

Breaking news

Thanks to our high vaccination rates and absence of COVID-19 cases, East Gippsland has been identified as an 'economy trial' region in a vital Victorian Government vaccination campaign.

Scheduled to begin 11 October, trials will be conducted in businesses and at events across highly vaccinated parts of regional Victoria, to help our state open progressively as a vaccinated economy when we meet the key doubledose thresholds.

Acting Mayor Cr Mark Reeves fully supports the vaccination passport and trial. "It is successfully operational in Europe and is how we protect each other, our front line responders and ourselves in a pandemic," he said.

"I'm excited to hear the positive responses from business and community, who clearly subscribe to the vaccination program with our higher vaccination rates." Read the full media release [here](#).



Well done East Gippsland!

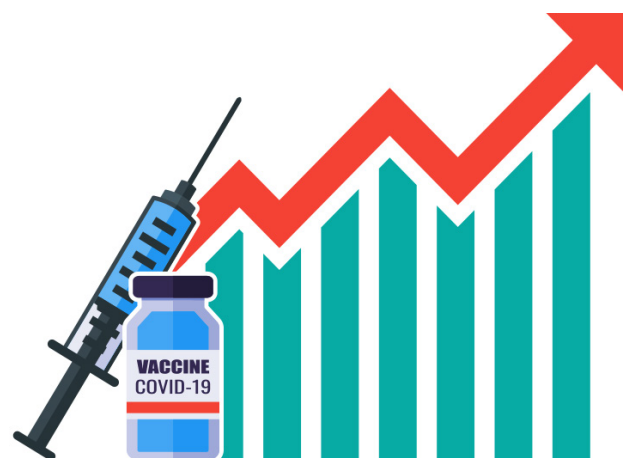
As of Monday 20 September, we surpassed the 80% first dose target for COVID-19 vaccinations - a great effort! The latest figures out shows we've reached 81.2%, bringing us even closer to our target of 80% of the community fully vaccinated.

First dose over 15 years: 85.6%

Second dose over 15 years: 60%

Target: 80%

Let's continue to lead by example in East Gippsland; if you're not vaccinated please roll up your sleeves and get it done to help protect everyone in our community, but particularly those who, due to health reasons, are unable to be vaccinated. Follow us on [Facebook](#) or keep an eye on our [website](#) for weekly vaccination updates.




Acknowledgement of Country

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel people as the Traditional Custodians of the land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders past and present.

East Gippsland welcomes 12 new citizens

East Gippsland welcomed 12 new citizens on Friday 17 September, as part of Australian Citizenship Day.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Australian Citizenship Day and our region has a successful history of welcoming people from all over the world.

The conferees from five countries including America, England, India, Scotland and Thailand, received their citizenship during a ceremony at St Mary's Parish Centre in Bairnsdale. As it was a small ceremony to comply with the current COVID-19 restrictions, an additional ceremony will be held in November for another group of conferees. The citizenship ceremony was live streamed and can be viewed [here](#) 



Deputy Mayor Cr Mark Reeves with Chaipat Murika and Pornsiri Robertson.



Deputy Mayor Cr Mark Reeves with Sandra Willis.



Deputy Mayor Cr Mark Reeves with Peter Watmough.



Deputy Mayor Cr Mark Reeves with Davinder Kaur.



State of the future

We have featured in Sustainability Victoria's 2020 Year in Review video!

Starring our very own Sustainability Officer Rebecca Lamble, the video showcases the Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre which received funding from Sustainability Victoria to install solar PV and LED lighting. Another step towards our renewable energy goals and minimising power costs!

Find out what other projects made a difference to the state of Victoria's future last year. Watch the video on [YouTube](#).



A ferry good change

Hey early birds and essential workers - the Raymond Island ferry has a new timetable, which includes a 6.20 am service Monday to Friday to cater for those who begin work at 7.00 am.

Paynesville departures remain unchanged.

If you're a regular user of the ferry, annual passes are available now from our Service Centres. Passes must be affixed to the bottom right corner of your vehicle windscreen.

