



GANNAWARRA  
Shire Council

# ADVOCACY STRATEGY

KERANG | COHUNA | KOONDROOK | LAKES DISTRICT | MURRABIT & DISTRICT |  
LEITCHVILLE | LALBERT | QUAMBATOOK



# VISION

Building upon our strengths of people, place and pride to inspire a positive future together.

# MISSION

Together with our community we will capitalise on our natural assets, support our business and agricultural sector and deliver quality services to our community.



# VALUES

## BE COLLABORATIVE

We will work closely with our community using our collective skills and knowledge to build a positive future. Together with our partners we will deliver great things for our community.

## BE RESOURCEFUL

We will be resourceful and resilient, employing creative problem solving to our challenges. We will plan and be prepared for when opportunities present.

## BE INNOVATIVE

We will embrace new ideas and technology to deliver quality services to our community at a lower cost. We will make time to consider the big issues and actively seek creative solutions.

## ... AND WE WILL LISTEN

We will listen to our community and use our collective knowledge and sound judgement to respond and close the loop.

Gannawarra Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays its respect to Elders past and present.

# ADVOCACY IS A KEY ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Advocacy is a process that challenges inequities by collaboratively and actively working with communities and key stakeholders to bring about changes in policy, process, practice and attitudes in order to ensure communities' rights are upheld.

Advocacy is an area of ongoing focus for Council. In recent years Council has spoken out on a broad range of issues important to Gannawarra communities and the wider region, such as public transport, support for agriculture and funding for important infrastructure projects.

Advocacy means time spent writing to government departments and political leaders, making submissions and sitting down with decision-makers, participating in crucial meetings and networks and improving local awareness through communication.

Advocacy is also about working in partnership. We have key partnerships with other local government authorities, community organisations, and most critically we work to empower our communities.

This document helps to highlight the priority infrastructure and policy needs for Gannawarra Shire Council over the period 2018-2021. The highest priorities that Council intends to pursue on behalf of the local community are detailed in this document.

Council is aware that as time goes on priorities can change and Council will be ready to engage on any new or emerging issues that impact our community and wider region.

*The community will be at the heart of the Council's advocacy.*



## OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Gannawarra boasts highly valuable agricultural and environmental assets and strong and resilient communities. We are close to and well connected with major regional growth areas like Bendigo and Echuca. Our communities are resourceful and creative and have proven able to adapt well to changing circumstances. Our warm climate, fertile agricultural land and affordable property options also make Gannawarra an attractive choice for business and residents alike.



10,549\*

\*(Censusdata.abs.gov.au, 2017)

49.8% MALE

50.2% FEMALE

MEDIAN AGE 49

AREA: 3,736 SQ KILOMETRES

## WHO IS GANNAWARRA?

Gannawarra is a region loaded with natural features, rivers, lakes, wetlands and forests. It is a perfect destination for relaxing on the riverbank, water skiing with friends or just soaking up the ambience of the majestic red gum forests.

We are a three hour drive from Melbourne and around one hour from the neighbouring centres of Swan Hill, Echuca and Bendigo. Visitors can choose from the many freshwater lakes, the Murray River or the Gunbower Creek to enjoy the natural qualities that Gannawarra has to offer. Gannawarra has many attractions such as beautiful golf courses, red gum sawmills, national parks, wetlands, diverse shopping centres and special places of interest.

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



# OUR ADVOCACY PRIORITIES:

After considering the ongoing discussions we have had with community through a range of consultations, we have identified and consolidated the key issues of importance for Gannawarra Shire residents and businesses. Council has also considered issues where it can have the greatest influence, in particular where we can partner with other councils or organisations from the region to gain greater benefits.

## THE TOP FIVE ISSUES FOR ADVOCACY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

### 1. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Gannawarra Shire Council is seeking a fairer funding framework for small rural councils in Victoria which provides ongoing financial sustainability.

### 2. CONNECTIONS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

People living within the Gannawarra Shire need to connect and travel to surrounding communities to access services, education, recreation and employment. We advocate for improved connectivity to our rail, public transport, community transport and digital infrastructure.

### 3. LAKES, RIVERFRONT AND WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Gannawarra Shire Council is seeking policy and planning frameworks that support water front development to improve livability and tourism investment in our region.

### 4. INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

We require significant network upgrades to facilitate investment in solar energy production in our region. Gannawarra Shire Council is a key partner in unlocking northern Victoria's solar potential and we are uniquely placed to work with key stakeholders to maximise this opportunity for our communities.

