



WELLINGTON
SHIRE COUNCIL

Agenda Special Council Meeting

Tuesday 26 May 2026, commencing at 5:00 PM

Meeting to be held at

Wellington Centre – Wellington Room, Foster Street, Sale

or stream online at <https://www.youtube.com/@wellingtonshire>

**SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL
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COUNCIL MEETING INFORMATION

Members of the public gallery should note that the Council records and publishes Council meetings via YouTube to enhance the accessibility of Council meetings to the broader Wellington community. These recordings are also published and archived on Council's Website for viewing by the public. Recordings may be used for publicity or information purposes.

Members of the public in attendance at the Council meeting who wish to communicate with the Council regarding an agenda item or any other matter should advise the Mayor, ideally prior to the meeting starting, to ensure that their submission is called at the appropriate time during the meeting.

Would gallery visitors, Councillors and invited online attendees please ensure that mobile phones and other electronic devices are turned off or in silent mode for the duration of the meeting.

MISSION STATEMENT

Working together to make a difference. We listen and lead to provide quality services that improve life for all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Gunaikurnai people. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge their ongoing cultural and spiritual connections to their land and waters.

RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY

We recognise the entire Wellington Shire community, including visitors to our shire, for their collective efforts in protecting and preserving the land, water, air, and history, and for making this a better place to live and work for current and future generations.

1. APOLOGIES

2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT/S OF INTEREST

3. GENERAL MANAGER CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1. DRAFT 2026/27 BUDGET SUBMISSIONS

ACTION OFFICER: MANAGER CORPORATE FINANCE

PURPOSE

To receive and consider the attached written submissions and any verbal submissions relating to the Draft 2026/27 Budget.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and consider the attached written submissions and any verbal submissions relating to the Draft 2026/27 Budget.

BACKGROUND

Council resolved at its meeting held on 21 April 2026 to:

- advertise its proposed Draft 2026/27 Budget and proposed differential rates under section 96 of the *Local Government Act 2020*; and
- consider submissions on the Draft 2026/27 Budget at an unscheduled Council Meeting on Tuesday 26 May 2026 at 5.00pm.

In accordance with section 96 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council invited interested persons to make written submissions in relation to the Draft 2026/27 Budget by 5:00pm on 10 May 2026 and to also make verbal submissions at the Council meeting on 26 May 2026.

Council received 18 written submissions, as attached, in response to the Draft 2026/27 Budget and will consider these submissions in conjunction with any verbal submissions prior to the Council meeting in June, where it will be recommended that the Budget, including any revisions, be adopted.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft 2026/27 Budget Submissions [3.1.1 - 25 pages]

OPTIONS

Council has the following options available:

1. To receive and consider the attached written, and any verbal, submissions relating to the 2026/27 Draft Budget; or
2. To seek further information and receive and consider any verbal and written submissions relating to the 2026/27 Draft Budget at a later Council meeting.

PROPOSAL

That Council receive and consider the attached written, and any verbal, submissions relating to the 2026/27 Draft Budget.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No staff and/or contractors involved in the compilation of this report have declared a conflict of interest.

COUNCIL PLAN 2025-29

While this report does not meet a specific Council Plan strategic objective, it aligns with good governance.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT (GIA)

Officers understand the requirements in relation to conducting GIA's to ensure Council remains compliant with obligations outlined in the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

A Gender Impact Assessment has yet to be completed on the draft 2026/27 budget.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Consideration of submissions may result in changes to the proposed 2026/27 Draft Budget.

COMMUNICATION IMPACT

This impact has been assessed and there is no effect to consider at this time.

LEGISLATIVE IMPACT

Under s96(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Council must develop a budget in accordance with its Community Engagement policy.

COUNCIL POLICY IMPACT

This impact has been assessed and there is no effect to consider at this time.

RESOURCES AND STAFF IMPACT

The consideration of submissions relating to the Draft 2026/27 Budget may have an impact on the level of resources available in the 2026/27 financial year and the staffing levels of Council.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

This impact has been assessed and there is no effect to consider at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This impact has been assessed and there is no effect to consider at this time.

