

# GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL WALKING AND CYCLING STRATEGY SUMMARY REPORT

## Acknowledgments

Gannawarra Shire Council and Tredwell acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, pays respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, and extends that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Gannawarra Shire Council.

Tredwell would also like to thank the following people for their contribution to the development of the Gannawarra Shire Walking and Cycling Strategy:

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Cover Image: Gannawarra Shire Council

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## Project Background and Scope

The following report provides a summary of key findings from the draft Gannawarra Walking and Cycling Strategy (GWCS). This Shire wide strategy has been developed to drive coordinated and target future investment in active transport, trail recreation and tourism opportunities within the Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC). The GWCS proposes walking and cycling trail developments, connections and extensions that enhance the way people move around the Shire, townships and communities, whilst attracting tourists and locals to explore the region's unique natural offerings.

The Walking and Cycling Strategy includes a review of relevant Council Plans/Strategies, an assessment of all existing walking and cycling infrastructure across the Shire and identifies opportunities to enhance connections to key services.

Consideration has been given to ensuring safe and accessible connections to the places people spend their time, including schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, parks and shopping precincts; whilst exploring ways to incorporate active recreation and tourism to enhance the livability of the community. With a strong connection to Gunbower Creek, Murray River, Loddon River and the Kerang Lakes, there is significant potential to utilise GSC's unique waterways to draw people in from surrounding towns, regions, and states and encourage them to stop, spend and stay in the Shire.

The strategy provides information and establishes recommendations to assist Council in ongoing development of walking and cycling assets. This has been achieved through determining the community's needs and demands, asset, management and maintenance requirements, and through the exploration of innovative walking and cycling opportunities at the forefront of national and international trends.

The GWCS has thoroughly considered the proposed development of the Murray River Adventure Trail, Koondrook to Kerang Rail Trail Project and the Kerang Lakes Eco-Trail Project which are being developed concurrently.

## Project Methodology

The projects five stage methodology is outlined below, this was developed to ensure that the project incorporated relevant consultation, research and planning processes whilst meeting the project brief requirements.

The five stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Project Inception and Background Research

Stage 2: Community and Key Stakeholder Consultation

Stage 3: Audit, Data Collection and Mapping

Stage 4: Draft Walking and Cycling Strategy and Concept Plans

Stage 5: Final Walking and Cycling Strategy and Concept Plans



## VISION STATEMENT

*"A high quality, sustainable and community driven walking and cycling network that encourages considerate trail use, active lifestyles, provides social, economic and environmental benefits, whilst improving transport and showcasing Gannawarra's unique natural flora, fauna and landscapes".*

## Overview of Gannawarra Shire Council

Gannawarra Shire Council covers an area of 3,735 square kilometres and has a population of 10,438 people (ABS 2021). Located in Victoria's north-west on the Murray River, the Shire is just 1.25 hours from Bendigo, 40 minutes from Swan Hill and 3 hours from Melbourne. It contains two large townships including Kerang and Cohuna and several smaller settlements including Koondrook, Quambatook, Leitchville, Lalbert, Lake Charm, Murrabit and Mystic Park (Kangaroo Lake).

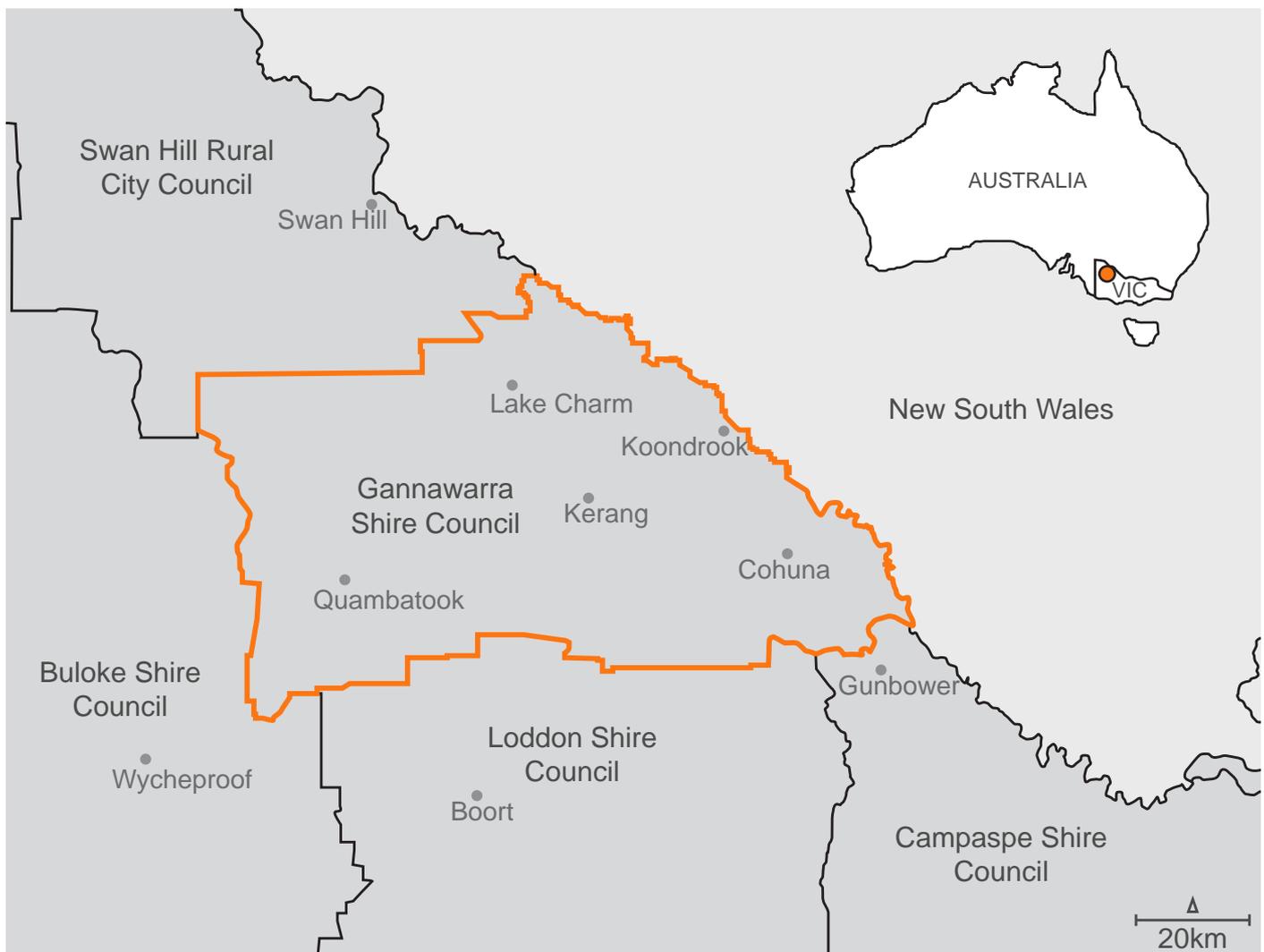
The GSC enjoys a diverse economy with representation across all sectors including dairy, cropping, livestock, retail trade, manufacturing, and government services such as healthcare and education. Emerging economic opportunities include nature-based tourism and renewable energy. The GSC is a place of strong community pride where

its communities motivate and inspire each other to make the region a great place to live, visit and do business.

