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Draft Transcript

Surf Coast Shire Ordinary Council Meeting
Surf Coast Shire Civic Office
Council Chambers
1 Merrijig Drive, Torquay, Victoria

Tuesday, 24 February 2026

6.00pm

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MAYOR STAPLETON: Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our February Council Meeting. I'm Mayor Libby Stapleton and it's a pleasure to welcome everyone joining us tonight. This meeting is also being livestreamed, so a big welcome to those tuning in online as well as those in our gallery and, of course, welcome to my fellow Councillors and a really warm back to Cr Schonfelder, who is joining us online and has recently returned from medical leave. Live captioning will accompany the livestream of this meeting and we hope that this assists those who may have hearing difficulties.

I would like to acknowledge that we meet on Wadawurrung Country and that the Surf Coast municipality also includes the traditional country of the Gadubanud and Guldjan people of the eastern Maar nation and I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to walking with traditional owners on a reconciliation journey that recognises and celebrates culture and the unique land, sea and waterway Country of the Surf Coast. I would also like to acknowledge Aboriginal people attending or viewing this meeting tonight.

Summer is usually a time for our communities - summer is usually a time of enjoyment for our communities and visitors alike. However, it also presents challenges with weather events often at their fiercest and this summer has been especially challenging as we know with a number of extreme weather events and we deeply acknowledge our neighbouring Councils and others around the state also impacted so significantly. As always, our community stepped up at this time to protect and help each other through these challenges and so did our Council staff. Fires kicked off in the Otways in early January, quickly followed by the significant flash flood event in the higher reaches of the Otways in mid-January. Visitors and businesses have been so heavily impacted and we are working with local businesses in the ongoing recovery effort. There was some Council property also damaged through the floods but it was extremely pleasing to see that there were no significant injuries, which I'm sure everyone would agree was quite remarkable and amazing. A great relief.

Our teams have worked hard in dealing with emergencies and supporting our neighbours to do the same, and this has - whilst the emergency event may have seemed concentrated, the actual recovery and working with communities and neighbours has occurred over an extended period of time and our staff are still now continuing to step up to help affected communities. But while dealing with emergencies, our communities and officers have still been able to deliver key events that are so fundamental to the Surf Coast Shire. Off the back of an intense period of heat and weather events, Council supported the delivery of Pilk Purriyn Truth-Telling event on 26 January, which was another moving reflection led by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, with excellent support by our teams.

The event welcomed many people from our community to Cosy Corner in Torquay for a peaceful and reflective ceremony.

More recently, I was also delighted to kick off the celebrations and acknowledgment of International Women's Day events, which will run across the Shire over this week

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and next. Last Friday, I attended the Anglesea Art Space to officially launch the beautiful Connections exhibition, which will run until Sunday, 8 March, and it's an acknowledgment of International Women's Day and I encourage anyone who is able to to get along to have a look at that exhibition. Other International Women's Day events include an in-conversation event with broadcaster and author Jacinta Parsons in relation to her book 'A Wisdom of Age' and that will be at Torquay's Multi Arts Centre, otherwise known as the MAC, next Wednesday, 4 March. I do believe it's fully booked but right to know that's happening. There are also a range of other local International Women's Day events from Lorne to Moriac and I encourage anyone who is interested to have a look on Council's website for more information about each of these events.

We have had other great events throughout the Shire recently, but I'm going to actually call on a few Councillors in a moment to share a little bit about some of those with you.

So we will get underway with our agenda for now. Just to recap on the process for Council meetings. These operate according to our adopted Governance Rules, which include the following procedures: during the meeting, the mover of a motion or an amendment may speak for a maximum of five minutes to open the debate and then a further two minutes to make a closing statement. Any other Councillor, including the seconder, may speak to a motion for no more than three minutes. I ask that members of the gallery avoid using mobile phones during the meeting as this can be distracting for Councillors as well as other members of the gallery, and I also note that any unauthorised recording of the meeting is prohibited under our Governance Rules. However, you can access a copy of the official recording on our website after the meeting.

I would now like to recite the Pledge as a sign of our commitment. As Councillors, we carry out our responsibilities with diligence and integrity and make fair decisions of lasting value for the wellbeing of our community and environment.

Do we have any apologies for tonight's meeting? I'm not aware of any apologies, although I do believe Cr Grist will be joining us online.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: He seems to be having trouble.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So hopefully Councillor Grist is able to join us online shortly. Can I please have a mover and a seconder to confirm the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 9 December 2025? Moved by Cr Phelps and seconded by Cr Walker. Thank you. And I will get Councillors to vote. Wonderful. Supported unanimously. Thank you.

And leave of absence requests: do we have any leave of absence requests this evening? Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Good evening, Mayor. Just with the apologies, I abstained because I wasn't present at the last meeting.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you for clarifying that, Cr Schonfelder. And you do have a leave of absence request that you would like to speak to?

CR SCHONFELDER: Yes, please.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Go ahead.

CR SCHONFELDER: Can I move that first, Mayor?

MAYOR STAPLETON: No, if you speak to it, Cr Schonfelder, then I'll call for a mover and a seconder.

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you. Council previously approved a leave of absence for me which was in place until 1 January 2026. I would like to ask that Council retrospectively extend this leave of absence until 7 February 2026. As many of you may know, I needed to take a period of medical leave following an accident. I am now on the mend and I am in the process of transitioning back to my full workload, which means that I may have a little longer than usual to return correspondence. I will also only be attending tonight's meeting for two hours to ensure that I am taking care of my health and recovery. I thank everyone for the kindness and support I have received during this time. I would also like to thank Council Officers who have taken the time to bring me back up to speed on Council business that I missed while I was on leave, including helping to ensure that I am prepared for tonight's meeting. Finally, Mayor, I'd like to thank Dr Marvin Hilal, who is a Muslim doctor at the Epworth Hospital, for the care that he has taken, along with other medical professionals, of me. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Schonfelder. So I can please have a mover and a seconder for this leave of absence? Cr Pattison. And seconded by Councillor Bodsworth. Thank you. And all those in favour of the leave of absence request? And that is supported unanimously. Thank you, Councillors. Declarations of conflicts of interest - if a Councillor or an officer has a conflict of interest, they must declare it now and do so again just prior to the item being discussed. The Councillor or officer will be requested to leave chambers or for those online will be placed in a virtual waiting room whilst the matter is being considered and once the matter is resolved, the Councillor or officer will be returned to the meeting. Are there any declarations of conflict of interest in relation to tonight's agenda? No? Thank you. We'll move on to presentations, and tonight we will be hearing from Cr Phelps, Councillor Bodsworth and if Cr Grist is able to join us online, Cr Grist, regarding a number of events in the Shire in recent months. So I'll start with you, Cr Phelps.

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. So I filled in for Mayor Libby Stapleton at the Torquay Motor Show a couple of weeks ago, on Sunday, 8 February to give an Acknowledgment of Country. I would like to give a shout-out to the Rotary Club President, Kelly Binion, and her team and the dozens and dozens of volunteers that made for a fabulous day. It was indeed a beautiful day, showing off Torquay at its best. There were 300-plus cars, motorbikes, vans, super cars and some very, very

passionate owners. I was also tasked with making the Mayor's choice, which was not easy, given the range and number of amazingly well-presented vehicles. In the end, I whittled it down to a 1966 Morris Mini Cooper S, owned by Bob Simpson.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Good choice.

CR PHELPS: Everyone said so. All in all, it was a great community day out for thousands of people and it was a really good event. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. And Councillor Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Mayor. So I'm going to provide a brief presentation on Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road race, which was held over the period of 28 January to 1 February. So the women's and men's Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road races were run and won, the road races, on Saturday, 31st and Sunday, 1 February. New Zealand's Ally Wollaston won back to back in the women's road race and Tobias Lund Andresen took out the men's road race. These are top-tier UCI world tier races, so they have the top categorisation possible of road races in the world. They bring the world's best riders to the Surf Coast and there was a bumper turnout from world teams this year, and they're an amazing showcase of our region to the world via the excellent coverage and it's always a bit thrilling to see all these squadrons of helicopters flying around over the top filming the race.

Sadly, this year the Surf Coast classic races, which are a fantastic course between Lorne and Torquay, had to be cancelled because of the fire risk but I do want to note that the riders very generously donated the prize purses this year for recovery efforts down the coast, which was an amazing gesture, and the distribution of those moneys is still being considered.

We held the Welcome Wave on Thursday, 29 January, which is an annual event to welcome the women's pro teams. It's a unique event in the world. The women's pro teams have often been a little overlooked next to the men's pro teams, and so we've made this gesture for several years in a row to really elevate their efforts and to recognise how awesome they all are. So there was a cacophony of cow bells, hordes of Nippers dressed in pink training kits, and quite a few Councillors were there to greet the world's best female riders at this year's edition of the Welcome Wave. Jan Juc Surf Lifesaving Club looked fantastic. It was an amazing venue. We had 140 of the world's best riders plus the team members, mechanics, soigneurs, event organisers, sponsors and supporters. We had a Welcome To Country from Wadawurrung woman Corrina Eccles and we had Mike Cussens on the didgeridoo. Mayor Libby joined race director Scott Sutherland for the traditional ringing in of the women's teams, and this year it was particularly raucous. We had women's teams standing up on their chairs and shrieking, which was great. We had a bunch of fun activities including a fun game of celebrity heads, a round of Surf Coast Aussie bingo, testing handball skills. We had a handball comp with AFLW talent Greea McKeegan and we had what is often the highlight, or equal highlight, the native animal encounters, which are just an unforgettable experience for a lot of the overseas visitors and are super Instagrammable. I actually did a bit of Instagram

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research preparing these notes for tonight and saw a lot of really fantastic images from the native animal encounters particularly.

The other big highlight of the Welcome Wave is always the chocolate buffet. So in the criterium in Geelong that day, they absolutely smashed the Great Ocean Road chocolaterie buffet in the evening. Like I said, the Welcome Wave is unique in the world and a team member was overheard exiting saying it was the best Welcome in the world. So we love to hear that. A few of us were sitting near Martina Fidanza, who is from team Visma-Lease a Bike, who had won the criterium that day, so we were asking, "How did your day go?" "Yeah, great day". "Well, what happened? What was good today?". "Oh, I won the criterium". So things like that are just so fantastic.

So just concluding, so proud that we put this event on. I am proud of the unique Surf Coast welcome that it provides. It's got an unforgettable Surf Coast vibe about it and such a strong local flavour, and a lot of that comes from our staff who set up the event and are there and provide amazing hospitality throughout. So I love that Surf Coast Shire supports the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road race. I particularly love that we support the Welcome Wave but also love the way we go about supporting it, which is a very thoughtful way, really making the most of what the event can do in terms of stimulating global interest in the area, showcasing amazing scenery, showcasing fantastic riding opportunities, outdoor offering that we have. Just couldn't have been prouder on Welcome Wave night. Thank you, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Lovely. Thanks, Councillor Bodsworth. And, Cr Grist, I'm glad you have been able to join. You were having some tech problems there.

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. I'd like to say I knew what I was doing but I was just pressing buttons until something worked!

MAYOR STAPLETON: Cr Grist is going to give us a bit of an update on the great results that were achieved through Surf Coast Council's Share in the Spirit of Christmas festive campaign over Christmas. Thanks, Cr Grist.

CR GRIST: So the Share in the Surf Coast Spirt of Christmas activations - and I'd like to table the Officer update provided to Councillors on 12 February regarding the 2025 Christmas activations and to have that included in the Minutes for the benefit of interested community groups and traders in the Surf Coast.

