

Connecting Gannawarra

THE LAKES DISTRICT

COMMUNITY PLAN
2024 – 2029

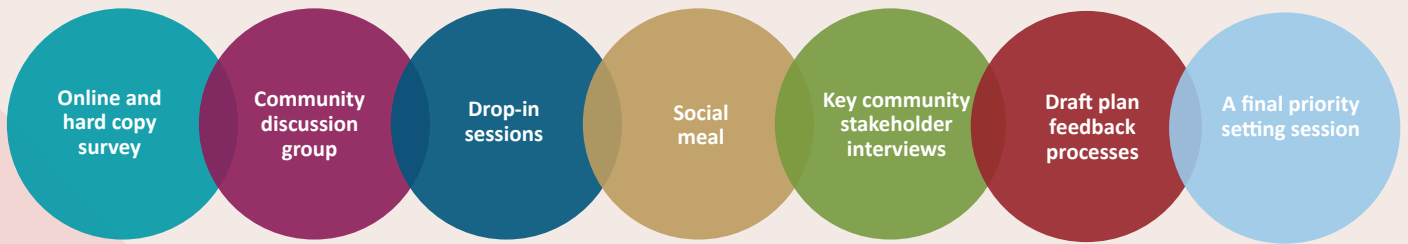


The Lakes District Community Plan

The Lakes District Community Plan 2024-2029 sets out the community's vision for the next six years.

Developed and owned by the community, the plan captures the community's voice for what is most important for them.

Community planning commenced in January 2023 and was completed in September 2023. Community members in and around The Lakes District were invited to share their input into the planning process via a variety of methods:



The Lakes District Community Plan is a community owned plan that captures community aspirations across a broad range of areas (not just local government). This project was delivered with funding from the Agriculture-Dependent Community Resilience Project.

Our Vision

In 2029 The Lakes District will LOOK LIKE, FEEL LIKE and HAVE:

- A united community, working together towards creating the great lifestyle, infrastructure and assets we deserve as locals and building the economic opportunities that can come from balanced tourism
- Waterfront housing developments to meet a sustainable and balanced demand for new housing
- A growing population that is connected to and contributing to The Lakes District community and groups
- Access to, and infrastructure on, the Lakes which is well maintained and supports enjoyment by locals and tourists
- Walking/biking/bridge infrastructure which enables easy and safe movement between the lakes
- Well maintained roads which safely support local, business and tourist traffic
- Beautifully maintained entrances, clear and attractive signage, enticing advertising
- Play areas for children and young people that attract families to live here, are utilised by tourists and enjoyed year-round by locals
- High quality and ensured water supply for all lakes to support a healthy and thriving environment
- A strong and sustainable farming community and industries
- An engaged next generation
- Regular arts and community events

Building On Past Work

The Lakes District Community Plan also builds on existing community plans and community consultation efforts. These include:

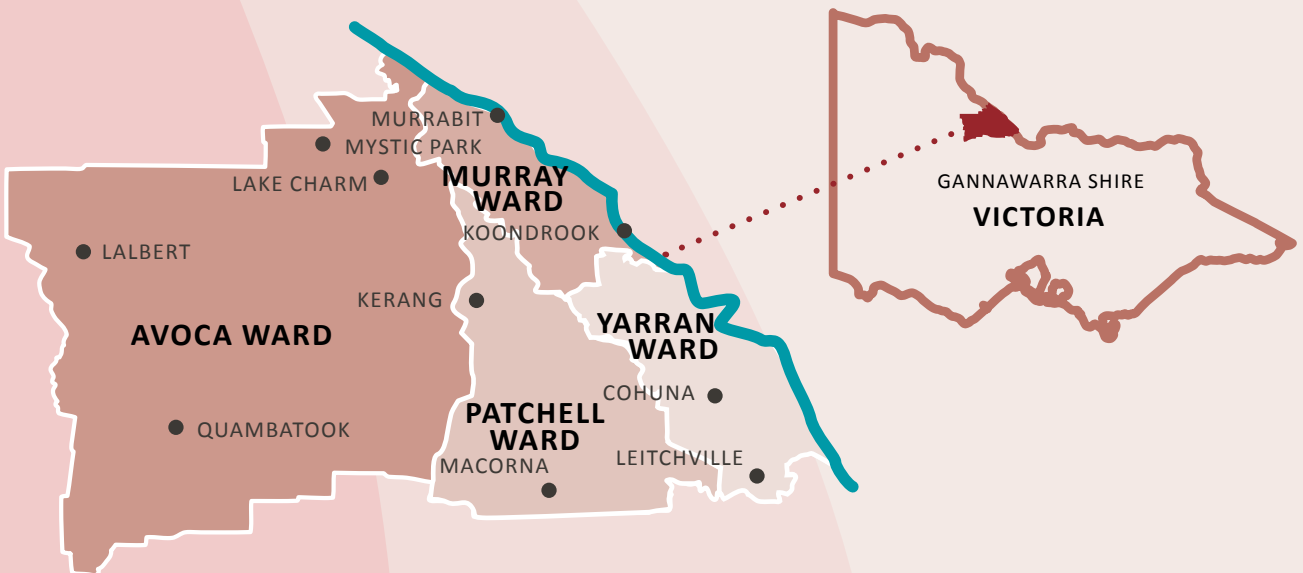
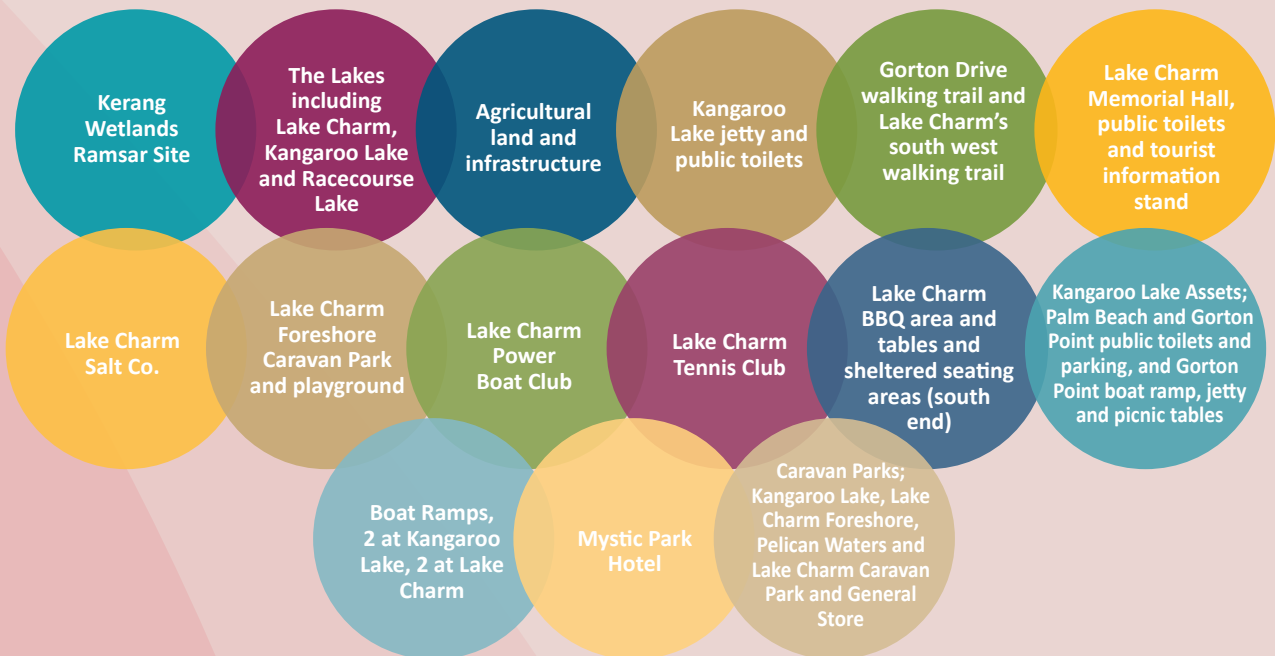


Our District

Located in the north-western part of the Shire and the Avoca Ward, the Lakes District comprises the localities of Kangaroo Lake, Lake Charm and Mystic Park. The Lakes District consists of a wide variety of land uses including agricultural operations, residential use, commercial operations and recreational/tourism-related uses.