For more on the ferry, including an upcoming outage for maintenance, head to: www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/raymond-island-ferry

We are working in collaboration with the Live Music Office towards best practices for sustainable live music, supported by better regulations and policy implementation. This will assist growth through all levels of the venue-based live music industry and provide clear career pathways for new and emerging musicians and industry professionals. Live and Local is a capacity-building program which seeks to strengthen live music in communities and consists of a mapping project; including a series of micro-festival music events, professional development workshops, a local industry forum informed by the experience, engagement and information gained through the program. This project is funded by the Live and Local Office NSW and Bushfire Recovery Victoria. For more information about the **Live and Local program**, please contact us on 5153 9500 or via email: feedback@gipps.vic.gov.au

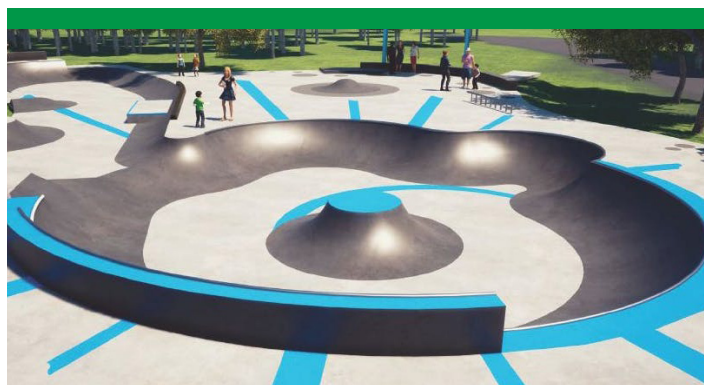


5 October: Council Meeting – 6.00 pm (Bairnsdale)

13 October: Author Talk: Cassandra Pybus, author of Truganini, in conversation with Claire Halliday. Free, 6.30 pm, via Zoom. Register on (03) 5152 4225.

21 October; 4 and 18 November: Bairnsdale Library Immunisation Session for children, 4.00 pm-6.00 pm.

26 October: Council Meeting - 6.00 pm



Calling Mallacoota skaters!

Calling all skaters! Have your say on the upgrade of the Mallacoota Skatepark.

Globally recognised skate park designers and builders Convic have worked with skaters from the Mallacoota community to produce a design that can be used by skaters, inline skaters, and scooter and BMX riders of all levels of skill from beginner to advanced.

It will be a space to play, teach and learn.

The new design boasts flowing transition and street areas, including half-pipes, handrails, quarter pipes, a spine (quarter pipes placed back-to-back) and more, as well as shady gardens and landscaping. The striking design is in the form of an abalone shell broken on the rocky shores of Mallacoota.

The design has a strong focus on skaters and scooter riders, but BMXers will still enjoy the ride.

Construction is due to be completed in 2022 and it's not too late to have your say on the design.

Feel free to check out our Frequently Asked Questions and have your say at yoursay.eastgippsland.vic.

Stay up to date with places to explore, taste, play and stay across the region.

As we re-open make sure you keep an eye out for upcoming events via our tourism website: www.visiteastgippsland.com.au

Please note that some events may be cancelled, postponed or moved online due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time. For the latest updates visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au

28 October: Council Meeting (Statutory) - 6.00 pm

29 October: Omeo High Country Caravan & RV Muster, Omeo Golf Club

19-21 November: SuperTrail trail running weekend, Lakes Entrance

Heating up hospitality

Is it just us or is it getting hot around here?

Definitely the latter, thanks to our recent delivery of 80 outdoor gas heaters to 42 hospitality businesses across the region. The initiative, funded by the Victorian Government's Outdoor Dining Activation Package, was open to all registered hospitality venues. The distribution of the heaters also provided a redeployment opportunity for several of our staff impacted by COVID-19 service closures.

For more information about business support initiatives, go to business.vic.gov.au.



Australia Day Award nominations

Nominations are now open for East Gippsland Shire's Australia Day Awards!

Now is the perfect time to shine the spotlight on those unsung heroes who have made positive contributions to our region's communities over the past 12 months.

Take the time and submit a nomination for someone you believe is deserving of an accolade. This could be a friend, workmate, someone at your sports club or community association or someone you know doing great work serving the community.

The Australia Day Award nomination categories are:

- Citizen of the Year—a person who had made a noteworthy contribution during the previous year, and/or given outstanding service to the community over several years
- Young Citizen of the Year—a person aged under 27 years who has given outstanding service to the community

- Community Event of the Year—an organisation/group who have held an event within the last 12 months

For further information about the awards and to nominate, visit www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/community/australia-day or contact us on 5153 9500.



2021 Citizen of the Year: Leo op den Brouw.

Council meeting in brief

At the Council meeting held 14 September, Council:

- Approved an alternative motion regarding a planning application to allow a 12-block housing development to proceed at 100 Kings Cove Boulevard, Metung.
- Moved ahead with a special charge scheme for South Bairnsdale Industrial Estate that will increase economic activity in the area by addressing a lack of water pressure on some blocks.
- Received and approved the draft Annual Financial statement, noting that the auditor gave it a strong endorsement.
- Adopted a new Procurement Policy aimed at finding value for money for ratepayers and ensuring equal opportunity in contractual matters.
- Voted yes to a redevelopment of the Crown foreshore reserve at Slip Road, Paynesville, with more than \$5m to be spent improving the area.
- Agreed to proceed with work to repair 44 culverts to ensure their continued serviceability.

