COMMUNITY RESEARCH | VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION 2026

# Community Priorities for Shepparton and District 2026

Evidence and practical commitments for residents and election candidates




**Prepared by Hussam Saraf**

With support from the Multicultural Roundtable in Shepparton

11 November 2026

50 issue briefs | Questions for candidates | Public accountability

**PURPOSE EVIDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY**

# Introduction

## Prepared by Hussam Saraf with support from the Multicultural Roundtable in Shepparton

I have prepared this report to help Greater Shepparton's multicultural communities and residents across the Shepparton electoral district make their own informed decisions in the 2026 Victorian state election. It helps voters identify the improvements they need and reminds candidates of the concerns they are being asked to address before the election and throughout the next term of Parliament.

The report examines 50 areas of community concern, including interpreter access, school capacity, university and vocational education, hospital waiting times, housing, dangerous roads, another river crossing, trains and regional connections, flooding, agricultural pests, council rates and waste services. It gives particular attention to barriers faced by multicultural communities while considering the needs of the wider population and surrounding towns. Each issue connects the problem with practical proposals, responsible authorities and measures of progress.

Our aim is to make the issues, evidence and proposed solutions clear and checkable. The research draws on reliable, attributable sources, prioritising official statistics, government and council documents, parliamentary records and published information from relevant service providers. References allow readers to check the evidence themselves. We distinguish documented facts from analysis and proposed action, identify gaps in the available evidence, and separate announcements and funding commitments from completed delivery.

We remain at an equal distance from all candidates and parties. The same standards of evidence, scrutiny and accountability apply to everyone. We acknowledge existing services and improvements while examining unmet needs and the practical effects of policy decisions. This report does not endorse a candidate or party, recommend a voting order, or tell anyone how to vote.

The report is intended to help residents ask informed questions and seek commitments with clear funding, responsibilities and delivery dates. It also provides a basis for following up those commitments after the election. It does not claim to represent every resident's views or replace continuing community consultation. Each reader is encouraged to consider the evidence, compare candidates' answers and make their own decision.

**Hussam Saraf**
**11 November 2026**

Cover artwork is illustrative. It represents Shepparton and the service issues examined in this report; it is not photographic evidence of conditions at any named site.

**READ THIS FIRST**

# The decisions residents should ask for

The central need is a coordinated plan that makes essential services accessible and turns infrastructure announcements into funded, staffed and maintained outcomes. The priorities below are a proposed agenda for discussion, not the result of a representative voter survey.

| Priority | A concrete decision to seek |
|---|---|
| Understand and use services | A funded interpreter access standard and published evidence of unmet demand. |
| Learn locally | An independent school provision review, stronger early learning and a costed expansion of full local university pathways. |
| Obtain timely care | Staffed hospital and specialist services, affordable everyday care and clear waiting-time reporting. |
| Find an affordable home | Targets for net additional homes, varied household needs and faster repairs and tenancy support. |
| Travel safely | Reliable trains, useful regional connections, durable roads and a clear decision on another river crossing. |
| Withstand emergencies | Flood and drainage works, inclusive warnings and practical evacuation arrangements. |
| Protect food production and work | Sustained pest management, transparent water decisions and fair, safe employment. |
| Afford daily life | Transparent rates and waste costs, assistance that people can access, and practical relief from essential costs. |
| Participate equally | Accessible public places, youth opportunities, First Nations leadership and meaningful community input. |

### Three tests for every promise

- Is it within the candidate's power, or does it require a named agreement with another government or organisation?
- Does it include a budget, operating costs, a delivery date and a measurable improvement for residents?
- Will the candidate report progress publicly, including delays, changes and decisions that conflict with their party's position?

Existing services and investment matter. The report therefore distinguishes a gap in access from the absence of a service, and a proposal from an approved project. Its purpose is to improve decisions, not to portray every institution or community as failing.

**HOW TO FIND AN ISSUE**

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Each issue brief includes evidence, analysis, actions, responsibility, measures and a question for candidates.


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## How to use the report

Start with the issues that affect your household or town. Each brief separates published evidence from analysis and proposed action. Use the worksheet to record a specific, costed commitment and a date for follow-up.

The final review pages identify matters that still need local data. The voting guide reflects the VEC’s 2026 instructions, including changes to the upper-house ballot. Check current official information before voting.

No ranking of candidates is provided. Residents can compare answers using the same questions, evidence standards and opportunity to respond.

**READ THE NUMBERS IN THEIR PROPER CONTEXT**

# Scope geography and evidence

Shepparton city uses postcode 3630. Postcode 3631 covers surrounding localities including Kialla, Shepparton East and other areas. Neither postcode defines the state electoral district. The official VEC boundary is the appropriate basis for deciding which state electorate represents an address. [1,74,75]

| Area | How it is used in this report |
|---|---|
| Shepparton District | The electoral focus. It extends across parts of Greater Shepparton and Moira, including Shepparton, Mooroopna, Tatura, Dookie, Numurkah, Nathalia, Katunga, Strathmerton, Picola and Barmah. Check individual addresses against the VEC map. |
| Greater Shepparton municipality | Many service, budget and Census sources use this boundary. Its data are labelled accordingly and are not presented as totals for the electorate. |
| Shared regional catchments | Hospitals, universities, transport, water and agriculture serve wider areas. Nearby places outside the district can still matter to service planning; their residents may have a different state member. |

The map places some nearby communities, including Murchison, outside Shepparton District. Do not assume that all places in Greater Shepparton City Council, or all residents who use Shepparton services, vote in this district. [1]

Open the official VEC district page and map

### A dated demographic baseline

The 2021 Census counted 68,409 residents in Greater Shepparton municipality. A language other than English was used in 17.6 per cent of households. Leading languages other than English included Punjabi, Arabic, Italian, Hazaraghi and Mandarin. These figures describe 2021 and the municipality; they are not a current population estimate or a complete list of communities. [2]

### How to read the evidence

- Documented evidence: an official statistic, published service arrangement, strategy, project statement or attributable provider account. Its date and geography matter.
- Analysis: an explanation of what the evidence means for access, costs or accountability. Service availability does not prove adequacy or universal access.
- Proposed action: an improvement for residents and candidates to consider. Proposed targets and timetables are not existing government commitments.

Prepared from public sources reviewed on 11 November 2026. This is a broad issues agenda, not a claim that every resident shares the same priorities. Source links and material limitations are recorded at the end. Current project status should be updated when a funding or delivery decision changes.

**MATCH THE PROMISE TO THE POWER**

# Who can make the decision

A state member can advocate, seek funding, scrutinise government and participate in parliamentary decisions. They do not individually control a council budget, a university's course approvals or a Commonwealth program. Effective representation includes negotiating those relationships and reporting what was achieved.

| Lead responsibility | Main matters in this report |
|---|---|
| Victorian Government | Government schools, public hospitals, much mental health and public dental provision, state roads, public transport, social housing, policing, planning frameworks and relevant environmental regulation. |
| Commonwealth Government | Medicare and much primary-care funding, higher-education funding, income support, immigration settings, major communications programs, aged care and major national funding partnerships. |
| Local councils | Local roads and paths, local drainage and public spaces, waste collection, local planning decisions within state settings, community facilities, council rates and local service coordination. |
| Universities and training providers | Specific course delivery, staffing, facilities, student support and partnerships within funding and regulatory settings. |
| Health services and other providers | Service operations, access arrangements, clinical or professional delivery, workforce and reporting obligations. |
| Shared or specialist responsibility | NDIS interfaces, water and catchment management, utilities, professional registration and regional infrastructure need the relevant agencies at the table. |

### A complete commitment has six parts

- A defined problem and the residents or places affected.
- A named action and a responsible decision-maker.
- A stated capital budget and continuing operating cost, with the funding source.
- A delivery date and intermediate milestones.
- A measurable result, including access for people facing language or disability barriers.
- A public reporting process and an explanation if the commitment changes.

For jointly funded projects, ask each partner to confirm its contribution. An announcement by one participant does not establish that the whole project is funded. For a new service, ask who will staff and operate it after the opening.

**ISSUE 01**

# Language access and interpreters

**A resident should be able to understand a diagnosis, a school meeting, a bill and an emergency warning.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Interpreter services already exist. Council advertises free telephone interpreting, while GV Health offers qualified interpreters and explains that some languages require advance booking. School policy also provides interpreting for important parent communications. These arrangements do not establish that every appointment, dialect or after-hours need is met. Monash University's IMPARO work describes the pressures on community members who interpret informally during crises. [4-7]

The practical question is whether the right interpreter is available when needed, without the resident having to navigate an English-only booking system. A telephone service may suit a routine enquiry but require additional arrangements for trauma, disability, complex consent or a sensitive discussion. A bilingual worker is valuable, but language ability alone is not a substitute for an appropriate interpreting qualification. Unpaid community leaders and children should not become the routine solution to an institutional service gap.

## Actions to seek

- Require publicly funded services to record language and dialect needs at first contact, offer interpreting proactively and explain confidentiality and cost before the appointment.
- Fund qualified local interpreters, remote backup and longer appointments where needed. Provide supported training and accreditation pathways for local bilingual residents, with paid work and supervision.
- Publish a quarterly service audit: requests, fulfilled bookings, waiting time, cancellations caused by language barriers and complaints resolved. Report small communities safely without identifying individuals.
- Test translated letters, websites, emergency messages and telephone menus with actual readers. Offer audio and face-to-face help for people with limited literacy, including in their first language.

**Responsibility.** Victorian health and education agencies and funded providers; councils for their services; Commonwealth agencies for their own programs.

**Public measure.** Within 100 days, agree a common access audit. Within one year, publish performance by service and a funded plan for the most persistent gaps.

## Question for candidates

**Will you fund and publish an interpreter access standard, and who will be accountable when someone misses essential care or information because no suitable interpreter was available?**

**ISSUE 02**

# School capacity and another public secondary school

**Families need safe access, a suitable learning environment and a credible assessment of future school demand.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Greater Shepparton Secondary College brought together four government secondary schools from 2020, with its new campus opening in 2022. The campus includes specialist learning facilities. The broader Greater Shepparton Education Plan also covers educational improvement beyond the secondary campus. These investments must be acknowledged when considering further provision. They do not, by themselves, settle the case for a second public secondary school. [8,9]

A further school, particularly one that improves access for families west of the river or in growing residential areas, is a proposal requiring a transparent educational and population assessment. It would be inaccurate to declare the existing college overcrowded without current enrolment, usable capacity and utilisation data. Equally, a headline capacity figure can conceal long journeys, inaccessible subject combinations or an unsuitable environment for some learners. Parents should be able to compare options without school staff or students being blamed for system design.

## Actions to seek

- Commission an independent district school provision review covering enrolment forecasts, actual classroom use, school choice, attendance, wellbeing, travel times and safe access during river-crossing disruption.
- Publish options for another secondary school, satellite provision and improvements to the existing campus. Compare educational outcomes, land, staffing, capital costs and ongoing operating costs.
- If the review supports a new school, reserve suitable land, identify a funding year and publish an opening and recruitment timetable. Include community consultation in accessible languages.
- Address immediate needs while planning proceeds: reliable school transport, staff continuity, learning support, bullying responses, quiet spaces and clear parent complaints pathways. Include specialist education and Banmira’s staged relocation needs. [10]

**Responsibility.** Victorian Department of Education and Victorian School Building Authority; schools deliver learning; councils assist land use and safe local access.

**Public measure.** Publish the review within 12 months, with separate measures for travel, attendance, wellbeing and subject access. A review must end in a decision with reasons.

## Question for candidates

**Will you support an independent assessment of a second public secondary school and publish the findings, costs and decision date, even if the evidence challenges your party’s previous position?**

**ISSUE 03**

# Early childhood learning and school inclusion

**Language support, early intervention and family access matter as much as the number of school buildings.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria provides English as an Additional Language programs, including support for newly arrived learners. EAL funding arrangements depend on eligibility and enrolment information. Council adopted its Best Start Early Years Strategic Plan 2026 to 2031 in August 2026. Earlier Council material identifies greater developmental vulnerability in the municipality's 2024 AEDC results than the statewide average; this is a population indicator, not a diagnosis of individual children. [11-14]

Families may need help with enrolment, kindergarten registration, transport, childcare costs and understanding unfamiliar school expectations. A parent who cannot attend a daytime meeting or read an English portal should still be able to participate. Children who have experienced interrupted schooling need educational assessment that distinguishes language acquisition from disability or learning difficulty. These priorities affect established local families as well as new arrivals. Council's 2025 to 2026 annual report says maternal and child health and supported playgroups were fully staffed. This does not establish capacity across all childcare providers. Audit actual available places and hours separately. [152]

## Actions to seek

- Map staffed early learning places, fees, waiting times and usable hours against demand, including before- and after-school and holiday care. Test shift-work and rural access, disability inclusion and whether staff shortages restrict licensed capacity.
- Resource EAL teaching, multicultural education aides and parent interpreting as students arrive. Publish how additional in-year demand is met rather than relying only on an annual snapshot.
- Strengthen maternal and child health, developmental assessment, speech therapy and early intervention referral follow-through. Support home languages while children acquire English.
- Offer affordable homework support, digital access and clear pathways from school to TAFE, university and employment. Include students with disability, young carers and learners returning after disengagement.
- Make uniform, device, excursion and school transport assistance easy to find and apply for. Ask families directly whether cost is preventing participation.

**Responsibility.** State education and health agencies; councils and early years providers; Commonwealth childcare funding; schools and community organisations.

**Public measure.** Report wait times for early intervention, kindergarten participation, EAL support received and disengagement follow-up. Compare access between towns and language groups without ranking children.

## Question for candidates

**What will you change in the first year so a child's language, postcode, disability or family income does not determine whether they receive early support and remain engaged at school?**

**ISSUE 04**

# A broader university with local science and research

**Students should have a realistic opportunity to complete more degrees while living in the region.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Shepparton already has a La Trobe University campus. Its 2026 nursing handbook identifies Shepparton delivery, and VTAC lists local education and social work pathways. The University of Melbourne offers rural medical training in Shepparton. Its Dookie facilities support agricultural learning, including defined semesters within the Bachelor of Agriculture. It would therefore be incorrect to describe the region as having no university education. [15-19]

The stronger case is for greater breadth, continuity and depth: more complete local degree pathways, laboratories, permanent academic staff, research, student facilities and affordable placements. An online degree accessed from a local study room is useful, but it does not automatically provide local laboratory teaching or the full experience of a staffed campus. Course names on a university-wide website must not be treated as proof that every year and subject is taught in Shepparton.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a course-by-course audit showing where each year, laboratory class and placement is delivered, travel required, annual intake, completion, fees and eligibility. Include courses cancelled for insufficient enrolments.
- Develop a joint university expansion business case with students, employers, existing universities and TAFE. Compare an expanded comprehensive campus, shared facilities and a new institutional model before selecting a governance structure.
- Test demand for engineering, computing and data science, laboratory science, food technology, agricultural science, environmental science and allied health. These are proposed areas for assessment, not a claim that none is available locally.
- Fund lecturers, technicians, laboratories, library access, placements and student accommodation together. Include scholarships and bridging study for rural, low-income, First Nations and refugee-background students.
- Link research to local problems such as water efficiency, food production, health access and climate resilience, with transparent public benefits and ethical community involvement.

**Responsibility.** Universities and the Commonwealth for higher education funding and regulation; Victoria for co-investment and training links; councils for land and planning.

**Public measure.** Within one year, publish the audit and business case. A commitment should name the first new full local pathway, its intake year, staffing and recurrent funding.

## Question for candidates

**Which additional degree could a student complete locally under your proposal, including practical training, and what funded agreement would make that possible?**

**ISSUE 05**

# TAFE adult learning and recognition of skills

**Training should lead to a recognised qualification, a useful skill or sustainable employment.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

GOTAFE's published Shepparton course catalogue includes English language, agriculture, automotive, information technology, nursing and community services options. William Orr is an established training campus. Existing provision does not guarantee that a particular course runs at a workable time, is affordable to every resident or provides the prerequisite pathway a learner needs. [20,21] GOTAFE and Wodonga TAFE operate under NVITAFE's single legal framework from January 2026. Selected course enrolment transfers announced for November are administrative; the provider says listed training remains local. Test course access against actual delivery. [139,140]

A worker with an overseas qualification may need assessment, supervised practice, profession-specific English or bridging study rather than another introductory certificate. Other adults need basic literacy, numeracy or digital confidence before vocational training. Visa status and funding eligibility can affect access, so generic claims that a course is free for everybody are unhelpful. The relevant test is whether a resident can enter, finish and use the training.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a district training demand register with requested courses, available intakes, cancelled classes and reasons for cancellation. Distinguish classroom, online and blended delivery.
- Provide evening, weekend and flexible courses linked to transport and childcare. Maintain supported in-person options for learners who cannot study effectively online.
- Create a local skills recognition and referral service that explains professional registration, recognition of prior learning and bridging requirements in plain language. It cannot promise automatic recognition by a regulator.
- Develop paid placements, apprenticeships and work experience with employers. Include technician and laboratory pathways that support university expansion, food processing and health services.
- Fund English for work, adult literacy and introductory digital study alongside technical training. Track transitions into stable work rather than counting course enrolments alone.

**Responsibility.** Victorian training agencies and providers; employers; Commonwealth skills and employment services; relevant professional regulators.

**Public measure.** Report course demand met, completion, placement availability and employment sustained after six and twelve months. Publish eligibility and total costs before enrolment.

## Question for candidates

**Which locally requested courses will you help establish, when will the first class start, and how will you make them accessible to working parents and residents with overseas qualifications?**

**ISSUE 06**

# Hospital cancer and specialist care

**Investment must reduce avoidable travel and improve timely access to treatment.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

GV Health Foundation describes a federally supported first stage of the Integrated Cancer Centre and a further stage needed for fuller integration. Council reported a $95 million Coalition election commitment for Stage 2 on 7 October 2026. An election commitment is not the same as an approved government budget or an operational service. GV Health has separately announced $7.1 million in operating funding for a PET scanner, expected to commence in early 2027. [22-24] Victoria's Local Health Service Networks operate alongside continuing local service identities and leadership; a network should not be described automatically as a hospital merger. [130]

Residents need a complete treatment pathway: diagnosis, specialist consultation, surgery or treatment, recovery, transport and support at home. New buildings and equipment require staff, maintenance and operating budgets. For a family with limited English, a metropolitan referral can also mean unpaid time off work, accommodation, navigation problems and a risk that consent or discharge information is misunderstood.

