

The image is a full-page background featuring an aerial photograph of the Aireys Inlet coastline. The top of the page is decorated with a blue pattern of white dots and wavy lines. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

Victorian election advocacy priorities – 2026

Aireys Inlet coastline



Acknowledgment of Country

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, and Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar, their Elders and leaders past, present and emerging as the Traditional Owners of the skies, land, waters and sea country across our municipality. We also extend our respect to all First Nations people who are part of the community.

The Victorian Government election will be held in November 2026 and presents an opportunity for Surf Coast Shire Council to advocate for local and regional projects and policies that matter to our community.

This prospectus summarises priorities that need support at Victorian Government level and includes regional and local capital projects plus policy and partner opportunities.

The priorities have been informed by the Surf Coast Shire Council Plan 2025-2029, which was developed following extensive participatory and deliberative community engagement processes.

Other key strategic work has informed the priorities including the identified need to increase the availability of affordable housing; Council's pipeline of social infrastructure projects across the municipality and our focus on place planning including the community led processes to deliver sustainable and liveable growth precincts.

Also included in this priority pack are advocacy on behalf of local farmers experiencing tough times because of drought, a request for improved public and active transport and a fairer system for funding emergency services.

Surf Coast Shire Council has a long-standing commitment to regional collaboration, consequently advocacy on projects or services delivered by partners are included as well.



Banyul-Warri Fields, Torquay

Polwarth electorate



Hurst Road area, Anglesea

The following advocacy priorities sit within the Polwarth Victorian electoral boundary.

Anglesea Community and Health Hub

This project will deliver an integrated hub in McMillan Street Anglesea incorporating multi-use community spaces, housing, health and medical facilities. The project will co-locate services and facilities as well as provide much needed key worker housing in a central Anglesea location. Council has sought grant funding through the Australian Government's regional Precincts and Partnerships Program and the outcome of the application is unknown at this stage.

The support we seek:

Next stage: Schematic and detailed design estimated at \$750,000. Council has \$360,000 to contribute.

Aireys Inlet social and affordable housing

Council is working on a social and affordable housing development at the site of existing social housing units at 2 Fraser Drive, Aireys Inlet. Not-for-profit housing provider, Housing Choices Australia has been appointed to co-design the project alongside a community advisory group. The project will address the significant shortage of affordable housing in this location and support existing social housing residents.

The support we seek:

infrastructure and carparking – estimated cost \$200,000.



Lorne rental housing incentive pilot project

Council is advocating for a land tax exemption for owners in Lorne who rent their properties to key workers for a minimum period of 24 months. The proposal is for Lorne to serve as a pilot project to encourage more long-term rental properties given Lorne's critical shortage of worker housing. Council is also seeking funding for design of affordable housing for key workers on suitable public land. The project would seek to build housing that is in keeping with the scale and character of surrounding residences.

The support we seek:

Victorian Government to trial a land tax exemption that encourages a specific number of properties to be made available for long-term rental for a minimum of 24 months.

\$250,000 for design of Lorne based affordable housing for key workers. Council has \$50,000 to contribute.

Torquay CBD and Baines Crescent Precinct Planning

The Torquay Town Centre remains the primary retail precinct in Surf Coast Shire but upgrades are required to ensure it is a vibrant commercial and social precinct into the future. A precinct plan that considers public domain improvements and incorporates housing would add vibrancy and create investment appeal. Residential apartments above commercial premises would address housing supply and provide more sustainable housing options.

The Baines Crescent Surf City precinct is an area of significant opportunity for job creation and social benefit. A precinct plan would identify the future role of the precinct and explore options for accommodation, housing, retail and hospitality. The site is a mix of public and privately owned land and includes the Torquay library, Australian National Surf Museum and cultural facilities.

The support we seek:

The combined cost of the precinct plans for Torquay CBD and Baines Crescent is an estimated \$700,000 and Council has \$225,000 to contribute

Anglesea Mountain Bike Trails

This project would deliver a 107 km network of new and upgraded trails with connections to other significant trail destinations in the region. Comprising 36 trails, the project will strengthen Anglesea's standing as a centre for mountain bike riders of all ages and abilities. Investment in the project will support the regional visitor economy boosting local jobs and businesses. There is an opportunity to stage delivery of the trails so work can commence with less than the full funding.

The support we seek:

The first stage is to undertake cultural heritage and vegetation assessments. Total construction cost is an estimated \$2.8 million

Winchelsea Place Plan priorities

Winchelsea is a key growth area for Surf Coast Shire with the potential to accommodate between 4,500 and 7,500 new dwellings by 2051. Council has collaborated with community on a Winchelsea Place Plan that identifies community aspirations and opportunities.

The support we seek (initial advocacy priorities):

Highway amenity improvements

The Princes Highway is the primary vehicle route for Western Victoria and traverses the township centre of Winchelsea. There is an opportunity to implement safety and amenity improvements in the town centre to better support pedestrian movement and amenity. Roadside infrastructure and tree planting have been identified as potential treatments through the Winchelsea Place Plan engagement process.

