

Connect

YOUR COUNCIL MAGAZINE

Winter 2026

TOGETHER WE RISE

We're advocating for better outcomes for our community

LOCAL STREET SEALING INITIATIVE

We're making progress on our unsealed roads

SUPPORT WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST

We partner with local services to connect you with support when you need it


Cardinia

Have your say!

Help shape the future of Cardinia Shire by having your say on our upcoming proposals, projects and initiatives.

Head to Creating Cardinia to provide your feedback - it helps guide our decision-making and plans to ensure we're delivering what the community needs.

Scan the QR code to explore current consultations and follow project pages to receive updates.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay



Beacon Hills Ward

Cr Brett Owen (Mayor)
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Henty Ward

Cr Liz Roberts (Deputy Mayor)
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Bunyip Ward

Cr Alanna Pomeroy
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Central Ward

Cr Collin Ross
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Pakenham Hills Ward

Cr Jack Kowarzik
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Officer Ward

Cr Samantha-Jane Potter
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Ranges Ward

Cr David Nickell
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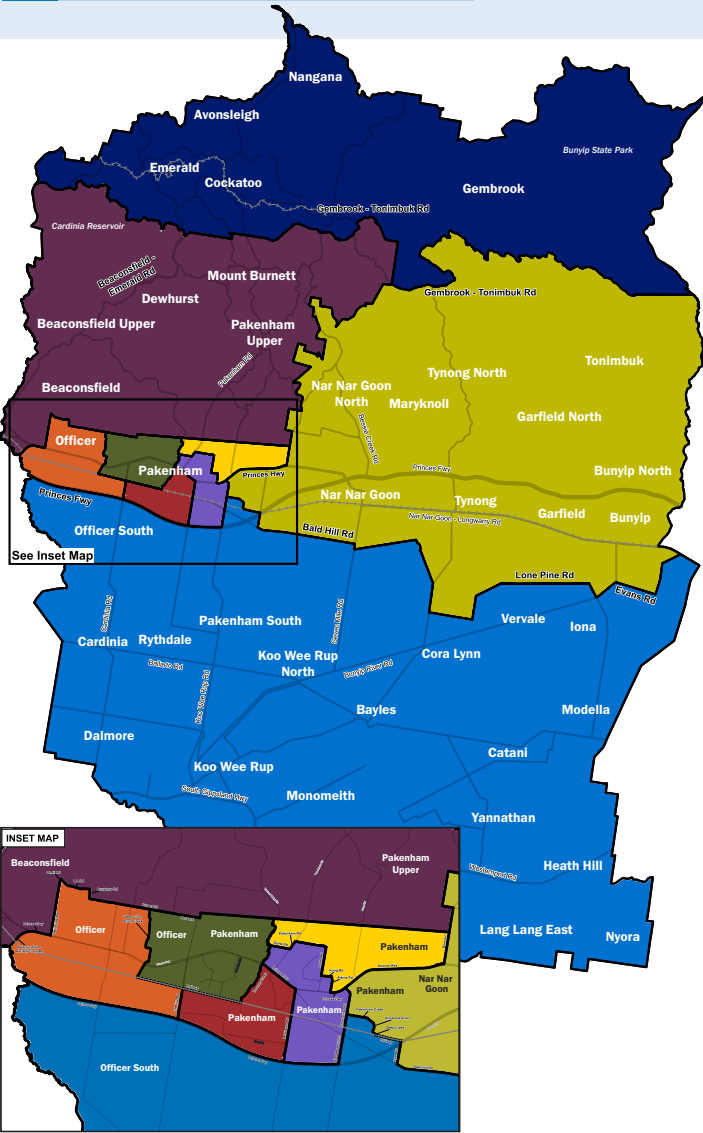
Toomuc Ward

Cr Casey Thomsen
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Westernport Ward

Cr Trudi Paton
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To find out which ward you're in, visit www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/communitycompass and type your street address into the 'My Council services' tool.

On the cover

Performers from the Dandenong Ranges Rudolf Steiner School at the Hills Hub Reconciliation Week event.



Stay up-to-date

Find out what's happening across the shire by exploring our range of publications.

Subscribe to our monthly Connect+ e-newsletter to have updates on new services, upcoming projects, local events and opportunities to have your say.

You can also subscribe to our speciality newsletters: Cardinia Business, Down to Earth, Youth News and Ageing Well.

www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/connect



Mayor's message

Cardinia Shire Mayor Cr Brett Owen attending the Safe Steps Candlelight Vigil.

We know many households are feeling cost-of-living pressures this winter, and we're committed to supporting residents when they are doing it tough. Through initiatives like our recent Bring Your Bills Day, we were able to deliver real and practical support for the community. In partnership with South East Community Links, I'm proud to say that we helped manage more than \$1.5 million in community debt.