ENGAGEMENT IMPACT

Section 96(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that Council develop the budget in line with its Community Engagement policy. To ensure that Council provided ample and varied opportunity for community engagement, Council placed the draft 2026/27 Budget on Council's website and advertised that it had done so. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers, on Facebook and Council's website (including the *Your Wellington Your Say* page) seeking community submissions on the Draft 2026/27 Budget and inviting the public to speak to, and in support of, submissions at this unscheduled Council meeting.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPACT

This impact has been assessed and there is no effect to consider at this time.

DRAFT 2026/27 BUDGET SUBMISSIONS

	CORRESPONDENT	SUBMISSION
1.	Ron D'Arcy (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Concerns that fortnightly red bin collection would unfairly impact people with disability, and questions the integrity of the consultation process
2.	Greg Gauld (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO - Questions the purpose of the consultation as the decision appears to have already been made without waiting for all community feedback to be received
3.	Kristy Thexton (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Concerns that Council is imposing FOGO bins without prior consultation
4.	Jacque Wade (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Concerns that a fortnightly rubbish collection is unhygienic and unsafe for households with nappies, continence aids and sanitary waste
5.	Corey Siebel (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Concerns that families cannot halve weekly waste and suggests alternating FOGO bin with fortnightly recycling
6.	Danielle Azevedo (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Highlights the feeling of powerlessness about the shift to fortnightly general waste collection, shown by a Change.org petition with nearly 2,000 signatures, and a feeling that consultation is not genuine as the decision has already been made
7.	Phillip Bass (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Concerns that the FOGO consultation is not genuine when it closes on 27 April, yet ratepayer costs are increasing and it has already been communicated there will be service reduction from weekly to fortnightly general waste collection
8.	Emma Wilkins (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO – Suggests weekly rubbish collection should be retained as FOGO rollout is illogical for families who produce little food or garden waste and rely on weekly red bin collection
9.	Belinda Cornwall (raised as a Council question at 21/04/26 meeting)	FOGO - Opposes the waste collection changes where rates are increasing, but services are reducing
10.	Lewis Bolton	Concern over increase to capital budget, request for Council to review internal spending and suggestion that ratepayers should be able to opt out of FOGO scheme.
11.	Braden Anderson	Request that Council concentrate on core services, responsibilities and servicing the needs of ratepayers

	CORRESPONDENT	SUBMISSION
12.	Clint Gartung	Suggests that the introduction of the FOGO service should be opt out
13.	Samuel Williams	Concern that rates continue to rise without noticeable improvements
14.	Sale Stock Agent Association	Request for price freeze on yard dues at Gippsland Regional Livestock Exchange
15.	Alex Scott and Staff, Kim McMahon, Kevin Ruff, Carley Einsiedel, Bailley Anderson, Gary Fenton, Peter Kelly, Kevin Farley, Michael Kelly, Natasha Adams, Darren Towns, George Wilford, Ian Finlay, Neville Peck, Tracey Ryan, Phillip Jolly, John Collins, Sonny Lambourn, Ken Bishop, Don McMillan, Ralf Meyer, James Coleman, Kim Gallatly, Hayden McKenzie, Barry Reid, Trevor Christensen, Elaine Wellins, Cam Smyth, Jayden Boulton	
16.	Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network	Encouraging Council to consider opportunities for additional investment in environmental and community resilience initiatives.
17.	Gayle Maher	Various Matters: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management of Direct and Contracted Fuel Exposure 2. Aligning Regional Leadership with Operational Strategy 3. Budgetary Anomalies: Bad Debts and Depreciation 4. Financial Resilience and Insurance Recovery
18.	Melissa Lund	Various issues: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue investment in initiatives that directly benefit children, families and community wellbeing. 2. Expansion of rubbish bin services is not the best use of council resources. 3. Improved lighting around the lake and walking areas. 4. Enforcement of laws around the use of e-scooters on footpaths. 5. Introduction of stronger preventative approaches to reducing drug-related harm.

	CORRESPONDENT	SUBMISSION
		6. Advocating to state and federal government regarding service gaps in the region. 7. Play a role in prevention, early intervention of family violence.

NO.	1
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Concerns that fortnightly red bin collection would unfairly impact people with disability and questions the integrity of the consultation process. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Ron D’Arcy

Dear Mayor and Councillors, I write to you not only as a resident of Wellington Shire, but as someone deeply embedded in, and accountable to, multiple layers of this community. In my capacity as Chairman of Maffra Neighbourhood House Inc., Operations Manager of The George Gray Centre, Deputy Chairman of Gippsland Disability Advocacy Inc., a School Council Member at Sale & District Specialist School, and as a member of Wellington Shire Council’s own Disability Advisory Committee, I engage daily with individuals and families whose voices are too often overlooked in broad policy reform. I am also a parent to a child with a disability who requires continence aids.

