

Operational Plan 2024-25

Community briefing

May 2024

About the plans on exhibition

Council's Operational Plan is the annual work plan and to-do list for a financial year. These plans build on the priorities and activities the group of elected Councillors set themselves for their term, called a Delivery Program.

Both the Operational Plan and Delivery Program work towards achieving the vision and goals for Eurobodalla as captured in the Community Strategic Plan. This plan is reviewed every four years to ensure it still accurately reflects the community's longer-term aspirations for the future of our area.

Around late April/early May of each year, Council will place a draft Operational Plan on public exhibition, along with an updated version of the Long-Term Financial Plan and the proposed fees and charges for the next financial year.

Long term financial plans estimate a council's finances for the 10 years ahead.

Long term financial plans estimate a council's finances for the 10 years ahead. They are a tool to provide guidance for future actions and to assess the community's aspiration against financial realities. Fees and charges that may be incurred by users of Council's services for the next financial year are outlined in a separate document.

Public exhibition means that these documents are available for the community to review and put forward a submission to Council about the plans. Following public exhibition, a further report is submitted to Council to consider the submissions received and the final versions of the plan, with an aim of having the operational plan adopted late June, ready to commence work on 1 July of the new financial year.

Council's financial forecast

Many councils around NSW are in financial hardship, with 17 applying for a special rate variation in 2023, and nine in 2024. Eurobodalla has not applied for a special rate variation, but - like many councils across the state our general fund is facing ongoing operating deficits. The general fund delivers the majority of Council's services to the community, apart from water, sewer and waste. This means Council's general fund day-to-day operations cost more than the revenue it collects. At the start of 2023, the projected deficit was a \$14 million shortfall.

These financial challenges were identified in an external review of Council's finances commissioned by new General Manager Warwick Winn. In late 2023 Council endorsed a Finance Strategy to address these challenges and the aim to achieve and maintain the financial resilience of Council. The work undertaken to date now forecasts the deficit falling to \$8.3million in the proposed 2024-25 plan.

Some of the proposed savings were identified during a budget reset process, undertaken in December 2023 as an action from the Finance Strategy. This process involved all areas of Council examining operations to gain a clearer understanding of the cost of delivering existing services, and identifying where efficiencies could be made.

Service modifications identified from the process and included in the 2024-25 operational plan include revised opening hours and service offerings at the Bay Pavilions and Moruya Library and the Basil Sellers Exhibition Centre, a more targeted, prioritised asset renewal and maintenance program, and a modified mowing and street cleaning schedule at low use locations within the shire. These changes will be evaluated during the year to ensure we are delivering outcomes for the community while living within our means.

2024-25 at a glance



190 Operational
Plan actions to do



\$150 million
estimated operating
expense



\$147 million
estimated operating
income



\$105 million
capital program



Second year
of implementing our
Finance Strategy

Council's infrastructure

Council manages more than \$1.9 billion worth of community infrastructure including \$620 million of dedicated water and sewer infrastructure.



114
bridges



147
car parks



498
park benches



925km
water mains



22
boat ramps



49
stand-alone
public toilets

- 8,673 stormwater pits
- 991 headwalls
- 925km water mains
- 627km sealed roads
- 627km sewer mains
- 564km kerb and gutter
- 498 park benches
- 394km unsealed roads
- 201km stormwater pipes
- 147 carparks
- 141 sewage pumping stations
- 114 bridges
- 103 parks
- 94km footpaths
- 66 bus shelters
- 54km shared pathways
- 49 stand-alone public toilets
- 35 playgrounds
- 31 tennis courts
- 24 sports fields
- 22 boat ramps
- 15 water pumping stations
- 13 cricket pitches
- 13 viewing platforms
- 12 netball courts
- 11 cemeteries
- 9 public halls
- 9 pontoons
- 8 jetties
- 7km rock wall
- 7 sewage treatment plants
- 5 skate parks
- 4 wharves
- 4 surf clubs
- 4 fishing platforms
- 3 libraries
- 3 waste management facilities
- 3 indoor basketball courts
- 3 swimming centres
- 3 childcare buildings
- 2 water treatment plants

2024-25 proposed Operational Plan

Shirewide highlights

- Education programs for sustainable practices with energy, waste, water and climate resilience will continue to be offered to the community.
- A Waste and Resource Management strategy will be put out for stakeholder feedback and finalised during the year, guiding our future efforts for waste management and reduction.
- Following two successful trials, an annual budget is proposed to support the installation of virtual fences at wildlife hotspots.
- Continued monitoring of our waterways via Council's estuary health monitoring program, participating in the Beachwatch program.
- Rebates and incentive programs will continue to be offered to the community for water conserving washing machines, toilets and showerheads.
- Council will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Elders, leaders and representatives to ensure First Nations culture is acknowledged and respected, including our annual NAIDOC Week celebration.
- Community care services for the shire's older residents and people living with disability, along with high-quality children's services including family day care, after school and vacation care and grant-funded playgroups are ongoing.
- Our youth services are now mobile, using a van to take support programs to the youth of the shire.
- Council's Libraries will explore opportunities to develop intergenerational programming in an effort to link older and younger community members.
- Beach safety and accessibility will continue through provision of lifeguards at eight of the shires more visited beaches and the installation of mobility mats during the peak season.

