

GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL

# STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN

2015-2020



GANNAWARRA  
SHIRE COUNCIL

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## Disclaimer

Information contained in this document is based on available information at the time of writing. All figures and diagrams are indicative only and should be referred to as such. This is a strategic document which deals with technical matters in a summary way only. While the Gannawarra Shire Council has exercised reasonable care in preparing this document it does not warrant or represent that it is accurate or complete. Council or its officers accept no responsibility for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting in reliance upon any material contained in this document.





## Executive Summary

Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC) has developed a five-year strategic tourism plan to guide all activities undertaken by Council to promote further growth within the local tourism industry. The Gannawarra Shire Strategic Tourism Plan 2015-2020 covers a broad spectrum of key focus areas; infrastructure and environment, business and hospitality, marketing and promotion, events, industry development and communication and partnerships all aligned to the strong nature based tourism opportunities that exist within the municipality. The strategy builds on the achievements of the previous Tourism Strategy while recognising the connections to the Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) Destination Management Plan. Other strategic documents recognised in the development of this Strategy include;

- Gannawarra Shire Council Plan
- Gannawarra 2025 Community Plan
- Gannawarra Shire Economic Development Strategy

Critical to the success of the strategy will be Council's capacity to engage with the shire's tourism operators, and other stakeholders such as the Victorian Government, natural resource management agencies and commercial developers, to create high quality visitor experiences and appropriate infrastructure designed to meet the needs of visitors well into the future.

As a year-round industry that supports a broad range of businesses Council recognises that tourism has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities.

The aims of the strategic plan are:

- To encourage demand for the shire's visitor experiences and services;
- To improve the quality and range of experiences and services;
- To generate higher visitor satisfaction; and
- To encourage return visits.

In the development of this Strategy a high degree of community consultation and industry research has been undertaken. Priorities and actions have been developed that will address the key sustainability principles that relates to the physical, environmental, social and economic aspects associated with developing tourism infrastructure and products. The strategy also recognises the need to enhance existing tourism and business sectors to better align with current and future tourism trends, and cater for the changing needs of the tourism market.



## Purpose of the Strategic Tourism Plan

Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC) commissioned the preparation of a new tourism plan to review the status of tourism activity and development in the shire, and to identify the most effective ways Council could support and progress the tourism industry during the next five years.

**The aims** of the strategic directions identified in the plan are to encourage demand for the shire's visitor experiences and services, and to improve the quality and range of experiences and services to generate higher visitor satisfaction and encourage return visits.

**The goals** of the plan include:

- Increase year round visitation to Gannawarra Shire.
- Generate higher yield (length of stay and expenditure) from visitors during autumn, winter and spring months.
- Further develop products and experiences to encourage visitation during the shoulder periods and the winter season.
- Increase employment.

## Role of the Strategic Tourism Plan

The Strategy is a resource that will be used by Council, the community and stakeholders to guide tourism activities for the coming 5 years. It collates much of the work undertaken by council and the community in identifying future objectives and opportunities to implement new actions aimed at growing tourism.

The strategy will provide a framework for Council to plan and prioritise projects and make decisions relating to:

- Facilitating a range of tourism infrastructure projects for the commercial sector
- Infrastructure design, development and maintenance
- Linkages to strategic regional projects derived from the MRT Destination Development Plan and associated marketing and promotion opportunities
- Providing linkages to local stakeholders who manage the local waterways, river and forests. Parks Victoria and DELWP.
- Providing assistance to tourism and hospitality businesses such as industry training and adoption of new technologies
- Allocating funds and assistance towards community based projects and events
- Advocating for State and Federal Government for local and regional projects



## About Gannawarra

The Gannawarra Shire is located in north-west Victoria bordering the Murray River to the north-east and the Mallee landscape to the south-west. The Shire comprises the main towns of Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook along with the smaller rural towns of Lalbert, Quambatook, Leitchville, Lake Charm and Murrabit.

A 3 hour drive from Melbourne the Shire is bordered by the Rural City of Swan Hill, and Shires of Loddon, Buloke and Campaspe. The Wakool and Murray Shires are adjacent to Gannawarra on the New South Wales side of the Murray River.

The Shire is recognised for the many environmental assets that exist across the municipality. The many waterways and forests are home to hundreds of waterbirds, and popular locations for outdoor recreation including fishing, camping, canoeing, watersports, cycling and bushwalking.

A strong and diverse agricultural base dominates the local economy and is complemented by manufacturing linked to agriculture, strong retail precincts in Kerang and Cohuna, health services, education and professional services.

## Economic Profile

The local economy is dominated by a strong agricultural base which is complemented by value added processing industry, manufacturing, retail and tourism and health services. Agriculture in the shire is estimated to be worth around \$283 million annually or 24% of total output, and like much of Northern Victoria, has been highly reliant on a strong local dairy industry and large scale grain production with livestock and horticulture other key agricultural sectors.

The Shire has 137,000 hectares of irrigated land and an extensive area of dry land comprising of a variety of soil types. This allows for the production of a large variety of crops such as hay, grains, legumes, stone fruit, citrus and viticulture.

In common with many other areas, periods of drought and flooding have had an impact on agri-businesses in the Shire. At the same time, the Shire is subject to the same economic pressures as other rural districts during times of general economic downturn – this can have an impact upon the employment base of the region as businesses seek to rationalise and adopt new growth models. Recent improved climate conditions (in 2011/12) have seen productivity levels in the agricultural sector begin to rise again. New approaches are being considered to maximise the viability and vitality of the agricultural sector (for example, through ongoing work into new dryland farming practices).

Whilst agriculture is the dominant industry sector in Gannawarra, but opportunities exist for economic diversification which will enhance the vitality and sustainability of the Shire. Tourism and the service sector is also identified as an area for growth, with the capacity to redefine perceptions of the Shire as an area in which to live and work.



## Population and Demography

Over recent years, the Gannawarra Shire population profile has changed. In 2001, the population of the shire was 12,055. In the last decade, the population has declined to a current level of 10,366. Reasons for this trend include younger people migrating to find work - or seek study opportunities - and the recent challenges brought about by environmental factors of drought and flooding leading businesses and families, to relocate. Rationalisation of agriculture is also a major contributor to the demographic profile.

The primary demographic for Gannawarra Shire is older adults with 47% of residents aged over 50 years. The fastest growing age demographic in the Shire is in the 59 – 65 years age bracket whilst at the other end of the spectrum, Gannawarra Shire is underrepresented in the 15-34 year old age bracket.

Population decline is common to the shires of the Central Murray region, where only three out of ten shires have experienced a growth over the past ten years. However, through its Strategic Community Plan – Gannawarra 2025, the Gannawarra Shire Council has identified a long-term program which aims to build upon the locational strengths of the area to reverse this trend.