This program demonstrates our modest investment in generating strong community outcomes. The expenditure was a little over \$84,000, coming in under the \$88,000 budget allocation. Council delivered Christmas trees and decorations across multiple townships, community Carols, sand activations by a local campaign, and partnerships with local community groups. Importantly, the campaign reached over 126,000 people. Social sentiment was overwhelmingly positive and only one minor complaint was received - the lowest level in several years.

Beyond the numbers, the real value is in community strengthening, families

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gathering at Carols, children posting letters to Santa, local volunteers, building decorations, schools and community groups contributing to town displays, and new residents engaging with their visitor centre for the first time. These activations helped create shared experiences across Torquay, Winchelsea, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet, Lorne and Deans Marsh, reinforcing local civic pride, connection and economic activity during our most important trading period.

I would like to commend Officers on delivering the well-managed program that came in under budget and clearly strengthened community spirit and I would like to table, as I said, the report for inclusion in the Minutes as I believe it's important read for our community groups and traders to hopefully build on what we did this year in future years. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Grist. We'll now move on to public questions and we have two community members who have submitted four questions for tonight. Our first question is from Mat Hines, and I can see that Mat is in the audience. I'll ask you to come up to the table, Mat. You've got two questions that you'd like to ask.

MAT HINES: Firstly, thank you for the work that Council has been doing recently to improve pedestrian and cycling safety, including the current works on Fischer Street and also the planned advocacy for increasing Federal funding for active transport. The Fischer Street works have prompted many to query when other streets will receive improvements for safety. Many of the current safety works have come about via the Safer Cycling Strategy but there are many areas where the matter is one of primarily pedestrian safety.

When thinking about pedestrians, it is important to remember that this includes people who use wheelchairs and mobility scooters, as well as parents and grandparents pushing prams and strollers. Some obvious streets in Torquay in need of safety improvements include The Esplanade, which has just three marked crossings through its entire length, despite having higher pedestrian traffic volumes; the Surf Coast Highway, which currently has no safe crossing between Surf City and the RACV, although the lights planned for Bristol Road will go part way in addressing the safety issues along this long stretch of road; and then there are the unofficial crossings on the same road further north at Deep Creek and Aldi.

Despite multiple community consultations over the decades calling for Gilbert Street to be pedestrianised, it continues in its role as a shortcut through to Bristol Road and on weekends a queue of cars circling while they look for a park, while the bricked crossings cause confusion for both drivers and pedestrians - are they a crossing? Are they not a crossing? And this is just in Torquay. The Great Ocean Road in Anglesea and Aireys and Mount Joy Parade in Lorne also lack sufficient safe pedestrian crossings. So onto my question: are Council Planning on developing a pedestrian safety strategy to guide future safety improvements either as part of a broader Integrated Transport Plan, as part of the next Safer Cycling strategy, or as a standalone plan?

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks for your question, Mat. I'm going to refer that to our CEO to respond to you.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Hi, Mat. Thanks for asking your question. It is an important issue. We don't currently have a pedestrian strategy on our Work Plan and we don't have funding allocated in the development of a pedestrian strategy at this point. The way we tend to consider pedestrian safety is sort of as you were talking about, through either our road safety strategy or our Safer Cycling Strategy and we try to ensure that the work we're doing for pedestrians kind of aligns through these strategies. That said, we have a pretty great team in our current Acting GM of Place Making and Environment team who in his substantive role, who are very good at attracting grants and getting funding for a range of things, including pedestrian safety infrastructure and so we're really fortunate that we've got such a highly skilled team who are really thinking about that a lot. And I guess while pedestrian safety is considered within a broader sort of Integrated Transport Plan or as part of a Safer Cycling Strategy, a standalone strategy would be helpful. So I guess at this point, we don't have it on our plans. It is something we're interested in and we will consider future opportunities, particularly if we can attract some funding in order to fund the preparation of a pedestrian strategy because it is a priority. So thanks for your question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Mat. And would you like to ask your second question now.

MAT HINES: Similar topic; more specific example. So for over a year now, the major north-south shared pathway that runs parallel to the west side of the Surf Coast Highway has been blocked at Grossmans Road. The route is a key part of access to schools, child care, recreational facilities, workplaces and hospitality businesses. The fencing in place to allow for the construction of a left-turning lane has occupied the public reserve and public pathway and prevented access to the signalised pedestrian crossing. These works were meant to have been completed last year.

In the meantime, no safe alternative crossing has been installed. This has resulted in pedestrians and cyclists choosing one of three paths: first, to walk along the highway to reach the lights, to walk on Grossmans Road to reach the lights, or finally to use the temporary path past the motel to attempt to cross the road at what has become the new intersection, where the new major development enters Grossmans Road, which is not a safe place to cross.

I do note that in the last few days, new signage has been put in place to direct pedestrians to cross at the bus stop, but this will still require pedestrians to negotiate their path across what can be a very busy road, especially during the school and child care pick-up times and the busy after-work period. A temporary pedestrian refuge should be considered for this location. My question: how much longer will the private developer be permitted to block access to the pedestrian crossing and what safety measures will Council put in place in the meantime to allow for the safe crossing of Grossmans road?

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Mat, for the question and I'll refer that to the CEO also.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thanks, Mat. As you referred to, there is a temporary signed detour for the footpath at the crossing. We understand from the developer that as part of undertaking their works, they have encountered some underground services which are in the way of them completing their works which is why there's been a delay in the completion of the project. The developer has been liaising with the Department of Transport in terms of the movement or management of those services at the intersection and are trying to resolve the issue as quickly as they can. We understand from the developer that the work should be finalised in the next couple of months. In the meantime, we'll forward your concerns about the pedestrian safety to the developer to see what safety improvements can be made at the intersection in the interim. Thanks for your question.

MAT HINES: Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Mat. And our next two questions are from Gene Crowe. I don't believe Gene is with us so I will read these questions out on behalf of Gene. Question 1: in light of the recent signage debacle at the Darian Road/Fischer Street roundabout, what controls has Council implemented to prevent a similar waste of money in future and, further, what lessons were learned from this costly and embarrassing situation? I'll refer it to my CEO.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thanks for your questions, Gene. The Darian Road/Fischer Street intersection works received State Government grant funding and one of the requirements as part of that grant was that we comply with the updated Australian Standard AS1742 for road signage. The signage that was installed and then the community feedback that we received was reviewed by Council, and Council chose to remove several signs to reduce congestion while still complying with the lower signage standards - there's a range of ways that you can comply with the Australian Standards - so complying with the lower signage standards outlined within the Australian Road Rules 2000. Since then, Officers have provided feedback to the State Government on the updated Australian Standards and the level of signage congestion that strictly adhering to guidelines creates. In future, our Officers will consider the level of signage congestion whilst still ensuring Council meets its requirements to adequately sign intersections. So thanks, Gene, for your first question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And the second question from Gene: the recent installation of dozens of No Standing Signs on Centreside Drive has reduced the visual amenity of the street. Was this issue considered when planning and approving this project? And, further, would Council consider reducing the sheer number of signs in this location? I'll also refer that to our CEO.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: So, Gene, I'm sure you will be relieved to hear that the signs are temporary. So the No Standing signs on Centreside Drive are a temporary measure to enable bus movements through this area whilst the detour is in place for

works along Merrijig Drive. We anticipate the works will be completed and signs removed by mid-April, so it's only a little while longer and it's really to ensure that the buses can move through that area safely. But thanks for your question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And that concludes our public question time this evening, so we will continue on.

There are no petitions for tonight's meeting.

Next up we do have a notice of motion. We have one notice of motion for tonight's meeting, which relates to vandalism in the Surf Coast Shire. Do we have a mover for this motion? Cr Barker. And seconded by Cr Grist. Thank you. And, Cr Barker, I'll invite you to speak to the motion.

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor, I have technical difficulties at the moment so my notes are in the ether, not in front of me, so I'll do my best to replicate them by memory. On Australia Day, there was a community event in Anglesea. Either the night or the afternoon prior to that, some vandals graffitied the tent that was a part of that activity. Now, obviously I'm on the record as having supported Australia Day in the past and I support those that disagree to be able to have their say, but the way this graffiti was done violated private property rights. Individuals and groups had gone out and spent money to hire this equipment. The vandals chose to spray with an anti Australia Day sentiment. As free speech advocate, all power to you if you've got different ideas, feel free to share them, but doing it in this format was neither inclusive, nor respectful, and Council has a policy on vandalism and graffiti. This notice of motion does not sway from that but it does allow us the opportunity to put forward a public position that we are against graffiti in all forms, whether it's on private or public land, and I think that this Council will be most effective at getting the message through because what I've seen around Torquay at least and the greater Surf Coast region, there's a lot of tags, graffiti - not political, just people marking their territory - but when it comes to political slogans on graffiti, I've often seen them aligned with the progressive, socialist, collectivist, whatever you want to call it, ideology, and I think that there's a lot of people in this room that would have a lot of influence over those people and if this Council is to pass this notice of motion, I think that it will be more effective than any other sort of action that could be taken against it. I've personally publicly offered \$500 for information that leads to the prosecution of the vandal in this case. I don't want to have to do that in the future and I would hope that there's some strong leadership within this group to be able to put aside personal, political preferences and put forward a strong public position that Surf Coast Shire condemns graffiti and vandalism in all its forms, whether it's on public or private land, and set a line in the sand that regardless of what your views are, breaching private property rights by vandalising them is not an appropriate way to go and if anything, will more than likely harm your cause or the message that you're trying to get forward. That was the motivation for putting this notice of motion forward. I'm very happy to hear opposing views and I look forward to the end result.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. And Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. So this motion appears straightforward but it speaks to something much deeper than graffiti or damaged property. It speaks to who we are as a community. The intention of this motion is to ensure that no member of our community is left in any doubt that vandalism is not activism. It is not dialogue and it is not civic engagement. It is unlawful damage that costs ratepayers money, burdens our staff and volunteers, and diminishes the amenity and safety of our shared spaces.

Council's Graffiti Management Policy already recognises that vandalism imposes financial and social costs and negatively impacts community wellbeing. This motion simply reinforces that principle that unlawful damage to property and disruption of lawful community events is inconsistent with our community values.

But there is also something deeper here that we must explore. When standards slip, when unlawful behaviour is excused as passion, when intimidation is called expression, the line between right and wrong starts to blur. Strong leadership means keeping that line clear, it means standing up for the rule of law, it means saying plainly what is acceptable and what is not. Across Australia, we can see what happens when leadership is unclear or hesitant on what is acceptable behaviour. It starts with graffiti. It escalates to vandalism. It grows into aggressive protests. And when boundaries continue to erode, we see tragic consequences such as the horrific attack at Bondi. No-one is saying graffiti automatically leads to violence but culture matters. Standards matter. The tone leaders set matters. When leaders speak clearly and firmly, they strengthen the social contract. When they hesitate, confusion and chaos fills the space.

Across our Shire, many residents wish to express civic and national pride, whether through flags, commemorations, cultural celebrations or community events. These are lawful, peaceful expressions of belonging. They are not acts of exclusion. They are part of the rich fabric of identity. When Council policies are unclear, inconsistently applied or perceived to favour some viewpoints over others, we risk unintentionally creating division. When people believe their lawful behaviour of civic pride is discouraged while unlawful behaviour is tolerated or explained away, frustration grows, and in that vacuum, vandalism and intimidation can become emboldened. Our obligation under the Local Government Act 2020 is to meet public interest and support safe, cohesive communities.