### 5. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

We advocate for improved access to services which support the health and wellbeing of our communities.

## POLICY CONTEXT

Gannawarra's development priorities are consistent with regional frameworks and priorities, as well as with State and Federal Government priorities. This demonstrates that our priorities are considered, strategic and worthy of support.

## LOCAL

Gannawarra strategic project priorities are outlined in Towards 2025: Strategic Projects 2019-2020. This detailed list of pipeline projects outlines the transformational projects across the Gannawarra community. These projects are underpinned by previous strategic work undertaken and endorsed by Council.

## REGIONAL

Gannawarra's strategic priorities are consistent with the Loddon Mallee Regional Priorities outlined by the Loddon Campaspe and Murray River Group of Councils in their Investment Prospectus. The Prospectus outlines investment in regional growth, enabling transport infrastructure, investing in tourism, and food and agriculture as key regional priorities. It is also consistent with the Loddon Mallee Strategic Plan, which cites developing water management, stronger communities, a more robust and diverse economy, better transport infrastructure and educational opportunities, as well as environmental protection and enhancement, as key priorities.

## STATE GOVERNMENT

The Victorian Government is responsible for a range of policy areas that impact on Gannawarra Shire Council. Some of these key areas include building new public transport and education infrastructure, funding early childhood services and Home and Community Care services, providing funding for maintenance of roads, bridges, as well as existing public transport services and growing the Victorian economy. Gannawarra Shire Council's priorities are in line with the aims and purpose of the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which supports major projects, creating jobs and building stronger regional communities. The fund has three parts, focusing on major projects, employment and communities.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Federal Government is also responsible for a number of policy areas that are a priority for Gannawarra Shire Council. These include the rollout of the National Broadband Network, funding for large-scale infrastructure projects, developing climate change and renewable energy policy and providing employment training and support programs. Uncertainty surrounding these policy areas makes investment and planning more difficult. Ongoing funding streams for infrastructure and general funding such as the Local Government Financial Assistance Grants which are critically important for Council to be able to provide services and infrastructure, are also a Federal Government responsibility.



# ADVOCACY THEMES & KEY ISSUES

# FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

## THE ISSUES

The annual local government grant allocation for small rural shires needs to be permanently increased to ensure Victoria's small rural shires become financially sustainable. Small rural councils across Victoria are not financially sustainable under the current funding mix. Their inability to provide and maintain 'basic livability' services and standards has been repeatedly validated via government inquiries and Auditor General Reports over the last decade.

Gannawarra Shire Council is a grant dependent council with only 40% of its income coming from council rates. The Fair Go Rates System which places a cap on increases to council rates is supported by the Gannawarra Shire Council, given ratepayers are under significant financial stress and sustained large increases in council rates is not a solution.

Gannawarra Shire Council generates approximately \$10 million in rates income each year. Under the current rate cap, Council raises approximately \$200,000 of additional revenue per year. The amount barely covers the increases to wages and salaries, let alone covering contract and material expenditure increases that typically exceed CPI and the rate cap.

Like other small rural Victorian councils, the challenges facing Gannawarra Shire Council include:

- small population size and a consequent lack of capacity to pay for services
- lack of economies of scale
- geography i.e. large distances between towns and locations which increases the cost of delivering services
- lower incomes and socio-economic disadvantage
- a high proportion of aged residents
- a lack of competition from service providers and suppliers
- difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff and skilled contractors
- a significant reliance on grants
- lack of viable options to generate alternative income streams
- ongoing struggle to fully fund the maintenance and renewal of community asset



GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL  
GENERATES APPROXIMATELY  
**\$10 MILLION**  
IN RATES EACH YEAR



## THE SOLUTION

Council can only afford to provide basic ‘livability’ services and the further cutting of costs will result in a diminished capacity to provide services and/or maintain the quality of services. Small rural shires have limited capacity to generate alternative income streams, such as through parking revenues or a broad range of user fees that larger councils can exploit. However, there is a solution.

The solution is for the State Government to adopt and implement the recommendations contained in the “Inquiry into the sustainability and operational challenges of Victoria’s rural and regional councils”, noting several of these recommendations were submitted by the Gannawarra Shire Council.

