The information that appears in this document has been prepared after an intensive planning process involving research, consultation and meetings over a six-month period.

During this process three working groups were responsible for development of key areas of the plan.

Those groups and their membership were:

- **Community House & Museum - Working Group (A)**
  

- **Infrastructure & Development - Working Group (B)**
  
  Members - Paul Barker, Ron Clark, Paul Davis & Jan Sharman.

- **Master plan for future image of township - Working Group (C)**
  
  Members - Wendy Sutton, Paul Barker, Jan Sharman & Geoff Robbins (RITCH Program).

Active individual and group stakeholder representatives at stages throughout this process have included:

Jan Sharman, Janine Godden, Barry Condick (Victoria Theatre Town Hall Committee), Paul Davis, Lynne Douthat, Wendy Sutton (Tarnagulla Parks & Gardens), Warren Gellel, Joan Ansell, Joel & Tracey Meaney, Glenda Lawler, Dale Potter (Tarnagulla Police & local Neighbourhood Watch), Ron Clark, Paul Barker, Jo Reid, Drew Sturni, Ethel Gregory, Doreen Ramm, Judy Scholes and Ralph and Jeannie Richards. Cr. Allen Brownbill and Val Kaeser showed interest throughout the planning process.

Groups/organisations consulted throughout this process have included: Tarnagulla Public Hall Committee, Tarnagulla Parks & Gardens, Tarnagulla Primary School, Tarnagulla School Council, Tarnagulla Parents & Friends, Tarnagulla Urban Fire Brigade, Tarnagulla Playgroup & Tarnagulla Senior Citizens.

Compilation and presentation of this report was undertaken by Jan Sharman and Paul Barker, and through the skill, resources and co-operation of Geoff Robbins from the RITCH Program of Maryborough District Health Service.
THE VISION...

TARNAGULLA is a country town in Victoria, Australia with a rich history of gold that grew from the lives of the men and women who flocked to the region to try to make a new life out of finding some of that gold.

In bringing the community together to think about and develop a futuristic community plan for consideration by the Loddon Shire, the feeling has been that any plan should reflect Tarnagulla’s past, and in particular the strengths or notable features of Tarnagulla’s past. The community has chosen to try to make use of the many identifiable features of its past to create unique and innovative ways to develop a pleasant and sustainable town and district environment to be enjoyed by its residents.

Key themes to be relied upon in the overall process of the “rebirthing” of Tarnagulla are restoration and recreation, while the utilisation of innovative design and development techniques in a number of potential developments has remained a priority. Additionally many aspects of this plan have been influenced by a strong desire for Tarnagulla to recover its sense of “community”, which has been by most accounts “missing” over the past decade as a result of a number of unfortunate and interacting social, economic and political factors.

Geographical and demographic information

Tarnagulla lies north of the Great Dividing Range in Central Victoria. Within a 12 km radius of Tarnagulla are the townships and farming areas of Waanyarra, Laanecoorie, Poseidon, Newbridge, Llannelly, Arnold, Arnold West and Murphy’s Creek. The district is basically flat farming land with a few undulating hills although there are vast stands of trees. The grassy landscape dotted with old orchards, farmhouses and the scars of mining of which many were abandoned many decades ago. A closer look reveals the foundations of many huts or houses, piles of stones from chimneys, digger holes and the deep lead mines. The scars of mining are evident from open cuts, shafts and miners holes often accompanied by mullock heaps, although many have now been removed and used in road making and for gravel and sand.

Tarnagulla forms part of the “Golden Triangle” in Central Victoria where a number of significant finds by gold prospectors over a long period of time and to this day have added to the historical relationship between gold and the district.
The main source of water for the area is the Loddon River on which the Laanecoorie Reservoir is built. Although only passing through Laanecoorie, Woolshed Reef, Poseidon, Newbridge and Memsie the river was important in the early development of this area. There are three main creeks that eventually join the Loddon River. The Kangedar Creek flows from Rheola through Arnold West, where it is joined by the Simpsons Creek, to feed the Bullabul Creek at Arnold. The latter creek flows from Murphy’s Creek through Irishtown and Arnold, is fed by the Five Mile Creek. The third creek of importance is Jones Creek, fed by the Waanayarra Creek and flows from that area to the Loddon River near Laanecoorie.

The town water supply is provided by Coliban Water from Laanecoorie Reservoir via a treatment plant, however many properties still operate their own rainwater tank supply. Tarnagulla is not sewered and the nearest sewered township is Dunolly 20 km to the south-west.

