



Minutes

Council Meeting

Tuesday 15 July 2025 at 6.00 pm

**Council Chambers (and by video conferencing)
East Gippsland Shire Council Corporate Centre
273 Main Street, Bairnsdale 3875**

Councillors

John White (Mayor), Sonia Buckley (Deput Mayor), Arthur Allen,
Jodie Ashworth, Tom Crook, Barry Davis, Joanne Eastman,
Bernie Farquhar, and Ian Trevaskis

Attachments referenced in these minutes can be located in the meeting agenda on East Gippsland Shire Council's [website](#).

Vision

To foster inclusive, connected, communities and places where all East Gippslanders prosper, and endeavour not to leave anyone behind.

Our Strategic Themes

1. Community Wellbeing and Social Responsibility
2. Prosperity
3. Making the Most of What We've Got
4. Managing Council Well

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1 Procedural

1.1 Recognition of Traditional Custodians

Mayor Cr John White welcomed all to the Council meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians.

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel people as the Traditional Custodians of this land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire, and their enduring relationship with country. The Traditional Custodians have cared and nurtured East Gippsland for tens of thousands of years.

Council values their living culture and practices and their right to self-determination. Council pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders, past, present, and future.

1.2 Apologies

Nil

1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Fiona Weigall Chief Executive Officer declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 7.1 *Personnel Matter*, as a material interest due to the matter relating to her employment at East Gippsland Shire Council.

1.4 Confirmation of Minutes

Motion

That the minutes of the Council meeting held Monday 23 June 2025 be confirmed.

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Arthur Allen

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

1.5 Next Meeting

The next Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 19 August 2025 at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street Bairnsdale commencing at 6.00 pm.

1.6 Requests for Leave of Absence

Nil

1.7 Open Forum

1.7.1 Petitions

Nil

1.7.2 Questions of Council

1.7.2.1 Budget Income and Cash Reserve Allocation

Mr John Butler-Cole submitted the following questions which were read out on his behalf by Fiona Weigall Chief Executive Officer:

Question 1: *“Is the Councillor group aware they have approved a 6.6% rise in rates income which will be the average rates rise to be applied to rates notices for this 25/26 budget year?”*

Question 2: *“Is the Councillor group aware that the increase in cash reserve closely equates to the 4.6% additional income above 2%. Is this rates increase being held unallocated in cash reserve as indicated in the publicised budget and Is this increase essential to boost the capped rate for future years?”*

Sarah Johnson General Manager Business Excellence provided a response which is summarised below:

Response 1: Thank you for your question. While I cannot speak for individual Councillors, I can share information from an Officer's perspective based on the adopted 2025/26 Budget.

The 2% rate increase is calculated using the base rates and municipal charge from the 2024/25 year, factoring in growth from supplementary valuations during that period.

Please see note 4.1.1(m) in the Budget (page 40, electronic P42) for details. The Essential Services Commission audits this annually and reports publicly.

This information was included in the email sent on 25 June 2025.

Response 2: Thank you for your question. While I am unable to comment on behalf of individual Councillors, I am able to provide information from an Officer's perspective in relation to the adopted 2025/26 Budget.

Regarding the cash reserve, I understand you are referencing the increase in total equity. This change is attributable to the budgeted operating surplus as well as any adjustments made to statutory reserves. It is important to note, however, that this does not necessarily indicate an increase in cash reserves, since the operating result also includes non-cash items.

In relation to service standards, our performance is publicly reported and benchmarked against industry standards via the LG Performance Reporting Framework and the Know Your Council website, where our results are accessible. We also employ "Happy or Not" reporting terminals at various service locations, such as the library, BARC, and waste transfer stations, which consistently indicate high satisfaction ratings.

This information was also included in the email sent on 25 June 2025.

1.7.3 Public Submissions

Nil

1.8 Items for Noting

Nil

2 Notices of Motion

Nil

3 Deferred Business

Nil

4 Councillor Delegate Reports

4.1 Cr Arthur Allen

On Monday 7th July 2025, along with Cr Crook, I attended the NAIDOC flag raising ceremony at GEGAC in Dalmahoy street Bairnsdale,

4.2 Cr Sonia Buckley

2025 Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly 24 – 27/06/25

Purpose of Report

To inform Council of the outcomes of the 2025 The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA), held in Canberra, with particular emphasis on motions and amendments submitted by East Gippsland Shire Council.

Summary

The 2025 NGA brought together over 1,300 local government representatives from across Australia. Key themes included climate change adaptation, infrastructure funding, regional aviation, cyber security, and financial sustainability.

East Gippsland Shire Council's active participation in the Assembly resulted in the success of all motions submitted, as well as the successful passage of an important amendment to a motion originally put forward by Glen Eira Council.

Key Outcomes for East Gippsland Shire

- All motions submitted by East Gippsland Shire Council were successfully adopted by the National General Assembly.
- The amendment submitted by East Gippsland Shire to the Glen Eira Council motion was also passed.

