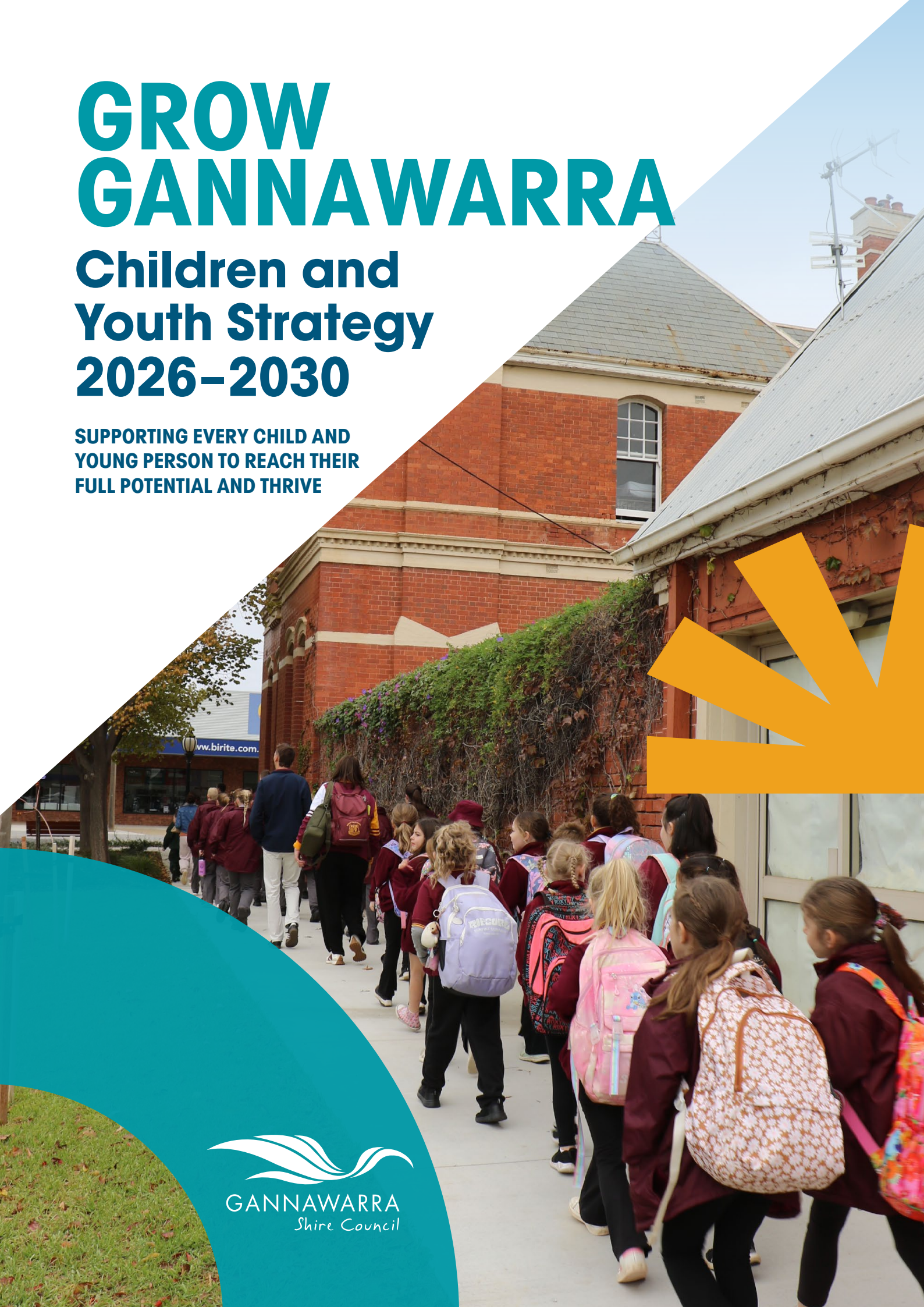
GROW GANNAWARRA

Children and Youth Strategy 2026–2030

SUPPORTING EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND THRIVE



GANNAWARRA
Shire Council



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.

INTRODUCTION

The *GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026-2030* outlines Council's commitment to supporting children, young people and their families by creating opportunities for every child and young person to reach their full potential and thrive.