Watch the meeting 

Orbost, Mallacoota visits rescheduled

We love going on the road and taking Council Meetings to the many towns



across our great shire.

However, due to uncertainty regarding future COVID-19 restrictions, Council meetings and visits scheduled to be held in Orbost (5 October) and Mallacoota (16 November) will now be held at the Corporate Centre, Bairnsdale.

But we will be rescheduling those Orbost and Mallacoota visits as soon as possible in the new year.

For more on Council meetings, please visit eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/council



Forest Park, Orbost

East Gippsy's big wet

To say it's a been a bit wet underfoot across the shire over the past couple of months would be an understatement.

Recent spring rainfall (on top of a drop in August) caused some localised flooding and forced the closure of some Council-managed roads.

Keep up to date with all the latest incidents and warnings at **Vic Emergency**.

You might also notice that some of our flood-affected parks and gardens are a little overgrown, particularly those in low-lying areas like Forest Park in Orbost (pictured). Never fear! Our parks and gardens crews are ready waiting until the ground dries a little before they can move on in and start mowing. It might be a few weeks though! Your patience is appreciated.

There are also several walking trails that have been inundated. Our teams are aware and will be working to repair these as soon as possible.

For more information about our parks and gardens head to Council's **website**.



Livingstone Park, Omeo



DID YOU KNOW? We manage about 2,900km of formed roads and more than 8,400 culverts throughout the Shire.



Creek Street, Omeo

Step in the right direction for safety

Walking to school or the shops is about to get a lot easier and safer for Eastwood locals thanks to a new footpath that will connect key parts of the suburb and link with other footpaths built by Council over the past two years.

When finished, a continuous path will stretch over 2km from Howitt Avenue through to The Great Alpine Road.

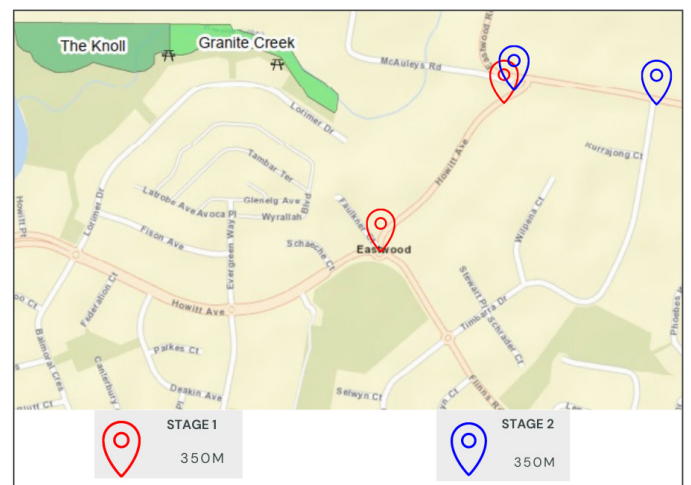
We are installing the new footpath along a section of Howitt Avenue and Eastwood Road. The new 2 metre wide path will provide locals with an active and safe route to the school and shopping precincts.

What's involved?

Stage 1 – creation of a 350 metre

stretch of footpath along Howitt Avenue from the Flinns Road roundabout to Eastwood Road intersection. Works will take six weeks to complete by a local contractor with \$100,000 from our capital works 2020/21 budget.

Stage 2 – the continuation of the footpath for a further 350 metres, from Howitt Avenue onto Eastwood Road to the Timbarra Drive intersection, linking to a recently completed 635 metre section of



footpath.

Sections of the Howitt Avenue nature strip will be closed to pedestrians during works, but the nature strip on the other side of the road will remain open.

Help with health and wellbeing plan

We are leading the development of a new four-year municipal health and wellbeing plan, 'Well placed for Wellbeing 2021-25'.

The plan guides our work, and that of our partner organisations, to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

Before we draft the plan we want to hear if the health priorities our working group developed are in line with community thinking.

The areas of focus are: Liveable; Healthy and well; Safe and secure; Connected to culture and community; and Able to participate. We have prepared drawings to help visually explain what these priorities look like, and the Mayor explains the purpose of the 'Well placed for Wellbeing' plan in this [short video](#).