At the same time, we're also working to keep rates as fair and affordable as possible for the community. We recently adopted our amended Revenue and Rating plan, which sets a clear and equitable approach to how rates are shared across different property types, without increasing the total amount of rates collected. This helps create a fairer system that supports sustainable growth, encourages development and reflects feedback from our ratepayers.

Our annual budget has been adopted, following a period of community consultation. We're focusing on using every dollar wisely and finding savings where we can.

Through careful financial management, we've delivered a budget surplus,

helping to strengthen Council's long-term financial sustainability and support future investment in community priorities.

This year's budget prioritises maintaining our existing assets, supporting our growing community and planning for long-term financial sustainability, while minimising impacts to the services you rely on.

Our new advocacy campaign 'Together we rise' is calling for improved infrastructure and services, so you can access what you need closer to home. Ahead of the upcoming State election, we're working hard to secure funding for the redevelopment of Cardinia Life, improved public transport, local higher education opportunities, the Lang Lang Bypass, a strategic sealed roads package and better local open spaces and parks.

I was proud to recently attend a number of community events including the Safe Steps Candlelight Vigil and our National Reconciliation Week community events in late May and early June. This year's theme 'All In' called on the community to actively commit to reconciliation and aligns with Council's

ongoing commitment to reconciliation, highlighted in our Reconciliation Action Plan.

We're committed to working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to build stronger relationships and understanding to create a more inclusive shire for the years to come.

Over the coming months, we remain committed to advocating for our community, managing resources responsibly and delivering outcomes that make a difference for everyone. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve, when we work together.

Cr Brett Owen
Mayor of Cardinia Shire

Council meetings

Council meetings are held on the third Monday of every month, and start from 6pm.

Check our website for the most up-to-date information. You can also watch Council meetings live or catch up on previous meetings.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/mayorandcouncillors



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/meetings



Investing in our future with the 2026-27 Budget

We've adopted our 2026-27 Budget, setting out how we will continue to support our growing community, deliver essential services and invest in the places and facilities we all rely on.

As more people choose to call Cardinia Shire home, we're seeing increased demand for roads, parks, community spaces, libraries, waste services and local infrastructure.

At the same time, rising costs and broader economic pressures mean we need to plan more carefully and spend responsibly. Through careful budgeting and a focus on finding efficiencies, we've achieved a budget surplus, putting Council in a stronger position to invest in community priorities now and into the future.

This year's budget focuses on sustainability. We're looking after what we have, improving safety and accessibility, and making steady progress on priority projects, while planning for the future.

More than **\$143.8 million** has been allocated to support the delivery of high-quality services across the shire.

This includes:

- **\$24.6 million** to support efficient, safe and cost-effective waste and recycling services.

- **\$13.9 million** to keep parks, playgrounds and open spaces safe and well maintained.
- **\$6.3 million** to support maternal and child health services.
- **\$2.4 million** for arts and creative industries, including the Cardinia Cultural Centre and Hills Hub Art Space.

These services support wellbeing, connection and quality of life for people of all ages across our community.

We're investing **\$66.3 million** in capital works, with more than half focused on renewing and upgrading existing assets.

Key investments include:

- **\$23.4 million** for road renewals and upgrades.
- **\$1.2 million** for footpaths and cycleways.
- **\$2.9 million** for recreational, leisure and community facilities.
- **\$16 million** to renew ageing Council facilities, deliver major community assets and support strategic land acquisition.

These investments help improve safety, accessibility and connectivity across both established and growing areas of the shire.

The 2026-27 Budget reflects a practical and responsible approach; maintaining

essential services, renewing key infrastructure and investing where it matters most.

Together, these investments support a liveable, connected and resilient Cardinia Shire, now and into the future.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/budget

A fairer way forward for rates

We're committed to keeping rates and charges as affordable as possible, while continuing to deliver essential services and projects.

That's why we've amended our Revenue and Rating Plan to outline how rates are shared across property types, while ensuring each ratepayer contributes a fair share, without raising the total rates collected.