## Actions to seek

- Seek a published funding and delivery plan for the remaining cancer services and cardiac catheterisation capacity, identifying which decisions are already funded and which remain requests.
- Publish local emergency department, elective surgery and specialist access results with consistent definitions, reporting periods and improvement plans. Use official performance data rather than anecdotes as a substitute for system measurement. [25]
- Include specialist recruitment, nursing, allied health, diagnostic services and interpreter capacity in every capital proposal. Provide retention measures that connect with housing and partner employment.
- Improve patient transport, accommodation assistance and supported referrals when treatment must occur elsewhere. Ensure translated discharge instructions and follow-up appointments are arranged.
- Protect access for northern towns through clear referral relationships between GV Health and NCN Health, with outreach where clinically appropriate. [29]

**Responsibility.** Victoria and public health services lead hospital delivery; Commonwealth co-funding and primary care arrangements also matter.

**Public measure.** Publish funded milestones, workforce vacancies, service start dates and patient access outcomes. Report travel avoided and equity of access, not only construction progress.

## Question for candidates

**What additional health service will actually be available to patients during your term, with which staff and operating budget, and how will we verify shorter waits or less travel?**

**ISSUE 07**

# Primary care dental mental health and addiction support

**A hospital expansion cannot replace accessible everyday care and early support.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Murray PHN's needs assessment identifies access and workforce challenges across its wider region, including responses for multicultural populations, homelessness and aged care. Its multicultural health report describes language, health literacy, trauma, stigma and cultural safety as barriers to care. These findings are regional evidence, not a measured prevalence estimate for every Shepparton neighbourhood. Commissioned mental health and alcohol and other drug services already operate. [26-28]

Local service planning should establish the actual availability of affordable GP appointments, dental care, psychologists, counselling, rehabilitation, child development services and after-hours care. A referral letter is not an outcome if a patient cannot afford the gap, travel to the service or navigate the booking process. Some residents need confidential support outside a small community's personal networks. Young people, carers and farmers may require different entry points.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a regularly updated access directory showing opening hours, costs, eligibility, interpreter arrangements, physical access and referral requirements. Keep a telephone and in-person alternative.
- Measure GP appointment availability, dental and psychological therapy waits, and failed referrals. Work with providers on affordable appointments, outreach and continuity of care.
- Support culturally safe mental health care, trauma-informed services, suicide prevention, addiction treatment and family support. Do not make a community's ethnicity a proxy for risk.
- Improve youth and perinatal mental health access and transitions between child and adult services. Include practical follow-up after a crisis or hospital discharge.
- Coordinate food security, housing and financial counselling referrals with clinical care, without making essential treatment conditional on completing complex paperwork.
- Include palliative and bereavement care in the access review. Goulburn Valley Hospice already provides local home-based care; assess timely referral, culturally appropriate support and geographic coverage. [129] Ask communities and providers whether faith, cultural or bereavement needs are unmet, including referral to appropriate funeral or cemetery services; do not presume a local shortage.

**Responsibility.** Commonwealth and PHN for much primary care; Victoria for public dental, mental health and other services; providers and community organisations for delivery.

**Public measure.** Within one year, publish baseline access measures and improvements, including affordability and successful referral completion. Suppress small identifying data cells.

## Question for candidates

**How will you help a resident obtain affordable care before their condition becomes an emergency, and what will change for people who cannot pay privately or travel?**

**ISSUE 08**

# Housing homelessness and rental quality

**More homes must include homes that local households can actually afford and use.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council's Homes for People strategy recognises the need for affordable housing and a more varied supply. A Victorian Government announcement in September 2026 describes further housing projects under way for older residents and young people. Beyond Housing provides existing local homelessness assistance. These initiatives should be recognised while assessing the remaining gap. [30-32] A June 2026 parliamentary contribution called for an audit of vacant public housing; it is not an audited vacancy count. Homes Victoria warns that one household can select several waiting-list areas. Location preferences must not be counted as unique district households. [142,141]

Demand is not adequately described by one waiting-list number. Public housing stock, applications, priority applications, people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping are different measures. The report does not combine them. Historical Ethnic Council evidence identifies barriers such as large-family rental needs, limited rental history and employment access; a current local assessment should test how far these barriers persist. [71]

## Actions to seek

- Publish a district housing needs assessment separating social housing, affordable rental, supported housing, accessible homes, larger family homes, key-worker accommodation and seasonal-worker accommodation.
- Set targets for additional completed and occupied homes, showing demolitions and disposals separately so gross construction is not mistaken for a net increase.
- Audit vacant public housing by reason and duration, separate repairable homes from redevelopment, publish repair-to-reletting times and fund a safe turnaround program. Report tenancy sustainment and exits from temporary accommodation, not just properties repaired.
- Provide accessible tenancy information, interpreting and independent advice on discrimination, repairs, overcrowding and rental applications. Assess problems without assuming every landlord or applicant behaves the same way.
- Link new housing to schools, transport, drainage, water, employment and health care. Avoid transferring infrastructure costs into unaffordable household bills without explaining the trade-offs.

**Responsibility.** Victoria for social housing and residential tenancy settings; Commonwealth housing investment; councils for planning and land; housing providers and developers for delivery.

**Public measure.** Publish net additions, completion dates, occupancy, repair performance and sustained tenancies. Audit current demand before quoting a headline waiting-list figure.

## Question for candidates

**How many additional affordable or social homes will your proposal deliver, for which household types, by what date, and how will you prevent the figures from counting homes that already existed?**

**ISSUE 09**

# Buses trains and everyday transport

**A transport network must connect people to the places they need to reach at the times they need to travel.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Shepparton Line Upgrade's third stage was completed in December 2025. V/Line introduced an expanded timetable on 23 August 2026. These improvements are real progress. On 9 October 2026, Jaclyn Symes MP announced a Shepparton and Mooroopna bus review, with consultation planned for early 2027. A review announcement does not establish which service changes will be funded. The following two pages examine rail duration, frequency and connections beyond the Melbourne corridor. [33,154,155,161]

Someone can live near a bus stop and still be unable to reach a hospital appointment, early factory shift, evening class or Sunday activity. A journey should be assessed from home to destination, including walking, waiting, transfers, return services and access with a wheelchair or pram. Rural residents need an explicit service offer, not an assumption that every household owns a reliable car.

## Actions to seek

- Deliver the announced bus review with residents, schools, hospitals, employers, students and disability groups. Include smaller towns, publish its scope and timetable, and identify funding for implementation.
- Test evening, weekend and shift-compatible services, dependable train connections and links between Shepparton, Mooroopna, Tatura and northern towns. Include affordable, accessible options for rural settlements.
- Make stops accessible, shaded, lit and connected by safe paths. Provide seating and readable information, with accessible alternatives to smartphone-only journey planning.
- Support community transport for people unable to use ordinary public transport, including medical trips. Publish eligibility, availability and booking arrangements.
- Review school buses, learner-driver access and road safety education together with the broader network. Provide practical language support for understanding ticketing and travel rules.

**Responsibility.** Victoria and transport operators lead public transport; councils manage many local paths and stops; community transport providers have a complementary role.

**Public measure.** Measure door-to-door journey times, missed connections, accessible stops, service reliability and the number of essential destinations reachable outside standard office hours.

## Question for candidates

**Which journeys that residents cannot reasonably make today will become possible under your transport plan, and when will the timetable change?**

**ISSUE 09 CONTINUED | RAIL JOURNEY TIMES**

# Faster trains and useful service frequency

**A train can run to its timetable and still take too long for a resident's appointment, class or working day.**

The timetable effective 23 August 2026 provides nine weekday trains in each direction and five each Saturday and Sunday. These totals exclude connecting coach legs. The timetable is therefore more frequent than earlier services; the remaining question is whether its timing and capacity meet residents' needs. [154,161]

## Problems to solve and their effects

- Lengthy journeys reduce the time available for work, study and medical appointments. A service can meet its published timetable while remaining too slow for a practical return trip. Assess the whole journey, including travel to the station and onward connections.
- Gaps between departures and fewer weekend trains restrict choice. A missed connection or an appointment that finishes late can mean a substantial wait, an extra fare or a need for accommodation. Test early, late and weekend travel in both directions.
- Poorly coordinated transfers can leave smaller-town residents dependent on lifts or taxis. Residents who need interpreting, mobility assistance or help booking a journey face additional barriers when connections change.

## What faster and more frequent must mean

- Publish a funded journey-time improvement plan identifying track, signalling, timetable and interchange constraints, the minutes each measure could save, and effects on intermediate towns. Distinguish a higher permitted speed from a shorter whole journey.
- Cost shorter gaps, more useful weekend and evening departures, and any express options. Test arrival and return times for medical care, study, work and events, rather than treating the daily service total as the only measure.
- Coordinate local buses and regional coaches with trains. State how passengers will be supported after a late arrival or missed last connection, including accessible replacement transport and information in community languages.

## Measure duration reliability and access separately

V/Line distinguishes services delivered from punctuality; its long-distance on-time threshold allows up to 10 minutes 59 seconds. Publish scheduled and actual journey durations, cancellations, replacement-coach days, crowding and missed connections alongside those percentages. Do not infer persistent lateness from a long scheduled journey alone. [160]

Responsibility. Victoria's transport department and V/Line lead service planning and rail operations; councils, coach operators and adjoining regions must coordinate access and interchanges.

## Question for candidates

**What funded changes will shorten journeys and reduce the gaps between trains, which services will improve first, and how will you prove that residents can complete useful return trips?**

**ISSUE 09 CONTINUED | A NETWORK BEYOND MELBOURNE**

# Connections northwards and across the region

**Shepparton should be a regional interchange that connects smaller towns with healthcare, education and jobs in several directions.**

Existing coaches already provide links beyond Shepparton. Their presence does not establish that frequency, transfers or return times are adequate. Assess the complete trip in both directions, including the time spent waiting and whether it can be completed on the required day.

| Corridor | Existing provision and the decision to test |
|---|---|
| North and north-east | The Shepparton timetable lists coaches through Tallygaroopna, Wunghnu, Numurkah, Katunga and Strathmerton towards Cobram and Tocumwal. Test daytime, evening and weekend access to Shepparton services. [154] |
| North-west | The Barmah timetable includes Zeerust, Bunbartha, Nathalia and Picola. Test usable appointments, shift times and connections with trains, rather than only a route appearing on a map. [156] |
| East and west | Murraylink links Shepparton with northern towns and Albury, and west towards Kyabram and Echuca. A separate Bendigo-Albury timetable includes Shepparton, Benalla and Wangaratta. Test through journeys, frequency and transfer protection. [157,158] |
| Interstate connections | The Sydney-Shepparton timetable combines coach and rail legs through the north-east network, with NSW TrainLink ticket conditions. Improve coordination and clear booking information; this is not a direct Shepparton-Sydney passenger train. [159] |

### Passenger rail beyond Shepparton

Commission a published feasibility assessment of extending or restoring passenger rail northwards, including options serving Numurkah and the Cobram-Tocumwal corridor. Compare rail options with more frequent, timed coaches and improved interchanges. Examine demand, infrastructure condition, freight interactions, crossings, station access, capital cost and ongoing staffing and maintenance. This is a proposal for assessment, not an assertion that a new passenger line is approved, funded or immediately usable.

The bus review should also test the needs of Tatura, Dookie, Toolamba and other smaller settlements, including demand-responsive connections where appropriate. Some destinations lie outside this electorate or Victoria, so the plan needs named council, state and operator partners. A local MP should explain how those agreements will be secured. [155]

### A measurable commitment

Publish a town-by-town access table covering the first and last service, days of operation, total journey time, transfer wait, accessible boarding and practical same-day return options. Cost immediate service improvements while longer-term rail options are assessed.

### Question for candidates

**Will you fund a transport plan that connects Shepparton northwards and across the region, including a transparent assessment of passenger rail beyond the city, and publish which towns will gain usable return services and by when?**

Source note. The current V/Line catalogue links to Bendigo-Albury and Sydney-Shepparton PDFs dated December 2024; these support route descriptions only. Confirm current departures and disruptions before travelling. [158,159]

**ISSUE 10**

# Potholes dangerous roads and safe walking

**Road repairs should prevent repeat failure and protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council describes an ongoing program of pothole repairs, resealing, rehabilitation and drainage work. Its mobility and road safety material records community concerns about road condition, footpaths and lighting. Moira's 2026 advocacy identifies further road and school-crossing priorities, including the Numurkah, Naring and Tocumwal Road intersection. These are different road networks and asset owners. [35,36,39]

A list of potholes is useful, but a durable response also asks why the pavement is failing: water, drainage, heavy vehicles, age or an inadequate repair method. A temporary patch may be necessary for immediate safety, while a scheduled rebuild resolves the underlying problem. Residents should not have to determine which agency owns a road before a dangerous defect is triaged.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a shared defect-reporting pathway with location, asset owner, risk category, inspection date, temporary treatment and permanent repair date. Provide telephone reporting as well as an app.
- Fund a multi-year maintenance and rehabilitation program, including shoulders, drainage, line marking, rural intersections and freight routes. Explain which repairs are deferred and the risk assessment. Identify priorities in northern towns separately; Moira's advocacy seeks $5 million for the Numurkah, Naring and Tocumwal Road intersection, which remains a funding request. [39]
- Identify high-risk school and health-service crossings, missing footpaths, inaccessible kerb ramps, poor lighting and cycling gaps. Consult older people and mobility-aid users on actual routes.
- Report repeat repairs at the same location and the proportion of maintenance that is preventive. Use road condition and crash-risk evidence to prioritise investment rather than political visibility.
- Coordinate roadworks, utility works and detours, with clear multilingual notices where disruption affects schools, businesses or emergency access.

**Responsibility.** Councils for local roads and many paths; Victoria for arterial roads and transport safety; Commonwealth contributions for eligible major projects.

**Public measure.** Publish response performance by risk, the maintenance backlog and repeat defect rates. Assess road safety over suitable periods rather than claiming that a single project caused a short-term change.

## Question for candidates

**Will you publish a funded repair program with deadlines and repeat-failure data, and identify who is responsible when a dangerous road is patched repeatedly without a lasting fix?**

**ISSUE 11**

# Another river crossing and the bypass

**The district needs a clear decision on additional crossing capacity and resilience.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The official bypass planning page describes a first stage from the Midland Highway at Mooroopna to the Goulburn Valley Highway north of Shepparton, including an additional Goulburn River crossing. It records a business case completed in December 2020. Council's current advocacy again seeks a new bridge. Completed planning is not evidence that construction funding or a construction contract exists. [3,37]

The public interest includes safer freight movement, more reliable access between communities and resilience when a crossing or approach road is disrupted. Different options may serve these aims differently. The route, flood behaviour, land impacts, cultural heritage, construction cost and maintenance liability need to be explained openly. A bridge that remains open while its connecting roads flood would not provide the expected whole-route resilience.

## Actions to seek

- Publish an updated business case and explain changes since 2020, including costs, traffic, freight, travel reliability, flood modelling and the options considered.
- Identify the decision authority, proposed route, environmental and cultural heritage processes, land requirements and consultation timetable. Include affected residents and Traditional Owners early.
- Separate funding for investigation, land, design and construction. Identify the share sought from each government and the remaining funding gap.
- Publish realistic milestones for approvals, procurement, construction and opening, including risks that could change the date or cost.
- Develop interim contingency arrangements for school travel, emergency access, freight and essential workers while the long-term project is assessed and delivered.

**Responsibility.** Victoria leads the road project, with potential Commonwealth co-funding and council coordination. Relevant environmental, water and heritage authorities retain their responsibilities.

**Public measure.** Measure progress against approved stages, publish cost changes and assess resilience across the entire route. Do not count a planning announcement as a completed bridge.

## Question for candidates

**Will you commit to a publicly costed and staged additional river crossing, and tell residents exactly which funding and approvals are still missing?**

**ISSUE 12**

# Flood protection drainage and emergency readiness

**Flood resilience needs infrastructure, understandable warnings and a workable evacuation plan for every household.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

SES publishes local flood guides for Greater Shepparton communities. NEMA lists Commonwealth funding of about $6.45 million for Numurkah's southern levees, with a matching jurisdiction contribution. Moira's earlier announcement described Council matching funds, while a later 2026 update seeks Victorian support for full delivery. The current funding split and delivery stages therefore need a reconciled public statement; the entire project should not be described as unfunded. [38,40,76,77]

Flood exposure, local stormwater ponding and failure of a drainage asset are related but different problems. Repairs should be based on current modelling and maintenance evidence. Protection for one locality must be examined for its consequences elsewhere. Residents also need to know residual risk: levees and drains reduce risk but cannot guarantee that flooding will never occur.

## Actions to seek

- Publish updated flood and drainage priorities, maintenance schedules and post-event lessons. Include culverts, pumps, blocked drains and areas where new development changes runoff.
- Provide a current Numurkah levee statement showing approved funding, design, construction milestones, maintenance ownership and residual risks. Continue planning for Nathalia, Barmah and other exposed communities.
- Co-design multilingual warnings, audio messages and trusted local communication channels. Test comprehension before emergencies and avoid relying solely on social media or one telephone network.
- Plan evacuation transport and accessible relief centres for people with disability, older residents, people without cars and households with children. Include medication, dietary needs, pets and privacy.
- Protect continuity of schools, health services, food supply and business operations. Explain recovery assistance and insurance-related referrals in accessible language.

**Responsibility.** Councils, SES, emergency services, catchment and water authorities, and state and federal funding bodies; residents and businesses also need supported preparation.

**Public measure.** Publish completion of priority drainage work, tested evacuation arrangements and community warning comprehension. Assess flood infrastructure against design standards and ongoing maintenance.

