

## 6.2.4 Update - Sealing the Hills Program

**Responsible GM:** Peter Benazic  
**Author:** David Fice

### Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- Provide endorsement under the CEO for Council Officers to continue to advocate for the delivery of the 'Sealing the Hills' project.
- Note the advocacy effort that has been undertaken.

### Attachments

1. Letter Hon Catherine King Sealing the Hills 20/07/22 [6.2.4.1 - 3 pages]
2. Joint Letter Sealing the Hills Cardinia Yarra Ranges [6.2.4.2 - 2 pages]

### Executive Summary

Endorsement will provide our Council Officers with the direction required to continue advocating for the 'Sealing the Hills' project to be delivered in its entirety.

Noting the advocacy efforts that have been undertaken will support our Councillors to be informed when discussing the matter with the community.

### Background

In 2019 Council received \$150 million from the Australian Government to seal 109km of unsealed roads in our hills communities.

The project received bipartisan support with commitments made by both the Labor and Liberal parties.

In July 2022, Council wrote to The Hon. Catherine King formally requesting confirmation that the project would continue under the newly elected Government. We did not receive a reply. (Attachment 1)

Council identified that the 'Sealing the Hills' project was not detailed in the Australian Government's revised budget in October 2022.

Immediate clarification was sought about the future of funding status, and a letter was written to the Prime Minister in November 2022. (Attachment 2)

Our Mayor, councillor Tammy Radford, and David Fice, Manager of Community Infrastructure Delivery, travelled to Canberra on Monday, November 28, 2022, to meet with The Hon. Catherine Kings, Chief of Staff, to discuss the progress of this project. Councillor Jim Childs, the Mayor of Yarra Ranges, also attended this meeting.

Both councils are awaiting an official response from the responsible Minister.

We understand there is still \$128 million in outstanding funding promised to complete the entire 'Sealing the Hills' program

The decision to discontinue funding from this initiative occurred without consultation with our community or council.

This funding would have supported us to:

- Seal hundreds of kilometres of roads
- Reduce dust and improve livability for the locality
- Deliver essential improvements to road safety
- Improve access to our schools and community facilities, and
- Improve access for our residents, tourists, and members of emergency services.

Council is working hard to complete works already underway and progressing planning for this much-needed infrastructure project.

On behalf of our communities, we would be extremely disappointed should federal funding not be available for the entirety of this vitally important road safety program.

### **Policy Implications**

Nil

### **Relevance to Council Plan**

#### **1.1 We empower our communities to be healthy, connected and resilient**

1.1.4 Facilitate a partnership approach to create safer communities.

#### **2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places**

2.1.1 Advocate, plan for and deliver accessible community infrastructure and services that address community need.

2.1.5 Upgrade Council's road network to improve safety and connectivity while considering traffic demand and freight transport needs.

#### **5.1 We practise responsible leadership**

5.1.2 Manage our finances responsibly and leave a positive legacy for future generations.

5.1.4 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy.

### **Climate Emergency Consideration**

N/A

### **Consultation/Communication**

Council Officers will continue to consult with the community as per the project standard process.

All relevant line managers have been involved in the advocacy work undertaken.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

Nil

**Conclusion**

It is respectfully requested that Councillors consider endorsing the recommendation for Council Officers to continue advocating for the ‘sealing the hills’ initiative at the Ordinary Council meeting in December.



26 July 2022

The Hon. Catherine King, MP  
Minister for Infrastructure  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Via email:** Minister.King@mo.infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Minister,

**Re: Sealing the Hills project – Cardinia Shire Council**

**Roads for the Community - Yarra Ranges Council**

Congratulations on your recent election victory and appointment as the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Cardinia Shire Council and Yarra Ranges Council both look forward to working with you and your colleagues.

During the campaign you had the opportunity to visit both Cardinia and Yarra Ranges where the mayors of each Council spoke briefly with you about much-needed infrastructure improvements for our councils as well as progress in delivering the *Sealing the Hills* project at Cardinia Shire Council and the *Roads for the Community* program at Yarra Ranges Council.

We are writing to you to formally request confirmation that these projects will continue under your new government as planned under the preceding government's funding model.

For background, the former Australian Government committed \$150 million each to Cardinia Shire Council and Yarra Ranges Council, across the electorates of Casey and La Trobe, to construct unmade roads throughout each municipality.

The *Sealing the Hills* project at Cardinia Shire Council will see the construction of 164 prioritised roads (109 km) throughout the shire. The project is estimated to cost \$176 million, with approximately \$26 million being funded through resident contributions via a Victorian Local Government Act landowner Special Charge Scheme.

The *Roads for the Community* program at Yarra Ranges Council will deliver the construction of 571 unmade local roads (187 km) through a \$200 million program comprising \$150 million in federal funding and a further \$50 million in funding from abutting property owners for roads primarily across the Dandenong's but also the urban growth areas of 39 suburbs and townships of the municipality.

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**Yarra Ranges Council**  
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In the order of 8,000 properties abutting unmade roads will directly benefit from the initiative through improved local amenity, reduced dust, increased safety of travel during bushfire events, improved access to schools and community facilities and reduced maintenance costs for vehicles

Both councils have coordinated an extensive consultation process involving engagement with landowners and residents and implemented a comprehensive approach to community engagement where construction of any road would not proceed unless a majority vote from benefiting residents is achieved.