Currently there is an extensive network of footpaths and tracks within the GSC that are maintained by Council and community groups. Many of these formalised trails are currently utilised heavily by locals residents and attract tourists to the GSC from neighbouring regions due to their unique flora and fauna and experiences offered. There are however many informal tracks and trails that are regularly utilised by the local community but are unknown to those outside of it, that have the potential to increase visitation to the region.

This report provides recommendations for the management and maintenance of these tracks and trails to aid in supporting GSC's tourism market.

### Gannawarra Shire Context Map



## Literature Review

An important component in the development of the GWCS is the review of a wide range of background and strategic documents and policy positions to ensure that the Strategy aligns with wider objectives across the state, region and local areas.

The following documents have been reviewed for consideration in the development of the GWCS:

- Economic Development Strategy (2019)
- Cohuna Vision Study (2015)
- Sport and Recreation Strategy (2019)
- Gannawarra Waterfront Masterplans (2019)
- Council Plan 2021-25
- Tracks & Trails Strategy Plan (2005)
- Gannawarra Strategic Tourism Plan (2015)
- Murray River Adventure Trail Feasibility Study
- Kerang-Koondrook Rail Trail Feasibility Study (2014)
- Bushwalking Victoria Strategic Plan (2020)
- Victorian Trails Strategy (2014-2024)
- Victorian Cycling Strategy (2018-2028)

## Demand and Trends

Understanding the rates of participation in walking and cycling related activities and trends which are likely to influence these rates, allows for the development of a forward-thinking strategy which can effectively plan for the future. A series of indicators and trends are outlined here to help identify potential implications for walking and cycling planning in the GSC.

### Victorian Participation Rates

The latest release of AusPlay Participation Data for Victoria outlines that walking (recreational) is the most popular sport/physical activity among Victorian adults, with an estimated 3,023,000 people (53.6% of the population) participating at least once between January 2021 and December 2021.

Cycling (17.8%) and bush walking (8.1%) also featured among the 10 most popular sports/physical activities.

The following table displays this data with the corresponding participation rates for Victorian adults.

Rank	Activity	VIC Adult Participation Rate	Estimate ('000)
1	Walking (Recreational)	53.6%	3,023.0
2	Fitness/Gym	37.1%	2,091.7
3	Athletics, track and field (includes jogging and running)	22.7%	1,280.9
4	Cycling	17.8%	1,001.8
5	Swimming	14.4%	813.7
6	Bush walking	8.1%	456.5
7	Yoga	7.9%	445.2
8	Tennis	6.0%	340.8
9	Basketball	5.9%	330.3
10	Pilates	5.6%	316.3

AusPlay Sport Participation Table, Top 10 Adult Activities, 2021

## Benefits of Walking and Cycling

Recreational walking and cycling offer a diverse range of benefits to communities. These benefits are clearly apparent when aligned to the existing infrastructure within the GSC.



### Health

Improved physical and mental well-being.



### Transport

Practical transportation corridors.



### Conservation

Preservation of natural areas.



### Economy

Positive economic drivers.



### Cultural Identity

Access and awareness of historical & cultural features

## Trail Audit

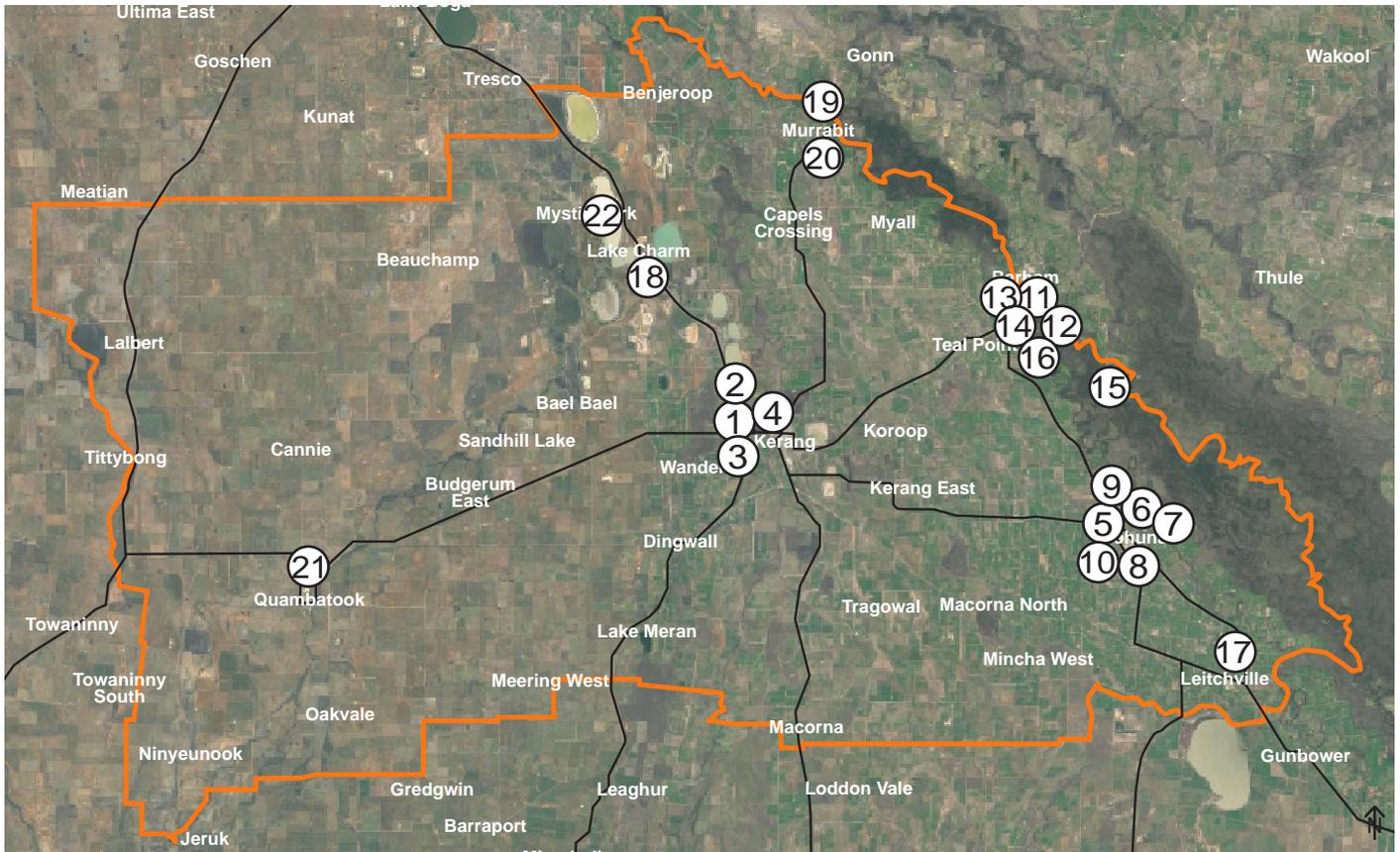
Existing trails which are Council controlled were audited through a process involving desktop research and on-ground assessments.

