

GANNAWARRA COMMUNITY VISION 2040

A COMMUNITY
VISION FOR THE
FUTURE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Gannawarra Shire Council acknowledges the Barapa Barapa, Yorta Yorta and Wamba Wamba peoples 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.



OUR GANNAWARRA

GANNAWARRA'S IDENTITY

Set along the Murray River in northwestern Victoria, Gannawarra's identity is linked to the natural environment with access to the Gunbower National Park, Loddon and Avoca Rivers, Gunbower Creek and Kerang Lakes.

It's a region where water and land are central to how we live, work and connect. Red gum forests, rivers, open plains, and wetlands rich with birdlife and native flora and fauna form the backdrop of life in Gannawarra.

OUR STORY BEGINS WITH COUNTRY

The Barapa Barapa, Yorta Yorta and Wamba Wamba peoples cared for this land for tens of thousands of years. This deep relationship with Country continues today, reminding us of our shared responsibility as custodians of the land on which we live.

FARMING SHAPES GANNAWARRA

Gannawarra is one of Victoria's most productive agricultural areas, due to the Torrumbarry Irrigation System and its proximity to the eastern fringe to the Mallee cropping region.

Dairy, cropping, livestock and horticulture shape the local agricultural economy. More than a quarter of all local jobs are in agriculture, forestry or fishing.

DIVERSIFICATION OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

While agriculture remains central to Gannawarra, manufacturing, renewable energy, healthcare and services are growing. The landscape continues to offer potential in intensive agriculture, tourism, and energy.

OUR TOWNSHIPS EACH HAVE THEIR OWN IDENTITY

Gannawarra's primary centres are Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook. Smaller outlying communities include Leitchville, Quambatook, Murrabit, Lake Charm, Lalbert, Macorna, Tragowel and Mystic Park.

Each place has its own story, and together they form the Gannawarra community we know and value.

STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY

Gannawarra is renowned for its strong community pride, thanks to our communities' efforts to motivate and inspire each other to make the region a great place to live, visit and work.

Local community volunteerism and activation supports strong community networks. The Gannawarra community looks out for each other and shares a resilience to adverse events such as floods and rural change. While the population continues to age, there's new energy coming in. Families are moving back or choosing Gannawarra for its affordability, lifestyle and work opportunities. Remote workers and skilled tradespeople are finding their place in our communities.

WE ARE SHAPING A VIBRANT FUTURE

We believe that our rural life, properly nurtured, will offer something exceptional. Our guiding principles remain connection, liveability, equity, wellbeing, resilience, and growth.



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



CONNECTION

People want to feel connected to their neighbours, services, and opportunities.



WELLBEING

People thrive in safe communities, with access to quality healthcare, recreation opportunities, and social support.



LIVEABILITY

People love the Gannawarra's peaceful environment, strong community spirit, and lifestyle opportunities.



RESILIENCE

People want to feel secure in the face of change, whether from climate, economy shifts, or community challenges.



EQUITY

People deserve access to services, infrastructure, and opportunities, no matter where they live.



GROWTH

People want local jobs, thriving businesses, great housing, and a strong economy to support their families and future generations.

Together, we are Gannawarra - a community that is proud, connected, inclusive and future-focused.





WHAT WE HEARD

To review the fifteen-year Community Vision, and to inform the development of the 2025-2029 Council Plan, we engaged deeply and listened closely to our community.

Over 760 Gannawarra residents shared their perspectives across 11 weeks from 4 December 2024 to 19 February 2025. The community got involved by:

- Attending one of 40 consultation sessions, including focus group sessions, social meals, drop-in sessions, partner agency meetings, and children and early years sessions.
- Completing online and hardcopy surveys
- Submitting drawings and stories



TOTAL PARTICIPATION

760



POPULATION

10,683



% OF POPULATION ENGAGED

7.1

"Phone/internet communication is so poor and difficult to run a business. It is impossible to have people live in houses with no phone/internet access and extremely difficult for us to boost the poor phone service"

– Male (50-59 years)

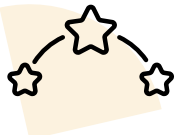
"Continue to support existing organisations devoted to the care of struggling families and economic disadvantaged people"

– Male (70- 84 years)



STRENGTHS

When we asked the community what they liked most about where they lived, they highlighted the character of the community and strong social bonds that foster a deep sense of belonging, safety and inclusion. Gannawarra's natural environment, forests, open space, and waterways are seen as an ideal place for raising families. The economy is viewed as strong, underpinned by rich agriculture activity and future potential. Gannawarra Shire is valued as a clean, safe and inclusive environment with strong ties to agriculture, lifestyle and recreation.