Population figures as provided through the Department of Sustainability and Environment show a more than 20% growth in the 20-year period from 1981 - 2001, moving from 123 in 1981 to a peak of 172 in 1996 and falling to 158 by 2001. The area referred to by these figures is 2.2 sq km and the figure represents about 2% of the population residing in the Loddon Shire. Research into the composition of the Loddon Shire reveals however that almost 60% of the Shire population resides in communities or districts of less than 500 residents. In terms of Tarnagulla and district, it is suggested that the township could potentially be regarded as an area of interest for a catchment population of up to about 500 people drawing from the Arnold, Llanelly, Murphys Creek, Laanecoorie, Waanyarra and Newbridge areas.
History

At first Tarnagulla was known as Sandy Creek and like many other Victorian goldfield towns it had its beginnings in the first gold rushes in the early 1850s. Most of the mining was alluvial, but there was one area of reef gold known by the unimposing name of Poverty Reef.

Prior to the wholesale working of the reef mines the field was worked predominantly by Chinese alluvial miners. Although there were no incidents of violence on the field, relationships with some of the Europeans were often strained. After some rumblings in 1857 most Chinese chose to leave Tarnagulla of their own accord to the nearby finds at Jones Creek, now referred to as Waanyarra.

But within only about a month it was evident that a rush had set in around some of the reef claims at Tarnagulla, and the population was reported to be increasing every day. Yields were good, several stores opened, others were about to be erected and a number of substantial cottages had been built. Within a few months a new reef, the ‘Sabbath Reef’ was hailed as one of the richest reef-mining areas in Victoria. Money became plentiful and the miners seemed prosperous.

The first signs of social organisation emerged when a reefers’ ball was held at Foos’ Hotel in May 1858, while there was a tea meeting several months later when the schoolhouse was opened.

Tarnagulla’s history is littered with a wealth of events of significance such as the above and most of which remain as priceless to the district as does the recording of the fabulous amounts of gold mined from the area throughout the gold rush era.

The preceding information has been précised as an introduction from a recent marvellous publication “Australian Ghost Towns” by Barry McGowan. McGowan devotes a chapter in his Victorian section to ‘Tarnagulla and Beyond’, details of which are provided in the reference attachment at the end of this plan.

Several other publications have also been included as future reference sources for any review and extension of this plan. Most of the significant buildings and facilities in and around the township have some degree of historical influence attached to their existence and this plan sets out to ensure that all those factors are considered in any future project development.
The Process

The process of the formulation of this plan can be traced back to two significant inputs;

- A Women’s Health Day conducted by the RITCH Program and Inglewood District Health Service on 6 May 2003; and
- Loddon Shire Council asking communities in the shire to take part in its future planning process, commencing in this instance at a Community Information Session held in Tarnagulla on August 14, 2003 attended by more than 40 people from the Tarnagulla, Laanecoorie, Newbridge and Eddington communities. Since then a number of Community Plan meetings have been held with the numbers of people attending varying from between 8 - 25, representing both themselves individually and/or various community organisations and groups.

Because of some of the issues identified during an open forum on community building during the Women’s Health Day, a group had already been formed (Tarnagulla Action Group) to investigate and initiate some new community activities and projects. Loddon Shire’s subsequent direction with community planning has certainly been considered fortuitous and enabled a wide cross section of the Tarnagulla community to build an achievable vision.

Regular community meetings related to the plan were conducted on -

- August 21  (17 attended)
- September 11 (15 attended)
- October 16  (12 attended)
- November 13 ( 9 attended)
- December 10 ( 7 attended)
- January 29   ( 8 attended) &
- February 5  (10 attended).

In addition three specific working groups held further meetings to research, discuss and develop the finer detail of some issues and projects. All community meetings were widely promoted via a mailing distribution of minutes and poster/flyers throughout the community. Wide discussion and consultation was undertaken with community groups and organisations to ascertain reaction and views on key points. The Community Action Group believes that the views of any resident in any way remotely interested in the development of the plan are referred to herein.
THE PLAN...

Priority issues identified and developed by Working Groups.