Additionally, both councils have established a process to support residents experiencing financial hardship who are interested in participating but may not have the financial means available to them. The prioritised roads are widespread throughout the communities of both municipalities and include the suburbs of:

<b>Cardinia Shire Council</b>	<b>Yarra Ranges Council</b>		
Avonsleigh	Badger Creek	Lilydale	Seville
Beaconsfield	Belgrave	Menzies Creek	Seville East
Beaconsfield Upper	Belgrave Heights	Millgrove	Silvan
Cockatoo	Belgrave South	Monbulk	Tecoma
Dewhurst	Chum Creek	Montrose	The Patch
Emerald	Don Valley	Mooroolbark	Upper Ferntree Gully
Gembrook	East Warburton	Mount Dandenong	Upwey
Guys Hill	Emerald	Mount Evelyn	Wandin North
Nar Nar Goon North	Ferny Creek	Narre Warre East	Warburton
Menzies Creek	Healesville	Olinda	Wesburn
Mount Burnett	Kallista	Powelltown	Woori Yallock
Pakenham Upper	Kalorama	Sassafras	Yarra Glen
	Launching Place	Selby	Yarra Junction

The roads selected were for various reasons, including linkages to existing sealed networks, roads abutting schools, traffic volumes, convenience, safety and reduced ongoing maintenance.

Construction has commenced and is progressing strongly with designs and investigations underway for over half of the roads in the overall program for both municipalities.

For Cardinia Shire Council, it is forecast that \$15 million of construction will be delivered in the 22/23FY, and a following \$25 million of construction is forecast to be delivered year on year for the following five years. Yarra Ranges Council will deliver a program of \$23.36 million of construction for the 22/23FY and a further average of \$30 million per annum for the successive five years.

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During the lead up to the 2019 federal election, bipartisan support was received for this funding initiative by candidates for both major parties. Recognising the significant benefit the program has delivered to community already, and for the benefit of those communities with programmed work over the coming years, Cardinia Shire and Yarra Ranges Councils seek confirmation that your government will continue its commitment that was provided back in 2019 as we look to continue delivering this significant program of work across the remaining years of the government's commitment.

Should the Australian Government's funding not be available, the program will be critically jeopardised and will need to be abandoned by both councils, despite significant work being completed in design, approvals, and community engagement to coordinate landowner involvement in the program of activity.

This funding initiative of the Australian Government has a high level of visibility throughout the Cardinia Shire and Yarra Ranges communities, with the benefits being significantly widespread among our residents.

You can find additional information concerning the *Sealing the Hills* project on the Cardinia Shire Council website: [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au) and the *Roads for the Community* program on the Yarra Ranges Council website <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Development/Roads-drains-footpath/Road-maintenance-and-construction/Roads-for-Community-program>.

Please contact David Fice, Manager of Community Infrastructure and Delivery on 03 5943 4593 at Cardinia Shire Council or Kim O'Connor, Manager Infrastructure Services on 0400 399 248 at Yarra Ranges Council should you wish to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the contents of this letter.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Springfield".

**Mayor Cr Jeff Springfield**  
Cardinia Shire Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Child".

**Mayor Cr Jim Child**  
Yarra Ranges Council

CC: The Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers MP  
Treasurer  
**Via email:** [jim.chalmers@treasury.gov.au](mailto:jim.chalmers@treasury.gov.au)



10 November 2022

The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP  
 Prime Minister of Australia  
 PO Box 6022  
 House of Representatives  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600

**via email:** a.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re: Urgent attention - Sealing the Hills Project - Cardinia Shire Council  
 Roads for the Community - Yarra Ranges Council**

We are writing to you as a matter of urgency to formally request you reconsider any decision made to discontinue funding for the "Sealing the Hills" and "Roads for our community" projects.

This is a significant infrastructure initiative that spans both the Cardinia Shire and Yarra Ranges communities. The Australian Government originally announced it in 2019 with bipartisan support and a total investment of \$300 million.

This funding is absolutely vital for both of our communities and supporting our Councils to seal hundreds of kilometres of unsealed roads. The program will deliver essential improvements to both road safety and access for our residents, tourists, and members of emergency services. Our communities have been severely impacted by major storms, most notably the June 9, 2021, storm which was the largest on record, and are some of the highest-risk bushfire areas in the state. A dangerous network of unsealed roads adds another layer of complexity.

Both Councils have coordinated and commenced an extensive consultation process involving engagement with landowners, residents, and key community groups in the surrounding areas. Construction has commenced with designs and investigations underway for more than half of the roads in the overall program for both municipalities. This follows years of consultation with our local communities and advocacy efforts on behalf of these communities to address their very valid concerns.

However, despite significant resource allocation by both Councils and enormous community expectation with works completed in design, approvals, and community engagement to coordinate landowner involvement and co-investment for delivery, this decision to strip funding from the initiative was made without any consultation with the community and or the Councils.

Should the Australian Government's funding no longer be available, both Councils will have no choice but to abandon this project at great reputational and financial risk to all levels of government.

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We seek your immediate attention and appeal to you to reconsider any decision to not progress with this project. We also request to meet urgently with you and The Hon Catherine King to complete any consultation required to make a decision that would deliver on promises made and address local impacts.

Please contact Cathy Douglas, Executive Assistant to the CEO at Cardinia Shire Council on 03 5943 4211 or [c.douglas@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:c.douglas@cardinia.vic.gov.au) or Shannon Woodward, Support & Co-Ordination Officer, for the Office of the CEO, Yarra Ranges Council on 03 9294 6204 or [shannon.woodward@yarraranges.vic.gov.au](mailto:shannon.woodward@yarraranges.vic.gov.au) to coordinate a suitable time to meet.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Radford".

**Cr Tammy Radford**  
Mayor  
Cardinia Shire Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. C. Child".

**Cr Jim Child**  
Mayor  
Yarra Ranges Shire Council

cc: Mr Michael Livingstone  
Advisor to The Hon. Ben Carroll, MP  
**via email:** [michael.livingstone@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:michael.livingstone@minstaff.vic.gov.au)