

COUNCIL WATCH FLEURIEU INC.

Accountability with Integrity — The time for change is Now !

NEWSLETTER No. 0000 — APRIL 2026

Special Investigation – Horse Tram Crisis



\$650,000... AND STILL NOT ENOUGH

Horse Tram Back for More as Council Shuts Down Public Scrutiny

Ratepayers Funding a System That Refuses to Fix Itself

The Victor Harbor Horse Tram is now at the centre of a growing governance and financial controversy.

After committing nearly \$650,000 in ratepayer support in December 2025, Council is now facing

fresh demands from the Victor Harbor Horse Tram Authority for additional land, permanent fee waivers, and ongoing financial support.

At a Council briefing on 1 April 2026, the Authority admitted it is not realistic for Council contributions to reduce in the short term.

That is not a recovery plan. That is dependency.

“What we are seeing is a model where administrative complexity has increased, costs have grown, and reliance on Council has deepened — the opposite of what was originally intended.”

How Much Is Enough?

How many bailouts before reform?

How many years before accountability?

How much more will ratepayers be asked to fund?

Public Shut Out

At the same time Council is being asked for more money, it has refused a second deputation from a ratepayer seeking to present operational evidence.

Council has confirmed it remains responsible for the Authority, yet scrutiny is being redirected away from elected members.

Demand Exists — Service Does Not

Community observations show:

- Late start times
- Early finishes
- Idle tram capacity
- Visitors left waiting

This is not a demand problem. It is an operational failure.

Eight Years of Warnings Ignored

Independent reviews in 2015 and 2017 identified inefficiency and the need for reform.

Today, the structure is more complex, more costly, and more dependent on Council funding.

The Real Issue: Governance

Council created the Authority, funds it, and carries the risk.

Yet public scrutiny is being limited.

Responsibility remains with Council — scrutiny does not.

Are Ratepayers the ATM?

Without reform, more funding requests are inevitable.

This is not sustainable. It is not accountable.

The Way Forward

- Independent review
- Full financial transparency
- Audit and Risk oversight
- Community-driven operating model

Conclusion

The Horse Tram is not failing due to lack of demand.

It is failing due to a system that has not adapted.

The time for change is now.

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“Accountability with Integrity”

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