

# central highlands COUNCIL



**ANNUAL PLAN  
2025/2026**

## CURRENT COUNCILLORS ON 30 JUNE 2025



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## PREFACE

The 2025-2026 Annual Plan for the Central Highlands Council has been prepared and adopted by Council in accordance with Section 71 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

The Plan outlines Council's strategic goals and objectives for the coming year.

Council adopted its 2025-2026 Budget Estimates at the Ordinary Council Meeting held at Bothwell on **Tuesday, 17 June 2025**.

Council has increased the General Rate by **5.13%** as well as all Fees and Charges.

All properties within the Central Highlands will contribute towards Council's solid waste costs with a solid waste charge and/or garbage charge being placed on all properties. As an offset, all ratepayers and residents will have free access to the Hamilton Refuse Disposal Site and Council Waste Transfer Stations. Disposal of tyres will incur a charge.

Pensioners may be eligible for a remission. Conditions apply as follows:

- You must be in receipt of one of the following concessions as of the 1 July 2025:
- Pensioner Concession Card (PCC), Health Care Card (HCC), Repatriation Health Card (i.e. Gold Card endorsed Total or Permanent Injury (TPI) or War Widow/Widower DVA.)
- You must have owned the property or be the eligible ratepayer listed on the property on or before the 1 July 2025.
- You must occupy the property as your principal place of residence on or before the 1 July 2025.

If you have already applied for a pensioner rate remission, please check that the remission is printed on your rates notice. If it does not appear on this notice, then please contact Council.

If you have not applied for a pensioner rate remission and the property is your principal place of residence, then please read the eligibility criteria above. If you believe that you are eligible to receive this remission, then you will need to fill out an application form by visiting the Council Office in Bothwell or Hamilton. Alternatively, you can contact Council and request a form to be sent to you or access this form from Council's website. However, applicants will need to provide a photocopy of their card along with their completed application form.

The Department of Treasury and Finance confirms your eligibility. They also set a maximum amount that can be claimed each year, and this is dependent on whether or not you also receive a remission on your water and sewage charges with TasWater.

All applications for a pensioner rate remission for the 2025-2026 financial year will need to be completed on or before the **31 March 2026**.

## **SUMMARY OF BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025-2026**

<b>Estimated Revenue of Council –</b>	<b>\$10,646,596</b>
<b>Estimated Capital Income of Council –</b>	<b>\$1,375,067</b>
<b>Estimated Expenditure of Council –</b>	<b>\$10,946,143</b>
<b>Estimated New Borrowings of Council –</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Estimated Capital Works Program for Council -</b>	<b>\$3,517,247</b>
<b>Estimated Operating Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>(\$299,547)</b>

*\*Budget Estimates may be altered during the financial year because of decisions of Council or amendments.*

## **OUR VISION**

To provide residents and visitors opportunities to participate in and enjoy a vibrant local economy, rewarding community life, cultural heritage and a natural environment that is world class.

## **OUR MISSION**

Provide leadership to ensure that local government and other services are provided to satisfy the social, economic and environmental needs of the present-day community, whilst endeavouring to ensure the best possible outcomes for future generations.

## **OUR GOALS**

1. Community Wellbeing – Build capacity to enhance community spirit and sense of wellbeing
2. Infrastructure and Facilities – Manage Council's physical assets in an efficient and effective manner
3. Financial Sustainability – Manage Council's finances and assets to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of Council
4. Natural Environment – Encourage responsible management of the natural resources and assets in the Central Highlands
5. Economic Development – Encourage economic viability within the municipal area
6. Governance and Leadership – Provide governance and leadership in an open, transparent, accountable and responsible manner in the best interests of the community

# **FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL AND COUNCILLORS**

The Central Highlands Council is a body corporate established under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993*. Council's formal policy setting and decision making role is vested in its nine elected Councillors who meet every month in open Council. The Mayor is Council's chairperson and principal spokesperson.

