

# GANNAWARRA FLOOD RECOVERY REVIEW 2023/24



The Gannawarra community has continued its recovery from the October-December 2022 floods during the 2023/2024 financial year.

The 2022 floods impacted 44 per cent of the Gannawarra Shire's landmass. The impact was widespread along the river systems which are a feature of the active floodplain on which Gannawarra is located.

In addition to this major flood, Gannawarra residents were impacted by the Christmas Day 2023 and January 2024 storm and flash flooding events.

For Council and Gannawarra residents the recovery journey from these events continues.

As we reflect on the past 12 months, despite the challenges, our communities have been resilient. Community members have extended support to impacted residents. Thanks to good rainfall since the floods, Gannawarra's agricultural sector experienced a good season. This helped to re-stimulate the local economy and build hope and confidence for the future.

Recovery from major flood events, such as those experienced by our Gannawarra communities, takes time and government resources to support Council with the costs involved in fixing the damage caused to community and Council infrastructure, such as buildings, roads, and bridges. This cost is beyond the means of our community. Council has actively advocated to government to speed up the timeframe for claims to be processed and to provide Council with the financial resources needed to enable restoration works to occur.

During 2023, Council developed an extensive submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2022 flood event and participated in the public hearings. Council continues to advocate for improvements in the way floods are managed and for improved flood mitigation to protect the Gannawarra community from future flooding events.

Council also worked closely with the community, government, emergency services, and social support agencies during 2023 to develop a Gannawarra Flood Recovery Plan. The implementation of this plan is now being overseen by the Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee which consists of 32 agencies who are working with Council to support the community at this time.

The Flood Recovery Plan for Gannawarra titled Gannawarra Community Resilience Flood Recovery Action Plan is centred on five key considerations to strengthen community resilience:

- Work in partnership with the community.
- Build on existing networks, resources, and strengths.
- Identify and support the development of community leaders.
- Be flexible in how we communicate with, and within, communities.
- Empower the community to make their own decisions and implement agreed actions that are place-based and community-led.

As determined by our community, the plan focuses on four key priorities:

## 1. Built and Natural Environment Recovery:

- Public Infrastructure Reconstruction
- Private Land and Building Recovery
- Natural Environment Resilience
- Improved Flood Planning

## 2. Wellbeing and Social Recovery:

- Building Understanding and Awareness
- Building Community Empowerment
- Building Connections
- Hope and Confidence for a Better Future

## 3. Agricultural and Economic Recovery:

- Agriculture and Business Recovery

## 4. Recovery Support and Service Coordination:

- Supporting coordination of agencies, resource planning, and implementation of relief and recovery services
- Engaging communities in decision making, information sharing and communication

At the conclusion of the 2023/2024 financial year, out of the 47 actions contained within the plan - 33 actions have been completed, 14 actions are in progress, and there are no actions that have not been commenced.

The Gannawarra Community Resilience Flood Recovery Action Plan has supported Council and partner agencies to target flood recovery resources towards community priorities and this will continue through the 2024/2025 financial year.



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## Council managed roads update

Council officers worked throughout 2023 to finalise packages of flood damaged local roads for approval by the State Government for works to commence. This process involved collecting evidence of the road damage, including photos at regular intervals, and measuring the depth of gravel to calculate the thickness lost during the flood.

Pre-approval of the scope of works was required by government prior to commencement of works to reduce the risk that Council would be left to fund some of the repairs out of its own budget, should any works be deemed not to comply with the State Government guidelines.

The required roadworks were divided into twelve packages. Packages 1-2 in the southern part of the Shire were completed in 2023.

Packages 3, 11 and 12 received government approval in May 2024. Contractors have been appointed and the works will proceed in the 2024/2025 financial year.

Packages 4-10 are pending approval.

Council has been very strong in its advocacy to repair local managed roads and other infrastructure damaged in the October-December 2022 flood event.

To date, Council has received \$2.037 million in advances through the Commonwealth and State Government Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements with the estimated cost of reconstruction works being \$8.6 million.

## Advocacy efforts continue

Council continues to advocate on key issues impacting our communities, including:

- Rural levees
- Flood mitigation measures
- Maintaining waterways
- Transport connectivity
- Build back better funding
- Digital connectivity
- Local road and bridge restoration

## Ongoing support for impacted residents

Mallee Family Care is providing case management support to individuals impacted by the October-December 2022 flood event, and Christmas Day 2023 and January 2024 Storm and Flash Flooding events. Support is available across the Gannawarra Shire and recently extended to offering set times for residents to access flood recovery support through the Cohuna and Kerang neighbourhood houses.

