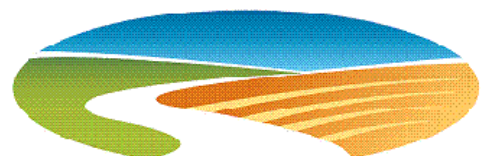




Photo courtesy of Loddon Times

VOLUNTEER STRATEGY 2018-2022


"I volunteer because I have a passion for my community and a desire to see it succeed"
– Volunteer survey participant



LODDON
SHIRE

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This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Volunteer Strategy 2018-2022 (Strategy) was developed to provide a strategic leadership approach to attracting, retaining, developing and recognising volunteers in Loddon Shire.

The Strategy outlines Council's approach to volunteer management across the Shire over the next four years; and takes into consideration the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

This inaugural Strategy was developed in consultation with the community, internal Council stakeholders and informed by research activities including benchmarking of other councils, and a desktop assessment of the way in which Council manages volunteer programs and works with volunteers.

The activities outlined in the Strategy have been reviewed by Council and the community and will be implemented over the next four years.



1.1 Council's Vision and Values

Council has identified the development of a Volunteer Strategy as a priority under the Council Plan 2017-2021; and recognises the need to sustain and grow volunteering across the Shire to support our community.

The Strategy aligns with Council's Core Values as outlined in the Council Plan 2017-2021. It provides a sound basis and direction from which Council can plan and make future decisions over the next four years.



The development of the Strategy is further supported in the Council Plan 2017-2021:

5.4.3 - Theme: Liveability		
Strategy	Action	Strategic Indicator
Community engagement: Build relationships and foster community engagement, pride and resilience.	Support and promote initiatives which encourage community inclusion and engagement.	Develop a Volunteer Strategy.

1.2 Supporting strategies and plans

Council has a number of other supporting strategies and plans in place. This Strategy draws upon a wider Council policy context:

- Disability, Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2021
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2018
- Long Term Financial Plan
- Information Technology Strategy 2017-2022
- Building Asset Management Plan 2018
- Section 86 Instrument of Delegation 2018
- Risk Management Policy 2015
- Event Management – A Guide for Organisers of Events 2016
- Staff and Contractors Code of Conduct 2017

2 PURPOSE

Council values the contribution of volunteers and acknowledges their assistance in the provision of services to the Loddon community through:

- formal volunteering with organisations; and
- informal volunteering or provision of support to individuals and the community.

The Strategy has been developed to recognise the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement,¹ which provide a framework for supporting the volunteer sector in Australia. They provide good practice guidelines for organisations to attract, manage and retain volunteers, and help improve the volunteer experience.

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement incorporate the following principles:

- Volunteer involvement should be a considered and planned part of an organisation's strategic development, aligning with the organisation's strategic aims and incorporated into its evaluation framework.
- Effective volunteer involvement requires organisational leadership, and a culture and structure that supports and values the role of volunteers.
- Volunteers have rights, which include the right to work in a safe and supportive environment with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.
- Volunteers have responsibilities, which include acting responsibly, being accountable for their actions to the organisation, and respecting the organisation's values and practices.

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement cover:

1. Leadership and management
2. Commitment to volunteer involvement
3. Volunteer roles
4. Recruitment and selection
5. Support and development
6. Workplace safety and wellbeing
7. Volunteer recognition
8. Quality management and continuous improvement

This Strategy contains a Volunteer Management Plan that recognises these standards.

¹ Volunteering Australia 2015

3 LODDON SHIRE COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

3.1 Location and geography

Loddon Shire is located in central Victoria, about 175 kilometres north-west of the Melbourne CBD. Loddon Shire is bounded by Gannawarra Shire in the north, the Shire of Campaspe and the City of Greater Bendigo in the east, Mount Alexander and Central Goldfields Shires in the south, and Northern Grampians and Buloke Shires in the west.

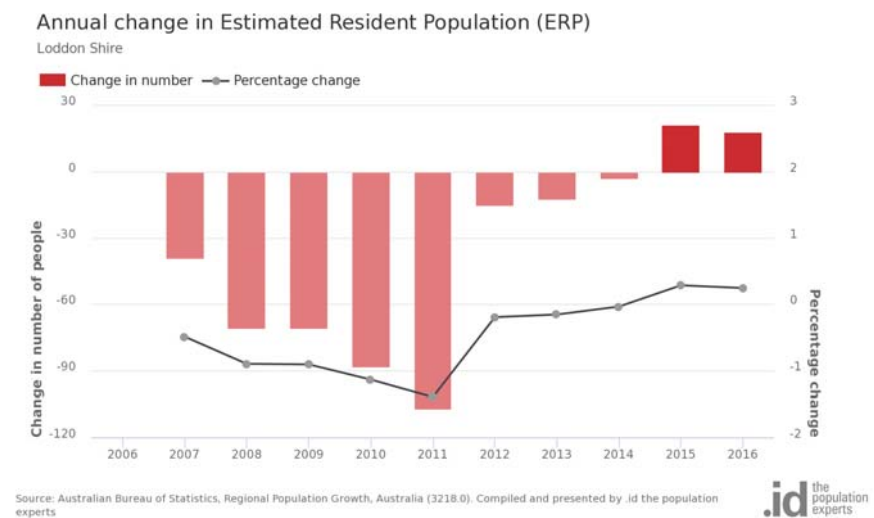
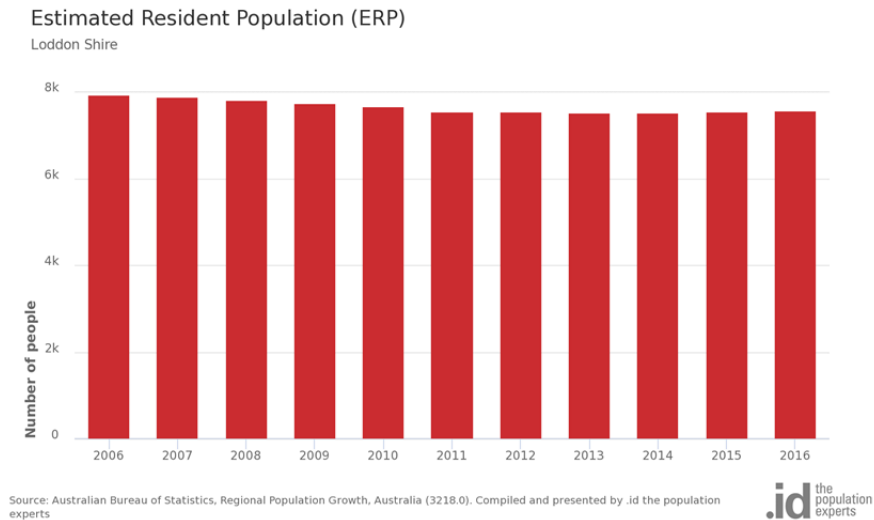
Loddon Shire is within the Loddon Mallee Regional Development Australia region which constitutes almost a quarter of the state and is a region known for the highest number of small towns in Victoria.