An on-ground assessment of trails across Gannawarra Shire Council was undertaken over a one-week period in February 2022, using a GPS device to collect a range of information for both existing and potential trails. The information collected included the alignment of trails, records of key attributes and photographs.

## Existing Trails Inventory

Map Ref	Trail Name	Primary Use(s)	Grade/Difficulty	Length
1	Town Swamp and Loddon River	Walk + Cycle	2	1.9km loop
2	ParkRun Kerang	Walk + Run	2	5km loop
3	Loddon River - Kerang to Old Kerang	Walk + Bike	2	950m
4	Historic Township Walk Kerang	Walk + Bike + Drive	1	5.1km
5	Gilrule Walking Track	Walk + Bike	2	2km
6	Cohuna Nature and Historical Walk	Walk + Bike	2	2.8km
7	Ski Run	Walk + Bike	2	3.8km
8	Cohuna Town Walk	Walk + Bike	1	2.5km
9	ParkRun Cohuna	Run + Walk + Bike	2	5km loop
10	Barr Creek	Walk	4	3.5km
11	Redgum Forest Walk (Turtle Loop)	Walk + Bike	3	9.1km return
12	Redgum Forest Walk (Eagle Loop)	Walk + Bike	3	13.2km return
13	Koondrook-Barham Redgum Statue Walk	Walk + Bike	1	2.4km
14	Goanna Walking Track	Walk + Bike	2	2.8km loop
15	Koondrook to Cohuna via Koondrook Track	Walk + Bike	2	15km one way
16	Gunbower Creek Canoe Trail	Canoe/Kayakers	N/A	5.2km return
17	Leitchville Town Loop	Walk + Bike	2	3.3km
18	Lake Charm Loop	Walk + Bike	2	2km
19	Railway Heritage Trail	Walk	2	2.7km
20	Murrabit Town Walk	Walk	2	2.7km
21	Avoca Trail Quambatook	Walk + Bike	2	1.5km
22	Kangaroo Lake Trail	Walk + Bike	TBC	3.7km One Way

Gannawarra Existing Trails Map



LEGEND

- ① Town Swamp and Loddon River
- ② ParkRun Kerang
- ③ Loddon River - Kerang to Old Kerang
- ④ Historic Township Walk Kerang
- ⑤ Gilruth Walking Track
- ⑥ Cohuna Nature and Historical Walk
- ⑦ Ski Run
- ⑧ Cohuna Town Walk
- ⑨ ParkRun Cohuna
- ⑩ Barr Creek
- ⑪ Redgum Forest Walk (Turtle Loop)
- ⑫ Redgum Forest Walk (Eagle Loop)
- ⑬ Koondrook-Barham Redgum Statue Walk
- ⑭ Goanna Walking Track
- ⑮ Koondrook to Cohuna via Koondrook Track
- ⑯ Gunbower Creek Canoe Trail
- ⑰ Leitchville Town Loop
- ⑱ Lake Charm Loop
- ⑲ Railway Heritage Trail
- ⑳ Murrabit Town Walk
- ㉑ Avoca Trail Quambatook
- ㉒ Kangaroo Lake Trail

## Other Trail Development Projects

### Kerang to Lake Charm Eco-trail

An emerging trail project is currently being explored in partnership with Kerang Landcare which seeks to link the townships of Kerang and Lake Charm through the development of a trail. This trail known as the Kerang Lakes Eco-Trail would explore the natural beauty of the area, by traversing through natural bushland and alongside RAMSAR listed waterways, commencing within Kerang Regional Park. The trail will connect to the Murray River Adventure Trail and showcase the unique birdlife, cultural heritage and profile Kerang Regional Park, highlighting the Gannawarra as Victoria's nature-based tourism destination.



Kerang to Lake Charm Eco-Trail Draft Alignment

### Murray River Adventure Trail

The Murray River Adventure Trail will be a multi-sport adventure trail which extends along the length of the Murray River within the Murray tourism region in Victoria and NSW, using land and water to incorporate walking, cycling, kayaking/canoeing and other forms of water transport.

The trail plans to extend from Lake Hume, near Albury Wodonga in the east to Mildura, Wentworth in the West. The Trail will traverse secluded River Red Gum forests and major settlements along the length of the Murray River and provides opportunities for visitors to experience the Murray River in its natural setting, allowing immersion in the environment through active recreation.

### Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail

What was once an important supply chain for early colonialists living on the Victorian-New South Wales border is set to become a popular outdoor adventure attraction for the Gannawarra Shire. The trail will follow parts of the former Kerang-Koondrook Tramways route, which delivered supplies to Kerang from the Koondrook Wharf. The Kerang and Koondrook Rail Trail is planned to eventually extend from Kerang out to the proposed Lake Charm Eco-trail.

The Victorian government has recently awarded \$500k funding to start the planning and design work for the 22-kilometre cycling and walking trail between Kerang and Koondrook.