Details of the Successful Amendment

The amendment advocated for:

- A direct portion of federal alcohol tax revenue to be allocated to local government areas specifically for:
 - Alcohol detoxification programs
 - Domestic violence prevention services

This initiative recognises the widespread social and economic harm caused by alcohol abuse and proposes a targeted reinvestment of tax revenue to fund practical, community-level solutions.

I addressed the Assembly in support of the amendment, stating:

“Firstly, I would like to thank Sophie for her work and Glen Eira for the opportunity to amend the motion. The ask is for a direct portion of federal tax revenue from alcohol sales, to be allocated to local government regions for alcohol detoxification and domestic violence prevention services. This is not only fiscally responsible—it is morally right.

We know the devastating ripple effects that alcohol abuse has in our communities—on families, children, workplaces, and public safety. Yet, too often, the services people need to break the cycle of addiction and violence are underfunded or completely out of reach.

By reinvesting a portion of alcohol tax revenue into local solutions—detox programs, safe housing, counselling, legal and financial supports—we can empower services to deliver targeted, culturally appropriate, and timely interventions. This is about prevention, not just crisis response. About giving people, a pathway to recovery, stability, and dignity.

Many of us in this room would have been touched one way or another from the societal effects of alcohol and domestic violence. Let’s support our communities where the need is most urgent—and where the solutions are already taking shape.”

General Assembly Highlights

- ALGA continues to advocate for long-term funding reform for local governments.
- Priorities include:
 - Enabling infrastructure
 - Community infrastructure
 - Safer local roads
 - Emergency and disaster preparedness
 - Climate resilience measures
- ALGA welcomed the Federal Government’s commitment to supporting Rex Airlines, safeguarding essential regional air services from collapse.
- Research presented at the NGA showed:
 - High financial risk of cyber breaches for councils
 - Human error is a major contributing factor
- Emphasis was placed on training, risk mitigation, and system improvements.
- The Federal Government has continued the practice of early payment of Financial Assistance Grants, supporting council cash flow and budget forecasting.

Conclusion and Feedback

East Gippsland Shire Council played a constructive and impactful role at the 2025 NGA. The success of all our motions, including the significant alcohol tax revenue amendment, reflects the growing influence of regional councils in shaping national policy priorities. The Assembly reinforced the importance of sustained advocacy, local leadership, and intergovernmental collaboration in responding to complex community issues.

However, ALGA needs to improve their governance around motions that are state not federal issues. Also, the fact it was held in a non-sitting week made networking with Ministers impossible.

4.9 Cr John White

2025 Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly 24 – 27/06/25

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) serves as the national voice for more than 500 councils across Australia. It plays a vital role in advocating to the Federal Government on behalf of local governments, ensuring that the priorities and challenges of councils are recognised in national policy. ALGA also fosters collaboration among councils to address shared issues such as climate change, economic development, and emergency management.

From 24–27 June 2025, I had the privilege of joining over 1,300 local government leaders in Canberra for the 31st National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA). The Assembly was officially opened by Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, who spoke powerfully about the importance of community leadership, civic engagement, and educating the next generation in governance and public service. Pleasingly she also mentioned Bairnsdale four times in her address to over 1,300 delegates from across Australia.

Throughout the Assembly, we heard from a range of Federal Ministers including The Hon Kristy McBain MP, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, The Hon Julian Hill MP, The Hon Josh Wilson MP, The Hon Darren Chester MP, Dr Anne Webster MP, and The Hon Kevin Hogan MP. There was strong recognition from Ministers of the expanding role councils play in supporting their communities, and the increasing financial pressures they face. This reinforces the urgent need for action to ensure the financial sustainability of local government.

Nearly 190 motions were debated across key policy areas such as financial sustainability, roads, disaster resilience, health, housing, and climate change. Motions endorsed by the Assembly will be referred to relevant Federal Ministers for consideration and will also inform ALGA's national policy agenda moving forward.

We also got to meet and form strong relationships with Councillors from across Australia, as we discussed issues of concern and shared our knowledge and experiences. This knowledge sharing is invaluable.

While in Canberra, our small group of Councillors and CEO also made the most of the opportunity to include meetings with:

- Victoria's Cross Border Commissioner where we discussed our advocacy priorities and the State of our national highways;
- Senior members of Minister McBain's office where we discussed our Council's emergency management work and future needs;
- NEMA – where we were also shown the operations of the National Situation Room that was important during the 2019/20 Black Summer fires

- Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie - Senator for Victoria
- Dr Anne Webster MP Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and Shadow Minister for Regional Communications
- Meeting with other Coastal Councils across Australia to organise ourselves into a collective group able to voice the need for immediate action on the impact of coastal erosion and sea level rise on our communities.

These meetings provided us with the opportunity to present our areas highest priorities in person to those in positions of power or influence.

