

Minutes: Rural Advisory Committee

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Tuesday 25th November 2025 - 3pm to 5pm

Community Rooms – 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale

Chair: Cr. Gareth Ward – Yarra Ranges Council (YRC)

Meeting 4 - 2025	
Rural Advisory Committee	Christine Ross; Kevin Sanders; Clive Larkman; Drew Waters; Robert Magdziarz; Kim Anning
Council	Cr Gareth Ward; Amanda Bunn; Michelle Mulholland; Carolyn Neville; Vincenzo Lombardi
Guests	Beth Wallis; Joerg Werdin
Apologies	Rajadurai Thangaraj, Ashley Waters, David Reid, Hamish Mitchell; Jo Chong Wah

Time	Topic	Speaker
2 min 15:00 – 15:02	1) Welcome - Acknowledgement of Country - Apologies - Call for other business items - Macclesfield Hall - Events & banner pole hire	Cr Gareth Ward
5 min 15:02 – 15:07	2) Matters arising from previous minutes • Comms plan for lost livestock ○ Two community communication pieces were distributed: one focused on strategies for securing livestock, and another aimed at media engagement, providing guidance on what to do if a community member encounters lost livestock. ○ It was agreed that the appropriate course of action for the community is to contact VicPol and the local Council, rather than attempting to manage livestock themselves. ○ Media release in local newspaper on 22 Sept 2025. Action: Amanda to investigate if signs can be implemented across the region advising to call 000 if come across lost livestock. Potential to be added to injured wildlife signage. • Adoption of minutes of prior meeting. Moved and Seconded • Opportunity to disclose any conflicts of interest.	Cr Gareth Ward & Amanda Bunn

	○ Nil	
20 mins 15:07 – 15:27	3) Managing your rural property • Caro gave an overview of the event program and topics featured on the day. • Caro and Amanda will report back to RAC first meeting in 2026. • If you have topics you would like to see covered, please contact Amanda.	Amanda Bunn / Carolyn Neville <i>YRC Economic Development</i>
38 mins 15:27 – 16:05	4) Integrated Water Management Plan • Beth gave an overview of the Integrated Water Management Plan for 2026 with final Plan scheduled June 2026. Community consultation in April 2026, including RAC feedback. • This Plan is different from conventional approach – includes both public and private land at multiple scales with higher collaboration between agencies. • The Plan sets direction for the next 10 years. • Climate change impacts. • Decreased water security in this region. • Predicting supply declining with demand increasing. • Water shortfall forecast by 2030. • Brush Creek recycled water process has already commenced to meet urban demands. • Hydraloop greywater treatment system to reduce water use by 25-40% and alleviate the need for rainwater. Use for toilets and washing clothes. • Coranderrk Aqueduct will be retired between 2029 and 2031. Melbourne Water are looking at other options to provide water to affected properties. • Passive drainage and infiltration swale to reduce stormwater runoff, keep water in landscape and improving soil moisture. • Stormwater detention benefits with raingardens and wetlands. Confirmed stormwater is Council's responsibility. <i>Feedback from RAC:</i> • Questioned Council involvement, sought and received clarity regarding roles in water management across levels of Government and industry. • May require changes to planning provisions in estates. • Farmers are leaving the region because of economic challenges, including Council charges. • Separation with the farming community who use water differently – either rainwater or bore water.	Beth Wallis <i>YRC Place Planning & Activations</i>
35 mins 16:05 – 16:40	5) Key issues facing Agriculture Sector in Yarra Ranges / RAC vision for 2026 • Formulating solid plan for the next 12-18 months.	Cr Gareth Ward