Housing at train station

There is vacant VicTrack owned land immediately adjacent to Winchelsea train station. There is an exciting opportunity to use this land for housing and to realise the benefits of residential development offering diverse housing forms, adjacent to a transport hub in town with identified growth potential.

Briody Drive Roundabout

A new roundabout at the intersection of Messmate Road and Briody Drive will provide safe access to several new housing developments in the west of Torquay. 360 new residential lots are planned for the precinct along with 290 retirement and residential units and 80 aged care beds. The roundabout is a critical piece of enabling infrastructure that will support delivery of a significant number of dwellings.

The support we seek:

Construction cost is estimated at \$1 million. Council has \$200,000 to contribute.

Spring Creek Netball Shelters

New and upgraded facilities are required to encourage participation and ensure equitable access. New player shelters are required along with replacement of a storage shed, conversion of old pavilion to storage and mini kitchen and upgrade of existing spectator shelters.

The support we seek:

Total estimated cost is \$160,000.

Surf Coast Suns playing infrastructure

Improved playing infrastructure is required to ensure the rapidly growing Surf Coast Suns Football and Netball club is compliant with the requirements of the Bellarine Football Netball League, which they will join in 2026. Entry to the league provides greater opportunities for players but does require specific upgrades to netball and football playing infrastructure.

For netball competition, female friendly change rooms are required.

Football requirements include nets behind the goals at Polwarth Oval.

The support we seek:

Total estimated cost of netball infrastructure is \$350,000. Football infrastructure is estimated to cost \$150,000.



Banyul-Warri Fields, Torquay

South Barwon electorate



Moriac

The following advocacy priorities sit within the South Barwon Victorian electoral boundary.

Moriac Park Upgrade

There is an opportunity to enhance the appeal of the Moriac and District Lions Park site at the town's entrance by upgrading facilities and adding new infrastructure and planting, noting the park is a popular destination for locals and visitors including those who stop at the adjacent Moriac general store.

The support we seek:

Estimated cost is \$160,000.

Moriac safety and amenity improvements

Funding is required to support streetscape design and improvement works to enhance central Moriac. The intersection of Cape Otway Road, Hendy Main Road and the railway line is a major safety concern for locals.

A related goal is an alternative heavy vehicle route to avoid trucks from travelling through Moriac. Currently heavily laden quarry trucks are navigating a complex intersection and travelling directly through a school zone in the middle of town every day.

The support we seek:

Funding support for design and delivery of streetscape works. Network upgrades that support a suitable alternative route for heavy vehicles.

Mt Moriac Female Friendly upgrade

Upgrades to this popular football and netball sports facility are needed to foster more equitable participation in sport. This would include unisex change facilities that cater for the needs of both males and females, inviting community spaces, adequate lighting in and around the facility and family friendly attributes including baby change amenities.

The support we seek:

Estimated cost is \$1 million

Connewarre Reserve sports ground drainage and lighting

Improved sports ground drainage and installation of lighting are required. There is an additional opportunity to plan for the future provision of multi-purpose sports fields including soccer. This would enable the reserve to provide additional capacity for high-membership Torquay based clubs.

The support we seek:

Estimated cost is \$3 million.

Surf Coast Shire and region



Spring Creek, Torquay

Public transport

More than 75% of Surf Coast Shire residents commute to work by car. There is a lack of viable public transport alternatives especially between key settlements and employment areas. A related challenge is the lack of affordable housing in coastal townships requiring workers to commute long distances. Direct coach routes that connect townships are necessary and the timetable should be structured to support worker and school commuting as well as the needs of older residents and visitors. A rapid transit link between Geelong and Torquay would support key growth areas and provide a practical public transport option for visitors to Surf Coast Shire.

The support we seek:

Early morning and late in the day coach services that connect coastal townships such as Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne to both Geelong and Colac.

Additional rail services to Winchelsea from Colac and Geelong, beyond the current five daily services, to encourage a greater percentage of non-car travel to and from this key growth precinct.

Funding for active transport including completion of gaps on key routes

Mobility is a fundamental requirement for a sustainable and well-functioning region. Funding and policy support to encourage alternatives to car travel are required to provide a more sustainable and higher functioning transport network in the region. Funding programs for active transport should focus on the establishment of practical end to end routes including integration with rail and bus services. Maintenance of roads should also include repair and sweeping of shoulders to support safe cycling use. In Anglesea the absence of a dedicated active transport option for crossing the Anglesea River is an ongoing barrier to non-car based travel.

The support we seek:

Funding and policy support that builds functioning active transport routes including the completion of identified gaps on key routes.

Torquay to Geelong cycling link

Surf Coast Shire Council is working with the City of Greater Geelong on a safe cycling corridor between Torquay and Geelong. Key to the project would be a separated shared user path along Horseshoe Bend Road from South Beach Road in Torquay to Warralilly Boulevard in Armstrong Creek. The project will create a safe route for commuting and recreational cycling and address a recognised cycling safety blackspot.

