

Gannawarra

Resource Recovery & Waste Management Strategy

2026 – 2036

19 May 2026



GANNAWARRA
Shire Council

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Abbreviations

Council	Gannawarra Shire Council
DCCEEW	Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
EPA	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
e-waste	electronic waste
FOGO	food organics and garden organics
MRF	material recovery facility
VRIP	Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan

Executive summary

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to reducing waste to landfill, increasing the recovery of waste resources and extending the life of resources through smarter more sustainable practices.

We will lead and educate the Gannawarra community on reducing waste and improving material recovery while delivering fit-for-purpose services and infrastructure for our region. The traditional model of material flows in society can be characterised as 'take-make-dispose'. By moving to a more circular model, we aim to protect our environment and strengthen our local economy.

This Resource Recovery and Waste Management Strategy is a 10-year plan to guide Council's efforts in improving waste management and driving greater resource recovery across the Gannawarra region. It is designed to meet the needs of residents, businesses and the broader community, while remaining cost effective and future focused.

Through waste reduction, efficient service delivery, and enhanced recycling and recovery systems, we will protect our environment and keep valuable materials in circulation.

The strategy outlines how Gannawarra Shire Council will contribute to meeting the Victorian Government targets and kerbside reform commitments by 2030 including:

- diverting 80% of waste from landfill
- halving the volume of organic material sent to landfill
- reducing total waste generation by 15% per capita
- ensuring every household has access to a food and organics recovery or composting.
- expanded separate glass service by 2027.

Australia's circular economy is still emerging, presenting both challenges and opportunities. As new technologies and practices evolve, Gannawarra Shire Council remains committed to staying informed, responsive, and forward-thinking. Council will maintain a flexible approach to ensure long term and economic sustainability.

1 Introduction

The Gannawarra Shire Council Resource Recovery and Waste Management Strategy 2026–2036 (the strategy) provides direction for minimising and managing waste and driving increases in resource recovery across the next ten years. The strategy builds upon the work and achievements of Council’s previous waste and recycling actions and initiatives.

The strategy has been developed to align with state resource recovery targets and other policies and regulations including requirements of Recycling Victoria and Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA).

The strategy focuses on Council’s waste and recycling facilities and services, including how to continually improve the delivery of these services for the Gannawarra community.

Our peers and representatives of business and community, have informed the path forward, and the priorities align with Council’s main strategic documents. The strategy is designed to meet the needs of the community, businesses and Gannawarra region.

The strategy has undergone a period of public consultation, with the community provided opportunities to review the document and submit feedback for consideration by Council.

2 Strategic context

Gannawarra Shire Council operates in the context of national and state-based waste and resource policies and regulations and is within the Loddon Malley region of northern Victoria. The following setting has informed Council's ambition and direction outlined in this strategy.

2.1 Gannawarra's vision and local context

Located on the Murray River, about 250 km north-west of Melbourne, Gannawarra is mainly rural and covers 3,736 km² with a population around 10,500. The largest employment sector is agriculture, forestry and fishing, followed by health care and social assistance.

Land is used mainly for agriculture, particularly dairy farming, grain and crop farming, grazing, horticulture and viticulture. The region's natural assets are a growing drawcard for tourism and Gannawarra is emerging as a hub for renewable energy, with solar and battery projects already underway.

The Council Plan 2025-29 includes three broad goals, one of which is to achieve long-term financial and environmental sustainability. Council recognises the interrelation between improved energy efficiency, cleaner energy sources and minimising and managing to waste to maintain a sustainable environment. Council's strategy to advance local sustainability and waste initiatives has informed the development of this strategy

The community vision for Gannawarra is:

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

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

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

This strategy aims to contribute to the vision and deliver on the Council Plan 2025–29. By delivering accessible, efficient, and environmentally responsible waste and recycling services, Council will empower the community to reduce unnecessary waste, recover valuable resources, and actively participate in the circular economy.

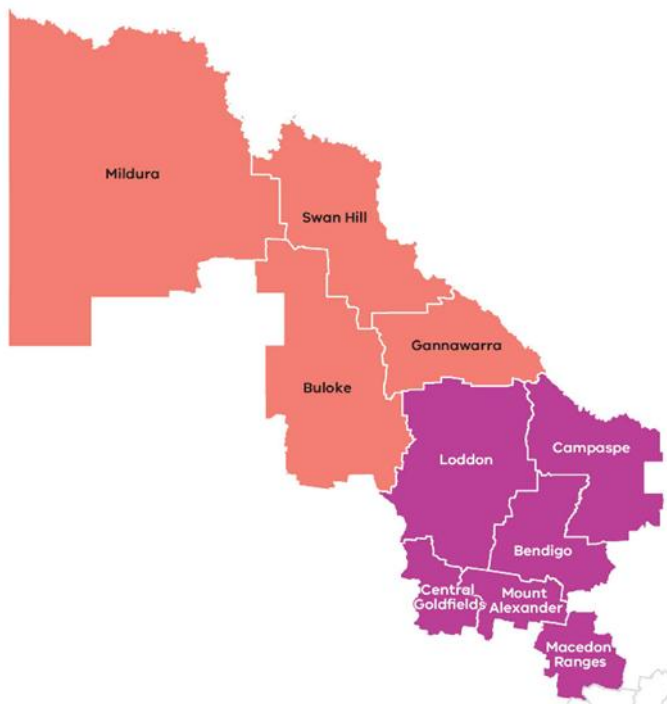
Through education, engagement, and local reuse initiatives, Council aims to strengthen community connections and create opportunities for a thriving and diverse economy.

2.2 Regional context

Gannawarra Shire Council is located within the Loddon Mallee Region and actively contributes to regional planning and strategic initiatives through collaboration with various governing bodies and organisations. Key initiatives and strategies that Council has supported include:

- Circular Central Victoria regional circular opportunity scan (2023) – This scan identified pathways for the Loddon Mallee Region to harness the benefits of a circular economy. The report outlines 9 circular opportunities across the organics, construction, consumer goods, and manufacturing sectors, with potential to recover approximately 688,900 tonnes of materials, including surplus fruit and vegetables, crop residues, animal manure, kerbside glass, and plastics.
- Loddon Mallee Regional Circular Economy Plan (2022) – Developed with input by 52 organisations, including local governments, businesses, manufacturers, social enterprises, the waste and resource recovery industry, research and education institutions, and the Victorian Government. The plan aims to improve access to collection services, and enhance the sorting and cleaning of commercial and commingled plastics, polystyrene, household soft plastics and agricultural plastics.
- Goulburn Murray Resilience Strategy (2020) – Council contributed to the Goulburn Regional Partnership that led to the development of this strategy. The circular economy was identified as one of the five key areas influencing regional resilience.

Figure 1: Loddon Mallee region



Loddon shown in dark pink, Mallee shown in light pink.

2.3 Victorian Government

The *Local Government Act 2020* is the main legislative instrument for Victorian councils. Other key Victorian legislation includes the *Environmental Protection Act 2017* and the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*.

