

GANNAWARRA SHIRE

THRIVING TOGETHER 2026-2030

A plan for a diverse, inclusive and
resilient Gannawarra





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Gannawarra Shire Council acknowledges the Barapa Barapa, Yorta Yorta and Wamba Wamba peoples as the traditional owners of the land now known as Gannawarra. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge their rich culture and connection to Country.

INTRODUCTION

Thriving Together 2026–2030 - a plan for a diverse, inclusive and resilient Gannawarra outlines Council’s commitment to ensuring every resident—regardless of age, ability, cultural background, income, gender identity, or circumstances—can feel valued, welcomed, safe, and connected.

This plan builds on the previous Social Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023, strengthening its foundations with updated community priorities and insights.

It complements the Council Plan 2025-2029 and puts in place an action plan for achieving the guiding principles of the Gannawarra Community Vision 2040 - connection, liveability, equity, wellbeing, resilience and growth.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thriving Together - a plan for a diverse, inclusive and resilient Gannawarra represents Gannawarra Shire Council's renewed commitment to strengthening community connection, equity, and wellbeing for all residents.

Building on the Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2015 and the Social Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023, this strategy sets a roadmap to ensure people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities feel valued, welcomed, and able to fully participate in community life.

Development of the plan was shaped by engagement with community members, local groups, and key stakeholders, reaching more than 1000 residents. Community input highlighted both the strengths that enable community connection and the barriers that limit participation.

Community strengths include strong volunteerism, friendly community networks, successful social meal programs, inclusive library initiatives, and active neighbourhood houses.

Challenges identified include limited transport options, financial pressures, social isolation, a strong sporting culture that can unintentionally exclude some groups, accessibility barriers, high rates of family violence, homelessness, and difficulty accessing timely information.

As a collection of small, agricultural-dependent communities, Gannawarra is significantly impacted by natural disasters and adverse events such as droughts, floods, and economic shocks. These events disproportionately affect rural communities, where socioeconomic disadvantage, limited-service access, and geographic isolation compound the impacts.

While rural communities are inherently resilient, strengthening emergency preparedness and investing in protective factors- such as community participation, inclusion, and connectedness- supports recovery and improves longterm outcomes.

THRIVING TOGETHER 2026-2030 FOCUSES ON FIVE KEY PRIORITY AREAS INFORMED DIRECTLY BY COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:

1. WELCOMING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

2. IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

3. EMBRACING AND VALUING DIVERSITY

4. KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

5. SUPPORTING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

This plan provides a framework for ongoing collaboration with local organisations, schools, service providers, community groups, volunteers, and residents. It guides initiatives aimed at reducing barriers, strengthening inclusion, and building a more connected and resilient Gannawarra.

Development of the plan was supported by Victorian and Commonwealth Government funding under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) following the 2022 flood event, which affected 44% of the municipality. The strategy builds on three years of recovery work and establishes a longterm framework to ensure Gannawarra- and every resident - can continue to thrive into the future.



BACKGROUND

Gannawarra is a rural community characterised by strong community values, natural assets, and local pride. While many residents enjoy a strong sense of community, others face barriers that prevent them from participating fully in community life.

Evidence supports that people most at risk of exclusion are those living with disability, who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, people who identify as LGBTIQ+, young people, older people and community members facing socioeconomic disadvantage.

IN RECENT YEARS, SEVERAL FACTORS HAVE INCREASED THE IMPORTANCE OF A RENEWED FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND RESILIENCE:

Rising social isolation since the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among young people, older residents living alone, carers, low-income households, and new residents.

Increased mental health challenges.

Transport limitations that affect participation and access.

Growing cultural diversity.

Limited access to non-sporting community activities.

Increased financial pressures affecting affordability of participation.

Higher expectations for accessible infrastructure.

The need for improved communication methods, particularly for residents without digital access.

Compounding impacts of natural disasters and adverse events on small agricultural-dependent communities.

Thriving Together 2026-2030 - a plan for a diverse, inclusive and resilient Gannawarra - considers recent factors impacting on the Gannawarra community.

The plan replaces Council's Social Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023 and meets Council's legislative obligations under the Local Government Act 2020 and Section 38(3) of the Disability Act 2006 that mandates the development and implementation of a Disability Action Plan.