Under Section 28 of the *Local Government Act 1993* -

- (1) A councillor, in the capacity of an individual councillor, has the following functions:
  - (a) to represent the community;
  - (b) to act in the best interest of the community;
  - (c) to facilitate communication by the council with the community;
  - (d) to participate in the activities of council;
  - (e) to undertake duties and responsibilities as authorised by council.
- (2) The councillors of a council collectively have the following functions:
  - (a) to develop and monitor the implementation of strategic plans and budgets;
  - (b) to determine and monitor the application of policies, plans and programs for –
    - (i) the efficient and effective provision of services and facilities; and
    - (ii) the efficient and effective management of assets; and
    - (iii) the fair and equitable treatment of employees of the council;
  - (c) to facilitate and encourage the planning and development of the municipal area in the best interests of the community;
  - (d) to appoint and monitor the performance of the general manager;
  - (e) to determine and review the council's resource allocation and expenditure activities;

- (f) to monitor the manner in which the services are provided by the council.
- (3) In performing any function under this Act or any other Act, a councillor must not:
  - (a) direct or attempt to direct an employee of the council in relation to the discharge of the employee's duties; or
  - (b) perform any function of the mayor without the approval of the mayor.
- (4) A councillor is to represent accurately the policies and decisions of the council in performing the functions of councillor.

## **COUNCIL REVENUES**

Council's principal funding is derived from the levying of rates, user pay charges and government grants. Rates are levied upon properties in relation to their Assessed Annual Value (AAV). The AAV is provided to Council by the Valuer-General. In the 2021–22 financial year the Valuer General provided fresh valuations of all Central Highlands properties. These valuations were effective for rating purposes from July 1, 2022.

The General Rate will be levied upon all rateable properties to provide the resources for all Council's activities, except for those services funded directly by a Service Charge. A charge of **\$348** will be levied on each household that has available the Garbage and Recycling Collection Service and applicable businesses will be charged **\$654**.

To help offset the cost of providing waste management to the Central Highlands by way of waste transfer stations, roadside domestic bins and the Hamilton Refuse Disposal Site, a Solid Waste Charge of **\$216** per annum applies to all non-vacant properties that are not on Council's door-to-door Garbage and Recycling Service with a charge of **\$110** for vacant properties and a charge of **\$623** for commercial properties.

Council has budgeted for an **5.13%** increase overall in the General Rate with 50% of the total General Rate Revenue being spread evenly over all ratepayers (**\$494.76 each**) and the remaining 50% General Rate has been calculated at 2.7585300 cents per dollar of the AAV. Ratepayers have the opportunity to pay by four instalments but should note that a penalty of **10%** is applied on the amount of each instalment unpaid by the due date.

Ratepayers may also make more frequent payments. Payment options have been expanded and include payments by telephone, BPay and Internet facilities. Eftpos, cash and cheque facilities are available at both the Hamilton and Bothwell offices. Payment can also be made at Post Offices and over the phone to Service Tasmania Shops.

Council collects the Fire Levy on behalf of the State Government. A minimum Fire Levy of **\$50** will apply to all rateable properties.

Upon application and prior to the 31 March 2026, eligible pensioners or Health Care Card Holders will be granted a remission on the rates payable on their principal residence. The remission is funded by the State Government.

## **KEY FOCUS AREAS AND SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES AS PER STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Goal 1     Community Wellbeing**

*Build Capacity to enhance community spirit and sense of wellbeing.*

#### **Strategies**

- 1.1 Continue to upgrade existing public open spaces and sporting facilities and encourage community use.
- 1.2 Advocate for improved health, education, transport and other government and non-government services within the Central Highlands.
- 1.3 Continue to strengthen partnerships with all levels of government.
- 1.4 Support and encourage social and community events within the Central Highlands.
- 1.5 Provide support to community organisations and groups.
- 1.6 Foster and develop an inclusive and engaged community with a strong sense of ownership of its area.
- 1.7 Foster and support youth activities in the Central Highlands.