The Murray Valley Highway runs between Lake Charm and Kangaroo Lake and Mystic Park. These communities are located between the larger centres of Kerang and Swan Hill with Kerang 20km to the south and Swan Hill 40km to the north. The Lakes District is 300km north of Melbourne.

KEY COMMUNITY FEATURES [BUILT AND NATURAL]



The Lakes District - Lake Charm

KEY STATS & FACTS - 2021



Population
147

Male **49.3%**
Female **50.7%**
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples **6.1%**
(VIC 1.0%)
Country of birth (Australia): **86.4%** (VIC 65.0%)



Age

Median age in Lake Charm: **55 years** (VIC 38 years)
Children aged 0-14 years made up **14.8%** of the population (VIC 18.0%)
and **23.0%** of the population are aged 65 years and over (VIC 16.8%)



Dwellings
58

6.7% of dwellings were unoccupied (VIC 11.1%)
\$188 / week was the median rent (VIC \$370)



Households

64.4% were family households (VIC 70.1%)
20.3% (25 people) were living in single person households (VIC 25.9%)
15.3% were group households (VIC 4.0%)
0.0% of households had no car (VIC 7.5%)



Employment

59.2% worked full-time (VIC 56.2%)
29.6% worked part-time (VIC 32.3%)
0.0% were Unemployed (VIC 5.0%)
14.1% were away from work (VIC 6.5%)



Household Income

In Lake Charm **13.6%** of households had a weekly household income of less than \$650 (VIC 16.4%) and **15.9%** of households had a weekly income of more than \$3,000 (VIC 24.2%)



Health

4.1% of Lake Charm residents reported three or more long-term health conditions (VIC 2.9%)

The Lakes District - Mystic Park includes Kangaroo Lake

KEY STATS & FACTS - 2021



Population
212

Male **50.5%**
Female **49.5%**
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples **2.4%**
(VIC 1.0%)
Country of birth (Australia): **84.0%** (VIC 65.0%)



Age

Median age in Mystic Park: **55 years** (VIC 38 years)
Children aged 0-14 years made up **13.0%** of the population (VIC 18.0%)
and **29.2%** of the population are aged 65 years and over (VIC 16.8%)



Dwellings
99

19.8% of dwellings were unoccupied (VIC 11.1%)
\$200 / week was the median rent (VIC \$370)



Households

82.9% were family households (VIC 70.1%)
17.1% (25 people) were living in single person households (VIC 25.9%)
0.0% were group households (VIC 4.0%)
0.0% of households had no car (VIC 7.5%)



Employment

54.9% worked full-time (VIC 56.2%)
33.3% worked part-time (VIC 32.3%)
8.8% were Unemployed (VIC 5.0%)
8.8% were away from work (VIC 6.5%)



Household
Income

In Mystic Park **22.7%** of households had a weekly household income of less than \$650 (VIC 16.4%) and **6.1%** of households had a weekly income of more than \$3,000 (VIC 24.2%)



Health

6.6% of Mystic Park residents reported three or more long-term health conditions (VIC 2.9%)