Thriving Together complements Council's commitment to diversity, inclusion and resilience in the Council Plan 2025-2029 (incorporating Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029) by responding directly to current community needs and aspirations.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM RESIDENTS:

"It's hard to become a local."

"There are some amazing people who make you feel welcome."

"Casual, unforced settings make it easier to get involved."

"Community meals and the library are great - everyone is welcome."

GANNAWARRA SHIRE PROFILE

Situated in north-western Victoria along the Murray River, the Gannawarra Shire is a destination for nature-based tourism and one of Victoria's most diverse agricultural regions.

With an area of 3,736 square kilometres, Gannawarra Shire is made up of two larger towns of Kerang and Cohuna and numerous smaller communities including Koondrook, Quambatook, Leitchville, Lalbert, Lake Charm, Macorna, Murrabit, and Mystic Park (Kangaroo Lake).

The region is accessible via the Loddon Valley and Murray Valley highways. It is approximately 1.25 hours by car from Bendigo, 40 minutes from Swan Hill, and a three-hour drive from Melbourne. Additionally, regular passenger rail services are available from Kerang to Swan Hill and Bendigo, with connections extending to Melbourne.

Owing to the Torrumbarry Irrigation System and its strategic location near the eastern edge of the Mallee cropping region, the Gannawarra enjoys a robust and varied economy. This encompasses sectors such as dairy, cropping, livestock, retail trade, manufacturing, and essential government services like healthcare and education. The region also presents growing opportunities in more intensive agricultural practices, nature-based tourism and renewable energy.

The Gannawarra is celebrated for its strong sense of community pride. Residents continually motivate and inspire each other, making this region an exceptional place to live and visit.



DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Gannawarra has a significantly older population, with 30.2% of residents aged 65 and over, almost double the Victorian average of 16.8%.

32.9% of people aged 65 and over lived alone in Gannawarra as at the 2021 Census. Of these 1062 residents, 65.0% (or 690 people) were female and 34.8% (or 370 people) were male.

In 2021, 7.6% of residents reported needing assistance with daily activities due to disability, an increasing figure that exceeds the state average.

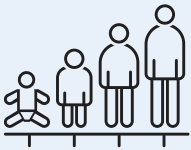
Planning for age and disability-friendly rural communities is both a challenge and an opportunity. Ensuring access to transport, healthcare, and social connections is essential to support wellbeing and reduce isolation and loneliness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.5% of Gannawarra’s population, compared to 1% across Victoria, placing Gannawarra in the top eight LGAs in Victoria. While the median age of the general population is 51, the median age for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents is just 25, with a large proportion under 18. This highlights the need to support cultural continuity and address disparities in life expectancy.

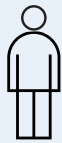
3.3% speak a language other than English at home.

Although earlier projections suggested a population decline, the population has grown modestly, from 10,366 in 2011 to 10,683 in 2021. This steady growth reflects the success of Council’s efforts to enhance liveability and economic resilience.

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT



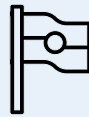
POPULATION
10,683



MALE
49.7%



FEMALE
50.3%



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
2.5%



MEDIAN AGE
51 YEARS



MEDIAN AGE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
25 YEARS



LIFE EXPECTANCY MALE
80 YEARS



LIFE EXPECTANCY FEMALE
84 YEARS



COUNTRY OF BIRTH AUSTRALIA
85.7%

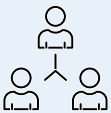


LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME
3.3%



LONE PERSON HOUSEHOLDS
33.2%

DATA SNAPSHOT



EMPLOYED PERSONS
4,551



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
3.6%



MEDIAN WEEKLY PERSONAL INCOME PEOPLE AGED 15+
\$590



VOLUNTEER WORK
22.9%



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE SCORE
952***



FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS 2024/25
240*



PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY
7.6%



LGBTQIA+**
5.7%**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census

* Source: Crime Statistics Victoria Family Violence Data

**Source: Victorian Agency for Health Information report 2020 – statewide data.

***Lower score equals higher level of disadvantage. Gannawarra is the 14th most disadvantaged out of 79 local government areas in Victoria.



**THRIVING
TOGETHER
2026-2030**
- A PLAN FOR A DIVERSE,
INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT
GANNAWARRA

COMMUNITY VISION



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A great place to live and participate: People enjoy Gannawarra for its quality of life, housing, recreation, and affordability. Community spirit, creativity, and learning opportunities are valued and celebrated.