- TARNAGULLA COMMUNITY/NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE with MUSEUM and OTHER PROJECTS.  
  Working Group (A)

  i. The existing Police site, reportedly now to be redeveloped following complications in relocating to and developing a site in Commercial Road - is still considered the most ideal location for such a centre and associated developments for the Tarnagulla Community. The Tarnagulla Community strongly contends that any future Police Complex is best placed in Commercial Road, the town’s main street. The existing Police site has the historic bluestone Police Cells adding substantially to community interest in the site. The community considers that the Police residence could accommodate the community/neighbourhood house, while the station building could accommodate a coffee shop and perhaps showcase Tarnagulla attractions in a number of ways. The Police cells or old jail building has the potential to be developed as a museum and historical complex displaying memorabilia and other records. A portion of vacant land between the fenced Police site and the CFA Fire Station has the potential for the development of an innovative drought tolerant garden and open space as an ongoing community project.

  ii. This planning group initiated action, requesting the Shire Council to investigate retention of the site for the community to develop this project. To date no written confirmation of a final decision/outcome has been received in reply to this approach and this disappointing.

  iii. The planning group believes that a community house will meet the needs of many groups, families and individuals in the community and provide opportunities for further community building in a township that has been devoid of a sense of community in recent times. Some of the many suggestions for inclusion in this proposal have included meeting rooms, socialisation areas, a coffee shop or coffee machine, consulting rooms for some visiting social and health services (RITCH Program of Maryborough District Health Service, Inglewood & District Health Service, individual specialist providers), a
chemist delivery service point or depot, computer and internet access, learning/resource centre and/or a Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) and an area for display and selling of local products such as crafts and handiwork, cold pressed oils, works from artists, woodwork, knitting, jewellery, postcards and souvenirs.

iv. Such is the level of community interest in this project that many aspects have been widely researched with the result that conceptual plans are well advanced.

v. The Action Group is in the process of forming as an incorporated association, while there is strong interest in the associated formation of an historical society.

vi. There is also strong commitment from the community towards operating the community centre/house, museum and any ancillary activities on a volunteer roster basis, both by individuals and groups.

vii. **SHOULD** the proposal for the relocation of the Police site not proceed (as is likely indicated) then this project requires a “fallback” position.

viii. A number of possible alternative locations were raised and discussed at length. These were;

- Tarnagulla’s Methodist Church which had been placed for sale over the latter months of 2003, but which has since been sold.
- The site in Commercial Road (main street), opposite the Victoria Hotel and Theatre, previously favoured by the Victoria Police for the redevelopment of the Police station and residence.
  - The Tarnagulla community during this process were informed that the difficulty with the site relates to heritage overlays, in particular requirements that an archaeological dig be conducted due to the site being the location of the historic Four Mill.
  - The community believes that this site would be highly suitable for a major project development purpose designed in the form of Community Centre, Historical Museum, Coffee Shop and a
business promoting, displaying and selling local arts, crafts other wares etc.

This project could entail buildings being designed to relate to the site’s past and would add considerable enhancement and appeal to the streetscape of Tarnagulla.

- A vacant block of land on the corner up from the Tarnagulla Post Office in Commercial Road. It is believed that this block was sold within family interests some years ago to settle an estate. The family member who acquired the land has to date left the land unimproved. *This block may be able to be acquired reasonably if an approach were made to the current owner.*

- A large parcel of land bounded by Poverty Street, Sandy Creek Lane, King Street and a lane at the back of Gladstone Street, which is the site of a little used cement cricket practice wicket and cricket practice nets. One of the townships main bluestone drains passes through this parcel of land. The planning group believes that this site could be developed as the community centre etc. and could possibly also cater for development of aged residential units or housing, as raised later in this plan.

- Incorporating some wider redevelopment of the Victoria Hotel and Theatre/Hall complex (Tarnagulla Public Hall). In considering this option the planning group considers any development of the existing Hall site could not adequately cater for the needs of the community centre and historical museum project. Improvements however to the hall’s kitchen are identified later in the plan.
• ACCESS TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS.
  Working Group (B)
  i. This issue is viewed as a serious impediment to long-term managed growth and development and implementation of adequate communications for the district.
  ii. Mobile phone coverage is poor and unreliable.
  iii. An upgrade of the Llanelly Exchange is required.
  iv. The community is anxious to establish what is needed to establish Broadband services for the district.

• UPGRADE OF VICTORIA HOTEL AND THEATRE - KITCHEN.
  Working Group (B)
  i. This project has previously been identified by the Shire as being a priority in order to meet increased health requirements in the storage, preparation and handling of food and refreshments.
  ii. Although the Hall’s Committee of Management is autonomous and has the intention to pursue an upgrade, it was suggested by Shire Officers that this project should be included in the Community Plan so that all relevant issues can be addressed.
  iii. The community feels that this building is one of Tarnagulla’s key historical focal points and in this regard any development should be to further enhance Tarnagulla’s heritage appeal.
  iv. The community regularly use this hall for a range of activities including Senior Citizens, Tai Chi Group, Strength Training Groups/programs, Community Cinema, craft group activities, health forums/workshops and major public/community meetings.
A MASTER PLAN FOR THE FUTURE IMAGE OF TARNAGULLA

Working Group (C)

i. Roadside channelling, footpaths and major drains - cleanup and repair to ensure preservation of this historic asset for the township. Footpaths should be the wide older style asphalt design as mostly evident at present.

ii. Streetscape - trees - assess and safeguard existing “old” trees and remove and relocate the crab apple trees located on the roadway edge.
iii. Period lamps/street lights - investigate, design and install a form of street lighting best suited to reflect and enhance the period architectural features of the township.