The Strategy defines Council's role as a leader, facilitator, partner and advocate, working collaboratively to strengthen connections that support children, young people and their families to grow and succeed within their communities.

Building on the previous Early Years Plan 2015-2018 and Children and Youth Strategy 2016-2020, this Strategy strengthens these foundations by incorporating current community priorities and insights. It responds to the strengths and challenges identified in *The State of Gannawarra's Children and Young People Report 2023* and aligns with the six domains from *The Nest* - Australia's first evidence-based framework to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people.

The Strategy complements the Council Plan 2025-2029 and sets out a clear action plan for achieving the guiding principles of the Gannawarra Community Vision 2040 – connection, liveability, equity, wellbeing, resilience and growth.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026–2030* outlines Council's commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0–24 years across the municipality. Children and young people make up around a quarter of Gannawarra's population, making their wellbeing critical to the region's long-term resilience, sustainability and prosperity.

The Strategy has been informed by consultation with children and young people, local stakeholders and community partners, alongside insights from *The State of Gannawarra's Children and Young People Report 2023*. Engagement highlighted strong community connections and a willingness to collaborate, alongside key challenges including access to services, youth mental health, transport barriers, educational engagement and participation in decision-making.

Guided by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) *Nest* framework, the Strategy focuses on six domains essential to wellbeing: being valued, loved and safe; having material basics; being healthy; learning; participating; and having a strong sense of identity and culture.

The Strategy positions Council as a leader, facilitator, partner and advocate, working collaboratively with community and service providers to strengthen systems that support children, young people and their families. It places a strong emphasis on family-centred approaches, early intervention and equity, particularly in response to the unique challenges of rural communities.

Building on existing strengths and partnerships, this Strategy provides a coordinated framework for action over the next four years, supporting children and young people in Gannawarra to feel connected, supported and empowered to reach their full potential and thrive.



BACKGROUND

Council plays an important role in supporting children, young people and their families across Gannawarra through a range of services, partnerships and community initiatives.

Council delivers a broad suite of early years and family services, including Maternal and Child Health, early childhood education and care, immunisation and aquatic programs. It also supports youth development and engagement through leadership opportunities, creative and cultural programs, community events and partnerships with schools and local organisations.

Council works closely with key partners including neighbourhood houses, schools, health services and community organisations to deliver programs that support literacy, health, wellbeing and cultural connection. Collaborative initiatives such as youth leadership programs, mental health expos and community events provide opportunities for young people to connect, participate and build skills.

Council also recognises the importance of improving access and inclusion, particularly in a rural context. Initiatives such as transport support and cross-community programming help address barriers to participation and strengthen connections across Gannawarra.

The Council Plan 2025–2029 identifies supporting career pathways for young people as a priority, with partnerships across education and industry enabling local employment and training opportunities.

The GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026–2030 builds on these strengths and provides a framework to strengthen partnerships, address service gaps and expand opportunities for children and young people to participate, develop and thrive.

"Leadership starts at school, partner and support schools to build leaders"

- GANNAWARRA YOUNG PERSON



COMMUNITY PROFILE

OUR COMMUNITY

10,683 PEOPLE LIVED IN GANNAWARRA AT THE LAST CENSUS IN 2021

3,736 SQUARE KILOMETRES AREA COVERED BY GANNAWARRA SHIRE



There are two main townships - Kerang and Cohuna and numerous smaller townships including Koondrook, Leitchville, Quambatook, Lalbert, Lake Charm, Macorna, Murrabit, and Mystic Park.

Approximately 3 hours from Melbourne, with larger regional centres of Swan Hill 40 minutes to the north, Echuca 60 minutes to the east and Bendigo 90 minutes to the south.