To give your feedback, visit our [Your Say East Gippsland website](#) or contact us on 03 5153 9500 for more information.

There will be further consultation opportunities as the draft plan is developed.



Premier urged to consider our situation

Earlier this month Mayor Cr Mendy Urie wrote an urgent letter to Premier Daniel Andrews addressing the cumulative impacts the lockdowns are having on East Gippsland communities, imploring him to consider our region's situation when rules are being reassessed.

Cr Urie's letter urged the Victorian Government to consider the mental health and wellbeing of its regional residents when making upcoming decisions relating to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, citing a "deterioration in mental health for vulnerable groups" and "increasing states of stress and distress" in our communities.

"The cumulative impact of drought, the Black Summer fires (and previous fire events), lockdowns (including border closures and a decimation of our tourism industry), and the constant uncertainty is taking its toll on business, families and communities," Cr Urie said.

"Given the numbers of people seeking assistance for mental health issues and suicide rates in rural areas, pre-COVID, we are fearful that increased stress as a result of lockdowns and isolation will lead to a deterioration in mental health outcomes."

Read the full media release on our [website](#).

Have you received your rates notice?

Rate revenue makes up about half of Council's income stream.

It contributes to our capital works program and assists in delivering services to the community.

Ratepayers should have received their 2021-22 Rate and Valuation Notice by now. If you have not, please contact us for a reprint.

If you get your notice by BPAY View, check your internet banking site for your notice. If you chose to get your notice by email, check your inbox and other folders.

Ratepayers can choose to have future rates notices emailed – just follow the steps on the notice.

If you've elected to pay by direct debit on an ongoing basis you don't need to do anything as the direct debit will continue.

The Victorian Government has set the 2021-22 rate cap at 1.5 per cent, which Council has met.

Your rates notice includes a property valuation set by the Valuer-General Victoria. If you think your valuation is incorrect you can lodge an

objection within two months of the date of issue at the [Rating Valuation Objection website](#).

We can help with this process and encourage you to contact us urgently.

We offer three **rates payment options**, including online payments. See the Rates Payment Options page on our website for details.

If you think you will have difficulty paying on time, contact us to discuss arrangements.



Calling all kids to get grubby!

Time to get your hands dirty kids!

Our new sustainability education program, Get Grubby, is encouraging children aged 3 to 10 to become great gardeners, do wonders with worm gardens, be creative with composting, become super savers of water and appreciate what the natural environment can do for our health.

We're working with Cate McQuillen, creator of Get Grubby TV and Dirtgirlworld and Get Grubby characters Dirtgirl, Scrapboy, Costa the Garden Gnome and to deliver these units across East Gippsland.

"It's so important to show our community's little people that they can still make a big difference by doing little things, like recycling or gardening, every day," Cate said.

Launching at the start of Children's Week on Thursday 23 October, the rollout of the 10-unit program coincides with key global eco-events such as World Environment Day and National Recycling Week.

Teacher and unit guides, activities, supporting Dirtgirlworld TV clips, songs and information are free for all of the shire's early-learning and childcare centres, schools and families to access. Contact our Waste Team (03) 5153 9500 to get your free access code, then head to getgrubbyprogram.com/east-gippsland-shire-council-login.



Artists' corner

Registrations open for ArtsACTION program

We've teamed up with Pop Up Art to deliver a free ArtsACTION upskilling and professional development program for creatives.

What's involved?

A six-part email resource pack which includes Zoom workshops and access to a growing network, all being delivered online until April 2022.

Is it for me?

If you are an emerging or professional artist or an arts worker, looking to grow your career, build your business, step up your organisation, or connect with other creatives across Victoria and beyond, ArtsACTION is definitely for you!

To find out more visit the [Pop Up Art website](#) or go to the [Eventbrite website](#) to register. Subscribe to receive the [email resource pack](#).

Entries closing for East Gippsland Youth Art Prize.

Artists, submit your piece by Friday 8 October for selection to be featured in an exhibition at the Brabuwoolooong Gallery, Bairnsdale from Monday 25 October.