## Methodology

The following steps were undertaken to develop the Tourism Plan:



## Principles Shaping the Plan

The selection of strategic directions for this plan has been shaped by the following principles:

Gannawarra Shire's Community Plan, ***Gannawarra 2025: Taking Up The Challenge*** identifies a range of community aspirations for life in Gannawarra, some of which relate to tourism. These include:

- To build a tourism industry that creates jobs and infrastructure and allows us to proudly show visitors the beauty of our natural environment and the depth of our aboriginal heritage.
- To provide career pathways that keeps our young people working locally in rewarding jobs.
- To improve entertainment options, particularly for our youth.
- To support our entrepreneurs and thinkers, celebrate their successes and help them lead us into new industries and initiatives.
- To be able to enjoy the same richness of food, street life, lifestyle and culture that other Victorians enjoy.

### Sustainability principles

For tourism to bring enduring, positive benefits to communities, Council recognises the importance of considering the Physical, Environmental, Social and Economic impacts associated with further development of the tourism landscape. All of these critical factors will be considered in shaping the future tourism directions within the municipality.





## Tourism Industry Roles

The platform for the Gannawarra Tourism Industry structure consists of Murray Regional Tourism (MRT), Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC) and Town Progress/Development Associations.

The MRT is the independent peak body for the Murray Region's tourism sector. It is the overarching organisation that co-ordinates all-inclusive tourism activities and development for the region.

The key role of the Gannawarra Shire Council is to strategically guide the development and promotion of the shire's tourism industry in line with directions identified by MRT.

The roles of town-based progress and development associations in Gannawarra Shire are generally providing business and community development opportunities. They are varied in terms of size, capacity and interest in tourism. Examples of successful tourism events co-ordinated by local groups include the Murrabit Country Market, Quambatook Tractor Pull and Bridge to Bridge Cohuna.

Murray Regional Tourism	Gannawarra Shire Council	Town Progress / Development Associations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop and promote overarching Murray region brand and assets.</li> <li>b. Support destination tactical marketing activity which is in line with MRT's core objectives.</li> <li>c. Market to new and emerging markets, where there is market opportunity or market stagnancy has occurred.</li> <li>d. Co-operative marketing activity opportunities</li> <li>e. Murray region market research – qualitative and quantitative</li> <li>f. Overarching PR support for events and Murray destinations.</li> <li>g. Leadership and advocacy for product development that fits within the whole of region structures.</li> <li>h. Overarching marketing and professional development opportunities.</li> <li>i. Regular meetings with State Tourism Organisations (NSW and VIC).</li> <li>j. Quarterly newsletters to LGA's, RTA's and participating operators.</li> <li>k. Tourism Managers Forums every 2 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination and tactical marketing that is co-ordinated and aligned with Murray region's brand and strategy.</li> <li>• Timely support for MRT marketing activities</li> <li>• Track and report tactical activity</li> <li>• Develop and update destination imagery and footage for Council and MRT programs.</li> <li>• Marketing and support services for key tourism events</li> <li>• Develop annual marketing activity plan and communicate to MRT.</li> <li>• Undertake visitor servicing and dispersal programs to increase yield.</li> <li>• Leadership and advocacy for tourism</li> <li>• Investment attraction for key products aligned with Council and MRT strategic directions</li> <li>• Visitor infrastructure development</li> <li>• Represent, promote and support local tourism groups</li> <li>• Undertake and participate in destination visitor and operator research</li> <li>• Assist tourism businesses to maximise revenue from visitors.</li> <li>• Attend Tourism Managers Forums</li> <li>• Distribute Council and MRT marketing opportunities to operators.</li> <li>• Industry networking and professional development opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting community and tourism events</li> <li>• Industry representation – focal point to engage industry</li> <li>• Advocacy for tourism in local area</li> </ul>



## Tourism Vision

### Murray Regional Tourism's Marketing Vision

By 2020, the Murray region will take its rightful place as one of Australia's most vibrant and iconic tourism destinations featuring the legendary Murray River and stunning National Parks and as a gateway to the Australian Outback – a must see destination for both Australian and international visitors

### Gannawarra Shire Council's Vision

Gannawarra will become a place that is positively defined by its difference. Five core values underline this vision including – collaborative, resourceful, innovative, flexible and integrity

### Gannawarra Shire Council's 2025 Tourism Vision

**Our Visitor Experiences** are fresh, appealing and allow visitors to creatively interact with our exceptional natural environment, Aboriginal and pioneer heritage, and local produce. We have developed iconic experiences that reflect our point of difference in the Murray River region, including outstanding access to the river from key towns, and a variety of outdoor adventure activities in the wetlands and forests of Gunbower National Park / Gunbower State Forest and Kerang Lakes

**Our Tourism Industry** is highly collaborative, working together to support and deliver on the region's tourism brand. We engage in packaging, referrals, touring routes, co-operative marketing, and sharing expertise. Our businesses are growing in number and size, and are financially and environmentally sustainable. We always seek to enhance social outcomes for local communities. We are well informed about changes in visitor expectations, and continually renew our products and services. We regularly upgrade our professional skills, and ensure that education is a priority for the industry.

**Our Reputation** as a place where visitors have memorable, rewarding and satisfying experiences is amongst the best in the region.



## Brand Positioning

The Brand Positioning of a place (destination, region, town, main street, etc.) is a snapshot of all the qualities, experiences, and attributes that make up its unique offer. It conveys:

- The appealing impressions the place creates;
- The emotional connection it makes with visitors;
- Its competitive advantage (Unique Selling Proposition).

It should shape the focus of product development, services, infrastructure and the visitor experiences offered in a location, and guide how they are marketed and communicated. This will enhance a place's capacity to satisfy the emotional and practical rewards that consumers are seeking, and generate additional visitation, length of stay and yield.