Community Consultation

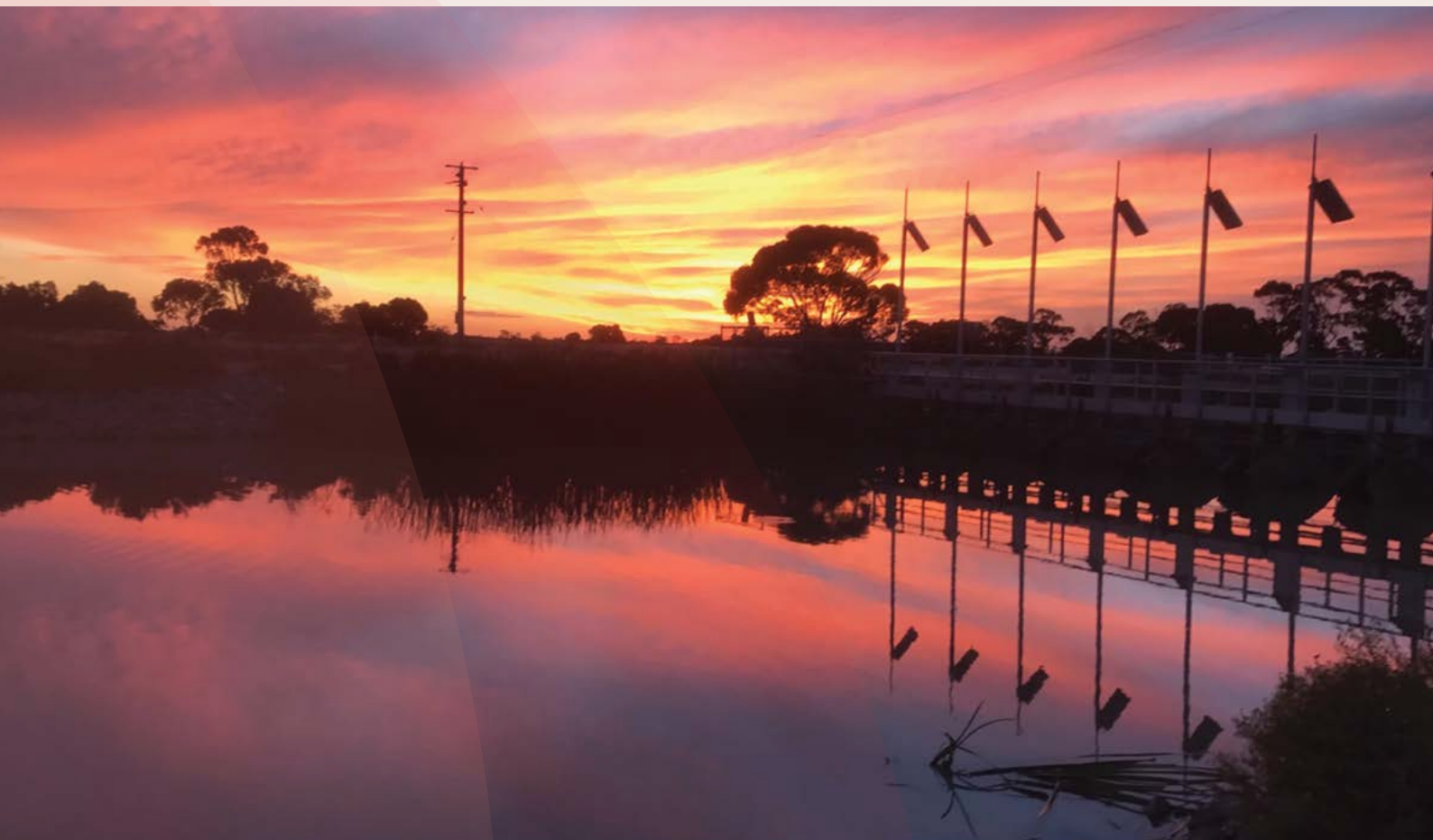
Residents living in The Lakes District were invited to share their thoughts on the strengths, challenges and opportunities for their community.

A range of strategies were selected from to ensure as many community members as possible could inform the development of The Lakes District Community Plan. Strategies included: an online and hard copy survey, drop-in session, community discussion groups, comment boxes at frequently visited community locations, and attendance at community social meals.