Cohesion does not mean uniformity. It means mutual respect under the rule of law. I appreciate we cannot control every act of vandalism but we can control the standards we set and we can make it clear that property will be respected, lawful events will be protected, volunteers and staff will be supported, and civic and national pride, when expressed lawfully and respectfully, is welcome in this Shire. If we are serious about inclusion, we must include those who love their town, their state and their country. Strong leadership does not inflame, it does not divide. It clarifies, it steadies, it sets the tone. This motion is not about politics. It is about principle. It is about reaffirming that disagreement belongs in debate, not on spray-painted walls or through the intimidation of community events. So I call on my fellow Councillors to be clear, balanced and firm. Let us publicly condemn vandalism

in all its forms, let us support those who clean it up and let us ensure our policies strengthen unity rather than division. I commend the motion. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Grist. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Mayor, and thanks to Councillors Barker and Grist for the motion. I'm very to happy to support this motion. It's all-important that we are able to exchange perspectives respectfully and without resorting to offensive or violent or aggressive behaviour. So I'm very happy to support this motion and also very happy to condemn people resorting to that kind of behaviour in this instance or any instance so I appreciate the Councillors bringing this to us. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Any other Councillors? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I would just like to say I totally support this motion, just with one caveat: we do need to be careful not to give the one thing that some of these small perpetrators want, which is publicity. To me, vandalism is cowardly destruction done under cover of darkness or out of view by people hiding their identity. Vandalism wastes money, wastes time, wastes resources and it's for no justifiable reason. So this is where we work, live and play and I encourage everyone to report graffiti and vandalism and to do what we can to make it socially unacceptable. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Any other Councillors? Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you, so in its essence, I agree with the motion that's put forward in our paper here and I also don't see any place for vandalism and it's completely not acceptable here or anywhere, and we all condemn vandalism and damage to property and we have a Graffiti Management Policy, which is available on our website, and we have a clear section on our website encouraging community to report vandalism. There's graffiti removal kits that can be provided to people to help them remove it off private property. There's time frames around when it needs to be removed, et cetera. So the Council has a very clear policy around graffiti management and the like and I support that. And so I don't necessarily agree with some of the deeper motivations potentially that have come through in some of the Councillors that have spoken around that it's left-leaning politics that are potentially more prevalent in the vandalism. I do take offence to those sorts of commentary because I think in essence if it is as it is that we condemn vandalism, I totally agree, but I don't think we should be laying blame or insinuating that certain parts of our community are perpetrating more vandalism than others. I don't agree with that and I don't think that that's appropriate. So in essence, because of the motion as it stands in the report, I will be supporting that motion because, of course, I agree that vandalism is completely not OK and I support the work that our Officers do in working with our community and adhering to our Graffiti Management Policy and I think that has been done in this instance and in response to events that have happened in recent months, as identified. So I will be supporting the motion in the way that it's drafted in our paper. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. Any other Councillors wanting to speak in Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor, and thank you to everyone for bringing it to light. I support this motion, how it's written, of course, too. Vandalism is an action involving deliberate destruction or damage to private property. Destructive and damaging also comes down to what we say and what we do. So I don't condone any form of vandalism or graffiti in any sort of way. I support this in moving forward in the motion that's here too, but also be aware, if you want to get your point across, do it in a respectful way, not destructive and damaging, regardless of what opinions or preferences or anything you have. We're all adults and hopefully we can keep it that way. We have seen an increase in graffiti prevalence, not just on Shire land but also on other land, GORCAPA land and things too, especially tagging and that side of things. So call it out. Call it out when needed and get it removed. We don't need it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. Any other Councillors? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. I agree with the other Councillors. I support the motion as it stands. I also condemn unlawful damage to property and vandalism. But thinking about the context of this motion, I think it is important to acknowledge context, which is a complex community issue, an event, on a date that is polarising for some and while that absolutely does not excuse any unlawful damage, it may help explain it. We can condemn vandalism and we absolutely should but we should also ask maybe about its drivers or what conditions are contributing to it. The motion recognises that unlawful damage to property and disruption of community events is inconsistent with community values and that is true but I think if this motion is about community values, then part of that must include constructive conversations that can educate and unify our community. Other Councillors spoke about unifying and I think we can all agree in unity. So let's move forward together.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. Any final comments, Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: Yes, I would just like to emphasise the point that Cr Phelps raised in that bringing attention to this does have potential risks. I was very hesitant about moving this notice of motion because of that one particular element and I think this balances the issue without giving the notoriety to the individual, and I think that's something that we need to be aware of ongoing, that sometimes if an act is done, highlighting it can only boost their message, but I think doing it this way is most effective and what you'll notice in the CEO's report to this notice of motion is that repairing vandalism costs the municipality - well, it costs Council, over \$100,000 every year. So if we can put a little bit of a dent in it, that just goes a fair way to being able to reallocate those funds into more essential services.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. We'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

Moving on to our reports. The first report on our agenda is the Council Plan Year 1 Action Plan - Half Year Report. And the purpose of this is to provide Council with the

report detailing the progress and status of Council Plan initiatives after the first half year of the Council Plan. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Bodsworth, as per the recommendation?

CR BODSWORTH: Yes, thanks, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, and do we have a seconder for that? Cr Phelps? Thank you. Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Mayor. So the recommendation is for the Council to receive a note, the Council Plan Year 1 Action Plan half year review, so this is a report on the implementation of the first half year of the Council Plan, up to 31 January. So the Council Plan, just to recap a little bit, is the road map for our Council term, so it's potentially the most important document that a Council produces in its term and it's the result of deep and broad, collaborative community engagement, which is a mandatory part of the Council Plan preparation process in Victoria, a deliberative engagement process, and in our case, fantastic buy-in from our community and a great series of deliberative meetings. Our Council Plan has five strategic directions - assets and infrastructure; climate and environmental leadership; community wellbeing; high-performing Council; and sustainable communities. That Council Plan incorporates a municipality Health and Wellbeing Plan, which is another mandatory document, and that plan also has five pillars. The report cross-references progress on Council Plan initiatives with Health and Wellbeing Plan pillars. This report provides transparency and accountability on progress in implementing the Council Plan, including where progress is slow or troubled, and there are a few examples of that in the report. Progress status categories are complete, on track, monitor or off track.

Things I would like to note from this report: 43 Year 1 initiatives under five strategic directions. The status of those are six complete, 33 on track, and four monitor. Point 12 in this report notes that ongoing reporting on this Council Plan will include more detail on costs and benefits of Council Plan initiatives and a hallmark of this Council's term so far has been an emphasis on return on investment and value for money considerations of our spending.

In terms of breaking down those themes, the strategic directions, assets and infrastructure - we've got asset renewal and maintenance on track. We're hearing, for example, about the Civil Operations Service Level Agreement further on in tonight's meeting. I want to acknowledge frustration out in the community about a few projects, including the Bristol Road intersection in Torquay, where there's been a hold-up due to relocation of nbn services, Pollocksford Road bridge, where there's been various hold-ups, redesign, and now we're on track to re-decking that bridge and getting it back operational, and the land slip in Fairhaven, which has been a long saga, caused a lot of community angst, and after a period of geotechnical observation and analysis, we're working on a solution. So I want to reiterate the awareness or the frustration out in the community on those things.

Under climate and environmental leadership, we've seen excellent preparedness,

response and recovery work recently by emergency management teams, and noting that the '26 to '28 Climate Emergency Action Plan is a work in progress. Soft plastic recycling is back. We're also recycling agricultural bags, paint and polystyrene. We've recently won a National Waste Innovation Award for our Surf Coast waste videos. If you were to Google 'Surf Coast waste videos', you'll see a series of fantastic videos about our waste chain.

Under community wellbeing, we've got the Anglesea community plan final meeting tonight, as we speak, and talking about a presentation to Council and the next steps. The Wurdi Baierr Aquatic and Reconciliation Centre is tracking for completion on time and on budget. Under high-performing Council, we're talking about expanded revenue opportunities in the report to make our Shire stronger and less reliant on State and Federal Government funding, which is something that is difficult to bank on. We also have important new performance reporting and continuous improvement initiatives.

Under sustainable communities, we have recently had the final meeting of the Winchelsea Place Plan Group, which I hope other Councillors will talk about in a second, and we've had some really important advocacy on housing from the Mayor. We've had good partnership work with the Lorne community and I attended and spoke at a really interesting festival type format thing called Slow Lane, talking about housing in January. And I'll hold it there. I just note very finally some great progress working with others, particularly the Aireys Inlet community and GORCAPA on Aireys Inlet bus issues. So thank you, Mayor. I commend this to colleagues.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. So this report outlines that there is a lot going on, just some of which Cr Bodsworth just touched on. Many of these actions are well underway or making progress and with relatively few of concern. There's a mix of short-term, medium-term and long-term projects in here aligned to the directions and objectives in our four-year Council Plan, again as Cr Bodsworth just described. There's some important preparatory and strategic work that will enable a step up in efficiency and effectiveness into the future as the budget continues to be squeezed, which I'm looking forward to seeing. I would also like to commend the Shire staff and Officers for what they have received so far and look forward to the end-of-year Progress Report. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: It's a good opportunity to raise a few great things that have happened across the year. The previous speakers have outlined more about the plan but I just wanted to talk about a few of the highlights. So the hockey pitch at Banyul Warri fields - very exciting. That was finished ahead of time, on budget and it's just an exceptional facility, so I'm sure we'll have some budding hockey stars coming out of our Surf Coast as a result of this wonderful facility. I might even give it a try when they have an open day later in the year. It could be really fun.

The delivery of the Surf Coast Arts Trail - so 200 artists across 56 studios, 15,000 visitors and, interestingly enough, 43% of those were from outside of our Shire, and the Shire is good at generating statistics and tracking so we can see how effective it is, and roughly \$208,000 worth of sales and the like were generated out of the Surf Coast Arts Trail. So that's some really clear stats for the benefit of that Surf Coast Arts Trail.

Coming from an engineering background, I love that our social infrastructure plan has been finalised, that is something I've been wanting to work through over the time I've been in Council, and so it's really great to see a prioritised plan for our social infrastructure being completed. Also the aquatics centre is well under way and we can see it just out here. We're all with baited breath waiting for it to be finished. Obviously it's still a while away but it's all coming along really well. And another really great program, which is on track and continuing to be delivered, is our community project delivery program. This is one of my favourite things that we do on Council and that's working to empower our community to take action and work with us in delivering important things for the areas that they care a lot about and that the community partners and works with. So a couple of examples of projects that have been delivered through this is the Winchelsea Memorial Grandstand, the Torquay football club storage and the Lorne landscaped reflection space. All wonderful community initiatives which we've partnered to deliver. So keep up the great work. It's only the first year and I'm looking forward to seeing what else comes. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: Thanks. The half-year report does one important thing well: it confirms that 43 initiatives in our Year 1 Action Plan, out of them six are completed, 35 on track and two being monitored due to emerging issues. That tells our community the things that we promised are at least being tracked and reported on, so in terms of accountability, it's alright. It also shows where we're meeting our legal duty under section 100 of the LGA to report on implementation of Council Plans. So doing the homework and handing it in. But there's a problem. The report admits that this year, the one half year report does not include financial information about the initiatives, and that over the course of the Council Plan will reporting be included to improve costs. This I find very anti transparent, otherwise known as opaque, and anything government should not be opaque. It should be clear. It's your money. You should know exactly what's going on with it. We're asking families who are struggling with rates and costs of living to trust us. She'll be right? I don't think so. While we tell them what we're doing but without the costs. So it's like showing someone a shiny new car but hiding the repayment schedule. It's all got to come together, both the good and the bad.