## Question for candidates

**If a major flood occurred again, what would be different for a family without English, a car or accessible accommodation, and who would make sure they were reached?**

**ISSUE 13**

# Fruit fly agricultural pests and biosecurity

**Pest management protects growers, food businesses, jobs and household gardens.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council reported $469,000 for the Goulburn Murray Valley fruit fly program in 2025 to 2026 and has sought continuing support at $1 million annually. Its later advocacy stresses management suited to regional conditions. Those figures relate to specific published funding periods and requests, not a verified current funding shortfall. Agriculture Victoria also publishes current Varroa management information and beekeeper support. [41-43]

Queensland fruit fly control requires coordinated action across commercial orchards, abandoned trees and backyard hosts. A short campaign can lose effectiveness if surveillance, hygiene and follow-up are not sustained. Pollinator health matters alongside pest suppression. Information should reach small growers and gardeners in the languages they use, with practical assistance for older residents or people unable to manage unwanted fruit trees.

## Actions to seek

- Seek a multi-year regional pest management agreement with a published current budget, funding end dates, responsibilities and measurable objectives.
- Support surveillance, trapping, timely alerts, orchard and backyard hygiene, accessible disposal advice and appropriately managed removal of unwanted host trees.
- Use bilingual field education and trusted community networks. Explain seasonal actions plainly and evaluate whether residents understood and adopted them.
- Include pollinator health, Varroa preparedness and emerging pest surveillance with Agriculture Victoria and industry specialists. Avoid presenting unverified local outbreaks as established facts.
- Publish program outcomes using trapping and surveillance data, participation and response times. Account for weather and monitoring intensity when comparing seasons.

**Responsibility.** Agriculture Victoria, councils, regional program partners, growers and industry organisations; Commonwealth responsibilities include border biosecurity.

**Public measure.** Report the funding horizon, monitoring coverage, verified detections and actions taken. Establish performance targets with specialists rather than promising complete pest eradication without evidence.

## Question for candidates

**Will you secure a sustained regional biosecurity program, and how will growers and residents know whether the money is reducing pest pressure rather than funding short campaigns?**

**ISSUE 14**

# Water farm viability and food industry workers

**A viable food region needs reliable water, productive businesses and fair working conditions.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Goulburn Murray Water publishes annual service charges, including fixed and usage-related components. These should not be confused with the separate price of buying water entitlements or allocations. Fair Work's horticulture guidance explains minimum pay protections, including a daily minimum guarantee for pieceworkers covered by the Horticulture Award. Specific entitlements depend on the applicable employment arrangements. [44,45]

Farms and food manufacturers face interconnected demands involving water, energy, freight, biosecurity, labour and market access. Residents should be able to discuss the local effects of water policy using evidence about production, jobs, communities and river health. Migrant and seasonal workers also need safe housing, transport and understandable employment information. Their contribution should be recognised without tolerating exploitation or assuming wrongdoing by an entire industry.

## Actions to seek

- Publish regional assessments of proposed water policy changes, including distribution of costs and benefits, environmental outcomes and cumulative effects on towns and food production.
- Support efficient irrigation, drainage, soil health, extension services and practical adaptation. Assess grant access for small and new growers as well as larger businesses.
- Coordinate electricity reliability, freight access, cold storage and processing infrastructure. Identify responsibilities and commercial contributions before promising public investment.
- Provide independent multilingual workplace information and referral to regulators. Support safe reporting of underpayment, unsafe work or inappropriate accommodation without relying on the employer as interpreter.
- Link seasonal workforce planning to lawful accommodation, transport, health access and opportunities for longer-term skills development. Include women workers and people isolated on rural properties.

**Responsibility.** State and Commonwealth governments, water authorities, regulators, employers and industry bodies; councils oversee relevant local planning and services.

**Public measure.** Track irrigation and infrastructure outcomes, workforce training and resolution of documented problems. Publish policy assumptions so the public can test claimed job or water savings.

## Question for candidates

**How will you protect the region's farming and food jobs while ensuring water decisions are transparent and the people doing the work have safe and fair conditions?**

**ISSUE 15**

# Council rates household bills and financial transparency

**Residents need a bill they can understand and a budget whose benefits they can assess.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Greater Shepparton's published 2026 to 2027 rate cap is 2.75 per cent, with no higher variation sought. The cap concerns the relevant average rates revenue, not a guarantee that every property bill rises by that percentage. Waste charges and the state Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund are separate. The adopted Council budget includes $55.2 million in capital works, with 75 per cent directed to renewal and maintenance. [46,47,49]

A ratepayer's concern may arise from valuation changes, the distribution of rates, waste services, a state levy or household income pressure. These require different remedies. A promise to freeze or cut rates should explain which expenditure, service, borrowing or grant assumption makes it possible. Lower revenue without an asset plan can shift a larger repair bill to later years.

## Actions to seek

- Provide a plain-language and translated bill guide separating general rates, any municipal charge, waste services and the state levy. Explain which authority sets each component.
- Publish comparable service costs, the asset renewal gap and the reasons major projects take priority. Identify whole-of-life costs, including staffing, maintenance and finance.
- Commission transparent reviews of avoidable expenditure and procurement efficiency, while showing the effect of any savings on services and asset condition.
- Make hardship arrangements, payment options and eligible concessions easier to access through assisted applications and language support. Council publishes concession and rebate information. [50]
- Explain how rating decisions affect farms, commercial property, residential owners and renters indirectly. Consult across both Greater Shepparton and the relevant parts of Moira rather than applying one council's figures to all residents.

**Responsibility.** Each council sets its budget and rating arrangements within Victorian settings; Victoria sets the rate-cap framework and state emergency services levy.

**Public measure.** Publish annual changes by bill component, household assistance uptake, renewal performance and independently verified savings. The test is value and affordability together.

## Question for candidates

**If you promise lower household charges, which component will fall, who has the power to change it, and what service or funding trade-off will you disclose?**

**ISSUE 16**

# Purple glass bins and better waste services

**The right question is whether the local waste system is necessary, efficient, affordable and convenient.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Greater Shepparton provides a 120 litre purple glass bin collected every four weeks. Separate glass recovery is part of Victoria's four-stream recycling approach. State guidance allows service design to reflect local circumstances; this does not create an automatic household right to opt out of the Council scheme. Container deposits cover eligible drink containers, while other glass jars and bottles still require appropriate recovery. [51-53]

The published residential purple-bin charge is $27.50 in 2026 to 2027, compared with $29 the previous year. For the listed standard combination of a 120 litre red bin, yellow, food-and-garden and purple services, annual charges total $379.50, compared with $396 previously. These are collection charges, not the entire rates bill, and do not describe Moira's service. Low usage, limited storage and collection cost remain legitimate concerns. [48]

## Actions to seek

- Publish tonnes collected, contamination, actual recovery destination, cost per household and cost per tonne for every waste stream. Explain environmental benefits and administrative costs.
- Assess shared glass bins, smaller or less frequent collection and accessible drop-off options for low-volume households where lawful and operationally suitable. Compare total cost and participation before making a change.
- Explain the interaction with the container deposit scheme and the handling of broken glass and non-eligible jars. Provide clear multilingual pictorial instructions.
- Review bulky waste, illegal dumping, rental and unit-complex arrangements, rural access and assistance for residents unable to move bins. Publicise existing nappy and incontinence-waste service options. [54]
- Consult on genuine alternatives and publish the decision, including consequences for other ratepayers. Removing a bin without a workable recovery alternative is not a complete service plan.

**Responsibility.** Council determines local service delivery within state requirements; Victoria sets recycling policy and standards; contractors deliver collection and processing.

**Public measure.** Publish service costs and recovery performance annually, then test alternatives against affordability, access and environmental outcomes.

## Question for candidates

**Will you commission an open value-for-money review of the purple bin and publish practical alternatives for households that produce very little glass?**

**ISSUE 17**

# Employment small business and local opportunity

**Economic success should create accessible, secure work and opportunities for residents to build businesses.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council's Economic Development Strategy 2025 to 2030 was endorsed in June 2025 and draws on research and consultation. Jobs and Skills Australia provides regional labour-market tools, but their geographic areas and sample limitations must be checked before presenting a statistic as a measure of this electorate. [55,56]

A low overall unemployment figure can coexist with underemployment, insecure hours, skills mismatch and difficulty obtaining a first local job. Someone qualified overseas may work below their skills because of registration requirements, English, networks or a lack of recognised local experience. Small businesses can face premises, insurance, finance, energy and regulatory costs. Migrant business owners may need practical navigation rather than another general promotional event.

## Actions to seek

- Develop a district workforce agreement connecting employers, training providers, schools and universities. Identify specific vacancies, entry requirements, local training and retention measures.
- Support paid work experience, mentoring and transparent recruitment for young people, residents with disability, First Nations applicants and migrants. Measure sustained employment and progression.
- Create accessible business advice on permits, food safety, commercial leasing, procurement and referrals for finance and tax expertise. Offer interpreting where needed and avoid duplicating existing services.
- Break appropriate public contracts into manageable opportunities, explain tender requirements and publish local procurement outcomes without weakening probity or value for money.
- Improve town-centre access, lighting, vacant-premises activation and reliable parking arrangements based on evidence from businesses, workers and customers. Link tourism and cultural activity to measurable local benefit.

**Responsibility.** Employers and businesses; councils for local economic development and relevant permits; Victoria and Commonwealth agencies for employment and industry support.

**Public measure.** Track employment retained at six and twelve months, apprentices completing, business survival and local procurement. Avoid treating attendance at a workshop as proof of a job created.

## Question for candidates

**What will you do to turn local skills and qualifications into sustainable employment, and what evidence will show that your program helped people who currently miss out?**

**ISSUE 18**

# Community safety family violence and fair treatment

**Residents need protection, prevention and confidence that they can report harm safely.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council's Empowering Communities material records concerns including family violence, racism, youth engagement, property damage and safety in public places. Its numerical crime comparisons are historical and should not be presented as 2026 rates. The Orange Door provides family violence and child wellbeing support, with translated information and inclusive access. Council's current implementation plan also identifies public-space safety and family violence prevention. [57-59]

A useful safety agenda distinguishes different offences and harms rather than treating all problems as one crime trend. Victims need timely assistance, while prevention requires housing stability, school engagement, addiction support and safe public places. Racism can discourage reporting and participation. No ethnic or religious community should be treated as collectively responsible for the actions of individuals.

## Actions to seek

- Publish current local safety indicators using consistent categories, population measures and time periods. Combine crime data with victim support and community experience, clearly distinguishing recorded incidents from prevalence. Include evidence-led responses to illicit tobacco and organised crime, with lawful-business protection and clear regulator roles. Council does not enforce the state tobacco licensing scheme. [132]
- Strengthen family violence response, emergency accommodation, specialist counselling, independent interpreting and legal navigation. Provide safe access for residents concerned about privacy or unfamiliar systems.
- Improve lighting, passive surveillance, safe walking routes and appropriate policing based on local evidence. Include rural towns and after-hours response, not only central Shepparton.
- Fund sustained youth engagement, school re-entry, mental health and addiction services alongside enforcement. Evaluate prevention programs rather than assuming a one-off event changes outcomes.
- Establish accessible reporting and follow-up for racism and discrimination, with clear referral to the appropriate body. Publish de-identified outcomes and protect complainants from retaliation.

**Responsibility.** Victoria for policing, justice and specialist services; councils for public spaces and prevention partnerships; Commonwealth and local agencies have related responsibilities.

**Public measure.** Report response and referral completion, access to safe accommodation, repeat harm and community trust. Protect privacy and avoid publishing identifiable small-group information.

## Question for candidates

**How will you improve safety while ensuring victims can obtain confidential help and no community is unfairly blamed or excluded from protection?**

**ISSUE 19**

# Young people sport recreation and belonging

**Young people need affordable places to learn, participate and spend time safely.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council's state election package includes a proposed Sports Events Centre, with a funding request shared across governments and Council. The wider Council Plan also addresses public-space safety and inclusion. Large facilities are only part of participation: transport, fees, equipment, opening hours and the welcome people receive also matter. [59,72]

A family can live close to a sports ground but be unable to afford registration, reach training after work or find a suitable program. Some young people prefer arts, technology, music or informal recreation to organised sport. Swimming and water-safety learning deserve attention in a region with rivers and irrigation infrastructure. Young people should help shape services rather than appear only as a problem to be managed.

## Actions to seek

- Map access to youth spaces, libraries, arts, sport and informal recreation across the district, including smaller towns. Publish opening hours and affordable transport connections. Include affordable creative activities, social isolation, community volunteering and access for people outside organised clubs.
- Support fee and equipment assistance, inclusive coaching, disability access and culturally welcoming programs. Offer practical options for girls and women where cost, privacy or scheduling prevents participation.
- Expand access to swimming and water-safety education through suitable local providers. Assess cost, travel and communication barriers without assuming prior familiarity with Australian waterways.
- Create structured youth participation in local decisions, with paid or supported involvement where appropriate. Include students outside mainstream education and young people who work or care for family.
- For major facilities, publish expected community use, charges, maintenance costs and accessible public hours, alongside event and tourism benefits.

**Responsibility.** Councils and community clubs; state sport, education and youth agencies; operators and funding partners.

**Public measure.** Track repeat participation, affordability, inclusion and local community access. Separate visitor-event benefits from routine access for residents.

## Question for candidates

**How will your recreation spending reach young people whose families cannot afford fees or transport, and how much access will residents receive from any major new facility?**

**ISSUE 20**

# Disability ageing carers and access to daily life

**Accessibility should connect the home, street, transport and destination as one usable journey.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council has an existing access and inclusion plan and has consulted on a 2026 to 2030 successor. The consultation page describes development and anticipated adoption; that should not be confused with proof that every action has been funded or completed. Murray PHN also identifies aged-care primary-care access challenges in parts of its region. [26,60,61] The Commonwealth's Support at Home replaced Home Care Packages in November 2025. Assessment, funding availability, service supply and fees are separate steps; a state candidate should explain their coordination role. [143]

A ramp at a public building is not enough if the adjoining footpath is broken or no suitable transport arrives. Older residents and people with disability may face fragmented assessment, services and paperwork. A person with limited English can face additional difficulty navigating aged care or disability systems. Carers need respite and practical support, and should not be assumed to be permanently available. The review should also include dementia support, culturally appropriate aged care, respite, accessible toilets and changing facilities, and continuity between hospital and home. These are proposed audit topics, not measured local shortage estimates.

## Actions to seek

- Audit complete accessible routes to health services, shops, schools, community buildings and transport. Publish a funded program for footpaths, kerb ramps, seating, accessible toilets and crossings.
- Provide independent navigation and interpreting for disability and aged-care services, including people whose needs are not met through a particular funding program.
- Improve local support workers, allied health, modifications, respite and transport. Track whether approved NDIS or aged-care funding can actually purchase services; nominate a coordinator for hospital discharge, changed eligibility and transitions between systems.
- Include older migrants, people with cognitive or sensory disability and carers. Test dementia, meals, cultural and religious needs, respite and end-of-life support. Offer Auslan, Easy Read and audio, with safe supported decision-making.
- Test emergency plans for people using powered equipment, mobility aids or regular medication. Plan backup electricity, transport and accessible relief accommodation with the person's consent.

**Responsibility.** Commonwealth programs including aged care and the NDIS; Victoria for health and relevant services; councils for public assets and access; providers for delivery.

**Public measure.** Publish the inaccessible-route backlog, resolved barriers, service waiting times and carer feedback. Do not define success only as the existence of an access plan.

## Question for candidates

**Which everyday barriers will be removed in your first year so a resident using a wheelchair, an older person or a carer can participate independently?**

**ISSUE 21**

# First Nations priorities and self determination

**Aboriginal priorities require Aboriginal leadership and should not be treated as a subset of migrant settlement.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Munarra describes its work in First Nations education, professional learning and career pathways on Yorta Yorta Country. The University of Melbourne records the opening of the Indigenous-led Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence in 2024. These are existing regional strengths on which future commitments should build. [62,63] Statewide Treaty commenced in December 2025 and Gellung Warl in May 2026. The representative body does not have a veto over legislation. Candidates should explain their position on implementation and the practical local outcomes they seek. [131]

A district-wide report should respect Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as decision-makers about their own priorities. Health, housing, education, employment, justice and cultural safety intersect, but a general community consultation cannot substitute for a specific, properly supported process with Aboriginal people. A project benefiting the wider public may also affect Country, cultural heritage and access to waterways.

## Actions to seek

- Agree priorities directly with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, including appropriate governance, resources, data use and evaluation.
- Support stable service funding and clear referral relationships between Aboriginal-controlled and mainstream health, education, housing and family services.
- Build education and employment pathways around existing local leadership and institutions. Assess retention, completion, career progression and the experience of students and workers.
- Include cultural heritage and Country in early infrastructure planning, including river crossings, development, water and environmental works. Do not leave engagement until the preferred design is fixed.
- Require public services to respond to documented racism and culturally unsafe practice. Publish actions and outcomes in forms agreed with the communities concerned.

**Responsibility.** Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations lead their priorities; governments and public agencies are accountable for their commitments and service responsibilities.

**Public measure.** Use measures agreed by Aboriginal partners, including community-defined outcomes and control over sensitive information. Participation in a meeting is not evidence of consent to a project.

## Question for candidates

**How will Aboriginal people have real authority over decisions affecting their communities and Country, and what funding will support that authority?**

**ISSUE 22**

# Energy costs heat and the local environment

**Environmental action should improve household comfort, public health and the resilience of local businesses.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Council has adopted a Climate Emergency Action Plan and an emissions target for its own operations. Its climate information also describes urban forestry and energy initiatives. These provide an existing framework; a published action is not necessarily a completed outcome. [64,65]

Residents experience environmental problems through hot homes, high bills, insufficient shade, poor drainage, smoke, waste or loss of valued public space. Renters and low-income households may have less ability to install efficient equipment or insulation. Rural businesses face different energy and reliability needs from an urban household. Local environmental priorities should be assessed using measured conditions rather than assuming every reported nuisance has the same cause.