- The community is committed to facilitating this direction as some donated funding (approx. $3000) has been made available to the Tarnagulla Community Action Group specifically to restore the four original township lights and to replicate additional lights for strategic placement if possible.

- The planning groups requests Council to investigate and apply for funding to match the community group’s donated contribution.

iv. Cleanup creek and surrounds.

v. General rubbish/litter management strategy requires development and ongoing improvement. Consideration should be given to locating the plastic wheelie bins present in the main street in locations that do not detract from the aesthetic appeal of the period streetscape.
vi. Main street and park bench seating. It is felt that a consistent design of seating or bench is required to further enhance the heritage feel of the township.

vii. Signage - on major roads entering the township requires attention to detail and a consistent approach. Some work needs to be undertaken on ensuring mileage distance signs are accurate and consistent. Names of main streets and roads need to be correct and consistent. E.g. Commercial Road not Commercial Street.

viii. Historic markers and heritage plaques in proximity of buildings and other town features. Shire staff had approached the community with a design of which a number of a fixed plaque type are available for installation, however follow-up advice indicates a number of issues in relation to the height and safety of the signage has delayed their installation.

ix. Speed limit through the main street should be reduced to 50 km per hour and install advance warning signs about speed limit further from the township? Investigate feasibility as to some change to the physical features of the street surface as a practicable means of restricting speeding trucks and vehicles. Advice n changed condition of the road surface/design could be advised on approaches to township.

x. Employment of a part-time cleaner for the main street, the public toilets in the main street and the adjoining park area.

xi. The CFA is recognized as a key stakeholder in the general image and presentation of the township because of its role in conducting fuel reduction exercises.
xii. The community feels that all residents should be encouraged to become involved in the development of a Disaster Management & Evacuation Plan for the community.

• RECREATION FACILITIES
  Working groups (B) & (C)
  i. A number of railings in the fence at the Cricket ground require replacement.
  ii. Some interest has been expressed in an assessment of the condition of the tennis courts. If courts are suitable for minor improvement there may develop sufficient interest to reform a Tennis Club again in Tarnagulla.
  iii. Strong interest expressed in developing a beach at the existing reservoir park. It is suggested that some minor earthworks are required along with a quantity of sand fill to create the “beach” effect.

• SELF CONTAINED UNITS OR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SUITABLE FOR THE ELDERLY.
  Working Group (B)
  i. Identified need for modern unit style housing in a safe environment suitable for elderly citizens wanting and able to care for themselves. The community suggests that this style of development would be more than acceptable in Tarnagulla. Many families have aged relatives interested in moving into the area however there is a lack of suitable available housing.
  ii. This project was identified as a possible growth and employment opportunity for the district. Community would encourage the Shire to investigate possibilities through state/federal governments and appropriate funding programs and sources. Such a project may also attract some private investment, or there may be scope to develop along the lines of a community trust of which there are a number of models in operation. (Locally the Bendigo Bank can assist in the documentary and legal requirements of community trusts.)
• FESTIVALS AND EVENTS & DISTRICT PROMOTION.
  
  Working Group (A)
  
i. Ongoing consultation to receive ideas about what type of themed event/s would be beneficial to the town.

  ii. Some suggestions - a spring festival or a Gold Fossickers Festival or another event with perhaps a heritage theme or based on local crafts etc. Consideration should be given to the area’s natural assets and attractions.

  iii. Some interest in a regular monthly weekend market. There were some comments noted about difficulties in promoting and sustaining these markets in that they often become dumping outlets for cheap alternative products/seconds etc.

  iv. Promotion of the township in general through a brochure as evidenced in some communities of similar size in other areas. This brochure could perhaps be available from a signed posted location of choice? Liaison between Tarnagulla Parks & Gardens and promotions group required. Ultimately the community centre/museum/coffee shop would fulfil this role.

  v. Development of a web page or a page linked to a reputable site to assist in promotion of the township and district.

• FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TOWN DEVELOPMENT.
  