OUR DEMOGRAPHICS

51 YEARS
THE MEDIAN AGE OF THE GENERAL POPULATION
compared to the median age for Australia of 38 years*

25 IS THE MEDIAN AGE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE, WITH 50.75% UNDER 25 (136 PEOPLE).
This highlights the need to support cultural continuity and address disparities in life expectancy*

THE BIRTH RATE WAS
90 IN 2024/25, 100 IN 2023/24 AND 92 IN 2022/23.
The birth rate has reduced over time - it was 165 in 1999***

84.4% OF RESIDENTS WERE BORN IN AUSTRALIA AND
93.3% SPEAK ONLY ENGLISH AT HOME*

2.5% OF THE POPULATION (268 PEOPLE) IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER.
This is higher than the state average of 1.0%*

4.2% OF 0-24-YEAR-OLDS (110 PEOPLE) REQUIRED ASSISTANCE WITH DAILY LIVING DUE TO A LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY*

78.8% OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES (297 FAMILIES) HAD A FEMALE AS THE PRIMARY CARER*

GANNAWARRA HAS A SEIFA INDEX OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE
SCORE OF 952
- based on income, education, unemployment, skill levels - placing Gannawarra as the 14th most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria*

$590 MEDIAN WEEKLY PERSONAL INCOME compared to $803 for Victoria.

$1,417 MEDIAN WEEKLY FAMILY INCOME compared to $2,316 for Victoria*

240 FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS 2024/25^

12.5% OF PREP CHILDREN WERE VULNERABLE ON TWO OR MORE DOMAINS
compared to 11.8% for Victoria.**

9.8% OF GANNAWARRA RESIDENTS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER HAD COMPLETED YEAR 12 OR AN EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATION,
compared to 14.9% for Victoria, indicating a lower rate of secondary school completion*

16.7% A HIGHER PROPORTION OF RESIDENTS HOLD CERTIFICATE III QUALIFICATIONS. GANNAWARRA HAS A STRONG VOCATIONAL WORKFORCE,
compared with Victoria (10.9%)*

DATA SNAPSHOT



0-4 YEARS
4.6%*



5-9 YEARS
5.3%*



10-14 YEARS
5.8%*



15-19 YEARS
4.6%*



20-24 YEARS
4.1%*

GANNAWARRA IS HOME TO MORE THAN 2600 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



6.2%
OF FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (175 HOUSEHOLDS) LIVE ON LESS THAN $500 PER WEEK WITH 66 FAMILIES LIVING ON LESS THAN $300 PER WEEK*



30.2%
AGED 65 AND OVER COMPARED TO 16.8% FOR VICTORIA*



24.4%
AGED 24 AND UNDER COMPARED TO 29.9% FOR VICTORIA*



1,324
FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 0-15YEARS*



13.3%
OF FAMILIES WERE SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES COMPARED TO 15.2% FOR VICTORIA*



24%
OF PREP CHILDREN WERE VULNERABLE ON ONE OR MORE DOMAINS**

*2021 ABS CENSUS
^ CRIME STATISTICS VICTORIA
**2024 AEDC (111 children measured)
~2019-21 PHIDU
^^ 2022 School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SECQ) DET
***2025 COUNCIL DATA

The State of Gannawarra Children and Young Person Report 2023 and data released since this report was developed, show that while Gannawarra performs strongly in several indicators compared with the Victorian average, significant challenges remain.

THE STATE OF GANNAWARRA CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT IDENTIFIED POSITIVE LOCAL OUTCOMES INCLUDING:

Lower developmental vulnerability compared with the Victorian average on some indicators measured through the Australian Early Development Census

Strong parental engagement in education

Positive maternal and childhood development indicators

Lower rates of mortgage and rental stress

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES WERE IDENTIFIED, INCLUDING:

Higher rates for single-parent and jobless families

Elevated family violence exposure

Higher youth unemployment

Lower high school participation

Greater rates of speech, language and behavioral concerns

Limited access to specialist and allied health services

The State of Gannawarra Children and Young People Report 2023 provided comprehensive data and identified key areas requiring greater focus, partnerships and advocacy to support every child and young person to reach their full potential and thrive.

Access to data helps us better understand what is working well and what needs to be improved. It also helps to identify gaps where data is needed to inform decision making.

DATA CAN HELP US TO:

Plan our efforts and resources

Advocate for our needs

Measure our progress over time

A key priority in this Strategy is to ensure that the most up to date data is available to inform evidence-based decision making and to be able to track improvements over-time.