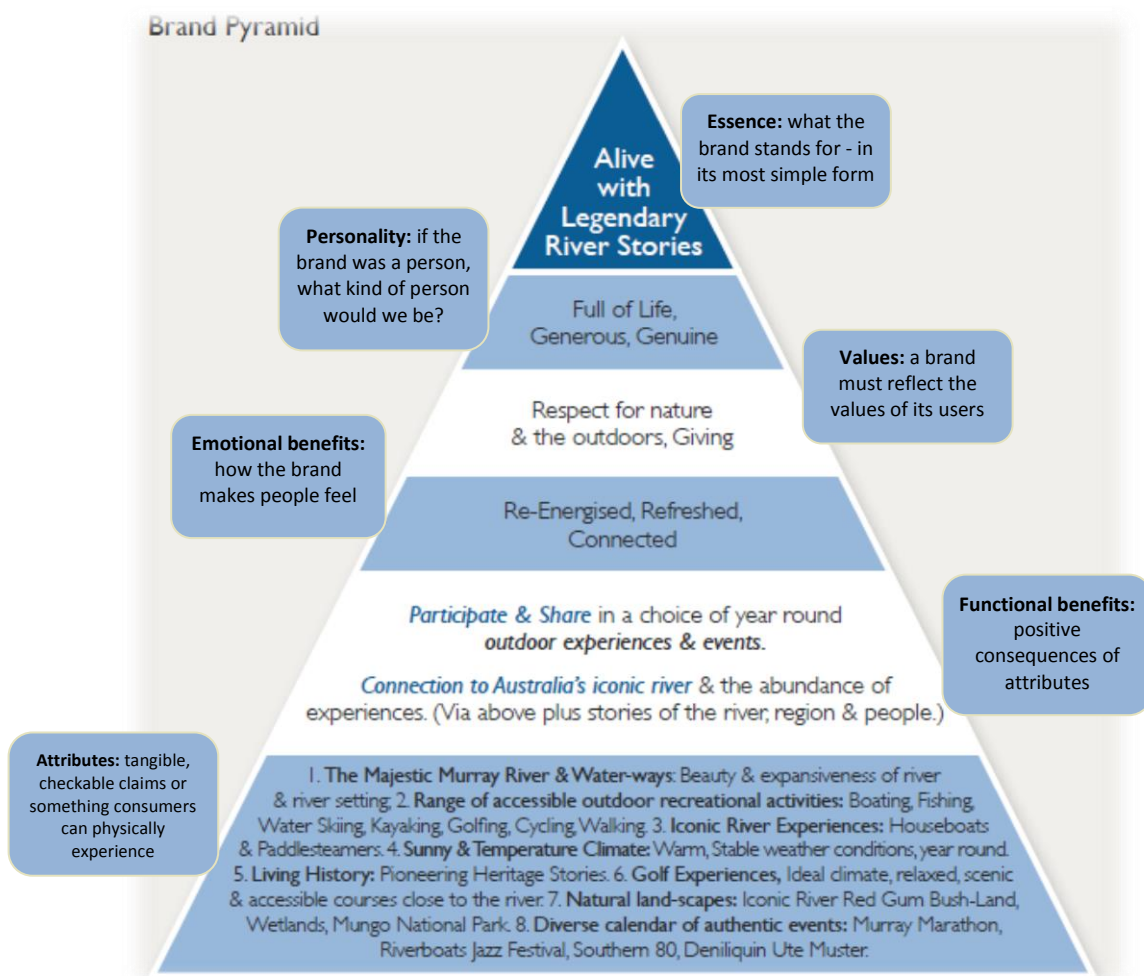
A Brand Positioning should inform all marketing communications about a place, and be used to develop a brand story, brand language, and a style guide for all written and visual elements of communications.

Tourism operators, natural resource managers, government and media should be encouraged to adopt a place's Brand Positioning to reinforce key marketing messages, and to develop tourism experiences that deeply satisfy visitors, generating greater word-of-mouth promotion and return visitation.

A brand pyramid captures the key elements of a Brand Positioning, including its attributes, benefits, values, personality and essence.



**The Brand Pyramid for the Murray Region:**



Source: MRTB Strategic Marketing Plan 2013-2017



## Key Elements for the Murray River Brand

Key elements of the vision for the Murray River brand include:

- Consumer recognition of the national and international significance of the river, its authentic Australian history, and the expanse of unique, active and energetic experiences interspersed with a generous, optimistic personality.
- The brand will also reflect MRT's marketing vision as one of Australia's most vibrant and iconic tourism destinations featuring the legendary Murray River and stunning National Parks and as a gateway to the Australian Outback – a must see destination for both Australian and international visitors.
- The brand's messaging and imagery will exemplify a re-connection and re-engagement of potential visitors with the region and showcase the energetic nature of the region and all that it offers and its unique connection with the legendary Murray River.
- Its focus is to connect with younger demographics, especially younger families, couples and friendships groups whilst still maintaining trust with the region's large existing older market.

## Branding Gannawarra Shire

As an overarching Murray Region brand already exists, it is recommended that a Brand Positioning for Gannawarra Shire be developed which leverages from this positioning and draws from Gannawarra's unique strengths. A Gannawarra Brand Positioning can be used by GSC for corporate and consumer messaging, and by other government and natural resource management agencies when communicating messages about the shire.

Relevant applications include collaborative, shire-based promotions, such as a consumer website (albeit to be part of the regional website), initiatives to encourage relocation to the shire to live / work, and other corporate communications.

As it is the shire's towns and their nearby features that attract visitors, it is recommended that the focus on the marketing of key locations within the shire rather than attempts to build market awareness of Gannawarra as a tourism destination (likely to be very limited). To do this effectively, and to guide product development within each town that supports its points of difference, it is also recommended that a Brand Positioning be developed for each of the shire's key tourism areas - Koondrook, Cohuna, Kerang Lakes and Murrabit. Each town / brand should link to, and support, the Gannawarra Shire Brand Positioning but also express its own identity.

# Infrastructure & Environment

The strengths of Tourism in the Gannawarra Shire are the wealth of nature based tourism experiences across the many waterways and forests. Fishing, camping, passive recreation and water sports remain the mainstay of visitation but the many waterways are now hosting cruise boats, planning replica paddle steamers and seeking to develop a higher class of tourism product for the more discerning visitors. Emerging opportunities are evolving in adventure tourism with mountain biking, canoeing and orienteering. The Murray River, Gunbower Forest and Kerang lakes are the key environmental assets providing the base for nature based tourism.

A local food culture is emerging with the Redgum Food Group, Koondrook – Barham Farmers Market. Tourists are becoming increasingly well-travelled and sophisticated and seeking quality food experiences. Developing a greater use of local food products in the hospitality market is an important aspect of tourism growth within the Shire.

Gannawarra shire is seeking to attract a growing target market of the 18 – 45 age group that has a young family, is environmentally aware, enjoys quality food and wine and participates in outdoor recreation such as canoeing, bushwalking and mountain biking. These markets are also demanding higher quality, authentic experiences that connect with local culture, heritage and the natural world. This emerging market requires built infrastructure within the natural environment to maximise tourism opportunities; quality accommodation along the waterways including the use of high class tents and cabins accessible to the natural environment. Changes to Victorian Government legislation may permit sensitive and appropriate tourism development in national parks and farming zones which has the potential to open up the development of new tourism products.