This is not an abstract issue to me; it is lived, constant, and non-negotiable. Let me be clear: I understand and support the intent behind reducing landfill and improving environmental outcomes. The introduction of FOGO services has merit, and I acknowledge the necessity of forward-thinking environmental policy. However, the proposed shift to fortnightly red bin (general waste) collection presents a serious and immediate risk to the dignity, health, and basic living conditions of many residents; particularly those living with disability.

For individuals who rely on continence aids, general waste is not discretionary. It cannot be reduced, delayed, or “managed” through behavioural change. It is generated daily, unavoidably, and in significant volume. Moving to a fortnightly collection cycle will result in the accumulation of waste that is not only impractical to store, but poses hygiene risks and deeply impacts quality of life. While Council may point to the option of obtaining an additional bin, this solution is fundamentally flawed. The associated costs are tied to property rates, effectively excluding renters; who make up a disproportionate percentage of people living with disability. This creates an inequitable system where the most vulnerable are left without a viable option.

I would strongly urge Council to reflect on the feedback already being provided by the community. Your own social media platforms are filled with residents articulating precisely these concerns. The sentiment is not isolated; it is widespread, consistent, and deeply felt. Equally concerning is the apparent contradiction between the consultation process and Council’s actions. While the “Have Your Say” survey remains open until 27 April 2026, information outlining these changes is already being distributed as though the outcome is predetermined. This undermines public trust and gives the clear impression that community consultation is performative rather than genuine. If Council is sincere in its commitment to consultation, then it must demonstrate a willingness to adapt its position based on the feedback it receives.

I am asking, in the strongest possible terms, that Council reconsider this element of the proposal. Retaining weekly red bin collection is not a matter of convenience; it is a

matter of equity, dignity, and public health. Environmental progress should not come at the expense of those who already face significant daily challenges. A balanced approach is not only possible, it is essential.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and would encourage Council to engage directly with your own Disability Advisory Committee before finalising any decision that will have such profound consequences.

NO.	2
SUBMISSION	FOGO - Questions the purpose of the consultation as the decision appears to have already been made without waiting for all community feedback to be received. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Greg Gauld

I recently completed a survey on the new council bin collection process. Today, 14/04/26, I received in the mail a copy of the new process with bin information and dates of implementation. I would like to know what the point of completing the survey was, with a completion date of 27/04/26, when clearly the council has already decided on what was going to happen without waiting for all the feedback to arrive.

NO.	3
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Concerns that Council is imposing FOGO bins without prior consultation. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Kristy Thexton

In relation to the FOGO bins, I'd like to ask council - Imagine you attend your local restaurant. They provide you with a starter of toasted bread, a bottle of sparkling water, and a cardboard container to take your meal home, along with the meal you ordered. You then go to pay your bill and find you've been charged for all extra's, that you didn't ask for. You question it, why am I being forced to pay for something I didn't ask for, and don't need. They say, it's ok, we already decided it for you. - You head to the local supermarket. You unload your trolley and as you are about to pay, the checkout person adds 3 items to your bags, and your charge amount increases. You say excuse me, they weren't my items. They say, it's ok, we decided that you needed these items. But feel free to participate in a community survey, but we already decided that you need these items. - Trees are being mulched near your residence. They truck dumps a load of mulch in your front yard and provides you with a bill. You say, I didn't ask for this, I don't need any mulch. They say, well your weeds are a little out of control, and this mulch will help with that, and will look great under your trees. It's ok, a community survey will ease your concerns. Here's your bill. All of this is what council has done to their community members. No prior consultation, a decision made without awaiting feedback from the very people who pay the rates, who are happily supporting a business that already takes their green waste, and forcing people like myself who has 2 compost bins and heavily reuses and recycles, to pay for a service that 1. I will never use, and 2. Never asked for, and never got asked for.