For those of you who care about social justice and collective outcomes, you should want exactly the same thing that I'm asking for here. If we want to keep delivering community health, wellbeing and climate initiatives, then we must prove that every dollar is working hard, otherwise when the State Government, which is already in

financially stretched position, inevitably pulls back on grants, the first things to be cut will be the very programs that we say we value the most. And in actual fact, if we value them the most, we wouldn't be cutting them but I can guarantee you if the funds from the state dry up, there will be some cutting needed to make sure that we can deliver our core services well.

The report talks about a high-performing Council and says Council manages its finances prudently and working innovatively to deliver the best value. Now, to make that true, we need transparent financial data tied to each initiative, not just warm words. Given the way that the recommendation has been worded, I'll support receiving and noting it, with a very clear expectation on the record: the full year report must include initiative level costs and a frank assessment of which activities are core local government and which are optional, so we do not overpromise in an era where state and Federal money will be scarce. That is how we protect community programs and that is how we respect the people who pay the bills.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. And do any other Councillors want to speak to this item? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. I am excited about what's happening in the Action Plan and satisfied with all the projects that are on track and commend the Officers who are working hard on progressing the Council Plan initiatives. I just wanted to speak to some of the initiatives that are being monitored for changing timelines, which include the speed zone reviews, which do involve collaborating with other transport stakeholders, but will be worth waiting for. I think speed management does contribute to a safer and more efficient road network and supports streets for people and wildlife as well. Another pedestrian safety project that's had a bit of interest is the Spring Creek pedestrian bridge and the works there are expected to start on-site by the middle of the year for that one.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. Any other Councillors? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor, and thank you, everyone, for highlighting what we've done in the first six months and what we're going to do, what's on track and what's not on track. So, as mentioned, six have been completed: Anglesea community plan, tonight, the hockey pitch, community grants program, Surf Coast Arts Trail, the social infrastructure plan and, importantly, the service review policy and program of service reviews, which will even keep us more on track.

With the summary of key initiatives, what's been happening? The progress instead of each of the strategic directions with assets and infrastructure - we've got the Spring Creek Reserve oval coming along, community wellbeing, including the Christmas celebrations, which we talked about earlier. Continuing on, the aquatic centre and the community-led project which I'd like to highlight is the interactive Lorne Avenue of Honour at the Lorne P-12 school, steered mostly by the senior students. The project honours the 32 students at a local school who went off to World War, creating a lasting place of remembrance, reflection and learning. Our high-performing Council with the service review policy I mentioned before is a really good one we're working

towards. Sustainable communities, including the social infrastructure plan and, of course, housing, and I'd like to highlight the climate environmental leadership, with the strategic direction of communities are prepared ahead of emergencies, supported during and after. This was highlighted earlier by Mayor Libby Stapleton for addressing many emergencies and natural disasters we faced over summer. I've been involved directly in preparing for the fire season with the First 72 Hours program during the emergencies, and the emergency recovery centres and the clean-ups. As a community member and a local Councillor, it is really rewarding to see the community come together during a crisis without hesitation. It really shows you the value of our community when under pressure and what they can do. There's still a lot to do with recovery and the resilience of the community is strong. Hopefully, the quarterly financial report coming next on the agenda provides detail of financial performance of the Council, including the Council Plan initiatives. This report brings clarity and transparency, showing what is on track or what isn't on track, to our community and keeps Council on track for the four years beyond our Action Plan and, hopefully, we keep seeing things done and into the future. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. Would any other councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. Would like to second Cr Barker's call for financial and costings to be linked to these reports in future but I will be approving it for noting, thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Grist. Any other Councillors? Cr Bodsworth, do you have any closing comments?

CR BODSWORTH: Just a few things, just in relation to how Cr Grist finished off just then. I totally agree that cost reporting is super important and that we've got room for improvement there. I just add that reporting on costs needs to be accompanied by reporting on value or outcomes because looking at costs alone without looking at what you got for those costs is not sensible. It can be quite hard to measure outcomes in local government land and so I really appreciate the work that's going on, which is not finished yet, during this Council term to better understand and be able to better report on outcomes and to enable people in our communities and ourselves as Councillors to get a better handle on value and we're talking about public value that's generated by the spending that Council does and we've been talking I think as I said before a lot more in this Council term about return on investment and that's across not just the usual private value concept of return on investment where it's about profit for shareholders but in this case it's across profit, people, place and planet, so it's a multiple ROI type scenario and it's going to take us time to build up a good framework for measuring and reporting on return on investment. That can be one of the missions of this particular Council during our term, which is contained in the Council Plan and is a work in progress.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. And we will now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you.

And we now move on to the Quarterly Budget Report for December 2025 and the purpose of this report is to present the Quarterly Budget Report to Council and it includes the comprehensive income statement, the balance sheet, statement of cashflows, statement of changes in equity, and statement of capital works. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Pattison, as per the motion?

CR PATTISON: Yes, as per the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And a seconder? Cr Phelps. Thank you. Cr Pattison, would you like to speak?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So the Quarterly Budget Report for December demonstrates a comparison of actuals and budgeted results to date and explanations of material variances. And as we can see from the quarterly reports, the Shire is in a strong financial position and, therefore, there's no need to prepare a revised budget. Council's operating surplus is 4.4 million favourable year to date, and that's a variance of around 8%, and that's mainly to do with capital grants and the delivery of the Wurdi Baierr Aquatic and Recreation project. But I also wanted to note the depreciation of Council's assets is also favourable. There's been a change in the accounting policy and the measurement of the useful life of our assets. That's come out of the '24-25 re-evaluation of buildings compared to the estimate in what was put in our estimated budget for '25-26.

But all in all, the budget is on track and I encourage you to note these Quarterly Budget Reports. I did also want to note, we can see in here that the rates - there's a slight - rates around charges are down slightly to budget. Rates notices have gone out and I wanted to draw to people's attention in these difficult financial times, encourage ratepayers with any outstanding rates to contact Council and join a payment plan so that they do not attract interest on their outstanding debts. So please get in touch with Council if that's a situation that you find yourself in. But I encourage people to endorse the quarterly budget. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. So we're at the halfway point to the financial year. As Cr Pattison has outlined, the finances look to be largely on track, with some income and expense timing adjustments. As we will see in an item coming up later in the agenda, I would like to note that the independent Audit and Risk Committee pore over these things with a fine-toothed comb, so I am confident that what we see here does reflect the situation, and it's also worth noting that the end-of-year Annual Report provides a better final overview of how well a budget went in terms of plan versus reality. I'm happy to support the recommendation to note the December quarterly budget report. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Any other Councillors wanting to speak to the item?

CR BARKER: This is one of the most important documents we see this year. It tells us whether our ambitions match our bank balance. The report says that Council remains in a sustainable financial position and confirms that a revised budget is not required. All good. But I appreciate the position that Cr Pattison put forward in that we can both identify what's happening, but I'm going to go a little bit further. So operating surplus 4.4 million favourable, 8% variance, but when you read the fine print, most of that good news comes from the timing of capital grants and a change in the depreciation policy and the re-evaluation of building, we're on par there, but it's not because we are living within our means or easing the pressure on rates. So I have done some smoke and mirrors and it's a little bit better, but if we want to get into a better position, we need some structural reform that I think is possible, but will we see it? Who knows?

The risks section is refreshingly honest. The breadth and level of Council operations exceeds Council's long-term financial sustainability. That's a serious risk. Now, to me, that's alarm bells. I appreciate the honesty in the report but it's up to everyone involved to be able to tighten the belt so that we can reduce that risk. If we try to be everything for everyone, we'll be nothing for anyone. So as I've said before, if we focus on the core essential services and do that well, we'll be supporting most of the community as best as possible.

Now, our community is already facing economic pressure on ratepayers and a slow down in development and its flow on impact to Council revenue resources. Add to that, the State Government, as I have said before and I will not stop harping on about it, because the debt that Victorian Government is in is astronomical. It beats I think three states combined together, and that debt means that spending needs to be cut, and if it's not cut, it means that we're going to get support from the Federal Government and the Federal Government is going to give that money through the issuing of bonds and inflation is going to go rampant, so if you've got concerns about the costs of living at the moment, and governments at every level, don't stop their spending and cut it back massively - that cost of living pressure is just going to get worse and worse. So, yes, we should note the report because it's - because hiding the numbers will not help and it's not an ideological point. It's basic financial survival. We need to focus on the basics, do them well. There's more but I'm out of time. So that's it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? And Cr Pattison, did you have any closing comments? We'll put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

Next on the agenda is item 4.3, which is motions for the ALGA Conference and MAV State Council meeting, and the purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of motions to be tabled at the Australian Local Government Association 2026 National General Assembly, which will be held in June, and at the Municipal Association of Victoria's State Council meeting, which is coming up in May this year. As the recommendation has been updated to reflect a corrected meeting date, I will ask Officers to share this on the screen just before we continue so Councillors can

review the revised motion. And the changing date there is just highlighted on the screen. Everything else remains the same. So we do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion?

CR BARKER: Just a quick question. I might not have been in the room when this was discussed but is the actual date correct as well?

MAYOR STAPLETON: Yes. So it was 2025 instead of 2026.

CR BARKER: But the 29 May? That's good.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Yes. Would anyone like to move a motion? Cr Bodsworth? As per the recommendation? Thank you. And do we have a seconder? Cr Pattison. Thank you. And Cr Bodsworth, over to you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Mayor. So ALGA, the Australian Local Government Association, National General Assembly - I was at the last one. It was a super-interesting thing to be at. It's a huge get-together of Councils from all over Australia - from right up at Kalumburu and Kununurra down to Hobart. It was very interesting to hear the breadth of issues covered. The delegates basically are in a huge theatre with a booklet of motions. We run through the motions and delegates vote on whether they support them becoming an ALGA advocacy item or not, and then those motions get packaged and communication collateral gets prepared to take those forward as advocacy items. So it's a bit of a process but it's a really important thing for us to participate in and to be in the room to make sure that Surf Coast municipality is standing up and being counted in that kind of forum. With the MAV, the Municipality Association of Victoria, it's a similar scenario.

So in talking to this, we have worked together on putting these motions together. Darren Chill has put a lot of work, which I'd like to acknowledge, into preparing these - not just sitting in the office working on them, but calling others and working out what other Councils are planning and that kind of thing and what the broader context is for these areas that we're advocating on.

So on the first one, the proposed ALGA motion number one is regarding telecommunications, with a focus on peak demand, and I'm going to leave other Councillors to talk about that, which I'm sure that they'll do. All I want to say is that we saw in January how much you don't want to be trying to get your phone or your emergency app to reload when something is going down. Minutes count and you don't want to be sitting there trying to get connectivity at a time like that.

In terms of ALGA motion number two, that's relating to a continuation of what was a four-year program with the Federal Government, which was the National Active Transport Fund. That was a program that allocated \$100 million, which sounds like a lot, that was over four years and over the entire continent, so it actually spreads out pretty thin, and compared to world-wide investments in active travel and reducing carbon dependency, it's actually quite pitiful. So there was a lot of - both at the National General Assembly and at the ALGA Roads Congress in Bendigo last year,

there was a lot of Council interest in active travel. Councils are recognising that it makes sense not just for the environment but also it's reducing road trauma, it's reducing pollution, it's reducing health costs from pollution, it's increasing physical activity, reducing health costs and improving mental health around that. It's saving household budgets. It's saving Council finances and it's reducing congestion, like what Mat talked about earlier tonight with people circulating in Torquay looking for parking spaces. So a lot of different reasons for investing in that. Currently Australia spends \$714 per person on roads every year, and just 90 cents of that amount goes towards walking and cycling infrastructure. So that's the kind of disparity that we're talking about in putting this motion forward.