Loddon Shire comprises a number of small towns dispersed throughout the Shire including the towns of Bridgewater, Inglewood, Wedderburn, Dingee, Mitiamo, Serpentine, Newbridge, Tarnagulla, Boort, Pyramid Hill and other surrounding villages and communities. These townships are diverse but they are connected by our Council which strengthens them as a whole.



3.2 People

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population for 2016 (2016 ERP) was 7,555. This is made up of more than 2,780 in the north (2016 ERP), compared with over 4,810 in the south (2016 ERP). There is a trend of population increasing in the south of the Shire and decreasing in the north.



The 2013 Loddon Mallee South Regional Economic Outlook report forecasts ongoing overall population decline in the longer term of 0.23% to 2026. Population forecasts predict that the number of residents living in the Shire will decrease slightly each year. In the last decade there has been a decrease in the number of family households and an increase in lone person households. Both mortgage repayments and rentals are relatively low, reflecting cheaper housing prices in Loddon Shire compared with regional cities and metropolitan Melbourne.

3.3 Ethnic composition

The majority of Loddon Shire's population was born in Australia however, 8% came from other countries. Only 3% of residents have identified as speaking a language other than English at home. The ethnic composition reflects that of regional Victoria, and relative to Australia's urban centres, is overall not vastly diverse.

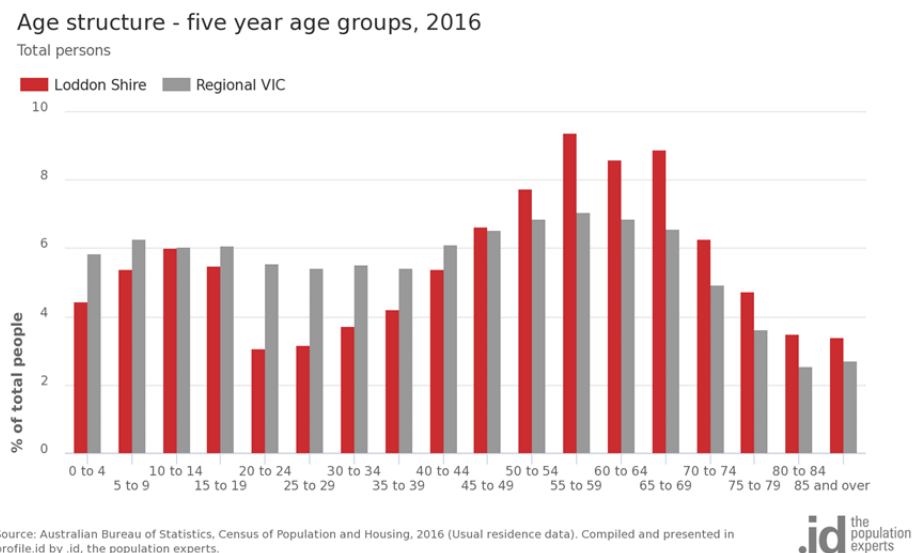
However, there are emerging pockets of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in some townships. Pyramid Hill is one such township in the Shire that has benefited from significant positive culturally diverse growth since 2008. Community members with origins in the Philippines now comprise almost 10% of the population.²³

3.4 Ageing population

During consultation for the Loddon Shire Council 2017-2021 Council Plan, one of the challenges identified was an ageing population with the median age of people in the Shire of 51 (up from 50 in 2011), which is eight years higher than the regional Victoria median and 14 years higher than the state median (up from 13 years in 2011).

Just over 21% of the population is under 19 years of age, 43.3% of the population is in the traditional working age group (19-59) and 35.7% is in the traditional retirement age group (60+). Like many other rural municipalities, the number of older adults living in the community is expected to grow considerably in coming years.

The Loddon area is seeing a decline in people less than 50 years of age and an increase in older employees or retirees settling in the municipality.



Analysis of the service age groups of Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years).

3.5 Income levels

Analysis of household income levels in Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a smaller proportion of high income households (those earning \$2,500 per week or more) and a higher proportion of low income households (those earning less than \$650 per week).

Overall, 5.8% of the households earned a high income and 31.9% were low income households, compared with 12.5% and 22.9% respectively for regional Victoria.

²Australian Bureau of Statistics – 2016 Census Data

³New York Times – Australia’s Immigration Solution – Small Town Living – May 21, 2018

3.6 Socio-economic indexes for areas

Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a number, which ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in Local Government. The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Loddon Shire in 2016 was 942.

The most disadvantaged municipality within Victoria is recorded as Central Goldfields followed by Greater Dandenong. Ararat Rural City Council is ranked equal with Loddon Shire as the eighth most disadvantaged municipality in Victoria.

