

ADVANCING BAW BAW



Advocacy Priorities 2023-2025

Introduction



Acknowledgment of Country

Baw Baw Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Kurnai, Gunaikurnai and Bunurong people as the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which Baw Baw Shire is located, and we value the significance of their history as essential to the unique character of our Shire.

We pay tribute to all First Nations People living in Baw Baw Shire, give respect to Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to all First Nations People.

Our role in advocacy

This document details Baw Baw Shire Council's key priorities for our municipality during the 2023 - 2025 Council.

Baw Baw Shire Council advocates on the community's behalf on a range of issues. We advocate for action and investment directly related to Council's operations and facilities. Sometimes the focus of our advocacy is on matters that are beyond Council's responsibility but that are significant to the needs of the community.

Over the next 20 years Baw Baw Shire's population is expected to grow by nearly 50%. Our flourishing population presents many opportunities to shape a sustainable, healthy and thriving region now and into the future, but rapid growth also places complex planning and financial demands on Council.

To secure our shire's vision for the future, Baw Baw Shire Council must be ambitious, coordinated, and clear in communicating the investment we need to provide the infrastructure and services our community deserves.

Major community infrastructure, road planning, economic development and healthcare access are among Baw Baw Shire Council's key advocacy priorities for 2023.

These priorities provide a framework for Council to plan and deliver targeted advocacy to State and Federal Governments and strengthen strategic regional partnerships.

Council's advocacy efforts are structured under three tiers in order of priority, project readiness and community impact.

Council will focus on seeking action from politicians, government departments, and other key stakeholders to fund and support of these priorities.

Advocacy Tiers



Tier One

These are Council's most pressing Advocacy Priorities. They are large, long-term projects and areas of community need that align with the Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2021-2025 and reflect the Community Vision for a sustainable, healthy and thriving future.

We will take a strategic, evidence based approach to communicating these needs to all levels of Government to show the need for change and investment in Baw Baw.

Council will:

- Provide annual updates to the community on the progress of these priorities.
- Ensure these priorities are a key focus of discussions with Local, Regional, State and Federal influencers.
- Encourage community to join in advocacy through the introduction of Community Action Groups via online and community-based networks.
- Use these priorities to form the basis of submissions to State and Federal Budgets.
- Develop a range of advocacy materials for each campaign including media campaigns, communications plans, website content, economic impact studies, videography, concept drawings, promotional materials, social media assets and other supporting documents.

Tier Two

Council's next eight advocacy priorities generally focus on medium to large sized projects and areas of community need which will make a significant impact on the safety, livability and sustainability of Baw Baw as a place to live and work.

These priorities are likely to be delivered over varying time frames based on their strategic alignment with Regional, State and Federal plans.

Council will:

- Provide annual community updates on the progress of these priorities.
- Ensure that they are referenced in any relevant submissions or position papers.
- Ensure these priorities are mentioned in discussions with Local, Regional, State and Federal key influencers.
- Develop a two-page advocacy flyer and website content for each project.
- Be aware and proactive and act as appropriate when potential opportunities arise.

Tier Three

Council's Tier Three priorities are focused on supporting projects and initiatives endorsed by Council in strategic documents and policies, such as the Long Term Infrastructure Plan, Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Baw Baw Recreation Strategy and Municipal Early Years Plan.

Advocacy for these priorities requires an agile approach by council; pivoting to take advantage of opportunities to bring forward projects as they arise and as community needs change.

Council will:

- Ensure that they are referenced in any relevant submissions or position papers.
- Ensure these priorities are mentioned in discussions with Local, Regional, State and Federal key influencers.
- Be aware and proactive in relation to any potential grants and opportunities, and act to expedite these projects as appropriate.

Tier One Advocacy Priorities



A diverse, connected community



A liveable, productive region



Healthy and well people



Baw Baw Culture and Connection Precinct

Council is seeking co-funding from the State and Federal Government to build the Culture & Connection Precinct.

With our rapidly growing population there is a lack of spaces that provide our community a place to learn, connect and engage in cultural activities.

The project will provide versatile shared facilities including future-ready library, dedicated maker's spaces, co-working spaces, café, meeting rooms, video conferencing facilities and exhibition spaces. The precinct will provide a space for our growing multicultural community, and an opportunity to create a hub of culture and connection in partnership with Baw Baw Shire's First Peoples.