And talking about that disparity and the return on investment from that funding, research has indicated that every kilometre travelled by car has a societal net cost of about 22 cents per kilometre, whereas every kilometre travelled by both walking and cycling has a societal net benefit of around the same amount, around 20, 21 cents per kilometre. So they're an absolute mirror image of each other in terms of value for money, spending on cars and spending on not cars. So that's what I want to focus on. I'll leave my colleagues to talk about the MAV motion as well. So I think we've done a great job this year with these proposals and I hope that Councillors support them.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Cr Bodsworth and I will tag-team. He has a passion in the ALGA motions and, as the Chair of the Geelong Regional National Library, I'm very enthusiastic about the motion for MAV around increasing State Government funding for public libraries to ensure allocations are needs based and reflective of population growth.

So the motion is calling on the Victorian Government to reform the public libraries funding program to ensure funding is needs based, considering population growth and equity measures, such as socioeconomic and age profiles. So, according to Public Libraries Victoria, government funding for libraries has not reflected population growth since 2018, and Council's MAV motion is informed by the work of Public Libraries Victoria, including their budget submission and, most importantly, drawing attention to the important role libraries play in our community, and they do provide so much value for the community. If you haven't been down to one of our local libraries, you really should because they're not just about books anymore. There's lots more going on at the libraries. It's about literacy and learning. But libraries also have a significant role in building community connectedness and, therefore, delivering on our health and wellbeing outcomes. They play a vital role in early years literacy and supporting families managing the cost of living. If it's a cold day and you've got nowhere to go, the library will be warm. If it's a hot day and you're struggling with heat, the libraries will be cool. There's internet. There's areas to sit. There's books. It just goes on and on, as well as the amazing speakers and events that happen. In COVID it was really even the importance of libraries because when people needed to get their authentication for their vaccinations on their phones, they would go to the libraries and the librarians would help them to do that.

So there's so many layers to our public libraries.

I was over at the Armstrong Creek Library when it opened last year and - or the year before - and there was a new member who had never been to the library and they're like, "But how much does it cost?" And the librarian is like, "You can join for free". "No, no, no, there must be cost". "No, you can access books and you can come here and it is free" and the person just couldn't understand that they didn't have to pay anything to join this amazing library. That was just a really interesting - I assumed everybody knew libraries were free. So I really think it's an important motion because we need to ensure there's that equity for everybody in accessing libraries and without adequate funding, with that funding burden continuing to fall on to local government, that could put in jeopardy these amazing services so we want to ensure that the funding is shared and the State Government continues to contribute adequately or increase their funding. So thank you. I encourage Councillors to support this MAV motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. Any other Councillors? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor, and thank you to other Councillors for highlighting some of the motions. I'm going to highlight the other motion around mobile coverage which I'm very passionate about. When we talk around recovery from emergencies, I'll talk about mobile coverage. The Australian Parliament is considering a Bill that seeks to ensure a minimum standard of mobile coverage. A minimum is not enough. The aim of the Bill is to ensure a minimum level of coverage but it does not take into account the impact of peak demand on local network performance. In the Surf Coast Shire there are many examples of network coverage failing to support peak demand and of the network being vulnerable to certain weather conditions. When we talk of adequate mobile coverage, this isn't talking about slow internet or bad reception or fixed-line nbn. We are talking about no mobile reception at all.

At certain times when the population goes from 1,000 to 20,000, there is no mobile phone or internet at all. In particular, Lorne and Aireys Inlet are both bushfire-prone zones. I witnessed this every day from Boxing Day until mid January, with times of no reception at all. It had a little circle going around looking for a satellite - that's what my phone showed - and messaging coming through hours later. This is imperative that this is addressed when we rely on emergency apps and warnings through the internet on mobile devices or need to make emergency calls or even book a restaurant. With many hours tourists are travelling on the famous Great Ocean Road, there are significant blackspots, including Cumberland River, where there's no reception at all. They rely on Starlink just for their reception. That's where the floods were. At least seven times on the Great Ocean Road between Lorne and Apollo Bay, there is no reception at all. Not limited reception. None. It can have significant impact on businesses who rely on online transactions in peak summer periods when demand is high. A booster system in peak season and genuine mobile blackspots needs to be addressed, and hopefully this motion to MAV hopefully addresses that in moving forward in our recovery.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. Any other Councillors? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I would just like to say these three motions are of direct importance to people in Surf Coast Shire, as already covered. Having a mobile phone network that not only copes with peak summer traffic but, more essentially, copes with emergency situations when much more capacity is needed for warnings, text messages and phone calls by multiple thousands of visitors and locals who may be in a state of high anxiety. To not only continue the Federal funding for active transport, which is due to end in 2029, but to also raise it to the levels recommended by the United Nations, to increase funding to our wonderful library service to reflect the benefits it provides to everyone, young and old, for social connection, learning, entertainment and so much more. It's important to contribute to National and state priorities and to have our Council's voice heard on behalf of ratepayers, so I strongly encourage accepting this recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. And Cr Bodsworth, did you have any closing - sorry, Cr Barker? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: I'm just turning the microphone on. Thanks, Mayor. If we are genuinely concerned about communication coverage, which I am also, I feel we must first ask ourselves and our community what practical infrastructure we are prepared to support here at home. We cannot reject upgrades like those proposed at Bob Pettitt Reserve and Jan Juc and then turn around and ask Canberra to fix a capacity problem for us. In my view, that creates poor optics and invites accusations of inconsistency. If we are unwilling to support reasonable infrastructure in our own municipality and, yes, sometimes in our own backyards, then escalating this issue nationally risks looking symbolic rather than serious. Before advocating to the Commonwealth, I think we need to be crystal clear as a community about what solutions we will actually stand behind locally.

As for the MAV motion to call on the State Government to reform its spending, I would like to say a lot of things, but suffice to say \$15 billion would pay for a lot of library books and there are more poignant questions we should be asking the State Government in regard to its spending. Furthermore, attending ALGA and MAV conferences involves travel, registration fees, staff time and associated expenses. Unless there was a clear, measurable outcome for our residents, these excursions become a high-cost exercise with uncertain return. It risks looking like activity without any local impact.

It must also be said that organisations like ALGA and MAV add another bureaucratic layer and cost between local communities and decision makers. Their advocacy often results in more Federal and State programs, more extraction and spending of taxpayers' money, and more centralised solutions that may not align with our community's priorities. For those reasons, cost, consistency, accountability and effectiveness, I cannot support this motion. It may feel constructive but it does not directly improve outcomes for our residents.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Grist. Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: All of these motions are not our circus, not our monkeys. First one, ALGA, motion 1, talking about the telecommunications issue. As Cr Grist touched on, we have rejected or downgraded telecommunications proposals coming before this chamber before. So we've got to have consistency. Either we are for good mobile telecommunication or we're not. It seems that we're trying to hedge our bets either way, and where we get some pushback, we then prevent the improvement to telecommunications or we actually look at the risks associated and support the introduction, not at our cost but just at our approval so that we can get better communications. Now, ALGA motion number two talks about active transport and calling on the Federal Government to pay up. Shared responsibility is no responsibility. Either local, active transport is our responsibility and we pay or it's Federal Governments and they pay. When you start trying to share it around, it doesn't work. If it is valuable and we do want to commit assets to it, then we'll do it, but don't be calling on other parts of government to bail you out. Now, on to the MAV motion, talking about libraries. Libraries are not free. They're paid for by ratepayers and taxpayers. Whether you own a house and pay State taxes, whether you are a ratepayer and pay directly, or whether you rent, you pay the rates through your landlord. Either libraries are valued and Councils take on responsibility for them and Councils fund them 100%, or they don't because I don't think it's fair that someone living in Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura ends up paying for a library in Torquay they'll never see and they'll never use. So either we take on that responsibility and cover the costs completely or we don't. I won't be supporting the motion because it's just going to be a waste of time, effort and resources to send people to these meetings that's going to deliver no productive outcome.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. And Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I would like to ask advice from you, if I may. With Cr Barker's reference to cancel all the different conferences being a circus and with Councillors being referred to as monkeys, I think that is inappropriate and I would like him to withdraw those comments, please.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks for your feedback, Cr Schonfelder. I would suggest that Cr Barker wasn't referring to us specifically as monkeys but was relaying I guess a phrase, a term, that is used in the community but I appreciate your feedback and I would encourage Cr Barker to ensure that his comments remain respectful of all of us. Thanks, Cr Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I did want to also speak on the motion as well.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: I would like to say that it's very important for different Councils to lobby State and Federal Governments, and Councils that are similar to us, such as Mornington Peninsula Shire, which has a coastal area as well as a hinterland area, as well as other Councils as well, our population is not as great as the larger metropolitan councils and rural and regional parts of Australia.

I know that it's possibly - I wouldn't know the exact percentage, but the majority of people live in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, so outside of the large capital cities, it's very important for a voice to be heard from non-capital parts of Australia, and I think that if we don't engage in the MAV and ALGA, then I think we do a disservice to our own communities without advocating on their behalf. I don't want to debate my colleagues on every point they raise but Cr Barker did refer to handouts or did refer to receiving more money from other tiers of government. It is actually a fact that the Federal Government has received money from Victorian taxpayers. It has been subsidising other states and Victoria has the fastest growing population in the country and receiving more money from the Federal Government is warranted in relation to that. As far as all the comments made by my colleagues about active transport and libraries and mobile phones, it is so important and I actually don't want to be too melodramatic, but I think it's almost life and death, particularly with mobile phone coverages when there's fires and floods and other emergencies. So I wish those conferences well and yourself, Mayor, attending them, I wish you all the very best. A few years ago, I had the honour of attending a conference in Canberra and it was great to meet other Councillors from other parts of Australia and sharing ideas and networking is so important. So I really hope this motion is supported. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder. And Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you. I just wanted to add that I support these motions as part of our advocacy to the levels of government that do have power and oversight on these matters. I think Council is really well placed to provide the advice on what's needed, being the closest level of government to community, and receiving the latest advice and guidance from residents, but often without the resources or powers to implement. So I hope these motions have impact.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. And Cr Bodsworth, do you have any closing comments?

CR BODSWORTH: Yes, thanks to everyone for the good variety of views that we've heard on these respective motions. Just on the value of being there, I guess - I think Cr Schonfelder nailed it when he said that if we're not in the room, our voice isn't represented, and that's the voice of the people that we're representing, so I think that we are letting those people down if we're not there. These gatherings provide unequalled access to decision makers and they provide a really unique opportunity for Councils' representatives, delegates, to get together and represent a combined voice. I think one piece of evidence for that was at the ALGA Roads Congress in Bendigo last year where Federal Infrastructure Minister Catherine King was present and gave an opening address one morning and I had the opportunity to ask her a question about continuing the National Active Transport Fund, and her answer was equivocal, and that question and answer triggered a lot of interest from Councillors, delegates, from all over Australia who were at that Congress and I have heard that Minister King has been really surprised and struck by the amount of interest that she's had from all over Australia in improving investment in active travel. So that's just one anecdote on the impact that you can have if you're in the room, and if you're

not in the room, you're not going to have that impact. We can write all the letters we want or we can make all the representations we like, but there's nothing like being face to face for putting our municipality's best foot forward. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. We'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 7/2. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have item 4.4, which is the status of the Surf Coast Shire hinterland economy, including the drought relief resilience update, and the purpose of this report is to provide Councillors with an update on the hinterland economy, outline of the drought relief and resilience measures that have been taken, and to report on the status of drought conditions affecting the Surf Coast and south-west Victoria. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion in relation to this report? Cr Barker, as per the recommendation?