	Themes raised: • Planning processes & implications – RAC previously requested more work and input. Advice and assistance on possibilities rather than just approvals or rejections. • Clarification sought on Councils vision/support for Agriculture in the region in the future. • Farming viability for the next 5 years. Closer connection with Council and landowners to understand farming issues. Possibility for council to research alternative crops. • Future of farming • Aging in place - farmers wishing to retire and remain on their property - sublease land to young farmers. Future generation farmers to be further educated for their future direction. • Insurance constraints. • Council assistance with farming, ie. guidance rather than legislation, an agricultural officer. • Horse industry is a professional service rather than farming, and also requires support. • Hobby farms/land size issues. • Succession planning. Additional comments: Cr Ward - Present a formal position on agriculture through the Council meeting process. Amanda – Agribusiness to attend first RAC meeting of 2026 to present their upcoming plans. Action: Cr Ward will collate feedback provided regarding key issues facing Agriculture Sector in YR and 2026 vision for the RAC, along with the 2024 list, and circulate to the RAC for further feedback and to confirm the details are correct. Action: Amanda to delve into organising a session on insurance for RAC/landowners, following on from prior action. <i>Rural postcodes</i> • Advocacy continues for peri-urban postcodes to be classified as rural, a position previously presented to the State Government. • Amanda attended a Federal Government meeting within the past 12 months regarding working visas, where she highlighted the need for peri-urban pensions to remain eligible under visa requirements. • No further updates at this stage. Action: Amanda to add peri-urban to rural postcodes to the Agenda for the next meeting and investigate any updates.	
10 mins 16:50 – 17:00	6) Other business <i>Empowering young farmers Press Release</i>	Cr Gareth Ward

	• Opportunity for young farmer scholarship. <i>Update on GM cotton</i> • Amanda confirmed the gene was approved as specified by the OGTR's correspondence on 14 October 2025. <i>Tomato Potato Psyllid (TPP) Information for Businesses</i> • Businesses in Victoria will soon need to comply with destination jurisdiction entry requirements for TPP when moving plants, produce and carrier material interstate. • There are many constraints regarding dealing with this issue with no training courses available as yet. • Concern some chemicals listed are not allowed for certain food products. • Serious impacts for YRC growers. • TPP webinar scheduled for 27th November for businesses impacted. • Amanda will distribute details of the webinar to the RAC, of which are also on Agriculture Victoria's website. • Monitor advice from Agriculture Victoria for further updates. <i>2025 Advisory Group celebration - CANCELLED</i> • Monday 15 December, 4-6pm, Civic Centre – has since been cancelled. <i>Macclesfield Hall - Christine</i> • Current heating system recently had its yearly inspection which revealed it is omitting carbon monoxide. The Hall Committee does not have funds to replace the heating system. • Local community needs support. Seeking a community grant on a yearly basis to fund the new appliance and other building maintenance. Christine will research community grants available. Action: Carolyn to investigate any grant opportunities to fund maintenance for Macclesfield Hall and report back to the committee. <i>New Banner Pole Fees</i> • Council has notified businesses that fees will be charged for holding events, this is to include covering disposal of waste. • New \$40 fee per banner pole per week for businesses. Committee disagrees with this fee. Action: Carolyn will follow up new banner pole fees and report back to this committee.	
17:00	7) Close	Cr Gareth Ward

Actions:

	Action	Who is to take the lead?	Date Completed
1.	<i>Discuss possibility of a communications plan regarding 'what to do with lost livestock' with Communications and Safer Communities. Explore option of signage. Also contact VicPol and discuss their process.</i>	Amanda Bunn	Completed – update at meeting 4 2025
2.	<i>Further review the high cost of insurance for farming businesses and investigate what assistance can be given, ie. advocacy.</i>	Amanda Bunn	
3.	<i>Organise for Mornington Peninsula to present their model relating to right to farm to Council or to the RAC.</i>	Amanda Bunn	TBC
4.	<i>Investigate if signs can be implemented across the region advising to call 000 if come across lost livestock. Potential to be added to injured wildlife signage.</i>	Amanda Bunn	
5.	<i>Collate feedback provided regarding key issues facing Agriculture Sector in YR and 2026 vision for the RAC, along with the 2024 list, and circulate to the RAC for further feedback and to confirm the details are correct.</i>	Cr. Gareth Ward	
6.	<i>Update on postcodes of designated regional areas for the Working Holiday maker program</i>	Amanda Bunn	
7.	<i>Investigate any grant opportunities to fund maintenance for Macclesfield Hall and report back to the committee.</i>	Carolyn Neville	
8.	<i>Investigate new banner pole fees and report back to this committee.</i>	Carolyn Neville	