Kerang to Koondrook Existing Tramway Alignment

## Community and Stakeholder Consultation

A series of consultation mechanisms were used to engage with the wider community and key stakeholders. These mechanisms were:

- Online Community Survey
- Internal Stakeholder Meeting
- Key External Stakeholder Meeting
- Community Trails Workshop
- Targeted stakeholder interviews (phone, emails, meetings)

## Workshop, Meeting and Interview Key Themes

Key themes derived from the Community and key stakeholder consultation engagement have been summarised below.

### Community Consultation Key Themes

- There is dangerous traffic and fast paced traffic in areas and there is a need for more safe crossings and bike paths etc.
- Strong support for the development of the Kerang Lakes Eco Trail
- Consultation with landowners and other stakeholders will need to be undertaken for approval
- There are flood plain risks in areas in GSC
- Consideration will need to be made to the management of existing and future trails
- Ensure traditional landowners are involved where required
- Murray River Adventure Trail will be an excellent addition to the trails network
- Link the communities e.g. Kerang, Koondrook and Cohuna
- Bright is a good example for trail development and design
- Rail trails are ideal as there is already some existing infrastructure in place e.g. Kerang to Koondrook

### Key Stakeholder Consultation Key Themes

- Planning for maintenance & governance of existing and future trails will need to be considered
- Opportunity to improve nature-based tourism within the Shire
- Land management and ownership will need to be considered

- Linkages between major townships would be beneficial
- Tourism and commercial opportunities for the community to be explored
- Understand the usage of trails and required activation
- Creation of trail experiences unique to the area that will attract visitors from local, regional and state levels
- There is a need for mountain bike trails in the area

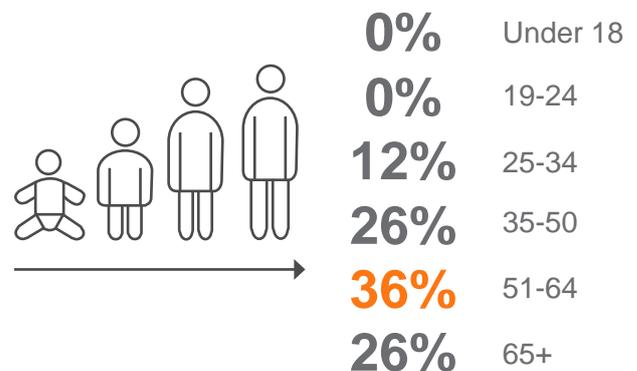
## Online Survey Key Themes

The below infographics summarise some of the key results captured through the community online survey.

### Total participants



### Age Group



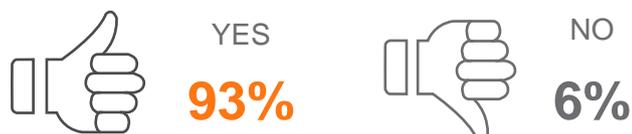
### Where do you live?



What type of activities do you have an interest in?



Have you used a path, trail or linkage for walking, cycling and/or trail based activity in the area in the past 12 months?



What type of walking, cycling and trail-based experiences and/or developments would you like to see offered in the Gannawarra Shire in the future?

Key themes:

- Cycling paths and linkages to avoid major roads
- Specific MTB trails, featuring single trails, jumps and obstacles
- Upgrades to trail infrastructure, signage, waymarking and improvement of management of current formal and informal trails
- Extension of Ski Run Trail in Cohuna
- Connection of townships via a shared use trail
- Promotion of current and potential canoe trails in the area
- Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail
- Improvements and further development of trails in Gunbower Forest
- Trails connecting Kerang Lakes (Kerang to Lake Charm Eco-trail)
- Addition of interpretation signs to current trails
- “I would like to see all the tracks and trails upgraded so that they are able to be used by residents and visitors, and then promoted as a high-quality visitor attraction and experience”.

Comments on walking, cycling and/or active transport linkages and routes within the Gannawarra Shire.

Key themes:

- Maintenance and improvement of current trails
- Better promotion and information (maps, brochures etc.) on current and future trails across the LGA
- More support infrastructure e.g. toilets, bins and rest areas
- Development of linkages to schools and other community facilities
- Dedicated cycling paths and trails
- Weed and vegetation issues (Bindis)
- Walking and cycling paths suitable for children to schools within the LGA
- Making any future linkages accessible by all community members e.g. wheelchair and mobility scooters, families with prams and young bike riders
- Safety issues and traffic management

### Strategy and Action Plan Overview

A summary of the strategy and action plan has been provided below which identifies the overarching strategic outcomes and subsequent strategies. The actions required to achieve these strategies are included within the full GWCS report.

<b>Strategic Outcome A: Integrated Planning &amp; Management</b>
Strategy A1: Upgrade existing Council-controlled trails, advocate for improvements to trails managed by other agencies
Strategy A2: Develop an integrated trail planning framework for Gannawarra Shire Council and its partners.
Strategy A3: Ensure public access to Council owned/managed land is maintained and seek to secure public access to additional land where this forms a strategic corridor for potential future trail/s.
<b>Strategic Outcome B: Sustainable &amp; Accessible Trails Network</b>
Strategy B1: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Kerang and surrounding suburbs and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B2: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Cohuna and surrounding suburbs and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B3: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Koondrook and surrounding suburbs and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B4: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Leitchville and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B5: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Lake Charm and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B6: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Quambatook and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B7: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure within Murrabit and promote as an integral part of a shire wide walking and cycling network.
Strategy B8: Ensure that up to date trail information is provided at strategic locations (i.e., information centers and trailheads) across the LGA. Ensure this information is consistent with other information sources, and appropriately reviewed & updated.
Strategy B9: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure between Koondrook and Cohuna, through Gunbower Forest, and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.
Strategy B10: Continue to progress with the development of a recreational trail along the old railway between Kerang and Koondrook.
Strategy B11: Upgrade existing mountain biking/off road cycling trails and assess feasibility of developing new mountain bike trails within the Shire.
Strategy B12: Continue to progress with the development of a recreational trail between Kerang and Lake Charm, showcasing the regions lakes and wetlands.

## 05 Strategy and Action Plan Overview

### **Strategic Outcome C: Participation, Promotion and Marketing**

Strategy C1: Improve health and wellbeing across the LGA through programs and events which promote regular physical activity and active lifestyles.

Strategy C2: Improve the provision of mapping and trail information across the Gannawarra LGA.

Strategy C3: Improve the provision of mapping and trail information across the Gannawarra LGA.

### **Strategic Outcome D: Development, Management & Maintenance**

Strategy D1: Ensure the management and maintenance structures for all current and future trails are clearly defined.