CR BARKER: Yes.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And a seconder? Cr Schonfelder, thank you. And Cr Barker, would you like to speak to this item?

CR BARKER: Just briefly. I support receiving this report, but I would like Council to be explicit that we distinguish between emergency phase support, recovery phase support, and normal business risks. In a world where the State Government is financially stretched, we need to protect both our farmers and our ratepayers by staying focused on only what Council can do. And by respecting the ability of land-holders to manage their own businesses without endless new layers of intervention. Because what you'll find is that while financial support is of benefit, it also creates complexities where everything needs to be checked and verified to make sure it's worthwhile and this is the same for anything, whether it's any particular industry, I don't like governments getting involved because they distort the economy and if you had let people be and stop taking their money, they will be able to survive and not need these handouts.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Cr Schonfelder, would you like to speak to this item?

CR SCHONFELDER: Yes, please, Mayor. I'd like to note that the status of the Surf Coast Shire hinterland economy is at the moment adversely affected from drought conditions, unfortunately, and I know that the hinterland does include other sectors, including tourism as well and construction, and I know that there are also a large proportion of the population who commute. They commute to the City of Greater Geelong and to other areas for their work, and that's interesting in itself because of transport issues as well, that we have a major road, being the Princess highway, travelling through the hinterland part of our municipality, and we have probably one of the most famous roads in the world, of course, the Great Ocean Road, and we do have another road that is of - I would say regional or even state significance - and that is Cape Otway Road. Sadly, the drought at the moment is almost lowest on

record, which is a real concern, and it is having a terrible effect on primary producers. I really hope that the conditions improve but we have had fires in neighbouring municipalities and also the Colac Otway Shire and I know that in the report it does refer to the fact that the dams are at a low level and when it comes to fire brigades that access water, they do access dam water at times and that is crucial. Also for stock as well - the fact that the lower water levels have an adverse effect on stock, and many primary producers have their stock at the moment and they haven't restocked because we're waiting for the break to happen and we're hoping that a La Nina continues.

So I do really appreciate the report. It is quite extensive and I actually would encourage the Federal, State and Local government to try and help farmers as much as possible so that we don't have to import our food or fibre from either interstate or overseas, and the fact that if we have decentralisation as well, I believe that has a better impact on the environment and on community as well, Mayor. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? No. Sorry, Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. There are elements here that are strongly worth supporting. Firstly, the focus on providing information, facilitating connections rather than directly intervening in markets is appropriate, ensuring that landholders and small businesses are aware of available drought support, regulatory relief and financial assistance is legitimate and limited role for local government. Transparency, coordination and reducing red tape are all constructive contributions.

Secondly, any effort to streamline processes, remove unnecessary regulatory burdens and allow primer producers greater flexibility to respond to seasonal conditions is consistent with economic resilience. The best form of drought resilience is often adaptive capacity, and that comes from freedom to innovate, diversify income streams and respond quickly to market signals.

However, there are also areas that warrant caution. Where responses drift toward ongoing subsidy dependence, direct financial intervention or expansion of Council-led programs beyond core functions, we should pause. Long-term economic resilience is built on strong property rights, functioning markets, manageable rates and low barriers to enterprise, not on layering additional bureaucracy or creating permanent support structures that distort incentives.

Similarly, if drought responses become a vehicle for broader policy expansion or new spending commitments without clear sunset clauses, measurable outcomes or cost discipline, that would be concerning, particularly in the context of Council debt and ratepayer pressure.

In short, supporting this report for noting makes sense. It provides valuable situational awareness. But, as we respond, we should prioritise reducing regulatory friction, avoiding structural increases in Council expenditure, and strengthening the conditions for voluntary market-led recovery. Resilience ultimately comes from

economic freedom, flexibility and local initiatives, and our policy setting should reflect that. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Grist. Any other Councillors wanting to speak? Cr Phelps, thank you.

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. The report includes lots of facts and figures about what has been done over the last year or so so it is worth reading through. I'd just like to say that it's been great to see the support provided to those affected by droughts around Surf Coast Shire. There's been a lot done, much of it behind the scenes, but plenty of direct contact too. There's a long way to go for some and the outlook isn't particularly positive for catching up on the lack of rainfall, but I'd like to emphasise help continues to be available in a variety of forms, and I encourage anyone affected to get in touch with the Shire as a starting point. My thanks to the Shire staff who have pulled together all the various programs and support available and provided that valuable assistance. I'm happy to support this recommendation to note the status of the Surf Coast Shire hinterland economy and, more importantly, the local drought response activities. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Just really briefly to say I really appreciate this report and the information that's in it. I really, really support what other Councillors have said about it as well. I think there's a lot of insights that we can take from this, reading it carefully, that we can take into our own policy considerations here on Council. I would like the recognition of the expertise that's in the hinterland, in the farming community. As Cr Grist talked about, it's that kind of expertise and the opportunity to be creative and to adapt. It's really a key to resilience. So I really appreciate having access to this and appreciate the great work that went into putting it together and the great work that people are doing throughout the Surf Coast hinterland.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. I also appreciate the work that's gone into this report and it's really important. The Surf Coast hinterland covers over 60% of the municipality so it's a really important part of the local economy. But the report is quite sobering. The drought situation in the Shire is partly stabilised but not recovered. There's farmers under water stress. There's elevated fire risk due to the dryness of it all. And we're dependent on consistent rainfall for full recovery, but recovery is not guaranteed, so we can't always just wait for rain to fall. There is a declining trend in rainfall, so more highs, fewer lows and reduction in the number of rain-producing cold fronts. We need to get serious about water security and do what we can in our patch, expanding our water reuse and recycling, and continue to advocate to the State Government as well to fund a sustainable water network across the state with the help of Barwon Water, which is already one of our Advocacy Priorities, but it just is important to - a reminder of how scarce and precious water is to us right now.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. Any other Councillors? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor, and thank you, everyone. This report updates us on the Surf Coast into a economy, outlining the drought relief and resilience measures taken and report on the status of drought conditions affecting Surf Coast but also the south-west Victoria.

Drought has placed pressure on agricultural productivity, water security and community wellbeing across rural townships. There has been drought response and support activity, including relief grants, requiring ongoing support, connection and resilience, but the thing that can help the problem is rain, which we can't control. Currently, as of last week, State-wide, 52% fall, 17% lower than previous years; Melbourne, 71% fall, 11% lower than previous years; and regional, 48% fall, 19% lower than previous years. We're far from through a drought.

We also need to take into account the recent fires, with a lot of the volunteers across the region being farmers and residents of the hinterland who are out there fighting fires without hesitation, often having to leave their own properties to fight fires and protect their neighbours, Protecting their community and taking water from drought-ridden properties from dams. I thank you all for your hard work and resilience. In receiving these updates, you demonstrate a continuing commitment to involvement in supporting drought relief and recovery. It's an in-depth report and matters pertaining to the hinterland economy more broadly. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. And, Cr Barker, any closing comments? No? We'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have item 4.5, which is the addendum to the adopted Torquay Jan Juc Retail and Employment Land Strategy, otherwise known as the RELS. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's adoption of the RELS addendum report. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Pattison. As per the recommendation? And the seconder? Cr Bodsworth, thank you. And Cr Pattison, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR PATTISON: Yes, I would, thanks. So a lot has changed since the Retail and Employment Land Strategy was prepared in 2020 and then endorsed by Council in 2021. So this addendum is important to provide the context and data to make informed decisions into the future around retail and employment land in Torquay. So the addendum report will enable Officers to commence preparing a plan (inaudible) (inaudible) amendment to incorporate (inaudible) Surf Coast Planning Scheme. This amendment has been delayed for some time as a result of the uncertainty around the COVID years and the impact of the distinctive areas and landscape at work.

So some of the things to consider that have impacted the RELS, or the Retail and Employment Land Strategy since they were prepared in 2020 (inaudible) related to COVID and, more specifically, the impact on that and the changing way people work, shop, those sorts of things. So, as a result, the demands have changed on land use,

with a lot more shopping being done online and work being carried out remotely. So this has changed the demand pattern for land use and in particular there has been an increased demand for warehousing in our industrial precincts and we have seen that in the west coast business park. The Urban Futures Strategy was adopted in mid-2025 and that work was completed by Council and that's a really important piece of work which also needs to be considered and the distinctive areas and landscape Statement of Planning Policy. So this sets out the protected settlement boundary around Torquay and the proposed changes to zoning for the Spring Creek area. In addition, this will also impact our urban centres and where growth will happen in our Shire and that all needs to be considered.

So considerations for the addendum report also relate to updated commentary, data and evidence, and they will enable further planning and development of the Messmate Road area, so technical data is needed to provide direction on what extent of employment of land is needed to be allocated for the Messmate Road area. The West Coast Business Park, as I mentioned earlier, has demonstrated the benefit of having employment land allocated so that people can live and work in the same area, and we can see this already and we want these learnings to be applied for planning and zoning for Messmate Road.

Also, rezoning of land in north Torquay to enable further small-scale shops in the north Torquay shopping precinct. So there's currently a cap on the extent of commercial shopping area, floor area, within north Torquay, but with the residential growth in north Torquay, it's proposed that increasing commercial offerings would be really well received and you can see that when you're there, that there are so many people living in that area and having additional shops there would be really beneficial. It would minimise the need for reliance on cars and encourage community connection, people coming together in their local area. Then we also move on to Baines Crescent. This is a great mixed use area and the addendum continues this to continue. There's so much potential in the Baines Crescent area and there's also opportunities to enhance what's already really great and make it even more vibrant, and this may include some level of housing, which is addressed in the addendum report, but really the need for a precinct level plan for this area.

So the aim of the implementation of the RELS and addendum report recommendation is to facilitate new investment in the Torquay economy by encouraging employment land and development in appropriate specific locations, resulting in the efficient use and development of land, given the protected settlement boundary around Torquay. It will also be used to develop a Planning Scheme amendment to incorporate these key policy directions into the Surf Coast Planning Scheme.

Many of you are probably interested in the DEL SPP and how the State Government is progressing with the implementation of this in the Planning Scheme. This work is being led by the State Government and they are progressing incorporating elements of the DEL into the scheme, with a recent amendment to introduce the DEL policy into the Surf Coast Planning Scheme, and we understand more is planned to be introduced in the next few months, which is good news. So am encourage my fellow

Councillors to support this motion so that Council can progress with the Surf Coast Planning Scheme amendment and have sound evidence to inform future planning support and support Torquay and Jan Juc to continue to be a vibrant community.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. And Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. Cr Pattison has pretty much said it all. I was a big fan of the RELS in the last Council term and I think this addendum really adds to it and updates it in a good way. I'm just going to hark back to the previous item on the hinterland report and just talk about one of my favourite things, which is the analogy with farming, and I think it's why this kind of deep thinking about economic strategy, long-term economic and employment strategy for the municipality, is so important because, in my mind, what we're doing on our role on the Council with the municipality is a little bit like what a careful farmer does with a really precious farm, which is kind of what we've got. We've got a municipality that is outstanding in its globally recognised values. We need to make it productive and we need to make it profitable so that we can reinvest those profits into the things that we've talked about tonight, like libraries, which are super important, that don't in themselves bring in money. So we need to work our municipality hard but we don't want to work it so hard that we're depleting it and running it down, and that's where I think the analogy with farming is really important, and any good, complex, multifaceted farm needs a good plan and that's kind of how I look at this RELS and addendum. I think they're just really good insights brought together to provide sensible and really place-based directions for retail and employment strategy. So I couldn't really support this more. I think it's super important for the future of our municipality's economy, employment and lifestyle. So a big fan.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Any other Councillors? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: I did have a very long, detailed part to say on this, but I'll just surmise it as quickly as I can. The addendum and the evidence base for it is sound, but the practical application of it in the RELS is going to result in land that's more expensive to develop, which is in turn going to reduce the amount of opportunities that can be had within especially the west extension of the business park, and we're never going to know it, but the controls that the RELS will impact on will result in people in Torquay seeking employment in Geelong or Melbourne or businesses rather than being based in Torquay, potentially close to the home of the owner, will seek a location elsewhere and it will just drive that employment opportunity that could have been local, elsewhere.

