



Colac Otway Shire Council



Advocacy framework and advocacy priorities



Prepared for adoption by Council
August 2024

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Colac Otway Shire Council acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Marr nation, past, present and emerging, as the traditional owners of the Colac Otway Region.

Council recognises the enduring culture of traditional owners and their connection to the land and water. Their living traditions inform, build and strengthen a shared understanding and value of the Colac Otway Region and its unique heritage and future prosperity.

These traditions and connections to land and water also help Council to ensure that this region and its unique environment can be protected and celebrated by the current and future generations of residents and visitors to this region.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

- Why is advocacy important?
- When is advocacy important?

PART 1: COUNCIL'S APPROACH

- What does council's advocacy look like?
- What are our advocacy principles?
- What are our advocacy categories and priorities?

PART 2: COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

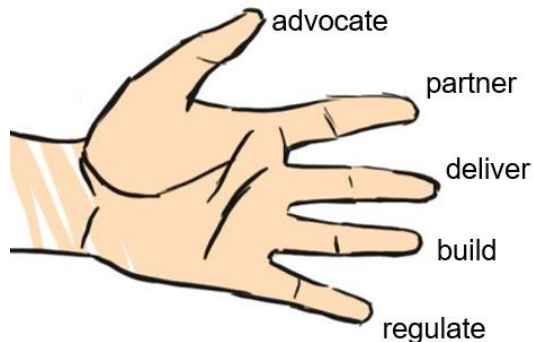
- Table 1 – Regional and shared priorities
- Table 2 – Municipal priorities
- Table 3 – Local priorities and quick wins
- Table 4 – Former advocacy priorities

INTRODUCTION

WHY IS ADVOCACY IMPORTANT?

The Colac Otway Shire Council (Council) supports its municipal community by delivering a wide range of services, projects and programs, facilities and infrastructure. Council also plans and regulates a variety of activities that occur across the Shire.

We can think of Council's various roles through five general groupings as follows:



Many community needs and aspirations remain outside local governments' direct authority and are controlled or heavily influenced by other levels of government, and the private and community sectors. Advocacy therefore remains a critical role for Council to deliver important outcomes for the community.

Council can progress a range of social, environmental and economic matters that are beyond Council's remit and capacity by:

- i. Participating in regional planning and partnerships to ensure Colac Otway aspirations and needs are included in strategic plans; and
- ii. Raising awareness of our community's interests when engaging with other levels of government.

This document provides a framework to support the setting of advocacy priorities so that advocacy initiatives are designed and delivered in the most efficient and effective way. The framework has two parts:

1. Part One: Council's approach
2. Part Two: Council's priorities.

The priorities in Part Two should be reviewed at least annually to ensure Council's focus remains relevant to new issues or opportunities. As things are achieved, Part Two will be updated to show progress and to provide transparency to the community.

When Council has affirmed its current priorities and intends to take a lead or partner role, officers will develop an advocacy plan for the specific priority. The plan will consider the most appropriate advocacy approach including key messages, decision-makers and influencers, and methods of advocacy. The advocacy plans will be shared with councillors and partners to ensure all efforts are understood and aligned.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN IS ADVOCACY IMPORTANT?

