irene Grant responded</i>  <i>Glass material collected through the purple-lid glass bins is transported to ASQ (Allstone Quarries), the glass is crushed, cleaned, and recycled for reuse in construction materials, such as sand substitutes, concrete and asphalt products. Council officers are working on a project to create opportunities for recycled products to be used in local construction and infrastructure projects across Wangaratta, supporting a circular economy approach.</i></p>
21.2 (23:50)	<p><b>Adrian Fox submitted the following question:</b></p> <p><b>Could you please give an update on the progress of the installation of the 10 Parking machines in CBD?</b></p> <p><i>Mayor Irene Grant responded:</i>  <i>The procurement process for the 10 new parking payment machines approved by Council is being finalised. We expect that the machines will be installed and operating by the end of June.</i></p>

21.3 (24:30)	<p><b>Graeme Gerald asked a question regarding the proposed installation of a 22,000-litre water tank on Yarrabee Road, adjacent to his property.</b></p> <p><b>Graeme stated that he had not been aware of the proposal and queried advice he had received that the project was being undertaken in consultation with, and at the request of, the CFA and the community of Markwood. He advised that he had no objection to additional water storage, but raised concerns about the proposed location.</b></p> <p><b>Graeme noted that an existing area nearby had previously been used by emergency services during fire events for the parking and refilling of water tankers and fuel vehicles, and questioned why an additional site was proposed approximately 80 metres away. He asked whether the infrastructure could be consolidated at the existing location. Graeme also raised concerns regarding traffic impacts on Yarrabee Road, particularly given the presence of a bus stop and roadside facilities, and identified drainage and water flow issues that he believed could be affected by the construction of a pad at the proposed site, with potential impacts on surrounding land. Council officers responded at the meeting, with further information to be provided following the meeting.</b></p> <p><i>Director Marcus Goonan responded:</i></p> <p><i>The proposed water tank location required further consultation, and Council would ensure that this occurs. Director Goonan outlined that the funding for the installation forms part of an annual allocation held by Council to respond to requests from the CFA for water tank installations. Director Goonan confirmed that Council was willing to continue discussions to ensure the tank is located appropriately.</i></p>
21.4 (27:51)	<p><b>John Harper asked a question regarding parking issues in the local community (Milawa) on weekends and particularly long weekends. Mr Harper advised that caravans and vehicles parking along the bike track and near the shops were impacting pedestrian access and safety. While acknowledging the benefit to local businesses, Mr Harper requested that Council undertake an urgent review of parking arrangements to address safety and potential damage to vehicles.</b></p> <p><i>Mayor Irene Grant responded:</i></p> <p><i>That the matter would be taken on notice and that feedback would be provided at a future meeting.</i></p>
21.5 (28:50)	<p><b>Shane Cunningham asked why residents of Yarrabee Road were not consulted regarding the proposed installation of a water tank, noting that consultation with affected residents had not occurred prior to the decision being made. Mr Cunningham stated that his primary concern related to the process by which the location was determined rather than the installation of the tank itself,</b></p> <p><i>Mayor Irene Grant responded:</i></p>

	<i>The she acknowledged the comments raised and noted that while the intentions of the project were good, the execution had not been satisfactory.</i>
21.6 (29:43)	<p><b>Vivvian King asked the following question:</b></p> <p><b>Vivian asked for further information regarding the census referred to by Councillor Winters, noting that the findings outlined in the report were concerning. Vivian asked whether the census was a public document and whether Council could provide the percentage representation of women and men among councillors.</b></p> <p><i>Mayor Irene Grant responded:</i></p> <p><i>Mayor Irene Grant advised that, based on the composition of Council, the Rural City of Wangaratta has historically been diverse in terms of representation, particularly during her involvement in local government.</i></p> <p><i>The Mayor noted that the information presented by Councillor Winters provided a broader snapshot of Victoria and stated that she was not certain whether the issues identified were as acute in rural and regional councils.</i></p> <p><i>The Mayor acknowledged that while debate among councillors can be robust, Council generally works well together. The Mayor further noted that feedback received from the community can at times be more combative and suggested this may reflect changing levels of understanding of, or respect for, government. The Mayor then invited Councillor Winters to respond further.</i></p> <p><i>Councillor Allison Winters responded:</i></p> <p><i>That the census referred to was a public document and outlined that the report included responses from 329 participants, with 49 per cent identifying as women, 49 per cent identifying as men, and 2 per cent identifying as non-binary, self-described, or preferring not to say. Councillor Winters advised that they were happy to provide the document following the meeting.</i></p>
21.7 (32:20)	<p><b>John Harper asked the following question:</b></p> <p><b>John asked whether Council would consider providing a rates concession or discount for veterans who do not hold a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card but instead hold a White Card with accepted conditions. Mr Harper noted that following ANZAC Day he had become aware that such concessions were not currently available through Council, despite veterans receiving concessions in other areas such as vehicle registration, and queried whether this was something Council would consider.</b></p> <p><i>Director Sarah Brindley provided a response regarding payment plans available under Council's Financial Hardship Policy. Director Brindley also encouraged any community members with questions about rate payments to contact the rates team for further information. Further information will be provided at an upcoming Council Meeting.</i></p>
21.8 (34:10)	<b>Peter Scarn asked the following Question:</b>