GROW GANNAWARRA 2026-2030

- SUPPORTING EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND THRIVE

COMMUNITY VISION

The Gannawarra Community Vision 2040 is a community vision for the future that sets down the guiding principles for the Gannawarra community-connection, liveability, equity, wellbeing, resilience and growth.

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

THE COMMUNITY VISION HIGHLIGHTS STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES AND FIVE KEY OBJECTIVES TO GUIDE COUNCIL DECISION MAKING OVER THE NEXT 15 YEARS:

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 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.

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 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.

The GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026-2030 aligns with these objectives.

The following principles will ensure that every child and young person is supported to reach their full potential and thrive:

Empowerment: enabling children and young people to influence decisions that shape their lives.

Purposeful Engagement: providing meaningful opportunities that lead to genuine outcomes.

Inclusiveness: ensuring equitable access for all children and young people.

Partnership: recognising children and young people as authorities on their own lives and working alongside them.

Safety and Respect: creating culturally safe, trauma-informed environments where young people are heard and valued.

Transparency and Accountability: demonstrating how contributions inform decisions and outcomes.

**Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and Victorian Commission for Children and Young People.*



LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

There is no set mandate for local government to develop a Children and Youth Strategy.

The Local Government Act 2020 however requires Council to plan for community wellbeing, engage with communities (including children and young people), and deliver equitable, inclusive services.

As a provider of children services, Council has a number of legislated responsibilities to ensure that the health, wellbeing and safety of children and young people is protected and promoted.

Council prides itself on engagement with its partners and residents- including children, young people and their families – and commits to the principles and requirements of legislation, policy, frameworks, standards and regulatory requirements.

INTERNATIONAL

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Referenced widely in Victorian policy with participation as a core right

STATE

Victorian Commission for Children and Young People frameworks
Includes engagement and participation guidance

Local Government Act 2020
Requires councils to plan for community wellbeing, engage with communities (including children and young people), and deliver equitable, inclusive services

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
Requires councils to prepare Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans including population health priorities for children and young people

Gender Equality Act 2020
Requires councils to undertake a Gender Impact Assessment when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct impact on the public, including children and young people

Emergency Management Act 2013 and Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management
Guides the development of safer and more resilient communities across Victoria

Planning and Environment Act 1987
Supports child-friendly communities through land use planning, open space, and infrastructure

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
The principal legislation governing child protection, family services and youth justice, prioritising the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Establishes principles for child wellbeing, the Child Safe Standards, and the Reportable Conduct Scheme

Victorian Child Safe Standards
Legally binding standards that apply to all organisations working with children, requiring proactive measures to prevent harm and abuse

Reportable Conduct Scheme
Requires organisations, including councils, to report and investigate allegations of child abuse involving staff or volunteers

Mandatory reporting obligations
Certain professionals must report suspected child abuse or neglect

Education and Training Reform Act 2006
Governs schools, early childhood education and care systems

Education and Care Services National Law / Regulations
Applies to early childhood services delivered or supported by councils

LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

VICTORIAN POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS

THESE ARE NOT LAWS, BUT CRITICAL FOR STRATEGY ALIGNMENT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–2027
- Early Years Compact 2017-2027
- Victorian Youth Strategy 2022-2027
- The Orange Door / Family Services framework
- Aboriginal Children and Young People Agreement
- Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children

GANNAWARRA SHIRE

- Charter of Human Rights
- Council Plan 2025-2029 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)
- Community Vision 2040
- The State of Gannawarra Children and Young People Report 2023
- Communications and Engagement Strategy
- Diversity Policy
- Children's Services Policy
- Fair Access Policy
- Child Safe Standards
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Community Resilience Action Plan
- Free from Family Violence Action Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Gannawarra Wellbeing Framework
- Cohuna Childcare Advocacy paper
- Exploring Care and Education in Cohuna
- Creative Gannawarra Strategy
- Aquatics Strategy
- Community Safety Plan
- Sport and Recreation Strategy
- Thriving Together – a plan for a diverse, inclusive and resilient Gannawarra

To access these documents visit: www.gannawarra.vic.gov.au or call into Council's offices in Kerang or Cohuna.



CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Strategy is informed by engagement with children, young people, stakeholders and the broader community, ensuring that local voices shape priorities and actions.

