



# STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN 2021-2026



the **Gannawarra**  
Victoria's *Nature Based* Tourism Destination

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## Disclaimer

Information contained in this document is based on available information at the time of writing. All figures and diagrams are indicative only and should be referred to as such. This is a strategic document which deals with technical matters in a summary way only. While the Gannawarra Shire Council has exercised reasonable care in preparing this document it does not warrant or represent that it is accurate or complete. Council or its officers accept no responsibility for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting in reliance upon any material contained in this document.









## Executive Summary

The Gannawarra has developed a five-year strategic tourism plan to guide all activities undertaken by Council to promote further growth within the local tourism industry. The Gannawarra Strategic Tourism Plan 2021-2026 covers a broad spectrum of key focus areas; infrastructure and environment, business and hospitality, marketing and promotion, events, industry development and communication and partnerships all aligned to the strong nature based tourism opportunities that exist within the municipality. This plan has undergone a significant review and builds on the achievements of the previous Tourism Plan while recognising the connections to the Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) Destination Management Plan. Other strategic documents recognised in the development of this Plan include;

- Gannawarra Shire Council Plan
- Gannawarra 2025 Community Plan
- Gannawarra Shire Economic Development Strategy

Critical to the success of the plan will be Council's capacity to engage with the Shire's tourism operators, and other stakeholders such as the Victorian Government, natural resource management agencies and commercial developers, to create high quality visitor experiences and appropriate infrastructure designed to meet the needs of visitors well into the future.

As a year-round industry that supports a broad range of businesses, Council recognises that tourism has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities.

The aims of the strategic plan are:

- To encourage demand for the Shire's visitor experiences and services;
- To improve the quality and range of experiences and services;
- To generate higher visitor satisfaction; and
- To encourage return visits.

Priorities and actions have been developed that will address the key sustainability principles that relates to the physical, environmental, social and economic aspects associated with developing tourism infrastructure and products. The plan also recognises the need to enhance existing tourism and business sectors to better align with current and future tourism trends, and cater for the changing needs of the tourism market.



## Purpose of the Strategic Tourism Plan

Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC) commissioned the preparation of a tourism plan to review the status of tourism activity and development in the Shire, and to identify the most effective ways Council could support and progress the tourism industry during the next five years.

The **aims** of the strategic directions identified in the plan are to encourage demand for the Shire's visitor experiences and services, and to improve the quality and range of experiences and services to generate higher visitor satisfaction and encourage return visits.

The **goals** of the plan include:

- Increase year round visitation to the Gannawarra.
- Generate higher yield (length of stay and expenditure) from visitors during autumn, winter and spring months.
- Further develop products and experiences to encourage visitation during the shoulder periods and the winter season.
- Increase employment.
- Develop creative infrastructure that supports visitation and liveability.
- Grow the profile of the Gannawarra nature based brand.
- Increase the commercial returns from tourism that support and diversify the local economy.
- Develop new market opportunities that increase visitation.

## Role of the Strategic Tourism Plan

The plan is a resource that will be used by Council, the community and stakeholders to guide tourism activities for the coming 5 years. It collates much of the work undertaken by council and the community in identifying future objectives and opportunities to implement new actions aimed at growing tourism.

The plan will provide a framework for Council to plan and prioritise projects and make decisions relating to:

- Facilitating a range of tourism infrastructure projects for the commercial sector.
- Infrastructure design, development and maintenance.
- Linkages to strategic regional projects derived from the MRT Destination Management Plan and associated marketing and promotion opportunities.
- Providing linkages to local stakeholders who manage the local waterways, river and forests. Parks Victoria and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.
- Providing assistance to tourism and hospitality businesses such as industry training and adoption of new technologies.
- Allocating funds and assistance towards community based projects and events.
- Advocating for State and Federal Government for local and regional projects.





## About Gannawarra

The Gannawarra is located in north-west Victoria bordering the Murray River to the north-east and the Mallee landscape to the south-west. The Gannawarra comprises the main towns of Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook along with the smaller rural towns of Lalbert, Quambatook, Mystic Park, Leitchville, Lake Charm and Murrabit.

A three hour drive from Melbourne, the Shire is bordered by the Rural City of Swan Hill, and Shires of Loddon, Buloke and Campaspe. The Murray River Council is adjacent to the Gannawarra on the New South Wales side of the Murray River.

The Gannawarra is recognised for the many environmental assets that exist across the municipality. The many waterways and forests are home to hundreds of waterbirds, and popular locations for outdoor recreation including fishing, camping, kayaking, water sports, cycling and bushwalking.

A strong and diverse agricultural base dominates the local economy and is complemented by manufacturing linked to agriculture, retail precincts in Kerang and Cohuna, health services, education and professional services.

## Economic Profile

The local economy is dominated by a changing agricultural base which is complemented by value added processing, manufacturing, retail, tourism and health services. Agriculture in the Shire is estimated to be worth around \$285 million annually and like much of Northern Victoria, has been highly reliant on a strong local dairy industry and large scale grain production with livestock and horticulture other key agricultural sectors.

The Gannawarra has 137,000 hectares of irrigated land and an extensive area of dry land comprising of a variety of soil types. The area's landscape is transforming with large scale solar farms being developed to maximise the natural resources and transmission infrastructure. Major agricultural projects such as cotton, organic grain and tomatoes, medicinal cannabis, poultry and new plantings of wine grapes are changing the farming landscape.

The ART of Gannawarra is an acronym for **A**griculture, **R**enewables and **T**ourism, three areas earmarked for further growth and benefit to the local economy.

Whilst agriculture is predicted to remain a dominant industry sector in the Gannawarra, opportunities exist for further economic diversification. Tourism is identified as an area for growth, with the capacity to redefine perceptions of the Shire as a destination. Major regional projects such as the National electricity transmission network 'KerangLink' will have major benefits for the community, as will the proposed VHM mineral sands project, major irrigation and viticulture projects and a proposed medicinal cannabis facility. Commercial investments in tourism and hospitality will increase the range of products and draw more visitors to the region. Projects such as the Railway Goods Shed Koondrook, several new accommodation projects and Koondrook Retreat will drive new tourism products in a changing market.