The State Government funded recovery support service, Windermere, continues to offer support to residents in Gannawarra impacted by the flood event via the Flood Recovery Hotline 1800 560 760.

## Rural Levee Advocacy

There are a large number of rural levees within the Gannawarra Shire in close proximity to most of the watercourses and flow paths, aimed primarily at keeping floods off agricultural land. The Murray River is also contained by levees.

Rural levees throughout Gannawarra are in the main poorly constructed with no proper provisions for maintenance and reconstruction and are inadequate in large floods. Once a levee breaches, damage is extensive and the floodwater has no way to re-enter the river system, other than via mechanical pumping.

Within the broader community there is confusion over ownership of rural levees. It is important that there is clear identification of who is responsible for ownership and maintenance of rural levees.

Rural levees were the number one flood recovery priority for the Gannawarra Shire determined by the community and Council following the 2022 floods.

Council has advocated to government on the uncertainty and confusion around ownership and management of levees across Gannawarra Shire. The North Central Catchment Management Authority received funding following the 2022 floods to undertake a review of levees across the NCCMA region (including Gannawarra) and work with local governments, agencies and communities to determine which levees provide collective community benefit and are strategically important during a flood to help move the flood from the top of the catchment to the bottom as safely as possible.

There are only two levees managed by Gannawarra Shire Council. These are:

- Kerang Township Protection Levee
- Quambatook Township Protection Levee

The review of the levee project is expected seek community input later in 2024.



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Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) provided Gannawarra Shire Council with \$996,279 following the October-December 2022 flood event to support events, programs and activities across flood impacted Gannawarra communities. The funding is being overseen by the Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee which includes 32 agencies who are working together to support the recovery of the Gannawarra community and deliver the Gannawarra Community Resilience Flood Recovery Action Plan by 30 June 2025.

- ◆ 169 community events funded
- ◆ 52 events in the 2022/23 year
- ◆ 117 events in the 2023/24 year

Shire-wide community flood recovery programs to build resilience to future emergencies

- **Community Recovery and Resilience Initiative - 2-year program** being led by Northern District Community Health across Buloke, Loddon and Gannawarra;
- **Sports Focus Flood Recovery Support Program** – 12-month club development program for Kerang Football & Netball Club and Cohuna Bowls Golf Club.

## Gannawarra Flood Reflections Video

**Clips** 7 video clips captured a diverse range of Gannawarra flood stories - Kerang, Cohuna, Reedy Lake, Koondrook, Quambatook, Murrabit and the Quinn Family Farm at Macorna. These can be viewed on Council's website.



**GANNAWARRA CARES**  
Take the time to connect with your community....



\$168,191.57 has been provided to support agency and community-led flood recovery events, programs and activities. This investment has provided a direct benefit to impacted Gannawarra communities.

Shop the Gannawarra  
this *Christmas*

Many of our local businesses are still recovering from the 2022 floods.

This Christmas shop local and give back to Gannawarra businesses that continue to support our local communities.

[www.thegannawarra.com.au](http://www.thegannawarra.com.au)



## Round 1 of a Community Flood Recovery Grants program 2023 provided funding to support the 11 community-led gatherings:

- Kerang Watercolour and Acrylic Painting Workshops
- Cohuna Family Fun Day
- Kerang New Year's Eve Party in the Park
- Cohuna New Year's Eve Fireworks and Family Night
- Kerang Summerwave Music Festival
- Kerang Community Christmas Carols
- Cohuna A little piece of Italy, concert - International classical guitarist with accompaniment
- Leitchville, Celebrating 100 years of the Leitchville Memorial Hall
- Kerang Lakes Community Christmas Celebration
- Kerang Traders School Holiday Spectacular

## Business Recovery Initiatives

- Radio advertising "Your support can help business recover after the floods".
- Newspaper advertising - "Shop local to help business recovery after the floods".
- Bush Biz Boost Flood Recovery workshops for small business recovery.
- Outdoor radio broadcast and events centred around business districts stimulated economic recovery.



## Acknowledging One Year On from the floods October-December 2022

- Production of **One Year On Flood Reflection** video clip available for viewing on Council's website.
- **Flood Reflections Exhibition**- over 100 photos and drone footage contributed by the community were exhibited in Kerang, Murrabit, Cohuna and Quambatook.



