

Gannawarra Connect

July/August 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Mayor	1
Community News	2-3
2020/2021 Budget	3
Works update	3
Recovery Plan Report	4
COVID-19 Recovery Survey	5
Drought support	6
Tourism	7
Your Councillors	8
Council meetings	8
Contacting Council	8

FROM THE MAYOR

It is great to see our communities remaining united as we begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be a long journey, but it is important that we work together.

One way you can help out is by completing Council's COVID-19 Community Health, Wellbeing and Recovery Survey. Please read the story below and see the flyer on page 5 for more details on this important feedback.

Finally, Council looks forward to rolling out projects and initiatives outlined in the 2020/2021 Budget, approved at our June Ordinary Council Meeting. Council thanks all residents who provided feedback during the community consultation process.

Kind regards,
Mayor Lorraine Learmonth



HELP SHAPE THE GANNAWARRA'S COVID-19 RECOVERY

Gannawarra Shire residents can help shape the municipality's social and economic recovery from COVID-19 by completing Council's COVID-19 Community Health, Wellbeing and Recovery Survey.

To assist with the development of Council's COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Plan, residents are encouraged to complete the 10-minute survey to help guide and inform local services of the challenges our community faced, and continue to face, during this time.



Council's COVID-19 Community Health, Wellbeing and Recovery Survey can be completed online at www.gsc.vic.gov.au. Hard copies can also be collected from Council's Customer Service Centre's at Cohuna and Kerang and the locations listed below.

Completed surveys can be returned by mail to PO Box 287, Kerang VIC 3579 or delivered to the following locations by Friday, 7 August:

- Council's Customer Service Centres at Cohuna and Kerang;
- Koondrook Post Office
- Lake Charm Store
- Murrabit General Store
- Quambatook Community Resource Centre

KNOW YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

The **Cohuna Neighbourhood House** aims to bring people together to connect with their local community through social, educational, recreational and support activities.



The neighbourhood house is managed by a volunteer committee and run by a manager (Tanya Black, above) and assistant managers (Moss and Danielle) who are in turn helped by many indispensable volunteers.

Services provided by the Cohuna Neighbourhood House include:

- Office and employment tasks, such as photocopying, resume writing and document scanning;
- Free computer and Wi-Fi access;
- Community room hire;
- Courses, including computer training, First Aid, Hospitality, Marine Licence and Responsible Serving of Alcohol;
- School holiday activities and arts projects;
- Emergency food relief pantry;
- Production of the *Cohuna Happenings* fortnightly newsletter;
- Running annual events, including the Welcome to Cohuna Barbecue, the Town Garage Sale and Christmas Community Lunch; and
- The development of an "All-Abilities Garden", which aims for people of all abilities to meet up and to access the enjoyment of digging the soil, attending to the plants, watering and eventually harvesting the produce.

The Cohuna Neighbourhood House is currently open to the public under restricted conditions Monday to Thursday from 10am to 12noon. Afternoons by appointment.

For more information, phone (03) 5456 4666 or 0490 255 450, email nhcohuna@bigpond.com or visit www.facebook.com/CohunaNH



L2P DRIVER MENTORS SOUGHT

Mentors are sought for the popular Gannawarra L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program, which helps learner drivers aged 16 to 21 years gain the necessary 120 hours of driving experience needed to obtain a probationary licence.

Volunteer mentors need to be over 21 years of age and hold a current full Victorian driver's licence. Mentors will also need to undertake a Working with Children Check, a Police Check and VicRoads Driver History Report, with all costs associated with these checks met by the program.

Mentors will be matched with one of the young people taking part in the program, and use a vehicle supplied by Council to gain supervised driving experience.

For further details, contact TAC L2P Program Coordinator, Phillip Tennant on 0427 223 450 or Council on (03) 5450 9333.

IMMUNISATION SESSIONS

JULY 2020

Wednesday, 1 July

Kerang
(10.30am – 12 noon)

Wednesday, 15 July

Cohuna
(10.30am – 12 noon)
Kerang
(4pm – 5.30pm)

AUGUST 2020

Wednesday, 5 August

Kerang
(10.30am – 12 noon)

Wednesday, 19 August

Cohuna
(10.30am – 12 noon)
Kerang
(4pm – 5.30pm)

NOTE: Bookings must be made prior to attending any of Council's immunisation sessions, which can be done by phoning (03) 5450 9333.

It is encouraged that only one parent/guardian attend with the child to be vaccinated.

Anyone showing any of the symptoms of Coronavirus, or those who are in isolation, should not attend.

For more details, visit www.gsc.vic.gov.au/immunisation



2021 KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENTS

Expressions of interest for Gannawarra Shire Council's four-year-old kindergartens and three-year-old programs for 2021 are now open.