The Victorian State Government established the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee tasked with an inquiry into the sustainability and operational challenges of Victoria’s rural and regional councils. In March 2018, the committee presented its final report to the Victorian State Parliament; noting the Parliament is obligated to respond to the report within six (6) months of receipt. The inquiry report identified solutions as contained in a raft of recommendations currently being considered by the Victorian State Parliament.

The solutions predominately include establishing a new grants program to assist small rural councils to deliver core services; along with providing additional funding to small rural shires via the Victorian Grants Commission’s Financial Assistance Grants.

## KEY PRIORITIES

1.

**CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR KEY PARTNERS, TO THE VICTORIAN STATE GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE “INQUIRY INTO THE SUSTAINABILITY AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF VICTORIA’S RURAL AND REGIONAL COUNCILS” TO PROVIDE FOR A FAIRER FUNDING FORMULA FOR VICTORIA’S SMALL RURAL COUNCILS**

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

- Victorian Grants Commission
- Victorian Minister for Local Government
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)
- Rural Councils Victoria (RCV)
- Mallee Regional Partnerships
- Murray River Group of Councils
- Loddon Campaspe Group of Councils
- Victoria’s other eighteen (18) Small Rural Shire Councils



# CONNECTIONS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES



IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY TO OUR RAIL, PUBLIC TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY TRANSPORT AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR OUR SHIRE

## THE ISSUES

Due to the low population density and geographic spread of our rural communities, residents in the Gannawarra Shire are required to travel long distances to surrounding regional or metropolitan centres to access basic, yet vital services, including health, education, training, employment and recreation.

Like many remote and rural communities, geographical limitations affect the way of life for residents in our Shire on a daily basis. They experience significant gaps in service delivery which can have a negative impact on their overall health and wellbeing and business viability.

Agriculture is a leading industry in our municipality, and the movement of grain and other farming produce is critical to our communities. Road and rail freight options are of paramount importance to the farming sector along with improved smart phone services. Technology in agriculture plays a key role in product trading, activating automated irrigation technology and in communications on farms.

Visitors and residents of Gannawarra Shire have access to only limited public transport options and experience unreliable mobile and internet connectivity.

Each of these fundamental issues impact livability in our municipality and Council’s ability to attract more residents and visitors to the region.

Improved connectivity to our rail, public transport, community transport and digital infrastructure is a high priority for our Shire.

# KEY PRIORITIES

## 1. IMPROVEMENTS TO PASSENGER RAIL SERVICES

Improved timetabling on the Swan Hill line is required to facilitate day trips each way between Swan Hill and Bendigo. Improved passenger rail services will provide stimulus for regional settlement growth and provide better access to education and health care services.

Track speed improvements by way of capacity enhancements on the Swan Hill and Bendigo rail lines are also required. These actions include improved signaling, level and pedestrian crossing upgrades, track reconditioning and additional crossing loops.

## 2. INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICES AND LINKS

Community transport initiatives provide critical transport services to the most vulnerable people within our communities.

These services are often delivered by volunteers who assist and transport people to education services and critical medical services and appointments. They also provide important opportunities for social interaction.

In Gannawarra Shire, these vital rural services include the Cohuna Community Bus and Gannawarra Non-Emergency Transport Service (GNETS), and it is crucial that government provides funding to support their maintenance and expansion.





RELIABLE AND COMPREHENSIVE MOBILE CONNECTIVITY FOR PHONECALLS AND INTERNET HAS BECOME A BASIC SERVICE EXPECTED BY BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS.

### 3. CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN ADDRESSING MOBILE BLACKSPOTS

Gannawarra Shire is affected by a significant number of mobile blackspots and overall poor network coverage. This presents a serious risk to residents in the case of an emergency and affects the ability of residents and businesses to communicate effectively.

Reliable and comprehensive mobile connectivity for phone calls and internet has become a basic service expected by business and community residents.

