



Submission to Mitchell Shire Council 4 Year Budget and 10 Year Capital Works Program 26/27

Submitted 27 February, 2026

In this submission BEAM Mitchell Environment Group (BEAM) provides comments on Mitchell Shire Council's budget development and Capital Works Program. We thank the Council for the opportunity to provide feedback and input.

About BEAM Mitchell Environment Group

BEAM Mitchell Environment Group is a long established, volunteer-driven community environmental organisation in Mitchell Shire. Our history dates back to 1989, and BEAM's vision is of a thriving community that is locally active in caring for a healthy environment – a vision that aligns with Council's priorities for sustainable growth, environmental stewardship, and community wellbeing.

Over many years, BEAM has developed a strong track record of constructive advocacy and practical action. Working collaboratively with other stakeholders, BEAM has contributed to outcomes including the protection of Mount Piper Nature Reserve from mining, support for the Cherry Tree Range Wind Farm, a climate emergency action plan for the Shire, and advocacy for the cessation of logging in native forests. These efforts align with Council's interests in biodiversity protection, climate change mitigation, and responsible land use planning.

BEAM has also delivered community-focused initiatives that support Council objectives around place-based engagement. These include establishing the Bulk Foods Scheme and the production of the *Natural Treasures of Mitchell Shire* guide - developed with Council support - which profiles more than 30 nature reserves and contributes to community awareness, visitation, and appreciation of local natural assets.

Currently, BEAM members volunteer in tree planting and habitat restoration, wildlife and flora surveys, community events and festivals, radio broadcasting and podcasting, and public engagement on renewable energy, sustainable farming, and sustainable living. BEAM members are also involved with wider community efforts like firefighting, Landcare, and community energy. Much if not all of this work directly supports Council goals relating to environmental resilience, climate adaptation, volunteer participation, and the strengthening of local partnerships.

[Read BEAM's five year plan, set in June 2023](#)

General Comments

BEAM would like to note our appreciation of Council officers' and Councillors' efforts in supporting the stewardship and sustainable development of the Shire. We also appreciate the substantial work represented in the budget preparation process. BEAM welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Budget and Capital Works program and we note our commitment and interest in further discussion and collaboration on issues raised here.

BEAM applauds the general theme in the Budget paper's idea of "Thinking Big and Delivering for Community". We encourage MSC to use this vision as an "all of Council" approach, in both the conceptualisation of big ideas and in the delivery of innovative, and community sustaining programs.

We recognise the financial constraints facing MSC and the need to ensure community consultation in developing plans and strategies. However, we believe that Council can tap into the power of community to support advocacy approaches and identify and pursue innovative funding opportunities. In summary, engage with the community to make the vision happen, not just in gathering ideas but in joint advocacy and in support for community led advocacy campaigns.

We note that there appears to be no specific funds allocated to supporting links with Traditional Owners and First Nations people, those people who have been custodians of this Country for millennia and who provide ongoing care in so many ways. We would like to see the role of First Nations people prioritised in such areas as local Treaty development, bushfire recovery, land-use planning, culture and heritage programs, and support for biodiversity initiatives. MSC should develop greater support and cooperation with First Nation people, one that would strengthen community cohesion and provide a powerful new model to be emulated by other Councils.

We note the huge population growth predicted for the Shire. This growth highlights the imperative to "act now", to preserve and enhance the unique natural beauty and diversity of the region, and to not allow the Shire to become a satellite suburb of greater Melbourne. We won't have another chance!

Consequently, BEAM urges Council's budget prioritisation of measures that underpin a healthy local environment and enhance the community's engagement with, and responsibility for, our environment

Specific comments on MSC Budget Development

- Council should ensure its 2026 bushfire recovery efforts include funds and programs that ensure biodiversity recovery and land restoration are adequately resourced, with wildlife, waterways and soil health in view. Habitat destroyed in the fires needs to be restored and other at-risk habitat preserved and protected. Biodiversity and ecological wellbeing should be priorities for all categories of land-use, particularly in

responding to the ongoing impact of global warming. This prioritisation of biodiversity should extend to bushfire preparedness measures into the future. Our proposal on biolinks is also relevant here, since they provide safe havens and exit options for wildlife.