As part of the development of the Council Plan 2025–2029, Community Vision 2040 and Thriving Together – a plan for a diverse, inclusive and resilient Gannawarra 2026–2030, Council undertook a broad community consultation program. This included direct engagement with 96 children and young people across local secondary schools, primary schools and early years settings.

In parallel, Council worked with approximately 40 stakeholders from education, health, community services and government through workshops held in 2024 and 2026. These sessions explored service gaps, emerging challenges and opportunities for collaboration. The outcomes, captured in a background document, underpin this Strategy.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Challenges identified included:

- Workforce shortages and recruitment challenges
- Limited access to specialist and allied health services
- Transport barriers and geographic isolation
- Uncertainty of ongoing program funding

Priorities identified included:

- Stronger cross-sector collaboration
- Advocacy for rural service models and local solutions
- Improved data sharing and evidence use
- Increased youth participation in decision-making
- Expanded mental health support and early intervention
- Improved access to health and allied health services
- Family violence prevention and response
- Improved transport options

KEY INSIGHTS FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people shared valuable insights about their experiences of living in Gannawarra.

Key challenges identified were:

- Limited social and recreational opportunities outside of sport
- Reduced face-to-face connection following the pandemic
- Barriers to participation due to transport limitations
- Increased reliance on digital devices
- Limited access to mental health support
- Food insecurity affecting some students

Young people suggested solutions including:

- Increasing opportunities for leadership, volunteering and decision-making
- Expanding low-cost or free community activities
- Improving transport options and access to events
- Creating more inclusive and welcoming spaces
- Supporting healthy eating and wellbeing
- Promoting cultural connection and inclusion

These insights highlight the importance of connection, inclusion, access and opportunity in supporting children and young people to thrive.

The priorities identified through consultation directly informed the focus areas and actions of the GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026–2030.

"Don't disregard young people and what they can contribute"

- GANNAWARRA YOUNG PERSON

ACTION PLAN 2026-2030

GOAL

FOR EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND THRIVE.

OBJECTIVES

PARTNER WITH COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND CREATE SAFE, INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS.

ENSURE COMMUNITY VOICES INFORM ACTIONS THAT IMPROVE HEALTH, WELLBEING, LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.



ACTION PLAN

The GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026-2030 is focused on the six domains of Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), the Nest, Australia's first evidence-based framework to enhance wellbeing of children and young people.

TO HAVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED FOR THE BEST START IN LIFE, A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON NEEDS TO BE ADEQUATELY RESOURCED IN ALL SIX DOMAINS:

1. VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE:
ENSURE CHILDREN FEEL VALUED IN LOVING AND SECURE ENVIRONMENTS.