The Victorian Government's *Recycling Victoria: A new economy* in 2020 is a ten-year policy and action plan aimed at transforming waste and recycling. It includes reform to kerbside recycling, introduction of the container deposit scheme and new investment in industry. The key targets and actions are:

- divert 72% of waste from landfill by 2025 and 80% by 2030
- cut the volume of organic material going to landfill by 20% by 2025 and 50% by 2030
- reduce total waste generation by 15% per capita by 2030
- 100% of households have access to separate food and organics recovery service or composting by 2030.

The strategies to achieve these targets include:

- a container deposit scheme and problematic single use plastic ban, implemented in 2023
- a standardised four stream household waste and recycling system (glass, food and garden organics, mixed recyclables, household rubbish) by 2030
- a staged increase to the landfill levy
- encourage investment in waste to energy
- strengthened waste and recycling industry
- new recycling laws and governance, including establishment of Recycling Victoria and regulating waste as an essential service.

Recycling Victoria released the Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan (VRIP) in October 2024. This provides long-term strategic infrastructure planning to guide and inform decision-making on waste, recycling and resource recovery infrastructure over the next 30 years. The VRIP replaced Victoria's seven regional waste and resource recovery implementation plans and the previous Statewide Waste and Resource Recovery Infrastructure Plan.

The *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*, among other legislation, requires Council to provide municipal residual waste and recycling services. The Act also establishes a duty for providers of essential waste, recycling or resource recovery services to minimise risk of failure, disruption or hinderance of service.

The *Environment Protection Act 2017* came into effect on 1 July 2021 and focuses on preventing pollution and waste rather than just cleaning up damage after it happens. At the heart of the Act, the general environmental duty requires Council to actively manage risks associated with its operations and to take reasonable and practical steps to prevent harm to human health and the environment. This means identifying potential hazards, implementing safety measures, and ensuring compliance with environmental protection standards.

In addition to the general environmental duty, Council must manage any pollution incidents, contaminated land and industrial waste in accordance with its duties under the *Environment Protection Act 2017*.

2.4 National level

Released in December 2024, *Australia's Circular Economy Framework* (the framework) sets out Australia's mission to double the circularity of the economy by 2035, relative to the 2019 baseline 'circularity rate' of 4.6% (DCCEEW, 2024b, p. 8). This is a measurement of how much of Australia's materials come from recycling rather than being taken from nature.

The framework focuses on initiatives to reduce the amount of material used and drive material recovery for productive use, by pursuing the following targets:

- Target 1: Reducing material footprint by 10%.
- Target 2: Lifting materials productivity by 30%.
- Target 3: Safely recovering 80% of our resources.

The framework builds on principles outlined in the *National Waste Policy 2018*. The policy provides an agenda for collective action by businesses, governments and communities and calls for increased access to resource recovery, waste management infrastructure and capacity building. The following overarching targets will guide investment and national efforts to 2030 and beyond:

1. Ban on export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, commencing in the second half of 2020.
2. Reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10% per person by 2030.
3. 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030.
4. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by government and industry.
5. Continued phase out of problematic and unnecessary plastics.
6. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill for disposal by 2030.
7. Make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions.

The supporting *National Waste Policy Action Plan 2024* establishes the following areas to prioritise to meet the targets:

- Government legislation, regulation, policies, standards and guidelines.
- Investment in infrastructure, procurement and funding support.
- Market development and support through innovation, reducing barriers and generating demand.

The *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020* (the Act) establishes a framework to regulate the export of waste materials and ban the export of specific wastes. The Act also manages the environmental impacts of products through voluntary, co-regulatory and mandatory product stewardship schemes. As part of the Act, Australia's environment ministers have established priorities to strengthen product stewardship and end markets, regulate packaging, and harmonise approaches to container deposit schemes, single use plastics kerbside collection and soft plastics. These priorities support the targets of the *National Waste Policy Action Plan 2024*.

3 Where are we now?

The current status of waste management within Gannawarra Shire was reviewed to determine the baseline for future improvements. This included a review of waste generation and diversion, collection services and waste and resource recovery facilities.

3.1 Materials generated

Gannawarra Shire Council provides a range of waste and recycling services to the community. These include kerbside collection of general waste (or 'rubbish'), mixed recycling and garden organics, as well as public drop off facilities at transfer stations, and public litter and recycling bins.

General waste collected across the Shire is transported for disposal at Patho Landfill in neighbouring Campaspe Shire.

Mixed recyclables from kerbside collections and transfer stations are consolidated and sent to the Echuca materials recovery facility (MRF) for sorting. Kerbside Green waste collected via the kerbside service and transfer stations is processed in-house by Gannawarra Shire Council.

Indicative tonnages collected of each main material stream through council kerbside, public street litter and transfer station services are provided in [Table 1](#).

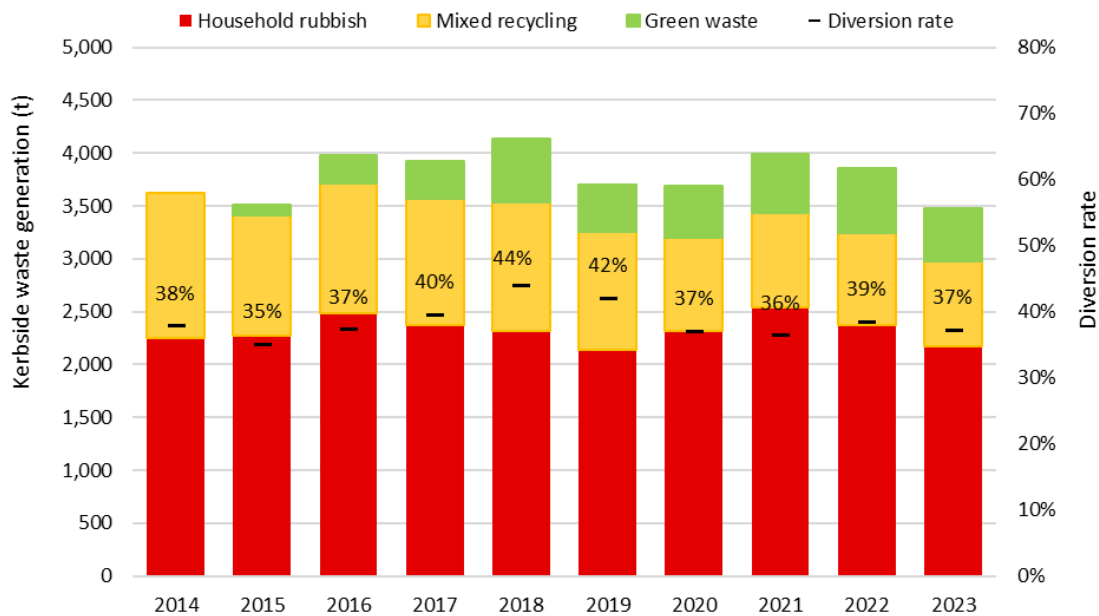
Table 1: Estimated waste generation, Gannawarra Shire Council, 2022-23

Type	Tonnes
Rubbish - kerbside and street litter bins	2,260
Rubbish - transfer stations	1,170
Recycling - kerbside and transfer stations	760
Green waste - kerbside	770
Green waste - transfer stations	320
Transfer station drop off not including waste and commingled recycling	130

Data source: Gannawarra Shire Council.