- Hence, we request Council support and advocate to secure significant funds for a biolink between Tallarook Forest and Mt Disappointment Forest - providing habitat connectivity for key species in the Shire. BEAM has been working closely with the Biolinks Alliance on this initiative and welcomes Council support and engagement. This project could be part of a wider program of supporting other biolink corridors, eg Black Ranges near Willowmavin/High Camp.
- Council should lobby for funding and commitments to alleviate wildlife roadstrike issues in the Shire, while retaining amenity and vegetation of roadside areas. This could include virtual fencing such as that [trialled on the Surf Coast](#) using [this technology](#) and other complementary evidence-based approaches.
- Re. Council's waste services expenditure, which remains a key expense for the Shire, we urge Council to consider opportunities to continue reducing waste going to landfill, and increasing the diversion of waste streams to reuse/recovery, repurposing, resale, recycling and composting.
- Noting roadside and public dumping of rubbish is an ongoing issue in the Shire, we encourage Council to take measures to alleviate this issue. This could include provision of hard rubbish services to renters in the Shire to ensure they can access waste services as homeowners/ratepayers do.
- We propose that MSC engages a full-time climate emergency officer (as per Macedon Ranges and other Shires).
- MSC should develop a strategy to encourage energy efficiency in all homes in Mitchell Shire - delivering emissions reduction and energy bill relief. Mitchell Community Energy should be ongoing community partners in this work.
- We would like to see a commitment in the budget to priorities in the Climate Emergency Action Plan and the MSC Waste Strategy 2030 that (among other outcomes) reduce emissions from waste, and ensure that those strategies are resourced to achieve their goals.
- We encourage Mitchell to look to other Councils for initiatives that support emissions reduction, energy efficiency, and climate resilience e.g. [Mornington Shire currently consulting](#) on a rates discount for solar installation or upgrades, and [Sustainability Geelong's pilot](#) with Vic Govt creating Climate Safe Rooms, helping more vulnerable households to achieve energy savings, lowering gas consumption, and reducing exposure to unhealthy temperatures
- In addition to capital works investments, we would like to see Council implementing campaigns, initiatives and programs that encourage and support healthy and sustainable living in Mitchell and use of open spaces, trails and paths, including support for bicycles for transport other than recreation. E.g. children to ride to school, adults to ride to work, supporting Mitchell to become a Bicycle Friendly Shire
- Allocate funding support for the next stage development and promotion of the BEAM Natural Treasures guide to local reserves and natural features (<https://www.beam.org.au/naturaltreasures>), to expand its reach, engagement and functionality in print and digital versions.

Comments on MSC Capital Works Program

- BEAM recognises the range of capital works priorities across the Shire, and supports spending on community facilities as outlined (including improvements to roads, bridges, footpaths, drains, libraries, town halls, parks, play spaces, recreational centres and other community facilities)
- In all its capital works activities, we urge Council to refer to the MSC Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). We call on Council to integrate relevant outcomes and actions of the CEAP into its capital works planning and budgeting.
- The CEAP notes areas for potential emissions reduction which could be addressed in capital works planning and implementation, such as:
 - Reducing emissions from electricity in buildings, through installation of PV on council buildings
 - Reducing reliance on gas, through electrification and renewables/batteries
 - Upgrades to street and other lighting to LED
 - Continue to implement Council's Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) for Council Buildings policy
- Prioritise sustainability in its capital works project planning and implementation. For example
 - Energy efficiency in buildings and facilities
 - Reducing use of fossil fuels in both build phase and ongoing operations
 - Integrating renewable energy and batteries, and reducing reliance on fossil fuels (e.g. electrifying all community facility builds)

Property

- Solar and battery installations can provide for low and zero emissions energy provision to Council facilities, and also significantly reduce energy costs. This supports the use of air conditioning at low cost, which can provide heat refuge to vulnerable residents during periods of extreme heat. We support the investment into the Solar Installation on Council Buildings Program. Council should consider programs, as developed in other municipalities, which support vulnerable residents to install roof solar and transition to heat pumps and RCAC and thus reduce their exposure to extreme weather.
- Council facilities should be adaptable for use as emergency evacuation and refuge centres during and following extreme weather events. This should include energy independence through the installation of solar and batteries, to provide a reliable community energy source in case of blackouts or intermittent grid interruptions. (This relates to CEAP Goal 2. *Improve Mitchell Shire's preparedness to climate change related emergency events*)

Vehicle fleet renewal

- We request that Council commits to a phased fleet update to electric vehicles, as outlined in the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- We propose Council adopts a staged program to replace MSC plant and machinery (tractors, mowers, hand tools) with battery powered equivalents, to secure the benefits of reduced costs and emissions from electrification.

Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes

- Noting commitments to Environmental Reserve Signage - we request Council consults BEAM, Wallan Environment Group, and other local environment groups on the content of those signs, as well as consulting Taungurung and Wurundjeri for cultural and Country knowledge inclusions. BEAM's [Natural Treasures of Mitchell Shire](#) resource includes significant information and knowledge on 36 local reserves and provides a reference point for signage and interpretation.
- Further invest in park design, establishment and maintenance for neighbourhood cooling outcomes as well as biodiversity.
- Council's budget for parks, open spaces and streetscapes should be directed to protect and enhance existing biodiversity values, including nature reserves, biodiversity corridors, rural roadsides, and canopy trees.
- The CEAP refers to the importance of heat mitigation measures such as shading, seating, and drinking water in the public domain and along pedestrian and cycle paths.

Recreational, Leisure and Community Facilities

- Noting a number of projects that involve lighting upgrades to facilities (e.g. tennis clubs), we request Council to ensure energy efficient lighting is used in these upgrades.

Infrastructure

- BEAM would like to see increased investment in improvements to active transport infrastructure, including accessibility considerations. Council should work with public transport providers (eg Mitchell Transit and PTV) to better integrate bicycles use into bus and train travel (eg bike racks)
- We draw Council's attention to pedestrian crossing needs at:
 - High Street, Broadford between Powlett and Murchison Streets. Noting there is a crossing at the the next block, there are still a lot of people who cross here in the 60(+) zone as well.
 - Tallarook Street Seymour: the new 40kph area still does not allow time for people to cross when cars suddenly appear around the corner from the roundabout, and most of the street is still 60(+) kph. Something to slow or stop or break the flow of the traffic is needed, perhaps near Araminta's and the courts.
- Further, we urge Council's attention to footpaths and mixed trails infrastructure needs at:
 - Broadford: Broadford Wandong Road. There is no safe route from Davidson Street south to Hillview Drive, despite the growing population in this area. We have seen people walking on the roadside at night along the narrow gap between the barrier and road and have been expecting news of an accident there. This trail would also allow access to Horwood Road with the gold course and Colin Officer Flora Reserve.
 - Seymour: Goulburn Valley Highway from Kobybon Road to Telegraph Road. This is another route with no safe off-road access. We have frequently

suggested in planning forums and feedback for a trail to the housing on Telegraph Road, the industrial estate and the two quality nature reserves with popular walking trails: Seymour Bushland Park and the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park. Proposals for new uses of Granite Park and the Motocross would benefit from this trail.

- Noting the planned 'Town Entry Signs' project slated for 2026/27 in the pipelines, we urge MSC to consult with Traditional Owners and First Nations residents to identify whether/how town entry signs can respectfully integrate recognition of the First Peoples of the towns and any cultural or geographic information they nominate as important.

Future Projects Pipeline

BEAM suggests MSC should consider future capital projects that increase the health of our community and local environment, as well the environment beyond our region, including:

- Shade and solar over car parks, e.g. at railway stations, supermarkets. Council can work with Mitchell Community Energy to facilitate, as well as business or other agencies.
- Additional EV charging facilities, such as in carparks and community facilities, and partnering with businesses to encourage more charging sites.
- A walking/cycling bridge across the Goulburn River, to connect Seymour with the Rail Trail.
- Investment in separated bike lanes on key routes, in particular close to schools, to encourage cycling and ensure safety of cyclists in the Shire as well as ensuring all new subdivisions have adequate and connected cycling infrastructure.
- As a member of the Mitchell Alliance for Tracks and Trails, we support their Budget Submission and the work of MBUG, WEG, FBKRT and others to prioritise the development of the Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail as a link of recreational spaces which would provide active recreation for all Shire residents as well as contributing to local visitor economies. Wallan to Kilmore should be the initial priority for this, recognising the population densities in this area. We note MSC's support for the work taking place at High Camp Rail and Flora Reserve and ask Council to prioritise the introduction of way-faring signs from Kilmore to High Camp to maximise the potential of this Reserve. We support initiatives that allow community members to gain sustainable access to the natural abundance of this Shire.
- We call for an improvement in all-abilities access to at least some sections of the following Council parks and reserves: Colin Officer Flora Reserve, Seymour Bushland Park, Monument Hill Reserve. We advocate for further planning, investment and advocacy for funding support from state and federal government for the adequate management, planning and managed use of these Reserves, noting that MSC does not have a great deal of discretionary funding.
- We call for Collaboration and advocacy for funding support with partner agencies to invest in infrastructure in nature reserves and natural areas, such as walking trails in Tallarook State Forest.

Further Information

For any additional information in relation to this submission, please contact:

Georgia Webster
Secretary
BEAM Mitchell Environment Group Inc
e: beamenvirogroup@gmail.com
m: 0412 554 822