NO.	4
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Concerns that a fortnightly rubbish collection is unhygienic and unsafe for households with nappies, continence aids and sanitary waste. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Jacquie Wade

With the new rubbish collection proposal, how will this be effective with continence Aides, Infant/baby nappies and female sanitary items. With a majority of the population being aged and disability, families with babies /infants and women aged between 10-60 that menstruate how is a fortnightly rubbish collection going to go. With the smell, infection and disease. Animals and rodents trying to get to them. Flies and maggots. Infection needs to be kept at Bay and having faeces and blood sit rancid in plastic bins for 14 days is just unethical and disgusting.

NO.	5
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Concerns that families cannot halve weekly waste and suggests alternating FOGO bin with fortnightly recycling. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Corey Siebel

Why doesn't the council make the rubbish (red bin) pick up weekly, and the recycling (yellow bin) and green waste (green bin) alternate fortnightly pick ups? Most families will not be able to cut their rubbish volume in half simply because of the introduction of a green waste bin.

NO.	6
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Highlights the feeling of powerlessness about the shift to fortnightly general waste collection, shown by a Change.org petition with nearly 2,000 signatures, and a feeling that consultation is not genuine as the decision has already been made. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Danielle Azevedo

Question and comment regarding waste policy draft. Comment: There is significant and growing community anger about the change to weekly waste collection. The change.org (<https://c.org/tj9pzQDSyg>) petition alone shows how strongly people feel (almost 2000 signatures in the space of a week), and that support continues to build. The community understands that this is a state mandated initiative, however councils have the ability to implement the changes based on the needs of the community. What is frustrating is that this feels like a decision that has already been made. Asking for feedback on a policy that already has a start date does not feel like genuine consultation, it feels like a formality. There also seems to be a real disconnect between this policy and how people actually live. Families with young children, intergenerational households, people living with disability, and women managing menstrual hygiene all have unavoidable waste that cannot go into FOGO. That hasn't been properly accounted for. Taking away regular expected waste services is unfair. Then there are the practical realities, smell, hygiene, and the very real risk of increased illegal dumping when people simply don't have the capacity. In a largely rural shire like ours, many households already manage food waste through composting, chooks, or worm farms. For us, FOGO will take garden waste, not reduce what goes into the red bin, we aren't living in urban households like in Melbourne that don't have the space to have chooks, compost or feed their worm farm. So the logic doesn't stack up. If anything, it would make more sense to move FOGO to fortnightly and keep general waste weekly. I believe this is how Latrobe Valley council is implementing the changes, to the delight of their community I am sure. Right now, people feel unheard and powerless as they pay more, for what feels like a lot less. I certainly never thought a weekly waste collection service I pay for via rates would be removed. Additionally, I would like to state that I personally spoke with FOGO staff at the Wellington Sustainability Festival, where the focus was on promoting the green bin, but there was no mention of reducing the red bin service. This feels like a deliberate omission when council should have taken the opportunity to promote the changes for consultation. I even left the stand with a bin-fluencer sticker. Question: Does Council have the ability to stop or change the move to fortnightly general waste collection, and if so, how much community opposition is needed before that happens? Was this decision made regardless of community input? Additionally, will council release the results of the feedback? Thank you for hearing and considering my submission.

NO.	7
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Concerns that the FOGO consultation is not genuine when it closes on 27 April, yet ratepayer costs are increasing and it has already been communicated there will be service reduction from weekly to fortnightly general waste collection. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Phillip Bass

Given Council has stated that consultation on the proposed FOGO changes remains open until 27 April, can it explain how this consultation can be considered genuine when the rollout includes a reduction in service value to ratepayers—specifically moving general waste collection from weekly to fortnightly—while overall costs are increasing, and has already been communicated as proceeding?

Prior to developing the waste service change model, what evidence did Council gather on ratepayer preferences for waste service levels, and what specific, measurable criteria will now be applied to assess community feedback—including any defined thresholds of opposition that would trigger reconsideration, delay, or reversal of these changes?