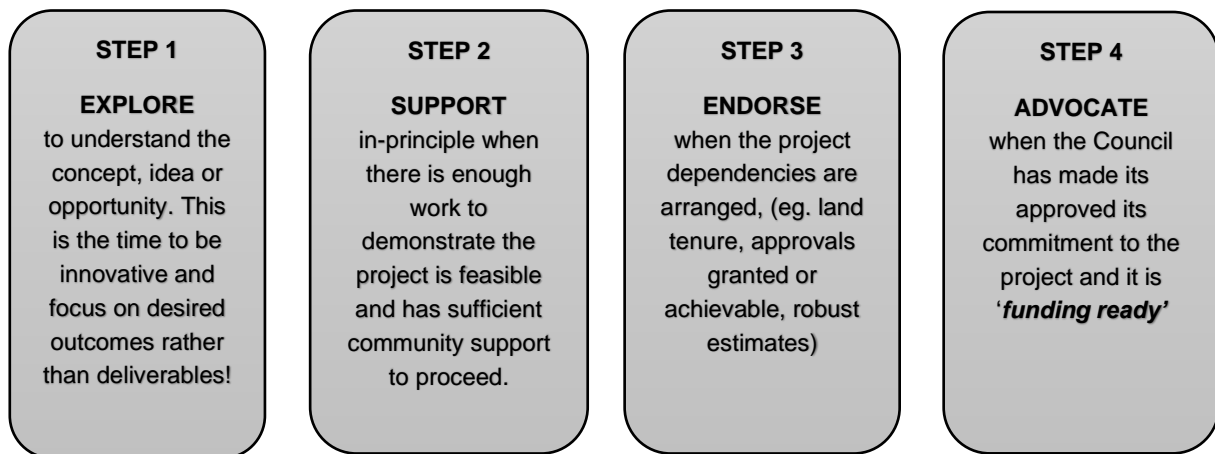
Advocacy takes time and effort, and this equates to financial investment. This means Council needs to focus on advocacy when it is most needed or most likely to be successful.

It is also important that Council and the community understand the difference between:

- **Priority projects** Council will have many priority projects that are important to its community but be successfully progressed at the same time; and
- **Advocacy priorities** This is a targeted list of initiatives drawn from Council's *priorities projects* and other initiatives that need targeted investment of time and effort to achieve the desired outcome.

Council will have many priority projects in its "*project pipeline*" at any time but not all are ready or need advocacy.

The steps in the project pipeline are shown in the following simplistic diagram:



Sometimes Council and the community needs help to progress infrastructure projects to the funding ready stage, and this means help is needed with project planning, design or approvals. Council may advocate for funds or partner support to take 'Step 3' of the project pipeline.

When a project is already at Step 4, Council is ready for 'Step 4' and can advocate for funding to implement or construct a project.

Sometimes for larger projects that will face a more competitive funding environment the advocacy may start earlier to start to raise awareness with key stakeholders, but this should be limited to projects that will be *funding ready* in the near future.



Part 1 – Council’s Approach



PART 1: COUNCIL'S APPROACH

WHAT DOES COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

Advocacy is the action of influencing change in areas out of Council's direct control to bring about positive change that will ultimately improve or maintain the health and wellbeing of the community. For Council, advocacy might mean seeking external funding or in-kind contribution to a project, a new/changed policy or position, or another outcome that is important to the community.

Advocacy initiatives can be delivered in many different ways and Council will identify the most appropriate forms of advocacy to achieve its desired outcomes. Some common forms of advocacy will include:

Formal submissions

This generally involves communicating Council and community interests, views or experiences to other levels of governments and other regulatory bodies, seeking input to their decision-making processes.

Public awareness initiatives

Public awareness campaigns are used to provide the community with the knowledge and awareness to help them to make informed decisions regarding their involvement or response to issues, action or events that have the potential to affect them in a substantial way.

Policy statements

These statements may be published in Council's formal strategies or policy documents, or as stand-alone statements. They support a clear and consistent position of Council's key issues.

Campaigns

For issues that require long term or significant attention, dedicated campaigns are undertaken to help raise awareness of an issue and call for action to bring about positive change, eg. social and affordable housing outcomes.

Presentations

Where council holds a strong view on an issue out of council's direct control, or seeks direct support such as for funding of a priority project, Council will present its position in person and/or writing to local State and Federal Members of Parliament and Ministers.

Some issues or initiatives will need more than one form of advocacy.

Council may partner with others in its advocacy efforts, or act alone. Council may also advocate on behalf of others when they need help to achieve outcomes that are important to our region and where we have a shared interest.