The precinct will be designed as a Green Star rated development, built to meet the highest environmental benchmarks addressing climate action, resource efficiency, and health and wellbeing.

Drouin & Warragul Arterial Road Network Planning

Council is actively advocating to State Government to allocate funding to Regional Roads Victoria to undertake transport network planning needed to address challenges with new and fit-for-purpose arterial transport routes in and around Drouin and Warragul.

Modeling predicts that the population of Baw Baw Shire will grow to 84,766 by 2041* and our 100-year-old network requires planning to keep pace with the projected volume of local residential and industrial traffic.

Council is advocating for an improved network which addresses arterial congestion and will make our roads safer for the community and unlock commercial and industrial opportunities for our region and beyond.

*Source: REMPLAN Forecast

New Hospital and Increased Health Services and Support

Council is in a unique position to have a positive influence on the health and well-being of our community.

Council can support health and wellbeing by looking at innovative ways to boost investment and development in health and support services.

We're asking the Victorian Government to address critical gaps in health services here in our community including:

- Building the new West Gippsland Hospital,
- Increasing access to allied health services
- Providing increased mental health services, especially youth and family services
- Fostering innovation in the local healthcare sector

Tier One Advocacy Priorities



Access to education



Future ready infrastructure



Financial Security



Early Years Infrastructure Investment

Council will strongly advocate for funding towards kindergarten infrastructure investment, and for the ongoing maintenance of any new facilities.

Huge early years sector reform has many implications for all Councils. The State Government's Best Start, Best Life policy introduces the new pre-prep initiative across the State and entitles children to 30 hours of kindergarten in the year before entering primary school. Baw Baw Shire is expected to deliver pre-prep programs from 2026 for vulnerable children, and universally by 2028.

The recent three-year-old reform already sees children accessing 15 hours of kindergarten in the year before the four year old program. The combination of these two reforms, on top of unprecedented growth in Baw Baw means there will not be sufficient infrastructure to place all children in kindergarten programs without appropriate resourcing.

Longwarry Logistics and Employment Hub

Council will continue to champion opportunities to form strategic partnerships with government, industry and service providers to create an employment and logistics hub in Longwarry.

Positioned at the 'Gateway to Gippsland', close to the planned Longwarry Sale Yards, the proposed Longwarry site boasts prime highway access and ideal proximity to Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The hub will consolidate efficient transport links, attract long term business investment and provide future employment opportunities essential for the greater Gippsland region as we transition out of forestry and coal.

Securing Resources for Ongoing Growth

Council will work with all levels of government and relevant authorities to ensure there is adequate funding and support for high-growth communities over the next 15-20 years.

We will advocate that funding opportunities should better respond to forecast population growth and address gaps in the cost for regional councils to plan and deliver major infrastructure projects e.g new recreation facilities and community spaces and precincts and arterial roundabouts.

We will communicate the growing service and infrastructure needs of our community and the resources required to deliver government mandated programs and to meet fair access standards. Council will hold key agencies to account over the provision and maintenance of non-council facilities and services such as drainage and roads.

We will actively pursue funding and identify prudent ways for our operations to remain financially sustainable for future generations.

Tier Two Advocacy Priorities



Business & Workforce Development

Council is committed to supporting the attraction of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses. Council will assist local businesses to create new jobs and provide goods and services via the Better Business Program and by leveraging the Regional Business Grant Fund.

Council will advocate for projects and investment that support local and regional economic growth and prosperity as part of its implementation of the Economic Land Use Strategy.

Education Investment

Making sure our families have access to high quality education which addresses the diverse learning needs of all members of our community.

We will continue to advocate for investment in state-of-the-art education facilities including tertiary and TAFE offerings, primary, secondary and specialist schools.

Erica Mountain Bike Hub

Gateway to Walhalla and Mountain Rivers region, Erica is home to Gippsland's premier cross-country mountain bike trails. The proposed Mountain Bike Hub will see the creation of a regional trails hub at Erica building upon the parks strong mountain biking experience. The project will attract vital tourism from Gippsland and Melbourne and promote positive, social, mental and physical activity.

