

LODDON BULLETIN

Thriving communities where everyone is welcome and all have the opportunity to live, work and create experiences



Council adopts 2026/27 budget

Maintaining core Council services and renewing community assets against a background of continuing financial pressure – that's the aim of the 2026/27 Loddon Shire Council budget.

The Budget includes a \$10.215 million capital works program with a strong focus on renewal of existing infrastructure, particularly the road network.

More than \$13 million will be spent on the road network, compared to rates revenue of about \$11 million. During community engagement on the budget maintaining roads, bridges, footpaths, tracks and trails was the most frequently selected priority.

Loddon Shire ratepayers will continue to pay the lowest average rates in the state, delivered in line with the Victorian Government's rate cap of 2.75 per cent.

However, the Budget forecasts an operating deficit of \$6.224 million and continued monitoring of procurement, contract management and budget governance processes will be required during 2026/27 in response to pricing pressures across construction, technology, and service delivery.

The ongoing annual Budget deficit and the need to improve Council's long-term financial sustainability will see Council's Chief Executive Officer prepare a mid-year financial sustainability report identifying recurrent savings opportunities and proposed savings targets to address the issues.

While a deficit is forecast, it is underpinned by strong cash balances and, supported by a substantial asset base comprising land, buildings and infrastructure assets. Council also does not have any borrowings and does not intend to borrow in 2026/27 or across the forward estimates (the following three years).

You can read the budget by scanning the QR code on the right.



JULY 2026

FEATURED IN THIS EDITION

**Council Budget 2026/27
adopted**

**Customer Service on your
fridge**

Mayoral column

A special Anzac donation

**What's On — Tourism and
Events update**

Council CEO reappointed

**Maternal and Child Health
service change planned**

**Small communities
celebrate**

**Community Satisfaction
Survey results**

**Pyramid Hill Preschool
playground gets a major
makeover**

Customer Service made easy

This edition of the Loddon Bulletin has a little extra something attached.

Yes, it's a fridge magnet - but not just any fridge magnet.

If you've got a request, suggestion, complaint or praise for Council or its services, it's a quick way for you to let us know.

Simply scan the QR code on the magnet and you'll be taken to the feedback page on our website where you can have your say. Or should you wish to call or email us instead, the details are all there.

Council is committed to supporting our community

You can reach out to us anytime through:

☎ (03) 5494 1200

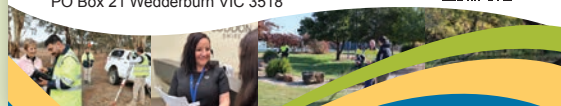
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Requests, suggestions
or complaints



A word from our Mayor

Hello everyone and welcome to the midwinter edition of the Loddon Bulletin. Council has been particularly busy — of course the annual budget is of major importance and you can read more about that on the front page of this edition.

But Council has also gone on to the front foot in the lead up to this year's Victorian State Election, releasing a list of its major priorities — and why they matter.

Council's Priorities 2026 document lays out the major strategic priorities requiring government investment and support to deliver positive social, economic and community outcomes across Loddon Shire. Priorities 2026 is split into two sections — Priorities and Advocacy Matters. The identified priorities are eight key Council-led initiatives requiring significant government investment and support for infrastructure or major service enhancements:

Rural Childcare in Loddon Shire, Roads and Bridges, Inglewood Streetscape Enhancement Project, Wedderburn Flood Risk Reduction Upgrade, Pyramid Hill Community Centre Stage 2, Critical Drainage Upgrade for Pyramid Hill Township, Serpentine Township Flood Mitigation Levee Project, Enabling Housing Growth.

Advocacy matters include broader areas where Council will continue to advocate for government investment, support and program funding.

Many of these priorities and advocacy matters will not be news to our residents, or indeed governments, as we have been pushing for them for a long time but we need to keep these priorities front and centre of the aspirants for Spring Street so that they are fully aware of what matters to our communities.