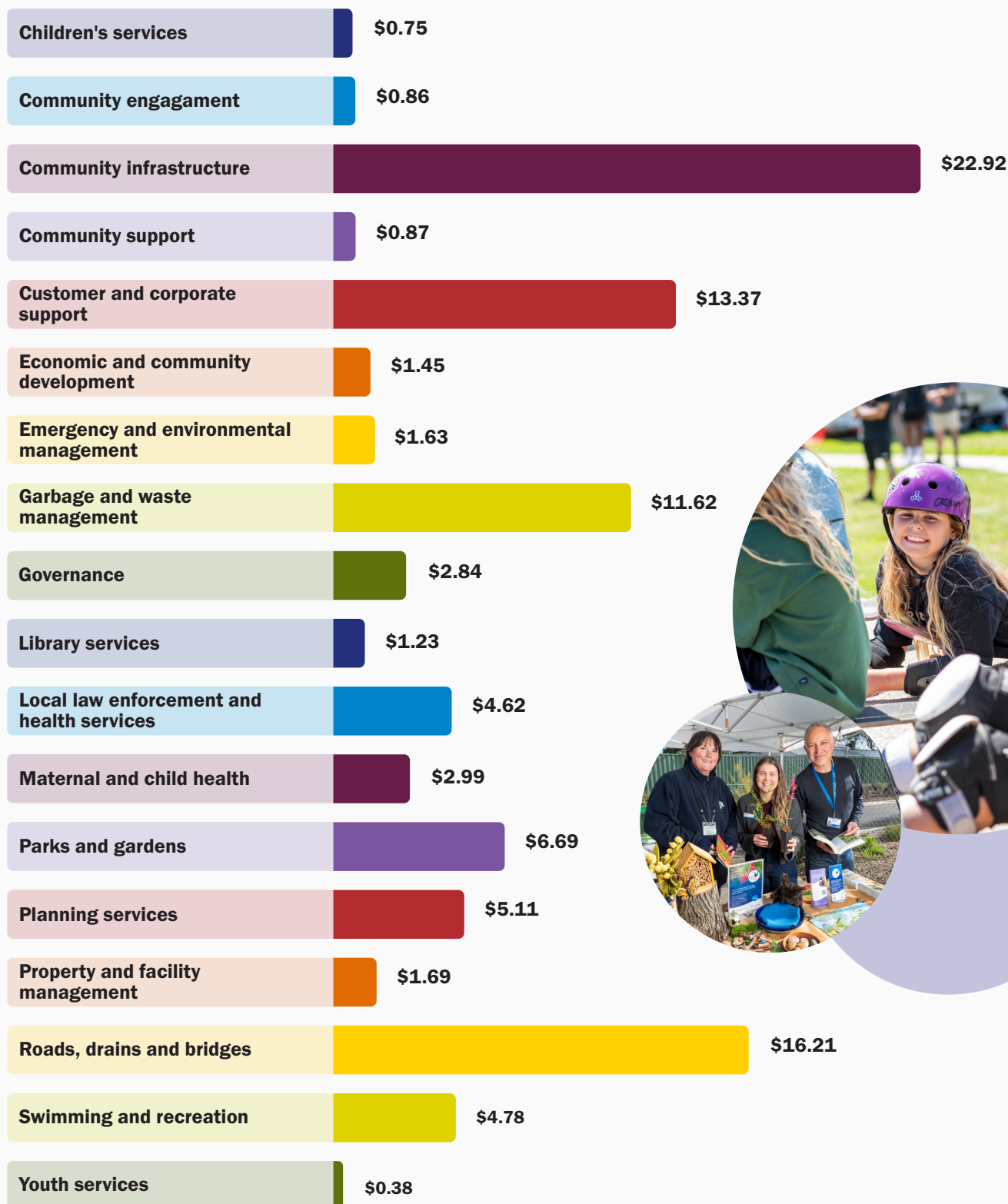
Developed using feedback from residents in 2026 across different property categories, the changes are designed to reflect community expectations and encourage development and housing supply, rather than long-term land banking.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/rates

How we're investing your rates

The dollar amounts below represent the breakdown of how every \$100 of revenue is used by Council to deliver facilities, programs and services in 2026–27.





TOGETHER WE RISE

Investing in a brighter future for Cardinia Shire

We've launched our advocacy campaign in the lead-up to the 2026 State election, calling for urgent investment in essential projects and services to support our shire's rapidly growing community.

Headlining our campaign are key priorities that will support the shire's growing population and improve the quality of life for those who live, work and play in the shire.

As one of Victoria's fastest growing municipalities, we welcome an average of three new households to our shire every day,

and our population is expected to grow by almost 40,000 people over the next decade.

Growth of this scale requires investment in the infrastructure and services our community needs and deserves. Council is ready to play its part, but we can't do it alone. We need investment and a shared commitment from other levels of government to ensure a brighter future for our community.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/advocacy

Parks and open space package

Co-investment from the state and federal governments is needed to deliver three critical open space projects that provide safe, inclusive recreation opportunities for young people and families across Cardinia Shire's growth corridor:

- **Officer District Park: \$7 million** to deliver a regional level skate park, mountain biking track and cafe to one of the region's most popular parks.
- **PB Ronald Reserve, Pakenham: \$10 million** for a major upgrade of central Pakenham's main park, including a new event stage and lawns, expanded skate park and outdoor gym, and additional picnic shelters and barbecues.
- **McMullen Recreation Reserve, Officer: \$12.6 million** for planning and delivery of a brand new reserve catering to the high growth sport of soccer, as well as lawn bowls and cricket.