3.7 Education levels and qualifications

Analysis of the highest level of schooling attained by the population in Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a higher proportion of people who had left school at an early level (Year 10 or less) and a lower proportion of people who completed Year 12 or equivalent.

Overall, 40.8% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 27.3% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 34.7% and 38.9% respectively for regional Victoria.

Analysis of the qualifications within the population in Loddon Shire compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a lower proportion of people holding formal qualifications (Bachelor or higher degree; Advanced Diploma or Diploma; or Vocational qualifications), and a higher proportion of people with no formal qualifications.

Overall, 35.8% of the population aged 15 and over held educational qualifications, with 47.8% having no qualifications. This is compared with 40.5% and 47.8% respectively for regional Victoria.

3.8 Economy

Loddon Shire's Gross Regional Product is estimated at \$0.39 billion, which represents 0.1% of Victoria's Gross State Product.

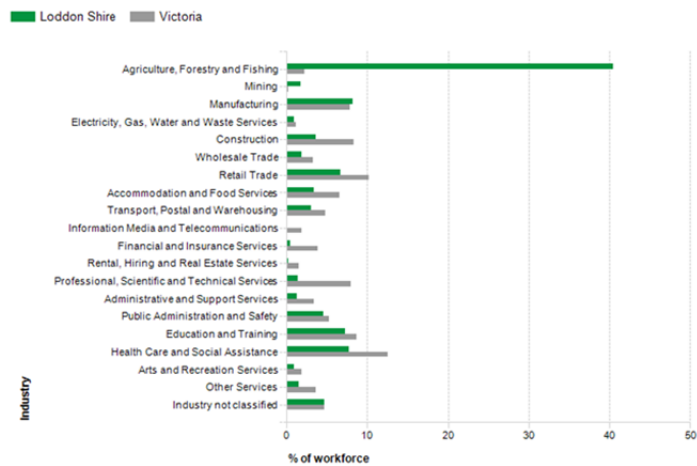
There were 3,066 local jobs in Loddon Shire in 2016. An analysis of the jobs held by the local workers in Loddon Shire in 2016 shows the three most popular industry sectors were:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (1,069 local workers 40.4%)
- Manufacturing (218 local workers 8.2%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (204 local workers 7.7%)

In combination, these three industries employed 1,491 people in total or 56.4% of local workers.

In comparison, Victoria employed 2.2% in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; 7.8% in Manufacturing; and 12.5% in Health Care and Social Assistance.

Employment (Census) by industry sector, 2016



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016
Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id, the population experts.



3.9 Economic profile changes

Nature-based tourism is a potential new industry segment and represents a significant development opportunity to attract visitors into the Shire. Significant nature tourism assets such as the Loddon River, Mount Kooyoora and the Boort wetlands offer a new and quite unique group of experiences to a broad range of visitors.

Nature and natural heritage are an important part of what makes the region attractive to tourists and new residents alike.

3.10 Internet connectivity

Internet use in the Shire is lower than the state average, however it has increased markedly since 2006. In 2006, only 13% of residents had access to internet connections. By 2016, this grew to 62%. However, 25% of the population continues to have no internet connection at all. The agricultural sector relies heavily on electronic communications and associated technologies.

Mobile phone coverage, broadband and wireless internet and satellite GPS (Global Positioning System) services are now essential for the modern competitive agricultural enterprise. With agriculture being the dominant sector of our economy, it is essential that investment in electronic communication and associated technology continues.

3.11 Councillors and wards

Loddon Shire Council consists of five Councillors elected from five wards.

The five wards of Loddon Shire are:

- Boort Ward
- Inglewood Ward
- Tarnagulla Ward
- Terrick Ward
- Wedderburn Ward

Details about the wards and Councillors can be found on Council's website: www.loddon.vic.gov.au

Under the Local Government Act 1989, Councillors are elected to be the governing body of our municipality. Our Councillors play a vital leadership role in creating and implementing our community's vision, strategic direction and the values within which we operate. Our Councillors guide the development of local policies, set service standards and priorities and monitor the performance of the organisation. Other responsibilities of Councillors include determining the financial strategy and budget, allocating resources, and liaising with other levels of government.



4 VOLUNTEERING IN LODDON SHIRE

4.1 Snapshot – current support – Loddon Shire Council

The following provides a summary overview of the way in which Council currently supports and interacts with volunteers and volunteer organisations across the municipality.

Volunteer Support – Loddon Shire Council (at August 2018)	
Population	7,555
Geographic area of municipality	6,700km ²
Number of volunteers in the community	31.7% of the population reported that they undertake voluntary work through an organisation or group ⁴ (approximately 2,395 people). Council has identified contact details of 577 volunteer individuals.
Number of community / volunteer groups	291 community / volunteer groups identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 61 manage and maintain community facilities and receive some financial support from Council o 25 are Section 86 committees o 5 are Kindergarten Committees o 4 are Senior Citizens Centre Committees
Published volunteer strategy or policy position	Volunteer Policy 2014 (due for review)
Types of volunteering activities supported by Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Visitor information services o Meals on Wheels – Pyramid Hill o Kindergarten Committees o Section 86 Committees o Senior Citizens Centres o Other Committees of Management for Council facilities o Committees of Management for Crown Land facilities (e.g. DELWP)
Centralised support for volunteers and volunteer programs across Council	No – volunteer management is undertaken by individual departments within relevant portfolios, with each area having a different approach. This includes all aspects – such as recruitment, retention, record management, compliance/governance, recognition of volunteers, training and skills development, feedback and grievances, evaluation of volunteer programs, etc.
Central register of volunteers and volunteer records	No – individual departments hold and maintain records across Council sites, some electronic and others paper-based. Organisational Development keeps a register of Police Checks where they are in place.
Central register of volunteering opportunities available with Council and / or volunteer organisations in the Shire	No