Infrastructure plays a critical role in servicing tourism through the provision of structural features that directly impact upon the quality of the activity and the destination experience. Structures such as boat ramps, streetscapes and landscapes, walking and cycling tracks, caravan parks, roads and signage and built amenities all have a major bearing on a quality tourism experience. The enhancement of infrastructure will be a priority of council to grow visitation in the municipality. The construction of the Koondrook Wharf will be a major infrastructure item to be constructed by Council to drive ongoing tourism development. Development of the Koondrook Caravan Park will increase the number of available sites and create a new camp ground on the Gunbower Creek aimed at the younger adventure tourism markets.

The caravan and motorhome industry has been growing strongly for the past 15 years. Around 34% of RV travellers stay only in caravan parks with 16% staying in non-commercial locations. The provision of RV Dump points and camping locations will service this particular market.

The future planning and construction of new infrastructure within these unique natural environments will assist the development of new tourism products aimed at increasing local visitation and giving businesses the confidence to invest.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Kerang Lakes facility upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are many opportunities to improve visitor facilities at the Kerang Lakes for a range of activities, including events. Family friendly experiences should be a priority.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Tourism and Recreation Master Plan in conjunction with other authorities and stakeholders that identifies and prioritises key visitor amenities and infrastructure requirements for the lakes to meet the needs of visitors and the local community, including events. Also consider management and promotional requirements.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 -4
<b><i>National Park/ State Forest – Mountain biking &amp; orienteering</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an opportunity to develop a mountain bike trail in Gunbower National Park and/or Gunbower Creek.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Parks Victoria and DELWP to investigate opportunities to develop a mountain bike – orienteering trail in the national park and / or state forest.</li> <li>Investigate opportunities for a mountain bike event – Cohuna to Koondrook, within the Gunbower forest</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 -4
<b><i>Loddon River Trail</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited walking trails along the Loddon River near Kerang.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Parks Victoria to develop and maintain a looped walking track at the Loddon River near the Murray Valley Highway bridge. Include interpretation about the natural and Aboriginal heritage.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2-5
<b><i>Koondrook Wharf</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demand for a wharf at Koondrook has been driven by the communities desire to recognise the riverboat history and to provide a facility for current day commercial vessels and recreational activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council to work with all stakeholders, regulatory authorities and the State Government to manage the design and construction of a wharf on the Murray River at Koondrook</li> </ul>	Yrs 1-3
<b><i>Ibis Rookery</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The design and layout of visitor facilities at the Ibis Rookery are dated and could be improved to provide a higher quality experience. There are also opportunities for Aboriginal cultural experiences, eg. guided canoe tours, a mountain bike trail (existing track), etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a Master Plan for the Ibis Rookery, including potential linkages with Middle Lake and Reedy Lake, to review and enhance visitor experiences, facilities, management, interpretation and promotion. Develop in association with relevant Aboriginal elders and the Lions Club.</li> </ul>	Yrs 4-5
<b><i>Gunbower Forest Access Road</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from Cohuna’s tourism industry suggests that visitor perceptions of the town as an all-year destination would be significantly enhanced by an all-weather access road to the Murray River.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Parks Victoria, DELWP and the local tourism industry to investigate likely demand for an all-weather road into the Gunbower Forest.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 - 3

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Miss Keats Picnic Area</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main location for visitor and boating facilities associated with Murrabit on Murray River, and only ramp between Koondrook and Swan Hill. Currently in poor condition and limited facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with land managers / community to develop and implement a basic site plan that includes signage, picnic facilities, bollards, landscaping, and designated camp areas.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1 - 2
<b><i>Koondrook Caravan park upgrade</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing the amenities at the Koondrook Caravan Park will cater for a broader range of visitors seeking tourism experiences close to nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a strategic development plan for the caravan park that provides a guide for maximising the accommodation options within the park while improving the amenities and landscaping of the park.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1 -4
<b><i>Streetscapes Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook, Murrabit</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many of the towns streetscapes are outdated and have the opportunity to better cater for visitors and to identify the local brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install public artworks and landscaping consistent with the local brand and in line with wider plans and strategies that attracts visitors and encourages economic activity</li> </ul>	Yrs 2-5
<b><i>Town-based cycle trails</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Koondrook Development Association (KDA) has undertaken considerable work to develop cycling / walking trails along the Murray River and linking natural attractions. Further work is required to connect routes into loops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support KDA to connect trails to establish looped routes that link key town and natural attractions. This may involve infrastructure such as bridges, signage, etc.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 -4
<b><i>Kerang-Koondrook Cycle Trail</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed Koondrook Wharf will open up new opportunities for business ventures that require access to the river, such as an outdoor adventure hub for canoe / kayak / bike / fishing equipment hire and guided tours.</li> <li>Establish an off-road cycle trail between Kerang (for local population and visitors arriving by train from Melbourne / Swan Hill) and Koondrook. This would work as a feeder route to the Murray Adventure Trail at Koondrook, as well as connect the two towns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and facilitate business opportunities associated with the Koondrook Wharf and seek private sector investment where appropriate.</li> <li>Undertake a feasibility study to investigate the establishment of a cycle trail between Kerang and Koondrook.</li> <li>If feasible, secure funding. Develop and maintain the trail.</li> </ul>	<p>Yrs 1-5</p> <p>Yrs 1-2</p>



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>On-road cycle touring</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop on-road cycle touring routes for cycle clubs and social groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Kerang cycling club to explore the feasibility of establishing a Kerang – Kerang-Lakes – Murrabit – Koondrook - Cohuna touring route that can be completed as a whole or in sections.</li> </ul>	Yrs 3-4
<b><i>Mapping Visitor assets</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is significant demand from the shire’s tourism industry to upgrade visitor facilities at many natural sites to enhance the visitor experience and encourage visitors to stay longer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In association with natural resource managers, map visitor assets at key natural sites in the shire, identify and prioritise improvements. Included but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kerang lakes, Gunbower Forest, specific waterways</li> </ul> </li> <li>Map all walking tracks and trails within the municipality.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 -3
<b><i>Signage</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are some issues with the quality and location of signage in the shire including directional signage to tourism businesses and attractions; town entry statements, and events boards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update GSC’s Signage Audit to identify and address signage issues at all tourism locations across the Shire</li> <li>Town Entry signs</li> <li>Events signage</li> <li>Information boards</li> <li>Town map boards</li> </ul>	Yr 1-3
<b><i>Appropriate built design</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A thriving tourism industry can lead to private sector developments that are unsympathetic to the character of a town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that character overlays and appropriate planning regulations are in place to protect each key tourism town</li> </ul>	Ongoing

# Business & Hospitality

Gannawarra Shire recognise the need for a strong and vibrant business sector to not only service local residents but to provide a range of services and experiences to attract visitors.