NO.	8
SUBMISSION	FOGO – Suggests weekly rubbish collection should be retained as FOGO rollout is illogical for families who produce little food or garden waste and rely on weekly red bin collection. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Emma Wilkins

I am wondering how much logical consideration has actually gone into the new FOGO bin roll out? Members of this shire have done just fine with the current bin arrangement for as long as it has been in place. Now, you decide that reducing the collection of our smallest bin, the one most households can overfill in a week, to fortnightly collection. I imagine that my household falls in with majority. 4 people (2adults & 2children between 8 & 16) and there is no way we would fill a FOGO bin once a month, let alone once a week. We have very minimal food scraps, and what we do have goes into the garden. We minimal garden waste also, we are lucky to need to do 2 trailers a year. Rubbish on the other hand we fill easily each week and often use neighbours bins as we don't have enough room. How are families meant to get by with fortnightly rubbish collection? What are families with children in nappies meant to do? Families are already struggling financially, where are they meant to find an extra \$200 to have adequate rubbish disposal? They won't and the result of that will be an increase in illegal rubbish dumping (who could blame people) and a higher cost to the shire, so the shire will then have another excuse to increase rates to already struggling families. We can see the cash grab avenue the shire is taking before this is even rolled out. This roll out has also been confirmed before consultation with residents is closed, is that even legal? I strongly urge council to go back to the drawing board, have proper community consultation, and then re address once that is done. Rubbish collection needs to be weekly and residents shouldn't have to buy an extra service that should not be downgraded in the first place. Thank you for your time and consideration.

NO.	9
SUBMISSION	FOGO - Opposes the waste collection changes where rates are increasing, but services are reducing. <i>(raised as a Council Question at the Council meeting on 21 April 2026)</i>
CORRESPONDENT	Belinda Cornwall

My points regarding to the change of rubbish collection: - rates increase again unacceptable for a reduction in service and the cost of living crisis already causing significant hardships of people and families, especially in rural areas - providing education instead to reduce waste and organic waste in general - rural areas have limited access to rubbish removal of required and cost of fuel to do this a future consideration - most rural areas have chooks and compost in place to reduce organic material/waste leaving the premises - school and kinder in Briag going to fortnightly rubbish collection is unacceptable and they have plans in place so all good scraps do not leave their premises - people with young children or have medical waste already filling bins weekly and fortnightly not acceptable - the smell of the bins with dirty nappies etc in general - this was never a plan to take to the public, I received the letter from the shire outlining the roll out instructions before this meeting, so not community consultation yet again - other shire/counsel areas not implementing this due to logistics and community in disagreement - will there be subsidised costs of having to go to the local tips? Another coat on top of increased rates and poor services - no community involvement yet again, poor decisions being made for rural/remote areas with no forward planning and issue/conflict resolution in place - was very annoying when contacted shire and the only thing was told, over and over again was "it's a government initiative", and we know how well they go (not!) - please do NOT deliver this bin to my address and do NOT increase my rates - I do NOT want to accept this initiative and want to OPT OUT!!!! - maybe feedback to the government should be to repair our poor roads and bring back resources to rural towns such as the travelling libraries and maternal and child health services. Remember - I choose to OPT OUT of this and not have the cost added to my rates for another reduction in already limited resources and services.

NO.	11
SUBMISSION	Request that Council concentrate on core services, responsibilities and servicing the needs of ratepayers
CORRESPONDENT	Braden Anderson

Core services and responsibilities, focused on real world behaviours and requirements. The current state government down Net Zero & DEI focus is absolutely not the place of a non metropolitan council. Focus on servicing the needs of Wellington rate payers.

NO.	12
SUBMISSION	Suggests that the introduction of the FOGO service should be opt out
CORRESPONDENT	Clint Gartung

People should be able to opt out of the NEW bin collection. What about the extra pollution from the added kerbside pickup?? What about those that don't have food scraps that have livestock that all the waste goes to who don't require it? stop wasting money.

NO.	13
SUBMISSION	Concern that rates continue to rise without noticeable improvements
CORRESPONDENT	Samuel Williams

Rates continue to rise but I don't see noticeable improvements to match the increase in cost.

NO.	14
SUBMISSION	Request for price freeze on yard dues at Gippsland Regional Livestock Exchange
CORRESPONDENT	Sale Stock Agent Association

GRLE yard dues

Recently all four agencies operating at GRLE have participated in Agrinous input of creating lots, creating pens, assigning vendors, headage input and breed and type description for Sheep Sales and Store Sales. Some Agents are also entering their own NVD's for the Store Sales. This removes the need for GRLE office staff to complete this task, therefore reducing their workload by at least a third, if not more when it comes to processing.