⁴ Community Profile ID – Australian Bureau of Statistics - Census 2016

Volunteer Support – Loddon Shire Council (at August 2018)	
Organisational links with external agencies to help with volunteer management and support	Boort District Health – memorandum of understanding to undertake preparation and delivery of Meals on Wheels program in Boort. Includes recruitment, management, training and rostering of volunteers.
Dedicated staff resources to help support volunteers and volunteer programs	No
Other identified organisational EFT for staff to manage volunteers and volunteer programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 0.05 EFT (2 hours per week) Social Support Officer (MOW) – externally funded o 0.2 EFT Corporate Services Administration (support for Section 86 Committees) o 0.2 EFT Tourism and Marketing Officer (support for Visitor Information Centre volunteers)
Financial support for volunteers and volunteer programs in the community	<p>2018-19 budget (recurring annual allocation):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Allocation to assist groups with maintenance of 61 facilities \$126,326 o Support of organisations to run events by volunteers \$17,000 o Club volunteer development \$12,000 <p>Total 2018-19 budget: \$155,326</p> <p>Notes: Additional \$15,000 remaining from previous years' one-off grant. Additional \$75,000 one-off funding partnership provided by Department of Health and Human Services Victoria.</p>
In-kind support for volunteers and volunteer programs in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Advice, guidance and administrative support for Section 86 Committees o Kindergarten Committees use of facilities at centres – IT, printing, stationery, etc. o Partnerships with Committees of Management to maintain and improve facilities through Business Asset Management Plan 2018 o Training of Meals on Wheels volunteers o Training of Visitor Information Centre volunteers o Works skills development opportunities for Visitor Information Centre volunteers o Ad-hoc courses and seminars offered for S86 Committees / Committees of Management / Volunteer organisations on governance related matters / strengthening volunteering in communities
Communication plan to promote volunteering opportunities and attract / encourage volunteers	No
Documented approach to support ad-hoc volunteering opportunities	No
Documented approach to support involvement of younger people	No
Corporate volunteering opportunities for Council staff	Staff can take paid leave for some emergency services activities (eg. CFA – Country Fire Authority, SES – State Emergency Service)

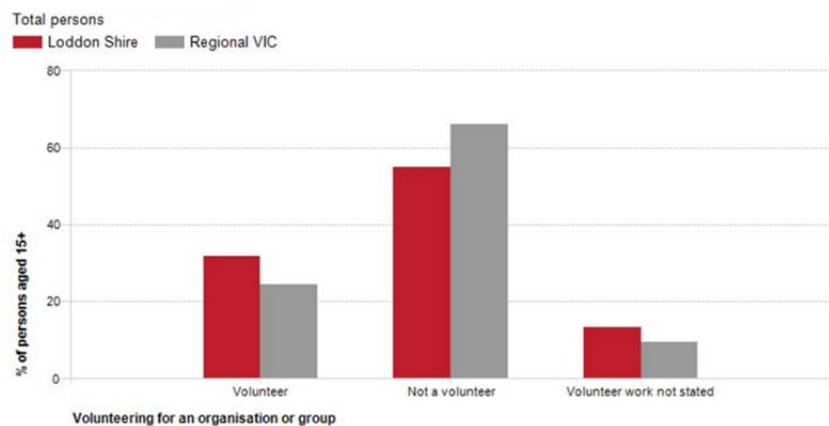
4.2 Volunteer involvement

The voluntary work sector is an important part of Australia's economy. The level of volunteering can indicate the cohesiveness of the community and how readily individuals are able to contribute to that community. Factors impacting on the level of volunteering in Loddon Shire include the age structure of the population, the level of proficiency in English, income and education levels.

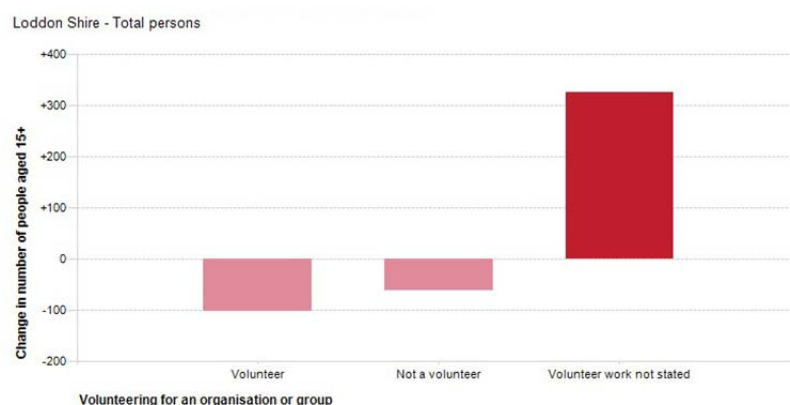
Analysis of the voluntary work performed by the population in Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to Regional Victoria shows that there was a higher proportion of people who volunteered for an organisation or group.

Overall, 31.7% of the population reported performing voluntary work through an organisation or group, compared with 24.3% for Regional Victoria – and 20.8% for the entire State.

When considering gender comparison - 33.7% of females had identified as volunteers, whilst 29.8% of males had identified as volunteers. The number of volunteers in Loddon Shire decreased by 101 people between 2011 and 2016.⁵



.id the population experts



.id the population experts

An opportunity to strengthen and promote volunteering is via the intergenerational influence of parents who volunteer and instil altruistic behaviour in their children. The 2014 General Social Survey (ABS) reported that 43 percent of people who volunteered had done some form of volunteering as a child, and 75 percent had a parent who had done voluntary work.⁶

⁵ Community Profile ID: Australian Bureau of Statistics – Census 2016

⁶ Distilled from: Volunteers in Victoria – Trends Challenges and Opportunities 2017

4.3 Need for assistance

Analysis of the need for assistance of people in Loddon Shire compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a higher proportion of people who reported needing assistance with core activities.