The following broad community engagement was achieved:

- 44 people filled in a survey
- 3 key stakeholders and community members attended a community workshop
- 22 people attended a social meal
- 6 people attended a drop-in session
- 7 people completed comment slips
- 3 community members participated in an interview
- 8 people attended the Community Plan feedback session to provide final comments on the draft Plan
- 7 people attended the Community Plan priority setting session

Overall, a total of 100 people shared their thoughts, ideas and dreams for the future of The Lakes District.



In The Lakes District We Love....

The top four things survey respondents liked about their community were:



Residents who attended the community workshop, community drop-in session and social meal noted similar themes, saying they really liked:

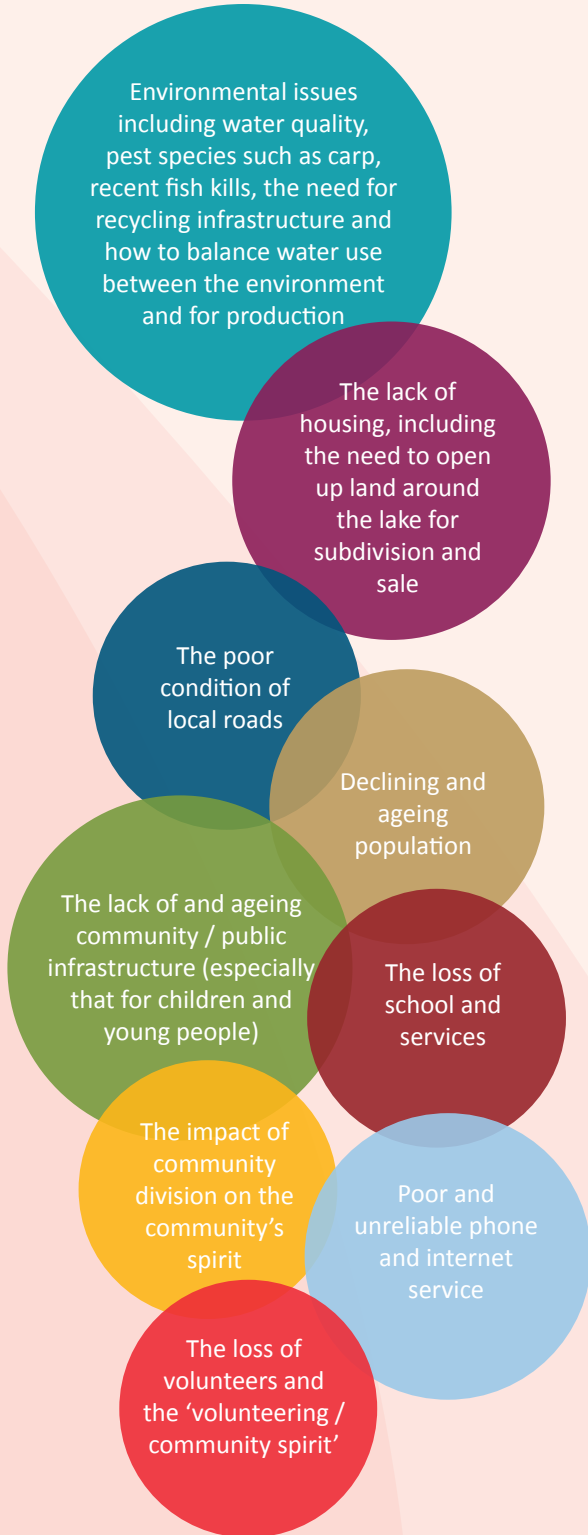
- The Lake and the location – community members of the Lakes District valued the lakes, the environment and opportunities for recreation and lifestyle they offered and their central location between Swan Hill and Kerang
- The people / community and commitment of volunteers to making the area a great place to live
- Events that allowed them to connect with each other – the social meals and ‘Cooking up a Storm’ activities were highly regarded, events at the Lake Charm Hall and Mystic Park Hotel were important
- Key community assets and infrastructure, including the Lake Charm General Store and Hall, the Mystic Park Hotel, and infrastructure, that enabled people to enjoy the Lakes

The people, the lifestyle, location and lakes, and community events and assets / infrastructure were shared across all groups.



