

Mansfield Shire Council

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

2026



Mansfield
Shire

HIGH COUNTRY HERITAGE: OUR PAST. OUR FUTURE.



Mansfield Shire, at the gateway to the High Country, is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes in Victoria. Surrounded by wilderness and founded by pioneers and cattlemen, life here is still lived in accordance with the region's foundational tenets of adventure and agriculture.

Home to over ten thousand Victorians (10,178 at 2022 census), the Mansfield Shire community is forecast to experience ongoing population growth of 2% per annum as more and more people seek a tree-change from Melbourne and further afield.

Sitting in the shadow of Mt Buller and on the doorstep of the largest snowfields in the Southern Hemisphere, Mansfield Shire is also a major tourism hub for Melbourne, interstate, and foreign tourists. The region welcomes 600,000 visitors yearly and that number continues to grow as more people look to holiday in the year-round beauty of the wilderness.

But the wilderness must be respected and a self-reliant community here must be prepared to protect itself and its guests for what nature throws its way. Improved emergency resilience is a longstanding priority for the people of Mansfield Shire.

Mansfield Shire Council, a small council with a limited ratepayer base, welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Victorian and Australian governments on projects that feed responsible and sustainable growth, developing infrastructure in the region while maintaining amenity and the unique country character that makes our shire such a beloved home to our community and destination for tourists.

HOW WE ADVOCATE

Through our advocacy efforts, we act as the voice of the Mansfield Shire community and strive to accomodate growth and prepare for the future.



Mansfield Shire Council advocates in the following ways:

We **listen** to our community. It is their feedback that primarily informs our advocacy priorities.

We **maintain relationships** and meet regularly with decision-makers and key influencers across Victorian and Australian government bodies. We keeping them updated on our changing priorities and proactively look for opportunities for collaboration.

We **collaborate** with local politicians to address the issues that affect our shared communities.

We **partner** with other councils, peak bodies and community advocacy groups to collaborate on issues important to the community.

We **investigate** funding opportunities and submitting grants in collaboration with community organisations.

We **maintain memberships** to relevant associations such as Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Rural Councils Victoria (RCV) and Tourism North East (TNE).

We **advocate** publicly through traditional and new media and word of mouth.

ADVOCACY PRIORITY DRIVERS



EMERGENCY RESILIENCE

Projects that prepare and safeguard the Mansfield Shire community for bushfires, floods and other emergencies.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Projects that create, maintain or repair the collective resources that ensure quality of life in Mansfield Shire.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Projects that encourage, stimulate or create growth in Mansfield Shire's local economy.

PLANNING & SAFETY

Projects that prepare and safeguard the Mansfield Shire community for forecasted growth and a changing world.

ADVOCACY PRIORITY #1

Emergency Services Precinct

Gaffneys Creek Fire 2026





Longwood Fire 2026

Reduce Mansfield Shire’s vulnerability to emergencies

Desired outcome

The construction of a fit for purpose Emergency Resilience and Recovery facility that reduces Mansfield Shire’s vulnerability, and improves its resilience, to fires, floods and other emergencies.

Why is this a priority?

Mansfield Shire’s geography leaves our region vulnerable to bushfires and floods. If we are to be responsible for our rapidly growing community and for the safety of over 600,000 visitors from Melbourne and further afield each year, we need adequate facilities.

Housing all of our emergency service teams in one easily accessible place will enable more effective emergency response coordination and allow for better outcomes while offering long term cost savings.

During the 2026 Longwood Fire, over 1000 fire-impacted people escaped the heat, the smoke and the trauma of the fire at the Mansfield Emergency Relief Centre. The facilities they fled to were not adequately equipped to offer a safe, comfortable place in which people could connect with relief and recovery services.