Cardinia Life regional basketball and gymnastics stadium redevelopment

Co-investment from the state and federal governments is needed to deliver the **\$60 million** stage one redevelopment of Cardinia life through an equal three-way funding partnership.

This stage would deliver four new indoor courts, a 1,500-seat show court, brand new dedicated gymnastics facility and refurbished foyer, change rooms, and car park.



Lang Lang truck bypass

We're seeking **\$57 million** from the state and federal governments to begin planning and construction of a dedicated truck bypass in Lang Lang.

Council has already acquired land to establish an alternative route that connects quarries directly to the South Gippsland Highway for easy access to construction sites across the city.



Strategic road sealing package

We're calling for funding support from the state and federal governments to seal priority unsealed roads across the shire.

This funding is vital to improve emergency access, support safer travel and provide reliable exit routes for communities in disaster-prone areas.



Local higher education

We're urging the state government to partner with existing TAFE providers to deliver Cardinia Shire's first-ever higher education facility.

Securing a dedicated TAFE site now would open doors for young people, and help build the skilled workforce needed for industries facing labour shortages.



Public transport package

Council is calling for improved bus services, upgraded bus stops and stronger public transport connections to make it easier for people to get around Cardinia Shire.

This is particularly important in regional areas such as Koo Wee Rup, Lang Lang and the Dandenong Ranges, where limited public transport can restrict access to work and education. Expanded bus routes in growth areas like Officer are also needed to service new housing estates and reduce reliance on private cars.



Building a Better Cardinia

We're focused on building stronger, connected and more liveable communities, that's why we're upgrading our open spaces, community facilities and local roads.

Over the next year, we're investing \$66.3 million into our capital works program.



Under construction

Construction and upgrade works are progressing across the shire to improve safety, accessibility and community wellbeing.

- Bessie Creek Road – road sealing works (Nar Nar Goon North).
- Cardinia Youth Hub (Pakenham).
- Koo Wee Rup Netball Court redevelopment.
- Huxtable Road – road sealing works (Pakenham Upper).
- Mt Burnett Road – road sealing works (Mount Burnett).
- Pakenham Revitalisation – town centre streetscape upgrades.
- Upper Beaconsfield Reserve Pavilion (Upper Beaconsfield).

Completed works

Several key projects have recently wrapped up:

- ✓ 2026 Road Resurfacing Program.
- ✓ Bunyip Sanctuary BMX Track renewal.
- ✓ Cockatoo Community Complex upgrades.
- ✓ Cora Lynn Recreation Reserve Pavilion upgrades.
- ✓ Greenland Court Reserve playground renewal (Garfield).
- ✓ Ron Andrews playground renewal (Pakenham).
- ✓ Toomuc Recreation Reserve – lighting, amenity, safety and reserve upgrades (Pakenham).

Upcoming projects

Projects expected to start construction in 2026-27:

- 2027 Road pavement renewal and resurfacing programs – across the shire.
- Cardinia Life renewal works (Pakenham).
- Ebony Drive Reserve playground renewal (Pakenham).
- Emerald Lake Park – staged upgrades as part of masterplan.
- Heatherbrae Recreation Reserve – court resurfacing works (Officer).
- Holm Park oval resurfacing (Beaconsfield).
- McGregor Road, Henty Street and Rogers Street intersection (Pakenham).
- Pakenham Regional Tennis Centre lighting upgrades.
- Princes Highway intersection upgrades – various projects are planned from Beaconsfield to Pakenham.



Official opening of the Cora Lynn Reserve in May 2026, following the completion of upgrades.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/majorprojects



From dust to decisions: our new framework to support unsealed roads

Bunyip Ward Councillor Alanna Pomeroy is looking forward to seeing more local residential unsealed roads considered and sealed.

Did you know that more than half of our local roads are currently unsealed?

If you live on an unsealed road, you'll know the challenges well — dust in dry weather, rough surfaces, drainage issues and access difficulties. While we work hard to maintain these roads through our regular grading, maintenance and re-sheeting programs, factors such as weather conditions and traffic volumes can affect road conditions and create ongoing challenges for residents and road users.

We're committed to improving our unsealed road network, which is why we've taken an important step forward with a new long-term strategy for unsealed residential roads across the shire.

The Local Street Sealing Initiative (LSSI) will guide how unsealed residential roads may be assessed, considered, and progressively proposed for engagement as part of future Special Charge Schemes.

By setting clear priorities and a consistent framework, we're working towards fairer, more transparent decision-making and a practical pathway for progress over time.