You can read the full document by scanning the QR code on the right or visiting the Council website.



*Loddon Shire Mayor
Cr Dan Straub.*



An artistic way to remember our fallen

"There is a link death cannot sever, loves remembrance lives forever".

Those words, written in Wedderburn more than 100 years ago, returned to the town in time for Anzac Day 2026.

They honour Frederick Cairns Drysdale, a Wedderburn-born soldier who was killed in action at the age of just 23 while serving in the Australian Imperial Force in Belgium in 1917 during World War I.

The words for Frederick's epitaph sit on his headstone at the Tyne Cot Cemetery, Passchendaele, Belgium, and might have remained in Flanders Fields and never returned to his home were it not for a project by the Australian National Veterans Art Museum (ANVAM).

The Unknown Widow by artist Sacha de Wit in collaboration with performer Kirshy McAinch, both Royal Australian Navy veterans, is a collection of 66 embroidered handkerchiefs containing words from soldiers' epitaphs. It was displayed at the Wedderburn Mechanics Hall and Literary Institute as part of the Loddon Valley Arts festival in September-October 2025. During the event, the handkerchief was presented to Loddon Shire Council, which has framed and donated it to the Wedderburn Korong Vale RSL.

Wedderburn Korong Vale RSL president Roger Paterson said the sub-branch was delighted to accept the donation.

"We are honoured to receive this framed epitaph honouring Frederick Cairns Drysdale, along with the many other servicemen from Wedderburn and the broader region whose stories deserve to be remembered," he said. "We sincerely thank ANVAM and Loddon Shire for their role in preserving and sharing this important piece of history. It is important to us that the service and sacrifice of our local men and women continue to be remembered and shared with future generations."



Wedderburn Korong Vale RSL president Roger Paterson, Frederick Drysdale's great niece Judith Sobol, great-great-nephew Derek Drysdale, great-niece Margaret Matthews and great-great-niece Lynette Matthews with Loddon Shire Council Tourism Coordinator Bradd Worrell after the handover of the framed handkerchief from Council to the RSL.



*Private Frederick Cairns
Drysdale*



UPCOMING KEY EVENTS

4 - 5 JULY

2026 Gold Fossickers Cup

Enjoy the lively annual darts tournament in Wedderburn, drawing players from across the region for a day of competition and community spirit.

📍 Wedderburn Mechanics Hall

JULY

Boort Golf Tournament

17 - 19 JULY

The Boort Golf Tournament brings golfers and spectators to Boort Golf Club for a weekend of competition, community spirit and country hospitality. A major highlight is the exciting \$10K hole-in-one challenge.

📍 Boort Golf Club

JULY

18 JULY | 11AM - 4PM (TWO EVENTS)

Keys of Gold - Inglewood Double Day

Enjoy an afternoon of music as part of the *Keys of Gold* festival, featuring two performances across Inglewood's historic venues. Experience *The Four Seasons* at St Augustine's Church, followed by *Brilliant Bach!* at Inglewood Town Hall.

📍 St Augustine's Church & Inglewood Town Hall, Inglewood

JULY

21 AUGUST

Feast on Loddon - Bridgewater Hotel

Enjoy an evening of local food, regional wines and live music beside the majestic Loddon River. The event celebrates the flavours and hospitality of the Loddon region.

📍 Bridgewater Hotel, Bridgewater

AUGUST



WINTER BUCKET LIST

VINTAGE TRAILS - INGLEWOOD CRAWL: Spend a winter day uncovering Inglewood's collectables scene, where vintage stores, antiques and hidden gems offer the thrill of discovery around every corner.

WARM UP & WIND DOWN WITH CELLAR DOOR REDS: Take the edge off winter with a tasting journey through the Loddon Valley's cellar doors. From bold, warming reds to intimate vineyard settings, it's the perfect way to slow down, sip and savour the season.

GOOD TIMES & EPIC BURGERS: Roll into Eddy's Garage for a winter burger feed with a twist. Enjoy classic comfort food, with a retro and nostalgic vibe that feels like home with the volume turned up.