The two-week free green waste drop off will take place again at our waste management facilities in conjunction with the Rural Fire Service's 'Get Ready' program.

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- Eurobodalla's Local Environment Plan will undergo housekeeping to ensure Council's planning instruments remain current.
- Eurobodalla's Economic Development Strategy will be updated.
- A new tourism delivery model will drive the priority outcomes of the Eurobodalla Destination Action Plan.

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- The biennial Basil Sellers Art Prize and scholarships, our nationally recognised art prize, will take place in December 2024.
- Round two of our village sign program is set for completion and will see installations at Tilba Tilba, Central Tilba, Tomakin, Broulee, Mossy Point and Batehaven.
- Ongoing works to Council's road network will continue, with \$1.3M of unsealed roads resheeting and \$1.5M of pavement rehabilitation to sealed roads allocated.
- A review of Council's light fleet will occur, and will consider if moving to electric vehicles is viable.

Batemans Bay area highlights

- Continued coastal management works in North Batemans Bay with estimated \$2.7M construction spend and \$3.5M of works for Caseys Beach rockwall.
- Construction of a new public toilet is scheduled for John Street reserve in Mogo.
- The masterplan to identify more housing options for Batemans Bay CBD is set to be finalised with a planning proposal to be prepared for its implementation.

Works for the Batemans Bay Coastal Headlands Walking Trail will be completed, linking headlands and beaches between Batemans and Mackenzies Beach ...

- Construction of the grant funded Mogo Trails will be finalised.
- Works for the Batemans Bay Coastal Headlands Walking Trail will be completed, linking headlands and beaches between Batemans and Mackenzies Beach via natural bush tracks, including the recently completed upgrade of Observation Point Batehaven.
- \$2.3M of intersection upgrades are planned for final design and the commencement of construction for George Bass Drive, establishing roundabouts at two key intersections (Broulee and Malua Bay).

Moruya area highlights

- The Regional Moruya Airport security and safety upgrades will continue, strengthening this key regional transport link.
- \$460,000 of drainage upgrades are programmed for Gundry Oval sports grounds.
- \$5.9M of transport works are scheduled to provide the infrastructure needed to progress the South Moruya Housing project.

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- Riverside Park's plan of management will be finalised with over \$200,000 allocated to improve the facilities and amenities of the park.



Multi-year construction efforts for the 3,000 megalitre Southern Dam will continue ...

Narooma area highlights

- The Wagonga Inlet Living Shoreline project will be completed, which will see the restoration and transformation of a section of the inlet shoreline, improving its protection and water quality, enhancing access for the community and reviving estuarine habitats.
- Multi-year construction efforts for the 3,000 megalitre Southern Dam will continue, estimating a further \$33M of work this year.
- \$182,000 of upgrade works, including drainage, are programmed for Dalmeny Oval.
- Works will continue at Bill Smyth Oval to establish a new competition-sized rugby league field.
- The Dalmeny Land Release Development Control Plan will be finalised incorporating feedback from public consultation.
- Grant supported work to Potato Point Road is programmed to deliver flood resilience upgrades.

More information

- 4474 1000
- council@esc.nsw.gov.au
- www.esc.nsw.gov.au/publicexhibition

Mayor's message

This time last year I spoke about the local government stewardship model and our aim to leave the Council in a better position than we found it.

As your councillors approach the end of this term and endorse our third and final budget, I am proud to say we have achieved that goal. Come September, the newly elected councillors will become stewards of this budget and associated operational plan; a plan that represents a return to core business, a return to a path of financial sustainability, and the consolidation of our new finance-led and delivery focussed service to the Eurobodalla community.

Working as one team, councillors and staff – buoyed by much community support – have worked hard at this mission. The discipline and sound management exhibited in the past 18 months has reaped rewards and we are starting to see stabilisation of our debt, solid strategies in place to tackle our financial challenges, and staff dedicated to making these changes.

In my experience, residents understand these financial challenges – it's not so different to our own households after all.

All actions in this plan have been carefully considered. They are achievable and are funded from Council budgets and recurrent government funding. We now only apply for grants to complete work on our official to-do list – that is, this annual operational plan. Successful grant applications mean we can swap out and save Council cash. It also means we aren't adding extra projects on top of an already full work schedule.

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In these changing and sometimes challenging times, our staff continue to deliver excellent services to the community. And it's not just fixing roads and collecting rubbish. Innovations like accessible beach mats, virtual fences, and free bushfire-ready green waste drop-off will keep coming. Our public toilets have been audited and upgrades already started – within a few years the worst of them will be looking much better. Our youth services have gone mobile, using a van to take their support where young people are. The creation of a new board will see our local tourism industry have more control over the way we attract visitors.