Overall, 7.4% of the population reported needing assistance with core activities, compared with 6.0% for regional Victoria.

This need for assistance is often met voluntarily by family members and friends. As noted earlier, our volunteer rates are higher than other areas of Victoria. Our residents volunteer their time and skills to people with disabilities, long term illness and problems associated with ageing; as well as to other tasks such as unpaid childcare and domestic work; and to various community-based organisations and groups.

4.4 The value of volunteering⁷

Council does not have the reporting mechanisms in place to accurately identify the number and value of volunteer hours in the Loddon Shire community. The following provides a snapshot of Victorian State Government data on the value of volunteering.

4.4.1 Economic value

The Department of Planning and Community Development (2012) estimated that volunteering contributions were worth about \$23 billion to the Victorian economy in 2011; and are set to grow to as much as \$42 billion by 2021 if rates of volunteering continue.

4.4.2 Community value

In addition to providing crucial services and supports to communities, places and individuals, volunteering has many other direct and indirect benefits for the strength and resilience of communities:

- a stronger social fabric – building a sense of community
- cultural benefits – people participating in activities that support cultural connections
- environmental benefits – enhancing and protecting natural assets and green spaces.

4.4.3 Individual value

As well as benefiting communities, volunteering provides health and wellbeing benefits for people who volunteer, with altruism being associated with greater personal satisfaction, wellbeing and longevity.

Volunteering is associated with greater health and happiness – 95 percent of volunteers say that volunteering is related to feelings of wellbeing.

The Department of Planning and Community Development (2011) found that volunteering can mediate the negative psychological effects of disadvantage.

Skills and networks developed through volunteering participation can also help to connect people to career paths and employment opportunities.

4.5 The future of volunteering in Loddon Shire

Loddon Shire is a 'community of communities', spread across more than 6,700 square kilometres. A challenge exists for Council in the provision of a coordinated approach to volunteer management across the Shire's geographical vastness.

⁷ Distilled from: Volunteers in Victoria – Trends Challenges and Opportunities 2017

Volunteer expectations are changing, Australians are asking for a wider range of ways to volunteer. They want meaningful roles and greater flexibility in how and when they volunteer under different circumstances that arise in their lives. This includes:

- episodic volunteering (short-term or project based volunteering)
- online volunteering
- skilled volunteering
- volunteering through the workplace⁸.

Loddon Shire's population is ageing faster than the rest of Victoria and is in decline in the northern areas of the municipality. A strategic approach to engaging and encouraging the next generation of younger volunteers to participate is crucial to delivering services and supporting communities into the future.

The ability for the community to access the internet is relatively low. Digital communication channel preferences continue to evolve; and Council needs to be responsive to these technological advances. Harnessing changing volunteer expectations through technology can increase the extent to which people are prepared to volunteer; and presents the opportunity for improved engagement with a younger demographic and in emerging culturally and linguistically diverse communities.⁹

Council also needs to ensure that accessible multi-channel options are available to the community for seeking information about volunteering. Having printed material available, and the ability to speak to someone over the phone or in person is still considered highly important by the community.

The Victorian State Government's mandated rate capping places additional pressure on Council to reduce the cost of service delivery. Under the plan, councils are directed to cap rate increases at a figure set by the Minister for Local Government.

Approximately two-thirds of Loddon Shire's budget is reliant upon state and federal government grants. Council is challenged with continuing to secure adequate financial support in an increasingly competitive environment. Maintaining the way in which Council is able to deliver services to the community is reliant on provision of this external funding.

Council is however excited by a newly strengthened partnership opportunity with the DHHS. This partnership opportunity provides some funding and support opportunities for initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining younger volunteers.

Council is heavily reliant on volunteers and volunteer organisations to support delivery of services and facilities to community, where Council does not have the funding or resources to do so.

The provision of a coordinated approach to management of volunteers and volunteer programs across the Shire in future may assist to encourage volunteer involvement, and direct volunteer resources in a more prioritised and strategic manner.

⁸ Distilled from: Volunteers in Victoria – Trends Challenges and Opportunities 2017

⁹ Population trends are further explained in Section 3 of this Strategy

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 How we consulted with the community

To support the development of this Strategy a community survey was conducted during May and June 2018 to better understand community views in relation to issues that affect the community – with particular reference to volunteering.

The survey explored volunteering experiences within the community, including reasons for volunteering, recognition of volunteers, and any challenges faced. The survey also provided an opportunity to comment on volunteering in Loddon Shire, and to offer thoughts, ideas or suggestions.

A questionnaire was made available for completion online via Council's website. Hard copies were also available at Council Centres for survey completion (e.g. Shire offices, Senior Citizens Centres, Visitor Information Centre, Meals on Wheels, etc.).

A communications plan was developed to coordinate community messaging. The survey was promoted via the following methods:

- media releases
- published on Council's website (home page)
- posts on Council's Facebook page promoting the survey during the consultation period reached more than 2,980 people
- mayoral column
- invitations to participate in the online survey were emailed to 272 community groups, organisations and individual volunteers across the Shire. An additional 112 hard copy surveys were sent via Australia Post where email addresses were not available
- including an option to enter a prize draw to win a \$100 hamper of local produce
- invitations to participate in the workshops were emailed to 16 survey respondents who had registered their interest within the first week of the survey live period.

The questionnaire was available from 16 May 2018 to 12 June 2018.

A total of 265 valid survey responses were received and processed (194 online and 71 hard copy).

During the survey period, a series of community workshops were facilitated on 24 and 25 May 2018 to provide community members with an opportunity to provide feedback via interactive group discussions; and enrich the feedback that was being provided in the surveys.