**Improved mobile coverage will:**

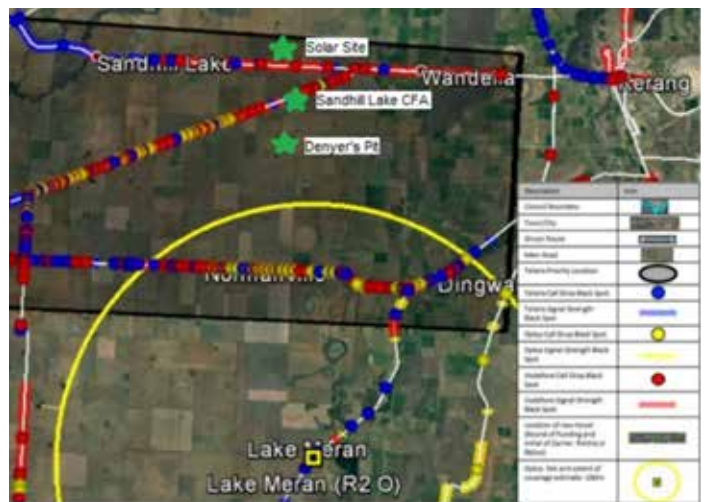
1. Provide residents with the capacity to communicate effectively and quickly;
2. Deliver greater productivity for businesses particularly modern farming enterprises;
3. Assist the region to manage in times of disaster or emergency; and
4. Enable visitors to

The Regional Development Australia – Loddon Mallee Mobile Phone and Device Blackspots Connectivity Assessment for the Loddon Mallee Region, which includes Gannawarra Shire, highlights the current mobile black spots within the Shire.

In June 2015, the Federal Government announced \$100 million for 499 new and upgraded mobile base stations across Australia under round 1 of the Mobile Black Spot Program. A new Telstra mobile tower at Lalbert was included in this round and was completed in April 2016.

**Gannawarra Shire’s top priorities for investment under the new rounds of funding include:**

1. An upgrade to the Kerang Tower as the fault area is 10km from Kerang at its furthest point.
2. A new tower at Reedy Lake. A location has been identified on DELWP-owned land that is clear from trees and other obstructions, and where there is good elevation and access from the main road. The diagrams below show the location of the suggested Reedy Lake site.



#### 4. IMPROVEMENTS TO ROAD NETWORKS TO ENABLE EFFICIENT MOVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

**Gannawarra Shire Council is calling for increased investment in our regional and rural roads network to improve transport connectivity within northern Victoria. This includes the following critical priorities:**

1. Improve freight movement and efficiency by investing in heavy vehicle bypasses, road widening and intersection upgrades (to allow for B Doubles / HGV) at key points of the road network.
2. Improve road safety through investments in carriageway duplication, road widening, overtaking lanes, intersection works, shoulder widening and sealing works at key points of the regional road network.
3. Invest in road quality and maintenance including pavement works, widening and maintenance at specified locations across the network.
4. Improve road quality and traffic management in our towns and approaches by investing in intersection upgrades, development of service roads, medians, carriageways and lighting, selected kerb and channel replacement and pedestrian management initiatives at specified locations in our towns.

#### 5. DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH IN INDUSTRIAL ESTATES IN KERANG, COHUNA AND KOONDROOK

Increasing demand for Industrial land requires the expansion of industrial estates in Kerang (Tate Drive), Cohuna and Koondrook. Economic growth is supported by new industry and supporting established industry to grow, increasing jobs and further support, local economies. The critical factor for rural population growth is jobs and the infrastructure to best service business developments.



## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

- Loddon Campaspe Transport Group
- Central Murray Regional Transport Group
- Rail Freight Alliance
- Cohuna Community Bus Service
- Gannawarra Non-Emergency Transport Service (GNETS)
- Gannawarra Local Agency Meeting (GLAM) partners
- Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership (PCP)

# LAKES, RIVERFRONT AND WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT



GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL IS SEEKING STRATEGIC PLANNING THAT SUPPORTS LAKE MANAGEMENT AND WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENTS TO IMPROVE LIVEABILITY AND TOURISM INVESTMENT IN OUR REGION.

## THE ISSUES

Gannawarra Shire Council is developing waterfront masterplans to capitalize on lifestyle living and business development opportunities around the key waterways.

The infrastructure around the waterways is either old and outdated or simply doesn't exist. Developing targeted infrastructure will enhance livability and visitation while also supporting further commercial and private sector investment.

Water is critical to agriculture, our environment, recreation and tourism development. It is central to who we are, how we live, work and play; and our Shire is home to some of the country's most beautiful waterways and wetlands.



# KEY PRIORITIES/ PROJECTS

## 1. FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE PRIORITIES AS IDENTIFIED IN KERANG LAKES WATERFRONT MASTER PLAN

The Kerang Lakes Waterfront Master Plan identifies key areas for improvement in tourism assets and is focused on improved infrastructure, food and retail, and nature-based experience development to transform the tourism offering in the region.