## Actions to seek

- Identify the least shaded and hottest essential walking routes, bus stops and public spaces. Fund trees, shade, drinking water and accessible cool places, including their long-term maintenance.
- Provide practical energy-efficiency advice, assistance with eligible schemes and suitable upgrades for low-income households, renters and community facilities. Assess bill savings rather than only installations.
- Coordinate power reliability and backup arrangements for health, aged care, refrigeration, communications and people using essential equipment.
- Improve transparent responses to reported odour, dust, smoke, noise, water quality and illegal dumping, with clear referral to Council, EPA or another responsible body.
- Protect waterways and biodiversity while planning growth. Publish the local costs and benefits of proposed energy infrastructure, including landholder consultation and any community benefits.

**Responsibility.** State energy and environmental agencies, network businesses, councils, water and catchment authorities, landlords and property owners; Commonwealth programs may assist.

**Public measure.** Track shade and tree survival, household benefits, complaint resolution and continuity of critical services. Explain funding and maintenance for each intervention.

## Question for candidates

**What practical changes will reduce heat exposure and energy costs for residents who cannot afford upgrades, and how will you demonstrate the benefit?**

**ISSUE 23**

# Township growth digital access and essential infrastructure

**Smaller towns and rural households need a specific service plan within the electorate.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The VEC district map includes northern communities such as Numurkah, Nathalia, Katunga, Strathmerton, Picola and Barmah, as well as Shepparton, Mooroopna, Tatura and other localities. Moira's budget consultation material identifies proposed work on Numurkah flood protection and roads, and Nathalia paths, drainage and floodplain planning. Consultation proposals must be distinguished from completed projects. [1,68,69]

New housing and business development create demand for water, sewerage, stormwater systems, roads, childcare and community facilities. Existing rural settlements can have different constraints from growth areas. Reliable mobile and internet access also affects education, business, telehealth and emergency information. The Commonwealth provides connectivity mapping and black-spot programs, but actual local gaps should be confirmed through address-level evidence and resident testing. [66,67]

## Actions to seek

- Publish a township-by-township service and infrastructure schedule covering roads, drainage, utilities, health access, transport, schools, childcare and public amenities.
- Coordinate development approvals with infrastructure capacity, flood risk and the costs of maintaining new assets. Explain the contributions expected from developers, service authorities and governments.
- Map mobile and broadband gaps using both published coverage and field testing. Prioritise emergency routes, farms, schools and households without a workable connection.
- Provide digital assistance, affordable public internet and non-digital ways to access essential services. Include scam awareness and safe help with online applications.
- Maintain local libraries, public toilets, community buildings, recreation and opportunities for residents to meet decision-makers. Publish a service offer for small towns rather than requiring every activity to occur in Shepparton.

**Responsibility.** Both councils, state agencies, water and utility providers, Commonwealth communications programs and network operators.

**Public measure.** Publish project status by town and measure actual service availability. Confirm funded dates rather than repeating an old consultation timetable.

## Question for candidates

**What will your first-term plan deliver for the smaller towns in this electorate, and how will residents see that funding is distributed fairly beyond the main city?**

**ISSUE 24**

# Multicultural participation and accountable representation

**Communities need influence over ordinary decisions, not only invitations to celebrations.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The 2021 Census recorded 17.6 per cent of Greater Shepparton households using a language other than English at home. Council publishes information in several community languages and offers multilingual access. These are important foundations, but neither a translation nor an event invitation proves that residents have shaped a decision. The Census figure relates to households in the municipality, not all people in the state electorate. [2,4,70]

Multicultural communities are diverse in language, faith, income, age, migration history and political opinion. Established migrants, newly arrived refugees, international students and seasonal workers may need different forms of access. Women, young people and smaller language groups can be missed when institutions consult only a few well-known representatives. Residents who cannot vote still use public services and contribute to the region.

## Actions to seek

- Establish regular, accessible meetings between the elected member and a broad range of residents, including the Multicultural Roundtable and other community organisations without granting any one group exclusive representation.
- Publish consultation materials early, offer interpreting, suitable meeting times, childcare or transport assistance where needed, and compensate substantial community expertise appropriately.
- Report what residents proposed, what changed, what was declined and why. Maintain a public commitments register and an accessible complaints and feedback pathway.
- Provide understandable civic and service information, including the different roles of governments. Keep election information non-partisan and refer enrolment and voting questions to the VEC.
- Require candidates to explain how they would respond if party policy conflicted with the district’s interests. Independents should explain how they would manage agreements, competing interests and legislative negotiations.
- Assess access to affordable shared meeting, faith, cultural and community spaces using published, consistent criteria. Include smaller groups, people with disability and residents outside central Shepparton.

**Responsibility.** The elected state member, parties and independents; councils and service agencies for their own consultation and public accountability.

**Public measure.** Report whose perspectives were included, response times and changes made. Avoid presenting an invitation list as evidence that all communities endorsed a decision.

## Question for candidates

**If your party or a political agreement supports a decision that harms this district, what specific action would you take, and would you publish your position and reasons before the decision?**

**ISSUE 25**

# Food security household costs and practical assistance

**Residents should be able to meet essential costs without losing dignity or access to ordinary community life.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Shepparton Foodshare describes a local food-security network supplying nutritious and culturally appropriate food through registered agencies. It reports growing demand and supports schools, emergency relief organisations and community programs. Individuals are directed to participating agencies rather than collecting directly from its distribution hub. This is evidence of an established response and continuing demand, not a district-wide poverty count. [73]

Rent, food, utilities, transport, school expenses and health costs interact. A small increase in several bills can overwhelm a household even when each increase appears modest in isolation. People in paid work, pensioners, carers and residents on income support can all need help. Language barriers, shame, digital exclusion and unfamiliar eligibility rules may prevent access to available assistance.

## Actions to seek

- Maintain an accessible local assistance directory with current referral arrangements, opening hours, eligibility, interpreting and transport options. Test whether people can actually obtain help.
- Support dependable food-relief logistics and community meal programs, including nutritious and culturally suitable food. Provide stable coordination without treating charity as a replacement for adequate income or affordable services.
- Improve access to independent financial counselling, eligible concessions and hardship assistance. Offer supported applications through trusted services and maintain confidentiality.
- Reduce avoidable participation costs through school assistance, accessible public transport, affordable recreation and practical digital access. Explain how each proposal reaches households experiencing hardship.
- Advocate to the correct level of government about income support, housing assistance and service affordability. A state candidate should distinguish their own powers from matters requiring Commonwealth action.

**Responsibility.** Commonwealth for income support settings; Victoria, councils, utilities and service providers for relevant charges and assistance; community organisations for local support.

**Public measure.** Track unmet requests, successful referrals and access to assistance, with privacy protected. Do not use the volume of food distributed as the sole measure of whether insecurity is improving.

## Question for candidates

**What will reduce the essential weekly costs of a struggling household, and how will people who cannot complete an English online form receive the same assistance as everyone else?**

**ISSUE 26**

# Ambulance response and travel for treatment

**Emergency response and the cost of reaching specialist care deserve separate, measurable commitments.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Ambulance Victoria's April to June 2026 table records 74.0 per cent of Code 1 responses within 15 minutes in Greater Shepparton, with an average of 13 minutes 55 seconds. For Moira the figures were 51.3 per cent and 19 minutes 29 seconds. These are whole-municipality figures, not results for this electorate or each town. Victoria's Patient Transport Assistance Scheme provides eligible travel and accommodation subsidies; it does not necessarily cover the whole cost. [78,79]

A municipal average can conceal long waits in rural places. Response time is also only one part of care: dispatch, ambulance availability, hospital transfer and access to a suitable destination matter. A family travelling repeatedly to Melbourne may face accommodation, fuel, lost earnings, childcare and interpreter coordination costs. These barriers should be assessed alongside local specialist expansion, rather than assuming a referral means treatment is accessible.

## Actions to seek

- Publish response performance for rural and urban service areas over comparable periods, including long waits, staffing gaps and hospital transfer delays. Explain any limits on small-area data.
- Seek a funded workforce and fleet plan covering paramedic retention, surge demand and rural coverage. Identify what additional capacity would change for towns north of Shepparton.
- Audit patient travel claims, processing times and unavoidable out-of-pocket costs. Provide help in community languages and test whether upfront costs cause missed treatment.
- Coordinate appointment times, community transport and accommodation for repeated treatment. Include carers, accessible vehicles and people who cannot safely travel alone.

**Responsibility.** Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, hospitals and the patient travel scheme; community transport providers and Commonwealth-funded services where relevant.

**Public measure.** Quarterly response and transfer indicators; patient travel processing time; travel-related cancellations; patient costs reported with consent.

## Question for candidates

**What will you fund to reduce long ambulance waits and treatment travel costs in this district, and how will residents see whether your intervention worked?**

**ISSUE 27**

# Women’s health maternity and early parenting

**Care should be accessible through pregnancy, recovery, parenting and other stages of women’s lives.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

GV Health already provides women’s health services. It reports that new clinic facilities at Shepparton Hospital are expected in February 2027. A February 2026 government announcement marked construction starting on the Shepparton Early Parenting Centre, describing ten overnight units and four day-stay places. Construction and an expected completion date are not proof that a service is open, fully staffed or meeting demand. [80,81]

Families need continuity between maternity services, maternal and child health, general practice and specialist support. Potential barriers to examine include transport, appointment delays, trauma, limited English, lack of childcare and difficulty obtaining a clinician or interpreter suitable for sensitive care. Fathers and other carers also need practical support. The relevant test is timely help, including for rural families, rather than counting only buildings or consultations.

## Actions to seek

- Publish the opening, staffing and referral timetable for the new facilities, together with service hours, eligibility, capacity and an interim pathway while families wait.
- Audit access to antenatal and postnatal care, pelvic health, menopause care, sexual and reproductive health, and perinatal mental health. Use patient feedback without exposing sensitive histories.
- Make confidential interpreting and longer appointments available for complex care. Provide clear information about consent, fees and how to request a suitable practitioner.
- Link early parenting support to maternal and child health, family violence assistance, home visiting and rural outreach. Assess whether shift-working families can use the service.

**Responsibility.** Victorian health agencies, GV Health and maternal and child health providers; Commonwealth primary-care and maternity arrangements; councils and community partners.

**Public measure.** Opening milestones, staffed places, referral-to-appointment waits, repeat travel and patient-reported continuity of care.

## Question for candidates

**When will the promised local services be fully staffed, and what will you do for women and families whose need cannot wait until the new facilities open?**

**ISSUE 28**

# Child development and the NDIS transition

**Families should not lose practical support while governments change the system around them.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The published Thriving Kids roadmap places the start of allied health and developmental checks in Greater Shepparton and Moira between July and September 2027. The wider program begins in stages and is intended to be fully available by January 2028. It concerns young children with developmental delay or autism and low to moderate support needs. Government information says NDIS access changes will not start before January 2028; individual assessment and transition arrangements still matter. Local parent support already includes the Strengthening Parent Support Program. [82,83,84]

A program announcement is not an appointment for a child waiting now. Families need a clear route between maternal and child health, kindergarten, school, allied health and disability services. Developmental assessment must distinguish language learning, disrupted education and disability appropriately. Neither bilingualism nor cultural difference should be treated as a diagnosis. Children with greater needs require clarity about ongoing specialist and NDIS pathways.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a local transition plan with a named coordinator, interim support, referral rules and an escalation route when a child falls between systems.
- Report current waits for assessment, speech pathology, occupational therapy and other developmental supports. Fund the workforce needed for the announced rollout rather than relying on relabelling existing appointments.
- Provide independent navigation in relevant languages, supported consent and clear explanations of eligibility and review rights. Include families in smaller towns and parents with disability.
- Track each referral to actual support, with consent. Ensure school inclusion assistance and family support are considered while diagnostic or funding decisions are pending.

**Responsibility.** Victorian education and health agencies; the Commonwealth and NDIA for NDIS rules; local providers and schools for delivery.

**Public measure.** Time from first concern to assessment and support; uncompleted referrals; workforce vacancies; continuity through program changes.

## Question for candidates

**What funded support will a Shepparton family receive before the local 2027 rollout, and who will resolve a case where neither the state service nor the NDIS accepts responsibility?**

**ISSUE 29**

# Heritage languages and a paid bicultural workforce

**English access and the maintenance of family languages can strengthen participation together.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria funds accredited community language schools. The Victorian School of Languages lists Shepparton classes in Albanian, Arabic, Mandarin, Hindi, Malayalam, Persian, Punjabi and Sinhala; levels and enrolment should be checked directly. This is established provision, not evidence that every local language is covered. ECCV's 2026 platform also calls for stronger community language and bicultural workforce support. That is an advocacy position, not a survey finding for this district. [85,86,87]

Language maintenance can support family communication, learning and cultural participation. A small community may lack teachers, affordable premises or enough students for a conventional class. Bicultural workers can help services understand barriers and build trust, but should not be asked to perform qualified interpreting, clinical or legal work beyond their role. Community organisations also need paid administrative capacity rather than repeated reliance on volunteers.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a local language-learning map covering classes, levels, fees, transport, waiting lists and unmet demand. Offer proportionate options for smaller language groups without assuming identical demand.
- Support shared teaching spaces, teacher development, learning resources and transparent small-grant access. Include remote or shared classes where a local class is not yet viable.
- Create paid bicultural roles with defined duties, qualifications, supervision, fair employment conditions and progression into relevant professions.
- Keep interpreting accreditation separate from bicultural engagement. Pay community contributors for substantial service-design and training work, with accessible and transparent selection.

**Responsibility.** Victorian education and multicultural agencies, schools, VSL and community language providers; service employers and training institutions.

**Public measure.** Languages and levels available, sustained enrolment, unmet requests, teacher retention and paid bicultural positions with clear role descriptions.

## Question for candidates

**Will you support sustainable language education and paid bicultural careers, including for smaller communities, and what local funding or positions will that commitment produce?**

**ISSUE 30**

# Racism religious freedom and equal treatment

**Residents should be able to practise their faith, express their identity and seek services without discrimination.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria already has an Anti Racism Strategy for 2024 to 2029. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission describes expanded civil anti-vilification protections commencing in April 2026, including protections relating to race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. A statewide framework must be judged by access to help and fair local implementation. [88,89]

Potential barriers include fear of reporting, uncertainty about the responsible agency, lack of interpreters and concern about retaliation. This report does not estimate local hate incidents without reliable data. Religious freedom and equal treatment should be protected across communities, including people with no religion. Ordinary disagreement is not automatically unlawful conduct; complaints need fair assessment and due process rather than assumptions based on identity.

## Actions to seek

- Provide a clear local reporting and referral pathway, with independent advice, interpreting and support for people experiencing discrimination or threats.
- Require public services to record and address substantiated access problems, with privacy safeguards and a transparent complaints review process.
- Apply fair criteria to the safety and accessibility of places of worship, shared community facilities and events. Explain planning, funding and security decisions consistently.
- Fund practical prevention in schools, workplaces and community settings, and evaluate whether behaviour and confidence in reporting improve. Include First Nations and LGBTIQA+ residents and people with disability.

**Responsibility.** Victorian government, the human rights commission, police where conduct is criminal, public services and councils within their powers.

**Public measure.** Access to advice, resolution time, complainant experience and implementation of remedies; interpret changes in reports carefully, as increased trust can increase reporting.

## Question for candidates

**How will you ensure equal protection and fair treatment for every community, including when the people affected are unpopular with some of your supporters?**

**ISSUE 31**

# Refugee health and continuity of settlement support

**A person should not be referred repeatedly between services because no organisation can explain who will help.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Regional Settlement Support Fund lists the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District among supported organisations. Victoria also publishes health access arrangements for refugees and people seeking asylum, including specified public services for eligible asylum seekers without Medicare. These arrangements should not be generalised to every temporary visa holder or every private service. Existing support is a foundation to strengthen, not evidence that settlement help is absent. [90,91]

Practical issues include trauma-informed care, dental treatment, family separation, housing, English learning, employment and understanding unfamiliar institutions. Short project grants can make continuity difficult; local funding stability should be checked against contracts and demand rather than assumed. A state MP cannot grant a visa or change Commonwealth migration rules, but can pursue accessible state services and effective referrals.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a local service map explaining eligibility, costs, languages, referral pathways and support when a person lacks Medicare. Keep it updated when contracts or rules change.
- Seek stable funding for effective settlement and refugee-health services, with transparent outcomes and an agreed process for emerging needs and smaller communities.
- Coordinate health, housing, schools, employment and legal referrals through consent-based case coordination. Avoid requiring families to retell traumatic experiences unnecessarily.
- Provide bicultural outreach and qualified interpreters without asking community volunteers to act as immigration advisers or clinicians. Include rural outreach and clear complaints routes.

**Responsibility.** Victoria for eligible public health and funded settlement services; Commonwealth agencies for migration and federal settlement programs; local providers and councils.

**Public measure.** Referral completion, continuity of case support, eligible people wrongly turned away, language access and publicly explained funding expiry dates.

## Question for candidates

**What will you do when an eligible resident is refused essential support because staff misunderstand their visa or Medicare status, and how will you secure continuity for effective local services?**

**ISSUE 32**

# Child safeguarding and support for care leavers

**Child safety requires prevention, trusted reporting and stable support into adulthood.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria announced October 2026 Working with Children Check changes involving mandatory training and WWCC Connect notifications. A check is one safeguard, not proof that an organisation is safe. Home Stretch offers eligible care leavers support to age 21, while Better Futures begins transition planning before adulthood. These programs already exist; the local question is whether young people receive timely, suitable help. [92,93,94]

Children need safe early learning, schools, sport, faith settings and out-of-home care. Families must understand reporting processes and their rights without relying on children to interpret sensitive discussions. Poverty, cultural difference or limited English should not be treated as proof of neglect. Where intervention is needed, safety, fair assessment, kinship relationships and continuity of education all matter.

## Actions to seek

- Audit how funded local organisations implement child-safe practice, supervision, complaint handling and staff training, rather than checking only whether a clearance number exists.
- Provide independent interpreting and understandable information for children and parents in child protection processes, with qualified advocacy and culturally appropriate assessment.
- Plan stable housing, education, employment, health and trusted adult support well before a young person leaves care. Check actual access to Home Stretch and Better Futures.
- Support Aboriginal community-controlled responses and safe family or kinship connections. Publish service capacity and unmet need without identifying children or families.