Bunyip Ward Councillor Alanna Pomeroy is passionate about improving unsealed roads across the shire and believes clearer planning, stronger engagement and better funding are key to seeing real change on the ground.

"I know how frustrating unsealed roads can be for residents, especially during extreme weather," Cr Pomeroy said.

"The Local Street Sealing Initiative gives us a clearer, fairer way to look at unsealed road improvements, while making sure communities are involved and informed every step of the way.

"For too long, unsealed road requests were handled one at a time, which made it hard for residents to see how decisions were being made. This initiative gives us a consistent framework, so roads are assessed fairly across the whole shire."

The LSSI explains how roads may be considered in the future using clear, transparent criteria to support fair and consistent decision-making, including:

- Affordability and estimated resident contribution costs.
- Ongoing maintenance requirements and asset management costs.
- Safety and emergency access.
- Resident enquiries.

Under the initiative, streets may be considered individually over time, with a staged consultation process in place to support informed decision-making. This approach is designed to empower property owners and Council to move forward together.

"We're being realistic about what we can achieve with current resources. Our unsealed road network is far too large

for us to consider sealing every road without further funding support," Cr Pomeroy said.

"The LSSI is a starting point for future progress, enabling us to gradually progress Special Charge Scheme consultations across residential unsealed roads."

More than 170 unsealed residential streets are currently eligible for consideration under the LSSI. Inclusion in the initiative does not guarantee an upgrade, however it means a street may be considered for future planning and community consultation.

"To see meaningful progress across the shire, we need continued support and investment from all levels of government," Cr Pomeroy said.

"By putting this framework in place now, we're laying the groundwork for long-term improvement, clearer communication, and more opportunities to upgrade local streets in the years ahead."

To find out if your street is eligible for future consideration, visit our website.



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/
seal-my-street](https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/seal-my-street)

A photograph of Cardinia Shire Mayor Cr Brett Owen and Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Roberts standing in a mulched area next to a newly planted tree. They are both wearing high-visibility orange safety vests. In the background, there is a brick building with a sign that reads 'VICTORIA BITTER' and another sign for 'RAILWAY HOTEL'. To the right, a white truck is parked with a yellow sign that says 'SIDE ROAD CLOSED' and 'DETOUR AHEAD' with a no-right-turn symbol.

Pakenham's growing: we're building for the future

Cardinia Shire Mayor Cr Brett Owen and Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Roberts celebrate progress on Stage 1 of the Pakenham Revitalisation project, while marking the start of the upcoming stages.

Pakenham is one of our fastest growing communities, with more people than ever choosing to live, work and spend time in the area.

As we continue to grow, we're investing in the spaces and infrastructure that support everyday life, helping ensure Pakenham remains welcoming, connected and easy to enjoy for everyone.

As part of the Pakenham Revitalisation project, we're continuing to deliver upgrades across the town centre to create a more welcoming, connected and vibrant place for our community.

We're currently finalising upgrades in the Main Street Gateway precinct as part of Stage 1. Major construction is complete

across Drake Place, Station Street and Main Street (near the Railway Hotel).

Our finishing touches are currently underway to revitalise these streets, with works including the installation of lighting, final road pavement, four new pedestrian crossings, mature trees, garden beds, seating and bins.

As part of Stage 2, we're delivering streetscape upgrades throughout Drake Place from the Railway Hotel to John Street, and Stage 3 works will take place along John Street from Drake Place to the Main Street roundabout.

Works have been phased into smaller sections to help minimise disruptions, with construction expected to start from July 2026.

Looking ahead, Stage 4 will see John Street being extended into Henty Street to create a new connection across the town centre. Plans are being finalised and Stage 4 is expected to go to tender shortly.

We're currently revising our plans for the future upgrade of the Main Street Central precinct as part of Stage 5.

We're taking into consideration previous feedback from the community, and we plan on sharing further information about Main Street Central when our review process is complete.

 www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pakenham

An aerial photograph showing a detailed artist's impression of the Pakenham town centre. The image depicts a mix of commercial buildings, parking lots filled with cars, and green spaces with trees. The layout shows a central business district with various sized buildings and pedestrian-friendly areas.

Artist's impression based on current design plans and subject to change.



Support when you need it most

Pakenham Hills Ward Councillor Jack Kowarzik is focused on improving financial support for the community.

We know the cost of everyday essentials is increasing, and many households across Cardinia Shire are feeling the pressure. That's why it's so important for residents to have access to practical support when they need it most.

Through Cardinia Support, Council connects residents with a range of services and resources to help with everyday costs, financial counselling and emergency relief.

These services are available year-round, helping residents access practical assistance, understand their options, and take positive steps towards financial wellbeing.

A key part of this work is partnering with local organisations to deliver support directly in the community.