When Council determines that a project or initiative is an advocacy priority, it should be clear about the role it will take (lead, partner, support) and be sure it has the capacity to successfully fulfil that role. Council should also be clear about any financial commitment it will make to the project or initiative. Council should only advocate to implement infrastructure when the initiative is 'funding ready'.

PART 1: COUNCIL'S APPROACH

WHAT ARE OUR ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES?

There are many projects, issues, causes or beliefs that Council can advocate on and many different methods or approaches Council can use to delivery it advocacy message.

Council must ensure its resources are used to their maximum potential and focused on areas with greatest likelihood to see positive change.

The following advocacy principles will underpin all of Council's advocacy approach.

Strategic

Advocacy messages and approaches must align with key strategies, plans and policies for our municipality and our key partners that include the G21 Regional Alliance, SouthWest Alliance, Barwon Region or Large Rural Shires group.

Evidence based

All forms of advocacy should be supported by accepted evidence in line with Council's plans, policies and strategic directions.

Constructive

All forms of advocacy should be framed positively and where appropriate propose constructive solutions, or genuine approaches to address issues of concern.

Collaborative

Where ever possible Council will consult with or partner with relevant organisation or groups when developing, supporting or delivery advocacy initiatives

Timely

Council will focus advocacy efforts and resource investment strategically (eg. aligned to funding programs or election cycles) to maximise likelihood of positive outcomes.

PART 1: COUNCIL'S APPROACH

WHAT ARE OUR ADVOCACY CATEGORIES AND PRIORITIES?

Not all projects and initiatives need active advocacy. Some will already have a strong chance of success through evidence-based assessments, strong policy alignment, effective relationships with partners or external opportunities such as elections.

Different circumstances create a higher level of urgency, effort and importance at different times.

Priorities also change from year to year, depending on community need and the political environment, as well as changes in importance in the local and regional environment. This means that Council should review its advocacy priorities at least twice-yearly and more often if needed.

To help determine appropriate resourcing and timing of advocacy priorities, consideration should be given to the following:

- Contribution to achieving strategic objectives contained in the Council Plan 2021-2025 which has the following strategic themes:
 - Theme 1: Strong and Resilient Economy
 - Theme 2: Valuing the Natural and Built Environment
 - Theme 3: Healthy and Inclusive Community
 - Theme 4: Strong Leadership and Management.
- Contribution to achieving strategic objectives contained in other strategic plans of Council or its regional partners.
- Contribution to addressing significant risks or challenges faced by Council or the municipal community.
- Council's capacity to meet any commitments required if the advocacy is successful.
- Preparedness of Council, community and key partners to implement if the advocacy is successful.
- Fit with political cycles and priorities of other levels of government.

Further to the above, advocacy priorities will also be grouped into one of the following advocacy categories:

1. Regional and shared priorities
2. Municipal priorities
3. Quick wins for local communities.

Council may be asked to provide Letters of Support for projects, priorities or initiatives developed and led by community groups or businesses. Where these are identified as advocacy priorities in Part 2 of this document a letter will be provided. For other proposals, the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer will discuss the alignment of the proposal to the matters outlined above.