THE FOLLOWING VALUES WILL ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IN GANNAWARRA HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE, BY FEELING VALUED, ACCEPTED AND INCLUDED:

Everyone feels they belong and can participate in community life.

People have equitable access to spaces, services, programs, and opportunities.

Barriers to participation are understood and addressed.

Diversity is respected and celebrated.

Community members are connected, supported, and informed.

Residents have the resources they need to live a healthy and fulfilling life and to support resilience to adverse events.

THRIVING TOGETHER 2026-2030 - A PLAN FOR A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT GANNAWARRA



RELEVANT POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

COUNCIL PRIDES ITSELF ON ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS AND COMMITS TO THE PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS OF FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION:

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

Convention on the Rights of the Child

FEDERAL

Commonwealth legislative framework

This Strategy is underpinned by Australia’s federal anti-discrimination and human rights framework, including the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Age Discrimination Act 2004*, the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* and relevant provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009* and *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*.

National policy framework

The Strategy aligns with key national policy commitments including *Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031*, the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*, the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, the Australian Government’s multicultural policy statement *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful*, the *National Anti-Racism Framework*, and *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*, The Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework and National Strategy for Disaster Resilience guide disaster risk reduction across Australia.

STATE

At the state level, this Strategy draws on Victoria’s key human rights, anti-discrimination and multicultural laws — including the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*, the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)* and the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 (Vic)* — as well as the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 (Vic)*. These statutes establish the legal foundations for equality, diversity, inclusion, protection

from vilification and hate, and non-discrimination in public services, service delivery, employment and community-wide participation.

Other relevant Victorian legislation is the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, *Climate Change Act 2013*, and the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

In addition, the *Emergency Management Act 2013* and *Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management* guides the development of safer and more resilient communities across Victoria.

Wellbeing in Victoria: a strategy to promote good mental health 2025-2035 responds to the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System and recognises that wellbeing is essential for all people and communities in Victoria to have what they need to thrive, for now and for future generations.

GANNAWARRA SHIRE

Charter of Human Rights

Diversity Policy

Council Plan 2025-2029 (incorporating the Gannawarra Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)

Risk Management Policy

Children and Youth Strategy

Asset Management Strategy

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2025-2029

Strategic Tourism Plan

Asset Management Policy

Compliance Policy

Customer Service Charter

Gannawarra Community Vision 2040

Children’s Services Policy

Municipal Emergency Management Plan

Gannawarra Community Resilience Action Plan

Gannawarra Wellbeing Framework



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

CONSULTATION PROCESS



Between late 2024 and early 2025, Council undertook an extensive and diverse community consultation program to inform the development of the Gannawarra Community Vision 2040 and the Gannawarra Council Plan 2025–2029 (incorporating the Gannawarra Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan). A total of 760 residents participated in this process.

In parallel, Council conducted a separate consultation to review the Social Inclusion Strategy, engaging a further 205 residents. This process was intentionally designed to be inclusive, ensuring the involvement of people with lived experience of social exclusion, young people, older adults, service providers, community groups, and residents from across the Shire who are not always represented in traditional Council engagement activities.

At the same time, Council completed a six-month flood recovery and resilience program titled ‘Let’s Talk About the Weather’ as part of the Gannawarra Flood Recovery Program from the 2022 flood event. Overall 188 people participated in the program, including 97 who attended in-person events and provided feedback via feedback boards and 91 residents who completed an online survey.

CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

Online and paper community surveys

Service provider survey

Listening posts in Kerang and Cohuna

Focus groups with students from Swan Hill Specialist School, Kerang Technical High School, Kerang Christian College and Cohuna Secondary College

One-on-one interviews with residents at risk of exclusion

Conversations with neighbourhood houses and local community centres

Engagement through the Social Meals program, and the Lake Charm Cooking Up a Storm program

One-on-one discussions with local health, disability, education, and community service providers

Insights from the Gannawarra School Focused Youth Network and Gannawarra Local Agency Meeting (GLAM) partnership

Review of community feedback from the Council Plan consultation raw data

Review of community feedback from the Let’s Talk About the Weather program online survey

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

"New people come, but they don't know where to go or how to get involved."

"The footpaths need to be wider to accommodate gophers."