[Figure 2](#) shows Council's kerbside waste generation since 2014 by bin type. The kerbside data is mostly from household waste but also includes street litter bins and some business waste. The black dashes indicate the kerbside diversion rate for the year. The historical kerbside waste data shows that waste generation has been decreasing since 2021.

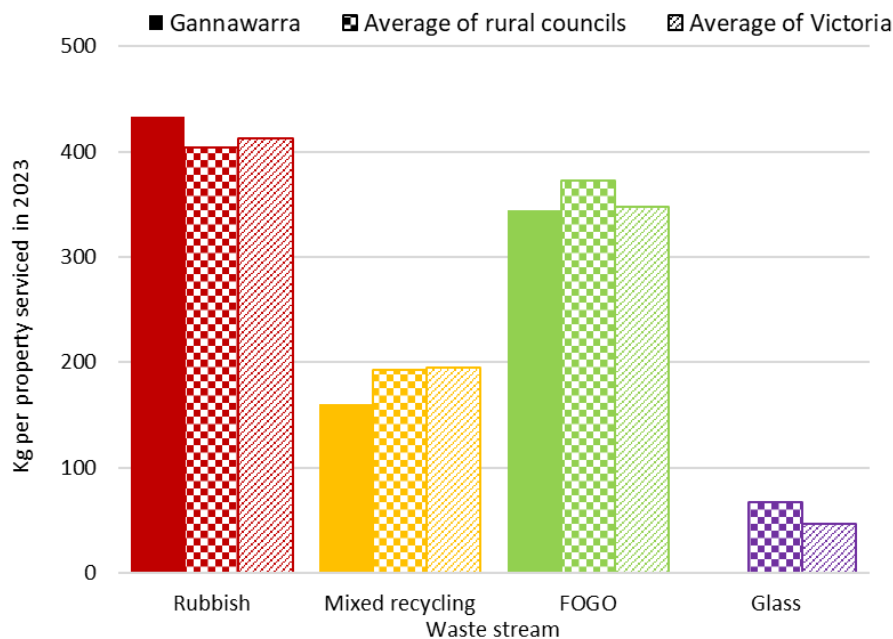
Figure 2: Generation of household rubbish, recycling and green waste, 2014 to 2023



Data source: Recycling Victoria data hub.

Figure 3 shows the kilograms of waste (by bin type) collected per household in Gannawarra Council compared with the average rural household and the average Victorian household in 2023. Households in Gannawarra generated slightly more rubbish than other households and less mixed recycling and organic waste. Gannawarra did not have a comparable glass collection service during 2023.

Figure 3: Generation of household rubbish, recycling and green waste per property, 2022–23 (with state and rural comparison)



Data source: Recycling Victoria data hub.

3.2 Council leadership and community engagement

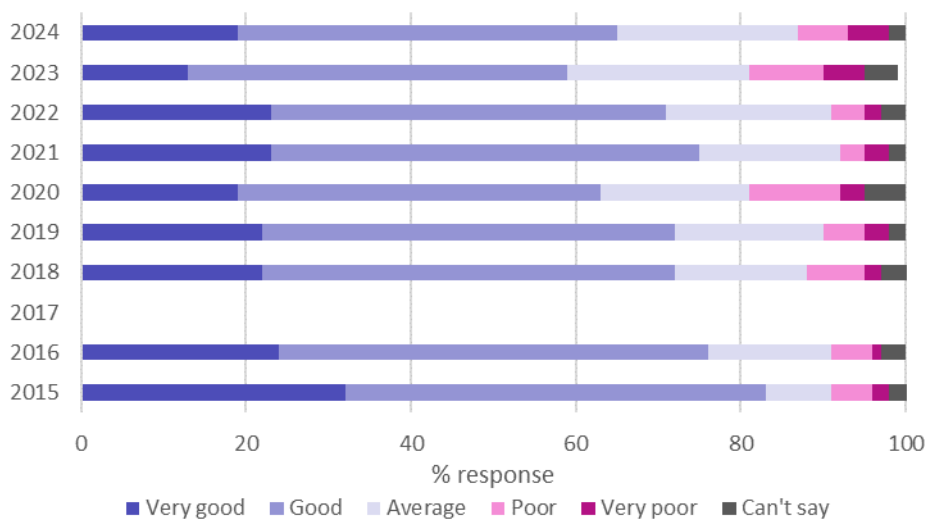
Community views

A Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey is coordinated by the Department of Government Services on behalf of Victorian councils each year. The survey asks the opinions of local people about the place they live, work and play and provides feedback to councils on their efforts and abilities. There were approximately 400 survey participants in Gannawarra Shire Council in 2024.

Regarding waste management, Council scored 67, which is in line with the state-wide average and a modest increase from a score of 64 in 2023.

In 2024, 19% of survey participants rated waste management in Gannawarra as very good, 46% as good, 22% as average, 6% as poor and 5% as very poor (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4: Community satisfaction in waste management, 2015–2024



Education

The Gannawarra Shire Council website provides educational and informational material for our residents to learn more about:

- which items belong in which bin
- household glass bottle and jar recycling
- single use plastics bans, including a list of banned items, reasons the ban has been implemented and support and resources for businesses
- the container deposit scheme, including a link to a refund collection point finder and information on how to become a refund collection point
- the Victorian Government's Detox Your Home program
- instructions to report illegal dumping.

3.3 Waste and recycling services




Kerbside services

Council currently provides rubbish and recycling kerbside services to over 5,000 properties including residential, community and commercial properties, as well as an opt-in green waste kerbside service in limited townships.

The collection routes cover the townships of Cohuna, Cohuna Golf Links Estate, Kerang, Koondrook, Lake Charm, Lalbert, Leitchville, Murrabit, Mystic Park and Quambatook. Council also offers an optional commercial rubbish and recycling collection to properties within the designated collection area under Council’s Waste Management Services, Bins – Provision and Replacement policy.

Properties outside the collection service area either use the transfer stations or have private collection arrangements. Council’s current kerbside collection services are outlined in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Kerbside collection services summary, 2022-23

Bin type			
Bin size	120 L or 240 L	240 L	240 L
Service type	Rubbish	Recycling	Opt-in garden organics <i>For Cohuna, Kerang and Koondrook urban residents</i>
Collection frequency	Weekly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly
Number of services	5,191	5,387	1,555
Where it goes	Patho landfill	Echuca MRF	In-house processing

Bin contamination

Incorrect placement of materials in kerbside bins causes contamination, impacts recovery of resources and can increase kerbside costs. Council commissions audits to identify where improvements can be made. The results of an audit from early 2025 are summarised in [Figure 5](#).

