



# Advocacy Strategy

**2018-21**

*Representing our  
community*





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Bass Coast Shire Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first Australians and recognises that they have a unique relationship with the land and water.

Council also recognises that we are situated on the traditional lands of the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung, members of the Kulin Nation who have lived here for thousands of years. We offer our respect to their elders past and present and through them, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# From the Mayor and Councillors

Our Mayor will lead our advocacy with strong support from our Deputy Mayor and all Councillors. We will aim high. We will involve our community and work with the administration as one. We will also, importantly, leverage off existing partnerships and forge new ones to secure the best outcomes for our community.

Our community has been very clear. They have asked us to strongly focus on advocating to the Victorian and federal governments on key priorities. For this reason Advocacy is a key theme in our *Council Plan 2017-21*. We have developed Council's first ever Advocacy Strategy which provides us with a framework to guide our advocacy efforts over the next three years.

We have a clear mandate to get things done.

Through our advocacy work we are the confident voice of our community. We are particularly focussed on delivering government investment in the public realm in order to further facilitate private investment.

Importantly, we acknowledge that successful advocacy occurs when Council and the community work together towards shared goals.

Our advocacy priorities will reflect the priorities of the community. We will support, encourage and empower our community, working in partnership to help shape a better Bass Coast.

*“It is important that the Mayor, Councillors, CEO and Officers have a clear strategic and tactical understanding as to how we approach advocacy.”*



# Our Vision

*Bass Coast will be known as a region that supports a sustainable and healthy community, and values and protects its natural assets.*

## What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is a deliberate process to represent our community's needs and influence decision makers to deliver a positive outcome for the Bass Coast community. It aims to bring about positive change in policies and services that affect Bass Coast at a local, regional and national level.

## The aim and purpose of the Advocacy Strategy

The aim of this Strategy is to provide Bass Coast Shire Council with the framework to be the confident voice that represents our community.

The Strategy framework will help us reach our objectives to:

- Advocate to develop policy and improve investment from state and federal government for the benefit of Bass Coast
- Develop a priority document that identifies why additional funding support should be provided
- Represent the community's needs, opportunities and concerns to the key service providers and decision makers
- Encourage, empower, support and work with our community
- Continue to ask, listen and adapt to the priorities of our community
- Pursue opportunities for funding and support, including philanthropic possibilities
- Establish strong links within our community and foster healthy strong relationships with key stakeholders and all levels of government

Delivering the Advocacy Strategy will ensure Council is as effective as possible with its resources (time, funds and skills), minimises risks and maximises opportunities.

## Advocacy Principles

We will advocate:

- On issues and opportunities that are consistent with our *Council Plan 2017-21* and are important to our community
- With confidence, balance, research and respect
- By building upon our strategic relationships with our community, partners and stakeholders
- In a flexible manner to allow for unexpected or special circumstances and adapt to the changing environment



Photos: Councillors participated in several workshops as part of the formation of this Advocacy Strategy

# Bass Coast Context

## Today's Reality

Our natural environment is our economy. People visit for the environment and stay to join tight knit communities that are passionate about protecting natural assets and growing business opportunities while creating safe and supportive townships in which to raise their families.

Bass Coast Shire Council is facing unprecedented growth pressure. Our population challenges are twofold: since 2007 our population has increased by 21.6 per cent and every summer our population temporarily swells to over 80,000.

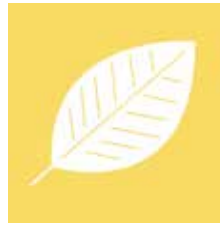
Our economy is growing; in fact we are the fastest growing economy in regional Victoria and the third fastest growing economy in Victoria. Since 2007 our economy has grown 45.6 per cent, out pacing all other local government areas except Wyndham and Melton.

## Tomorrow Unchecked

Under a business as usual model, by 2035, Bass Coast Shire Council will be experiencing the following:



37% increase in the number of residents



Environmental protection will be crucial to maintain resident quality of life and attract visitors



Upwards of 235,000 new residents will move into areas to the north and east of the region (within a one hour drive)



An extra 1.6M per annum in domestic and international visitors in 2035 (an extra 4,300 per day)



71% increase in residents aged 70-74 years old



An additional 3,950 visitor movements generated per day (on average)



Every weekend the region will reach or exceed capacity in peak months

## Advocacy's role in our future

To continue to nurture a Shire where communities are passionate, safe and educated, where businesses and families can grow and flourish, and where visitors can continue to experience a thriving and pristine environment, Bass Coast Shire Council will need to advocate to government to receive support on priority projects.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## Our elected officials

### Mayor

Our Mayor will lead our Advocacy activities.

The Mayor will facilitate partnerships and strategic alliances while strenuously looking for ways to build and strengthen networks that benefit the community.