## Population and Demography

Over recent years, the Gannawarra population profile has changed. In 2001, the population of the Shire was 12,055. In the last decade, the population has declined but the 2016 CENSUS saw an increase in the local population of around 100 people.

Population trends include younger people migrating to find work - or seek study opportunities - and the recent challenges brought about by environmental factors of drought and low irrigation allocations are challenging issues to maintain population growth. Rationalisation of agriculture is also a major contributor to the demographic profile.

The primary demographic for Gannawarra Shire is older adults with 47% of residents aged over 50 years. The fastest growing age demographic in the Shire is in the 59-65 years age bracket whilst at the other end of the spectrum, Gannawarra Shire is underrepresented in the 15-34 year old age bracket.

Population decline is common to the shires of the Central Murray region, where only three out of ten shires have experienced a growth over the past ten years. However, the Gannawarra is fighting the declining trends and has around 300 new jobs on the horizon. This, along with a strong mandate for change is predicted to provide significant opportunity for population growth and will influence the jobs market for our youth.





## Methodology

The following steps were undertaken to develop the Tourism Plan:



## Principles Shaping the Plan

Analysis of local strategic documents to determine community directions for tourism. These include:

- To build destinations that link to the natural environment, local heritage and culture.
- The provision of tracks and trails linking key locations.
- To develop up market accommodation and eateries to support new visitor markets.
- To ensure the local infrastructure recognises the Gannawarra brand and is aligned to the target markets.

### Sustainability principles

For tourism to bring enduring, positive benefits to communities, Council recognises the importance of considering the physical, environmental, social and economic impacts associated with further development of the tourism landscape. All of these critical factors will be considered in shaping the future tourism directions within the municipality.





## Tourism Industry Roles

The platform for the Gannawarra Tourism Industry structure consists of Murray Regional Tourism (MRT), Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC) and Town Progress/Development Associations.

The MRT is the independent peak body for the Murray Region’s tourism sector. It is the overarching organisation that co-ordinates all-inclusive tourism activities and strategic development for the region.

The key role of the Gannawarra Shire Council is to strategically guide the development and promotion of the Shire’s tourism industry in line with regional directions identified by MRT.

The roles of town-based progress and development associations in the Gannawarra differ greatly. They are varied in terms of size, capacity and interest in tourism. Examples of successful tourism development by local groups include the Murrabit Country Market, Quambatook Tractor Pull, Big Cohuna Festival, Kerang Show and Shine and Koondrook Wharf.

Murray Regional Tourism	Gannawarra Shire Council	Town Progress / Development Associations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and promote overarching Murray region brand and assets.</li> <li>• Support destination tactical marketing activity which is in line with MRT’s core objectives.</li> <li>• Market to new and emerging markets, where there is market opportunity or market stagnancy has occurred.</li> <li>• Co-operative marketing activity opportunities.</li> <li>• Murray region market research – qualitative and quantitative.</li> <li>• Overarching PR support for events and Murray destinations.</li> <li>• Leadership and advocacy for product development that fits within the whole of region structures.</li> <li>• Overarching marketing and professional development opportunities.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with State Tourism Organisations (NSW and VIC).</li> <li>• Quarterly newsletters to LGA’s, Regional Tourism Association’s and participating operators.</li> <li>• Tourism Managers Forums every 2 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination and tactical marketing that is co-ordinated and aligned with Murray region’s brand and strategy.</li> <li>• Timely support for MRT marketing activities.</li> <li>• Track and report tactical activity.</li> <li>• Develop and update destination imagery and footage for Council and MRT programs.</li> <li>• Marketing and support services for key tourism events.</li> <li>• Develop annual marketing activity plan and communicate to MRT.</li> <li>• Undertake visitor servicing and dispersal programs to increase yield.</li> <li>• Leadership and advocacy for tourism.</li> <li>• Investment attraction for key products aligned with Council and MRT strategic directions.</li> <li>• Visitor infrastructure development.</li> <li>• Represent, promote and support local tourism groups.</li> <li>• Undertake and participate in destination visitor and operator research.</li> <li>• Assist tourism businesses to maximise revenue from visitors.</li> <li>• Attend Tourism Managers Forums.</li> <li>• Distribute Council and MRT marketing opportunities to operators.</li> <li>• Industry networking and professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting community and tourism events.</li> <li>• Undertaking local marketing.</li> <li>• Working closely with Council to create opportunities aligned to the regional strategies.</li> <li>• Encouraging commercial investment in tourism products.</li> <li>• Supporting the Strategic Tourism directions.</li> </ul>



## Tourism Vision

### Murray Regional Tourism's Marketing Vision

Our vision is to hold our rightful place as one of Australia's most vibrant and iconic tourism destinations focused on the legendary Murray River.

### Gannawarra Shire Council's Vision

Gannawarra will become a place that is positively defined by its difference. Five core values underline this vision including – collaborative, resourceful, innovative, flexible and integrity

### Gannawarra Shire Council's 2026 Tourism Vision

**Our Visitor Experiences** are fresh, appealing and allow visitors to creatively interact with our exceptional natural environment, our heritage and built environment. We have developed experiences that reflect our point of difference in the Murray region, including unique accommodation and dining in key towns, and a variety of outdoor adventure activities in the wetlands and forests of Gunbower National Park/Gunbower State Forest and Kerang Lakes.

**Our Tourism Industry** is flexible and creative, working together to support and deliver on the region's tourism brand. We engage in packaging, referrals, touring routes, co-operative marketing, and sharing expertise. Our businesses are growing in number and size, and are financially and environmentally sustainable. We always seek to enhance social outcomes for local communities. We are well informed about changes in visitor expectations, and continually renew our products and services. We regularly upgrade our professional skills, and ensure that education is a priority for the industry.

**Our Reputation** as a place where visitors have memorable, rewarding and satisfying experiences is amongst the best in the region.





## Brand Positioning

The brand positioning of a place (destination, region, town, main street, etc.) is a snapshot of all the qualities, experiences, and attributes that make up its unique offer. It conveys:

- The appealing impressions the place creates;
- The emotional connection it makes with visitors;
- Its competitive advantage (unique selling proposition).