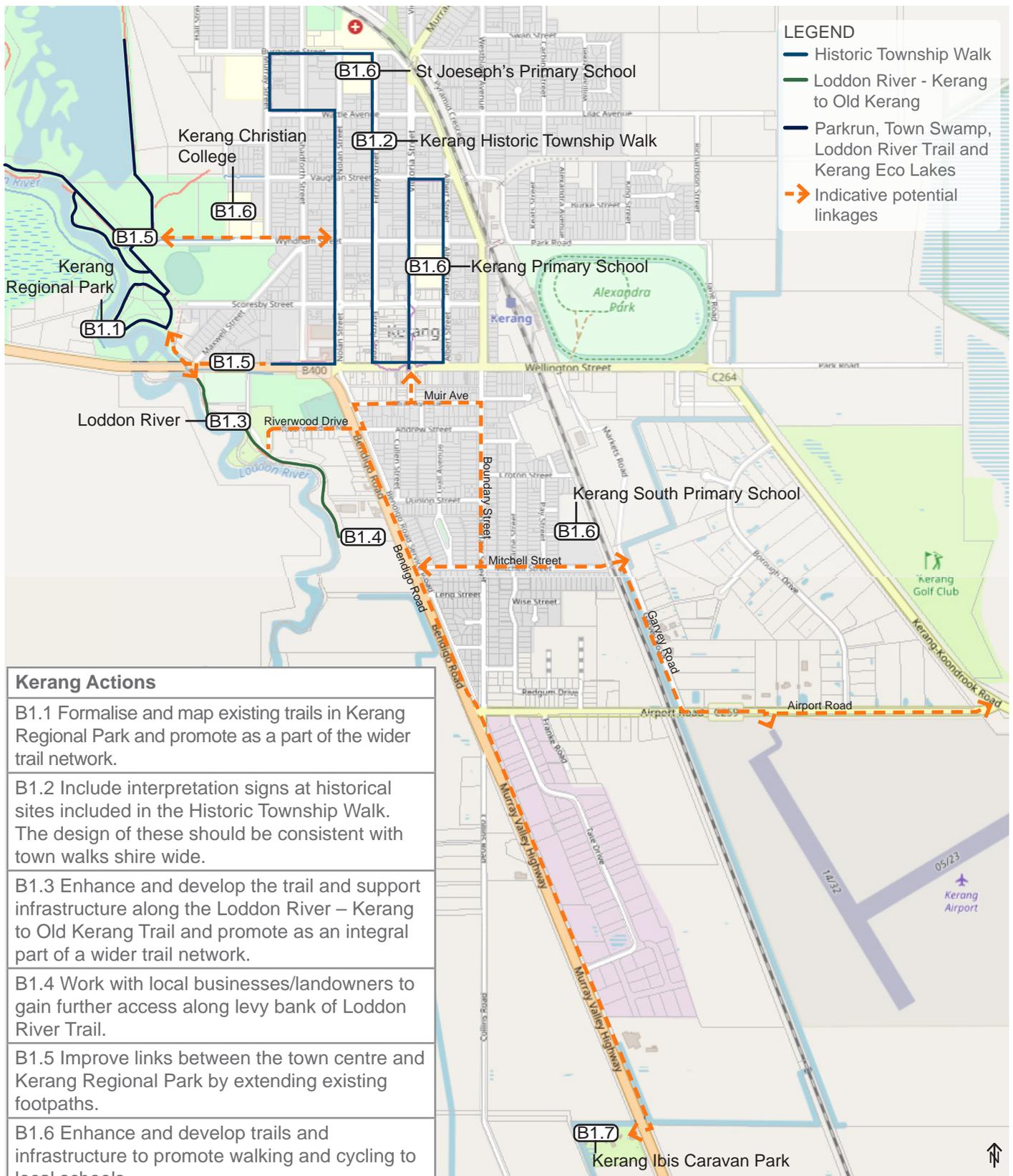
### **Strategic Outcome E: Community, Tourism & Economic Development**

Strategy E1: Use trail development and provision as an economic and community development tool.

Strategy E2: Foster partnerships relating to trail development, management, maintenance and promotion.