Tourism is an industry, just like any other industry, and it can bring additional benefits to local communities through the development of new businesses, new employment opportunities and an increased local spend. It assists the financial viability of the local business sector by providing additional revenue linked to events and visitation. It also provides justification to develop the many built assets such as parks and toilets, rest areas, caravan parks and local streetscapes.

Construction of the Koondrook Wharf is seen not only as a key item of infrastructure but also as an enabler and driver of new business development. Strong interest from the commercial business sector is already evident and development of the surrounding river precinct will be a major drawcard for further tourism products and new business. Improved food and hospitality businesses, cruise vessels on the river, the development of farm based food businesses and new accommodation options are all priority areas to grow tourism within the Shire.

There is opportunity for business development linked to the environment, indigenous and European history and heritage. It is estimated that visitors will spend on average around \$123 per day. Murray Region statistics show that 54.3% of visitors eat out at restaurants, 26.4% visit hotels and clubs and 21.5% shop for pleasure. The direct economic impact of domestic overnight visitation to the shire is estimated as \$40.87 million per annum. The majority (83%) of visitors are also using the internet to plan their visit highlighting the need for an up to date web presence. The development of the MRT digital platform will certainly improve the electronic media for marketing, promotion and information and in particular provide a much needed online booking system for tourism operators. Council will work closely with tourism businesses to facilitate the implementation of the digital platform.

The local tourism industry requires a strong and creative retail sector to best support tourism. Hospitality businesses need to adopt a greater food and wine presence to service the changing visitor markets, accommodation providers need to consider a wider range of options including wilderness tents and five star cabin and unit accommodation close to nature. The tourist market is now demanding higher quality services and competition between destinations is strong.

Council will work with a range of developers, businesses, community and stakeholders to encourage new tourism developments and continuous improvements within the business and hospitality sectors of the Shire that support tourism.

TOPIC	STRATEGIC ISSUE	GSC ACTIONS	TIME FRAME
<b><i>Tourism businesses at Koondrook Wharf</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed Koondrook Wharf will open up new opportunities for business ventures that require access to the river, such as an outdoor adventure hub for canoe / kayak / bike / fishing equipment hire and guided tours.</li> <li>Arts &amp; culture, accommodation and dining &amp; hospitality businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and facilitate business opportunities associated with the Koondrook Wharf and seek private sector investment where appropriate.</li> <li>Utilise historic buildings within and close to the Wharf precinct for new business developments.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1 - 5
<b><i>Retail Precinct</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cohuna has potential to further develop into a boutique shopping precinct complemented by views across to Gunbower Creek.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a retail investment prospectus to encourage the establishment of shops, galleries and cafes that meet the needs of the local community and visitors.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 - 3
<b><i>Cruise Vessels</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed Koondrook Wharf will open up the port to a variety of cruise vessels that are operated by private and public organisations.</li> <li>A number of new cruise businesses are proposed to operate in the shire providing much needed opportunities to increase length of stay and yield.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the establishment of new cruise businesses in the shire. Murray River &amp; Gunbower Creek</li> <li>Support cruise vessels and commercial watercraft to use Koondrook Wharf.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1 - 3
<b><i>Accommodation upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of “designated” free camping options in some locations across the Shire. Kerang, Cohuna, Murrabit, Koondrook</li> <li>A need for more up-market accommodation opportunities within the major towns of Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the current locations available for free camping at key locations across the municipality and develop options that will encourage increased visitation. Develop a policy to support this activity.</li> <li>Facilitate new accommodation opportunities utilising commercial developers and existing accommodation providers in Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook and Kerang Lakes</li> </ul>	Yrs 1 - 4

TOPIC	STRATEGIC ISSUE	GSC ACTIONS	TIME LINE
<b><i>Food and Wine Trail</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a number of food producers in Gannawarra Shire who are seeking to develop farmgate experiences.</li> <li>The Backroads Trail to the north of the Murray River provides an attractive touring concept to raise the profile of local produce / arts / heritage experiences in an area bordered by Barham, Deniliquin, Mathoura and Moama.</li> <li>There may be potential to develop another touring trail – or connect with the current trail - from Echuca via Cohuna to Koondrook-Barham that complements the Backroads Trail and forms a touring loop to the north and south of the river back to Echuca (or Swan Hill).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a desktop study to independently assess potential food / wine / arts / heritage experiences between Echuca and Koondrook-Barham (and within ½ hour from this route) that could be included in a trail. Seek involvement from the Campaspe and Wakool Shire Council.</li> <li>If potential product that is sufficient in number and quality is identified, seek to develop an extension of the existing food trails to maximise local opportunities.</li> </ul>	Yr 2
<b><i>Food &amp; Wine Culture in hospitality businesses</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food and Wine is a major drawcard for tourism and the area has the opportunity to build on the availability of local food and local wine grape growers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the local business community to develop a greater food and wine focus across the Shire that better utilises the locally grown food products and better caters for visitor needs</li> </ul>	Yr 1 - 5
<b><i>Farm based food businesses</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Tourism market is becoming more aware of the quality food offerings from local producers and the potential for food to drive visitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the introduction of on-farm food businesses aimed at increasing tourism and hospitality products, promoting agricultural diversity and increasing visitation</li> <li>Support the QDA to package accommodation, educational facilities, meals and farm tours for the secondary schools market. Also provide advice regarding promotional activities.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Family Activities Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited number of family activities in Cohuna beyond self-organised watersports.</li> <li>Limited activities in many tourism towns for younger age group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the local community to provide family activities, such as bike hire, fishing equipment hire, free outdoor games in public areas, etc.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Weekend trading Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited weekend trading hours by some shops and cafes, including during major events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with retail and hospitality businesses to encourage longer weekend trading hours during events, as a first step in extending trading hours.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1 – 3

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Educational tours</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Quambatook Development Association has hosted several successful school camps using community facilities and resources to introduce city-based secondary school students, such as Geelong College, to Mallee town and farm life. There is an opportunity to further develop, package and actively promote this educational experience, and involve nearby communities such as Lalbert.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the QDA to package accommodation, educational facilities, meals and farm tours for the secondary schools market. Also provide advice regarding promotional activities.</li> <li></li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Quambatook Working Heritage Machinery Museum</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Quambatook Working Heritage Machinery Museum has an open weekend each year. There may be demand to open more regularly, especially in association with the Quambatook Historical Centre.</li> <li>The Kerang Museum has a range of heritage assets that are being utilised for specific tourism functions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the QDA, Quambatook Working Heritage Machinery Association, and the Quambatook Historical Centre to investigate the demand and feasibility of opening more regularly. Consider linking this event to other historical attractions.</li> <li>Support the local museums and heritage associations to market their assets to the visitor markets and develop specific events.</li> </ul>	Yr 2 - 3
<b><i>Aboriginal Culture Visitor experience</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to develop Aboriginal cultural experiences to promote the heritage of the region's first peoples, and to enhance visitor satisfaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local Aboriginal organisations and individuals to develop cultural experiences, such as tours, interpretive information, displays of artworks and artefacts, etc.</li> </ul>	Yr 1 - 3
<b><i>Public transport</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The local airports are currently underutilised and may be an area of opportunity to develop for tourism related activities. Facilitate a feasibility study that aims to utilise aviation facilities linked to a major tourism proposal at the Kerang lakes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate a feasibility study that aims to utilise aviation facilities linked to a major tourism proposal at the Kerang lakes</li> </ul>	Yrs 1-3

# Marketing & Promotion

Council will partner with Murray Regional Tourism in developing a range of marketing and promotional opportunities. Consumer Shows such as the Caravan & Camping Show, specific media promotions, the introduction of a new whole of Murray website and media familiarisation tours will be used to promote the local area as a tourism destination.