"I usually stick to myself, but going to the Neighbourhood House has brought me out of my shell."

"If you're not involved in sport, it's not as easy to make friends.""

"Old school attitudes and country views can make things harder."

"It's hard to know what's happening — too much goes on social media."



KEY INSIGHTS FROM CONSULTATION



WHAT HELPS PEOPLE FEEL INCLUDED

Friendly community members, welcoming businesses.

Social meals, libraries, U3A, gardening groups, "Cooking Up a Storm," chatty cafés.

Neighbourhood Houses acting as safe and accessible hubs.

Community events and informal gatherings.

Opportunities for volunteering.

BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Limited transport and high travel costs.

Lack of non-sport activities.

Social cliques, conservative culture, judgement, and difficulty "breaking in".

Financial barriers to events, travel, and participation.

Poor communication or reliance on social media for updates.

Limited disability access in community spaces.

Mental health challenges and lack of local support.

Caring responsibilities that restrict participation.

Patchy footpaths, insufficient seating, and limited accessible play spaces.

WAYS TO IMPROVE

More arts, culture, social, and hobby-based activities.

Better transport options (community bus, carpool systems).

Strengthening communication across digital and non-digital channels.

Celebrating cultural diversity and improving cultural safety.

Inclusive infrastructure upgrades.

More intergenerational programming.

Strengthening volunteer pathways.

Creating welcoming initiatives for new residents.

Supporting mental health through awareness and partnerships.



VISION

**A CONNECTED,
WELCOMING
AND INCLUSIVE
GANNAWARRA WHERE
EVERYONE CAN THRIVE.**



GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND RESILIENCE



1. EQUITY - EVERYONE HAS FAIR ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES.



5. COLLABORATION - STRONG PARTNERSHIPS CREATE STRONGER OUTCOMES.



2. PARTICIPATION - COMMUNITIES THRIVE WHEN EVERYONE CAN CONTRIBUTE.



6. COMMUNITY-LED - LOCAL PEOPLE SHAPE LOCAL SOLUTIONS.



3. RESPECT & DIVERSITY - ALL PEOPLE FEEL VALUED FOR WHO THEY ARE.



7. TRANSPARENCY - CLEAR COMMUNICATION BUILDS TRUST AND CONFIDENCE.



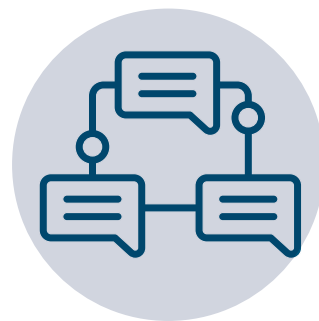
4. ACCESSIBILITY - SPACES, SERVICES AND INFORMATION ARE USABLE BY ALL.



8. RESILIENCE - COMMUNITIES LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER AND HAVE WHAT THEY NEED TO WITHSTAND TOUGH TIMES AND LEAD HEALTHY AND FULFILLING LIVES.



ACTION PLAN 2026-2030



THRIVING TOGETHER 2026-2030 FOCUSES ON FIVE KEY PRIORITY AREAS INFORMED DIRECTLY BY COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:

1. WELCOMING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

2. IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

3. EMBRACING AND VALUING DIVERSITY

4. KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

5. SUPPORTING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE



FOCUS AREA 1:

WELCOMING AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

GOAL:

**A MORE INCLUSIVE AND SOCIALLY
CONNECTED COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE
OF ALL BACKGROUNDS FEEL WELCOME AND
ABLE TO PARTICIPATE.**

STRATEGIES

1. Support community-led initiatives that expand non-sporting social activities such as arts, music, gardening, game nights, and informal meet-ups.
2. Encourage and support inclusive volunteering pathways.
3. Promote activities that cater for all ages, abilities, interests, and cultures.
4. Encourage free and low-cost events to reduce financial barriers.
5. Strengthen initiatives that welcome new residents.
6. Provide community grants to support inclusion-building initiatives.
7. Support a Creative Gannawarra Program to deliver art and culture events, programs and activities that support inclusion and celebrate diversity.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Support the continuation of the Gannawarra Neighbourhood House Network.

Develop an annual Events Calendar with community partners.

Establish "Welcome to Gannawarra" packs for new residents.

Explore community connector model with local volunteers.