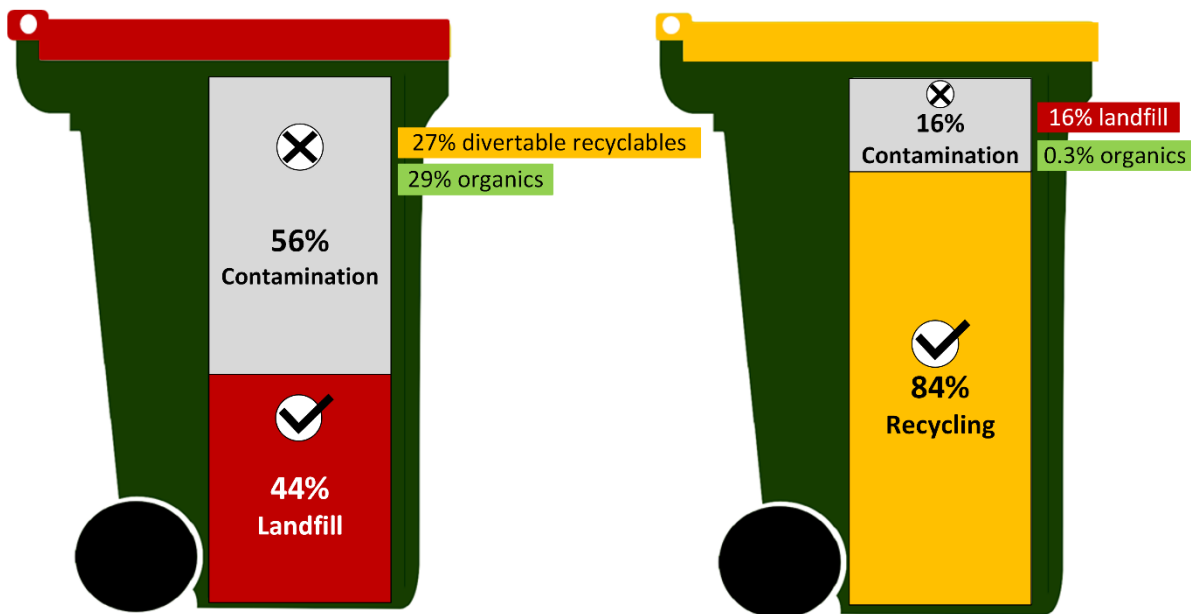
The general waste (red lid bin) consisted of 27% (by weight) divertible mixed recyclables that could have been recycled if placed to the yellow lidded bin. Cardboard was the most significant divertible recyclable material found in the rubbish stream, accounting for nearly 6% of bin contents.

The red lidded bin also contained 29% organics. Council is looking to provide a recovery solution for this material by expanding the green waste service to accept household food waste.

The contamination rate in our recycling (yellow lid bin) was 16%. Textiles were the most prevalent contaminant, accounting for almost 4% of bin contents. Bagged waste, non-recyclable plastic, plastic bags and non-packaging metals were other significant contaminant materials that residents are putting in their recycling bins.

The national average contamination in kerbside recycling bins is about 11% (Brunton, 2024), indicating there are opportunities for Gannawarra to continue to improve.

Figure 5: Composition of kerbside bins based kerbside audit data available in 2025



Separated glass

Council installed designated glass recycling skips at Cohuna, Kerang, Lalbert and Quambatook transfer stations, and adjacent the Koondrook Works Depot, with funding received from the State Government. This initiative provides a free glass drop off service to residents.

To support the new service, Council ran a waste glass education and behaviour change campaign to encourage residents to take household glass bottles to transfer stations in October 2022. This was part of the *A Small Change Makes a Big Impact* campaign support by Sustainability Victoria. Information was distributed to all households about what items could be placed in each household bin and what should be taken to transfer stations.

Kerbside organics

Council offers a green organics (green waste) service to properties in Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook. The green waste is collected by Council's contractor and mulched at transfer stations.

Container deposit scheme

There are currently 3 container deposit scheme drop off locations in the region for the community to use. These are located in Cohuna, Kerang and Leitchville. Council encourages the use of the container deposit scheme along with use of the current glass drop off services available at Cohuna, Kerang, Lalbert and Quambatook transfer stations and the Koondrook public drop off site. There has been a strong uptake of the CDS by the community since its introduction in 2023.

3.4 Waste facilities

Council operates transfer stations and depots across the extent of the council area with Kerang and Cohuna at the centre and east of the shire, and Lalbert and Quambatook sites servicing the west. There is also a 24 hour glass drop off point opposite the Koondrook works depot.

Each transfer station holds a registration from EPA Victoria. This requires Council to carefully manage its operations to minimise risk of harm to the environment, and ensure safe operation for its staff and the public.

The transfer stations at Kerang and Cohuna are open multiple days each week and accept a range of material for recycling and disposal. Smaller facilities at Lalbert and Quambatook operate twice a month. Residents also use the Barham transfer station across the NSW border.

Gannawarra Central Landfill (located on Denyer Road) is located in the centre of the council area. It is licensed by EPA to accept municipal, industrial, and limited reportable priority wastes. Council must comply with stringent conditions to ensure protection of the environment for the life of the landfill.

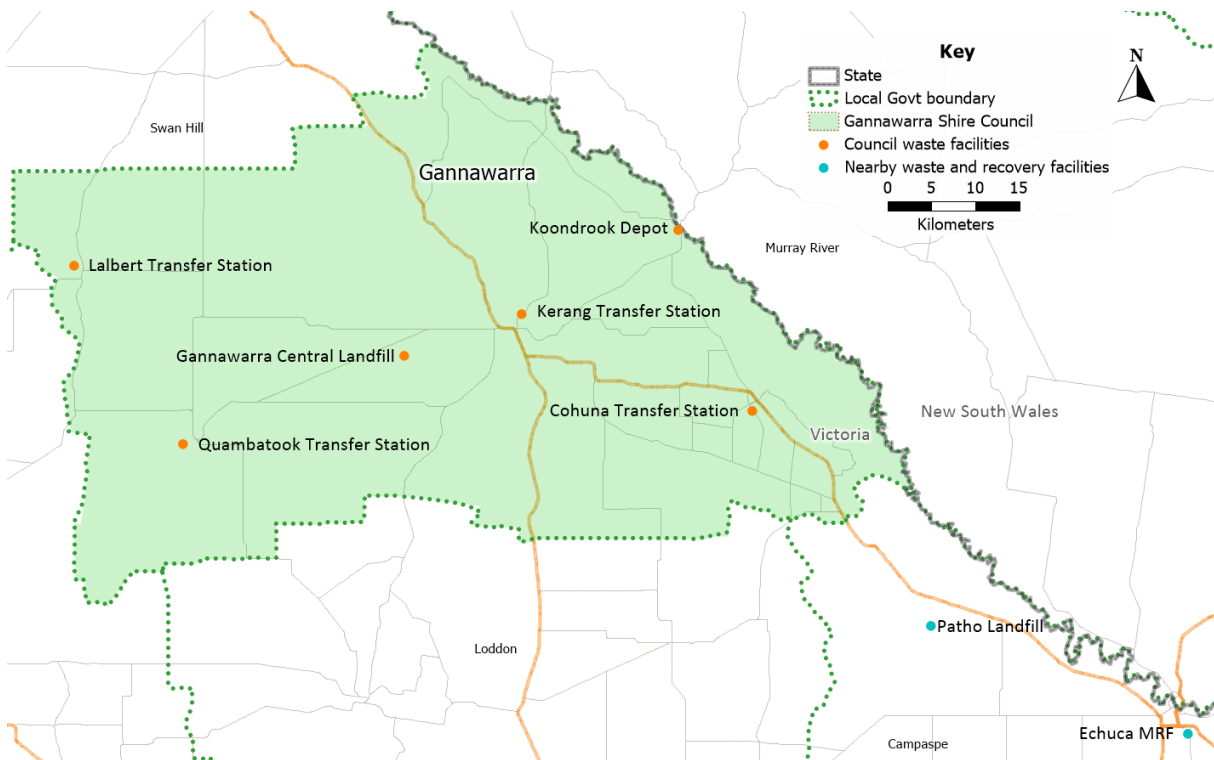
The site area is approximately 11 hectares, with two filled cells (cells 1 and 2), one active cell (cell 3) and four future planned waste cells. Cells 1 and 2 were capped in 2017–18 with landfill gas passively vented to the atmosphere via a shared venting stack, and Cell 3 is almost full. Assessing the future operation of Gannawarra Central Landfill is a high priority for Council.