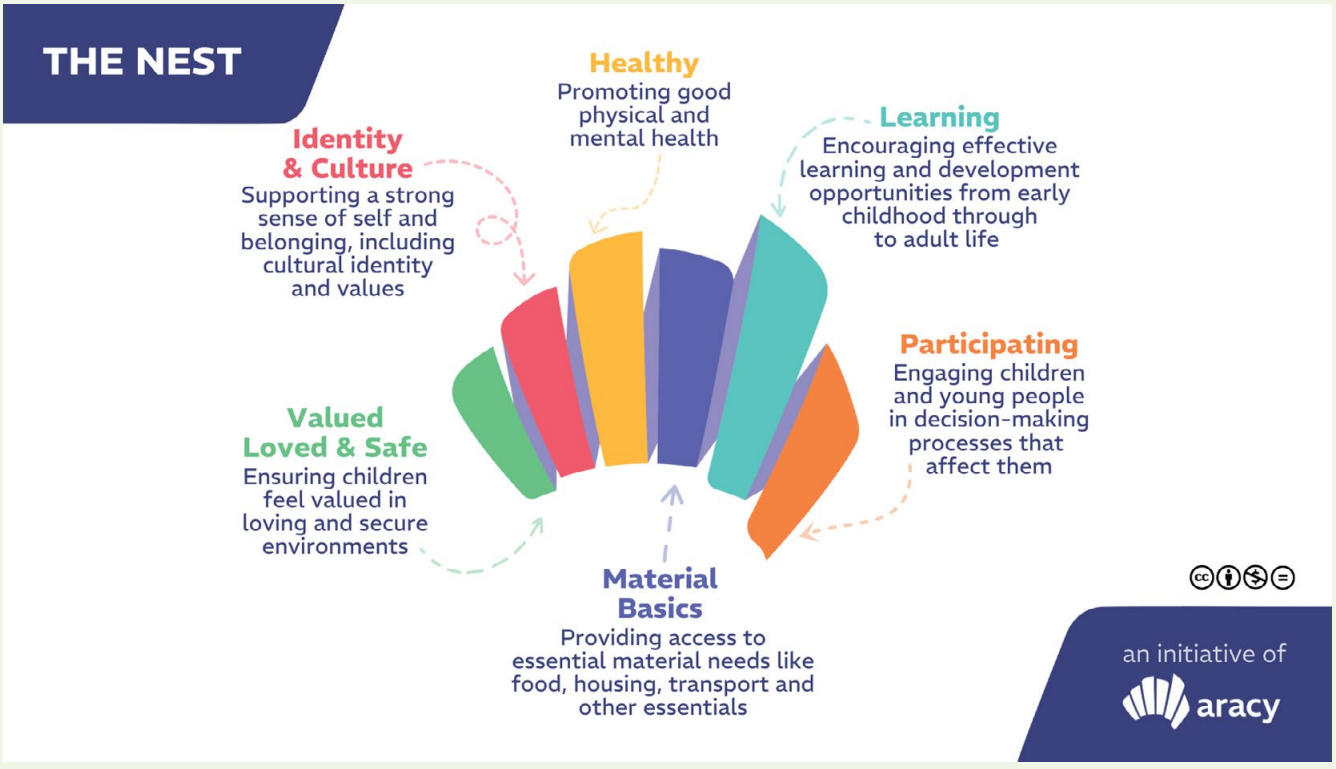
2. MATERIAL BASICS:
PROVIDE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL MATERIAL NEEDS LIKE FOOD, HOUSING, TRANSPORT AND OTHER ESSENTIALS.

3. HEALTHY:
PROMOTE GOOD PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

4. LEARNING:
ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH TO ADULT LIFE.

5. PARTICIPATING:
ENGAGE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT AFFECT THEM.

6. IDENTITY AND CULTURE:
SUPPORT A STRONG SENSE OF SELF AND BELONGING, INCLUDING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND VALUES.



FOCUS AREA 1

VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

GOAL:

ENSURE CHILDREN FEEL VALUED IN LOVING AND SECURE ENVIRONMENTS.

KEY ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
1.1 Foster community connection and belonging by celebrating children, young people and families across the community.	Children, young people and families are valued and celebrated.
1.2 Support the implementation of the Gannawarra Free from Family Violence Action Plan 2025-2029.	Action Plan implementation.
1.3 Engage priority populations in emergency preparedness activities as opportunities arise.	Enhanced preparedness to emergency events.

SUCCESS MEASURES

% of young people reporting they feel safe in the community (survey-based)

Number of community safety and connection initiatives delivered annually

Number of partners supporting implementation of the Free from Family Violence Action Plan



PROMOTING OF SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES.

FOCUS AREA 2

MATERIAL BASICS

GOAL:

SUPPORT ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL MATERIAL NEEDS LIKE FOOD, HOUSING, TRANSPORT AND OTHER ESSENTIALS.

KEY ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
2.1 Strengthen cross-agency collaboration to respond to gaps in food security, housing, transport, digital access and financial hardship.	Stronger partnerships working on shared local solutions.
2.2 Assess resource requirements to meet diverse community and workforce needs.	Resourced community and workforce to support children, young people and families.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Number of cross-sector initiatives addressing food security, transport or digital access

Increased community-led transport options that enable connection to services, activities and events

Number of advocacy submissions or funding applications addressing service gaps and workforce needs



SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS THAT IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES.