To be eligible for four-year-old kindergarten, children must be turning four years of age before 30 April 2021; and to be eligible for three-year-old programs, children must be three years of age before 30 April 2021.

To assist with planning for next year, parents and guardians of children eligible for either program are encouraged to visit www.gsc.vic.gov.au/enrolments or contact the Gannawarra Shire Children's Centre to request an enrolment pack, which will be distributed early in Term 3.

Parents and guardians who have children currently accessing three-year-old programs at Cohuna, Koondrook and Leitchville, as well as children who attend the Gannawarra Shire Children's Centre Long Day Care who are eligible to attend four-year-old kindergarten in 2021 will be automatically put on the list to receive an enrolment pack.

For more information, please contact the Gannawarra Shire Children's Centre on (03) 5452 1357.

WORKS UPDATE



APPIN SOUTH BRIDGE

The replacement of the Appin South Bridge, which spans the Loddon River in the southern part of the municipality, is on track to be completed by the end of July.

This \$1.179 million project is supported by the Federal Government's Bridges Renewal Program and Regional Roads Victoria's Fixing Country Roads program.

2020/2021 BUDGET

Gannawarra Shire Council's 2020/2021 Budget - approved at the June 2020 Ordinary Council meeting - ensures Council will continue to provide key services to the community and deliver projects that will transform the Gannawarra for future generations.

Council's key financial document for the coming 12 months outlines how Council will spend the \$37.7 million of revenue generated through rates, charges and grants during 2020/2021, with a \$7.917 million surplus predicted.

Key community services will be funded as part of the 2020/2021 Budget, including community resilience efforts, Council's popular community grants programs, our Community Care and NDIS services, libraries, children's services and our popular arts and culture programs.

The 2020/2021 Budget also includes a \$17.5 million Capital Works program, highlighted by projects supported through funding from the State and Federal Government.

Council listened to the community's concerns regarding the financial implications of COVID-19 on everyday costs, agreeing to increase the total revenue raised through municipal rates by 1.5 per cent – 0.5 per cent lower than the State Government's Fair Go Rates System cap of 2 per cent.

Residents had their opportunity to comment on the 2020/2021 Budget during a five-week public consultation period that due to Coronavirus-related social distancing measures, relied on the use of social media and digital communication to provide every opportunity for residents, ratepayers and community organisations to be aware of how this financial blueprint benefits their community, as well as how to respond.

RELIEF AND RECOVERY PLAN



Council plays a vital role in the response, relief and recovery efforts during times of crisis and emergency. The recent COVID-19 Pandemic is no exception.

So far Council has:

- Placed greater emphasis on buying local and using local services where possible;
- Waived fees to support local businesses, clubs and users;
- Worked with Council leasees and facility hirers to reduce financial burdens;
- Implemented a seven-day payment cycle to ensure our creditors receive payment as soon as practicable;
- Enacted the COVID-19 Hardship Policy to hold interest on any debtor or rates accounts and to cease debt recovery processes on any outstanding debts or to defer payments;
- Implemented the Federal Government's Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package, which provide free childcare;
- Supported local health service planning and communications;
- Worked with local community groups to help them to navigate restrictions;
- Increased services to our Community Care customers to reduce risks of social isolation and respond to additional needs brought on by restrictions;
- Developed a new program in partnership with Carers Gateway and local schools to support remote learning and improve access to the internet;
- Continued to deliver on Capital Works Program, including delivery of the projects supported by the Drought Communities Programme - Extension;
- Directly contacted local small businesses to provide information and supporting access to State and Federal government support payments and programs;
- Developed a television and radio campaign promoting Council support services and encouraging the community to support local business;
- Liaised with business leaders on the type of support required by the business community;
- Delivered Council's annual influenza immunisation program with over 1100 people immunised against season flu so far;
- Participated in State and regional emergency management and relief forums and processes; and
- Implemented Council's Pandemic Plan

At present Council is:

- Working with the Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee to develop a Community Recovery Plan which will be delivered in conjunction with the current Drought Community Resilience Plan;
- Working on plans to reopen Council services and facilities as restrictions ease;
- Working with cafés, restaurants, beauty therapists, caravan parks and accommodation premises to ensure compliance as restrictions ease;
- Developing a range of media and marketing campaigns to support business recovery;
- Develop a business services training and skills development plan; Monitoring and updating information on Government support services;
- Developing a Gannawarra relocation campaign and buy local campaign;
- Working with representatives of the retail sector to monitor business support programs;
- Securing economic stimulus funding to support new and existing projects and encourage commercial investment including:
 - Cohuna Waterfront and CBD upgrades
 - Kerang Industrial Estate expansion (Tate Drive Final Stage)
 - Koondrook All Abilities Playground
 - Roads funding; and
- Supporting new and emerging commercial businesses to drive local jobs