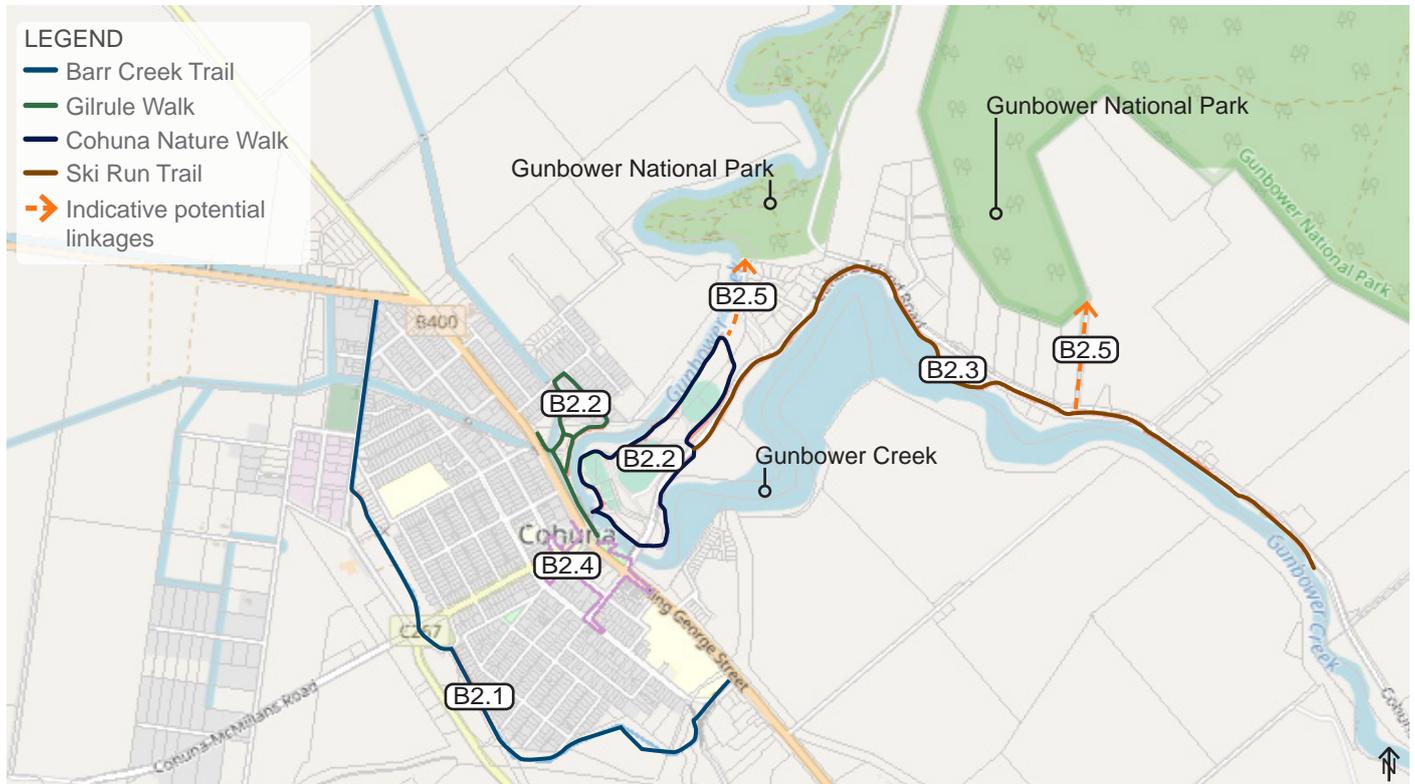
## Strategy and Action Maps

### Kerang Strategies and Actions Map



Kerang Actions	
B1.1	Formalise and map existing trails in Kerang Regional Park and promote as a part of the wider trail network.
B1.2	Include interpretation signs at historical sites included in the Historic Township Walk. The design of these should be consistent with town walks shire wide.
B1.3	Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure along the Loddon River – Kerang to Old Kerang Trail and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.
B1.4	Work with local businesses/landowners to gain further access along levy bank of Loddon River Trail.
B1.5	Improve links between the town centre and Kerang Regional Park by extending existing footpaths.
B1.6	Enhance and develop trails and infrastructure to promote walking and cycling to local schools.
B1.7	Enhance and develop trails and infrastructure to promote walking and cycling to the Ibis Caravan Park.

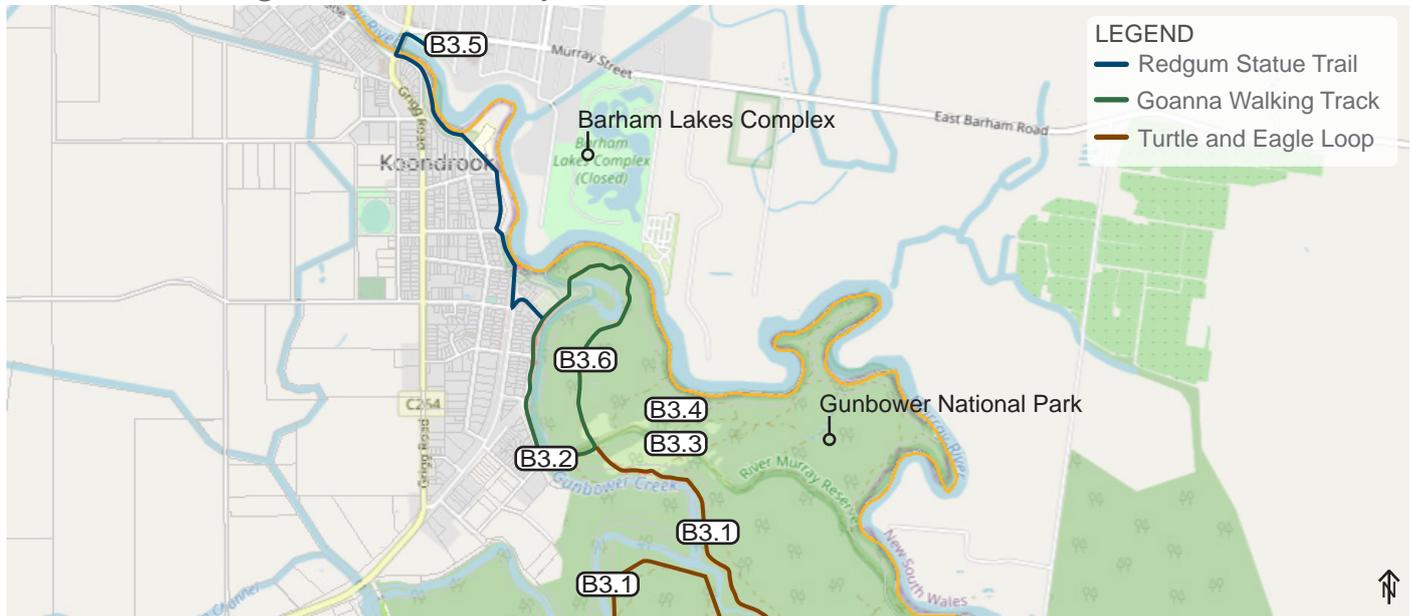
## Cohuna Strategies and Actions Map



### Cohuna Actions

- B2.1 Develop and formalise the Barr Creek Trail, Cohuna and promote as a part of the wider trail network.
- B2.2 Upgrade signage and waymarking, throughout Gilrue and Cohuna Nature Walk.
- B2.3 Enhance and develop the Ski Run Trail and its support infrastructure.
- B2.4 Develop consistent and clear signage throughout Cohuna to improve connectivity of trails network and linkages to key areas.
- B2.5 Extend and link existing trails to Gunbower Forest, to improve access to natural features and neighboring townships.

## Koondrook Strategies and Actions Map



### Koondrook Actions

B3.1 Replace existing waymarker signage along the Turtle and Eagle Loop with modern waymarkers ensuring that trail alignment is clearly articulated.

B3.2 Install trailhead sign at Condidorios Bridge entrance to Gunbower Forest, include trail maps and relevant information on all nearby trails.