FOCUS AREA 3

HEALTHY

GOAL:

PROMOTE GOOD PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

KEY ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
3.1 Expand access to community-based allied health, early intervention, primary care and prevention services.	Better access to early intervention, prevention and allied health services.
3.2 Facilitate child and youth mental health programs such as Youth Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention.	Improved mental health and wellbeing.
3.3 Explore flexible rural health models such as multi-use active recreation spaces and low-cost community-based programs such as art, music, theatre and physical activity.	More accessible opportunities tailored to local needs.
3.4 Increase health promoting opportunities for children, young people, and families through schools, community programs, and partnerships.	Improved rates of physical activity, healthy eating and reduced rates of smoking/vaping.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Number of health and wellbeing programs delivered

Participation rates in health, physical activity and wellbeing programs

Increased access points to allied health or early intervention services (e.g. outreach sessions)



ENHANCING ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH LOCALLY RELEVANT, PREVENTION-FOCUSED AND COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH INITIATIVES.

FOCUS AREA 4

LEARNING

GOAL:

ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH TO ADULT LIFE.

KEY ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
4.1 Increase access and engagement in early childhood education and care.	Children start school ready to learn.
4.2 Support schools to identify attendance risk early and access interventions.	Increased school attendance.
4.3 Expand career pathway opportunities and job readiness for young people.	Improved pathways to training and employment.
4.4 Support safe and effective use of technology for learning.	Equitable access to learning opportunities.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Participation rates in early childhood education and care programs

Number of partnerships supporting education, training and employment pathways

Number of young people participating in career pathway or job readiness initiatives



STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH TO EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT.

FOCUS AREA 5

PARTICIPATING

GOAL:

ENGAGE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT AFFECT THEM.

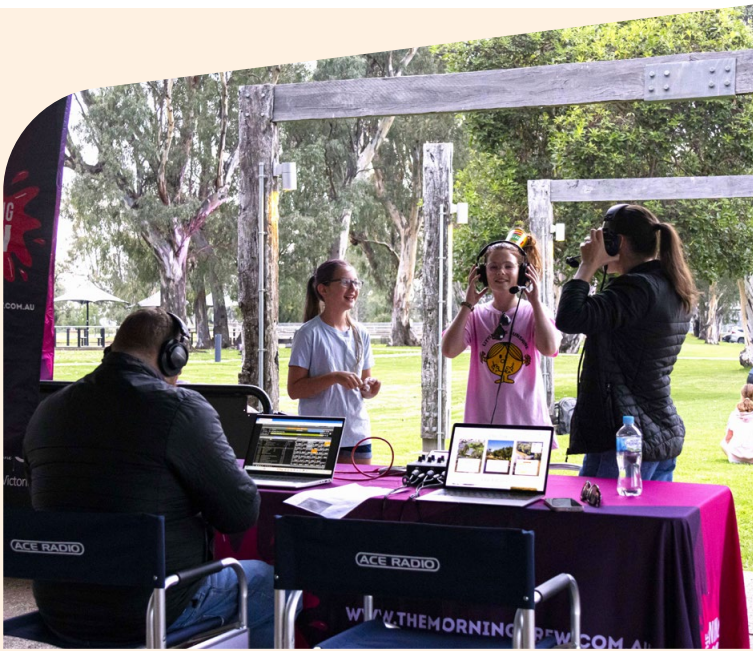
KEY ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
5.1 Support youth engagement in decision-making by exploring the establishment of a Youth Voice to strengthen opportunities for leadership.	A diverse and balanced Youth Voice in decision making.
5.2 Improve connection to health, education, support services, and community activities.	Increased access to services.
5.3 Provide family friendly opportunities that support community connections that are culturally safe and inclusive.	More family friendly opportunities.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Establishment of a Youth Voice mechanism by July 2027

Number of children and young people engaged in decision-making processes

Number of youth-led initiatives supported



PROVIDING MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING AND COMMUNITY LIFE.

FOCUS AREA 6

IDENTITY AND CULTURE

GOAL:

SUPPORT A STRONG SENSE OF SELF AND BELONGING, INCLUDING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND VALUES.