Support regular community-led non-sport social opportunities (craft, games, music, community meals, intergenerational activities).

Support neighbourhood houses, libraries, and community halls to host accessible, inclusive programs.

Explore opportunities to co-design non-sport activities with young people.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Increased non-sporting events and activities and associated participation rates.

Volunteer diversity and retention.

Positive feedback from participants in community intergenerational programs.

Number of free/low cost events and number of grants awarded for inclusive activities.

"Keep asking people to join in — personal invites help."

"Move casual, no-pressure activities would help."

"There's not much to do outside sport."

FOCUS AREA 2: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

GOAL:

REDUCE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION BY IMPROVING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBLE GATHERING SPACES.

STRATEGIES

1. Encourage accessible community hubs that support connection and inclusion.
2. Improve footpaths, crossings, and community seating to enhance accessibility.
3. Provide safe and inclusive play spaces, including sensory-friendly areas.
4. Offer low-cost or subsidised hire fees for halls and meeting rooms.
5. Promote community halls as inclusive social hubs.
6. Work with stakeholders to explore innovative transport solutions.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Advocate for community transport and mobility options in rural towns.

Consider disability accessibility, signage and sensory considerations when upgrading community facilities.

Increase accessible pedestrian crossings, seating, shade, and resting points across townships.

Upgrade playgrounds to include universal design and sensory features.

Establish a framework for community space improvements to guide future investment.

Promote community halls as year-round hubs with low-cost hire for activities.

Explore flexible outreach service models to better service small rural communities.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Users' satisfaction surveys.

Audit completion on accessibility of footpaths and seating.

Playground usage.

Increased number of bookings/ hall usage.

Identify innovative community transport options.

"I am a non-driver, so getting to activities can be tricky."

"Footpaths aren't accommodating gophers."

"Transport costs make it too hard to get involved."

"We need more safe parks and spaces."

FOCUS AREA 3: EMBRACING AND VALUING DIVERSITY

GOAL:

A COMMUNITY THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS PEOPLE OF ALL IDENTITIES, CULTURES, AND BACKGROUNDS.

STRATEGIES

1. Support diverse representation in leadership and community decision-making.
2. Strengthen cultural awareness initiatives, including NAIDOC and multicultural celebrations.
3. Provide diverse food options at events.
4. Promote education and advocacy on social inclusion issues.
5. Build partnerships that support marginalised communities, people with disabilities, indigenous residents, LGBTIQ+ people, and low-income households.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Support the delivery of community-led multicultural recognition events with community partners.

Partner with local Aboriginal organisations to support Indigenous-led activities and cultural strengthening by continuing the implementation of the Gannawarra Reconciliation Action Plan.

Support diversity and inclusion training for clubs, volunteers, and community groups.

Increase visibility of inclusive messaging (e.g. signage, symbols of welcome).

Utilise existing partnerships to support diversity and inclusion across Gannawarra communities and determine local priorities.

Provide community leadership on initiatives that address racism, discrimination and stigma.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Diversity in community leadership.

Training participation and completion.

Attendance at multicultural events and Reconciliation and NAIDOC activities.

Diversity in food options.

Number of partnerships.

Campaign reach and engagement.

"There needs to be more cultural awareness."

"People who aren't 'locals' struggle to be accepted."

FOCUS AREA 4: KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

GOAL:

ENSURE ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN EASILY ACCESS INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES, SUPPORTS, PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND SERVICES.

STRATEGIES

1. Use diverse communication methods to reach different demographics.
2. Maintain an up-to-date, well-promoted community directory.
3. Improve outreach to rural residents and people without access to digital platforms.
4. Advocate for improved digital connectivity.
5. Regularly review communications to ensure accessibility and inclusive content.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Develop a monthly “What’s On in Gannawarra” community newsletter (digital and printed).

Document key accessible community information locations across towns.

Collaborate with schools, health services and libraries for consistent outreach across Gannawarra communities.

Strengthen communication about services, supports and programs through multi-channel promotion.

Create a centralised online portal with easy navigation for events, services, and groups.

Support an outreach model to connect with residents without access to digital information.

Work with partners to develop a quarterly Community Connections Directory to keep residents informed of opportunities for social connection.

Provide guidance for staff in the use of inclusive language, accessible formats and diverse imagery when developing communication material.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Reach across demographics.

Community Connections Directory usage.