**Responsibility.** Victorian child protection, education and child-safety regulators; funded care providers; community organisations and Commonwealth services where relevant.

**Public measure.** Timeliness of safety responses, placement and school stability, care-leaver housing and support continuity, and young people’s experience of being heard.

## Question for candidates

**What will you change locally so a child’s safety concern is heard early and a young person leaving care is not left without stable housing, education or a trusted support person?**

**ISSUE 33**

# Youth justice prevention and support for victims

**Safer communities need effective responses to offending and practical ways to prevent it recurring.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria changed bail settings in 2026. The government's announcement describes its intended safety benefits; those claims require evaluation against outcomes. The Sentencing Advisory Council also explains the youth justice custodial order operating from September 2026. A discussion of these changes should use current rules rather than repeat superseded descriptions of the system. [95,96]

Residents affected by crime need timely information, safety planning and support. Young people at risk of repeated offending may also need sustained education, housing, family support, addiction treatment and lawful supervision. No ethnic or religious identity should be treated as evidence of criminality. Local policy should be tested against repeat victimisation, reoffending and safety, not only arrest or detention counts.

## Actions to seek

- Ask for a district prevention plan linking schools, youth services, police, health and housing, with clear responsibility for following up disengaged young people.
- Publish access and waiting times for victim assistance, youth legal advice, diversion and treatment, while protecting identities and recognising eligibility limits.
- Evaluate changes to bail and custody using comparable data on safety, reoffending and court outcomes. Explain both intended benefits and unintended effects.
- Provide appropriate interpreting, independent advice and family engagement. Support return to education, work and stable accommodation after custody or other justice involvement.

**Responsibility.** Victorian justice, police, education, health and housing agencies; courts make individual decisions independently; community providers deliver funded support.

**Public measure.** Repeat victimisation and reoffending over defined periods; timely victim support; education and housing continuity; completion of meaningful interventions.

## Question for candidates

**What evidence would persuade you that a justice policy is failing locally, and would you change your position if it increased costs or detention without improving community safety?**

**ISSUE 34**

# Gambling losses and accessible help

**Gambling harm deserves attention alongside other pressures on household wellbeing and local services.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The gambling regulator's October 2026 workbook records $46,463,778.43 in gaming machine expenditure at Greater Shepparton venues for 2025 to 2026: approximately $46.46 million in player losses. This is a venue-based municipal total. It is not the amount lost exclusively by local residents, is not a Shepparton District total and excludes online and other forms of gambling. Victoria publishes prevention and treatment pathways, including language support. [97,98]

The figure does not show which communities experienced harm. It would be wrong to attribute a disproportionate share to multicultural residents without evidence. Potential effects to investigate include debt, housing stress, family conflict and reduced spending on essentials. Confidential support should be accessible before a crisis, and people affected by someone else's gambling also need a route to help.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a local harm-prevention plan linking health, financial counselling, family support and community organisations. Measure access and outcomes rather than only attendance at awareness events.
- Provide confidential interpreting, outreach and culturally appropriate information without labelling any community as a gambling problem.
- Ask candidates to explain their position on gaming machine regulation, venue applications, harm-minimisation measures and the limits of state power over online gambling.
- Scrutinise public and community reliance on gambling-related revenue. Where funding would change, identify an alternative so essential services and clubs are not left with an unexplained gap.

**Responsibility.** Victoria and its gambling regulator for state-regulated gambling; councils within planning and advocacy roles; Commonwealth agencies for relevant online regulation.

**Public measure.** Comparable venue expenditure trends, access to counselling, referrals completed and reported harm reduction; do not equate lower expenditure alone with resolved harm.

## Question for candidates

**What specific gambling-harm measure will you support, and how will you protect people seeking help while explaining any consequences for venue or community funding?**

**ISSUE 35**

# Labour hire exploitation and workplace safety

**Food production and other local industries should offer fair, lawful and safe work.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria's Labour Hire Authority publishes responsibilities for horticultural hosts and providers, including changes from October 2026, and translated information for workers. WorkSafe explains psychological health duties under regulations effective from December 2025. These frameworks are relevant to local seasonal and other employment, but their existence does not establish a rate of noncompliance in this district. [99,100,101]

Workers may depend on the same intermediary for a job, accommodation and transport, making it difficult to challenge unfair treatment. Concerns to test include unpaid wages, unlawful deductions, unsafe housing, heat exposure, machinery risks, bullying and retaliation. These are possible risks to investigate, not allegations against named local employers. Fair employers also benefit when enforcement prevents competitors gaining an advantage through unlawful practices.

## Actions to seek

- Coordinate targeted, evidence-led inspections and worker outreach across labour hire, employment, safety and accommodation regulators. Publish results with appropriate procedural fairness.
- Offer confidential advice in relevant languages about pay records, deductions, licensed providers, injury reporting and complaint options. Explain which regulator can address each problem.
- Support safe transport, heat planning, training and practical access to drinking water and suitable amenities. Include small farms and businesses in clear compliance guidance.
- Provide independent help after injury or exploitation, including navigation of compensation and legal services. Test whether fear of losing work or housing prevents reporting.

**Responsibility.** Labour Hire Authority and WorkSafe for Victorian regulation; Fair Work agencies for national employment rules; councils and relevant housing authorities for accommodation.

**Public measure.** Complaints resolved, wages recovered where reported by regulators, safety improvements, access to independent advice and action against substantiated repeat breaches.

## Question for candidates

**How will you protect a worker who depends on the employer for income, housing and transport, while ensuring honest local businesses compete on fair terms?**

**ISSUE 36**

# Driver licensing and transport affordability

**The ability to reach work, study and care should not depend on having money for a second car.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

VicRoads sets overseas licence conversion requirements according to residence and licence circumstances. Berry Street's TAC L2P program covers Greater Shepparton and Moira but has age and other eligibility limits. It is not a general driving program for all newly arrived adults. Service Victoria states that applications for the 2026 registration rebate closed on 31 August; it should not be advertised as an open application opportunity now. [102,103,104]

The wider transport issue is addressed in issue 9. Here the focus is the cost and practical difficulty of obtaining and retaining safe mobility. Supervised practice, lessons, testing, child seats, registration, fuel and vehicle repairs can create barriers. Older new arrivals, single parents and people with disability may not fit existing youth programs. Residents without a car need a reliable alternative while these barriers are addressed.

## Actions to seek

- Audit demand and waiting lists for learner support, including adults outside L2P eligibility. Assess a complementary program with trained mentors, suitable vehicles and safe supervision.
- Provide clear multilingual information on licence conversion, test arrangements, road rules and costs. Use authorised assessment arrangements rather than informal assurances.
- Publish who benefits from transport concessions and temporary rebates, who is excluded and when applications close. Compare one-off relief with reliable low-cost services.
- Link transport planning to shift times, school hours, medical appointments and accessible vehicles. Include licensing assistance in employment and settlement pathways where appropriate.

**Responsibility.** Victoria, VicRoads, TAC and transport agencies; program providers and employers; Commonwealth support where relevant to employment or settlement.

**Public measure.** Time and cost to obtain a licence, learner support access, missed work or appointments and useful travel options for residents who cannot drive.

## Question for candidates

**What practical transport support will you offer an adult who cannot use a youth learner program and cannot reach work by bus, and how will it be funded?**

**ISSUE 37**

# Rental rights and enforcement in practice

**A legal right is useful only if a renter can understand it and obtain a timely remedy.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Consumer Affairs Victoria records rental-law changes from October 2026, including measures concerning bond claims, minimum-standard records and third-party fees. Separate energy-efficiency standards begin in phases from March 2027. Their application depends on the particular requirement and tenancy circumstances; it would be inaccurate to describe every future standard as already compulsory. [105,106]

Issue 8 addresses the supply and suitability of housing. This brief concerns enforcement: repairs, safety, fees, bond disputes and access to advice. A family may hesitate to complain if it fears losing its home in a tight market. Limited English, disability, digital barriers and unfamiliar documents can make lawful processes difficult for renters and small rental providers alike. The report does not assert that every local property is noncompliant.

## Actions to seek

- Fund accessible local tenancy advice and assistance with evidence, repair requests and dispute pathways. Provide qualified interpreting and clear information on time limits.
- Publish inspection, enforcement and dispute-resolution performance with sufficient regional detail to reveal persistent delays and repeat noncompliance.
- Explain the phased energy standards to renters and rental providers, including exemptions, commencement triggers and support for compliant upgrades.
- Coordinate urgent repairs, mould and safety concerns with health and housing services. Monitor outcomes for people who report problems, including displacement or unresolved retaliation concerns.

**Responsibility.** Victorian tenancy regulators and dispute-resolution bodies; rental providers and agents for compliance; housing and legal services for assistance.

**Public measure.** Time to resolve urgent repairs and disputes, compliance after intervention, accessible advice received and avoidable tenancy loss.

## Question for candidates

**What will you do so a renter in this district can enforce an existing right promptly, rather than wait for another law while living with an unresolved safety problem?**

**ISSUE 38**

# Building defects and protection for home buyers

**New housing must be safe and durable, with a workable remedy when construction goes wrong.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria's Home Warranty Insurance information describes new arrangements for eligible contracts from July 2026. Earlier domestic building insurance arrangements are not automatically converted into the new scheme. The Building and Plumbing Commission provides guidance on defects and rectification. Contract dates, coverage and procedural requirements matter; the report does not give a determination on an individual building claim. [107,108]

Families buying or building a home may face complex contracts, delays, defects or a failed builder. These are risks to examine rather than claims about particular Shepparton companies. A warranty announcement does not by itself establish prompt compensation or completed repairs. Buyers with limited English need independent explanations before signing, especially where they have committed most of their savings.

## Actions to seek

- Publish accessible guidance explaining contract checks, practitioner registration, warranty coverage and complaint routes, including the difference between older and newer schemes.
- Monitor regional inspection capacity, unresolved defects and time to a practical remedy. Report whether an order leads to repairs rather than counting orders alone.
- Support independent consumer and legal advice for complex disputes, with interpreting. Ensure purchasers understand that a sales explanation is not independent advice.
- Assess the local building workforce and compliance support needed to increase housing supply without weakening safety, accessibility or energy performance.

**Responsibility.** Victorian building and consumer regulators and relevant insurers; builders and other practitioners for their obligations; councils within their statutory functions.

**Public measure.** Defect resolution time, completed rectification, consumer access to advice, regional inspection capacity and transparent treatment of insolvency cases.

## Question for candidates

**How will you ensure that a family with a defective or unfinished home receives an enforceable remedy, and what evidence will show that the new protections work locally?**

**ISSUE 39**

# Drought water recovery and farm transition

**Water decisions affect farms, food processing, workers, ecosystems and the towns around them.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Victoria publishes concerns about community impacts of Commonwealth Basin water recovery, while the Commonwealth describes voluntary purchasing and its socioeconomic assessment process. These are distinct government roles and positions. Agriculture Victoria states that Farm Drought Support Grants and the Farm Advisory Service closed on 30 September 2026. Assistance available in another region should not be assumed to apply to Shepparton. [110,111,109]

Issue 14 covers agricultural water and industry viability. Further scrutiny is needed of cumulative effects: irrigation demand, delivery costs, processor throughput, employment and environmental health. A willing seller's benefit and a neighbouring business's exposure can differ. The report does not assume a fixed volume will be purchased from this district, or that every announced grant remains available. Long-term adaptation needs a plan beyond short emergency funding rounds.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a district impact assessment of water recovery and climate pressures, including processors, farm workers, small towns, environmental outcomes and Aboriginal water interests.
- Explain the state's negotiating position, alternatives considered and the evidence required to judge social, economic and environmental trade-offs.
- Provide a current assistance register with eligibility, closing dates and a referral when a scheme ends. Assess gaps for tenants, small producers, contractors and affected workers.
- Cost practical adaptation and diversification options, including efficient infrastructure, skills, financial counselling and mental health support, without promising that technology can remove every water constraint.

**Responsibility.** Commonwealth and Victorian water agencies, catchment and irrigation authorities; agriculture agencies, industry and local government for adaptation and regional planning.

**Public measure.** Verified local water-recovery exposure, farm and processor impacts, environmental indicators, support uptake and a published response to identified transition costs.

## Question for candidates

**What local evidence and safeguards will you demand before supporting a water policy, and how will you help workers and towns as well as individual water owners?**

**ISSUE 40**

# Energy transition reliability and consumer protection

**Residents need affordable, reliable energy and a fair process for decisions about energy infrastructure.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

VicGrid's current information says the proposed Central North renewable energy zone will not proceed. Older consultation material should not be presented as an approved current plan for Shepparton. This does not mean all renewable or transmission projects in the region are prohibited. Victoria also implemented Energy Retail Code changes in stages during 2026, including additional payment-difficulty and best-offer protections from October. [112,113]

Issue 22 covers household costs, heat and the environment. Further questions concern outages, capacity for farms and industry, transmission proposals, renters' access to efficiency measures and the distribution of transition costs. A household without rooftop solar should still have a fair path to lower bills. Claims about a specific project require its actual route, approval status, cost and consultation record.

## Actions to seek

- Maintain a current district register of energy proposals and network upgrades, clearly distinguishing consultation, approval, construction and operation.
- Require project-specific consultation on land use, farming, cultural heritage, environment, compensation and community benefits, with accessible information and independent advice.
- Publish reliability and connection constraints affecting homes, farms and employers, together with the responsible network's improvement plan and contingency arrangements.
- Audit access to retailer hardship protections, concessions and efficiency programs. Include renters, apartment residents, people using essential medical equipment and households unable to use online comparison tools.

**Responsibility.** Victorian energy agencies and regulators, network businesses and project proponents; Commonwealth energy arrangements and councils within their roles.

**Public measure.** Outage duration, connection delays, consumer assistance outcomes, project milestones and publicly explained distribution of benefits and costs.

## Question for candidates

**How will your energy policy lower costs and protect reliability for residents who cannot install solar, while giving affected landholders a fair say in infrastructure decisions?**

**ISSUE 41**

# Insurance affordability and long-term disaster recovery

**Recovery is incomplete when households cannot repair safely, insure affordably or understand their options.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Victorian Parliament's inquiry into the 2022 floods produced a final report in July 2024 and a government response in February 2025. Recommendations and responses must be checked against actual implementation. Commonwealth Treasury has also described work on recognising risk mitigation in insurance. This is not a guarantee that a particular flood project or household upgrade will reduce a particular premium. [114,115]

Issue 12 addresses physical flood protection and readiness. The additional concerns are uninsured losses, disputed claims, temporary housing, mental health and the cost of returning to a safer home. Premiums depend on multiple factors. The state can influence planning, mitigation and recovery support, but does not unilaterally set every private insurance price. Residents need clear evidence about risk rather than an assurance that a levee removes all danger.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a local register of relevant flood-inquiry recommendations, the government response, responsible agency, funding and evidence of completion.
- Provide independent recovery and claims navigation, financial counselling and interpreting. Identify unresolved household cases through consent-based outreach rather than public disclosure of private losses.
- Compare levees, drainage, property adaptation, planning and other mitigation options using credible risk and benefit assessments. Explain residual risk and maintenance obligations.
- Seek transparent information on how insurers recognise verified mitigation, and coordinate with Commonwealth regulators. Do not promise a premium reduction without a supported mechanism.

**Responsibility.** Victoria and councils for relevant recovery, planning and mitigation; Commonwealth regulators and insurers for insurance arrangements; legal and financial support services.

**Public measure.** Unresolved recovery needs, repair and claim delays, completed mitigation, risk communication and documented insurance responses where available.

## Question for candidates

**Which flood-recovery gaps will you resolve, and how will you show that proposed works reduce risk rather than simply move it to another neighbourhood or town?**

**ISSUE 42**

# State finances taxes and fair regional investment

**Every spending or tax promise should explain its local benefit, continuing cost and funding source.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Auditor General's October 2026 report on Victoria's 2025 to 2026 finances provides independent scrutiny of financial reporting and fiscal pressures. The 2026 to 2027 budget lists regional measures, including $1.2 million for the Shepparton Education Plan's engagement, wellbeing and pathways work at GSSC. State land tax is separate from council rates, and a principal place of residence is generally exempt subject to the rules. [116,117,118]

Residents need to understand whether a promise is new funding, a continuation, a reannouncement or a share of a statewide total. Debt, interest and operating costs affect future choices, but a large statewide number does not by itself prove a particular local project should be cancelled or approved. Likewise, a tax reduction can have service or borrowing consequences. These trade-offs should be explained openly, including effects on renters, businesses and rural communities.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a district investment ledger showing committed funds, actual expenditure, completion dates and ongoing staffing and maintenance costs.
- Require costed commitments to identify the funding source, delivery risks and any offsetting savings, taxes, charges or borrowing. Distinguish forecasts from audited results.
- Explain the local effects of proposed state taxes, levies and concessions, including land tax, property transactions and business costs where relevant. Avoid implying all households face the same liability.
- Seek a transparent regional allocation method that considers population, disadvantage, distance, service catchments and delivery costs rather than relying solely on headline per-capita comparisons.

**Responsibility.** Victorian Parliament, Treasury and spending agencies; the Auditor General independently scrutinises public administration and financial reporting.

**Public measure.** Actual local delivery against published budgets, recurrent service capacity, transparent cost changes and reasons for regional allocation decisions.

## Question for candidates

**What will your promises cost over the full term, how will you pay for them, and which competing priorities or charges would change as a result?**

**ISSUE 43**

# Legal assistance fines and financial counselling

**People should be able to understand a notice or dispute before it becomes a larger debt or court problem.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre provides local legal advice within its scope and capacity. The state financial counselling provider list includes Primary Care Connect for Greater Shepparton and Moira. Fines Victoria has Work and Development Permit and special-circumstances pathways, but eligibility, evidence and the stage of enforcement matter. These are not automatic cancellation rights for every person experiencing financial difficulty. [119,120,121,122]

The issues span tenancy, employment, family violence, consumer contracts, scams and unpaid fines. Limited English, low literacy, disability or digital exclusion can make it difficult to identify the right help. A fine can grow while a person tries to obtain advice, but that does not establish that every fine is incorrect. An effective service must provide timely triage and explain what happens if it cannot take the matter.