Part 2 – Advocacy priorities



PART 2: COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

TABLE 1 – REGIONAL AND SHARED PRIORITIES

Priority	Partners	Council's Role
<p><u>Regional social and affordable housing</u> Advocacy to Federal Government will primarily focus on policy and regulatory changes. This will complement advocacy to State Government for regulatory change and ongoing funding for social and affordable housing solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G21 • SWVA • MAV • RCV • Community groups 	Partner
<p><u>Key skills programs</u> Advocate to State Government to expand the training and education programs, including traineeships, that develop a skills pipeline aligned to the needs of Regional Victoria. This may include ongoing support for the women building surveyors program, and exploration of similar programs for other key skills shortages including Environmental Health and Town Planning. Advocacy will include skills needed for regional businesses, in particular in aged care and early years services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G21 • SWVA • MAV • RCV 	Partner
<p><u>Tax reforms to support accelerated housing outcomes</u> Advocate to State Government for policy changes to reduce burden and disincentives resulting from current tax regime, including Windfall Gains Tax and Land Tax.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G21 • SWVA • MAV • RCV 	Partner
<p><u>East Colac Enabling Infrastructure for employment</u> \$3m for road upgrades to facilitate employment in East Colac industrial precinct. Enabling infrastructure that needs support includes the intersection of J.Barrys Rd, Forest St and Hearn St which cant facilitate the new industrial estate in its current form and is discouraging investment in the site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G21 • SWVA • MAV • RCV 	Partner
<p><u>Bluewater Electrification Project</u> The Bluewater Leisure Centre plays an important role in the health and fitness for residents in the Colac Otway area. Transitioning from gas to electricity to run the facility will produce annual savings to be used for social programs and will reduce Council's carbon emissions by 30%. A funding application has been submitted to the Federal Government's Community Energy Upgrade Program seeking 50% (\$1.35m) of the project's cost (\$2.7m).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G21 • BSWCA 	Lead

Key reference documents

- [G21 Regional Alliance Priority Projects](#)
- [Refreshed Vision for SouthWest Victoria Alliance](#)
- MAV Opportunities for the 2022 State Budget.

Council recognises that other regional priorities are important to the prosperity and wellbeing of the Colac Otway Shire communities. These may be beyond current Council's capacity to prioritise for active advocacy, however Council is committed to work with partners for regional and sector outcomes.

PART 2: COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

TABLE 2 - MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES

Colac Otway Shire priorities	Total project cost	What Council is seeking
Major infrastructure priorities ready for delivery		
<p><u>Eliminyt Recreation Reserve Pavilion Redevelopment</u> Replacement of sub-standard clubrooms with a contemporary multi-user pavilion to support Colac South community growth and strong outcomes for a healthy and connected community. Concept Plans are endorsed and a funding application has been submitted to the Federal Government's Housing Support Program – Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream, seeking full funding.</p>	\$6.6 million	\$6.6 million
<p><u>Victorian Blue Ocean Safety Skills Centre, Apollo Bay</u> Total redevelopment of aged lifesaving facility plus accommodation at Department of Education land. The project aims to establish capacity for water safety training, bluewater skill development and accommodation. The proposed accommodation may also provide short term worker accommodation over non-school peak periods.</p>	\$15 million	\$15 million
<p><u>Lake Colac Foreshore Playspace</u> Council's development of the new Botanic Gardens Masterplan proposes a new location for a regional playspace at the eastern end of the foreshore, enabling this project to proceed in advance of other major infrastructure works. This project will add great value to the attractiveness of the area for locals and visitors and further showcase the beautiful environment of Lake Colac.</p>	\$2.6 million	\$2.6 million
<p><u>Colac Key Worker Accommodation projects</u> Two Colac-based funding applications have been lodged with the Regional Key Worker Accommodation fund established by the Victorian Government: one by Colac Area Health and the other by a private developer. Both projects will make valuable contributions to the challenge of accommodation for workers and Council will advocate to government for support.</p>	\$2.5 million	\$2.5 million
<p><u>Apollo Bay Early Years Hub – Childcare</u> Apollo Bay has limited childcare service which impacts the local economy and workforce. The current provider is unable to consistently offer its full service, primarily due to workforce constraints and accommodation shortages. The provider has secured tenancy for a further five years at the GORH precinct, which provides a period in which Council can pursue infrastructure funding for an expansion of the Early Years Hub planning at the P-12 College site.</p>	\$2.5 million	\$2.5 million
Priorities for project planning funding		
<p><u>Connecting coastal communities</u> Council is committed to ongoing pursuit of safe connections between coastal communities for locals and visitors to the Great Ocean Road. Investment is needed to continue to exploration, planning and feasibility work to find a solution to the Skenes Creek to Apollo Bay and other gaps in the longer term aspiration of connection between Fairhaven and Apollo Bay.</p>	TBD	TBD
Non-infrastructure priorities		
<p><u>Anam Cara House Colac</u> Advocating to State Government for funding assistance to extend this service to full year.</p>	\$1.0 million p.a.	\$1.0 million p.a.
<p><u>Colac Area Health Urgent Care</u> The current Urgent Care Centre facility is already under strain and will fall substantially below the modelled facility requirements using traditional occupancy benchmarks. Reconfiguration of the Urgent Care Centre should include a dedicated behavioural assessment room as the lack of a purpose-built area in the current facility presents an occupational violence and aggression risk. The expansion of facilities will be a critical element in achieving effective management of the growing demand.</p>	TBD	TBD