It should shape the focus of product development, services, infrastructure and the visitor experiences offered in a location, and guide how they are marketed and communicated. This will enhance a place's capacity to satisfy the emotional and practical rewards that consumers are seeking, and generate additional visitation, length of stay and yield.

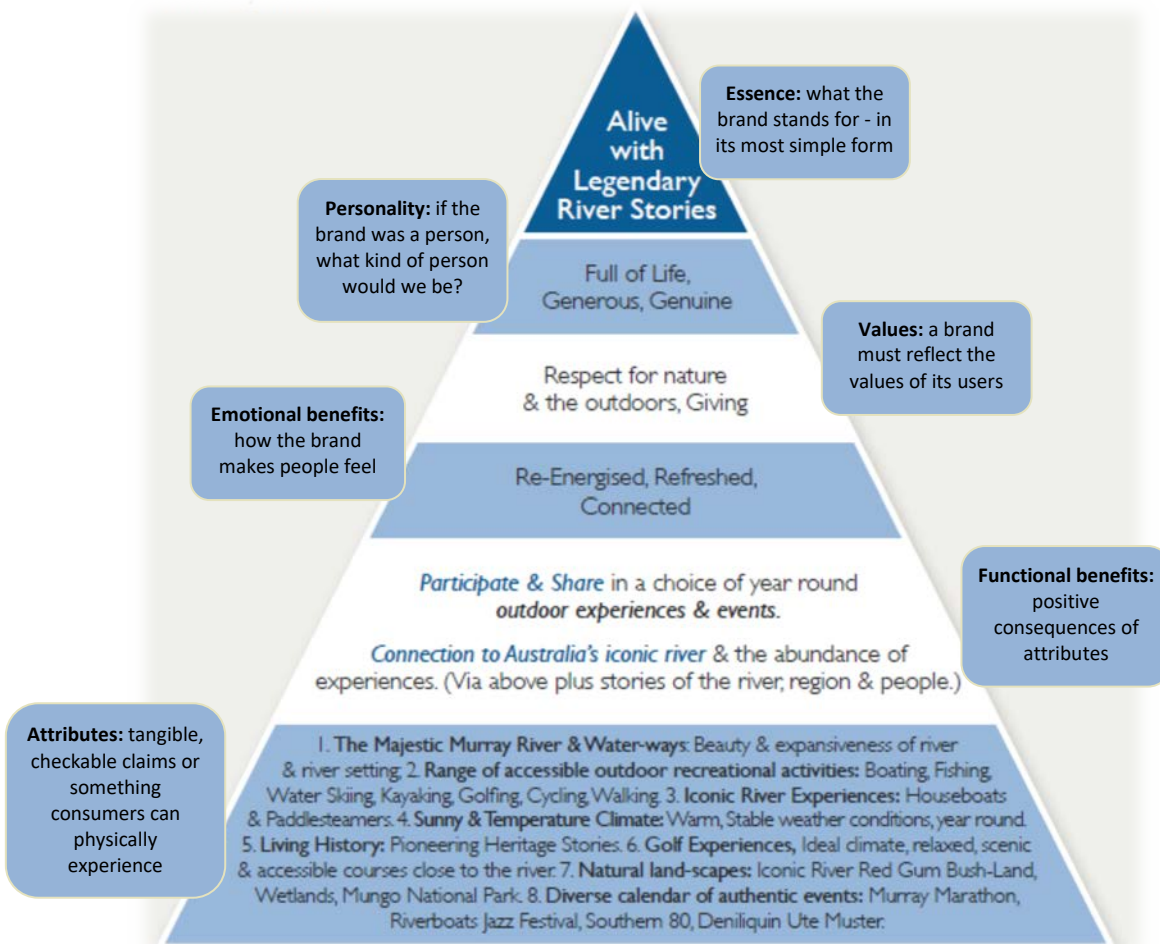
A brand positioning should inform all marketing communications about a place, and be used to develop a brand story, brand language, and a style guide for all written and visual elements of communications.

Tourism operators, natural resource managers, government and media should be encouraged to adopt a place's brand positioning to reinforce key marketing messages, and to develop tourism experiences that deeply satisfy visitors, generating greater word-of-mouth promotion and return visitation.

A brand pyramid captures the key elements of a brand positioning, including its attributes, benefits, values, personality and essence.



## The Brand Pyramid for the Murray Region:



Source: MRTB Strategic Marketing Plan





## Key Elements for the Murray Brand

Key elements of the vision for the Murray brand include:

- Consumer recognition of the national and international significance of the river, its authentic Australian history, and the expanse of unique, active and energetic experiences interspersed with a generous, optimistic personality.
- The brand will also reflect MRT's marketing vision as one of Australia's most vibrant and iconic tourism destinations featuring the legendary Murray River and stunning National Parks and RAMSAR listed wetlands and as a gateway to the Australian Outback – a must see destination for both Australian and international visitors.
- The brand's messaging and imagery will exemplify a re-connection and re-engagement of potential visitors with the region and showcase the energetic nature of the region and all that it offers and its unique connection with the legendary Murray River.
- Its focus is to connect with younger demographics, especially younger families, couples and friendships groups whilst still maintaining trust with the region's large existing older market.

## Branding the Gannawarra

As an overarching Murray Region brand already exists, it is recommended that a brand positioning for the Gannawarra be developed which leverages from this positioning and draws from Gannawarra's unique strengths. A Gannawarra brand positioning can be used by GSC for corporate and consumer messaging, and by other government and natural resource management agencies when communicating messages about the Shire.

Relevant applications include collaborative, shire-based promotions, such as a consumer website (albeit to be part of the regional website), initiatives to encourage relocation to the Shire to live/work, and other corporate communications.

Over the past few years Council has been committed to grow the profile of the Gannawarra brand leading to wide recognition of "the Gannawarra". This profile building has been supported by many National and State wide recognitions;

- Victoria's FIRST large scale solar farm
- Victoria's FIRST commercial cotton crop
- Victoria's FIRST commercial outdoor cannabis crop
- Australia's FIRST organic processing tomato crop
- National and International awards for the Koondrook Wharf
- Murray River Adventure Trail stage 1.