Council will continue to develop a range of electronic and hard copy materials for distribution and continue to use the Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre and Kerang Library to market and promote the local area.

Marketing and Promotion will be undertaken externally to new visitor markets and locally to inform the local community of the many tourism opportunities and to encourage a greater participation at community level.

Statistics will be collated to better understand the local tourism trends and to allow Council staff to better target marketing activities. An annual marketing plan will assist in maintaining a strong focus on marketing and promotion.

TOPIC	STRATEGIC ISSUE	GSC ACTIONS	TIME FRAME
<p><b>Annual regional opportunities for Council buy-in, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional Digital Platform</b></li> <li>• <b>PR and Media Outreach</b></li> <li>• <b>Consumer Shows</b></li> <li>• <b>Destination Appeal Marketing Program</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to take advantage of MRT's co-operative marketing programs which enable Gannawarra to leverage regional tourism marketing dollars and expertise, a regional brand strategy, and quality promotional initiatives the shire couldn't otherwise afford.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Negotiate investment and support inclusion in MRTB marketing initiatives on an annual basis. Also assist MRT to communicate to Gannawarra's tourism operators regarding marketing opportunities. Initiatives include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participation in the Regional Digital Marketing Platform -</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Content about Gannawarra to be maintained by GSC, and to use the towns' branding.</li> <li>○ Will be developed across a range of devices - mobile, desktop, tablet etc.</li> <li>○ Includes multi-booking features, bookeasy integration, events calendar listing, social media integration, itinerary planning and booking tools, and interactive mapping</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>PR and Media Outreach</b> which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Event listings in top tier media; pitching stories related to feature destination experiences; Hot Deals, Accommodation Reviews, and Giveaways, media famils.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Consumer Shows</b> eg caravan and camping</li> <li>• <b>Destination Appeal Marketing Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ promotion in relevant media relating to key experiences, such as history and heritage, nature, Aboriginal culture, golf, water sports.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Media familiarisation tours</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, leverage journalist famil tours organised by MRTB.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide itinerary options and host journalist familiarisation tours for relevant media within the Shire.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Familiarisation tours for regional visitor information centres' staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant advantage in staff and volunteers from Murray region visitor information centres being familiar with Gannawarra visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in, and support, regional familiarisation tours for Murray region visitor information centres' staff and volunteers.</li> </ul>	<p>Yrs 1 - 3</p>

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b>Visitor research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding changes in market preferences and behaviours is essential to inform promotional initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in regional research initiatives to monitor changes in visitation and market behaviours.</li> <li>Collate information from Gateway re visitor needs</li> <li>Collate accommodation statistics</li> <li>Collate traffic counts at key entry points to the Gunbower Forest at peak times of the year.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Brand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to refresh the shire brand, and develop town brands with the tourism industry and local communities to affirm points of difference between towns and to guide product development and marketing activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the development of a brand initiative aimed at better representing tourism within the Shire and within specific towns</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 - 4
<b>Annual Marketing Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise an annual marketing program, taking advantage of opportunities provided by MRTB and other organisations.</li> <li>Promote the shire's product strengths in relevant marketing initiatives, ie. nature, fishing, motorised water sports, food and wine, golf &amp; history / heritage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare an annual marketing program that complements and leverages MRT's marketing activities.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Adjacent shires 'locals' campaign</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage residents and visitors in adjacent shires, especially Echuca and Swan Hill, to travel to Gannawarra Shire on day trips.</li> <li>Develop a local Tourism campaign aimed at informing local residents of attractions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the groundwork from the Visiting Friends Relatives campaign, promote attractions, events and touring concepts in Murray region media, including press and radio, eg. media releases, advertisements.</li> <li>Educate local residents on the local tourism attractions in the Shire.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Direct Marketing Campaign</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current coach visitation to the shire is very low with coaches passing through the shire to other parts of the Murray region.</li> <li>Opportunity to grow the visitor market with invitations to recreational and touring clubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a direct marketing campaign to the touring coach market, including preparation of 1-2 day itineraries (and longer if link to other shires) and hosting coach operator familiarisation tours.</li> <li>Conduct a direct marketing campaign to all clubs that would have an interest in visiting the area. Caravan Clubs, mountain bike, canoe &amp; bushwalking clubs etc.</li> </ul>	Yrs 2 –3
<b>PR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise the profile of the Shire's food and wine experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the River Red Gum Food Group and Backroads Trail Committee to promote the stories behind local food production, farmgate / dining experiences, and the Koondrook-Barham Farmers Market.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1-2 onwards



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Co-operative Promotions</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Gannawarra’s tourism operators to conduct collaborative marketing campaigns within the Murray region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek tourism operators’ participation in selected marketing campaigns to provide tactical offers, including the Local Marketing (VFR) campaign, adjacent Shires ‘Locals’ campaign, and Adjacent Destinations campaign.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Touring Routes</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness of the shire’s attractions by developing itineraries that include historical and natural attractions, food and wine, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop touring routes for caravan and camping enthusiasts, especially to suit the interests of the retirees market.</li> </ul>	Yrs 1- 3
<b><i>RV Friendly</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When key facilities are installed there will be an opportunity to promote relevant towns as RV friendly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake RV Friendly accreditation for Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook, Leitchville and Murrabit .</li> </ul>	Yrs 1-3
<b><i>Brochure and Web Content</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve promotion of cycling and walking trails in the shire to attract this growing segment, tailored to the needs of groups, couples and singles.</li> <li>Promote local birds, habitats and visiting seasons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop materials to promote opportunities related to cycling and walking. Include mapping.</li> <li>Develop a brochure to promote bird-watching opportunities and convey information about local bird species and sites. Utilise the expertise of “Birdlife” and local birdwatching experts.</li> <li></li> </ul>	Yrs 1-2 Yrs 1-2
<b><i>Tourism Brochures</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building on the review of brochures undertaken for this plan, conduct a brochure audit to identify additional publications that are required to meet visitors’ information needs.</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a brochure audit - develop additional publications as required; continue to update and produce existing publications as considered appropriate.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Information Upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that information is provided to the wider tourism industry including tourism operators and key community groups</li> <li>Participation in MRT’s regional digital platform will provide the opportunity for an online booking service at the VIC.</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide regular information to tourism operators, businesses and community groups including an annual tourism round table.</li> <li>Establish an online booking service for walk-in visitors to the VIC via the MRT digital platform. Engage local tourism businesses.</li> </ul>	Yr 1- 5 Yr 1-2