Council also owns the Quambatook nightsoil depot which is used by private contractors for disposing of septic tank sludge in trenches at the rear of the former landfill.

Council is responsible for closure and rehabilitation of its landfills. This includes auditing of landfill rehabilitation and aftercare. As well as managing the capped cells at the Gannawarra Central Landfill, Council is responsible for land containing closed landfills at Mystic Park, Kerang, Macorna, Leitchville, and Quambatook. The closed Kerang landfill remains under monitoring, although it has been monitored for approximately 26 years and should be close to stabilising. There are also closed landfills for which Council is not the land manager, located at Appin, Cohuna, Lake Charm, Lalbert, Murrabit (Benjeroop), and Tragowel.

Council's key active facilities are shown in [Figure 6](#). Also displayed are nearby facilities where most of Gannawarra's waste and recycling is taken.

Figure 6: Map showing Gannawarra Shire Council waste facilities, Patho Landfill and Echuca MRF



3.5 Public waste and recycling

Across the Gannawarra Shire, there are 165 public rubbish and 27 public recycling bins. While collection frequency varies by location, these bins are collectively serviced more than 10,000 times per year. Positioned in high-traffic areas—such as near local shops, parks, sporting clubs, and rest stops—these bins play a vital role in maintaining the cleanliness and appeal of our public spaces.

During peak holiday times, Council provides red rubbish skips at selected locations for campers. Standard public bin setups were found to be insufficient to meet the high demand during the peak holiday times, leading to litter and illegal dumping. Council’s installation of these skips has helped to reduce these problems.

Council has also established a reporting mechanism to track trends in illegal dumping behaviour. Over a five-month period in late 2024, Council registered 267 reports of dumped waste. The clean-up and proper disposal of dumped waste remains a significant cost to Council.

3.6 Performance

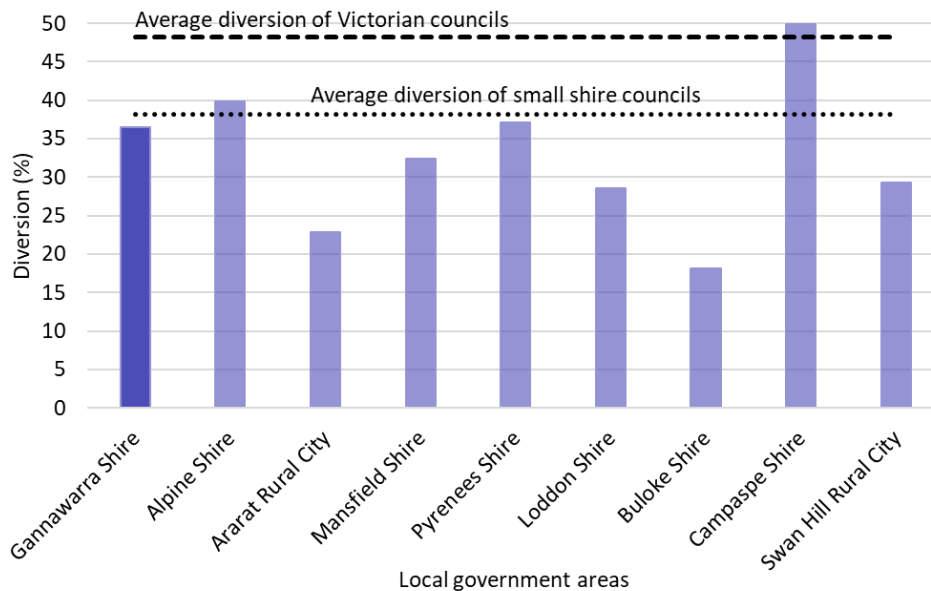
Council has worked hard across the past decade to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and maximise recycling and resource recovery. Some of Council’s key achievements are highlighted below.

Diversion rates

Council’s diversion rate of about 36% in 2022–23 was below the state average (about 48%) but is similar to the average diversion rate for small rural councils.

Figure 7 shows that Council is tracking reasonably well compared to nearby and similar councils, but has opportunity to improve diversion of waste from landfill.

Figure 7: Kerbside diversion rate for selected councils, 2022–23



Data source: Know Your Council website

Green waste service

To support the Gannawarra community to recover more materials, Council introduced an opt-in green waste service. Across this decade of service, Council has collected approximately 4,740 tonnes of green waste from participating residents. The introduction of the service has contributed to Gannawarra Shire Council recovering more household materials.

Speciality recycling

Council has introduced material-specific collection services across Gannawarra Shire, with designated drop-off points at local transfer stations. For example, motor oil can be taken to Kerang Transfer station.

Glass recycling skips have been installed at the Cohuna, Kerang, Lalbert, and Quambatook transfer stations, along with a publicly accessible site in Koondrook, funded by the State Government. This initiative offers residents a free and convenient way to dispose of waste glass responsibly.

In addition, Council is actively responding to emerging waste challenges by exploring viable end-of-life recovery solutions for agricultural plastics and solar panels. Council supports the agriculture sector by hosting DrumMuster sites at all transfer stations, and collecting bagMUSTER and solar panels at Kerang and Cohuna transfer stations.

4 Issues and opportunities

The challenges facing waste management and resource recovery in Gannawarra Shire are discussed below, as well as opportunities to address and improve outcomes.

4.1 Waste management hierarchy and circular economy

The waste management hierarchy is a foundational principle guiding Australia's waste policies. It is embedded in both the *Environment Protection Act 2017* and the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*, where it also aligns with the circular economy. This hierarchy outlines a tiered approach to waste management, prioritising avoidance as the most desirable option and disposal as the least preferred, as illustrated in *Figure 8*.