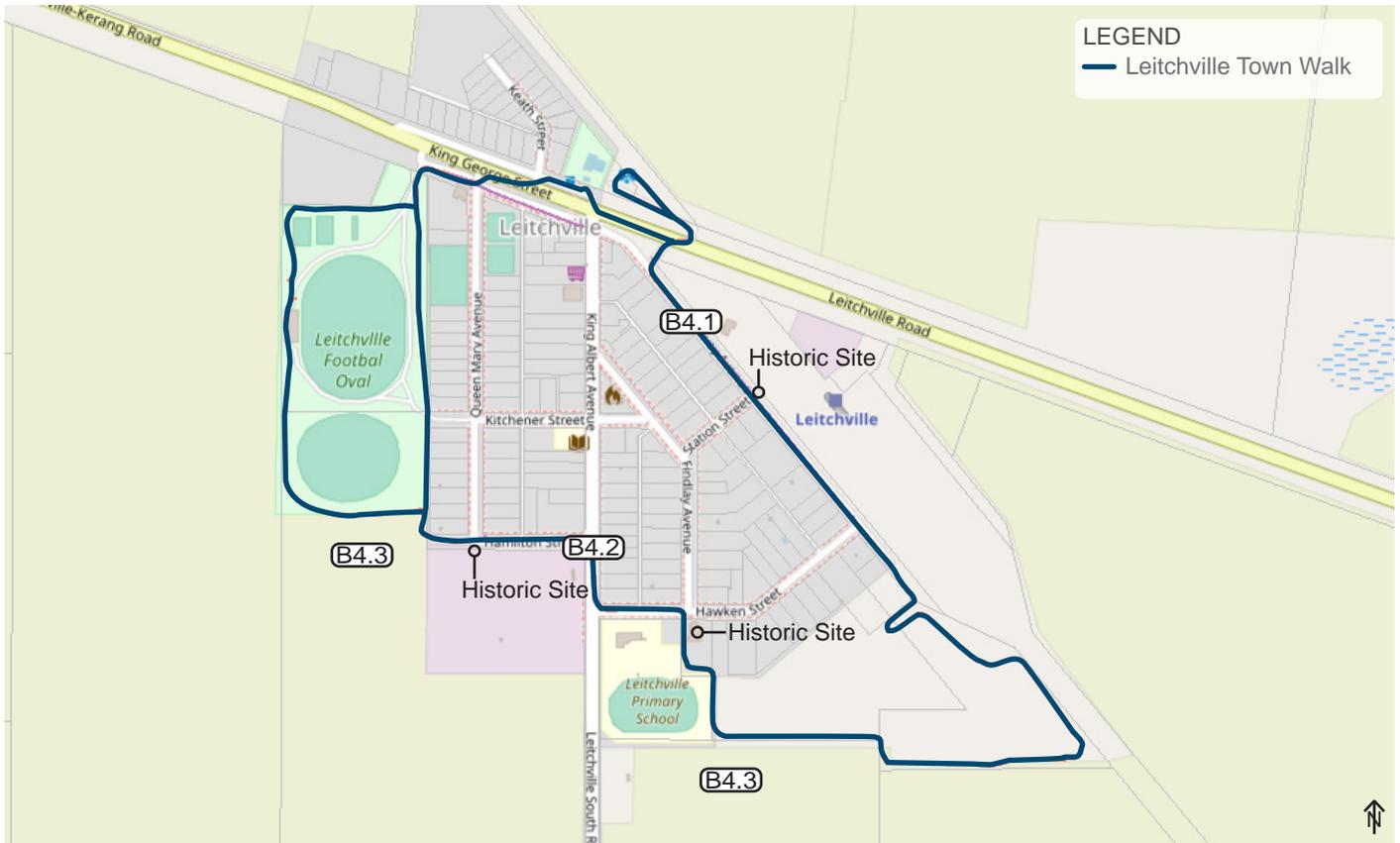
B3.3 Consider opportunities to include Technical Trail Features in Gunbower Forest to enhance the appeal for mountain bike riders.

B3.4 Work cooperatively with Parks Victoria and Landcare services to maintain and upgrade infrastructure within National Parks and State Forests.

B3.5 Install a trailhead sign at the beginning of the Redgum Statue Trail, including interpretation and relevant information.

B3.6 Further develop and formalise Goanna Walking Track, include waymarking and other suitable signage.

## Leitchville Strategies and Actions Map



### Leitchville Actions

B4.1 Improve the trail surface along the Town Loop trail.

B4.2 Enhance design and placement of trail signage around the Town Loop trail, including interpretation at historical sites.

B4.3 Promote revegetation of appropriate areas surrounding the trail.

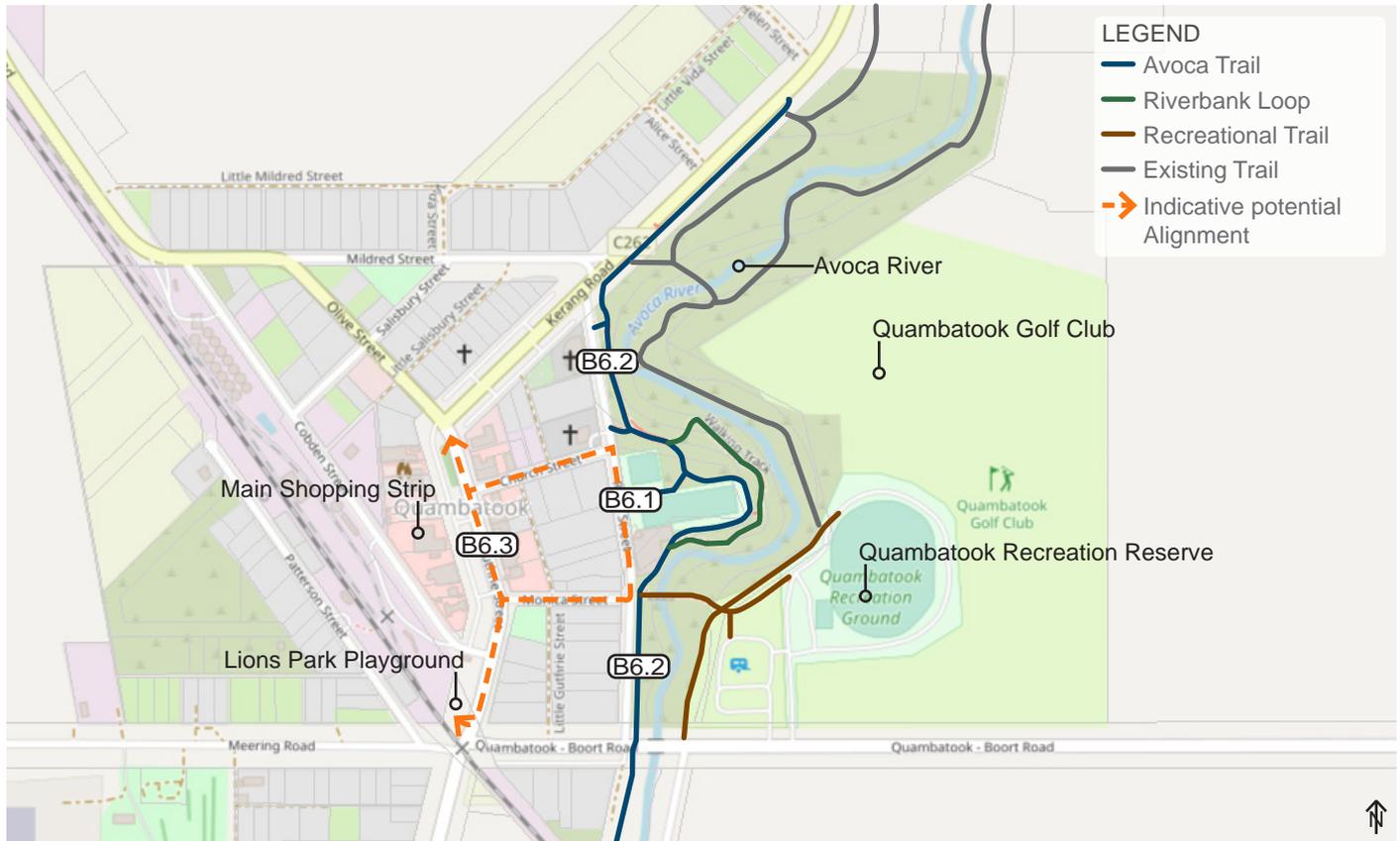
## Lake Charm Strategies and Actions Map