All of this recognition is being used to maintain strong consistent branding of the Gannawarra; Victoria's Nature Based Tourism Destination.

# Infrastructure & Environment

The strengths of tourism in the Gannawarra are the wealth of nature based tourism experiences across the many waterways and forests. Fishing, camping, passive recreation and water sports remain the mainstay of visitation but the many waterways are now hosting cruise boats, kayak tours and seeking to develop a higher class of tourism product for the more discerning visitors. Emerging opportunities are evolving in adventure tourism and nature based tourism with mountain biking, kayaking and bushwalking. The Murray River, Gunbower Forest and Kerang Lakes are the key environmental assets providing the base for nature based tourism. Implementation of the Murray River Adventure Trail will provide communities with linkages to a wider tourism market. Tourists are becoming increasingly well-travelled and sophisticated and seeking quality food experiences. Developing a greater use of local food products in the hospitality market is an important aspect of tourism growth within the Gannawarra.

The Gannawarra is seeking to attract a target market of the 18–45 age group that has a young family, is environmentally aware, enjoys quality food and participates in passive outdoor recreation. These markets are also demanding higher quality, authentic experiences that connect with local culture, heritage and nature. This growing market requires built infrastructure within the natural environment to maximise tourism opportunities; quality accommodation along the waterways including the use of high class tents and cabins accessible to the natural environment. Changes to Victorian Government legislation may permit sensitive and appropriate tourism development in national parks and farming zones which has the potential to open up the development of new tourism products.

Infrastructure plays a critical role in servicing tourism. Structures such as boat ramps, streetscapes and landscapes, walking and cycling tracks, caravan parks, roads and signage and built amenities all have a major bearing on a quality tourism experience. The enhancement of infrastructure will be a priority of Council to grow visitation. The construction of the Koondrook Wharf has been a major driver of change, providing renewed confidence in the local area to support new tourism products. Koondrook Retreat is a first for the region. High class tents along the Gunbower creek will cater for the emerging markets and add further diversity to the accommodation on offer. The planning process has commenced for the first stage of the Murray River Adventure Trail and will connect Barmah to Koondrook/Cohuna. The township of Koondrook has worked closely with Council to leverage associated opportunities and ensure that Koondrook becomes a key destination along the MRAT. Similar opportunities exist in Cohuna and will be driven by the waterfront masterplans and the need to develop creative community infrastructure that will support liveability, visitation and commercial activity. The proposed Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail will connect Kerang to the MRAT providing a range of linked experiences via Kerang Regional Park and the Kerang Lakes.

The future planning and construction of new infrastructure within these unique natural environments will assist the development of new tourism products aimed at increasing local visitation and giving businesses the confidence to invest.



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Waterfront upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve infrastructure at Kerang Lakes, Koondrook and Cohuna to support visitation, commercial activity and liveability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise the Waterfront masterplans to develop “creative” infrastructure around the key waterfront locations of Kerang lakes, Koondrook and Cohuna.</li> <li>Kangaroo Lake North End Stage 2.</li> <li>Kangaroo Lake entry treatment.</li> <li>Quambatook Weir Pool Project.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 4
<b><i>Murray River Adventure Trail</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT and Stakeholders to develop stage 1 of the Murray River Adventure Trail.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate on the MRAT working group to develop stage 1 of the MRAT.</li> <li>Work with Koondrook, Cohuna and Kerang to better connect the town based infrastructure to the MRAT.</li> <li>Work with Koondrook and Cohuna to develop a horse riding camp and halfway camp along the MRAT.</li> <li>Work with Koondrook and Cohuna to develop the internal walking tracks and trails that connect to the MRAT.</li> <li>Work with Koondrook and Cohuna to develop a mountain bike trail within the Gunbower Forest.</li> <li>Work with Kerang Landcare to develop trail connections to Kerang Lakes and Koondrook.</li> <li>Work with commercial operators to run tours and activities along the MRAT.</li> <li>Work with MRT to connect the key tourism locations to the MRAT; Kerang Lakes, Murrabit, Kerang.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 4
<b><i>Kerang Regional Park</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve walking tracks and trails and recreation infrastructure at Kerang Regional Park (KRP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Parks Victoria to develop and maintain a looped walking track at KRP. Include interpretation about the natural and Aboriginal heritage.</li> <li>Work with Kerang Landcare to develop trail connections to Kerang Lakes and Koondrook.</li> <li>Install kayak launching facilities, signage and fishing platforms.</li> <li>Develop connections to the Kerang CBD, Atkinson Park and other key sites.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 5
<b><i>Koondrook Wharf</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drive further tourism products from the Koondrook Wharf including hire boats watercraft, paddle steamers and cruise boats, weddings and hospitality businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council to work with all stakeholders to facilitate the development of tourism products around the Koondrook Wharf.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3
<b><i>Ibis Rookery</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the Kerang Lakes waterfront masterplan to improve the Ibis Rookery infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Lakes community to prepare a Development Plan for the Ibis Rookery.</li> </ul>	Year 3 - 4