KEY ACTIONS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES
6.1 Support and encourage self-determination.	Increased sense of belonging and cultural pride.
6.2 Celebrate diversity through a range of multicultural, intergenerational and community-led events, programs and activities that foster belonging and social cohesion across communities.	Enhanced cultural safety across services.
6.3 Support cultural safety and trauma informed practice training across agencies.	Improved equity and inclusion across services.
6.4 Explore sustainable funding for Aboriginal children and youth programs.	Sustainable cultural programs.
6.5 Deliver on the children and youth specific actions within the Gannawarra Reconciliation Action Plan.	Delivery of Gannawarra Reconciliation Action Plan.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Number of cultural, community and inclusion programs delivered

Participation rates across diverse groups

Number of partners participating in cultural safety or trauma-informed training



ENCOURAGING INCLUSIVE AND CULTURALLY SAFE COMMUNITIES THAT CELEBRATE DIVERSITY, SUPPORT SELF-DETERMINATION AND STRENGTHEN A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

IMPLEMENTATION

Council plays an important leadership role in supporting children, young people and families in Gannawarra; however, achieving the vision of this Strategy is not something that Council can do alone. Achieving better outcomes for children and young people will require strong partnerships, shared advocacy and collective action across the community.

Council will work collaboratively with key partners including local health services, education providers, community organisations and government agencies to deliver coordinated, evidence-informed actions that respond to local needs and areas of disadvantage.

A coordinated and inclusive approach will ensure resources are aligned, system capability is strengthened, and services remain flexible and responsive within a rural context.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

- Use local data and service mapping to identify gaps and inform decision-making
- Focus on priority populations based on evidence and lived experience, ensuring gender equality and intersectionality are considered
- Strengthen partnerships to deliver actions and shared outcomes
- Build workforce capacity through collaboration and shared learning
- Embed lived and living experience in planning and delivery
- Identify and pursue sustainable funding opportunities
- Advocate collectively for resources to meet community needs

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION WILL INVOLVE COLLABORATION WITH:

- Children, young people and families
- Health services
- Education providers
- Government (local, state and federal)
- First Nations communities
- Community organisations and networks

PRIORITY GROUPS INCLUDE:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- Children and young people experiencing disadvantage
- Rural and isolated communities
- Young people with disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse young people
- LGBTIQA+ young people

COUNCIL WILL ALSO LEVERAGE EXISTING PARTNERSHIP PLATFORMS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS GROW GANNAWARRA CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY:

- Gannawarra Local Agency Meeting (GLAM)
- Buloke, Loddon, Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executive (BLG)
- Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee
- Gannawarra Neighbourhood House Network
- Kerang Elders and Leaders Group
- Gannawarra Community Planning Groups across 9 communities.

Actions will be embedded within Council's annual operational plans and budgets, with external funding pursued to support delivery.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

PROGRESS WILL BE MONITORED AND MEASURED USING:

COMMUNITY OUTCOME INDICATORS:

- Initiatives delivered
- Participation in events and programs
- Accessibility of opportunities
- Feedback from children, young people and families
- Stakeholder surveys

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- Marketing and promotion
- Reach of communications across multiple platforms
- Awareness levels of programs and services
- Priority group engagement
- Case Studies to capture work undertaken
- Learnings incorporated into future actions

COMMUNITY WELLBEING INDICATORS

- Changes in service access and wellbeing indicators
- Advocacy efforts and policy changes
- Changes in disaggregated data and reporting
- Child and youth voice in decision making

COUNCIL COMMITS TO FACILITATE AN ANNUAL FORUM OF STAKEHOLDERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO MONITOR PROGRESS AND MAKE DECISIONS AS TO THE ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS STRATEGY

WE WILL ASK:

1. How much did we do?
2. How well did we do it?
3. Is anyone better off?
4. Has equity and inclusion improved?
5. What does the evidence tell us?
6. What do we need to change?

Council will publish an annual review in its Annual Report and a final evaluation in 2030.

CONCLUSION

The GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026–2030 represents a shared commitment to ensuring every child and young person in Gannawarra is supported to thrive. Grounded in community voice, evidence and strong partnerships, the Strategy sets a clear direction for building inclusive, connected and resilient communities where children and young people are safe, supported and empowered to reach their full potential.

Achieving this vision will require continued collaboration across Council, community, services and all levels of government. By working together, listening to young people and responding to their needs, Gannawarra can create the conditions for future generations to grow, lead and contribute to a strong, vibrant and sustainable community.



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