Figure 8: Waste management hierarchy

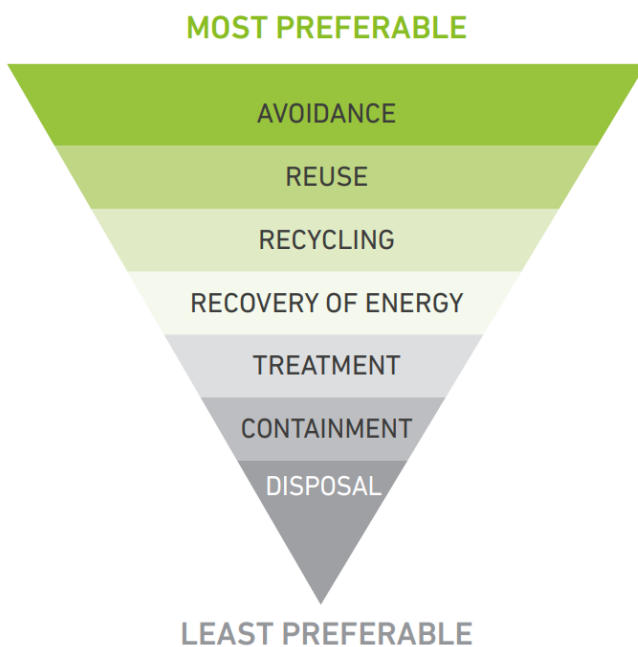
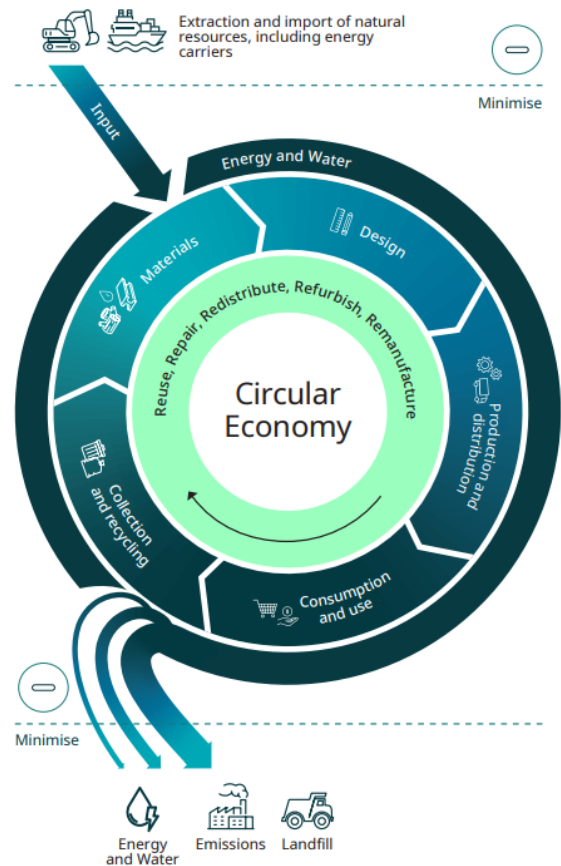


Figure 9: Resource flows in a circular economy



Waste management hierarchy: adapted from Australian environmental policy frameworks.

Resource flows in a circular economy: sourced from Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, National Circular Economy Framework (2024).

The Australian government released the *National Circular Economy Framework* in 2024. The framework defines a circular economy for Australia as ‘an economic model that promotes sustainable and efficient use of resources as a way to support environmental, economic and social outcomes’. There are 3 key principles in a circular economy:

- design out waste and pollution
- keep products and materials in use at their highest value
- conserve natural resources and regenerate nature.

The circular economy model, depicted in *Figure 9* is becoming more embedded in national and state conversations surrounding waste. The model aims to reduce the quantity of valuable resources being lost as waste to landfill and move away from the unsustainable linear take-make-use-waste approach.

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to promoting a circular economy. Each community member can make a positive impact through changes in habits such as avoiding waste and limiting waste through consumer choices. Examples of this could be not accepting or using single-use plastic packaging or choosing to buy goods that can be repaired.

4.2 Increasing cost and requirements

Waste and recycling services account for a significant proportion of Council’s budget each year. Examples of these services include:

- kerbside collected waste and recycling collections
- transport of these materials for further processing and/or disposal
- management of public waste bins
- operating Gannawarra Central Landfill
- managing the 4 resource transfer stations and public waste recycling drop off point
- safely managing closed landfills
- delivering waste and recycling education programs.

Council is required to deliver services and facilities that meet regulatory standards while maintaining financial sustainability, in order to reduce the cost burden on ratepayers.

The Victorian waste levy for depositing rural municipal waste in landfill has increased to \$84.78 per tonne disposed of at landfill. This is a 157% increase from the \$33.03 per tonne levy rate in 2019-20. This is a strong driver for Council to work hard at supporting the Gannawarra community to reduce waste generated and recover and recycle more materials.

Council’s waste services and facilities are funded through the general waste charge that is included in each resident’s annual rates notice. Council needs to maintain an affordable waste collection charge while aligning new waste services with the State-mandated kerbside reforms.

4.3 Waste avoidance and behaviour change

The waste management hierarchy places avoidance as the most preferred outcome for managing waste. However, minimising waste generation within the Shire presents challenges, as Council has limited control over many contributing factors, such as excessive packaging on everyday products. Despite this, Council is committed to supporting initiatives that influence community behaviour and deliver cost savings to residents.

According to Sustainability Victoria, the average Victorian household discards approximately \$2,200 worth of food annually. Reducing food waste not only benefits household budgets but also helps mitigate the environmental impacts associated with food production, packaging, transport and waste management.

To support waste reduction efforts, Council will leverage state-developed resources and promote participation in programs like Sustainability Victoria's free ResourceSmart Schools initiative, which offers five sustainability-focused modules for integration into school curricula.

Council will also align with statewide household waste reforms and education campaigns to develop and implement a staged waste education plan. This plan will assist residents and businesses in adapting to new systems and will include targeted education on key issues such as bin contamination and problematic materials, including compostable packaging, soft plastics, compostable bin liners, and batteries.

4.4 Resource recovery

Key initiatives in resource recovery affecting our community include state-led household kerbside reforms, a growing emphasis on business waste, loss of valuable resources, problematic wastes and the emergence of new waste streams such as solar panels.

Kerbside collected materials

As of 2025, an estimated 27% of recyclable materials in Gannawarra Shire were still being placed in rubbish bins instead of recycling bins. Additionally, 16% of materials found in recycling bins were contaminants. These figures highlight a significant opportunity for Council to work with the community to improve recycling practices, particularly for paper, cardboard, plastics, and metals.

Council is actively collaborating with the state government to prepare for the upcoming household kerbside reforms. As part of this process, Council is reviewing current waste and recycling services and planning a best-practice four-stream collection model tailored to the needs of the Gannawarra community. Proposed additions include separate collections for food and garden organics, as well as expanded glass collection.

Supporting local business and farmers

Council will engage with local businesses and farming communities to enhance the recovery of commercial food waste, agricultural plastics, and other commonly used packaging and industrial materials including hard and soft plastics, paper, cardboard, metals, and glass.

As new initiatives emerge, Council will provide businesses with information and practical options to increase resource recovery and reduce the volume of harmful materials sent to landfill

Organics

Diverting organic waste from landfill is essential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Council is committed to enhancing green waste collection across the Gannawarra community, ensuring that organic materials are processed into high-quality mulch that can be returned for local use.

Minimising contamination is vital to maintaining the integrity of this process. Council will continue to educate and support residents to dispose of organics correctly—whether through kerbside bins or transfer station drop off points. By doing so, we can ensure that materials processed locally or at composting facilities result in clean, safe mulch and compost, free from harmful contaminants.