In the future Council will:

- Lead the development of a Community Relief and Recovery Action Plan to support social, economic and environmental recovery across Gannawarra communities;
- Work directly with community to ensure the delivery of timely and appropriate relief and recovery support;
- Partner with community organisations to develop a network to support mental health and wellbeing;
- Partner with community groups to develop plans which support volunteering;
- Bid for further grant funding from State and Federal government as part of economic stimulus;
- Support and coordinate a Gannawarra Business Action Team to support small business recovery;
- Continue to develop major projects that support commercial development and employment;
- Maintain a strong marketing and promotion campaign aimed at increasing visitation;
- Continue to develop major agricultural projects aimed at providing employment and local investment;
- Advocate for continued investment in economic recovery through State and Federal funding packages;
- Work in partnership to support the re-starting of events and community activity when it is safe to do so; and
- Support a range of initiatives that strengthen capacity for safer and more resilience communities into the future

COVID-19 COMMUNITY HEALTH, WELLBEING AND RECOVERY SURVEY

COUNCIL WOULD LIKE
TO HEAR FROM YOU!
WE WOULD
LIKE TO KNOW:

- What challenges you are currently facing?
- Biggest impact on your lives?
- How you have remained connected to your community?



ONLINE

Complete online at www.gsc.vic.gov.au



HARDCOPY

Hard copies can be collected and returned to the following venues:

- Council's Customer Service Centres at Cohuna & Kerang
- Koondrook Post Office
- Lake Charm Store
- Murrabit General Store
- Quambatook Community Resource Centre

DROUGHT SUPPORT

WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS



Rural Aid's Community Builders Webinars series focuses on community rebuilding and resilience by bringing fresh ideas to help support your community.

Topics featured during the nine-session program include *What makes a great town*, *Building good businesses in small towns* and *The role leadership plays in developing resilient communities*.

To access these webinars, please visit www.ruralaid.org.au/towns/webinars/



The Australian Red Cross' free Tune In and Tune Up Drought and Wellbeing webinar series explores drought and wellbeing-related topics, delivered by expert speakers.

Topics discussed during the series, which runs through to 12 August, include managing wellbeing through drought and prolonged stress; strengthening resilience; wellbeing efforts for communities that are seen to be in drought recovery; and preparing for challenging times.

To register for any of these webinars or to view past sessions, please visit www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/recovering-from-emergencies/drought-resilience-program#Webinars

ENERGY EFFICIENT COMMUNITIES – DAIRY FARMING GRANTS SUPPORT

The Energy Efficient Communities Program – Dairy Farming Business Grants provides dairy farming businesses with grants of up to \$20,000 to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy costs and lower on-farm emissions.

For more information, visit <https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/Energy-Efficient-Communities-Program-Dairy-Farming-Business>. Applications close 17 August.

DROUGHT RECOVERY UPDATE

The recent rains have been welcomed, however drought conditions continue to impact on our Gannawarra communities. This is now overlaid by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The drought-focused Gannawarra Community Resilience Action Plan will soon be incorporated into a Gannawarra COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Plan. This plan will ensure continued partnerships to support all communities across the Gannawarra.

Council has received an additional \$100,000 as part of the Department of Health and Human Service's Drought (Mental Health) Support Package for 2020-2021. This will support ongoing work, including the popular Tactics for Tough Times Program, delivered locally by Northern District Community Health.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 infrastructure programs funded through the Federal Government's Drought Communities Programme continue to be implemented across the Gannawarra Shire. There is a number of events and programs that have been funded through this program that have been delayed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. These activities will resume when it is safe to do so.

ONLINE SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Council's Dry Conditions Support portal – available at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/drought - features information in the one location to support community members impacted by drought.

This includes information on locally delivered services such as the Tactics for Tough Times program and Rural Financial Counselling Service – North West.

Information on grant opportunities is also available, such as the Victorian Government's On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant, which has been increased to \$10,000 with three new funding streams available. Applications have also been extended to August.



The Tactics for Tough Times program aims at increasing the capacity of our community to support each other through conversations, counselling, skill development and a suite of resources aimed at building resilience and knowledge.

For more information, phone NDCH on (03) 5451 0200

BUILDING VIBRANT DESTINATIONS

Approved by Council in 2019, the Waterfront Masterplans have inspired creative infrastructure developments along the key waterfronts of the Gannawarra that can support commercial developments, hospitality businesses, major events and livability aspects.

Developed following a detailed community consultation phase designed to capture ideas from all community members, the Waterfront Masterplans are strategically aligned to the Murray Regional Tourism Plans and, in particular, the Murray River Adventure Trail.

Council secured \$669,232 funding via the Regional Growth Fund in 2019 to undertake significant works at Cohuna, Kangaroo Lake and Koondrook. These works highlight the importance of having a strong direction and plan for infrastructure developments.