All four agencies have discussed this ongoing process in readiness of the financial year fee increases. All agencies agree and propose a price freeze due to the change in operations of sale processing. As this sale processing relieves GRLE office staff workload, all operating agents request a review of the yard fee structure going forward to support and promote services for our local producers and the community. We have put a lot of work into promoting GRLE, with some resistance from local producers and some Agents at times, and feel we are making significant headway into ensuring GRLE is a viable market for local producers. Our current fees are quite similar to local yards, and a fee increase of say 3% would see us become dearer than some yards. WSC has seen great increase of throughput, and we propose that increased headage should offset the need for fee increases.

NO.	15
SUBMISSION	Request for price freeze on yard dues at Gippsland Regional Livestock Exchange
CORRESPONDENTS	Alex Scott and Staff, Kim McMahon, Kevin Ruff, Carley Einsiedel, Bailey Anderson, Gary Fenton, Peter Kelly, Kevin Farley, Michael Kelly, Natasha Adams, Darren Towns, George Wilford, Ian Finlay, Neville Peck, Tracey Ryan, Phillip Jolly, John Collins, Sonny Lambourn, Ken Bishop, Don McMillan, Ralf Meyer, James Coleman, Kim Gallatly, Hayden McKenzie, Barry Reid, Trevor Christensen, Elaine Wellins, Cam Smyth, Jayden Boulton

To Wellington Shire Council,

I am writing as a stakeholder of the GRLE, about the upcoming Budget updates. Stakeholders have been working together over the past several years to streamline the processes and increase throughput at the facility.

With the upgrade of the software to Agrinous, Agents, on behalf of Vendors are now doing at least 30% of the processing of Sales that was once completed by GRLE staff, as well their standard duties of drafting, penning, selling and delivering Livestock.

Between this decreased workload on the GRLE Staff and the substantial increase of Livestock numbers through the facility, it is my firm belief that all fees associated with GRLE should be maintained at their current level, and no increase applied.

As it stands, GRLE fees are even with or very slightly under that of the competing yards, and any increase would almost definitely see us dearer than them, which would be detrimental to the facility.

With these points considered, please freeze the fees as they stand rather than apply any increase,

Thankyou,

NO.	16
SUBMISSION	Encouraging Council to consider opportunities for additional investment in environmental and community resilience initiatives.
CORRESPONDENT	Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network

May 2026

To: Mayor & Councillors
Latrobe City Council

Submission on Draft 2026/27 Budget

The Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network (LCLN) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Council’s Draft 2026/27 Budget.

LCLN acknowledges and supports the broad strategic direction outlined within the Council Plan and recognises the significant financial and service delivery pressures currently facing local government. In this context, we particularly welcome Council’s continued commitment to strengthening communities, supporting volunteer participation, enhancing environmental sustainability, and building resilience across the municipality.

As one of the municipality’s most established and active community-based environmental networks, LCLN sees strong alignment between Council’s strategic objectives and the work undertaken by Landcare groups, volunteers, and partner organisations across the region.

Strategic Alignment

LCLN’s activities directly contribute to several key Council Plan priorities, including:

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment;
- Strengthening community participation and social connection;
- Supporting partnerships and collaborative delivery;
- Building resilience to climate, environmental, and economic pressures; and
- Encouraging active community stewardship of local places and landscapes.

Landcare provides a highly cost-effective mechanism for delivering outcomes across these areas. Through relatively modest public investment, Landcare mobilises substantial volunteer labour, landholder co-investment, community leadership, and external grant funding that significantly multiplies the impact of government expenditure.

The Network and its member groups support activities including:

- Weed and pest management;
- Biodiversity protection and revegetation;
- Waterway and catchment health initiatives;
- Sustainable land management practices;
- Community education and skills development; and
- Social and volunteer engagement activities that strengthen local connection and resilience.

Importantly, Landcare activity extends well beyond environmental outcomes alone. In many communities, Landcare groups act as enduring social infrastructure — bringing together residents, farmers, volunteers, schools, community organisations, and government agencies in practical and constructive local action.

The Value of Volunteer and Community Contribution

LCLN wishes to emphasise the extraordinary contribution made by Landcare volunteers across the municipality.

The value of this contribution is not simply financial, although the volunteer hours and in-kind effort generated through Landcare represent a substantial economic benefit to the community. Equally important is the social



capital created through ongoing volunteer participation, leadership development, local knowledge sharing, and community connection.