Open to people aged between 12-25 who live, work or study in East Gippsland, artists can enter works into the following categories:

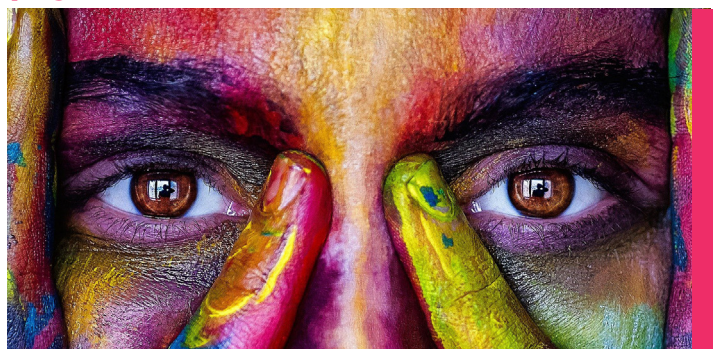
- Drawings
- Paintings
- Photographs
- Digital illustrations
- 3D visuals
- Film (2-3 minutes)

In addition, in recognition with the Archibald Prize coming to the Gippsland Art Gallery, a special portraiture category is included this year.

Cash prizes will be on offer for first, second and runner-up of \$300, \$200 and \$100 for each age category. Plus, \$300 for the special portraiture prize. Winners are announced on 25 October and the exhibition runs through until the end of January 2022.

Make sure you are following the Brave Arts EG Facebook Virtual Gallery to see all the fabulous artists in our community.

To find out more or to register your entry, visit the [Youth page](#) on our website.





Some of our Working for Victoria scheme hires and now full-time mower operators/labourers with us: Pictured: Brad Durie, Nicholas Carroll, Wayne Kennedy, Blake Mair and Adrian Sheritt. Not pictured: Jessica Douglas.

Work for Victoria works for us!

In a win for us, the community, and half a dozen very happy new employees, we've been able to take on six new Parks and Gardens team members from the ranks of its Working for Victoria (WV) recruits.

The \$500 million WV Fund matches Victorians who have lost their incomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic with new employment opportunities.

The six were offered full-time, ongoing positions as mower operators and labourers after completing their six-month WV employment contracts.

"The Working for Victoria scheme has been a great way for us to ascertain who could potentially be future employees at the shire – a 'try before you buy'," Dave Richardson, Parks and Gardens Coordinator, said.

"It takes out down time for new employees having to be trained in the usage of our machinery and to see how they work in with others from the crew."

The new hires said they were grateful for the opportunity, noting that it gave them a foot in the door to gain full-time employment when positions became available – and that they all love working outdoors and in the community.

The new Parks and Gardens workers join seven other WV employees who have found roles with us, including our Risk Administration Officer.

"Our Work for Victoria workers and our 13 new hires are helping our community respond to the devastating impacts of bushfire and the COVID pandemic. They're each playing a role in helping us move forward and helping our economy to bounce back. In return, we are providing them with much-needed experience, mentors and an ongoing job."

Audit and Risk Committee vacancy

We have a vacant position available on our Audit and Risk Committee and would like a diverse range of candidates to consider applying for this important position.



The primary role of the Committee is to assist Council to fulfil its governance and oversight responsibilities in relation to financial reporting, internal control, risk management systems, ethical accountability and the internal and external audit functions.

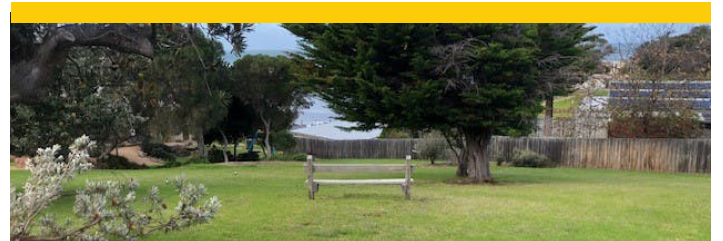
Skills and attributes required of Committee members include a strong financial background and/or experience in risk management and/or governance. Independent members of the Audit Committee are paid for meeting attendance and a travel allowance is paid where appropriate.

The tenure for this position is for a three-year term.

Get your Nomination for Membership pack from our website or by calling Wendy Veldhuizen on 5153 9500.

Nominations must be lodged with the Chief Executive Officer by **12.00 noon on 22 October 2021**.

New landscaping for Lake Tyers reserve



Lake Tyers Beach is welcoming a planned upgrade of Skidale Close Reserve, near the ocean and popular Lake Tyers.

The project will enhance the reserve by installing new play equipment, nature-based play elements, pathways and lounge-style seating. New landscaped areas will complement the natural environment of the park.

"What could be better than lunch at nearby Lake Tyers Tavern, then a sunny stroll around the upgraded park to take in the stunning views over the ocean and beach," Mayor Cr Mendy Urie said.

"The renewed reserve will be an asset for locals and visitors alike."

Community members are being invited to share their thoughts on the draft design, which serves as a talking point for what the project might deliver. Share your feedback on the initial concept plan and help shape the final design via our online survey at yoursay.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au. You can also contact Council's Strategic Project Planner via feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au or (03) 5153 9500. The survey closes at 5pm on Monday 4 October 2021.