## 2025-2026 Initiatives

- Continue support of local organisations and groups.
- Continue support of community groups and clubs through in-kind assistance as well as through Council's Community Grants Program.
- Continue the annual allocation of funds to local schools to assist with their programs for school children.
- Provide annual bursaries for a child at each local school continuing further education and annual citizenship awards.
- Continue to allocate funds and support for the provision of medical services to Bothwell and advocate for the reopening of services at Ouse.
- Support programs and activities that promote the health and wellbeing of our community.
- Continue to support regional groups of benefit to Central Highlands residents.
- Advocate on behalf of our community on regional, state and national issues.
- Continue with implementation and support the priorities listed in the Central Highlands Health & Wellbeing Plan 2020-2025.
- Continue to support and participate as a member of the Health Action Team Central Highlands (HATCH).
- Develop, in partnership with community organisations and members, to provide annual events in the Municipality like the Hamilton Show and Bushfest.

## Goal 2     Infrastructure and Facilities

*Manage Council's physical assets in an efficient and effective manner.*

### Strategies

- 2.1 Develop and implement a 10-year Asset Management Plan for all classes of assets.
- 2.2 Continue to work at regional and state levels to improve transport and infrastructure.
- 2.3 Seek external funding to assist with upgrading of existing infrastructure and funding of new infrastructure and facilities.
- 2.4 Ensure that the standard of existing assets and services are maintained in a cost-effective manner.

## **2025-2026 Initiatives**

- Allocated appropriate funds to ensure that existing services and assets are maintained effectively.
- Annually review the 10-year Asset Management Plan to include all classes of assets.
- Complete as many Capital Works Projects within the Annual Budget Estimates 2025-2026.

## **Goal 3      Financial Sustainability**

*Manage Council's finances and assets to ensure long term viability and sustainability of Council.*

### **Strategies**

- 3.1 Manage finances and assets in a transparent way to allow the maximisation of resources to provide efficient and consistent delivery of services.
- 3.2 Review annually, Council's Long-Term Financial Management Plan and Long-Term Asset Management Plan.
- 3.3 Where efficiency gains can be identified, resource share services with other Local Government councils.
- 3.4 Increase the level of grant income where possible.
- 3.5 Encourage development to expand Council's rate base.
- 3.6 Identify revenue streams that could complement/substitute for existing resources.
- 3.7 Develop and maintain sound Risk Management processes.

## **2025-2026 Initiatives**

- Identify appropriate grant funding to leverage Council funding for projects.
- Continually review, update Council policies regularly and Council's Risk Register.
- Continue participation in Council Shared Services and South Central Sub-Region Group, and identify other services that can be resource shared.
- Provide financial management reports to Council on a monthly basis.

- Ensure Annual Financial Statements are completed within the legal statutory timeframe.
- Ensure that staff are provided with continual training opportunities especially in Council's new financial software and records management systems.

## **Goal 4     Natural Environment**

*Encourage responsible management of the natural resources and assets in the Central Highlands.*

### **Strategies**

- 4.1 Continue to fund and support the Derwent Catchment Project.
- 4.2 Continue with existing waste minimisation and recycling opportunities.
- 4.3 Promote the reduce, reuse, recycle, recover message.
- 4.4 Continue the program of weed reduction in the Central Highlands.
- 4.5 Ensure the Central Highlands Emergency Management Plan is reviewed regularly to enable preparedness for natural events and emergencies.
- 4.6 Strive to provide a clean and healthy environment.
- 4.7 Support and assist practical programs that address existing environmental problems and improve the environment.

### **2025-2026 Initiatives**

- Allocated funds to continue our support of the Derwent Catchment Project to implement on ground projects and provide a link between Council and the community on natural resource management issues.
- Work with other stakeholders, land managers and government agencies to ensure strategic weed control.
- Undertake roadside weed eradication.
- Monitor the usage of Council waste transfer stations, roadside bins and refuse site to ensure that the facilities meet the needs of our ratepayers and are maintained at an acceptable standard.
- Provide education and encouragement of recycling within the Municipality to extend the life of the Hamilton Refuse Site.

- Facilitate regular meetings of the Central Highlands Emergency Management Committee and ensure that the Central Highlands Emergency Management Plan is reviewed and remains current.
- Actively participate as a member of the Southern Tasmanian Regional Waste Authority.
- Introduce practices to accurately measure waste deposited at the Hamilton Landfill Site to determine the state waste levy to be paid.