- Good people
- Sense of community
- Natural environment
- Peace and quiet
- Friendships
- Strong sense of community and people looking out for each other

“(Place) more emphasis on community events, things which bring the community together and bind them. Family activities and events during the week and weekends. Encouraging people to get out and about and active”

– Female (24- 35 years)

“Viability and profitability of our farms depends on modernisation. We need to continue to move forward with opportunity and vision. We proudly have our next generation farming alongside us with the following generation on the ground”

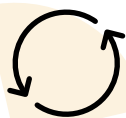
– Female (50 – 59 years)





CHALLENGES

Residents identified several challenges impacting the Gannawarra community. Poor road conditions, limited footpaths and unsafe pedestrian crossings were highlighted, along with concern over rising living costs and limited job opportunities. Healthcare access is a growing issue, with residents noting the shortage of local medical and mental health services and staff. Affordable housing is increasingly difficult to secure, and development restrictions is making it more difficult. Residents also called for more transparent and inclusive Council communication, and a focus on financial sustainability. Environmental concerns such as climate, water security and weed/tree management were mentioned strongly. Additional feedback emphasised the complex impacts of renewable energy, youth disengagement, social-economic disadvantage and the difficulty of balancing growth while preserving liveability.



- Poor road conditions
- Limited footpaths and unsafe pedestrian crossings
- Rising cost of living
- Limited job opportunities

"Improve health and wellbeing of all community members of the community particularly women and children through addressing family violence and men's violence towards women"

– Female (35 – 49 years)

"Set up the shire for the future, sustainability and financially for future generations!"

– Female (18 – 24 years)

"More employment opportunities, especially for youth"

– Male (50 – 59 years)

"Township plans that focus on each township's strengths – we can't have everything in each town"

– Male (35 – 49 years)





PRIORITIES

TOP TEN PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY

1. **INFRASTRUCTURE AND ROADS:** Safer roads including road maintenance, improved drainage, footpaths, crossings, and traffic improvements
2. **ECONOMIC GROWTH:** More job opportunities, business support, and tourism development
3. **RECREATION AND LEISURE:** Better parks, walking trails, swimming pools, and skateparks
4. **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Renewable energy, tree planting for urban shade, and better waste management.
5. **EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** Improved schools, TAFE options, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities
6. **PUBLIC SAFETY:** Stronger police presence, crime prevention, and better street lighting
7. **COMMUNITY PROGRAMS:** More activities for young people, families, and volunteer involvement
8. **SOCIAL SERVICES:** Improved community services, including aged care, disability support, and childcare
9. **HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT:** More affordable housing, available and well-planned housing options
10. **HEALTHCARE SERVICES:** Better access to local doctors, mental health support, and consistent care

Full community engagement summary report and list of Council's strategic documents is available at www.gsc.vic.gov.au

"The unique environment is Gannawarra Shire's biggest drawcard for tourism, protecting this must be a priority as well as the wellbeing of people living in the local community"

– Female (70 – 84 years)

"Maintain the farming land to ensure our community has a future, allowing some to be sold to renewables impacts on the whole community"

– Female (35 – 49 years)



COMMUNITY VISION 2040

Our community is proud, connected and inclusive, and we actively seek opportunities that enhance lifestyle and liveability.

Gannawarra is growing and is economically diverse, with unique tourism destinations, cultural and natural assets.

We recognise and appreciate the value of the natural environment and how it connects our communities. We are resilient to a changing environment through innovation and collaboration.



STRONG LEADERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Council makes transparent and well-informed decisions. Services and infrastructure are delivered responsibly, ensuring long-term sustainability across all our communities.



A CONNECTED AND WELCOMING PLACE

Everyone feels supported and included, from early years to older age. Towns are vibrant, public spaces are safe, and people can connect with each other, services, and opportunities.



A THRIVING AND DIVERSE ECONOMY

Gannawarra's economy is innovative and evolving — from agriculture and tourism to renewables and manufacturing. Strategic investment supports local jobs and future industries.



A PROTECTED AND PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

Our natural environment is treasured and well cared for. We are prepared for climate change, reduce our environmental footprint, and act on shared responsibility for land and water.



A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND PARTICIPATE

People enjoy Gannawarra for its quality of life, housing, recreation, and affordability. Community spirit, creativity, and learning opportunities are valued and celebrated.

DELIVERING THE COMMUNITY VISION

This Community Vision will guide our collective efforts over the next fifteen years. It will inform Council's strategic planning and partnerships with community, business, and government.

This is a community-designed document, and is reviewed every four years.

The Community Vision feeds into the Council Plan which informs the strategic direction of Council.

Council and the community will work together to seek opportunities to advance this Community Vision for the future.





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