Project cost estimates

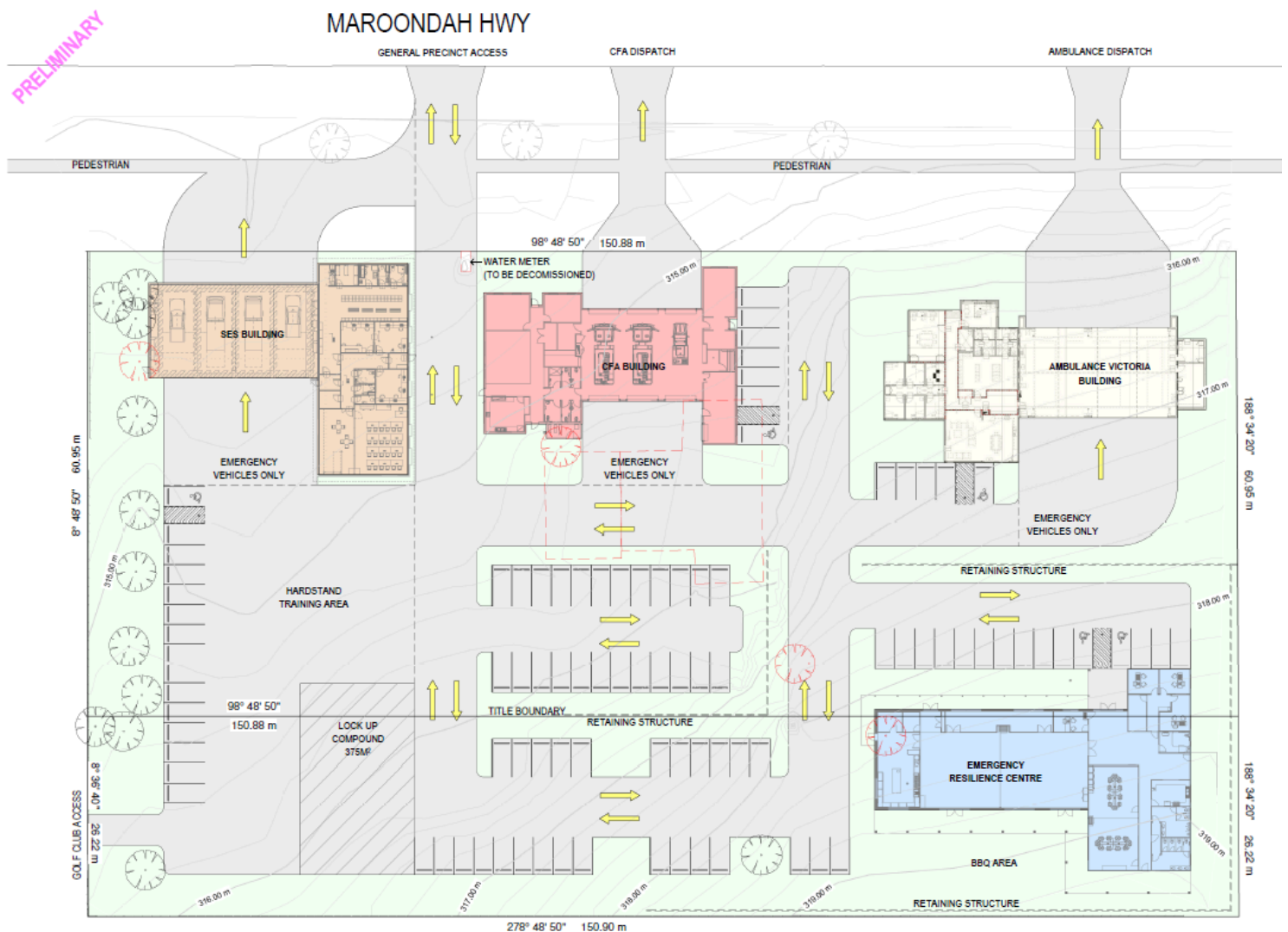
Emergency Services Resilience and Recovery Centre	\$3,834,955
SES Facility	\$4,300,714
AV Facility	\$5,329,059
Carpark, landscaping, Indigenous art	\$4,691,925
Total Project Cost	\$23,006,653
Total Funding Required	\$18,850,653