As part of this ongoing support, Council partnered with South East Community Links (SECL) and ADRA to deliver Bring Your Bills Day in Pakenham, providing food relief and confidential, one-on-one help to residents navigating household bills, fines, loans and housing costs.

Pakenham Hills Ward Councillor Jack Kowarzik is a representative of Council's Financial Wellbeing and Resilience Action Team and is focused on ensuring residents feel supported and connected to the help they need.

"We know many households are feeling the pressure of the rising cost of living, and we want people to know they're not alone," Cr Kowarzik said.

"Through Cardinia Support and initiatives like Bring Your Bills Day, we're

making it easier for people to access the help they need."

Residents were able to speak directly with experienced financial counsellors, as well as representatives from banks, utility providers and other support services.

Whether it was understanding a bill, setting up a payment plan, or learning about grants, concessions and consumer rights, the focus was on listening, supporting and helping people feel more confident about their next steps.

More than 850 individuals and families attended Bring Your Bills Day, with around \$1.5 million in bills, debt and savings being worked through. This included:

- \$32,000 in debts waived.
- \$74,100 in grants and concessions secured.
- \$73,500 placed into manageable hardship payment plans.

For those doing it especially tough, SECL also provided more than \$80,000 of fuel and grocery vouchers to help ease immediate pressures on local families. ADRA also supported people on the community bus with food parcels and groceries.

By helping to break down barriers to seeking support, more than 70 per cent of attendees at Bring Your Bills accessed community services for the first time, and nearly three-quarters had never previously contacted their service provider about their debt.

Importantly, participants reported real improvements in their wellbeing:

- 69% felt reduced financial stress.
- 92% reported increased trust in support services.

"With one third of Cardinia Shire residents meeting the criteria for financial hardship and 40 per cent of households with children experiencing food insecurity, I'm proud that Council has programs and partnerships in place to support our community when they need it," Cr Kowarzik said.

As demand continues to grow, Council remains committed to working with partners to ensure residents can access the support they need.

We're continuing to advocate for increased funding to expand local support services, including emergency relief, which provides immediate assistance such as food, essential items and financial help. Ratepayers experiencing financial hardship can also apply for flexible payment arrangements, deferred payments and other support options through Council.

"Strengthening financial wellbeing is a key priority for Council. We want Cardinia Shire to be a place where everyone can feel secure, while being supported and able to thrive," Cr Kowarzik said.

"For ongoing financial support including emergency relief, we can connect you to local services and assistance."



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/support



Emerald's looking greener than ever before

We've been busy planting around 16,000 indigenous plants across Pepi's Land Reserve in Emerald, as part of a major restoration and revegetation project.

Through large-scale planting, careful weed management and ongoing care, we're restoring this locally significant natural area and helping it thrive for years to come.

By reintroducing local indigenous plant species, we're strengthening nearby waterways and wetlands, improving soil health, and creating a landscape that's more resilient to climate pressures.

These new plantings will provide vital habitat for birds, insects and native mammals, while also improving connections between existing patches of vegetation.

To give new plants the best possible start, deer-exclusion fencing has been installed, and temporary plant guards are in

place where grazing pressure is higher. Targeted weed control, including the removal of invasive species such as willows, is also helping native plants establish and grow.

Supported by Melbourne Water's *Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways program*, the Pepi's Land revegetation project is already making a visible difference, transforming the reserve into a greener, healthier and more inviting place for the community.

As Pepi's Land continues to flourish, it will offer more opportunities for walking, learning, birdwatching and connecting with nature, enhancing both biodiversity and everyday enjoyment for the Emerald community.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/parks

The flow on effect of our water management plan

Over the past decade, we've taken a strategic and coordinated approach to managing water across Cardinia Shire through our Integrated Water Management Plan.

From taps to waterways, our Integrated Water Management Plan has guided the way we use, reuse and manage water across our community, helping create a healthier environment and a more liveable place for everyone.

The 10-year plan was recently reviewed to assess whether we achieved what we set out to do. The results confirmed the plan's long-term success, with lasting benefits for our community, including:

- 91% of actions were completed (29 of 32).

- Our aspirational water target was achieved, stabilising Council water use to just 1.44% of total community consumption.

These results are significant given the rapid growth that Cardinia Shire has experienced over the last decade. While hundreds of new parks, play spaces, community and sporting facilities were delivered across the shire, we managed to still reduce our reliance on drinking water.

This has been made possible through:

- Water-saving projects and audits across our facilities.
- Increased use of recycled water for sports fields and open spaces.
- Practical actions like fixing leaks,

installing water tanks and improving water efficiency.

- Strong partnerships with Melbourne Water, South East Water, Yarra Valley Water, DEECA and the Victorian Government.