Getting know...Patricia Clive, Governance and Compliance Coordinator

How would you describe your role to someone without telling them your title?

I help people do the right thing in the interest of the Council and the community.

What do you enjoy most about your role as Governance and Compliance Coordinator at Council?

Puzzles. Working out how all the different parts interconnect. I also like working with others to solve problems—improving everyone's understanding of the requirements for Council to serve the community.

What led you to this point in your career?

I started my public service career as an electoral officer for a regional member of Federal Parliament who represented most of outback Queensland. Before moving to Gippsland (my husband's career in the Royal Australian Air Force has brought us here a couple of years ago) I also worked as an advisor to a State Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and Minister for Public Works and Housing where I gained extensive experience in parliamentary processes, party and cross

floor politics and learnt to balance public interest, public sector interests and politics.

What do you love most about living in Gippsland?

East Gippsland offers many opportunities to get out in nature - bike riding, hiking, running and exploring. My favourites are the walk around Nyerimilang Heritage Park and cycling on the Rail Trail.

If you could go anywhere in the world right now, where would you go and why?

Queensland, north and central, to visit my big boys (23 and 20) and spend time with extended family—due to lockdown we are missing out on some family milestone events.

If you could be anything in world, other than your current role, what would you be and why?

I think I would have always been drawn to research and writing professions, but if I had known what other opportunities existed when I was leaving school, I might have become a graphic designer or a photographer or dressmaker.



A revamped ramp

The popular North Arm Boat Ramp in Lakes Entrance is getting a revamped ramp, jetty and weigh station, as well as a new pontoon and groyne.

Located to the west of the North Arm Bridge in Lakes Entrance, at the base of Kalimna Hill, it is one of the most used boating and fishing facilities in East Gippsland and provides on-water access to both the Gippsland Lakes and Bass Strait.

The existing facility is in poor condition, so we're replacing the boat ramp and apron, creating a new floating pontoon on the west side of the ramp and fixed jetty on the east side; relocating of the weigh station (gantry), to the eastern jetty and constructing a groyne wall.

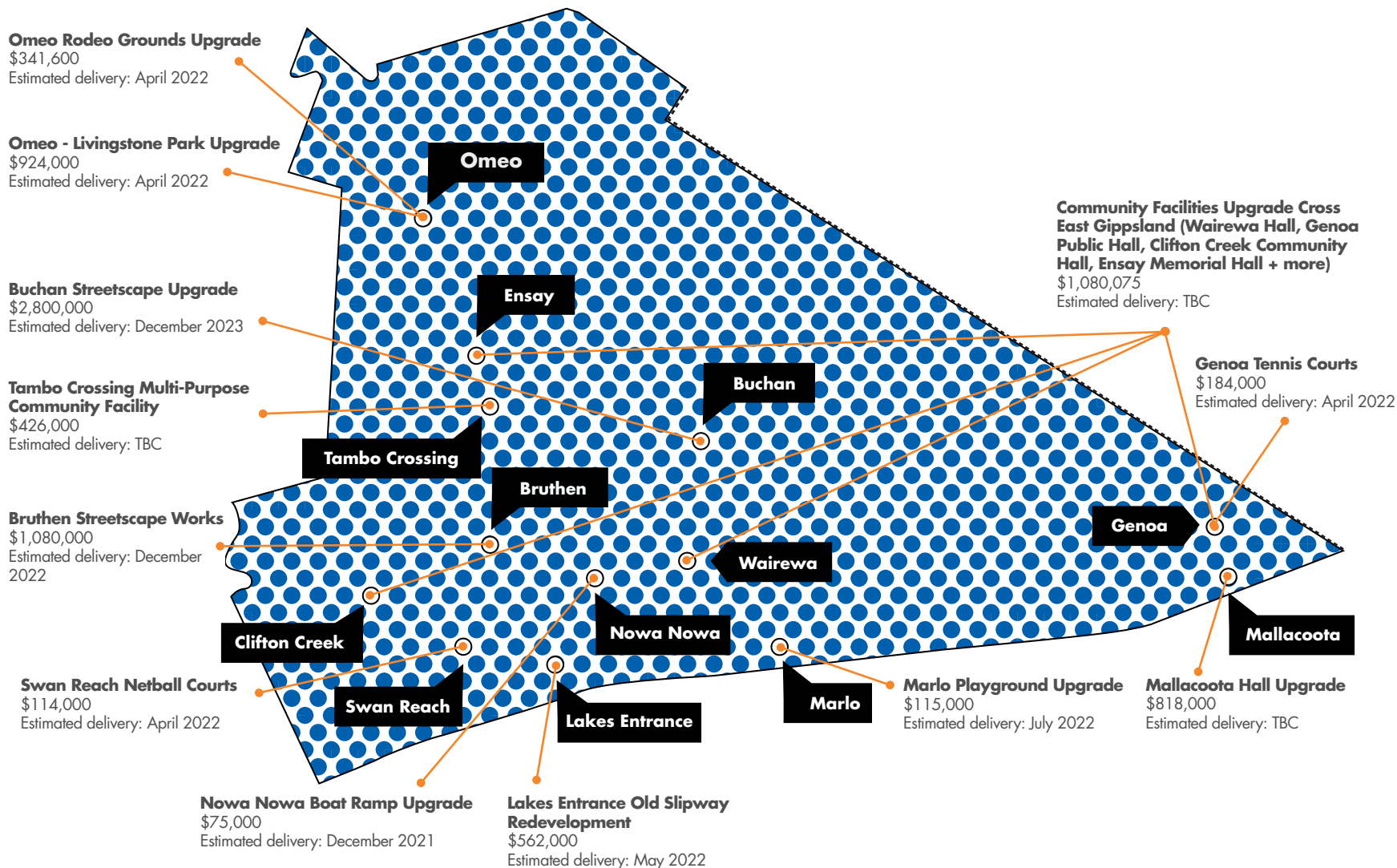
Work will begin early October 2021 with Stage 1 complete by late December 2021 in preparation for the whole facility being open to the public in time for the popular Christmas and new year periods. Stage 2 begins in early February 2022 and is expected to be completed in March 2022.