The intent that this seeks to achieve in having a controlling element over the growth is going to result in choices made by people that we will never know but I can guarantee you that if these controls remain, the economic growth and opportunities in this area will be hamstrung and because of that, I won't be supporting the recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Yes, there was a lot to go through for me in these two reports, being the original Torquay Jan Juc Retail and Employment Land Strategy and then this recently completed addendum. To me they both provide sensible advice and directions to take. I'd like to thank members of the committee for their recent input. However, I do believe the Retail and Employment Land Strategy and the addendum, with its updated data, is considered and takes into account the wholistic approach to the commercial future of Torquay. So, accordingly, on balance, I support this recommendation and encourage Councillors to do likewise for a better Torquay. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Any other Councillors wanting to speak? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. I think the addendum before us tonight responds to identified issues that need to be addressed and it positions Torquay as a regional service centre. It has a bit of a shift to higher density and strategic and what I think is sensible development, which makes the best use of what land we do have, and ensures as well that growth happens within existing boundaries. So this allows us to respond to current pressures and allows Torquay to generate more local jobs and commercial activity, as well as housing and it made me think back to our youth survey that was conducted recently and a large portion of young people growing up on the Surf Coast were unsure if they would still be in the Shire in the next 10 years due to limited job opportunities and housing diversity, so I am sure this would be welcomed by the young people who live here now who rely on this growth to be able to stay and contribute in their local community.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. Any other Councillors? Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Mayor. I'd like to highlight the importance of amenity, and these employment precincts enhance the local amenity and the fact that so many members of our community want a small-town feel, and Torquay was once like a fishing village, and I think that Gilbert Street and Bell Street, for example, and also even Jan Juc as well, it does have a small-town feel about it and a fishing village feel, and I know that Cr Pattison talked about retail changing and that's a pertinent point, particularly with online retailing and the like, and the same - the need for warehousing, which can be accommodated, for example, at Baines Crescent and it can be located out of sight as far as on the main Esplanade or the main Surf Coast Highway, and that adds to the visual ambience of Torquay because so many people say that Torquay is so beautiful and I think it's important not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg, and our municipality - the visual beauty of it needs to be retained and enhanced. Coupled with that, walk-ability as well, and active transport, and people who are locals and even people from Geelong coming to the Surf Coast and Torquay, travelling perhaps by a pushbike, a more environmentally friendly way of travel than something that has to be seriously considered. I know that the business park, and with Messmate road precinct too, the fact that you have got employment area for the north-west there as well and the capacity is available because I have

worked previously as a policy analyst in the Victorian Farmer s Federation and I have been aware of industry requirements, such as ports and different types of circumstances, and there's a saying that if you don't have industry, you don't have community, and I think that having employment available for local people so they don't have to commute, that's a huge positive, and to have a mix as well is important in different types of industries as well. So I commend this item. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Schonfelder. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. So it's positive that this addendum enables more employment land and, therefore, employment opportunity, and if it reduces barriers to business entry, competition and supply, (inaudible) not protection of existing centres, are what keeps prices down and investment flowing. I trust we will be cautious of overly prescriptive planning that attempts to micro-manage retail outcomes. Our role needs to set clear, predictable rules, not to design the market. On balance, I will be supporting the addendum with the principle that economic growth is best driven by private investment and regulatory restraint. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Grist. And any other Councillors? Cr Pattison, any closing comments? No. We'll put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 8/1. Thank you, Councillors.

And we will move on to item 4.6, which is the Civil Operations Service Level Agreement. And the purpose of this report is to present the revised SLA agreement to Council for adoption. We do have a recommendation before us. Would anyone like to move a motion? Cr Phelps. And is that as per the recommendation? And a seconder? Cr Schonfelder, thank you. And Cr Phelps, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR PHELPS: Thank you. I personally would love to see a bit of rationalisation and alignment like this and as a bonus a couple of response time improvements as well. Civil Operations Service Level Agreement operates in conjunction with the Road Management Plan, which is an important document outlining the standards and responses for our Shire's 1,000 kilometres plus of roads that are sealed or unsealed. The Service Level Agreement covers infrastructure such as drainage, kerb and channel, street sweeping, response to graffiti and vandalism, some vegetarian - vegetation management, street signs and more I would like to note that Surf Coast Shire compares well to other similar local governments and to the Municipal Association of Victoria suggested template by defining similar or better standards to them. While road management and Civil Operations are a very large part of the annual budget, I do regard them as core business for the Shire and it is good to see this Service Level Agreement being improved with more accessible language and taking on board community views. So I support the adoption of this revised Civil Operations Service Level Agreement.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. And Cr Schonfelder, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you. I would like to concur with the sentiments expressed by the Deputy Mayor and the importance of having Road Management Plan is essential and the technology as well is improving all the time, particularly with dust suppression, and I have noticed in the community there has been encouragement for people to drive slower, to try to lower dust levels, because the differences between driving 5 kilometres or 10 kilometres less is only a few seconds, depending on how far you're travelling, and I do think that with the weather we've had recently, with very strong winds, you have to be careful driving with trees and vegetation on the roadside, and also the conditions as well - to be very careful when it comes to stock that might get out on to roads. I know even on the Great Ocean Road and in coastal areas, there's been kangaroos and deer, I've been told, that have been on different roads and for people to travel carefully and safely. So I commend this item and I do also agree with Cr Phelps about this item being a core service and being a very important requirement of the Council, and I know that other colleagues also value the importance of having wildlife corridors and drainage as well, the importance of that in relation to wildlife, being able to travel across roads, perhaps underneath roads as well. So I am very happy about it. Thank you, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Schonfelder. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: Again, long prepared speech but I'll keep it short. It's not a legislative requirement. It's got gender equity impact assessment for Civil Operations. What we provide should not matter whether you're of any particular description. If you're a person, we aim to deliver it. And it's just too explicit, too restrictive, not agile enough to respond if conditions are different, and I won't be supporting it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Any other Councillors? No? And Cr Phelps, did you have any closing comments?

CR PHELPS: No, thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: We'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 7/2.

And I would suggest that now is an appropriate time for us to take a short 10-minute break and, Cr Schonfelder, I understand you won't be rejoining us after the break, so thank you for attending online. For everybody else, we will be back at 8.15 to continue. I would like someone to move that we suspend Standing Orders. Cr Pattison. And seconded by Cr Schonfelder. Thank you. And all those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you. (Pause).

MAYOR STAPLETON: Welcome back to our livestream. If I could please have a mover and a seconder to resume Standing Orders? Cr Barker and seconded by Cr Pattison. And all those in favour? Thank you. And just noting Cr Grist hasn't rejoined online. Here he comes now. Thank you, Cr Grist.

And we are moving on to item 4.7, the proposed guidelines for Surf Coast Event Grant Program, and the purpose of this report is to consider the updated Major and Special Event Grant Guidelines and the new Community Event Grant Guidelines, which fall under the Event Grant Program. We do have a recommendation before us. Do we have a mover of a motion? Cr Walker as per the recommendation?

CR WALKER: As per the recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And a seconder? Cr Crockett? Thank you. And Cr Walker, would you like to speak to the item?

CR WALKER: Yes, please, Mayor. I love the events on the Surf Coast. We have heard about some of the great events over summer so far, some big, some small, some cancelled, but all valid. We have such an amazing backyard to host events on the Surf Coast and the Great Ocean Road and the region. I welcome the new grant guidelines. There's categories of tourism events, boutique, creative special focus events and community events. Each of these streams are outlined in the program. I welcome the new weighting criteria, resulting in funding being allocated to events that deliver better outcomes to the Surf Coast community and allows ongoing sustainability of events, reducing the risk to Council. Events drive visitation and generate overnight stays which add to the viability of local businesses and generate employment. They raise the profile of the host town but also enrich the lives of residents. Events can champion social, cultural, health or environmental issues in our community. They can support the participation and celebrate our local communities. The guidelines contain clear expectations for event organisers seeking funding, streamline administrative processes, improve evaluation criteria and increase recognition of access, inclusion and environmental outcomes. The guidelines created improve clarity, consistency and transparency across different event funding streams. I recommend these proposed guidelines.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. And Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. I also welcome this update for the grant guidelines. I think community-led events are so important and they're more than just a day on the calendar. They're a community project and to have locals involved in shaping our public spaces and activating our neighbourhoods and showcasing our beloved natural areas and Council is doing a good job of always trying to improve our user experience so these new guidelines for major, special and community events have been created in response to event organiser feedback and align with our Council Plan. I like that the new guidelines reward events demonstrating excellence beyond the basics for access and inclusion as well as considering environmental impact and the efficiency in people now being able to apply for their event - to run an event three years in a row in one single application, and I also support that the events being held within the Surf Coast Shire outside of peak season, so December/January, driving year-round visitation. As we have seen recently with climate events, businesses can no longer rely on a guaranteed summer trade, so this extension throughout the year will help with slow tourism and sustainable visitation to support our local economy year round.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: I won't be supporting the motion because my belief is the fundamental structure of grants is terrible. It doesn't support the voluntary interaction between consenting adults because it separates the funding source to those who are receiving it. It doesn't have enough publishing and promotion of the grant recipients and the values. That needs much better transparency. And the issue with aligning the Council direction with the grants application just shows that you may have someone in the community running an event that provides an objectively let's say nine out of ten benefit to the community but if that's not in alignment with the Council direction and there's another event that objectively has a five-out-of-ten benefit to the community, that five-out-of-ten benefit will get the money and the nine out of ten won't because it's not in alignment with the Council direction. So for these reasons, I will not be supporting the motion and I will encourage others that want more equitable outcome to join me in opposing the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. I am pleased to see separate guidelines for community events. I think a different approach should apply where the objective of an event is getting a local community together to socialise, to have fun or to get to know each other, and/or. I would say some finetuning may come to light over the next year or so. Other than that, these documents provide a clear guide to those seeking support for events from Surf Coast Shire. I think Cr Barker raises a good point about the acquittal process and what benefits come from providing the funds. Aside from that, I am happy to adopt those guidelines. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Any other Councillors? Cr Walker, would you like to make any closing comments?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor. It's also important that we have got some fantastic events coming up too, that not just that we support, but from the community. So you have your markets coming up, the Deans Marsh Festival, the Aireys Inlet Music Festival, the Rip Curl Pro and the Great Ocean Road Fun Fest all in the next couple of months, so get out there and support them while you can. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. We'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 6/2. Thank you, Councillors.