Key Issues/Challenges

The most important issues/challenges that survey respondents shared were:



Additionally, residents who attended the community workshop, community drop-in session and social meal shared a range of challenges/ issues/threats including:

-  ➤ Road quality and maintenance – alongside a conversation about the inequitable spread of Shire efforts across the Gannawarra LGA
-  ➤ The prolonged delay in opening up additional housing estates along the Lakes foreshores
-  ➤ Environmental issues, including water quality and availability and fish kills, and weed / pest management
-  ➤ Ageing community asset and infrastructure and associated maintenance costs
-  ➤ Lack of volunteers, ageing volunteer base and impact on groups closing
-  ➤ Ageing population and strategies to ensure this population can age well in community (for example health services, public/ community transport)
-  ➤ Lack of access to key services – health, education, etc
-  ➤ Poor internet and mobile phone service
-  ➤ Enabling family farming to return to the area – impact of corporate farming, water costs and delivery, and the impact of National Parks as neighbours
-  ➤ State and Federal policies around water and primary industries
-  ➤ Community fragmentation

Across all the groups consulted with from The Lakes District, the lack of housing, ageing population, volunteer decline / burnout, road quality, maintaining community infrastructure, environmental issues, loss of key services, community divisions and mobile phone and internet service were common themes.

NOTE a complete summary of findings from the community consultation processes can be found in the Lakes District Consultation Summary Report.

Our Key Priorities

Gannawarra Shire Council's 2021 - 2025 Council Plan is guided by the following Strategic Statement:

“The Gannawarra will be renowned as an Australian destination and home of choice for its liveability and unique opportunities in innovative agriculture, renewable energy and nature-based tourism.

We focus on inclusive services and assets that enhance the health and wellbeing, cultural heritage, connectivity and productivity of our communities.”

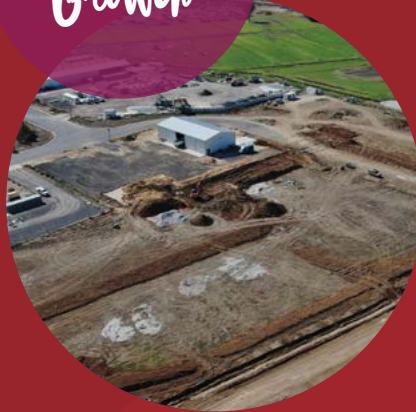
The achievement of which will be achieved through action on three goals.

Goal 1. Liveability



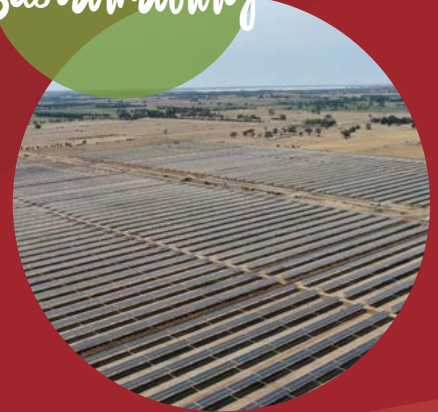
Enhance the wellbeing and liveability of the Gannawarra through creative infrastructure and services.

Goal 2. Growth



Grow the Gannawarra through a diverse and broad economy.

Goal 3. Sustainability



Achieve long-term financial and environmental sustainability.

The Lakes District Community Plan is set within these goals of Liveability, Growth and Sustainability. In this way the Lakes District Community Plan both aligns with and extends Council's strategic focus.

Goal 1. Liveability

Enhance the wellbeing and liveability of the Gannawarra through creative infrastructure and services.

