

# ADVOCACY PLAN

---



A summary of key priorities for the  
Gannawarra Shire community.

---



# VISION

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to sustainably developing its community by building a strong economy, a vibrant tourism sector, ensuring the provision of high quality services and facilities and developing stronger connections to the wider community through digital and physical infrastructure.

To achieve our vision we need to advocate on behalf of our community to key decision-makers. This document is intended to aid in advocacy activities engaged in by Council. This document sets out a clear and compelling case for financial and policy support.

Working in partnership with the Victorian and Federal Government, as well as community groups and other agencies, is critically important for Gannawarra Shire Council to successfully deliver improved outcomes to its community. Funding and support from government and agencies allows Council to progress its key projects and continue to deliver high-quality services.

## GANNAWARRA AT A GLANCE

Bordered by the Murray River to the north, Gannawarra is three hours from Melbourne by road and around one hour from the neighbouring centres of Swan Hill, Echuca and Bendigo. Gannawarra Shire is a diverse landscape of lakes and rivers, red gum forests, irrigated pasture and broad acre farm land.

Agriculture remains the key industry in the Gannawarra Shire. Within agriculture, the main enterprises are dairy, broad acre cropping, livestock and horticulture. The Shire also has a number of industrial precincts with growing businesses largely related to agri-food and agricultural engineering.



## 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.





# WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Improved liveability for all Gannawarra Shire residents
- A strong, diverse economy with a focus on job creation
- High-quality services for our community
- Safe and high-quality streetscapes, bridges and roads.
- Meaningful and accessible education facilities and opportunities
- Career and leadership opportunities for youth and young professionals
- Prevention of chronic illness and improved respite and allied health care.
- Effective and efficient transport services for all residents
- A thriving tourism industry that brings visitors to our region and adds value to the local economy.
- Protection and enhancement of our natural environment and Aboriginal heritage
- Population growth and increased diversity, without compromising 'small town' values.
- Innovative and diverse farm sector



# 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.

---

## 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, 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.

---





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gannawarra Shire Council recognises that although it cannot directly deliver business outcomes it can facilitate and promote economic development. Council aims to influence appropriate investment and development by creating an environment that is conducive for business, investment and growth. Gannawarra Shire has the potential to make the most of its natural assets and become a hub for investment in the solar and tourism industries. Council has taken positive steps to do this, however investors need policy stability and support. Agriculture is another focus area for Council, as it is the largest contributor to our economy. However, to remain viable and profitable, we need to facilitate agricultural diversification and promote improved on-farm efficiency and innovation. Tourism is another growth industry which has the potential to significantly boost economic development. Gannawarra Shire encompasses two Ramsar-listed wetlands, a network of 57 lakes and Gunbower National Park. We need targeted investment in infrastructure which will allow us to make the most of our environment and to offer the best to visitors.

## WHAT WE NEED

- Policy support to develop a thriving localised renewable energy industry.
- Financial incentives for new and existing farm enterprises to support on-farm water efficiency and sustainability improvements.
- Funding to support further development of the Koondrook Wharf Precinct.
- Funding to support critical tourism infrastructure projects (including at the Kerang Lakes, Gunbower Forest and National Park and other wetland assets) to boost the local tourism industry.
- Policy and funding to ensure the long-term viability of small towns in Gannawarra Shire.
- Funding to support the implementation of regionally significant tracks and trails projects including the Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail, Kerang to Kerang Lakes and Koondrook forest track.
- Funding to upgrade road and rail access at the Quambatook grain receival facility.
- Support to develop new industries and utilise existing infrastructure such as the Murray Goulburn dairy processing facility in Leitchville.



Economic Development



# CONNECTIVITY

Gateway  
to Gannawarra

VISITOR CENTRE

Tourism Business Agriculture Lifestyle

Gannawarra Shire Council believes the connectivity of its community members with each other and with those outside the Shire is critically important to their ability to live well. Connectivity allows community members to do business and to attract much needed investment to the Shire. Connectivity encompasses digital and physical connectivity. It also allows residents to share information quickly and efficiently, to interact with others and to access high-quality services. The fast and efficient movement of people both within and in and out of the Shire is critical to attracting business investment as well as population and skills growth. High-speed broadband, improved mobile coverage and improved rail services are critical services that would significantly improve our economy and quality of life for residents.

## WHAT WE NEED

- Access to the National Broadband Network across the whole Shire, including connecting Kerang and Cohuna to fibre optic cable.
- The completion of the Regional Rail Project, including the duplication of track between Bendigo and Kyneton and improved rail services, including better timetabling and the introduction of a shuttle service, from Bendigo to Swan Hill.
- Funding to address the mobile black spots identified in the iLoddon Mallee and Regional Development Victoria survey.
- Funding to support essential transport infrastructure upgrades across the Shire.
- Increased funding support to improve regionally significant transport routes.

Connectivity



# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to creating healthy and liveable communities, to foster the long-term sustainability of our population and improve the quality of life for residents. We want our communities to be healthy, active, educated, connected and able to access the services they need to live well. Therefore, Council must continue to provide opportunities for lifelong learning, youth services, childcare, aged care and sporting and recreation facilities. Encouraging healthier lives will lead to lower rates of chronic illness and better quality of life. The ability to offer a wide range of health, education and care services will also enable Gannawarra Shire to become an attractive lifestyle destination for new residents.

## WHAT WE NEED

- The Victorian Government's ongoing funding and support for public libraries including the rollout of the Tomorrow's Libraries program.
- Policy stability and funding for the continued rollout of the National Partnership Agreements on Kindergarten education and a national childcare framework that ensures high-quality, affordable and adequate childcare for all families.
- A national aged care framework that supports adequate ongoing service provision at a local level, particularly for small rural shires where Council is the primary service provider.
- Improved access to quality education and training opportunities for Gannawarra residents.
- Funding to improve access to a range of health services for the prevention of chronic illness in the community.



Community Wellbeing





# GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Gannawarra Shire Council recognises the importance of effective and efficient governance and partnerships to be able to perform at the highest level and to serve its community well. There are a number of regulatory arrangements that impact the effectiveness of Council. Improved flexibility, efficiency of ongoing funding arrangements and reporting requirements will allow Council to best meet the needs of the community. Sustainable and fair funding arrangements for local government, especially small rural councils, is particularly important. Working together with other Councils, government agencies and community groups allows Council to achieve the best outcomes and to deliver the highest quality services. While Council does this well, there are always opportunities for improved cooperation which require support.

## WHAT WE NEED

- Continued indexation of Local Government Financial Assistance Grants by the Federal Government and distribution of the grants to small regional councils to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Support for the creation of a multi-party management structure to control the RAMSAR-listed Kerang Lakes and funding for the creation of an associated strategic management plan.
- Capacity to increase rates without being subject to rates-capping.
- Indexing of Roads to Recovery to reflect CPI as a minimum, to ensure Council can continue to provide high quality services and infrastructure to residents.