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Gunbower Forest</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a range of nature based tourism products to support increased visitation to Gunbower Forest and align to the MRAT.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with commercial operators to develop new tourism products in the forest. Kayak tours &amp; camps, bushwalking tours and camps, food and accommodation services.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3
<b><i>Accommodation upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing the amenities at the Koondrook Caravan Park/NBT Hub will cater for a broader range of visitors seeking tourism experiences close to nature.</li> <li>Amenities at the Lake Charm Foreshore Caravan Park are outdated and are deterring tourism development.</li> <li>Accommodation in Cohuna is lacking and badly needs more accommodation options for consideration for the town to grow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a strategic development plan for the Koondrook Caravan Park that provides a guide for maximising the accommodation options within the park while improving the amenities and landscaping of the park.</li> <li>Work with the Foreshore Management Committee to improve amenities in the Lake Charm caravan park and provide additional accommodation options.</li> <li>Work with the Cohuna Waterfront Holiday Park to improve accommodation options including the installation of glamping tents and upmarket accommodation.</li> <li>Utilise land in Cohuna managed by council to develop an accommodation hub “concept” for consideration. The hub could be similar to what is being developed in Koondrook or it may be modular cabins.</li> <li>Consider accommodation upgrades in Kerang.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 4
<b><i>Cohuna Streetscape</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The streetscape in Cohuna is tired and outdated. Develop concept plans that improve the Cohuna CBD including connections to the Gunbower Creek.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop modern streetscapes and landscaping consistent with the local brand and waterfront masterplans and strategies that attracts visitors and encourages economic activity.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 5
<b><i>Town-based cycle trails</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Koondrook Development Association (KDA) has undertaken considerable work to develop cycling / walking trails along the Murray River and linking natural attractions. Further work is required to connect routes into loops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the MRAT and develop a range of mountain bike trails and walking tracks that add further value to tourism and liveability.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3
<b><i>Kerang-Koondrook Rail Trail</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a cycle trail between Kerang. This would work as a feeder route to the Murray Adventure Trail at Koondrook, as well as connect the two towns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise the work of the feasibility study to construct the Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail. May be in stages.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>On-road cycle touring</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop on-road cycle touring routes for cycle clubs and social groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Kerang's Loddon Mallee Cycling Club to explore the feasibility of establishing a Kerang - Kerang-Lakes - Murrabit - Koondrook - Cohuna touring route that can be completed as a whole or in sections.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 4
<b><i>Mapping Visitor assets</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is significant demand from the Shire's tourism industry to upgrade visitor facilities at many natural sites to enhance the visitor experience and encourage visitors to stay longer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In association with natural resource managers, map visitor assets at key natural sites in the Shire, identify and prioritise improvements. Included but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kerang Lakes, Gunbower Forest, specific waterways.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Map all walking tracks and trails within the municipality.</li> <li>Map kayaking trails within the Gannawarra.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 3
<b><i>Signage</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain relevant and brand consistent signage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update GSC's Signage Audit to identify and address signage issues at all tourism locations across the Shire.</li> <li>Undertake a regular audit of tourism infrastructure by independent assessors.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3
<b><i>Appropriate built design</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A thriving tourism industry can lead to private sector developments that are unsympathetic to the character of a town.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that character overlays and appropriate planning regulations are in place to protect each key tourism town.</li> </ul>	Ongoing

# Business & Hospitality

Gannawarra Shire Council recognises the need for a strong and vibrant business sector to not only service local residents but to provide a range of services and experiences to attract visitors.

Tourism is an industry, just like any other industry, and it can bring additional benefits to local communities through the development of new businesses, new employment opportunities and an increased local spend. It assists the financial viability of the local business sector by providing additional revenue linked to events and visitation. It also provides justification to develop the many built assets such as parks and toilets, rest areas, caravan parks and local streetscapes.

Construction of the Koondrook Wharf is seen not only as a key item of infrastructure but also as an enabler and driver of new business development. Strong interest from the commercial business sector is already evident and development of the surrounding river precinct will be a major drawcard for further tourism products and new business. Improved food and hospitality businesses, cruise vessels on the river, the development of new accommodation options are all priority areas to grow tourism within the Shire.

There is opportunity for business development linked to the environment, Indigenous and European history and heritage. It is estimated that visitors will spend on average around \$123 per day. Murray Region statistics show that 54.3% of visitors eat out at restaurants, 26.4% visit hotels and clubs and 21.5% shop for pleasure. The direct economic impact of domestic overnight visitation to the Shire is estimated as \$42.2 million per annum. The majority (83%) of visitors are also using the internet to plan their visit highlighting the need for an up to date web presence. The development of the MRT digital platform has certainly improved the electronic media for marketing, promotion and information. Council will work closely with tourism businesses to facilitate the implementation of the digital platform and continue to look at new ways to improve the system.

The local tourism industry requires a strong and creative retail sector to best support tourism. Hospitality businesses need to adopt a greater food and wine presence to service the changing visitor markets, accommodation providers need to consider a wider range of options including wilderness tents and five star cabin and unit accommodation. The tourist market is now demanding higher quality services and competition between destinations is strong.

Council will work with a range of developers, businesses, community and stakeholders to encourage new tourism developments and continuous improvements within the business and hospitality sectors of the Shire that support tourism.



TOPIC	STRATEGIC ISSUE	GSC ACTIONS	TIME FRAME
<b><i>Tourism businesses at Koondrook Wharf</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Koondrook Wharf has created new opportunities for business ventures that require access to the river, such as an outdoor adventure hub for canoe, kayak, bike and fishing equipment hire and guided tours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and facilitate business opportunities associated with the Koondrook Wharf and seek private sector investment where appropriate.</li> <li>Utilise historic buildings within and close to the Wharf precinct for new business developments.</li> <li>Maintain the Koondrook prospectus to promote tourism related business.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Retail Precinct</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cohuna has potential to further develop into a boutique shopping precinct complemented by views across to Gunbower Creek.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In line with the Waterfront Masterplan develop connections between the Cohuna CBD and Gunbower Creek.</li> <li>Utilise the Retail Strategy to provide strategic direction for the changing structure of the retail sector in all towns.</li> <li>Maintain an investment prospectus to encourage the establishment of shops, galleries and cafes that meet the needs of the local community and visitors.</li> <li>Upgrade the Cohuna streetscape.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 3
<b><i>Cruise Vessels</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed Koondrook Wharf will open up the port to a variety of cruise vessels that are operated by private and public organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the establishment of new cruise businesses in the Shire. Murray River &amp; Gunbower Creek.</li> <li>Support cruise vessels and commercial watercraft to use Koondrook Wharf.</li> <li>Use the prospectus to promote these opportunities to developers.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3
<b><i>Accommodation upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A need for more up-market accommodation opportunities within the major towns of Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate new accommodation opportunities utilising commercial developers and existing accommodation providers in Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook and Kerang Lakes.</li> <li>Facilitate accommodation opportunities in line with the Waterfront masterplans.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 4