These networks will be at a local, regional, state and national level. The Mayor will ensure Councillors, our community and local media stay informed.

### Deputy Mayor

Our Deputy Mayor will provide high levels of support and assistance to the Mayor, keep us on track and aiming high, and lead when the Mayor is not able to.

### Councillors

Our Councillors will commit to a “rolling community conversation.”

They will advocate through their networks and spheres of influence. Also continuing to engage via opportunities such as “coffees with constituents”, community meetings and ward newsletters in order to understand new and emerging community issues. Importantly our Councillors will keep their local community informed of Council’s progress and gather feedback.

## The administration

### Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO and the Mayor will work closely together to implement this strategy and provide advice on existing policy and strategy.

The CEO will seek strategic partnerships and relationships with local, regional, state and federal departments and bodies.

Through the CEO, our Officers will provide technical information, advice and support the implementation of this Strategy. They will plan community engagement and perform reviews and evaluations. They will also advocate to government departments on Council’s full suite of priorities and programs.

Officers will also promote and discuss Council’s advocacy priorities with the community and stakeholders.

*Photos: (top) Advocacy presentation to Council’s Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee, (middle and bottom) Councillors will promote and discuss our Advocacy priorities at every opportunity.*



# Advocacy Campaign Framework

A successful campaign will maintain a strengths-based focus and be aspirational.

In order for people, especially decision makers and the broader community, to be influenced, they must be inspired and generate enthusiasm for the issue, rather than receive negative messages that focus on the problem.

The audience needs to identify with our issue; therefore, the key messages must be clear, easily understood and relatable.

Key elements of a successful Advocacy Campaign are:

- Advocacy topic and objective
- Target audience (stakeholders)
  - decision-makers and advisors
  - influencers (eg media outlets)
  - people directly affected
  - supportive stakeholders
- Key messages
  - Succinct statement that outlines the topic and why the change is important
  - Objective - what is to be achieved
  - Desired action – what needs to happen
  - Evidence that supports the statement and actions with easily understood facts and figures
  - Use examples to tell the story
- Lead agency (Council, state government, community group, etc)
- Lobbying/meetings with key stakeholders
- Publicity campaign and awareness
- Budget
- Timeframes
- Review and evaluation

The campaign framework can be applied to any advocacy issue. It will particularly apply to all key priorities. Elements of this framework will also apply to other advocacy issues. For example, where a position on an advocacy issue is adopted by Council for the first time.

*Photos: Celebrating the turning of the sod at the new Wonthaggi Secondary College Senior Campus site*