The North Arm Boat Ramp facility including fish cleaning tables and bins will be closed for public access while construction takes place from Friday 1 October to Friday 24 December 2021 (approximately 12 weeks) and early February 2022 to early March 2022 (approximately 4 weeks), but there is another boat launch areas and fish-cleaning facilities just 300m to the east so you can keep on fishing!



Helping our region recover

Projects Managed by Council / on Council Land



East Gippsland is one of 11 shires around the state on the receiving end of the \$68.6 million Local Economic Recovery (LER) program.

Jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments, the program is funding local projects vital for community recovery, support economic stimulus projects, and boost industry and jobs across bushfire-affected regions.

LER funded projects underway in East Gippsland, led by Council (depicted on map) or other agencies, are listed here.

For more information about these projects visit the State Government's Local Economic Recovery [website](#).

Not Managed by Council / Not on Council Land

Bruthen Recreation Reserve Upgrade: \$1,070,000

Buchan Canoe Launch: \$40,250

Buchan Gelantipy and District Renewal Program: \$118,600

Destination Gippsland Tourism Product: \$267,000

East Gippsland Rail Trail Surface Upgrade: \$1,500,000

Envite Environment Training Opportunities for Young Indigenous People: \$850,000

Goongerah Community Facilities and Support Initiatives: \$87,260

Lakes Entrance Recreation Reserve: \$402,125

Mallacoota Abalone Processing Facility: \$3,000,000

Mallacoota Golf Course Upgrade: \$1,890,000

Mallacoota Pony Club: \$296,000

Marlo Community Hall Upgrade: \$336,000

Metung Hot Springs Tourism Development Stage 1: \$1,500,000

Mobile Play2Learn Program – East Gippsland: \$432,549

Orbost Cultural Walk: \$362,000

Recovery and Resilience Building for Children with Additional Needs: \$140,000

Riviera Nautic On-water Facilities Upgrade: \$190,000

Sailors Grave Brewing Relocation and Expansion: \$2,350,000

Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve Upgrade: \$140,000

Tambo Valley Honey Agri-tourism Experience: \$400,000

Bushfire Attack Levels explained

A Bushfire Attack Level rating, also known as a BAL rating, is a measure of possible fire intensity at a proposed house location.

BAL ratings are assessed by a range of factors, including distance of the proposed house to threat vegetation, type of vegetation, and the slope of the land.

Construction requirements get progressively more stringent as the BAL rating increases.

A house must be designed and built in accordance with the property's assessed BAL rating, to meet or exceed all the construction requirements for this rating.

If you are thinking about rebuilding or have any questions, visit our **Bushfire Rebuilding webpage** or contact our free Rebuild Support Service on **BRSS@egipps.vic.gov.au** or 03 5153 9500.



There are 6 BAL ratings: low, 12.5, 19, 29, 40 and FZ (flame zone).