TOPIC	STRATEGIC ISSUE	GSC ACTIONS	TIME LINE
<b><i>Food and Wine Culture in hospitality businesses</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food and Wine is a major drawcard for tourism and the area has the opportunity to build on the availability of local food and local wine grape growers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the local business community to develop a greater food and wine focus across the Gannawarra that utilises locally grown food products and better caters for visitor needs.</li> <li>Maintain connections with the Bendigo Gastronomy group.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Farm based food businesses</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Tourism market is becoming more aware of the quality food offerings from local producers and the potential for food to drive visitation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the introduction of on-farm food businesses aimed at increasing tourism and hospitality products, promoting agricultural diversity and increasing visitation.</li> <li>Use the prospectus to promote this type of development.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Family Activities Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited number of family activities in Cohuna beyond self-organised watersports.</li> <li>Limited activities in many tourism towns for younger age group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the local community to provide family activities, such as bike hire, fishing equipment hire, free outdoor games in public areas in line with the Waterfront Masterplans.</li> <li>Develop appropriate activities for children to encourage visitation.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Weekend trading Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited weekend trading hours by some shops and cafes, including during major events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with retail and hospitality businesses to encourage longer weekend trading hours during events, as a first step in extending trading hours.</li> </ul>	Year 1 – 3



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Educational tours</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is scope to consider farm tours, indigenous tours, bushwalking tours and other products to increase local area knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Cohuna events group to support the development of local farm tourism.</li> <li>Develop guided tours related to nature, culture and general places of interest.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Quambatook Working Heritage Machinery Museum</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Quambatook Working Heritage Machinery Museum has an open weekend each year. There may be demand to open more regularly, especially in association with the Quambatook Historical Centre.</li> <li>The Kerang Museum has a range of heritage assets that are being utilised for specific tourism functions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the local museums and heritage associations to market their assets to the visitor markets and develop specific events.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 3
<b><i>Indigenous Culture Visitor experience</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to develop Indigenous cultural experiences to promote the heritage of the region's first peoples, and to enhance visitor satisfaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local Aboriginal organisations and individuals to develop cultural experiences, such as tours, interpretive information, displays of artworks and artefacts, etc. MUST be with the wishes of the indigenous community.</li> <li>Develop a keeping place at the Gateway Visitor Centre.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3

# Marketing & Promotion

Council will partner with Murray Regional Tourism in developing a range of marketing and promotional opportunities. Consumer Shows such as the Caravan & Camping Show, specific media promotions, the introduction of a new whole of Murray website and media familiarisation tours will be used to promote the local area as a tourism destination.

Council will continue to develop a range of electronic and hard copy materials for distribution and continue to use the Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre and Kerang Library to market and promote the local area.

Marketing and Promotion will be undertaken externally to new visitor markets and locally to inform the community of the many tourism opportunities and to encourage a greater participation at community level. The development of brand consistent materials will showcase the Gannawarra and drive further recognition of the area as Victoria's Nature Based Tourism Destination.

Statistics will be collated to better understand the local tourism trends and to allow Council staff to better target marketing activities. An annual marketing plan will assist in maintaining a strong focus on marketing and promotion and the development of a database for regular marketing will allow considerable coverage across Victoria and New South Wales.



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<p><b>Annual regional opportunities for Council buy-in, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional Digital Platform</b></li> <li>• <b>PR and Media Outreach</b></li> <li>• <b>Consumer Shows</b></li> <li>• <b>Destination Appeal Marketing Program</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to take advantage of MRT’s co-operative marketing programs which enable Gannawarra to leverage regional tourism marketing dollars and expertise, a regional brand strategy, and quality promotional initiatives the Shire couldn’t otherwise afford.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate investment and support inclusion in MRTB marketing initiatives on an annual basis. Also assist MRT to communicate to Gannawarra’s tourism operators regarding marketing opportunities. Initiatives include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the <b>Regional Digital Marketing Platform</b> -</li> <li>• <b>PR and Media Outreach</b> which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Event listings in top tier media; pitching stories related to feature destination experiences; Hot Deals, Accommodation Reviews, and Giveaways, media famils.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Consumer Shows</b> eg caravan and camping</li> <li>• <b>Destination Appeal Marketing Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ promotion in relevant media relating to key experiences, such as history and heritage, nature, Aboriginal culture, golf, water sports.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Media familiarisation tours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, leverage journalist famil tours organised by MRTB.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide itinerary options and host journalist familiarisation tours for relevant media within the Shire.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Familiarisation tours for regional visitor information centres’ staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant advantage in staff and volunteers from regional visitor information centres being familiar with Gannawarra visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in, and support, regional familiarisation tours for regional visitor information centres’ staff and volunteers.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b>Visitor research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding changes in market preferences and behaviours is essential to inform promotional initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in regional research initiatives to monitor changes in visitation and market behaviours.</li> <li>Collate information from Gateway re visitor needs.</li> <li>Collate accommodation statistics.</li> <li>Collate traffic counts at key entry points to the Gunbower Forest at peak times of the year.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Brand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to refresh the Shire brand, and develop town brands with the tourism industry and local communities to affirm points of difference between towns and to guide product development and marketing activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain a consistent brand campaign in all marketing activities.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 4
<b>Annual Marketing Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise an annual marketing program, taking advantage of opportunities provided by MRTB and other organisations.</li> <li>Promote the Shire's product strengths in relevant marketing initiatives, ie. nature, fishing, motorised water sports, food and wine, golf and history/heritage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare an annual marketing program that complements and leverages MRT's marketing activities.</li> <li>Develop joint venture marketing activities with community groups.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Adjacent shires 'locals' campaign</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage residents and visitors in adjacent shires, especially Echuca and Swan Hill, to travel to the Gannawarra on day trips.</li> <li>Develop a local tourism campaign aimed at informing local residents of attractions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the groundwork from the Visiting Friends Relatives campaign, promote attractions, events and touring concepts in Murray region media, including press and radio, eg. media releases, advertisements.</li> <li>Educate local residents on the local tourism attractions in the Gannawarra.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Direct Marketing Campaign</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to grow the visitor market with invitations to recreational and touring clubs.</li> <li>Current coach visitation to the Shire is very low with coaches passing through the Shire to other parts of the Murray region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a direct marketing campaign to all clubs that would have an interest in visiting the area. Caravan Clubs, mountain bike, canoe and bushwalking clubs etc.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise the profile of the Shire's food and wine experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a wine and food information map aimed at improving the profile of boutique food products in the local area.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 2 onwards