The plan is currently under development, however some major pipeline projects have been identified including the Kangaroo Lake North End upgrade.

This project will facilitate the development of new boat ramp facilities, public amenity improvements, landscaping, recreational infrastructure and enhancements to public access to the north end of Kangaroo Lake.

Kangaroo Lake, north of Kerang, has been identified as an important water body capable of hosting major national and state water sports events. These events attract large numbers of participants and spectators and provide a significant boost to the local economy's hospitality sector. Kangaroo Lake also hosts workers from the local solar farms and has capacity to cater for the workforce of the proposed mineral sands mine 10kms west, which is projected to employ 130 staff.

The proposed upgrade will not only benefit the many watersports visitors and holiday makers who frequent the area, but also provide the community with improved lifestyle attributes.

## 2. MURRAY RIVER ADVENTURE TRAIL

The Murray River Adventure Trail (MRAT) is an important element of the Murray Region Tourism Destination Management Plan and is a multisport adventure trail that, when completed, will extend the length of the Murray River, incorporating walking, cycling, kayaking, canoeing and other forms of water transport.

Council's priority is to continue to work with Murray Regional Tourism and our communities to ensure that Gannawarra Shire Communities get the best possible outcomes from the development and investment in the MRAT.

In Gannawarra, key developments linked to the adventure trail include the Koondrook Wharf and Koondrook Nature-Based Tourism Hub which are important investments in the region's destination and tourism offering, enriching the overall visitor experience. The trail itself plays a critical role in linking destinations with new tourism products and experiences. The plan aims to disperse visitors from the major centres and encourage visitors to explore the smaller communities along the lengths of the river.

These local trails will be a critical community infrastructure investment which will help to build connectivity with the Murray River Adventure Trail and support growth in the regional visitor economy. The trails will deliver a local community aspiration, support businesses in key sectors and strengthen the overall recreation and tourism product of the region.



### 3. INVESTMENT AND FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOONDROOK WATERFRONT

The Koondrook Waterfront is undergoing a significant transformation that includes a mix of new and upgraded community and commercial infrastructure. The Koondrook Wharf redevelopment is complete, the nature-based tourism (NBT) hub is underway, and the historic railway goods shed is about to commence a \$1.2 million renovation.

The next stage of the waterfront development requires a \$500,000 investment to upgrade the roadway between the wharf, the NBT hub, caravan park and boat ramp to provide designated pedestrian and vehicle access to the sites. The roadway will be resurfaced in a natural material that complements the local brand and will include surface drainage, solar lighting, pedestrian footpath and artistic features all aimed at connecting individual assets. The pathway will also link with the pedestrian footbridge across the Gunbower Creek to allow access to the Gunbower State Forest for recreation activities. This project will also provide connections to Arbuthnot Sawmills, which is proposing to develop a boardwalk and viewing platform along the river to improve the visitor experience and pedestrian access.

The Koondrook area is establishing itself as a destination that offers a unique nature based experience. Gannawarra Shire Council has developed the concept of a waterfront precinct in consultation with the Koondrook community and has enhanced the development of the experience through projects including the Koondrook Wharf and the Koondrook Nature-Based Tourism Hub that continue to add value to the theme.

The Koondrook CBD, with its connection to the wharf, Arbuthnot Sawmill, the railway goods shed development, Murray River, Gunbower Creek and the Gunbower State Forest, will strengthen the development platform for growth in Koondrook.



#### 4. SECURING ENVIRONMENTAL WATER FOR COUNCIL'S SIGNIFICANT WATERWAYS TO MAINTAIN THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT THE SIGNIFICANT FLORA AND FAUNA

Gannawarra is home to 57 Ramsar listed lakes and waterways. These wetlands are classified as internationally important. In addition, these wetlands form part of the China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) and Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA).

Environmental water is critical to supporting these wetlands and the significant animal and plant life which inhabit them.



#### 5. SECURING SUSTAINABLE RECREATION WATER FOR QUAMBATOOK

This \$450,000 project will facilitate engineering and infrastructure works upstream of the Quambatook Weir to ensure a permanent body of recreation water is held in the Avoca River. Through this project, Gannawarra Shire Council is aiming to provide the community of Quambatook opportunities to attract additional visitors to support existing businesses and community events, and to enhance lifestyle and wellbeing opportunities for residents.

#### 6. COHUNA WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

This project is about providing connections to the waterway by constructing piers and jetties that allow people to access the water.