COHUNA WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT – STAGE 1



Strong visitation, a growing residential market and commercial investment will support the Cohuna Waterfront Redevelopment. Stage 1 works – which included the installation of a jetty, picnic facilities and landscaping - are part of a plan to encourage people to socialise by Gunbower Creek.

The Waterfront Masterplan also highlights a new all abilities playground, on-water connections from Garden Park, connections to the CBD, accommodation and improved facilities in Apex Park.



KANGAROO LAKE FORESHORE REDEVELOPMENT – STAGE 1

Completed earlier this year, these works included road and landscaping improvements that have improved the area for visitors, event hosts and residents.

Upgrading the local infrastructure improves the livability aspects for the current community, with Council keen to promote residential development in line with the proposed VHM mineral sands and rare earths project west of Mystic Park.

KOONDROOK CBD REDEVELOPMENT – STAGE 3

With several major commercial projects planned near the Murray River's banks, connecting the Koondrook Wharf precinct to the Koondrook Nature Based Tourism Hub was a priority.



The Goods Shed is currently undergoing a significant renovation, providing a major attraction overlooking the Koondrook Wharf. Several private accommodation projects are in the planning phase, highlighting the confidence the commercial sector has in Koondrook as a destination.

MURRAY RIVER

ADVENTURE TRAIL

The Murray River Adventure Trail is a 1,040-kilometre land-based and 1,390-kilometre water-based multi-sport adventure trail that incorporates both sides of the Murray River between Lake Hume to Wentworth.

The trail traverses secluded River Red Gum forests and major settlements along the length of the Murray River, providing opportunities for visitors to experience the region in its natural setting.

Council is excited to support Stage 1 of the trail's development, focusing on the area between Barmah and Koondrook. Regional Development Victoria and Murray Regional Tourism are coordinating the planning of this stage, with on-ground works being undertaken by GHD Consulting. This preliminary work is looking at the existing network of tracks and trails through the forests and considering things such as cultural heritage, flooding, access and connections to towns.

Council has been aligning itself to the development of the trail with a range of capital works proposed for Cohuna and Koondrook. These works include the Koondrook Nature Based Tourism Hub, with other new infrastructure in the Murray River-based township to accommodate trail participants.

Similar works are proposed for Cohuna, which will connect to the trail via the Gunbower Forest. The town's Waterfront Development will support accommodation options for visitors wanting to kayak, walk, cycle or horse ride through the "Kakadu of the south".

Kerang will also be connected to the trail via the Kerang-Koondrook Rail Trail, providing an alternate route for visitors and locals alike. Future trail connections are proposed between Kerang and the Kerang Lakes area.

For more information, please visit www.murrayregionaltourism.com.au/murray-river-adventure-trail/

COMMUNITY NOTICES

YOUR COUNCILLORS

AVOCA WARD



Cr Charlie Gillingham
(Deputy Mayor)

0457 719 874
charlie.gillingham@gsc.vic.gov.au

MURRAY WARD



Cr Steve Tasker

0438 531 271
steven.tasker@gsc.vic.gov.au

PATCHELL WARD



Cr Jodie Basile

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Cr Jenny Fawcett

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Cr Brian Gibson

0408 171 476
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YARRAN WARD



Cr Andrew Gibbs

0488 668 114
andrew.gibbs@gsc.vic.gov.au



Cr Lorraine Learmonth
(Mayor)

0429 103 180
lorraine.learmonth@gsc.vic.gov.au

COUNCIL MEETING

The July Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday, 15 July 2020 at 6.30pm.

The August Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday, 19 August at 6.30pm

Agendas for Ordinary Meetings of Council are available online at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/meetings two days prior to each meeting.

NOTE: Council is operating in accordance with the new *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020* which operates for a Prescribed Period from 1 May to 1 November. During this Prescribed Period this new Act puts in place numerous measures to ensure local government decision-making can continue during the Coronavirus pandemic.

During this Prescribed Period the following arrangements, which are effective immediately, will apply until 1 November 2020:

- Ordinary Council Meetings will be closed to the public; and
- Meetings will be live-streamed via Council's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/gannawarra).

Alternative options are available for residents who want to ask questions of Council. These options are listed in the Contacting Council section of this newsletter.

CONTACTING COUNCIL

IN PERSON

Cohuna Customer Service Centre

21-23 King Edward Street

Kerang Customer Service Centre

47 Victoria Street

BY PHONE

(03) 5450 9333 during business hours

BY EMAIL

council@gannawarra.vic.gov.au

BY MAIL

PO Box 287

Kerang VIC 3579

ONLINE

Lodge a request at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/request

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook – www.facebook.com/gannawarra

Twitter – www.twitter.com/GannawarraShire