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Co-operative Promotions</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Gannawarra’s tourism operators to conduct collaborative marketing campaigns within the Murray region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek tourism operators’ participation in selected marketing campaigns to provide tactical offers, including the Local Marketing (VFR) campaign, adjacent Shires ‘Locals’ campaign, and adjacent destinations campaign.</li> <li>Partner with community groups to undertake marketing activities.</li> <li>Develop and circulate a range of investment prospectus documents to encourage tourism projects.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Touring Routes</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness of the Shire’s attractions by developing itineraries that include historical and natural attractions, food and wine, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop touring routes for caravan and camping enthusiasts, especially to suit the interests of the retirees market and brand related markets.</li> <li>Update the touring route materials to disperse visitors to the smaller centres such as Quambatook.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 3
<b><i>Brochure and Web Content</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve promotion of cycling and walking trails in the Shire to attract this growing segment, tailored to the needs of groups, couples and singles.</li> <li>Promote local birds, habitats and visiting seasons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop materials to promote opportunities related to cycling and walking. Include mapping.</li> <li>Develop a brochure to promote bird-watching opportunities and convey information about local bird species and sites.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 2
<b><i>Tourism Brochures</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building on the review of brochures undertaken for this plan, conduct a brochure audit to identify additional publications that are required to meet visitors’ information needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a brochure audit - develop additional publications as required; continue to update and produce existing publications as considered appropriate.</li> <li>Seek to reduce and refine the volume of brochures.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Information Upgrades</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that information is provided to the wider tourism industry including tourism operators and key community groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide regular information to tourism operators, businesses and community groups including an annual tourism round table.</li> <li>Maintain information across the community using a range of platforms.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Knowledge of staff / volunteers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that staff and volunteers at Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre, Kerang Library and Barham Visitor Information Centre have a genuine understanding of experiences, products and services available in the Shire, and adjoining shires.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an annual familiarisation program.</li> <li>Conduct a famil for communities to better understand tourism options within the Shire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1 - 5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Product referrals</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the level of cross-promotion between businesses and the stocking of shire-produced and other businesses' brochures at tourism businesses and town based community information facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage tourism operators, retailers and community events to distribute information to their visitors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1 - 5</li> </ul>
<b><i>Public transport</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While public transport in the Shire is limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that existing services are little known and used by visitors for tourism purposes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote public transport options on the Shire's tourism website, and develop tourism initiatives that utilise public transport. Eg Rail cycle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2 - 3</li> </ul>

# Events

Events are a great way to bring visitation to towns and to fill gaps in the local tourism market. They provide value to the local accommodation houses, support local retailers and provide revenue for local community groups.

A range of events are currently hosted across the Shire such as markets and farmers markets, ski racing events, horse racing, tractor pulling, arts and culture, fishing competitions and various sporting events.

Opportunities exist to develop more local events that link into the local area brand. The emerging food culture is seeing new products being grown and developed on farm. Specialty meats, nuts and oils along with a range of preserves, sauces and condiments are sought after products for visitors and foodies. Regions that have a strong tourism industry all have a very strong and creative food and wine culture. To maximise new tourism opportunities there needs to be a greater recognition of the quality food products available in the area that can be used to add value to local events. The Murrabit Market along with the Cohuna Farmers Market are great examples of successful local events promoting the local food industry.

The natural environment provides an ideal location for current and new events. Fishing competitions bring in hundreds of visitors and support local community groups while sporting events are growing in popularity with the Bridge to Bridge event and Kerang races key events on the calendar.

Analysis of events has shown the real value to the community. Ski racing events at Lake Charm bring in around \$35,000 to the local economy across accommodation, fuel, food, drinks over a two day event.

Council will continue to support existing events and work closely with the community to develop new events aimed at increasing visitation to the Shire.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Regionally significant events</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MRT to develop an events strategy that will identify opportunities to develop regionally significant events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify new regional events to bring to the Gannawarra and work with MRT to grow inter Council events such as the Black Swan and Massive Murray Paddle.</li> </ul>	Year 1
<b><i>Community based events</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support existing community events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the annual events brochure that is promoted on the Council website and Facebook. Work with specific groups needing marketing assistance for events.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>New Events</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to host events during gaps in the annual Shire calendar that meet market demands and expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local communities and event organisers to establish new events to fill gaps in the yearly weekend calendar. Events linked to local strengths and opportunities and in line with what visitors are seeking.</li> <li>Develop a new events marketing package to entice new events to the local area.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Local waterways</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise economic returns from aquatic events such as ski racing that return significant benefit to the business sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with aquatic organisations to ensure that local waterways are utilised for water sports events. Eg ski racing, boat racing and other aquatic activities deemed appropriate on local waterways.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5



# Industry Development

Murray Region Tourism (MRT) is the over-arching organisation responsible for the strategic directions of tourism at a regional level. MRT provides a range of industry training programs to meet the needs of tourism businesses, managers and staff. Programs such as; customer service and marketing, digital media, on-line booking and consumer packaging to improve service levels within the industry.

With the implementation of the new MRT digital platform comprising on-line booking, the relationship with tourism businesses will need to be significantly improved. In the Gannawarra Shire many operators do not interact with the wider tourism industry and have a low level of technology uptake with no website presence or on-line booking system. With statistics showing around 63% of tourists planning their holidays with the aid of technology many regional tourism businesses have limited exposure to the market. With support from MRT, Council will provide personalised service to local tourism operators to assist them to maximise the many emerging initiatives.

The modern tourist has a higher expectation of services provided by the destination. Quality locally produced foods, wines and beverages, access to modern digital services such as high speed broadband and downloadable applications that are Smart phone compatible along with high quality accommodation and a wide range of tourism experiences. Council will conduct regular briefings and forums aimed at providing operators with information and training and a greater awareness of market trends and expectations.