At a time when many communities are experiencing increasing social fragmentation, cost-of-living pressures, climate anxiety, and volunteer fatigue, investment in community-led participation and local stewardship has become more important — not less.

Supporting Landcare therefore represents both an environmental investment and a community strengthening investment.

Opportunities for Enhanced Investment

While acknowledging current budget constraints, LCLN encourages Council to consider opportunities for modest additional investment in environmental and community resilience initiatives that can leverage substantial external and volunteer contributions. Areas for consideration could include:

- Small community environmental grants programs;
- Volunteer support and capacity-building initiatives;
- Partnerships supporting weed and pest coordination activities;
- Community biodiversity and revegetation projects;
- Climate resilience and adaptation activities;
- Support for community engagement events and environmental education programs;
- In-kind operational support for community environmental organisations; and
- Collaborative initiatives that strengthen connections between Council, Landcare, schools, Traditional Owners, and community groups.

Even relatively small additional allocations can generate significant multiplier effects through volunteer participation, grant leverage, and partner co-contributions.

Closing Remarks

LCLN appreciates Council’s ongoing commitment to community wellbeing and environmental sustainability and welcomes continued collaboration in achieving shared strategic objectives.

The challenges facing our landscapes and communities are increasingly complex and interconnected. Addressing them will require strong partnerships between local government, community organisations, volunteers, landholders, and regional agencies.

Landcare remains uniquely placed to support this work through trusted local relationships, community mobilisation, and practical on-ground delivery.

We encourage Council to continue recognising the strategic value of community-led environmental action and to consider enhanced support for initiatives that strengthen both the health of the environment and the resilience of the community

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Phil Darton
Chair
Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network

NO.	17
SUBMISSION	<p>Various Matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management of Direct and Contracted Fuel Exposure 2. Aligning Regional Leadership with Operational Strategy 3. Budgetary Anomalies: Bad Debts and Depreciation 4. Financial Resilience and Insurance Recovery
CORRESPONDENT	Gayle Maher

9 May 2026

Wellington Shire Council
By way of email: enquiries@wellington.vic.gov.au

Dear Councillors,

RE: SUBMISSION DRAFT BUDGET 2026-27

I welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Budget 2026–27.

Overall, I believe this is a measured and appropriately “pared back” budget that reflects the challenging economic conditions currently being faced and appropriately focuses on the Shire’s core responsibilities.

While the budget is fiscally conservative, there are several areas where greater strategic alignment and operational planning could further reduce long-term structural risks.

1. Management of Direct and Contracted Fuel Exposure

With fuel volatility contributing approximately \$1 million in increased costs — nearly equivalent to the projected \$1.296 million underlying deficit — fuel management represents a significant fiscal risk.

- **Contracted services:** As waste and FOGO services are externally contracted, clarification is sought regarding whether fuel-efficiency KPIs or operational efficiency measures are embedded within these contracts.
- **Internal operations:** Council continues to utilise its own plant and equipment for components of the \$22.7 million road program. Unlike contracted services, these internal operations are directly exposed to fuel price fluctuations. How is Council managing this direct budget risk? Are there specific operational efficiency measures being implemented to mitigate these pressures?
- **Technology and efficiency opportunities:** Given that other Victorian councils are achieving operational efficiencies through smart technology and route optimisation systems, could components of the \$1 million ICT renewal allocation be leveraged to investigate technologies that improve operational efficiency, route planning, and fuel management outcomes?

2. Aligning Regional Leadership with Operational Strategy

The \$4.9 million allocation toward Renewable Energy Land and Infrastructure is a strategically important investment that I strongly support.

Having been involved in the developmental context surrounding this work, I recognise its importance to the community and its role in positioning Wellington Shire as a leader within the regional energy transition. However, there is also an opportunity to better align Council’s external leadership role with its own longer-term operational planning.

While Council is facilitating significant regional transition opportunities for industry and the community, its own operational budget remains exposed to fuel volatility. I encourage

Council to consider how the strategic momentum generated through these projects may also inform future fleet, plant renewal, and operational efficiency strategies over time.

Aligning future asset renewal planning with the evolving energy landscape Wellington Shire is helping to facilitate would ensure Council is not only enabling the transition externally, but also positioning itself to benefit from future operational efficiencies where practical and financially viable.