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**Council, agency and community-led events were held throughout the Shire to support flood recovery, social inclusion and mental health and wellbeing, including:**

- 11 community meals and information sessions at Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook, Murrabit, Myall, Macorna, Benjeroop, Dingwall, Lakes District, Kerang West and Quambatook
- Over 100 women attended a Women in the Warra flood recovery health and wellbeing event
- The 20th birthday of the Sir John Gorton Library was combined with a flood recovery family fun day with over 200 attending
- 290 attended a morning tea in Cohuna to bring the community together as part of the Daniher MND Drive
- 50 attended International Women's Day breakfast at the Sir John Gorton Library to connect and be inspired by stories from 3 local women
- R U OK? Day events were held across Gannawarra Shire.
- Seniors Week Festival community events were held across Gannawarra to support older residents to connect and enjoy time together
- 50 attended an Empower Her - Gannawarra Goes Orange women's morning tea in Cohuna
- Over 200 attended an outdoor film night in Kerang's CBD prior to Christmas 2023
- The Koroop community was able to host a flood recovery Christmas gathering at the Koroop Hall. This was the first time the Koroop community come together since the floods
- A community Christmas Day lunch was held in Cohuna providing residents without family and friends the opportunity to spend Christmas Day together
- Men from across flood impacted Gannawarra communities enjoyed a bus trip to the Lost Trades Fair in Bendigo
- A Harmony Day event supported at Kerang Technical High School to promote inclusion and celebrate cultural diversity
- The Gannawarra Refugee Support Group hosted a Refugee Week event with a special guest speaker

**Round 2 of a Community Flood Recovery Grants program in 2023 provided funding to support the following 15 community-led gatherings and celebrations:**

- Dingwall Community Creative Art Project
- Murrabit Group School, Art therapy with a local Aboriginal artist
- Legacy Morning Tea Events
- Leitchville Community Wellbeing Day
- Koondrook Get Connected Wellbeing Session
- Cohuna Neighbourhood House Art, Culture and Entertainment Events
- Kerang District Health, Volunteer Acknowledgement Dinner
- Koondrook New Year's Eve Event
- Kerang Agricultural Show Music Festival
- Quambatook Community Lunch and Walking Netball Event
- Murray Plains Cluster School Wellbeing Day
- Murrabit and District Community Dinner
- Benjeroop Community Connect, Wellbeing Day
- Quambatook Family Fun Day
- Lakes District Family Colour Run

**Pre-Christmas creative outreach activities supported social connections and mental health and wellness throughout 2023:**

- Kerang Neighbourhood House - 5 creative art sessions
- Kerang Progress Association - art workshop with local Aboriginal artist
- Quambatook - Christmas wreath making workshop
- Murrabit Playgroup - two creative activities
- Mallee Family Care - cultural cooking activities
- Murrabit Hum and Strum - come and try session
- Christmas card making workshop at Kerang Library



**International Men's Day flood recovery events were held on 19 November 2023**

- Kerang Men's Shed get-together and BBQ at Kerang Museum
- Cohuna Men's Shed open day and BBQ lunch
- Quambatook Men's Shed Bus trip to Bendigo and visit to Men's Shed
- Murrabit Men's Shed – Cuppa and a Chat



**Brad McEwan**

- **Sporting Club flood recovery dinner**, 71 attended an evening focused on the important role of volunteers and sporting clubs during times of crisis on 15 February 2024
- **Leadership and Resilience workshop** attended by 22 managers and emerging leaders



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55 farmers and community members attended an **Around the Paddock dairy farmer flood recovery dinner** in Cohuna on 7 February 2024 featuring the Unbreakable Farmer, Warren Davies. The event brought farmers together to create positive community connections and support mental health and wellbeing. Five external partners provided support and funding towards the event.



## HALT on Tour in Gannawarra March 2024

11 sessions held over 3 days reached over 240 people. HALT's Jeremy Forbes delivered mental health and wellness sessions to Gannawarra community groups and male dominated workplaces reaching those impacted by the floods.



220 attended the **Victorian State Concert Orchestra flood recovery performance** in Kerang on 2 June 2024.

To support the distribution of targeted flood recovery information to impacted communities, funding was provided to **community newsletters** circulating in Kerang, Cohuna, Leitchville, Quambatook, Murrabit and Kerang Lakes district.