Plastics and e-waste

Emerging problematic materials in the Gannawarra community such as solar panels, batteries, e-waste, soft plastics and silage wrap are a growing focus for Council. We are committed to improving collection systems and exploring regional pathways for the management and recycling of these materials.

Each of these waste streams presents unique challenges. Council provides bagMuster collection points, and steps are being made to provide a recycling service for silage wrap and soft plastics, including advances in chemical recycling and trials for collecting and recycling silage wrap. Council will continue to support initiatives where they are credible, stable and offer long-term benefits for the community.

Council provides free drop-off facilities for solar panels at its transfer stations, and will monitor the effectiveness of this service as the number of end of life solar panels increase in coming years.

Batteries and e-waste remain a growing concern across Australia due to their potential toxicity and safety risks if not properly managed. Council provides free drop-off facilities for e-waste at all transfer stations and Ecobatt battery drop-off points at multiple locations across the shire.

Council will continue to support the recovery of these items by promoting educational programs that raise awareness of product stewardship schemes such as B-cycle for batteries and the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme.

4.5 Other

Public place bins, litter and illegal dumping

Council continues to utilise a range of guidance and resources to support effective public place recycling and waste management, including efforts to address litter and illegal dumping.

Across the Gannawarra Shire, reports of littering and illegal dumping remain low. However, camping bins provided during peak holiday periods have occasionally attracted the illegal disposal of bulky items. This may indicate a lack of awareness around what can be placed in these bins, or a preference for convenience over proper disposal at transfer stations.

Council will work closely with the community to ensure camping bins are used appropriately and that residents and visitors are informed about the correct disposal pathways for various waste types. By improving awareness and access to proper waste services, we can maintain the cleanliness and environmental integrity of public spaces.

Funding opportunities

Council will continue to monitor and pursue funding from external sources as opportunities arise, particularly in connection with the annual state budget announcements. Victoria has seen significant investment in the waste, recycling and resource recovery sector, creating substantial opportunities for councils to enhance their services and infrastructure.

Gannawarra Shire Council has successfully secured funding through several of these initiatives. This support has enabled upgrades to local transfer stations, allowing for the safe acceptance of materials such as glass and e-waste.

Additional funding was received through Sustainability Victoria's Circular Economy Household Education Fund and Local Government Energy Saver Program. These grants supported the development of localised circular economy education programs and delivered energy-efficiency upgrades across seven council-operated facilities.

5 Where do we want to get to?

Australia's circular economy is in a formative stage, with its evolving landscape offering both challenges and opportunities. As new practices and innovations continue to emerge, Gannawarra Shire Council remains committed to staying informed, responsive, and forward-thinking. Ongoing developments will continue to shape Council's approach to sustainable waste and resource management.

5.1 Council leadership and waste education

Council will continue to lead and educate the Gannawarra community on reducing waste and improving material recovery. Through targeted initiatives and modelling best practice, Council aims to support residents and businesses in adopting more sustainable behaviours.

A staged waste education plan will be developed to guide the community through upcoming changes to kerbside services. This plan will complement state programs and focus on reducing contamination, improving recycling outcomes, and helping households minimise waste and save money. Key topics will include food waste, soft plastics, compostable items, and batteries.

Internally, Council will strengthen its own practices by building staff knowledge of circular economy principles and reviewing procurement policies to support waste avoidance and green purchasing.

At Council's main office in Kerang, staff have begun recovering office food waste, which is now collected and used to feed staff-owned chickens. This simple approach keeps food waste out of the red bins and reduces the amount sent to landfill.

Council will also pursue regional collaboration to share resources, attract funding, and address cross-boundary waste challenges, such as silage wrap and construction materials, through joint initiatives with neighbouring councils.

5.2 Waste and recycling services

Council began upgrading kerbside services in 2015 with the introduction of an opt-in green waste service and dedicated glass bins at transfer stations. These early steps will be built upon to meet the requirements of the state-mandated 4-stream kerbside system under the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*.

Plans include expanding the current green waste service into a full FOGO (food organics and garden organics) collection where the green waste service is currently offered, which must be in place by 2030. In 2025, audits revealed that 29% of Gannawarra kerbside rubbish stream was recoverable organic material, highlighting the potential impact of this service.

Council will also improve and expand service options for glass to continue to recover more glass from households by 2027. The upgrades will align with the draft Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard 2024 requirements and enable greater recovery of food waste and glass, reducing landfill volumes and improving the quality recyclables in yellow-lidded bins.

Council will continue to monitor and evaluate the performance and interaction of their current and new kerbside services to ensure that they are serviced at an appropriate frequency and operate and efficient and cost-effective as possible.

5.3 Waste facilities

Transfer stations

Council is committed to continually improving the operation and presentation of its transfer stations to align with best practice standards. A range of enhancements are being considered to support safer, cleaner, and more efficient facilities. These may include:

- strengthening safety measures for handling and storing potentially hazardous materials
- reducing environmental impacts through better protection of waste and recycling from weather exposure
- managing green waste more effectively to minimise stockpiles
- upgrading signage to improve clarity and safety for users and staff
- increasing staff training and regular site assessments to help identify and address potential risks

Council will look to develop and implement a transfer station plan for each site to meet best practice operations and service, and maximise resource recovery. This will include a review of each site, how materials are collected and stored, ensuring appropriate levels of staffing are resourced and that operating hours meet each community's needs.

Gannawarra Central Landfill

Operating a landfill in 2025 is a significantly more costly undertaking than it has been in the past. Landfill sites need to attract a certain threshold tonnage of waste each year to achieve financial viability. That tonnage has increased due to rises in the waste levy as well as higher day-to-day ongoing costs of staffing, equipment, maintenance, compliance and monitoring that landfills require.

Council is planning a strategic use and cost analysis of Gannawarra Central Landfill. This analysis will inform Council's decision-making process on the future direction of the site. The general options being considered include:

- continue site operations
- expand landfill operations, attracting more waste tonnages
- place the landfill in abeyance, suspending operations and adopting a wait-and-see approach
- close and rehabilitate the landfill site.

5.4 Litter and illegal dumping

Council is working to improve data collection on litter and illegal dumping clean ups around Gannawarra Shire, with the aim of identifying hotspot locations and recurring waste types. More detailed data will enable Council to better understand sources and work with the community to address them proactively, keeping our public spaces clean and to protect the local environment.

One challenge already identified is the overuse of bins supplied for seasonal camping waste. Council will continue to work with campground owners, coordinators and other relevant local businesses and stakeholders to ensure campers know what can and cannot be disposed of in these bins.

To help reduce illegal and hazardous dumping, Council has developed a signage trial for installation at one of the seasonal camping bin sites.

5.5 Measurement and review

Council will continually improve its waste data collection to enhance the accuracy of reported quantities and sources. Reliable data is critical for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of services, including kerbside collections and transfer station operations.

As data quality and consistency improves, Council will be better equipped to identify service gaps and inefficiencies enabling targeted improvements. Enhanced data also enables Council to provide more detailed information to the Gannawarra community, including comparisons with previous years.

High quality data strengthens opportunities for collaboration with other councils and businesses, fostering confidence in the material flow information reported by Gannawarra Shire Council and potential partnerships.