And next up we have item 4.8, which is the Audit and Risk Committee biannual activity report, and the purpose of this report is to provide Councillors with an update on the activities, findings and recommendations of the Audit and Risk Committee for the past six months as required by section 54/5 of the Local Government Act. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Grist, as per the recommendation? Thank you. And do we have a seconder? Cr Bodsworth, thank you. And Cr Grist, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR GRIST: I would, thanks, Mayor. The report provides a good snapshot of Council's governance and risk oversight over the past six months. What stands out in this report is the breadth of oversight undertaken by the committee. It has continued to monitor internal and external audit activity, oversees the status of audit recommendations and review key risk areas including financial management, compliance, governance, controls and emerging organisational risks.

Importantly, the report highlights ongoing monitoring of the internal audit program and progress against degree of management actions, oversight of financial report processes, including review of Financial Statements and compliance with legislative requirements, consideration of strategic and operational risk registers, ensuring key risks are identified, assessed and treated, and continue to focus on fraud control, policy currency and governance framework improvements. It's reassuring to see that outstanding audit actions are being tracked and recorded transparently and there is a structured process in place to escalate any overdue or high-risk matters. That demonstrates a maturing governance culture rather than a reactive one.

The Audit and Risk Committee plays a crucial role under the Local Government Act 2020 in providing independent assurance and advice to Council. This biannual report gives Councillors confidence that appropriate scrutiny is occurring behind the scenes, particularly around financial integrity, risk management and internal controls. For those reasons, I support the item being received and noted. It reflects a functioning governance framework, active oversight and a commitment to continuous improvement, all of which are fundamental to maintaining community trust and Council stewardship. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Grist. Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Not much to add to that but just to say that we're really lucky to have the Audit and Risk Committee independent members that we have. We're partway through a recruitment process for a new member and Chair said that he's never seen such a strong field of respondents to the vacancies, that it's great for us. We get an amazing choice and we have fantastic members on the committee. So as Cr Grist said, the scope of the review is good and it's all there in the report for Councillors to read, so I think we're lucky with what a good place we're in with our Audit and Risk Committee.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Any other Councillors wanting to speak to this item? Cr Phelps and then Cr Barker.

CR PHELPS: The work of the Audit and Risk Committee is fundamental, I think, to having confidence in the finances and processes of Surf Coast Shire. The independent industry experts, in conjunction with Cr Pattison and Cr Grist, look into to all sorts of operational and financial aspects and consistently record the Surf Coast Shire is doing well and in some cases leading the way. The biannual report lists what they have covered for the last six months of 2025, including fraud and corruption control, policy and system, procurement policy, external audits, insurance

coverage and costs, and much more. So I'm very glad we have this committee independently doublechecking things, as much of what they do is way above my pay grade, and, accordingly, I recommend that we receive and note the Audit and Risk Committee biannual activity report. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: It's easy to receive a note and move on. The problem is a lot of the interesting detail is buried. The report refers to issues being managed or no significant issues but it doesn't make it obvious to the average resident how many moderate issues are still open, how long they have been open and what it might be costing them; an environment where the state budget is tight and we're wrestling with our own serious risks, like the risk that the breadth and level of Council operations exceeds Council's long-term financial sustainability that I have mentioned earlier.

I would like the Audit and Risk Committee to be more explicit about the big structural concerns, if they share the concerns that I have - not just whether we tick the right boxes but whether we're taking on too many functions, relying too much on grants that might or very well disappear, or running systems that are more complex than they need to be.

I'm happy to note the report but I'd like to see the next one have a short, plain English summary with a top few risks and key outstanding actions written for the people who actually pay for this - the residents. Plain English, easy to understand. That will be just one small component to building community trust and respect in this organisation because, as we've seen, trust in institutions is waning and when we hide information or finances from the community, the people that are paying for us to operate, that just breathes resentment. So more transparency, more accountability, and historically, the Audit and Risk Committee has also highlighted that we're not doing enough in the climate management space. I'd actually highlight or we are already doing too much and that in itself is a risk so I see there's a fundamental difference between what I see is the practical reality and what the Audit and Risk Committee see is the reality. So I'll be noting the report but there's some areas that I'd like to see improved.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Grist, did you have any closing comments?

CR GRIST: No, thank you, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: OK. We will now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

And item 4.9 is the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Assessment and the purpose of this report is to present the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Assessment to Council for noting. We have a recommendation. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Bodsworth as per the recommendation, and a seconder for that? Cr Phelps. Thank you. And Cr Bodsworth, would you like to speak to that item?

CR BODSWORTH: I'll just speak to it very briefly. So this is a legislative requirement. It's to help the committee to keep functioning at a high level and the results that we're seeing are based on the survey of committee members. So generally positive feedback with some suggested improvements which are all in the report. The only thing I'd like to note is the highly constructive relationship between the committee and the organisation. That's all I have to say about this.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. And Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Similar to Cr Bodsworth, it's a very positive report on the whole and there are a couple of useful comments in there that should be followed up. That's all I have.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Any other Councillors? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: I'll support the assessment but just ask that next year's assessment includes a frank section on weaknesses of the organisation and follow-up actions, both for internal and the community to understand, and a stronger focus on long-term financial resilience, not just compliance. While the compliance component is important, financial resilience in a changing economy is going to be I think our single biggest risk and if we are not ready for any changes that occur, that just puts us in a very bad position. Happy to speak with any of the members of the Audit and Risk Committee on what my concerns are in more detail if they want to learn.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? And Cr Bodsworth, would you like to make any closing statements?

CR BODSWORTH: No, thanks, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: We'll put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have the award of contract T26-025 for Plumbing Maintenance Services and the purpose of the report is to seek Council's approval to award the contract to a panel of three contractors. As the recommendation was redacted in the open agenda, I will now ask Officers to share the unredacted recommendation on the screen for a quick read before we continue. (Pause). Thank you. And we do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Pattison, thank you. And do we have a seconder? Cr Bodsworth, thank you. And Cr Pattison, would you like to speak to the item?

CR PATTISON: Yes, just briefly. So the contract is for a panel for Plumbing Maintenance Services to maintain the ongoing serviceability of Council's facilities, public reserves and open spaces, and it's awarded a two-year panel of rates contract, and the contract will operate on a schedule of rates with annual CPI adjustments and for an initial term of two years, with the option for further extensions

at the discretion of Council. So expenditure of around \$1 million over the contract period and the current panel expires on 31 March 2026. And, as we can see, it's great that there are some local plumbers included in the mix and I encourage Councillors to support the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: I was just going to note the local content as well (inaudible) local content and we got a good competitive field. Councillors have had access to confidential tender report heading into this meeting to get our heads around the process and the rigour and the fairness of the process and I am satisfied with that. So I think it's a good result.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: It's good to have a consolidated contract that includes a number of providers, but there's just a couple of key concerns that there's no explicit discussion of how cost escalation will be handled over the contract term. Now, thinking in mind this is three years, there will be significant cost escalations, and it's not just costs. It's also the revenue. What will Council do if future budgets come under pressure due to reduced external funding from the State or Federal Government? Delegated in the full execution extension options to the CEO are deficient, but it reduces Councillors and ratepayers access to a timely reporting method. So I can see the intent to consolidate this all but there's some serious concerns that I think will play out over the next few years that this contract does not specify. So I won't be supporting the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Any other Councillors wanting to speak to this item? And any closing comments, Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: No.

MAYOR STAPLETON: We'll put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 6/2. Thank you, Councillors.

Next we have item 4.11, which is the project budget adjustments and cash reserve transfers for February 2026, and the purpose of this report is to present the proposed budget adjustments and cash reserve transfers for Council approval. And the report presents adjustments including existing projects that require adjustment, project closures, new projects to be initiated, CEO-approved transfers under delegations, or corrections to prior reports presented to Council. We do have a recommendation before us. Would anyone like to move a motion? Cr Phelps. As per the recommendation? Thank you. And seconded by - a seconder for the motion? Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. And, Cr Phelps, would you like to speak to this item?

CR PHELPS: Just in brief, this regular item is a significant transparency measure and in itself it should address the suggestions earlier that Cr Grist, Cr Bodsworth and

Cr Barker raised during the Council Plan Year 1 Action Plan Half Year report. I do agree it would be good, though, to see financial information outlining how each project went alongside other factors in the Council Plan Action Plan report. This project - budget adjustment - the project budget adjustments and cash reserve transfers report provides clear information about where variations have occurred and why, and also includes the final figures for closed and finished projects. I encourage Councillors to approve the project budget and adjustments as outlined. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: Nothing to add, thanks, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker

CR BARKER: I won't be supporting this as it's allocating a quarter of a million dollars from the state through the safer local roads and streets program into our safe cycling and pedestrian route project, and getting all of Victorians to contribute a quarter of a million dollars to our cycling project is not fair on any measure from my perspective so I won't be supporting it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Just a quick one, thank you, Mayor. I appreciate from Officers giving us a bit more detail in this, which is great, so I think the basis for a variation gives us a lot more context, not just for us, but also for our community in transparency and clarity also. So I appreciate that. That's all. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Walker. Any other Councillors? No? And, Cr Bodsworth, did you have any closing comments? Sorry, Cr Phelps.

CR PHELPS: No, thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: My bad. I will now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 6/2. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have item 4.12, which is the local government countback report for Torquay ward and the purpose of this report is to present the local government countback report to Council for the 2025 Torquay ward countback. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Walker. And seconded by Cr Phelps. Thank you. And Cr Walker, would you like to speak to this item?

CR WALKER: Just briefly, to say after three months, welcome, Phoebe, officially. No, it's great to get a full quorum of Councillors back, so thanks, and welcome.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Walker, and Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I just note it is a formal receipt of the countback report from the 2025 local government countback, courtesy of the local government electoral regulations. So it's a formal report. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. I am supportive of noting this report as I wouldn't be otherwise, so it is an honour and privilege to have been elected in the countback and I am really grateful to be here. I also note that the process of a countback, as opposed to something like a by-election or similar, is appreciated when it comes to saving time, money and resources from Council. So I support this efficient process as well.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: I would just like to see the causal factors were the catalyst for this countback occurring be made public. That's not my job to make that happen.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. Any other Councillors? And, Cr Walker, did you any closing comments?

CR WALKER: No, thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: We'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? The motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

And item 4.13, which is the instrument of appointment and authorisation under the Planning and Environment Act, and the report is to seek Council's appointment of authorised Officers under the Act through the updated instrument of appointment and authorisation, and this instrument requires updating due to recent staff changes. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Phelps, thank you. And seconded by Cr Pattison. Thank you. And, Cr Phelps, did you have anything you would like to say?

CR PHELPS: Just quickly again, this is a regular item, as you note, Mayor. It just identifies the changes in Officers who have the authority to carry out roles within the legislative framework.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. And Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Nothing to add.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Did any other Councillors want to speak to this item?

CR BARKER: I would like it to be made known public why we keep having these

changes of staff, even if it's just a short little note as to why some staff members have left. I think that would be of benefit to the community.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? We'll now put the - sorry, Cr Phelps, no closing comments? No? We will put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 7/1. Thank you, Councillors.

And item 4.14, which is the conflict of interest records and the purpose of the report is to present the records received since the previous Council Meeting. We do have a recommendation. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Pattison as per the recommendation?

CR PATTISON: As per the recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And seconded by? Cr Bodsworth? Thank you. And did you want to speak to this item?

CR PATTISON: No.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Cr Bodsworth?

CR BODSWORTH: No, thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Any other Councillors? We will put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

And we now move on to the closed section of our meeting. We do have one confidential item to consider tonight so we will need to close the meeting to the public and end our livestream. I wish to thank everyone who has joined us this evening, both in person and online. And I will call for Councillors to move and second a motion to move into confidential, please. Cr Pattison and seconded by Cr Phelps. And all those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 6/2. Thank you. We'll now end the livestream.