**Mansfield Shire Council has pledged \$4,000,000 in land to the project*
**Contributions from partners in the Mansfield Shire community stand at \$156,000*



Emergency Services Precinct

including Resilience and Recovery Hub



SITE PLAN
1:500

NOTE:
- ALL RL'S ARE REFERENCED ACCORDING TO THE AUSTRALIAN HEIGHT DATUM (AHD).
- ALIGNMENT OF TITLE BOUNDARY FROM EXISTING FENCE POSTS. RE-ESTABLISHMENT MAY BE REQUIRED.



Mansfield Shire

ADVOCACY PRIORITY #2

Mansfield Showgrounds – Relief and Staging Centre





Upgrade facilities at Mansfield Showgrounds

Desired outcome

Upgrade the Mansfield Showgrounds so it can function effectively as an emergency relief and staging centre while continuing to support major community and agricultural events. This includes a new purpose-built pavilion with solar and battery, upgraded shower and toilet facilities, and improved on-site generator and water pump infrastructure.

Why is this a Priority?

The Mansfield Showgrounds are a vital community asset, supporting major agricultural and equestrian events while also serving as a long-established emergency relief and staging area. Its proximity to town, multiple buildings, enclosed arenas and undercover stockyards make it one of the few locations capable of accommodating large numbers of people and animals during emergencies.

During the recent fire event, nearly 200 people and animals sought refuge at the Showgrounds, exposing serious infrastructure limitations, including inadequate amenities and an un-insulated pavilion unusable in extreme heat. As emergency events become more frequent and severe, urgent upgrades are required to ensure the site can operate safely and effectively as an emergency relief centre, protecting community safety, animal welfare and emergency response capability.

The Ask: Support in obtaining funding to upgrade the Mansfield Showgrounds Relief and Staging Centre - \$1.8M



Mansfield Shire

ADVOCACY PRIORITY #3

Mansfield Hunting & Fishing Expo Expansion





Expand expo to a three-day event

Desired outcome

Deliver a free, family-focused MHF Outdoor Expo, held annually in late February, showcasing the best of the outdoor and firearms industry through expert speakers, live demonstrations, and leading brands, alongside strong participation from local businesses and producers. Expanding the expo from a one-day event to a three-day experience will encourage visitors to stay longer, explore the region, and engage with surrounding townships, generating broader and more sustained economic benefits.

Why is this a Priority?

The MHF Outdoor Expo already demonstrates significant economic impact, attracting around 18,000 visitors at the end of February, a critical period for regional tourism. The event is well positioned to act as a cornerstone for bushfire economic recovery, driving visitation and spending across Mansfield Shire and surrounding communities. Townships such as Woods Point, Jamieson, Howqua, Goughs Bay and Bonnie Doon experienced substantial losses during what should have been peak trading season and urgently require renewed economic activity.

This year's event is particularly important, with Mt Buller experiencing over 100 booking cancellations and a setback to its planned summer recovery campaign. Expanding the expo to three days provides an immediate and proven opportunity to attract visitors back to the region, encourage longer stays, support local operators, and spread recovery benefits across Mansfield, Mt Buller and the wider alpine and lakes communities.

**The Ask: Funds to support the expansion of the Mansfield Hunting & Fishing Expo
- \$50,000**



Mansfield Shire

ADVOCACY PRIORITY #4

MANSFIELD WINTER FESTIVAL





New Winter Event for Mansfield & Mt Buller

Desired outcome

Deliver a three-weekend winter activation program from 5–21 June 2026 to coincide with the opening of the Mt Buller ski season and position Mansfield as a vibrant winter destination. Delivered in partnership with Mt Buller, the program will include a winter lighting trail linking the main street to the Botanic Gardens and Mt Buller, igloo dining with local chefs, family snow activities, and the Mansfield Lantern Festival. The event aims to attract 6,000–9,000 visitors, increase overnight stays and stimulate local economic activity.