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Knowledge of staff / volunteers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that staff and volunteers at Gateway to Gannawarra VIC, Kerang Library and Barham VIC have a genuine understanding of experiences, products and services available in the shire, and adjoining shires.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an annual familiarisation program, eg. 2 x one day coach trips per year with all staff / volunteers invited to attend.</li> <li>Conduct a famil for communities to better understand Tourism options within the Shire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1- 5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Product referrals</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the level of cross-promotion between businesses and the stocking of shire-produced and other businesses' brochures at tourism businesses and town based community information facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage tourism operators, retailers and community events to distribute information to their visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1- 5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Kerang Library and Visitor Information Service</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The visitor information displays and signage (internal and external) at the library are inconsistent with the Gateway to Gannawarra VIC.</li> <li>Establish an online booking service for walk-in visitors to the VIC via the MRT digital platform. Engage local tourism businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refresh and upgrade the Kerang visitor information facilities by installing new signage and displays that are consistent with the Gannawarra brand. Use the visual merchandising report to ensure the facility is appropriately branded and set up</li> <li>Install visitor information boards with 24 hour access.</li> <li>Promote locations in Kerang that provide information on weekends. Undertake in conjunction with local Progress association.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 2 -3</li> </ul>
<b><i>Public transport</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While public transport in the shire is limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that existing services are little known and used by visitors for tourism purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote public transport options on the shire's tourism website, and develop tourism initiatives that utilise public transport. Eg Rail cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 2-3</li> </ul>

# Events

Events are a great way to bring visitation to towns and to fill gaps in the local tourism market. They provide value to the local accommodation houses, support local retailers and provide revenue for local community groups.

A range of events are currently hosted across the Shire such as markets & farmers markets, ski racing events, horse racing, tractor pulling, arts & culture, fishing competitions and various sporting events.

Opportunities exist to develop more local events that link into the local area brand. The emerging food culture is seeing new products being grown and developed on farm. Specialty meats, nuts and oils along with a range of preserves, sauces and condiments are sought after products for visitors and foodies. Regions that have a strong tourism industry all have a very strong and creative food and wine culture. To maximise new tourism opportunities there needs to be a greater recognition of the quality food products available in the area that can be used to add value to local events. The Murrabit Market along with the Koondrook-Barham Farmers Market are great examples of successful local events promoting the local food industry.

The natural environment provides an ideal location for current and new events. Fishing competitions bring in hundreds of visitors and support local community groups while sporting events are growing in popularity with the Bridge to Bridge triathlon and Kerang races key events on the calendar.

Analysis of events has shown the real value to the community. Ski racing events at Lake Charm bring in around \$35,000 to the local economy across accommodation, fuel, food, drinks over a 2 day event.

Council will continue to support existing events and work closely with the community to develop new events aimed at increasing visitation to the Shire.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Regionally significant events</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MRT to develop an events strategy that will identify opportunities to develop regionally significant events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the event strategy consultation to identify local event opportunities. Facilitate assistance to events as required and provide ideas to community groups for events based on tourism strengths.</li> </ul>	Yr 1
<b><i>Koondrook-Barham Farmers Market</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lack of facilities at the current Farmers Market site in Koondrook is creating considerable additional workload for the voluntary committee and some inconvenience to visitors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Farmers Market Committee to consider a variety of locations and facility requirements to better meet the needs of the market, and improve the visitor experience.</li> </ul>	Yr 1 - 2
<b><i>River Red Gum Food Group (RRGFG)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RRGRG is a voluntary committee that organises the monthly Koondrook-Barham Farmers Market, and other high quality food and community events. Revenues to the committee are very limited and it is challenging for volunteers to sustain their workloads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the RRGFG to attain funding for the project management of key projects.</li> </ul>	Yr 1 - 5
<b><i>Murrabit Market</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important tourism and community venture</li> <li>Declining visitor numbers</li> <li>Aging volunteer base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Murrabit Advancement Association and Regional Development Victoria to prepare a Business and Marketing Plan for the market to refresh the visitor experience, provide guidance on financial resourcing, succession planning, promotions, etc.</li> </ul>	Yr 2- 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide visitor information on busy market weekends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a visitor information service at Murrabit Market.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>New Events</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to host events during gaps in the annual shire calendar that meet market demands and expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local communities and event organisers to establish new events to fill gaps in the yearly weekend calendar. Events linked to local strengths and opportunities and in line with what visitors are seeking.</li> </ul>	Yr 1 - 5
<b><i>Local waterways</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise economic returns from aquatic events such as ski racing that return significant benefit to the business sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with aquatic organisations to ensure that local waterways are utilised for watersports events. Eg ski racing, boat racing and other aquatic activities deemed appropriate on local waterways</li> </ul>	Yr 1- 5

# Industry Development

Murray Region Tourism (MRT) is the over-arching organisation responsible for the strategic directions of Tourism at a regional level. MRT provides a range of industry training programs to meet the needs of tourism businesses, managers and staff. Programs such as; customer service & marketing, digital media, on-line booking and consumer packaging to improve service levels within the industry.

With the implementation of the new MRT digital platform comprising on-line booking, the relationship with tourism businesses will need to be significantly improved. In the Gannawarra Shire many operators do not interact with the wider tourism industry and have a low level of technology uptake with no website presence or on-line booking system. With statistics showing around 63% of tourists planning their holidays with the aid of technology many regional tourism businesses have limited exposure to the market. With support from MRT, Council will provide personalised service to local tourism operators to assist them to maximise the many emerging initiatives.

The modern tourist has a higher expectation of services provided by the destination. Quality locally produced foods, wines and beverages, access to modern digital services such as high speed broadband and downloadable applications that are Smart phone compatible along with high quality accommodation and a wide range of tourism experiences. Council will conduct regular briefings and forums aimed at providing operators with information and training and a greater awareness of market trends and expectations.