STRIKE GOLD - PROSPECTING ADVENTURE: Step back into gold rush history with a guided fossicking experience alongside the Gold Nugget Hunter. Learn the art of prospecting and try your luck in landscapes where fortunes were once made.

BIG SKIES & WINTER OUTLOOKS: Wrap up warm and explore the Loddon Valley's stand-out lookouts, including Kooyoora State Park, Mount Hope, Pyramid Hill and Terrick Terrick National Park. Winter light and wide-open horizons make every view unforgettable.

For a full list of events and experiences:

www.visitloddonvalley.com.au



This Winter in the Loddon Valley, embrace crisp days and wide-open spaces as you rediscover your own backyard through a sense of play and discovery.

Explore scenic walking trails, take in epic winter views, and enjoy the simple freedom of the outdoors. Warm up at local cellar doors with bold regional red wines, or step inside museums and heritage attractions to uncover the stories of the region's rich past.

From fresh air adventures to delicious tastings, winter is the perfect time to slow down, explore, support local businesses, and create new memories close to home.

WINTER

Play and discover



Loddon Valley

Council Chief Executive Officer reappointed

Loddon Shire Council Chief Executive Officer Lincoln Fitzgerald has been reappointed to the position.

Mr Fitzgerald was appointed by Councillors under a new five-year contract effective from 1 November 2026.

He was initially appointed to a five-year contract in 2021, which expires on 31 October this year.

Loddon Shire Mayor Dan Straub said Councillors had little hesitation in offering Mr Fitzgerald a new contract.

“Lincoln has led Loddon Shire outstandingly during his time here, including navigating out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 and 2023/24 floods and a whole host of financial and other challenges that go with a rural municipality,” Cr Straub said.

“We look forward to him continuing to lead Council as we seek to achieve the aims of the 2025-29 Council Plan, the advocacy program that we have and will continue to run, and ensuring Loddon Shire is well positioned for the future.”

Mr Fitzgerald said he was honoured to be reappointed.

“I see this as a vote of confidence not just in myself but the whole organisation and the direction we are heading,” he said.



“I have really enjoyed working in this community, and the support I have received in it, and look forward to continuing to doing so.”

Prior to being appointed CEO, Mr Fitzgerald previously worked in a range of roles including at the City of Greater Bendigo and Mount Alexander Shire Council, as well as overseas.

Change planned for Maternal and Child Health service

Loddon Shire Council will work with the State Government to transition its Maternal and Child Health service to an alternative provider, with a strong focus on continuity of care for local children and families.

The decision follows an independent review of the Council-run service, which found that while it is highly valued by families and performs strongly in relation to participation and community connection, the current model faces ongoing sustainability challenges and risks when being delivered in a local government setting.

These include a small specialist workforce, limited internal clinical governance capability and the difficulty of sustaining specialist clinical oversight within a rural council setting.

Loddon Shire Mayor Dan Straub said Council would now begin detailed transition planning as it worked closely with the Department of Health to identify and progress a future service model.

This would include further engagement with staff, union representatives and any potential future provider.

“By making this decision now, Council can work proactively with partners to support a well-managed transition, rather than reacting to future workforce and governance pressures,” Cr Straub said.

“The focus is on supporting long-term service arrangements that provide stability and continued high-quality outcomes for local families.”



Council recognises the deep importance of this service to local families and the broader community. The service has been highly valued for many years, reflecting the trust and relationships that have been built through its delivery.

Council acknowledges the contribution of its Maternal and Child Health staff and the important role they play in supporting families across the municipality.

Although Council has resolved to transition out of providing the service, there will be no immediate change to current service delivery arrangements, and families should continue to access services as usual. Council is committed to keeping families and the community informed throughout the transition process and will provide further updates as more information becomes available.