## Actions to seek

- Audit waiting times, unmet requests and referral completion for legal assistance and financial counselling, including outreach to smaller towns.
- Provide qualified interpreting, accessible notices and practical help assembling documents. Keep independent advice separate from the agency seeking payment or enforcing a decision.
- Expand access to approved Work and Development Permit sponsors where evidence shows a gap, and explain other review or payment options without guaranteeing eligibility.
- Support scam prevention and rapid referral after fraud, unfair contracts or coercive debt. Include older residents, people with disability and newly arrived households without assuming they are the only people affected.

**Responsibility.** Victorian justice, consumer and fines agencies and funded advice services; courts and tribunals decide matters independently; Commonwealth regulators for relevant financial and online conduct.

**Public measure.** Time to appropriate advice, unassisted urgent matters, completed referrals, resolved eligible fines and sustainable debt outcomes.

## Question for candidates

**How will you ensure that a resident can obtain timely independent advice before a small problem becomes an eviction, an unmanageable debt or a missed court deadline?**

**ISSUE 44**

# Integrity complaints and public decision-making

**Residents need to see why decisions were made and have a fair route to challenge mistakes.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Victorian Ombudsman handles complaints within its public-sector jurisdiction; it is not the correct body for every police, private business or Commonwealth complaint. The VEC publishes changes to political finance laws in 2026. Current rules and disclosure requirements should be checked rather than relying on older thresholds. Legal compliance is a baseline; candidates can also offer clearer explanations of their own decisions. [123,124]

Frustration grows when a complaint is transferred repeatedly, public information is difficult to obtain or a funding decision is unexplained. This report makes no allegation of misconduct against a candidate or agency. The aim is practical accountability: transparent criteria, relevant conflicts disclosed, records accessible and a response that addresses the issue. Smaller organisations should be able to compete for grants without privileged access to decision-makers.

## Actions to seek

- Ask candidates to publish commitments, progress, material changes and reasons, with accessible contact and complaint pathways through the electorate office.
- Seek transparent grant and procurement criteria, outcome reporting and appropriate conflict-of-interest disclosure, while protecting genuinely confidential information.
- Track public information and complaint response times, explain review options and reduce referrals that send people back to the same unresolved problem.
- Support independent oversight and accurate political finance disclosure. Apply the same standards to allies, opponents, governments and independents.

**Responsibility.** Victorian Parliament, public bodies and independent oversight agencies; VEC for relevant electoral finance regulation; candidates and parties for their obligations.

**Public measure.** Timely, substantive responses; publicly explained funding decisions; corrections made; commitment reporting and access to appropriate independent review.

## Question for candidates

**Will you publish your local commitments and progress, explain relevant conflicts and support independent scrutiny even when it is inconvenient for you or your party?**

**ISSUE 45**

# Emergency volunteers and local response capacity

**Community resilience depends on trained people, maintained equipment and support that lasts beyond a disaster.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

CFA describes both operational and nonoperational volunteer roles and publishes emergency response performance. Those arrangements show the breadth of local capability needed, but do not prove that each brigade or town has sufficient volunteers at every hour. The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund is already discussed in issue 15; residents should be able to connect levy explanations to transparent service funding. [125,126] [48]

Beyond flood infrastructure, practical questions concern CFA and SES recruitment, training, fatigue, daytime availability, vehicles, communications and facilities. New residents may be willing to help but unfamiliar with volunteering requirements. Inclusion should strengthen safe capability, not bypass training standards. Emergency workers and volunteers also need psychological support and arrangements that recognise the pressures on their employers and families.

## Actions to seek

- Ask relevant agencies to publish local capability needs and a funded plan for training, equipment, vehicle replacement and suitable facilities, without exposing sensitive operational information.
- Support diverse recruitment into operational and support roles, with clear requirements, accessible information and practical help for suitable volunteers.
- Test communications, power backup, evacuation assistance and coordination between towns. Include people with disability, isolated residents, livestock and companion animals in appropriate planning.
- Publish how state emergency funding reaches regional services and how gaps are prioritised. Provide ongoing wellbeing and recovery support for volunteers and affected communities.

**Responsibility.** Victoria, CFA, SES and emergency management agencies; councils, employers, local units and community partners within their responsibilities.

**Public measure.** Training and equipment milestones, sustainable volunteer participation, readiness exercises, identified coverage gaps and delivery against published funding plans.

## Question for candidates

**What specific capability is missing locally, what will you fund to address it, and how will residents know that emergency levies and grants improved readiness?**

**ISSUE 46**

# Preventive public health water and environmental risks

**Prevention should reach people before an avoidable illness or environmental incident becomes an emergency.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Department of Health lists Greater Shepparton and Moira among areas relevant to Japanese encephalitis vaccination eligibility. That is not a statement that an outbreak is occurring now. Goulburn Valley Water publishes drinking-water quality reports. Their availability supports scrutiny; this report does not allege that local drinking water is unsafe. [127,128]

The wider prevention agenda includes mosquito exposure, extreme heat, smoke, food safety, workplace chemicals, vaccination access and timely communication. Seasonal workers and people with limited English may need information through employers and trusted community organisations as well as websites. Emergency advice must be current and location-specific. Environmental risks should be assessed using monitoring and credible evidence rather than rumours or assumptions about particular industries.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a district prevention calendar and responsibility map for mosquito control, vaccination outreach, heat, smoke and other seasonal risks, with accessible warnings and practical protective advice.
- Audit eligibility information, appointment availability and interpreting for preventive care. Explain costs and arrangements for people without Medicare where relevant.
- Make water and environmental monitoring easy to understand, including what results mean, what triggers action and who communicates during an incident.
- Coordinate councils, the public health unit, water agencies, schools, employers and community groups. Review whether warnings reach rural households and people without reliable internet.

**Responsibility.** Victorian health and environmental agencies, the local public health unit, councils and water providers; workplaces for their safety obligations.

**Public measure.** Timely risk communication, eligible access to prevention, response to monitoring results and evidence that hard-to-reach households receive usable information.

## Question for candidates

**How will you ensure preventive health and environmental warnings reach every part of the district, and what will you do when an eligible resident cannot access the recommended service?**

**ISSUE 47**

# Keeping essential workers in the district

**A new building or funded position is useful only when qualified people can provide the service consistently.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Murray PHN's needs assessment identifies rural workforce shortages and the links between service viability and housing. Its findings concern a wider catchment, not a vacancy census for this electorate. The Committee for Greater Shepparton already operates a Community Connector Program, helping relocating professionals and their families with housing, schools, employment connections and social networks, with follow-up after arrival. These are existing foundations for a retention strategy. [26] [133]

Recruitment alone does not establish a stable workforce. A worker may leave if a partner cannot find employment, childcare does not fit shifts, supervision is unavailable or accommodation becomes unaffordable. Locally raised students, First Nations workers and residents with overseas qualifications also need pathways into skilled roles. The question is whether recruitment and training produce sustained, safe services across towns, rather than simply moving a shortage between employers.

## Actions to seek

- Publish a joint workforce plan covering health, allied health, aged and disability care, teaching, early learning, interpreters and essential trades. Distinguish funded vacancies, actual staff, turnover and unmet service demand.
- Link recruitment to suitable housing, childcare, transport, partner employment and community connection. Evaluate existing support before duplicating it; avoid subsidising employers without clear public benefit.
- Fund local placements, supervision, traineeships and supported entry or return to practice. Help qualified migrants navigate registration and bridging requirements without weakening professional standards.
- Measure retention after twelve and twenty-four months, service continuity in smaller towns and cancelled services caused by staffing gaps. Report workloads, supervision and worker wellbeing alongside recruitment totals.

**Responsibility.** Victorian health, education and skills agencies; Commonwealth primary-care, aged-care and training settings; employers, professional bodies, education providers, councils and community partners.

**Public measure.** Comparable vacancy and turnover measures by occupation and service area; placements completed; retention; service hours actually delivered.

## Question for candidates

**For each new service you promise, who will staff it, how will they be trained and retained, and what will you do if a funded position remains vacant?**

**ISSUE 48**

# Family violence crisis access and lasting safety

**Safety depends on a usable pathway from first contact to secure accommodation and continuing support.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

The Orange Door offers interpreting and operates on weekdays during business hours. GV Health lists its Shepparton access point and Marian Community's specialist crisis response, including after-hours access through Safe Steps. Local and statewide services therefore exist. The evidence reviewed does not establish current local refuge vacancies, interpreter response times or how quickly every rural household receives assistance. [134,135]

The public policy question is whether a person can use these pathways safely when violence occurs. Barriers to investigate include unsafe callback arrangements, transport, disability access, lack of money or documents, threatened immigration consequences, concern for children and pets, and fear of losing housing. These are not characteristics of any one culture. Coercive control, economic abuse, sexual violence, elder abuse and technology-facilitated abuse require informed responses, without making an unsupported claim about the precise legal classification of every act.

## Actions to seek

- Publish an anonymised service-capacity and response audit covering after-hours access, smaller towns, safe transport, emergency accommodation, refuge and longer-term housing. Never publish confidential refuge locations.
- Fund independent, qualified interpreting with safe contact arrangements. Avoid using children, an alleged perpetrator or an unsuitable community intermediary for sensitive communication.
- Connect crisis care to legal advice, financial support, children's services, health and secure housing. Arrange independent specialist advice where visa concerns affect help-seeking; do not promise immigration outcomes.
- Support prevention, victim recovery and accountable perpetrator interventions. Include diverse family relationships, people with disability, older residents and LGBTIQA+ people, with privacy and survivor choice.

**Responsibility.** Victoria for specialist family violence, police, courts, housing and funded services; Commonwealth agencies for relevant income and immigration settings; local providers for coordinated delivery.

**Public measure.** Time to safe contact and accommodation; unmet interpreter requests; repeat referrals; continuity into stable housing; survivor-defined safety outcomes.

## Question for candidates

**If a resident needs to leave an unsafe home tonight, what funded local pathway will provide safe transport, interpreting and accommodation, and how will you address any gap without making them repeat their story to multiple agencies?**

**ISSUE 49**

# Digital exclusion scams and access without an app

**A service should remain usable when a resident cannot afford data, use a smartphone or safely manage an online account.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Goulburn Valley Libraries advertises practical digital help, including a free, appointment-based Numurkah session on 11 November 2026. This is evidence of support already offered, not a guarantee of unlimited appointments or a future timetable. Victoria's Health Translations directory links to ACCC scam information in languages including Arabic, Dari, Persian, Hazaragi, Punjabi and Tagalog. [137,138]

Coverage, affordability, skills, accessibility and trust are separate barriers. An online form may be technically available while a resident cannot complete identity checks, upload documents or understand a suspicious message. Essential banking, cash, postal and in-person services should be mapped by town before asserting that a branch has closed. Fraud affects people across ages and backgrounds; this report does not infer a higher local victimisation rate for a cultural group without evidence.

## Actions to seek

- Require essential publicly funded services to provide a workable telephone or assisted in-person route, with interpreting and disability access. Do not make smartphone ownership a practical condition of receiving help.
- Map public internet, affordable device support, private assisted appointments and digital training by town. Link libraries, neighbourhood houses and community organisations to stable funding and referral arrangements.
- Offer multilingual scam prevention and rapid referral after suspected fraud. Train helpers to protect passwords, identity documents, financial information and the resident's control of an account.
- Assess cash, banking and postal access with dated local evidence, including accessibility, travel cost and service hours. Seek an agreed continuity plan from the relevant providers when a service change is proposed.

**Responsibility.** Victorian agencies and councils for accessible service design and local support; Commonwealth communications and consumer agencies; banks, Australia Post, network operators and service providers for their roles.

**Public measure.** Essential transactions completed through assisted routes; waiting time for help; coverage and affordability barriers resolved; verified service access by town.

## Question for candidates

**Will a resident without a smartphone, credit card or confident English still be able to use the services you fund, and who will help them safely when the online system fails?**

**ISSUE 50**

# Housing growth planning rights and neighbourhood services

**More housing needs a credible plan for services, environmental risk and participation in decisions.**

## Evidence and the practical problem

Plan for Victoria sets a target of 15,250 net new dwellings in Greater Shepparton municipality by 2051. This is a municipal planning target, not the number of homes funded, approved or due during the next parliamentary term. The state framework also identifies infrastructure, environmental risks, agricultural land and Traditional Owners' values as relevant considerations. Existing township infrastructure and housing issues are discussed in briefs 8 and 23. [136]

Faster planning can help supply, but zoned land alone does not deliver an affordable home. Water and sewer connections, drainage, electricity, transport, schools and construction capacity affect delivery. Established neighbourhoods, growth areas and small towns need different solutions. Residents also need understandable information about what is proposed, who decides, and which participation or review rights apply to that particular process; these rights should not be assumed identical for every project.

## Actions to seek

- Publish an annual housing delivery pathway separating planning capacity, approvals, serviced lots, construction, completion and occupation. Identify expected tenure, size and accessibility, not just a total dwelling count.
- Stage new development with funded utilities, transport, education, health and public-space capacity. Disclose developer contributions, public subsidies and the council maintenance obligations that follow.
- Assess flood, heat and fire exposure, productive agricultural land, biodiversity, shade, heritage and cultural values. Compare infill and greenfield options transparently, including affordable and accessible housing outcomes.
- Provide early, understandable notices and multilingual assistance for material proposals. Explain decision authority, submission deadlines and applicable review routes, and publish the reasons for the final decision.

**Responsibility.** Victorian planning authorities and ministers; councils within planning schemes; water and other utilities, developers and housing providers; relevant environmental and cultural heritage bodies.

**Public measure.** Net completed and occupied homes; serviced-lot delivery; infrastructure before occupation; housing diversity; transparent decision and contribution records.

## Question for candidates

**How will you turn housing targets into affordable, serviced homes while protecting residents from flood risk, unexpected infrastructure bills and decisions they cannot understand or influence?**

**AMOUNTS ARE NOT A SINGLE APPROVED PACKAGE**

# Investment proposals and funding status

The following figures help residents test specific claims. They are published estimates or announcements, with different dates and scopes. Do not add them into a total: stages may overlap, costs may change and operating expenditure may be excluded. All amounts are Australian dollars.

| Project or service | Published figure | Status and decision still required |
|---|---|---|
| Additional Goulburn River crossing | No current total adopted here | Council advocacy; completed planning is distinct from construction funding. [3,37] |
| Integrated Cancer Centre Stage 2 | $95 million | Coalition election commitment reported 7 October 2026; implementation needs government funding and delivery arrangements. [23] |
| Cardiac catheterisation services | $30.7 million | Council advocacy estimate; confirm scope, funding, workforce and operating costs. [3] |
| Sports Events Centre | $37 million total | Council package seeks $12m state, $15m federal and $10m council. Funding request, not proof all shares are secured. [72] |
| Regional trades training precinct | $15 million | Council request; confirm provider arrangements, course demand and delivery plan. [72] |
| GV Link Stage 2 / Kialla West | $28m / $21m | Separate Council growth infrastructure requests. Confirm net public cost and contributions. [72] |
| Banmira Specialist School Stage 2 | $30 million | Council request for the next stage; distinguish it from existing school investment. [10,72] |
| Selected road priorities | $15m to $20m River Road; $7m additional Ford and Wanganui | Council estimates. Also identify arterial and local road responsibilities and avoid double counting. [3] |
| Numurkah southern levees | About $6.45m Commonwealth; $12.91m listed total | NEMA allocation with co-contribution. Reconcile Council and state contribution statements and current delivery status. [40,76,77] |
| GV Health PET scanner | $7.1m operating funding | GV Health announcement; expected start early 2027. Track commissioning and staffing. [24] |
| Regional fruit fly program | $1m annually requested | Council request for sustained support; publish current approved allocation and expiry. [41,42] |

Residents should also seek published costs for a school provision review, broader university pathways, language access, bus changes and housing. A proposal without an established local estimate should be costed before being presented as a guaranteed benefit.

**CHECK THE STATUS BEFORE REPEATING A PROMISE**

# Delivery dates and policy changes to track

These items supplement the investment ledger. A budget allocation is not proof of completed delivery, and a new law does not prove that everyone can enforce it. The dates below are published statuses reviewed on 11 November 2026; they should be checked again when used.

| Item | Published position | Local accountability question |
|---|---|---|
| GSSC engagement and pathways | $1.2m in the 2026 to 2027 regional budget. [117] | Which activities, staff and students will benefit, and how will outcomes be reported? |
| Shepparton rail services | $30m for additional services in the regional budget. [117] | Expanded services began 23 August 2026. What further journey-time, frequency and regional-connection improvements will be funded? [154,161] |
| Early Parenting Centre | Construction start announced February 2026. [81] | When will it open with staff, funded places and clear referral arrangements? |
| Women’s health clinic facilities | Expected February 2027; existing care continues. [80] | What improves in capacity, waiting time and access? |
| Thriving Kids | Allied health and checks in Greater Shepparton and Moira scheduled July to September 2027. [82,83] | What support bridges the wait, and what happens at the NDIS interface? |
| Rental standards | New rental measures in 2026; energy standards phased from March 2027. [105,106] | Are people informed, inspectors available and remedies timely? |
| Central North energy zone | The proposed zone will not proceed, according to VicGrid. [112] | Which separate energy projects or upgrades are actually proposed or approved? |
| Registration rebate | Applications closed 31 August 2026. [104] | What continuing transport relief is available, and who misses out? |
| Selected drought programs | Farm Drought Support Grants and Farm Advisory Service closed 30 September 2026. [109] | What current assistance covers local households, farms and workers? |
| Treaty implementation | Statewide Treaty began December 2025; Gellung Warl began May 2026. [131] | What is the candidate’s position, and what local outcomes and accountability will follow? |

Ask for the document confirming any revised amount, date or eligibility rule. An expired program should be labelled closed; a scheduled service should be labelled planned until operating status is verified.