	<p><b>Peter Scarn asked for an update on the safety review associated with the petition for Appin Street, including how long the review process would take and what the next steps would be. Peter raised concerns about pedestrian safety, noting frequent crossings by children and referring to a serious incident that occurred in December. Peter sought clarification on the process following the safety review.</b></p> <p><i>Director Marcus Goonan Responded:</i></p> <p><i>Director Marcus Goonan outlined the process for petitions, advising that petitions are formally received at a Council meeting and that Council has several options for how a petition may be progressed, including referral to the Chief Executive Officer or to a future Council meeting. Director Goonan indicated that the petition was expected to return to Council, likely at the May Council meeting, and advised that a review and collection of relevant data would be undertaken to assess support for a crossing at the location. Director Goonan noted that the review process would not take a significant amount of time.</i></p> <p><b>Peter Scarn asked the following Question:</b></p> <p><b>Peter raised further concerns regarding the lack of pedestrian crossings at one end of Appin Street, noting the presence of kindergartens, schools and main roads in the area. Peter queried why crossings existed near shops and school crossing points but not at the other end of the street.</b></p> <p><i>Director Marcus Goonan Responded:</i></p> <p><i>Director Goonan advised that school crossings and pedestrian crossings are treated and funded differently. Director Goonan explained that the request being considered related to a priority pedestrian crossing, which is typically provided in central business districts and areas with high pedestrian and traffic volumes. Director Goonan advised that a range of factors would be considered as part of the review process, including potential options to make crossing points more visible, and confirmed that Council would provide clear information when the matter is reported back.</i></p>
21.9 (36:56)	<p><b>Helen Harrington asked the following question:</b></p> <p><b>Helen acknowledged the work undertaken by Council staff, in particular Hannah Clancy, in supporting residents who lost their homes in the bushfires. Helen noted that recovery is a long-term process and asked how long Council would continue to provide support to affected residents, either through Hannah or other avenues, noting that recovery extends beyond a one-year timeframe.</b></p> <p><i>Director Marcus Goonan Responded:</i></p> <p><i>Director Goonan advised that Council's support for residents impacted by emergencies does not cease and confirmed that Helen could continue to contact Hannah Clancy for assistance. Director Goonan noted that the particular fire event did not meet the threshold for State Government emergency funding, despite</i></p>

*advocacy efforts. Director Goonan outlined that Council had undertaken significant recovery works to date, including the disposal of fire debris and ongoing clean-up of roads and affected areas, and advised that while Council would continue to provide support, future engagement may involve residents contacting Council directly as required.*

**Helen Harrington asked the following question:**

**Helen raised concerns regarding access via Bennetts Lane, noting that road conditions had deteriorated following fire recovery and firefighting activities. Ms Harrington advised that the condition of the road was causing additional anxiety, particularly in relation to access during any future fire events, and asked whether the road condition could be addressed.**

*Director Marcus Goonan Responded:*

*Director Goonan acknowledged the concerns raised and explained that repair works are subject to approval from the relevant funding bodies. Director Goonan advised that Council had not been successful in securing funding for the road through those processes but confirmed that a number of works had been scheduled, including tidying up roadside areas, removing fallen trees, and clearing silt from drains. Director Goonan advised that these works were included in Council's program and expected to commence within the coming months.*

## 22. Confidential Business (41:11)

**Resolution:**

**(Moved: Councillor D Fuller/Councillor H Benton)**

That Council resolves to close the meeting to members of the public in accordance with Division 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 to consider the following items:

**Support at Home Pricing Update**

**Item is Confidential under the Local Government Act 2020 as it contains information relating to : (a) Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released..**

**Carried**

**Resolution:**

**(Moved: Councillor D Fuller/Councillor A Winters)**

That the standard meeting be reopened. No other business was transacted while the meeting was closed to the public.

**Carried**

### **23. Closure of Meeting**

The Meeting closed at 6:50pm.

UNCONFIRMED