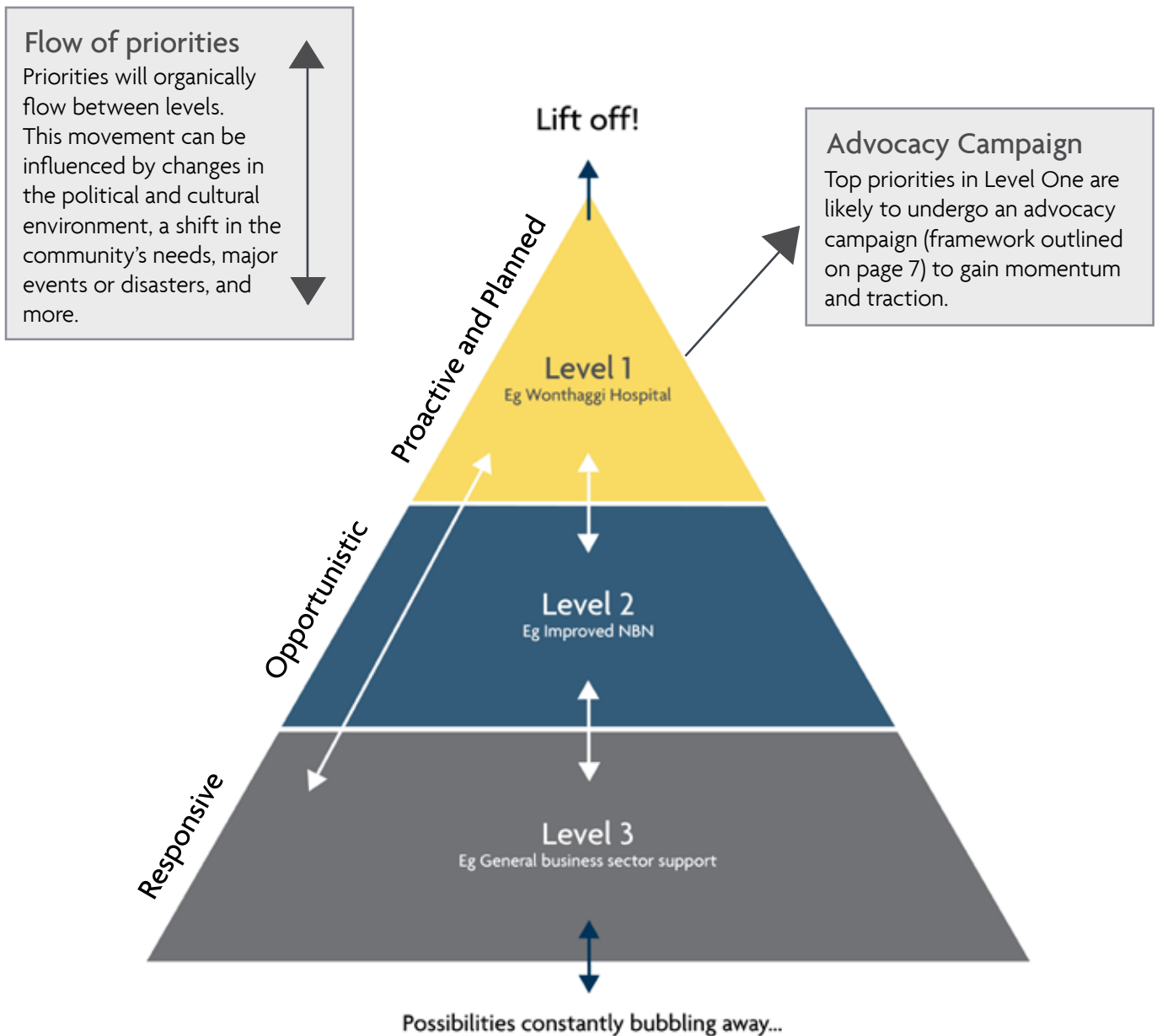
# Three Tiers of Bass Coast Advocacy

The three tiered model guides Council's advocacy processes and determines its priorities.

Level One hosts the top five to ten key opportunities and issues identified by Council and the community. These priorities will engage a pro-active approach from Council, and will be listed in the Priority document.

*"We need to be innovative and attention grabbing but realistic and focus resources to our top priorities"*

Level Two and Three hosts opportunities and issues which Council supports and advocates for in an opportunistic and responsive way.





# Level One Priorities

## *Proactive and Planned Approach*

Are led by the Mayor and CEO and are:

- Selected and adopted by Council and are the top five to ten areas of focus
- Aligned with the *Council Plan 2017-21*
- Key pillars in Council's approach to federal and state election cycles
- A major community issue of strategic significance
- Aligned with state and federal policies and/or funding programs, or is a state or federal delivered service
- Underpinned by a resourced and planned approach

We will:

- Follow the advocacy campaign framework and ensure they are the key features of media and publicity campaigns
- Publish them for our community in our priorities document and annually report on our progress
- Use them to form the basis of submissions to the federal and state government budget process
- Make them the key focus of our discussions with:
  - Federal and state ministers
  - Local members of parliament
  - Strategic partners
- Maintain relationships with key stakeholders and look for opportunities to work with existing and new partners to achieve them

### *Example: Wonthaggi Hospital upgrade to Sub-Regional status*

- Identified in Council's adopted advocacy priorities document
- Identified in and aligned with *Council Plan 2017-21*
- A major issue for the broader community of Bass Coast
- State government delivered service
- Health identified as a priority for state government, with significant funding allocated by the government in 2018



# Level Two Priorities

## *Opportunistic Approach*

Led by the Administration and supported by our elected officials and are:

- Underpinned by an adopted position of Council
- Clearly linked to the *Council Plan 2017-21*
- A state or federal government delivered service, issue or policy
- A Council led service, activity or project, and/or one that established a strong partnership with the community, that requires support and funding

We will:

- Ensure that they are referenced/pursued in relevant submissions and/or position papers
- Highlight through the media when appropriate
- Communicate as appropriate to relevant departments, organisations and bodies
- Reference them when appropriate in discussions with:
  - Federal and state ministers
  - Local members of parliament
  - Strategic partners
  - Our community
- Maintain relationships with key stakeholders and look for opportunities to work with existing and new partners to achieve them
- Be alert to potential opportunities and act on them when they arise.