  Working Group (B)
  
i. Any futuristic Plan needs to look at the “big picture” by considering how the town might attract some development to create jobs for the town. E.g. Light industry/engineering or business from another sector. For such an outlook to be viable the plan needs to address issues such as roads, sewerage and town planning/subdivision regulations/guidelines. Other service infrastructure development such as telecommunications is seen as pivotal to realistic development potential.

  ii. The Community believes that the Shire should work through planning and infrastructure issues in readiness to try to attract light industry and/or small production business. Then if some of the simplest things are correct, development begins to happen and achievements will follow. All levels of Government should have a ‘can do’ attitude.
iii. Need to investigate the issue of many town blocks reverting back to being crown land. Can this process produce some beneficial outcomes for the community rather than simply create more obstructions and limitations on the sympathetic development of the township.

- **SEWERAGE FOR THE TOWNSHIP.**
  
  **Working Group (B)**
  
  i. The Community is not sure of implications of changes in state planning requirements regarding disposal of household effluent.
  
  ii. Consider options for addressing this issue taking into account the widest benefits for small townships such as Tarnagulla. Solutions offered were based around innovative and environmentally favourable effluent disposal concepts for whole of small towns or for individual blocks and developments. A number of documents and websites are referred to in a listing as an attachment at the conclusion of this Plan.

- **TARNAGULLA PLAYGROUP.**
  
  **Working Groups (B) and (C)**
  
  i. Upgrade facilities. E.g. Picnic table needs painting and request for further fencing of the wood chip play equipment area.
• WALKING TRACKS/PARKS AND SIGNAGE.
  Working Group (C)
  i. Make maximum use of natural features/attractions, such as the number of state parks etc.
  ii. Some areas would be ideal for orienteering/wildflower walks at particular times of the year. The historic Waanyarra Cemetery would be of interest as part of a designated walk.
  iii. Request for the provision and installation of additional railing and posts in the park area adjacent to the Victoria Theatre. Presently cars often park on the grass and damage the sprinkler system and grass area.

• HISTORIC CRICKET PAVILION
  Working Group (C)
  i. Significant comment received in that this pavilion is the oldest existing in Victoria and one of the two oldest in Australia.
  ii. Community suggests Investigating what might be done to further enhance/preserve and use this facility? Consultation needed with Tarnagulla Parks & Gardens Committee. How can the pavilion link in with other projects/facility upgrades? Indications that Parks & Gardens Committee believe an upgrade to the kitchen is only major requirement, but that any development needs to be in total keeping with the pavilion’s heritage requirements.

• TOURIST OPPORTUNITIES.
  Working Group (A)
  i. Gold mining - Reef Mining N/L (Puris Energy) at the Crystal Hill Mine. Are there possibilities to conduct some tours??
  ii. Listing of historic sites - part of organised tours on some basis.
  iii. Development of Museum in old police jail or at another site (see Community House provisions).
  iv. At the time of finalisation of this plan a community meeting was to be conducted for the purpose of forming an historical society to guide and manage the historical aspects associated within this plan (i.e. future Museum and where research is required to assist overall design and development of historical aspects of this plan and other historical projects at later dates).
• TRANSPORT

   Working Group (B)
   
i. Obtain a community car or access to a community bus operated on an appropriate basis from the Community House.
   
ii. Investigate and link in with available transport solutions/options provided from existing services, and look to extend options through support and lobbying of Shire Council and other networks/groups, recognising that the district has Central Goldfields Shire townships as other areas of interest. Some joint transport schemes might be appropriate for these corridor areas. Request Council to investigate links with adjoining municipality as a priority.
   
iii. Transport to medical and other professional appointments for isolated and disadvantaged people is seen as a priority issue.

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ISSUES...

(1) Community Centre Complex.

(2) Streetscape and Image of the Township.

(3) Town Hall Improvements.

(4) Communications and Transport.

(5) Recreation Facilities.

(6) Future Long Term Planning and Development.
ATTACHMENT...

(A) Web references on innovative Sewerage and effluent disposal systems.

http://www.vermitech.com/environ.htm
and links

http://www.organicdownunder.com/wormfarm.htm
and links.


(B) Report - Organics into Agriculture (1999) by Mr. Chris Hood.
Sources of Organic Wastes within the Calder, Desert Fringe & Grampians
Regional Waste management Group Regions.

(C) References:

  Tarnagulla Recreation Reserve and Reservoir. Australia: Committee of
  management Tarnagulla Recreation Parks.
  Books.
  National Library of Australia.
  Square: Crown Castleton.