Feedback from rural residents.

Regional Wellbeing Survey results.

Increased diversity in Council promotional materials.

“It can be hard to know what is happening in the community.”

“Use community newsletters more.”

“Put information where people already go—waiting rooms, noticeboards, shops.”

FOCUS AREA 5:

SUPPORTING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

GOAL:

ENSURE COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO PREPARE AND RECOVER FROM EMERGENCIES.

STRATEGIES

1. Encourage community leadership for emergency preparedness and recovery.
2. Engage communities in decision making and support community-led solutions.
3. Develop resources to support emergency preparedness and community resilience.
4. Explore opportunities for sharing knowledge across communities.
5. Encourage volunteering.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Review the Gannawarra Community Resilience Action Plan.

Explore opportunities to add Emergency Preparedness to existing township based community plans.

Support emergency services with community education and capacity building initiatives.

Expand on the Emergency Dashboard on Council's website.

Support the development of a community informed communication plan.

Support community-led activity, events and programs.

Engage children, young people and their families in emergency preparedness and resilience.

Provide leadership on violence prevention, particularly against women and children.

Explore opportunities for sharing knowledge across communities.

Work with partners to explore volunteer opportunities to support vulnerable residents during an emergency.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Updated plans and strategies.

Engagement of partners in preparedness activity.

Emergency Dashboard use.

Emergency preparedness integrated into community plan.

Increased access to information.

Involvement of children, young people and their families.

Violence prevention initiatives and data.

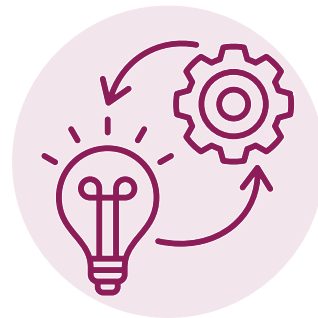
"Communities need to work together and support one another."

"Connections are important to overcome loneliness and thrive as a community."

"Those who are connected to the community prior to an event are more likely to receive community support."

*Source: Gannawarra Let's Talk About the Weather community engagement survey (2024).

IMPLEMENTATION



Council plays a vital decision making and leadership role that affect the lives of our community. Achieving the full vision outlined in the Thriving Together plan is not something Council can do alone. Success depends on strong partnerships, shared advocacy, and collective leadership across the community.

In addition to the actions outlined in the Action Plan, Council will continue to develop cross-sector partnerships to ensure adequate and equitable access to services that support opportunities for all residents to participate fully in community life.

COUNCIL WILL WORK ALONGSIDE:

- Community groups and volunteers.

- Neighbourhood Houses.

- Schools and youth networks.

- Aboriginal organisations and Elders.

- Disability, health, and community service providers.

- LGBTQIA+ groups.

- CALD communities.

- State Government partners.

- Local businesses.

- Sporting clubs and recreation groups.

COUNCIL WILL USE EXISTING FORMALISED PARTNERSHIP PLATFORMS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THRIVING TOGETHER PLAN:

- Gannawarra Local Agency Meeting (GLAM).

- Buloke, Loddon, Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executive (BLG).

- Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee.

- Gannawarra Neighbourhood House Network.

- Gannawarra Community Planning Groups across 9 communities.

Actions will be incorporated into annual operational plans and budgets across Council teams and external funds will be sought to support the delivery of this plan.



MONITORING & EVALUATION



PROGRESS WILL BE MEASURED USING:

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES INDICATORS

- Increased participation in community activities.
- Increased sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Improved perceptions of inclusion and diversity.
- Reduced barriers to participation.

ACCESS & ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

- Number and diversity of activities offered.
- Accessibility upgrades completed.
- Participation rates among priority groups.
- Community feedback and engagement data.

COMMUNICATION INDICATORS

- Use of community directory.
- Reach of communications across multiple platforms.
- Awareness levels of programs and services.
- Council will publish an annual review in its Annual Report and a final evaluation in 2030.

CONCLUSION

Thriving Together 2026–2030 – a plan for a diverse, inclusive and resilient Gannawarra represents a renewed, community-informed commitment to building a socially connected, welcoming and equitable Gannawarra. By strengthening participation, valuing diversity, improving accessibility, supporting community resilience, and ensuring people stay informed, Gannawarra Shire Council will support a community where all residents can feel included and thrive.



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