### Lake Charm & Kangaroo Lake Actions

- B5.1 Promote and support the Lake Charm Loop trail as a part of the shire wide trails network.
- B5.2 Work with local community and organisations to clear rubbish from the Lake Charm Loop bushland area behind the caravan park.
- B5.3 Continue to enhance and develop plans for a trail around the edge of Lake Charm, as proposed by the Lake Charm Progress Association.
- B5.4 Continue to enhance and develop plans to extend Kangaroo Lake Trail to northern precinct/ caravan park area, as suggested in Gannawarra Waterfront Masterplans.

## Quambatook Strategies and Actions Map



### Quambatook Actions

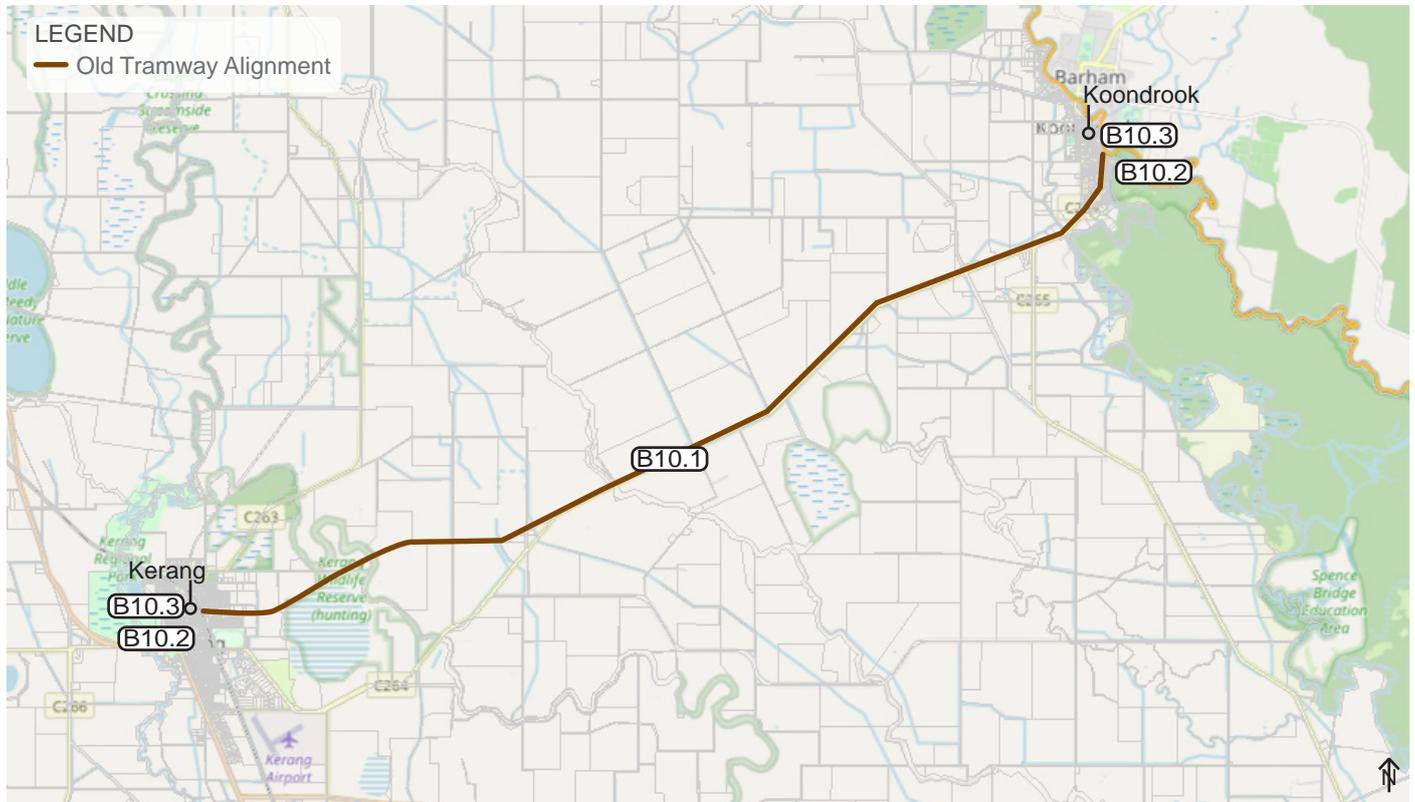
B6.1 Install a trailhead sign at a central location, including interpretation and relevant information on trails in Quambatook.

B6.2 Continue to enhance and develop plans for the existing Avoca River Trail, as proposed by the Quambatook Progress Association (QPA) and in line with the Master Plan.

B6.3 Develop and promote linkages to town facilities and visitor destinations.



## Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail Strategies and Actions Map



### Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail Actions

B10.1 Continue to support the link from Kerang to Koondrook utilising the old tramway which recently received funding for detailed design in 2022.

B10.2 Enhance existing trails and develop new trails where possible in surrounding areas. Ensure that these trails are appealing to the anticipated visitors associated with the Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail.

B10.3 At the appropriate point of the progression of the Rail Trail project, develop trailhead infrastructure at Kerang and Koondrook, to provide information about the trail, other trail experiences and promote connectivity to the town centre.

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