### ***Example: Coal Seam Gas***

- Council has an adopted position
- Council actively advocated in opposition to the exploration of mining coal seam and unconventional gas within the Shire during 2014, 2015 and 2016
- Should the issue resurface, and future opportunities for advocacy arise, Council would continue its activity in opposition

### ***Example: NBN***

- Council has an adopted position
- 'Improved access to internet and telecommunications across the Shire' is identified in the *Council Plan 2017-21* and the *Economic Development Strategy 2016-2021*
- The issue applies to the whole of the Shire though some areas are more disadvantaged.
- The NBN is a federal project

# Level Three Priorities

## *Responsive Approach*

Led by the community, businesses and or/associations and supported by Councillors and the Administration and are:

- Clearly linked to the *Council Plan 2017-21* or a specific Council strategy or policy
- Town or community specific, localised or a ward-based issue or opportunity
- Establishing context and background, identifying opportunities and issues
- Important but receiving little attention from state and federal government and consequently the media and wider community

We will:

- Ensure that they are referenced/pursued in relevant submissions and position papers when appropriate
- Highlight through the media when appropriate
- Communicate as appropriate to relevant departments, organisations and bodies
- Reference them when appropriate in discussions with:
  - Federal and state ministers
  - Local members of parliament
  - Strategic partners
  - Our community
- Consider acting on them when an opportunity arises depending on the level of resource required

### ***Example: General Business Sector Support***

- Linked to and identified in the *Council Plan 2017-21* under the theme of 'Economic Development'
- Not yet specific or topical enough for a Council resolution, but has potential to move into the opportunistic phase with a change in climate
- Council would have a reactive approach to issues in this area

### ***Example: Refugee support***

- Council has an adopted position, however this issue has not maintained as high a profile as it did previously
- Council may have a responsive approach to issues in this area
- Has potential to move into the opportunistic phase if the profile increases

# Partnerships and a collaborative approach

To ensure that our community achieves its identified priorities we will need to work collaboratively with all of our stakeholders and partners.

A great example of this approach is in the area of advocacy for the Wonthaggi Education Precinct, where over a decade of advocacy became successful when all stakeholders worked together as one voice to demand that the new precinct be funded.

## *Example: Wonthaggi Secondary College and Highball Facility (Education Precinct)*

- Advocacy priority 2017 – Funded October 2017 at \$33million
- Involved a proactive and collaborative approach from the following agencies:

National	State	Regional	Local
Local MPs	Local MPs	Regional Development Victoria (RDV)	Wonthaggi Secondary College (WSC)
Ministers	Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV)		Wonthaggi Amateur Basketball Association (WBA)
	Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA)		Wonthaggi Tourism and Business Association (WTBA)
	Ministers		Local Media
	Department of Education		Young Leaders
	Candidates for local seats		Education Reference Group
			Community



# Review, Monitoring and Evaluation

Council is committed to ensuring best practice while remaining aligned with the views and needs of the community. Consistent evaluation and review is an essential element of this Strategy. Review and evaluation will impact on the live and flexible nature of this document.

A strong element of the review process will involve communicating our Level One advocacy priorities with the community and taking on board feedback.

This will involve, but is not limited to:

- Reporting to, and discussions with community groups, advisory committees, etc
- Effective communications of advocacy priorities through campaigns, using relationships with local media, issuing media releases, sharing information through social media, etc
- Councillors gathering feedback through their usual interactions with the community including community connection sessions, coffee with a councillor, emails, newsletters, social media, etc

The Advocacy and Engagement Department will be responsible for reporting on:

- Updates and outcomes from the above community engagement activities
- Advocacy activities such as communications campaigns, meetings with ministers, presentations, petitions, media releases, political announcements, etc
- Successes: What has been achieved
- Barriers to achieving results and ways forward
- New opportunities
- Possible new priority areas



# Supporting documents

## Bass Coast Shire Council Plans and Policies

- Annual Budget
- Arts and Culture Plan 2015-19
- Aspirational Networks Pathway Plan 2016
- Asset Management Policy and Strategy
- Bass Coast Education Plan 2013-17
- Bass Coast Planning Scheme
- Bass Coast Shire Council Events Policy
- Bass Coast Sport and Active Recreation Needs Assessment (SARNA) 2016
- Bass Coast Towards 2030
- Biolinks Plan 2018
- Building Asset Management Plan 2016
- Communications and Engagement Strategy 2015-18 (revised 2018)
- Council Plan 2017-21
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Cowes Activity Centre Plan (2015)
- Disability Action Plan 2016-20
- Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-21
- Drainage Services Asset Management Plan 2015
- Economic Development Strategy 2016-21
- Long Term Financial Plan
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2016-20
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2017
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Natural Environment Strategy 2016-26
- Open Space Asset Management Plan 2018-22
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 Growing Tourism
- Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study
- Rating Strategy 2015
- Road Services Asset Management Plan 2014
- Sites and Theme Plan 2014-24
- Township Structure Plans
- Urban Road and Drainage Improvement Policy
- Waste Management Strategy 2015-25
- Youth Action Plan 2016-20

## Other Plans and Policies

- Bass Coast Health Clinical Services Plan
- Boating Coastal Action Plan
- Gippsland Freight Strategy
- Gippsland Local Government Network Victorian budget submission 2018/19
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan 2014
- Plan Melbourne Refresh 2017
- Regional Public Transport Strategy

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