PART 2: COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

TABLE 3 –LOCAL COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND QUICK WINS

Local community priorities	Total project cost	What Council is seeking
<p><u>Highview Trail, Apollo Bay (project planning)</u> Planning project is needed to get this project 'funding ready'. Philanthropic funds are held by Nosedá family for construction contribution and \$90k has been committed to progress the pre-construction works for this project. Council awaits an application for the additional funds through the Regional Tourism Investment Fund.</p>	<p>\$450, 000</p>	<p>\$360, 000</p>
<p><u>Lavers Hill to Crows and Melba Gully Trail Plan (project planning)</u> Preliminary estimates indicate that the project is likely to cost in the order of \$1.0 million to \$1.5 million, but more work is needed to get this project 'funding ready'. Assistance needed to understand full cost and feasibility issues.</p>	<p>\$100, 000</p>	<p>\$100, 000</p>

PART 2: COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

TABLE 4 – PREVIOUS ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

As Advocacy initiatives are either successful or no longer relevant they will be listed in the following table. After about three years they will be removed from the table, allowing progressive updates to be maintained at a reasonable level of detail.

Advocacy initiative	Reason no longer an active advocacy priority
<p><u>Beeac Playspace \$200k</u> Replace tired equipment with contemporary accessible playspace, BBQ etc.</p>	Funded through LRCI Round 2
<p><u>Joint G21 Councils' energy efficient lighting</u> Transition Council's street lighting to energy efficient lighting to reduce power costs and carbon emissions.</p>	Street lighting owned and managed directly by Council has been completed. The remaining lights require Department of Transport partnership that is not able to be secured.
<p><u>Blue Church Corner upgrade</u> Address safety issues through the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Tomahawk Creek Road and Princes Highway, Nalangil.</p>	Project has been funded and will be delivered by Department of Transport.
<p><u>Colac Specialist School Business Case</u> Advocacy was to secure support for the relocation of the Specialist School to former Colac High School site.</p>	Project has been funded and will be delivered by State Government.
<p><u>Elliminyt Wetlands</u> Council's Integrated Water Management (IWM) plan for Colac identified that the town's population growth needed a contemporary and innovate approach to use of water in all forms. The Elliminyt Wetlands is the flagship project in the Colac IWM plan.</p>	Council was successful in securing funding for this project in April 2022 with a \$3 million grant from the Victorian Government through the Regional Infrastructure Fund, announced by Minister for Regional Development on 13 April 2022. The \$1.2 million balance of project funding was sourced through the Federal Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.
<p><u>Regional renewable organics network</u> Advocate for funding for the RRON facility planned for Black Rock, Breamlea, recognising its potential as a flagship as a Regional Circular Economy project delivering economic and environmental outcomes</p>	This project has progressed sufficiently that Council no longer needs to advocate with the project partners.
<p><u>Forest Street Colac Upgrades</u> Investment needed to ensure Forest St continues to perform its role as a major connector supporting industry.</p>	Project has been funded through LRCI and Council's capital works program, and delivered over 2023-24.
<p><u>COPACC Floor Upgrade</u> Proposal is to provide structural upgrade to part of COPACC to enable COPACC to optimise the use of the venue.</p>	Project has been funded through LRCI and Council's capital works program, and delivered over 2023-24. Additional funding was secured for upgrade of the stage floor and auditorium projector.