**A FAIR WAY TO COMPARE VERY DIFFERENT PROPOSALS**

# Choosing priorities and assessing trade offs

This report does not claim that all 50 areas can be fully resolved in one term. Residents can use the same criteria to compare proposals and ask candidates to explain their choices. The method below is suggested for public discussion; it is not a survey result or a candidate ranking.

| Criterion | What to examine |
|---|---|
| Urgency and harm | Does delay threaten safety, health, housing stability or access to essential services? |
| Reach and equity | Who benefits, who misses out and what changes for smaller towns or people facing extra barriers? |
| Evidence of need | Is there a reliable baseline, current demand data or a well-founded service-access problem? |
| Effectiveness | Would the proposal solve the problem, and what alternatives were compared? |
| Deliverability | Are land, approvals, workforce, partners and an achievable timetable identified? |
| Whole of life affordability | What are construction, staffing, maintenance, finance and replacement costs, and who pays? |
| Accountability | Can residents verify progress and outcomes without relying on promotional announcements? |

### Important choices to make openly

A new school must be compared with other ways to improve choice, access and outcomes, while also funding immediate support. A larger university needs sustainable course demand and staffing as well as buildings. A bridge needs an approved route, flood assessment and connecting roads. Cheaper waste services need a workable collection and recovery model.

A lower rates bill may require efficiency gains, other funding, borrowing or a change in services. Each option has different consequences. Infrastructure can create benefits across the region, but decision-makers should explain how those benefits reach people who cannot drive, afford fees or use English-only systems.

### A suggested first meeting

- Ask participants individually to identify their five most important issues before group discussion, so the loudest voices do not determine the agenda.
- Record the postcode or town and the access barrier, without collecting unnecessary sensitive information. Invite smaller and less visible communities.
- Choose immediate actions and longer-term investments separately. Publish what was agreed, what remains contested and what evidence is needed.

**RESPECTFUL QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE A SPECIFIC ANSWER**

# Questions for all candidates

### 1 Local interests and party decisions

If your party, or an agreement you enter as an independent, supports a decision that you believe harms Shepparton District or its multicultural communities, what action would you take? Would you publish your position, seek changes and explain any decision to vote against or support it?

### 2 Your first three commitments

What are the three measurable improvements you will pursue first, what is your power to deliver them, and what will residents see within twelve months?

### 3 Language and equal access

Will you support a funded standard for interpreters and accessible information, with public reporting of unmet need across health, education and other essential services?

### 4 Schools and a fuller university

Will you support independent, published assessments of school provision and wider local university pathways, then commit to a decision date, funding approach and the first deliverable?

### 5 Roads and another crossing

Which road repairs and river-crossing milestones will you seek to fund, and how will residents distinguish maintenance, planning and actual construction commitments?

### 6 Affordability and trade offs

If you promise to reduce rates, waste charges or other household costs, which authority will act, what will it cost and what service or budget trade-off will you disclose?

### 7 Fairness across the electorate

How will your program serve Numurkah, Nathalia and smaller rural communities as well as the main urban area, and how will you demonstrate equitable access?

### 8 Evidence and accountability

Will you maintain a public commitment register, report at least annually, meet residents regularly with interpreting available, and correct inaccurate claims promptly?

Use the same questions and response space for every candidate. Record unanswered questions as unanswered, and give candidates a reasonable opportunity to supply a written clarification. A confident answer is not a substitute for evidence.

**PROPOSED MILESTONES FOR THE NEXT TERM**

# A timetable for public accountability

The following timetable is a suggested public accountability framework. It is not an existing agreement with a candidate, council or service provider. Set realistic project-specific dates when the responsible agencies confirm the work.

| When | What residents should be able to see |
|---|---|
| Before voting | Written candidate commitments with the responsible authority, funding status, proposed outcome and delivery date. Clear distinctions between endorsement, advocacy, allocated funds and delivery. |
| First 100 days | A public commitment register; meetings with responsible agencies; a schedule for missing baseline data; accessible community meetings across the electorate. |
| Within 12 months | Published school and course-access reviews; interpreter access and transport findings; agreed project funding stages; baseline housing, health, road and service access measures. |
| Every six months | A concise progress update showing completed work, delays, changed costs, funding gaps and next decisions. Residents can submit evidence and corrections. |
| Every year | An accessible public forum with written responses; a comparison of commitments with measurable outcomes; an explanation of any change in priorities. |
| Before the next election | A full term review that distinguishes promises, funding secured, projects delivered and improvements residents actually experienced. |

### A small dashboard that would make a difference

- Language access: requests fulfilled, time to support and appointments lost because interpreting was unavailable.
- Education and employment: usable local pathways, attendance and completion, placement access and sustained work.
- Health and housing: timely affordable care, successful referrals, net additional occupied homes and repair performance.
- Transport and resilience: repeat road defects, essential journeys possible, bridge milestones, drainage and flood project delivery.
- Affordability and inclusion: bill components, assistance accessed, accessible routes and participation by town and community.

Each measure needs a named publisher, a baseline date, a target, a reporting interval and privacy safeguards. Targets should be agreed after the baseline is established. Missing data should trigger a plan to obtain it, not an invented figure or a claim that the problem does not exist.

**USE ONE COPY FOR EACH CANDIDATE**

# Your voter and candidate commitment worksheet

Candidate name _____ Party or independent _____

Meeting or written response date _____ Your town _____

### My three most important issues

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

### Record a promise in the candidate's own words

**The action and the people or places it will help**

_____

**The authority responsible and partners required**

_____

**Funding amount source and status**

_____

**First milestone and final delivery date**

_____

**How the result will be measured**

_____

**Where and when progress will be reported**

_____

### Check the answer

For each item, mark Yes, Partly, No or Unanswered. These checks assess the completeness of the commitment, not which candidate you should vote for.

| Check | Your assessment |
|---|---|
| Specific action and responsible authority | |
| Evidence and a realistic funding explanation | |
| Deadline and measurable public benefit | |
| Access for people facing language or disability barriers | |
| A public reporting and correction process | |

Follow-up question _____

Response link or document _____

**A BROAD REPORT STILL NEEDS LOCAL EVIDENCE**

# Checking for gaps: services and communities

Use this checklist in community meetings to test the 50 briefs against daily experience. A concern should lead to evidence gathering and a specific proposal. It should not automatically become a claim that the whole district lacks a service.

| Area to test | Further questions to record | Main briefs |
|---|---|---|
| Health across the life course | GP bulk billing; dental waits; mental health and addiction; maternity; allied health; dementia; palliative and bereavement support; culturally safe and LGBTIQA+ inclusive care. | 6, 7, 20, 26-28, 47 |
| Learning and care | Teacher and aide vacancies; EAL; childcare and holiday care hours; bullying, school refusal and disengagement; disability support; scientific courses; affordable placements; adult literacy. | 2-5, 28, 29, 47 |
| Homes and everyday access | Overcrowding; suitable family homes; homelessness; accessible design; vacant-home turnaround; rental advice; defects; crisis accommodation; serviced growth and planning participation. | 8, 20, 37, 38, 48, 50 |
| Work and household security | Skills recognition; youth and women's employment; safe seasonal work; business costs; food relief; concessions; debt; gambling; transport and care that fit shifts; workforce retention. | 5, 14, 17, 25, 34-36, 43, 47 |
| Safety and rights | Family violence and coercion; child safety; victims' needs; organised crime; racist or religious harassment; legal advice; fair treatment; scams and safe digital support. | 18, 30, 32, 33, 43, 48, 49 |
| Belonging and public space | Libraries; arts; youth spaces; swimming and water safety; disability access; accessible toilets and changing facilities; affordable faith and community venues. | 19-21, 24, 29, 30 |
| Households at risk of being missed | Older people; carers; young people outside education; people with disability; new arrivals; temporary residents; isolated rural households; smaller language groups. | Apply across all briefs |

### Ask people directly

Which service did you try to use? What happened? When and where? What language, disability, cost or transport barrier mattered? What would have made access possible? Record consent and anonymise personal details. Invite disagreement and experiences that show a service working well.

**TURN AN UNANSWERED QUESTION INTO A RESEARCH TASK**

# Checking for gaps: places and evidence

The electorate is not one uniform service area. Test the agenda in Shepparton and Mooroopna, Tatura and Dookie, Numurkah and Nathalia, and smaller communities including Katunga, Strathmerton, Picola and Barmah. Check an address against the VEC boundary before attributing it to the district. [1]

| Topic | What to verify locally |
|---|---|
| Roads and daily journeys | Exact road owner, repeat defect locations, crash evidence, school-bus access, shift-time transport, pedestrian crossings, cycling routes and accessible stops. |
| Water and resilience | Levee and drainage responsibilities, maintenance, residual flood risk, rural fire capacity, safe water arrangements, heat and mosquito warnings, insurance and recovery gaps. |
| Digital and essential services | Actual mobile and internet performance, outage resilience, in-person and assisted access, cash, banking, post services, scams and privacy. Verify a closure before asserting it. See briefs 23 and 49. |
| Town growth and business | Water, sewerage and power capacity, land release, public spaces, freight, local retail access, business premises and the recurrent cost of new facilities. |
| Agriculture and environment | Fruit fly and other verified pests, water recovery impacts, chemical safety, biodiversity and river health, shade, air quality, dumping, recycling, energy projects and animal welfare. See briefs 13, 14, 16, 22, 39-41 and 46. |
| Statewide policy effects | Tax and levy changes, health networks, Treaty implementation, rental and building reforms, child-development transitions, enforcement capacity and regional budget delivery. |

### Four evidence questions before adding a claim

- Is this a verified absence, an inadequate service, a waiting-time problem or difficulty using an existing service?
- Does the evidence describe the district, a municipality, a provider catchment or the whole state, and what period does it cover?
- Is the proposed solution supported by demand, alternatives, costs, workforce and a responsible authority?
- Have people affected had a fair opportunity to contribute, including those who disagree or cannot attend an English-language meeting?

Priority for further investigation _____

Evidence needed and responsible agency _____

A comprehensive agenda is a living record. New evidence may add an issue, change its priority or show that a proposed solution is unnecessary. Keep corrections visible and apply the same standards to every candidate.

**COMPLETENESS MEANS RECORDING WHAT IS NOT YET KNOWN**

# Evidence still needed to make decisions

The coverage review checked the 50 briefs against council advocacy and planning, regional health needs, provider information and statewide policy changes. It added dedicated briefs on workforce retention, family violence access, digital exclusion and planning. It strengthened early learning, TAFE, housing, ageing and road priorities. This is desk research, not a completed community consultation or a guarantee that every local problem has been captured.

| Evidence request | Who should supply it and why it matters |
|---|---|
| Language access | Health, education and service agencies: requests, refusals, delays, languages, cost and completed appointments. Published interpreter availability alone does not show unmet need. |
| School and learning capacity | Education department, schools and providers: current enrolment, capacity, attendance, EAL and disability support, teacher vacancies, course demand, cancellations and placements. |
| Childcare and essential workers | Providers and employers: staffed places and usable hours, fees, waiting times, workforce vacancies and retention. Licensed capacity is not the same as available care. |
| Health and care continuity | Health services, PHN, aged-care and disability providers: waits, affordability, staff, rural outreach, discharge delays and referrals that did not reach treatment. |
| Housing and safe accommodation | Homes Victoria, housing and family violence providers: dated stock, vacant-home reasons, repair-to-reletting times, household demand and accessible crisis capacity; protect locations and identities. |
| Roads bridges and town services | Councils, transport and utility agencies: defects, backlog, ownership, intersection priorities, project stages, operating costs and service capacity by town. |
| Bills farms and resilience | Councils, water agencies and responsible departments: rate and waste cost components, levy impacts, pest funding, water recovery effects, flood works, insurance barriers and current support. |
| Participation and trust | Agencies and community organisations: who was heard, whose views were missing, complaint outcomes and changes made. Collect information with consent and report small groups safely. |

### How to close the remaining gaps

For each request, record an agency, a due date, the geographic boundary and source period, and whether the answer is received, partial or unavailable. Ask the same questions of every candidate. Invite residents from different towns, ages, abilities and language groups, including people who cannot attend meetings. Publish corrections and dissenting views. No reliable district figure should be replaced by an estimate presented as fact.

**VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION 2026 • CHECKED 11 NOVEMBER**

# Before you vote: dates and practical access

All times below are Victorian local time. Check the VEC's live venue information before travelling; opening hours and accessibility vary by voting option. This guide supports participation without recommending any candidate or party.

| Date or option | What the voter needs to know |
|---|---|
| Election day: Saturday 28 November | Voting centres open 8 am to 6 pm. You can vote at any election-day centre in Victoria. [144] |
| Early voting: 18 to 27 November | Open 9 am to 6 pm daily except Sunday 22 November. You do not need a reason to vote early. Use the VEC venue locator. [145] |
| Postal applications: by 25 November | Apply by 6 pm on Wednesday 25 November; apply early enough for delivery. Anyone can apply. [146] |
| Returning a postal vote | Post before 6 pm on 28 November, or deliver it to a voting centre before that deadline. The VEC must receive a posted vote by Friday 4 December. Follow the pack's declaration and verification instructions. [146] |
| Low-sensory voting: 17 November | A dedicated session in each district is scheduled 10 am to 4 pm for voters with sensory needs. Check the location and VEC instructions. [149] |
| Telephone and assisted voting | Telephone voting opens 18 November for eligible voters who are blind, have low vision, or have a motor impairment and need help. Check eligibility and registration. [149] |

## Enrolment and a missed deadline

The normal enrolment deadline was 8 pm on 3 November. The VEC says eligible people who missed it can provisionally enrol and vote at an early or election-day centre. Bring a driver licence or learner permit, Australian passport, or recent electricity bill or rates notice showing your name and address. Tell staff you need to enrol. If an address or name change was not recorded, ask staff to follow the VEC's instructions for your existing enrolment. [150]

Enrolment is generally compulsory for Australian citizens aged 18 or over who have lived in Victoria for more than a month; some historically enrolled British subjects also qualify. Living locally or holding permanent residence alone does not establish eligibility. Residents who cannot vote still have a place in community consultation. [150]

## Language and disability assistance

Ask election staff for help. The VEC provides translated information and language assistance on 03 9209 0112 during business hours. Check a venue's wheelchair access rating and access guide; Auslan assistance, magnifiers and suitable voting screens are also described by the VEC. [151,149]

**USE THE CURRENT 2026 INSTRUCTIONS**

# Your two ballots and an informed choice

For an address in Shepparton District, the lower-house contest elects one district MP. The district also belongs to Northern Victoria Region, which elects five upper-house MPs. Upper-house choices matter as well as the district candidates appearing at local forums. [1] [144]

| Ballot | How to complete it |
|---|---|
| Lower house: Legislative Assembly | Number EVERY box, starting with 1 for your first choice, then 2, 3 and so on in your order of preference. Do not leave a candidate unnumbered. [147] |
| Upper house: Legislative Council | Choose either ABOVE the line for parties/groups or BELOW the line for individual candidates. Number at least five boxes in order, starting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. You may number more. Do not complete both sections. [147] |
| If you make a mistake | Use numbers, not ticks or crosses. Ask election staff for help or a replacement ballot if you cannot make a clear correction. [147] |

**Important 2026 change: group voting tickets have been removed for the upper house. Do not rely on an old instruction to put only “1” above the line. The current VEC instructions require at least five preferences above or below the line. [148]**

### Check the complete field

Use the VEC’s current candidate information for both Shepparton District and Northern Victoria Region. A forum invitation, older profile report or party announcement is not a substitute for the official candidate list. Assess the same evidence for each candidate, including independents and any candidates who did not attend a forum.

### Your preferences are your choice

How-to-vote cards are suggestions, not instructions you must follow. Voting booths provide privacy. You can ask election staff or a trusted person for help, but anyone helping complete a ballot must follow your choices. [153,151]

### Questions that make an answer useful

- Which local problem will you address first, what evidence supports your approach, and which residents or towns will benefit?
- What can you deliver as a state MP, which partners must agree, and what funding, workforce and deadline are required?
- What is your position when your party or an agreement conflicts with the district’s interests, and where will you publish your reasons and progress?
- How will residents with language, disability, cost or transport barriers actually use the promised service?

Keep a copy of written answers and compare actions with outcomes after the election. A respectful assessment can recognise achievements, identify omissions and question costs using the same standard for every candidate.

VEC: 2026 voting options and venue information

VEC: current ballot instructions

**SOURCES 1 TO 9**

# References and source notes

Numbered references correspond to the citations in the text. Links were reviewed on 11 November 2026. A source records evidence or a published position; inclusion does not mean the author endorses every statement made by that organisation. Recommendations in this report are proposed actions, not quotations from the sources.

**[1] Victorian Electoral Commission**

Shepparton District and official district map

Current district page; accessed 11 November 2026.

**[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics**

Greater Shepparton 2021 Census QuickStats

2021 Census; municipality, not electoral district.

**[3] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Victorian State Election priorities 2026

Council advocacy requests and project estimates.

**[4] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Multilingual services

Published service arrangements.

**[5] Goulburn Valley Health**

Culturally and linguistically diverse and language support

Interpreter access and booking arrangements.

**[6] Monash University**

IMPARO project

Community interpreting research and 2023 workshops.

**[7] Victorian Department of Education**

Interpreting and translation services policy

Current school policy.

**[8] Victorian School Building Authority**

Greater Shepparton Secondary College

School merger and campus investment.

**[9] Victorian Government**

Education plans

Greater Shepparton Education Plan.

**SOURCES 10 TO 18**

# References and source notes

**[10] Banmira Specialist School**
Frequently asked questions
School relocation and staging information.

**[11] Victorian Department of Education**
English as an additional language
EAL support and programs.

**[12] Victorian Department of Education**
EAL program funding
Student Resource Package equity funding guidance.

**[13] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Council adopts Best Start Early Years Strategic Plan 2026 to 2031
26 August 2026.

**[14] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Council meeting agenda 26 August 2025
Early years needs and AEDC 2024 findings.

**[15] La Trobe University**
Shepparton Campus
Existing campus and student support.

**[16] La Trobe University**
Bachelor of Nursing Shepparton
2026 course handbook; delivery mode and placements.

**[17] Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre**
Courses by field of interest
2026 to 2027 main round listings; Shepparton entries.