5.6 2026–2036 goals

In the coming 10 years, Council staff will focus on three key goals to improve waste management for everyone in our community:

- cutting down the amount of waste we produce and send to landfill
- providing reliable, efficient waste services and infrastructure
- boosting recycling and resource recovery to protect our environment.

The Australian and Victorian Governments have set targets related to the overarching goals set by Gannawarra Shire Council. These are outlined below in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of Australian and Victorian Government waste-related targets

Target	National (baseline year 2016–17)	State (baseline year 2019–20)
Reduce waste to landfill per household	10% by 2030	15% by 2030
Recovery of waste	80% by 2030	72% by 2025 80% by 2030
Divert organics from landfill	50% by 2030	20% by 2025 50% by 2030

Gannawarra Shire Council is guided by these targets and has developed an action plan to achieve them, as outlined in Chapter 6.

Council will report on its progress against this strategy through our annual reporting process.

We will also periodically review this strategy to ensure the priorities and actions remain relevant to the context and are addressing current and emerging issues and opportunities.

6 Action plan

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to reducing waste to landfill, increasing the recovery of waste resources and extending the life of resources. To work towards this, a range of actions will address current and future challenges and opportunities within five key areas:

- council leadership and waste education
- waste and recycling services
- waste facilities
- litter and illegal dumping
- measurement and review.

The actions have been prioritised based on environmental, social and economic impacts, and have an indicative timescale of short (0-2 years), medium (2-5 years), and long term (5-10 years).

A summary of the proposed strategic actions and implementation plan is provided in [Table 4](#).

To ensure continual improvement, this implementation plan will be reviewed annually.

Table 4: Council waste and recycling action plan

#	Action	Priority	Implementation		
			2026–2028	2028–2031	2031–2036
Council leadership and waste education					
1	Develop and implement a staged waste education plan for residents and businesses to support kerbside bin changes. This should include early consultation.	H	✓	✓	✓
2	Build organisation and community knowledge, awareness and action to drive circular economy.	H	✓	✓	✓
3	Review and update council procurement policies and targets to support circular economy outcomes.	M	✓	✓	
4	Identify opportunities for Council to avoid and minimise waste in its operations, including increasing green purchasing to promote circular economy, trialling a paperless office system, recycling food waste from office kitchens and reducing single-use plastics.	M	✓	✓	✓
5	Continue to support and participate in regional and State campaigns as they become available, including ‘Small acts, big impact’.	H	✓	✓	✓
6	Continue to promote and support environmental events such as Clean-Up Australia day and National Recycling Week.	H	✓	✓	✓
7	Encourage and support school participation in the ResourceSmart Schools program.	H	✓	✓	✓
8	Advocate via Council and regional groups on issues such as product stewardship programs for hard to recycle materials, plastics and additional resourcing.	M	✓	✓	✓
9	Support and engage with regional working groups such as the Loddon Mallee Circular Economy Reference Group to pursue regional circular economy solutions.	H	✓	✓	✓
10	Partner with nearby councils to implement circular opportunities identified in the Circular Central Victoria plan, for example finding solutions for silage wrap and construction waste.	H		✓	✓
11	Develop and implement education campaigns around problematic materials and bin contamination key issues in advance of kerbside standard, such as compostable packaging, soft plastics, compostable bin liners and batteries.	M	✓	✓	✓
12	Work with communities to minimise contamination in all recovery streams.	H	✓	✓	✓
13	Work with local businesses (particularly in the hospitality sector) to explore options for reducing and diverting food waste.	M		✓	✓

#	Action	Priority	Implementation		
			2026–2028	2028–2031	2031–2036
14	Work with local farming networks to reinforce the risks and EPA messaging about illegal burning of waste.	M	✓	✓	
15	Advocate and support initiatives that promote a circular economy such as repair and sharing services, charities and circular businesses.	H		✓	✓
16	Investigate options to support community op shops (or similar) to recover items from transfer stations	L		✓	✓
17	Use informational signage for public waste bins in line with good practice guidelines published by Sustainability Victoria.	M	✓	✓	
18	Promote Council’s and the community’s waste and recycling performance to encourage greater community responsibility to improve waste diversion in homes.	M		✓	✓
Waste and recycling services					
19	Advocate for sufficient resources (both financial and staffing) to support the appropriate waste services provided, infrastructure initiatives and shift to circular economy.	L	✓	✓	✓
20	Continue to host Detox Your Home.	L	✓	✓	✓
21	Review the services included in the waste charge and align with Ministerial good practice guidelines.	H	✓	✓	
22	Revise Council waste management services policy to align with the new Victorian kerbside standards and timing of services for residents and businesses.	H		✓	✓
23	Investigate opportunity to participate in a collaborative regional or sub-regional collection contract for future kerbside collections.	M		✓	✓
24	Implement a FOGO collection service to comply with the kerbside service standards.	H	✓	✓	✓
25	Investigate pathways for FOGO processing.	H	✓	✓	✓
26	Create a cleaner stream of garden organics for returning mulch (that is processed to a safe standard) to the community to assist with education campaigns around organics diversion and recovery.	M	✓	✓	
27	Advocate for a recycling service for glass that is appropriate for the municipality.	H	✓	✓	
28	Extend the glass recycling service to comply with the kerbside service requirements.	H	✓	✓	✓

#	Action	Priority	Implementation		
			2026–2028	2028–2031	2031–2036
29	Monitor and support regional initiatives to tackle problem plastics including silage wrap and soft plastics.	M	✓	✓	✓
Waste facilities					
30	Develop and implement a transfer station plan to meet best practice operations and service, and maximise resource recovery.	M	✓	✓	✓
31	Assess future operation of Gannawarra Central Landfill including a detailed cost analysis of the options.	H	✓	✓	✓
32	Ensure transfer stations and Gannawarra Central Landfill have appropriate measures are in place for disaster waste management and are incorporated into the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.	M	✓	✓	
33	Implement recommended actions from biennial landfill audits	M	✓	✓	✓
34	Investigate options for landfill gas management at Gannawarra Central Landfill, such as flaring.	M		✓	✓
35	Continue to ensure Council's closed landfills are assessed and managed to minimise the risk of potential harm to human health and the environment.	M	✓	✓	✓
Litter and illegal dumping					
36	Collect data on litter and clean ups by council to identify issues and measure improvement.	L		✓	✓
37	Develop and publish information about seasonal camping waste and disposal, working in consultation with campground owners/coordinators where applicable and other relevant local businesses and stakeholders.	M	✓	✓	✓
38	Explore collaborative arrangements with Parks Victoria to increase visitor preparedness for the 'carry in, carry out' policy at national parks in the Shire	M	✓	✓	✓
Measurement and review					
39	Seek to continually improve waste data collection to increase accuracy of the quantities and sources. This may be via contract conditions for reporting.	H	✓	✓	✓
40	Conduct periodic audits of kerbside services to determine causes of contamination and understand compositions of wastes, potentially in coordination with other councils.	M	✓	✓	✓
41	Perform a review to evaluate viability of universal kerbside services in line with the kerbside standard every three years.	L		✓	✓
42	Undertake periodic strategy review, considering current context and emerging trends.	L		✓	✓

7 References

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