3. Budgetary Anomalies: Bad Debts and Depreciation

- **Bad Debts (Page 41):** An 82.6% decrease in bad debt provisions appears difficult to reconcile with the “significant strain” on the community referenced on Page 3. Clarification is sought regarding the assumptions underpinning this forecast reduction.
- **Depreciation (Page 41):** A 13.7% decrease in Plant and Equipment depreciation may indicate changes to asset replacement cycles. Has fleet or plant renewal been deferred, and if so, what assessment has been undertaken regarding the potential long-term impacts on maintenance costs, operational efficiency, and fuel consumption?

4. Financial Resilience and Insurance Recovery

Drawing from my experience as a former Councillor during the 2019 storm recovery period, I note that insurance settlements associated with major disaster events can take many years to resolve.

Given the increasing frequency of climate-related infrastructure damage and rising insurance costs, does the current budget adequately provide for disaster-related reserves and cash-flow resilience during extended recovery periods?

It is acknowledged that Local Government continues to operate within rate-capping constraints below inflation while simultaneously managing increasing operational and infrastructure costs.

Overall, this budget represents a sensible and measured response to current economic conditions.

However, the final document would be strengthened through:

- clearer justification of significant financial variances;
- greater transparency around fuel exposure management;
- and stronger strategic integration between operational planning, technology investment, and long-term efficiency initiatives.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the matters raised in this submission.

Kind Regards



Gayle Maher

NO.	18
SUBMISSION	<p>Various Matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue investment in initiatives that directly benefit children, families and community wellbeing. 2. Expansion of rubbish bin services is not the best use of council resources. 3. Improved lighting around the lake and walking areas. 4. Enforcement of laws around the use of e-scooters on footpaths. 5. Introduction of stronger preventative approaches to reducing drug-related harm. 6. Advocating to state and federal government regarding service gaps in the region. 7. Play a role in prevention, early intervention of family violence.
CORRESPONDENT	Melissa Lund

To Wellington Shire Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide community feedback regarding Council's forecasted budget and future priorities.

I would strongly encourage Council to continue investing in initiatives that directly benefit children, families, and overall community wellbeing. One area I believe is particularly valuable is after-school literacy and book club programs for children. These programs provide educational support, safe social connection, confidence, and positive engagement for young people in regional communities.

I also believe Council should carefully consider how ratepayer funds are allocated. While sustainability and environmental planning are important, they must remain practical, realistic, and financially responsible for rural communities. Every dollar spent should provide clear and meaningful value to residents. In my view, excessive expansion of rubbish bin services is not the best use of limited Council resources.

I would also encourage Council to prioritise:

- youth engagement and after-school activities
- mental health and family support services
- safe and accessible public spaces
- library and educational programs
- practical infrastructure and transport access
- stronger community safety initiatives

Improved lighting around the lake and walking areas would also be a positive long-term investment for Sale. Well-lit public spaces encourage healthy outdoor activity, greater community use, and help residents feel safer when walking during early mornings and evenings.

I would also ask Council to carefully consider the use of e-scooters on footpaths and shared community spaces. Public safety, particularly for children, elderly residents, and pedestrians, should remain a priority, with clear expectations around safe use and enforcement where required.

Finally, I believe our community would benefit from stronger preventative approaches to reducing drug-related harm in Sale. Supporting young people, families, education, community connection, and early intervention initiatives are all important parts of building a healthier and safer regional community long term.

While allied health and clinical services such as occupational therapy, child psychology, and speech pathology are not directly delivered by Council, there is an important role in advocating to State and Federal Government regarding significant service gaps in the region. In particular, long waitlists and limited availability of paediatric services under the NDIS highlight a serious access issue for families in Sale and surrounding areas. Early intervention is critical for children's development, communication, learning, and mental health, and delays in access to these services can have long-term impacts on outcomes. I would encourage Council to advocate strongly for increased funding, workforce incentives, and improved access to paediatric allied health and mental health services in regional communities such as Wellington Shire.

I also note that while policing and legal responses to family violence sit with State authorities, local Council has an important role in prevention, early intervention, and community wellbeing. In a regional area experiencing complex social challenges, it is important that Council continues to invest in programs that strengthen families, support young people, and reduce risk factors at a community level.

Thank you for considering this feedback.

Kind regards,

Melissa Lund

4. CLOSURE OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Meeting declared closed at:

The live streaming of this Council meeting will now come to a close.