Bonanza for Loddon Shire communities in Tiny Towns grants

The Victorian Government's Tiny Towns grants scheme proved a goldmine for Loddon Shire communities in June, when 12 projects were successful in receiving more than \$380,000 in funding.

The projects were in Arnold, Campbell's Forest, Dingee, Mitiamo, Pyramid Hill, Rheola, Serpentine, Newbridge, Eddington, Laanecoorie, Kingower and Korong Vale.

They were announced in the Newbridge Hall by Minister for Regional Development Michaela Settle and State Member for Ripon Martha Haylett.

Loddon Shire Council is proud to have worked with our communities on their applications for these grants and looks forward to seeing the results when the projects are completed.



There's a pot of money to restore and repaint the Arnold Hall after it was successful in the recent Tiny Towns grants.

Positive results from Community Satisfaction Survey

Loddon Shire Council has received and acknowledged the results of the 2026 Community Satisfaction Survey.

The annual survey of 500 local residents shows another improvement in Council's scores, with the Overall Performance index at 63, up from 58 last year and 53 in 2024.

That rates six points above the statewide average and three points above the Small Rural group of shires that Loddon is compared with.

Council has either performed in line with or significantly higher than the statewide and Small Rural group averages on all service areas evaluated.

The three top performing areas were Appearance of Public Areas (76, up from 71 in 2025), Waste Management (75, up from 72) and Recreational Facilities (75, up from 72). Customer Service saw a significant jump up to a score of 73 (up from 66) to be among Loddon's highest rating performance areas.

Council was also statistically higher than the Small Rural and statewide averages for Overall Performance, Value for Money, Overall Council Direction, Appearance of Public Areas, Lobbying, Consultation and Engagement, Community Decisions, Sealed Local Roads, Waste Management and Recreational Facilities.

Loddon Shire's lowest performing areas from the 2026 survey remain consistent with previous years – Unsealed Roads (index score of 46, but up 10 points from 2025), Planning and Building Permits (index score of 47, up from 44) and Sealed Local Roads (51, also up 10 points on 2025).

Loddon Shire Mayor Dan Straub said while the continued improvement was pleasing, there was still plenty of room to get better.

"Over the years we have put a lot of effort into improving the areas identified by our community as being of concern," he said.



"These results show it is paying off but there is always improvement to be made and we will continue to work on that."

A total of 500 people were surveyed in Loddon Shire – 7.9 per cent of the population aged 18 or older – including 94 in Boort Ward, 163 in Inglewood Ward, 9 in Tarnagulla Ward, 105 in Terrick Ward and 129 in Wedderburn Ward.

About 57 per cent of the survey respondents had contact with Council in the past 12 months.

Of the total respondents, 53 per cent were aged 65 and over, 26 per cent between 50-64 years, 13 per cent between 35-49 and 8 per cent between 18-34.

It can be read in full (as can previous surveys) on the Loddon Shire Council website (scan the QR code on the right).



Your Councillors



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Cr Miki Wilson

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Major upgrade for Pyramid Hill playground

Pyramid Hill Preschool has a brand new playground for children to enjoy.

The project was made possible thanks to \$149,000 in funding from the Victorian Government through the Department of Education's Building Blocks program.

As well as new playground equipment, the preschool has also received internal and external painting and some bathroom upgrades, helping to improve both the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Loddon Shire Council Manager Community Services Nicole Taylor said outdoor play was an important part of early learning and the playground would be enjoyed by children for many years to come.

"The new playground gives children more opportunities to build confidence, develop their physical skills, use their imagination and play together," she said.

Council was also pleased to use a number of local trades to complete the project, supporting local businesses to deliver improved facilities for our children and educators.



Council is committed to supporting our community

You can reach out to us anytime through:

- ☎ (03) 5494 1200
- 🌐 www.loddon.vic.gov.au
- ✉ loddon@loddon.vic.gov.au
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or complaints



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Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.



Loddon Shire Council

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Local call: 1300 365 200 **T:** (03) 5494 1200

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