Why is this a Priority?

Winter represents a critical tourism opportunity for Mansfield and surrounding communities, particularly at the start of the ski season, when visitor numbers can be significantly influenced by activation and events. Coordinating a town-wide winter program to coincide with the opening of Mt Buller creates a strong incentive for visitors to arrive earlier, stay longer, and spend locally, spreading economic benefits across accommodation, hospitality, retail and tourism operators.

This project also strengthens regional collaboration between Mansfield and Mt Buller, ensuring that economic benefits flow beyond the resort and into the township and broader shire. By creating a high-quality, multi-weekend program that appeals to families, visitors and locals alike, the event supports tourism growth, enhances community vibrancy during winter, and helps build long-term resilience in the regional economy.

The Ask: Funding for light display and festival - \$210,000



Mansfield Shire

ADVOCACY PRIORITY #5

MANSFIELD HIGH COUNTRY FESTIVAL





Boost for High Country Festival - Mansfield & Mt Buller

Desired outcome

Deliver a nine-day spring festival from 30 October to 7 November 2026 that celebrates the culture, creativity and community spirit of the Mansfield district and Mt Buller. The festival will feature music, arts, makers, parades, markets, food, family activities and fireworks, culminating in the CFA Torchlight Parade. In partnership with Mt Buller, the program will also highlight off-season activities such as mountain biking, hiking and rock climbing, attracting 6,000–7,000 visitors and driving visitation, participation and local economic activity across the region.

Why is this a Priority?

This festival is a signature community event that strengthens regional identity while delivering significant social and economic benefits. It provides an important opportunity to recognise and thank emergency service volunteers through the CFA Torchlight Parade, reinforcing community resilience and appreciation. By partnering with Mt Buller to promote off-season activities, the event also supports tourism diversification, extends visitation beyond peak periods and encourages visitors to engage with both the township and alpine areas, spreading benefits across the wider district.

The Ask: Funding support to boost Mansfield High Country Festival - \$40,000



Mansfield Shire

ADVOCACY PRIORITY #6

ROADS AND ROUNDABOUTS





Make Mansfield Shire's roads safe

Desired outcome

Further investment from state and federal governments into Mansfield Shire's system of state and locally managed road with an emphasis on road maintenance and the construction of roundabouts to ensure the safety of a growing community and increasing numbers of visitors to the shire.

Why is this a Priority?

According to the 2021 Census, Mansfield Shire ranks 71st out of 79 Victorian LGAs by population, yet 22nd by land size, reflecting its role as a major regional tourism destination rather than a population centre. While the Shire has a modest base of around 10,000 ratepayers, it welcomes more than 600,000 visitors each year, many travelling from Melbourne and interstate to access Mt Buller, lakes, trails and High Country attractions. This places significant pressure on an extensive road network that is critical to the visitor economy.

Safe, reliable roads are fundamental to maintaining Mansfield's reputation as an accessible and welcoming destination. Ongoing investment in road surfaces, intersections and roundabouts is essential to support high visitor volumes, reduce congestion and ensure a positive and safe travel experience. With regional Victoria accounting for 52% of road fatalities despite representing only 25% of the population, improving road safety in tourism-intensive regions like Mansfield is vital, not only to protect residents, but to safeguard visitor confidence, sustain tourism growth and support the region's long-term economic prosperity.

The Ask: \$\$\$



Mansfield Shire

Kirsten Alexander
Chief Executive Officer
Mansfield Shire Council
33 Highett Street, Mansfield
03 5775 8530 | 0436 925 502
kirsten.alexander@mansfield.vic.gov.au
www.mansfield.vic.gov.au



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