Community workshop opportunities were available in six townships:

Date	Township	Venue	Participants
24 May 2018	Wedderburn	Community Centre	8 people
	Serpentine	Council Chambers	0 people
	Inglewood	Town Hall	2 people
	Tarnagulla	Tarnagulla Hall	3 people
25 May 2018	Pyramid Hill	Senior Citizens Centre	2 people
	Boort	Memorial Hall	5 people

The workshop format was interactive and conversational, with feedback sought on the following:

- reasons for volunteering
- community benefits of volunteering
- recruitment – ways in which people end up volunteering / suggestions for future
- issues faced by volunteers / volunteer groups
- better supporting volunteers – ways in which the Shire could provide improved support to volunteers and volunteer groups.

5.2 What the community has told us

5.2.1 Community survey outcomes

Volunteering snapshot

86.4% of respondents reported that they volunteer at least once a month.

69.9% of respondents reported that they undertake volunteer activities that are within 10km of their home or work.

68.3% of respondents reported that they had been volunteering for more than 10 years.

The most common ways respondents had initially become involved in volunteering were through:

- a community interest / to provide support
- family members – parents / children
- invitation / were asked to volunteer
- sport
- club, group or organisation involvement

Types of volunteering experiences and activities

The most common types of organisations volunteered for the past year were:

- Local sporting team (49.8%)
- Community groups (49.3%)

The most common types of volunteer activities were:

- management / committee work (61.5%)
- administration / clerical (47.1%)
- fundraising / sales (36.5%)

Reasons for volunteering and personal benefits

The most commonly cited reasons for volunteering included:

- help others / help the community (84.1%)
- keep a group / association going (66.2%)
- personal satisfaction (65.7%)

10.6% of respondents reported that they had used volunteering to assist them with gaining employment.

The most commonly cited benefits experienced as a direct result of being a volunteer were:

- feel part of a community (85.0%)

- friendship / social contact (79.7%)
- personal satisfaction (73.4%)

Training

33.5% of respondents identified that training was needed for their volunteer roles, with a variety of different training types noted.

Those respondents who had received training reported a high level of satisfaction with this aspect.

Future of volunteering

82.4% of respondents reported that they expect the amount of volunteering they undertake to either increase or stay the same, over the next year.

The most notable circumstances that affect how or when people volunteer were:

- family commitments (61.0%)
- work commitments (44.9%)

Recognition

30.2% of respondents reported that they felt that it is reasonable to expect recognition for volunteer contributions. Most common suggestions for recognition provided by these respondents include:

- a thankyou
- certificate / award / badge
- event / community acknowledgement

66.2% of respondents reported that they had received recognition for volunteer contributions. The most common types of recognition received included:

- certificate / award / badge
- a thankyou / gratitude from others
- life membership

Satisfaction with volunteering

91.9% of respondents reported that overall, they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their volunteering experiences.

Respondents who made general comments in relation to volunteering experiences most commonly reported:

- they find volunteering enjoyable and rewarding
- volunteering provided new experiences
- volunteering can be overwhelming / life balance

Respondents not currently volunteering through an organisation

11.1% of respondents reported that they have not volunteered for an organisation in the past year.

37.5% of respondents not currently volunteering reported that they were likely or very likely to commence volunteering through an organisation in the next year.

Respondents not currently volunteering reported the most notable circumstances that would need to change to encourage them to do so as:

- family commitments
- work commitments

Informal volunteering

Respondents engaged with a wide range of informal volunteering opportunities. The most common reported activities include:

- cooking for others
- driving others
- teaching / coaching / mentoring
- yard / property maintenance
- babysitting

22.2% of respondents reported that they had not undertaken any informal volunteering in the past year.

Importance of volunteering and community benefits

89.9% of respondents noted the importance of volunteering in the community as either very important, or extremely important.

The main benefits of volunteering to the community were most commonly cited as:

- community pride through building a sense of community and ownership
- social inclusion / interaction with others
- networking within the community and community groups
- monetary – enabling cost effective delivery of services
- personal rewards
- keep groups functioning

Hindrances – things that prevent people from volunteering

The most commonly cited things that prevent people from volunteering were:

- time constraints
- understanding expectations / how to go about volunteering
- expenses / costs
- family / work / life balance
- transport / travel requirement
- self confidence
- personalities / attitudes of others

Improving volunteering rates and recruiting

Most common suggestions to help improve volunteering rates and recruitment were:

- media / advertising to increase awareness of opportunities
- targeted messaging to encourage people to volunteer
- school programs
- invite people to volunteer and be welcoming

5.2.2 Community workshop outcomes

Key themes emerging from the community workshops include:

- Volunteering provides improved community outcomes and sense of pride.
- People volunteer to support their community or address a need in the community.

- Small towns and areas would not function without volunteers – they keep the community alive, keep groups going and assist with delivery of needed services.
- Participation in volunteering activities provides a social connection for people.
- Concerns about the ageing population, and younger people perceived to be not able to volunteer as readily due to work and family commitments.
- Suggest a coordinated approach to volunteering across the Shire.
- Improve volunteer organisation support – including training, information, guidance, templates and documents, make it easier.
- Improve volunteer support – information, role descriptions, requirements.
- Advertising and networking – let people know about volunteering opportunities, what’s involved and the importance.
- Care for volunteers – make them feel valued, and that they are part of something. Help them to understand their roles; and embrace skills and cultural diversity. Encourage a culture of inclusiveness.
- Encourage younger volunteers – consider targeted messaging to younger adults and children. Utilise partnerships with schools.
- Personal approach – identify skills and interests; and ask individuals.
- Motivate volunteers – provide one-off opportunities, tap into interests, provide incentives, make it fun, help to mitigate financial cost of volunteering.
- Training – offer competency-based work skills training.

5.3 Consultation with Councillors and Council staff

During May 2018 all Councillors and 17 key staff were consulted via workshop or interviews to explore key issues around volunteering in Loddon Shire, and suggestions for the future.