It will support recreation, visitation and the livability aspects to grow the local population and support new industry development.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Murray River Tourism
- North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA)
- Indigenous groups – Barapa Barapa Elders, Yorta Yorta Nation, Dja Dja Wurrung
- Parks Victoria
- Murray River Group of Councils
- Business and Traders
- Goulburn Murray Water
- Regional Development Victoria
- Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water

# INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY



PART OF THIS STRATEGY IS TO DEVELOP GANNAWARRA AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER, WITH A FOCUS ON RENEWABLE ENERGY, NATURE-BASED TOURISM, ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE GREEN INSPIRED BUSINESSES

## THE ISSUES

The Gannawarra Shire relies heavily on agriculture to support the local economy. However, the impacts of climate change, volatile world markets and the Murray Darling Basin Plan are impacting on agriculture requiring Council to commit to diversifying the economy.

Part of this strategy is to develop Gannawarra as an environmental leader, with a focus on renewable energy, nature-based tourism, organic agriculture and sustainable green inspired businesses to shift the Shire into a new and exciting era that better supports its communities.

This new thinking will facilitate many new opportunities to sustain the economy for the benefit of the whole community, including encouraging people to relocate, and providing new jobs to support young people.



# KEY PRIORITIES/ PROJECTS

## 1. TO UPGRADE THE 220KV ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION NETWORK BETWEEN KERANG AND BENDIGO TO SUPPORT LARGE SCALE SOLAR DEVELOPMENT IN THE KERANG AREA

The 220kv electricity transmission line that supplies the Kerang terminal station from Bendigo is at capacity.

Upgrading this section of the transmission network will facilitate the take-up of approximately 4,000ha or an additional 2,00MW of renewable generation capacity. Developers have already expressed an interest in securing this land for future development and commercial developers are meeting with Ausnet to consider opportunities to upgrade the line.

The north west area of Victoria is recognised as having the highest solar resource in Victoria and is therefore the most attractive location for commercial solar development. Of all identified locations with a high solar resource, Kerang is placed closest to Melbourne, which generates opportunities to supply renewable energy to this major energy consumer.

## 2. TO DEVELOP SEVEN SOLAR FARMS WITHIN THE GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL WITH APPROXIMATELY 650MW OF COMBINED GENERATION CAPACITY

Gannawarra Shire Council has issued planning permits for the development of seven solar projects. This will generate local jobs and deliver positive spin-offs for the economy which is critical for the long-term sustainability of the Shire. Council is committed to developing renewable alternatives in all aspects of its business and is seeking to maximise the economic and environmental benefits of renewable energy generation.

## 3. TO LOBBY THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO URGENTLY TAKE ACTION TO DEVELOP AND ENACT LEGISLATION TO CLARIFY THE RATEABILITY OF SOLAR FARMS, BATTERY FARMS AND/OR ANY OTHER EMERGING TECHNOLOGY IN VICTORIA

The Electricity Industry Act 2000 does not provide clarity to local councils on payment in lieu of rates (PiLoR) for solar and battery farms, nor any other emerging technologies.

In Victoria, projects are required to make a PiLoR to the Local Government Area (LGA) based on a specified formula or by negotiation. The generator and the LGA are to agree on a PiLoR and may vary the amount, taking relevant project factors into account. Greater clarity is required in this area.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Gannawarra Shire Council is working closely with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the municipalities of Mildura and Swan Hill to realise the opportunities in renewable energy generation in north west Victoria. A working group has been established to identify what is required to support the energy industry in the region.

Work is also underway with the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) looking at options on the future works required to provide improved transmission access for the renewable energy industry.

The community is highly supportive of the development of renewable energy, and many local progress associations, sporting clubs and community groups have already forged strong relationships with renewable energy developers.



# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



OUR COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH A RANGE OF PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS.

## THE ISSUES

Rural communities across Gannawarra Shire experience significant levels of health disadvantage. Our Council is committed to working with partner organisations to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities through a range of projects and programs.

Whilst Council is not the primary provider of health services, we can provide the community with access to the natural and built environments that support healthy lifestyles.

In 2017, Gannawarra Shire partnered with health agencies to undertake the Loddon Gannawarra Health Needs Analysis, which identified a range of health issues within our community.