**[18] University of Melbourne**
Department of Rural Health study options
Shepparton rural medical training and pathways.

**SOURCES 19 TO 27**

# References and source notes

**[19] University of Melbourne**

Dookie semester

Bachelor of Agriculture study arrangements.

**[20] GOTAFE**

Courses at Shepparton campuses

Course catalogue; availability varies by intake.

**[21] GOTAFE**

Shepparton William Orr campus

Existing training facilities.

**[22] Goulburn Valley Health Foundation**

Integrated Cancer Centre pledge of support

Stage 1 and Stage 2 explanation.

**[23] Greater Shepparton City Council**

First commitment for the Integrated Cancer Centre

7 October 2026; Coalition election commitment.

**[24] Goulburn Valley Health**

Funding for a life saving PET scanner

Operational funding and expected opening.

**[25] Victorian Agency for Health Information**

Patients waiting for planned surgery

Official performance reporting and definitions.

**[26] Murray Primary Health Network**

Needs Assessment 2025

Regional needs assessment; population and service evidence.

**[27] Murray Primary Health Network**

Murray Health Report on multiculturalism

2024; whole PHN catchment, not district statistics.

**SOURCES 28 TO 36**

# References and source notes

**[28] Murray Primary Health Network**
Primary mental health services
Existing commissioned services and access pathways.

**[29] NCN Health**
Annual reports and strategic plan
Nathalia and Numurkah services; Strategic Plan 2026 to 2030.

**[30] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Affordable Housing Strategy
Homes for People 2020.

**[31] Premier of Victoria**
New homes for Shepparton’s youth and young at heart
7 September 2026; projects under way.

**[32] Beyond Housing**
Help when homeless
Existing local housing assistance.

**[33] Victoria’s Big Build**
Shepparton Line Upgrade Stage 3 complete
Completion in December 2025.

**[34] Victoria’s Big Build**
More services for upgraded Shepparton Line
2026 timetable expansion announcement.

**[35] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Road maintenance
Council maintenance responsibilities and prioritisation.

**[36] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Mobility and Road Safety Strategy
2025 consultation and strategy material.

**SOURCES 37 TO 45**

# References and source notes

**[37] Victoria's Big Build**
Bypassing Shepparton
Completed planning and December 2020 business case.

**[38] Victoria State Emergency Service**
Greater Shepparton local flood guides
Township flood guidance and emergency planning.

**[39] Moira Shire Council**
Setting priorities for Moira's future
26 February 2026; state election advocacy.

**[40] Moira Shire Council**
Major funding boost for Numurkah flood protection
Federal allocation and Council matching contribution announcement.

**[41] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Funding secured for Goulburn Murray Valley fruit fly program
2025 to 2026 funding and request for continuing support.

**[42] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Tailored fruit fly management for Goulburn Murray Valley
2026; regional management and ongoing funding request.

**[43] Agriculture Victoria**
Varroa mite frequently asked questions
Current management and support arrangements.

**[44] Goulburn Murray Water**
Price list
2026 to 2027 service charges.

**[45] Fair Work Ombudsman**
Horticulture pay and piece rates
Current award guidance and daily minimum guarantee.

**SOURCES 46 TO 54**

# References and source notes

**[46] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Budget

Adopted Budget 2026 to 2027.

**[47] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Rate capping

2026 to 2027 cap and exclusions.

**[48] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Waste rates

2026 to 2027 and 2025 to 2026 collection charges.

**[49] State Revenue Office Victoria**

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund calculations and discounts

State levy and relief arrangements.

**[50] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Rates exemptions concessions and rebates

Published assistance arrangements.

**[51] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Purple lid bin for glass

Local 120 litre bin and collection arrangements.

**[52] Victorian Government**

Standardising household recycling across Victoria

Four waste streams and service design.

**[53] Victorian Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action**

Recycling glass

Glass recovery and the container deposit scheme.

**[54] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Kerbside collection

Service options including nappies and incontinence waste.

**SOURCES 55 TO 63**

# References and source notes

**[55] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Economic Development Strategy
2025 to 2030; endorsed June 2025.

**[56] Jobs and Skills Australia**
Jobs and Skills Atlas
Regional data with geography and sample caveats.

**[57] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Empowering Communities fact sheet
2023; historical consultation themes, not current crime counts.

**[58] Family Safety Victoria**
The Orange Door
Family violence and child wellbeing support.

**[59] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Council Plan in action
2025 to 2029 implementation priorities.

**[60] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Universal Access and Inclusion Plan 2026 to 2030
Consultation and development page; adoption status to be checked.

**[61] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Access and inclusion
Existing 2022 to 2026 plan and access responsibilities.

**[62] Munarra**
First Nations excellence
Education professional learning and career pathways.

**[63] University of Melbourne**
Indigenous led educational centre opens
Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence; 2024 opening.

**SOURCES 64 TO 72**

# References and source notes

**[64] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Climate Emergency
Adopted climate action plan and Council operations target.

**[65] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Climate change
Urban forest and energy programs.

**[66] Australian Department of Infrastructure**
Digital connectivity indicators mapping tool
16 January 2026; local connectivity evidence.

**[67] Australian Department of Infrastructure**
Mobile Black Spot Program
Current program and funded project mapping.

**[68] Moira Shire Council**
Draft Annual Budget 2026 to 2027
Consultation page; township proposals, not proof of completion.

**[69] Moira Shire Council**
Flood protection and community infrastructure priorities for Numurkah
3 July 2025; planned drainage and growth corridor work.

**[70] Greater Shepparton City Council**
Language information
Council information in multiple community languages.

**[71] Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District**
Regional settlement experiences
2019 evidence; historical barriers requiring current review.

**[72] Greater Shepparton City Council**
2026 state election priorities launch
Council investment requests across transport health skills and growth.

**SOURCES 73 TO 81**

# References and source notes

**[73] Shepparton Foodshare**
Food security and distribution services
Current service description and agency referral arrangements.

**[74] Australia Post**
Shepparton 3630 postcode
Shepparton and Shepparton South delivery areas.

**[75] Australia Post**
Postcodes beginning with 363
Includes Kialla and other 3631 localities.

**[76] Moira Shire Council**
Numurkah Levee Stage One nears completion
2026 update; southern levee state support sought.

**[77] National Emergency Management Agency**
Disaster Ready Fund
Numurkah southern levees and Barmah project allocations.

**[78] Ambulance Victoria**
Response times: quarter 4, 2025 to 2026
April to June 2026; LGA table on page 5; not electoral district totals.

**[79] Victorian Department of Health**
Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme
Travel and accommodation assistance; eligibility and guidelines from April 2026.

**[80] Goulburn Valley Health**
Screening to specialist care: supporting women’s health
New clinic facilities expected February 2027; existing services continue.

**[81] Premier of Victoria**
Work starts on Shepparton Early Parenting Centre
20 February 2026 construction announcement; not confirmation of opening.

**SOURCES 82 TO 90**

# References and source notes

**[82] Victorian Government**
Thriving Kids implementation roadmap
23 October 2026; Greater Shepparton and Moira service rollout timetable.

**[83] Victorian Government**
Thriving Kids
Program scope and transition information; check individual eligibility.

**[84] Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing**
Strengthening Parent Support Program
Local parent support providers and program expansion.

**[85] Victorian Government**
Community language schools
Accreditation and funding framework.

**[86] Victorian School of Languages**
Face to face classes
Current centre and language listings; confirm enrolment and levels with VSL.

**[87] Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria**
State Election Platform 2026
Advocacy proposals; not a representative survey of Shepparton residents.

**[88] Victorian Government**
Victoria's Anti Racism Strategy 2024 to 2029
Published statewide framework and intended outcomes.

**[89] Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission**
Explaining Victoria's new anti hate laws
Expanded civil protections from 15 April 2026.

**[90] Victorian Multicultural Commission**
Regional Settlement Support Fund
Funded organisations include the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District.

**SOURCES 91 TO 99**

# References and source notes

**[91] Victorian Department of Health**

Refugee and asylum seeker health and wellbeing

Updated July 2026; eligible access arrangements including people without Medicare.

**[92] Victorian Government**

Changes to the Working with Children Check

October 2026 update on training and WWCC Connect.

**[93] Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing**

Home Stretch

Eligible care leaver support to age 21.

**[94] Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing**

Better Futures

Transition support from 15 years and 9 months to age 21.

**[95] Premier of Victoria**

Victoria’s tough bail laws in full effect

30 March 2026 announcement; government policy description, not an independent evaluation.

**[96] Sentencing Advisory Council**

Youth justice custodial order

New order operating from 30 September 2026.

**[97] Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission**

Monthly local government area gaming machine data

October 2026 workbook; 2025 to 2026 annual totals; venue geography, not residents’ total gambling.

**[98] Victorian Department of Health**

Gambling harm prevention and response in Victoria

Prevention and treatment services including language access.

**[99] Labour Hire Authority Victoria**

Horticulture industry

Provider and host responsibilities; changes from October 2026.

**SOURCES 100 TO 108**

# References and source notes

**[100] Labour Hire Authority Victoria**
Horticulture workers
Worker information, reporting and translated resources.

**[101] WorkSafe Victoria**
Psychological health regulations: frequently asked questions
Psychosocial risk duties under regulations effective December 2025.

**[102] VicRoads**
Convert your overseas licence
Residence and testing rules depend on circumstances and issuing jurisdiction.

**[103] Berry Street**
Driving support and mentoring: TAC L2P program
Program includes Greater Shepparton and Moira; age and eligibility limits apply.

**[104] Service Victoria**
20 per cent off rego: applications closed
Applications were open 1 June to 31 August 2026.

**[105] Consumer Affairs Victoria**
New changes to rental laws
Changes from October 2026 and earlier reforms; distinguish commencement dates.

**[106] Consumer Affairs Victoria**
New minimum energy efficiency standards
Phased commencement from March 2027; requirements depend on the measure and tenancy.

**[107] Victorian Government**
Home Warranty Insurance
Updated October 2026; arrangements for eligible contracts from July 2026.

**[108] Building and Plumbing Commission**
Defects in your building work
Homeowner guidance, defects and rectification processes.

**SOURCES 109 TO 117**

# References and source notes

**[109] Agriculture Victoria**

Drought support package

Farm Drought Support Grants and Farm Advisory Service closed 30 September 2026.

**[110] Victorian Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action**

Victorian Basin Communities IDC

State position and community impact concerns about water recovery.

**[111] Australian Department of Climate Change Energy the Environment and Water**

Voluntary Water Purchase Program for the 450 GL

Updated September 2026; southern Basin purchasing and socioeconomic considerations.

**[112] VicGrid**

Renewable energy zones

Current declaration information; proposed Central North zone will not proceed.

**[113] Victorian Government and Essential Services Commission**

Notice of amendments to the Energy Retail Code of Practice

Reforms in February, July and October 2026.

**[114] Parliament of Victoria**

Inquiry into the 2022 flood event in Victoria

Final report July 2024 and government response February 2025.

**[115] Australian Treasury**

Improving insurance coverage

Guiding principles on recognising mitigation in insurance; not a guaranteed premium reduction.

**[116] Victorian Auditor General's Office**

Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria 2025 to 2026

October 2026 audit and analysis; distinguish actual results from forecasts.

**[117] Victorian Government**

Budget 2026 to 2027: regional Victoria

Published regional allocations including GSSC, PET services and Shepparton rail.

**SOURCES 118 TO 126**

# References and source notes

**[118] State Revenue Office Victoria**
Understanding land tax
Taxable land and exemptions; a principal residence is generally exempt.

**[119] ARC Justice**
Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre: general legal advice
Local legal service; eligibility, scope and capacity apply.

**[120] Consumer Affairs Victoria**
Financial counselling program providers
Provider list includes Primary Care Connect for Greater Shepparton and Moira.

**[121] Fines Victoria**
Work and Development Permit
Eligibility and approved sponsor rules for nonfinancial ways to address eligible fines.

**[122] Fines Victoria**
Special circumstances
Review criteria and supporting evidence; not every hardship qualifies.

**[123] Victorian Ombudsman**
Complaints
Jurisdiction, complaint process and public body accountability.

**[124] Victorian Electoral Commission**
Political finance laws 2026
Changes to funding, disclosure and compliance.

**[125] Country Fire Authority**
Volunteer frequently asked questions
Operational and nonoperational roles, training and participation.

**[126] Country Fire Authority**
Emergency response times
Published performance reporting; station and area context matters.

**SOURCES 127 TO 135**

# References and source notes

**[127] Victorian Department of Health**

Japanese encephalitis

Updated August 2026; Greater Shepparton and Moira included in eligible high risk areas.

**[128] Goulburn Valley Water**

Water quality

Annual and monthly water quality reports; no contamination allegation in this report.

**[129] Hume Region Palliative Care Consortium**

Goulburn Valley Hospice Care

Local home based palliative care and service area.

**[130] Victorian Department of Health**

Local Health Service Networks

Networks operating since July 2025; services retain local identity and leadership.

**[131] First Peoples State Relations Victoria**

What Treaty delivers

Updated October 2026; Treaty and Gellung Warl commencement, functions and limits.

**[132] Tobacco Licensing Victoria**

Compliance and enforcement

2026 licensing and closure powers; roles of police and councils.

**[133] Committee for Greater Shepparton**

Community Connector Program

Existing relocation and family support; provider description, not an independent retention evaluation.

**[134] Victorian Government / The Orange Door**

Access, interpreters and after-hours support

Business-hours service and interpreter callback arrangements; accessed 11 November 2026.

**[135] GV Health**

Other support services: family violence pathways

Local Orange Door and Marian Community crisis support; availability does not establish capacity or response time.

**SOURCES 136 TO 144**

# References and source notes

**[136] Victorian Department of Transport and Planning**

Plan for Victoria: housing targets

Net additional dwelling targets to 2051 are municipal planning targets, not funded construction commitments.

**[137] Goulburn Valley Libraries**

Numurkah Library: Tech 1-On-1

Free appointment-based device help advertised for 11 November 2026; an example of provision, not a permanent timetable.

**[138] Victorian Health Translations / ACCC**

Scam information in your language

Directory of ACCC multilingual resources; reviewed January 2026.

**[139] Northern Victoria Institute of TAFE**

About NVITAFE

Single legal and governance entity from 1 January 2026; GOTAFE and Wodonga TAFE delivery continues.

**[140] GOTAFE**

Course transfers

November 2026 enrolment changes for selected courses; provider states training remains at listed local campuses.

**[141] Homes Victoria**

Applications on the Victorian Housing Register

Data definitions and September 2026 reporting; location preferences are not unique households in a district.

**[142] Parliament of Victoria**

Shepparton electorate housing: adjournment contribution

Kim O’Keeffe, 18 June 2026; a request to audit vacant public housing, not an audited vacancy count.

**[143] Australian Government / My Aged Care**

Support at Home program

Program replaced Home Care Packages and short-term restorative care in November 2025; eligibility, funding and fees require individual assessment.

**[144] Victorian Electoral Commission**

State elections

Election date, representation and timetable; checked 11 November 2026.

**SOURCES 145 TO 153**

# References and source notes

**[145] Victorian Electoral Commission**

2026 voting options

Early voting dates, hours, mobile and telephone arrangements; check venue details before travelling.

**[146] Victorian Electoral Commission**

Vote by post

2026 application and return deadlines; accessed 11 November 2026.

**[147] Victorian Electoral Commission**

How to fill out state ballot papers

Current instructions for both houses, including at least five preferences above or below the upper-house line.

**[148] Victorian Electoral Commission**

2026 Electoral Act amendments

Group voting tickets removed and electoral timetable changes; do not use superseded 2022 instructions.

**[149] Victorian Electoral Commission**

Accessible voting options

Low-sensory session on 17 November, venue access and eligible telephone voting; checked 11 November 2026.

**[150] Victorian Electoral Commission**

Enrol to vote

Eligibility and current instructions for people who missed the enrolment deadline; checked 11 November 2026.

**[151] Victorian Electoral Commission**

What happens at a voting centre

Language assistance and voting-centre support; checked 11 November 2026.

**[152] Greater Shepparton City Council**

Annual Report 2025 to 2026

Early years staffing and participation reporting, including maternal and child health and supported playgroups.

**[153] Victorian Electoral Commission**

2026 state election: how-to-vote cards

Party and candidate cards suggest preferences; the voter decides how to vote.

**SOURCES 154 TO 161**

# References and source notes

**[154] V/Line**

Shepparton Line train and coach timetable

Effective 23 August 2026; train counts, scheduled duration and northern coach connections checked on 11 November 2026.

**[155] Jaclyn Symes MP**

Shepparton bus network set for review

Announcement dated 9 October 2026; consultation planned for early 2027, distinct from funded service implementation.

**[156] V/Line**

Barmah to Melbourne via Shepparton or Heathcote

Effective 23 August 2026; coach links through Nathalia, Picola, Bunbartha and Zeerust.

**[157] V/Line**

Murraylink Mildura to Albury timetable

Effective 23 August 2026; connections through Shepparton, northern towns, Kyabram and Echuca.

**[158] V/Line**

Bendigo to Albury via Shepparton timetable

Listed in the current timetable catalogue; linked PDF is dated 1 December 2024. Used for route structure, not current departure-time claims.

**[159] V/Line**

Sydney to Shepparton via Benalla timetable

Current catalogue link; PDF dated 1 December 2024. Shows coach and rail transfers and NSW TrainLink ticket conditions; verify current connections.

**[160] V/Line**

Performance definitions and targets

Reliability and punctuality are separate measures. Long-distance punctuality allows up to 10 minutes 59 seconds; no latest-month local percentage adopted here.

**[161] V/Line**

August 2026 timetable changes

48 additional weekly Shepparton Line services announced from 23 August 2026; some coach journeys replaced by trains.

## Updating this report

Update a figure when its source period or geographic boundary changes. Update a project when funding is allocated, a contract is awarded, construction begins or a service opens. Keep those milestones separate. Preserve earlier versions so residents can see what changed and why.

Public corrections and additional local evidence should identify the relevant section and provide a source or a description of the lived experience. Individual experiences are valuable; they should not be converted into population-wide claims without supporting evidence.