THE LAKES DISTRICTS' STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

1: A WELCOMING, CONNECTED AND UNITED COMMUNITY WITH REASONS TO COME TOGETHER

1. Work with Gannawarra Shire Council to maintain spaces and places and encourage events where The Lakes District communities can come together and celebrate what unites them – their love of the Kerang Lakes, the people, the environment, and assets such as the Lake Charm Hall, Lake Charm General Store and the Mystic Park Hotel.
2. Create a local 'Calendar of Events' based on existing events and activities and share broadly to encourage connection with a focus on new community members.
3. Consider the development of a large annual event for The Lakes area.
4. Advocate for social programs that strengthen community inclusion and connections (e.g., Social Meals, Cooking Up a Storm, Playgroup). Note the importance of outside support to get events 'off the ground'.
5. Explore funding streams to build and support an arts and culture precinct within the Lakes District. Consider the Lake Charm School site as a possible location.

2: SUPPORT, RECRUIT, RESOURCE AND REDUCE WORKLOAD ON VOLUNTEERS

1. Strengthen relationships and connections between community groups to support each other, share resources and remain viable. Continue the model where community groups share updates with the Kerang Lakes Community Development Group (KLCDG).
2. Create opportunities to encourage new volunteers, especially younger and new residents.
3. Seek practical support from Council to strengthen volunteer sustainability, for example, agreement to pay certain annual costs which have widespread community benefit and commitment to support high priority areas from the Community Plan.

Goal 1. Liveability

Enhance the wellbeing and liveability of the Gannawarra through creative infrastructure and services.

THE LAKES DISTRICTS' STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

3: INFRASTRUCTURE, ASSETS AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENCOURAGE AND ENABLE USE OF THE LAKES

1. Develop an agreement with Council which clarifies their role and responsibilities as the owners of key public infrastructure and assets that enable enjoyment of the Lakes. Focus on items that maintain spaces for the community to come together and encourage young families to move to the area.
2. Maintain walking tracks to enable safe active access around The Lakes District.
3. Source funding to re-instate the bridge over the channel at the entrance of Racecourse Lake for pedestrians. Explore opportunity to coincide bridge with the proposed boat ramp for Racecourse Lake.
4. Consider sporting facilities that reflect the needs of the community and encourage opportunities for social connection.

4: INNOVATIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. Advocate for health and wellbeing services that are accessible to The Lakes District communities. Consider outreach, including opportunities to bring key services to well attended community events such as Social Meals and Cooking Up a Storm.
2. Raise awareness of the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme.

5: SUPPORT HEALTHY AGEING IN PLACE

1. Uphold the importance of our ageing community members, valuing their contribution to our communities across many years and their current and ongoing contribution.
2. Explore strategies and advocate for supports that enable people to age in place – facilitating their right to stay healthy, empowered, connected and local. Community transport models should be the first focus.

6: LAKE CHARM SCHOOL

1. Explore, with the Department of Education, opportunities to re-purpose the Lake Charm School*. Initial suggestions include as an Arts Hub and RV Park.
2. Stay open to the opportunity of re-opening the Lake Charm School if population increases and interest allows.

*Recognising its current use as a playgroup venue.

Goal 2. Growth

Grow the Gannawarra through a diverse and broad economy.

THE LAKES DISTRICTS' STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

1: BUILD ON PREVIOUS MASTERPLANS AND REPORTS

1. Gannawarra Shire Council works with Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) to resolve the key barrier restricting waterfront development for shared use infrastructure around Lake Charm – ownership and ongoing responsibility for maintenance and legal liability. This builds on previous requests by the Kerang Lakes Community Development Group that “The Shire looks at taking on the management of all the eco/tourist lakes, not just Kangaroo Lake.” Explore possible adaptation of the Lake Boga model.
2. Recognising the significant financial costs and investments of time and effort by local people, review existing masterplans and reports for key learnings. Identify ideas with widespread community support that can be achieved in the short and medium term for ‘quick wins’.
3. Prioritise efforts that benefit the existing Lakes District community and attracts young families as permanent residents. Ensure infrastructure placement, such as playgrounds which enables shared use.