These include:

- Dental health conditions are the number one Ambulatory Care Sensitive Condition for hospital admissions with the rate almost double the state average (5.3 per 1,000 compared to 2.7).
- Admissions for mental health related conditions are higher than the state average.
- Gannawarra Shire has higher rates than the Victorian average for heart attack, unstable angina, hypertension and heart failure.
- Family violence incidents are almost double the state rate (2,290.5 per 100,000 population compared to 1,242.4)

In addition to these health issues, Gannawarra communities are facing a shortage of general practitioners. This is resulting in less treatment and poorer health outcomes for people in our Shire.

# KEY PRIORITIES/ PROJECTS

## 1. REDUCE ORAL HEALTH DISADVANTAGE IN GANNAWARRA SHIRE

This could be achieved through preventative actions including:

- Strengthening Oral health systems and support across the early years, focusing on Maternal Child Health Key Ages and Stages visits
- Professional development for health care staff around oral health
- Screening and treatment programs across early years and school settings

## 2. FLUORIDATION OF WATER SUPPLY AT COHUNA

Scientific research undertaken by the Australian Government's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has confirmed that community water fluoridation helps to reduce tooth decay and improve overall dental health in communities where it exists.

Given the dental health challenges facing communities in Gannawarra, and Kerang being our only community with a fluoridated water supply, it is our priority for Cohuna's water supply to also be fluoridated.

## 3. INCREASED LOCAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES

Given admissions for mental health conditions are higher in Gannawarra than the state average, urgent funding is required to better support the existing mental health services in our communities. With increased resources, these services would be better equipped to focus on intervention and prevention; to respond quickly to the mental health needs of individuals, to provide a more intensive service response to ensure treatment is effective, and to provide improved follow-up services.

## 4. IMPROVED COORDINATION OF SERVICES, PARTICULARLY THOSE PROVIDING OUTREACH SERVICES WITHIN GANNAWARRA SHIRE

Outreach programs in our Shire aim to deliver vital health

services to those with limited access to allied health, GP and medical specialist services.

Our outreach programs are having a positive impact and helping to close the gap in the health care inequities facing our rural communities, however improved coordination of these services would ensure they are being delivered in those areas of greatest need, are operating effectively and achieving the optimal outcome.

## 5. PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

We recognise that family violence is the single greatest contributor to death, disability, and illness in Victorian women aged 18-44 and are concerned that family violence incidents are almost double across the shire then the state average.

In order to reduce and prevent family violence we need;

- Strengthening service systems and pathways to better support family experiencing family violence across Gannawarra Shire communities.
- Professional development and capacity building opportunities in family violent prevention and early identification screening in universal services.

## 6. ADDRESS THE CURRENT SHORTAGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS ACROSS GANNAWARRA COMMUNITIES

Our small communities are missing out on the multi-skilled practitioners they need, and improved strategies are required to better meet the healthcare needs of our residents.

We urgently require government support, incentives and pathways that will encourage and support the recruitment and retention of general practitioners in the Gannawarra Shire, and right across rural Victoria.





## 6. MURRABIT STORM WATER

The township of Murrabit has an open drain system which requires an upgrade. The upgrade of water drainage infrastructure will reduce the risk associated with Arbovirus/ Mosquito transmitted disease by the removal of stagnant water in the township. We advocate for funding to enable the storm water system to be installed.

## 7. COHUNA AQUATIC CENTRE

The current Cohuna Swimming Pool is facing a number of major infrastructure issues. The pool requires major work to maintain its structural integrity. The redevelopment of this facility would support the health and wellbeing of the community. A new aquatic facility would support recreational swimming, aquatic programming as well as dry land physical activity programs. The new facility would support further development of the Gunbower Creek precinct and enhance Cohuna as a tourist destination.

## 8. KERANG MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE

This project will see the construction of a purpose built facility to cater for a range of community activities. This integrated building could be used for arts and culture,

community events and be a meeting place which facilitates community engagement and connection. This centre would support a growing community and assist in attracting new residents and strengthen the local economy. We advocate for funding to plan and deliver a multi-purpose centre for Kerang.

# KEY PARTNERSHIPS

- › Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership
- › GLAM network
- › Loddon Gannawarra Health Services Executive Network (LGHSN)
- › Northern District Community health
- › Kerang District Health
- › Cohuna District Health
- › Gannawarra Early Years Board
- › Gannawarra Seniors Advisory Group
- › Children and Youth Area Partnership
- › Loddon Mallee Local Government Aged Care Consortium





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