Rural women – put your hands up

Applications for the AgriFutures Rural Women's Award are closing soon.

The Victorian winner gets a \$15,000 bursary which can be used on activities like education and training, business plans, testing new business concepts and publishing books. Nominations close Friday 8 October.

Freedom of Entry ceremony postponed

We have been advised by the Australian Defence Force that the Freedom of Entry Ceremony for the HMAS Choules at Mallacoota has been postponed due to COVID-19.

Scheduled for November, this event will now occur in 2022. We will share updates from event organisers as we receive them.

Apply for Black Summer grant

The closing date for applications in the first round of National Recovery and Resilience Agency (NRRRA) Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants has been extended.

For more information or to apply, visit the **NRRRA website**.

Applications close 5.00 pm on Wednesday 6 October.

Small business support

If you have a business, or are thinking about starting one, take advantage of our free Business Concierge service.

Through this service you can access free, flexible, confidential and tailored support which is highly tailored to your business.

Our concierge will work alongside you to achieve your business goals and provide only the information that is relevant to you.

For more information or for small business support, contact Business Concierge Mali Bromley by **email** or call 03 5153 9500.

Work begins on protection upgrades

Our work on the Community Resilience and Development Program continues across the region.

The program seeks to ensure the resilience and capacity of community facilities across East Gippsland and The program contains several elements; contractors have completed BAL assessment and reporting works and this has informed the scope of works now underway for ember protection upgrades.

Contracts have been awarded for the electrical switchboard and AV upgrade parts of the program. Work has begun, taking into consideration COVID-19 requirements.

For more information contact your Place Manager, or project lead Paul Oakes on 03 5153 9500.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Grant win for youth working group

The Mallacoota and Cann River Children and Youth Working Group has received funding to support a much-needed Youth Recovery Officer position for Mallacoota and Cann River districts.

Funded through Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV), supported by the Commonwealth Disaster Funding Arrangements, the grant will provide \$439,326 over two years.

This is in addition to \$60,000 previously pledged by the Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation.

The Mallacoota and Cann River Children and Youth Working Group built the case for the funding. The group is co-chaired by council's Eva Grunden and Uniting Gippsland's Ruth Churchill and includes community members, Red Cross, the Mallacoota P-12 College, Mallacoota Medical Centre, The Sanctuary, BRV, Mallacoota District Health and Support Service,

Save the Children, Regional Arts Victoria, Royal Flying Doctor Service and YAC Vic, and has been focused on the unique needs of the region's children and young people.

The Youth Recovery Officer funding was awarded to the Mallacoota Community Health and Infrastructure Resilience Fund, with the position to be managed by the Mallacoota Medical Centre team.

The grant will provide \$439,326 over two years.



Bemm River shares issues, solutions

Our Community Conversations program planned for bushfire affected communities had to be postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Timing was on Bemm River's side though, and the community had its session in between lockdowns with 17 residents taking part on 19 August.

Attendees shared their views on issues the community faced during the bushfires. Joining us to listen to the issues from that time and current issues were relevant agencies and departments.

Bemm River community members also spoke about some community-identified solutions.

The session was run by an independent facilitator who will produce a report for the community with findings and recommendations derived from discussions at the session.

These reports will be prepared and provided to all communities who hold Community Conversation sessions.

We encourage communities with upcoming sessions to get involved and share their bushfire stories and views on community issues and the future. Postponed sessions will be rescheduled when COVID-19 restrictions allow or will be held online.

Stay tuned for information on upcoming sessions.

Reach out for help

The ongoing challenges of drought, fire and COVID-19 is creating stress for many people.

If you, your neighbour over the fence or down the road, or a friend needs someone to talk to we encourage you to look into the below resources.

Rural Financial Counselling Service Gippsland is free for all primary producers. Contact 1300 045 747.

Rural Aid is committed to supporting rural communities and aims to reduce stress, depression and suicide in rural areas. Call Darren Devlin on 0432 441 046 for more information or Rural Aid on 1300 327 624.

Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. Contact 13 11 14.

I Farm Well is a practical online tool kit to help Aussie farmers manage life's challenges effectively and get the most out of every day.

Weathering Well is an innovative, digital mental health and wellbeing tool designed for Australian farming communities experiencing adversity from drought and other climatic events.

The National Farmers' Federation **Farm Hub** holds a wealth of information to support farmers.

Black Dog Institute has a wide range of bushfire support strategies, information and resources for long-term health and wellbeing.

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Note: When emailing a Councillor, type "Att Cr (their last name)" in the subject line.

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