Together, these efforts have supported healthier waterways, smarter water use and more resilient communities.

We're now developing a new Integrated Water Management Plan and will be inviting community feedback over the next year.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/water-plan

Let's TALK RUBBISH



Let's be clear on glass

We're urging the Victorian Government to rethink introducing a new purple bin for glass.

The Victorian Government has directed all councils to introduce a separate glass recycling bin for households by mid-2027, as part of statewide kerbside reforms.

Council is calling on the Victorian Government to pause the mandatory rollout of a new glass-only household bin and instead work with councils and communities to deliver a more effective and environmentally responsible approach to glass recycling.

While Council supports improving recycling outcomes and reducing waste to landfill, it does not believe a fourth household bin is currently the right solution for the shire.

A proposed new glass recycling bin could mean more costs and confusion for households, so we're asking the Victorian Government to reconsider and instead focus on expanding the current Container Deposit Scheme as an alternative.

Cardinia Shire is one of 36 Victorian councils participating in the *Let's be clear on glass* campaign, which calls on

the Victorian Government to:

- Extend the timeline for introducing a glass only bin.
- Release the business case for kerbside glass recycling.
- Prioritise expanding the Container Deposit Scheme as a more effective alternative.

A recent statewide survey found that nearly 25,000 Victorians opposed the introduction of a glass recycling bin.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/glass-bin

Batteries don't belong in your bin!

It might seem harmless to toss a used battery or broken electronics into your bin, but it's not, and you could be putting the community at risk without realising it.

Anything with a battery, cord or plug is considered electronic waste (e-waste). This includes everyday items like loose household batteries, mobile phones, laptops, power tools, children's toys, vapes and small appliances.

Since 2019, e-waste has been banned from landfill in Victoria, meaning it must never go in your household rubbish or recycling bins.

Why? Batteries and e-waste can start fires in kerbside bins, waste trucks and at processing facilities, putting drivers, workers and the wider community in danger. These incidents can also divert emergency services away from other critical situations.

E-waste can contain toxic materials that can harm our soil and waterways if not disposed of correctly.

The good news is it's easy and free to do the right thing. Residents can safely dispose of e-waste by booking a hard waste collection or dropping small items like batteries, phones and

laptops at Council drop-off points, major supermarkets or Officeworks.

When recycled properly, valuable materials like gold, copper and silver can be recovered and reused — helping protect our planet and keep our community safe.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/ewaste



Recognising our volunteers

2026 Stan Henwood Award nominees and winner.

Every year as part of National Volunteer Week, the Stan Henwood Award shines a light on the people who strengthen our community through service, generosity and care.

Held on 21 May 2026 at the Cardinia Cultural Centre, the Stan Henwood Award celebrated our local volunteers, acknowledging their achievements and ongoing contributions to our community.

The award honours the legacy of Stan Henwood OAM, whose lifelong commitment to Cardinia Shire left a lasting impact and continues to inspire community connection across the shire.

2026 Stan Henwood Award winner: Noelene (Non) Blair

This year, the Stan Henwood Award was proudly presented to Noelene (Non) Blair, who was recognised for her extraordinary contribution to a wide range of local organisations and community initiatives across the Hills region.

Volunteering within the local community for more than 30 years, Non has:

- Coordinated the Woorilla Writers Group for 15 years.
- Supported the Emerald Community House for more than 20 years.
- Served with GEMCO Players Community Theatre for 15 years.
- Managed the Emerald Market for 15 years.
- Led the Arts Alliance for the last three years.
- Coordinated PAVE/Winterfest for an incredible 32 years.
- Contributed to Eastern Health.

A standout achievement is Non's leadership of the Woorilla International Poetry Prize, now in its 15th year.

The competition has attracted emerging and established poets from across Australia and around the world, elevating local, national and international voices, while strengthening Emerald and Cardinia Shire's reputation as a creative and inclusive hub for all.

Equally significant is Non's long-standing support of the Emerald Community House, which spans over two decades. From writing grant submissions to mentoring individuals in everyday life skills, her work has had a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of many local people.

Known for her integrity, inclusivity and strong communication, Non leads by listening. Her empathy, emotional intelligence and ability to adapt to the needs of individuals and groups have built trust, resilience and connection throughout the community. Her commitment to celebrating local culture has helped shape the identity of the Hills, highlighting its vibrancy, talent, heritage and sense of belonging.