The support we seek:

The construction costs for a complete off-road link between Torquay and Geelong is \$13 million. The cost of the Surf Coast Shire section is \$4.3 million, which would deliver a fully off-road option between South Beach Road and Lower Duneed Road. A \$2.8 million option is available that would incorporate existing on-road cycle lanes south of Blackgate Road. Council has \$500,000 for safe road crossings enroute.

Improved maintenance of state managed roads

State roads are by definition primary transport routes, and in Surf Coast Shire, are critical enablers of regional economic output. The Great Ocean Road serves as an international tourism destination whilst also serving as the primary link for coastal communities along its length. The Princes Highway links hinterland communities to Geelong and Melbourne and serves as the key transport route for primary producers. The condition of state roads is of critical concern to local communities and funding programs should be boosted to catch up with maintenance and renewal backlogs, improving road performance and safety.

The support we seek:

Increased investment in maintenance of key regional and rural roads

Funding program for drainage infrastructure

Growth, combined with more frequent weather events, is overwhelming existing stormwater drainage systems. Such systems were typically developed to accommodate less intensive development and less extreme weather. Retrofitting systems is beyond the means of Victorian councils like Surf Coast Shire which have smaller rate bases, no other revenue streams and a heavy reliance on grant funding for infrastructure.

The support we seek:

A dedicated fund for drainage infrastructure to support the retrofitting of systems.

Sustainable tourism along the Great Ocean Road

Improved management of coach and mini-bus tours on the Great Ocean Road would elevate the visitor experience, improve safety, reduce amenity impacts and protect the environment. A licence system that provides a means to stagger visiting times and limit bus numbers in particular areas would reduce congestion of the type currently being experienced in the Aireys Inlet lighthouse precinct. Revenue from the licences could be reinvested into tourist facilities such as toilets and parking spaces to improve the experience and reduce local amenity impacts.

The support we seek:

An licence system for tour operators that facilitates the staging of visits for a better visitor experience and improved local amenity and enables revenue to be reinvested into local tourist facilities.

Funding for Sustainable Water Network

Barwon Water has a series of projects planned to ensure regional water security and provide better environmental outcomes. Both Barwon Water and Council have received funding for a partnership project to divert stormwater from the Karaaf wetlands. Funding for future stages of Barwon Water's hinterland project would enable diverted stormwater to be combined with recycled water to supply new and existing agricultural enterprises in the Thompson Valley north of Torquay.

The support we seek:

Funding to develop future stages of the Barwon Water Sustainable Water Network to ensure healthy rural landscapes and build a sustainable economy.

Neighbourhood Houses

Council is supportive of Neighbourhood Houses Victoria's 'Keep our Doors Open' campaign, which is seeking to increase recurrent funding provided through the Victorian Government's Neighbourhood House Coordination Program. Neighbourhood Houses enable people of all ages to access support, build skills and find connection but Houses are struggling to maintain services due to the compounding effect of funding that hasn't kept pace with service costs.

The support we seek:

Increase recurrent funding through the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program to ensure it reflects current service costs and enables Neighbourhood Houses to remain financially sustainable.

Review of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund should be reviewed in favour of a more equitable system for funding important emergency services functions. The ESVF levy model places a disproportionate burden on local primary producers, given the levy amount is calculated according to land value. The median cost to Surf Coast Shire farmers is almost double the state average.

The support we seek:

A review of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund to ensure rural and regional rate payers are not disproportionately impacted. Secondly, that funds are directly invested into emergency services in the communities where the levy is raised.

Drought assistance for farmers

Winter rainfall in south-western Victoria was within the lowest five percent of historical totals since 1990 forcing farmers to purchase water and fodder to keep stock alive. There is a significant economic flow-on effect being experienced by local businesses throughout region. Long range weather forecasts are uncertain and even if the drought were to end shortly the financial recovery will take years as farmers have used up existing cash reserves or been forced to reduced stock levels.

The support we seek:

Disaster relief funding and concessional loans for primary producers.

Funding support for GORCAPA

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) is the land manager for the coast and parks along the length of the Great Ocean Road. GORCAPA's remit is broad and includes environmental and cultural protection alongside economic development. A sustainable funding model is essential for the entity to achieve its vision and support communities whose economic sustainability is reliant on the visitor economy.

The support we seek:

A funding model that enables GORCAPA to deliver its vision and obligations in a financially sustainable way

Funding support for landfill rehabilitation

Landfill rehabilitation costs are typically many millions of dollars and have escalated at higher rate than waste fees and the rate cap. The challenge is exacerbated for rural Councils where the cost of landfill rehabilitation takes up a much greater percentage of their overall budget. The Victorian Government imposes a Municipal and Industrial landfill levy on landfill operators, a portion of which is used to fund government agencies such as EPA and Recycling Victoria. There is a surplus however, which could support Councils with smaller rate bases to continue education and resource recovery programs as well as to meet landfill rehabilitation costs. This would enable Councils to support delivery of government objectives to reduce the impacts of waste and contamination.

The support we seek:

A proportion of the landfill levy be used to support Councils with lower rate bases to reduce waste volumes going to landfill in the first instance and to fund landfill rehabilitation costs when the time comes to close the facility.





Anglesea landfill

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