Industry Transition

Securing opportunities and working with industry partners to support workers affected by major industry closures, natural disasters, climate change and the pandemic.

Innovation in the Visitor Economy

The economic impact of the visitor economy in Baw Baw is broad and far-reaching. Projects including the Gippsland Regional Events Fund and Visitor Information Services are essential to drive tourism. Investing in innovation in tourism and securing support for marquee events will stimulate visitation and improve the experiences and products on offer in our region.

Sealing South Face Road

This project will see the sealing of South Face Road, Mt Baw Baw to create a dynamic, safe, and connected tourist route through Gippsland. This improvement will increase visitation and better connect Mt Baw Baw to the surrounding regions, encouraging private investment.

Securing Utilities

The rapid growth of Baw Baw Shire places significant pressure on the provision of essential utility services such as water, sewerage and telecommunications for residents and businesses. Ensuring water security for our growing residential and business population is essential.

Guaranteeing viable commercial access to utilities will improve Baw Baw Shire's attractiveness as a place to do business, stimulating local job creation.

Trafalgar Library

A new static library in Trafalgar will create an inclusive community space for residents to not only browse and borrow from a larger collection but also experience a wider variety of programs not currently available through the mobile library.

Tier Three Advocacy Priorities



Active Transport

Baw Baw Shire's paths and trails play an important role providing a means of access to community facilities, services, public transport and open space. The provision of paths and trails make communities more liveable, improves connections and make people healthier and physically active.

Council will look for opportunities to progress the objectives of the Paths and Trails Strategy including:

- Improving the amenity, accessibility and safety of the footpath network for all users
- Strengthening existing pedestrian links creating a direct, connected network
- Assisting in responding to residents' requests for the construction of new footpaths
- Promoting and encouraging walking as a sustainable and preferred mode of transport for short trips to work, shops, school and recreation
- Providing paths and trails that link key destinations and points of interest such as shops, educational institutions, recreational and health facilities, and public transport

Economic Development

Council will look for ways to further support the implementation of strategic initiatives outlined in Council's Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy 2022-2025 including:

- Strengthening and leveraging key regional partnerships with State and Federal Governments, The Peri Urban Group of Rural Councils, Destination Gippsland, One Gippsland, Food & Fibre Gippsland, Start Up Gippsland, Committee for Gippsland, Lardner Park and Alpine Resorts Victoria.
- Establishing a Work from Home Hub
- Seeking opportunities to collaborate with social enterprises, Aboriginal businesses and start-up incubators.

Environmental Sustainability

The Local Government Act 2020, legislates Councils' obligation to address environmental sustainability as one of its overarching governance principles. Council will be seeking opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders to accelerate the implementation of key strategies from Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022-2030. Examples include:

- Developing Council Carbon Emissions Reduction Plan
- Identifying opportunities to introduce Environmentally Sustainable Development principles into new developments
- Identifying significant trees for strengthened protection via the Planning Scheme and Local Law
- Working with the Victorian Government in planning the Container Deposit Scheme in Baw Baw Shire
- Reviewing Council's capability to actively manage risks to infrastructure, services and operations posed by extreme weather events

Long Term Infrastructure Plan

The overarching objective of the LTIP is to provide the Baw Baw community with the right infrastructure, at the right time, in the right places, and in a way that represents best value for money and a sustainable use of resources. Council will continue to seek funding and grants to build new infrastructure and upgrade existing assets to make our towns safer, healthier and more inclusive including:

- Road reconstruction and re-sealing
- Renewal of sports facilities
- Refurbishing council owned buildings
- Renewal of playground and skate parks
- Accessible car parking improvements

Sport & Recreation

As part of Council's continued role in delivering location based recreation infrastructure and supporting community sports we will continue to work with key partners including sporting associations, GippSport, DEECA (formerly DEWLP) and Visit Victoria to advance recreation opportunities. Council will continue to progress key actions from the Baw Baw Recreation Strategy 2017-2027 and plans including:

- Drouin Recreation Plan
- Warragul Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Rural Recreation Reserve Master Plans
- Downton Park Master Plan

Recreation infrastructure accounts for almost half Council's capital program, we will advocate for greater government funding toward the planning and construction of pavilions and playing surfaces.