Key themes emerging from Councillor and staff engagement include:

- Recognition of the critical importance of volunteering in Loddon Shire – for the delivery of services and provision of support to the community.
- A need for a coordinated approach to volunteer management and supporting volunteering and volunteer groups across the Shire.
- Recognition that there is an ageing volunteer base with fewer people available.
- The need to encourage young volunteers including episodic volunteering opportunities and inter-generational connections.
- Opportunities for volunteer skills development to help with employment opportunities – partnerships with Library agencies, community houses etc.
- The need for Council to help make it easy for volunteers and volunteer groups by reducing red tape, and providing support, information, advice and assistance.
- A need for a more structured approach to communication and awareness, including initiatives for motivating people to volunteer.
- Strengthen partnerships with peak bodies and other volunteering organisations.

6 VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Volunteer Management Plan outlines our commitment to supporting, attracting, retaining, developing and recognising volunteers; and has been developed to align with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.¹⁰

6.1 Strategic directions for 2018-2022

Five strategic directions have been identified. A number of objectives have been outlined to accompany each strategic direction.

Strategic directions	
1. Leadership, Commitment & Quality	Leading, planning and resourcing to support volunteers and volunteer organisations with consistent standards, and review.
2. Attracting	Raising the profile of volunteering across Loddon Shire and attracting younger volunteers.
3. Retaining	Motivating, engaging and supporting volunteers and volunteer organisations with standards of best practice and consistency.
4. Developing	Volunteers are supported with skills and knowledge development opportunities.
5. Recognising	Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

¹⁰ Volunteering Australia 2015

6.2 Action Plan

Objectives	Actions	Priority and timeframe	Responsible area
DIRECTION 1 – LEADERSHIP, QUALITY AND COMMITMENT¹¹			
<i>Leading, planning and resourcing to support volunteers and volunteer organisations with consistent standards, and review.</i>			
1.1 A coordinated approach to Council-supported volunteers, volunteer programs and volunteer organisations	1.1.1 Strengthen partnerships with peak bodies for assistance with a coordinated approach to Council-supported volunteer management, information provision and training opportunities.	2019 ongoing	Director Corporate Services (DCS)
	1.1.2 Create an internal volunteer support working group as a forum for discussion and planning.	2019	DCS
	1.1.3 Ongoing consultation with Council-supported volunteer groups to find out what Council can do to either promote, assist or support.	2019 ongoing	DCS
	1.1.4 Consider how local business can be engaged in supporting volunteering opportunities	2019	DCS
1.2 Effective planning and resourcing to support the Strategy	1.2.1 Develop a business case for the introduction of a permanent dedicated volunteer supporting Council staff FTE resource.	2018	DCS
	1.2.2 Introduce a permanent dedicated volunteer supporting Council staff FTE resource to provide centralised support across Loddon Shire (Volunteer Support Officer (VSO)).	2019	DCS
	1.2.3 Advocate for ongoing external funding for the volunteer supporting Council staff FTE resource (VSO).	2019	DCS
	1.2.4 Identify and advocate for external funding, resources and training opportunities.	2019	DCS
	1.2.5 Review the level of financial and in-kind support Council provides to Council-supported volunteer groups and volunteers.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	1.2.6 Consider the feasibility of expanding corporate volunteering opportunities for Council staff.	2020	Manager Organisational Development (MOD)
	1.2.7 Develop a policy on remunerating Council volunteers for out of pocket expenses.	2019	MOD

¹¹ National Standards for Volunteering references: 1 Leadership & Management, 2 Commitment to Volunteer Involvement, 3 Volunteer Roles, 6 Workplace Safety & Wellbeing 8 Quality Management & Continuous Improvement

Objectives	Actions	Priority and timeframe	Responsible area
1.3 Systems of good practice and continuous improvement	<p>1.3.1 Identify and implement opportunities for consistent volunteer management processes, forms, induction and OHS training across all Council-supported volunteer programs, in line with the National Standards for Volunteering.</p> <p>1.3.2 Create a central register of Council volunteers and volunteer records.</p> <p>1.3.3 Ensure that volunteer roles are appropriate, defined, documented and communicated.</p> <p>1.3.4 Review Council's Volunteer Policy to ensure it supports the implementation of this strategy.</p>	<p>2019-20</p> <p>2019</p> <p>2019-20</p> <p>2019</p>	<p>DCS</p> <p>VSO</p> <p>VSO</p> <p>DCS</p>
1.4 Regular evaluation	<p>1.4.1 Engage / consult with the community, partner organisations, and Council volunteers to seek regular feedback and identify improvement opportunities (eg. surveys, etc.)</p> <p>1.4.2 As part of Council's pending information technology reforms, ensure the ability to collect and analyse the right data to enable better management of volunteers and measuring of the impact of volunteers</p> <p>1.4.3 Develop and agree upon organisational measures; and implement systems to measure Council's performance against the initiatives in this strategy.</p> <p>1.4.4 Consider the development of a community based volunteer strategy</p> <p>1.4.5 Report to Council on a regular basis to share progress action the actions in this strategy and share learnings and successes with others.</p>	<p>2019 ongoing</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2019</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2019 ongoing</p>	<p>DCS</p> <p>Manager Information and Business Transformation</p> <p>DCS</p> <p>Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>DCS</p>