Council will work with MRT, tourism operators and community groups to improve the skill levels, knowledge and understanding of all stakeholders and to strive for improvements in all aspects of tourism within the Shire.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Cycle Tourism</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When cycling trails are further developed in the shire, it will be important for the tourism industry and town's public facilities to cater for cyclists.</li> <li>As other outdoor adventure segments develop, eg. canoeing, kayaking also work with the tourism industry to encourage the provision of appropriate support services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT to conduct briefings to update operators and local development associations on the needs of the cycling market and how different tourism sectors can meet these requirements (eg. accommodation, eateries).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 3-5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Build capacity</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build the capacity of town-based progress and development associations to take greater leadership in industry networking and visitor servicing at the local level (as required).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with each progress / development association to identify and develop their tourism-related goals and projects.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Changes in market trends</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism operators need to keep abreast of changes in market trends and preferences for visitor experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide updates on latest market research at local industry forums and in regular newsletters and communications to the local tourism industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1 - 5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Digital technology</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operators also need to stay informed of advances in digital technology, trends in consumer take-up of various tools and platforms (eg. social media) and opportunities (and pitfalls) to communicate with visitors before, during and after their trip.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT to provide an annual program of digital technology training for tourism operators and staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1</li> </ul>
<b><i>Building reputation for good food</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kerang has an opportunity to encourage more highway traffic to stop and spend through building its reputation for quality food and refreshments. This may require inspiring the hospitality sector to cater for tourism markets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring together Kerang's hospitality sector to discuss market trends and opportunities associated with attracting visitors to Kerang's eateries. Identify further training opportunities with the operators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 2</li> </ul>

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Customer Service</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving customer service standards, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors, is important to meet the expectations of a well-travelled public. It is especially critical for Kerang, where its primary tourism point of difference, as identified in section 8.2, could be as a service centre. Hospitality and retail also tend to have a high turnover of young staff, so ongoing training opportunities (internal to the business and external) are very important. Demonstrating the benefits of a skilled and well-trained workforce should be promoted within the local tourism industry.</li> <li>Assist managers of small tourism businesses to attain the skills they need to provide customer service training to staff in a busy hospitality or retail business.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT to provide customer service training to the hospitality and retail sectors. In particular, train managers to train their staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1-5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Customer service skills of staff/volunteers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that staff and volunteers at information facilities in the shire have a high level of customer service skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct bi-annual customer service training for staff and volunteers of visitor information outlets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yr 1- 5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Promotional Skills</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some community-based organisations working in tourism have little or no experience in marketing and promotions for events and other experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct marketing training for community-based event organisers and associations.</li> <li>Provide support to tourism and hospitality businesses to provide packages aimed at encouraging visitation.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Public Liability Insurance</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public liability insurance concerns are deterring some community organisations from establishing events and visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide advice to assist community organisations to attain public liability insurance where required, eg. via briefings, fact sheets, newsletters.</li> </ul>	Ongoing

# Communication & Partnerships

Council will seek to build the capacity of town-based progress and development associations to take greater leadership in industry networking, events, product development and visitor servicing. This will be achieved by improving communication with community groups and by conducting events such as tourism forums, bus tours, regular collaboration at community meetings and by assisting communities in the development of events and local projects linked to the community plans.

Community groups will be encouraged to develop a closer working relationship with Council and Tourism businesses and to play a much more proactive role in developing and promoting their local tourism opportunities.



TOPIC	STRATEGIC ISSUE	GSC ACTIONS	TIME FRAME
<b><i>Brochure stands at local businesses</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of visitor information 7 days/week throughout the shire.</li> <li>• Participation in MRT's regional digital platform will provide the opportunity for an online booking service at the VIC.</li> <li>• To ensure that visitors receive the most up-to-date information, channel all visitor information inquiries via telephone and email to the VIC, where staff and volunteers have participated in regular tourism training and product updates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the placement and restocking of brochure stands at all accommodation facilities, key events and specific businesses throughout the shire.</li> <li>• Establish an online booking service for walk-in visitors to the VIC via the MRT digital platform. Engage local tourism businesses.</li> <li>• VIC to service all visitor telephone and email inquiries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yr 1- 5</li> <li>• Yr 1-2</li> <li>• Yr 1-5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Two-way communications – Tourism Operators</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct two-way strategies to keep tourism operators informed about GSC's tourism activities, and to keep Council informed about industry issues and requirements.</li> <li>• Attain feedback from the shire's tourism industry on important initiatives that relate to the whole shire.</li> <li>• Create networking opportunities to encourage a supportive operating environment for tourism operators, and to encourage collaborative initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct biannual tourism forums, hosted in association with a town progress association, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) present and discuss information about Council's proposed approach to tourism activities as per the Tourism Plan;</li> <li>(ii) launch completed projects;</li> <li>(iii) report on latest visitor research; and</li> <li>(iv) attain updates on regional initiatives from MRTB. These forums will also create an industry networking opportunity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Yrs 1 - 2 onwards</p>

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME LINE</b>
<b><i>Two-way communications - Town Progress/Development Associations</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct two-way strategies to keep town associations informed about GSC's tourism activities, and to keep Council informed about tourism industry issues and requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly attend town association meetings to attain feedback on important tourism initiatives relating to the town, and to receive updates on community tourism projects.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Two-way communications - Community</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community involvement in tourism planning and implementation is essential to ensure that the visitation and tourism development which occurs in a town is consistent with the local community's aspirations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local town progress / development associations to conduct major projects that benefit the town.</li> <li>Provide support to tourism related projects in the towns' community plans</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the local community informed about tourism initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a regular media release about Council's tourism-related activities. Link with initiative below when appropriate.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Membership- Murray Regional Tourism Board</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration as part of the Murray regional tourism program is essential to develop tourism in the shire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate in the Murray Region Tourism Board partnership, including compliance with the Funding Agreement 2014-2017.</li> <li>Attend MRTB Board meetings and Tourism Manager Forums.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Awareness of opportunities- Investors</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness amongst potential investors of product development opportunities in Gannawarra.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend selected regional and state business forums and networking events.</li> <li>Respond to investor leads and inquiries</li> </ul>	Ongoing



## Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy

Gannawarra Shire Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Strategy and will work with all internal and external stakeholders in particularly community groups to support the delivery of the Strategy through regular monitoring and reporting process.

The Strategy is a living document and will be reviewed and amended as circumstances change. The review will include assessing the progress of the Strategy deployment, assess whether the outcomes of the action bring the Shire closer to meeting the priority goals, and amend and evolve the Strategy to reflect changing needs in the Shire, new funding opportunities that may arise, or new direction which may be developed.

The review stage will occur before the end of the Strategy five year phase and will feed into the development of the following five year phase of the Strategy.

Council will report on how it is progressing with meeting the Strategic Issues of the plan. This may include reporting the at regular Council meetings, reporting to community groups and via local media.



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