Last year I invited readers of this plan to participate in Council life, suggesting we are all the richer for the community's involvement. We have consciously pursued opportunities to connect with residents and ratepayers, successfully opening up our Council Meetings and seeing more and more people coming along to present to councillors or just watch proceedings.

The day after each Council Meeting we host a Councillor Catch Up at a village or town around the shire. The Catch Ups are an opportunity for residents to chat with their elected representatives informally, in their own neighbourhood. It's been a great initiative, with good discussions had, questions answered, challenges taken up.

I encourage you to review the 2024-25 budget and work plan and tell us what you think. Let's keep this good conversation going.



Mathew Hatcher
Eurobodalla Mayor

General Manager's message

A return to our core business. That is my simple philosophy as we head into the second year of a program to set our Council on a path to financial sustainability.

I am grateful to councillors, staff and our ratepayers and residents for their support and encouragement as we move into the new way of operating; one that is finance-led and delivery focussed, and with real rigour around governance and risk management.

In a practical sense, this means adjustments to our work program to make it more manageable for our workforce, changing the way we approach grant funding, and having the right organisational structure and the right strategies. I am confident these building blocks are now beginning to be put in place.

A Finance Strategy with 12 key actions to guide our work – quite a few already underway - will see us striving for financial sustainability. These actions include a new approach to grants that requires critical thinking ahead of applying for them; in particular consideration of ongoing maintenance, operational and depreciation costs. We will only apply for grants to pay for work already programmed in the budget, swapping Council cash for government funds when grant applications are successful.

Our recovery from the 'hangover' of a very large capital works program continues this year. Since arriving at Eurobodalla Council in November 2022 I've been saying we're a medium-size council trying to do the work of a large one. Post-fires and floods, this was an admirable feat. But the cost of building our shire back and some very large projects – Bay Pavilions, Mogo Trails, Coastal Headland Walking Trail - has taken a toll on our staff and our budgets. These are fine assets for our shire, but we must understand the cost.

By staging our works program and adjusting how we work, we are starting to see a stabilisation and this will continue into 2024-25. We are still providing the services our ratepayers and residents expect with pride and diligence. But when a works program is too large to finish within the financial year, it carries over to the next with the additional labour and material costs building each year.

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As we tackle these entrenched challenges, a new organisation structure that includes a finance and corporate services directorate ensures we have the right focus on the governance and risk frameworks integral to local governments.

This 2024-25 operational plan outlines a comprehensive work program. Coastal management works continue in North Batemans Bay while we finalise the stunning Wagonga Inlet Living Shoreline project in Narooma. Our award-winning environmental programs continue, helping residents reduce their environmental footprint and protecting our precious flora and fauna. Following two successful trials, we will introduce an annual budget to install virtual fences along local roads at wildlife hotspots.

The free green waste drop-off will return in September 2024 to coincide with the RFS Get Ready weekend. While this represents lost revenue for Council, I believe supporting residents to prepare for bushfire is worth that cost.

A new van has transformed our youth service to a responsive outreach service, popping up where needed for support, education, and events for Eurobodalla's young people.

When it comes to recreation, work will start this year on upgrades to Hanging Rock sporting complex, the second playing field at Bill Smyth Oval in Narooma, as well as drainage work at Gundry and Dalmeny playing fields.

A sustainability plan for Bay Pavilions that aims to reduce the facility's financial impact on Council's budget will be introduced, starting with energy efficiencies.

We will finish the Mogo Trails and Coastal Headland Walking Trail projects, both wonderful assets for our community in terms of recreation and economic activity, however, the ongoing costs to Council for operations and maintenance need careful consideration.

Our plan to upgrade the shire's 67 public toilets is underway. 2024-25 will see a number of our worst toilets upgraded to a better standard, including a new and long-awaited facility at John Street Reserve in Mogo.

With a housing strategy soon in place and the Batemans Bay Masterplan well underway, the time has come to revisit our LEP, the land use instrument that guides development in our shire. Rather than hiring consultants, I'm proud to say that work will be completed by our staff.

A new approach to tourism delivery will start in 2024-25, underpinned by closer engagement with the local tourism industry and starting with creation of a tourism industry board.

Rural and urban road maintenance is, as always, a priority. We will grade, resheet, repave or rebuild roads all across the shire after a couple of horror years of rain that created potholes we're still repairing.

Collaboration with local MPs and government agencies continues to be strong and helps Council get best benefit for the community on projects like the Moruya Bypass, the Eurobodalla Regional Hospital, and the emergency services precincts at Moruya and Surf Beach, which we hope to see built this year.

I look forward to more conversations and problem-solving with residents and community groups in the year ahead. These interactions are a highlight of my role, and I believe we have made real progress in our transparency and how we work with the community. With goodwill and mutual respect, we can continue to grow and transform this important relationship.



Warwick Winn
General Manager