Objectives	Actions	Priority and timeframe	Responsible area
DIRECTION 2 – ATTRACTING¹²			
<i>Raising the profile of volunteering across Loddon Shire and attracting younger volunteers.</i>			
2.1 A structured, targeted approach to attract younger volunteers; and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities	2.1.1 Partner with peak bodies to utilise online volunteer registration resources and information.	2019	DCS
	2.1.2 Review the way that volunteer information, resources and educational materials are presented on Council’s website – make it easier to find and ensure links to partner organisations are included.	2019	VSO
	2.1.3 Utilise technology and social media platforms to engage with young people.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	2.1.4 Leverage relationships with schools to develop grass roots volunteer programs including dedicated skills development; and to promote volunteering opportunities.	2019 ongoing	Director Community Wellbeing (DCW)
	2.1.5 Make information available so that volunteer organisations may more easily invite, encourage and welcome volunteers.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	2.1.6 Provide accessible information and resources.	2019 ongoing	VSO
2.2 Lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering	2.2.1 Develop a multi-channel communication plan / strategy that assists with repositioning and valuing volunteering in the community; lets people know how they can volunteer; and promotes opportunities more widely.	2019	DCS
	2.2.2 Develop and maintain a volunteer information kit – have this available both online and hard copy at strategic locations across the Shire.	2019	VSO
	2.2.3 Consider developing a “Volunteering@Loddon” brand that is focused on raising the profile of Council volunteering opportunities and promoting the brand through appropriate media channels.	2019	DCS
2.3 Increased awareness of volunteering opportunities	2.3.1 Partner with peak bodies to utilise platforms to facilitate an online register of volunteers, volunteer organisations, roles and opportunities.	2019 ongoing	DCS

¹² National Standards for Volunteering references: 1 Leadership & Management, 4 Recruitment & Selection

Objectives	Actions	Priority and timeframe	Responsible area
DIRECTION 3 – RETAINING¹³ <i>Motivating, engaging and supporting volunteers and volunteer organisations with standards of best practise and consistency.</i>			
3.1 Motivate and make it easier for people to continue to volunteer	3.1.1 Promote different ways for people to volunteer outside of traditional roles, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Episodic volunteering o Online volunteering o Skilled volunteering o Volunteering through the workplace o Identification of opportunities at different life stages 	2019 ongoing	VSO
	3.1.2 Establish a program of regularly reconnecting with lapsed Council volunteers	2019 ongoing	VSO
	3.1.3 Identify, understand and address barriers to youth volunteering	2020	DCW
	3.1.4 Identify and understand ways to encourage ad-hoc volunteers to take on committee volunteer roles	2020	DCS
3.2 Reduced red tape for Council-supported volunteer organisations	3.2.1 Review and streamline governance systems and requirements for Council-supported volunteer organisations, including the provision of templates to assist.	2019	DCS
	3.2.2 Investigate availability of online tools through partnerships with peak bodies.	2019	VSO
	3.2.3 Review the in-kind support provided by Council staff to Council-supported volunteer organisations and identify improvement opportunities.	2019	DCS
	3.2.4 Promote the importance of volunteer organisations having rotations and succession planning, and the benefits of involving new people and new ideas.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	3.2.5 Advocate to State and Federal government to reduce red tape and streamline volunteer organisation requirements	2019 ongoing	CEO
3.3 Engaged committees of management and volunteers	3.3.1 Review and continue to improve the way in which Council communicates and engages with Council-supported committees of management and volunteers.	2019 ongoing	DCS
	3.3.2 Include an article in each Council bulletin that promotes volunteerism.	2018 ongoing	DCS

¹³ National Standards for Volunteering references: 3 Volunteer Roles, 5 Support & Development

Objectives	Actions	Priority and timeframe	Responsible area
DIRECTION 4 – DEVELOPING¹⁴ Volunteers are supported with skills and knowledge development opportunities.			
4.1 Support skills development opportunities to enhance employment pathways and increase confidence and desire to volunteer	4.1.1 Strengthen partnerships with Library agencies, neighbourhood houses and men’s sheds to help provide volunteers and volunteer groups with skills training opportunities.	2019 ongoing	DCW
	4.1.2 Develop volunteer networking events to connect volunteers to opportunities for volunteering and / or employment.	2019 ongoing	DCS
	4.1.3 Support leaders and managers of volunteers to attend networking and development opportunities	2019 ongoing	DCS
4.2 Promote skills development for Council-supported volunteer organisations to assist with governance requirements	4.2.1 Partner with peak bodies to link in with training resources and opportunities.	2019 ongoing	MOD
	4.2.2 Explore opportunities with DHHS and relevant State government advisory groups to support training initiatives for volunteer organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers.	2019 ongoing	DCS
4.3 Promote a youth leadership training program	4.3.1 Explore opportunities with DHHS and peak bodies that support a youth leadership training program to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop young people and provide them with the skills to be able to contribute positively to the community in a volunteering capacity. 	2019 ongoing	DCS/DCW
4.4 Embrace skills and diversity	4.4.1 Encourage cross-generational volunteering opportunities where different age cohorts can exchange skills.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	4.4.2 Encourage cross-cultural skills exchange and development.	2019 ongoing	VSO

¹⁴ National Standards for Volunteering references: 5 Support & Development

Objectives	Actions	Priority and timeframe	Responsible area
DIRECTION 5 – RECOGNISING¹⁵			
<i>Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.</i>			
5.1 An established, consistent approach to caring for volunteers and volunteer recognition	5.1.1 Develop a formal volunteer recognition program / system.	2019	DCS
	5.1.2 Implement an annual volunteer event to thank and recognise volunteers as part of National Volunteer Week.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	5.1.3 Celebrate volunteers via a program of regular social and traditional media stories, including regular features in the Mayoral Column.	2019 ongoing	VSO
	5.1.4 Participate in the Premier's Volunteer Champion Awards	2019 ongoing	DCS

7 REVIEW OF STRATEGY

Progress against the initiatives outlined in this strategy will be reviewed and reported on an annual basis by the Director Corporate Services, with results made available to our community.

The Volunteer Strategy will be reviewed and a new document completed on or before 31 December 2022.

¹⁵ National Standards for Volunteering references: 7 Volunteer Recognition