2: PROMOTE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KERANG WETLANDS RAMSAR SITE

1. Work with Gannawarra Shire Council and Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to protect and promote Kerang Wetlands Ramsar Site.
2. Promote opportunities for eco-tourism businesses which showcase the significance of the Kerang Wetlands and increase visitor traffic and nights to the area.

3: DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

1. Advocate for improved mobile phone and internet services to meet the needs of the Lakes District residents, businesses, industries and visitors.

Goal 2. Growth

Grow the Gannawarra through a diverse and broad economy.

THE LAKES DISTRICTS' STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

4: A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT

1. Develop a unique brand for the Lakes District. Use this branding on all promotions and signage.
2. Advocate to Council and representative bodies (Visit Victoria and Murray Regional Tourism) for the continued strategic and 'branded' build of The Lakes District as a destination (within the Gannawarra – Victoria's Nature Based Tourism Destination strategy).
3. Install large signs along the Murray Valley Highway at the entrances to The Lakes area to ensure travellers see the scale and beauty of The Lakes and are directed to local businesses. Include a large map of the Kerang Lakes area.
4. Encourage and seek funding for the establishment of businesses in eco-tourism, water-based tourism and local asset tourism.
5. Explore possible locations and funding streams for arts based infrastructure, businesses and events including music festivals.
6. Create a series of photo opportunities around the Lakes, encourage both amateur and professional photography to showcase the area with an annual competition.

5: STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE FARMING COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES

1. Improve roads, ensuring they safely support residents and agriculture / other industry needs and equipment.
2. Request ongoing advocacy from Gannawarra Shire Council to state and federal government and peak bodies for a balanced approach to water delivery and use which offers water security and quality for local industries and communities.
3. Request ongoing advocacy from Gannawarra Shire Council to state and federal government for the management of pest plants and pest animals on both private and public lands.

Goal 2. Growth

Grow the Gannawarra through a diverse and broad economy.

THE LAKES DISTRICTS' STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

6: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO ENABLE POPULATION GROWTH

1. Request Council enact the recommendations of their multiple strategic documents and prioritise the rezoning and development of low-density residential and rural living residential on and near waterfrontages in the Lakes District. Doing so will enable the Lakes District to attract skills, diversity and permanent residents and capitalise on opportunities presented by increased workplace flexibility, lifestyle choice and developments such as VNI West and Goschen Mineral Sand Mining.
 2. Explore the Haven development at Lake Boga as a successful example and possible model.
 3. Explore development of a water treatment plant for The Lakes District to supply potable water to surrounding communities.
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Goal 3. Sustainability

Achieve long-term financial and environmental sustainability.

THE LAKES DISTRICTS' STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND KEY ACTIONS:

1: PARTNER WITH GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL FOR HIGH QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

1. Develop a model for working with Council that outlines roles and responsibilities for infrastructure and asset management and key Council representatives. Outline a strategic approach to achieving the area's potential.
2. Invite Gannawarra Shire Council leadership to one meeting each year of the Kerang Lakes Community Development Group.

2: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

1. Continue to manage locally and advocate for measures to support high quality and consistent water flows which protect native species and reduce the incidence of fish kills.
2. Invite Gannawarra Shire Council leadership to one meeting each year of the Kerang Lakes Community Development Group.

3: WASTE MANAGEMENT

1. Advocate for infrastructure to support the recycling of glass for The Lakes District communities through the installation of purple lidded bins in strategic locations.

Putting Our Plan Into Action

Implementation of The Lakes District Community Plan will be led by the Kerang Lakes Community Development Group in partnership with Gannawarra Shire Council. The Kerang Lakes Community Development Group has representation from key community groups in their district.

If you would like to get involved contact:
the Kerang Lakes Community Development group via
email: lakeskerang@gmail.com.