## Aboriginal Self-Determination

- Community excursion to the Long Walk, Melbourne and "Dreamtime at the G" AFL match
- Reconciliation Week community dinner with Kinja, Uncle Ron Murray and Sarah James
- Reconciliation Week - 300 students and community members joined the annual walk and cultural music and storytelling event in Kerang on 29 May 2024
- Performance of Ridzyray at Summerwave 2024
- Kerang Tech High School indigenous led art program
- Development of the Draft Gannawarra Reconciliation Action Plan



**Gannawarra Shire Council acknowledges the Barapa Barapa, Yorta Yorta and Wamba Wamba people as the traditional owners of the land now known as Gannawarra. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge their rich culture and connection to Country.**

## A range of activities and programs across Gannawarra have supported community to build recovery and resilience, knowledge and skills.

- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training
- Red Cross Communicating in Recovery Workshop
- Crisisworks training
- Phoenix Australia Helping You Help Others Psychological First Aid Workshop
- Gender and Disaster Australia - Lessons in Disaster Training
- Gender Impact Assessment Training
- Women's Health Loddon Mallee Women's Rising Workshop
- 104 senior primary school students attended the GRIP Leadership Conference in Bendigo on 30 April 2024



## 14 funded Easter/April 2024 events designed to bring people together over the holiday period and create a unique point of difference to attract visitation to support flood recovery were held:

- Quambatook Tractor Pull additional entertainment
- Mystic Park Hotel live music
- Kerang Neighbourhood House creative therapy art and craft school holiday program
- Cohuna Lions Club flood recovery BBQ
- Murrabit Netball Club netball clinic
- Kerang Lawn Tennis Club Easter tennis tournament live entertainment
- Kerang Turf Club, Kerang Easter Races children's entertainment
- Leitchville LIVE musical event
- Murrabit Market roving performers
- Cohuna Neighbourhood House teen gaming social event
- Kerang Football Netball Club pop-up cinema event
- Kerang Exchange Hotel live music events
- Murrabit & District ANZAC Day community lunch
- Quambatook creative workshop



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# GANNAWARRA FLOOD RECOVERY 2024/25



## What's coming up?

- 6 small agricultural dependent communities will be supported to implement their new community plans to build resilience across Gannawarra's rural communities. Community consultations are occurring to identify projects that can be supported by flood recovery funding in each community.

- 3 local neighbourhood houses will be supported to trial a social prescribing model and to map social activities across Gannawarra's rural communities. The aim is to create sustainable outcomes into the future and to build social connections within and between communities.

- 1 premiere of the film "Just a Farmer" will be held on Sunday 8 September 2024 at Kerang Memorial Hall. The movie tells the story of the challenges and triumphs of farming. The screening will be followed by a Q & A session exploring the mental health and wellbeing themes of the movie's storylines with panel members including Leila McDougall, farmer, writer, actor, producer of Just a Farmer and co-cast member, Damian Walshe-Howling.



- Local schools will be supported to host flood recovery Science Week activities. 3 Stage shows delivered by Fizzics Education will be presented in Kerang and 1 show in Cohuna on 8-9 August 2024. The events enable strengthening of connections between Gannawarra schools through a science-based activity.
- Local primary schools will also enjoy a Children's Week activity.



- An indigenous bush tucker garden and artwork project will be supported in Kerang.
- A cultural dance program will occur in local schools, followed by workshops and a community performance in partnership with Tyipen Kwe - indigenous children and youth program participants.
- 6 early year programs will enjoy a visit from the Little Wombat Program, an Aboriginal cultural engagement program in May 2025.
- A community flood recovery project will occur at Middle Reedy Lake, a RAMSAR wetland of international significance, and an area of immense natural beauty and cultural significance.



- Jumbleads/Make a Change Australia – Let's Talk About the Weather Flood Recovery Program will roll out between July and December 2024. The program includes various forms of community engagement including two events – Positive Green Spaces in Kerang on 13 November and Living with Water in Cohuna on 20 November. Residents can complete a survey at: <https://makeachange.org.au/gannawarra/>



- Events supporting young people will include: Live Stand-Up Comedy, Skate Park activation, R U OK? Day activity and a Summer Cinema series focused around Gannawarra aquatic facilities.

- Telstra signal boosting equipment will be installed at 7 community hubs to enhance digital connectivity during future emergency events in Gannawarra's rural communities.

- 1 "Take a Wellbeing Vacation" workshop will be held in March 2025 to support women's well-being and self-care strategies to better manage change.

- Training across Gannawarra will occur to build capacity of the community to plan and prepare for future emergencies.

- 2 Youth Take Over programs will be held in Cohuna and Kerang. The program engages secondary school students with employers and services to create authentic work experience opportunities. Participants in previous programs have reported developing confidence, employability skills, industry contacts and feeling more hopeful about their futures.



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