Council will work with MRT, tourism operators and community groups to improve the skill levels, knowledge and understanding of all stakeholders and to strive for improvements in all aspects of tourism within the Shire.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Cycle Tourism</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When cycling trails are further developed in the Shire, it will be important for the tourism industry and town's public facilities to cater for cyclists.</li> <li>As other outdoor adventure segments develop, eg. kayaking also work with the tourism industry to encourage the provision of appropriate support services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT to conduct briefings to update operators and local development associations on the needs of the cycling market and how different tourism sectors can meet these requirements (eg. accommodation, eateries).</li> </ul>	Year 3 - 5
<b><i>Build capacity</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that hospitality businesses in the Shire have access to the strategic direction of tourism at MRT level and council level to increase development opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host an annual round table for tourism and hospitality businesses.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Changes in market trends</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism operators need to keep abreast of changes in market trends and preferences for visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide updates on latest market research at local industry forums and in regular newsletters and communications to the local tourism industry.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Digital technology</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operators also need to stay informed of advances in digital technology, trends in consumer take-up of various tools and platforms (eg. social media) and opportunities (and pitfalls) to communicate with visitors before, during and after their trip.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT to provide an annual program of digital technology training for tourism operators and staff.</li> </ul>	Year 1
<b><i>Building reputation for good food</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Hospitality sector is inconsistent in the delivery of food and food services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host a high profile food industry person to encourage local operators to better understand the tourism opportunities through food and local products.</li> <li>Continue to grow visitor numbers that create demand for improved services.</li> </ul>	Year 2 - 3

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Customer Service</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving customer service standards, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors, is important to meet the expectations of a well-travelled public. It is especially critical for Kerang, where its primary tourism point of difference, could be a service centre. Hospitality and retail also tend to have a high turnover of young staff, so ongoing training opportunities (internal to the business and external) are very important. Demonstrating the benefits of a skilled and well-trained workforce should be promoted within the local tourism industry.</li> <li>Assist managers of small tourism businesses to attain the skills they need to provide customer service training to staff in a busy hospitality or retail business.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MRT to provide customer service training to the hospitality and retail sectors. In particular, train managers to train their staff.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Customer service skills of staff/volunteers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that staff and volunteers at information facilities in the Shire have a high level of customer service skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct bi-annual customer service training for staff and volunteers of visitor information outlets.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Promotional Skills</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some community-based organisations working in tourism have little or no experience in marketing and promotions for events and other experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct marketing training for community-based event organisers and associations.</li> <li>Provide support to tourism and hospitality businesses to provide packages aimed at encouraging visitation.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Public Liability Insurance</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public liability insurance concerns are deterring some community organisations from establishing events and visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide advice to assist community organisations to attain public liability insurance where required, eg. via briefings, fact sheets, newsletters.</li> </ul>	Ongoing



# Communication & Partnerships

Council will seek to build the capacity of town-based progress and development associations to take greater leadership in industry networking, events, product development and visitor servicing. This will be achieved by improving communication with community groups and by conducting events such as tourism forums, bus tours, regular collaboration at community meetings and by assisting communities in the development of events and local projects linked to the community plans.

Community groups will be encouraged to develop a closer working relationship with Council and tourism businesses and to play a much more proactive role in developing and promoting their local tourism opportunities.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b><i>Visitor Information</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of visitor information 24/7.</li> <li>• Participation in MRT's regional digital platform will provide the opportunity for an online booking service at the VIC.</li> <li>• Ensure the website is Smartphone friendly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the placement and restocking of brochure stands at all accommodation facilities, key events and specific businesses throughout the Shire.</li> <li>• Provide electronic versions of materials that are Smartphone compatible.</li> <li>• Further develop the digital aspects of visitor information.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 5
<b><i>Tourism Operator partnerships</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain regular communications with Tourism operators and encourage partnerships for marketing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host an annual Tourism forum with presentations from MRT Board, CEO and industry personnel.</li> <li>• Council to provide a regular update of the strategy implementation.</li> <li>• Work with industry operators to market the area for specific activities.</li> </ul>	Year 1 - 2 onwards

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE</b>	<b>GSC ACTIONS</b>	<b>TIME LINE</b>
<b><i>Two-way communications - Town Progress/Development Associations</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct two-way strategies to keep town associations informed about the Gannawarra's tourism activities, and to keep Council informed about tourism industry issues and requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide regular information on tourism to the community groups in Gannawarra.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Two-way communications - Community</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community involvement in tourism planning and implementation is essential to ensure that the visitation and tourism development which occurs in a town is consistent with the local community's aspirations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide regular tourism updates to the community.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the local community informed about tourism initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a regular media release about Council's tourism-related activities.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Membership- Murray Regional Tourism Board</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration as part of the Murray Regional Tourism program is essential to develop tourism in the Shire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate in the Murray Region Tourism Board partnership, including compliance with the Funding Agreement.</li> <li>Attend MRTB Board meetings and Tourism Manager Forums.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b><i>Awareness of opportunities- Investors</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness amongst potential investors of product development opportunities in Gannawarra.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend selected regional and state business forums and networking events.</li> <li>Respond to investor leads and inquiries.</li> </ul>	Ongoing





## Monitoring and Evaluating the Plan

Gannawarra Shire Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Plan and will work with all internal and external stakeholders in particularly community groups to support the delivery of the Plan through regular monitoring and reporting process.

The Plan is a living document and will be reviewed and amended as circumstances change. The review will include assessing the progress of the plan deployment, assess whether the outcomes of the action bring the Shire closer to meeting the priority goals, and amend and evolve the plan to reflect changing needs in the Gannawarra, new funding opportunities that may arise, or new direction which may be developed.

The review stage will occur before the end of the Plan five year phase and will feed into the development of the following five year phase of the Plan.

Council will report on how it is progressing with meeting the milestones of the plan. This may include reporting at Council meetings, reporting to community groups and via local media.



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