02/07/25 – Meeting with The Hon. Darren Chester MP and Joel Tuckwell (Senior Adviser to the Hon Catherine King MP

03/07/25 – East Gippsland Music Festival Gala Concert held at Boucher Hall Bairnsdale. This was such an amazing night with our local students displaying incredible musical talent ably assisted by a group of dedicated teachers. I was seated next to the Secondary College Principal Tony Roberts and was excited to be able to inform him of my trips to Canberra during which the Governor General gave an address to 1300 people and mentioned her trip to Bairnsdale four times while also talking about her visit to the school which created a lasting memory. The Principal was visibly excited.

07/07/25 – Municipal Association of Victoria Regional Meeting – Gippsland

09/07/25 – NAIDOC Community Street March and events

12/07/25 – Mountain Biking East Gippsland Winter Enduro with funding from East Gippsland Shire Council.

5 Officer Reports

5.1 Assets and Environment

5.1.1 Construction of Slip Road Maritime Precinct - Variation

Authorised by Acting General Manager Assets and Environment

Confidentiality Notice

The information contained in **Confidential Attachment 1** to this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (a) Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released; and (g) Private Commercial Information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—(ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in **Confidential Attachment 1** would disclose pricing and other information that is confidential in nature.

Motion

That Council:

- 1. approves an exemption from the market engagement requirements of the Procurement Policy on the basis that following the tender or procurement process would mean substantial delay or would be impractical, disadvantageous or unreasonable in the circumstances;*
- 2. approves the variation for CON2022 1451 Slip Road Marina Precinct Upgrade Project for the sum of \$2,716,582.15 (excluding gst);*
- 3. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to finalise the terms and to sign the contract variation in the form proposed; and*
- 4. resolves that Confidential Attachment 1 to this report and all discussions relating to that attachment remain confidential.*

Moved: **Cr Sonia Buckley**

Seconded: **Cr Arthur Allen**

CARRIED

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Bernie Farquhar,
 Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

Against: Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Tom Crook and Cr Joanne Eastman

Abstained: Nil

5.1.2 Sale of Land - 8 Gannet Grove Metung

Authorised by Acting General Manager Assets and Environment

Motion

That Council:

- 1. determines that the Property known as 8 Gannet Grove Metung is not required for public access or any future public use;***
- 2. gives notice of its intention to sell the property known as 8 Gannet Grove Metung in accordance with the provisions of section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020;***
- 3. notes that in accordance with section 3.3 of Council's Sale of Council-owned Land Policy, the property will be sold for at least market valuation, unless Council specifically resolves otherwise;***
- 4. notes that the property will be sold by public tender on the open market; and***
- 5. notes that a community engagement process will be undertaken in respect of the sale of the property at 8 Gannet Grove Metung.***

Moved: Cr Tom Crook

Seconded: Cr Arthur Allen

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
 Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
 Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.2 Business Excellence

5.2.1 Summary of Councillor Briefing Sessions

Authorised by Acting General Manager Business Excellence

Motion

That Council receives and notes this report and all attachments pertaining to this report.

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Tom Crook

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
 Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
 Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

5.2.2 S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation Planning and Environment Act 1987

Authorised by Acting General Manager Business Excellence

Motion

That Council:

- 1. in the exercise of the powers conferred by section 147(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, resolves that the Council Officers listed below be appointed as Authorised Officers, for the purposes of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the regulations made under that Act:***
 - a. Kellinde Chester, Strategic Planning Projects Coordinator***
 - b. Daniel Heinrichs, Development Compliance Officer***
 - c. Chris Wightman, Senior Planning Advisor***
- 2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer to remake and execute the S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation to reflect the above changes to Authorised Officers; and***
- 3. notes that the Instrument will come into force immediately following resolution of Council and will remain in force until Council determines to vary or revoke it, or until the Officer ceases to be employed by East Gippsland Shire Council.***

Moved: Cr Tom Crook

Seconded: Cr Arthur Allen

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

6 Urgent Business

Nil

Motion

That Council resolves to move into confidential business pursuant to section 66(2) of the Local Government Act 2020.

Moved: Cr Sonia Buckley

Seconded: Cr Tom Crook

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

For: Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and
Cr John White

Against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

The meeting was closed to the public at 7.19 pm.

7 Confidential Business

7.1 Personnel Matter

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (f) Personal Information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would unreasonably disclose personal information about the Chief Executive Officer, including performance expectations and employment-related matters.

7.2 Council Insurances

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (a) Council Business Information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations, if prematurely released.

In accordance with section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the information contained in and discussed under this agenda item is considered confidential. Public disclosure at this stage could reasonably be expected to disadvantage Council in its negotiations regarding insurance terms, particularly by revealing sensitive pricing and provider details prior to the finalisation of contractual arrangements.

8 Close of Meeting

Mayor Cr John White declared the Council Meeting closed at 7.49 pm.