## **Goal 5 Economic Development**

*Encourage economic viability within the Municipality.*

### **Strategies**

- 5.1 Encourage expansion in the business sector and opening of new market opportunities.
- 5.2 Support the implementation of Irrigation Schemes.
- 5.3 Continue with the Highlands Tasmania branding.
- 5.4 Encourage the establishment of alternative industries to support job creation and increase permanent residents.
- 5.5 Promote our area's tourism opportunities, destinations and events.
- 5.6 Support existing businesses to continue to grow and prosper.
- 5.7 Develop partnerships with State Government, industry and regional bodies to promote economic and employment opportunities.
- 5.8 Work with the community to further develop tourism in the area.

## 2025-2026 Initiatives

- Continue as a member of Destination Southern Tasmania.
- Continue as a member of Southern Tasmanian Councils Association (STCA) and Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT).
- Continue to support the annual Highlands Bushfest event and Hamilton Show.
- Continue provision of the tourism brochure through the Brochure Exchange facility, Brooke Street Pier, Spirit of Tasmania, and other visitor centres.
- Continue the roll out of the Highlands Tasmania Touring Map.
- Engage and strengthen the community by supporting community events and local initiatives that enhance visitation to the Central Highlands.
- Promotion of Central Highlands through production of material and via Council's website and Council's Facebook page.
- Continue support of the Highlands Digest to enable it to provide community information to residents and visitors.
- Continue to support local events that encourage visitation to the Central Highlands.
- Continue to support the Central Highlands Visitor Management Committee to optimise the use of the Centre and the disbursement of information to tourists and visitors to the Central Highlands and provide funding for the purchase of goods for sale that promote the Central Highlands.
- Work with the South Central Sub-Region Group through the South Central Workforce Network to provide training for jobseekers and connecting job seekers with relevant local employers

## Goal 6 Governance and Leadership

*Provide governance and leadership in an open, transparent, accountable and responsible manner in the best interests of our community as a whole.*

### Strategies

- 6.1 Ensure Council fulfills its legislative and governance responsibilities and its decision making, supported by sustainable policies and procedures.
- 6.2 Ensure that Council members have the resources and skills development opportunities to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

- 6.3 Ensure appropriate management of risk associated with Council's operations and activities.
- 6.4 Provide a supportive culture that promotes the well-being of staff and encourages staff development and continuous learning.
- 6.5 Provide advocacy on behalf of the community and actively engage government and other organisations in the pursuit of community priorities.
- 6.6 Consider the Council's strategic direction in relation to resource sharing with neighbouring councils and opportunities for mutual benefit.
- 6.7 Support and encourage community participation and engagement.
- 6.8 Ensure that customers receive quality responses that are prompt, accurate and fair.
- 6.9 Council decision making will be always made in open council except where legislative or legal requirements determine otherwise.

### **2025-2026 Initiatives**

- Annually review Council's Long-Term Financial Plan and Strategy, as well as all the Long-Term Asset Management Plans.
- Continually monitor and review Council's financial situation and report findings to Council, in a clear and transparent format on a monthly basis.
- Encourage staff to undertake training to further develop their skills.
- Support Elected Members to take advantage of seminars, training and workshops that assist them in their position as a Councillor and their duty to engage in ongoing professional development.
- Review the Risk Register at each Audit Panel Meeting.
- Ensure ongoing compliance with all legislation, regulations and codes of practice which impact upon Council.
- Continue to provide information to our community and ratepayers via newsletters, Council's article in the Highland Digest, our website and our Facebook page.
- Continually review Council policies and update as required.
- Participate in the Future of Local Government Review.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH STATEMENT**

Council will:

- Ensure that Council complies with Public Health requirements.
- Conduct immunisation sessions as required and promote the need for immunisation.
- Ensure proper provision of on-site effluent disposal in compliance with the current regulatory framework, codes, standards and best environmental practice.
- Undertake routine inspection of places of public assembly, food premises, public health risk activities and water carters to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- Promptly investigate environmental health complaints.
- Maintain an effective analysis program for food, recreational waters and general complaints.
- Continue to promote safe food handling through the provision of the I'M ALERT free online food safety training program.
- Provide staff and Councillors with Influenza vaccinations if desired.

## **ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025 - 2026**

Annual Budget Estimates Summary document forms Appendix A of this document.