Council extends its heartfelt thanks to Non Blair, and to all volunteers, whose dedication helps make Cardinia Shire a welcoming, connected and caring place for everyone.



www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/volunteers

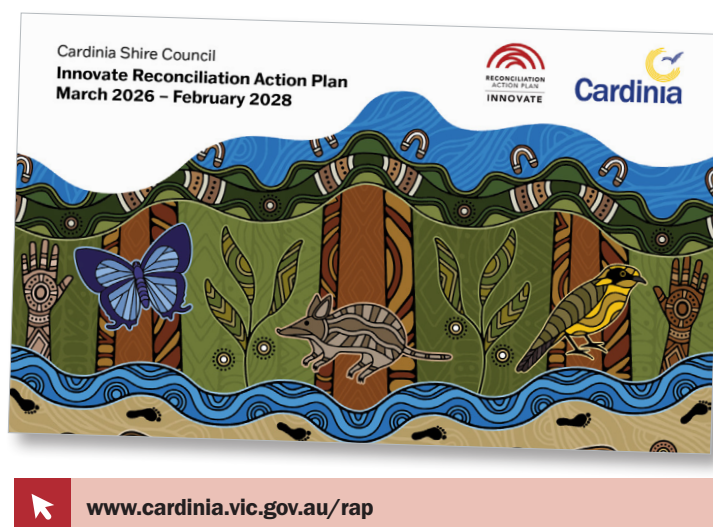
Thriving communities

Progress towards reconciliation

We're proud to have adopted our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), marking an important step in our shared journey towards reconciliation.

Developed in consultation with the Traditional Owners of Cardinia Shire, the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, the wider community and our internal Reconciliation Working Group, the RAP outlines how we will strengthen relationships, demonstrate respect and create meaningful opportunities.

We're committed to learning from the past, acting with integrity in the present, and shaping a future where reconciliation is a shared journey. We're proud to play our part in creating a community where everyone belongs, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel safe, respected, and connected.



Backing farmers: strengthening our farming future

From fresh asparagus to dairy and vegetables, Cardinia Shire plays a vital role in Victoria's food bowl, helping put food on tables locally and across the state.

With more than 725 agribusinesses across the shire, we're working to protect our productive farmland, local food supply and our \$500 million agricultural economy.

During 2024-25, more than 330 rural landowners, farmers, food businesses, industry representatives and community leaders engaged with us, informing our Draft Agribusiness Audit Report.

Earlier this year, 10 community representatives were appointed to our Food and Agribusiness Advisory Committee to help guide the future of the shire's vibrant food and agribusiness sector.

Together, these insights are guiding our draft Food and Agribusiness Strategy, which is expected to be presented to Council later in 2027.

Did you know?

- Around 1,800 people work in agriculture locally.
- Nearly half the shire (46%) is used for farming.
- 2,592 rural properties support active agriculture.
- Cardinia Shire is a major producer and exporter of asparagus.



What's on?

Here are some of the events and activities happening across our shire

Cardinia Cultural Centre (CCC)

Friday Flicks

Watch a range of movies at the CCC, with all tickets priced at \$7. Come along to see what's playing!

From Catchment to Coast

23 July – 31 August

Mark your calendars, because the Catchment to Coast exhibition is coming to the Cardinia Cultural Centre this winter!

Hosted by Council in partnership with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Melbourne Water and the Western Port Biosphere Foundation, Catchment to Coast highlights how water tells a continuous story, flowing from the hills into the shire's creeks, rivers and wetlands, and ultimately through to Western Port Bay.

Through engaging displays, interactive learning opportunities and visual storytelling, this exhibition showcases how water links landscapes, ecosystems and communities, while encouraging visitors to consider the role they can play in protecting local waterways.

Featuring works by local artists Kate Gorrington-Smith and Jina He, the exhibition brings a creative perspective to the story of water across the region.

Winter Sets: Cookin' on 3 Burners

Saturday 1 August from 7–9:30pm

Catch Australia's funk and soul heavyweights Cookin' On 3 Burners live, delivering electrifying grooves, powerhouse vocals and a high-energy show that's lit up stages around the world.

EUPHORIC 2026

Saturday 8 August from 7:30–10:20pm

Gather your friends for an electrifying night of cabaret-style entertainment featuring drag, dance, comedy and more. Book now for a bold and unforgettable evening out. This event is strictly adults-only (18+).

Find out more at
www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/ccc



Libraries

Creative Haven

Emerald Library
First and third Tuesday of every month from 6–7:30pm

Cooking rice paper rolls with Oddie's Kitchen

Pakenham Library
Friday 21 August from 6:30–8pm

20th Anniversary Art Exhibition

Emerald Library
Saturday 13 June – Saturday 1 August

NAIDOC Week with Muyan Story

Pakenham Library
Wednesday 8 July at 11am and 2:30pm

Find out more at www.myli.org.au

Info about Council events: www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/events

The information in this edition of Connect was correct at the time of print. For the most up-to-date information about Council services, events and programs, visit www.cardinia.vic.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

Cardinia Shire Council acknowledges the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands of Cardinia Shire, and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

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